

The Bat and the Two Weasels

Fables of la Fontaine > Book II > The Bat and the Two Weasels

A blundering bat once stuck her head
Into a wakeful weasel's bed;
Whereat the mistress of the house,
A deadly foe of rats and mice,
Was making ready in a trice
To eat the stranger as a mouse.
"What! do you dare," she said, "to creep in
The very bed I sometimes sleep in,
Now, after all the provocation
I have suffered from your thievish nation?
Are you not really a mouse,
That gnawing pest of every house,
Your special aim to do the cheese ill?
Ay, that you are, or I'm no weasel."
"I beg your pardon," said the bat;
"My kind is very far from that.
What! I a mouse! Who told you such a lie?
Why, ma'am, I am a bird;
And, if you doubt my word,
Just see the wings with which I fly.
Long live the mice that cleave the sky!"
These reasons had so fair a show,
The weasel let the creature go.
By some strange fancy led,
The same wise blunderhead,
But two or three days later,
Had chosen for her rest
Another weasel's nest,
This last, of birds a special hater.
New peril brought this step absurd;
Without a moment's thought or puzzle,
Dame weasel oped her peaked muzzle
To eat the intruder as a bird.
"Hold! do not wrong me," cried the bat;
"I'm truly no such thing as that.
Your eyesight strange conclusions gathers.
What makes a bird, I pray? Its feathers.
I'm cousin of the mice and rats.
Great Jupiter confound the cats!"
The bat, by such adroit replying,
Twice saved herself from dying.
And many a human stranger
Thus turns his coat in danger;
And sings, as suits, wherever he goes,
"God save the king!" or "save his foes!"