

The Camel and the Floating Sticks

by Jean de La Fontaine

The first who saw the humpback'd camel
Fled off for life; the next approach'd with care;
The third with tyrant rope did boldly dare
The desert wanderer to trammel.

Such is the power of use to change
The face of objects new and strange;
Which grow, by looking at, so tame,
They do not even seem the same.

And since this theme is up for our attention,
A certain watchman I will mention,
Who, seeing something far
Away upon the ocean,
Could not but speak his notion
That 'twas a ship of war.

Some minutes more had past,--
A bomb-ketch 'twas without a sail,
And then a boat, and then a bale,
And floating sticks of wood at last!

*Full many things on earth, I wot,
Will claim this tale,--and well they may;
They're something dreadful far away,
But near at hand--they're not.*