Fable

"THE SPANIEL AND THE CAMELEON"

By

John Gay
A spaniel, bred with all the care
That waits upon a favourite heir,
Ne’er felt correction’s rigid hand;
Indulged to disobey command,
In pampered ease his hours were spent;
He never knew what learning meant.
Such forward airs, so pert, so smart,
Were sure to win his lady’s heart;
Each little mischief gained him praise;
How pretty were his fawning ways!

The wind was south, the morning fair,
He ventured forth to take the air.
He ranges all the meadow round,
And rolls upon the softest ground:
When near him a cameleon seen,
Was scarce distinguished from the green.
'Dear emblem of the flattering host,
What, live with clowns! a genius lost!
To cities and the court repair:
A fortune cannot fail thee there:

Preferment shall thy talents crown,
Believe me, friend; I know the town.'
'Sir,' says the sycophant, 'like you,
Of old, politer life I knew:
Like you, a courtier born and bred;
Kings leaned an ear to what I said.
My whisper always met success;
The ladies praised me for address,
I knew to hit each courtier’s passion,
And flattered every vice in fashion.

But Jove, who hates the liar’s ways,
At once cut short my prosperous days:
And, sentenced to retain my nature,
Transformed me to this crawling creature.
Doomed to a life obscure and mean,
I wander in the sylvan scene.
For Jove the heart alone regards;
He punishes what man rewards.
How different is thy case and mine!
With men at least you sup and dine;

While I, condemned to thinnest fare,
Like those I flattered feed on air.'