In another of Spitta Bey's tales I find a version of the Jealous Sisters, more resembling Galland's in some particulars than any other with which I am acquainted; while a third contains the story of the Nose-Tree, which I had not met with before in any genuine Oriental form.

CHINESE LEGENDS.

THE BIRD KO KO.O.O.

Here is in the south of China a bird which, if very frequently heard, is very seldom seen. It is shaped like the brown thrush, but is rather larger; its colour is jet black, and its singing is principally composed of one loud clear double note which may be represented by the words Ko Ko.o.o.

The Chinese explain its existence by the following legend:—

Long ago, no one knows how long, two beautiful young girls, tempted out by a lovely moonlight night, escaped noiselessly from their home and walked towards the hills to see the blossoms of the strawberry tree (myrica esipida), which is supposed to wait till night to open its petals.

The elder of the two girls was called Ah Ko, and had lately married Ah Saw's (the other girl) brother. She had come (Chinese fashion) to live with her mother-in-law, and, needless to relate, the young husband was still very much in love. The mother who, like all Chinese women, was a slave to her son was very lavish of her attentions to the youthful bride, and in her desire to please her son was perhaps more anxious for her welfare than for that of her own daughter, Ah Saw. As the two girls were walking gaily chatting together, a large tiger sprang suddenly between them, and seizing Ah Ko in his powerful jaws carried her into the depths of the neigh-}

bouring wood. Poor Ah Saw was so horror-struck that she could do nothing for a long time but gaze stupidly at the spot from whence she saw Ah Ko and her unwished-for companion disappear. At last her senses returned, and turning round she ran wildly back to her mother's house.

The latter, anxious about her daughters, was waiting at the door, and on hearing from Ah Saw of the horrible scene which had taken place was so much in terror of what her son would say that she forgot for the time being that she had twice been a mother, and that poor Ah Saw, even though she was not a son, had some claim upon her love. She turned wrathfully upon the poor girl, and ordered her away from her house, forbidding her to reappear before her unless she could bring back her sister-in-law. The girl retraced her steps, and wandered aimlessly about the country, calling Ah Ko Ko.o.o.o. until death, more merciful than her own mother, took pity upon her and carried her away.

We are led to suppose that in spite of her mother's cruelty Ah Saw must have been a very dutiful daughter, since she left her place of rest to come back to this world under the shape of a bird to try and do her mother's bidding. And this is why the sound Ko Ko.o.o.o. is so often heard in the south of China.

THE BIRD TEE TAI TAI.

In the south of China there is another bird, the existence of which is also explained by a legend. It is a sort of little bird bearing some likeness to the English lark. It rises from the ground with a very sweet twitting song, flying in a straight line higher and higher into space until it is out of sight, continuing its song all the while. It is commonly called "Ah tee tai tai," and "the black bean bird."

Once upon a time there lived a man whose first wife died in giving birth to a little son. The father, who had not been married long enough to grow tired of matrimony, resolved to renew the experiment, and consequently looked round for a second wife. In spite of the immense quantities of babies destroyed at their birth, for the only reason that they are born a girl, women are still very plentiful in
China, and it is almost as easy to find a wife there as it is in England; consequently very shortly after our friend Ah Kwai set to work, he brought to his home a beautiful bride.

At first all went smoothly enough (it generally does, even in China). The young wife, who was fond of children, made a great pet of her stepson, and Ah Kwai was congratulating himself on the excellence of his choice. Sometime afterwards the new wife, Ah Leen, who did not like to be inferior to the first wife, also presented her husband with a son; but she did not die, thinking it did not do to imitate people too far. The happy father thought that this new baby, Ah Tee (Chinese for little brother), would serve as a new link to make stronger the ties of love which existed already between him and his family; but alas! he knew not the heart of a jealous woman. As long as she had no son of her own Ah Leen thought her little step-son a very delightful plaything, but as soon as Ah Tee appeared she concentrated all her love on the new comer. Gradually all her affection for the first-born vanished, then jealousy and hatred took possession of her heart, and she even went so far as to grudge the food and clothing that had to be bestowed upon the poor child.

For several years envy and hatred tortured her heart cruelly, till at last one fine day she determined to free herself from her torment by getting rid of the unconscious cause of it.

She called the two boys to her and gave them both a basket of green beans, telling them that they were to go to a distant field and plant them, forbidding them, at the same time, to come back till the green leaves were seen above ground.

As she had taken great care to boil her step-son’s portion she thought she was pretty safe never to see him again, and she began to think a great deal of herself and to think she was decidedly a clever woman. But, as the sequel will show, she was “counting her chickens before they were hatched,” or, as the Chinese say, “naming her children before they were born.”

Both boys started happy enough, until, when some little distance from home, Ah Tee found out that his brother’s beans were bigger than his own. The little despot immediately began to make what is commonly called a fuss, until A Poon, who had been taught pretty sharply to give in to his whims and fancies, good naturedly gave up his own beans and took his brother’s instead.

Arrived at the field they planted the famous beans according to the instructions they had received from their mother, and waited patiently till the green leaves should be seen above ground. After a few days A Poon one morning woke up and found his own patch of ground dotted all over with green, while Ah Tee’s was as bare as it was on the day when they planted their seeds, and though the good-natured little fellow was very lorn to leave his brother, he dared not disobey the orders he had received. Consequently he started for home with a very heavy heart.

When Ah Leen saw him returning alone she guessed at once what had taken place, and refusing to receive her step-son she sent him back to fetch his brother. The poor boy silently retraced his steps and returned to the field where, look where he would, no trace of Ah Tee was to be found. So not daring to reappear before his mother without her beloved son he wandered about, calling “Ah Tee, tai tai? Ah Tee, tai tai?” (Little brother, where are you?), until at last he died of exhaustion, and was changed into a bird which now in its singing imitates the plaintive wail.

M. T. Mansfield.

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CHINESE SUPERSTITIONS.

The old amahs who take care of our children share the Chinese belief in the inferiority of women, and they will not believe you if, upon the arrival of an infant, you welcome your baby-girl with as much joy as you would a boy. They are further persuaded that during the first days of its life the infant knows to what sex it belongs.

At one time I was staying at Foochow with a friend of mine, who had just had a baby-girl, and I had my amah with me. One evening,