

Uncivilized

An ancient ape, once on a time,
Disliked exceedingly to climb,
And so he picked him out a tree
And said, "Now this belongs to me.
I have a hunch that monks are mutts
And I can make them gather nuts
And bring the bulk of them to me
By claiming title to this tree."

He took a green leaf and a reed
And wrote himself a title-deed,
Proclaiming pompously and slow:
"All monkeys by these presents know."
Next morning, when the monkeys came
To gather nuts, he made his claim:
"All monkeys climbing on this tree
Must bring their gathered nuts to me,
Cracking the same on equal shares:
The meats are mine; the shells are theirs."
"But by what right?" they cried, amazed,
Thinking the ape was surely crazed.
"By this," he answered. "If you'll read,
You'll find it is a title-deed,
Made in precise and formal shape
And sworn before a fellow-ape,
Exactly on the legal plan
Used by that wondrous creature, man,
In London, Tokyo, New York,
Glengary, Kalamazoo, and Cork.
Unless my deed is recognized,
It proves you quite uncivilized."

"But," said one monkey, "you'll agree
It was not you who made this tree!"
"Nor," said the ape, serene and bland,
"Does any owner make his land,
Yet all of its hereditaments
Are his and figure in his rents."

The puzzled monkeys sat about;
They could not make the question out.
Plainly by precedent and law,
The ape's procedure showed no flaw,
And yet, no matter what he said,
The stomach still denied the head.

Up spoke one sprightly monkey then,
"Monkeys are monkeys; men are men.
The ape should try his legal capers
On men, who may respect his papers.
We don't know deeds; we do know nuts,
And spite of 'ifs' and 'ands' and 'buts,'
We know who gathers and unmeats 'em,
By monkey practice also eats 'em!
So tell the ape and all his flunkeys,
'No man-tricks can be played on monkeys.'"

Thus, apes still climb to get their food,
Since monkey minds are crass and crude,
And monkeys, all so ill-advised,
Still eat their nuts, uncivilized.

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