

# THE FABLE OF THE FOOLISH MONKEY

Like All Fables It Has a Moral and an Application to the Cases of a Very Large Number of Bipeds Who Ought to Have More Than Monkey Intelligence.



In a country near the Nile, the natives, if they come to trust and like you, will tell you this fable:

Once upon a Time there was a Monkey, who, from his high Place in the tops of the Coconut Trees, watched the Men at work in the Villages. One day he saw a Carpenter sawing Logs with a Saw which he had made out of a Sword.

The Monkey was Interested in the Saw—for Monkeys are Always Interested in Everything. At night when the Carpenter was Asleep, the Monkey went to his Hut and Stole the Saw. The next morning he climbed a Tree with his Prize, and seating himself on a Limb, began to saw it, as he had seen the Man saw the Log.

But he got on the Wrong side of the Saw. When he had sawed the Limb half way in Two, it broke, and despite his nimbleness, he Fell into the River Below, which was filled with Crocodiles. The Moral of this Fable is: "Keep on the right side of the Saw."

You may draw that moral, or a number of others from the fable. It is worth thinking about, whatever moral you draw from it. As you advance in years, and in experience, which the years bring with them, you look back on your earlier days and discover with disgust that you have made many mistakes.

It is the wise man who profits by the mistakes of others, if he can. It is much less costly and annoying than profiting by his own. If you read and study you can avert much trouble; you can avert far more if you O.B.SERVE. Look at the young men whom you meet, or whom you watch as you go about your business or your amusements.

Here is one diligently at work sawing away his future with the deadly saw we call INTemperance. Like the imitative monkey, he gets no end of amusement out of drink. He has been told that many great men have been drunkards, and he has also been told, which is not true, that some of them were great men BECAUSE they were drunkards; that is, they never did anything of importance unless they were drunk.

So he plays with intemperance till he cultivates the vice of drinking, and then, when he discovers that his only support has been cut off and that he is rapidly going to destruction, he shouts in vain for help.

Happily, intemperance is decreasing. It is no longer fashionable to be drunk in society. Statesmen no longer consider it just the thing to go into a Senate chamber drunk. Employers have discovered that a useful man is too expensive if he has not the sense to keep sober, and that sober men can be found easily to take the place of those who neglect their work because they like the sensation that comes with intoxication.

As the years go by, the human monkeys who use that means of bringing about their downfall will decrease rapidly in numbers. But the means that men find to destroy themselves are of endless variety.

Men, especially those who have not learned to reflect, are continually meddling with forces they do not understand, and continually getting into trouble because of it.

It is not always the vicious or the dishonest that come to grief. Often the best intentioned discover when it is too late that they have been cutting their support away, and that the chasm of destruction lurks beneath them.

The get rich plaything is a saw that men will use to bring them into trouble as long as the gambling instinct remains a human inheritance, and that promises to be forever.

It is hard to persuade the man who has to work hard for a little money that his prosperous neighbors have not gained their prosperity by lucky chances. For years a great lottery, stretching like a writhing snake about the country, robbed the people of millions of dollars weekly. Rich and poor, high and low bought tickets every week, living on the hopes that were kindled by widely published stories of big winnings, never learning of the thousands of cases of despair and suicide occasioned by the losses that went to make up those winnings.

When at last the Government took a hand and drove out the lottery, other forms of gambling rose up to replace it.

Race track gambling, now luckily almost at an end, served to supply the saw by which the foolish public could plunge itself to its fate. Then came the 520 per cent interest games, and "fake" investment schemes, many of which still flourish despite all that can be done to drive them out of existence.

It has been said that the gambler does not seek his victims; that he never compels anybody to gamble; that he merely furnishes the opportunity and his prey comes of its own accord.

As well defend the snake which lies in wait at the mouth of a prairie dog burrow. The snake knows that the prairie dog must sooner or later come out of his lair. The gambler knows that the average human being must sooner or later gamble.

If you know of a man who, honest otherwise, is still inclined to try to get rich quick by responding to any of the lures of the sharks that prey on his kind, do not try to warn him away by talking of the evil of gambling itself, or the danger of losing. You cannot make him believe that he will lose. Hope springs eternal in the human breast. The hope of winning cannot be stilled in the breast of the gambler.

Tell him that he may win, but that his winnings will come out of the pockets of the men and women who must lose. Tell him that the five hundred dollars he expects to get out of some carefully disguised lottery scheme will be taken from the total savings of some poor widow, striving in her ignorance to get a fortune out of the few dollars her husband has left her.

Tell him that, no matter how fortunate he may be, his fortune will mean some other man's misfortune, and that his success will bring sorrow, perhaps despair, to others. Then, IF HE IS HONEST, he will stop.

It is easy to say that no honest man will ever gamble; that no self-respecting man will ever drink; that no intelligent man will destroy his future by indolence, or vanity.

But the man who sees poverty staring him in the face, his children in danger of want, and the cost of living going up at a rate with which his earnings cannot possibly keep pace, may be forgiven if he sometimes yields to the temptation to get something for nothing, so alluringly presented to him by the scoundrels who fatten on that particularly rascally species of robbery.

As for the drunkard—the temptations that are offered to him are at first put in so subtle and apparently harmless a form that he is drifting down a terrible current before he fairly realizes where he is going.

Indolence, one of the most irresistible means of self-destruction, is inherent in most men. A great and successful man, who himself works eleven or twelve hours every day, and does not spare the men who work under his direction, admits that he is naturally lazy.

"Every man," he says, "is as lazy as he dares to be. The only difference between me and some of the men I know who have not got as far as I have is that I have not the courage to be very lazy."

It is so easy to slight the task at hand, or to put it off until to-morrow; so pleasant to do the things you want to do rather than the thing you ought to do, that a man must summon all his will power to resist.

In your own experience you have undoubtedly met men of real talent who have proved utter failures because of their indolence, while other men, with half the natural equipment, have far outstripped them.

The man who plods gets little applause or admiration while he is plodding, but there comes a time when the brilliant man finds that he has only been sawing away his support by trifling with the gifts that the Creator bestowed upon him, and when the plodder comes to the reward that his long arid toils have earned for him, then his is the applause and the homage that comes to all success, and the bitterness of despair is for the man who has wasted the gifts that were his by nature.

As the world grows larger and competition grows keener, it becomes harder and harder to rise above the general level, to be anything but the commonplace citizen, who has the price of his living fixed for him, who is denied any real voice in the government of which he ought to be a part, who, far from doing anything for his fellow men, finds it difficult to do anything for himself and his family.

As his difficulties grow his caution must increase. There are and always will be alluring temptations to beset his way. There will be plenty of saws ready to his hand, and if he chooses to use them to cut from under him the only support he has, destruction is always ready to swallow him up, like the grimly humorous crocodiles in the cartoon that accompanies this editorial.

But if he uses his JUDGMENT, which all men possess in a greater or less degree, and thinks before he allows himself to try tempting experiments, he will not find the way to usefulness so hard, after all.