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Khin Myo Chit

in her *Gift of Laughter*

weaves a yarn about the irrepressible wit and native good humour of the cheerful Myanmar in a delightfully breezy way that only she can get away with.

The reader is treated to a rare collection of anecdotes, tall tales and picturesque similes that come right out of the lips of the uninhibited country folk. One wonders how they could rise to such poetic heights in their normal everyday conversation, but then the world's most beautiful pieces of literature, like Homer's Iliad, medieval ballads, Aesop's Fables and all folk-songs began orally, didn't they?

The writer feels that the literary heritage of the nation would be poorer if the priceless utterances of a gifted people were allowed to pass unrecorded and "waste their sweetness in the desert air".

Preface

An Attempt to Record the Uninhibited Wit and Humour of Myanmar

When the book 'Hla-Daw Thar Sagar' (in Myanmar) came out, even the Myanmar people were taken by surprise by the expressions of wit and humour of their own people. They asked, "Do you really mean to say that people of Hla-Daw always talk like that?" The city folk could not believe that the expressions which could only be found in "Towards More Picturesque Speech" of Readers' Digest come naturally to these simple countrymen even as they go about their daily chores. Their effortless similes come naturally as they speak.

Until recently, there never had been any attempt to record their sayings. But for the efforts of writers like Aung Naing, a young Myanmar scholar and teacher, and Myo Myint Nyain, a native of the place, the priceless gems of wit and humour might have sunk into oblivion.

"You should see how my goodman came home last night his feet twisting and body swaying like one doing a Yodayar dance!"

"Only just this once indeed! How stupid can you get! It's like chopping off your limbs just for the sake of getting the role of Stumpy in a play!"

"Come on and hear the ear-splitting jazz band—for here comes the old bus clanging away like mad.

These are only some of the witty and humorous expressions that can be found in Daw Khin Myo Chit's book, *Gift of Laughter*, English version of 'Hla-Daw Thar Sagar'. The reader is treated to a rare collection of anecdotes, tall tales and picturesque similes that come right out of the lips of the simple country folk. One wonders how they could rise to such poetic heights in their normal everyday conversation, but then the world's most beautiful pieces of literature, like Homer's Iliad, medieval ballads, Aesop's Fables and all folk-songs began orally, didn't they?

Daw Khin Myo Chit, the author of "Gift of Laughter" perhaps having caught the bug of their hyperboles, remarked "the world might be poorer by the less of witticisms in the same way if it had missed Homer's epic or medieval ballads or Aesop's fables."

"Gift of Laughter" is a book about native wit and humour, tall tales and short short with inimitable illustrations by her illustrious grandson Maung Yit.