





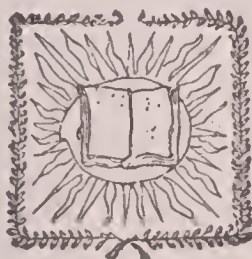


“Remember, Amédée, there will some day be a man’s work for you to do.”

PROVERB STORIES
OF
MANY LANDS

BY
LUCILE BERK

ILLUSTRATED



THE CENTURY CO.
NEW YORK AND LONDON

PZ7
B4523
Pw

Copyright, 1924, by
THE CENTURY CO.



~~41.75~~

Printed in U. S. A.

SEP - 3 '24

© Cl'A 800658

ms. 1.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE WARRIOR OF THE GREEN TWIG	I
THE PRINCESS AND THE WORM	19
THE CAKE-VENDER OF MOSCOW	35
CORNELIA OF THE SEVEN HILLS	53
THE STORY OF ITUDU	73
THE VOICE OF PIETRO IN THE CROWD	89
LADY MARY SHAKES THE TREE	113
THE BLACK CAMEL	133
THE GODCHILD OF THE SEA	153
THE LOTUS-FLOWER OF THE JUMNA	175
THE LONG HUNTER LIFTS HIS GUN	221
THE CANNON-BALLS OF ALKMAAR	221

ILLUSTRATIONS

“Remember, Amédée, there will some day be a man’s work for you to do”	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Alexander led him through the snow-storm . . .	42
Lady Mary is toasted by the Kit-Cat Club . . .	126
He was made tender of a small herd of camels . . .	140

THE WARRIOR OF THE GREEN TWIG

PROVERB STORIES OF MANY LANDS

THE WARRIOR OF THE GREEN TWIG

EVEN if you have not seen the castle of Chillon, I am sure you have read about it, for it has been immortalized in Lord Byron's poem "The Prisoner of Chillon." It is small wonder that the poet felt the spell of the ancient gray structure, situated so picturesquely on a tiny island in the clear blue waters of the Lake of Geneva. As I wandered through the majestic halls and damp, gloomy dungeons, I, too, pictured all the life and power that dwelt within them in former times, when Chillon was the stronghold of the noble house of Savoy.

As you know, the story Lord Byron has revived in his stirring poem is that of the great liberator Bonivard, who languished for six years in the subterranean dungeon, but

4 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

who at last was freed, and his beloved country of Berne, also. But it was another story I recalled as I sat on a stone step in the inner court, a story dating much earlier, yet quite as romantic and equally worthy of Byron's inspired pen. This story has been left unnoticed for so many years, that it is surely high time it were recorded, lest it pass into oblivion entirely.

Brushing aside the cobwebs and dust of nearly six hundred years, let us follow the story of the child Amédée, whose home was the castle of Chillon, and whose life is a chronicle of keen adventure.

To be quite exact, Amédée was born in the winter of the year 1334, the only son of Count Aimo of Savoy and his beautiful consort, the Countess Clementine. Those were troublous times, when a man's glory was measured by his conquests, and war and strife were almost continual; and Amédée, though he resembled his mother's family and was delicate and spirituelle, had been nursed from his earliest recollection on the stories of battle and the brave traditions of his illustrious family.

The Warrior of the Green Twig 5

The fair-skinned, golden-haired child with the dark, dreamy eyes sat for hours at the knee of Father Raffaello, the old family chaplain, or sometimes on a low settle beside his father, and heard repeated the stories of the prowess of his great-grandfather, Amadeus the Fourth, and of his grandfather, Amadeus the Fifth, for whom he had been named, and whose glorious conquests had added to the domains of the house of Savoy.

“And it is in their footsteps that thou shalt follow, little Amédée,” he had been told, “so that the lands of Savoy may grow broader and its people mightier, and the name of Amadeus ring out even to the great ocean.”

He would look at his mother at such times, and kiss her pale cheeks and trembling lips, in an instinctive, childish effort to comfort her. She was very gentle, his lovely mother Clementine, and to her, battle and conquest meant pain and bloodshed and terror. She would clasp the child as though to protect him, and hold him close to her heart, and her imagination would picture the dangers he must encounter when he was grown and went out into the world

6 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

to lead the cruel life of men. A little of her anguish and fear crept into the heart of the child also, and he would assure her he had no desire for fame, but would remain with her always, to stroke her little white hands and caress the golden plaits of her hair. No doubt it was because of this that Amédée's cousins—and also his father, sometimes—feared that the boy was a coward, and nicknamed him the “Warrior of the Green Twig.”

“If thou wilt sit in the courtyard of the castle, and wave thy little green twig,” his cousins would shout derisively, “then thy enemies will tear thy lands asunder and kill thee with the sword!”

Little Amédée would run to his mother and tell her of their taunts, and she would soothe him and lead him to happier thoughts. And so he grew, in time, to be nine years old.

That was the year that his uncle Conrad came for a long visit to the castle of Chillon. He was a handsome young man of twenty, was Conrad of Montferrat, tall and slim like his sister Clementine, though of dark complexion, while she was fair. Amédée fell

The Warrior of the Green Twig 7

readily under the spell of this clever young uncle, who possessed so many elegant accomplishments and was so unlike the coarser, sturdier members of his father's family. In the quiet moonlight evenings of summer, when the large open court of the castle was bathed in soft silver light, Conrad would sit strumming on his guitar, and singing the melodious ballads of his native province. And the child would draw closer and closer, and give himself up to the enchantment of the music.

Count Aimo and his nephews, however, felt no great admiration for this visitor at the castle. They offered him every courtesy, for that was an age when hospitality was a noble art; but when Conrad was not present, they intimated their contempt for a grown man whose slender white fingers had never grasped a lance, and whose wits were never matched against an adversary but were content to spend themselves in the invention of pretty ditties to be sung to fair ladies. Amédée felt the angry blood rush to his head as they spoke, and he burst out in childish defense of his handsome uncle. But his father only smiled and said:

8 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

“Thou art young, Amédée. Thou hast not yet learned that life is not a love-ballad, nor this earth a land of dreams.”

In the autumn Count Aimo fell ill. He was leeches and poulticed, and all manner of herbs were administered, but with scant effect. There was only one hope left him: he must make a pilgrimage to Rome. Sorrowfully his lady Clementine and little Amédée helped him make his preparations for the difficult, tedious journey on horseback, over rough mountain roads and through unfriendly provinces. Twenty sturdy young followers, his nephews among them, polished their swords and mended their armor; for they were to accompany their stricken liege, and knew full well the hazards of the open road. When the count had been lifted to his powerful gray war-horse, he held out his hand to his brother-in-law.

“I leave my lady and my little son in your care, Conrad,” he said. “You must protect them, and my people, and my lands. And pray that I may come back healed and strong, so that my enemies shall not cease to feel the power of the fearless house of Savoy.

The Warrior of the Green Twig 9

“Do not weep, my Clementine,” he bade his wife. “The lady of a brave knight must cultivate a resolute heart.”

Then he turned to his son:

“And you, my little Amédée, God bless and keep you! Play your happy games among the birds and flowers. But remember, there will some day be a man’s work for you to do; and when that day dawns, you should be waiting and ready!”

And so the count rode out across the draw-bridge and turned down the road, the only road in those days that led through the mountains to Rome; and his proud standards and the bright trappings of his followers floated in the wind. Amédée climbed to the topmost turret of the southeast wing of the castle and watched the retreating figures on their prancing chargers as they grew smaller and smaller in the distance and at last were lost to view.

It was his favorite playground, that southeast turret, where the lake birds nested, and from where the mountain peaks could be counted, tier upon tier, until they seemed to melt into the purple-gray of the clouds. And it was from this

10 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

vantage-point that Amédée spied a troop of horsemen coming along the road.

It was the third day after his father's departure, and the child felt lonely and a little uneasy. We all know the feeling, I am sure, for we all have experienced the sense of security in a father's and mother's protection, and the disturbing effect of the absence of either. Little Amédée had no clear idea of the cause of his disquietude, but unconsciously he sought this high turret, from which he could look so far toward the south, and perhaps behold the snowy mountain-peaks at the base of which his father's followers might even then be wending their difficult way.

A flash of light far down the road, as glaring as when a mirror reflects a ray of the sun, made Amédée rub his eyes and peer intently into the distance. Soon he could discern horsemen, many of them, advancing along the road. His little heart leapt with exultation. Was his father returning so soon? But it sank again when he saw how many moving figures there were—perhaps ten times the little handful that had ridden out with Count Aimo a few days

The Warrior of the Green Twig 11

before. The child hurried excitedly down the narrow stairway.

“Uncle Conrad! Uncle Conrad!” he called loudly. “Don’t you see them coming?”

“See whom?” inquired Uncle Conrad, rather annoyed to be interrupted in his daily game of dominoes with Father Raffaello.

“Strange soldiers are coming up the road—many, many of them! Oh, Uncle Conrad, my father is not here, and I am afraid!”

The pale Italian face turned a shade paler as Conrad rose. Father Raffaello put his hand upon the young man’s arm.

“Let the child call the men together, and give them the order to guard the turrets,” he suggested.

Conrad nodded impatiently, and went to look out upon the road.

The old priest grasped the shoulders of the nine-year-old child, and looked straight into his eyes. He knew a great deal about the world, and could judge men wisely.

“Think of thy brave father, little Amédée,” he whispered, “and thy gentle, frightened mother.”

12 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

And suddenly, into the terrified little heart crept a strange feeling of strength. Amédée thought of his father's last words at parting: "When that day dawns, you should be waiting and ready!" Then off he ran, through the long corridors and courts, calling to the servants and gathering the defenders of his fortress home.

At the foot of a stairway he came upon his mother, weeping and wringing her hands.

"My boy! My little Amédée," she cried, "come with me' I have been searching for you, in every room and passageway. There is great excitement and rushing about, and the clanking of armor and shouting, and many other ominous noises. I can feel in the air that there is danger. Come with me, my little one; in the subterranean vaults we shall be safe."

But Amédée broke away from her slender white arms.

"Go thou into the vaults, my mother," he said. "Thy son, and my brave father's also, hath cast aside his little green twig!"

When he returned to his uncle and the old chaplain, they were peering through a narrow

The Warrior of the Green Twig 13

slit in the stone masonry, at the horde of strangers swarming upon the road.

“Such a fuss, and all for nothing!” said Conrad, bursting into a nervous, mirthless laugh. “I can see their standards plainly now. They are the men from Chieri, neighbors and friends of the house of Montferrat. Lower the drawbridge, you stupid knaves, and bid them enter. We shall have guests at Chillon to-night!”

But the voice of the child piped up quick and clear:

“No, no, my uncle! Let them not enter! My eyes must be sharper than yours, for they see a hundred swords gleaming in the sun upon the road. Surely it is not armed thus that friends would come to seek shelter for the night!”

And as he spoke, an arrow glanced by their little window and broke itself against the stone wall of the turret.

Father Raffaello raised his arm solemnly.

“Bow thy head, Conrad of Montferrat,” he said, “for great is thy shame. Thou art not only a coward but a traitor also, than which

14 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

there is nothing more despicable. Lock him in his chamber, loyal Savoyards, and place a guard to watch him. The honor and safety of Count Aimo's possessions are more secure in the hands of a little child and an old priest than in those of his treacherous brother-in-law."

So Father Raffaello, with the help of Amédée, directed the defense of the castle, which was now under siege. The deep moat surrounding their tiny island, and the impregnable structure in which they lived, were their chief protections. But Count Aimo had taken with him twenty picked retainers, and so, few men were left to fight off the assaults of the enemy. The defenders could never have launched an attack themselves, had not Amédée undertaken to secure help and supplies by means of a perilous enterprise.

In the dead of night, with only one faithful old servant, the child slipped into a small boat, on the lake side of the castle, and let himself be paddled carefully, noiselessly across the dark waters to the little village of Villeneuve, at the upper angle of the lake. Here lived many

The Warrior of the Green Twig 15

gallant Savoyards; and here, also, was stationed a flotilla of galleys, formidable sea-craft in those ancient times.

The sight of the golden-haired boy, come to acquaint them of the plight of the beleaguered castle, roused the men to instant action, and soon the lake hummed with the rhythmical splash of a hundred oars. And when the turrets were once more filled with armed and trained fighters, the men of Chieri were sorely chagrined.

The captain of the galleys, who had fought with Count Aimo in many battles, despatched a messenger at once to overtake his liege and make known to him the danger threatening his home. And since Count Aimo's grave illness had greatly retarded his progress, the messenger came upon him after only three days' hard riding.

Without a moment's hesitation, the count wheeled his steed about and commanded his men to travel with all possible haste back to the castle. He himself rode as fast as he could, but it was several days before he reached home. The brave Savoyards had so greatly reduced

16 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

the ranks of their Chieri assailants, however, that when the latter beheld a fresh detachment advancing to attack them from the rear, they fled precipitately.

You can readily imagine the relief and satisfaction of Count Aimo, whose anxiety upon his homeward journey had been so great; and the joy and pride of the inmates of the castle, also, for they had vanquished a foe that outnumbered them many times over.

And when the good count heard how bravely Amédée had acquitted himself, and how naturally he had stepped into the place of leader, when the treachery of Conrad was discovered, it is small wonder that the tears of exultation stood in his eyes, for he knew his son was worthy of his illustrious lineage.

“Thou hast learned a noble lesson, my Amédée,” he said. “Now I need worry for thee no longer. He who has a brave heart is prepared for life’s struggles.”

And Father Raffaello answered for the child, and his words were words of wisdom:

“Our little Amadeus has found that a brave

The Warrior of the Green Twig 17

heart is born in the time of need, and the hour of danger is the hour of courage.”

As for Conrad of Montferrat, though the lovely Clementine pleaded for leniency toward him, the chronicles show that he was imprisoned in the deep dungeon for many months, and was then sent home, disgraced and repentant.

It is a sad fact that Count Aimo died in the early winter, for his fast-failing strength had prevented his attempting again the pilgrimage to Rome. So Amédée became nominal ruler at the tender age of nine years, with the good old priest as his adviser and guide.

And when he was grown, and proclaimed Amadeus the Sixth of Savoy, he led his valiant followers through many glorious battles, and conquered lands and peoples far and near. Naturally enough, the first of his conquests was that of Chieri, in the year 1347; and soon after, he subdued Savigliano. He also became ruler of Gex and Faussigny, and later led a crusade against the Turks and delivered Gallipoli from their cruel yoke. So you see, he was

18 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

really a very great hero—in fact, the greatest in the history of Savoy.

He was called “Amadeus the Green Knight,” for green was his favorite color at tournaments, and was chosen by him in memory of the taunts of his cousins when he was a child, for he never forgot that he had been nicknamed the Warrior of the Green Twig. In like manner, he chose for his motto, to be embroidered on his standards, the words of Father Raffaello, which have been passed down through the centuries and become a popular proverb to this very day:

The hour of danger is the hour of courage.

THE PRINCESS AND THE WORM

THE PRINCESS AND THE WORM

SO many fantastic things have been said and written about Lei-tsu, that one might really suppose she was never a human being at all, but rather one of that group of strange pagan gods and goddesses held in reverence by the Chinese. The great antiquity of her history (for she was born about 2690 B. C.) has given ample occasion for historians, of every generation since, to add to the list of her accomplishments and achievements, until she has become, in their accounts, a superhuman being, who never tasted life's mingled pleasures and sorrows.

But some very ancient Chinese records convince me that Lei-tsu was just as human as you and I, and had so sensitive a nature that she felt joy and pain very keenly indeed. Now, there is no reason why this should detract from the esteem in which she is held by her countrymen, for the blessing she conferred on her people deserves their gratitude and praise for-

22 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

ever, so I can be making no mistake in telling her story as she really lived it, and leaving the fanciful legends attaching to her name for the poets of her native land to sing.

The year 2690 B.C. was very near the dawn of history. Not that human beings had only recently appeared upon the earth—for we believe they had existed for a long time before—but, rather, that they were just raising themselves above a state of barbarism and were discovering the things which have given Man his supremacy over the other creatures of the globe.

The Chinese lived very primitively, at the time of which I write. They built themselves huts from the boughs of trees, and covered their bodies with the skins of animals; but from Sui-jön, one of their first emperors, they had learned the use of fire; under Fu-hi they had become huntsmen and shepherds; and under the Emperor Shön-nung they had been taught to sow and reap crops.

The title of Lei-tsu's father was Yu-ch'öng-ki, which means in Chinese that he was the holder of the fief of Ch'öng-ki, a fertile and pleasant district in the province now known as

Kan-su. So Yu-ch'öng-ki was really a nobleman, in the primitive sense of the word, the ruler of wide lands, and he owed allegiance to none but the emperor of all China. It had long been a grief to this powerful man that he was growing old and had not been blessed with a child. When, therefore, a daughter was born to the aging nobleman and his soft-voiced little wife, it was an occasion for great rejoicing in Ch'öng-ki.

This small daughter was named Lei-tsu, and she was treated with the deference and respect befitting the princess of a noble house. And when the sun shone in the green valley which was her home, she was as happy and light-hearted a little princess as you might hope to find anywhere, at any time. For she was a true child of nature, and danced over the sweet-smelling fields and under the rich fruit-trees, dressed in her soft white lambskins, just as a bird or butterfly might flit, and just as care-free as they, too. But when the rain fell, or the white snow in winter, Lei-tsu stayed in her father's hut and wept all the day long, for there was nothing for her to do but sit in the doorway

24 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

and watch the gray clouds chase one another across the sad sky.

One day, when the wind blew sharp and one could smell the approaching frost in the air, Leï-tsu, who must have been nearly eight years old at that time, came home to the hut in the evening, carrying something very carefully in her hands.

“What does Leï-tsu bring into the house?” asked Shan-ir, who swept the earthen floor with a bundle of twigs and cooked the meals for Yu-ch’öng-ki and his family.

“It is a little bird, Shan-ir,” answered Leï-tsu. “His wing hangs helpless at his side, so that he cannot fly away from the big *süé*.” In Chinese, *süé*, you must know, means snow. “Leï-tsu will keep the bird near the pleasant fire until the sun shines warm again.”

“But Leï-tsu must not bring the bird into the house,” said Shan-ir, who was not always sweet-tempered, it seems. “There is no room for such things here.”

“Leï-tsu is the daughter of Yu-ch’öng-ki,” the little princess reminded Shan-ir; then she came and stroked the old woman’s cheek. “Be-

sides, I will build him a tiny house of his very own, so he won't be in the way."

Shan-ir relented of course; and Lei-tsu had something to take care of and love during the winter. She wove for her bird a little basket, or cage, of slender rushes, and fed him with seeds that grew wild in the woods. And because he was warm and contented, the bird sang beautifully, so that Lei-tsu forgot to be sad, and the melting of the snow in the spring seemed to come very quickly that year. Perhaps her bird was the first ever kept in captivity; the poets say so, at least; but the custom of keeping birds for pets became very popular indeed, and the lowliest home in China to-day has its wicker cage with song-birds.

During the next summer Lei-tsu was happier than ever, and made friends with the baby lambs in her father's flocks, and the rabbits that lived near the edge of the woods, and even the old tortoise who blinked at her from his muddy bed in the pond.

And one evening she came home to the hut, carrying some leaves in one hand, and dragging a long branch behind her with the other.

26 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

“What does Lei-tsu bring into the house?” asked Shan-ir, who was very cross that day.

“Only a little worm, good Shan-ir,” answered Lei-tsu. “He makes so little noise chewing the green leaves, that surely he will disturb no one.”

“But worms are horrid crawling things,” cried Shan-ir in real alarm, “and sometimes they bite people! Surely, Lei-tsu must not bring such a thing into the house!”

“Lei-tsu is the daughter of Yu-ch'öng-ki,” the child warned her. “This worm is too busy, eating the leaves, to care to bite Shan-ir. Lei-tsu has watched him eat and eat till he has grown long and fat and very handsome. Lei-tsu wishes to have him near, so that she may watch him grow into a great dragon.”

Shan-ir grumbled a good deal as she bent over the smoky fire, and perhaps the chunk of meat she was roasting was less carefully prepared that evening than usually, but the gray worm and the bunch of leaves were brought into the hut notwithstanding, and the worm throve there prodigiously. Lei-tsu found that

he refused to eat the leaves of any but the mulberry tree.

The worm did not grow into a dragon, but something quite as marvelous happened to him in time; for *he ceased being a worm*. When he had spent about two weeks in the hut, and had consumed numberless green mulberry leaves he lost his appetite, and clung quietly to a bare twig. At last he began to move his head back and forth, and two very fine silk threads circled about him many times and made him a prisoner.

Lei-tsu observed all this with wonder. But when her worm had completely disappeared from view, and not the faintest motion was to be seen in his golden home, she took in her hand the cell, or cocoon, he had built with so much pains and began unraveling it. It was not that she meant to be destructive; she only wanted to see again the small creature she had made her pet. She unwound the slim double thread, turn after turn, and because it was so beautiful and soft, she gathered it up and twined it around a piece of wood.

28 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

But when her silk thread broke off and she tore apart the hard, shell-like interior of the cocoon, her gray friend was not there; a motionless, mummified pupa was all she saw. Then Leï-tsu wept,—wept long and rather noisily, I am afraid,—and before the little princess would be comforted Shan-ir had to promise that in the future all animals brought to the hut would be permitted to remain.

Now, it happened about this time that Hién-yüan, a young prince who was the holder of a fief not far away, decided that some measure must be taken to save China from her many enemies; for the emperor was growing old and feeble, and had allowed dangerous foreign tribes to enter his domain. So Hién-yüan came to Yu-ch'öng-ki to ask for his support.

Leï-tsu sat at her father's knee, and listened to the old man's earnest discourse with the young prince. And when she heard her father promise Hién-yüan to follow him to battle, with all his able-bodied subjects, she jumped up in glee.

“May Leï-tsu come too?” she asked eagerly.

“Lei-tsu will help to capture the wicked Ch’i-yu, whom you go to fight!”

Hién-yüan smiled. He was a kind young man, despite the fact that he was an intrepid warrior.

“Lei-tsu will have to remain safely at home,” he said. “But she can help us capture the wicked Ch’i-yu, nevertheless.”

“How?” asked Lei-tsu.

“If you will think hard enough, you will find the means,” answered Hién-yüan.

Then he went away. And when Yu-ch’öng-ki had gathered about him all the strong men over whom he ruled, he led them off to fight. The war which followed lasted many years, and was most bloody and fierce.

Through those long years, Lei-tsu stayed in the green valley and was very sad. She thought and thought, day after day, how she might help the brave men who were giving their lives in defense of China, and most often she thought of Hién-yüan, and determined that she must find a way.

Such persistent effort is almost certain to

30 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

lead somewhere, and one day, quite suddenly, an idea dawned in Lei-tsu's brain. Shan-ir observed how the eyes of the princess sparkled, and what a happy little laugh escaped her lips. But before Shan-ir could voice her surprise, Lei-tsu had run out of the hut and was far across the fields.

And from that hour, Lei-tsu was the busiest little person in all China. Before nightfall she had collected hundreds of small gray worms from the mulberry trees of the valley, and had installed them, with many armfuls of green leaves, in a corner of the hut. And the next day she brought more, and still more; so that the sound of the worms' continual chewing filled the hut. Shan-ir did not dare to protest, this time, for Lei-tsu was so earnest about her work. And well she might be; for she had discovered the hidden wealth of China.

When the biting winds of autumn descended on the valley, Lei-tsu sat twisting a long rope of pure silk, and the poets say it was as thick around as her wrist. Such a thing had never been known before. And when it was finished,

she called an old subject of her father's, helped him gather the trailing rope upon his horse, and bade him carry it to the seat of war, and present it in her name to the prince Hién-yüan.

When at last Ch'i-yu, the wicked traitor, was overpowered and captured, Hién-yüan and his men secured him with this very rope. The story goes that they fastened him to the limb of a great tree as he sat on his horse, and that the horse, taking fright, suddenly started from under him, causing Ch'i-yu to be hanged with the silken rope. Whether or not that was the first time such means of punishment was employed, the ancient records fail to state, but it seems very likely.

At all events, Lei-tsu, though throughout the war she had remained in the valley which was her home, had produced the means of destroying Ch'i-yu, and it is small wonder that all China revered her from that time on.

The people honored Hién-yüan, also, for delivering them from the foreign tribes, and they made him Emperor of China, giving him the new name of Huang-ti. And as a ruler in times

32 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

of peace Huang-ti distinguished himself even more than he had in war. For he organized a system of government, and under him China became a powerful nation.

But one of the first things the Emperor Huang-ti did—and one of the most important, I think—was to make Lei-tsu his wife; and so she became Empress of China.

During the time which elapsed between the overthrow of Ch'i-yu and the marriage of the young emperor, however, Lei-tsu had not been idle. For she had constructed with her own hands, out of bars of wood, bamboo stems, and supple rushes, a crude loom, on which she wove the first silk cloth ever produced. Hers must have been a wonderful mind indeed, to conceive of laying hundreds of threads in parallel lines to form what, in modern weaving, is called the "warp" and then, by drawing forward each alternate thread, permit a shuttle carrying the cross-wise thread (now called the "weft") to pass through horizontally, over one and under the other of the warp threads, to weave a close and compact web. Through every age and in

every land honor should be paid Lei-tsu, for she performed a great service for all mankind.

Incidentally, with her toil and patience, she produced a silken gown for her own fair person and in this very gown she was wedded to the Emperor Huang-ti.

The bamboo tablets on which the most ancient of Chinese records are written tell us that Lei-tsu's happy discovery spread with great rapidity through all China, and that even during her lifetime the royal family and all the noblemen, or mandarins, were clothed in silk. They even say that some of this silk was dyed in different colors.

Because of all this, Lei-tsu came to be known as "The Lady of Si-ling," *si* meaning silk in Chinese. And she is worshiped to-day as the goddess of the silkworm, and thousands of people pray to her, each year, that the silk crop may prosper.

To keep in remembrance the simple means and the great results of the labor of Lei-tsu, a wise man of China evolved a proverb, and when the Chinese people hear it, their thoughts fly

34 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

back over three and a half thousand years, and they think of the little Empress of China, "The Lady of Si-ling." The proverb is this:

Patience and a mulberry leaf will make a silk gown.

THE CAKE-VENDER OF MOSCOW

THE CAKE-VENDER OF MOSCOW

HE stood on a busy corner of the market-place of Moscow—the Great Posad, as it was called. A wooden tray, or shelf, was slung with a leather thong about his neck, and his high-pitched, childish voice sang out lustily to draw the attention of passers-by to the little anise cakes he had for sale. His occupation was not a particularly pleasant one, for the hot rays of the sun in summer and the chilling blasts of the long winter beat mercilessly on the slender child. Nor was it a particularly profitable occupation, for the crowds hurrying by or loitering about in groups hardly noticed an object so common on the streets of Moscow as a child vender. Moreover, the poor of that city have always been especially poor, and, to them, cakes—even the coarse ones baked by little Alexander's mother—were luxuries indulged in only on feast-days, when the slowly gathered contents of the slim money-bags were squan-

38 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

dered recklessly, with no thought of the drudgery which would begin anew on the morrow.

Yet the child, Alexander Danilovich Men-shikoff, never rebelled against the unpleasantness of his daily lot, for peddling on the streets was the customary employment of the children of poor families, and must be borne, along with the hunger and cold and raggedness that the poverty-stricken have suffered in all lands and ages. Every year many of these unfortunate children succumbed from exposure to the rigorous weather; only the sturdiest survived to carry the unhappy custom from generation to generation.

Alexander's father was an illiterate, good-natured man, who helped a farmer in a near-by village with his plowing in the spring and his harvesting in the autumn, and at other seasons went from door to door in the poorer sections of Moscow as a tinker, mending, for a few copecks, the copper kettles and pitchers of the housewives. He had never known a better manner of living, and was, therefore, quite content, with no ambitions whatever. Not so

his good wife, who, before her marriage, had been a scullery-maid in the home of a wealthy merchant and thus had seen with her own eyes that some people actually live all their lives in comfort and plenty. Many a tale did she tell to her children and neighbors, and invariably ended:

“And my master and his family changed their linen every week; and in the summer they bathed in basins in the house. Surely the nobility could not have it grander, nor even the children of the czar!”

Alexander's little brothers and sisters would sit speechless and wide-eyed, whenever their mother described at length the splendors she had seen, but Alexander's dark eyes would sparkle, and once he told them:

“When I am a rich man and live in a grand mansion, I shall throw copecks to the children in the streets, so that they may buy anise cakes and honey, and carry a bit to the cathedral when they go to worship.”

All this, you must know, was long, long ago, in the year 1684. Alexander was twelve years

40 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

old at that time, and had been peddling his little cakes for four years in the market of Moscow—the Great Posad.

One day, when the first heavy snow of winter was falling, the boy wandered far from his accustomed corner, for he knew he must move about or freeze to death. Finally, he reached the stone walls of the Kremlin, and, entering, stationed himself near the entrance of the Uspensky Cathedral.

“Who will buy sweet anise cakes?” he cried. “Anise cakes made of finely ground flour and flavored with fragrant seeds! Who will buy?”

A young man came out of the church. As the cold wind struck him, he gathered his cloak more closely about him, and peered impatiently up and down the street; there was no one in sight but the little cake-vender, stamping his feet and blowing on his blue fingers, and the gentleman accosted him abruptly:

“Boy, can you tell me whether my servant is anywhere about? I left him here an hour ago, when I went in to worship, and his orders were to remain upon this very spot until I return.”

The young man’s accent was strange, and

singularly sweet, the boy thought, for the thick, guttural syllables of the Russian language fell clearer and more musically from his tongue than Alexander had ever heard them spoken before.

“I have seen no one standing here, sir,” he answered. “But then, I myself just stopped here a moment ago. I will see whether your servant is waiting around the corner.”

And he ran quickly to look. But the snow pelted sharply down and the drifts were deep, and almost every one had sought the shelter of his home, so that the streets were quite deserted. Alexander came back unsuccessful from his search.

“I have circled all about the church, sir,” he said, “but there is no one to be seen. The storm is growing more bitter every moment, and I am going home, for there is no hope of selling anise cakes to-day.”

“I cannot make my way without my servant,” said the gentleman; “I must hold my wrap before my face, for the wind stings like a whip. Do you think *you* can lead me, my boy? I will pay you well if we reach my home in safety.”

42 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

“Oh, yes, sir!” cried the boy, eagerly; “and then perhaps the good sir will buy some of my sweet cakes for his supper.”

So Alexander, holding the leather cover of his tray firmly together with one hand, to protect his precious cakes from the weather, and grasping a fold of the stranger’s cloak with the other hand, led the gentleman through the driving snow-storm to the west end of the boulevard of Prechistenka, as he had been directed. They halted before a large frame house (at that time nearly all houses in Russia were built of wood), set well back from the street in a spacious inclosure. When the door was opened, the young man drew the child with him into the great hall.

“You must warm yourself before you venture farther,” he said; “and besides, I promised you should have some money.” He drew a whole handful of copecks from his purse and dropped them into the pocket of the child’s sheepskin coat.

Alexander’s big brown eyes gleamed. He had never before taken home so many coins for a day’s toil, and he knew how his mother and



Alexander led him through the snow-storm.

father would gloat over this money. But his honest little heart prompted him, and, drawing aside the leather cover of his tray, he took his cakes, one after the other, and laid them on the table. Then, shyly looking about him at the great, handsome hall, he edged his way toward the door.

“Not so fast, my boy,” said the young man, stopping him. “You are an honest little fellow, and one who thinks and acts quickly. Honesty and alertness are qualities met with none too often in this country, and I, who come from far, value them highly. If you would care to enter my service, instead of peddling your little cakes on the streets, you shall be my page in place of the faithless rascal who left me to make my way home unattended this afternoon.”

Alexander almost jumped with surprise and delight, for to him, a common little street urchin, this was a most startling offer.

“Oh, I will come! I will come so gladly!” he cried. “If my father will only let me, I will come into your service, sir!”

“Then bring your father to me to-morrow morning, and I will make the arrangements

44 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

with him. My name is Monsieur Lefort. What is your name?"

"I am Alexander Danilovich Menshikoff, your servant," and with a solemn little bow, the boy slipped out of the great door into the wild storm, and his heart leaped and danced with joy as he picked his way through the drifts to his humble home, the copecks jingling in his pocket as he went.

This is how it came about that the little vender of anise cakes unfastened the tray from his shoulders for the last time, and entered a new and unusual environment.

Monsieur Lefort was a Swiss by birth, educated in the academy in Lausanne. His sharp wits and well-trained mind, and his eager desire to see the world, had led him through many lands, and had brought him at length to Moscow, at that time the capital of all the Russias. Here he later won the friendship of Peter, the young prince who was to become so important and powerful a ruler. Peter, while still a child, recognized that all the other countries of Europe had a more advanced civilization than Russia, and better organized governments, and

he gathered about him the ambitious and progressive ones of his countrymen, and many foreigners. Among the latter Lefort was the chief, and he contributed much to the child-prince's education.

The new little page who had come into his household interested Monsieur Lefort from the start. For a child of twelve he was very manly and independent, quick to think, and loyal to his master ; and he had an amusing, picturesque way of saying things that others would have expressed in a most commonplace manner. He accompanied Monsieur Lefort everywhere, and that gentleman took pains in the long, dull winter months to teach him the rudiments of learning, and the soft, musical inflections of the French language.

But there was a shady side to Alexander's life also, and this shady side was provided by Lefort's other servants. Led by the head serving-man, named Yuri, they took advantage of the child's tender years and made the hours he spent in their company most miserable. It was not long before they found out that Alexander had been a common peddler, and that his par-

46 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

ents were very humble indeed, and they taunted and abused him, and sometimes struck him with their hard fists till tears of pain stood in his eyes. Every kindness and evidence of interest that their master showed his little page added to their resentment and jealousy, and Alexander suffered more and more at their hands. But the child never breathed a word of all this to Monsieur Lefort.

But one day that gentleman happened to come into the great hall and discover his page crouching before the formidable figure of Yuri, who, with great relish, was administering blows and uttering a torrent of bitter words.

“You dirty little imp!” Yuri was saying. “To stumble and scatter your bundle of wood on the stairs, as though your shoulders, which could carry your peddler’s shelf well enough, would break beneath this load! If the master knew that your father is a tinker, he would kick you out of the house, instead of teaching you book-learning, which you will always be too stupid and common to use!”

Lefort took one step further into the room, and Yuri turned and saw him. The man

turned red. He could see that his master was displeased, but he tried to extricate himself from this embarrassing situation, and with the greatest possible credit to himself.

“I am teaching your new servant his duties in the household,” he stammered; “he has had no training whatever, for all he knows is how to sell cakes to camel-drivers upon the streets.”

“To fling *you* out of my house would be a treatment too gentle and easily forgotten,” said the master; “you shall go untouched, but I will see to it that you find no employment in the homes of any of the adherents of Prince Peter.”

Then he raised the child from the floor and took him into his own chamber.

“How long has that wretch been abusing you?” he asked.

“Ever since I came to you, sir,” answered Alexander.

“Then why have you told me nothing of it?”

“Because what Yuri has said of me is true. I *have* been a common street boy, and my father is only a tinker. I have not deceived you about it; you knew it all the while, and you have been so wonderfully good to me, sir. But I could n’t

48 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

stop Yuri from talking about it: I could n't sew buttons on his mouth."

It was a quaint expression and Monsieur Lefort smiled involuntarily.

"Ah, we all have our enemies!" he said. "And that is the worst thing about them: we cannot sew buttons on their mouths."

But from the time of Yuri's dismissal, none of the servants dared touch the little page of whom the master was so very fond.

A few years after this, Prince Peter, who occasionally visited his friend Lefort, was attracted by the intelligence and alertness of the latter's page, and, from that time on, whenever he met the Swiss gentleman, he demanded at once to see Alexander. There is no doubt that young Peter, who was growing up in a gloomy palace, surrounded by intriguing ministers and thwarted by an elder stepsister who aspired to steal all his power from him, was never so happy as when in the company of the kindly Lefort, who recognized the unusual mental strength and courage of the prince. And it is small wonder that, denied the company of young people of his own years, he felt drawn

to his friend's page, for he and Alexander were nearly the same age. Peter was simple and democratic to a degree most rare in those times and in that land, and this fact helped win for him in later ages the surname "the Great." His sympathy for young Menshikoff led to his making the boy his own page and sharing with him his ambitions and progressive plans.

When Peter actually ascended the throne, in the year 1696, Alexander, the former cake-vender, could be called his serving-man no longer, but rather his supporter and coöperator. And for many years thereafter Menshikoff's life was an ever-growing triumph. He accompanied the czar to battle, and proved himself an able warrior. He traveled with Peter to Holland and England and Vienna, and brought back learning and culture such as Russia had never known before. For his gallantry in battle he was made a general, at the age of thirty-two, and he was later created a prince of the Holy Roman Empire, upon the czar's request. Naturally, he was very rich, for Peter heaped favor after favor on him. He lived in a grand mansion, and, I am glad to say, he ful-

50 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

filled the promise of his childhood, giving freely to the poor, especially to the children of his old neighborhood.

You can see what a very important man Menshikoff was. His influence over the czar was a good one, and there is every reason to believe that he restrained that monarch from many harsh acts; for Peter was very cruel, and accomplished his radical reforms by force.

But now comes the unhappy end of the story. Every great man has his enemies, and Menshikoff, who had risen so high and from so low a level, was envied and hated by a score of men who always considered themselves his superiors because of their noble lineage. When Peter died, they lost no time in showing this man, who had been a power behind the throne, that his hour of glory was over. They began to repeat openly the bitter slanders that their jealousy invented. They accused him of many misdeeds of which he was innocent, and soon spread a rumor that he had stolen from the emperor's treasury the wealth which Peter had really bestowed upon his favorite.

For a while Alexander held these unscrupu-

lous men at bay, for he succeeded in placing Peter's widow, Catherine, upon the throne, and held the reins of empire himself. But when, after two years, Catherine also died, his enemies soon stripped him of his exalted position and even of his wealth. He suffered one humiliation after another, and at last was banished to Siberia, together with his wife and three children.

In years, Menshikoff was still in the prime of life, but his spirit was broken, and his stalwart body wasted with it. The journey into the wilds of Siberia was at that time fraught with far greater dangers than now, and Menshikoff's wife and one daughter succumbed on the way. Bowed with grief and robbed of his dignity, the favorite of Peter the Great reached his destination, but could endure no longer, and died in the year 1729.

His friend Lefort, who was an old, old man by this time, but who still possessed some influence at court, made every effort to restore the respect and honor the memory of Menshikoff deserved, and at length succeeded in securing the release of the exile's two remaining chil-

52 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

dren, who returned to Moscow and, later, recovered a part of their father's riches.

Lefort protected and loved these children, and often repeated to them the simple phrase used by his little page Alexander, a great many years before. So exactly did that phrase express the cause of Menshikoff's downfall, that Lefort had it engraved beneath a portrait of the one-time cake-vender, and so it has been preserved to the present time.

If you are ever as lucky as I was, and see this old picture of Alexander Danilovich Menshikoff, you will find beneath it these words—which became a proverb in the Russian language:

You cannot sew buttons on your neighbor's mouth.

CORNELIA OF THE SEVEN HILLS

CORNELIA OF THE SEVEN HILLS

THE city of Rome was decked as it had never been decked before; banners waved from its buildings and garlands hung on the walls, and fragrant rose-petals lay strewn along the triumphal path. Old and young,—man, woman, and child,—dressed in their gayest, brightest robes, had been up since break of day, and had sought every point of vantage from which they might witness the most joyous sight of their lives, and join in the ecstasy of the occasion. Even the sun lent his most brilliant splendor, and the breeze from the north lifted the banners, so that they fluttered out against the blue sky.

The City-on-Seven-Hills, the city of Rome, was very young in those days, and the gems of architecture which were later to adorn her had not yet been built; nor were the effects of extravagance and wickedness, which ultimately ruined her, anywhere to be seen, for the year of

56 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

which I write was 202 before the birth of our Lord, and the scene I am describing was the victorious return of Publius Cornelius Scipio after the battle of Zama and the conquest of Carthage. That battle and that conquest marked the end of the second Punic war, which had lasted for sixteen years, and which had cost untold moneys and thousands of brave Roman soldiers. It is small wonder that the entire population of the city, patrician and plebeian alike, welcomed the returning victors with transports of enthusiasm and joy.

In the portico of a handsome new mansion (one of the very first to be built in Rome of creamy-white travertin stone, and in the Greek style) a beautiful woman with a slim boy of ten at her side, and a fairy-like, golden haired girl of seven or eight leaning against her knee, eagerly watched the triumphal procession. The children were both a-flutter with excitement; and they marveled to see a tear upon their mother's cheek, and hear a little catch in her voice as she watched the mighty hero, great Scipio, pass slowly on his splendid white horse

at the head of the procession, and pause to peer expectantly up between the white pillars of the portico to where they sat. Their mother waved her slim hand, and the people in the street shouted, and the procession moved along.

“Why dost thou tremble, sweet mother?” queried the boy. “Thou art grown quite pale!”

So imperfectly can the child-heart grasp the emotions of its elders! For the man whom all Rome was honoring that day, the proud warrior on the white horse, was their mother’s husband and their father, though to them he was a stranger, having been away at the wars so long. Their mother, the lovely Æmilia, clasped them both to her heart then and kissed them many times.

“Thy father comes back safe from the fearful battles,” she whispered. “May he never leave us again to go to war!”

And then she dried her eyes and leaned forward to smile and bow her head to the gallant captains and ranks of soldiers who had fought in far-away Africa; for Æmilia was a matron honored by all Rome. The children left her

58 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

side, and went to the balustrade, and tossed flowers down on the passing troops, and cheered them with their small, gay voices.

After the soldiers came the treasures and booty captured from Carthage: the caskets of gold talents, the armor and swords and lances, the hundreds of beautiful horses, and, most wonderful of all, the trained war-elephants, such as the people of Rome had never seen before.

There followed in the procession the prisoners of war and the slaves that were to be sold into bondage. That was a sight such as we to-day—thank God!—shall never see, but in old Rome the buying and selling of human beings was a custom which no one questioned, and which survived for hundreds of years. At the head of these abject, defeated ones, walked Syphax, who had been a mighty king, and who now passed with his head bowed, and his hands and ankles shackled with heavy chains. A few hundred prisoners clanked after him, and then came the slaves—black people from Libya. Most of these were tall and strong, scantily

dressed, their dark skins greased so that they glistened like bronze in the sun. At the end of the line, dragging along behind the others, trudged a negro woman leading a child by the hand. The child's rather large head was set deep in her shoulders, and her poor little back was twisted into a pitiful hump. Some of the people in the street jeered:

“If thou wert a boy, thou couldst learn to juggle, and perform in the market-place!”

The slave-mother's eyes blazed at the taunts, and she lifted the child in her arms and hastened to catch up with the procession. Tears rolled down the little one's cheeks, and the people in the street laughed to see its grief. Just then the child lifted her eyes, and the sob that was rising in her breast stopped half-way, and she stared with all her might. What she saw was the golden hair and lovely face of a little girl of about her own age, leaning over the balustrade of a beautiful white portico. And this fairy-like child—who alone, perhaps, in all that crowd, felt sympathy for the little slave—put her hand into her flower-basket, then, find-

60 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

ing it quite empty, took the pansy wreath from her head, kissed the rich petals, and dropped it over the balustrade.

The slave-child clasped her mother's neck and besought her to pick up the flowers from the ground. Feigning to stumble, the woman fell to her knee. The Roman soldier guarding the lines struck at her with his leather thong, and she scrambled to her feet; but in the hand of the child on her arm was pressed a wreath of purple and yellow flowers, warm with the kiss of Cornelia, the patrician fairy-child with the golden hair.

The procession of triumph had passed from sight, and still Cornelia leaned against a pillar of the portico, and tears stood in her eyes.

“Poor little slave-child!” she whispered.
“Poor little slave-child!”

Publius Cornelius Scipio came home to his family in the late afternoon, after the ceremonies in the Forum, where he had been given the title of “Africanus” in recognition of his victory over Carthage, Rome's most formidable enemy. Æmilia and her two children welcomed him as befitted a hero.

“Of the celebration and triumph Rome has given me,” Scipio said, “this is the most joyous moment, the very climax of the whole!”

He embraced his lovely wife and the son whom he had last seen as an infant, and the daughter whom he had never seen before. He was a generous man, and he had brought many rich gifts for Æmilia.

“The children shall choose their own gifts,” he said. “I am curious to know what my son and daughter desire to possess.”

“I would, above all things,” said Publius the son, “that I may accompany you, my father, to the next Roman war.”

“The fulfilment of thy wish is promised thee,” answered the great Scipio. “And what does my small Cornelia crave?”

“Your affection, Father,” she ventured, for knowing him for so short a time, how could she realize that she need not beg for this?

“Thou art already in possession of my love,” said Scipio, smiling, and stroking her soft hair. “Name a gift more tangible.”

Cornelia hesitated.

“I should like a slave of my very own,” she

62 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

said shyly; “a particular slave, Father—the little hunchbacked girl that walked at the end of the triumph to-day.”

“And for what reason can you want such a slave, if she is deformed, as you say? Surely, she can never labor as a stronger slave might.”

“It is not for labor that I want her,” answered Cornelia. “It is that I may play with her all the games I now play alone; and then, she might sit beside me when I learn from the good Ennius. And I would teach her what I already know, for that would be of all pastimes the most delightful!”

Truly, the desire to learn and the desire to teach are closely related, and many a child of to-day has conned her lessons over and over to her dolls, in much the same way that Cornelia, in a time long past, explained her sums and repeated her exercises to the small black slave-child who became her companion!

Though Scipio Africanus thought his daughter's request very odd indeed, a slave more or less was a trifling matter to a rich man in those days, and so he promised to buy the little hunchback. Æmilia, who understood her small

daughter and who had not been blind to Cornelia's emotion that morning, in the portico, lifted her younger child on her lap.

"I could use another handmaid, myself, now that thou art home, my Scipio," she said; "a handmaid that might put her heart into her work, as well as her strength—such a one as the mother of this same slave child appeared to be."

"By all means, procure them both, then," responded her husband.

Cornelia looked up into her mother's face, and her eyes sparkled. She had not dared to ask so much, herself, but Æmilia's kind heart had divined the child's loving wish.

This is how it came about that a weak and ill-formed slave girl and her grateful mother entered the household of Scipio Africanus, and became the most devoted slaves in that family's retinue.

At first, Raffa, the slave-girl, rolled her large eyes and giggled behind her black hand when her small mistress attempted to teach her the Latin alphabet and the intricacies of four-times-two. But so earnest was the youthful teacher, and the pupil so determined to please,

64 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

that Raffa soon acquired a creditable fund of learning for her age.

Scipio was one of the first Romans to appreciate and admire Greek learning and culture, and to his house he welcomed poets and philosophers, that he might enjoy their wisdom and their power of beautiful expression. And since the Romans did not forbid their wives and daughters, as the Greeks had done, to develop their minds and share equally with men in the riches of learning, Cornelia gained an exceptional education from some of the greatest scholars of the age. And this is of some importance to us, even to-day; for, when she was grown, she volunteered as scribe, or clerk, to Ennius, one of the most inspired of early Roman poets. Ennius was a valued friend of Scipio's and the most beloved of Cornelia's teachers, and when his sight failed him, it was Cornelia who took down the words that fell from his lips. And thus it was that the fragments of his writings remaining to-day, were penned by the hand of Scipio's daughter.

Cornelia soon had another pupil to teach, for a second daughter was born to Scipio and his

wife, whom Æmilia did not live to rear. The care of this little sister, who was ten years her junior, was Cornelia's joy and most tenderly discharged duty. Her love of children and her genius for instructing and guiding them became her most striking characteristics, and, in the end, won for her lasting fame.

To the modest little home of Ennius, Cornelia frequently went, accompanied either by Raffa or some other maid-servant, to read some newly translated Greek verse, or to take baskets of fruits and flasks of wine. And it was there that she met, one day, a handsome Roman captain, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus. Together they sat listening while the worthy scholar declaimed a stirring Greek epic which had recently found its way to Rome. Despite his interest in the beautifully told narrative, Tiberius could not keep his eyes from wandering to the lovely face of the patrician maiden sitting beside Ennius and to the fair hair with its ornament of pansies—for pansies were Cornelia's favorite flower. And though Cornelia gazed steadfastly into the face of her dear teacher, the color came and went in her

66 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

cheeks, for she was aware of the captain's glance even though she did not see it.

Strangely enough, Tiberius Gracchus and Cornelia chanced to visit the poet Ennius at the same hour many times after that. This is all the more extraordinary when we consider the Roman customs of those days. For then the father of an aristocratic maiden arranged the marriage of his daughter to a desirable youth of equal station, sometimes without a friendship or even an acquaintance existing between the young people. And this marriage was usually arranged when the maiden was sixteen or seventeen years of age. So, the chance of love between girl and man was slight indeed, in ancient Rome!

Ennius, however, had been born among the far-off Calabrian mountains, and had spent his youth amid pastoral scenes, where a life more free and genial was possible. And it is to his belief in the beauty of love that we owe this most charming romance of early Roman times.

Cornelia and Tiberius loved each other; and the magnitude of the obstacle that stood in their way, only increased their devotion. Scipio and

Tiberius were political enemies; for the Africanus was a leader of the aristocracy, and the Gracchus was a leader of the people. It would have been quite useless for the young man to ask Scipio for the hand of his daughter; both he and Cornelia knew that only too well. So they loved in secret for many years; no one—except old Ennius, and Raffa, who sometimes carried oral messages between the two—knew how tender was their feeling for each other.

Cornelia, however, had begged her father not to give her in marriage to any man, since her duty was so clearly to him and to her young sister, and Scipio, unaware of the motive that prompted her, agreed gladly, for she was very dear and very necessary to him and he could not bear the thought of losing her. And so, many years passed, and Scipio became a fretful old man. Those were years of heartache for Cornelia. Her duties in her father's house were many; and that was well, for leisure to brood upon her love for Tiberius and her fears for him when he was away at war, might have crushed her spirit.

It was then that Scipio's enemies, perceiving

68 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

that he was growing weak, plotted to undermine the great esteem in which he was still held in Rome. They invented a charge against him of misuse of public funds, and Scipio was too proud and too bitter over their accusations to show the official records that would have proved his innocence. He uttered no word in his own defense, and so permitted his name to be besmirched. The Romans were people of action, and it seemed as though a miserable fate awaited the man who had so long been their favorite.

That was in the year 187 B. C., and it happened that, in the annual elections of that year, Tiberius Gracchus was chosen tribune, or leader of the people. Cornelia, suffering with her father under the unjust accusations of his enemies, despatched Raffa to the home of the new tribune, to beseech him to use his influence to save her father. Raffa must have pleaded her master's cause well (or else Tiberius heeded the promptings of his own heart) for, despite differences in politics, he succeeded with his oratory in lessening the harshness of public opinion; and Scipio was permitted to remove to

Liternium, where he bought a farm and lived in peace.

Cornelia was always loyal to her father, and comforted him in his last years, sharing his joy in nature and tending with him the garden in which he took such pleasure. And as she was faithful to her father, so Tiberius was faithful to his love, and sent her each spring a nosegay of lovely pansies to assure her of his enduring devotion. Perhaps it was the message they carried that attached to these soft, velvety flowers a significance which survives even yet in the name of "heart's ease," as we sometimes call them.

In 183 B. C., Scipio died, and was laid at rest near his farm in Liternium. It was through the efforts of the blind Ennius that Cornelia's kinsfolk arranged her marriage to Tiberius. So, after years of patient waiting, the beautiful love of these two was crowned with happiness.

Cornelia, as you have doubtless heard, became the most beloved and admired of Roman matrons, and one of the greatest mothers of history. Of her children, only three survived early childhood. To them and to her husband

70 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

she devoted all her time. Unfortunately, Tiberius Gracchus, who won great victories in Spain, and held high office at home, died before his children were grown. Many offers of marriage were made to his lovely widow, who refused them all. So far had her fame spread, that the King of Egypt sent ambassadors to ask her to become his queen.

“There can be no higher title than the one I bear,” Cornelia answered them; “for I have been the wife of Tiberius Gracchus, and after him no man can win my heart.”

From that time on, she dedicated her life to her children, educating them herself, and ever urging them on to new endeavor. The story which we always connect with her name, and which you must have heard many times, is so beautiful that it will surely stand being repeated once more. A haughty Roman matron had been displaying her jewels to Cornelia and boasting about their worth. Cornelia called her children to her:

“These are my jewels,” she said, “and their worth is beyond price!”

As Cornelia, in her own life, had never neg-

lected the performance of her duties, it was the will to *do* that she encouraged most in her sons.

“Toil does not come to help the idle,” she told them many times, and surely both Tiberius and Caius, her two sons, heeded well her counsel, for they became two of Rome’s most eminent tribunes!

When Cornelia died, the people of Rome raised a monument by public subscription, on which was carved: CORNELIA, THE MOTHER OF THE GRACCHI.

And that was not the only honor paid her. For, when, in the year 52 B. C., the senate house, or Curia, had to be rebuilt, the original structure having burned to the ground—the new edifice was called the Curia Cornelia. And in the stone of the base these words were engraved:

Toil does not come to help the idle.

THE STORY OF ITUDU

THE STORY OF ITUDU

LITTLE ITUDU lived in the dim and misty past to which we can give no definite date, and the story of his life comes down to us only through legend—the dreamy legend of Japan—the country in which he lived.

His was not a happy, care-free childhood, even according to Japanese standards, for Itudu could not see. He was not blind, but his eye-muscles had drawn his eyes together until he was able only to distinguish day from night, and to see a small portion of the bridge of his nose, and so he had very little advantage over a totally blind person. Unfit to join other children in the games and tumble-about that his little heart craved, and intimidated by their jeers and abuse, Itudu led a lonely life; and, as is generally the case with children who cannot play like others, and who are alone a great deal, Itudu became very thoughtful, and wondered much about the big world he could not see.

76 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

In olden times it was the custom for a son to follow the trade of his father, and in some lands this custom led to the separation of people into many groups, or castes, some of which were looked down upon by others. The power of caste, or class, is beginning to wane, even in the most remote and unprogressive nations, but it has been a very real and merciless force in the past, and the cause of much injustice and unhappiness. And it was another great handicap in the life of little Itudu.

His parents, who were hard-working, good people, tried by the only means in their power to get help for Itudu. When he was very small, they carried him to the priest in their village, but as they had so few coins to offer the wise man, he gave them very little of his time and attention. He directed the mother and father to repeat special prayers to their ancestors—prayers beseeching them to use their influence with the evil spirits, that the child's eyesight might be released. Or, he said, if the boy could be taken to the great temple of Kiyomidzu-Dera, in the city of Kyoto, and placed

before the holy shrine, the miraculous power of the great god Kwan-on might straighten his eyes and let him behold the glory of the god's mighty image.

These were the only words of hope the priest gave them, and the poor people found scant comfort in his advice, for Itudu's father belonged to the caste of carriers, the lowliest class of laboring men, who were forbidden to enter the innermost shrine of the holy place, and could worship only outside its walls.

When Itudu reached the age of twelve years he was a tall, sturdy lad, who longed to add to the pitifully small family income by carrying burdens on his back along the great highway, as his father was doing. The few sen, or Japanese cents, that Itudu's father earned by his arduous labor were scarcely enough to keep starvation from the door, and the boy realized that his daily ration could not keep pace with his growing appetite. So one day he begged his father to take him along and test his strength.

"You will call to me, my father, or whistle, and I will follow you upon the road, bearing a

78 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

sack of rice on my shoulder, just as you do, and so we may be able to bring home the earnings of two men instead of one.”

The father shook his head sadly.

“I fear it can’t be done, Itudu,” he said, but when he saw the pained look on the boy’s face, he quickly added, “But there can be no harm in trying.”

So the next day Itudu followed his father along the dusty road, carrying a heavy sack of rice to the big city of Kyoto, but they lagged behind the other carriers, for the father had to lead the sightless boy over the narrow foot-bridges, and on the rocky mountain slopes Itudu groped his way slowly and stumbled often. A lump would rise in his throat when this happened, but he would hurry on, and try to make up in the flat open country the time he had lost on the difficult mountain paths.

But it was quite in vain. Tired and sad, father and son presented themselves late in the evening, the last ones in the long line, to be paid their wages for the day, and to hear the words they knew the foreman would utter:

“The boy need not come to the rice-beating

platform to-morrow; we have no work for him.”

That night was a sorrowful one for Itudu; and had he been able to see the tears of his mother and father, his heart would have broken. Late into the night he lay on his straw mat without closing his pitiful squinted eyes, and the words of his father rang in his ears over and over again:

“There is nothing left for you to do, my son, but to be a beggar, sitting at the gateway of the temple. The rich men, passing in to worship, will have pity on you and will drop coins into your hand.”

Itudu writhed at the thought. He did not want to be a beggar and crouch beside the temple gate. He was young and strong, and his heart wanted to be gay.

And then he remembered what the priest had said, years before:

“If the boy could stand before the holy shrine in the great temple . . .”

Itudu sat up, and his heart beat fast. That very day, after he and his father had delivered their sacks of rice, in Kioto, his father had led

80 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

him to the temple, and had laid the boy's hand on the wall that surrounded the inner shrine.

Slipping into his clothes, Itudu crept out of the house into the night. He would try to find his way alone; he would return to the temple, and, despite the restrictions against his caste, he would seek some means of gaining entrance, so that he might stand before the mighty image of the god Kwan-on. His plan was a daring one, for the journey was long and the boy could not see. But though he lacked sight, Itudu's other senses were very keen, as is generally the case with the blind, and it was with remarkable assurance that he traversed again the path he had trod a few hours before, when he followed in his father's footsteps.

Up the rocky mountain slopes climbed the child Itudu, and down again into the valley. The darkness of the night did not frighten him, and the shadows of the trees and jagged crags along the road had no terrors for him, for he saw them not. On and on he hurried, till at last he reached the open plain.

And then an awe-inspiring thing happened.

With a low, deep rumbling like majestic thunder, the earth under his feet shook in a mighty convulsion. Itudu found himself lying on his face, clutching the ground, and listening to the wild beating of his heart. He knew almost at once what had happened, as this was not the first earthquake he had experienced. Living in a land where such upheavals are not infrequent, Itudu was not frightened for long, and soon he picked himself up and continued on his way, until at length he entered the temple and stood beside the wall about the shrine of Kwan-on.

He passed his sensitive fingers up and down along the bricks as he searched for the gateway. Suddenly, very near the base of the wall, his hand struck some crumbled mortar and bits of stone, and, brushing these aside, he could pass his finger clear through to the other side. It was just a tiny crevice caused by the rocking of the ground in the earthquake, but it was the only loophole open to the carrier's child. Flinging himself on the ground, Itudu turned and twisted his neck till he brought his eye exactly even with the little hole in the wall. And then

82 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

he tried, tried so hard—to *see* into the holy place.

Just then the early morning sun, peeping over the hills in the distance, cast a shaft of light through the wooden lattice-work of the temple, and struck into flame the gold-covered image of the god Kwan-on. And this gleam of light passed before the eye of little Itudu, and he saw its splendor as it rested on the great god with eleven heads and a thousand hands. It was hardly more than a minute before the beam of sunlight moved, and left Kwan-on in the shadow of the shrine, but for that minute Itudu had *seen*, and the image of the mighty god was graven in his soul. Awed and dazed, the lad rose to his feet and peered about him. But the vision had passed, and he saw no more, for the strained muscles of his eyes had snapped back into their former position.

“The god Kwan-on is great,” he murmured; “he has let me see the glory of his image.”

Then Itudu packed loose earth and dead leaves in a mound against the wall, covering the tiny hole so that it might not be discovered by

the temple priests. And slowly he trudged back to the village where his father lived.

It was nearly noon when he arrived there, and he found it a place of mourning, for nearly every house had been demolished in the earthquake, the night before, and the people sat amid the ruins, or sought to raise some manner of shelter where their homes had stood. So often do earthquakes occur in Japan, that nearly all Japanese houses are constructed of supple bamboo and tough paper, and almost no building is erected with the idea that it will stand very long.

Itudu's mother greeted him a little sharply when he appeared.

"Where hast thou been, child?" she asked.

"I have needed thy strong arms to help me raise the fallen walls of our house, and I have called and searched for thee all the morning."

"I have been far away," said Itudu, "and I was much frightened by the great trembling of the earth. But I will help you now, my mother."

So Itudu set to work with a will, and with his

84 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

mother's assistance managed to reconstruct their modest dwelling. And, as they worked, the good woman noticed that every now and then the lad turned his face toward the sun and murmured under his breath. And the words he repeated thus to himself were:

“One can see the heavens through a needle's eye.”

That night, when the father returned from his labor, Itudu greeted him with a smile.

“I am content, now, to sit beside the temple gate and be a beggar,” he said. “But I will not stay here at the little temple in our village. I will beg at the temple of Kiyomidzu-Dera, in the big city, so that I may be near the image of the great Kwan-on, who could restore my sight to me if I might stand before him. I will come back to see you, my mother and my father, for the next feast-day.”

The parents were loath to let the boy leave the protection of his home, but his heart seemed so set upon going that at length they consented. So the next day Itudu went again with his father along the dusty road to Kioto, and was

left with a poor family there, who gave him food and lodging. And he sat at the temple gate day after day, and held out his hand for alms.

But Itudu's object was not so much to gather coins from the wealthy worshipers, as to be near enough to try his experiment again. And he was very persevering in this. Every morning, before the city was awake, he made his way to the wall of the holy shrine, and, uncovering his little loophole, lay down with his eye placed at the opening, to await the sunrise, when the golden image would gleam in the light. And he saw it again and again, and each time a little better. He did not know that he was training his vision, but that is just what he was doing, in a way not very different from the treatment used by great medical men of a later age. When he had been doing this for several weeks, Itudu found that after he had seen the image and had risen from the ground he could see, for a few minutes, the lovely blue of the sky and the beauty of the country around him. And each day his sight stayed with him for a longer

86 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

time than the day before. And he gave thanks to the great god Kwan-on, and rejoiced.

When the time arrived for him to return to his parents for the feast-day, he could see clearly with one eye, and hurried along the road, gazing at all the things his father had tried to describe to him.

Surely I need not tell you of the joy of his good mother and father! Indeed, words would fail to express it. But I can tell you that Itudu never again sat at the temple gateway to beg for charity. He carried a sack of rice on his strong back, first in the long line of carriers, and he was proud and happy. He never gained the use of his other eye, but he saw so much that people said he knew every stone upon the road.

All this happened so long ago that you might expect it would be quite forgotten. The temple of Kiyomidzu-Dera later burned down to the ground, but the image of the great god with eleven heads and a thousand hands was saved, and stands to this day in a new temple, and you can see it if you go to Kioto. The whole story

of the life of Itudu is not remembered by many people, but throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom of Japan you often hear repeated the words that Itudu once uttered:

One can see the heavens through a needle's eye.

THE VOICE OF PIETRO IN THE
CROWD

THE VOICE OF PIETRO IN THE CROWD

THE people who passed regularly through the narrow, roughly paved street, and even some of those whose business carried them there less frequently, raised their heads as they walked by the old stone house, and peered expectantly up at a particular window. And if the frame was empty, they glanced higher yet at the tiny garden on the roof, where green shrubs grew in wooden tubs and an awning kept out the hot sun. And they were rarely disappointed in finding, in one of these two places, the object of their interest. If you had lived in the beginning of the fourteenth century, in the city of Genoa, in Italy, you might have wondered, as they did, why the lonely child with the large brown eyes was kept locked up in the home of his grandfather.

Simone himself wondered many times; but when he questioned his grandfather, a frown appeared on the old man's face.

92 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

“It is because I love you, my little one,” his grandfather told him, “that I would keep you safe, as long as I may, from the cruel world outside.”

Simone dared not question further ; and so he played, day after day, month after month, in the cold, handsome rooms, or up in his tiny garden on the housetop, and gazed wistfully down at the people in the narrow street, and listened to their noisy, happy voices. It was a hilly, winding street, and at the steepest parts a few steps were built of red brick. The hawkers would stop a moment to rest their heavy loads and wipe the perspiration from their swarthy faces ; the old people paused and tried to straighten their bent and weary backs ; only the children ran quickly up the incline, their cheeks glowing with the exertion, their laughter floating up on every breeze. They all glanced up at the little grandson of Guglielmo Boccanegra ; and if the old gentleman was standing beside the child, they doffed their caps or made respectful courtesies, for he had been the *capitano* of the city, and though his enemies had wrested his power from him, the people

The Voice of Pietro in the Crowd 93

honored him still. Little Simone always waved his hand to the passers-by and smiled; and his smile was so winning, that those who saw it could never quite forget it.

Simone Boccanegra was an orphan. He could not remember clearly what had happened to his parents, but a shudder would pass over him whenever one of the servants mentioned the scourge. In those early days the men of science were quite helpless to halt the devastating epidemics that swept through the cities. Little Simone had been only two years old when the plague broke through the doors of nearly every house in the proud city of Genoa; and his mother and father had both been carried off to rest forever in the quiet cemetery at the foot of the hill.

And that was the time he had come to live in the big old house with his grandfather, who loved him so tenderly, and whom he loved with all his heart. He loved Rosa, his patient old nurse, also, and Federico, who had served his grandfather for thirty years. And of course he loved Karo, the big, faithful dog, which kept close at his side all day, and slept at the foot of

94 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

his bed at night. He did not quite love Padre Luigi, who came each day to teach him mathematics, and read to him from the Holy Scriptures. Padre Luigi was a stern man, and the child was a little afraid of him. But the studies delighted Simone, and gave him so much to ponder and wonder about, later in the day, that he was almost fond of the austere priest because of them. He was not entirely friendless, you see; only, the great outdoors and the freedom of discovering the world for himself had been denied him.

There were other things besides the people in the street that Simone watched through the long days. From a corner of his playground on the housetop he could look out above the roofs of the houses that sloped down to the harbor, and see the glimmer of the sun on the blue water. And on the narrow neck of land that jutted out into the Mediterranean, he could see the slim, lofty structure that the workmen were hurrying to complete, and that was called the "Laterna." Some time a fire was to be lit every night at the very top of the Laterna, as a guide to mariners far out at sea, but now great bon-

fires were kindled at night on the rocks to warn away the frail craft that ventured on such long voyages so fearlessly.

On the eve of Simone's tenth birthday his grandfather summoned the child, and spoke to him long and earnestly.

"Thou art growing up to be a man, Simone, my little one," the old man said, and there was a quaver in his voice. "To-morrow it will be ten whole years since the day of thy birth. Thou art tall and strong, and hast learned eagerly of Padre Luigi. And thou hast been kept carefully from the sight of all evil. That was thy father's fervent wish. Just before he passed into the Kingdom of our Lord, he begged me to help thee become a *good man*, than which there is no greater thing."

There was something in the thickening gloom of the twilight and the solemn voice of his grandfather, that brought tears into the eyes of the child.

"The world is filled with good and evil," continued the old man, "and the evil often spoils the good; but also, the good can raise the evil. It all depends on which is the stronger. I have

96 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

tried to teach thee, with the help of Padre Luigi, what is good. Now thou shalt go out among the people and see for thyself. Thou art old enough to think, and to judge people by their acts. Choose those that are honest and loyal and unselfish, to be thy friends. In the company of good men, thou may'st grow to be one also."

Then they sat for a long time, each busy with his own thoughts, neither uttering a single word, until the darkness of night settled all around.

That was the beginning of a new life. The next morning, Simone Boccanegra, the sturdy little lad of ten, stepped out from the massive doorway of the old mansion for the first time in his remembrance. It was a thrilling moment for the child. His face was flushed, and he clung nervously to his grandfather's hand. Even Karo the dog seemed to sense the significance of that step. He came up close to his little master, and walked slowly by his side, as though he were fastened there.

At the foot of their steep, crooked street,

three ragged, dirty little urchins were playing at one of the oldest, most absorbing games in the history of mankind, the game of warfare. They were all two or three years older than Simone, and they jabbed at one another with their crude, hand-whittled wooden sabers, as seriously as men might do in real conflict. Pietro, their leader,—quite the dirtiest and most unkempt of the three,—had fashioned his weapon more cleverly than the others, and the jabs he inflicted, though unable to do any real harm, had roused the wrath of his small opponents, so that they both thrust at him furiously.

Suddenly Pietro saw Simone and his grandfather, accompanied by Karo, coming down the street; and he shouted, at the top of his voice, as seems to have been the custom of children of the streets since the very day the first street was invented:

“Here comes the Boy-at-the-Window! Here comes the grandson of Guglielmo Boccanegra!”

And as the others stopped and stared, his sharp wits traveled farther and he added:

“The grandson of a *capitano* should have a

98 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

military escort to prove his rank. My fellow-Genoese, carry your sabers at attention, and follow me!"

The three queer little figures, carrying the wooden swords point-upward at their shoulders, stepped into line, several paces behind the "Boy-at-the-Window," and followed him solemnly. And so, flanked by his grandfather and the faithful dog, and guarded in the rear by three warlike ragamuffins, Simone walked through the streets of Genoa, the proud city that even at that time had won the name of "La Superba."

There were many things of which Genoa could justly boast in those days; her splendid harbor, the greatest and busiest on the Mediterranean Sea; her enormous trade, extending in every direction, the arteries of her power; her industrious and prosperous citizens; her well-fortified citadel and powerful fleet; and chief of all, her free government, which elected its own leaders and made its own laws.

And as they walked slowly through the streets Simone's grandfather told the child a great deal of the story of the sturdy Genoese who had built this glorious city and acquired so

much power. Since the year 888, Genoa had been a free city, or republic, ruled by consuls elected from certain noble families. Of course, the republic was not limited in territory to the confines of the city itself. In that long-ago time all Italy was divided up into sections, each section ruled by a great city. And, as would inevitably happen under such conditions, each city waged war on the districts bordering its domain, in an effort to increase its size. Genoa, however, owing to her peculiar position, hemmed in from all sides by lofty impassable mountain barriers, counted only a small strip of sea-coast along the Mediterranean as her territory, and that is the reason why she built herself many ships. She had proved her prowess in places far from the home land, and won valuable colonies. These colonies were spread in every direction. There were the Balearic Islands, which Genoa had wrested from Spain in 1146; there were Smyrna and Tenedos and Pera; and there was Caffa, in the Black Sea. Guglielmo Boccanegra loved to speak of the conquests of his beloved city, and the child exulted in his story.

100 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

At length they came to the massive stone wall that surrounded the city, and paused beside the *Porta degli Archi*.

“Ah, my little one, stand for a moment and admire the great wall,” said the old man, pointing to its splendid height and thickness. “The people of Genoa are very proud of this wall, and they have reason to be. A long time ago, in the year 1154, the Teuton Barbarossa, with a horde of wild men, came down upon us from the north. He did not make war upon us; perhaps he dared not meet our valiant soldiers with his untrained men. But he made certain demands; and we, knowing that we were not so strong as he supposed, submitted weakly. When he returned to his cold country, we knew he would come back, for we did not trust him; and so we hastened to prepare ourselves for his return. For eight days men and women—and even little children, I have been told—toiled night and day at the raising of a wall around their city. And at the end of that time, so much had been built that one would have supposed it to be the labor of a year.”

The Voice of Pietro in the Crowd 101

“And did Barbarossa and his wild men really return?” asked the child anxiously.

“Yes, but he never challenged Genoa to battle.”

Little Simone looked admiringly up at the work of his countrymen, and passed his hand gently over the rough stones. Then the old man clasped the child's hand firmly again, and they walked on together, out into the open country. They passed through fields and peaceful pasture-lands, and skirted delicately green olive groves on the hill slopes. And sometimes they stopped to speak with a peasant working on his land, or were gravely saluted by an old veteran who had served gallantly with Guglielmo Boccanegra's forces long before.

By the time they returned to the city they were both tired, and anxious to reach their home. Their curious military escort had followed them the whole way; Simone had glanced over his shoulder at them many times, and smiled, but his grandfather pretended not to know of their existence, for it was beneath the dignity of a *capitano* to take notice of these small and uninvited attendants.

Before entering the door of his home, Simone turned and called the urchins nearer. Then he placed in the dirty little palm of each a tiny coin from the purse at his belt, and thanked them gravely for their friendliness. The old man stood waiting on the threshold, and smiled to himself at the earnestness of children's make-believe. But the three little beggars threw their caps into the air with a shout, and Pietro turned a handspring in his joy.

From that day on, Simone and his grandfather went out often together, and each time they saw new wonders. Once it was the iron harbor chain from Porto Pisano, which hung in the market-place. The old man's eyes glowed as he related the story of the glorious sea battle of Meloria. The city of Pisa had been the most powerful of Genoa's rivals, and so sure were the Pisans of their strength, that they taunted the Genoese, and insulted them. Roused to fury, Genoa manned and armed eighty-eight galleys and sailed them across to the Pisan coast when they were least expected. And there was fought a most bloody and merciless battle. Almost all the nobles of Pisa were

The Voice of Pietro in the Crowd 103

killed or taken prisoner, and the power of that city was crushed and broken. As a souvenir of their conquest the Genoese carried off the Pisans' harbor chain, and cherish it even to-day.

Guglielmo Boccanegra had taken part in the great celebration with which Genoa greeted her victorious heroes, and he had been the one to suggest hanging a piece of the chain across the façade of the Palazzo del Capitano, which he had had erected in 1260, when he was Capitano of Genoa. The stone lions' heads which the Genoese had brought home as a trophy after their victory over the Venetian fortress at Pantocratore, had been built into this same façade, and they are still to be seen on the north side of the dim old building which was once the seat of government.

That was a part of the city to which the old man seldom led the child. It reminded him too poignantly of the days when he had been in power, and of the jealous nobles who had brought about his downfall. But when Simone grew to be a young man, he went there often by himself, for it was near the wharves and docks, and nothing interested him more than the ship-

104 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

ping and the strange cargoes from many lands. And so it happened that he witnessed one day in the year 1317—in the square in front of the Palazzo del Capitano—a bloody riot between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, the two political factions in the city. When Simone told his grandfather of this terrible street fight, the old man turned pale and trembled.

“Will our people never learn,” he said, “to live in peace! They have conquered their enemies, and now they must needs fight amongst themselves, brother against brother! Their devotion passes from one master to the next; it is a weak, unstable thing. Be warned, Simone, my child: the ambition to lead these people has caused the downfall of many men besides myself. Navigate thy fortunes in safer waters than the treacherous shoals of government.”

“Thou hast chosen an apt simile, Grandfather, for it is of ships and distant lands that I dream always. I would be a merchant, and carry back and forth across the seas the things that people buy.”

The Voice of Pietro in the Crowd 105

The old man pondered for a moment.

“It is a fair ambition, Simone,” he said at last. “Though our family has never engaged in trade before, it is a calling not unworthy, and one that will take you among the common people, whose intentions are kindly and good, instead of among the nobles, whose intentions are evil.”

And so it happened that in course of time Simone became a merchant, dealing in cloth and fine fabrics. His vessels called at many ports on the Mediterranean, and his transactions were known to be more honest and fair than those of other men.

Meanwhile, Genoa had been fighting, for one reason or another, almost constantly. The power of government passed from the Guelfs to the Ghibellines, and back again; and when both factions were completely exhausted, a foreigner would grasp the reins of power and hold them as long as he might. Thus, Robert of Sicily was lord of Genoa for ten years. His was an irksome yoke, and when at last, in 1330, the Genoese won back their city for them-

106 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

selves, with what seemed inspiration, they divided the power to rule between equal numbers of Guelfs and Ghibellines,—and elected besides, a leader of the people, who should guard their rights, and whom they called the *Abbate del Popolo*.

Even this happy plan worked well for only a short time; then the strife began again, and the nobles reserved the right to elect the *abbate* from among themselves. In 1339, the people rose in revolt against this injustice, and then a very dramatic thing happened. Electors chosen from the people assembled in the Palazzo del Capitano to choose a new *abbate*, while a huge crowd gathered in the open square outside. Hour after hour the voices of the electors droned on, and the crowd, looking anxiously up at the windows of the Palazzo, grew restive.

At last a young workman, his hands and clothes soiled and coarse, climbed up on the fountain in the center of the square. He raised his cap in his hand, and the people turned to him and listened.

The Voice of Pietro in the Crowd 107

“I am only a common mechanic,” he said. “Will you listen to me, people of Genoa?”

There was silence for a moment; then the multitude shouted their approval.

“Many of you know me, but some of you do not,” the young man went on. “My name is Pietro, and I am a maker of foils and sabers, which some of you are wearing at your sides to-day. I know little about the men who would rule us, and less about their method of doing so. But I do know, and so do you all, my fellow-Genoese, that these men forget our rights and needs as soon as they rise to power. Why should we stand here and wait—we, the people of La Superba—while the electors sit in the council-room, drinking and gossiping, instead of choosing a worthy leader for us. Let us choose a leader ourselves, and let us choose a good and honest man. There is such a one here, standing among us in the market-place.” He pointed into the heart of the throng. “Let us make Simone Boccanegra our *abbate!*”

Then a slow, soft murmur passed through the crowd, spreading and growing in volume

108 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

till it broke out in a mighty shout, so that the very walls of the Palazzo del Capitano shook with the tumultuous reverberation.

“Yes!” the collective voice rolled like thunder, “Simone Boccanegra shall be our *abbate!*”

The electors, deliberating drowsily over the possibilities of a half-dozen candidates, became suddenly aware of the surging shout rising from the market-place. Their faces went white, and a few ventured to peep out at the windows. They reported to those more timid ones, who remained at the long table, how Pietro, a common working-man, was clinging to the stonework of the fountain. He was waving his cap and inciting the people, they said. By mutual consent the electors scrambled in a body down the stairway, and out into the market-place. They edged and elbowed and pushed their way through the swaying mob, to the center of the square, where the fountain stood.

Pietro had slipped down from his place of vantage, by this time, and was standing at the fountain's base, his face red and moist from exertion and emotion, and his smile was one of triumph. Pietro, the foil-maker, who had once

The Voice of Pietro in the Crowd 109

been a dirty little ragamuffin parading with a wooden sword at a respectful distance behind the Boy-at-the-Window, was living the great moment of his life.

Simone, in the meantime, standing in the crowd,—taken quite unaware, surprised and confused,—was being jostled, unwillingly enough, toward the center of the square. He found himself standing between the two *capitani*, and one of them had placed the sword of the *abbate* into his hands.

“Fellow-citizens,” Simone said, and his voice shook a little, “I am indeed greatly moved. You have honored me with a confidence that brings tears to my eyes. And for that confidence I thank you earnestly. But I am a merchant, my friends; I have not been educated in politics. I beg you therefore, find some one among you more fitted to fill this office of trust.”

And he handed the sword of the *abbate* back to the *capitano* who had given it to him. The crowd commented among themselves on this turn of affairs. The murmur which arose proved they were growing impatient. Then the

110 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

voice of Pietro, a trifle hoarse from much shouting, called for silence.

“If he will not be our *abbate*, and lead the party of the people, let him be our *signore*, and lead the whole republic!”

A burst of wild applause and another mighty shout were the immediate response. The electors and the *capitani* stood aghast; there was no denying the people now. They began to press Boccanegra to accept the office of *abbate*. After all, they would rather that he should become the leader of the people than that he should be raised to the very pinnacle of power. The mutterings of the multitude were growing ominous, and Simone knew he must act at once. He stepped up on a ledge of the fountain, and silence fell in the market-place.

“There is no mistaking my duty,” he said, his voice ringing clear and true. “My fellow-Genoese, you may trust me. I will serve you to the limit of my ability. Name the office to which you would appoint me. I accept it.”

The answer was not long in coming. Their wish was that he be their sole ruler, and they conferred upon him the title of Doge.

The Voice of Pietro in the Crowd 111

Never had a crowd been more boisterous and exultant. They carried Simone upon their shoulders to his home, and the city declared a holiday, and draped the streets with flags. Had Guglielmo Boccanegra been still alive, all the bitterness would have been erased from his heart.

That is how it came about that Simone Boccanegra, who had once been known as the Little-Boy-at-the-Window, became the first Doge, or Duke, of Genoa. And he filled the office with honor. It was one that required the greatest wisdom and tact. Simone ruled firmly and prudently, and for five years Genoa enjoyed peace. He chose his ministers and advisers from men whose merit had been proved, for his motto was ever the one he had learned from his grandfather when he was a child: "Keep company with good men and you will increase their number."

In 1344 the factions of the nobles combined and became very strong, and they forced Boccanegra to resign from office. For ten years he led a quiet, secluded life. Not so the Republic of Genoa: one battle followed upon another,

112 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

first with the Venetians and then with the Milanese. And finally civil strife broke out in the city of La Superba.

Then the poor people of Genoa, exhausted and miserable, turned again to their first Doge, and implored him to lead them back to peace. When he consented, they reinstated him, and his power was even greater than before. For seven years he ruled again, and the people almost worshiped him. But alas! a treacherous nobleman killed him with poison, and so he died, in his prime and at his post. But the name of Simone Boccanegra has endured on the lips of his fellow-men for nearly six hundred years, and is always uttered with love and admiration. And his motto is still remembered:

Keep company with good men and you will increase their number.

LADY MARY SHAKES THE TREE

LADY MARY SHAKES THE TREE

EVELYN PIERREPONT, Earl of Kingston, was very rarely to be found in his own home: first, because he took an active part in politics, which in his day were in a pretty mess and necessitated his presence at the court in London; secondly, because his pleasures—which he never neglected for the sake of mere duty—were much more easily to be found in the great city than in the small town of Thoresby, in Nottinghamshire, where his ancestral home was situated.

In justice we must admit that the earl had honest reason to consider the old mansion in Thoresby extremely dull, for his lovely and vivacious wife had died very young, leaving him with four little children, the eldest of whom was only a baby of three years. He took his responsibility as a father as lightly as possible and was almost a stranger to his children. Yet we are inclined to think that he might have

116 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

found it very “amusing” to know them better, (Lord Kingston’s emotions seldom rose beyond the pitch of amusement.)

It was upon one of his fleeting visits to Thoresby, shortly after the death of Lady Kingston, that he discovered that little Lady Mary, his eldest child, was given to what he termed “antics.” One dreary winter’s morning, the little girl disappeared unnoticed from the breakfast table in the nursery and trotted downstairs on a mission of exploration and adventure. Knowing nothing of the fact that her father was at home, she opened a door and walked into the great library, where she had seldom been before. No one was in the room, and at first she had a lovely time, peering up at the dim pictures above the book-shelves, climbing into one after another of the high-backed chairs, and trying to lift the big books, nearly all of which were too heavy for her. But by and by she began to feel cold and tired, and, having found an empty book-shelf in a dark corner of the room, she climbed into it, curled herself up like a kitten, and fell fast asleep.

When she awoke she began to cry—she was

just a little thing, you know. She was very cramped and uncomfortable on the hard, narrow shelf; and, too, she was really frightened at her strange surroundings and was not yet sufficiently aroused to remember where she was. His lordship sat at the table before the fire, writing a letter; and, being very much absorbed in what he was doing, and, besides, quite unfamiliar with that kind of sound, he was disturbed by but failed to recognize the little wail that came from a shadowy corner of the library.

His quill scratched across the paper. Then he looked about him in bewilderment.

“What an extraordinary noise!” he muttered. “How very distressing!”

But he applied himself again to the composition of his letter, and would have forgotten the interruption completely had it not been very soon repeated. This time, Lord Kingston put out his hand and pulled the bell-cord vigorously. When Thomas, the very tall footman, appeared, he found his lordship much annoyed.

“There is a very disturbing noise in this room, Thomas,” he said. “Have it stopped at once.”

118 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

Thomas stood still for a moment to ascertain what the noise might be, and from which direction it came. And, because by this time little Lady Mary had recovered her senses, her shrill baby voice piped out quite clearly from the darkest recess in the library:

“It’s me, Thomas. And I want to get down, please.”

And when she had been rescued from the uncomfortable shelf, and was being carried from the room on Thomas’s shoulder, she was so very much afraid of her august father that she dared not look at him, but tightly clutched the golden braid of the footman’s uniform and hid her pretty face behind her curls.

This little episode was spoken of by his lordship as “a most surprising antic, upon my word!” and he did not soon forget it. This is proved by the fact that Lady Mary and her nurse were packed off the very next week to West Dean, to the home of her paternal grandmother, that she might learn there the manners becoming to a well-behaved child of noble birth.

Now, this grandmother, as it happens, was a

very remarkable woman; for, besides calmly and efficiently managing a vast estate, she had acquired some learning, and spent every leisure moment in her well-filled library. It was an age when women of rank or even royalty, were educated as little as possible beyond the attainment of certain elegancies and formal manners, and were doomed to a life whose only interests were the frivolities and gossip of the court. How Mrs. Elizabeth Pierrepont came to lead a life of retirement in West Dean and to find her greatest pleasure in her books, it would be hard to discover at this late date, for the good lady passed from this world in the year 1699. But there she was, and there was little Lady Mary also, at the time of which I write.

Because she was so pretty and sprightly and high-spirited a child, Grandmother Pierrepont soon grew very fond of her, and she gave orders that Lady Mary should be brought downstairs every afternoon, so that the little girl might spend an hour or two with her out in the beautiful park-like gardens, or, when the weather was bad, before the cheerful log fire

120 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

in the library. Lady Mary was encouraged to bring her playthings (crude and clumsy the children of to-day would find them!) and amuse herself with them while her grandmother read or smilingly watched her.

But the child, though she was so very little and loved to romp, had a brain as quick and active as her body. Sometimes she would tire of playing with her dolls, and, picking up a book, would gravely turn its pages. Presently, coming to her grandmother's side, she would drop a little courtesy and inquire, "What letter this might be, or that?" pointing with her dimpled baby finger.

Mrs. Pierrepont was pleased that the child showed an interest in what she so dearly loved, and she always answered and explained most kindly. But it did not occur to her that Lady Mary might be clever enough to combine the letters into words. The good lady had serious plans for the child's future education, and intended that her granddaughter should be taught to read and write and cipher as soon as she was old enough; but the fact is, that little

Lady Mary had *taught herself to read* before any one was aware of it. And this was made evident, in a most startling manner, one memorable afternoon.

Bishop Burnet was visiting Mrs. Pierrepont, to whom he was distantly related, and he asked to meet her little granddaughter. Lady Mary was carefully washed and brushed and sent to the drawing-room. Being well trained by this time, she dropped to her knees before the bishop to receive his blessing, and then stepped to one side to await his pleasure.

“Very beautiful child,” said his Grace, addressing Mrs. Pierrepont; “and resembles you, madam—most wisely.” Then, lifting Lady Mary’s chin with his finger, he asked: “And do you *know* anything, my child?”

Mrs. Pierrepont was just about to explain that because of her tender years Lady Mary had not yet been tutored, when the child answered his Grace herself.

“I know some poetry,” she said proudly.

“Indeed!” said the bishop, and his eyes twinkled through his spectacles; “and pray, what kind of poetry do you know?”

122 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

Little Lady Mary, quite simply, began to recite:

“Her feet beneath her petticoat
Like little mice stole in and out,
As if they feared the light;
But oh, she dances such a way!
No sun upon an Easter-day
Is half so fine a sight.”

Grandmother Pierrepont sat staring, wide-eyed, at the child; and the bishop completely forgot his accustomed dignity and laughed outright. The poem, it is true, was popular enough, and much admired at the time, but where could the little creature have picked it up in that stately old house in the country, where she so rarely spoke with any one but her grandmother and the servants!

“That was most pretty,” said Mrs. Pierrepont, at length, when she had recovered her composure; “from where have you got it, my child?”

“From the little book next the old atlas,” answered Lady Mary promptly, and quickly ran to fetch the book to show them. And there, sure enough, was the poem, and a score of others besides. Little Lady Mary had spelled

them all out carefully, word for word, and had memorized some of them, too, for she was delighted and fascinated by the lilt and melody of the lines.

Grandmother Pierrepont was more delighted than she dared openly show in the presence of her small grandchild, and Bishop Burnet sat chuckling to himself and rubbing his hands for several minutes. Lady Mary, being very quick and observant, was certain she had pleased them both. And the energy and perseverance she brought to the lessons that were promptly begun the very next day, under the guidance of her capable grandmother, proved how earnestly her little mind craved knowledge.

For four years Lady Mary lived at West Dean, and she spent many an evening in reading aloud to Grandmother Pierrepont. And very close indeed became the bond of love and companionship between these two, so far apart in age.

Then, when she was eight years old, Lord Kingston sent for the child, and she journeyed back to Thoresby. His lordship thought the little maid who presented herself before him in

the candle-lit library upon her return, very different from the tearful, frightened baby whom Thomas had carried from that very room four years before.

Being a gay man, rather than a wise one, and being not a little pleased with Lady Mary's beauty and grace and the brightness and wit of her conversation,—which far surpassed that of other children of her age,—he determined to take her with him to London for a few weeks and show her off before his friends. Now, this was not a sensible thing to do, because children are generally spoiled by much admiration and praise, not realizing how lightly and carelessly words of flattery are often uttered, and how seldom real esteem expresses itself in extravagant compliments. It is, therefore, a proof of this small lady's uncommon sense and judgment that she could, at so early an age, distinguish between true admiration and false, with an instinctive wish to win the former.

All of which was shown in this wise:

Lord Kingston was a member of the Kit-Cat Club, a political organization, to which belonged many of the most celebrated men of the age.

Statesmen and generals, poets and noblemen met here to foster the interests of the Whig party, which had fallen so sadly from power during the reign of Queen Anne. It was a custom of this club to choose each year, by vote of the members, the most beautiful and charming of the grand ladies of London society, whose portrait was to hang on the walls of the club-room and to whom a toast was to be drunk at each meeting. One day Lord Kingston, in a spirit of jest, announced that he knew a lady fairer than any other they might choose, and worthy indeed to be their goddess for the year. When the gentlemen demanded who this beauty might be, his lordship despatched his coachman with orders that Lady Mary was to be dressed in her prettiest frock and brought at once to the club-house.

It was a strange adventure for a little girl. The atmosphere of the club, which was little better than a tavern, was surely such as a careful mother would strive to keep from her child. But Lord Kingston was a *careless* father, and his pride was gratified at the unanimous applause she won and the pretty manner with

126 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

which she answered the sallies of the great men sitting in the club-room.

Of them all, only one sat silent in a corner, watching the child intently but saying not a word. At last Lady Mary walked over to him and laid her little hand upon his arm.

“*You* have not said that you like me. Do you not like me, sir?” she asked wistfully.

“I do not give voice to my praise easily,” answered Mr. Addison, for it was none other than he; “nor is it readily won.”

“Then I must try to gain your favor,” said the child. “If it is hard to win, it must be worth having.”

Mr. Addison put his hand upon her head and smiled, for she had already won his heart.

So it came about that little Lady Mary Pierrepont, in the year 1697, was chosen the toast of the Kit-Cat Club, and her portrait was painted by a famous artist to adorn that resort of politics and wit, and her health was drunk by many great men. But none of these did she respect as much as Mr. Addison, for his praise was hard to win.

It was always thus; the child seemed to take



Lady Mary is toasted by the Kit-Cat Club,

especial delight in doing the things that were difficult to do. And, considering the very scanty education she received, it is remarkable how far she succeeded in developing her talents. She had little help or encouragement from any one, for her grandmother, unfortunately, died when Lady Mary was ten years old; but the influence and inspiration of the good old lady of West Dean lived on with her granddaughter always. Lord Kingston ignored his children and their ambitions, and, after engaging for them a governess, who knew astonishingly little herself, he considered his fatherly duty fully performed. The old library at Thoresby was the source of nearly all the knowledge Lady Mary acquired, and was her joy and entertainment besides.

Before she was fifteen, she was writing very creditable poetry, and snatches of stories too, though she never took the latter seriously, nor completed a single one. But her greatest achievement during these years of her girlhood was learning Latin. She applied herself so earnestly to the study of this language, that, though she had scarcely any assistance or

128 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

guidance, she mastered it sufficiently to translate the "Discourses" of Epictetus into English. And that, certainly, was no inconsiderable feat!

This conquering of the Latin language was just another evidence of Lady Mary's most striking characteristic—the desire to have that which was difficult to get. In a poem called "The Answer," she gave expression to this peculiarity of hers:

But the fruit that can fall without shaking
Indeed is too mellow for me.

This particular fruit required a great deal of shaking, as you can well suppose, but the reward was twofold. Not only did Lady Mary possess herself of the learning she so much desired, but around its acquisition are wound the first threads of her life's romance.

Miss Anne Montagu, a striking beauty and a very sweet and gracious young lady, was Lady Mary's dearest friend. She herself had no unusual gifts of mind, but she did have a brother who had traveled extensively on the Continent—no ordinary occurrence in those days—and who was an active young Whig, with splendid prospects whenever his party might rise again

to power. Mr. Wortley Montagu was devoted to his sister. Hearing from her of so extraordinary a thing as a society belle (Lady Mary had been presented at court and was much admired) who applied herself to serious study, he determined to remain at home one afternoon when the young lady was to call, so that he might gaze upon this curiosity.

That meeting was fatal to Wortley Montagu's peace of mind; for though he strove to drive from his memory the thought of the lovely girl who had plied him with questions about his travels and sought his advice in the choice of books of Latin grammar and Italian poetry, the image of her sweet face with its lively expression haunted him wherever he might be. He quarreled with himself, and not infrequently he quarreled with her, because her charm held him when he wished to be free; but he contrived to meet her often at the opera or in the homes of her friends, and the letters his sister Anne wrote Lady Mary were nearly all copies of drafts written in his handwriting, which are still in existence. As for Lady Mary, she had lost her heart to him at the start.

130 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

At last Wortley Montagu presented himself to Lord Kingston, to ask for his daughter's hand; but upon his failing to submit to that unreasonable nobleman's demands with regard to the marriage settlement, all negotiations were abruptly broken off, Lady Mary was sent to Thoresby, where she might see no one, and his lordship proceeded to make arrangements to marry her to an elderly Irishman of considerable wealth and property. So the wedding-day was set and the wedding-clothes were made, and all Lady Mary's efforts in behalf of her own true love were in vain, when young Montagu, with a strength of character which we, with our different customs, cannot half appreciate, determined to forego the dowry, and eloped with Lady Mary from Thoresby and married her.

Lord Kingston never really forgave her, nor even saw her more than two or three times after that; but she did not regret the step she had taken, and was content to live in the very modest style her husband's income permitted during the first few years of their marriage.

Lady Mary Shakes the Tree 131

Then, when Queen Anne had died, and George the First from Hanover ascended the throne of England, the fortunes of the Whigs improved, and Wortley Montagu was sent as ambassador, first to Vienna and later to Constantinople. His wife and their little son accompanied him, of course, and the letters which Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote from these remote countries, to her sister, the Countess of Mar, and to her friends in London, have been collected and published and are read with delight even to-day.

Lady Mary's greatest achievement, however, and the one for which the world owes her thanks, was the introduction into England of the Eastern custom of inoculation for smallpox. Until then, smallpox epidemics had swept frequently over the land, and had carried off thousands of helpless victims. Lady Mary herself had suffered from this fearful disease, and her only brother had died of it. When, therefore, she learned, in her travels in the East, that the people there had found a means of checking these periodic ravages, she learned

132 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

the method and brought the knowledge back with her to England.

Lady Mary had both her children innoculated, in order to prove to her countrymen the value of the treatment; but all England rose against it and against her. Lady Mary's life was made miserable, but she persevered, and before many years had passed, she had the satisfaction of seeing the benefit she had introduced to her native land firmly established there.

Without her patience and resolute effort, this great thing would not have been accomplished; but, as Lady Mary herself had said:

*The fruit that can fall without shaking
Indeed is too mellow for me.*

THE BLACK CAMEL

THE BLACK CAMEL

IT was a slow and wearisome journey across the desert. Hour after hour, day after day, the little caravan traveled, and the prospect scarcely changed. The ridge of plateau-land to the east, vaguely outlined through the dazzling heat; an occasional glimpse of the Red Sea to the west; and otherwise nothing; nothing at all but the dreary stretch of sand behind, and the dreary and seemingly endless stretch of sand ahead. The noiseless tread of the camels, as they swung steadily on also was monotonous, and the desolation all around affected the spirits of the travelers, till their minds, too, became parched and empty wastes.

Mankind, fortified with an eternal optimism, has smiled and sung amid unbelievable hardships, but after the fifth day of travel no member of the caravan raised his voice to utter a word of cheer. Silently, doggedly they rode, and when night came they pitched their crude

136 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

tents on the burning sands, and slept because they were exhausted. The darkness brought little relief. Of course, the mere absence of the sun was something infinitely welcome, but the baked sands radiated a scorching heat, and the dry and stifling air remained motionless, as though the breathing of Mother Earth were completely suspended.

The caravan was composed of ten persons. There was Keerah, the leader,—a tall, slender Arab with clean-cut features; energetic, intelligent,—and with him were two kinsmen. The remaining seven were slaves, purchased by Keerah a few days before, in the great slave-market at Petra, in Arabia. Of these slaves, five were men and two women. The men were negroes from northern Africa, but the women were Bedouin Arabs from the Syrian desert district. Human lives were sold and bartered in those days, for the time of which I write was long, long ago; indeed, as nearly as I can figure from the ancient records, it was about 1050 B. C.

One of the five male slaves was 'Anká, a skilled workman who had learned in Egypt to

build with sun-baked clay. He had been bought by Keerah because of his skill, for Keerah's master, the Sheik Rejmaá, was planning to build a new and wonderful city. One of the two Arab women was 'Anká's wife.

There were twenty camels in the train, for the Arab mind has always been keen for business, and a journey of hundreds of miles must be made to pay in more ways than one. On the passage northward the pack-animals had been laden with dates and grain from the fertile region over which Sheik Rejmaá ruled; now, as they traveled homeward, they carried the seven newly bought slaves, and sacks of salt, and spears tipped with spikes of bronze.

When at length the caravan reached the green, well-watered vicinity of the city of Medinah, Keerah ordered the tents to be pitched, and decided to rest for three days, so that man and beast might be refreshed in the cool shade of palm-trees and with clear spring-water.

Here, in the still night, with the stars thicker and nearer and more golden than we usually see them, a boy-child was born to the slave 'Anká

138 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

and the Arab woman who was his wife. He was a dark-skinned baby with a dimple in his chin, and his parents named him Lokman. His Arab mother crooned a weird song over him, and his father raised his arms to the rising sun at daybreak, for his heart was filled with thankfulness and pride.

By a strange coincidence, on the very same night a black camel was born in the herd. So seldom are black camels seen, that the Arabs have always prized them highly and regarded them as omens of good luck. When Keerah saw the shaggy baby camel, in the morning, he rubbed his hands and gloated over the unexpected gain. He was in high spirits, and when he was also led to view the new-born child, his interest and satisfaction were evident. He stooped over the tiny infant, and saw how dark it was, and his eyes flashed, and he threw his head back and laughed loudly.

“By the wind!” he cried exultantly, “ ’t is another black camel, surely! It is doubled good luck I shall take home to our mighty master, the Sheik Rejmaá!”

And so when the caravan turned eastward,

two days later, there were eight slaves instead of seven.

The region over which Sheik Rejmaá ruled was called Woshem, and was situated near the very center of the Arabian peninsula, a mountainous and well-watered country, productive beyond most other sections in that sandy land. Here some of the finest date-palms flourished, and green gardens grew in their protecting shade; and here herds of cattle and camels browsed in real pastures, and the cool breeze swept through the valleys. It was a rich country over which Rejmaá was lord, and he was a prosperous and mighty sheik, and his power within his domain was unlimited.

And this is where the child Lokman lived and grew. His home was a tent outside the walls of sun-baked mud around the new city that 'Anká was helping to build. His dress was a long white shirt with a girdle of leather; a striped cloth covered his head, and was held in place with a band of twisted horsehair. His food was a bowl of *samh*, which is an Arabian porridge, with a handful of dates, or some stew made of camel's meat. His mode of life was

140 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

primitive according to our standards, but he was as happy and playful and as light of heart as our own youngsters of to-day. Even his bondage was no misfortune, for until he should be big and strong enough to do useful work, he was quite free, and his small wants were all provided for. So the child wandered on the hills through the long sunny days, and his ears and eyes were open and keenly tuned to every stir and rustle of nature. He followed the shepherd and the flocks of sheep or camels, and he learned the habits of the animals; and sometimes he saw a wild beast spring out from a rocky cave or a dense forest, and carry off some bleating lamb or helpless calf.

Among these surroundings the Black Camel grew. That nickname clung to him always; since the day of his birth, when Keerah had uttered it at sight of him, he had always been called the Black Camel, so that his real name of Lokman was nearly forgotten.

When he was twelve years old, his first duties were assigned him; he was made the tender of a small herd of camels. He was given a little



He was made tender of a small herd of camels.

crooked stick, called a *mihjan*, like those carried by all camel-drivers, and with this he drove the big animals, each morning, far out from the new walled city. Then, lying down on a rock, he watched them as they nibbled the feathery *ghada*, their favorite food, and called if one of them wandered too far. His occupation was not a very active one, and Lokman dreamed a great deal, and talked to himself to while away the tedious hours. And by and by this seemingly idle talk developed into the invention of little stories, and always the stories were about animals.

One day, Keerah was unexpectedly sent upon a business errand by his master, Sheik Rejmaá, to a town about thirty miles distant. Servants were set to work preparing for the little journey, and Keerah sent one of his own slaves, named Sitab, to go in search of the pack-camels, which Lokman was tending. Sitab came upon them suddenly as he turned a rocky crag. There, he beheld their young shepherd gesticulating dramatically and heard him declaiming loudly. For a moment he stopped and listened,

142 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

and the story that he heard was of a kind most strange to him. He stepped out from his concealing rock.

“Where hast thou learned this queer, fantastic story, Black Camel?” he asked.

The lad’s eyes flashed.

“It is a story about Keerah’s brother, who comes so often upon a visit, and uses honeyed, pleasant words, but steals cattle and horses from Keerah, behind the master’s back. I have thought out this story, and I have disguised it so that even he would not recognize that it is about him.” And Lokman repeated it eagerly.

Several weeks later, Keerah’s brother, with his false smile, came again to pay a visit. Sitab listened as he spun his web of pretty phrases, and his thoughts flew back to the child Lokman, and the strange story he had told. Then Sitab approached his master, Keerah, respectfully.

“Keerah, my master,” he said, “there is a way in which you might entertain your brother who visits you. The child Lokman, whom we call the Black Camel, tells most surprising stories. And his stories are of a kind I have never heard before, for they are not of kings

and battles, but rather of beasts and fowl, which speak and have intelligence. If you would like to have him relate his stories to-night, when your distinguished brother dines with you, I will send for him, my master."

And Keerah, thinking to please his brother, agreed willingly. So that night, in Keerah's adobe home, where a feast was spread before a great many guests, Lokman, with wildly beating heart, told his story.

"There was once a weasel," he began, "who heard that a flock of chickens belonging to a rich man were ill. They had eaten of the *mesaa* berries, and had nearly perished. So weak were they, that the weasel thought it would be a simple matter to overpower them all, and carry them off, one by one, to his lair. So he decked himself in the plumage of a peacock which he had killed a few days before, and went to visit the chickens. 'I greet you, O noble chickens!' he said. 'What is the condition of your health? I hope you are feeling well and merry.' But the chickens recognized his squeaky voice, and they answered him: 'We shall feel extremely well, O weasel, on the day

144 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

when the hunter kills *you*, and we no longer see your face.’ ”

There was a long pause. Then Keerah spoke:

“It is a strange story, surely! But what is the meaning of it all?”

His brother broke in quickly:

“There is no meaning. It is simply the stupid fancy of a stupid child.”

But Lokman looked straight at him.

“Keerah your brother is discerning,” he said. “There is a meaning to this story. It is directed at him who displays an assumed friendliness but carries deceit and hypocrisy in his heart.”

There was a murmur from the assembled guests, for many of them had nursed in their breasts suspicion of Keerah’s brother. But the guileless Keerah admired the story immensely.

“Tell us another of these quaint tales, Black Camel,” he demanded.

Lokman considered for a moment. He selected carefully of the stories he had invented out on the wild pasture fields.

“Once upon a time, a great plague of locusts

swept over the land. They came in swarms and hosts, so that the sky was blackened at their approach as by a mighty storm-cloud. And they settled down in the green gardens, and began to consume everything that grows. The people of the village made a great effort to save their crops. They went out with baskets of finely woven, slender rushes, and they gathered the locusts from tree and vine and shrub.

“A little child was catching locusts, and thrusting them into his basket, when he saw a large scorpion upon the ground. The child believed it was a very big locust, and he reached out to take it. The scorpion drew back quickly, so as to escape the child’s hand, and then it said to him: ‘If thou hadst taken me into thy hand, thou wouldst surely have ceased hunting locusts.’ ”

It was Keerah again who asked for the meaning of this story. The Black Camel looked straight at him as he answered:

“It means, most honored Keerah, that Man should know how to distinguish between good and evil, and should treat each thing according to its nature.”

146 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

The next morning, oddly enough, Keerah's brother cut his visit short, and with a scowl upon his face, returned to his home. And he carried nothing away with him except the things he had brought.

As the years passed, the Black Camel grew to be a man, and always he was weaving new stories. The people of all the villages roundabout knew him and came to hear him tell his tales. He was an important slave now, for Keerah was grown old, and Lokman had been made leader of the caravan. So it was that he traveled to many places to do the business of his venerable master, the Sheik Rejmaá, who had grown richer and more powerful than ever. At last, he sent Lokman, with a large train of camels and many slaves to help him guard the valuable goods they carried, far up into the North, through a veritable chain of deserts, to a land called Palestine, where lived the Hebrews, a people rich in culture.

To this land came Lokman, and, in the great market-place at Jerusalem, sold the goods he had brought so many weary miles. At the time there ruled over this people a great and very

wise king of whom you all have heard, for his name was David. David was the greatest king in Hebrew history; he was noble and kindly, but he could be brave and warlike, also. His people flourished under him as they never had before, and never have since. And it is to him, that we owe the most exquisite psalms ever conceived.

Now it happened, one day, that a servant of David chanced to pause, in the market-place, to listen to a dark-skinned stranger dressed in the garb of the Arabs who dwelt far in the Southland. This stranger was reciting a fanciful story to a group of people, and the story that he told had a deep meaning. When he had finished, his listeners shouted with enthusiasm, and clapped their hands, for they recognized the truth hidden in the simple fable. And the servant told King David of the Arab and his story, and David said:

“Fetch me this man, that I too may hear his tales of beasts and birds, in whose actions are hidden the motives and thoughts of men.”

So Lokman was brought before David, King

148 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

of the Hebrews, and a story was demanded of him. And this is the fable that he recounted:

“Once upon a time, a pack of dogs, wandering about the outskirts of a village, came upon the skin of a lion, which the hunter had left there to dry in the sun. The dogs decided that they would tear the skin to pieces. Nearby stood a fox, a most wise and clever beast, and watched them at their malicious occupation. ‘If that lion were still alive,’ he said to them, ‘you would surely see how much sharper and longer and more powerful his claws could be than are your teeth.’

“This story, O great King, concerns itself with the human beings who are eager to taunt and insult men of rank and merit when those men have been superseded and have fallen from power.”

“There is significance in this tale,” said David. “Tell me another fable, pilgrim from Arabia.”

Lokman bowed low.

“O noble King,” he said, “I wish to relate to you a story which few of the men I have met have comprehended. May I repeat it to you?”

“Proceed,” commanded the king.

“A lion, one day, met a man on the road, and they began to discourse. Presently a dispute arose between them as to which race—the human beings or the beasts—was the stronger and more courageous. The lion boasted of his indomitable valor and fearlessness. Then the man took a piece of soft white limestone from a bag at his girdle and sketched upon the stone wall beside the road the picture of a huge, brawny man strangling a lion. The lion watched him, and then he said: ‘If lions were painters, as the sons of Adam are, there would be upon that wall a different picture; for it would show not a man strangling a lion but, instead, a lion overpowering a man.’

“The meaning of this fable is that Man cannot be judged solely by the testimony and standards of his fellow-men.”

“Truly, thou hast invented a story that would break some of the unseemly pride of Man,” King David said to him. “Thou art indeed very wise. Tell me who thou art, pilgrim from Arabia.”

“My name is Lokman,” replied the slave.

150 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

“The people who dwell in the same land as I, call me the Black Camel.”

“’T is a name well chosen. Thou art truly a black camel, for thou art rare, and thy wisdom is more precious to mankind than gold and rich jewels. Tell me, if thou canst, Black Camel, why thy stories are always in the form of fables.”

“Great King, it is because a fable is a bridge which leads to truth.”

Then Lokman went out from the presence of King David. And when his business in the city of Jerusalem was finished, he journeyed back to his home in Arabia.

Sheik Rejmaá learned of what had happened in the kingdom of the Hebrews, and how his slave had held converse with the great ruler of that land, and he gave Lokman his freedom, and portioned off a piece of fertile land for him and his family. There the Black Camel lived in peace, and invented many more fables, and so much wisdom did they contain, that they have been repeated through the ages. Some, indeed, such as the popular one of “The Hare and the Tortoise,” have been wrongfully ascribed to

Æsop; it can be proved, however, that they originated in the industrious brain of Lokman nearly three thousand years ago. And to-day they are as vivid and real as they were then, for the Black Camel expressed it accurately when he said:

A fable is a bridge which leads to truth.

THE GODCHILD OF THE SEA

THE GODCHILD OF THE SEA

SEÑORA JOANNA lived in a tiny village on the Mar Menor, that large lagoon, separated by a narrow strip of land from the sea, on the west coast of Andalusia, in Spain. She was a widow, whose only property was the small farm her husband had left her, and, being childless, she devoted all her time to the managing of her few acres, which yielded her a decent livelihood. She was known far and near for her shrewd business sense and her tireless energy. These qualities made her a conspicuous contrast to her languid, slow-moving neighbors, who all considered to-morrow as good a time for work as to-day, and perhaps a little better.

It was, therefore, a most surprising sight for these same neighbors to watch Señora Joanna leave her fields one day, fasten the latch on her little house, and, mounting her patient ass, turn its head toward the south, and pass down the

156 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

road at a brisk trot. They shook their heads and muttered to one another, or, if that was not convenient, to themselves:

“She might at least have told some one where she was going!”

Not being as indolent as these good folk, let us follow Señora Joanna on her journey, and satisfy our curiosity with regard to her destination.

For two hours she jogged along the road, arguing frequently with her gallant steed, which repeatedly tried to stop by the roadside to nibble tempting green grass. Then she came to a fork in the path, and turned sharply to the west, so that the salt, cool breeze from the sea blew directly in her face. By the time the sun had mounted to the center of the sky, the ass was clattering over the paved streets of the town of Palos, and Señora Joanna could hear the waves breaking on the sea-shore.

The good woman drew rein before a large, rather handsome residence, and dismounted nimbly. A servant opened the heavy door with the wrought-iron hinges, even before Señora Joanna had raised the knocker, and she passed

inside. What her neighbors did not know, and what she might have communicated to us,—recognizing that we are no mere idle gossip, but a very serious minded biographer,—was that this same servant had been sent to the señora's cottage during the night, to summon the good woman to the bedside of her sister-in-law, Señora Pinzón, who was in great distress.

Señora Marie Pinzón was a frail, anxious little person, the exact opposite of robust Señora Joanna, and the cloud of dark foreboding that hung over her had completely crushed her gentle spirit, and had forced her to take to her bed, ill with what nowadays is known as “a case of nerves.”

And indeed, things looked very alarming for Señora Maria. Her husband, the wealthy owner of many ships, was a fearless navigator, who had voyaged as far as men dared go in those days, and who had brought home many rich cargoes from far-off lands. This time, however, he had taken with him his two small sons, Martin Alonso and Francisco, who would some day be mariners themselves, and had sailed away to the islands off the west coast of

158 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

Africa which had recently been discovered and claimed by Portugal. Naturally enough, the Portuguese would be hostile to a fleet of Spanish ships bent on plunder (for that was an age when men took whatever they could win with the sword), and when the ships belonging to Pinzón had not returned for seven weeks after they were due, Señora Maria gave in to despair. To complicate matters still more, a third son had been born to Señora Maria during her husband's absence. Week after week the poor woman had postponed the christening,—a most pompous and important ceremony in the fifteenth century,—but the ships flying the Pinzón flag had not returned.

In this extremity of misfortune, Señora Maria had sent for her sister-in-law, and on Señora Joanna's substantial shoulder she now sobbed out her fears and anguish.

"I don't know much about the ships and the crews," Señora Joanna comforted her, "and I don't believe in venturing out of sight of land, but I do know my brother, and it will take a stormy sea indeed, or a very sturdy Portuguese, to get the better of a Pinzón. He'll come back

yet, Maria, and so will the two little ones, for they are made of the same stuff as he. And if they do not come back, you and I will take care of the baby, Maria, and the farm will have to produce enough for three instead of for one." You see, she was a very sensible woman!

Señora Maria heaved a sigh of relief. It was good to let Joanna manage things for her. And at last her weary, troubled eyes closed, and she fell sound asleep. Señora Joanna stood at the window, deep in thought; there were many things for her to think of now. And as she pondered, her glance went out over the blue waters and rested on a tiny sail on the far horizon, and watched it slowly coming nearer.

The baby began to cry, and she picked him up and held him close, and his plaintive little whimper ceased, and he seemed to smile up into her face. Señora Joanna had always wanted a baby of her own, to love and care for. She was a devout, good woman, and she would not even have admitted it to herself, but at that moment, in her heart of hearts, she almost hoped the child's father might not return, so that she might take Maria and this little pink

160 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

bundle in her arms back to the lonely farm with her.

But when the baby was asleep once more and had been placed in his crib, she returned to the window, to find that the speck of sail she had been watching in the distance was larger and nearer now. It was heading straight for the harbor, and a smaller vessel followed in its wake.

And, sure enough, it was the hardy husband of Señora Maria who dropped anchor in the port of Palos; and his two small sons were with him and safe. But even as he set foot on land, there was a frown on Pinzón's brow and a curse on his lips; for of the six ships with which he had departed he was bringing back only two. Four good vessels of his fleet, representing the greater part of his fortune, had been tossed about blindly in a dense fog, among the unfamiliar Portuguese Islands, till they had struck on the rocks, and foundered with their crews, near enough together to hear one another's cries for assistance but separated by the obscuring mist, so that they could help neither themselves nor their comrades.

Pinzón was a proud and avaricious man, as were most of the Spanish adventurers, and to have to admit that he had lost most of his wealth, filled him with shame and humiliation. And when he heard that he was the father of a third son, he broke forth with the rage of a madman.

“Why could not this one have been a girl!” he muttered between clenched teeth. “To each of my sons I have bequeathed, on the day of his christening, a ship from my fleet, fully manned and equipped, so that when he is grown he may be prepared to start out on the quest of fortune. Now there remain but two vessels of my proud squadron, and they belong, according to my promises, to my two elder sons, so that to this third one I can give nothing, nothing at all! He is as the child of a pauper, a beggar!”

“He is a Pinzón!” said Señora Joanna, cheerfully. “He will make his way, even without your help. Give your son luck, and throw him into the sea! He will return with his hands filled with pearls and gold.”

These words pleased her brother.

“Take the child away with you, Joanna,” he

162 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

said. "To see him in my home would be a constant reproach. Some day, if I can offer him what I consider his birthright, I will send for him."

Señora Maria submitted weakly to this unnatural arrangement, and so, when Joanna returned to her little farm after a fortnight's absence, she carried in her arms a tiny pink bundle that seemed to smile up into her face as she jogged along the road. Of course her neighbors marveled and made all sorts of comments, but they all agreed on one thing:

"She's a queer woman, surely; and the queerest thing about her is that she discusses her affairs with no one."

When Vicente Yañez Pinzón (for so the baby had been christened) grew out of infancy, Señora Joanna set about his training and education with her customary vigor. And so, reared away from his own family, the child developed different traits and a different character from those of his two brothers. His body grew to be sturdy and tall as theirs, and his love for the salt sea as keen, but he shared Señora Joanna's simple, honest piety, while they

had their father's thirst for loot and gain, whether gotten by fair means or foul.

When Vicente was fourteen, he was apprenticed to a mariner trading along the coast, and for three years went to sea in the small, poorly constructed trading-vessels of the time. One day he startled his foster-mother.

"I should like to know," he said, "all about the handling and controlling of a ship,—a big ship, like those you tell me my brothers possess,—so that some day I might be a pilot, or even a captain. I want to go far out to sea, where many strange things are, instead of cruising forever under the shadow of the coast."

"If thou hast a heart to study these things," Señora Joanna answered slowly, "I know where thou mayest acquire this learning. It is as a true Pinzón that thou hast spoken, and I am proud of thee."

So she took him next day to the convent of La Rabida, which is situated near the town of Palos, and placed him in the care of Juan Pérez, the prior, a man of great learning. In those times there were no colleges, and the priests were the only men who had the leisure and in-

164 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

clination to delve into the wisdom of the ancients. And of the priests living in Spain during the illustrious reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, few had as wide a knowledge or as broad a vision as Friar Juan Pérez.

There was another source of learning waiting for Vicente. That greatest of all means of spreading information, the printing-press, had recently been invented, and the wealth of knowledge of the most eminent scholars was available to any man who learned to read. And so it was that the opinions of Aristotle, Pliny, and Strabo, with regard to the earth,—its shape, size, and the distribution of bodies of land and water,—were all studied with eagerness by Vicente, the while the good friar taught him the art of making maps and charts and guiding a ship over the dark seas of night, with the aid of the compass. There was much to learn, and at the age of nineteen, in the year 1490, Vicente was still engrossed in his studies at La Rabida.

Now, it happened one day that young Pinzón was sitting in the sunny garden of the convent, reading a book of ancient science, when he

heard a ring at the little gate by the road. He went to see who might be there, and found a man standing in the dusty road. The stranger's clothes were simple, and even a bit shabby, but his lofty brow and modest but dignified bearing proclaimed him to be a gentleman of uncommon attainments. The man was leading a little child by the hand, and the child was crying quietly to himself.

"I am a poor traveler," said the man, "passing through a strange country; and my child is weary and crying for food. Can I procure here for him a bit of bread and a goblet of water from the well, so that he may be refreshed, and permit me to continue my journey?"

"Enter, stranger, and welcome," Vicente answered, and held wide the gate. "I will fetch you food and drink for the child."

Then he led the foreigner (for the man's accent proclaimed him the son of another land) to the garden-seat, and himself hurried into the priory, and returned presently with food for the child. And while the little one ate and rested, Vicente engaged the stranger in conversation, and learned something of his re-

166 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

markable story. The sun settled behind the hills, and still they talked, for the stranger found in young Pinzón an intelligent and willing listener, and the youth's spirit and imagination were set afire by what he heard. The stranger's was a mighty project and a mighty ambition, surely; for the man sitting in the convent garden at La Rabida was none other than Christopher Columbus.

At last, Vicente went in search of Friar Pérez. Had not the animated conversation in the little garden taken place that summer evening, the pages of history with which we are so familiar, had been written quite differently.

Columbus was much discouraged, and with sufficient cause, indeed! He had spent several precious years trying to win the support of the government of his native city, Genoa, for his stupendous project; then he had sought help in Portugal. Now Spain, after encouraging him with promises of assistance in carrying out his cherished plans, was letting him go, to seek his luck at the court of France.

That night Columbus and his small son slept at La Rabida. Indeed, the good friar kept them

there for many days. Meanwhile, he called upon his friends to consider the enterprise of discovery on which Columbus had set his heart.

“Let me go to Palos, master,” begged Vicente. “I have there my father and brothers, who possess ships and have sailed far and often upon the sea. Perhaps they will feel, when they hear Señor Colon as I have heard him, that his plan is great and wonderful!”

Friar Pérez, who was convinced of the feasibility of Columbus’s project, and who left no stone unturned that might prove of assistance to his inspired guest, agreed to let Vicente visit his father’s home in Palos. Of course, Señora Joanna accompanied him thither. Her love for the youth had increased with the years, and when she saw that his heart was set on helping this stranger, she readily lent her support.

It was not so easy to interest the Pinzóns of Palos in the scheme. Vicente’s father was old, and satisfied to spend his days at home before the warm fire; his days of adventure were over. He had, indeed, retrieved his lost fortune and was wealthy again, and though Vicente knew nothing of it, a ship for the youngest

168 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

of his three sons was being built that very moment by the most skilful shipwright of the busy port.

Martin Alonso and Francisco were most skeptical at first. The idea of sailing due west into great Oceanus, about which nothing was known, for the purpose of proving that the earth was round, and possibly reaching the continent of Asia, seemed to them an idle dream, fraught with danger, and almost sure to fail. It was only when Vicente glowingly pictured the riches of the Orient—the gold of Cathay, or China, the spices growing in Cipango, as Japan was then called, and the jewels to be found in India—that their greedy natures were appealed to. They agreed it might be profitable to join this enterprise and bring home untold wealth. So they returned to La Rabida with Vicente, and met Columbus, and they promised to help him and sail with him on his voyage.

As you have read in your histories, it was not till two years later, in 1492, that Columbus, with the untiring aid of Friar Juan Pérez, won the

approval of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, and secured from them a promise to supply seven-eighths of his equipment and expenses, provided he could furnish the other eighth himself.

But no crew could be assembled. No Spanish sailors, bold men that they were, dared ship on so wild and ruinous a venture. In vain Columbus argued and appealed.

And then came Vicente's twenty-first birthday. He was summoned to Palos, to the home of his father, and the whole town took part in the celebration that awaited him there. And on that day he was made possessor and commander of the gallant little ship, the *Niña*, that strained at her anchor in the harbor, ready to respond to the gentlest breeze that might blow over the blue waters.

"Father, may I offer my ship and my crew to Señor Colon and the great adventure?" were Vicente's first words.

"Thou art a man now," old Pinzón answered. "Thou shalt decide for thyself."

"Yea, let us sail to the westward with

170 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

Columbus!" shouted the two brothers. "Let us gather gold and jewels from Cathay, and win fresh glories for immortal Spain!"

In Vicente's generous proffer and the zeal and fearlessness of the three Pinzón brothers Columbus's hope lay. Thus, though the name of Vicente Yañez Pinzón has almost passed into obscurity, it may truly be said that but for him Columbus would not have sailed from Palos on that sunny third of August in 1492, with the three dauntless little ships, the *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta* and the *Niña*. Columbus himself commanded the first of these; Martin Alonzo Pinzón was captain of the second, with his brother Francisco as pilot; and Vicente guided the *Niña*, his own ship, on that momentous voyage westward.

There is no need for me to tell again the details of a story that you have heard many times repeated. The tribulations and the suffering, more of mind than of body, experienced by those brave men through the long days and nights; the plottings and murmurings of the crews, which only the greatest tact and vigilance on the part of the captains could keep in

check—all this but heightened the joy when land was sighted on October twelfth.

And then followed amazement at the strange and wonderful things they saw. When we allow our imaginations full play, we can feel some of the emotions the navigators experienced. The calm and pleasant climate, the brilliant blue of sky and sea, the rich and luxuriant growth of vegetation, and the simple, kindly habits of the natives caused Columbus to write several times in his journal: “One could wish to live in these islands forever!”

As you know, these men lived and died in the belief that they had visited the islands to the east of Asia, and their surprise was great at not finding the stores of wealth they had been told existed there. It was, no doubt, the quest for gold which prompted Martin Alonso Pinzón (whose nature was ever mercenary) to separate from the others as the little fleet was cruising among the islands, and go searching on his own account for the rich land of Cipango. His behavior was in absolute violation of Columbus’s orders, and was the first proof of the disloyalty of this greedy man. Vicente

172 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

suffered great shame and humiliation from the misconduct of his brother; it is said that never again did a word pass between the two.

After more than six weeks, when Columbus set sail for Spain, on board the *Niña* (for the *Santa Maria* had been shipwrecked and lost), the *Pinta* hove in sight, and Martin Alonso tried with empty excuses to explain his desertion of his leader. Columbus, feeling too grateful to Vicente to chide his brother, accepted the latter's explanation, and bade him follow on the route to Spain.

But in the course of the return voyage, a fearful tempest broke, and the tiny ships were tossed about and nearly swallowed by the huge billows. And during this storm the *Pinta* again passed out of sight, perhaps driven by the furious winds, but more likely in accordance with her Captain's purpose; for Martin Alonso hoped to reach Spain before Columbus, and claim the discovery of the westward passage as his own.

It is a fact of singular justice that on the evening of the very day that Columbus dropped anchor in the port of Palos, and was received

on land with great rejoicing, the *Pinta* reached the harbor also. When Martin Alonso beheld the emblem of Columbus floating from the mast of the *Niña* in the little port, he ordered his sails furled, and slunk into the harbor like a thief in the night.

Indeed, the glory and honor paid Columbus was a stinging reproach to this treacherous Pinzón, for he could not share in the happy welcome home. He hid himself in his house and brooded on his ignominious position, till, a few days after his return, he caught a violent fever and died within a week.

Our loyal Vicente, on the other hand, participated in the celebrations at Palos, and later at the court at Barcelona, and, though he had not brought back with him the riches of the Orient, he always rejoiced that he had given of his labor, his time, and his fortune to the memorable expedition.

Many years later Vicente Pinzón again visited the new world to the westward, and skirted the coast of Brazil three full months before Cabral, the Portuguese navigator, credited with the discovery of this land, reached its shores.

174 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

From this voyage Vicente returned with a considerable fortune. As soon as he landed in Spain, he betook himself to that dearest of his kinsfolk, his aunt Joanna. She was old and blind now, but her shrunken frame trembled with joy as she put her arms about his stalwart form and kissed his tanned and rugged brow.

“Thou hast accomplished all I had wished for,” she whispered, “for thou hast made thy name illustrious, and still hast kept thy honor and thy heart unsullied. As for the rest, it is as I prophesied to your father long ago.

And the fisher-folk of Spain repeat to this very day the words she had spoken:

Give your son luck and throw him into the sea.

THE LOTUS-FLOWER OF THE JUMNA

THE LOTUS-FLOWER OF THE JUMNA

THE Jumna River is broad, and it flows steadily and swiftly. Though it rises in the far north of India, among the mighty Himalaya Mountains, the greater part of its course lies through an arid, sandy plain, where its banks alone are fair and verdant. But in the end, when it has swept past rich cities and refreshed countless gardens, its clear waters mingle with those of the Ganges, and swell the volume of that river, which the Hindus call sacred.

Kites and vultures wheeled and dipped above the stream, and then swung, almost motionless, high up in the sky. Their keen eyes ever followed a small white object tossing on the surface of the water,—a reed basket floating with the current,—and as it traveled along, they hung always directly above it, waiting. A desert lion stood upon the river-bank, and his

178 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

quivering nostrils caught the scent of the object on the river, and his eager tongue brushed the long, bristling whiskers on the sides of his powerful jaws. He was not like the kites and vultures, which would not touch their prey while it lived; but to reach the reed basket he would have to swim out to mid-stream, and, like all of his kind, he feared the touch of water. And as he stood upon the bank like a statue molded of the yellow sand, the basket floating on the waters moved along swiftly with the stream, and a pathetic little wail rose from it—a wail that was heard by none but the lion and the vultures.

Within the reed basket a baby girl lay wrapped in delicate muslin and soft, rich silks, and she had been sent out alone upon the journey to Paradise, to which the Hindu people believe the waters of the Sacred River lead. We do not know who the parents of the baby may have been, nor from what village in the north she came; the abandoning of girl babies was a common custom in that land, and no doubt the kites and vultures had watched many similar white objects floating down the river. But we

The Lotus-Flower of the Jumna 179

do know that this particular baby came of a wealthy family, for the trimmings of her basket were most costly; and we also know that the Hindu mother loved her helpless babe, for with the greatest care and solicitude the child had been prepared for the voyage to the Life Beyond. Beside the child in the basket stood a handsome lota, a brass bowl used for ceremonial washing, and within the bowl was a great shining stone, an offering to the gods, to insure their acceptance of the tiny life.

In the late afternoon, as it approached the city of Agra, the basket struck an eddy in the river and was whirled round and round and then tossed in toward the edge of the stream, under the low-lying bank. More and more slowly it floated, and at last came to rest among the water-lily pads and lotus-flowers of a quiet pool.

A Hindu woman was bathing in the pool. She made a cup of her hand, and lifted the cool water to her throat and face; and she chanted a strange melody that was very sorrowful. As she turned to come out of the water, she saw a white object a short way up the river, and she

180 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

parted the lily-pads in her path and waded over to it. When she lifted the dainty cover of the basket and saw the flower-like beauty of the tiny child within, she uttered a half-choked cry of joy. Then she whispered:

“I should not lift thee, little one, from the river, nor interrupt thy journey to Paradise, for thou wouldst make a beauteous blossom in the gardens of the god Shiva, the Destroyer! But my mistress shall see thy lovely face, and perhaps take comfort from thee in her grief and longing. And out of her great riches she can propitiate thy gods and mine, that they may let thee stay upon this earth!”

Then she raised the basket from the water and balanced it carefully upon her head and climbed with it out of the pool. Upon the bank she deftly exchanged her wet garment for a dry one, and proceeded to a great building of pink sandstone upon the hill. Cautiously she made her way through the long corridors, so that no one might see her and the strange burden she carried. Into the zenana, or harem, she passed, and then slipped quietly into the private chamber of her mistress, Buran Khan, the favorite

wife of the great Asaf Khan, who was the mighty general of Shah Jahangir's army.

Here, on a couch, her mistress lay weeping and moaning. Wali, the Hindu woman, approached the couch and knelt beside it. She held the beautiful baby in her arms, and again its tiny voice uttered a plaintive cry. The great lady on the couch started, and stopped weeping; then she turned, and held out her arms, and when they had closed about the small form, a lovely smile shone on her face.

"You have restored my babe to life," she whispered. "Oh, Wali! you possess wondrous powers of magic!"

"Nay, my lady, it is not so; for your babe lies dead, and no power that I possess can give it life again. But Allah, whom you worship, and Krishna, to whom I pray, have given you another infant, in place of the one they took from you."

Buran Khan looked at the child for a long time, silently.

"This is a Hindu baby, Wali, that you have rescued from the river," she said at length. "Surely you would not suggest that I should

182 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

take the child as my own!" Her voice shook with agitation.

"The Hindu idea, my lady," the woman answered her, "is that the lotus, wherever it grows, is beautiful and pure."

There was a pause; then Buran Khan laid her hand on Wali's shoulder.

"No one need ever know, good Wali—no one but you and me—that this is not the little one I have just lost?" she whispered.

"Your servant's lips are locked upon your secret forever, my lady," Wali assured her. "May the beautiful child thrive and grow, and bring you joy!"

So it was that the Hindu god Shiva and the vultures circling above the river were cheated of a fair little being upon whom they had nearly closed their grasp. Shiva was enriched in another fashion by Buran Khan, for she gave a large, sparkling emerald from her own personal jewels, which was set in the stone forehead of an image of the Hindu god, in a nearby temple. She also gave bounteously to the Mohammedan molla, or priest, who recited

The Lotus-Flower of the Jumna 183

prayers for her from the opposite side of a lattice carved of marble, nearer than which he dared not approach.

But the brilliant gem which the real mother of the child had placed within the brass lota when her baby was consigned to the river and the gods—with that gem Buran Khan would not part, but kept it carefully hidden, where only she might gaze upon its beauty. She little dreamed of the real value of the stone, or its history, and the Hindu mother up in the northlands probably had never guessed it either, but it was destined one day to become a jewel famed throughout the world.

When Asaf Khan returned from the wars he found himself the father of a particularly beautiful baby girl, and his dearly loved wife Buran was very happy and proud. They named the child Arjmand Bann, and when she grew older she was so beloved by the entire household that she was called by every one “The Begum,”—“begum” being a title given to ladies of high rank. She had the most enchanting ripple of a laugh, and a soft voice that was nearly always

184 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

singing. And her little mind was alert and keen, and her heart was running over with loving kindness.

Until she was nine years old she was permitted considerable freedom, and played with her half-sisters and half-brothers,—the children of Asaf Khan's other and less favored wives,—and with the children of the royal court. She knew that after her ninth birthday she would be kept very strictly in the zenana, in accordance with Mahomedan custom, and so she danced and frolicked while she might, with all the abandon of youth and high spirits. And always the Hindu woman Wali, the silent one, stood near her and watched over her, and smiled at her childish pranks.

Around the palace of Shah Jahangir storm-clouds were gathering and danger lurked. His rule was hard and cruel, and his subjects feared and hated him with a bitterness that threatened revolt. The mighty empire which his father, the great Akbar, had conquered, and then governed with such wisdom and understanding, writhed under the injustices and humiliations imposed upon it by the arrogant Jahangir. The

The Lotus-Flower of the Jumna 185

Hindus of high caste and the nobles who had held office under Akbar and helped him administer his realm, had all been supplanted by Mohammedan favorites of the shah, and resentment smoldered in their breasts. But Jahangir remained wilfully blind to the growing discontent of his people, whose grievances daily increased.

At last, upon a day of stifling heat, the patience of the downtrodden ones broke. A huge crowd gathered,—people from every corner of the city,—and swarmed about the walls of the palace. The sound of their threatening voices echoed through the corridors and struck the first note of dread in the cruel heart of Jahangir. He looked about him at his courtiers and wondered how loyally they would defend him.

Then into the silent room there rushed an aged man. His body was stripped of clothes, and his eyes gleamed with the intensity of religious zeal. He strode up to the shah and stood before him, pointing his lean finger into the very face of the monarch.

“Oppressor of my people! Tyrant of this

186 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

land!" He hissed the words, and his body writhed like that of an angry serpent. "We can bear your heavy rule no longer. The people of the city are waiting outside your gates, ready to storm the palace. And they will have small mercy upon you and your followers. You have levied taxes upon us till we have nothing more to give; you have taken from us our lands, our families, our religion. In the name of the thousands who hate you, I warn you to flee from this city, with all your court, before the day is done.

"It is only our love of your father, the great Akbar, that makes us thus lenient to you," the old man went on; "for the sight of your wicked heart plucked from your stony breast would be a welcome one to the people of Agra! May never son of yours, nor kin of any kind, rule over us, until the Sacred Tulwar, the sword forged by Indra and bestowed upon our city, be restored to its magnificence, and returned to the hands of my people!"

That evening, in the gray of twilight, a long train of horsemen, palanquins carefully curtained, and pack-animals heavily burdened,

The Lotus-Flower of the Jumna 187

wound its way to the northwest, over the great Rajputana desert. And so the court of Shah Jahangir was established in Lahore; and here his children, and those of his followers, grew to manhood and womanhood.

Of Jahangir's sons, only Prince Jahan had the respect and love of the people. He was the favorite son of Jahangir's favorite wife, Nur Mahal, and the mother fostered in the young prince those qualities of clear thinking and toleration for which Indian history honors her. From his early youth, because of the wickedness of his father (for Jahangir had soon forgotten the lesson learned at Agra) Prince Jahan had been estranged from the shah. And this breach between father and son widened ever more and more, for Jahangir ruled his children as sternly as he did his people.

It was through the influence of Nur Mahal, the one person whom Jahangir respected and loved, that a betrothal of Prince Jahan with the playmate of his early childhood, The Begum, was arranged. Before the young people could be married, however, Jahangir compelled Prince Jahan to wed the daughter of Muzaffar

188 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

Husain Mirza, in order to seal a political alliance which the shah believed would be of advantage to him.

This act of Jahangir's was the last straw. Prince Jahan and the bride who had been forced upon him rode forth from the great palace in Lahore, and on the prince's lips there was a vow of vengeance against his tyrannical father. Straight he went to Asaf Khan, and begged anew for the hand of The Begum.

"If you will let me win my heart's desire," he said, "I shall feel the joy and strength of a hundred men, and I will go forth and gather about me all those whom my father has wronged and oppressed; and with that countless throng I will break the bitter sway of the shah, my father!"

Then Asaf Khan consented, and gave the prince his blessing, for he knew that the shah had never a friend in all that realm; and he set the day for the wedding. Prince Jahan's heart was right glad then, and he put spur to his horse and traveled fast from town to town to acquaint the people with his brave purpose. And the people cheered him and shouted, and

The Lotus-Flower of the Jumna 189

drew their swords from the scabbards and pledged their support in the army of the prince they loved.

Only Agra, the beautiful city beside the Jumna, held aloof.

“We have vowed,” said the spokesman of the city, “that no son of Jahangir, nor any other relative of his, shall rule over Agra, until the Sacred Tulwar of Indra is made whole: for in that we place our faith and hope.”

The Sacred Tulwar was a huge sword which the Hindu people believed had been forged in heaven, and to which they ascribed magic powers. Many years before, when the Moham-
medan hordes had swept down upon the land, the Hindu rajah, seeing that his city and even his palace were doomed to fall before the invaders, fled with some of his ministers, and they were never seen or heard of by the people again. With them they had carried some of the contents of the royal treasury; most precious of all, the great diamond which had formed the hilt of the Sacred Tulwar, and of which legend said that it had never been mined upon this earth. The sword itself, without a

190 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

hilt and therefore quite useless as a weapon, had been left behind by Shah Jahangir in his flight from Agra, as it had been left by the Hindu rajah many years before.

The failure of Agra to join his standards was a sore disappointment to Prince Jahan. The city was the fairest one in his father's realm, and the one he had most hoped to win. But he had small time to dwell upon this disappointment, for his nuptials with The Begum were close at hand.

When Buran Khan had prepared the beautiful bride for the wedding, she placed in the hands of this daughter she had reared as her very own a silver casket wonderfully carved.

"The jewel within this silver case is peculiarly your own, my little one," she said. "I have kept it for you very carefully since you were a tiny baby. And now I add it to the dowry that your good father gives with you. May it be a talisman of good fortune and happiness to you, as it has been to me ever since it came into my life!" And she kissed The Begum fervently.

Thus it was that the great, brilliant stone which had lain in the brass lota beside the little

The Lotus-Flower of the Jumna 191

child, on the voyage down the river, came into the possession of Prince Jahan. Its astonishing size and the clarity of its sparkling depths convinced the happy prince that the wonderful diamond was the very one which had been taken from the hilt of Agra's magical tulwar.

Not many moons passed before that diamond was fitted once more into the empty groove in the hilt of the sword, and it blazed in the sunlight as it was carried through the streets of Agra at the head of the triumphal procession of Shah Jahan and his court when they entered the city. For the young prince had met with scarcely any opposition in establishing his dominion over the entire realm of his father, and with great acclaim had been crowned emperor. And the ignoble Shah Jahangir had been banished from the land.

A proclamation went out upon that day of coronation that The Begum should henceforth be known by the name of Mumtaz Mahal, which means "Crown of the Palace," with the added title of Empress of India. And Shah Jahan placed in her hands the royal seal, which she alone might use, so that every document of

192 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

state must receive the sanction and approval of the empress. Never was great power put to more kindly and beneficent use, for Mumtaz Mahal felt a bond of sympathy with the Hindu people of the land, which we, having been let into the secret of her birth, can readily understand. Her charity, her gentleness, and her remarkable beauty made her truly the Crown of the Palace, and as such Shah Jahan loved and cherished her, so that the romance of their lives is the most ideal love-story of India.

As for the Sacred Tulwar, I can find no accurate record of its later history, but it seems that the blade was either lost or destroyed during the Persian invasion at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Only the wonderful diamond remains; we call it the Koh-i-noor, which means Mountain of Light, and part of it shines forth to-day in the crown of mighty England.

Shah Jahan's reign was a peaceful one. He gladly turned from the life of a warrior to that of a philanthropist and a patron of art, and to his love of beauty and his sense of graceful

The Lotus-Flower of the Jumna 193

symmetry we owe the masterpiece of Indian architecture, before which every traveler to that land stands in rapt amazement.

When the lovely empress Mumtaz Mahal died, in the year 1631, Shah Jahan was stricken with grief. Nevermore did he enter the harem, nor wear colored dress, or jewels. Had he not considered kingship a sacred duty, he would willingly have laid aside his scepter, and led the simple, religious life of a Mohammedan priest.

There remained only one tribute he could pay to his beloved, and by his order twenty thousand workmen labored for twenty years to construct a fitting tomb for the Crown of his palace. The Taj Mahal, most exquisite of earthly resting-places, stands as the result of their skill and of Shah Jahan's dream of beauty and love.

When you wander out from the city of Agra on a placid moonlit night to view this wonderful shrine, its white marble and alabaster will shimmer like an opal of a hundred tints, and its slender minarets, mirrored in the cypress-bordered pool, will enrapture you with their

194 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

sublimity. It was as I stood just so that my Hindu guide whispered to me the story I have here recounted.

“When the remains of the great empress were brought to this place and laid under the stone,” he concluded, “Wali, a tottering old Hindu woman, stumbled along in the funeral procession, and an ancestor of mine, who was near to her, heard her mutter these words, which my people repeat to this very day:

“The lotus, wherever it grows, is beautiful and pure.”

THE LONG HUNTER LIFTS HIS GUN

THE LONG HUNTER LIFTS HIS GUN

HOW the child, from his very infancy, came to call his parents Father John and Mother Martha, it would be difficult to say, since they really were his parents, and, logically enough, the only ones he had. Equally odd is the fact that they called him "little Ben," even after he had become a full-grown lad, rather above the average size and proudly conscious of his thriving young beard.

But "little Ben" he certainly was in his childhood; and very small indeed he must have been when the pig jumped clean over his head at the country fair. That remained the earliest of his recollections, and many years later, when he stalked over the mountains on hunting-expeditions, he would sometimes make the forest ring with laughter, at the memory of it.

People in Virginia were gay in those days, even along the western border, where life was

198 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

very primitive and fraught with constant danger. They loved to play jokes, and were not resentful when jokes were played on them; and they were always ready for a horse-race or a shooting-match, or any kind of sport. Father John took keen delight in all these things, and so he and Mother Martha and little Ben traveled many miles to attend a country fair.

One of the amusements offered there was called "the scamper," when several pigs were let loose among the crowd. The rule of the game was that these pigs must be caught by their tails only, and these tails were well greased, so that they slipped again and again through clutching fingers. The squealing of the frightened animals rushing to and fro between the legs of people in the crowd, upsetting some of them and splashing others with mud, was mingled with the screams of the children and the laughter of their elders. And in all this confusion one of the pigs jumped right over the head of little Ben. Father John caught hold of its tail as it landed on the ground, and held on so tenaciously that the judges agreed on awarding the pig to him as a prize, and it was

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 199

later carried, in triumph, to the farm in the mountains.

That farm was not much of a farm, to be sure. It consisted of a small clearing planted with corn and wheat, on the bank of the Blue Run, a swift little river, and a crude log cabin consisting of one room with a smoky fireplace. It was a typical frontier homestead, no worse and no better than its neighbors, and it shared with them one great advantage over a more pretentious estate: when the soil became poor or the game moved farther west, it was possible to collect the household belongings, choose a more favored site, build a new cabin, and start all over.

There was very little money to be found among the hill people of Virginia in the year 1750, when little Ben was twelve years old, and the only things of value in a cabin home were likely to be some pieces of old pewter, brought from England by the settlers, a few skins of deer and bear, and a couple of rifles, oiled and loaded. It is hard to believe that these few poor things could be coveted by any one, but often bands of Indians or lawless whites

200 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

would descend upon a cabin and steal what they could, and every householder was ready to guard his small possessions with zeal and at the risk of his life.

It happened once that Father John left home to test his skill at a shooting-match to be held in Albemarle County. There was much neglected work waiting to be done on the farm, but John Cleveland, being a farmer from necessity and not from choice, could easily dismiss from his mind the unpleasant thought of weeds, whenever an attractive pastime offered itself. Mother Martha had coaxed him to carry her spinning-wheel along with him and leave it three miles down the trail at the cabin of a neighbor, with whom she was planning to spend the afternoon, taking her younger children with her.

So it was that little Ben was left alone, with instructions to hoe three rows of corn and study carefully the lessons Mother Martha had set him. He applied himself at once to the lessons, for, like his father, he had no love for the fields. Thirty times he wrote laboriously on the strip of birch-bark that served him as a

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 201

slate, the word "opportunity." Feeling very virtuous and proud of his neat work, he climbed upon a stool to place his birch-bark copy-book conspicuously above the fireplace. It was as he stood thus that the door of the cabin was thrown open, and three drunken rowdies stepped—or, rather, stumbled—into the room. When they saw the child perched upon the stool, they pointed their fingers at him and laughed immoderately.

"Since you are alone, Master Cleveland," said one of them, thickly, "we will not ask your leave to warm ourselves at the fire." He lifted a wooden bench to his knee, and with his full brute strength broke off the sides and base and tossed them into the fireplace.

Little Ben looked about him in dismay. He knew what his father would do were he at home. His eye wandered for a moment to his birch strip with the one word "opportunity" thirty times repeated, then passed to the rifle resting on hooks in the wall above his head. In another instant he had grasped the gun and was pointing it at his tipsy visitors.

"Do you see this, gentlemen?" he asked

202 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

simply. His face was flushed and his heart thumped, but the small finger ready to press the trigger was quite steady, and the aim was true.

Two of the men, with eyes and mouths wide open, stood stupidly staring at him; the third, whose mind was less befuddled, perhaps, muttered a nasty oath and moved toward the door.

“We had best get out quickly,” he said nervously. “The boy is excited, and not to be trusted.” And he made for the woods as fast as his staggering legs would carry him. The other two stumbled after him in haste, and little Ben was left standing in triumph upon the stool, the big gun clasped tightly in his hands.

That was an exploit which to-day would occasion no end of comment and praise, and a modern young hero would no doubt be petted beyond all reason by his fond relatives. But Benjamin Cleveland lived in a country and at a time when a stout heart was bred in every lad, and in every lassie too. Father John merely nodded his head when he heard the story, forbore to administer punishment to his son for having failed to hoe the corn, and fitted hooks

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 203

several inches lower on the wall, to hold the gun.

“Reckon little Ben is old enough,” he remarked dryly to Mother Martha, “to carry a gun of his own. Mind you keep it oiled and cleaned, boy, and don’t waste more powder than you have to.”

And that is all that was said about the matter.

The rifle, however, became little Ben’s constant companion, and many an adventure did he have with it. It did not take him long to learn to handle that gun like an expert. We should not care to use that sort of rifle nowadays, for it required more time to load than we could spare in a tight place, but it was one of the best of its kind at the time, and many a cotton-tail and wild turkey fell under its fire. Later, little Ben ventured farther from home, and saved his shot for a bear or an elk whose skin he might sell to the trader. Soon the lad was earning more from the sale of these skins than his father could make from the scanty produce of the ill-kept farm.

There was a tract of woodland, several miles

204 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

up the river, that abounded in game and had been looked upon with covetous eyes by our young hunter, for a long time. An old Dutchman named Noort held the exclusive right to hunt on that tract, and he might easily have become prosperous, had he not exchanged most of his peltries for brandy at the nearest tavern. Noort made a practice of hunting at night by torch-light, and he had the reputation of being able to shoot straight even after drinking heavily. He was very much a braggart, and boasted never to have missed a shot.

Ben, now a tall lad of sixteen, disliked Noort heartily, and one day he determined to shake the old Dutchman's conceit. He stripped a large piece of bark from a tree, carefully trimmed and rounded it, and carried it in the late afternoon to Noort's pine tract. In a deep pool, on the banks of which were many hoof-prints, Ben deposited the piece of bark, which floated on the surface, looking for all the world like the back of a handsome young buck. Then Ben climbed into the branches of a near-by tree and waited.

When dusk fell, the deer came softly out of

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 205

the woods to the water, to quench their thirst and to stand in the clear pool, where they were less tormented by insects. Then through the darkness of the forest a flickering light approached. The old Dutchman was coming to hunt his game. Ben, perched in the tree, clapped his hands suddenly, and the timid animals fled in a moment, leaving nothing but the piece of bark floating in the water. Arrived at the pool, Noort flung his flaring torch from side to side. Its light would confuse and blind the game until the hunter could raise his gun and shoot. At last he spied what seemed to be a very fine deer, resting in the water. He shot with his accustomed precision, but the animal scarcely moved. For a moment Noort stood perplexed, then lifted his gun, and, aiming with more care, shot again. Still the strange animal did not raise itself from the water, nor sink. Noort peered into the pool for a moment, and then threw up his hands in alarm.

“It be no deer!” he shrieked. “It be de *duyvil!*” and, dropping his torch, he took to his legs without daring once to look behind him.

Ben grinned and chuckled to himself all the

206 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

way home through the woods, that night. But his rough joke bore unexpected fruit, for the superstitious Dutchman never again dared set his foot in that uncanny pine tract, and Ben hunted there undisturbed, for many a long day.

The spirit of adventure and the joy in new sights again and again gripped the heart of the boy. One day he set his face eastward, where he had been told substantial homes were built and tobacco was planted on the rich hill-sides. He did not go far enough to see the really handsome mansions of the wealthy Virginia planters, for they were all situated near the sea-coast. But he gazed in admiration at the pretty dwellings he passed, and the cultivated fields and hedges, like those his mother remembered in old England. He did not know what an uncouth figure he cut, trudging along the dusty road in his ill-fitting doe-skin jacket and heavy fur cap—in the middle of summer, too!—his gun slung over his back, his little hunting-dog at his heels.

He sat down to rest beside a low picket fence, lined with a hedge. On the smooth lawn inside the hedge two girls were playing. One was a

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 207

fragile little creature of eight years, too delicate to remain long on earth; she was tenderly handling the pretty flower dolls which her sister was fashioning for her from hollyhocks and pink and blue mertensia bells. The child made them dance upon the greensward, and laughed when they fell on their sides. The older sister watched her with delight. She stooped over and kissed the little one's pale brow.

"I will make you some more fine ladies, honey," she said, "and then we will show them how to dance the quadrille."

"Let me pluck the flowers!" cried the child, and came to within a few feet of the hedge where Ben sat watching her. She raised her hand to pick some tall hollyhocks, when something darted through the grass at her feet and a great rattlesnake signaled his warning. To Ben's trained ears the sound was unmistakable. He sprang to his feet, leaned far over the fence, and cast a hastily plucked white rose between the helpless child and the angry serpent. Striking at the missile as it reached the ground, the ugly reptile buried its fangs deep in the fragrant flower.

208 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

The young hunter leaped over the hedge and crushed the deadly head with the butt of his gun before the snake had time to strike again, then lifted the trembling child in his arms. Her sister, pale with fright, came running to her, and the old negro mammy also, who had been sitting at a little distance, crooning a song and rocking back and forth. They carried the child into the house and laid her on a couch to rest. Then Mr. Graves, the father of the two girls, and his gentle wife, with tears in their eyes, in faltering voices thanked the brave lad. They begged him to accept of their hospitality as long as he remained in the vicinity, and tried to force all manner of valuable presents on him.

But Ben felt ill at ease in these elegant surroundings, and hastened to depart, though his eyes followed pretty Mary, the elder sister, about the room, and seemed unable to see aught else.

“If I may be permitted to come again—” something prompted him to say. “It is such a pleasant journey from the mountains.”

There were two things he carried away with

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 209

him: a book called "Hudibras," written by Samuel Butler and published in England, which he said would give him more pleasure than the suit of fine clothes and the silver shoe buckles Mr. Graves offered him, and the picture in his memory of a sweet and lovely girl bending over her frail little sister.

How often and how carefully Ben read that book, we, with countless volumes and periodicals at our disposal, can scarcely understand. How often he thought of the plantation in the valley, of the smooth lawn, of kindly Mr. Graves and his good lady, of the delicate blossom of a child, and of sweet Mary, I dare not try to guess. I only know that he made the "pleasant journey from the mountains" many times, and that in the end there traveled back with him a radiant and happy bride, and that his heart was very glad.

It was in the year 1762 that Mary Graves and Ben Cleveland were married and settled on a small farm near Pig River. But Ben, as you can well imagine, made an indifferent farmer, and was glad enough for the valid excuse of the French and Indian War to drop his hoe

210 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

and take up his gun against the enemy that threatened destruction to the entire border colony. He was a famous shot, even for that day of skilled marksmen, and he fought with his brain as well as his brawn.

“’T is a bit of good sense I have read in ‘Hudibras,’” he often said, “and it has saved my life more than once:

“For those that fly may fight again
Which he can never do that’s slain.”

It may be a brave man who stands out in the open and lets himself be shot; but, truly, it is a wise man who picks off his enemies and protects himself at the same time.”

Those words of Samuel Butler’s had become the guiding motto of Ben’s life.

After the war, being so unsuccessful on his farm as scarcely to support his wife and children, Ben Cleveland determined to seek his fortune elsewhere. In the year 1769 he joined with his father-in-law, Mr. Graves, in establishing a stock-farm beside the Yadkin River, in North Carolina. Since Mr. Graves was an experienced manager and had several industrious slaves, this venture, needless to say, pros-

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 211

pered, and left Ben considerable freedom to pursue his hunting adventures.

There were at that time a number of hardy spirits—most famous of all, the great Daniel Boone—who made extended expeditions and were absent from home for long periods at a time, so that they were called the Long Hunters. From Boone himself, who was a neighbor of the Clevelands, Ben heard such glowing accounts of the beautiful country to the westward, that in 1772 he could no longer resist the call of the wilderness, and in the company of four other restless pioneers, set out for the lands across the Blue Ridge, which were called Kentucky.

This country, however, did not belong to the English colonists, but remained, according to solemn treaty, the hunting-grounds of the Indians. The little band of white men had scarcely passed through the Cumberland Gap, when a terrifying thing happened.

They had dismounted in order to prepare their noonday meal, and were resting in the shade of some grand old oaks. Ben spread his blanket and soon fell fast asleep. In a

212 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

few minutes he awoke with a start and sat bolt upright, his eyes filled with alarm. With the caution of the trained woodsman he looked about him, and saw that a huge limb of the tree under which he lay was broken, and hung directly above him, only partly attached to the great trunk.

“Look!” he said to his companion. “See what an ugly thing we are camped under.”

The others laughed carelessly. “It is evident that that branch has hung just so for many months,” they said. “The raw wood is weather stained. There is no cause for worry.”

Ben rose to his feet and picked up his blanket.

“As surely as it has hung there for a long time,” he said, “so surely must it fall in the end.”

He moved over toward his comrades, trailing his blanket behind him. At that moment there was a sharp crack above, and the heavy limb crashed to the ground, pinning the end of his blanket beneath its weight. When the men, with all their strength, rolled the monster branch over, they found that its sharp end had been driven fourteen inches into the earth, on

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 213

the very spot where Cleveland had slept. With white faces his friends grasped him by the hand, and his prophetic wisdom made him the undisputed leader after that.

That night the five hunters pitched their camp for the first time in beautiful Kentucky. But the neighing of one of their horses betrayed their presence to a party of Cherokee Indians, who stealthily surrounded and captured them. For some strange reason, the Indians neither killed nor scalped their prisoners, according to their barbarous custom, but stripped them all of their belongings—their horses, guns, ammunition, and even shoes and caps—and ordered them out of the red man's land. A single old firelock was given them in exchange, and two rounds of shot. The long journey back to their homes had to be made with no other means of procuring food than these two gun charges; and it is said that when they reached the white settlements, they were quite exhausted and on the point of starvation.

But Ben Cleveland had no peace of mind.

“I have been spared,” said he, “so that I might fight again. And I will try to recover

214 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

my good horse and the gun my father gave me when I was a boy.”

A few of his neighbors were eager to join him in his delicate undertaking, and cheerfully followed him over the difficult trail, back to Kentucky. Once there, however, Cleveland separated himself from his party and made his way alone and on foot to a Cherokee village. He laid his grievance before Big Bear, the chief.

“The tribe that stole your horse and gun,” said Big Bear, “will surely kill you if they know for what you have come. But you are a brave fighter, and so should be killed only by another equally brave, and since I am the mightiest warrior of the Cherokees, I alone have the right to kill you. Therefore I will protect you from the others.”

So Big Bear gave him a guard of Indians, and they set out in quest of the stolen belongings. From village to village they searched, till at last they located the handsome young horse and the time-worn rifle, in the possession of a battle-scarred veteran brave.

“If you think to take from me what I have

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 215

rightfully won," cried this fearless red man, dropping to his knee and aiming the gun straight at Cleveland, "I will kill you with your own weapon!"

One of Big Bear's men threw Cleveland suddenly to the ground, just in time to avoid the shot of the angry Indian, which pierced through the white man's jacket but did him no bodily harm. Before the Indian could reload, Cleveland sprang to the back of his horse, which stood nearby; and, as he dashed off, he stooped from his galloping steed and snatched the rifle from the hands of the crouching red thief.

So he rode back to Big Bear, and later to his companions.

"I have got what is mine," he said. "Now let us return to our own country, and leave to the Indian what is his."

They journeyed back to North Carolina, and Cleveland never again hunted in Kentucky.

Indeed, his hunting days were nearly over. But that was no less because the herds of elk and buffalo were moving ever westward, than because a most thrilling part of the history of our country was being enacted, and a man of

216 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

Ben Cleveland's temperament could not for long keep out of the fray.

Soon the tidings of Lexington and Bunker Hill reached the frontiersmen on the southwestern border. Cleveland knew that the British officials were exacting unreasonable taxes, and were unjust and tyrannous in their rule. Other men saw this too, and thus that territory, like all the others, was soon divided into two camps, the Tory and the Whig, and there was bitter enmity between them.

Under the unstable government, lawlessness was rampant, and conditions forced honest men to rise in rebellion. The settlers of Wilkes County soon turned to Ben Cleveland as their natural leader. With his volunteer militia he scoured the land, summarily disposed of outlaws by hanging them from the nearest tree, and conducted an intermittent warfare with the Tory loyalists.

In 1778, he was made colonel of the militia, and the head justice of his county, and so his leadership became official. And it was in this capacity that his greatest service to his country was performed.

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 217

The British had suffered one repulse after another in the North, and were finally driven to the Southern colonies, where they rallied around Cornwallis, gathered together all the staunch loyalists they could muster, and soon had a formidable army. Several successful encounters so encouraged Cornwallis that he sent a threatening message to the western frontier, demanding that the men come under his standard or accept his challenge of battle. That message fired the entire border.

The hardy woodsmen, to whom freedom had always been a very real thing, quickly armed themselves. Their leaders decided to make an attack on the British commander, Colonel Ferguson, who was marching with more than eleven hundred men through South Carolina,—before that able warrior might expect them. Ferguson's scouts, however, brought him the news that the backwoodsmen were coming.

“Let them come!” cried the colonel. “They are but a handful of mountain rats, without any training, and with no conception of military tactics. We will array ourselves on yonder height, and when we shoot down among the

218 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

dogs, they will cower and sneak back to their homes in the woods!" He laughed as he pictured their discomfiture.

But the battle that was fought on King's Mountain did not prove to be quite so simple.

Colonel Benjamin Cleveland, at the head of the "Bulldogs of Wilkes County," as they were called, spoke to his men before he led them into action, and what he said has become historic.

"Every man must consider himself an officer," he cried, "and act from his own judgment. Fight as the Indian fights, and take advantage of every tree and rock and bush. Strike as many of the enemy as you can, but do not let the enemy strike you; for remember, you can serve only as long as you are alive and whole!"

The frontiersmen formed into four separate columns and ascended the mountain from north, south, east and west. Their rough coon-skin caps and their deadly hunting-rifles bristled behind tree trunks and boulders in every direction, and the British in their red coats were pitifully conspicuous targets. But they fought like men, and several times the woodsmen gave way before them.

The Long Hunter Lifts His Gun 219

“Retreat to cover!” Cleveland would shout. “‘He who flies may fight again, which he can never do that ’s slain!’”

And sure enough, he always led them back into the fray, and each time they advanced a little farther.

Ferguson’s position on the broad summit of King’s Mountain would have been ideal had he been fighting an enemy employing the military tactics of that day; but the “rats from the woods” fought like the Indians, and surrounded their foe as they would have encircled a herd of game. Closer and closer they pressed, and when at last brave Ferguson fell from his horse and expired, the loyalists knew that their cause was lost, and they surrendered.

That battle blighted the hopes of Cornwallis and though it has been less often described in verse and story than some of the conflicts that preceded it or came after, it stands in the light of the present day as a crisis in the American Revolution, turning the tide of war definitely against the British, and safeguarding the independence of our young nation.

The frontiersmen returned to their woods

220 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

and mountains and their several duties, leaving the affairs of state to minds better fitted for such work than their own. But they had done their bit well, and deserve our gratitude—not least among them the gallant Ben Cleveland, who had led his “Bulldogs” to victory. That he was honored and idolized by his men is proved by the fact that to him was awarded Ferguson’s powerful war-horse, and also, as a trophy, an old snare-drum, of which he was very proud, and on which he scrawled (for he was no great scholar) the words of his favorite proverb:

*Those that fly may fight again,
Which he can never do that’s slain.*

THE CANNON-BALLS OF ALKMAAR

THE CANNON-BALLS OF ALKMAAR

CLUMP! *Clump! Clump! Clump!* Grietje was coming home with the evening's milk. The sharp click of her wooden shoes on the brick pavement could be heard down the entire length of the little street, and the old people, sitting around the fires in their small cottages, smiled and nodded their heads.

“Grietje is a good girl,” they said, “and as strong as a bull calf. Farmer Hoeck and his good wife have something to be proud of in their family, after all!”

The children came running out of their houses to meet Grietje, for she was a favorite with them all, and could make grimaces to satisfy the soul of any little urchin and make him shriek with mirth.

“Yes, yes, little ones,” Grietje replied to the shouts of the children, “I will pretend to be the old tavern-keeper, and run after you all with a stick. But first I must get the milk into the

224 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

cheese-house and pour it into the tubs, that it may quickly begin to turn to curds. Jan, keep away from the pails! You remember that the last time you upset one of them, my father made it painful for you, for ever so long, to lie down in bed or sit upon a stool. Marietje, is it fish for your mother's dinner that you carry in your basket? My nose cannot mistake the smell of it. And the odor of fish, as you very well know, will frighten the cream right out of the milk, and then Mother Hoeck can make no butter. Run along, and carry your basket home; then perhaps you may return and play at teasing the old tavern-keeper, and I will run after you and search in every corner but the one where you are hidden!"

While Grietje was jesting with the children she was carrying her pails of milk, two at a time, from the small boat moored in the canal, to the cheese-house, where it was poured into large vats and left for a time, that the cream might rise and be skimmed from the top. Then she mended the fire which kept the curing cheeses at a uniform temperature; and then

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 225

for half an hour Grietje was free to romp with the children.

The old folks were right: Grietje was a good girl, and as strong as a bull calf. With her flaxen hair streaming from under her snowy cap, and her red cheeks glowing with health and youth, she was a perfect type of Dutch maiden. There was nothing delicate about Grietje: her frame was large and her shoulders broad, and although she counted only twelve summers, she had been doing the entire work of the dairy on her father's farm ever since her brother Hendrik had run away to Liège, far in the Southland, to study painting and engraving under the artist Lampsonius.

Hendrik Hoeck was one of the members of the family about whom the town gossips had much to say. In that year of 1572, the Golden Age of Art had not yet dawned in north Holland, though it was already flourishing in Flanders; and the farmer-people of Alkmaar, where the Hoeck family lived, had little patience with a great husky lad who neglected all his duties, and cared to do nothing the livelong

226 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

day but daub with paints and chalk on the walls of his father's house.

“The boy is queer,” they would say. “Farmer Hoeck will reap small satisfaction from his son, for the lad takes after his grandfather, and there is no knowing what he will do, or how he will end. With Grietje it is different!”

But Hendrik Hoeck was not the only blot on the family honor. He was a very small blot indeed compared with old Jakob Hoeck, his grandfather. People did not talk of Jakob Hoeck except in a whisper and with frequent furtive glances over their shoulders, for no one could tell how far his power extended, nor for what evil purpose he might use it. It was said of him, by those who remembered, that he, also, had run away from home when he was young, and had wandered on foot through many lands—Italy, Spain, and Heaven knows where else! And when he returned, he did not settle down to be a decent farmer, which every one knows he should have done. Instead, he built himself a little room and filled it with glass bottles and globes and vials and tubes, and here he poured different liquids to-

gether, and made strange colors, and sometimes even hissing noises and wreaths of steam without the least vestige of fire.

To-day we should call him an alchemist, the forerunner of our modern scientific chemist, from whom we have gained such important knowledge; but in the olden days he was accused of witchcraft and magic, and was believed to hold communication with the devil and carry out the Evil One's sinful schemes.

Jakob Hoeck married a respectable village girl, and had an only son; and though he never put his hand to honest work, he always seemed to have enough money on which to live. Indeed, he paid for his supplies with gold, which (here the wise ones shook their heads knowingly) he doubtless made in his glass vials by means of black magic.

But one day a disastrous thing happened. An explosion occurred in Jakob Hoeck's laboratory; an explosion which reverberated like thunder and caused the very earth to tremble; an explosion which wrecked the laboratory and nearly burned the whole house to the ground. As luck would have it, the life of

228 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

Jakob Hoeck was saved. He emerged from the ruins, badly burned and scratched, it is true, but smiling, despite all, for his soul was satisfied. He had succeeded in producing artificially a substance called saltpeter, a necessary ingredient of gunpowder. The latter was still almost unknown in his country, but during his travels, he had seen it most effectively used by the Spaniards in their wars.

He felt that the work he had done was good. The elders of the town—the whole community of Alkmaar, indeed—disagreed with him in this. They armed themselves with stones and bludgeons, and hurried to the still-smoldering remains of Hoeck's laboratory. They stormed the place and routed him out, and pursued him through the streets of the town and past the city gates, and they forbade him on penalty of death, to enter Alkmaar again.

Several miles distant from the town there was a dense woods, and in this woods Jakob Hoeck built himself a tiny hut, and made a small clearing, on which he could plant turnips and cabbages. And here he pursued his experiments undisturbed, and lived to be an old man.

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 229

In the meantime his family, left behind in Alkmaar, managed to eke out a livelihood by some means or other, and his son grew up to become a prosperous farmer and law-abiding citizen, who never showed any tendency to follow the father's strange ways. Farmer Hoeck, in good time, married and had two children, named Hendrik and Grietje. And so, you see, we come back to the starting-point of our narrative.

Grietje, of course, had heard all the stories concerning her grandfather, and some of them were very elaborate indeed. She had even gone many times to the little hut in the woods, for Farmer Hoeck insisted that on certain feast-days in the year she should carry a basket with flour and cheese, a jug of milk, and several ells of good draper's cloth, and leave them on the doorstep of her grandfather's crude dwelling. This she had always done with trembling and a thumping heart, and then had run away toward home as though chased by a hundred goblins. She had never actually seen the old man on any of these occasions. In fact, I believe that if he had appeared in the doorway of

230 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

his hut, Grietje would have swooned on the spot, for her fear was very terrible and real.

Her visits to her grandfather's home in the woods were the only exciting events in the life of Grietje, up to her thirteenth year, for otherwise her daily routine was peaceful enough, with the care of the cattle; the trip in the little boat, along the quiet canal morning and evening, to the pasture land to milk the cows; the churning of the butter, and the salting of the cheese.

But this peaceful life was not destined to continue long. And one day *Grietje did not come home with the evening milk!* For this is what happened:

She had started out, as was her custom, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, in her little boat filled with newly scrubbed wooden milk-pails. Onnoozel, her big, shaggy dog, ran along the bank of the canal and barked. He knew his business, did Onnoozel, even though he bore so uncomplimentary a name: it was to protect Grietje, and to stand guard over the buckets of milk until they were all collected.

It took twenty minutes of vigorous rowing to reach the polder, and the milking of eight

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 231

cows is likely to be a lengthy task, so nearly three hours had elapsed when Grietje's boat rounded a curve in the canal and brought her in sight again of the ramparts of Alkmaar. But behold! The great plain outside the massive walls of the city was filled with men in armor, and horses and tents, and the flags floating from the standards over the tents were the hated flags of Spain!

Grietje's blue eyes nearly popped from their sockets. Even Onnoozel stood still suddenly and ceased his joyous barking. Of course the girl had heard of the cruel Spanish troops who had swept over the whole of southern Holland and had vanquished every one in their path. News did not travel swiftly in those days; but there had been a report, several months before this, that Naarden had been destroyed by the Spanish under the Duke of Alva, and that the city of Haarlem was under siege. And now they were here, before the gates of Alkmaar! The girl rested on her oars and stared and stared. What would her mother do, and her father? Then another thought came: what would she herself do?

232 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

At last she squared her shoulders and began to row again. Onnoozel, silent now, kept even with the little boat. But two great swarthy soldiers, with lances in their hands, shouted at her and stopped her. One of them spoke broken Dutch, and he demanded her name and where she was going.

Grietje was not a stupid girl, and she thought quickly.

“My name is Marguerite,” she said. “I live yonder in the woods with my grandfather, who has been to Spain. I am taking this milk to be sold at the market in Alkmaar.”

The soldiers laughed.

“You will not get the milk to market this day, nor for many a day to come,” said the one who understood her language. “And you had better go home to your grandfather. This is no place for a pretty girl like you,” and he stooped down from the little bridge on which he stood, and chucked her under the chin.

Grietje did not like that. She began to row with all her strength, back toward the polder. Tears rolled down her cheeks, and something rose in her throat and almost choked her.

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 233

When she had passed the lazy curve in the canal, she called Onnoozel, and he jumped down from the low bank and sat beside her in the little boat.

“What is to become of us, Onnoozel? And where shall we go?” she wailed.

The dog poked his moist black nose into her hand. He was sympathetic, but had no suggestion to offer. The night was falling fast now; already the evening star shone in the darkening sky.

“There is no one to go to but Grandfather.” A shudder passed over her as she spoke. “Onnoozel, we shall have to go to Grandfather in the woods.”

She moored the boat to a tree as near her destination as the canal would take her, and then, with the dog close at her heels, made her way into the dark forest. Once or twice she paused, and her courage nearly forsook her; but the thought of the cruel Spanish soldiers encamped at the gates of her city, made her grope her way on again. When at length she reached the hut, she crept up to the tiny window and peeped inside. Over a crackling fire of

234 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

dried twigs an iron pot was steaming. It might contain some deadly potion, some hideously concocted witch's brew, but the smell that reached Grietje's nose at the window indicated that it might contain — dinner. Onnoozel sniffed the welcome smell and wagged his tail.

“Grandfather,” whispered Grietje at the window, “Grandfather, I am Grietje Hoeck.”

Then she crouched down and waited. She heard some one shuffle across the floor of the hut and open the door. The light from the fire shone out into the woods.

“Did some one call?” It was a gentle voice that asked. “I bid the stranger welcome.”

Then Onnoozel bounded over to the doorstep, and the old man put his hand on the dog's shaggy head and stroked it. That was reassuring, and Grietje stepped out of the shadow of the woods and stood before her grandfather.

“You are my granddaughter,” he said at once. “I do not know your name, but I have seen you come and leave your basket at my door. I wished to speak to you, but I did not even show myself, for I saw you were afraid.”

“I am afraid no longer,” replied Grietje, hon-

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 235

estly, and lifted her face for her grandfather to kiss, and then willingly entered the shelter of his hut.

That night a quantity of dinner was consumed in the hermit's cabin such as had never before disappeared at one sitting there, for both Grietje and Onnoozel had healthy young appetites, and the alchemist certainly was no mean cook.

Then they sat before the fire until very, very late, and Grietje told him about her father and mother, and about Hendrik, who had run away from home to become an artist, and the life they had all led in Alkmaar. And then she described the happenings of this eventful day: her attempt to return from the polder; the Spanish hosts surrounding her city's walls; and her fears for the safety of her parents and the neighbors whom she loved. The old man sat looking into the fire very thoughtfully.

"We must find a way to help them," he said at length. "You and I must give assistance to our city!"

And they did.

At first Grietje could not understand how

236 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

the work she did day after day for her grandfather could be of any use to the inhabitants of Alkmaar. But the old man was very wise.

“Be patient, my dear,” he told her. “*Haast u langzaam*. In the end you will see.”

Haast u langzaam, you must know, means “Make haste slowly,” and Grietje, to whom had been proved in many ways the sound judgment and the goodness of old Jakob Hoeck, did his bidding without question. Morning and evening she went to the polder with faithful Onnoozle at her side, cared for the sleek cows grazing there, and brought the milk back to the hut in the woods. Into great wooden tubs, which her grandfather had fashioned, she poured the milk. To this she added the rennet which turned it rapidly to curds, and followed the procedure of making it into cheese exactly as she had done in the old cheese-house at the back of her father’s home.

Only, the molds into which she shaped it were different. Until that time, the cheeses made in Holland were rectangular, very much like a brick, though not quite so thick, and that was the shape in which Grietje had been accustomed

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 237

to form the cheeses. But now her grandfather insisted that they be round. He hollowed out large spherical forms for her from solid blocks of wood, and when the cheeses were entirely cured and quite hard he dipped them in a fluid which dyed them black on the outside, and then he polished them with oil until they shone like globes of metal. In a few weeks the little hut was stacked with polished black cheeses.

Then, one day, Jakob Hoeck called Grietje.

“Come, my dear,” he said. “You are to go with me on a most important errand. You will carry this sack, which is rather heavy, for it contains two spheres of iron of the same size as your cheeses; and you must hold them carefully, so that they do not jolt nor knock against each other. But before we start you must promise me that, whatever you see or hear this day, you will show no surprise, nor on any account utter a single word!”

When Grietje had solemnly promised, the old man helped her lift the heavy sack to her shoulder. Then they set off through the woods, Jakob Hoeck leading the way, in the direction of Alkmaar.

238 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

The Spanish soldier who accosted them, when they reached the plain before the city walls, was much astonished when this stranger, bent with age, demanded in excellent Spanish to be directed to the general's tent.

"You must tell your mission and who you are, before I will let you pass," he was told.

"I am an enemy of Alkmaar, and so your friend," Jakob replied.

It was well that Grietje did not understand the tongue in which he spoke, now to the sentinel and later to the great Don Valdez himself, for her amazement would have appeared upon her face in spite of herself. We, who have the advantage of comprehending any language, shall know just what he said.

When Jakob Hoeck was brought into the presence of Don Valdez, he dropped respectfully to his knees. Grietje stood in the entrance of the tent, her sack slung over her shoulder, and her countenance as stolid as only a Dutch countenance can be.

"Great and noble Spaniard," began the old man, "I am an alchemist who has traveled long in Spain and Italy, in Egypt and Arabia; and

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 239

I have learned many of the secrets of the wise men of these lands. I bring to you one of the most profound of these secrets, with which you will be able to subdue quickly the city under whose walls you are encamped. It is because this city has used me so ill that I would wreak vengeance by placing my power in your hands. I am an outcast of Alkmaar, one who has suffered exile and humiliation for many years; now the houses of its inhabitants shall crumble under my mighty blasts!"

"Let us see what you have brought," demanded Don Valdez.

"Bring me thy sack, Granddaughter," old Jakob called, and he lifted a black and polished cannon-ball from its folds. Then he continued:

"It is because saltpeter is brought from far-away India and is so exceedingly scarce, that your mortars lie idle, or are used to fling harmless stones. I have discovered how to produce saltpeter, and I can supply you with balls of fire, like this one, in large quantities."

"We will see if you speak truth," said Don Valdez, and sent for the captain of the battery.

"Place this black ball in your mortar," he

240 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

commanded the captain, "and aim at yonder tree. If you can indeed supply us with gunpowder, good alchemist, we shall repay you well."

"I ask for no pay," replied Jakob Hoeck. "The ruins of Alkmaar shall be my reward."

Hardly had he spoken when a noise like thunder filled the air, and the sturdy tree, with its branches broken and splintered, came crashing to the ground.

"We will try the other fire-ball upon that mound of sand," commanded Don Valdez, and pointed his jeweled finger.

And the gleam that shone in his eye when the mound of sand rose into the air and then descended like a rain of ashes, was the gleam of conquest.

"Bring us all the cannon-balls you can make," said the general; "and when Alkmaar has fallen, we shall send a message to our king, so that he may reward your service."

Jakob Hoeck bowed low.

"I will send all I can, each day," he said. "But let me warn you not to waste my fire-balls on Alkmaar's walls. Those ramparts are too

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 241

thick and strong to yield. Throw the deadly missiles over the walls, and they are sure to destroy houses and lives, and bring the stubborn city to its knees.”

The old man bowed himself out of the august presence, and trudged back to his hut in the woods, supporting himself on Grietje's sturdy shoulder. There was a smile upon his face which it was well Don Valdez could not see.

Then Jakob Hoeck set to work quickly to build a little cart for Onnoozel to draw. Holland is a land, you must remember, where dogs were used as beasts of burden, and indeed, still are; and Onnoozel was not unaccustomed to a harness. When the small cart was finished, the old man decorated it with gay colors, and on the tail-board he painted the words: *Haast U Langzaam*.

From that time on, Grietje went daily through the woods to the Spanish camp, leading Onnoozel, with the cart stacked full of shiny black cheeses. Never a word did she utter on these occasions, nor answer the sallies of the soldiers, but delivered her cargo of “cannon-balls” to the captain of the battery, and then

242 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

sometimes stood to watch a few of them hurled over the walls and dropped into the city.

Old Jakob Hoeck was a wise man. He knew that the natives of Alkmaar were patriots, as he himself was most truly one, and that they would hold out against their enemies until starvation forced them to submit. That is the way in a siege, you know; for it is not a pitched battle, and sometimes there is very little fighting; it is a patient blockade, lasting until the food supply of the city is exhausted.

The throwing force of the ancient cannon was not very great, but, as you can imagine, when Grietje's cheeses fell on the roofs or brick pavements of Alkmaar, they cracked and broke in many pieces. And so the people soon discovered of what material these strange missiles were made, and how valuable they were. Cheese is exceedingly nutritious, as the thrifty Dutch people know well.

Now that this added duty, this trip each day to the Spanish camp had to be accomplished, there was more work for Grietje than she could do. But assistance came most unexpectedly.

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 243

One day, when the young girl was on the polder milking the cows, she noticed a stranger-lad of fifteen or sixteen sitting on the bank of the canal, sketching in an artist's portfolio. When she carried her pails of foaming white milk to the little boat, this youth addressed her and showed her the picture he had made of the contented, grazing cattle and the pretty milkmaid.

"I am a stranger to this part of the country," said the lad. "Can you direct me to the city of Alkmaar? For I carry a message to one Farmer Hoeck, who lives there."

"I am the daughter of Farmer Hoeck," cried Grietje, excitedly, "and it is to me you will have to deliver your message, for the city of Alkmaar is beleaguered by the Spanish, and no one can enter there."

"It is from your brother that I bring news," replied the youth. "He is a fellow-student with me under the master Lampsonius. He begged me to visit his family on my sketching-trip of the north country, and to tell them that he is doing well, and is happy in his work."

244 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

“Come,” said the practical Grietje. “You must get into the boat and go with me to my grandfather’s home in the woods.”

When the young artist, whose name was Otho van Veens, heard of the plight of the city of Alkmaar, and of the ambitious scheme of Jakob Hoeck, he abandoned his plan of travel and set to work with a will, adding his young strength to the work of succoring the town. He too was a loyal Dutchman, a native of Leyden, and he had seen much of the evil wrought by the Spaniards in his land.

So the three patriots labored in the little hut in the woods, day after day, and week after week. And Alkmaar did not yield.

One morning Grietje brought back a letter for Jakob Hoeck from the Spanish camp.

“You are commanded to appear at once before Don Valdez,” it read, “and you had better lose no time.”

The old man’s face paled. Had the Spaniards discovered how he had deceived them; the calamitous trick he had played? He could hope for no mercy from them, then. But bravely he went, alone, to answer the call.

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 245

Don Valdez sat in his tent, and there was an ugly frown upon his brow.

“For many weeks we have been bombarding this city,” he said, “and still it does not fall.”

The old man moistened his lips and tried to smile.

“They are a stubborn people,” he said, “but they must be growing very weak.”

“We strongly suspect that your fire-balls are powerless and do no harm,” continued the general. “When we shoot them over the walls, we hear no explosion and we see no smoke.”

“It is because they fall amongst the houses,” answered Jakob Hoeck, “so that the sound and scattering fire do their damage without rising above the roofs. But I will prove the power of my gunpowder, good general. Perhaps your captain is not as skilful at handling his weapon as I might be. Permit me, then, to load and shoot your cannon once, to demonstrate that I speak truth.”

“Aim at yonder bridge across the canal,” ordered Don Valdez, “and if it does not fall a total wreck, things will go ill with you.”

Into the breach of the cannon, then, Jakob

246 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

Hoeck slipped a real cannon-ball which he had brought with him, concealed in his doublet. And lo! the bridge was completely destroyed.

Don Valdez was a hard and bitter man to his enemies, but he also was a courtier and a gentleman, and his apologies to the old alchemist were sincere and gracious. And so, many weeks passed again, and still Grandfather Hoeck and Grietje and Otho van Veens toiled on in the woods.

Even though something is expected at any moment over a long space of time, it is apt to come as a surprise in the end. One morning Grietje stood among the soldiers of the Spanish battery, her cart-load of cheeses just delivered, and waited to see the first of these shot over the walls of her city. When—behold!—The gates of Alkmaar swung open and many men marched forth.

“Alkmaar surrenders!” went up the shout of the Spanish camp.

But in a few moments some one perceived that the men of the city were armed, and that they marched in military order. They had not come to plead for leniency from their conquer-

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 247

ors; they had come to fight! Don Valdez's army was taken unaware. The soldiers scrambled for their armor and their weapons.

"We will shoot a fire-ball among them," cried the captain of the cannon. "We will crush them into the ground, like a swarm of miserable insects!"

So the mortar was aimed, and the missile set, and the order given to shoot. A few Dutchmen fell, and rolled over once or twice in the sand; but there was no explosion and no fire, and the yellow stuff that spattered over the spot where the "fire-ball" had dropped was not gunpowder, *it was cheese!*

There was consternation and confusion in the Spanish camp then. The shouts of the officers could not restore order. And that was fortunate for Grietje, standing there amongst them. She succeeded in making her escape, and ran with the speed of the wind to the woods.

"We are discovered!" was her breathless story. "The Spanish know how we have tricked them!"

"Then flee as I have directed you should do in this event," spoke Jakob Hoeck. "Otho, I

248 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

trust to you to protect my Grietje. Go with her to a distant part of the woods and climb into a tall tree, and hide there till the danger is passed.”

“But you, Grandfather!” cried Grietje; “what will become of you!”

“I am an old man,” said the alchemist, “and I have done my duty. That is enough for me.”

Van Veens forced Grietje to go, then, and Jakob Hoeck remained alone with Onnoozel, sitting in his hut in the woods, waiting. All the afternoon he sat so, till the twilight fell. Then he heard the sound of voices and the tramping of many feet. He trembled a little, but he did not move.

When the men of Alkmaar broke in at the door they found the old man preparing his soul for a horrible death. How little he was prepared for their acclaim and praise and joy, you can well imagine. But when they carried him on their shoulders through the woods across the plain, through the city gates, and to the very doorstep of the home of his son, the alchemist of Alkmaar woods received his reward.

The Cannon-Balls of Alkmaar 249

Soon Grietje and Otho van Veens crept through the open city gates, also, and shared in the triumphant applause of the people they had saved. I will not dwell too long upon this scene of joy, for you can easily picture it for yourselves.

But let me tell how Otho van Veens soon set out for Italy, to study the great works of the ancient masters. And how when he returned in 1580 he married Grietje Hoeck and took her to live in Antwerp and later in Brussels, where his studio was famous, and where he was the master of the greatest of Flemish artists, Peter Paul Rubens.

Some of the results of Grietje's eventful life are still visible to-day. Most striking of all, perhaps, is the shape of Holland's cheeses. They are painted red now, it is true, instead of black, for there is no need to disguise them as cannon-balls; but in contents, shape, size, and weight they are quite the same as Grietje and Jakob Hoeck made them in the little hut in the woods.

If you wish to see how Grietje looked, you

250 Proverb Stories of Many Lands

will find in the Louvre, in Paris, a picture by Otho van Veens, of himself and his family, painted in 1584.

And until recently there was preserved in Alkmaar a small dog-cart, with gay colors, and on the tail-board were the words:

Make haste slowly.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00024845709