

中國二十五故事

TWENTY-FIVE SHORT CHINESE STORIES

TOLD IN SIMPLE ENGLISH BY

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TWENTY-FIVE SHORT CHINESE STORIES

THE BOY WHO HAD NO PAPER

Once there was a little boy named Yang Su. When he was only four years old, his father died and his mother became very poor. Later, Yang Su wanted to study for the examinations, but he had no money to buy paper, or pen and ink. He did not know what to do. But where there is a will there is a way. The boy lived near the sea, so he took a stick and went down to the shore. There, with the stick, he wrote down his lessons on the sand, and afterwards he became a great scholar.

THE BOY AND THE GLOWWORMS

Once there was a boy who was studying for the examinations, but he could not read when it was dark, because his family was too poor to buy oil. What could he do? At last, he thought of a plan. He remembered that glowworms give a tiny light, and so he collected a large number together. By their light he was able to continue studying for a long time into the night.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL

A poor boy, named Kwang Heng, was very fond of books and loved to study. He worked for a magistrate who gave him books instead of money. But the books were no use, for the boy was too poor to buy oil for a lamp at night. At last, he thought of a plan. His next-door neighbor was wealthy and had lamps; so he made a little hole in the wall between the two houses. Then he held his book in front of the hole and caught the light that came through, and so was able to study.

THE SLEEPY STUDENT

Once upon a time, there lived a boy who was very anxious to do well in the examinations, and thus bring honor to his parents. He discovered, however, that after he had been studying for some hours, he began to be very drowsy. His head used to nod until he fell fast asleep. This distressed him very much indeed.

At last, he tied a piece of cord to the end of his queue, and fastened it to a beam in the roof, so that, when his head began to nod, the pull of the queue roused him. In this way, he was able to keep awake and study for a long time

THE BIG JAR OF WATER

A little boy, named Ssŭ Ma Kwang, was playing with some children in a beautiful garden. One of the boys was sitting on the edge of a large earthenware jar and looking at the goldfish swimming in the water. Suddenly he fell in. The jar was a high one, and none of the children could reach their playfellow. What could they do? Quickly Ssŭ Ma Kwang thought of a plan. He took up a large stone, which was lying on the ground, and threw it at the earthenware jar. The jar broke. The water ran out, and thus the boy's life was saved.

THE BALL IN THE HOLLOW TREE

In a little village, there once lived a boy who was very clever, and always knew what to do in difficult circumstances. One day, when he was playing ball with some companions, the ball struck the top of a hollow tree and then fell inside.

All the other children thought that the ball was lost forever, but this boy ran immediately to the village well and drew a pail of water. He carried it to the hollow tree and poured the water inside. The ball floated to the top, where the children could reach it quite easily.

TWENTY-FIVE SHORT

MENCIUS AND HIS MOTHER

Mencius was only three years old when his father died, so his mother worked hard that her son might have a good education. She sent him to school, and, at first, Mencius liked to go. After a while, he became lazy, and, throwing his books to one side, he left school and returned home.

When Mencius entered the house, he saw his mother weaving a piece of cloth, she had put a great deal of hard work into it, so that the cloth was very valuable. As soon as she saw Mencius, she picked up a knife and cut the cloth from the top to the bottom.

"My son," she said, "you are not so sorry to see me cut this cloth as I am to see you leave your studies."

The heart of Mencius was so moved that he went back to school at once, studied hard, and became a great teacher.

THE STOLEN ROPE

A man was once punished by having a large wooden frame fixed round his neck. As he was going through the streets he met some of his friends.

"What have you been doing?" they asked.

"Oh, nothing," replied the man; "I just picked up a piece of rope that I saw lying on the road."

"But," said his friends, "surely you have not been made to wear a wooden frame simply for picking up a piece of rope?"

"Well," said the man, "there happened to be an ox at the other end."

ADVICE FOR A DOCTOR

A Chinese doctor was called in to see a sick man. He treated him so unskillfully that the man died, so the family took the doctor and tied him to a post, meaning to kill him the next day.

In the night, however, he ran away and swam across a river to his home. When he reached his house, he saw his son, hard at work, studying some medical books.

"My son," he said, "do not be in such a hurry to study your books. The first and most important business for a doctor to do is to learn to swim."

WHY THE GENERAL RETURNED

Many, many years ago the state of Ch'u was fighting against the state of Ch'i. An officer of the Ch'u army told his general that he would frighten the general of the Ch'i army, so that he would go back to his own country.

One night, he went to the enemy's camp and took away the general's bed curtain without any one knowing.

The second night, the officer stole the general's pillow.

The third night, he stole the pin which fastened the general's queue.

Then the general was greatly alarmed and said to his officers: "We must return at once. If I stay here for another night, my head, also, will be stolen."

THE WISE FORTUNE TELLER

A man once went to a fortune teller to ask him to help him to find something he had lost. The fortune teller said to him, "Go back to your house and look under the matting on the *kang*. You will find it there." So the man returned home and did what the fortune teller ordered.

The next day, he went again to the fortune teller and said, "I still cannot find what I have lost."

"Go and look again, and look more carefully this time," said the fortune teller.

The third day, the man went again to the fortune teller and said, "I have not found it yet."

"What is it you have lost?" asked the fortune teller.

"My camel," the man answered.

THE COURTEOUS HUSBAND AND WIFE

During the Later Han dynasty there was a man whose name was Liang Hung. He was a poor but ambitious man. In the daytime, he worked for other people, and when he had leisure, he studied books. His wife, Meng Kwang, was a virtuous woman.

One day Liang Hung was husking rice for a rich neighbor, and his wife brought him some food, which she had prepared for him. When she came up to him, she lifted up the tray on a level with her eyebrows. When people saw that they respected each other as if they were guests, they all wanted to be friends with Liang Hung.

THE VIRTUOUS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

In the Chou dynasty, there was a man named Yao Yang-tzu. His home was very poor, so he went far away to earn a living. One day, a fowl belonging to his neighbor flew over into his yard. His mother, who was greedy, took the fowl and killed it, for she wanted to eat it.

When her daughter-in-law saw what had been done, she was very grieved, but she did not blame her mother-in-law. She said very gently to her: "It must be that your daughter-in-law is not good, for there is no money to buy good food for you."

When the mother-in-law heard these words, she was greatly moved in her heart and did not eat the fowl.

THE STORY OF HAN PAI-YU

In the Han dynasty, there was a man named Han Pai-yu, who served his mother dutifully and obediently. He was a very filial son and always tried to make his mother happy. Sometimes, when he did wrong, his mother used to beat him.

One day his mother beat him with a stick and he wept. His mother said: "Why do you cry now? Whenever I beat you before this time, you never cried?"

He answered, "When you beat me before, it was very painful, so I knew you were strong. To-day it is not painful, so I am afraid you are getting old."

When his mother heard these words, she was very pleased, for she knew she had a very dutiful son. She lived to be ninety years old.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

Once there was an old man who lost a horse. His neighbors came to sympathize with him, but the old man said, "How do you know that this is not a good fortune?"

A few months later, the lost horse returned, bringing with it another very fine horse. The neighbors of the old man came to congratulate him, but he said, "How do you know that this may not be a misfortune?"

A little while later, the old man's son, who was fond of riding, fell off the horse and broke his leg. The neighbors came again to sympathize with him, but he said, "May this not be good fortune?"

A year later, there was a great war with another country, and all the young men had to go and fight, and nearly all were killed. The old man's son could not go because his leg was broken, and the two lived together happily for many years.

PRINCE YEN AND THE DOCTOR

One day, Prince Yen, who was the ruler of Hades, was seriously ill. He called in a great many doctors but not one could cure him. At last, he commanded a little ghost to go up to the World to ask a doctor there to come. He said to

the little ghost, "If you see a doctor who has not many ghosts following him, ask that one to come."

The little ghost came up to the World and looked everywhere for a doctor, but he could not find one who had no ghost following him. They all had a great many ghosts following them. At last, he saw a doctor who had only one ghost following him, so he asked him to go down to see Prince Yen.

When he came before Prince Yen, the latter asked him, "How long have you prescribed medicines and treated illnesses?"

The doctor replied, "I have only prescribed medicine once and treated one person."

"No wonder you had only one ghost following you," said Prince Yen. "With me, there would be two."

A FOX PRETENDS TO THE TIGER'S MAJESTY

One day, a tiger caught a fox and wanted to eat it. The fox said, "You cannot eat me."

The tiger said, "Why can I not eat you?"

The fox replied, "Because Heaven has appointed me the king of all the beasts."

The tiger said, "I don't believe it."

The fox said: "If, indeed, you don't believe it, you can come with me to the forest and see. When the beasts see me they will all run away."

The tiger said: "Very good. I will go with you to see if it is true or false. When we come back, it will not be too late to eat you."

Then the fox led the tiger to the forest. It was indeed true that when all the beasts saw them they hurriedly ran away, for they thought that the fox had led the tiger there to eat them. The tiger, when he saw this, also ran away frightened.

PLANTING A PEAR TREE

One day a countryman was pushing a wheelbarrow full of pears to market. At a certain place a priest happened to appear in front of him and asked for a pear to eat. The man was very angry and ordered the priest to go away. The priest said: "I asked for only one pear. Why are you so angry with me?"

Just then a kind-hearted man, who stood by, bought a pear and gave it to the priest to eat. The priest took a pip from the pear and asked for a cup of boiling water from the bystanders. The priest made a hole in the ground and planted the pip in the hole. Then he poured the water into the hole. In a little time, the pip began to

sprout. It grew larger and larger, and had first leaves, then flowers, and finally large ripe pears. The priest picked the pears and handed them one by one to the bystanders, till they were all gone.

The countryman turned his head to look at his own pears, but they were gone too. Then he tried to find the priest, but he was gone also. So the countryman knew that the pears, which the priest had handed to the bystanders, were his own pears, and the tree was a handle of his wheelbarrow, for it now had only one.

THE HUNTER AND THE ELEPHANT

Once a certain man went out to hunt with his bow and arrows. He was very tired and fell fast asleep in a wood. When he was sleeping, an elephant came and lifted him onto its back with its trunk. The man awoke and found himself on the elephant's back. He did not know what to do.

At last the elephant stopped and put him down gently at the foot of a tree. Then it made a loud noise and a great many elephants gathered quickly in that place. The largest elephant looked up at the tree and then looked down at the man. It seemed to order him to go up. Then it lay down on the ground and the hunter jumped up on its

back and climbed to the top of the tree. Suddenly he saw a fierce lion creeping softly through the high grass. There was not a moment to lose. The hunter quickly shot at the lion and killed it.

Then he climbed down again onto the elephant's back and it took him to a place where it scratched the ground with its large foot. Underneath there were a great many tusks. The hunter wrapped them into a bundle, and the elephant led him to a place where he could easily find his way home again.

A GRATEFUL DOG

A certain man was going home in a boat with a large sum of money. On the river bank he saw a man who was just going to kill a dog for food. He was very sorry for the dog and bought it from the man and took it with him in the boat.

The boatman, who had formerly been a robber, when he saw that the man had a great deal of money, wanted to steal it; so he quickly drew out his knife to kill him. The man begged that his body might be complete in death, so the boatman wrapped him in a piece of canvas and threw him into the water. The dog immediately jumped into the water, and, seizing the bundle with its teeth, struggled hard and swam to a shallow place.