

The Monkey and the Leopard

by Jean de La Fontaine

A monkey and a leopard were
The rivals at a country fair.
Each advertised his own attractions.
Said one, "Good sirs, the highest place
My merit knows; for, of his grace,
The king hath seen me face to face;
And, judging by his looks and actions,
I gave the best of satisfactions.
When I am dead, 'tis plain enough,
My skin will make his royal muff.
So richly is it streak'd and spotted,
So delicately waved and dotted,
Its various beauty cannot fail to please."
And, thus invited, everybody sees;
But soon they see, and soon depart.
The monkey's show-bill to the mart
His merits thus sets forth the while,
All in his own peculiar style:--
"Come, gentlemen, I pray you, come;
In magic arts I am at home.
The whole variety in which
My neighbour boasts himself so rich,
Is to his simple skin confined,
While mine is living in the mind.
For I can speak, you understand;
Can dance, and practise sleight-of-hand;
Can jump through hoops, and balance sticks;
In short, can do a thousand tricks;
One penny is my charge to you,
And, if you think the price won't do,
When you have seen, then I'll restore
Each man his money at the door."

*The ape was not to reason blind;
For who in wealth of dress can find
Such charms as dwell in wealth of mind?*

*One meets our ever-new desires,
The other in a moment tires.
Alas! how many lords there are,
Of mighty sway and lofty mien,
Who, like this leopard at the fair,
Show all their talents on the skin!*