

Pshaw could rightly comprehend the wisdom of the words he spoke. And in all the kingdom there was no sage who approached nearly to Pshaw for wisdom. Often, indeed, so that he might express his judgment with the greater precision, he spoke in a language of which he alone of all the Counsellors had knowledge. Happy is the lot of a monarch who numbers among his Court so learned an adviser as was Pshaw (Even to this day his name is set down by the makers of books to convey the sound made by men when they scorn the opinions of the foolish.)

Now it fell out that this great Counsellor was wrath with the Great King. For many years' space he had tendered shrewd advice on affairs of weight, and for many years' space his master had rejected the same in favor of Counsel which Pshaw, in his wisdom, knew to be far less wise.

Therefore, he determined, after much searching of heart, to kill the King, and the manner of the killing that he devised gave proof of the wisdom of Pshaw. It was his aim to slay the King by means of a subtle and secret, yet potent poison that he had placed in a carrot: this carrot he destined for that white Rabbit which should be next in order as provision for the dweller behind the golden bars. He foresaw that the King-Snake would die of the poison that was in the carrot that should be in the Rabbit.

And then, of a surety, the King himself would perish. For this was, as the ancestor of the Rabbits had said, written in the Book of Destiny a book so large that it could not lie, as do the little books that men make in our time.

Thus, on a day when the sun was hot, Pshaw walked in the Courtyard of the Royal Rabbits (called also, the Courtyard of the King's Security, for so long as the snake should live so long might the monarch sit without care upon his throne.). Very stately was the manner of his habit, for his coat of cloth of gold, reaching to his heels, was lined with crimson tuffetas and girt with a broad girdle of silver lace heavily fringed. From his shoulders hung the "Cloak of Sage Counsel," made wholly of white velvet, on which were brodered in thread of gold and precious stones,

the Eye of Justice, which is red; the Eye of Mercy, blue as the heavens themselves; and the Eye of Craft, which has no colour; since the lids are closed. About his neck hung a baderike of large balasses (with- out which it was permitted to no counsellor to raise his voice)

To the Keeper of the King's Rabbits spake Pshaw:

"Which of all the Rabbits shall next provide eating for the Great Snake, O diligent Warden of the Court of Security?"

"This one shall be the next, O wisest of all possible Counsellors," he answered, and pointed to Rhab "with his hand outstretched, as though for some killing.

Rhab heard and trembled.

"Let him have at least one good meal before he dies. Let him meet his death with the Full Stomach that is the father of the Stout Heart."

"It shall be as my lord desires," answered the Keeper, as he took the poisoned carrot from Pshaw and laid it before the nose of the whitest of all white Rabbits.

Then Pshaw, certain of having accomplished his purpose, went his way out of the Courtyard of Security.

But Rhab had no heart for eating, and the Forefather of the Rabbits took the carrot for his portion.

Then came the Keeper in quest of Rhab; by his velvet ears he seized him to the honour and glory of the Forefather's house.

Into the cage of the King-Snake he thrust him, trembling at the honour that was his. Slowly, the tired eyes of the Serpent opened. Slowly, the monstrous coils of amber and jade-green and Royal Purple uncoiled as the King-Snake raised his head to strike.

So terrible was the glitter in his eyes, so evil was the dead fire as it flashed to life that Rhab sprang suddenly erect.

On his hind legs he stood.

With his white velvet paws he beat the air rapidly from fear. High up in the cage he leaped in his panic. Not once or twice did he leap, but three times in all.

So strange to the King-Snake was the sight of this leaping, that he himself threw up his evil head—whether in fear or resentment who shall say? Yet such was the strength of his movement, that his head