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# Hoosier Folklore

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**From Indiana and Neighboring States**

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# HOOSIER FOLKLORE

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## THE GOURD IN HOOSIER LAND

By EDDIE W. WILSON

The gourd has held an important place in the folk life of Indiana for many years.

It figured prominently among the Miami who once claimed sovereignty over all this territory and also among the other Indian tribes. Here it was most conspicuous as a rattle, that musical instrument which was a part of medicine and religious ceremony. Charlevoix, French Jesuit traveler and historian, thus tells of a Miami juggler's religious rite as related by an eye-witness (Nicolas Perrot) :

After a solemn feast they placed, says he, on a kind of altar, some figures of pagods [idols], made of bears' skins, the heads of which were painted green. All the Indians passed before this altar, making their genuflexions, or bending their knees, and the quacks led the band, holding in their hand a sack, in which were enclosed all these things which were wont to be used in their invocation or worship. He was the cleverest fellow who made the most extravagant contortions, and in proportion as any one distinguished himself this way, he was applauded with great shouts. After they had thus paid their first homage to the idols, they all danced in a very confused manner, to the sound of the drum and chichicoué [gourd rattle]; and during this the jugglers pretended to bewitch or charm several Indians, who seemed to be expiring under the power of their incantations; afterwards by applying a certain powder to their lips, they restored them to life.<sup>1</sup>

In like colorful manner, the Shawnee who came from the South to share the hunting grounds of the Miami used the gourd rattle to accompany his social and religious dances, also his peyote songs. This sacred peyote rattle of the

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Francois Xavier de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America* (Chicago: Caxton Club, 1923) 1:317.

Shawnee was quite an elaborate affair with its symbolical carvings and its beadwork. So rich in tradition was this rattle that the Shawnee affirmed that it first came from "seed originally given them by their Creator."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the explorer-missionary utilized the gourd in this region. According to Father Hennepin:

We found very good ripe grapes as large as damson plums; to get them we had to cut down the trees on which the vines climbed. We made wine which lasted us nearly three months and a half. It was kept in gourds which were buried in sand every day to keep the wine from spoiling, and to make it last longer, mass was said only on holydays and Sundays.<sup>3</sup>

Then, in later years, the gourd was indispensable among the pioneers.

Benjamin S. Parker has enumerated many of its uses in the backwoods community:

For drinking and dipping vessels the common article was the gourd—one of the most adaptable and convenient gifts of nature to man. In an age when manufactured conveniences were hard to get the gourd was a boon, and in every cabin home it played a conspicuous part. Of many sizes and shapes, it served, when properly scraped out and cleansed, a variety of purposes. It hung as a dipper beside the spring or well with its long sweep, and in the same capacity, it was a companion to the cider barrel and the whiskey jug; it was used at the table, at the lye kettle or at the sugar camp for soup, soap or sap; a large one properly halved made a wash-pan or a milk-pan, or, cut with an opening, it became a receptacle for the storing of divers things; a small one was used by the grandmother to darn the family socks over; the boy used one to carry his bait in when he went fishing and the baby used another for a rattle. A veritable treasure was the gourd, and it should be celebrated in song.<sup>4</sup>

Baynard Rush Hall who wrote about his early experiences in Indiana under the name "Robert Carlton" mentions having seen a "calabash banjo." He even tells of a cabin built over a running stream; here there was a trapdoor cut in the puncheon floor and water was dipped from the stream by

<sup>2</sup> Erminie W. Voegelin, "Shawnee Musical Instruments," *American Anthropologist*, n. s., 44 (1942) 66.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Hennepin, *Father Louis Hennepin's Description of Louisiana* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938) 46.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin S. Parker, "Pioneer Life," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 3 (1907) 130.

means of "a calabash at the end of a proper pole."<sup>5</sup> In describing the pioneer schoolhouse of Indiana, Sandford C. Cox says in his *Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley*:

The house was generally furnished with a split [splint] bottom chair for the teacher and rude benches made out of slabs or puncheons for the children to sit upon, so arranged as to get the benefit of the huge log fire in the winter time, and the light from the windows. To these add a broom, a water-bucket and a tin cup or gourd, and the furniture list will be complete.<sup>6</sup>

In giving the practices common in the states of Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee between 1840 and 1870, Edward E. Dale states that "The whole family drank from a common cup, gourd or tin dipper,"<sup>7</sup> whereas in her description of the hospitality extended her by the Shawnees at Hegewisch in 1860, Mrs. Henrietta Gibson says that "the meal consisted of quartered muskrat and hard yellow corn" cooked "in a big camp kettle that looked like a soap kettle." This was eaten "out of gourds."<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the gourd of the early Indiana days has been "celebrated in song" in accordance with the wish previously quoted from Benjamin S. Parker. James Whitcomb Riley who loved Hoosier life and tradition exclaims in "Out to Old Aunt Mary's":

"Why, I see her now in the open door  
Where the little gourds grew up by the sides and o'er  
The clapboard roof! And her face—ah, me!  
Wasn't it good for a boy to be  
Out to old Aunt Mary's"

Also, in the Hoosier poet's description of "A Child's Home—Long Ago," he says:

The stranger, as he drains the dripping gourd  
Intuitively murmurs, "Thank the Lord!"

<sup>5</sup> Robert Carlton, *The New Purchase* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1916) 170.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by D. D. Banta, "The Early Schools of Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 2 (1906) 48.

<sup>7</sup> Edward E. Dale, "Medical Practices on the Frontier," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 43 (1947) 308.

<sup>8</sup> J. W. Lester, "Pioneer Stories of the Calumet," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 18 (1922) 168.

Additional references might be cited in relation to the gourd in Indiana. New and interesting aspects of the subject are constantly being revealed in varying fields of research.

Los Angeles, California

### ANNUAL MEETING

#### THE HOOSIER FOLKLORE SOCIETY

THE ANNUAL meeting of The Hoosier Folklore Society will be held on Friday and Saturday, July 28 and 29, in conjunction with the Program Meeting of the American Folklore Society at Bloomington, Indiana.

Four program sessions will be held, the two morning sessions meeting at 9 a.m. and the two afternoon sessions meeting at 1:30 p.m. These meetings will be held in Room 100 of the Business and Economics Building. The Dinner Meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. in Alumni Hall, Indiana Union, on Friday evening, and there will be a Picnic at 5 p.m., Saturday, July 29, at the Beech Grove Shelter House, McCormick's Creek State Park.

## TALES FROM THE OZARK HILLS

By VANCE RANDOLPH

Stories of this type were extraordinarily numerous in the Ozark region sixty or seventy years ago. Many are remembered by elderly people today, who say that they heard "hundreds of 'em" when they were children. The items here presented are taken from a large file of folk-material which I have collected in Missouri and Arkansas. Publication of the entire collection is impracticable at present; it would require many months to classify the material, and to supply adequate headnotes. Since I am not in a position to undertake this work, it has been decided to print a few samples in the journals, by way of calling attention to the existent material. Later I shall deposit a typescript of the whole collection in the Folklore Section of the Library of Congress, where it will be available to students of these matters.

### THE HALF-WIT FROM MISSOURI

Told by Mr. Wiley Burns, Joplin, Mo., May, 1931. He heard the story in Eureka Springs, Ark., about 1889.

Once upon a time there was a fellow that come from Missouri but he lived in Arkansas, and he was kind of a half-wit. What they call feeble-minded nowadays. He just set around in a little park all day, and folks would give him their old clothes to wear, and he got his tobacco by sweeping out the poolhall. They let him sleep in a old empty house, and some of the good women around town would give him a bait of victuals every day. They made him set on the back porch to eat it, because he was too dirty to come in the house, and he was lousy too, and maybe he had bedbugs on him besides.

When strangers come to town some of the young fellows would introduce the half-wit as "a distinguished Missourian now sojourning in our midst." Sometimes they would say he was a Senator from Missouri, who was resting up from the hard work he done in Washington. One day they give him a fine gold-headed cane, and told the tourists he was the Mayor of St. Louis. The folks that live in Arkansas are

always poking fun at Missouri. They call Missouri the "Puke Territory," and make out like the people in Missouri are no better than Yankees, if the truth was knowed. But the half-wit didn't pay no mind to all this foolishness. He just set in the park with his gold-headed cane, and grinned at the tourists that come to see him. And if they give him any money he would say "Thank you, sir" and put it in his pocket.

When the town boys wanted to prove how ignorant Missouri folks are, they would show the half-wit a dime and a penny, and say he could have which-ever one he liked best. And the half-wit always took the penny, because it was bigger and ought to be worth more. So then the town smart-alecs would laugh very loud, as they thought this was a great joke.

One day there was a tourist come to the hotel, and he seen the half-wit with the gold-headed cane, and he heard the town boys laughing about what fools the people are in Missouri. And this kind of talk did not set very good, because he was from Jefferson City. So after while he got the half-wit over in the corner by himself. Then he pulled out a dime and a penny, and showed how you can go to the cigar-counter and trade the dime for ten pennies. But if you have just got a penny you can't trade it for nothing, because a penny is the least money there is in this country. Then he says to the half-wit, next time them smart-alecs offer you a dime and a penny, you just grab the dime and holler "Hurrah for old Missouri!"

The half-wit he scratched his head, and counted on his fingers, and pretended like he was thinking very hard. "No, sir," he says, "it won't never work." And the tourist says, "What do you mean, it won't work?" The half-wit he fiddled with his gold-headed cane a while, and rattled the pennies in his pocket. "If I was to take the dime," says he, "them damn' fools wouldn't try me no more."

#### THE HERON AND THE EEL

Told by Mr. Lon Jordan, Farmington, Ark., October, 1941. Mr. Jordan says it was well known to the boys around Fayetteville, Ark., about 1905.

Once upon a time there was an old blue heron standing in shallow water, trying to catch a fish for his dinner. He didn't see no regular fish, but there was a little eel come swimming along. So pretty soon the heron grabbed the little

eel, and swallowed him quick as a wink. The trouble with a heron is, he's only got one gut and it runs straight through. In less than a minute the old heron heard a splash in the water behind him. So he looked around, and there was the little eel swimming along just like he done before.

"There's another one!" says the old heron, and he grabbed the little eel and swallowed him quick as a wink. In less than a minute the old heron heard a splash in the water behind him. So he looked around, and there was the little eel swimming along just like he done before. "Well, by God!" says the old heron, "the creek's full of 'em!" and he grabbed the little eel and swallowed him quick as a wink. In less than a minute the old heron heard a splash in the water behind him. So he looked around, and there was the little eel swimming along just like he done before. The same thing happened twice more, and it seemed like the little eel knowed every inch of the trail by this time. All he had to do was follow his nose, and it was surprising how quick he could run through that old heron and splash out in the water again.

The old heron finally figured out that he had been swallowing the same little eel every time, but he never let on. He just backed up to a old stob of dead sycamore that was sticking out of the riffle. He braced himself right good, so his hind end was jammed tight against the stob. "Now, you little varmint," says the old heron, "I've got the deadwood on you!" And with that he grabbed the little eel and swallowed him quick as a wink. And this time he did not hear no splash in the water behind him, because the little eel could not get out nohow. So the old heron he just stood there with his tail up against the sycamore stob until the little eel was plumb digested, and that's the end of the story.

But ever since that day, when one fellow has got another one over a barrel, he says "I've got the deadwood on you," just like the old heron says to the little eel when he backed up against the sycamore stob.

#### THE DUMB SUPPER

Told by Mr. Lew Beardon, Branson, Mo., December, 1938. He heard it at Forsyth, Mo., in the 1890's. "Some folks tell it for the truth." said he.

Once upon a time the old folks went to town and left three girls alone in the house, and the girls set a dumb

supper to see who they was going to marry. To set a dumb supper you got to do everything backwards, and not make no noise. So the girls never said a word while they baked three little pones of bread, and set three plates on the table, and drawed up three chairs. Still walking backwards, they opened the door and both windows, and then all three of them set down to wait for the change of the hour.

It was a plumb dark night, and the wind was a-rising. Just at midnight a regular gale tore through the house and blowed out the light. A minute later there come a flash of lightning, and the girls all seen a tall man standing by the table. The least girl she hollered "Oh my God!" and of course that broke the spell. They got the doors and windows shut, and lit the lamp, but the stranger was gone.

The girls was all talking at once now, but nobody could tell much about the man except that he was tall with a long coat, and he wore cowboy boots outside his pants. All of a sudden the oldest girl pointed to her place at the table. The plate was still there with the little pone on it, and the fork and spoon was there, but the knife was gone. There couldn't be no mistake about that knife, because it was not a common case-knife like the others. It was a sharp steel knife that Pappy had the blacksmith make out of a file, with a deerhorn handle riveted on.

The old man missed his knife next morning, and the girls had to tell about the dumb supper. Pappy just grumbled a little about his knife being lost, but the old woman give the girls hell. She says dumb suppers ain't Christian, and no better than saying prayers to the Devil. She says all conjuring is wicked and terrible dangerous besides, and she made the girls promise they would never do nothing like that again.

By and by the oldest girl married a man who was on the public works, and he was a kind of straw-boss and made pretty good money, so they moved into town. Then she got to working in a boarding-house and going to dances of a night. The next thing anybody knowed, she left her husband and run off with a fellow from the Indian Territory. He was a big tall fellow, and he wore cowboy boots outside his pants. Finally him and her got to fighting in a hotel somewheres, and the hotel people found her laying dead, with a knife sticking in her heart. It was a homemade knife with a deerhorn handle, the sheriff said. Looked like some blacksmith must have made it out of an old file.

## GRAVELS FOR A GOOSE

Told by Mr. Ed Wall, Pineville, Mo., April, 1922. Mr. Wall heard the story from a trapper who lived on the Cowskin River, near Noel, Mo., in the 1890's.

Once upon a time there was a farmer a-plowing in his field, when along come two smart-alec town boys, and they says to him "Where can we get some gravels for our goose?" What they meant was, that they was looking for some fast women, like them that stays at the sporting-houses in big towns. The farmer pointed to his cabin down the road. "Yonder's where I always go," says he. "She might fight you off a little at first, but you'll get it all right." The two smart-alecs started for the house at a right fast lope, and the farmer follered along through the brush to see what happened.

He seen the smart-alecs go in the door, and everything was quiet for about half a minute. Then come the God-awfulest hullabaloo you ever heard, with people hollering and fighting like they would bust the house down. Them two town boys come a-tearing out and made for the road. Their clothes was tore, and their hats was gone, and one of 'em had a bloody nose. The farmer's wife run right after them, hollering fit to wake the dead. She had the shotgun, and fired it off twice, but she didn't hit nobody. Soon as the smart-alecs was out of sight the farmer come a-running up, and he says "For God's sake, what is the matter?"

Well, she sure told him what was the matter, and she says "Do you aim to stand there like a fool, while your wife is throwed down and ravished by criminals from the city?" So the farmer says "No, I reckon not," and with that he grabbed the shotgun and run off through the woods. After while he come back, and he says "I chased them fellers pretty near a mile, but they got plumb away." The old woman kept on a-grumbling how things has come to a pretty pass, and it looks like decent people ain't safe in their own homes nowadays. The farmer he talked some about riding to town and getting the sheriff to fetch bloodhounds, but he was afraid it wouldn't be no use. "I figure they must be fifty miles off by this time," he says, "they was the fast-runningest fellers I ever seen."

The farmer's wife was still a-grumbling, but finally she says maybe them boys was just carried away by their passions, when they seen such a pretty woman away out here in the

woods. And they didn't actually *do* nothing anyhow, but just scared the hell out of her. And maybe it is better to hush the whole thing up, so as not to have no scandal, she says. The farmer he stomped and argued awhile, and then he says "Well, have it your own way, and I will do whatever you think best." And so they et supper and went to bed.

The farmer didn't say no more, but he laughed about it for years, specially when he heard her telling the kinfolks what a terrible experience she had went through. And all the rest of his life he figured it was a great secret joke on the old woman.

#### THE COOKSTOVE AND THE CIRCUS

Told by Mrs. May Kennedy McCord, Springfield, Mo., March, 1934. She heard it in Stone County, Mo., in the early 1900's. Mr. Rufe Scott and Mr. Jack Short, prominent citizens of Stone county, told me that it actually happened, and that they were acquainted with the man who sold the stove.

Once upon a time there was a family lived away back in the hills, and they bought a fine new cookstove. Stoves was kind of new then, in that neighborhood. Most folks had pots and kettles and dutch-ovens fixed so they could cook their victuals right in the fireplace. Cookstoves was mighty handy, and didn't burn so much wood. But wood was free for the cutting in them days, and a stove cost a lot of money. Some of the old-timers thought cookstoves was dangerous, because they give off deadly gas, and was liable to explode. And lots of people claimed that victuals cooked on a stove didn't taste very good, anyhow. One old man got sick, and when the doctor asked how was his appetite, he says "I ain't et much, since we got the stove."

Well, anyhow, this family bought a brand-new cookstove, and they liked it fine. Folks from away up the creek come down to see how the contraption worked, and taste the victuals that was cooked on it. They used the stove all winter, and liked it fine. But along in the spring the word got around that a circus was coming to town. The folks seen them big colored posters, with elephants and lions and trapeze performers on them. Everybody was crazy to go, but it cost a lot for a big family to get in, and cash money was mighty scarce.

When circus-day finally rolled around, the whole family was in town before daylight. It took two wagons to fetch 'em, because there was so many kids. They brought the cookstove,

too, with three joints of pipe, all polished up like new. The old man says as soon as he can sell the stove, he'll have money enough to buy circus-tickets all round, and ride on the circle-swing besides, with red lemonade for everybody. One of the older merchants, who was a friend of the family for years, spoke up and says "Don't you think it's kind of foolish, to sell your stove just for one day's entertainment?" The old man looked at him, kind of surprised. "No, I reckon not," he says. "Circuses is educational, and I wouldn't want none of my children to miss it. As for the stove, hell's bells! We can cook in the fireplace!"

#### THE DEPUTY'S WIFE

Told by a lady who wishes to remain anonymous, Joplin, Mo., December, 1946. She had it from her boy-friend, who grew up in Picher, Okla., just across the Missouri-Oklahoma line.

Once upon a time there was a patch farmer, and he got to be a deputy sheriff. Sometimes he would have to be away from home two or three days. He thought maybe his wife was trifling on him, so he used to sneak back at night and hide in the orchard to watch the house. He never did catch nobody, but he still figured maybe she was trifling on him.

He thought about it a long time, and finally he fixed up a contraption to find out for sure. He got a crock of cream out of the spring-house, and set it under the bed. Then he took a big turnip, and tied it on a string. He fastened the string to the springs of the bed, just long enough so the turnip would not touch the cream if one person was laying in the bed. But if two people got in the bed, the springs would sag down enough to let the turnip down into the cream. Then he told his wife that he would be gone until noon the next day, and rode off down the trail. He figured that if a man come to see his wife in the night there would be cream on the turnip, and he would have her dead to rights.

When he got to town the sheriff told him to go and arrest a fellow way down in the south end of the county, and off the road at that. So he did have to be away all night sure enough, and most of the next day, too. And that night the sheriff himself sneaked out to the deputy's house, and stayed there all night. The sheriff was a big stout young fellow, and he weighed pretty near two hundred pounds. He put his gun under the bed, and when he went to get it in the morning

he seen the turnip and the crock of cream. "What's this truck doing under your bed?" says he.

The woman she looked under the bed and seen how things was. "I told you my husband was a smart fellow," she says. "He must have set this here trap to catch me." And then she jumped on the bed by herself, and the turnip did not touch the cream. But when she and the sheriff both got on the bed, the springs sagged down till the turnip was pretty near out of sight. "It's lucky you seen the damned thing," she says to the sheriff. So then she took a towel and wiped the turnip dry. "That would-be Edison won't find no cream on his plumb-bob," she says, "and I'll give him hell for even suspicioning such a thing." And then they laughed some more, and the sheriff he sneaked out the back way, same as he always done.

Well, when the deputy come home it was about two o'clock, and he was pretty tired because he had been up all night. The first thing he done was to yank the covers up on the bed, so he could look at the turnip. The woman follered him into the bedroom. "For goodness sake," she says, "what are you up to now?" The deputy give here a sour look. "I invented this here machine," says he, "to find out who's been sleeping in our bed while I was gone." The woman laughed mighty scornful. "There wasn't nobody in that bed but me," says she. The deputy shook his head. "You don't weigh no three hundred pounds, all by yourself," he says, "and you couldn't flounce around enough to register on this here invention." The woman come up close, so as to take a good look. "Register, my foot!" she says, "I don't see no cream on the turnip."

The deputy went out in the yard, and cut him a good stout hickory. "No, there ain't no cream on the turnip," says he. "But how come two pounds of butter in that there crock?"

#### HOOT-OWL JESSUP

Told by Mr. Lon Jordan, Farmington, Ark., December, 1941. He said it was supposed to be a true story, about a politician "up in Missouri somewhere."

Once upon a time there was a prominent citizen who lived in a big town, and he was trying to get elected to be a Congressman. He kept a-campaigning around, but the country people wouldn't vote for him. So he bought a farm, and was always having his picture taken out in the field somewhere,

with overalls on like a regular farmer. Sometimes he would put on boots, and have his picture taken with dogs and guns, to make out he was a great hunter.

A bunch of jokers took him out coon-hunting one dark night, and they hid in the brush so he thought he was all by himself. Just then a big hoot-owl lit in a tree right beside him. "Who-oo, who-oo, who-oo are you?" says the big owl. The fellow didn't know what it was, and he was kind of scared, but he answered right up: "I am Joseph K. Jessup, and I am an Attorney-at-Law, and I am running for Congress in the Third Congressional District!" The boys all heard what he said, and they just rolled on the ground and laughed themselves sick. Next day Jessup denied the whole story, and he said it was a lie made up by his political enemies. But the tale got into the newspapers, and people in the Third Congressional District laughed about it for forty years. Jessup was beat bad in the election that time, but after a while he got to be a Federal Judge, and they say he done pretty good at it. But he never did hear the last of the coon-hunting story, and he was knowed as Hoot-owl Jessup to the end of his days.

#### SNAKE IN THE BED!

Told by Dr. O. St. John, Pineville, Mo., July, 1921. He said he heard it related as the experience of a physician at Anderson, Mo. "I know for a fact," he added, "that snakes do get into people's beds sometimes."

Once upon a time there was a fellow that had the name of drinking too much popskull, and one morning his wife sent for the doctor. The boy that rode in says the fellow had went plumb crazy, and kept hollering that there was a snake on his legs. When the doctor got there the fellow was yelling loud as he could, and it took three big men to hold him in the bed. Soon as he seen the doctor he says "For God's sake, Doc, make these damn' fools turn me lose! There's a big snake wroppin' around my legs!"

The doctor figured on giving the fellow some morphine to quieten him down, so he got out his syringe and told the woman to fetch some hot water. And he says to the fellow "You just take it easy now, because everything is going to be all right." The fellow kept on fighting worse than ever, and it was all them three men could do to hold him. "You listen to me," says the doctor, "I am going to take all the covers off this bed, so you can see there aint no snake on your legs."

Then he pulled the quilts off one at a time, till he come to the blanket that was right next to the fellow's hide. "Hold his head up, boys, so he can see there aint no snake," says the doctor, and then he pulled off the blanket. And there layed a blacksnake six foot long if it was a inch!

When Doc seen that snake he just throwed himself backwards, plumb to the other side of the house. And when them three big men seen it, they dropped the fellow like a hot potater, and took out. And no sooner did the fellow get loose till he was off like a turpented cat, and never stopped till he got to the barn. There was a jug hid in the hay, and he took three or four big snorts right quick. He set down and rested a while, and then he went back to the house. The three big men was gone, but the doctor was still there, and the old woman was a-fanning herself with a turkey-wing. The fellow walked right in and picked up his pants and put them on. And then he put on his shoes, and then he stuffed the tail of his shirt inside the pants: "I've had a kind of hard day," says he, "and I need a little something to steady my nerves," and so he took another big drink. Then he handed the jug to the doctor, and Doc took a pretty good snort himself.

After a while Doc he laughed a little, and put the syringe back in the little tin box. "The folks told me you was plumb out of your head," says he, "and I thought so too, the way you was carrying on." The fellow just grinned, and looked sideways at the old woman. "I maybe got a little drunk," he says, "but I ain't no more crazy than anybody else," and so he took another drink. "I bet you'd holler and kick too, if three men was holding you down in bed, and there was a big snake wroppin' round your legs." And the doctor he says "Yes, I reckon I would."

#### THE CHAMPION LIAR

Told by Mr. Reggie Courtney, Joplin, Mo., March, 1926. He had it from a resident of Jane, Mo., near the Missouri-Arkansas border.

Once upon a time there was a fellow who was always telling big stories. Folks used to say he was the champion liar of the whole country. But them tales of his wasn't really lies, and everybody knowed it. They was just big windy stories, and folks used to come for miles around to hear him tell 'em, when he got going good.

One day a bunch of the boys was setting in front of the store at the crossroads, when this here windy fellow come riding along on a mule. "Howdy, Emmett," says the postmaster. "Light down, and tell us one of them big lies of your'n." But the fellow didn't stop only a minute, and he looked mighty serious. "No time for foolishness today, boys," says he. "Old man Slinkard has fell off'n the barn, and it looks like his back's broke. I'm going after Doc Holton."

After Emmett went down the rode towards town the boys just set there and looked at one another. They all knowed old man Slinkard, and most of them was kin to him. Pretty soon they all got on their horses and rode over to the Slinkard place, to see if they could do anything to help out. It was pretty near four mile, through mighty rough country. They was all hot and sweaty and tired before they come in sight of the house. And the first thing they seen, when they finally got there, was old man Slinkard out a-plowing his corn.

"Well, I'll be damned!" says the postmaster. "He never fell off'n the barn at all! That goddam Emmett lied to us!" The other boys was all pretty sore too, but they couldn't pass up a chance to pour it on the postmaster. "I don't see where you got any kick a-coming," says one fellow. "Didn't you ask him to tell us one of them big lies?" The postmaster he says yes, but he didn't figure on riding no four miles in this heat, just for some fool idea of a joke. "Well, I don't see how you can blame poor Emmett," the fellow says, "because he just done what you told him." And then they all laughed like fools, and that's all there is to the story.

#### THE STRANGER AND THE BEANS

Told by Mr. Price Paine, Noel, Mo., October, 1923. He heard it near Noel, in the late 1890's.

Once upon a time a fellow was a-traveling, and he stopped at a log house to stay all night. There was a man and a woman in the cabin, but they didn't have no children. They set down to supper, and the main dish was green beans seasoned with sowbelly. It was mighty good, too, but the man and the woman was both light eaters. The stranger only got about half as much as he wanted, because he was minding his manners and didn't want to look too greedy. When supper was over there was a lot of beans left, and the woman put the platter in a kitchen safe. The doors of the safe was made of tin with

nail-holes punched in it, so the stranger could smell them beans, and he got mighty hungry.

The folks only had one bed, so the stranger layed down on one side, and the woman on the other. The man he slept in the middle of the bed, of course. Away in the night, there come a hell of a racket among the chickens. "It's them damn chicken-thieves again," says the man. He jumped up and grabbed the shotgun, and then made a run for the chicken-house, without even stopping to put on his shoes. Soon as he was gone the woman nudged the traveler and whispered "Stranger, now's your chance!" So the fellow got up, opened the kitchen safe, and et the rest of them green beans!

Eureka Springs, Arkansas

## A CHINESE GHOST STORY

By LOUISE P. OLSEN\*

In China we always think that a tree that grows to be very old will eventually become a ghost, even though it still has life in it.

Once upon a time there was a scholar who did nothing but read and study, and I might say that when a scholar passes certain examinations he becomes a high official in the court. This scholar was still young and handsome, but he spent his days and nights reading, reading, reading, so he would be able to pass the tests to be given that year by the emperor.

In order to be by himself he moved to a new place. It was a very old house, and deserted. He went there because he thought it would be more quiet and because the scenery in the neighborhood was beautiful. The owner of the house told him it was haunted, but the young man did not believe him.

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\* Anna Ding-ah Wong, a young student from Canton and Hong Kong, China, came to me with the request that I edit a paper which she had written for a psychology course. In return for the favor, she said she would tell me a ghost story. I took it down in shorthand, and later transcribed the story *verbatim*.

In the courtyard of the house there was a very large banana tree; it was very old and very beautiful. The student from his window could look out upon that tree. One night he studied later than usual, and then prepared for bed. But just as he was trying to blow out his candle, he saw a very beautiful lady, like an angel from the sky, entering his room. He was so surprised to see her, because he did not know there was anyone else in the house. He talked to her, and to his surprise she knew much of the information contained in the books and the classics. She was very fascinating, and the young man promptly fell in love with her. They discussed the subjects in the forthcoming tests; in fact they talked until morning, but when the first light came she disappeared. After she had gone the young man felt very strange.

Every night this lady came back to him, always at the same time. The scholar began to pine, and his landlord, when he came to ask for the rent, wondered what was the matter. The young man said he felt all right, yet he looked wan and pale, as though he were withering away like a flower. The landlord said something must be wrong, so he asked a priest whom he knew to come to look over the house and courtyard. The priest said the banana tree was a ghost.

One night the landlord and the priest hid where they could look into the student's room as he sat at his desk. The lady came as usual. As soon as she appeared, the two men began cutting down the banana tree. At the same time the young man noticed that the lady looked sick. He asked what was wrong with her. She kept saying, "I must go," but the scholar would not let her go because he thought she was sick. When the tree fell, she gave a long cry and disappeared. Then the priest and the landlord came in and told the student that the lady was a ghost.

The young man felt he could no longer stay in that house, so he left.

## AN ARAPAHO VERSION OF THE STAR HUSBAND TALE

By ZDENEK SALZMANN

As to its general popularity and wide distribution, the Star Husband tale of the North American Indians may well be compared to any of the best known European tales. It is not, then, altogether surprising to find that close to ninety variants of this particular tale have been collected and that frequently more or less extensive analyses of them have been undertaken.<sup>1</sup>

Although this tale has been obtained from tribes as widely separated as the Kodiak Island Eskimo, the Micmacs, and the Koasati, most of the variants were supplied by the Plains Indians. But the Star Husband tale is not only extremely popular with these Indians; it was suggested on the basis of the distribution of the traits of this tale that the Plains area was quite probably the center of its dissemination, although the direction of dissemination and the form of the tale were not, of course, uniform.<sup>2</sup>

Of the Plains versions, the largest number (seven) was obtained from the Arapaho Indians.<sup>3</sup> It is hoped that the

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<sup>1</sup> See Robert H. Lowie, "The Test-Theme in North American Mythology," *JAF*, 21 (1908), 97-148; Gladys A. Reichard, "Literary Types and Dissemination of Myths," *JAF*, 34 (1921), 269-307; (Mrs.) Edith G. Campbell, *The Star Husband Tale* (unpublished master's thesis, Indiana University, 1931), ix + 131 with bibliography; Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (New York, 1946), pp. 345ff. Cf. also Stith Thompson, *Tales of the North American Indians* (Cambridge, 1929), comparative notes on pp. 330ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Stith Thompson, *The Folktale*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. George A. Dorsey, *The Arapaho Sun Dance* (Field Columbian Museum, Anthropological Series, Vol. IV, Chicago, 1903): (1) "Little-Star," pp. 212-228, collected in Oklahoma, with sequel.

George A. Dorsey and Alfred L. Kroeber, *Traditions of the Arapaho* (Field Columbian Museum, Anthropological Series, Vol. V, Chicago, 1903): (2) no. 134, pp. 321-329, collected by Dorsey, told by Fire-Wood of Oklahoma, with sequel; (3) no. 135, pp. 330-331, collected by Dorsey, told by Long-Hair of Oklahoma, without sequel; (4) no. 136, pp. 332-338, collected by Kroeber, told by Run-in-the-Water of Wyoming, with

present (eight) Arapaho variant of the Star Husband will be of some use for future comparative studies of this tale. This is an unusually well told version with an interesting *snake episode* in the upper world, which has not before been recorded in connection with the tale. As in many other Plains variants, the present tale includes the further adventures of Star Boy.<sup>4</sup>

## I

All Indians camp around rivers. One beautiful moonlit night the boys and girls were racing, dancing, and playing games. Some of the girls were lying down looking up at the stars. One girl was watching the brightest star as it was shining and sparkling in the sky. She said, "I like the brightest star best of all the stars. I wish I could marry that star." It happened that her older sister lay beside her. She heard what the younger girl said and she told her, "You must not speak like this; you must not wish that somebody would marry you who does not belong on the earth." Her sister did not answer.

The next day the two sisters went down to timber to gather some dry wood. There they saw a tall tree higher than a person. On a limb of the tree a porcupine was resting. The girls tried to get it down so that they could make some use of it. The younger said to her sister that she would climb the tree and get the porcupine. She began climbing up, but when she had almost reached the porcupine, it climbed a little higher. Soon she was high in the tree as she followed the porcupine. Just then the girl on the ground noticed that

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sequel; (5) no. 137, p. 339, collected by Kroeber, told by Caspar Edson of Oklahoma, with sequel; (6) pp. 339-340 in footnote, collected by Kroeber, told by Philip Rapid of Oklahoma, with sequel; (7) no. 138, pp. 340-341, collected by Kroeber, told by two or three old women in Wyoming, with sequel.

<sup>4</sup> The tale was obtained from Mr. John B. Goggles at Ethete, Wyoming, during a field trip in the summer of 1949 under a grant from the Graduate School of Indiana University, which is hereby gratefully acknowledged. Mr. Goggles, 66, of Ethete, on the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming, which is the center of the northern division of the Arapaho proper, told the story in English upon my explicit request for the Star Husband tale. Wording and style of the original have been retained wherever possible; editorial changes are concerned almost entirely with grammar.

the tree was stretching up. She called to her sister, "Come down, the tree is moving up. Look down!" The younger girl answered, "I am just about to catch it. Soon I'll be down." The older sister shouted again, "Come down, come down, the tree is moving!" When the younger girl looked down, her sister seemed to be a very little person. She did not know what was happening. The tree was moving so fast that it was all she could do to hold on to it. Soon they had gone so high in the sky that she could not see anything down at the bottom of the tree. Then the porcupine spoke up and said, "I am a star, the brightest one of all. One night you were wishing that I would marry you. That is why I had to come down to get you. We are on our way to my home."

Soon they reached the sky world, which looks like the earth. They climbed down from the tree, which was again just as tall as it had been on the earth. The girl looked around; everything was the same as on the earth, everything looked nice. They went to the sky village where the Star had his home. It was beautiful and there they lived together. The young girl did not have to work hard. Everything was provided for her. She enjoyed looking around at all the scenery. Meanwhile her star husband would go out to hunt and bring back good meat to eat.

Time went on and she found herself with child. Soon a baby boy was born, whom the people called Star Son. In those times small babies seem to have grown up very fast. It seems that the people there grew just as much every day as we grow every year. And so very soon the boy could walk and talk. Sometimes the young lady would go out for a walk to dig some good roots to eat. The boy seemed to like everything she dug; all the roots tasted good.

The young lady and her son enjoyed themselves until she made a discovery. When the Star Husband would come back from hunting, he would lie down to rest. Then a small snake would come in and lie down on the Star's breast. It would coil itself and sleep too. The lady did not think anything of this at first, but when the snake kept coming, she began to be curious. She inquired about the snake and the Star, asking people what it meant. She happened to talk about this matter with an old woman. She asked, "What about this little snake and the Star?" The old woman answered, "I pity you. I am going to tell you about the little snake and the