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Foreword (for parents and adult readers)

I share with educators the belief that story reading forms a very important part of students' education. And I am aware that I have benefited greatly from reading stories in school.

I went to the Royal Diocesan High School, Mandalay, which was a bilingual school, founded in 1869 by the Anglican missionary Dr E. Marks, and donated by the Myanmar king, King Mindon. In every grade, teachers used to tell stories, some in Myanmar and some in English; and there are also story books, which I read, as both text books and additional reading.

Stories, which I had listened or read, cover a very wide range. In Myanmar language, they included the *Jataka* stories, stories from history, novels and plays, including many from Shakespeare. I remember one teacher, a Brahmin, who used to tell the lengthy story of *Ramayana*, spending many afternoons. In English, the stories come mostly from English history and folk-lore; but there are also supplements of bible stories and European tales. I still keep a few books from my school days in early and mid-fifties. I have kept them over half a century, lovingly, and with great care and effort because of change of residence many times. Three are handy: The Complete History Readers, Book III, *An Introduction to British History*, Blackie and Sons (India); Hero Tales Book

III, Harper & Co London; and Dr. Htin Aung's *Burmese Folk Tales* (Oxford University Press). Looking back, I can say that I have gained much by reading these story books. I improved my language abilities, i.e. English and Myanmar, by reading story books in both languages.

Now at age seventy plus, I am holding a post-retirement-post as Principal of Lumbini Academy, an educational institution in Yangon, for pre-KG to Grade XII education. This position had been offered me by my friend Dr. Thant Lwin Maung (pen-name Ko Tar), the institution's founder; and I accepted it because I felt his aim was noble, and I shared and appreciated his concepts of education. But it is not a full-time job as the designation might mean, but I get myself involved with my part-time presence and occasional advisory role.

Both Ko Tar and I strongly believe that students should be encouraged to read, in addition to classroom reading, and that they should find books easily. Because of this Ko Tar (who is also a publisher) has been producing books for children. One of these is his collection of short stories from Myanmar history. When that book came out Ko Tar asked me if I might like to translate it into English. I agreed immediately. I was motivated by the desire to give Lumbini boys and girls reading material which I write for them. But when I got on with the task, I felt I like to add more stories. Thus, it comes out with thirty tales, where as Ko Tar's contains eighteen. My source for the added

stories is U Phoe Kyar's *Myanma Gon-ye Yazawin Phat-sar* (The Pride of Myanmar History Reader).

About the tales

Dictionaries tell us the words *story* and *tale* generally mean the same thing. A *story* may be the true and exact record of an event, or imaginary like a novel. But *tales* in general are stories, which can contain exaggeration or modification. They can come from real stories from history; or they can be invented ones, like folk tales which our ancestors had created.

The tales in this book are based on the stories from Myanmar history, about kings, heroes, exceptional women, learned men, monks etc. They were real people; but the stories about them may have changed to make them more interesting.

In this book, the reader will find some tales which look unreal. Generally, the further back a story goes, the more it can contain imaginary parts. Myanmar has a recorded history over one thousand years stretch. But our history is longer than that, and we have stories about kings and kingdoms, like the kingdoms of Tagaung, Thayaykhittaya and early Bagan, which are older. Thus, one may find the story of Maung Pauk Kyaing from Tagaung, or Pyu Saw Htee from early Bagan rather unlikely. However, from later periods, like Kyansittha and son Yazakumar, the story has a firm foundation because it is written on stone. Thus, we like to say that most of the tales in this book are based on true stories.

The level of English

I have tried to write the tales in simple English to make it suitable for young students. The guide line I followed is 'writing plain English.' I checked the reading ease score of each story with such yardsticks as Rudolph Flesch Readability Score, Gunning Fog-index etc. which can be done online. I got reasonable scores which mean that each story is suitable for fifth, sixth grade students and above.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Dr. Thant Lwin Maung a.k.a. Saya Ko Tar for suggesting me to translate his work, and also for his encouragement. And I also want to thank my wife, Daw Mya Mya Swe, who told me again and again not to work hard, but to take leisure and care of my health.

Lastly, I thank the kids of Lumbini Academy, for whom this book is dedicated, for they always appear in my mind when I was doing this work. I wish they will read this book and like it.

Phoehlaing

August 3, 2011

To the Boys and Girls of Lumbini Academy
and other schools

I have written this book for you, and I want you to read it. It is about some men and women from our history. You can read about good and bad kings, brave men, learned people, famous women, and *nats*.

You can read one story a day, and take many days to finish the book. After you finish, I want you to read it again, and again. You will learn much about Myanmar history. You will also learn English.

Sometimes you will find some English words which you do not know. But don't stop. Don't worry. Don't give up the book. Go on reading until you finish one story. If you try, you will know the story when you come to the end. So try, try. Read whenever you have time.

I know you are good boys and good girls.
And I know you will become great.

I love you all,

Ba Ba Hlaing