

Uncalculating Zeal

by Ambrose Bierce

A Man-Eating tiger was ravaging the Kingdom of Damnasia, and the King, greatly concerned for the lives and limbs of his Royal subjects, promised his daughter Zodroulra to any man who would kill the animal. After some days Camaraladdin appeared before the King and claimed the reward.

"But where is the tiger?" the King asked.

"May jackasses sing above my uncle's grave," replied Camaraladdin, "if I dared go within a league of him!"

"Wretch!" cried the King, unsheathing his consoler-under-disappointment; "how dare you claim my daughter when you have done nothing to earn her?"

"Thou art wiser, O King, than Solyman the Great, and thy servant is as dust in the tomb of thy dog, yet thou errest. I did not, it is true, kill the tiger, but behold! I have brought thee the scalp of the man who had accumulated five million pieces of gold and was after more."

The King drew his consoler-under-disappointment, and, flicking off Camaraladdin's head, said:

"Learn, caitiff, the expediency of uncalculating zeal. If the millionaire had been let alone he would have devoured the tiger."