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The best known of stories, or episodes, which tell how the hero got the help of animals is that usually called The Grateful Animals (Type 554). As in most other tales of gratitude, the hero is the youngest of three brothers. Going on his adventures, he performs kind deeds for animals and wins their gratitude. In some cases he rescues the animals from danger or starvation, and in some he makes a satisfactory division of booty for three animals who are quarreling over it. As in The Animal Brothers-in-Law, the animals usually give the hero a part of their body so that he can summon them if he ever needs their help. Most frequently the animals are ants, ducks, and bees, or a raven, a fish, and a fox. The hero then proceeds, and the animals, called upon in his hour of need, perform his tasks for him and bring him success. In his choice of adventures for the hero at this point, the story-teller has considerable freedom, for his introduction may lead him almost anywhere. In practice, however, the episode is used as an introduction to a relatively small number of rather well-known stories. He may win a beautiful princess by performing certain difficult tasks, such as the sorting out of a large quantity of scattered seeds or beads, or the bringing of a ring or key from the bottom of the sea. The ants and the fish help with these two tasks. This would seem to be the normal course of the story of The Grateful Animals, for these tasks are seldom found in other connections. But the animals may help the hero bring back the water of life and death from the end of the world (Type 551); they may help him choose the princess from her identically clad sisters (Type 313); or they may help him hide from the princess, and thus win her hand rather than lose his life (Type 329).

Although the story is known in the Persian Tuli-Nimneh of the fourteenth century, its principal use seems to have been in oral folktales. It has been in Europe long enough to be told in every country, except possibly the British Isles. There are oral versions from India, Indonesia, and Ceylon, and from the Turks, Armenians, and Tartars. It is known in Africa in at least a dozen versions from Madagascar to the Guinea Coast, and has been carried by the French to Missouri.

None of the three tales of helpful animals which we have discussed has received adequate study. They should undoubtedly be handled as a group because of their frequent interrelation. It would be almost necessary to study the various tales for which these stories serve as introductory episodes. How independent a life can such merely introductory types have?

These questions and the relation of written to oral versions, not to speak of the obvious Oriental affinities, should afford many interesting problems for future research.

In a special variety of The Grateful Animals tale the animals give the hero a part of their body so that he may use it to transform himself into that animal when he wishes to. This introduction is sometimes used as a part of The Dragon Rescue or any other tale where it is appropriate.⁽¹²⁾ It is widely but thinly distributed over continental Europe and has been carried, presumably by the French, to the island of Mauritius.

(12). See Bolte-Polivka, II, 22, n. I.

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Several such oral tales have found a place in Oriental literary collections. In the Hindu fable collection, the Panchatantra, occurs a good part of the tale of Luck and Intelligence (Type 945); it also occurs in recent literary form in India, but has a vigorous life in popular tradition of India and the Near East, and sporadically as far afield as Germany and the Philippines. In the Ocean of Story, as well as in the Thousand and One Nights, occur fragments of Devils Fight over Magic Objects (Type 518; oral: all Europe, western Asia and North Africa) and of The Prince's Wings (Type 575; oral: sparingly over north and eastern Europe). In the Ocean of Story, likewise, there is an analogue of The Girl as Helper in the Hero's Flight (Type 313). This story does not otherwise appear in central Asia but is one of the most popular of all oral folktales in Europe and America; it is no wonder that it has been retold by such story-tellers as Straparola and Basile. Two tales popular in the tradition of the Near East appear in the Persian Tuti Nameh: The Grateful Animals (Type 554; oral: Europe and Asia, especially Baltic countries and The Magic Bird-heart (Type 567; oral: eastern and southern Europe, and Persia; origin probably in Persian tradition). In an Arabic history of the ninth century appears an abbreviated version of The King and the Abbot (Type 922), though Walter Anderson has shown that the tradition is certainly oral, in spite of frequent literary treatments in Europe. Likewise, the occurrence of the story of The Monster in the Bridal Chamber (Type 507B) in the apocryphal Book of Tobit does not carry the implication that this version is the source of the tradition: it is obviously a late and considerably modified form of the story, which appears to have developed orally in the Near East.