



Right and Wrong

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Serbian

Intermediate
5 min read

A certain king had two sons: the one cunning and unjust, the other just and good. After the death of their father, the unjust brother said to the just one,—

“Get you away from me; we cannot live together any longer. Here you have three hundred gold pieces and a horse; this is your share of our father’s inheritance. There is nothing more for you.”

The just brother took the three hundred gold pieces and the horse, and departed, saying as he went,—

“Heaven be praised! although I have received only this much from the whole kingdom.”

After some time the two brothers met on the high road, each mounted on his horse. The just brother called to the unjust one,—

“God help you, my brother!”

And the other answered,—

“God give you nothing but evil! Why do you always bring in the name of God? Wrong is better than Right.”

Then the good brother answered,—

“Come, I will lay you a wager that Wrong is not better than Right.”

And they made a bet together for one hundred gold pieces, and agreed, that the first man they met should decide the wager. Going farther on they met the demon on horseback, who had changed himself into a monk. They asked him to tell them which was better—Right or Wrong. The demon answered, “Wrong!” and so the good brother lost his one hundred gold pieces. Then they bet again for the second and third hundred pieces, and according to the decision of the demon, who assumed different shapes each time he appeared to them, the just brother lost all the three hundred gold pieces, and his horse as well. Then said he,—

“Heaven be praised! I have not a single gold piece left; but I have my eyes still, and will wager with you for them, once more.”

And he wagered his eyes that Right was better than Wrong.

Then his brother, without seeking further for a judge, drew forth his knife, and cut the other’s eyes out, and cried,—

“Now you are without eyes, let Right help you!”

But the other, pitiable as was his plight, still praised God, and said,—

“I have lost my eyes for the Right of Heaven; now I pray you, oh my brother! to give me some water in a vessel, that I may moisten my mouth and wash my wounds, and to lead me forth and leave me under the fir-tree by the spring.”

The brother listened to this entreaty; gave him some water in a vessel, led him out, and left him under the fir-tree by the spring. And as the miserable man stood there, he heard at a certain hour in the night, the Vilas[1] come to the spring, and as they bathed in it they said to each other:

“Do you know, sisters, that the king’s daughter is ill of leprosy? The king has called all the physicians together, but not one of them can heal her. If any one only knew it, and would take some of this water, immediately after we have left it, and would tell the king’s daughter to bathe in it, in a day and a night she would be well, as would

all, whether lame, deaf, or blind, become healed who bathe in this water.”

At this moment the cock crowed, and the Vilas disappeared. On hearing this, the unhappy man, crawling on all fours, dragged himself from under the fir-tree down to the water, washed his eyes in it, and immediately received his sight. Then he filled his vessel with the water, went quickly to the king, whose daughter was ill of leprosy, and said to him, “I am come to heal your daughter; if she will admit me into her presence, she will be made well in a day and a night.”

When the king heard this he at once admitted him to the maiden’s chamber, and the man gave orders that the princess should be bathed in the water he had brought. And when a day and a night had passed the maiden was well and clean from leprosy. The king was overjoyed: he gave the just brother half his kingdom, and his daughter for a wife; and thus the man became the king’s son-in-law and the first man in the land after the king.

This news soon spread over the whole kingdom, and came to the ears of him who always had said that Wrong was better than Right. He thought to himself:

“My brother found his fortune under the fir-tree,” and away he went to seek for it there himself. First he took some water in a vessel, then went under the fir-tree and cut out his eyes with a knife. At a certain hour in the night the Vilas came there to bathe, and they began to talk among themselves how the king’s daughter had been healed. “Some one must have overheard us,” they said, “when we were talking of how she could be healed with the water we had bathed in. Perhaps even now some one is listening to us. Come and let us see.”

And when, as they looked about them, they came under the fir-tree, and discovered the man who had come there to seek his fortune, and who had always said that Wrong was better than Right, they seized him, and tore him into four pieces. And this is how Wrong came to the help of the unjust.

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