

The Elephants and the Lion

By P'u Sung-ling

A huntsman of Kuang-si, who was out on the hills with his bow and arrows, lay down to rest awhile, and unwittingly fell fast asleep. As he was slumbering, an elephant came up, and, coiling his trunk around the man, carried him off. The latter gave himself up for dead; but before long the elephant had deposited him at the foot of a tall tree, and had summoned a whole herd of comrades, who crowded about the huntsman as though asking his assistance. The elephant who had brought him went and lay down under the tree, and first looked up into its branches and then looked down at the man, apparently requesting him to get up into the tree. So the latter jumped on the elephant's back and then clambered up to the topmost branch, not knowing what he was expected to do next. By-and-by a lion arrived,¹ and from among the frightened herd chose out a fat elephant, which he seemed as though about to devour. The others remained there trembling, not daring to run away, but looking wistfully up into the tree. Thereupon the huntsman drew an arrow from his quiver and shot the lion dead, at which all the elephants below made him a grateful obeisance. He then descended, when the elephant lay down again and invited him to mount by pulling at his clothes with its trunk. This he did, and was carried to a place where the animal scratched the ground with its foot, and revealed to him a vast number of old tusks. He jumped down and collected them in a bundle, after which the elephant conveyed him to a spot whence he easily found his way home.

¹ The term here used refers to a creature which partakes rather of the fabulous than of the real. The *Kuang yün* says it is a kind of lion;" but other authorities describe it as a home. Its favourite food is tiger-flesh. Incense-burners are often suede after the "lion" pattern and called by this name, the smoke of the incense issuing from the mouth of the animal, like our own gargoyles.