



The Rat and the Oyster

La Fontaine

French

Easy
2 min read

A country rat, of little brains,
Grown weary of inglorious rest,
Left home with all its straws and grains,
Resolved to know beyond his nest.
When peeping through the nearest fence,
“How big the world is, how immense!”
He cried; “there rise the Alps, and that
Is doubtless famous Ararat.”
His mountains were the works of moles,
Or dirt thrown up in digging holes!
Some days of travel brought him where
The tide had left the oysters bare.
Since here our traveler saw the sea,
He thought these shells the ships must be.
“My father was, in truth,” said he,
“A coward, and an ignoramus;
He dared not travel: as for me,
I’ve seen the ships and ocean famous;

Have cross'd the deserts without drinking,
And many dangerous streams unshrinking.”
Among the shut-up shell-fish, one
Was gaping widely at the sun;
It breathed, and drank the air's perfume,
Expanding, like a flower in bloom.
Both white and fat, its meat
Appear'd a dainty treat.
Our rat, when he this shell espied,
Thought for his stomach to provide.
“If not mistaken in the matter,”
Said he, “no meat was ever fatter,
Or in its flavour half so fine,
As that on which to-day I dine.”
Thus full of hope, the foolish chap
Thrust in his head to taste,
And felt the pinching of a trap—
The oyster closed in haste.
Now those to whom the world is new
Are wonder-struck at every view;
And the marauder finds his match,
When he is caught who thinks to catch.

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