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Notes to Correspondents.

Notes.

CUMULATIVE NURSERY STORIES.

(See 'N. & Q.' 7th S. viii. 321; ix. 163, 461.)

Yet another example of the world-wide cumulative nursery stories, from 'Fables, Legends, and Songs of Chitrál,' collected by H. H. Sirdar Nizam-ul-Mulk, Rájá of Yasin, &c., and by Dr. G. W. Leitner, and translated from Persian and Chitrál, a first instalment of which is published in the *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, and *Oriental and Colonial Record* for January, p. 145 ff (the Second Series of the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*). It is entitled

THE VINDICTIVE FOWL.

A Fowl sat near a Thistle, and opened a rag, in which Corals were tied up. Suddenly one fell into a thistle. The fowl said: "O Thistle, give me my coral." The Thistle said: "This is not my business." The Fowl said: "Then I will burn thee." The Thistle agreed. The Fowl then begged the Fire to burn the Thistle. The Fire replied: "Why should I burn this weak thorn?" Thereupon the Fowl threatened to extinguish the Fire by appealing to the Water: "O Water, kill this Fire for my sake." The Water asked: "What is thy enmity with the Fire, that I should kill it?" The Fowl said: "I will bring a lean Cow to drink thee up." The Water said: "Well!" But the Cow refused, as it was too lean and weak to do so. Then the Fowl threatened to bring the Wolf to eat the Cow. The Wolf refused, as he could feed better on fat sheep. The Fowl threatened the Wolf with the Huntsman, as he would not eat the lean Cow. The Huntsman refused to shoot the Wolf, as it was not fit to eat. Then the Fowl

threatened the Huntsman with the Mouse. The Huntsman replied: "Most welcome!" But the Mouse said that it was feeding on almonds and other nice things, and had no need to gnaw the leather skin [*sic*; query=water skin?] of the Huntsman. The Fowl then said: "I will tell the Cat to eat thee." And the Mouse replied: "The Cat is my enemy in any case, and will try to catch and eat me, wherever it comes across me, so what is the use of your telling the Cat?" The Fowl then begged the Cat to eat the Mouse, and the Cat agreed to do so whenever she was hungry; "but now," said she, "I do not care to do so." Then the Fowl became very angry, and threatened to bring little boys to worry the Cat, and the Cat said: "Yes." The Fowl then begged the little Boys to snatch the Cat one from another, so that it might know what it was to be vexed. But the Boys just then wanted to play and fight among themselves, and did not care to interrupt their own game. Then the Fowl threatened to get an Old Man to beat the Boys, who said: "By all means." But the Old Man refused to beat the Boys without any cause, and called the Fowl an idiot. The Fowl then said to the Old Man: "I will tell the Wind to carry away thy wool," and he said: "Very well!" And the Wind, when ordered by the Fowl, with its usual perverseness, obeyed, and carried off the Old Man's wool.

Then the Old Man beat the Boys, and the Boys worried the Cat, and the Cat ran after the Mouse, and the Mouse bit the Huntsman in the waist [qu., the leather bottle at his waist?], and the Huntsman went after the Wolf, and the Wolf bit the Cow, and the Cow drank the Water, and the Water came down on the Fire, and the Fire burnt the Thistle, and the Thistle gave the Coral to the Fowl, and the Fowl took back his Coral.

This, it must be confessed, can hardly be considered as a very good specimen of cumulative stories. It is, for one thing, far too wordy, and consequently must "drag" somewhat in the recital, according to the translation, however it may "go" in the original. But it is once more interesting to find here reproduced several of the features which mark the greater number of such stories and rhymes as are cited in my 'Popular Tales and Fictions,' vol. i. p. 289 ff, and in the pages of 'N. & Q.' noted at the head of this paper, namely, the Fire, the Water, the Cow, and the Cat. I cannot understand such things to be merely fortuitous; they point clearly to borrowing by one people from another.

It may be worth while adding that in the several versions of the 'Book of Sindibád'—Persian, Syriac, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and Old Castilian—there is a tale which may also be regarded as belonging to the class of cumulative stories. It is to this purpose. A hunter finds some honey in the fissure of a rock, fills a jar with it, and takes it to a grocer. While it is being weighed, a drop falls to the ground and is swallowed up by the grocer's weasel. Thereupon the huntsman's dog rushes upon the weasel and kills it. The grocer throws a stone at the dog and kills him. The huntsman draws his sword and cuts off the grocer's arm, after which he is cut down by the infuriated mob of the bazaar. The governor of the town, informed of the fact, sent messengers to arrest the murderer.