

KINTARO

Long, long ago there lived in Kyoto a brave soldier named Kintoki. He fell in love with a beautiful lady and married her. Not long after this, through the malice of some of his friends, he fell into disgrace at Court and was dismissed. Unable to bear the disgrace, he died, leaving behind his beautiful young wife to face the world alone. Fearing her husband's enemies, she fled to the Ashigara Mountains and there her son, Kintaro, was born. As Kintaro, or the Golden Boy, grew older, he grew stronger and stronger, so that by the time he was eight years old he was able to cut down trees as quickly as the woodcutters. His mother gave him a large axe and he helped the woodcutters, who called him "Wonder-Child" and his mother the "Old Nurse of the Mountains," for they did not know her high rank.

Growing up all alone in the mountains, Kintaro had no companions so he made friends with all the animals and learned to understand and speak their language. His special friends were the bear, the deer, the monkey and the hare.

One day, while out in the woods with his friends, romping and wrestling and running, Kintaro pulled a very large tree over to serve as a bridge across a stream. His great feat of strength was observed by a woodcutter who happened to be standing on a rock overlooking the scene. The woodcutter followed Kintaro home and challenged Kintaro to wrestle with him. For a long time they wrestled but the pair were evenly matched and finally the old man asked to stop, declaring the match a draw.

Then the old woodcutter revealed his true identity, that he was really Sadamitsu, a general in the service of Lord Minamoto-no-Raiko. He had been sent out to find promising young men who could become soldiers. Would Kintaro's mother allow him to go?

Kintaro's mother was very happy that Kintaro would become a samurai and wear two swords and, although she was sad at parting with him, she let him go.

Lord Raiko was pleased with Kintaro and when Kintaro grew up, he made him Chief of the Four Braves, a small band of the bravest and strongest soldiers in Japan.

Soon after this event, news came about a cannibal monster which had been terrorizing the people. Kintaro went to the rescue and disposed of the monster by cutting off its head, which he carried back in triumph to his master.

Kintaro now became the greatest hero of his country and had power and honor and wealth. He built a comfortable home for his mother in Kyoto where she lived happily to the end of her life.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION: Yei Theodora Ozaki, The Japanese Fairy Book.
New York: E.P. Dutton and Company. pp.60 - 73.

Researcher: Beulah L. Gilley