

# **INDIAN FABLES**



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**COLLECTED AND EDITED BY**

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*illustrated by*

*F. Carruthers Gould*

**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS**

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## PREFACE

WHATEVER diversity of opinion there may be concerning matters oriental among the races inhabiting the West, there has been one point on which it may be said that but one view has been entertained by them all—that the East is the original abode of much of the Fable and Romance that have formed the heirloom of this world.

Hence, some have been inclined to think that when Æsop gave his immortal collection of Fables to the world, he might have derived the bulk of his material from an Eastern source. In more recent times, not a few have surmised that the highly admired collection of tales known as the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, though ostensibly derived from the people of Arabia, might have been obtained by that very people, like many of their arts and sciences, from a more remote centre of Eastern learning.

This great capacity of the Far East to furnish materials for Fables and Romances in endless variety is as much a characteristic of it now as in days of antiquity. To one that has the time and inclination to collect such materials, there is no better field than India.

The proverbs and pithy sayings—not to speak of other crude germs, capable of development into fables with wholesome morals, which abound among the people of the country—are, in the metaphorical language of many of its writers, “as many as the pearls of the deep.” But these pearls lie underneath the surface, and sometimes “full many a fathom deep.”

Hence it is that many a person that has traversed the country from the Himalaya to Cape Comorin has failed to see them. Nay, many that have spent years in India have, like many seafaring men that have spent their lives on the ocean wave, failed to see them at all.

Like the few that specially dive for them, some have from time to time endeavoured to collect the materials described above, and presented them in the shape of works which have interested the public.

Their labours, instead of exhausting the materials, have only proved their extent, even as all the divers for the wealth of the seas heretofore have, instead of exhausting it, only proved the extent to which mankind may profit by continuing their labours in that direction.

The efforts that I have made to collect the materials for these Fables, and present them in this form, have to be regarded, more or less, in this light. The work that is now submitted to the public is the outcome of continued research during a number of years. How far they may be interesting or instructive I leave it to

the judgment of the general reader and the critic to decide.

The collection contains more than a hundred fables. Of these a few have long had a standing in the literature of India, though in a slightly different garb. The rest may be said to have been derived from original sources.

During the past two years these Fables, with illustrations, have been before the public in the columns of *The Leisure Hour*.

The volume has been dedicated to Sir William Andrew, whose great interest in such pursuits, and especially in matters concerning India, is well known to all. His brief yet valuable letter accepting the dedication, containing, in addition to his impression of the character of the work, an expression of that genuine regard and sympathy which he has invariably entertained towards the people of India, is reproduced here in the hope that the perusal of it may prove a source of gratification to the British public and to my countrymen in India.

LETTER FROM SIR WILLIAM ANDREW, C.T.E.

“29, BRYANSTON SQUARE, W.

“MY DEAR SIR,—

“I accept with much pleasure the dedication of your interesting volume of Fables from the Far East. Such a dedication from a Hindu gentleman of your ability is peculiarly gratifying to me, from having

paid so much attention to India and the interesting people who inhabit that vast empire.

“I return herewith the manuscript, the perusal of which has afforded me much gratification.

“Believe me, yours very truly,

“W. P. ANDREW.

“P. V. RAMASWANII RAJU, Esq.”

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## THE GLOW-WORM AND THE DAW

A JACKDAW once ran up to a glow-worm and was about to seize him. "Wait a moment, good friend," said the worm; "and you shall hear something to your advantage."

"Ah! what is it?" said the daw.

"I am but one of the many glow-worms that live in this forest. If you wish to have them all, follow me," said the glow-worm.

"Certainly!" said the daw.

Then the glow-worm led him to a place in the wood where a fire had been kindled by some woodmen, and pointing to the sparks flying about, said, "There you find the glow-worms warming themselves round a fire. When you have done with them, I shall show you some more, at a distance from this place."

The daw darted at the sparks, and tried to swallow some of them; but his mouth being burnt by the attempt, he ran away exclaiming, "Ah, the glow-worm is a dangerous little creature!"

Said the glow-worm with pride, "*Wickedness yields to wisdom!*"

## THE KING AND HIS VASSAL

AN Eastern king was very angry with a certain chieftain who had not seen him at court, though often desired to do so. One day he was walking through the streets of his capital in disguise with his chief minister, according to the custom of kings in the East, to see how the people fared. Soon after passing a butcher's shop, the king said to his minister, "Instantly the chieftain arrives in the city, send him up to me."

When the minister returned to his palace, he found the chieftain on his way to the court. "Pray, don't see his Majesty till I ask you to do so; and don't ask me for the reason now," said the minister to the chieftain, who therefore postponed his visit.

The king came to know of this, and asked the minister why he had done so.

"Sire," said the minister, "your order to send up the chieftain was given after passing a butcher's shop, and you meant to flay him like a sheep; so I asked him to see you some time after, when you should be in a better mood to see him."

The king confessed his intention, and said, "*A wise minister is a tyrant's curb.*"

## THE FOX AND THE VILLAGERS

A FOX that had long been the dread of the village poultry yard was one day found lying breathless in a field. The report went abroad that, after all, he had been caught and killed by some one. In a moment, everybody in the village came out to see the dead fox. The village cock, with all his hens and chicks, was also there, to enjoy the sight.

The fox then got up, and, shaking off his drowsiness, said, "I ate a number of hens and chicks last night; hence I must have slumbered longer than usual."

The cock counted his hens and chicks, and found a number wanting. "Alas!" said he, "how is it I did not know of it?"

"My dear sir," said the fox, as he retreated to the wood, "it was last night I had a good meal on your hens and chicks, yet you did not know of it. A moment ago they found me lying in the field, and you knew of it at once. *Ill news travels fast!*"

## THE LION, THE STAG, AND THE FOX

A FOX saw a stag, and exclaimed, "What rich meat there is in him!"

A lion, that had got nothing to eat for some time, was prowling at a distance.

The fox said to himself, "If I should point out the stag to the lion, he will make his breakfast off him, and leave me the remainder." So he went up to the lion and, bowing respectfully, said, "If your majesty will step in that way, your majesty's humble servant will be able to point out something highly desirable."

"Very good!" said the lion, and followed the fox.

But the stag, who had got a hint of the conspiracy, ran up to a place of safety, and was watching their movements unseen.

The lion, not finding the stag, said to the fox, "Knave, you have deceived me! I am frantically hungry: you are as good a morsel as the stag, though a trifle less in size," and, springing on him, ate him up in no time.

Said the stag, "*The wicked are often caught in their own toils.*"

## TINSEL AND LIGHTNING

A PIECE of tinsel on a rock once said to a pebble, “You see how bright I am! I am by birth related to the lightning.”

“Indeed!” said the pebble; “then accept my humble respects.”

Some time after, a flash of lightning struck the rock, and the tinsel lost all its brilliancy by the scorching effects of the flash.

“Where is your brilliancy now?” said the pebble.

“Oh, it is gone to the skies,” said the tinsel, “for I have lent it to the lightning that came down a moment ago to borrow it of me.”

“Dear me!” said the pebble; “*how many fibs doth good bragging need!*”

## THE MONKEY AND THE LOOKING-GLASS

A MONKEY in a wood somehow got a looking-glass, and went about showing it to the animals around him. The bear looked into it and said he was very sorry he had such an ugly face. The wolf said he would fain have the face of a stag, with its beautiful horns. So every beast felt sad that it had not the face of some other in the wood.

The monkey then took it to an owl that had witnessed the whole scene. "No," said the owl, "I would not look into it, for I am sure, in this case as in many others, knowledge is but a source of pain."

"You are quite right," said the beasts, and broke the glass to pieces, exclaiming, "*Ignorance is bliss!*"



THE MONKEY AND THE LOOKING-GLASS

## THE FAWN AND THE LITTLE TIGER

A FAWN met a little tiger and said, "What fine stripes you have!"

The little tiger said, "What fine spots you have!"

Then the fawn said, "It would be such a nice thing if you and I were to live together as friends. We might then roam through the woods as we like, and be so happy!"

"I think so too," said the tiger.

The two joined hands, and went out for a long walk. It was breakfast time. The fawn saw some fine grass in the lawn, and said to himself, "One should first see his friend fed and then feed." So he turned to the tiger and said, "Will you have some of this fine grass for your breakfast?"

The tiger put his nose to the grass; but could not bring himself to feed upon it, because it was against his nature; so he replied, "I am so sorry, I cannot eat it!"

Then the fawn said, "Allow me to go home for one moment and ask mamma for something that would suit you for breakfast."

So the fawn went home and told the hind of the happy friendship he had formed, and of all that had happened since.

The hind replied, “Child, how lucky it is that you have come away! You must know the tiger is the most deadly enemy we have in the woods.”

At these words the fawn drew near to his dam and trembled.

The hind said, “*It is indeed lucky to get away from the wicked at the first hint!*”

## THE LION, THE FOX, AND THE STAR

A YOUNG lion and a young fox once went out together for an evening stroll. Venus, the evening star, had just risen. The fox said, “Ah, how I wish I could go to the star and play with it!”

The lion said, “Ah, how I wish the star would come here and play with me!”

An owl, who had heard their words from a neighbouring tree, said, “*The character of each is known by his words!*”

## THE SEA, THE FOX, AND THE WOLF

A FOX that lived by the sea-shore once met a wolf that had never seen the sea. The wolf said, "What is the sea?"

"It is a great piece of water by my dwelling," said the fox.

"Is it under your control?" said the wolf.

"Certainly," said the fox.

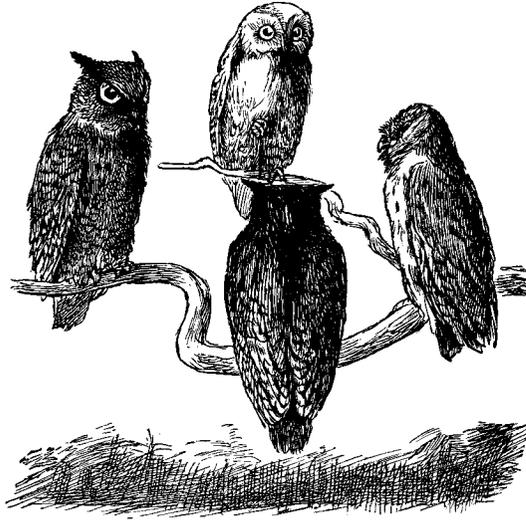
"Will you show me the sea, then?" said the wolf.

"With pleasure," said the fox. So the fox led the wolf to the sea, and said to the waves, "Now go back,"—they went back! "Now come up,"—and they came up! Then the fox said to the waves, "My friend, the wolf has come to see you, so you will come up and go back till I bid you stop;" and the wolf saw, with wonder, the waves coming up and going back.

He said to the fox, "May I go into the sea?"

"As far as you like. Don't be afraid, for, at a word, the sea would go or come as I bid, and as you have already seen."

The wolf believed the fox, and followed the waves rather far from the shore. A great wave soon upset him, and threw up his carcass on the shore. The fox made a hearty breakfast on it, saying, "*The fool's ear was made for the knave's tongue.*"



## THE FOUR OWLS

FOUR owls went out, each to a part of the world, to see how people liked things, ill and false, and came back to tell of what they had seen.

The owl that went north said, “I saw, by a stream, the fish make mouths at the birds. They further said, ‘Look at our fins and their wings, how queer they are!’ ”

The owl that went south said, “I saw on a hill a fly of fair hues go by the door of a hive; the bees said, ‘Look, he has come to beg of us for some food.’ The fly said to a friend of his, ‘These rogues, I mean the bees, stole the sweets from the blooms when the air was dry, so now I have naught to eat when it is cold.’ ”

The owl that went east said, “I saw in a wood a pard go out from his den. The wolf went with him a few yards,

came back, and said to a friend of his, "The pard is a knave, yet I cling to him, for he is strong."

The owl that went west said, "I saw a bear pass by a lion's den. A fox close by said the bear went to make love to the lion's mate, but was sent back with a box on his ear."

The four owls together said, "*Where the sun shines, there scandal is.*"