

The Gentlemen of the Jungle

Once upon a time an elephant made a friendship with a man. One day a heavy thunderstorm broke out, the elephant went to his friend, who had a little hut at the edge of the forest, and said to him: 'My dear good man, will you please let me put my trunk inside your hut to keep it out of this torrential rain?' The man, seeing what situation his friend was in, replied: 'My dear good elephant, my hut is very small, but there is room for your trunk and myself. Please put your trunk in gently.' The elephant thanked his friend, saying: 'You have done me a good deed and one day I shall return your kindness.' But what followed? As soon as the elephant put his trunk inside the hut, slowly he pushed his head inside, and finally flung the man out in the rain, and then lay down comfortably inside his friend's hut, saying: 'My dear good friend, your skin is harder than mine, and as there is not enough room for both of us, you can afford to remain in the rain while I am protecting my delicate skin from the hailstorm.'

The man, seeing what his friend had done to him, started to grumble; the animals in the nearby forest heard the noise and came to see what was the matter. All stood around listening to the heated argument between the man and his friend, the elephant. In this turmoil the lion came along roaring, and said in a loud voice: 'Don't you all know that I am the King of the Jungle! How dare any one disturb the peace of my kingdom?' On hearing this, the elephant, who was one of the high ministers in the jungle kingdom, replied in a soothing voice, and said: 'My lord, there is no disturbance of the peace in your kingdom. I have only been having a little discussion with my friend here as to the possession of this little hut which your lordship sees me occupying.' The lion, who wanted to have 'peace and tranquility' in his kingdom, replied in a noble voice, saying: 'I command my ministers to appoint a Commission of Enquiry to go thoroughly into this matter and report accordingly.' He then turned to the man and said: 'You have done well by establishing friendship with my people, especially with the elephant, who is one of my honourable ministers of state. Do not grumble any more, your hut is not lost to you. Wait until the sitting of my Imperial Commission, and there you will be given plenty of opportunity to state your case. I am sure that you will be pleased with the findings of the Commission.' The man was very pleased by these sweet words from the King of the Jungle, and innocently waited for his opportunity, in the belief that naturally the hut would be returned to him.

The elephant, obeying the command of his master, got busy with other ministers to appoint the Commission of Enquiry. The following elders of the jungle were appointed to sit in the Commission: (1) Mr. Rhinoceros; (2) Mr. Buffalo; (3) Mr. Alligator; (4) The Rt. Hon. Mr. Fox to act as chairman; and (5) Mr. Leopard to act as Secretary to the Commission. On seeing the personnel, the man protested and asked if it was not necessary to include in this Commission a member from his side. But he was told that it was impossible, since no one from his side was well enough educated to understand the intricacy of jungle law. Further, that there was nothing to fear, for the members of the Commission were all men of repute for their impartiality in justice, and

as they were gentlemen chosen by God to look after the interests of races less adequately endowed with teeth and claws, he might rest assured that they would investigate the matter with the greatest care and report impartially.

The Commission sat to take the evidence. The Rt Hon. Mr Elephant was first called. He came along with a superior air, brushing his tusks with a sapling which Mrs Elephant had provided, and in an authoritative voice said: 'Gentlemen of the Jungle, there is no need for me to waste your valuable time in relating a story which I am sure you all know. I have always regarded it as my duty to protect the interests of my friends, and this appears to have caused the misunderstanding between myself and my friend here. He invited me to save his hut from being blown away by a hurricane. As the hurricane had gained access owing to the unoccupied space in the hut, I considered it necessary, in my friend's own interests, to turn the undeveloped space to a more economic use by sitting in it myself; a duty which any of you would undoubtedly have performed with equal readiness in similar circumstances.'

After hearing the Rt. Hon. Mr. Elephant's conclusive evidence, the Commission called Mr. Hyena and other elders of the jungle, who all supported what Mr. Elephant had said. They then called the man, who began to give his own account of the dispute. But the Commission cut him short, saying: 'My good man, please confine yourself to relevant issues. We have already heard the circumstances from various unbiased sources; all we wish you to tell us is whether the undeveloped space in your hut was occupied by anyone else before Mr. Elephant assumed his position?' The man began to say: 'No, but-' But at this point the Commission declared that they had heard sufficient evidence from both sides and retired to consider their decision. After enjoying a delicious meal at the expense of the Rt. Hon. Mr Elephant, they reached their verdict, called the man, and declared as follows: 'In our opinion this dispute has arisen through a regrettable misunderstanding due to the backwardness of your ideas. We consider that Mr. Elephant has fulfilled his sacred duty of protecting your interests. As it is clearly for your good that the space should be put to its most economic use, and as you yourself have not reached the stage of expansion which would enable you to fill it, we consider it necessary to arrange a compromise to suit both parties. Mr. Elephant shall continue his occupation of your hut, but we give you permission to look for a site where you can build another hut more suited to your needs, and we will see that you are well protected.'

The man, having no alternative, and fearing that his refusal might expose him to the teeth and claws of members of the Commission, did as they suggested. But no sooner had he built another hut than Mr. Rhinoceros charged in with his horn lowered and ordered the man to quit. A Royal Commission was again appointed to look into the matter, and the same finding was given. This procedure was repeated until Mr. Buffalo, Mr. Leopard, Mr. Hyena and the rest were all accommodated with new huts. Then the man decided that he must adopt an effective method of protection, since Commissions of Enquiry did not seem to be of any use to him. He sat down and said, 'Ng'enda thi

ndagaga motegi,' which literally means 'there is nothing that treads on the earth that cannot be trapped,' or in other words, you can fool people for a time, but not for ever.

Early one morning, when the huts already occupied by the jungle lords were all beginning to decay and fall to pieces, he went out and built a bigger and better hut a little distance away. No sooner had Mr. Rhinoceros seen it than he came rushing in, only to find that Mr. Elephant was already inside, sound asleep. Mr. Leopard next came to the window, Mr. Lion, Mr. Fox and Mr. Buffalo entered the doors, while Mr. Hyena howled for a place in the shade and Mr. Alligator basked on the roof. Presently, they all began disputing about their rights of penetration, and from disputing they came to fighting, and while they were all embroiled together the man set the hut on fire and burnt it to the ground, jungle lords and all. Then he went home, saying: 'Peace is costly, but it's worth the expense,' and lived happily ever after.

- **Jomo Kenyatta**

About the Story

Written by Jomo Kenyatta, the story 'The Gentlemen of the Jungle' is in the form of a fable. A fable is a short moral story often with animal characters. The story is about the law of self-perseveration and the danger of friendship between unequals. An elephant makes friendship with the man. The man has a little hut at the edge of the forest. The elephant requests the man to allow him to keep his trunk inside the hut to protect him from the torrential rain. The man agrees. The elephant slowly occupies the hut which he has made in succession. Eventually the man realizes that he can release himself from the clasp of the animals only through intelligence. The moral of the story is that one can protect one's interests only by making good use of one's own resources.

Jomo Kenyatta, a Kenyan statesman and the dominant figure in the development of African nationalism in East Africa has authored several books. His long career in public life made him the undisputed leader of the African people of Kenya in their struggle for independence.

Glossary

thunder Storm: storm accompanied by thunder and lightning

flung: threw

hailstorm: shower of hail

turmoil: disturbance, trouble

tranquility: peace, calm

establish: set up, to settle on a permanent basis

grumble: to murmur with discontent

findings: information discovered as the result of an inquiry

personnel: the people employed by an organization

intricacy: complexity

impartial: without prejudice or bias, fair, just

adequate: sufficient

endowed: gifted with, to possess an ability or skill
investigate: to find out more details or gain more information
hurricane: a storm with violent wind
conclusive: decisive
evidence: a thing or set of things helpful in forming a conclusion or judgement
confine: to keep within limits
unbiased: fair or impartial

COMPREHENSION:

(A) Tick the correct alternative:

1. The elephant put his trunk into his friend's hut because
 - (a) His friend was a kind man.
 - (b) His friend was powerful.
 - (c) The weather outside was very bad.
 - (d) He wanted to live there.
2. The king of the jungle appointed the Commission of Enquiry because.....
 - (a) the animals of the forest had a dispute
 - (b) the man and the animals had a dispute
 - (c) the man and the elephant had a trouble
 - (d) the animals' freedom was in danger
3. “_____ your hut is not lost to you.” Who said these words?
 - (a) Lion
 - (b) Elephant
 - (c) Man
 - (d) Rhinoceros

(B) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10-15 words each:

1. Who was the owner of the hut?
2. Why did the elephant request the man to allow him put his trunk inside the man's hut?
3. Why did the elephant throw the man out of the hut?
4. Why did the animals assemble near the hut?
5. Why was the commission of Enquiry appointed?
6. Why was the man not allowed any representation in the commission?

(C) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 20-30 words each:

1. Who were the members and the secretary of the Commission?
2. Why did the man permit the elephant to put his trunk inside the hut?
3. What did the elephant say before the Commission of Enquiry?
4. Why did the man do as the members of the commission suggested?
5. Why did the man build a very large hut?

(D) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60-80 words:

1. What does the story teach you?

2. “Peace is costly, but it’s worth the expense.” Explain.

(E) Say whether the following statements are True or False. Write “T” for True and “F” for False in the bracket:

1. The elephant and the man were friends. []
2. One day the elephant helped the man. []
3. The lion praised the man for his friendship with the elephant. []
4. The animals of the forest invited the lion as the peace of the jungle was in danger. []
5. The Commission of Enquiry included a member from the man’s side. []
6. The man built a large and better hut and lived in it. []