ONCE upon a time, two Swans had to leave home on account of a famine; and they settled by a lake in a distant land. By the side of this lake lived a Carrion Crow. The Swans built a nest, and Mrs. Swan laid two beautiful round eggs in the nest, and sat upon them. She had to sit on the eggs for weeks, in order to keep them warm, so that the little ones might grow up inside and be hatched. While she sat there, the Crow used to help Mr. Swan to find food for his wife; and when the cygnets came out of their shells, the Crow helped to feed them also.

So all went happily for a time, and Mr. and Mrs. Swan were deeply grateful to the kind Crow. But Crows are not kind without some reason, and what this Crow's reason was, you shall now hear.

Time went on, and one day Mr. Swan said to Mrs. Swan--

"My dear, the famine must be over by this time. What do you say? shall we go home again?"

"I am ready," Mrs. Swan said, "and we can start to-morrow if you like."

"Stop a bit," says Mr. Crow, "I have a word or two to say first."

"Why, what do you mean?" the Swans said, both together.

"I mean," said the Crow, "that you may go, if you like, but these cygnets are as much mine as yours, and may I be plucked if I let them go with you!"

"Yours!" said Mrs. Swan. "Who laid the eggs? who hatched them?"

"And who fed them, I should like to ask?" said the Crow, with a disagreeable laugh: "Caw, caw, caw!"

Here was a bolt from the blue! The Crow stuck to it, and the end of all was, that Mrs. Swan stayed behind to look after her little ones, while Mr. Swan flew off to lay a complaint in court against the greedy Crow.

But you must not suppose that this Crow meant to sit still, and let the Swan have things all his own way. Not he; off he flew secretly to the Judge, and to the Judge said he--

"O Judge, a Swan is going to lodge a false charge against me, and I want your help!"

"If it is false," said the Judge, "you want help from no one."

"Caw, caw, caw!" said the Crow, "you understand me." Then this vulgar Crow winked one eye at the Judge.
"Hm, hm," said the Judge, looking at the Crow. It is a pity to say it, but it is quite true, that this Judge was an unjust Judge; and he was ready to give any decision, right or wrong, so long as he was bribed well for his trouble. In that country, you see, there was no jury to decide matters, but all power lay in the hands of the Judge.

The Judge winked one eye at the Crow. Then he said, very softly, "~What will you give me?~"

"Silver and gold have I none," said the Crow, "but I'll tell you what I will do. I'll carry your father's bones to the Holy Land, and bury them in Jerusalem, and then your father will be sure to go to heaven."

The Judge was so foolish that he really believed his father would go to heaven at once, if only his bones were buried in Jerusalem, although his father had been as wicked as himself while he was alive. So he agreed to the Crow's proposal.

When the case came into court, of course the Judge gave decision in favour of the Crow, though there was no evidence on his side except his own word: and who but a fool would trust the word of a Carrion Crow? When the court rose, the Crow flew to the house of the Judge, and asked for the bones of the Judge's father. So the Judge tied up his father's bones in a bag, and hung the bag round the Crow's neck. Away flew the Crow, but he didn't fly far; for as the Judge watched him, the Crow hovered over a filthy drain; and untying the bag, began dropping the bones one by one into the mud.

"Hi, you brute!" shouted the Judge, "what are you doing!"

"Oh, you pumpkin!" said the Crow, "did you verily think that I should take the trouble to carry your father's rotten old bones to Jerusalem? No, no; I only wanted to see what rogues the race of Judges can be. Caw!" Flop! went the last bone into the mud, and away flew the Crow, and never came back there any more.

So the Judge had to pick his father's bones out of the gutter. And the next thing he had to do was to reverse his own decision, and give the Swan his young ones again; because, you see, a great many people had heard what the Crow said to the Judge, and knew (if they didn't know it before) that the Judge was a rogue. So the Swan got his young ones back, and as for the Judge, he became the laughing-stock of the whole city, and he was obliged to go and try his tricks elsewhere.

NOTES

(The Swan and the Crow:

Told by LÁLA SHANKAR LÁL, village accountant, and recorded by CHANGAN SINH, master of the school at Chamkari, Etah district, N.W.P.

No change, except Wazir for Judge and Gayá for Jerusalem. The Judge is a Hindu, and the Crow promises to take his father's bones to the sacred city of Gayá, in Bengal.

(The end)