



FANTASTIC FABLES

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The Cat and the King

A Cat was looking at a King, as permitted by the proverb.

"Well," said the monarch, observing her inspection of the royal person, "how do you like me?"

"I can imagine a King," said the Cat, "whom I should like better."

"For example?"

"The King of the Mice."

The sovereign was so pleased with the wit of the reply that he gave her permission to scratch his Prime Minister's eyes out.

The Sagacious Rat

A Rat that was about to emerge from his hole caught a glimpse of a Cat waiting for him, and descending to the colony at the bottom of

the hole invited a Friend to join him in a visit to a neighbouring cornbin.

"I would have gone alone," he said, "but could not deny myself the pleasure of such distinguished company."

"Very well," said the Friend, "I will go with you. Lead on."

"Lead?" exclaimed the other. "What! *I* precede so great and illustrious a rat as you? No, indeed—after you, sir, after you."

Pleased with this great show of deference, the Friend went ahead, and, leaving the hole first, was caught by the Cat, who immediately trotted away with him. The other then went out unmolested.

The Overlooked Factor

A Man that owned a fine Dog, and by a careful selection of its mate had bred a number of animals but a little lower than the angels, fell

in love with his washerwoman, married her, and reared a family of dolts.

"Alas!" he exclaimed, contemplating the melancholy result, "had I but chosen a mate for myself with half the care that I did for my Dog

I should now be a proud and happy father."

"I'm not so sure of that," said the Dog, overhearing the lament.

"There's a difference, certainly, between your whelps and mine, but I venture to flatter myself that it is not due altogether to the mothers.

You and I are not entirely alike ourselves.”

The Kangaroo and the Zebra

A Kangaroo hopping awkwardly along with some bulky object concealed in her pouch met a Zebra, and desirous of keeping his attention upon himself, said:

“Your costume looks as if you might have come out of the penitentiary.”

“Appearances are deceitful,” replied the Zebra, smiling in the consciousness of a more insupportable wit, “or I should have to think that you had come out of the Legislature.”

The Dog and the Physician

A Dog that had seen a Physician attending the burial of a wealthy patient, said: “When do you expect to dig it up?”

“Why should I dig it up?” the Physician asked.

“When I bury a bone,” said the Dog, “it is with an intention to uncover it later and pick it.”

“The bones that I bury,” said the Physician, “are those that I can no longer pick.”

The Tyrant Frog

A Snake swallowing a frog head-first was approached by a Naturalist with a stick.

“Ah, my deliverer,” said the Snake as well as he could, “you have arrived just in time; this reptile, you see, is pitching into me without provocation.”

“Sir,” replied the Naturalist, “I need a snakeskin for my collection, but if you had not explained I should not have interrupted you, for I thought you were at dinner.”

The Man and the Bird

A Man with a Shotgun said to a Bird:

“It is all nonsense, you know, about shooting being a cruel sport. I put my skill against your cunning—that is all there is of it. It is a fair game.”

“True,” said the Bird, “but I don’t wish to play.”

“Why not?” inquired the Man with a Shotgun.

“The game,” the Bird replied, “is fair as you say; the chances are about even; but consider the stake. I am in it for you, but what is there in it for me?”

Not being prepared with an answer to the question, the Man with a Shotgun sagaciously removed the propounder.

The Fabulist and the Animals

A Wise and illustrious Writer of Fables was visiting a travelling menagerie with a view to collecting literary materials. As he was passing near the Elephant, that animal said:

“How sad that so justly famous a satirist should mar his work by ridicule of people with long noses—who are the salt of the earth!”

The Kangaroo said:

“I do so enjoy that great man’s censure of the ridiculous— particularly his attacks on the Proboscidae; but, alas! he has no reverence for the Marsupials, and laughs at our way of carrying our young in a pouch.”

The Camel said:

“If he would only respect the sacred Hump, he would be faultless. As it is, I cannot permit his fables to be read in the presence of my family.”

The Ostrich, seeing his approach, thrust her head in the straw, saying:

“If I do not conceal myself, he may be reminded to write something disagreeable about my lack of a crest or my appetite for scrap-iron; and although he is inexpressibly brilliant when he devotes himself to censure of folly and greed, his dulness is matchless when he transcends the limits of legitimate comment.”

“That,” said the Buzzard to his mate, “is the distinguished author of that glorious fable, ‘The Ostrich and the Keg of Raw Nails. ’ I regret to add, that he wrote, also, ‘The Buzzard’s Feast, ’ in which a carrion diet is contumeliously disparaged. A carrion diet is the foundation of sound health. If nothing else but corpses were eaten, death would be unknown.”

Seeing an attendant approaching, the wise and illustrious Writer of Fables passed out of the tent and mingled with the crowd. It was afterward discovered that he had crept in under the canvas without paying.

AESOPUS EMENDATUS

The Cat and the Youth

A Cat fell in love with a handsome Young Man, and entreated Venus to change her into a woman.

“I should think,” said Venus, “you might make so trifling a change without bothering me. However, be a woman.”

Afterward, wishing to see if the change were complete, Venus caused a mouse to approach, whereupon the woman shrieked and made such a show of herself that the Young Man would not marry her.

The Cat and the Birds

Hearing that the Birds in an aviary were ill, a Cat went to them and said that he was a physician, and would cure them if they would let him in.

“To what school of medicine do you belong?” asked the Birds.

“I am a Miaulopathist,” said the Cat.

“Did you ever practise Gohomoeopathy?” the Birds inquired, winking faintly.

The Cat took the hint and his leave.

The Archer and the Eagle

An Eagle mortally wounded by an Archer was greatly comforted to observe that the arrow was feathered with one of his own quills.

“I should have felt bad, indeed,” he said, “to think that any other eagle had a hand in this.”

The Farmer and the Fox

A Farmer who had a deadly and implacable hatred against a certain Fox, caught him and tied some tow to his tail; then carrying him to the centre of his own grain-field, set the tow on fire and let the animal go.

“Alas!” said the Farmer, seeing the result; “if that grain had not been heavily insured, I might have had to dissemble my hatred of the Fox.”

The Hen and the Vipers

A Hen who had patiently hatched out a brood of vipers, was accosted by a Swallow, who said: “What a fool you are to give life to creatures who will reward you by destroying you.”

“I am a little bit on the destroy myself,” said the Hen, tranquilly swallowing one of the little reptiles; “and it is not an act of folly to provide oneself with the delicacies of the season.”

The Lion and the Thorn

A Lion roaming through the forest, got a thorn in his foot, and, meeting a Shepherd, asked him to remove it. The Shepherd did so, and the Lion, having just surfeited himself on another shepherd, went away without harming him. Some time afterward the Shepherd was condemned on a false accusation to be cast to the lions in the amphitheatre. When they were about to devour him, one of them said:

“This is the man who removed the thorn from my foot.”

Hearing this, the others honourably abstained, and the claimant ate the Shepherd all himself.

The Herdsman and the Lion

A Herdsman who had lost a bullock entreated the gods to bring him the thief, and vowed he would sacrifice a goat to them. Just then a Lion, his jaws dripping with bullock’s blood, approached the Herdsman.

“I thank you, good deities,” said the Herdsman, continuing his prayer, “for showing me the thief. And now if you will take him away, I will stand another goat.”

The Man and the Viper

A Man finding a frozen Viper put it into his bosom.

“The coldness of the human heart,” he said, with a grin, “will keep the creature in his present condition until I can reach home and revive him on the coals.”

But the pleasures of hope so fired his heart that the Viper thawed, and sliding to the ground thanked the Man civilly for his hospitality and glided away.

The Hare and the Tortoise

A Hare having ridiculed the slow movements of a Tortoise, was challenged by the latter to run a race, a Fox to go to the goal and be the judge. They got off well together, the hare at the top of her speed, the Tortoise, who had no other intention than making his antagonist exert herself, going very leisurely. After sauntering along for some time he discovered the Hare by the wayside, apparently asleep, and seeing a chance to win pushed on as fast as he could, arriving at the goal hours afterward, suffering from extreme fatigue and claiming the victory.

“Not so,” said the Fox; “the Hare was here long ago, and went back to cheer you on your way.”

The Crab and His Son

A Logical Crab said to his Son, “Why do you not walk straight forward? Your sidelong gait is singularly ungraceful.”

“Why don’t you walk straight forward yourself,” said the Son.

“Erring youth,” replied the Logical Crab, “you are introducing new and irrelevant matter.”

OLD SAWS WITH NEW TEETH. CERTAIN ANCIENT FABLES APPLIED TO THE LIFE OF OUR TIMES

The Hares and the Frogs

The Members of a Legislature, being told that they were the meanest thieves in the world, resolved to commit suicide. So they bought shrouds, and laying them in a convenient place prepared to cut their throats. While they were grinding their razors some Tramps passing that way stole the shrouds.

“Let us live, my friends,” said one of the Legislators to the others; “the world is better than we thought. It contains meaner thieves than we.”

The Ants and the Grasshopper

Some Members of a Legislature were making schedules of their wealth at the end of the session, when an Honest Miner came along and asked them to divide with him. The members of the Legislature inquired:

“Why did you not acquire property of your own?”

“Because,” replied the Honest Miner, “I was so busy digging out gold that I had no leisure to lay up something worth while.”

Then the Members of the Legislature derided him, saying:

“If you waste your time in profitless amusement, you cannot, of course, expect to share the rewards of industry.”

The Lion, the Bear, and the Fox

Two Thieves having stolen a Piano and being unable to divide it fairly without a remainder went to law about it and continued the contest as long as either one could steal a dollar to bribe the judge. When they could give no more an Honest Man came along and by a single small payment obtained a judgment and took the Piano home, where his daughter used it to develop her biceps muscles, becoming a famous pugiliste.

The Wolf and the Lion

An Indian who had been driven out of a fertile valley by a White Settler, said: "Now that you have robbed me of my land, there is nothing for me to do but issue invitations to a war-dance."

"I don't so much mind your dancing," said the White Settler, putting a fresh cartridge into his rifle, "but if you attempt to make me dance you will become a good Indian lamented by all who didn't know you. How did *you* get this land, anyhow?"

The Indian's claim was compromised for a plug hat and a tin horn.

The Hare and the Tortoise

Of two Writers one was brilliant but indolent; the other though dull, industrious. They set out for the goal of fame with equal opportunities. Before they died the brilliant one was detected in seventy languages as the author of but two or three books of fiction and poetry, while the other was honoured in the Bureau of Statistics of his native land as the compiler of sixteen volumes of tabulated information relating to the domestic hog.

The Milkmaid and Her Bucket

A Senator fell to musing as follows: "With the money which I shall get for my vote in favour of the bill to subsidise cat-ranches, I can buy a kit of burglar's tools and open a bank. The profit of that enterprise will enable me to obtain a long, low, black schooner, raise a death's-head flag and engage in commerce on the high seas. From my gains in that business I can pay for the Presidency, which at \$50,000 a year will give me in four years—" but it took him so long to make the calculation that the bill to subsidise cat-ranches passed without his vote, and he was compelled to return to his constituents an honest man, tormented with a clean conscience.

The Boys and the Frogs

Some editors of newspapers were engaged in diffusing general intelligence and elevating the moral sentiment of the public. They had been doing this for some time, when an Eminent Statesman stuck his head out of the pool of politics, and, speaking for the members of his profession, said:

"My friends, I beg you will desist. I know you make a great deal of money by this kind of thing, but consider the damage you inflict upon the business of others!"