

**THE MAN, THE
TIGER, AND
THE SNAKE**

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The man, the tiger, and the snake by Ferdinand Reyher

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FERDINAND REYHER

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The Man, the Tiger, and the Snake

By

Ferdinand Reyher



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To
MY MOTHER

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The Man, the Tiger, and the Snake

There is an old Laos folktale of a hunter who rescued from death a man, a tiger, and a snake, each in turn naturally professing gratitude and in turn pledging aid should the hunter ever need it.

*Now, it so happened, that need befell the hunter, and not being Anglo-Saxon, and consequently not convulsed with squeamishness at the idea of cashing in on favors previously rendered, he went forth without hesitation and quoted to those whom he had befriended—provided, of course, that he understood classical Sanskrit, which he probably didn't—the following verse from the *Hitopadesa*:*

*“That friend only is the true one who is by when trouble comes;
Words are air; a deed talks louder than a solo played on drums.”*

Interesting, the working out of that legend, inscribed in ancient temple books and told from immemorial times about the camp fires of obscure tribes in the neglected hinterland bordering India, Cochin-China, and Siam. And if you, happening upon some translation of the story now, imagine that there is a significance in its development and dénouement extending not beyond the remotest jungle gateway touched by the westerner's railroad; that, in other words, the tale is but an example of a peculiar psychology and isolated experience of an