The Bad Child's Book of Beasts

by Hilaire Belloc

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BAD CHILD'S BOOK OF BEASTS ***

THE BAD CHILD'S BOOK OF BEASTS

Verses by

H. BELLOC

Pictures by

B. T. B.

DUCKWORTH, 3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden

Child! do not throw this book about; Refrain from the unholy pleasure Of cutting all the pictures out! Preserve it as your chiefest treasure. Child, have you never heard it said That you are heir to all the ages? Why, then, your hands were never made To tear these beautiful thick pages! Your little hands were made to take The better things and leave the worse ones. They also may be used to shake The Massive Paws of Elder Persons. And when your prayers complete the day, Darling, your little tiny hands Were also made, I think, to pray For men that lose their fairylands.

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DEDICATION

To Master EVELYN BELL Of Oxford Evelyn Bell, I love you well.

beasts

INTRODUCTION

I call you bad, my little child, Upon the title page, Because a manner rude and wild

Is common at your age. The Moral of this priceless work (If rightly understood) Will make you—from a little Turk— Unnaturally good. Do not as evil children do, Who on the slightest grounds Will imitate

Kangaroo

the Kangaroo, With wild unmeaning bounds:

Do not as children badly bred, Who eat like little Hogs, And when they have to go to bed Will whine like Puppy Dogs: Who take their manners from the Ape, Their habits from the Bear, Indulge the loud unseemly jape, And never brush their hair. But so control your actions that Your friends may all repeat.

Child is dainty

'This child is dainty as the Cat, And as the Owl discreet.'

The Yak

As a friend to the children

Yak

commend me the Yak. You will find it exactly the thing: It will carry and fetch,

Carry and fetch

you can ride on its back, Or lead it about

Leading it about with a string

with a string.

The Tartar who dwells on the plains of Thibet (A desolate region of snow)

A pet in Thibet

Has for centuries made it a nursery pet, And surely the Tartar should know!

Then tell your papa where the Yak can be got,

Where a yak can be got

And if he is awfully rich He will buy you the creature— or else

Father and son

he will not. (I cannot be positive which.)

The Polar Bear

The Polar Bear is unaware

The polar bear

Of cold that cuts me through: For why? He has a coat of hair. I wish I had one too!

The Lion

The Lion, the Lion, he dwells in the waste, He has a big head and a very small waist;

The lion

But his shoulders are stark, and his jaws they are grim, And a good little child will not play with him.

The Tiger

The Tiger on the other hand,

The tiger

is kittenish and mild, He makes a pretty playfellow for any little child; And mothers of large families (who claim to common sense)

The tiger again

Will find a Tiger well repay the trouble and expense.

The Dromedary

The Dromedary is a cheerful bird:

Dromedary

I cannot say the same about the Kurd.

The Whale

The whale

The Whale that wanders round the Pole Is not

Whale is not a table dish

a table fish. You cannot bake or boil him whole Nor serve him in a dish;

Cut his blubber up

But you may cut his blubber up And melt it down for oil. And so replace

Oil for light

the colza bean (A product of the soil).

These facts should all be noted down And ruminated on,

Be ruminated on

By every boy in Oxford town Who wants to be a Don.

The Camel

Camel

"The Ship of the Desert."

The Hippopotamus

I shoot the Hippopotamus

Shot hippo

with bullets made of platinum, Because if I use leaden ones

Flatten 'em

his hide is sure to flatten 'em.

The

The Dodo

Dodo

The Island

The Dodo used to walk around,

Dodo walking around

And take the sun and air. The sun yet warms his native ground—

The Dodo is not there!

Dodo is not there

The voice which used to squawk and squeak Is now for ever dumb—

In a museum

Yet may you see his bones and beak All in the Mu-se-um.

The Marmozet

The species Man and Marmozet Are intimately linked;

Marmozet

The Marmozet survives as yet, But Men are all extinct.

The Camelopard

The camelopard

The Camelopard, it is said By travellers (who never lie), He cannot stretch out straight in bed Because he is so high. The clouds surround his lofty head, His hornlets touch the sky.

How shall I hunt I Hunting the camelopard this quadruped? cannot tell! Not I!

(A picture of how people try And fail to hit that head so high.) I'll buy a little parachute (A common parachute with wings), I'll fill it full of arrowroot And other necessary things,

Camelopard running

And I will slay this fearful brute With stones and sticks and guns and slings.

(A picture of

Parachute and wings

how people shoot With comfort from a parachute.)

The Learned Fish

The Learned Fish

This learned Fish has not sufficient brains To go into the water when it rains.

The Elephant

The Elephant

When people call this beast to mind, They marvel more and more At such a

Tail little tail behind, Trunk So LARGE a trunk before.

The Big Baboon

The Big Baboon

The Big Baboon is found upon The plains of Cariboo: He goes about

With nothing on

with nothing on (A shocking thing to do).

But if he

Dressed respectfully

dressed respectably And let his whiskers grow, How like this Big Baboon would be

Like Mr. So-and-So

To Mister So-and-so!

The Rhinoceros

Rhinoceros, your hide looks all undone,

The Rhinoceros

You do not take my fancy in the least:

You have a horn

You have a horn where other brutes have none: Rhinoceros, you are an ugly beast.

The Frog

The Frog

Be kind and tender to the Frog, And do not call him names, As 'Slimy skin,' or 'Polly-wog,' Or likewise 'Ugly James,' Or 'Gap-a-grin,' or 'Toad-gone-wrong,' Or 'Bill Bandy-knees':

The frog is sensitive

The Frog is justly sensitive To epithets like these.

No animal will more repay A treatment kind and fair; At least

Or so lonely people say

so lonely people say Who keep a frog (and, by the way, They are extremely rare).

Oh! My!

Oh! My!

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