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Humorous phases of the law (Legal recreations)

Irving Browne

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This historic book may have numerous typos, missing text or index. Purchasers can download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. 1876. Not illustrated. Excerpt: ... THE ANIMAL KINGDON IN COURT. One of man's proudest boasts is his assumed superiority to, and sovereignty over, the brute creation. In a state of innocence, we are informed by a reliable authority, he had dominion given to him over the beasts. His superiority was early lost, in a great degree--perhaps as one of the sad consequences of the fall. In a state of nature, even since the fall, his sovereignty has been occasionally, in some measure, restored; probably as a reward for his desertion of the impurities of the world and of society. Thus, in Cowper--a recognized legal authority--Alexander Selkirk, cast away on a desert island, says to himself: "I'm monarch of all I survey, My right there is none to dispute. From the center all round to the sea, I'm lord of the fowl and the brute." This was not a mere empty boast, for he says later, in speaking of the docility with which the animal race yielded to his authority: "Their tameness is shocking to me." How different in a state of so-called civilization? We pay taxes on our dogs, and they give us hydrophobia; we feed our horses dainty oats, and install them in luxurious stables, and they kick us or run away with us; we transport the bee from the rough forest tree to a neat and comfortable hive, and he, not caring a straw, stings us; we pay several thousand dollars for a fine ram and he butts us, or for a blooded bull, and he lifts us, unwilling, over the fence, when we would go our own gait. How feelingly does the philosopher Launce describe what he undergoes for his ungrateful

cur: "I have sat in the stocks for puddings he hath stolen, otherwise he had been executed; I have stood on the pillory for geese he hath killed, otherwise he had suffered fort." But our damages are not confined to our own persons. We are forc...