

The Opossum of the Future

by Ambrose Bierce

One day an Opossum who had gone to sleep hanging from the highest branch of a tree by the tail, awoke and saw a large Snake wound about the limb, between him and the trunk of the tree.

"If I hold on," he said to himself, "I shall be swallowed; if I let go I shall break my neck."

But suddenly he bethought himself to dissemble.

"My perfected friend," he said, "my parental instinct recognises in you a noble evidence and illustration of the theory of development. You are the Opossum of the Future, the ultimate Fittest Survivor of our species, the ripe result of progressive prehensility--all tail!"

But the Snake, proud of his ancient eminence in Scriptural history, was strictly orthodox, and did not accept the scientific view.