

**THE KING OF THE
SNAKES**

**AND OTHER FOLK-LORE STORIES
FROM UGANDA**

**BY
MRS. GEORGE BASKERVILLE**

ILLUSTRATED BY MRS. E. G. MORRIS

LONDON
THE SHELDON PRESS
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C. 2
NEW YORK AND TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN CO.
KAMPALA: THE UGANDA BOOKSHOP

DEDICATED
TO
**ALL THE LITTLE CHILDREN
I LOVED IN UGANDA**

First published 1922

[pp. 27-31]

THE STORY OF KIBATE

ONCE upon a time there was a man called Kibate who had a great many friends.

Now Kibate wanted to build a house, and he asked his friends about it, and everyone gave him different advice, till at last Kibate thought: "If I take the advice of all my friends my house will be a very queer one, and if I take the advice of one or two the others will be jealous. I had better build my house all alone."

So he went away into the jungle and made a clearing, and lived there alone until his house was finished; and as it took a long time to build Kibate learnt many things, and he made friends with the beasts and birds and trees, and learnt their language.

When his house was finished he made a great feast and called all his friends, and they came gladly, for they had wondered where he was all that time, and some said he was lost.

Everyone praised the house except one man, and he said:

"Kibate, you need one more pole in the roof; if you do not put in one more pole your house will fall down." And he showed him where the pole should go, and Kibate saw that he was right and said:

"I will go into the forest at once and cut a pole. Will you stay here until I come back and help me put it up?" And his friend promised: "I will sit here until you come back."

Then Kibate took his spear and an axe and went into the forest, and he was just going to cut a branch when the tree cried out:

"Kibate, would you hurt an old friend?" So he went to another tree, and it cried out:

"Do not hurt me, Kibate; are we not friends?" And every tree said the same thing, and Kibate went on and on through the forest, but could not find a tree that was not his friend.

At last he was quite tired out, and then he found he had lost his way, and he sat down to think what he should do next.

Just then he heard a rustling in the forest, and a great snake with seven heads came out of the bushes.

Kibate had never seen such a wonderful thing before, and he was more surprised still when each head spoke to him:

"Kibate, the King will send for you."

"Kibate, you shall be a great chief."

"Kibate, you shall be a great warrior."

"Kibate, all Uganda shall hear of you."

"Kibate, the generations to come will praise you."

"Kibate, you shall make fire for the army."

"Kibate, you shall make a rhinoceros laugh."

Then the snake went back again into the bushes, and Kibate got up feeling quite rested, and wondered whether he had really seen the snake or whether he had been asleep and dreamt it.

Very soon he found a way out of the forest and came to a road where many people were passing to and fro.

He asked one man: "Where are all these people going?" And the man told him:

"The King of Uganda is going to war with the King of Ankole, and every man who stays at home will be punished." So Kibate joined the soldiers and went to the war with his spear and his axe.

They marched for many days until they reached the country of Ankole, and then they built a big camp of huts in a wide plain. The next day a dreadful storm fell upon them, and it rained for three nights and three days without stopping, and the camp was soaked and all their things were soaked, and when the rain stopped and the tired soldiers hoped to cook some food there was no fire in the whole camp, so they ate a little raw food and tried to sleep.

But in the night the chief saw a fire on a distant hill, and he woke his men and told them to go there and bring back a pot full of fire with them. So a company of men set out, and when they came to the hill-top they found that the fire was on the horn of a rhinoceros. They begged the rhinoceros to give them some fire, but it said: "It is very dull living alone on the hill-top; the man who can tell me a funny story shall take the fire from my horn."

The men thought and thought, but none of them could think of a funny story, so they had to go back to the camp without the fire. The chief was much troubled, and he sent a proclamation through the army that the man who could tell a funny story to the rhinoceros should be given a chieftainship when the war was over.

When Kibate heard this he volunteered to go all alone and fetch the fire. He reached the distant hill and found the rhinoceros looking out gloomily over the plain, very bored and cross, so he began to tell a story at once:

"Once upon a time there was a King who had no feet."

When the rhinoceros heard this he began to laugh.

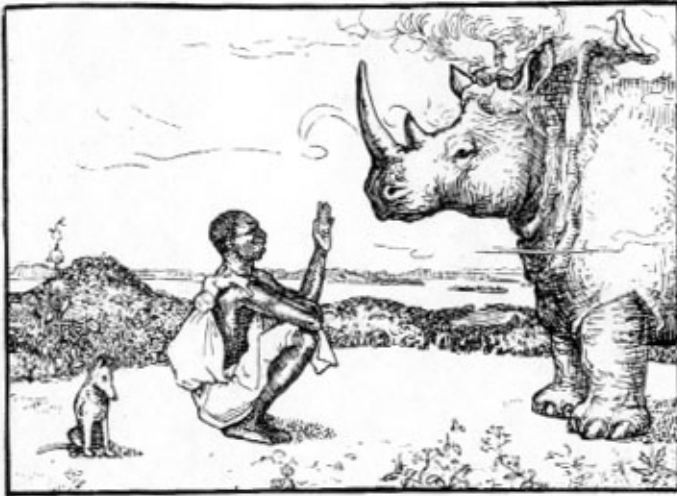
"What did the King do?" he asked.

"He walked on his hands," said Kibate.

The rhinoceros laughed and laughed until his sides ached, and Kibate took the fire and kindled the wood in his pot until he had quite a nice blaze, and then he went down to the plain. When he looked back he saw the rhinoceros still laughing on the hill-top! Perhaps you don't think that was a funny story, but, you see, Kibate had lived so long in the jungle that he knew just the sort of story a rhinoceros would find amusing.

Kibate returned to the camp and the soldiers made their fires and cooked their food, and the next day they fought a great battle and defeated the army of the King of Ankole.

When the war was over the King sent for Kibate and gave him a chieftainship, and all the soldiers went to their homes and told their relations how Kibate had saved the army, and Kibate went home to his house in the jungle clearing to get his things, and there he found his friend sitting just where he had left him, but he had grown very old, for he had sat there thinking all the time, and thinking always makes people get very old.



...✦ KIBATE ...✦
— TELLS THE RHINOCEROS?
A FUNNY STORY —

AND:—



MAKES HIM LAUGH!