

BRAVE LAO

KEYWORD: Courage.

Away off in a land beyond the sea, in a beautiful brown house, very different from the homes we have in this land of ours, lived a lovely family, as happy as happy could be. This pretty brown house had a lovely wistaria vine climbing up its side, and as the blossoms swayed in the breeze their sweet smell floated into the house.

Not only was the pretty house different from ours, but the people who lived in it were different, too. They had darker skins than we have and black eyes and such black, black hair.

In the garden were beautiful cherry trees in full bloom, and they looked like big bouquets. These trees were so lovely that sometimes this country was called the Land of Cherry Blossoms. In the garden was a dear little boy just seven years old. His name was Lao, and he was very busy gathering cherry blossoms for his mother with which to decorate the inside of the house. Presently with his arms filled with the beautiful blossoms he went indoors and helped his mother fill the vases. Everything was bright and gay, and they laughed and talked as they arranged the flowers.

Soon Lao's father came into the room. He was a handsome man in his wonderfully embroidered kimono. He called little Lao to him, and they had a long talk together. After the evening meal the father and the lad went out again into the garden, where they sat for ever so long. Then they slipped out through a secret gate and went to the Temple. The bells of the Temple seemed to sing a soft song as they went in to pray. Little Lao asked the Great Father to make him brave and full of courage that he might grow up to be strong and wise like his father. Then they came out of the Temple and walked a long, long way until they came to a dark wood, and little Lao's heart beat very fast. His father had been very quiet on this long walk, but now he said: "My son, I will now leave you all alone in this forest. But you need not be afraid, for there is nothing to fear. The Great Father will watch over you." Then he disappeared, and little Lao was left all alone.

How dark it seemed! And the shadows seemed so big, and there was no way out. The leaves rustled, and there was a curious sound of little feet scurrying here and there. The trees stood tall and still. It seemed as though there were no way out of this thick forest.

Little Lao stood quite still for a long time, for he did not know which way to turn. What should he do now? He wanted his mother, oh, so much! She seemed so far, far away just then. How could he reach her? And then as he thought more about his mother, all at once he remembered that she had told him about a little light which he carried with him wherever he went. Right in his own little heart, she had said, there burned a tiny light which never went out. So he just wished and wished that this little light might be so bright that it would show him the way home. Thinking about it made him hopeful, and he felt quite sure that this little light would guide him to his mother.

Presently he heard little Nature voices around him, and up in the trees he heard pleasant rustling sounds. Then right inside of him the little voice of Courage spoke very sweetly to him: 'Be brave, little lad; God's Angels, full of love, are watching over you. Walk straight ahead, never fear, and all will be well.'

Just then his little light began to burn so brightly that



it shone right out through his little black eyes, and he could see quite clearly the way out of the forest. Right before him was a path winding through the trees. The little Nature Spirits seemed to be everywhere, and so he was no longer one bit lonely or afraid. Before long he was singing as he walked quickly through the quiet woods.

After a while he came to the end of the path. There the Moon was sending down lovely rays of light, the stars were twinkling brightly as though to cheer him on his way, and so he was lighted right to his own dear home. There he found his kind mother and father waiting for their dear, brave little Lao, who had shown such courage.

This is the story of one of our little brothers away off in Japan, the Land of Cherry Blossoms. Let us try to keep our little light burning very brightly, so that we too may be brave and full of courage. Then we shall never be afraid of the dark, for we know that God Himself is LIGHT.