

FOLK TALES

from

KOREA'

COLLECTED AND TRANSLATED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION-

BY

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The Nine-Tailed Fox

it. Then the mother scolded him roundly for his refusal, and compelled him to drink it. So with the greatest reluctance he drank it, and immediately fell down dead. And his body immediately changed into the shape of a rat. Then the wife took the medicine, and at once experienced violent labour pains. In a few moments she gave birth to many dead rats.

So the truth was found. The young man's double was the rat which had eaten his nails and drunk his urine while he was living in the mountains.

So from that time it has been the custom, when cutting one's nails, to smell them and then put them in the chamber pot.

Told by Zong Zin-II; Yangsan (1932).

22

The Nine-Tailed Fox

ONE day a man made water by the roadside. Then he saw that he had done it on a white bone. He asked rather pointlessly 'Is it cold?' and the bone replied, 'Yes, it is cold.' So he asked again, 'Is it warm?' And the bone replied, 'Yes it is warm.'

The man was very alarmed at this remarkable occurrence, and he ran away. Then the bone got up and ran after him. It nearly caught him up, and he was more frightened than ever. Just then he came to a wine shop. So he turned to the bone and said, 'Just wait here a moment. I'll get you some wine.' Then he went into the shop and ran away through the back door. He went on his way and saw no more of the bone.

A few years later he happened to pass by the same wine shop. He saw another one in front of it, that appeared to be newly built. There was a pretty young woman selling wine in the new shop, so he went in. As he drank he chatted to the girl. His earlier experience came to mind, and he said, 'A few years ago I outwitted a white bone on this very spot.' As he spoke the girl turned into a nine-tailed fox. 'I was that white bone,' she cried. 'I have been waiting for you to come back.' With these words she sprang on him and ate him up. And the moral is that one should not make water on white bones.

Told by Gim Yang-Ha; Zongpyong (1928).

23

Butterflies

LONG, long ago there lived a girl whose parents had betrothed her to a man whom she had never seen. Unfortunately her betrothed died before they could be married. When she heard of his death the girl got into a palanquin draped in the white cloth of mourning and went to the dead man's house. There she unplaited her hair and wept in mourning. Each morning and afternoon she went to his grave and walked round it, weeping bitterly and calling him by name.

In those days it was not permitted to a daughter of a *yanghan*, or gentleman, to marry again when once she had been betrothed or married. And it very often happened that young widows died by poison either self-administered or given to them by their relations.

This girl used to go and lament her sad lot at her betrothed's grave, and she used to pray, 'Some day I shall meet you in the other world, and if there is truly affinity between us, may this grave break into two.'

One day she went as usual to the grave with a woman servant and the grave did suddenly burst open. The young widow immediately leaped into it. The servant was terrified, but tried to stop her mistress. She made a grab at her, but only succeeded in seizing a small piece of her skirt, which came away in her hand as the grave snapped shut.

As she held the cloth in her hand it broke into many pieces. Every piece turned into a butterfly and fluttered away.

It is said that the butterflies we see to-day are all descended from the patterns on the young widow's skirt.

Told by Bag Sog-Ryong; Tong-yong (1946).

24

The Unmarried Girl's Grave

ONE day a man made water by the roadside. It happened that at that spot there was a grave level with the ground. That night the