

FABLES AND ANECDOTES.

BY AMBROSE BIERCE.

A Successful Man of Business, having occasion to write to a Thief, expressed a wish to see him and shake hands.

"No," replied the Thief, "there are some things which I will not take—among them your hand."

"You must use a little strategy," said a Philosopher to whom the Successful Man of Business had reported the Thief's haughty reply. "Leave your hand out some night and he will take it."

So one night the Successful Man of Business left his hand out of his neighbor's pockets, and the Thief took it with avidity.

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 would like better."

"For example?"

"The King of the Mice."

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

A Hunter who had lassoed a Bear was trying to disengage himself from the rope, but the slip-knot about his wrist would not yield, for the Bear was all the time pulling in the slack. In the midst of his trouble he saw a Showman passing, by and managed to attract his attention.

"What will you give me," he said, "for my Bear?"

"It will be some five or ten minutes," said the Showman, "before I shall want a fresh Bear, and it looks to me as if prices would fall during the intermediate time. I think I'll wait and watch the market."

"The price of this animal," the Hunter replied, "is down to bed-rock: you can have him for nothing a pound, spot cash, and I'll throw in the next one that I lasso. But the purchaser must remove the goods from the premises forthwith, to make room for three man eating tigers, a cat-headed gorilla and an armful of rattlesnakes."

But the Showman passed on, in maiden meditations, fancy free, and being joined soon afterward by the Bear, who was absently picking his teeth, it was inferred that they were not unacquainted.

"Come," said a Lamb to a Lion whom she had met in the fields, "let us lie down together, as it has been predicted that we would."

Instead of complying, the Lion started to run away in terror, greatly to the surprise of some peasants, who were even more astonished when they saw the Lamb in fierce pursuit. In a few moments the smaller beast had overtaken the larger, and, springing upon him, fastened her teeth in his throat and was soon eating the carcass at her leisure. This threw the peasants into the utmost consternation and they cried out that it was a miracle.

"Miracle, your grandmother!" said an aged man who had thoughtfully ensued upon these events in order to expound their meaning; "the actors in this little tragedy are only

our dear old friends, 'the Ass in a Lion's Skin' and 'the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing.'

A Lion seeing a Poodle whose hair had been cut in imitation of his own fell into laughter at the ridiculous spectacle.

"Who ever saw so small a Lion?" he said. "It is very true," said the Poodle with austere dignity, "that I am small; but, sir, I beg to observe that I am all dog."

An aged Tramp was taking his breakfast at a swillbarrel when he was accosted by a Sleek Person who said:

"My good man, I pass my life in doing benevolent deeds. I am Superintendent of the Jamram Gobootle Home for the Aged Indigent. I dare say you are very unworthy of our charity, but if you will send in an application for admittance I will submit it to the Board."

The Tramp thanked him and did as he suggested, but when the application was read at the next meeting of the Board it was unanimously rejected, for it was signed Jamram Gobootle. The members of the Board feared that if the founder of the institution were admitted as an inmate his presence might embarrass the administration.

A Widow weeping on her husband's grave was approached by an Engaging Gentleman who, in a respectful manner, assured her that he had long entertained for her the most tender feelings.

"Wretch!" cried the Widow. "Leave me this instant! Is this a time to talk to me of love?"

"I assure you, madame, that I had not intended to disclose my affection," the Engaging Gentleman humbly explained, "but the power of your beauty has overcome my discretion."

"You should see me when I have not been crying," said the Widow.