

Battle of the Monkey and the Crab

A **MONKEY** and a Crab once met when going round a mountain.

The Monkey had picked up a persimmon-seed, and the Crab had a piece of toasted rice-cake. The Monkey, seeing this, and wishing to get something good out of it, said, "Please, exchange that rice-cake for this persimmon-seed." (A persimmon is a Japanese fruit, it looks a bit like a tomato.)

The Crab, without a word, gave up his cake, and took the persimmon-seed and planted it. At once it sprung up, and soon became a tree so high you had to look far up to see it. The tree was full of persimmons, but the Crab had no means of climbing it, so he asked the Monkey to scramble up and get the fruit for him. The Monkey got up on a limb of the tree and began to eat the persimmons. The unripe ones he threw at the Crab, but all the ripe and good ones he put in his pouch. The Crab under the tree thus got his shell badly bruised, and only by good luck escaped into his hole, where he lay distressed with pain, and not able to get up.

Now, when the relatives and household of the Crab heard what had happened, they were surprised and angry, and declared war, and attacked the Monkey, who, leading a large group, fought back strongly. The crabs, finding themselves unable to meet and cope with this force, became still more exasperated and angry, and retreated into their hole and held a council of war. Then came a rock, a bee, and an egg, and together they devised a plan for revenge.

First, they requested that peace be made with the crabs; and thus they convinced the king of the monkeys to enter their hole unattended, and seated him by the fire. The Monkey, not suspecting any plot, took the *hibashi*, or poker, to stir up the slumbering fire, when bang! went the egg, which was lying hidden in the ashes, and burned the Monkey's arm. Surprised and alarmed, he plunged his arm into the pickle-tub in the kitchen to relieve the pain of the burn. Then the bee which was hidden near the tub stung him sharply in his face, already wet with tears. Without waiting to brush off the bee, and howling bitterly, he rushed for the back door; but just then some seaweed entangled his legs and made him slip. Then down came the rock, tumbling on him from a shelf, and broke his back, and so weakened him that he was unable to rise up. Then out came the crabs in a crowd, and holding their pinchers high they pinched the Monkey so sorely that he begged them for forgiveness and promised never to repeat his meanness and treachery.