

M462
The clever younger brother,

Told by Yang Xiu-gong.

They tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao family. Mother and father had both died, and there remained only two brothers. These two farmed together. On one occasion, he, the younger brother, together with his elder brother, the two of them, went digging, but he was not putting his heart into digging. So the elder brother said, "You must put your heart into your digging. If you do not put your heart into your work, I fear we shall have no food to eat." The younger brother stood up and changed into a pheasant and flew away behind the hill. The elder brother could do nothing about it, so he sat down and wept. The younger brother flew back and said to his elder brother, "Now I am going to change into a horse for you to lead away and sell, but when you are talking price, you must only ask for seven and a half taels. You must not ask for more. If you do ask for more I shall not be able to change back again". The elder brother followed his instructions. He led him away for sale and sold him to a Chinese. One day this Chinese led the horse to a lake for a drink. The horse, as he drank, went further and further towards the middle of the lake. He went on until he disappeared altogether. There was nothing that the Chinese could do but to go home again.

One day the younger brother said to the elder brother, "Yeu-rang wants to buy a horse. I will turn into a good horse for you to lead and sell to him, but this time you must ask nine and a half taels". The elder brother led the horse for Yeu-rang to look at and Yeu-rang made him ride it for him to see. The elder brother jumped up and sat on its back and it galloped very smoothly. Yeu-rang said, "Good indeed, but how much silver do you want?" He replied, "Only nine and a half taels". So Yeu-rang gave him nine and a half taels.

Yeu-rang led it away and shut it in a stable with a wall made of planks. One day Yeu-rang was not in the house. Now Yeu-rang had two daughters, and they only were at home. The horse said, "You two dip up some water for me to drink". Yeu-rang's two daughters said, "This horse of father's can talk! Let us dip some water for him to drink". While they were away dipping water for their father's horse to drink, the horse kicked out the planks of the stable and was gone. The two daughters called Yeu-rang to run after it and he went in pursuit. The horse changed into a rat and ran down into a rat hole, so Yeu-rang changed into a cat and sat down to watch the mouth of the hole. The rat changed into an ant and climbed up into the cat's ear. The cat brushed it away with its paw, so the ant crawled away. He crawled on until he could no longer see the cat and then changed back into a person. He went to Yeu-rang's two daughters and said, "Cousins, have you any ground popcorn?" They replied, "We have", and gave him some. He made it into a ball and took it to feed the cat. He gave the popcorn to the cat to eat and then, with the washing dolly, killed the cat. Then he took Yeu-rang's two daughters as wives for his brother and himself.