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THREE SHAN LEGENDS.

I.

NANG MAAG BIN.

The story I am going to relate is about a very beautiful Princess who came out of a bale fruit. *Nang* means "Princess," *Maag* means "Fruit," and *Bin* means "Bale."

Many long years ago there reigned a King at Mong Hsing Hko. He had a son, and this prince, when he came of age, was sent by his father to learn the art of a prince. The Prince went out alone, and travelled on to where his fortune might lead him. At last he chanced to come to a solitary cottage, in which dwelt a learned hermit. The Prince asked the holy man whether he would accept him as his pupil, and the hermit, observing the appearance of the young Prince, decided that the lad would certainly be a very able and clever youth. So he told the Prince that he would be very pleased to do as he wished.

The Prince stayed with the hermit for some years, and the aged tutor took special interest in teaching his clever young pupil. After some years the Prince had learnt almost everything from the hermit, for he was his only pupil. Thus the hermit and the Prince spent their time happily in the forest, living upon different kinds of fruit only. But although the Prince was quite happy with his holy master, he was anxious about his father, from whom he had been parted a long time; and having at length a good stock of knowledge in his head, he asked the hermit's permission to go back to his home. Although the old hermit was very sorry to lose his pupil, he had to consent, for the Prince had been with him a long time. But before he went away, the hermit said that as a token of his love he would give him something of high value.

The hermit told the Prince that in the territory of the giants there was a very fine bale tree. Around this tree the giants kept watch every day and night, for not only was the tree valuable, but also the place was just on the border of their territory and human territory. The giants were really guarding the fruit on that tree, and that fruit would be worth taking, for in it was a princess. This fact was known to the hermit and the giants only.

The hermit gave the Prince some medicine which would make him invisible to the giants. The giants were supposed to sleep at noon, but no doubt they would keep sentinels to watch the tree. By the help of this wonderful medicine the Prince was not only safe from the giants' sight, but also was able to arrive at the place exactly at noon. He climbed up the tree and took his prize. The sentinels smelt human blood,
but they could find no signs of a human being. They awoke all their friends, and to their amazement they saw that their valuable fruit was missing.

The Prince took the fruit back to the hermit, who told him that it was his prize, and made him promise not to open it until he reached his kingdom. The Prince promised without any hesitation. As he was on his way home he heard a very lovely voice from within the fruit. His heart beat fast; he asked some questions, and the voice replied with a yet more lovely tone. He learnt that it was the voice of a girl, and he began to speak to her like a lover, and asked her if she would accept his love. The princess inside the fruit gave a favourable reply, saying that she was in his power.

Thus as he carried the fruit along he chatted with the princess inside the fruit the whole way, till he approached his kingdom. He then could no longer keep the promise which he had made, for he was so anxious to see the princess in person. He opened the fruit, and a lovely princess, dressed in the most beautiful clothes, decorated with precious jewels, came out and sat down near him. The Prince was overcome with delight to see the fair princess beside him. The couple then went on together till they reached a well outside the prince's city. There was a big tree near this well, and its branches towered over the well. The Prince thought that it would be prudent for him to keep the princess at that place while he went into the city to make known his arrival and to tell his father about his fair consort whom he had left outside the town.

The King was very pleased to see his son back again, and more pleased to learn that he had brought a fair lady from the giants' territory. He ordered all his soldiers and his subjects in the city to go and meet his daughter-in-law. He himself accompanied his son on an elephant decorated with royal ornaments.

While the princess was alone in the tree, for the Prince, before he went away, had helped her to get up into the tree that she might be more safe there, a maid from a rich man's house came to draw water. This maid was the most ugly of all the women in the universe, and her character was consistent with her appearance. She was the most ugly, the most wicked, and the most jealous of all human beings. As this woman stooped down to draw water from the well, she happened to see the reflection of the fair princess who was in the tree. Mistaking this reflection for her own, this woman thought that she was the most beautiful woman in the world, and thought that she ought not by any means to be a maid-servant to anybody. So she broke her pots, and went back to the house really believing that she was beautiful. The mistress of the house, who was waiting for the water, was astonished to see her maid return empty-handed. She asked her what the matter was, and on being told that the maid had broken the pots through slipping and falling on
the road, she scolded her for being so careless, and then gave her a new pair of pots and warned her to be more careful this time.

The maid went again as usual to the same well, and as she looked down into the water she again perceived the same fair image. This time she looked round to see whether anyone was beside her, but seeing no one, not the least sign of a human being, she concluded that the shadow must be that of nobody but herself. Again the vain thought came into her head, and she broke the water-pots again. She retired home, walking more proudly than the first time, to meet this time double abuse. She was not only scolded by her mistress, but severely abused by her master also.

They gave her this time a pair of wooden bottles to go and fetch the water, and if she failed to bring it this time she was to be driven away from the house. She went to the well again, and again saw the same shadow. But this time she looked very carefully, and at last she saw two shadows, and learnt that the ugly one was her own. She looked around her in every direction, vainly; but on looking upward she saw the fair princess in the tree. She was very angry, and, climbing up the tree like a wild and angry beast, pulled the princess down and treated her very harshly. At last she killed the princess and threw her body into the well, after taking all her possessions. She put on all the beautiful clothes and jewels of the princess, and went up into the tree, and seated herself at the place where the princess had sat before.

The Prince, accompanied by his royal father, then appeared at the tree with all their retinue. On seeing the ugly maid every one was dejected. Even the King himself did not come near enough to greet his new daughter-in-law. He turned his elephant and went straight back. However, the unfortunate Prince had to call this wicked woman his wife and take her to his palace. He kept her in a separate room, and never went to her. So the Prince was very unhappy for some time.

A month or two afterwards a very pretty lotus came out from the well. Its fragrant smell persuaded everyone passing to come to it. It chanced one day that one of the King's servants came that way and saw the lovely lotus. He took it to the Prince, who put it in a respected place. It was so lovely and beautiful and its smell was so attractive, that the Prince was always near the lotus. The wicked maid soon knew this, and from the Prince's behaviour she thought that the lotus must surely be that lady whom she had killed. Her usual jealousy persuaded her to destroy the lotus, so one day when the Prince was absent she went to the place, and taking the lotus, threw it away. The Prince was indeed very sad when he missed his favourite lotus. However, in a few months' time a mango tree came up in the exact place where the lotus was thrown. Although the tree was quite small as yet, there was a golden fruit on it. This fact was again known by the wicked woman; the place where the tree grew was quite near her, and one day her maid-servants saw the
mango and told her what they had seen. This wicked woman at once
ordered the tree to be cut down, and told her servants to throw the
mango into a stream which flowed down to a great distance, passing
the King’s garden on its way. The golden mango went down with the
water till it reached the King’s garden.

It happened that day that the King’s gardener and his wife were
washing their clothes in the stream. The old couple saw the lovely
fruit, and the gardener without much difficulty caught hold of it. As it
was a very strange fruit they kept it on a high shelf in their house. These
old people used to go out in the early morning and work all day.
From the time the mango was in their house they found that a strange
thing occurred. When they went out they usually left their house very
untidy and their food uncooked. Now, every time they came back
the house was very clean and the grandest meal was ready for them.
They could not find out the cause for some time, but one day they pre-
tended to go out, and immediately came back to watch who had been
doing their work every day. To their surprise they saw a very beautiful
girl come out of the golden mango. She was going to do the work again,
but the two old people ran up and caught her. The housewife threw
away the empty fruit. The Princess was very sorry that her cell had
been thrown away; she told them that if the cell was with her all the
people in the city could take refuge in it in time of danger.

So the fair lady lived with these old people for some time. She
told them all about herself. The old woman had to go and give flowers
from the garden to the royal family every week. One day the princess
told the old woman to bring her some flowers. She wove the flowers
into a wreath in a very beautiful manner, and in the wreath she showed
what had happened to her from the beginning of her life up to that time.
Every detail was included in the wreath. She then told the old woman to
present the wreath to the Prince. As soon as the Prince saw it he was
very unhappy. He asked the old woman who had woven the wreath, but
as the girl had made her promise not to tell, she replied that she had
done it herself. The Prince did not believe this; he destroyed the
wreath and told her to do it again in his presence. As the old woman
could not do it, he knew that the story told in the wreath must be true,
and that his fair consort must be at this woman’s house.

One day he went out to the garden with some of his men. He was
on an elephant. On reaching the house he asked for some water to
drink. The housewife brought some, and the Prince poured the water
away. This he did many times until the old woman could no longer
bear it; she called out for the girl. When the girl came out the Prince
begged her to go with him; she consented, and accompanied him on the
elephant.

The wicked woman at the palace was very jealous of the fair
princess, and planned a stratagem to get rid of her. Meanwhile the
Prince and the princess lived happily for some time. One day they were going to wash their hair. The wicked woman managed to put some finger and toe nails in the princess’s hair, but nobody knew that she had done it. She then told the Prince that the princess was a witch. The King was also informed. When the princess was examined they found the nails in her hair. This was a sign of a witch, and as witches were considered very evil, the King ordered his daughter-in-law to be executed. The Prince was very sad, but he could not oppose his father’s order.

So the princess was taken out to be executed. Before they killed her she prayed to God. She asked Him that when she died her body should become a big rest-house, her eyes two parrots which would relate her story to the Prince, and her limbs a golden mango tree, the fruit of which, she prayed, should be very wholesome to honest and pious people, and very sour to wicked and bad-charactered people. Her prayer was fulfilled. A fine big rest-house appeared at that place, and also a golden mango tree, and two parrots. As for herself, she died and became one of the seven angels of a silver mountain very far away from human territory.

One day the Prince, accompanied by his wicked wife and their retinue, came to the place where the rest-house was. It was strange to all of them, and they were astonished to see the golden mango tree. The servants plucked some of the fruit for the royal couple. The Prince tasted one of the fruits and it was very wholesome indeed, but when the wicked woman tasted hers, her strange expression was seen by all. Even when she asked for a piece from the Prince’s fruit she could not eat it; it was too sour for her. The Prince saw that there was something wrong, but he had not to wonder long, for one of the parrots on the tree promised to tell him all when he was alone. He told all his people to go back with their mistress. When he was alone the parrots related all the story of the princess. They said that she dared not go back to him for she had been killed many times. If he wanted to see her he must go to the silver mountain which was in the territory of the angels.

The Prince determined to go alone till he obtained his fair love again. So he went on his way until he came to a hermit. The hermit said that he knew nothing about the mountain, but he thought that an old hermit who lived very far away might know. He showed the Prince the way to the old hermit. By the help of Thakya Min, the supreme of all Nats, the Prince arrived at the place where the old hermit lived. This hermit was so old that when he sat down his eyelids hung down as far as his nose. When he heard the voice of the Prince he lifted up his eyelids to look at him. The Prince told the old hermit what he wanted, and related the whole story of himself and the fair lady he was seeking. The holy man sympathised with the Prince, and gave him directions how to catch the angel.
The angels came down from the silver mountain to bathe in the golden pond every week. The Prince arrived there in time to see the seven sisters come. They bathed merrily in the pond. All dressed and went back to the palace after they had finished except the youngest, who remained alone for some time. The Prince took her dress and hid it. When she came up from the water she could not find her dress, but only the Prince, who begged her to go back with him to his kingdom. She did not want to part from her sisters, but as her affection for this young man was still fresh, and as she was sorry to see him come from a very great distance, she agreed to go with him. The Prince loved her dearly, so she loved him too.

They both set forth for their kingdom. When the Prince reached the palace he drove away the wicked inhuman woman. The woman had not gone three steps from the palace when the earth rose to meet her. She was swallowed up by the earth. The Prince and Princess then lived together happily till the death of their father. They then became King and Queen and both reigned happily.

II.

THE SILVER OYSTER.

The old people in the Shan States are in the habit of telling religious stories. They say that Buddha existed in every world, sometimes as an animal, and sometimes as a human being; but whatever he was he was the chief. The following legend is told about him.

Many years ago there reigned a King in a certain country. He had wives but no children. So one day he called his wives and told them to ask for a son from the nats they worshipped. The Queen went into the royal garden and stayed there for seven days. On the last day she dreamt of the sun which fell on her breast. The King was told, and he knew she would be with child. The Queen was to stay in the garden until she gave birth. Wires, one gold and one silver, were connected from the royal garden to the palace, and it was ordered that if she gave birth to a daughter the silver wire was to be struck, and if to a son, the golden wire. Ten months after he had heard the dream he heard the shivering of the wires. He went and looked at them, and saw both shivering. He knew not what had happened, and waited for the sun to rise. Then a letter announced that the Queen had given birth to a Silver Oyster. The King was so ashamed of what other kings would say that he ordered the Queen to leave the palace, and the Oyster to be thrown into the river. The Queen knew that it was useless to talk with the King, so she consented, and went to live with a poor old couple who loved her as their own daughter.
THREE SHAN LEGENDS.

As the Oyster was thrown into the river, the Thakya Min came down, and taking it up put it in a pot with a pair of flying shoes and a magic stick. He wrote a letter saying that after seven months something would come out of the shell. He packed the pot properly, and it floated down the river. It went on for a month. On this river there stood the kingdom of the dragons, and as the seven princesses were bathing they saw the pot. All ran towards the bank except the eldest, who took it up and went to the palace. She opened it and saw those things which have been described. She read the letter, and intended to keep the pot, but her father would not allow her to do so, and she was forced to pack the pot again and send it floating down the river, writing a few words saying how she had had to set it floating again unwillingly.

Another month passed, and the pot was picked up by a giantess who was the ruler of the giants. She opened it and kept the pot and its contents in a room at the top of her palace. She looked after the oyster with the utmost care. Five months after she had picked it up, a lovely child came out, and she was very glad, as she had no children. She kept many maids to look after him. He grew up to be a strong and lovely boy. His foster-mother usually went out every day, and she told her son not to climb to the top of the palace. The maids were also ordered not to let him climb up there. As these giants transformed themselves into human shape, he thought that they really were human beings like himself.

One day, when he was in the sixteenth year of his age, he determined to climb up to the top of the palace to see what was there and why his mother, as he thought her, had so often told him not to do so. As soon as his mother went out he climbed up, although the maids tried their very best to stop him. He reached the topmost room. He saw a giant's outer garment and a mask. He at once knew that the people with whom he was living were not human beings, but giants. He opened the pot which was also there, and saw the shoes, the stick, and the letter. Thus he came to know his real father and his country. He put on the garment, the mask, and the shoes, and took the stick in his hand. He entered. He looked very ugly in his new garments. He then flew to the east, where he saw a garden containing a blood pond; to the north he saw heaps of human bones; in the western garden he saw dead bodies; and in the south he saw human beings who were confined there. He set them free. He now knew then that his pretended mother, the giantess, used to eat human beings. So he flew up, intending to return to his own country. The giantess saw him and was mad with grief. She tried to induce him to come down, and he thought of going to her, but on second thoughts he was afraid of being eaten. So he flew up. As his foster-mother was weeping he dropped his turban. He saw her pick it up, and when she kissed it she fell to the ground senseless. Again he thought of descending, and again he dared not. So he flew as fast as possible to be out of
sight. When the giantess came to herself she went to the palace and punished the maids for not doing what she had ordered.

He flew on till he saw a group of cowherds enjoying themselves under a tree. He descended and went to them. At first they were very much frightened, but he managed it so carefully that they became friends. They loved him very dearly. They were five hundred in number, and all promised to build for him a house and to bring food for him next day. So he stayed with the cowherds in the day time, and alone at night when they had returned to their homes.

A year passed, and one day the cowherds told him that a pwe was to be held in the King’s palace. The pwe was held because the youngest of the King’s seven daughters was to choose a husband for herself. So they told him that they were going to the pwe, and told him not to go with them as he was very ugly. He consented. They all went to the pwe. He followed them at a distance, and when they were out of sight he flew as fast as he could to the pwe. The princess was on the platform, and the people stood around her. He went and stood on the east side, and when the cowherds arrived at the pwe they also stood on the east side. They saw him, and being very much ashamed of him gave him a blow each and went to the north side. He thought that he would be safe on the north and went there also. They found him there and reproached him. Everywhere he went he found them and could not get rid of them. So he jumped to the front. As he jumped the princess saw his skin, which was very beautiful. She took up the wreath and put it round his neck as a sign that she chose him as her husband. All the people were amazed. The ministers told the King that the princess had chosen a husband who was as ugly as he could be. The King, being vexed, drove both daughter and son in-law into the forest. The six sisters were very angry, and they made up their minds to kill their sister’s husband.

One day the six sisters persuaded the King to order them, the seven, to bring a fish each to him. If anyone failed, her husband must be put to death; the fish must be brought the following morning at ten o’clock. So the King ordered as he was bid. The youngest went home in tears, but when her husband saw her come crying he comforted her and told her not to be worried. As soon as it was dawn he beat the ground thrice with his stick, and all the fish appeared in front of him. He picked out the largest two and awoke his wife. He gave them to her, one to play with and one to take to the King. She was so pleased that she took both to the King a little after her sisters had left the palace. The sisters with their fishermen went to every stream but could get none. The youngest sister’s husband then flew to a banyan tree. He beat three times again, and a throne appeared with the fishes in front of it. He took off his garments and sat down on the throne. The sisters after a fruitless search
arrived at the spot where he was sitting. They took him for a nat. They worshipped him and asked for a fish each. He gave them one each but in return asked for the tips of their six noses. They went back satisfied, thinking that they would be able to kill the ugly man, as they called their sister's husband, because even they with their numerous followers could find nothing and their husbands would have been killed if they had not had the good fortune to meet a nat.

When they arrived at the palace they were surprised to find their youngest sister before them with two large fishes. They did not, however give up their plan, and the next thing they planned was to bring to the King a stag each. The same thing happened as in the case of the fish, and this time the "ugly man" took the tips of their ears. So the last contrivance was that each sister must build a road of jewels from her house to the palace within seven days. The youngest cried very much, for she had not a single stone, nor anybody to help her husband. Her husband told her to mark out the road. When she took a level place the elder sisters pushed her side and took the place for themselves. Though her husband told her not to be sad or anxious, she could not help it, because she knew that they could not afford such a road.

The sixth day came, and not a stone had been placed on their road, whereas the others had nearly reached the palace. The youngest went to bed and thought only of death. At midnight her husband got up, and he prayed for his road to be the best among the seven. His prayer was answered. In a minute's time he saw the road shining brightly in the moonlight. He did not sleep, but made the necessary things for the procession to the palace. Many nats came down and kept him company. They gave him nat's garments and when it was dawn he took off his giant's garments and put on his nat's dress. He woke his wife, who at first did not believe that he was her husband. He had to put on the giant's garments again to show her who he was. She got up, mad with happiness, and taking the giant's garments she burnt them. She put on him the nat's dress, and with the nats as their followers they went to the palace. The King was amazed, and thinking that some king had come to pay a visit he got down from his throne and asked his son-in-law to get up on to it. His son-in-law then told him who he was. The King was very angry with the ministers and his daughters. He called his daughters and told them to beg his son-in-law for mercy. He forgave them. As they said that they had got the fish and the stags from a nat, and not from him, he took out the nose-tips and ear-tips from his pocket, and placing each in its place, made the noses and ears whole again.

So then he went to his father and related his story. His father was very pleased and gave him his kingdom. He took his mother to his palace, and summoned the dragon-princess and his foster-mother the giantess to his royal town, and built a palace for each of them. They lived long and happily in peace.
He had to be an oyster for seven months and had to undergo these hardships because he had killed an oyster in his last existence.

III.

THE STORY OF ARGANEE.

Once there was a very learned man in the town of Benares. Because of his learning he became a teacher. He had a school of his own; he alone taught his pupils and he rose to fame by his cleverness in teaching. It happened that out of his five hundred pupils there was one, and one only, that he could not teach; and even in this case it was not his method of teaching that was at fault. The name of this pupil was Arganee, and he was as dull as an ape in human form. He toiled through his lessons as heavily as a woodcutter through his toiling life. He made no progress in his learning from the time he joined the school to the time for leaving it. One day his teacher sympathetically advised him to try to learn a single word, “Evam-me-sutam,” a sacred word taken from the Scriptures. Arganee accordingly learnt that word. It was not an easy thing for so dull and witless a lad as Arganee, but after three months’ studying he was able to pronounce the word as accurately as any wise man. He was so pleased with his success that he said that word before every sentence he spoke. So, after paying respect to his master he took leave of him and went away.

He wandered about the country until one day, when he was making his way through a forest in which he had not before set foot, he came upon a lovely palace. Being half dead with thirst, hunger, and weariness, he sat down under an apple tree which was near a well just by the palace. He satisfied his hunger with the apples, quenched his thirst with the water from the well, and relieved his weariness with a sound slumber. Not long after he fell asleep, he was suddenly awakened by a beautiful, a fairy-like, maiden of about his own age. Now this maiden was the daughter of a lord who was the owner of that castle. Her mother had died about a year before, and therefore only she herself, her aged father, and a single servant, were left to occupy the whole area which surrounded the palace. On that day on which Arganee made his way towards the palace, Hkin Hkin U, for that was the name of the enticing maiden, begged her father to give her permission to seek for herself a learned husband, as she had already entered the threshold of life since her mother died. Her father, without further ado, granted her request. She made a long and wise reasoning with herself the whole day, and had now come out for a walk to enjoy the splendour of the evening. So this is how she saw Arganee.

When Arganee woke up she questioned him about his birth and his occupation and his reason for trespassing on her domain. He answered her questions so satisfactorily that she took him to be a wise man. So
she brought Arganee to her palace and discovered her plan to her father. He was very pleased at the successful attempt of his daughter. Therefore Hkin Hkin U and Arganee were married next day. The grandeur of the marriage could not be rivalled by that of any other earthly marriage.

But not many days after their marriage, Hkin Hkin U knew that her husband was no wiser than an ape, and she told him that if he wanted to win her he must go out into the world again to seek for more wisdom. Therefore he went away.

After travelling for eleven days he came to the bank of a river. Being unable to go farther he wept, and prayed to God to help him in his endeavour to lead a wiser life. His prayer was heard by his mother who had died and become a fairy. So she came invisibly to Arganee and told him who she was. She asked him of his troubles, and he made known to her all his wishes. Then he begged her to show him her face. The fairy then said, “My son, from this very instant you will at once become the wisest man in the world, but your second request cannot be granted, lest you should seek to trespass against the lawful consort of human beings.” But Arganee cried and wept, saying that he was wise enough not to do so. Then the fairy said, “Dear son, control your mind, and step not a pace towards me, or your will ruin yourself and will die the death of a wretched man.” She then showed herself. Arganee, being overcome by desire, tried to embrace his mother, but was forced away by the fairy, who then said, “May you die the death of a wretched man.” Then she made her way towards heaven. So Arganee went away sorrowfully, regretting his wicked deed towards his mother. “But what is done cannot be undone,” he said to himself, and he continued his journey, not the same way as he had come, but towards another country.

When he arrived at this other country he lodged at a shop, and not long after his entrance into the town his fame had become known to every citizen in the town. One day a herald went about the town proclaiming that there would be a contest in drawing at the royal court, and whoever drew the best should become the heir to the throne. So a Brahmin who was expert in drawing, Kala-pyu by name, went to the court, accompanied by Arganee, who was his teacher. But Arganee did not enter the court; he stayed outside. On being commanded to draw the portrait of the Queen, Kala-pyu sat down near the throne. But Arganee, as soon as he heard the voice of the Queen, at once knew the form of her face and every part of her body. As soon as he finished, the Brahmin went home and showed his portrait to his master who had already finished his own drawing and returned home for dinner. Arganee took the portrait which his pupil had drawn and gave him in return his own drawing, saying, “You will be rewarded greatly for that.” On seeing this drawing the King was very angry, for the picture was little better than naked; everything that was on the Queen’s skin was
shown. So the Brahmin was accused of trespassing against the King's will, and so he was sentenced to death. But Kala-pyu said that the portrait was his master's work. Therefore Arganee was sent for. When he arrived before the King he was sentenced to death at once, and was forthwith executed.

Thus was Arganee punished for his evil deed towards his mother. This story teaches us not to be indolent in any enterprise. For though he did lawfully he was killed. Thus his prosperous life was made short by the solemn vow of the fairy, his mother.

B. R. PEARN.