

# Fables For The Times eBook

## Fables For The Times

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# Page 1

## The Baa-Sheep and the Lion.

A baa-sheep was lying under the paw of a black-maned lion. Whatever was going to be done had to be done quickly. A thought flashed upon the sheep and he said:

"Most dread lord and master, I have heard your voice extolled beyond that of all others. Will you not sing me a little selection from Wagner before I die?"

The lion, touched in his vanity, immediately started up and roared away until the goose-flesh stood out on the rocks. When he had finished, the sheep was in tears.

"What means this?" growled the lion in a rage. "Do you presume to criticise my singing?"

"Oh, no!" sobbed the sheep. "That is not it. But I have heard that wool was the worst thing in the world for the voice, and when I think of the ruin of that beautiful organ of yours, consequent upon eating me, I weep to think that I was not born hairless."

The lion regarded him out of the corner of his eye. Then, in his grandest manner, said: "Run along home to your ma, little sheep; I was only playing with you," and walked off through the forest with a great deal of dignity.

[Illustration: The Baa-Sheep and the Lion.]

## The Dog and the Meat.

A dog with a piece of meat in his mouth was crossing a bridge over a placid stream. On looking down he saw another dog with a precisely similar piece of meat in the water below him. "That's a singular incident," he thought to himself as he prepared to jump in. "But hold a minute! The angle of incidence is always equal to the angle of reflection. Upon reflection, I find that the other dog and the meat are only optical phenomena." And he trotted on his way to Boston without further thought about the matter.

[Illustration: The Dog and the Meat.]

## The Fox and the Grapes.

A fox stood under an apple-tree and gazed up earnestly at the globes of yellow lusciousness. "How sad, for the sake of an old-time piece of literature," he said, "that the fox is a carnivorous animal and doesn't care particularly about fruit!"

## IMMORAL:

We all have plenty of faults without the Truly Good taking the trouble to invent them for us.

[Illustration: The Fox and the Grapes.]

The Fox and the Crow.

A crow, having stolen a piece of flesh, perched in a tree to enjoy it at leisure. A fox saw her, and, being hungry, thought he would employ a little diplomacy to get the meat away from her.

“What a prima-donna the crow would be,” he said, looking at her with mock admiration, “if she only had a voice proportional to her other attractions!”

The crow promptly dropped the piece of flesh on his head, completely blinding him, and before he could recover from his surprise, lit on his back and began to peck him viciously. “I’ll have you to know,” she cawed, “that I’m a proper lady, and the man that compares me to them shameless French singing hussies is going to get hurt.”

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### IMMORAL:

Don't praise the soft whiteness of a labor delegate's hands.

[Illustration: The Fox and the Crow.]

The Ass in the Lion's Skin.

An ass, by some means unknown to the writer, having managed to get into a lion's skin, ran around the neighborhood frightening the beasts into fits. When he brayed, they said: "Jupiter! what a magnificent bass voice he has!" and he was the pantata of that district until he died of old age.

### IMMORAL:

A good bluff, well chuckled, is liable to do considerable execution.

[Illustration: The Ass in the Lion's Skin.]

The Horse and the Oyster.

A very prancy horse, discovering an oyster on the sea-shore, thought to show off a little and make the oyster envious.

After he had done some surprising leaps and curvetings, he went up to the oyster, and, with a toss of his head, said:

"There! what do you think of that?"

"You must excuse me," answered the bivalve, "but I have been blind from birth, and missed the whole show."

### IMMORAL:

Of what use is a dress suit in the Desert of Sahara?

[Illustration: The Horse and the Oyster.]

The Monkey and the Ass.

An ass, having seen a monkey doing tricks on a roof, to the edification of the villagers, became envious, and essayed to emulate his more agile rival.



The roof broke under his greater weight, and he fell through on his master, squashing him flatter than a pan-cake. Thenceforward, having no one to say him nay, he lived a life of peace and plenty, coming and going at his own sweet will, while the monkey was captured by an organ grinder and works eighteen hours a day.

## **IMMORAL:**

People are not always such asses as they seem to us.

[Illustration: The Monkey and the Ass.]

The Merchant and the Fool.

A merchant of horses was driving his stock to the market. On the road he met a venerable old fool, who offered to buy his entire stock.

"It is this way," said the intended purchaser, "I will take your horses now, and whenever I find use for one, I will send you the money for it."

"Now the gods be lenient to folly!" exclaimed the indignant merchant. "Man, Man! where in the realm of idiocy did you get your knowledge of business?"

"I ran a pay-on-publication journal for ten years," said the fool with asperity.

But the merchant had vanished in a cloud of oaths and dust.

[Illustration: The Merchant and the Fool.]

The Wolf and the Sheep.

A wolf that had been left for dead by the dogs lay not far from a running brook. He felt that one good drink might save his life. Just then a sheep passed near.

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“Pray, sister,” said he very gently, but with a sinister twinkle of his eye teeth, “bring me some water from yon stream.”

“Certainly,” said the sheep, and she brought him a glass in which she had poured a few knock-out drops. As she sat on his corpse a little later she moralized in this manner: “Some clever people are wicked, but all wicked people are not clever by a d——d sight.”

[Illustration: The Wolf and the Sheep.]

The Ambitious Hippopotamus.

A hippopotamus who had dwelt contentedly for years on the banks of a reedy stream, looked up one day and saw an eagle.

She became immediately fired with a desire to fly. Having lived a staid and respectable life that could not but find favor in the eyes of the gods, she raised her voice in prayer.

Jove smiled a little, but granted her request.

On the instant a pair of broad, powerful wings were affixed to her shoulders.

She was naturally a trifle nervous about trying them at first, but finally mustered up her courage.

Away she swooped, and with a pardonable vanity took her course over a piece of jungle where some old friends lived.

Precisely thirty-eight seconds later a convention of animals, all swearing and trembling with fright, were trying to conceal themselves in the same three-by-four hole in the ground.

The effect on the other animals disconcerted the good-natured hippopotamus to such an extent that she lost control of herself and sailed through the forest like an avalanche on a bender. Down went the trees and crack went the branches, while horror-stricken beasts with bristling hair split the welkin with their shrieks.

The hippopotamus made for home at her best speed. Arriving over the familiar spot, she let go all holds and came down ker-splash in the mud, knocking the astonished little hippopotamuses out into mid-stream.

“Oh, Jupiter! take 'em off!” she gasped. “I now see that the hippopotamus was not intended to fly.”



## **IMMORAL:**

It takes more than nine bloomers to make a man.

[Illustration: The Ambitious Hippopotamus.]

The Man and the Serpent.

A man, who had lived a beautiful purple life, went to sleep under a tree in the forest. Jove sent a huge serpent to destroy him. The man awakened as the reptile drew near.

“What a horrid sight!” he said. “But let us be thankful that the pink-and-green elephant and the feathered hippopotamus are not also in evidence.”

And he took a dose of bromide and commended himself again to sleep, while the serpent withdrew in some confusion.

## **WHAT THIS PROVES TO A THINKING MIND:**

Jove himself couldn’t get a job as Sunday-School Superintendent on his reputation.

[Illustration: The Man and the Serpent.]

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The Appreciative Man.

A man stood in the archway of an ancient temple. He took in the wonderful proportions and drank of the exquisite detail in an ecstasy of delight.

“Oh, great is art!” he cried in a frenzy. “Art is all! the only God!”

Just then an earthquake came mumbling along and jarred the whole country loose.

As the man picked himself out of the jumbled-up ruins into the dust-filled air, he encountered a lion who had lost his tail and his temper in the *melee*.

“Well, where’s your art now?” snarled the lion.[1]

“All in my eye, I reckon,” answered the man, as he bathed his damaged optic.

[Illustration: The Appreciative Man.]

On the Not-Altogether-Credible Habits of the Ostrich.

An ostrich, who was closely pursued by a hunter, suddenly thrust his head deep down into the sand.

“Ah! ah!” exulted the hunter, “I have the silly thing at last.” He advanced to place a rope around the bird’s legs; but the ostrich, who had accurately timed his arrival, landed a kick in the pit of his stomach that sent him into the hereafter like a bullet through a fog-bank.

## IMMORAL:

“Umph,” said the ostrich as he surveyed his victim, “because a man looks sad at the opening of a jack-pot, it doesn’t necessarily follow that he’s only got ace-high.”

[Illustration: On the Not-Altogether-Credible Habits of the Ostrich.]

The Idol and the Ass.

An ass felt it his duty to destroy superstition, so he went up to the brass idol in the market-place and gave it a vigorous kick.

A dog came to him as he lay groaning on the ground, nursing his broken leg, and said, “Well, did you prove anything?”

“Nothing,” said the other. “Except that I am an ass.”

Deductions to be drawn: Any old thing.

[Illustration: The Idol and the Ass.]

The Bee and Jupiter.

A Bee, the queen of all the hives, ascended to Olympus with a present of some super-refined honey for Jupiter.

The god was delighted with the honey, and in return offered to grant any request the Bee might make.

“Give to me, I pray, O Lord of the Heavens! a sting, that, small and weak as I am, I may not be defenceless against my enemies.”

Jupiter was quite put out at this demand, as he knew the weapon would be used principally against mankind, whom he much loved. But a god’s promise must be kept, so he said:

“It is granted you.”

“Many thanks, most potent one!” cried the Bee, running the new-gained weapon in and out with much satisfaction.

Jupiter sternly cut short her thanks, and continued:

“In using this means of defense and offense you will imperil your own life, for the sting shall remain in the wound it makes and you shall die from the loss of it.”

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The Bee flew around for a moment, and then lit on the back of the god's neck.

"You will kindly reconsider that last clause," she said, "or," in a very meaning tone, "I die right here."

Jupiter felt a cold chill take its agitated way up his spinal column.

"All right," he said, hastily. "I don't want to be small about it. Have it your own way. Only please get off my neck!"

The Bee went joyously back to earth, humming a song of praise.

### IMMORAL:

How to play a cinch (Hoyle). "Put both feet on the encircled object. Rosin the hands, take a long breath and *Pull*."

[Illustration: The Bee and Jupiter.]

The Lion and the Boar.

One Sunday, when the new administration had induced a general thirst, a lion and a boar came at the same moment to a corner spring to drink.

"Have one with me," said the lion. "No, sir; this is on me," said the boar. From words they came to blows, and while they were in the press of combat the clock struck one A.M. and they had to go home cold-sober and disgusted.

### IMMORAL:

Reform is just the thing for angels.

[Illustration: The Lion and the Boar.]

The Tiger and the Deer.

One day a tiger, who had grown remorseful over his murderous career, resolved to turn over a new leaf and live on terms of friendly interest with the other animals of the forest.

He started out on a campaign of pacification. The first animal he met was the deer, whom he addressed in the most courteous and beautiful of language, assuring him of his undying affection.

“Bunco!” yelled the deer, as he skipped away from there at the rate of ten seconds in even time.

## **IMMORAL:**

It is useless to attempt to gain the good-will of suspicious characters.

[Illustration: The Tiger and the Deer.]

The Old Man, His Son and the Ass.

An old man and his little boy were once driving an ass to the market-place. “What’s the matter with one of you riding?” said a passer-by. So the man put his boy on the ass and they went on. The next person they met said it was a shame to see a boy ride while an old man walked. The man lifted the boy off and got on himself. This also excited adverse comment, and the man took the boy up behind him. The next critic was a member of the S.P.C.A., and he upbraided them both roundly, saying that they would better carry the ass than he them. Thereupon they tied the ass’s legs to a long pole and carried him between them. While crossing the bridge, into the town, the man stumbled and the ass fell into the water and was drowned. They promptly sued the city for damages, and compromised on \$263, more than eight times the value of the ass.

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### IMMORAL:

Hard luck cannot touch smooth people.

[Illustration: The Old Man, His Son and the Ass.]

The Shipwrecked Traveler.

A man who had traveled over many countries was shipwrecked off the coast of Opera land. After a desperate battle with the waves he managed to near the shore where the cruel waves played with him like a cat with a mouse. He would pull himself up the beach, half fainting, and a great, dancing, hissing breaker would pounce upon him and drive him back.

He called for help until the inhabitants espied him.

They came in a group, the women costumed as milkmaids and the men as cavaliers.

After making about twenty feet the company stopped.

"Oh! save him, save him!" sang the soprano.

"Yes, yes! we will save him!" sang back the tenor.

Then everybody sang "Save him, save him; oh, yes, we will save him, save him from *the sea!!!*"

The sopranos took a B flat on the last note, while the tenors and altos rambled up and down the scale and the bassos bombarded the theme with their deepest chest tones.

In the meantime the traveler had been washed out to sea. As the next wave brought him to the strand the company advanced once more a short distance, and began.

"In the name of Mercy, help me!" screamed the drowning man.

"Oh, hear his piteous cry," sang the tenors, and the prima donna stepped out and sang a beautiful aria beginning "Now the cruel waves advancing." After she had finished the bass got in front of the company.

He described how his strong arm had plucked the stranger from a watery grave, and advanced to the beach to suit the action to the words.

But, alas! the traveler had given up the ghost several minutes before. Then the company sang a miserere and went home to lunch.

## **IMMORAL:**

The finest of Raphael's canvases would make a poor overcoat.

[Illustration: The Shipwrecked Traveler.]

The Discontented Woman.

A woman who was dissatisfied with her husband loudly petitioned Jove to send her another. The god listened favorably to her petition and sent her a demigod.

In less than a week the woman was bewailing her lot again, saying she never cared for mixed goods anyhow, and that while the god-half of her present husband might be all right, the man-half snored and chewed tobacco. Jove, wearied by her ill-humored persistency, took back the demi-god and sent her a man out of the Yellow Book for husband, instead.

Up to the present writing the lady in question hasn't discovered where she is at.

## **IMMORAL:**

Hysterics and Art are only relations by marriage.

[Illustration: The Discontented Woman.]

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[Footnote 1: (editorial note) This was corrected from the original, which