

RUS: A BUNDLE OF BUCOLICS

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Rus: A Bundle of Bucolics by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

**RUS: A BUNDLE
OF BUCOLICS**

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A

BUNDLE OF BUCOLICS.



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INVOCATION.

'GENTLE READER'—throw away this tract.
'Tis for the times, 'tis true, but not for you
—too weak to wield a pick with me, to prick our
peaceful Arcadée.

Ye who have none other god but gain; it's
against your faith to go with me, for it will cost
you ninepence and an hour or two, and 'time'—
you tell me in your creed—'is money.'

Women and Men with brains; Braves who
would sooner bruise a serpent's head than flee from
it, and Brutes after my kind—I call you to come
with me and follow to their lairs in the wilds of
'Merrie England' those birds and beasts of prey,
and creeping things, and creatures fabulous, which
you have only seen aforetime 'cabin'd, cribb'd,
confin'd, bound in'—in town menageries or in
'Stories for the young.'

The pink, prize-winning porker, swept and
garnished twice a day and honour-ribbon'd round
his neck at Smithfield show, looks not and lives
not as he did in his comfortable country quarters,
where he wallowed at his own sweet will—a pam-
pered and polluted spoiler.

The gorgeous jay, amidst a flight of jays, is
tame indeed, and harmless to his kin; but let the
brilliant bird alight amongst the common crowd
of nesting sparrows, toiling ants, and lowly worms
of his own wood, and he becomes a greedy tyrant.

Ye cannot learn what the landed-lord is like
by viewing him—loafing and lithping amongst

his pals and pallettes in a West-end palace; nor is the unselfish squire in novels 'nothing but the truth.'

To know these noble animals aright, you must, unseen, see them in their haunts and habits as they live unfettered in their native fastnesses.

I call you. Come with me, and we shall discover by the way besides the bleaching, broken bones of the defenceless prey, and many missing links, and curious fossils, and some survivals of the unfittest that should have been forgotten fossils long, long ago.

FOXES.

IN common with the rest of my heroic countrymen, who have with sundry false notes sung and sworn for generations past that they '*never, never, NEVER* will be slaves,' I have taken as commandments the tables of Court precedence, so we must of course run after the noblest rustic first.

Considering that our country has a history of a thousand years, and customs and laws which alter not, it is curious that there still should be a shadow of a doubt as to who is greatest in the counties of this kingdom. Some say a Duke; others say them—nay, a neighing Thoroughbred is best; some ruddy rustics call a Shorthorn cow 'The Duchess'—their 'she-leader,' whilst pale-faced dissenters from that Eastern faith dare swear by Bishops as above the cloven-footed ancestress of bulls. Of the noble army of village martyrs, many from their lowly hovels cry aloud that they

to 'Ladies Bountiful' bow down; a few noisy 'men of blood and fire' place farm-fed pheasants first; but most of the 'thirty million fools' fall down and worship the golden Fox, as quite *The Chief* of the county aristocracy.

For my part, I often wonder why the free and foul fox was not chosen for our country's crest, rather than the false-tooth'd and mangy lion, captive in an iron-clad cage, which costs the curious a shilling and a crush to see and sniff. The double-dealing fox, who lays up for himself much treasure which he will never use; who for ever pokes his pointed nose into his neighbour's nest to see how much he can annex, and then sneaks off with his illgotten gains; who fears to fight a stronger neighbour who might thrash him—is an allegory surely more adaptable to England's glory than is the similitude of a lion reckless and improvident.

Whenever I can drink of that pure 'well of English undefyled' which saturates the pages of that modest register of charnel-houses and their bones—'The Peerage'—I break out into a purple rash of national pride, like a proper plantagenet should, as I read of 'Arg' and 'Gu,' of 'Az' and 'Ppr' and other daring deeds of my dead and disreputable ancestors; so, pardon my little weakness in proposing a new national crest: 'For England, a Fox courant, puant, or; gorged with a goose, gu; issuant from the dexter jaws a hen, saignante, reflexed over the back; his sinister hinder paw collared of a steel spring ppr.'

The wild fox, like most blue-blooded aristocrats, is born of more or less 'poor but honest parents,' mostly in a nest kindly built for him