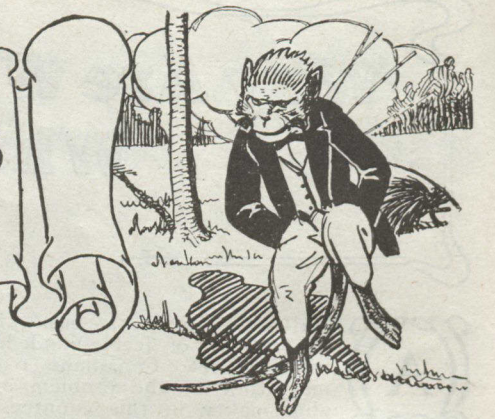




Uncle Peter's Stories



How Mr. Monkey Got So Stuck Up

"OF ALL the people I know you are certainly the most ridiculous," said Mr. Monkey to Mr. Porcupine. "You can not run, you can not climb, and you have no tail to help you along through the world. I certainly am glad that I am not a porcupine!"

"Well," said Mr. Porcupine, "you will admit that I am well enough protected. My quills are long enough to keep any unfriendly animal away, so that I am left alone and can travel in safety."

"You are a slow and uninteresting kind of an animated pincushion," said Mr. Monkey. "I am not a bit like a pincushion," said Mr. Porcupine, for my points are all sticking OUT instead of IN, and that makes a big difference in lots of ways. I am not a bit afraid of you, Mr. Monkey, and if we came together I am quite sure you would get the worst of it."

"We are not likely to," said Mr. Monkey



"indeed," he added, "I cannot imagine any circumstances where my speed would not enable me to get away from you without any trouble. Just watch me for a few minutes and I will give you an exhibition of acrobatics." And off up the tree went Mr. Monkey, jumping from branch to branch and swinging by his tail in the air, while Mr. Porcupine sat below and watched him.

"Doesn't he think he's clever?" said Mr. Porcupine to the Baby Elephant, who had come up to watch the fun. "Yes," said Baby Elephant, "but isn't it too bad that he hasn't any brains. His head is even emptier than one of the cocoanuts he's so fond of eating."

"Is that so," said Mr. Monkey from the tree. "I've got a very good set of brains indeed. It isn't the size of your head that shows how much brains you've got, or you'd have a lot, Baby. Why, my brains are so fine that they work just as well upside down as they do any other way," said Mr. Monkey, hanging down over the top of Mr. Porcupine's head by his tail.

Now the branch that Mr. Monkey was hanging by was not a very strong one, and just as he was speaking there was a loud crack and the branch broke right off, and down came Mr. Monkey with a CRASH. Mr. Porcupine jumped to get

out of the way, but he couldn't jump fast enough, and poor Mr. Monkey landed right in the middle of Mr. Porcupine's back, on the top of those long, sharp quills they had been talking about a few minutes before.

"Ouch!" said Mr. Monkey, and then he squealed for those quills were very long and very sharp, and as they were not very firmly fixed in Mr. Porcupine's back a whole lot of them came out and remained sticking very painfully into Mr. Monkey.

MR. PORCUPINE was very much vexed; he shook his fist in Mr. Monkey's face. "What did you want to do that for?" he asked. "I didn't want to," said Mr. Monkey. "What did YOU want to stand underneath just where I would fall on you for?" he asked. "How did I know you were going to fall?" said Mr. Porcupine, and they kept on asking one another a lot of foolish questions which neither of them were able to answer, which is a habit people have when they are too angry to know whether they are talking sense or not. And all the time Baby Elephant sat there and laughed and laughed, as he could well afford to because he hadn't got into any trouble himself. So Mr. Monkey and Mr. Porcupine stopped quarrelling because they neither of them liked to be laughed at. "Go away home, Baby," said Mr. Porcupine, "or I'll throw a few quills at YOU," and Baby Elephant trundled off home to tell the news.

The very best thing you can do is to go to see



Doctor Ape right away," said Mr. Porcupine to Mr. Monkey. "If you don't, those frills of mine will work further in and be all the harder to pull out."

So Mr. Monkey started off to see Dr. Ape. It was a long walk but luckily the doctor was in when he got there. "Tell me all about it," said Dr. Ape. "Where do you feel pain? Have you any fever? Have you ever felt these pains before? And he went on asking "Doctor questions" till Mr. Monkey got quite mad. "Pull the quills out first and ask the questions afterwards," said Mr. Monkey, or I won't pay your bill," So Dr. Ape got a long pair of pliers, and after a lot of "Doctor preparations," he began to pull at the quills. OH MY, but they did hurt, they all seemed to be fastened in at the ends, and indeed they were, for that is the way a porcupine quill sticks when it once gets a chance.

Every time Doctor Ape pulled Mr. Monkey yelled, and as there were a lot of quills there were a lot of yells before it was all over. "You must now take a long rest and have bandages on your back," said Dr. Ape, "and if you are careful, you may get well again in time."

SO POOR Mr. Monkey didn't get any more climbing for a long time after that. All day long he sat in a big easy chair, reading the "Jungle Times" until he knew every word of it by heart,

and his friends used to come along to see him and to pass remarks about the good times they were having outside, which is a way that friends often have when they come to see someone who cannot go out. After a few days Mr. Porcupine called. "I don't want to talk to you," said Mr. Monkey. "I'm sure I don't want to stay," said Mr. Porcupine. "Then what on earth did you come for at all," said Mr. Monkey. "Well, I'll tell you," said Mr. Porcupine, "I really came to say something I forgot to say the last time we met. I didn't think of it till after you had gone." "And what was that?" said Mr. Monkey. "I wanted to ask you who was the most like a pin-cushion," said Mr. Porcupine. "You called me a pin-cushion once, you will remember, but I told you how wrong you were. So you made yourself into a pin-cushion, and in your case the pins were all PUT IN THE RIGHT WAY. That's the advantage



of having brains," said Mr. Porcupine, dodging out of the way of a book which Mr. Monkey threw at his head.

"You tried to make a monkey of me," said Mr. Porcupine, "and you made fun of me, and then you tried to make a porcupine of yourself. Good-day, Mr. Monkey." And Mr. Porcupine, laughing as heartily as a porcupine can laugh, which isn't saying much, went home again.

Now this simple little story teaches us all some very valuable lessons if we really and truly want to learn them. The first is that we shouldn't boast even if we are touching wood, unless we are sure that the wood is quite strong enough to stand it. The next lesson is that we shouldn't look down upon our neighbours and try to pick out their bad points, as the points may stick into us in a way we don't like. The third lesson is that some of the most insignificant looking people are the worst ones to bump up against in a hurry, and there are quite a number of other lessons which you can find if you like to look for them yourselves. I can't tell you any more of them now, because as you can see for yourselves I have come to the end of the column and there isn't any space left.

Perhaps it's just as well, after all!

