

The silvered head will sue in vain,  
 A maiden's love beseeching;  
 The maid, despising it, is fain  
 To flee afar with screeching;  
 Like Hangman's Well it causes pain,  
 Where dead men's bones are bleaching.

And furthermore:

Slow, tottering steps the strength exhaust;  
 The eye unsteady blinks;  
 From driveling mouth the teeth are lost;  
 The handsome figure shrinks;  
 The limbs are wrinkled; relatives  
 And wife contemptuous pass;  
 The son no further honor gives  
 To doddering age. Alas!

Now one night, while she was turning her back to him in bed, a thief entered the house. And she was terrified at seeing a thief, and embraced her husband, old as he was. He, for his part, felt every limb thrill with astonishment and love, and he thought: "Gracious me! Why does she hug me tonight?" Then, peering narrowly about, he discovered the thief in a corner, and reflected: "No doubt she embraces me from fear of him." So he said to the thief:

"She who always shrank from me,  
 Hugs me to her breast;  
 Thank you, benefactor! Take  
 What you like the best."

And the thief made reply:

"Nothing here that I should like;  
 Should I want a thing,

I'll return if she does not  
 Passionately cling."

"Thus advantage may be anticipated from a benefactor, thief though he be. How much more from a suppliant guest? Besides, having been maltreated by them, he will labor for our success, or for the revelation of their vulnerable point. In view of this, he should not be killed."

Having listened to this view, Foe-Crusher questioned another counselor, namely, Hook-Nose. "My worthy sir, what should be done under the present circumstances?" And Hook-Nose answered: "O King, he should not be killed. For

From enemies expect relief,  
 If discord pierce their host;  
 Thus, life was given by the thief  
 And cattle by the ghost."

"How was that?" asked Foe-Crusher. And Hook-Nose told the story of

#### THE BRAHMAN, THE THIEF, AND THE GHOST

There was once a poor Brahman in a certain place. He lived on presents, and always did without such luxuries as fine clothes and ointments and perfumes and garlands and gems and betel-gum. His beard and his nails were long, and so was the hair that covered his head and his body. Heat, cold, rain, and the like had dried him up.

Then someone pitied him and gave him two calves. And the Brahman began when they were little and fed them on butter and oil and fodder and other things that he begged. So he made them very plump.

Then a thief saw them and the idea came to him at once: "I will steal these two cows from this Brahman." So he took a rope and set out at night. But on the way he met a fellow with a row of sharp teeth set far apart, with a high-bridged nose and uneven eyes, with limbs covered with knotty muscles, with hollow cheeks, with beard and body as yellow as a fire with much butter in it.

And when the thief saw him, he started with acute fear and said: "Who are you, sir?"

The other said: "I am a ghost named Truthful. It is now your turn to explain yourself."

The thief said: "I am a thief, and my acts are cruel. I am on my way to steal two cows from a poor Brahman."

Then the ghost felt relieved and said: "My dear sir, I take one meal every three days. So I will just eat this Brahman today. It is delightful that you and I are on the same errand."

So together they went there and hid, waiting for the proper moment. And when the Brahman went to sleep, the ghost started forward to eat him. But the thief saw him and said: "My dear sir, this is not right. You are not to eat the Brahman until I have stolen his two cows."

The ghost said: "The racket would most likely wake the Brahman. In that case all my trouble would be vain."

"But, on the other hand," said the thief, "if any hindrance arises when you start to eat him, then I cannot steal the two cows either. First I will steal the two cows, then you may eat the Brahman."

So they disputed, each crying "Me first! Me first!" And when they became heated, the hubbub waked the Brahman. Then the thief said: "Brahman, this is a ghost who wishes to eat you." And the ghost said: "Brahman, this is a thief who wishes to steal your two cows."

When the Brahman heard this, he stood up and took a good look. And by remembering a prayer to his favorite god, he saved his life from the ghost, then lifted a club and saved his two cows from the thief.

"And that is why I say:

From enemies expect relief, . . . .

and the rest of it. Besides:

The Scriptures tell a holy tale

Of sacrificial love,

How Shibi gave the hawk his flesh

As ransom for the dove—

showing that it is contrary to religion to slay a suppliant."

Having listened to this opinion, the king asked

Wall-Ear: "What is your view, sir? Tell me." And Wall-Ear said: "O King, he certainly should not be killed. For if you spare his life, you two may well grow fond of each other, and spend the time pleasantly. There is a saying:

Be quick with mutual defense  
In honest give-and-take;  
Or perish, like the ant-hill beast  
And like the belly-snake."

"How was that?" asked Foe-Crusher. And Wall-Ear told the story of

#### THE SNAKE IN THE PRINCE'S BELLY

In a certain city dwelt a king whose name was Godlike. He had a son who wasted daily in every limb because of a snake that used his belly as a home instead of an ant-hill. So the prince became dejected and went to another country. In a city of that country he begged alms, spending his time in a great temple.

Now in that city was a king named Gift, who had two daughters in early womanhood. One of these bowed daily at her father's feet with the greeting: "Victory, O King," while the other said: "Your deserts, O King."

At this the king grew angry, and said: "See, counselors. This young lady speaks malevolently. Give her to some foreigner. Let her have her own deserts." To this the counselors agreed, and gave

the princess, with very few maid-servants, to the prince who made his home in the temple.

And she was delighted, accepted her husband like a god, and went with him to a far country. There by the edge of a tank in a distant city she left the prince to look after the house while she went with her maids to buy butter, oil, salt, rice, and other supplies. When her shopping was done, she returned and found the prince with his head resting on an ant-hill. And from his mouth issued the head of a hooded snake, taking the air. Likewise another snake crawled from the ant-hill, also to take the air.

When these two saw each other, their eyes grew red with anger, and the ant-hill snake said: "You villain! How can you torment in this way a prince who is so perfectly handsome?" And the snake in the prince's mouth said: "Villain yourself! How can you bemire those two pots full of gold?" In this fashion each laid bare the other's weakness.

Then the ant-hill snake continued: "You villain! Doesn't anybody know the simple remedy of drinking black mustard and so destroying you?" And the belly-snake retorted: "And doesn't anybody know the simple way to destroy you, by pouring in hot water?"

Now the princess, hiding behind a branch, overheard their conversation, and did just as they suggested. So she made her husband sound and well, and acquired vast wealth. When she returned to her own

country, she was highly honored by father, mother, and relatives, and lived happily. For she had her deserts.

“And that is why I say:

Be quick with mutual defense, . . . .

and the rest of it.”

Now Foe-Crusher, having heard their advice, agreed. But Red-Eye, perceiving that the matter was decided, continued his remarks with a quiet sneer: “Alas! Alas! Our lord the king has been wickedly done to death by you gentlemen. For the proverb says:

Where honor is withheld or paid  
Mistakenly, 'tis clear  
Three things have unrestricted course:  
Famine, and death, and fear.

And again:

It argues utter want of sense  
To pardon obvious offense:  
The carpenter upon his head  
Took wife and him who fouled his bed.”

“How was that?” asked the counselors, and Red-Eye told the story of

#### THE GULLIBLE CARPENTER

There was once a carpenter in a certain village. His wife was a whore, and reputed to be such. So he,

desiring to test her, thought: “How can I put her to the test? For the proverb says:

Fire chills, rogues bless, and moonlight burns  
Before a wife to virtue turns.

“Now I know from popular gossip that she is unfaithful. For the saying goes:

All things that are not seen or heard  
In science or the Sacred Word,  
All things in interstellar space  
Are known among the populace.”

After these reflections, he said to his wife: “Tomorrow morning, my dear, I am going to another village, where I shall be detained several days. Please put me up a nice lunch.” And her heart quivered when she heard this; she eagerly dropped everything to make delicious dishes, almost pure butter and sugar. In fact, the old saw was justified:

When lowering clouds  
Shut in the day,  
When streets are mired  
With sticky clay,  
When husband lingers  
Far away,  
The flirt becomes  
Supremely gay.

Now at dawn the carpenter rose and left his house. When she had made sure that he was gone, with laughing countenance she spent the dragging day in trying on all her best things. Then she called on an old lover and said: “My husband has gone to

another village—the rascal! Please come to our house when the people are asleep.” And he did so.

Now the carpenter spent the day in the forest, stole into his own house at twilight by a side entrance, and hid under the bed. At this juncture the other fellow arrived and got into bed. And when the carpenter saw him, his heart was stabbed by wrath, and he thought: “Shall I rise and smite him? Or shall I wait until they are asleep and kill them both without effort? Or again, shall I wait to see how she behaves, listen to what she says to him?” At this moment she softly locked the door and went to bed.

But as she did so, she stubbed her toe on the carpenter’s body. And she thought: “It must be that carpenter—the rascal!—who is testing me. Well, I will give him a taste of woman’s tricks.”

While she was thinking, the fellow became insistent. But she clasped her hands and said: “Dear and honored sir, you must not touch me.” And he said: “Well, well! For what purpose did you invite me?”

“Listen,” said she. “I went this morning to Gauri’s shrine to see the goddess. There all at once I heard a voice in the sky, saying: ‘What am I to do, my daughter? You are devoted to me, yet in six months’ time, by the decree of fate, you will be a widow.’ Then I said: ‘O blessed goddess, since you are aware of the calamity, you also know the remedy. Is there any means of making my husband live a

hundred years?’ And the goddess replied: ‘Indeed there is—a remedy depending on you alone.’ Of course I said: ‘If it cost my life, pray tell me, and I will do it.’ Then the goddess said: ‘If you go to bed with another man, and embrace him, then the untimely death that threatens your husband will pass to him. And your husband will live another hundred years.’ For this purpose I invited you. Now do what you had in mind. The words of a goddess must not be falsified—so much is certain.” Then his face blossomed with noiseless laughter, and he did as she said.

Now the carpenter, fool that he was, felt his body thrill with joy on hearing her words, and he issued from under the bed, saying: “Bravo, faithful wife! Bravo, delight of the family! Because my heart was troubled by the gossip of evil creatures, I pretended a trip to another village in order to test you, and lay hidden under the bed. Come now, embrace me!”

With these words he embraced her and lifted her to his shoulder, then said to the fellow: “My dear and honored sir, you have come here because my good deeds earned this happiness. Through your favor I have won a full hundred years of life. You, too, must mount my shoulder.”

So he forced the fellow, much against his will, to mount his shoulder, and then went dancing about to the doors of the houses of all his relatives.

"And that is why I say:

It argues utter want of sense  
To pardon obvious offense, . . . .

and the rest of it.

"We are certainly uprooted and undone. For the proverb is right in saying:

Shrewd men unmask a foe  
Who seems a friend,  
Whose speech is kind, whose acts  
To hatred tend.

And again:

Before fools' counsel flees  
Prosperity, though won;  
Its place and time are lost,  
Like dark before the sun."

But they all disregarded his advice, picked Live-Strong up, and started to carry him to their fortress. And on the journey Live-Strong said: "O King, I have done nothing yet, and I am in a sad state. Why are you so kind to me? Nay, I desire to enter the blazing fire. Pray put me under obligations by providing fire."

Now Red-Eye pierced his purpose and said: "Why do you wish to enter fire?" And Live-Strong replied: "For your sake I have been plunged into this calamity by Cloudy. Therefore I wish to be reborn as an owl in order to requite their enmity." Now Red-Eye, being a master of diplomacy, rejoined: "My dear sir, you are wily and plausible. Even if

reborn as an owl, you would highly esteem your corvine provenience. There is a story that illustrates the point:

Though mountain, sun, and cloud, and wind  
Were suitors at her feet,  
The mouse-maid turned a mouse again—  
Nature is hard to beat."

"How was that?" asked Live-Strong. And Red-Eye told the story of

#### MOUSE-MAID MADE MOUSE

The billows of the Ganges were dotted with pearly foam born of the leaping of fishes frightened at hearing the roar of the waters that broke on the rugged, rocky shore. On the bank was a hermitage crowded with holy men devoting their time to the performance of sacred rites—chanting, self-denial, self-torture, study, fasting, and sacrifice. They would take purified water only, and that in measured sips. Their bodies wasted under a diet of bulbs, roots, fruits, and moss. A loin-cloth made of bark formed their scanty raiment.

The father of the hermitage was named Yajnavalkya. After he had bathed in the sacred stream and had begun to rinse his mouth, a little female mouse dropped from a hawk's beak and fell into his hand. When he saw what she was, he laid her on a banyan leaf, repeated his bath and mouth-rinsing, and performed a ceremony of purification. Then through the

magic power of his holiness, he changed her into a girl, and took her with him to his hermitage.

As his wife was childless, he said to her: "Take her, my dear wife. She has come into life as your daughter, and you must rear her carefully." So the wife reared her and spoiled her with petting. As soon as the girl reached the age of twelve, the mother saw that she was ready for marriage, and said to her husband: "My dear husband, how can you fail to see that the time is passing when your daughter should marry?"

And he replied: "You are quite right, my dear. The saying goes:

Before a man is gratified,  
These gods must treat her as a bride—  
The fire, the moon, the choir of heaven;  
In this way, no offense is given.

Holiness is the gift of fire;  
A sweet voice, of the heavenly choir;  
The moon gives purity within:  
So is a woman free from sin.

Before nubility, 'tis said  
That she is white; but after, red;  
Before her womanhood is plain,  
She is, though naked, free from stain.

The moon, in mystic fashion, weds  
A maiden when her beauty spreads;  
The heavenly choir, when bosoms grow;  
The fire, upon the monthly flow.

To wed a maid is therefore good  
Before developed womanhood;  
Nor need the loving parents wait  
Beyond the early age of eight.

The early signs one kinsman slay;  
The bosom takes the next away;  
Friends die for passion gratified;  
The father, if she ne'er be bride.

For if she bides a maiden still,  
She gives herself to whom she will;  
Then marry her in tender age:  
So warns the heaven-begotten sage.

If she, unwed, unpurified,  
Too long within the home abide,  
She may no longer married be:  
A miserable spinster, she.

A father then, avoiding sin,  
Weds her, the appointed time within  
(Where'er a husband may be had)  
To good, indifferent, or bad.

Now I will try to give her to one of her own station.  
You know the saying:

Where wealth is very much the same,  
And similar the family fame,  
Marriage (or friendship) is secure;  
But not between the rich and poor.

And finally:

Aim at seven things in marriage;  
All the rest you may disparage:

"But

Get money, good looks,  
And knowledge of books,  
Good family, youth,  
Position, and truth.

"So, if she is willing, I will summon the blessed sun, and give her to him." "I see no harm in that," said his wife. "Let it be done."

The holy man therefore summoned the sun, who appeared without delay, and said: "Holy sir, why am I summoned?" The father said: "Here is a daughter of mine. Be kind enough to marry her." Then, turning to his daughter, he said: "Little girl, how do you like him, this blessed lamp of the three worlds?" "No, father," said the girl. "He is too burning hot. I could not like him. Please summon another one, more excellent than he is."

Upon hearing this, the holy man said to the sun: "Blessèd one, is there any superior to you?" And the sun replied: "Yes, the cloud is superior even to me. When he covers me, I disappear."

So the holy man summoned the cloud next, and said to the maiden: "Little girl, I will give you to him." "No," said she. "This one is black and frigid. Give me to someone finer than he."

Then the holy man asked: "O cloud, is there anyone superior to you?" And the cloud replied: "The wind is superior even to me."

So he summoned the wind, and said: "Little girl,

I give you to him." "Father," said she, "this one is too fidgety. Please invite somebody superior even to him." So the holy man said: "O wind, is there anyone superior even to you?" "Yes," said the wind. "The mountain is superior to me."

So he summoned the mountain and said to the maiden: "Little girl, I give you to him." "Oh, father," said she. "He is rough all over, and stiff. Please give me to somebody else."

So the holy man asked: "O kingly mountain, is there anyone superior even to you?" "Yes," said the mountain. "Mice are superior to me."

Then the holy man summoned a mouse, and presented him to the girl, saying: "Little girl, do you like this mouse?"

The moment she saw him, she felt: "My own kind, my own kind," and her body thrilled and quivered, and she said: "Father dear, turn me into a mouse, and give me to him. Then I can keep house as my kind of people ought to do."

And her father, through the magic power of his holiness, turned her into a mouse, and gave her to him.

"And that is why I say:

Though mountain, sun, and cloud, and wind, . . . .  
and the rest of it."

But they paid no heed to Red-Eye's reasoning, and took the crow to their fortress, to the destruction



of their race. And on the journey Live-Strong laughed in his heart and said:

The secrets of diplomacy  
To him alone were plain  
Who, instant in his master's cause,  
Advised that I be slain.

"Now if they were to take his advice, not even the slightest misfortune would befall them."

When they came to the fortress gate, Foe-Crusher said: "Come, my friends! Give this Live-Strong whatever chamber he prefers—for he wishes us well."

And Live-Strong, hearing this, reflected: "I must now devise a plan for their destruction. This is not possible if I live in their midst. For they would observe motions betraying my purpose, and would keep their eyes open. Only by remaining near the gate can I accomplish my desire."

He therefore said to the owl-king: "O King, what the king has said, is eminently right. Yet I, too, am a student of diplomacy and a well-wisher. I know that even one who is loyal and pure in purpose should not dwell in the heart of a fortress. I will therefore take my place here at the fortress gate and pay daily homage, my body sanctified by the dust from your lotus feet."

To this the owl-king agreed, and his efficient caterers daily gave Live-Strong, by special command of the king, the pick of the viands. So that in a very few days he grew strong as a peacock.

But Red-Eye, seeing how Live-Strong was being pampered, was amazed, and he said to the counselors and to the king himself: "Dear me! These counselors are a pack of fools, and you, too, sir. I cannot think otherwise. Then there is the saying:

I played the fool at first; then he  
Who had me on his tether;  
And then the king and counselor—  
We all were fools together."

"How was that?" they asked. And Red-Eye told the story of

#### THE BIRD WITH GOLDEN DUNG

There was once a great tree on a mountain side. On it lived a bird in whose dung gold appeared.

One day a hunter came to the spot, and directly in front of him the bird dropped its dung, which at the moment of falling turned to gold. At this the hunter was amazed.

"Well, well!" said he. "For eighty years, man and boy, I have had bird-trapping on the brain, and I never once saw gold in a bird's dung." So he set a snare in the tree. And the bird, fool that he was, forgot the danger, and perched on the customary spot. Of course, he was caught immediately.

Then the hunter freed him from the snare, put him in a cage and took him home. But he reflected: "What am I to do with this bird of ill omen? If anybody should ever discover his peculiarity, it would be

reported to the king. In that case my very life would be in genuine danger. I will take the bird and report to the king myself." And he did so.

Now when the king saw the bird, his lotus eyes blossomed and he felt supremely gratified. "Come now, guardsmen," said he. "Look after this bird with anxious care. Give him everything he wants to eat and drink."

Then a counselor said: "He was hatched from an egg. Why keep him? You have no evidence save the mere incredible assurance of a hunter. Is gold ever present in bird-dung? Take this bird from the cage and set him free."

So the king, taking the counselor's advice, freed the bird, who perched on the lofty arch of the doorway long enough to drop dung which was of gold. Then he recited the stanza:

I played the fool at first; then he  
Who had me on his tether;  
And then the king and counselor—  
We all were fools together.

After which he took his carefree flight through the atmosphere.

"And that is why I say:

I played the fool at first, . . . .

and the rest of it."

But once more—for fate was hostile—they neglected Red-Eye's counsel, sound as it was, and pam-

pered Live-Strong further with varied viands, including plenty of meat.

Then Red-Eye called together his personal adherents, and said to them privately: "The end is at hand. The welfare of our king, and his fortress, are things of the past. I have given him such counsel as an ancestral counselor should give. Let us now, for our part, seek another fortress in the mountains. For the saying goes:

Joy comes from knowing what to dread,  
And sorrow smites the dunderhead:  
A long life through, the woods I've walked,  
But never heard a cave that talked."

"How was that?" they asked. And Red-Eye told the story of

#### THE CAVE THAT TALKED

There was once a lion in a part of a forest, and his name was Rough-Claw. One day he found nothing whatever to eat in his wanderings, and his throat was pinched by hunger. At sunset he came to a great mountain cave and went in, for he thought: "Surely, some animal will come into this cave during the night. I will hide and wait."

Presently the owner of the cave, a jackal named Curd-Face, came to the door and began to sing: "Cave ahoy! Cave aho-o-oy!" Then after a moment's silence, he continued in the same tone: "Hello! Don't you remember how you and I made

an agreement that I was to speak to you when I came back from the world outside, and that you were to sing out to me? But you won't speak to me today. So I am going off to that other cave, which will return my greeting."

Now when he heard this, the lion thought: "I see. This cave always calls out a greeting when the fellow returns. But today, from fear of me, it doesn't say a word. This is natural enough. For

The feet and hands refuse to act  
When peril terrifies;  
A trembling seizes every limb;  
And speech unuttered dies.

"I will myself call out a greeting, which he will follow to its source, so providing me with a dinner."

The lion thereupon called out a greeting. But the cave so magnified the roar that its echo filled the circuit of the horizon, thus terrifying other forest creatures as well, even those far distant. Meanwhile the jackal made off, repeating the stanza:

Joy comes from knowing what to dread,  
And sorrow smites the dunderhead:  
A long life through, the woods I've walked,  
But never heard a cave that talked.

"Take this to heart and come with me." And Red-Eye, having made his decision, departed for another fortress, accompanied by a retinue of followers.

At Red-Eye's departure, Live-Strong was over-

joyed. And he reflected: "Very good, indeed. Red-Eye's flight is a blessing to us. For he was farsighted, while the rest are numskulls. I can easily destroy them now. For the proverb says:

If no farsighted counselors,  
Long-ried, secure,  
Aid him, the downfall of a king  
Is swift and sure.

And there is sound reasoning in this:

The shrewd discover enemies  
Disguised as friends  
In senseless counselors whose speech  
To evil tends."

After these reflections, he dropped each day one fagot from the forest into his own nest, with the ultimate purpose of setting the cave afire. Nor did the owls, poor fools, perceive that he was building up his nest in order to burn them alive. Well, there is sense in the saying:

Cause your friends no bitter woes;  
Do not fraternize with foes:  
Friends, when lost, are friends no more;  
Enemies were lost before.

Thus, pretending to build a nest, Live-Strong constructed a woodpile at the fortress gate. Then at sunrise, when the owls became blind, he hastened away and reported to Cloudy: "My lord and king, I have prepared the enemy's cave for burning. Come with your retainers, each bringing a lighted fagot from the forest, to throw on my nest at the gate of the

cave. Thus all your foes will die in torments like those in Pot-baking Hell."

At this Cloudy was delighted and said: "Father, tell me your adventures. It is long since we met." "No, my son," said Live-Strong. "This is no time for talk. Some enemy spy might possibly report my journey hither. And our blind enemy, thus informed, might make his escape. Make haste, make haste. For the proverb says:

When speed is needful, ne'er permit  
Delay, but do it pat;  
Else, wrathful gods are sure to strike  
The undertaking flat.

And again:

Whatever deed you have in mind  
(Especially when fate is kind),  
Do quickly. If you wait a bit,  
Then time will suck the juice of it.

"Later, when your enemies are slain, and you have returned to your home, I will tell the whole story in carefree humor."

So Cloudy and his followers, taking Live-Strong's advice, seized one lighted fagot apiece in their bills, flew to the gate of the cave, and threw their fagots upon Live-Strong's nest. Then all the owls (being blind in the daytime) remembered Red-Eye's counsels as they suffered the torments of Pot-baking Hell. In this fashion Cloudy exterminated his foes and returned to his old fortress in the banyan tree.

There he mounted the lion-throne and, his heart

overflowing with joy, he questioned Live-Strong in full session of his court: "Father, how did you pass the time in the midst of the enemy? For the proverb says:

Better a plunge in blazing fire  
(The righteous know)  
Than momentary contact with  
A wicked foe."

And Live-Strong said: "My lord and king!

Whatever path provides escape  
When danger's face is seen,  
With clear decision follow, if  
It noble seem, or mean:  
Two arms like trunks of elephants,  
Fight-calloused, skilled to wield  
The bow of heaven, Arjun felt  
To woman's bracelets yield.

The wise and strong, awaiting days  
More prosperous, must grant  
Obedience to wicked lords  
Whose speech is adamant:  
Gigantic Bhima, smoke-begrimed,  
Puffing at labor, and  
A ladle flourished in his fist,  
Was cook in Matsya land.

The prudent, hopeful man should act  
As suits an evil case,  
Should steel his heart to carry through  
A holy deed, or base:  
Great Arjun with a calloused arm  
From twanging bow divine  
Effeminately danced, and saw  
His tinkling girdle shine.

The wise, alert, ambitious man,  
 If he expect success,  
 Must wait on fortune, watch his step,  
 And curb his stateliness:  
 Yudhishtir King, with pilgrim's staff,  
 Long drew his painful breath,  
 Though worshiped by his brothers, great  
 As War, and Wealth, and Death.

So Kunti's handsome, powerful twins,  
 High birth writ on their brows,  
 Were menials at Virata's court,  
 And lived by counting cows.

So queenly Draupadi, with youth's  
 And matchless beauty's seal,  
 In charm most like a goddess, fell  
 By turn of fortune's wheel;  
 And haughty maidens called her slave  
 And sneered at her for sport,  
 What time she powdered sandalwood  
 In Matsya's royal court."

"Father," said Cloudy, "this dwelling with an enemy seems to me like the sword-blade ordeal."  
 "So it is," said Live-Strong. "But I never saw such a pack of fools anywhere. Not one was sensible except Red-Eye. He, indeed, has great capacity, an intelligence not blunted by his extensive scientific attainments. He discovered my exact purpose. But as for the other counselors, they were great fools, making a living by a mere pretense of giving good counsel, with no flair for verity. They were not even aware of this:

'Tis ruinous to trust the scamps  
 Who come to you from hostile camps;  
 Such rivals you should chase away,  
 For constant trouble does not pay.

The foeman serving as a scout,  
 Who knows (by bobbing in and out)  
 Your favored chair, familiar bed,  
 And how you drink, and what you're fed,  
 Your travels to another town—  
 Will strike his heedless foeman down.

The prudent therefore guards himself—  
 The source of virtue, love, and self—  
 With every effort, strain, and stress:  
 For death will follow heedlessness.

And there is plenty of sense in this:

Who, ill-advised, does not commit  
 Grave faults of *savoir faire*?  
 What glutton has not much unrest  
 Within himself to bear?  
 Whom does not fortune render proud?  
 Whom does not death lay low?  
 To whom do not possessions bring  
 Abundant harm and woe?

The steady forfeit glory, while  
 The restless forfeit friends;  
 The bankrupt forfeits family,  
 The banker, better ends;  
 The man of passion forfeits books,  
 The fawner, friendship's flower;  
 The king with careless counselors  
 Must forfeit kingly power.

"Yes, O King, I have experienced in person what you were kind enough to put into words: that associ-

ation with the enemy is equal to the sword-blade ordeal. As the old verse puts it:

Bear even foes upon your back;  
When fortune clogs  
Your path, endure. The great black snake  
Slew many frogs."

"How was that?" asked Cloudy. And Live-Strong told the story of

#### THE FROGS THAT RODE SNAKEBACK

There was once an elderly black snake in a certain spot, and his name was Slow-Poison. He considered the situation from this point of view: "How in the world can I get along without overtaking my energies?" Then he went to a pond containing many frogs, and behaved as if very dejected.

As he waited thus, a frog came to the edge of the water and asked: "Uncle, why don't you bustle about today for food as usual?"

"My dear friend," said Slow-Poison, "I am afflicted. Why should I wish for food? For this evening, as I was bustling about for food, I saw a frog and made ready to catch him. But he saw me and, fearing death, he escaped among some Brahmans intent upon holy recitation, nor did I perceive which way he went. But in the water at the edge of the pond was the great toe of a Brahman boy, and stupidly deceived by its resemblance to a frog, I bit it, and the boy died immediately. Then the sorrowing father cursed me

in these terms: 'Monster! Since you bit my harmless son, you shall for this sin become a vehicle for frogs, and shall subsist on whatever they choose to allow you.' Consequently, I have come here to serve as your vehicle."

Now the frog reported this to all the others. And every last one of them, in extreme delight, went and reported to the frog-king, whose name was Water-Foot. He in turn, accompanied by his counselors, rose hurriedly from the pond—for he thought it an extraordinary occurrence—and climbed upon Slow-Poison's hood. The others also, in order of age, climbed on his back. Yet others, finding no vacant spot, hopped along behind the snake. Now Slow-Poison, with an eye to making his living, showed them fancy turns in great variety. And Water-Foot, enjoying contact with his body, said to him:

I'd rather ride Slow-Poison than  
The finest horse I've seen,  
Or elephant, or chariot,  
Or man-borne palanquin.

The next day, Slow-Poison was wily enough to move very slowly. So Water-Foot said: "My dear Slow-Poison, why don't you carry us nicely, as you did before?"

And Slow-Poison said: "O King, I have no carrying power today because of lack of food." "My dear fellow," said the king, "eat the plebeian frogs."

When Slow-Poison heard this, he quivered with

joy in every member and made haste to say: "Why, that is a part of the curse laid on me by the Brahman. For that reason I am greatly pleased at your command." So he ate frogs uninterruptedly, and in a very few days he grew strong. And with delight and inner laughter he said:

The trick was good. All sorts of frogs  
 Within my power have passed.  
 The only question that remains,  
 Is: How long will they last?

Water-Foot, for his part, was befooled by Slow-Poison's plausibilities, and did not notice a thing.

At this moment another black snake, a tremendous fellow, arrived on the scene. And being amazed at the sight of Slow-Poison used as a vehicle by frogs, he said: "Partner, they are our natural food, yet they use you as a vehicle. This is repellent." And Slow-Poison said:

I know I should not carry frogs;  
 I have it well in mind;  
 But I am marking time, as did  
 The Brahman butter-blind.

"How was that?" asked the snake. And Slow-Poison told the story of

#### THE BUTTER-BLINDED BRAHMAN

There was once a Brahman named Theodore in a certain town. His wife, being unchaste and a pursuer of other men, was forever making cakes with

sugar and butter for a lover, and so cheating her husband.

Now one day her husband saw her and said: "My dear wife, what are you cooking? And where are you forever carrying cakes? Tell the truth."

But her impudence was equal to the occasion, and she lied to her husband: "There is a shrine of the blessed goddess not far from here. There I have undertaken a fasting ceremony, and I take an offering, including the most delicious dishes." Then she took the cakes before his very eyes and started for the shrine of the goddess, imagining that after her statement, her husband would believe it was for the goddess that his wife was daily providing delicious dishes. Having reached the shrine, she went down to the river to perform the ceremonial bath.

Meanwhile her husband arrived by another road and hid behind the statue of the goddess. And his wife entered the shrine after her bath, performed the various rites—laving, anointing, giving incense, making an offering, and so on—bowed before the goddess, and prayed: "O blessed one, how may my husband be made blind?"

Then the Brahman behind the goddess' back spoke, disguising his natural tone: "If you never stop giving him such food as butter and butter-cakes, then he will presently go blind."

Now that loose female, deceived by the plausible revelation, gave the Brahman just that kind of food

every day. One day the Brahman said: "My dear, I don't see very well." And she thought: "Thank the goddess."

Then the favored lover thought: "The Brahman has gone blind. What can he do to me?" Whereupon he came daily to the house without hesitation.

But at last the Brahman caught him as he entered, seized him by the hair, and clubbed and kicked him to such effect that he died. He also cut off his wicked wife's nose, and dismissed her.

"And that is why I say:

I know I should not carry frogs, . . . .

and the rest of it."

Then Slow-Poison, with noiseless laughter, hummed over the verse:

The trick was good; all sorts of frogs, . . . .

and the rest of it. And Water-Foot, hearing this, was conscience stricken, and wondering what he meant, inquired: "My dear sir, what do you mean by reciting that repulsive verse?" "Nothing at all," said Slow-Poison, desiring to mask his purpose. And Water-Foot, befooled by his plausible manner, failed to perceive his treachery.

Why spin it out? He ate them all so completely that not even frog-seed was left.

"And that is why I say:

Bear even foes upon your back, . . . .

and the rest of it. Thus, O King, just as Slow-Poison destroyed the frogs through the power of intelligence, so did I destroy all the enemy. There is much wisdom in this:

The forest-fire leaves roots entire,  
Though trunks remain a shell;  
The flooding pool of water cool  
Uproots the roots as well."

"Very true," said Cloudy. "And besides:

This is the greatness of the great  
Whom gems of wisdom decorate;  
Despite what hurts and hinders, too,  
They see an undertaking through."

"Very true," said Live-Strong. "And once again:

The final penny of a debt,  
The final foeman dire,  
The final twinges of disease,  
The final spark of fire—  
Finality on these imposed  
Leaves nothing to desire.

"O King, you are truly fortunate. For your undertaking has had final success. Indeed, valor is not sufficient to end a matter. Victory is wisdom's business. As the proverb says:

'Tis not the sword destroys a foe,  
'Tis wit that utterly lays low:  
Swords kill the body; wit destroys  
Fame, family, and regal joys.



"Thus, success comes with minimum effort to a man of wisdom and manliness. For

Wisdom broods o'er the inception;  
 Memory does not fail;  
 Means appear to predilection;  
 Counsels wise prevail;  
 Sparkles fruitful meditation;  
 Mind attains its height;  
 Joy achieves its consummation  
 In a worthy fight.

"Thus kingship belongs to the man possessing prudence, capacity for self-sacrifice, and courage. As the verse puts it:

Associate in full delight  
 With someone who is wise,  
 Self-sacrificing, brave; thereby  
 Win virtue as a prize;  
 On virtue follows money; and  
 On money follows fame;  
 Then, personal authority;  
 And then, the kingly name."

And Cloudy replied: "It is wonderful how immediate is the reward of knowing social ethics. By virtue of which you penetrated and exterminated Foe-Crusher with his retinue." Whereupon Live-Strong said:

"Where at last you need sharp measures,  
 First try gentle measures there:  
 Thus the lofty, lordly tree-trunk  
 Is not felled without a prayer.

"And yet, O my king, why say of a future matter either that it involves no effort or that it is not readily attainable? There is wisdom in the saying:

Since words with actions fail to suit,  
 The timidly irresolute  
 Who see a thousand checks and blocks  
 Turn into public laughingstocks.

Nor are thoughtful men heedless even in minor matters. For

The negligent who say:  
 'Some day, some other day—  
 The thing is petty, small;  
 Demands no thought at all,  
 Are, heedless, headed straight  
 For that repentant state  
 That ever comes too late.

"But as for my master, who has overcome his foes, he may sleep tonight as soundly as ever he did. You know the saying:

In houses where no snakes are found,  
 One sleeps; or where the snakes are bound:  
 But perfect rest is hard to win  
 With serpents bobbing out and in.

"And again:

A noble purpose to attain  
 Desiderates extended pain,  
 Asks man's full greatness, pluck, and care,  
 And loved ones aiding with a prayer.  
 Yet if it climb to heart's desire,  
 What man of pride and fighting fire,

Of passion, and of self-esteem  
 Can bear the unaccomplished dream?  
 His heart indignantly is bent  
 (Through its achievement) on content.

"Therefore my heart is at peace. For I saw the undertaking through. Therefore may you now long enjoy this kingdom without a thorn—intent on the safeguarding of your people—your royal umbrella, throne, and glory unshaken through the long succession of son, grandson, and beyond. Remember:

A king should bring his people ease,  
 But he should also aim to please;  
 His reign is else of little note,  
 A neck-teat on a female goat.

And once again:

Love of virtue, scorn of vice,  
 Wisdom—make a kingdom's price.  
 Then is Glory proud as slave,  
 Then her plumes and pennons brave  
 Near the white umbrella wave.

"Nor must you, in the thought, 'My kingdom is won,' shatter your soul with the intoxication of glory. And this because the power of kings is a thing uncertain. Kingly glory is hard to climb as a bamboo-stem; hard to hold, being ready to tumble in a moment, with whatever effort it be held upright; even though conciliated, yet sure to slip away at last; fidgety as the bandar-log; unequilibrated as water on a lotus-leaf; mutable as the wind's path; untrustworthy as rogues' friendship; hard to tame as a ser-

pent; gleaming but a moment like a strip of evening cloud; fragile by nature, like the bubbles on water; ungrateful as the substance of man's body; lost in the moment of attainment, like the treasure of a dream. And furthermore:

Whenever kings anointed are,  
 Let wit spy trouble from afar;  
 Anointing-jars too often spill,  
 With holy water, pending ill.

"And no man in the wide world is beyond the clutch of pending ill. As the poet sings:

Remember Rama, wandering far;  
 Remember Nala's sinking star;  
 With Bali's bonds, the Vrishnis' tomb,  
 And Lanka's monster-monarch's doom;  
 The Pandus' forest-borne disaster,  
 And knightly Arjun, dancing-master.  
 Time brings us woe in countless shapes.  
 What savior is there? Who escapes?

Ah, where is Dasharath, who rose to heaven  
 And dwelt its king beside?  
 Ah, where King Sagar, he to whom 'twas given  
 To bind the ocean's tide?  
 Where arm-born Prithu? Where is Manu gone,  
 Sun-child (yet suns still rise)?  
 Imperious Time awakened them at dawn,  
 At evening closed their eyes.

And again:

Where is Mandhatar, conqueror supreme?  
 Where Satyavrat, the king?  
 God-ruling Nahush? Keshav, e'er the gleam  
 Of science following?

They and their lordly elephants, I ween,  
Their cars, their heavenly throne,  
By lofty Time conferred, in Time were seen,  
And lost through Time alone.

And yet again:

The king, his counselors,  
His maidens gay,  
His golden groves, Fate stings.  
They sink away.

“Thus, having won kingly glory, quivering like  
the ear of a rogue elephant, take delight in her, but  
trust in wisdom only.”

Here ends Book III, called “Crows and Owls,”  
which treats of peace, war, and the other four expedi-  
ents. The first verse runs:

Reconciled although he be,  
Never trust an enemy.  
For the cave of owls was burned,  
When the crows with fire returned.

BOOK IV  
LOSS OF GAINS