

F A B L E S

CALCULATED FOR THE
AMUSEMENT and INSTRUCTION of
Y O U T H;

Originally dedicated to
A YOUNG PRINCE,
For whose Improvement they were written.

TAKEN FROM THE FRENCH.

—Let mortals learn,
When in obedience to the Gods they tread
The doubtful paths of destiny, to affront
The dreadful'st dangers with undaunted spirit;—
Let them not, even in worst extremes, despair;
For while they keep to virtue's narrow paths,
With guards invincible they march surrounded:
The Gods who surely guide them on their way,
From them no more than from themselves can stray,
For virtue's of divinity a ray!

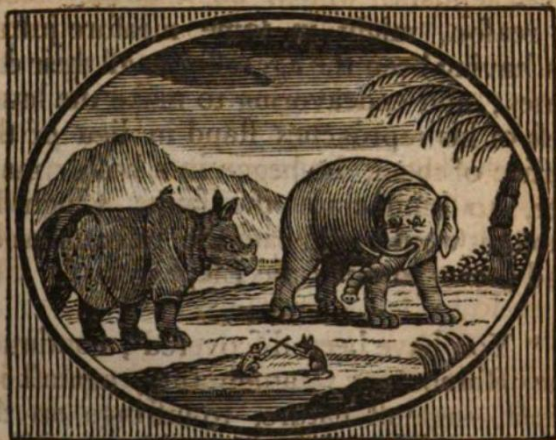
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1789

XVII. The DUEL between the RAT and the FROG.



There are very few provocations which can justify the having recourse to a revenge that endangers the life of a fellow-creature; and we have a right to believe that person possessed of a heart filled with envy, malice, cruelty, and every vice baneful to society, who, for every trifling offence, flies to his sword for redress.

FABLE.

AN ELEPHANT and a Rhinoceros, after having had very frequent and very violent quarrels, met in a large meadow,

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when the latter found himself very much puzzled how to invent some charge against the Elephant, which, bearing the colour of reason, might in some measure justify his having been the aggressor in all their disputes; and endeavoring to make the loudness of his reproaches stand in lieu of the justice of them, he began in a hostile manner, to enumerate the faults which he thought would vindicate the resentment he had shewn towards the Elephant.

“ You have been discovered”, continued the Rhinoceros, “ attempting, against instinct,—against nature, to infringe on the peculiar prerogative of man, by practising with a sword to obtain an undue advantage over your adversaries. You are also accused of consulting the heavens, and studying the stars, to learn whether you will ever be able to succeed in your rebellious designs of usurping the throne; for which purpose also, you have been caught tracing on the sand, characters which are suspected of being cabalistical, and of black intent”.

“ If”, answered the Elephant, “ I am able to wield the sword, I deserve praise for my address, in acquiring an art that may render me as serviceable to the state,
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as in your hands it would be detrimental, supposing your courage and skill equal to the badness of your heart : Neither am I deserving of censure for raising my eyes to heaven, since instinct prompts all who possess grateful hearts, to offer up daily thanksgivings, for the benefits they have received, and I feel a particular impulse of gratitude for the rich qualities with which all my race are endowed ; and my writing on the sand, is an evident proof, that my mind is not as dull, as the heaviness of my body would suggest, since I am able to execute the most wonderful of all inventions : But I have not entered into this justification for the sake of avoiding a battle, from which I by no means wish or intend to shrink”.

Upon which he raised his proboscis, as a signal, to begin the fight, which was answered by the other presenting his horn, when they were prevented from beginning the attack, by the extraordinary sight of a duel between a Rat and a Frog. They had, each of them, armed themselves with a sharp pointed bulrush, and were reared on their hinder legs ; in this attitude they were seeking revenge with all the fury of which they were capable.

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“Let us hear the subject of this quarrel” said the Rhinoceros, (who had not much inclination for fighting, and therefore had no objection to postponing it a little) to which the Elephant consenting, their curiosity was soon gratified to their own shame.

“I maintain”, cried the Rat, “that a mouse-coloured grey is the most beautiful”. —“And I”, said the other, “will not suffer the green of the Frog to yield in beauty to the dirty grey of the Rat”; whereupon they renewed their blows with redoubled fury:—But the Elephant had heard enough to cover him with confusion; and turning towards his antagonist, he thus addressed him with concern.

“How much reason have we to blush with shame, at having condescended to meet for the purpose of gratifying our animosity, and deciding our quarrel in the same manner, that these wretched insects—these abortive productions of nature, settle their contemptible differences; who think to screen their own insignificance, by imitating the actions of the most noble beasts. We will return, and look on this transaction, as a burlesque, our folly has deserved”.

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"In truth", said the Rhinoceros, "we cannot, after what we have witnessed, fight with honor; therefore I will retire with you, as a friend, for never shall it be said we ended our quarrels after the manner of such despicable animals, as Rats and Frogs".

M O R A L.

It is time that men of honor and rank should wipe off that stain from the sword, with which every lacquey and hair-dresser has of late dared to pollute it. Let the great employ it in the service of their country; not disgracing it by drawing it in the cause of drunken quarrels, or tavern broils. Let them not, for one hasty word, sacrifice their own happiness, and perhaps involve a whole family in ruin, by taking away the life of their only protector and friend, while they deprive the world of an useful member of society.



XXXVI. OF ARMED ANIMALS.



The first idea that should be inculcated in a soldier, is, that all depends upon his courage; for an army may rest its hopes of success more upon the unanimity of the officers, and the courage, intrepid coolness, and implicit obedience of the soldiers; than on the force of numbers; which proves how necessary it is for a good general to be a disciplinarian.

F A B L E.

A Leopard, grown proud of the character of bravery, which a lucky conquest

quest acquired him, thought to add to his consequence, by giving defiance to his King, and arrogantly usurping, by force of arms, a part of the country which was particularly appropriated, by the Lion, to his own use.

He was seconded, as is generally the case, by those, who, either mistaking their own interest, wished to gratify a rebellious spirit; or, being idle, made the doing of mischief (the natural consequence of idleness) both an employment and a pleasure. The Leopard's army consisted of all the malecontents of the forest, which amounting to a vast number, gave him the most sanguine hopes of success; but the Lion, more wise, and better experienced, determined to avail himself of a dear-bought lesson, which the loss of a late battle had taught him, and recollecting that his former ill success proceeded from recruiting none but those who possessed weapons of offence alone, resolved to admit those only, who could boast of defensive ones also.

According to this resolution he assembled those of his subjects on whom he could depend, chusing from the numbers which flocked to his standard, the Rhinoceros,

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defended by an impenetrable shield of scales,—the Crocodile,—the Hedge-Hog—Porcupine, and Tortoise, no less fortified for defence ; besides innumerable other animals, on whom nature had bestowed an armour for protection against the attacks of their Enemies.

Thus supported, the Lion, fearless of the superiority of numbers, undauntedly met his antagonist, and after bravely sustaining the violence of the first onset of so powerful an army, his well-disciplined, well-defended troops, soon turned the fate of the battle ; for suffering his adversaries to exhaust their strength and spirit, while they themselves acted only upon the defensive, he watched the time, when the army of the Leopard, elated with the hopes of having daunted his forces,—deaf to the voice of command,—and trusting to their own skill, would lay themselves open to a defeat.

This soon happened, and the Lion as quickly made his advantage of it ; for he attacked them with a fury which the coolness and firmness that his troops had at first expressed, and which his enemies had mistaken for cowardice, rendered so perfectly unexpected ;

pected; that it instantly occasioned the confusion of the Leopard's army, which immediately taking flight was warmly pursued, and entirely banished the forest; and the victorious troops, enriched with the spoils of the conquered party, returned home in triumph.

M O R A L.

A good cause inspires troops with confidence: it is, therefore, the duty of a general to render himself beloved, by friendly acts, and a liberal attention to his soldiers;—to render himself feared, by the strictness of his discipline, and to make himself cheerfully obeyed, by conforming to that discipline himself: Thus will soldiers follow their leader, in the persuasion that the cause he espouses must be right, and that under such a commander success awaits them.

