

The Tale of Three Kings

by Francis Clark-Lowes (16th April 2011)

Once upon time there was a cunning king. So cunning was he, that he came to be known as King Cunning. This king was always looking out for ways of expanding his kingdom. He used his own native cunning, and the cunning of his courtiers, to enlist the support of his subjects, as well as that of other kings and their subjects, in his many dubious schemes. And because he was cunning, and his courtiers were cunning, his subjects loyally believed the stories they were told, obeyed King Cunning's cunning laws and didn't notice that they were being used. Other kings were also deceived about his evil intentions and strove to emulate the noble sentiments in which King Cunning and his courtiers purported to believe.

In a neighbouring kingdom there was a kind king. So kind was he, that he came to be known as King Kind. He and his subjects were much in awe of King Cunning, but because they were kind they also felt sorry for his victims. What a dilemma! So King Kind started a kind campaign against King Cunning which was to avoid all hurtful references to King Cunning's cunning, and which accepted without question all his references to his previous suffering and that of his people. Indeed anyone who said anything rude about King Cunning and his subjects, and especially anyone who questioned the stories of suffering which King Cunning and his subjects claimed to have undergone, would be punished. And what was paradoxical about this punishment was that it was unkind! Well, as one could have expected King Kind died at last without his campaign having achieved anything.

King Kind's son and successor, King Wise, was a man of a different mould. He saw through the cunning of King Cunning, and he realised that the only way to defeat him was to uncover and oppose his cunning stories and schemes. This would remove the basis of his power and make him look ridiculous. King Wise had often argued with his father about these matters, and King Kind had always ended up saying something like: 'But you can't possibly say these things about King Cunning and his kingdom. It's too unkind and because he will feel under attack, he will attack us and destroy our kind campaign.'

Well King Wise set to work to undermine King Cunning's cunning plans. But he didn't have an easy time. His father's laws, which enjoined everyone to be nice to each other, died hard, and even when they had been repealed their sentiment lingered on for many years. Moreover, some of King Cunning's subjects lived in King Wise's kingdom, and though they professed to be loyal subjects, they worked in one way or another to resist King Wise's campaign. King Wise was stigmatised as a bigot, and he had difficulty holding onto his throne. But at last he prevailed, King Cunning was revealed for what he was and not long thereafter received an assassin's bullet in the head. His son, King Pragmatic, took his place on the throne and extended equal citizenship to his father's victims. Thus King Cunning's dubious schemes came to an end and everyone lived happily ever after.