

beasts

(a novel of political intrigue)

by Ramón Llull

translation and illustrations
by Alberto García-Alvarez

book of the beasts

A 13th Century publication by the Catalan philosopher Ramon Llull, translated and illustrated by Alberto Garcia Alvarez.

The Book of the Beasts is a fable of animals seeking power and involved in intrigue and treason. It is a view of human behaviour where 'the end justifies the means'.

A novel of political intrigue.



Preface

The Book of the Beasts is part of a larger work; 'The Book of Marvels'. This was written in Paris, in 1289.

'The Book of Marvels' is a journey through life. Felix, the protagonist, is sent by his father to wander and question all the creation. He goes through cities and forests asking shepherds, wise men, hermits, artisans and philosophers questions about theology, astronomy, sciences and politics; always learning... always curious about all aspects of creation.

'The Marvels' is a compendium of ten books narrated in the form of allegories, with many stories and anecdotes. The books are: God, Angels, Heaven, Elements, Plants, Metals, Beasts, Man, Paradise, and Hell. Nine of the books are concerned with different aspects of the universe as seen during the 13th century. One of the books, the "Book of the Beasts" here translated, is believed to have been written before the others and incorporated later into 'The Marvels'.

After numerous experiences traveling through the world, Felix finds on the road two men with whom he exchanges a few words and asks some questions. They tell Felix how they just encountered a gathering of animals nearby involved in the election of a king. Felix goes on,

sees the animals and becomes an observer of a cycle of events that starts with the election of their king. At the conclusion of 'The Beasts', the narrator, not Felix, tells us that Felix took the book to a king so that he could guard himself against wicked advice and dishonest men.

The main character in the "Book of Beasts" is the Fox, named "Na Renard" in the original Catalan.

About Ramon Llull

Ramon Llull was born in the 1230's in Mallorca. In 1263 he had a spiritual experience and felt called by God to dedicate his life to the conversion of unbelievers, in particular from the Moslem faith. He wrote all his works in Catalan, not in Latin as was the custom at that time, and many were translated into other languages.

Nearly 300 written works have been preserved from Ramon Llull, on all imaginable subjects (philosophy, mysticism, theology, logic, rhetoric, politics, law, medicine..), including his Book of Marvels.

On-line references:

[Johnston, Mark D. : The spiritual logic of Ramon Llull. - Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1987.](#)

[Jorn Barger May 2002: Ramon Llull \(Raymond Lull or Lully\) resources on the Web](#)

[Ramon Llull Database - Llull DB](#)

About Alberto Garcia Alvarez

Alberto was born in Barcelona in 1928. He arrived in New Zealand in 1973 with his wife Marian (m.1958) and their two children: Jordi (b.1959) and Pablo (b.1961).

After the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Alberto completed his primary studies at the Colegit de Sant Miquel, Barcelona and later at the Escola d'Arts I Procediments Artistics de Llotja and the Escola Superior de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi, Universitat de Barcelona, (1946-1951).

Alberto and family moved to California (1960) where he taught at six universities (1961-1972) including University of California, Berkeley. In NZ he held the position of Senior Lecturer in Painting; head of Printmaking and supervisor of the Masters Programme at Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland (1973-1994).

Alberto has held more than 60 solo exhibitions in NZ and overseas (1951-). Al fresco painting and other media have been commissioned for many public buildings in Spain, California and NZ (1947-). Alberto's publications include *On Our Way* series (W.H. Sadlier Inc. New York, 1967-1968); *The Beasts - Translation from Catalan to English*, by Ramon Llull (s. XIII); also many literary essays and poems.

Alberto has residences in Auckland and Barcelona.

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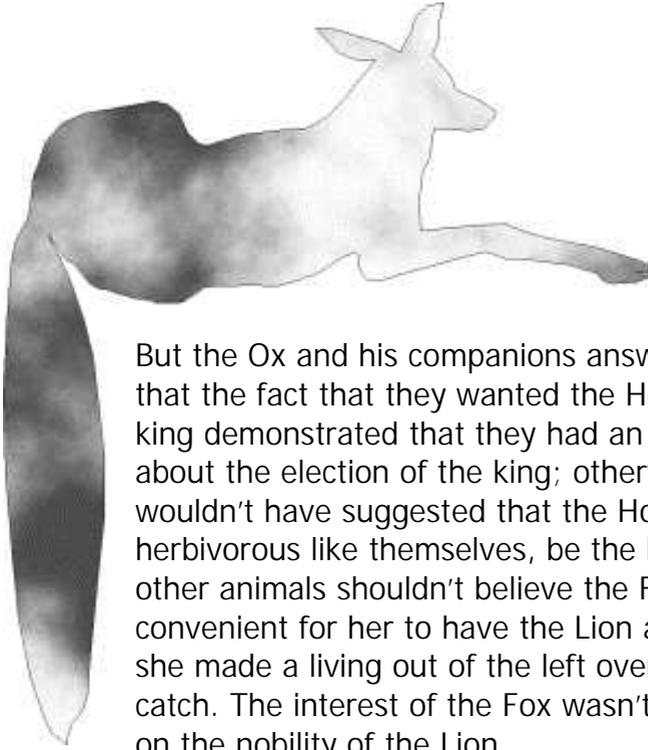
Election of the king

In a beautiful meadow through which flows a broad river, many animals gathered to choose their king. The majority agreed upon the Lion, but the Ox, who wasn't at all in favour, said:

"Gentlemen, a king must be noble, of beautiful figure, large, humble and kind to his subjects. The Lion is not big and doesn't feed on herbs but, rather, eats other animals... and has such a loud voice that he makes us all tremble with fear when he roars. For this reason, if you want to follow my advice, choose the Horse as king. The Horse is big, beautiful and humble; he is swift, doesn't look haughty and, furthermore, he doesn't eat meat."

The Deer, the Roe Deer, the Ram and the other herbivores were very pleased by what the Ox had just said, but the Fox stepped in front of them all and said:

"Gentlemen, God didn't create the world with the intention that men should be known and loved, but rather so that He should be loved and known by men. And God wished that men should be served by animals, despite men's eating meat and herbs. And you, gentlemen, mustn't heed the Ox, who doesn't like the Lion because it eats meat, rather you must follow the rules and the laws that God gave and placed on all His creatures."



But the Ox and his companions answered the Fox that the fact that they wanted the Horse to be the king demonstrated that they had an open mind about the election of the king; otherwise they wouldn't have suggested that the Horse, herbivorous like themselves, be the king. And the other animals shouldn't believe the Fox; it was convenient for her to have the Lion as king because she made a living out of the left overs of the Lion's catch. The interest of the Fox wasn't, then, based on the nobility of the Lion.

So many words were uttered from each side that the court was disrupted and the election cancelled. The Bear, the Leopard, and the Lynx, who had hopes of being chosen king, said that the court should be postponed until such time as it could be determined which animal most deserved to be the king. The Fox, realizing that the Bear, the Leopard and the Lynx wanted to postpone the election because each of them hoped to become the king, in the presence of all said these words:

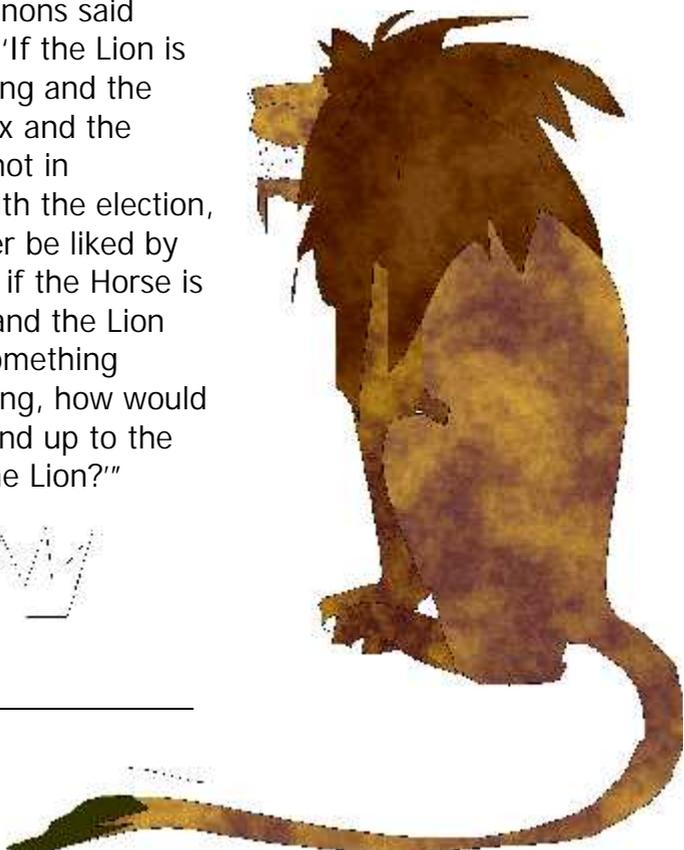
"In a cathedral a bishop had to be elected and there was a disparity of opinions among the assembly of canons. Some canons wanted the

sacristan of the cathedral, a most wise and virtuous man, to become the bishop. The archdeacon wanted to be elected bishop and the precentor¹ wanted it too, and both opposed the election of the sacristan and consented to have as bishop a stupid canon, of good figure but very little knowledge; weak and lustful.

"All the members of the chapter were surprised at what the archdeacon and the precentor were saying. One of the canons said these words: 'If the Lion is selected as king and the Bear, the Lynx and the Leopard are not in agreement with the election, they will never be liked by the king; and if the Horse is elected king and the Lion were to do something against the king, how would the Horse stand up to the strength of the Lion?'"



¹ *Choirmaster*

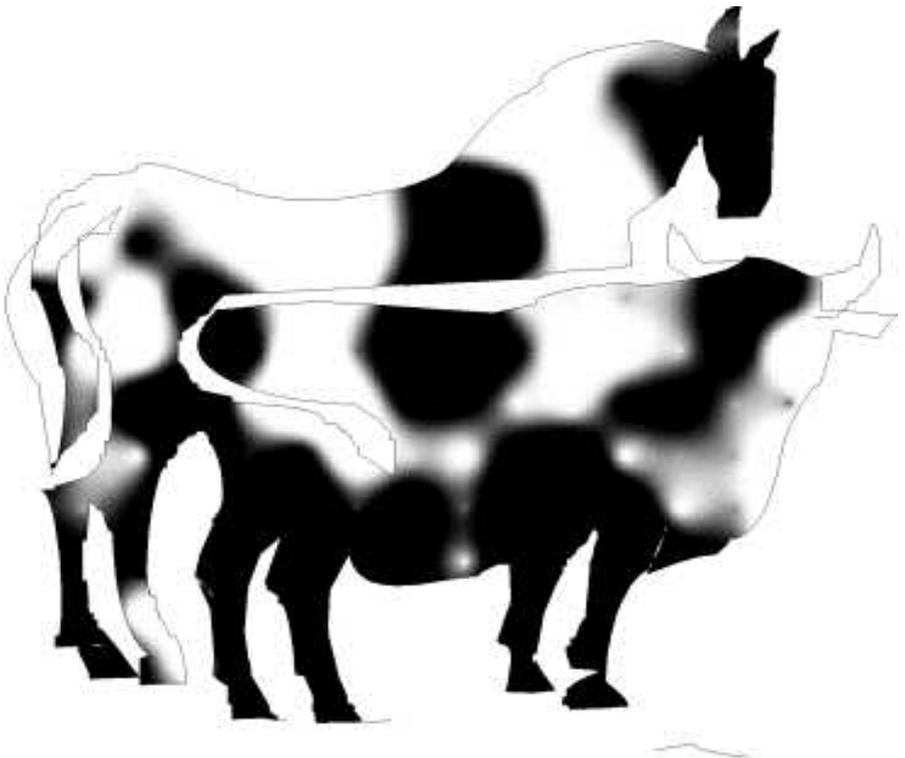


When the Bear, the Lynx and the Leopard had listened to the Fox, they thought it wise to be on the side of the Lion and consented to his election as king. Because of the strength of opinion of the Bear and the other carnivorous animals - and despite the fears of those that eat herbs - the Lion was elected king and, as his first decree, he gave all the carnivorous animals licence to eat and nourish themselves from the herbivorous ones.

One day the king was in a meeting of parliament trying to structure his court. All the day and into the night the king and his barons were working together and had no time for food or drinks. When the parliament closed, the Lion and his company were very hungry, so the king asked the Wolf and the Fox what they could eat. The answer was that it was too late to hunt for food but that not too far away there was a calf, the son of the Ox, and a colt, son of the Horse, from which they could eat abundantly. The Lion sent for them and the colt and the calf were brought back and eaten up. The Ox was very enraged with the death of his son, and so was the Horse, and both decided to go to be with humans, to serve them and to seek vengeance for the wrong that their lord had committed against them. From the moment the Ox and the Horse were with men, the Horse was used for riding and the Ox for ploughing the fields.

One day the two animals met each other while in the pastures and each asked about the other's

fortune. The Horse said that he had to work very hard for his lord, was being ridden all the day and had to run up and down day and night. He wished to get out of that slavery and would happily go back and submit himself to the Lion, but since the Lion eats meat - and he himself had been proposed for kingship - he was afraid to return to the kingdom of the Lion. So he would prefer to live painfully under the lordship of men who after all do not eat horse meat, than in the company of the Lion who does eat it.



When the Horse had explained his horrible situation to the Ox, the Ox said that he, too, suffered much from ploughing all the day, and that his lord forbade him to eat from the wheat that the land produced thanks to his labours. When he was released from the plough, he was put to pasture on the grass that had been eaten by the sheep and goats while he was working. The Ox complained strongly about his lord and the Horse tried to console him as much as he could.

While the Ox and the Horse were talking in this manner, a butcher came to see if the Ox was fat enough, because the lord of the Ox had offered to sell the Ox to him. The Ox said to the Horse that his lord wanted to sell him and have him killed so that men could eat meat. The Horse said that it was a bad remuneration for the service given. For a long time both Horse and Ox lamented themselves. The Horse advised the Ox to get out and to return to his land, since it was better to live in peril of death and tribulations with his family at home than in danger of tribulation and death with an ungrateful man.

Of the king's council

When the Lion was chosen king, he gave a speech in front of his people and said:

“Gentlemen, it is your wishes that I should be your king, regardless of what you all know; that the

business of a king is dangerous and problematic. It is dangerous because as a consequence of the king's sins, God sends frequently to the world hunger, illness, death and wars; things that come also because of the sins of the people, and because of this, to reign is dangerous for the king and for all his subjects. And because it is difficult, I ask you all to provide me with counsellors to give me advice. The counsellors must be wise and faithful, and worthy of being in the company of the king."

The words of the king pleased the courtiers and everyone felt that the election of the king had been successful. It was decided that the Bear, the Leopard, the Lynx, the Serpent and the Wolf should be the counsellors of the king. All of those selected swore in front of the court to be faithful to the king to their best ability.

The Fox was greatly displeased for not having been appointed counsellor of the king and, facing the congregation of courtiers, addressed them with these words:

"As it is written in the Gospel, Jesus Christ, who is the king of heaven and earth, wished to be in company of humble and simple men. To this end he chose the apostles, poor and simple men, to show that their virtue would exalt them and make them still more humble. Against your opinion, it seems to me that the king should have in his council simple and humble animals; not those that

are haughty because of their power or lineage and with pretensions to rival the king. These animals should be an example of hope and humility to those that are simple and subsist by eating herbs."

The Elephant, the Wild Boar, the He-goat, the Ram and other herbivorous beasts approved of what the Fox had said and advised the king that, since the Fox spoke so well and had so much wisdom, she should be a counsellor as well. The Fox advised the King to keep the Elephant, the Wild Boar, the He-goat and the Ram in the royal council. The Bear, the Leopard and the Lynx, when hearing that the Fox was to be in the council, became worried. They feared that with her eloquence and cleverness she could have all of them incur the King's rage; especially because the Fox had urged, more than anybody else, the election of the Lion as king.

"Sir," said the Leopard addressing the king, "in your court you have the Cock, who has a beautiful figure and is wise -since he knows how to be master of many hens. He sings at dawn with a clear and harmonious voice and he would be much better than the Fox as a councillor of yours."

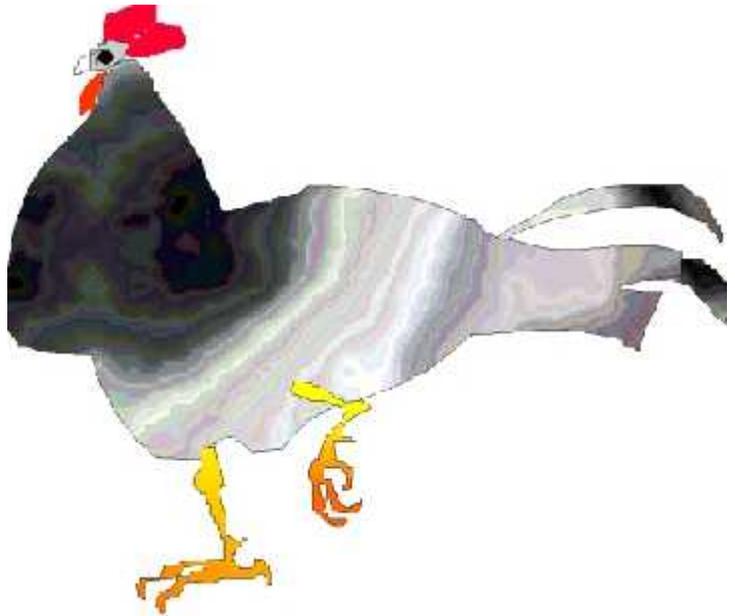
The Elephant said that it would be good to have the Cock as a counsellor to the King because he could give the king example of how to control the queen and, furthermore, he would wake the king at day break for the prayers. He said that the Fox was

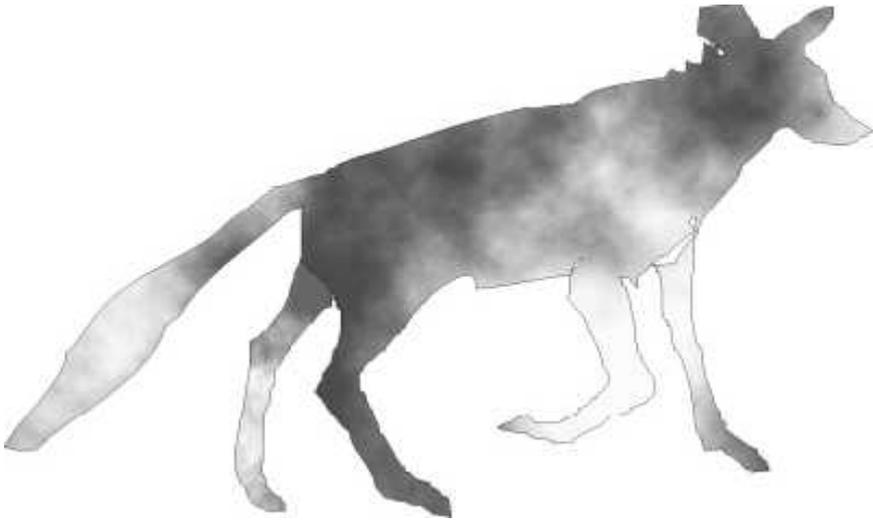
well chosen as counsellor; he was a wise beast and knew a lot.

The Leopard said that it wasn't wise to have in the king's council two animals who, by nature, resent each other. Their antagonism would disturb the council of the king. The Fox commented that it was a requirement to have in the council beautiful and big animals, like the Elephant, and the Wild Boar, and the He-goat, and the Ram and the Deer, because in the king's presence it is desirable to have beautiful animals.

It was the king's wish that the Fox and her companions be part of the court and of his council, and that is how it would have been had not the Leopard said secretly to the king these words:

"Sir, a count had a war against a king, and since he wasn't as powerful as the king, he had to rely on his own cunning; thus, the count bribed the king's scribe to obtain the battle





strategies, and that destroyed the king's power to win the war against the count."

Once the Leopard had finished his story and the Lion had understood its meaning, the Lion said that he wanted the Cock to be in his court, and not the Fox who might inform the Elephant and the other herbivorous about the strategies of the king and his carnivorous allies.

About the treason of the Fox against the king

Not to be in the king's council was extremely upsetting for the Fox and her companions, and at that point the Fox conceived treason in her heart and, wishing the death of the king said to the Elephant:

"From here on there is going to be great enmity between the animals that eat meat and those that

eat herbs; because the king and his council are meat eaters and you have no one in the council to represent your nature and your rights.”

The Elephant answered by saying that he hoped the Serpent and the Horse would reason in their favour and defend their rights in the court of the king, since they were animals that didn't eat meat. In reply the Fox said that in a far-away land, a Christian had a Saracen² who he trusted and to whom he gave many favours. The Saracen, being opposed to the Christian because of religion, couldn't reciprocate the attentions or the feelings but pondered all the time on how he could kill him. “And that is the reason, Elephant,” said the Fox, “why you mustn't trust the Serpent or the Cock; they are very different in nature from you and your companions. It is true that they are not carnivorous but you should realize that they will consent to anything against you and your companions.”

These words from the Fox left the Elephant very worried and he considered for a long time all the wrongs that could come to him and to his companions from the election of the king and his council. While the Elephant thought over all this, the Fox advised him not to be afraid of the king and his council, and said that if he, the Elephant, wanted to be king, she would find the way to

² The original infers a possessive relationship

achieve it. But the Elephant couldn't trust the Fox reasoning that, as a carnivorous animal, she would prefer her kind rather than the herbivorous animals, and said to the Fox:

"In a land it happened that a kite was carrying a rat in his beak and a hermit, seeing it, prayed to God that the rat would fall on his lap. The prayers of the saintly man were heard and God made the rat fall into the lap of the hermit, who prayed again that the rat be changed into a beautiful young girl. God did what the hermit asked for and the rat was transformed into a very nice looking young girl. 'Daughter,' said the hermit, 'Do you want the sun as a husband? No sir, the sun is obscured by the clouds,' said she. The hermit asked if she would have as husband the moon, and she said 'No; the moon doesn't have light of its own but reflects the sun.' 'Good daughter, would you marry the clouds?' asked the hermit. 'No,' replied the girl, 'because the wind orders the clouds to go here and there.' The girl didn't want the wind as husband because the mountains obstructed its free movement; neither did she want the mountains because the rats burrowed in them, nor a man as a husband because he would kill the rats. In the end, the girl begged the hermit to pray God to return her to the rat she had been and to give her a good rat husband.

When the Fox heard this story, she realized that the Elephant was suspicious of her and feared that

the Elephant might expose her to the king. She would have made the same proposition of becoming king to the Wild Boar, but to avoid making her intentions known to others she decided to try her best to convince the Elephant to become the king, and said:

“In a land there was a lord who had a handsome son whom he very much loved. It so happened that his wife died and he married again. The new wife disliked the son and, when the son was twenty years old, she thought of a way to get rid of him: she told her husband that his son had been trying to seduce her. The lord was so much in love with his wife that he immediately believed all she had told him and ordered his son to go and never again return; he didn’t want to see him again. The boy felt humiliated and furious for being treated in that unfair way.”

The Elephant found some consolation from the words of the Fox and hoped to become the king, as the Fox suggested. He asked the Fox, however, how a fox was going to arrange for the king to die considering the strength of the Lion and his council and the fact that the Fox was a small animal with little power. The Fox replied with this story:

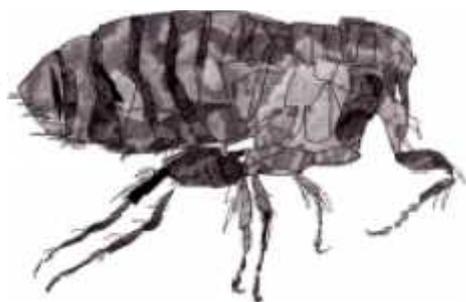
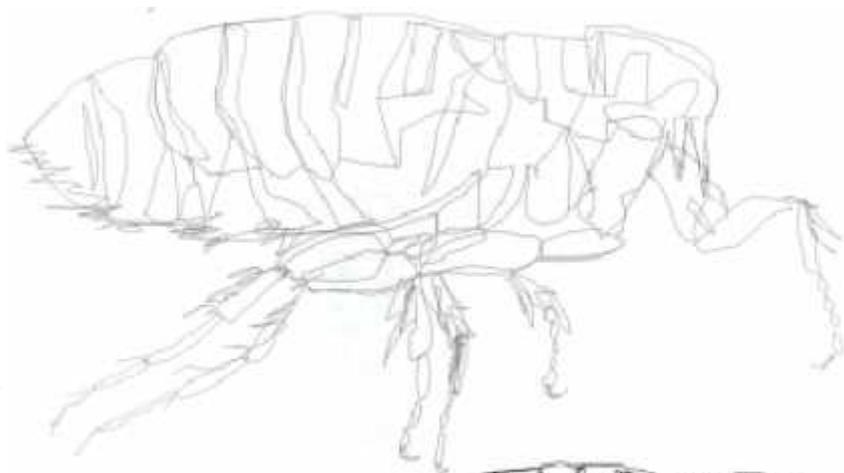
“In a land it so happened that all the animals decided to give up one of their number to the lion to be eaten so that the lion wouldn’t torment them with his hunting raids. Every day the animals drew

lots and sent the unfortunate one to the lion. One day it fell to the hare and she waited until midday to go to the lion because she was so afraid. The lion was very annoyed for the delay; he was very hungry, and asked the hare why she was so late. As an excuse, the hare said that close by there was a lion who said he was king of the land and had tried to catch her. The lion was very angry, believing what the hare had just told him, and asked her to show him that lion. The hare went ahead, followed by the lion. The hare reached a large pool encircled by a wall. When they were above the water and their figures reflected on the surface, the hare said to the lion: "Sir, do you see the lion in the water that wants to eat a hare?"

The lion thought that his reflection was that of another lion and leapt in to fight the contender. That was his death and the cunning of the hare was the cause of it."

After listening to the Fox's story, the Elephant said:

"A king had two pages to attend to his person. One day it happened that the king was seated on his throne and in front of him there were many high barons and lords. One of the pages was close by the king and saw a flea on the white silk robe of the king. He asked the king to have permission to approach him to clear the flea from his coat. The king gave him permission and the page grabbed the flea.



The king wanted to see the flea and show it to his lords and pointed out how marvellous it was that so a small beast could dare to get so close to a king, and ordered the page to be given one hundred bezants³. The other page was envious of his companion and the following day placed a big louse on the mantle of the king and spoke to the king as the other page had done the previous day. The king was very alarmed and said that the page should die for allowing that dirt on his royal clothes, and ordered that the page be given one hundred lashes."

The Fox realized that the Elephant was afraid of becoming the king and marvelled to see that such a big animal could be so frightened, and said to him these words:

"It is said that a serpent, through Eve - who was the first woman - provoked God's anger towards Adam and all his descendants. Then, if the serpent with Eve could have procured so much wrong, why can't I, with my ingenuity and cunning, make the king fall under the rage of all his people?"

Right at that moment, when the Fox had told the story of Eve, the Elephant conceived the betrayal of

³ *Byzantine unit of currency at the time*

the king and said to the Fox that he would be king willingly as long as the Fox did the killing. The Fox reassured the Elephant that she would see to that.

The Elephant promised to the Fox great gifts and honours if she succeeded in making him the king.

How the Fox was the king's gate keeper

At the king's court it was decided that the Cat be the king's valet and the Dog the gate keeper. The Cat was appointed valet so that he would eat the rats, who destroy the clothes and, furthermore, because he resembles the figure of the king. The Dog was chosen to be the gate keeper because he hears someone coming from a long distance and barks, informing the king.

While the Cat and the Dog were doing their duties, the Fox went looking for the Ox and the Horse. She found the Ox on the road, returning to the king's court. Each greeted the other graciously. The Ox recounted to the Fox the tribulations of his life: how he had gone freely to work for a man; how that man had enslaved him for a long time; and how, at the end, the man wanted to sell him to a butcher who wanted to kill him. The Fox informed the Ox of the situation at the king's court.

"Mister Ox," said the Fox, "what are you going to do?"

The Ox said that he was returning to the king's court and was running away from the man that had the intentions of selling him and have him killed.

The Fox said to him:

"In a kingdom there was a king of bad habits who had a very wicked council. Because of the wickedness of the king and his council, all his subjects were enduring hard labour and the kingdom was suffering the wrath of God; it was beyond calculation the harm that the king and his court were inflicting on the animals that lived in that land. So harmful was it that his subjects no longer endured it and, because of the bad example of the king, they wished his death and the death of his council."

From what the Fox had just said, the Ox understood that the king and his council were wicked and fearing to go to live under an evil ruler he said to the Fox these words:

"In a city there was a bishop who was a disgrace to his office. His malice and dishonesty - and his bad example to the chapter and to the residents of the city - caused much harm, and all the spiritual benefits that the city could have enjoyed had the bishop been a good example and followed the doctrine that Jesus Christ gave to his apostles, were lost. One day the bishop did something very wrong and afterwards went to sing a mass. A canon of his church felt that the bishop's action

was so abominable that he left the city and went to live with shepherds in the mountains, and said that it was better to be with them, protecting the sheep from the wolves, than with a shepherd that kills his sheep and gives them to the wolves."

When the Ox had finished with his story he said to the Fox that he would go away; he didn't want to be under a wicked king.

"Mister Ox," said the Fox, "do you know the question that a hermit put to a king?"

"What question?" asked the Ox.

The Fox said that in a high mountain there was a hermit:

"He was a holy man and every day he heard many complaints about the king of the land, who was a sinner and a poor ruler. The holy man was distressed to see the wickedness of the king and wished to help him to change to a good life. The good man came down from his hermitage to a beautiful city and went to see the king. 'My lord' he said to the king, 'Which seems to you to be more acceptable to God: the life of a hermit or the life of a king who reigns with wisdom over his people?' For a while the king thought about the question and finally said that the life of a king of good deeds is better for his subjects than the life of a hermit. 'My lord,' said the hermit, 'I am pleased with your answer; it implies that a wicked king does more harm than all the good that a hermit might do, and

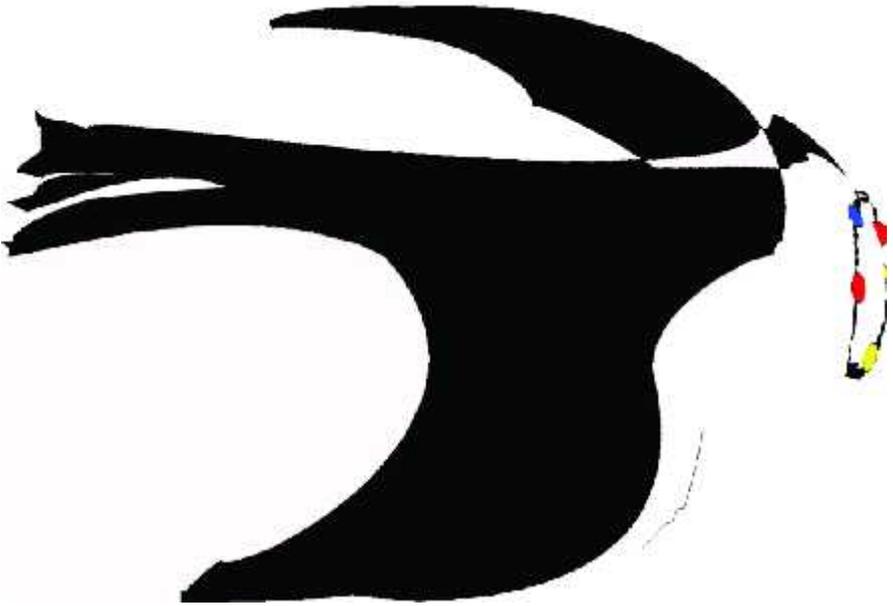
because of this I have come to you, determined to stay with you and your kingdom for as long as necessary to help you with the Word of God, so that through it you may learn to know and fear Him.’ That hermit remained in the king’s court for a long time. His preaching the Good Word helped the king to become a good ruler.”

The Fox, after finishing her story, said to the Ox: “Mister Ox; you are in a similar position to that of the hermit and, if you wish, I will give you advice with which you will be able to lead the king, your lord and mine, to good conduct and much good will come out of what you do.”

The Ox promised that he would do anything possible to achieve this. The Fox advised the Ox to remain in a beautiful meadow, close by the king and his barons, and to eat and rest until he became robust and able to bellow loudly.

“As soon as you, Mister Ox, feel robust and strong, bellow as loudly as you can three times during the day and three at night, and meanwhile I shall have spoken to the king about your case.”

The Ox did as the Fox had advised and the Fox went to the king’s court. After a while, when the Ox felt strong, he started to bellow with all his might. As soon as the Fox heard it she went to see the king’s reaction. The king was so scared that he couldn’t stop shaking, which made him very embarrassed in front of his barons because he



feared they were going to see him as a coward. While the Lion was so fearful the Fox approached him, which made the Cock crow and the Dog bark. The king was pleased to have the Fox near him and asked her if she knew what beast was making so much racket; it seemed to the king that such a powerful voice had to be from a big and strong animal.

“My lord,” said the Fox, “in a valley a jongleur⁴ left his small drum in a tree. When the wind blew it struck the branches of the tree. The beating made the drum sound like a strong voice that thundered all over the valley. An ape who was close by and heard the sound approached the drum. He felt that,

⁴ A wandering minstrel

the sound being so loud, that thing had to be full of lard or something good to eat, but once he had ripped the drum open he found it empty. "And so," said the Fox to the Lion, "you can see that the threatening noise that you heard is from an animal that may not have in him the strength that the voice implies. Be strong and courageous because the king shouldn't be afraid of what he doesn't know."

While the Fox was talking the Ox bellowed so loudly that the whole area shook and the king and his companions were frightened. The king couldn't hide his fear and said that, if the strength of that beast was in keeping with his voice, the animal shouldn't be living so near his place. At this point the Ox bellowed again and the Lion and all his court trembled. The Fox seemed to be very jovial and with no sign of concern. The King, surprised, said:

"Fox, how can it be that you are not afraid of this terrible and strange sound? You can see that I, being so powerful, and the Bear, and the Leopard and many of the other beasts that are stronger than you, are full of fear of this voice."

The Fox, in answer to the king, told this story:

"A raven made his nest in a rock and every year a big serpent ate his chicks. The raven, not having the strength of the serpent, didn't dare to face the snake in combat, so he thought of using cunning.

One day the king's daughter was playing with her maid-servant in the garden and hung her chaplet of gold, silver and precious stones on the branch of a tree. The raven took the chaplet and flew for a long time with many men following him to see where he was taking it, because the king's daughter liked that ornament very much and was weeping. The raven left the ornament at the place where the serpent was, and the men, in order to get the chaplet, had to kill the serpent. The raven had obtained help from others by using his cunning and ingenuity.

"So, my lord," said the Fox, "I have so much ingenuity and cunning that, if I weren't strong enough to fight the beast that makes that terrible noise, I would use that ability of mine to conquer the beast and make him die."

Then the Fox had finished her story, the serpent, who was one of the councillors, told this other story:

"On a lake there was a heron who used to fish all his life. When he grew old and started to lose his day's take, he thought of overcoming his shortcomings with cunning and ingenuity, but in the end this ability was the cause of his death."

The Lion asked the serpent to tell him how the heron caused his own death by using cunning and ingenuity.

"My king," said the serpent, "At one point the heron passed a full day without interest in fishing and remained very sad at the shore of the lake. A crab was surprised to see that the heron didn't fish as usual and asked why he was so pensive. The heron cried and said that he was taking pity on the fish of the lake whom he had known for so long, because two fishermen from a neighbouring lake were planning to come to this one. "Those fishermen are wise masters in the art of fishing; no fish will escape them and they will take every one from this lake.'

The crab, hearing these words was very concerned and told the fish of the lake what was going to happen. All the fish got together and went to see the heron to ask his advice. 'There is only one solution; that I take you all, one by one, to a lake not far from here. In that lake there are many



reeds and much clay around it and the fishermen will not be able to do any harm to you'.

The fish thought this a good idea and every day the heron took as many fish as he wanted and made it look like he was taking them to a lake, as promised, but each time he stopped on a hill and ate the fish he was carrying and then went for another one. This practice kept the heron well fed for a long time without the need for fishing.

One day the crab asked him to be taken to the other lake. The heron stretched out his neck and the crab grabbed his neck with his two pincers. While the heron flew with the crab at his neck, the crab was surprised not to see the lake where they were going. When the heron was near the hill where he had been eating the fish, the crab saw the bones of the fish and realized the deception. The crab thought, 'While there is yet time, do something to this traitor who wants to eat you.' Then the crab tightened his grab on the neck of the heron and broke it. The heron fell to the ground and the crab returned to his lake where he told the fish that the cunning of the heron was the cause of his death."

"My lord," said the Fox, "In those times, when God expelled Adam from Paradise, God cursed the serpent for tempting Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and, from those times, all the serpents are horrible to look at, are venomous and because of them all

the calamities fell on the world. And for this reason, once upon a time, a wise man threw a serpent out of the king's council, although the king had much affection for the serpent." The Lion asked the Fox to tell the story.

"My lord," said the Fox, "a king had heard about a holy man who was very wise and sent for him. The holy man was asked by the king to stay and advise him on how to rule his subjects and also to correct his vices, were he to have any. The holy man stayed with the king and advised him to do good things and avoid evil behaviour.

One day the king and his council were discussing some important matters. Close by the king there was a big serpent with whom the king was consulting more than with any other. When the holy man saw the serpent, he asked what was the purpose of a king in this world, and the king said: 'In this world the king represents God, and his duty is to maintain justice and lead the people that God has entrusted to him.'

'Sir,' said the holy man, 'Which beast was more against God at the time of the creation?' The king said that the serpent was. 'My lord,' said the holy man, 'according to your answer it follows that you have to kill the serpent and that you will be in great sin if you keep her in your court. If you, as king, represent the image of God, you must abhor what God abhors, and especially that which God abhors

most.' Because of those words, the king killed the serpent and the serpent's cunning and ingenuity were of no help to her."

When the Fox had told the story, the Ox bellowed

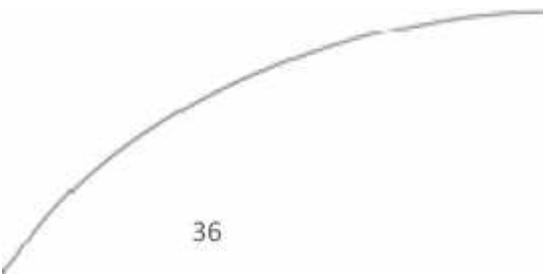
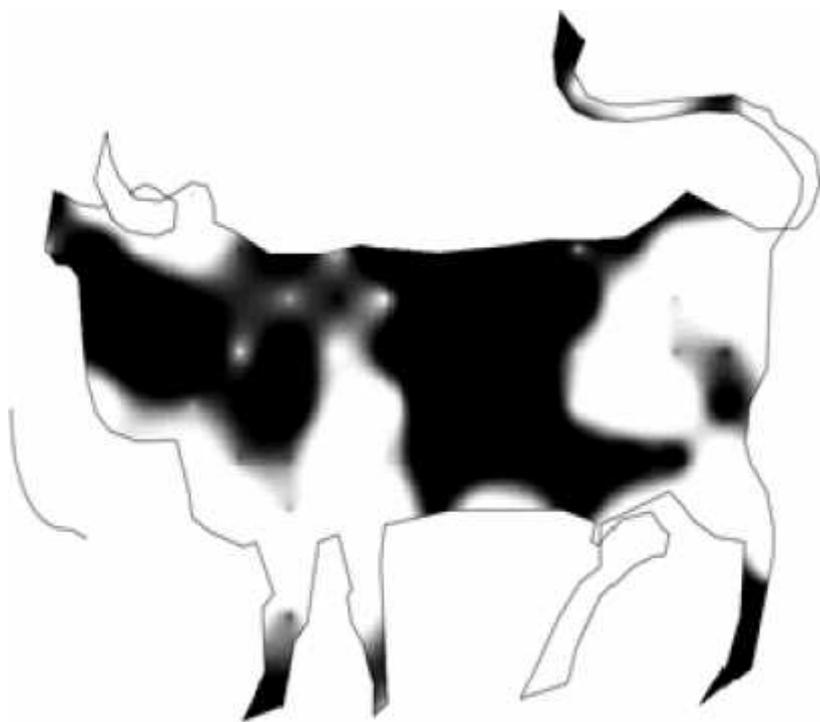


and thundered so loudly that the place shook and the Lion and all the others trembled with fear. The Fox told the king that, if he wanted, she would go to the animal that made that horrible noise and would try to bring him to the king so that he could be a member of the king's court. The Lion and the others begged the Fox to go to see that vociferous beast. The Fox pleaded with the king that, if the Ox were brought to the court, he should be given protection so that no one could do harm to him.

The Lion, in front of his council, granted the Fox all her demands.

The Fox went to the valley where the Ox was and he, when seeing the Fox, rejoiced. They greeted each other and the Fox explained all that had happened since her departure.

"Good friend," said the Fox, "You will go to the king and make him believe that you are humble and you will behave as if you possess great wisdom. I shall point out to the king that you repent for having been so long outside his rule, and you, in front of everyone, will ask the king's pardon for having been with men and having accepted their rules. My friend," said the Fox, "speak and be with the king and his court in such a way that all of them are pleased with your words and manners; tell the king about the life of men and advise him to make friendship with them."



The Ox and the Fox set off towards the king's court. The king and his barons recognized the Ox and felt stupid to have been so scared of him, and the king marvelled at how the Ox could have a voice so strong and terrible. The Ox made the proper reverence to the king and the king asked him about his life. The Ox explained all that had happened while serving men. The king showed surprise at how the Ox had changed his voice and the Ox told him that he had been bellowing with fear and contrition, because he felt guilty towards the king and his court for having left them for another lordship. The fear and contrition made him tremble, and this trembling was the cause for changing his voice; the terror was coming from his heart expressing his remorse. The Ox asked forgiveness and the king granted it in the presence of all his court.

The king asked about the life of the men's king. The Ox said that the serpent had spoken the truth; that the most false and vicious beast in the world is man. The Lion asked the Ox to tell him the reason why the serpent had spoken so.



"My lord," said the Ox, "once upon a time a bear, a raven, a man and a serpent fell into a coal pit. A saintly hermit who passed by the pit saw the four of them inside unable to get out. All of them begged the hermit to help them out, and each one offered a good reward. The saintly man helped out the bear, the raven and the serpent, but when he was about to help the man out, the serpent advised him not to do it because, if he did, he would be sorry.

The hermit didn't listen to the serpent's advice and helped that man out anyway. The bear brought to the hermit a beehive full of honeycombs. After the hermit had eaten some honey he went to the city to preach. Entering the city the raven brought him a precious chaplet that he had taken from the king's daughter's head. The hermit took it and was very pleased because it was of great value.

In the city there was a crier announcing that any one finding the chaplet should return it to the king's daughter and he would receive a good reward. Otherwise, if somebody had it and failed to return it, he would suffer a heavy punishment.

The holy man met on the street the man whom he had saved from the coal pit. The man was a silver-smith. The holy man secretly gave him the chaplet and the silver-smith took it to the court and denounced the holy man, who was taken prisoner, walloped and thrown into prison.

The serpent that the holy man had helped out of the pit went to the king's daughter while she was sleeping and bit her on the hand. She cried and screamed. Her hand became very swollen and poisoned, which worried the king. He proclaimed all over the city that whoever could cure his daughter's hand would receive a valuable reward. The serpent went to the king while he was sleeping and said in his ear that in prison there was a man who had a herb that could cure his daughter. (The serpent had given the herb to the holy man and taught him how to use it on the king's daughter's hand. The serpent also told the holy man to demand justice from the king against the silver-smith, who had treated him so badly.) The holy man did as he was told by the serpent; he was freed from prison and the silver-smith incarcerated."

The story against men was heard with pleasure and approval by the Lion and all of his council. The Lion asked the Ox if he thought that he (the Lion) should be afraid of the king of men. The Ox said that it was very dangerous to be the enemy of the king of men because animals cannot defend themselves from wicked, powerful and cunning men.

The Lion remained very thoughtful over what the Ox had just said. Realizing that the Lion was afraid of the men's king, the Fox said:

“My Lord, the haughtiest and greediest animal is man; for this reason, and if it so pleases you and your council, it would be a good idea to send messengers with jewellery to the king of men; they would show him your good will and give him the presents, and the king will feel love for you and your subjects.”

The king and council accepted what the Fox said, but the Cock opposed it, and had this to say:

“In a land it so happened that Strength and Cunning debated in front of the king. Strength said that, by nature, he was superior to Cunning, but Cunning said that the contrary was true. The king wanted to know which one was superior and to find out he made them fight with each other. Cunning won. And this is the reason why, my lord,” said the Cock, “if you have friendship with the king of men and send him messengers and he sends you messengers as well, these will see in you and your barons that you could not protect yourselves from their king, neither with ingenuity nor cunning, since men fight with those tools to vanquish all those that fight with strength and without cunning or learning.”

“On the other hand,” the Fox said, “God makes all that he does with power, not with cunning or with learning. For that reason and according to nature, in a war all those who fight with arms similar to

God's will be stronger than those that choose other arms."

The Lion was well pleased with the Fox's words and wanted by all means to send messengers and jewellery to the king of men. The Lion asked advice about whom to send and what jewels to take. The Fox was of the opinion that the Ox, knowing the customs of men and the things they most would like, would be the best to advise the king on that matter. The king told the Ox that he would follow his advice, and then the Ox said:

"My lord the king, it is custom of the kings of men to send messengers chosen from the best of their council and their noble men. The most noble councillors you have, it seems to me, are the Lynx and the Leopard. As presents, the Cat is a little like your own image, and the king of men will find it very graceful of you if you send the Cat and the Dog; the Cat because it looks like you and the Dog because it hunts, and men like hunting."

As the Ox had said, so it was done by the Lion. Once the messengers had departed, the king made the Ox a member of his House and the Fox took the position of the Dog.

About the messengers that the Lion sent to the men's king

The Lion instructed the Lynx and the Leopard with these words:

"The wisdom of the lord is shown by the wisdom of his messengers. They should talk well, advise well and make the right decisions. The nobility of the lord is shown in the honourable disposition of his messengers, in their way of dressing and in the well learned company they keep, and in that they do not have avarice, gluttony, lechery, haughtiness, rage, or any other vice. All these considerations are necessary to messengers of a noble prince, so that their mission is agreeable to the prince to whom the messengers are sent."

When the king had finished instructing his messengers, they left the court and travelled for a long time through many lands. After a long journey they came to a city where the king had a great parliament. At the entrance to that city there were women from brothels who, in front of the messengers, sinned with men. The messengers marvelled at what they were seeing and the Leopard said to his companion these words:

"A middle-class man had as wife a woman whom he loved very much. The man rented living quarters that he possessed near his own home, to a prostitute. The wife of that man saw all the time

how men entered the house of the prostitute and a lustful desire entered into her heart. That woman lived in sin for a long time and one day her husband found her with a man who was sinning with her. The husband was extremely upset by the sin of his wife and said to her:

‘Once it happened that in a meadow two he-goats were fighting and due to the head-on heavy blows they were bleeding. The blood fell on the grass and a vixen licked it. Then it happened that the two he-goats, in one of their charges, encountered the vixen between them and hit her so hard that she died. While dying, the vixen said that she herself had been the cause of her own death.’

“Sir Leopard,” said the Dog, “it is a great marvel how men that believe in God have no shame to allow these prostitutes to be seen in the presence of those who come and go from the city. It seems as if the lord and the inhabitants of the city are lustful and, like dogs, exercise shamelessly their sinful desires.”

As the Dog was talking they arrived at the hostel. Afterwards the Leopard and the Lynx went to see the king and take to him the presents they were bringing. The messengers stayed in the city for many days before being allowed to talk with the king, because that king had the habit of not making himself available until late, and to show nobility he wasn't visible frequently.



One day it happened that the messengers had been all the day at the door of the king without having had the chance to speak with him. They were very upset with the king and tired of being in his court. A man, who was also very tired of waiting

to see the king, said in the presence of the messengers:

“God, who is the king of Heaven and Earth, is humble because any time a man wants to talk with Him he can do so and explain his needs. God doesn’t have doorkeepers to whom one has to pay, or councillors who, for money, deceive people; nor does He believe in someone because of his flattery, and He doesn’t make judges, governors or solicitors haughty, mean lustful or offensive. Blessed be a good king and blessed be all of those who love him, know him, honour and serve him.”

By the words of that man the messengers knew that the king was a lustful man, and the Lynx said to the Leopard these words:

“A king wanted to give his daughter in marriage to another king and, secretly, sent a gentleman to the land of the king to find out about his personal life. The gentleman asked the people opinions about their king and everybody had only bad things to say. One day, coming from the king’s court, he found two minstrels who had received money and clothes from him. When asked about the habits of the king they said that the king was generous, was a hunter and he loved women; they praised the king in many ways. From their praise, and from the condemnation that the king received from his subjects, the gentleman knew that the king was an evil man of vile ways. The gentleman told his king

what he had heard and the king refused to give his daughter in marriage; it was against his conscience to give his daughter to a man of bad customs.”

The messengers went to the king and gave him the presents that the Lion was sending, as well as a letter from their lord in which there were written the following words:

“In a province there was a king who had many honourable barons of great power. The king, in order that his barons should fear him, and to maintain peace and justice in his lands, tried to be very friendly with the emperor. That emperor had high esteem for the king due to the pleasures that he had received from him and because of his good habits, and the king’s barons, out of fear for the emperor, didn’t dare to disobey their lord in any demand made of them. In this way they were at ease and the king had peace in his kingdom.”

When the king had heard the content of the letter from the Lion and had received the presents, he gave the Cat to a rag-and-bone man and he gave the Dog to a gentleman who was a keen hunter. It displeased the messengers very much that the Cat had been given to a man of low social position, because the Lion had sent the Cat to represent his own image.

After talking extensively with the king about the mission that had brought them there, the messengers returned to their hostel. The Dog came

to the hostel to complain of his dissatisfaction for having been given by the king to that gentleman who had in mind to hunt the small subjects of the Lion. He was unhappy to have to do such things against the one that had been his lord.

The king invited the messengers one day when he had all his court assembled. In a beautiful hall the king and queen ate in the company of many gentlemen and ladies, and the messengers were seated to eat in front of the king. While they all ate, minstrels went up and down the hall singing and playing instruments and what they sang was indecent and contrary to good education. They praised what should be condemned and condemned that which ought to be praised. And the king and all the others laughed and enjoyed what the musicians did and said. While all this was going on, a poorly dressed man⁵ with a long beard came into the chamber and said in the king's and others presence:

“Do not forget, king, queen, barons and all others great and small eating in this room, that God created the creatures that are being eaten at the king's table and all the other tables. He made them delicious to eat and had them brought from far-away lands just to be at the service of men and men at the service of God. The king and queen mustn't think that God forgets either the dishonesty

⁵ *believed to be Ramon Llull*

or the disorder that we have in the room, in which God is insulted because there is no one to reprimand what ought to be reprimanded or to praise what ought to be praised; nor is there any one to give thanks to God for the honour that he has given to the king, the queen and all the others."

After the good man had finished with his words, a wise squire knelt down in front of the king and begged to be given in the court the occupation to praise what ought to be praised and to condemn what ought to be condemned. The king didn't want to grant the petition of the squire fearing he would accuse him of those wrong things he was doing, which he enjoyed and wanted to keep on doing to the end of his life when he would perform penance for his sins.

While this was going on, an officer from the city came in and brought before the king a man who had unjustly killed a gentleman. The king ordered the man to be hanged but the man said to the king these words:

"Lord King, God's way is to pardon when asked for clemency. To you, who are in the world in God's place, I am asking for clemency and you must pardon me, since that is what God would do." And the king replied with these words: "God is just and compassionate. He is just when he pardons the man who doesn't offend willingly, and who, when

he has done wrong by accident or misfortune, repents and asks to be pardoned. But God's justice would not be compatible with compassion were He to pardon a man that had intended to sin and afterwards relied on asking for pardon. And, inasmuch as you wanted to kill the gentleman and you expected afterwards that I would pardon you, I am telling you that you are not worthy of my pardon."

Following that reasoning, the messengers thought that the king was contradicting his previous talk with the squire in which he had not been willing to grant him the position he wanted. When the king and all the others had finished eating and were leaving the chamber, the messengers commented to each other that the nobility of the court was great and had great power in its people and treasury if only men were wise and God fearing.

When the two messengers returned to the hostel they found the innkeeper weeping loudly with great grief. "Why are you crying? What's wrong?" asked the messengers.

"In the city," said the innkeeper, "the king has had a large parliament where he has assembled many peoples brought from far away lands. The expenses of the kingdom have been very great and the king has imposed high taxes. That will cost me lots of money, which I'll have to borrow from the Jews."

“Mister innkeeper,” said the messengers, “doesn’t the king have a treasury?” The innkeeper said that the king didn’t have a treasury but relied on his subjects, that when the courts met he raised money by collections and that he convoked the courts twice a year which drained the peoples’ resources because the courts, having high expenses, impoverished the land.

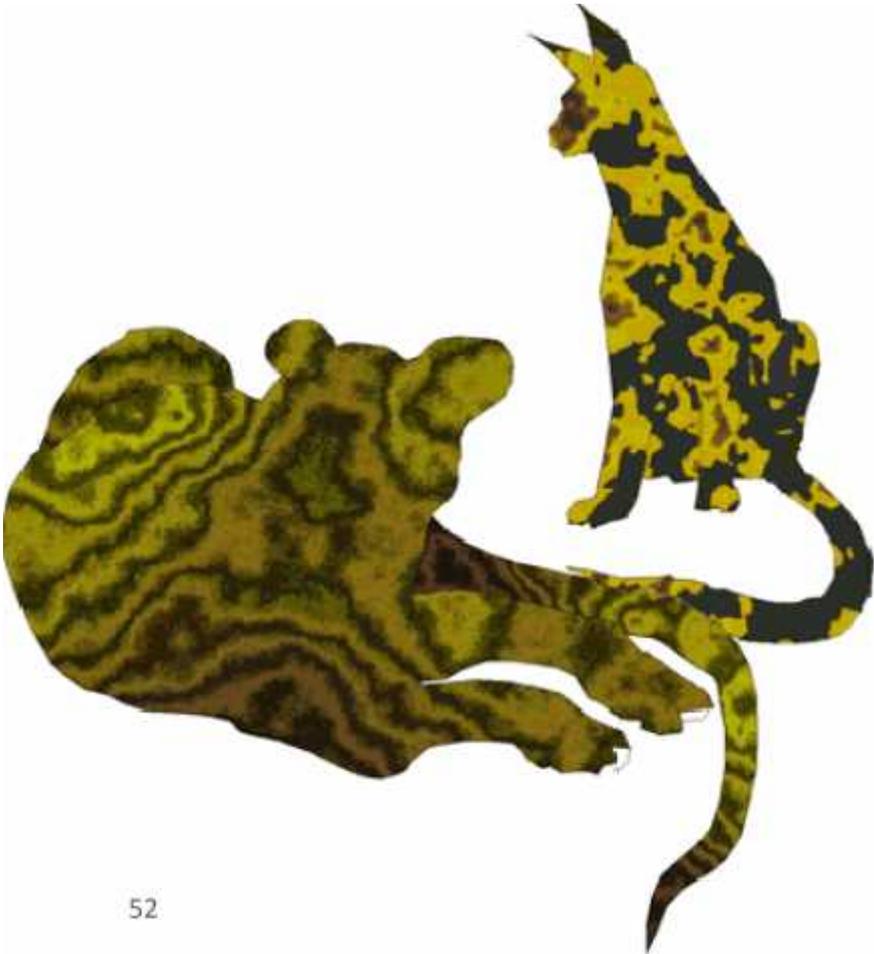
“Good friend,” said the Lynx, “What is the benefit coming from the court’s meetings?”

The innkeeper replied that there was none, in fact there was great harm, since the people became poorer and, because they suffered in their poverty, they were deceptive and treacherous and the king became furious with his subjects. The king gave and spent so much with the courts that his income from rents wasn’t enough, and he took from some to give to the others. And, since everybody thought that the king would have some news to tell or some important matters to attend to, but in fact nothing was said or done, everybody was very disappointed with the king and mocked and despised him.

Hearing this about the king, the messengers despised the king and all the men of his land, and the Leopard said these words to the innkeeper:

“Great harm is done to this land because it doesn’t have a lord of good habits who knows how to maintain justice and peace.”

“Sir,” said the innkeeper, “it’s impossible to measure the harm that comes from a bad prince; firstly from the wrong he does, and also from the good he could do but fails to do. So, because of the wicked prince we suffer in the two ways you have



heard. This king, to whom you have been sent, is a man that relies too much on his council, which is a bad council with wicked and evil men. Each member of the council believes he is a better king than the king himself and between all of them they plunder his kingdom. The king is hopeless; his only concerns are to hunt, play sports, fornicate and indulge in his vanities.”

After the king had finished his afternoon nap, the messengers went to the palace but couldn't enter to talk with the king until they had bribed the doorkeeper. Once in his presence the king gave preference to the Leopard and made him sit nearer to him than the Lynx because he thought the Leopard was better looking. The Lynx was envious of this preference and was angry because he believed that the king should give him as much, or more, honour.

While the king was with the messengers, four cities sent eight leaders to the king to complain about the public officers in their cities, who were bad men and sinners and were destroying their land. The eight leaders demanded that the king have good officers. The king sent them to his council with promises that they would satisfy their demands, but when the eight men faced the council and explained their complaints the councillors reprimanded them. This was because the public officers of the four cities had friends in the council, who advised and protected them and received part

of the money that they obtained wrongly. Those eight leaders left without getting any satisfaction from the king.

“What is your message to our king,” said the Leopard to the king. The king said to give him his regards, and to ask him to send him a beautiful bear and a wolf, because he had a very strong wild-boar and wanted to make him fight with the strongest bear he could find; and he had a bulldog which he would like to fight the most ferocious wolf that they had in the court of the Lion.

The two messengers took leave from the king, disgruntled; he had kept them for a long time and had not given them anything or sent anything for their lord the Lion: in fact they felt he wanted to take control of him.

On the road returning home the messengers met the eight leaders who were going back to their cities, very annoyed and unhappy with the king and all his council. While traveling together they spoke about what the king had said and about his council and his behaviour, and each had bad things to say. The Leopard put this question to the leaders:

“Sirs, do you think the king is guilty of the harm that follows his malevolent ruling?” One of the eight leaders answered with these words:

“In a city there was a noble and very rich merchant. When he died he left all he had to his son. That son was very much in demand: some

wanted him to take a wife, others to enter a religious order. The youth wanted to sell everything he had and make a hospital and a bridge: the hospital to take the pilgrims that came through that city arriving from abroad; the bridge to help the pilgrims cross the river without drowning, because that river was at the entrance to the city and many pilgrims going and coming from Jerusalem had drowned in it. One night, when the hospital and the bridge were finished, he dreamt that with all the good that would come from the hospital and the bridge, he would receive merit in front of God."

After listening to those words, the Leopard understood that the king would suffer in hell a punishment as great as the harm that would come out of the bad habits that his wicked council introduced into his land, and said that the punishment kept for them was incalculable. He said to himself that he preferred to be an irrational animal, albeit with no life after death, than to be the king of men with so much guilt.

The messengers and the leaders parted courteously from each other. The Leopard asked the leaders to have faith in God; to trust that in a short time He will give them a good lord with good council and good public officers, and not to despair since God will not allow a bad prince to live very long, so that he might not do as much harm as he would if he were to live longer.

Soon after the Lion had sent his messengers and presents to the king of men, the Fox, who was now the gate keeper of the king, said to the king that the Leopard had the most beautiful beast in the world as his wife. The Fox praised her so much that the king fell in love for her and took her as wife despite the queen and the council. The council then became fearful of the Fox when they saw that she had managed to make the king do such a wicked thing to his wife and to the Leopard, his loyal servant.

“Good friend,” said the Ox to the Fox, “I fear that the Leopard may kill you when he learns how you have influenced the Lion to force his wife.” The Fox said these words to the Ox:

“Once upon a time a maidservant was deceiving her queen by having a close friendship with the king. This made the queen jealous of her and the king but she was afraid to take revenge on her.”

After the messengers had arrived and related their errands, the Leopard went to his residence, where he was expecting to find his wife whom he so much loved. The Mustela⁶ and all the others of his household were sad when they saw their master and recounted to the Leopard the dishonour that the king had inflicted on him by taking his wife by force. The Leopard was enraged with the king and

⁶ *weasel*

asked the Mustela if his wife was angry or rather pleased when the king took her for his service.

“My lord,” said the Mustela, “the she-Leopard was extremely angry and cried for a long time, and moaned over leaving you because she loves you more than anything else.”

The rage of the Leopard grew with that information because, had she gone willingly with the king, he wouldn't have been so upset. At this point, the Leopard thought about the best way to take revenge on the king who had been so treacherous to him.

About the battle between the Leopard and the Lynx

The Leopard went to the king's court and the Fox, who saw him come, said secretly to the king the following:

“My lord, because of your union with the she-Leopard, I have incurred the rage of the Leopard. Unless you, in front of him, do not give me honour and let me be nearer to you than any other, I believe that he will kill me.”

From that moment the king made the Fox a member of his council and kept her close by him against the possible intentions of the Leopard to harm or kill her. And following the advice of the

Fox, he made the Peacock, who has a good hearing, the gate keeper.

The honours that the king gave to the Fox displeased all the council and the barons present there at the time, but most of all it displeased the Leopard, who had been informed that the Fox had been the instigator of the union of his wife and the king.

The Leopard went before the king. In the presence of the many honourable barons, the Leopard accused the king of treason saying that the king had taken his wife with deception, and that if there was in the court any baron that wanted to defend the king, the Leopard would fight with him and make him confess that the king was a traitor. And then the Leopard announced the place and time for the battle and gave his pledge to the king.

After the Leopard had challenged the king for treason in front of his people, the king became very angry and felt ashamed for being called a traitor. The king asked his barons: "Who among you wants to accept the challenge of the Leopard, who is accusing me of treason?"

All the barons remained silent and the Fox said: "Treason is a very unpleasant thing to God and it is a grave dishonour for the people when their lord is accused of treason. In the same way that the Leopard dishonours his lord - and as consequence puts himself in peril of death - it will give honour to

any baron who defends the king of the charge of treason and goes into battle to save his honour, and he will receive a great recompense.

Because of the great affront to the king and because the Lynx hated the Leopard from the time when the Men's king had given the Leopard preference and honour over him, the Lynx accepted the battle and defended the king of treason. But he had a bad conscience, knowing that the king had used villainy and deception against the Leopard, who had been a loyal servant all his life.

At the scene of the battle between the Leopard and



the Lynx, all the people present were saying "Now we will see which wins; whether truthfulness or falsehood." Then the Cock asked the Serpent whom she thought would win the battle, and the Serpent said these words:

"The battle was arranged so that the truth confuses and destroys the false. God is truth and so, any person who supports falsehood is in battle against God and truth."

These words that the Serpent said secretly to the Cock were heard by the Leopard and the Lynx and greatly consoled the Leopard and saddened the conscientious Lynx, who feared that the sins of the king could dishonour him and be the cause of his death.

All the day and up to the hour of compline⁷ the battle of the Leopard and the Lynx went on. The Lynx defended himself with considerable strength against the Leopard whom he would have beaten and killed, but his conscience oppressed him, while to the Leopard, the truth and the rage he felt for the king gave him strength and courage when he felt he was weakening. So strong was the hope that the Leopard had set on his own good rights that it seemed to him that nothing could conquer him. And at the end he did beat the Lynx, to whom he said in front of all the court that the king, his lord, was false and a traitor. The king was very

⁷ Night prayers

confused and shamed by that battle; the Leopard killed the Lynx and all the people were ashamed because of the dishonour of their king.

So great was the confusion of the king before his people, and so much was his fury against the Leopard, who had brought him so much dishonour, that the king, in front of everybody, couldn't restrain himself from killing the Leopard, who in turn couldn't defend himself from the Lion because he was tired. All those present were upset by this disgraceful act of the king and wished to be under



the lordship of some other king, because the subjection of a people to an injurious, irascible and treacherous king is very perilous.

All that night the king remained angry and disgusted. The next morning he called for a meeting of his council and asked for advice concerning what the men's king had requested, that is: to send him a bear and a wolf.

"My Lord," said the serpent, who was the wisest councillor the king had, "in your lands there are many bears and many wolves. From these you can choose to your taste, a bear and a wolf to be sent on your behalf."

The Fox, for his part, said that the king of men was the most noble and the most powerful king in the world: "And because of this, it is necessary that you send to him the wisest and strongest bear and wolf that you have; otherwise it could mean disgrace and danger for yourself."

The king asked the Fox which were the best bear and wolf of his kingdom and the Fox answered that, since the Bear and the Wolf were in his council, it seemed that they were the wisest and strongest in his kingdom. It seemed proper to the king to send the Bear and the Wolf of his council and neither of them made excuses, considering their honour and fearing that to excuse themselves would imply cowardice.

The Fox said, furthermore, that just as he was sending the most noble members of his land, he should be sending with them the wisest messengers. This met with the approval of the king who said that the Serpent be named for the mission. Before departing from the king's court, the Serpent said these words:



“Once upon a time it so happened that a Fox found in a beautiful valley the entrails of a beast inside of which there was a fish hook that a fisherman had placed to catch the Fox, were he to eat it. The Fox, seeing the entrails, didn’t touch them and said, ‘These entrails have not been left in this valley without intention of harm and danger.’”

The Lion, because he was in a state of sin for killing the Leopard, didn’t have as much artful deceit or ingenuity as he had had before, and failing to understand the significance of the serpent’s words he asked the Serpent for a clarification of her meaning. The Serpent said that from the time that the Ox and the Fox had been in his court, the courts had not been without trouble and tribulations, and for this reason the honours that the king had given to the Ox and the Fox had not been without causing trouble.

When the Ox heard that the Serpent had accused him before the king, he defended himself saying that he wasn’t guilty of anything and shouldn’t be suspected of wanting to do anything bad against the king or his court since the king was honouring him by not wanting to eat him although he was a good eating beast. And because of this he had to protect and save the king’s honour. Then the Ox confessed to the king all his past doings and explained how the Fox had advised him to bellow three times during the day and three times during the night, and to come to the court to negotiate

with the king. In such a way did the Ox excuse himself to the king, that the Fox raged and conceived in her heart bad things against the Ox.

One day it so happened that it snowed heavily and was very cold. The Lion and those of his court had nothing to eat and were very hungry. The Lion asked the Fox what could they eat and the Fox replied that she didn't know, but that she would go to see the Peacock and would ask if he knew of any animal near that place which could be eaten by the king and his company.

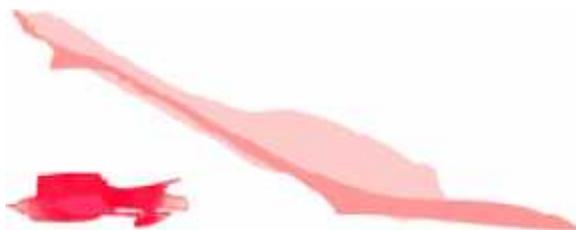
The Peacock saw the Fox coming and was frightened because he dreaded her. The Fox said that if the king were to ask him if he had heard of any beast good for eating, to tell him that he didn't, but that the Ox' breath stinks, which means that he is going to die in a short while of sickness. The Peacock, being afraid of the Fox - and because the Ox eats wheat as does the Peacock – supported the death of the Ox and told the Lion what the Fox had told him to say.

When the Lion asked the Peacock what he could eat, and the Peacock told him that he didn't know but that the Ox would die soon because his breath was stinking, the Lion wanted to eat the Ox. However his conscience was telling him not to, considering that the Ox had promised loyalty to him, had served him for a long time and was trustful. The Fox, seeing that the king was in

doubt, approached the king and asked him why didn't he eat the Ox, considering that he was going to die of sickness according to the Peacock, and furthermore because it is God's wish that the king satisfies his needs on those subjected to him whenever possible,

The Lion replied to the Fox nothing would compel him to break the faith that he had sworn to the Ox.

"My Lord," said the Fox, "will you eat the Ox if I



make him tell you to eat him and if he declares that you are freed from the faith that you have promised him?" The Lion said yes, he would. Then the Fox went to a very hungry Raven and said:

"The Lion is hungry and I will try to have him kill the Ox, who is very fat and, being so big, will suffice for all. If the Lion should say to you that he is hungry, you should offer yourself to him and tell him to eat you: he will not eat you because I will excuse you from it and he shall not refuse my advice; he does whatever I advise him to do. And if I offer myself to the king to be eaten, you must say that I am not good to be eaten, that my flesh is unhealthy."

Once the Fox had instructed the Raven in this way, she went to the Ox and said that the king wanted to eat him since the Peacock had informed him that he knew the Ox would die presently because of bad odour of his breath. The Ox was frightened and said that it was true what the peasant had said to the gentleman. "And what was that?" asked the Fox. And the Ox told her:

"A rich peasant wanted to have honours and gave his daughter in marriage to a gentleman who longed for the wealth of the peasant. The honours attracted the riches but the riches had not enough power to bring honours to the peasant. That is, the honours of the gentleman attracted the wealth of the peasant in such a way that the peasant was

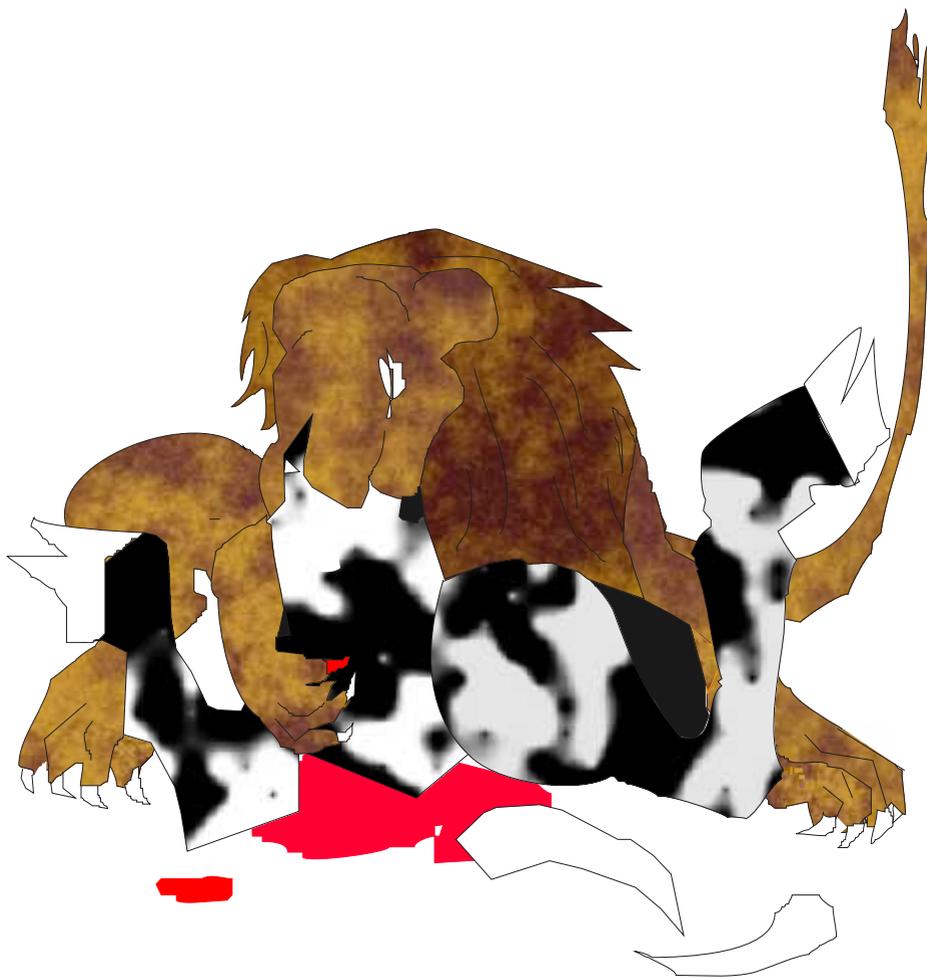
impoverished without honours, while the gentleman became rich and kept his honour. Then the peasant said to the gentleman that in the relations between a peasant and a gentleman, poverty and work apply to the peasant, and honour to the gentleman. "So," said the Ox, "in the relations between ox and lion there is death for the ox and satisfaction for the lion."

The Fox said to the Ox that the Lion had promised fidelity to him and that he would not betray his promise, and advised the Ox to offer himself to the Lion to be eaten if he needed to, and then the Lion would be very grateful and, because of this, and because he is in debt to him, he wouldn't do any harm to him. "And furthermore, I shall help you in such a way that the Lion will not do any evil thing or wrong to you."

Once the Fox had organized all these things, she went to the Lion with the Ox and the Raven. The Raven presented himself to the Lion and told him that he knew the Lion was hungry, and told the Lion to eat him. The Fox excused the Raven saying that his flesh wasn't desirable as food for a king. After these words the Fox asked the king to eat her instead because she didn't have anything else to give. The Raven, however, said to the Lion that the flesh of the Fox was unhealthy to eat.

Then the Ox, with similar words, offered himself to the Lion and told the Lion to eat him because he

was big and fat and had good flesh to eat. At that point the Lion killed the Ox and all of them - the king, the Fox and the Raven - ate of the Ox as much as they wanted.



When the Ox had been killed, the Lion asked the Cock and the Fox who would be his chamberlain. The Cock wanted to talk first, but the Fox gave him a look of rage which silenced him. The Fox said to the king that the Rabbit had a pleasant appearance, was a humble beast and would do well in what used to be the Cat's, and then the Ox's, position. The Lion asked the Cock if he thought it a good idea what the Fox was saying, but the Cock didn't dare to contradict the advice of the Fox, since he feared her greatly and he advised the king to do as the Fox had advised. The Lion made the Rabbit chamberlain and the Fox gained great power in the court, being so feared by the Cock, the Peacock and the Rabbit, and the Lion believed everything that the Fox had to say.

One day it so happened that the king had to consider an important matter concerning his kingdom and took advice from the Cock and the Fox. The Cock said to the king that he wasn't sufficiently informed to advise the king on matters so important without the other companions, and advised the king to enlarge the council; it didn't do honour to the king to reduce his council, which had happened since the Serpent, the Leopard, the Lynx and the Wolf had been lost.

The king thought it good to get more councillors and he would have appointed them had not the Fox said these words:

“In a land it so happened that a man had been gifted by God with so much knowledge that he understood everything that beasts and birds said. The gift had been given to that man by God with the condition that he never reveal to any person anything that he heard or understood from the beasts and birds, and that if he revealed it, he would die that same day. That man had an orchard in which an ox pulled a noria⁸ to supply water and a donkey carried manure to where the soil was being dressed.

One evening the ox was tired and the donkey advised him not to eat barley that evening, so that the following day the man wouldn't make him pull the noria and he could rest. The ox followed the advice of the donkey and that evening he didn't eat his barley. The gardener thought that the ox was ill and put the donkey to work the noria. All that day the donkey pulled the noria with great fatigue. When the night arrived he went to the stable where the ox was relaxed, resting.

The donkey complained to the ox, and said, “The master intends to sell you to a butcher because he thinks you are ill, so, before he kills you I think you better go back to your work and don't make it look as if you were ill.” The donkey said these words to the ox so that the man wouldn't make him turn the

⁸ *Noria: a vertical water wheel which is slung with a chain of buckets and driven by a horizontal wheel turned by an animal.*

waterwheel, which was much harder work than carrying manure. The ox was afraid to die and that night ate the barley and put on a healthy appearance.

The man who was the master of the ox and the donkey understood what they had just said and laughed about it in front of his wife. The woman wanted to know of what he was laughing but he didn't want to tell her, because he was afraid of dying if he were to reveal that he understood the beasts and birds. The woman implored her husband to tell her of what he had been laughing but he didn't want to tell her. The woman said that she would not eat or drink and let herself die if her husband didn't tell her about it. All that day and night the wicked woman fasted; refusing to eat or drink. The husband, who liked her very much, said that he would tell her, and he made his final will. After the testament he wanted to tell her what he had laughed about, but he heard what the dog said to the cock and what the cock replied."

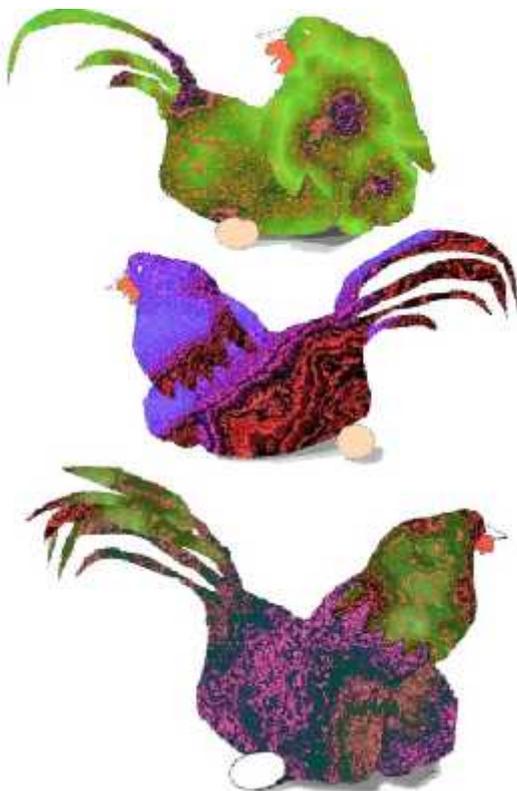
"And what happened?" said the Lion to the Fox.

The Fox continued with the story and said that, while the man made his final will, the cock sang. The dog reprimanded the singing and explained to the cock how his master had to die and wanted to die so that his wife could live. The cock answered that it was proper for the man to die because he was foolish: He didn't know how to be the master

of a woman. Then the cock called his ten hens and made them assemble in one place and did with them anything he wanted. This was done by the cock to show the dog that he had to console himself for the death of his master.

Both were consoled for the death of their master, and the cock sang and the dog was pleased.

'Companion', said the dog to the cock, 'let's say that if you have a wife as mad as my master's; what would you do to her were she about to bring you death as has happened to my master?' Then the cock said that if he were in the place of his master, he would cut five branches from a pomegranate tree that grew there in the orchard, and that he would knock her about with them until the branches were broken, and he would force her to eat and drink or leave her to die of hunger.

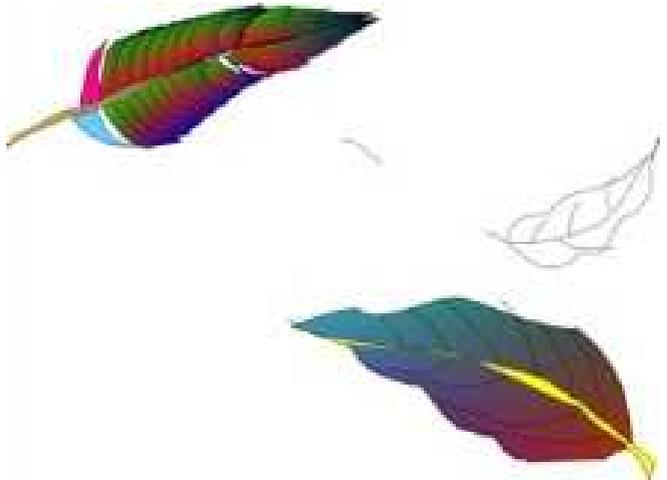


The man, who understood the words that the dog and the cock had said, got up from bed and did what the cock had advised. And his wife, when she was well beaten, ate and drank and did whatsoever her husband wanted."

When the Fox had finished the story explained above, she said that the Cock was so wise that he would know how to advise on anything, and for this reason there was no need for the king to enlarge his council; "And, furthermore, with a multitude of councillors there is too much diversity of intentions and opinions and wills, which might disturb the process of the council."

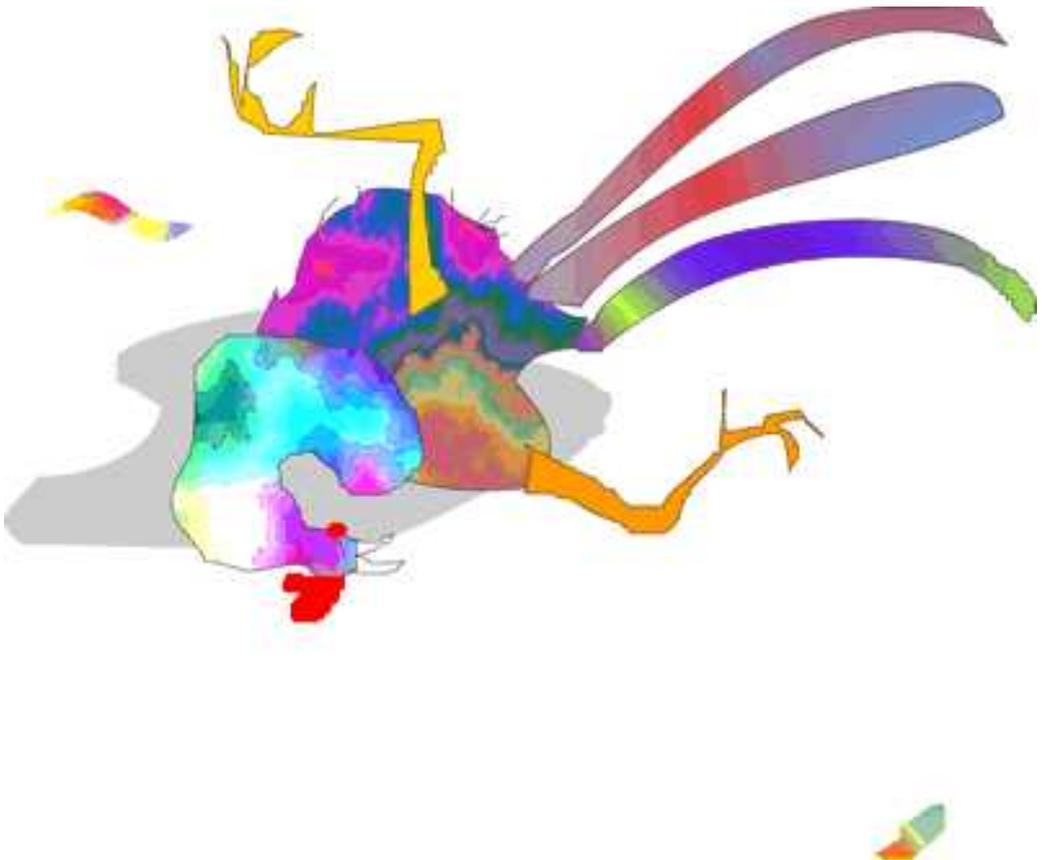
When the Fox had spoken, the Cock said as follows: "A parrot was in a tree with a raven and, under the tree there was an ape that had

placed firewood over a glow-worm thinking that it was a fire, and he blew on the wood with the intention of lighting a fire to warm himself. The parrot yelled to the ape saying that that wasn't fire



but a glow-worm. The raven advised the parrot not to try to correct nor teach someone who doesn't accept advice or correction.

Many times the parrot said to the ape that it was a glow-worm and not a fire as he thought it was, and the raven reprimanded the parrot each time for trying to straighten what by nature was twisted. The parrot came down from the tree and approached the ape with the intention of making him understand better why he was criticizing him, and so close did he come to the ape that the ape grabbed him and killed him."



When the Cock had finished his example, the king believed that it was addressed to him and made a rough gesture as sign of displeasure. Then the Fox caught the Cock, killed and ate him in front of the king.

Now that the Fox was the only councillor of the king, and the Rabbit was the chamberlain and the Peacock the doorkeeper, the Fox felt a great happiness. She could do anything she wanted with the king. While the Fox was in this happy state, she remembered the treason that she had conceived against the king when she had said to the Elephant that she would try to make the Lion die and have the Elephant as king. The Fox would have been very satisfied leaving things as they were, but feared that the Elephant might uncover her plot. For this reason the Fox wanted to procure the death of the king in order to achieve what she had promised to the Elephant.

About the Death of the Fox

The Fox continued to plot the death of the king but forgot that the king had given her more honours than to any other of the barons of his court. One day the Fox said to the Elephant that it was a good time for the king to die, especially since everything was so well prepared that in his court there was no other councillor than herself.

The Elephant thought about what the Fox was saying for a long time. In his conscience he disapproved of the death of the king, but he feared to be disobedient to the Fox because the Fox could expose him and plan his death. Finally the Elephant decided not to consent to the Fox' plan, because he felt conscientious about the death of the king. Even though he feared that the Fox might betray him as she was betraying the king, the Elephant preferred to be in peril of death than to betray his natural master. While the Elephant was thinking about this, he thought that in the same way that the Fox wanted to kill the king with cunning, so he could with cunning make the king kill the Fox.

“Because, if in the Fox's heart there is possibility of treason, ingenuity and cunning”, thought the Elephant, “in my heart, being so big, there must be room for loyalty, wisdom and cunning.”

“Mister Elephant”, said the Fox,
“What are you thinking about? Why
don’t you try to be king before the
serpent, who is so wise and astute,
returns from her mission?” The
Elephant, then, decided to wait for
the Serpent before plotting
anything against the Fox, and
together with the Serpent arrange
that the king should kill the Fox.

When the Fox saw that the
Elephant was not responsive, she
feared that the Elephant might
expose her to the Serpent on her
arrival, and so she told the Elephant
to hurry up, otherwise she would
organize the plot in such a way that
he couldn’t imagine.

The Elephant was really scared of the cunning of
the Fox and wanted to know under what kind of
conditions she would want to serve with him as
king. The Fox said that she would serve with him
under the same conditions that she was at present
with the king, that is, to be the only councillor and
that the Rabbit be the chamberlain and the
Peacock his doorkeeper.

After the Fox had told the Elephant her conditions,
he asked the Fox in what sort of way the king
should die, and the Fox explained to the Elephant



the manner in which she had thought he could die, in these words:

“Between the Wild-boar and the king there is bad will because the Wild-boar thinks himself as equal to the king in strength and character⁹. I shall tell the Wild-boar to be on guard against the king because he wants to kill him. Then I will tell the king to guard himself against the Wild-boar who wishes to become king, and I’ll try to get the king to kill the Wild-boar. Once the Wild-boar is dead and the king is tired from the fight that he will have had with the Wild-boar, then, you, mister Elephant”, said the Fox, “will easily be able to kill the king and become king yourself.”

The Elephant thought of deceiving the Fox in the same way and said to her these words: “Any promise is vain without a witness and for this reason it seems to me,” said the Elephant, “that you, Fox, must have a witness to the promise that you want me to make to you, that is: that you will be my only councillor and that the Rabbit be my chamberlain and the Pea-cock my doorkeeper; because without witnesses, were I to deny my promise, you wouldn’t be able to prove it and I, being the king, wouldn’t feel as obliged to honour it as now when I am not a king and you are the king’s councillor”.

⁹ *“person” in the original*

The Fox considered for a while what the Elephant was saying and she feared that the witnesses could uncover her treason. When the Elephant saw that the Fox was so worried he said that the best witnesses that she could have would be the Rabbit and the Pea-cock, who were afraid of her and who would like to be her officers; and there was no need to worry that they would reveal any of her secrets.

The Fox accepted the advice of the Elephant and, in the presence of the Rabbit and the Pea-cock the promise to the Fox was reaffirmed; and the Rabbit and the Pea-cock promised secrecy. After these words the Elephant advised the Fox first of all to tell the Wild-boar that the king wanted to kill him, and then to tell the same thing to the king. The Fox went first to talk with the Wild-boar and, meanwhile, the Elephant went to talk with the king, to whom he told everything he had agreed with the Fox; he asked the Lion for forgiveness for having conceived treason against him and said that he had repented and preferred to be a loyal subject than a traitor.

"Elephant," said the Lion, "How could I be sure that what you are telling me is true?"

And the Elephant said that he could see what the Fox had done: that in his council there was no other animal but she, and that the Rabbit and the

Peacock feared her because of the difference in their natures.

“And furthermore, Sir, I’ll give you another proof; the Fox went to the Wild-boar and told him that you wanted to kill him and she will tell you the same; that the Wild-boar wants to kill you and will advise you to have a proud appearance to the Wild-boar so that he knows for sure what the Fox has told him.”

After these words, the Elephant told the king that the Rabbit and the Pea-cock had consented to his death. The king was really amazed that the Fox, to whom he had given so much honour, could conceive for him so much deception and wickedness; and said these words:

“I heard my father say and recount that my grandfather, who was king of a great country, wanted to demean the barons who merited honours, and wanted to praise the evil beasts who don’t merit any, amongst which there was an ape whom he praised greatly. That ape, because he resembled men, wanted to be king himself and other than honouring my grandfather he conceived treason against him.”

“My Lord”, said the Elephant, “in a small glass you can’t have a lot of water, neither can you have great loyalty and honour in a villainous person; and for this reason it is proper that you kill the Fox, so that you may have good advice and be free in your

rule and not submit to a wicked being¹⁰ the nobility that God gave you because of lineage and occupation.”

After these words, the Elephant went to see the Wild-boar, to whom the Fox had already spoken, and said that he knew what the Fox had told him; so the Elephant told the Wild-boar what the Fox had told him. The Wild-boar was surprised to see that the Elephant knew about it, and the Elephant explained to him what had happened.

While the Elephant was talking with the Wild-boar, the Fox went to the Lion and told him that the Wild-boar wanted to kill him, and then the Lion realized that the Fox wanted to betray him. The king assembled in front of him many barons; there were the Elephant, the Wild-boar, the Fox, the Rabbit and the Pea-cock. In front of everybody, the Lion asked the Rabbit and the Pea-cock to tell him the truth about the testimony that they had promised to give to the Fox after his death. The terror of the Rabbit and the Pea-cock was great, but greater was that of the Fox, who said to the king these words:

“My Lord the king, I said this to the Elephant, as well as to the Wild-boar, to test the loyalty of your barons. To the Rabbit and to the Pea-cock, I assure you, I never told them of what the Elephant is saying against me.”

¹⁰ *“person” in the original*

The Fox assumed that the Rabbit and the Pea-cock, who feared her so much, wouldn't dare to accuse her in front of the king; or to expose her in anything.

After the Fox had spoken, the king gave the Rabbit and the Pea-cock a terrible look and made a very loud roar so that the nature of his high lineage made more impact on the consciences of the



Rabbit and the Pea-cock than the natural fear they had of the Fox. When the Lion had made the great roar, he angrily ordered the Rabbit and the Pea-cock to tell him the truth, and they had to tell him.

Then the king in person killed the Fox.

After the death of the Fox, the king's court returned to the normal state. The king made the Elephant and the Wild-boar - as well as other honourable barons - members of his council, and expelled from it the Rabbit and the Pea-cock.

Here ends the 'Book of the Beasts', that Felix took to a king so that he could see how, by looking at the animals, he could reign; and how he has to guard himself against wicked advice and against dishonest men.

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