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THE BIRD CALLS TO ADZANUMEE

Adzanumee and Her Mother

THERE once lived a woman who had one great desire. She longed to have a daughter—but alas! she was childless. She could never feel happy, because of this unfulfilled wish. Even in the midst of a feast the thought would be in her mind—"Ah! if only I had a daughter to share this with me!"

One day she was gathering yams in the field, and it chanced that she pulled out one which was very straight and well shaped. "Ah!" she thought to herself, "if only this fine yam were a daughter, how happy I should be!" To her astonishment the yam answered, "If I were to become your daughter, would you promise never to reproach me with having been a yam?" She eagerly gave her promise, and at once the yam changed into a beautiful, well-made girl. The woman was overjoyed and was very kind to the girl. She named her Adzanumee. The latter was exceedingly useful to her mother. She would make the bread, gather the yams, and sell them at the market-place.

She had been detained, one day, longer than usual. Her mother became impatient at her non-appearance and angrily said, "Where can Adzanumee be? She does not deserve that beautiful name. She is only a yam."

A bird singing near by heard the mother's words and immediately flew off to the tree under which Adzanumee sat. There he began to sing:

"Adzanumee! Adzanumee!

Your mother is unkind—she says you are only a yam,

You do not deserve your name!

Adzanumee! Adzanumee!"

The girl heard him and returned home weeping. When the woman saw her she said, "My daughter, my daughter! What is the matter?" Adzanumee replied:

"O my mother! my mother!

You have reproached me with being a yam.

You said I did not deserve my name.

O my mother! my mother!"

With these words she made her way toward the yam-field. Her mother, filled with fear, followed her, wailing:

"Nay, Adzanumee! Adzanumee!

Do not believe it—do not believe it.

You are my daughter, my dear daughter

Adzanumee!"

But she was too late. Her daughter, still singing her sad little song, quickly changed back into a yam. When the woman arrived at the field there lay the yam on the ground, and nothing she could do or say would give her back the daughter she had desired so earnestly and treated so inconsiderately.