

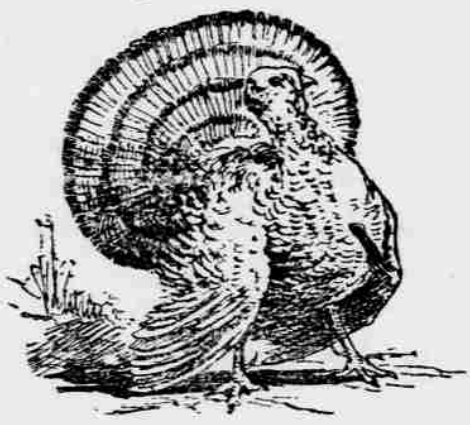
THE MIKADO'S FATE.

A THANKSGIVING TRAGEDY.

It was about the first of November that the big turkey, the Mikado of the farmyard, was given a house all to himself and everybody waited upon him in the most entire manner. At first he was somewhat astonished at so marked a change in his fortunes. Such extraordinary consideration as he now received at everybody's hands amazed him for a time, but he soon settled it in his mind entirely to his satisfaction.

"Ho! ho!" he said. "Ha! ha! They have just turned my worth. I have always known that I was a great genius, with a brain as big as a wash tub, and I think the other turkeys, poor insignificant things, and the chickens, sorry creatures, know it also. At least, they have all shown a wholesome respect for my power, but I must admit that I have been slow to impress the people with my importance. It has come at last, however. See how they truckle to me, how they bow, how they supply my every want almost before it is felt, and make menials of themselves to cater to my pleasure!"

This he said to himself as he walked by himself. The other citizens of the farmyard looked at him with gloating faces and the bitterness of envy in their hearts. He had always tyrannized over them, and they hated him with a hatred all the more deadly because it was concealed under the mask of respect. Now, though he had never done a humane or generous thing in his life, they beheld him housed and feasted like a king, with the same of admiration served up to him every hour. They could not understand it; they saw no justice in it, and they murmured against it.



"OH, I AM THE GREAT MIKADO."

A poor, hard working hen who had brought up her family by the strictest economy and most faithful industry, and who had been robbed of her last bite again and again by the heartless Mikado, spoke her mind about it.

"It's an outrage," she said, "an outrage on all decent fowls to see that brute of a Mikado in clover up to his comb while the rest of us scratch from morning till night merely to keep life in our bodies! Such things are rapidly creating an aristocracy of fowls. In the future when male and female are both equal before the law there will be none of this. But it's the way of the world, and always has been. The basest and least deserving got into power, because they are so coarse that they can ride right over any obstacle, having no sensibilities to wound."

Here a great swell of a cock, a monopolist of high degree, looked away and pretended not to hear; but the others listened attentively, sighed, and admitted that he was hard to rise in the world while such monsters as the Mikado had the power to oppress.

A middle-aged anarchist sputtered around at a great rate; but as he had always talked rather more than he should, he didn't give him the closest attention. A fair and honest of good figure smiled scornfully, and said that one could expect nothing but coarse vanity from a person of really low pedigree like the Mikado. For her part, come what would, she had the comforting knowledge that the blood of the Brahmins flowed in her veins. Her ancestors were Asiatic kings. Then she strutted around to show off her figure, which really was perfect.



THE MIKADO AT THE FEAST.

A young turkey, who was considered something of a crank because he wore glasses, was greatly given to philosophy and metaphysics, had gone so far as to lecture a little and was thinking of starting a newspaper, here piped up: "It is my opinion, friends, that we are to blame for our lack of success. The Mikado is merely carrying out the theories of the new school of Boston thinkers and the occultists of the east, which he has dropped on, I verily believe, through my teaching. He has a powerful will, and he has secretly and persistently demanded the good things of life and is getting them. The great force, my friends, is mind. But while we have been talking about it, he, like the pirate he is, has grabbed the idea and put it into operation."

An old and opinionated cat that had been apparently sleeping on a fence post now had a word to say. "You are very inexperienced creatures. When you have lived as long as I have (which none of you are likely to do, I am sorry to say, for reasons it would be indelicate now to mention) you will know that what appears sometimes to be great good fortune is really the greatest curse that could befall us. I will not here go into particulars, but I will entreat you not to be envious of the Mikado. This is a very dramatic world. The man who is up to-day may be down to-morrow. Envy is no virtue. Perhaps your hard lot is better a thousand times for your soul's good than the wealth of a Gould or a Vanderbilt, or even the Mikado. Ben Franklin spoke wisely when he said:

He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is humble none at all."

Just then the Mikado, whose doors had been opened by the beautiful daughter of the house to give him an hour's walk in the sunshine, came near them with lordly gait, head erect and wings scraping the earth in overwhelming pride. In spite of the cat's sermon on humility, in the face of the fact that they knew she spoke the truth, they felt shivered and men in the presence of this petted and admired creature. He walked near them, smiled scornfully, and said:

Stand out of the way, you creatures small,
Stand out of the way of my shadow;
You are all mine, and I will have you all,
You are all mine, and I will have you all."

And they stood out of his way, though here and there was one who could not refrain from shedding tears, so deep was his humiliation.

The mistress of the house, accompanied by a friend, just then appeared on the other side of the fence, and the object of their attention seemed to be the Mikado. He wasn't slow to show his appreciation of the distinction, either. He strutted and gobbled in the most pompous and self-gratulatory way.

"Isn't he magnificent?" said the visitor. "I should think he would weigh nearly twenty pounds. Oh, isn't he a treasure!"

The Mikado heard this remark and almost fainted with delight. "Ah," he thought, "I was right in always believing myself an important personage. I hear it now from the lips of those who have heretofore pretended to be my superiors."

"What do you feed him on?" asked the visitor.

"Oat meal scalded in hot milk and various little dainties. It's a joy to see him eat."

At this the Mikado felt himself bursting with pride.

"My daughter is to be married on Thanksgiving day, and he is to be the great feature of the table," said the hostess.

"Oh, my," thought the Mikado, "won't that be fine?" I am to figure at a wedding, to be the great feature of the whole proceeding, it seems. I must order something nice to wear."

The cat on the fence post also heard, but she only licked her lips and smiled knowingly.

The days went on and the Mikado only grew fatter and more domineering every hour, and the other fowls became more and more cast down.

On Thanksgiving morning his doors were opened and he was invited to come forth. This was the day on which he was to receive greater honors than ever, and he waddled out, cumbered by his excessive flesh, with more arrogance than usual. He was a little surprised when the hired man grabbed him by the legs and suddenly inverted him. It was an undignified attitude for a bird of his plumage, to say the least; but he reflected a moment and concluded that it was but fitting, after all, for a creature of his distinction to be carried, and of course this awkward fellow didn't know how to carry him gracefully or even comfortably.

He had no time to frame other thoughts, for in a moment more the hired man had assassinated him, and his head was lying on one side of the chopping block and his body on the other.

His last conscious associates ran in all directions, chilled with horror, nor were they seen again that day. He graced the feast, to be sure; he was the great feature of it, but not in the capacity he had so conceitedly anticipated. Instead of the fine suit of fashionable garments he had expected to be arrayed in, he appeared shorn of his feathers, with his skin cruelly browned and his legs cut off at the knees, a sorry and humbled Mikado, surely.

In a short time his very memory was forgotten, or recalled only with a sneer, or to be cited as an example of what conceit will bring any one to.

The day after Thanksgiving there was a little talk over his head and his bones, which were found in a ditch by his despised comrades. His fate was a lesson to them.

"After all," said one, "we might have known that such a sudden rise into affluence could bode no good. Up like a rocket and down like a stick, you know."

"Do you remember my words," said the cat, who came strolling along, bulging in body more than usual from having enjoyed extraordinary Thanksgiving blessings. "I told you to envy no one; that it was a dangerous thing to reach such eminence as the Mikado enjoyed. Poor fool, he did enjoy it while it lasted."

"Could it be," said the young turkey with the eyeglasses and taste for metaphysics, "could it be that my doctrines led him astray? Still, he was a good illustration of the truth of what I have been preaching—that if you persistently desire the best you will get it. But the best, in his case, didn't seem to be really good for him, after all, and now the question arises: 'Is it good for any of us?' I must admit that I am somewhat confused on this point, and, in spite of the Mikado's grave faults of character, I lament the tragedy in which he was the victim. For some reason, his death was the occasion of general rejoicing in the house, and I have even picked up a word here and there which goes to show that the people who were the cause of his death gave thanks over his body. They actually called the day 'Thanksgiving,' so grateful were they that he was gone. Perhaps they feared that in his excessive love of power he would rise some day, seize the reins of government, and trample them all under his feet. If so, I half excuse the murder, though I am too much of a Buddhist to sympathize with a festival which sanctions the destruction of living creatures, and the eating of them, too. In the round of existence, depend upon it, my friends, all such things are evened up. They who kill shall be killed in turn; if not in this life, in some embodiment in the far future."

The hen who was in favor of equal suffrage said that after all there were compensations in life. She still held her old views; but she had learned a lesson in patience. Her dream of political equality would be realized; but she must wait, and while she waited work as well as talk. A very aged old bird of no particular lineage cleared his throat, just then. As he was generally silent, he commanded great attention when he did speak. He said: "You are getting on to the true philosophy of life at last. Agitation doesn't accomplish half as much as people think it does. The influences which really move the world are subtle. Your talkers think they revolutionize the world; but the real power comes from higher, much higher"—and he subsided into silence.



THE TALK OVER HIS HEAD AND BONES.

The noted anarchist rooster had nothing at all to say until his views were called for. Even then he evaded it until cornered and compelled to talk. Then he straightened up and put on his old time, important manner. "It is the beginning of the end, my friends," he said. "Monsters like the Mikado die of their own greed. They are their own executioners. Had he divided his abundance with us we would all have had a layer or so of the fat which encumbered him and brought him to grief, and he might have been alive to-day. But, no—he must have the earth. Nothing was too much for him. We had to starve that he might live. All of you can testify that he lived upon the proceeds of your labor, for you scratched and he came along just as your life was ready for your mouth and snatched it from you, and you dared not say your souls were your own."

"But what of the lady with the purest blood of Asia in her veins?" asked a dapper young cock. "I haven't seen her to-day."

"Nor have I," said a dozen voices. Here the cat spoke again. "I am sorry to say that our fair friend has shared the Mikado's fate."

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"Oh, dear; what a difficult and dangerous world to live in!" said all in one voice.

The old house dog, who was fond of Shakespeare, came on the scene, sniffed contemptuously at the Mikado's bones, and said: "Alas! he lived for self, and now none are so poor as to do him reverence."

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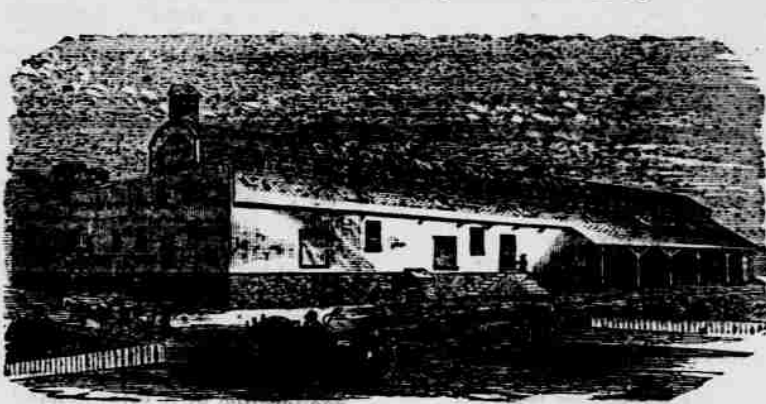
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