

**Chapter 1 : Folk-lore of Shakespeare: Chapter VII. Animals**

*(LARGE PRINT EDITION) The author has compiled facts and figures from various sources relating to medieval natural history concerning animal life. Her purpose is to impart knowledge of the state of natural science during the period in which the great dramatist lived through the writings of.*

But fondness for animals of any kind seems to have been entirely wanting among the Jews. In every early history, except the Bible, we meet with some allusion to a favourite horse, or dog, or tame gazelle. No wonder Jessica, freed from the trammels of her Jewish home, could give a turquoise ring for a monkey 1 Another explanation as to the singular scarcity of allusions to animal life in the Bible may be suggested. The Jews appear to have been quite indifferent to the beauties of nature. The only traces of admiration of the external world are found in the writings of Job and Solomon. Job was not of Hebrew birth, and Solomon had by his large knowledge gained a wider sympathy with nature than his compatriots. It is almost incredible that a nation should wander for forty years through lands rich enough to furnish pasture for vast flocks and herds, materials for clothing, ornament, and manufactures, and that the chronicle of their Exodus should be absolutely deficient in a single reference to the rich animal life around them. Many species of birds and animals are indeed mentioned, but only to be avoided as unclean. From the list of creatures that might not be used as food, we gather the only information from a Jewish source respecting the fauna of Arabia or Palestine. A similar disregard of natural beauty exists in the Mohammedan scriptures. The poetry of nature animates every other mythology. Love of beauty led the Greeks to personify the waterfall and the rainbow, to find dryads in trees, nereids in running brooks, altars in stones, and gods in everything. Anderson, in his Origin of Commerce, traces the introduction of whalebone into England to an accident. Some English ships were sent, in 1791, to Cape Breton on a whaling expedition. At the entrance of the Bay of Saint Lawrence the sailors found no whales, but came to a store of whale fins which had been left on an island by some Biscay ship, that was afterwards wrecked. These fins, as explained by Edge, are the horny laminae adhering to the upper jaw of the whale, and are a substitute for teeth. They are only found in perfection in the Greenland whale and a few other varieties. The spermaceti and white whales possess teeth and no fins. The ivory of the Middle Ages was supplied chiefly by the walrus, whose teeth were brought over in considerable quantities by the Northern fishermen. In Christian art it symbolized deliberate cunning or fanciful illusion. The word chimerical in modern usage signifies an idle dream, a castle in the air, a project that can have no existence but in the imagination.

Chapter 2 : animal lore | eBay

*Excerpt. In consequence of the charming indifference displayed by older writers on natural history to the necessity for any system of animate nature, I have followed the modern classification of the animal kingdom, although I have purposely avoided introducing scientific nomenclature.*

It is further alluded to by Shakespeare in "Twelfth Night" i. The old seal of the mayor of Grimsby represents a boar hunt. The lord, too, of the adjacent manor of Bradley, was obliged by his tenure to keep a supply of these animals in his wood, for the entertainment of the mayor and burgesses. In "Antony and Cleopatra" iv. Indeed, among the Egyptians this favoured animal was held sacred to Isis or the moon, and worshipped with great ceremony. In the mythology of all the Indo European nations, the cat holds a prominent place; and its connection with witches is well known. Thus in another passage of the same play i. Numerous stories are on record of witches having disguised themselves as cats, in order to carry out their fiendish designs. A woodman out working in the forest has his dinner every day stolen by a cat. Exasperated at the continued repetition of the theft, he lies in wait for the aggressor, and succeeds in cutting off her paw, when lo! On applying to a certain wise man of Stokesley, he was informed that they were bewitched by an old woman who lived near. The owner of the pigs calling to mind that he had often seen a cat prowling about his yard, decided that this was the old woman in disguise. He watched for her, and, as soon as she made her appearance, flung at her a poker with all his might. The cat disappeared, and curiously enough the poor old woman in question, that night fell and broke her leg. This was considered as conclusive, that she was the witch that had simulated the form of a cat. This notion is very prevalent on the Continent. Witches are adepts in the art of brewing, and therefore fond of tasting what their neighbours brew. On these occasions they always masquerade as cats, and what they steal they consume on the spot. There was a countryman whose beer was all drunk up by night whenever he brewed, so that at last he resolved for once to sit up all night and watch. As he was standing by his brewing pan, a number of cats made their appearance, and calling to them, he said; "Come, puss, puss, come, warm you a bit. After a time, he asked them "if the water was hot. They all vanished at once, but on the following day his wife had a terribly scalded face, and then he knew who it was that had always drunk his beer. This story is widely prevalent, and is current among the Flemish-speaking natives of Belgium. A neighbour begged to have one of them, and obtained it. To accustom it to the place, he shut it up in the loft. At night, the cat, popping its head through the window, said, "What shall I bring to-night? The cat then set to work, and cast all it caught on the floor. Next morning the place was so full of dead mice that it was hardly possible to open p. The cat was now busily employed in shooting down rye, so that in the morning the door could not be opened. The man then discovered that the cat was a witch, and carried it back to his neighbour. On the following day they were found bleeding in their beds. Four or five men were attacked in a lone place by a number of these beasts. The men stood their ground, and succeeded in slaying one cat, and wounding many others. Next day a number of wounded women were found in the town, and they gave the judge an accurate account of all the circumstances connected with their wounding. From their supposed connection with witchcraft, cats were formerly often tormented by the ignorant vulgar. In some counties, too, they were enclosed, with a quantity of soot, in wooden bottles suspended on a line, and he who could beat out the bottom of the bottle as he ran under it, and yet escape its contents, was the hero of the sport. He saysâ€”"This is a sport which was common in the last century at Kelso on the Tweed. A large concourse of men, women, and children assembled in a field about half a mile from the town, and a cat having been put into a barrel stuffed full of soot, was suspended on a crossbeam between two high poles. A certain number of the whippers, or husbandmen, who took part in this savage and unmanly amusement, then kept striking, as they rode to and fro on horseback, the barrel in which the unfortunate animal was confined, until at last, under the heavy blows of their clubs and mallets, it broke, and allowed the cat to drop. The victim was then seized and tortured to death. It is improperly applied to a female by Beaumont and Fletcher in the "Scornful Lady" v. He has assigned, among other grounds for this vulgar opinion, its power of abstinence and its faculty of self-inflation. It lives on insects, which it catches by its long gluey tongue, and crushes between its jaws. It has been ascertained by

careful experiment that the chameleon can live without eating for four months. It can inflate not only its lungs but its whole body, including even the feet and tail. In allusion to this supposed characteristic, Shakespeare makes Hamlet say iii. I eat the air, promise-crammed; you cannot feed capons so;" and in the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" ii. This, however, depends on the volition of the animal, or the state of its feelings, on its good or bad health, and is subordinate to climate, age, and sex. It was absurdly said to proceed from the eggs of old cocks. He saysâ€œ"â€œThis of ours is generally described with legs, wings, a serpentine and winding tail, and a crest or comb somewhat like a cock. But the basilisk of elder times was a proper kind of serpent, not above three palms long, as some account; and different from other serpents by advancing his head and some white marks, or coronary spots upon the crown, as all authentic writers have delivered. Thus, it was supposed to have so deadly an eye as to kill by its very look, to which Shakespeare very often alludes. In "Romeo and Juliet" iii. In the following passage in "Henry V. Out of my sight! She cloaths destruction in a formal kiss, And lodges death in her deceitful smiles. Thus, in "King John" ii. Shooting with the cross-bow at deer was an amusement of great ladies. Buildings with flat roofs, called stands, partly concealed by bushes, were erected in the parks for the purpose. Then forester, my friend, where is the bush That we must stand and play the murderer in? Hereby, upon the edge of yonder coppice; A stand where you may make the fairest shoot. It is used in "Much ado about Nothing" i. In "Taming of the Shrew" i. The term is humorously applied to any troop or company of players by Hamlet iii. This consisted in releasing the hounds from the leash or slip of leather by which they were held in hand until it was judged proper to let them pursue the animal chased. Thus he speaks of the "shoulders for the fellow of this walk," i. Shakespeare has several pretty allusions to the tears of the deer, this animal being said to possess a very large secretion of tears. And the big round tears Coursed one another down his innocent nose In piteous chase. Such wholesome tears shedde I, when thou pursewest me so. It is not surprising, therefore, that Shakespeare frequently speaks of the dog, making it the subject of many of his illustrations. Thus he has not omitted to mention the fatal significance of its howl; which is supposed either to foretell death or misfortune. In "2 Henry VI. Several of these, too, are practised in our own country. Thus, in Staffordshire, when a dog howls, the following advice is givenâ€œ"â€œTake off your shoe from the left foot, and spit upon the sole, place it on the ground bottom upwards, and your foot upon the place you sat upon, which will not only preserve you from harm, but stop the howling of the dog. Thus, Pausanias relates how, previous to the destruction of the Messenians, the dogs pierced the air by raising a louder barking than usual; and it is on record how, before the sedition in Rome, about the dictatorship of Pompey, there was an extraordinary howling of dogs. The term "dog-day" is still a common phrase, and it is difficult to say whether it is from superstitious adherence to old custom, or from a belief in the injurious effect of heat upon dogs, that the magistrates, often unwisely, at this season of the year order them to be muzzled or tied up. It was the practice to put them to death; and Ben Jonson, in his "Bartholomew Fair," speaks of "the dog-killer" in this month of August. Lord Bacon, too, in his "Sylva Sylvarum," tells us that "it is a common experience that dogs know the dog-killer, when, as in times of infection, some petty fellow is sent out to kill them. Although they have never seen him before, yet they will all come forth and bark and fly at him. The well-known myth of "St George and the Dragon," which may be regarded as a grand allegory representing the hideous and powerful monster against whom the Christian soldier is called to fight, has exercised a remarkable influence for good in times past, over half-instructed people. It has been truly remarked that "the dullest mind and hardest heart could not fail to learn from it something of the hatefulness of evil, the beauty of self-sacrifice, and the all-conquering might of truth. Referring, also, to the numerous legends associated with its dread form, he mentions "the spleen of fiery dragons" "Richard III. The dragon is a masterpiece of the popular imagination, and it required many generations to give it artistic shape. Every Christmas he appears in some London pantomime, with aspect similar to that which he has worn for many ages. His body is partly green, with the memories of the sea and of slime, and partly brown or dark, with lingering shadow of storm clouds. The lightning flames still in his red eyes, and flashes from his fire-breathing mouth. The thunderbolt of Jove, the spear of Wodan, are in the barbed point of his tail. His huge wingsâ€œ"bat-like, spiked, sum up all the mythical life of extinct harpies and vampires. Spine of crocodile is on his neck, tail of the serpent, and all the jagged ridges of rocks and sharp thorns of jungles bristle around him, while the ice of glaciers and brassy glitter of

sunstrokes are in his scales. In "Troilus and Cressida" ii. The name was given from the circumstance that Andrea Ferrara adopted a fox as the blade mark of his weaponsâ€™ a practice, since his time, adopted by other foreign sword-cutlers. Swords with a running fox rudely engraved on the blades, are still occasionally to be met with in the old curiosity shops of London. Thus, there is a common superstition in England and Scotland that it is never seen for twenty-four hours together; and that once in this space, it pays a visit to the devil in order to have its beard combed. It was, formerly, too, a popular notion that the devil appeared frequently in the shape of a goat, which accounted for his horns and tail. Sir Thomas Browne observes that the goat was the emblem of the sin offering, and is the emblem of sinful men at the day of judgment. His object seems to have been to include the most distasteful and ill-omened things imaginableâ€™ a practice shared, indeed, by other poets, contemporary with him. This idea was not confined to our own country, but is mentioned by La Fontaine in one of his "Fables" Liv. She herself is one of the most melancholicke beasts that is, and to heale her own infirmitie, she goeth commonly to sit under that hearbe. In "Venus and Adonis" the term occursâ€™ "By this, poor wat, far off upon a hill, Stands on his hinder legs, with listening ear.

### Chapter 3 : The Animal-Lore of Shakespeare's Time

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