# II.The Adventures of the Beggar's Son

When the Son of the Chan arrived as before at the cold Forest of Death, he exclaimed with threatening gestures at the foot of the amiri-tree, “Thou dead one, descend, or I will hew down the tree.” Ssidi descended. The son of Chan placed him in the sack, bound the sack fast with the rope, ate of his provender, and journeyed forth with his burden. Then spake the dead one these words, “Since we have a long journey before us, do you relate a pleasant story by the way, or I will do so.” But the Son of the Chan merely shook his head without speaking a word. Whereupon Ssidi commenced the following tale:—“A long time ago there was a mighty Chan who was ruler over a country full of market-places. At the source of the river which ran through it there was an immense marsh, and in this marsh there dwelt two crocodile-frogs, who would not allow the water to run out of the marsh. And because there came no water over their fields, every year did both the good and the bad have cause to mourn, until such times as a man had been given to the frogs for the pests to devour. And at length the lot fell upon the Chan himself to be an offering to them, and needful as he was to the welfare of the kingdom, denial availed him not; therefore father and son communed sorrowfully together, saying, ‘Which of us two shall go?’“‘I am an old man,’ said the father, ‘and shall leave no one to lament me. I will go, therefore. Do you remain here, my son, and reign according as it is appointed.’“‘O Tângâri,’ exclaimed the son, ‘verily this is not as it should be! Thou hast brought me up with care, O my father! If the Chan and the wife of the Chan remain, what need is there of their son? I then will go, and be as a feast for the frogs.’“Thus spake he, and the people walked sorrowfully round about him, and then betook themselves back again. Now the son of the Chan had for his companion the son of a poor man, and he went to him and said, ‘Walk ye according to the will of your parents, and remain at home in peace and safety. I am going, for the good of the kingdom, to serve as a sacrifice to the frogs.’ At these words the son of the poor man said, weeping and lamenting, ‘From my youth up, O Chan, thou hast carefully fostered me. I will go with thee, and share thy fate.’“Then they both arose and went unto the frogs; and on the verge of the marsh they heard the yellow frog and the blue frog conversing with one another. And the frogs said, ‘If the son of the Chan and his companion did but know that if they only smote off our heads with the sword, and the son of the Chan consumed me, the yellow frog, and the son of the poor man consumed thee, the blue frog, they would both cast out from their mouths gold and brass, then would the country be no longer compelled to find food for frogs.’“Now, because the son of the Chan understood all sorts of languages, he comprehended the discourse of the frogs, and he and his companion smote the heads of the frogs with their swords; and when they had devoured the frogs, they threw out from their mouths gold and brass at their heart’s pleasure. Then said the wanderers, ‘The frogs are both slain—the course of the waters will be hemmed in no more. Let us then turn back unto our own country.’ But the son of the Chan agreed not to this, and said, ‘Let us not turn back into our own country, lest they say they are become spirits; therefore it is better that we journey further.’“As they thereupon were walking over a mountain, they came to a tavern, in which dwelt two women, beautiful to behold—mother and daughter. Then said they, ‘We would buy strong liquor that we might drink.’ The women replied, ‘What have ye to give in exchange for strong liquor?’ Thereupon each of them threw forth gold and brass, and the women found pleasure therein, admitted them into their dwelling, gave them liquor in abundance, until they became stupid and slept, took from them what they had, and then turned them out of doors.“Now when they awoke the son of the Chan and his companion travelled along a river and arrived in a wood, where they found some children quarrelling one with another. ‘Wherefore,’ inquired they, ‘do you thus dispute?’“‘We have,’ said the children, ‘found a cap in this wood, and every one desires to possess it.’“‘Of what use is the cap?’“‘The cap has this wonderful property, that whosoever places it on his head can be seen neither by the Tângâri, nor by men, nor by the Tschadkurrs’ (evil spirits).“‘Now go all of ye to the end of the forest and run hither, and I will in the meanwhile keep the cap, and give it to the first of you who reaches me.’“Thus spoke the son of the Chan; and the children ran, but they found not the cap, for it was upon the head of the Chan. ‘Even now it was here,’ said they, ‘and now it is gone.’ And after they had sought for it, but without finding it, they went away weeping.“And the son of the Chan and his companion travelled onwards, and at last they came to a forest in which they found a body of Tschadkurrs quarrelling one with another, and they said, ‘Wherefore do ye thus quarrel one with another?’“‘I,’ exclaimed each of them, ‘have made myself master of these boots.’“‘Of what use are these boots?’ inquired the son of the Chan.“‘He who wears these boots,’ replied the Tschadkurrs, ‘is conveyed to any country wherein he wishes himself.’“‘Now,’ answered the son of the Chan, ‘go all of you that way, and he who first runs hither shall obtain the boots.’“And the Tschadkurrs, when they heard these words, ran as they were told; but the son of the Chan had concealed the boots in the bosom of his companion, who had the cap upon his head. And the Tschadkurrs saw the boots no more; they sought them in vain, and went their way.“And when they were gone, the prince and his companion drew on each of them one of the boots, and they wished themselves near the place of election in a Chan’s kingdom. They wished their journey, laid themselves down to sleep, and on their awaking in the morning they found themselves in the hollow of a tree, right in the centre of the imperial place of election. It was, moreover, a day for the assembling of the people, to throw a Baling (a sacred figure of dough or paste) under the guidance of the Tângâri. ‘Upon whose head even the Baling falls, he shall be our Chan.’ Thus spake they as they threw it up; but the tree caught the Baling of Destiny. ‘What means this?’ exclaimed they all with one accord. ‘Shall we have a tree for our Chan?’“‘Let us examine,’ cried they one to another, ‘whether the tree concealeth any stranger.’ And when they approached the tree the son of the Chan and his companion stepped forth. But the people stood yet in doubt, and said one to another thus, ‘Whosoever ruleth over the people of this land, this shall be decided to-morrow morning by what proceedeth from their mouths.’ And when they had thus spoken, they all took their departure.“On the following morning some drank water, and what they threw from their mouths was white; others ate grass, and what they threw from their mouths was green. In short, one threw one thing, and another another thing. But because the son of the Chan and his companion cast out from their mouths gold and brass, the people cried, ‘Let the one be Chan of this people—let the other be his minister.’ Thus were they nominated Chan and minister! And the daughter of the former Chan was appointed the wife of the new Chan.“Now in the neighbourhood of the palace wherein the Chan dwelt was a lofty building, whither the wife of the Chan betook herself every day. ‘Wherefore,’ thought the minister, ‘does the wife of the Chan betake herself to this spot every day?’ Thus thinking, he placed the wonderful cap upon his head, and followed the Chan’s wife through the open doors, up one step after another, up to the roof. Here the wife of the Chan gathered together silken coverlets and pillows, made ready various drinks and delicate meats, and burnt for their perfume tapers and frankincense. The minister being concealed by his cap, which made him invisible, seated himself by the side of the Chan’s wife, and looked around on every side.“Shortly afterwards a beautiful bird swept through the sky. The wife of the Chan received it with fragrance-giving tapers. The bird seated itself upon the roof and twittered with a pleasing voice; but out of the bird came Solangdu, the Son of the Tângâri, whose beauty was incomparable, and he laid himself on the silken coverlets and fed of the dainties prepared for him. Then spake the son of the Tângâri, ‘Thou hast passed this morning with the husband whom thy fate has allotted to thee. What thinkest thou of him?’ The wife of the Chan answered, ‘I know too little of the prince to speak of his good qualities or his defects.’ Thus passed the day, and the wife of the Chan returned home again.“On the following day the minister followed the wife of the Chan as he had done before, and heard the son of the Tângâri say unto her, ‘To-morrow I will come like a bird of Paradise to see thine husband.’ And the wife of the Chan said, ‘Be it so.’“The day passed over, and the minister said to the Chan, ‘In yonder palace lives Solangdu, the beauteous son of the Tângâri.’ The minister then related all that he had witnessed, and said, ‘To-morrow early the son of the Tângâri will seek thee, disguised like a bird of Paradise. I will seize the bird by the tail, and cast him into the fire; but you must smite him in pieces with the sword.’“On the following morning, the Chan and the wife of the Chan were seated together, when the son of the Tângâri, transformed into a bird of Paradise, appeared before them on the steps that led to the palace. The wife of the Chan greeted the bird with looks expressive of pleasure, but the minister, who had on his invisible-making cap, seized the bird suddenly by the tail, and cast him into the fire. And the Chan smote at him violently with his sword; but the wife of the Chan seized the hand of her husband, so that only the wings of the bird were scorched. ‘Alas, poor bird!’ exclaimed the wife of the Chan, as, half dead, it made its way, as well as it could, through the air.“On the next morning the wife of the Chan went as usual to the lofty building, and this time, too, did the minister follow her. She collected together, as usual, the silken pillows, but waited longer than she was wont, and sat watching with staring eyes. At length the bird approached with a very slow flight, and came down from the birdhouse covered with blood and wounds, and the wife of the Chan wept at the sight. ‘Weep not,’ said the son of the Tângâri; ‘thine husband has a heavy hand. The fire has so scorched me that I can never come more.’“Thus spoke he, and the wife of the Chan replied, ‘Do not say so, but come as you are wont to do, at least come on the day of the full moon.’ Then the son of the Tângâri flew up to the sky again, and the wife of the Chan began from that time to love her husband with her whole heart.“Then the minister placed his wonderful cap upon his head, and, drawing near to a pagoda, he saw, through the crevice of the door, a man, who spread out a figure of an ass, rolled himself over and over upon the figure, thereupon took upon himself the form of an ass, and ran up and down braying like one. Then he began rolling afresh, and appeared in his human form. At last he folded up the paper, and placed it in the hand of a burchan (a Calmuc idol). And when the man came out the minister went in, procured the paper, and remembering the ill-treatment which he had formerly received, he went to the mother and daughter who had sold him the strong liquor, and said, with crafty words, ‘I am come to you to reward you for your good deeds.’ With these words he gave the women three pieces of gold; and the women asked him, saying, ‘Thou art, indeed, an honest man, but where did you procure so much gold?’ Then the minister answered, ‘By merely rolling backwards and forwards over this paper did I procure this gold.’ On hearing these words, the women said, ‘Grant us that we too may roll upon it.’ And they did so, and were changed into asses. And the minister brought the asses to the Chan, and the Chan said, ‘Let them be employed in carrying stones and earth.’“Thus spake he, and for three years were these two asses compelled to carry stones and earth; and their backs were sore wounded, and covered with bruises. Then saw the Chan their eyes filled with tears, and he said to the minister, ‘Torment the poor brutes no longer.’“Thereupon they rolled upon the paper, and after they had done so they were changed to two shrivelled women.”“Poor creatures!” exclaimed the Son of the Chan. Ssidi replied, “Ruler of Destiny, thou hast spoken words: Ssarwala missdood jakzank!” Thus spoke he, and flew out of the sack through the air.And Ssidi’s second relation treats of the adventures of the Poor Man’s Son.Next - III.The Adventures of Massang

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