AESOP'S FABLES

By Aesop



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INTRODUCTION

THE HISTORY OF FABLE

MODERN versions of Æsop go back no further than 480 A.D. In their earliest use they are related to the folklore current among all primitive peoples. This folklore had risen in Greece to the rank of literary form a thousand years before the above-mentioned revival in Germany, France, and England. As the creation of Æsop it was the answer to a need for trenchant, but veiled, characterization of men and measures in the dangerous times of the Tyrants. In mirth-provoking utterances, quite apart from personal criticism, things could be intimated with all the force of specific judgments, yet in such veiled form that to resent them was tacit confession that they applied. Later on, when free speech became safer, the grammarians and rhetoricians raised these clever, pithy stories to the literary form they have since maintained.

There is for Æsop's Fables no authorized original version. Always, it appears, they were subject to interpolations and special versions. They took on metrical forms in Latin, and in later times in French. It is the particular distinction of a real fable that it bears this amplification, yet can at any time and from any true version shake off the accessories of particular phrasing and in its bare facts meet all the requirements of a literary and artistic whole. It is this static character which has made the fable of such value to language students. Even little children, comparing different versions, learn to distinguish the raw material of a real story from its varying renderings. Subjoined is an account of Æsop, called the Inventor and Father of Fable in its present form.

ÆSOP, THE FATHER OF THE FABLE

The life of Æsop, like that of Homer, the most famous of Greek poets, is involved in much obscurity. Sardis, the capital of Lydia; Samos, a Greek island; Mesembria, an ancient colony in Thrace; and Cotiæum, the chief city of a province of Phrygia, contend for the distinction of being his birthplace. Although the honor thus claimed cannot be definitely assigned to any one of these places, yet there are a few incidents now generally accepted by scholars as established facts relating to the birth, life, and death of Æsop. He is, by an almost universal consent, allowed to have been born about the year 620 B.C. and to have been by birth a slave. He was owned by two masters in succession, Xanthus and Jadmon, both inhabitants of Samos, the latter of whom gave him his liberty as a reward for his learning and wit. One of the privileges of a freedman in the ancient republics of Greece was the permission to take an active interest in public affairs; and Æsop, like the philosophers Phædo, Menippus, and Epictetus in later times, raised himself from the indignity of a servile condition to a position of high renown. In his desire alike to instruct and to be instructed, he traveled through many countries, and among others came to Sardis, the capital of the famous king of Lydia, the great patron, in that day, of learning and of learned men. At the court of Crœsus he met with Solon, Thales, and other sages, and is related so to have pleased his royal master by the part he took in the conversations held with these philosophers that Crœsus applied to him an expression which has since passed into a proverb —μαλλον ὁ Φρὺξ, “The Phrygian has spoken better than all.”

On the invitation of Crœsus he fixed his residence at Sardis, and was employed by that monarch in various difficult and delicate affairs of state. In his discharge of these commissions he visited the different petty republics of Greece. At one time he is found in Corinth, and at another in Athens, endeavoring, by the narration of some of his wise fables, to reconcile the inhabitants of those cities to the administration of their rulers. One of these missions, undertaken at the command of Crœsus, was the occasion of his death. Having been sent to Delphi with a large sum of gold for distribution among the citizens, he was so indignant at their covetousness that he refused to divide the money and sent it back to his master. The

Delphians, enraged at this treatment, accused him of impiety and, in spite of his sacred character as ambassador, executed him as a public criminal. But the great fabulist did not lack posthumous honors, for a statue was erected to his memory at Athens, the work of Lysippus, one of the most famous of Greek sculptors. These few facts are all that can be relied on with any degree of certainty in reference to the birth, life, and death of Æsop.

The fable on pages 197-200 is a translation of La Fontaine's metrical version of one of the most popular of the Æsop Fables. La Fontaine, who died at Paris in 1695, was a popular writer of drama and the most noted of the French fabulists. Following this, on pages 201-214, are fables from the Russian of Kriloff, a writer who for nearly twenty years was one of the librarians at the Imperial Public Library at St. Petersburg, in which city he died in 1844.

ÆSOP'S FABLES



ÆSOP'S FABLES

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

ONE day a Wolf and a Lamb happened to come at the same time to drink from a brook that ran down the side of the mountain.

The Wolf wished very much to eat the Lamb, but meeting her as he did, face to face, he thought he must find some excuse for doing so.

So he began by trying to pick a quarrel, and said angrily: “How dare you come to my brook and muddy the water so that I cannot drink it? What do you mean?”

The Lamb, very much alarmed, said gently: “I do not see how it can be that I have spoiled the water. You stand higher up the stream, and the water runs from you to me, not from me to you.”

“Be that as it may,” said the Wolf, with a snarl, “you are a rascal all the same, for I have heard that last year you said bad things of me behind my back.”

“Dear Mr. Wolf,” cried the poor Lamb, “that could not be, for a year ago I was not born; I am only six months old.”

Finding it of no use to argue any more, the Wolf began to snarl and show his teeth. Coming closer to the Lamb, he said, “You little wretch, if it was not you it was your father, so it’s all the same”; and he pounced upon the poor Lamb and ate her up.

THE FOX AND THE LION

A LITTLE fox was out playing one day, when a Lion came roaring along. “Dear me,” said the Fox, as he hid behind a tree, “I never saw a Lion before. What a terrible creature! His voice makes me tremble.”

The next time the Fox met the Lion he was not so much afraid, but he kept a safe distance and said to himself, “I wish he would not make such a noise!”

The third time they met, the Fox was not frightened at all. He ran up to the Lion, and said, “What are you roaring about?”

And the Lion was so taken by surprise that, without saying a word, he let the Fox walk away.

It would not be safe for little foxes always to follow the example of this one; but it is often true that what our fear makes seem a lion in the way has no danger in it if we meet it bravely.

THE DOG AND HIS SHADOW

A DOG once had a nice piece of meat for his dinner. Some say that it was stolen, but others, that it had been given him by a butcher, which we hope was the case.

Dogs like best to eat at home, and he went trotting along with the meat in his mouth, as happy as a king.

On the dog's way there was a stream with a plank across it. As the water was still and clear, he stopped to take a look at it. What should he see, as he gazed into its bright depths, but a dog as big as himself, looking up at him, and lo! the dog had meat in his mouth.

"I'll try to get that," said he; "then with both mine and his what a feast I shall have!" As quick as thought he snapped at the meat, but in doing so he had to open his mouth, and his own piece fell to the bottom of the stream.

Then he saw that the other dog had lost his piece, too. He went sadly home. In trying to grasp a shadow he lost his substance.

THE CRAB AND HIS MOTHER

“MY child,” said a Crab to her son, “why do you walk so awkwardly? If you wish to make a good appearance, you should go straight forward, and not to one side as you do so constantly.”

“I do wish to make a good appearance, mamma,” said the young Crab; “and if you will show me how, I will try to walk straight forward.”

“Why, this is the way, of course,” said the mother, as she started off to the right. “No, this is the way,” said she, as she made another attempt, to the left.

The little Crab smiled. “When you learn to do it yourself, you can teach me,” he said, and went back to his play.

THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

IT WAS a sultry day, and a Fox was almost famishing with hunger and thirst. He was just saying to himself that anything would be acceptable to him, when, looking up, he spied some great clusters of ripe, black grapes hanging from a trellised vine.

"What luck!" he said; "if only they weren't quite so high, I should be sure of a fine feast. I wonder if I can get them. I can think of nothing that would so refresh me."

Jumping into the air is not the easiest thing in the world for a Fox to do; but he gave a great spring and nearly reached the lowest clusters.

"I'll do better next time," he said.



He tried again and again, but did not succeed so well as at first. Finding that he was losing his strength and that he had little chance of getting the grapes, he walked slowly off, grumbling as he did so: “The grapes are sour, and not at all fit for my eating. I’ll leave them to the greedy birds. They eat anything.”

THE WOLF AND THE CRANE

ONE day a Wolf, who was eating his dinner much too fast, swallowed a bone, which stuck in his throat and pained him very much. He tried to get it out, but could not.

Just then he saw a Crane passing by. “Dear friend,” said he to the Crane, “there is a bone sticking in my throat. You have a good long neck; can’t you reach down and pull it out? I will pay you well for it.”

“I’ll try,” said the Crane. Then he put his head into the Wolf’s mouth, between his sharp teeth, and reaching down, pulled out the bone.

“There!” said the Wolf, “I am glad it is out; I must be more careful another time.”

“I will go now, if you will pay me,” said the Crane.

“Pay you, indeed!” cried the Wolf. “Be thankful that I did not bite your head off when it was in my mouth. You ought to be content with that.”

Gentle, kindly folk sometimes have to learn that kindness must be mixed with caution.

THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPERS

THE Ants and the Grasshoppers lived together in the great field. The Ants were busy all the time gathering a store of grain to lay by for winter use. They gave themselves so little pleasure that their merry neighbors, the Grasshoppers, began at last to take scarcely any notice of them.

When the frost came, it put an end to the work of the Ants and the chirping and merrymaking of the Grasshoppers. But one fine winter's day, when the Ants were employed in spreading their grain in the sun to dry, a Grasshopper, who was nearly perishing with hunger, chanced to pass by.

"Good day to you, kind neighbor," said she; "will you not lend me a little food? I will certainly pay you before this time next year."

"How does it happen that you have no food of your own?" asked an old Ant. "There was an abundance in the field where we lived side by side all summer, and your people seemed to be active enough. What were you doing, pray?"

"Oh," said the Grasshopper, forgetting his hunger, "I sang all the day long, and all the night, too."

"Well, then," interrupted the Ant, "I must not deprive my own family for you. If Grasshoppers find it so gay to sing away the summer, they must starve in winter," and she went on with her work, all the while singing the old song, "We ants never borrow; we ants never lend."

THE FROGS WHO ASKED FOR A KING

THERE were once some Frogs who lived together in perfect security in a beautiful lake. They were a large company, and were very comfortable, but they came to think that they might be still happier if they had a King to rule over them.

So they sent to Jupiter, their god, to ask him to give them a King.

Jupiter laughed at their folly, for he knew that they were better off as they were; but he said to them, “Well, here is a King for you,” and into the water he threw a big Log.

It fell with such a splash that the Frogs were terrified and hid themselves in the deep mud under the water.

By and by, one braver than the rest peeped out to look at the King, and saw the Log, as it lay quietly on the top of the water. Soon, one after another they all came out of their hiding places and ventured to look at their great King.

As the Log did not move, they swam round it, keeping a safe distance away, and at last one by one hopped upon it.

“This is not a King,” said a wise old Frog; “it is nothing but a stupid Log. If we had a King, Jupiter would pay more attention to us.”

Again they sent to Jupiter, and begged him to give them a King who could rule over them.



Jupiter did not like to be disturbed again by the silly Frogs, and this time he sent them a Stork, saying, “You will have some one to rule over you now.”

As they saw the Stork solemnly walking down to the lake, they were delighted.

“Ah!” they said, “see how grand he looks! How he strides along! How he throws back his head! This is a King indeed. He shall rule over us,” and they went joyfully to meet him.

As their new King came nearer, he paused, stretched out his long neck, picked up the head Frog, and swallowed him at one mouthful. And then the next—and the next!

“What is this?” cried the Frogs, and they began to draw back in terror.

But the Stork with his long legs easily followed them to the water, and kept on eating them as fast as he could.

“Oh! if we had only been—” said the oldest Frog. He was going to add “content,” but was eaten up before he could finish the sentence.

The remaining Frogs cried to Jupiter to help them, but he would not listen. And the Stork-King ate them for breakfast, dinner, and supper, every day, till in a short time there was not a Frog left in the lake. Poor, foolish Frogs, not to have known when they were well off.

THE DONKEY IN THE LION'S SKIN

A DONKEY once put on a Lion's skin which some hunters had spread out to dry. It did not fit the Donkey very well, but he found that in it he could frighten all the timid, foolish little animals, so he amused himself by chasing them about.

By and by he met a Fox, and tried to frighten him by roaring.

"My dear Donkey," said the wise Fox, "you are braying, and not roaring. I might, perhaps, have been frightened by your looks, if you had not tried to roar; but I know your voice too well to mistake you for a Lion."

THE MICE IN COUNCIL

SOME little Mice, who lived in the walls of a house, met together one night, to talk of the wicked Cat and to consider what could be done to get rid of her. The head Mice were Brown-back, Gray-ear, and White-whisker.

"There is no comfort in the house," said Brown-back. "If I but step into the pantry to pick up a few crumbs, down comes the Cat, and I have hardly time to run to my nest again."

"What can we do?" asked Gray-ear. "Shall we all run at her at once and bite her, and frighten her away?"

"No," said White-whisker; "she is so bold we could not frighten her. I have thought of something better than that. Let us hang a bell round her neck. Then, if she moves, the bell will ring, and we shall hear it, and have time to run away."

"O yes! yes!" cried all the Mice. "That is a capital idea. We will bell the Cat! Hurrah! hurrah! No more fear of the Cat!" and they danced in glee.

When their glee had subsided a little, Brown-back asked, "But who will hang the bell round her neck?"

No one answered. "Will you?" he asked of White-whisker.

"I don't think I can," replied White-whisker; "I am lame, you know. It needs some one who can move quickly."

"Will you, Gray-ear?" said Brown-back.

"Excuse me," answered Gray-ear; "I have not been well since that time when I was almost caught in the trap."

“Who will bell the Cat, then?” said Brown-back. “If it is to be done, some one must do it.”

Not a sound was heard, and one by one the little Mice stole away to their holes, no better off than they were before.

When there is trouble there is need of some one to act, as well as some one to advise.

THE KID AND THE WOLF

A KID coming home alone one night met a big Wolf. “Oh, oh, I know you will kill me,” said the little Kid; “but please play me a tune, so that I may have one more dance before I die; I am so fond of dancing.”

“Very well,” said the Wolf, “I will try, for I should like to see you dance before I eat you.”

Then the Wolf took up the shepherd’s pipe that was lying near, and began to play. But while he was playing, and the Kid was dancing a jig, the Dogs heard the sound, and came running up.

“It is my own fault,” said the Wolf, as the Dogs caught him. “My business is to kill Kids and eat them, and not to play for them to dance. Why did I try to be a Piper, when I am really only a Butcher?”

“You didn’t play very well, either,” said the Kid.

THE HAWK AND THE NIGHTINGALE

A NIGHTINGALE sitting on the top of an oak, singing her evening song, was spied by a hungry Hawk, who swooped down and seized her. The frightened Nightingale prayed the Hawk to let her go.

"If you are hungry," said she, "why not catch some large bird? I am not big enough for even a luncheon."

"Do you happen to see many large birds flying about?" said the Hawk. "You are the only bird I have seen to-day, and I should be foolish indeed to let you go for the sake of larger birds that are not in sight. A morsel is better than nothing."

THE CROW AND THE PITCHER

A THIRSTY Crow once spied a pitcher, and flew to it to see if by chance there was any water in it.

When she looked in, she saw that there was water, but that it was so far from the top that she could not reach it, though she stretched her neck as far as she could.

She stopped, and thought to herself, “How shall I get that water? I am perishing with thirst, and there must be some way for me to get some of it.” Some pebbles were lying on the ground; and, picking them up in her beak, she dropped them one by one into the pitcher.

They sank to the bottom; and at last the water was pushed up by them to the top, so that the Crow could easily drink it.

“Where there’s a will, there’s a way,” said the Crow.

THE ANT AND THE DOVE

AN Ant, walking by the river one day, said to himself, “How nice and cool this water looks! I must drink some of it.” But as he began to drink, his foot slipped, and he fell in.

“Oh, somebody please help me, or I shall drown!” cried he.

A Dove, sitting in a tree that overhung the river, heard him, and threw him a leaf. “Climb up on that leaf,” said she, “and you will float ashore.”

The Ant climbed up onto the leaf, which the wind blew to the shore, and he stepped upon dry land again.

“Good-by, kind Dove,” said he, as he ran home. “You have saved my life, and I wish I could do something for you.”

“Good-by,” said the Dove; “be careful not to fall in again.”

A few days after this, when the Dove was busy building her nest, the Ant saw a man just raising his gun to shoot her.

He ran quickly, and bit the man’s leg so hard that he cried “Oh! oh!” and dropped his gun.

This startled the Dove, and she flew away. The man picked up his gun, and walked on.

When he was gone, the Dove came back to her nest.

“Thank you, my little friend,” she said. “You have saved my life.”

And the little Ant was overjoyed to think he had been able to do for the Dove what the Dove had so lately done for him.

THE OX AND THE FROG

AN Ox, drinking at a pool, chanced to set his foot on a young Frog, and crushed him to death.

His brothers and sisters, who were playing near, ran at once to tell their mother what had happened. “Oh, Mother,” they cried, “a very huge beast, with four great feet, came to the pool, and crushed our brother to death in an instant, with his hard, cloven heel.”

The old Frog was very vain. She was rather large, as Frogs go, and gave herself airs on account of it. “Was the cruel beast so very large?” she said. “How big?”

“Oh!” said the young Frogs. “It was a terrible monster!”

“Was it as big as this?” she said, blowing and puffing herself out.

“Oh, much bigger,” replied the young Frogs.

“As big as this, then?” she added, puffing and blowing with all her might.

“A great deal bigger,” they answered.

“Well, was it *so* big?”

“Oh, Mother!” cried the Frogs; “pray do not try to be so big. If you were to puff till you burst, you could not make yourself half so big as the creature we tell you of.”

But the silly old Frog would not give up. She tried again to puff herself out, saying, “As big as”—and she did indeed burst.

It is useless to attempt what is impossible.

THE BAT AND THE WEASELS

A BAT, trying to fly one day, fell to the ground, and a Weasel caught him. The Bat begged the Weasel not to kill him.

"There is nothing I hate like a bird," said the Weasel; "I always kill them."



"But I am not a bird," said the Bat, as he folded his wings close to his sides; "birds don't come tumbling down as I did; and besides, don't you see my little smooth head, and my ears?"

“Yes, yes,” said the Weasel, “I did not notice them at first. I see, you are a mouse”; so he let the Bat go.

Some time after, the Bat took another flight, and again fell to the ground. Another Weasel came out of his hole and caught him.

“Pray don’t kill me,” said the Bat.

“Certainly I shall,” said the Weasel; “I kill mice wherever I find them.”

“But stop a moment,” said the Bat, spreading his wings; “I am not a mouse. Don’t you see my great wings? A mouse can’t fly, can it?”

“I beg your pardon,” said the Weasel; “I did not know that you were a bird; I thought you were a mouse. I see I was mistaken.” Then he let him go.

So the cunning Bat escaped a second time, but it is not often safe to use such arguments.

THE FOX AND THE GOAT

A FOX once happened to fall into a deep well. He tried in every way to get out, but at last began to think that it was impossible, and that he must die there, a prisoner. While he was thinking how sad that would be, a thirsty Goat came and looked down into the well, wishing that he could get some water. He soon saw the Fox.

"Halloo," said the Goat, "what are you doing down there? Is the water good?"

"The best I ever tasted," answered the Fox. "It is cool, and clear, and delicious. Come down and try it yourself."

"I will," said the Goat, "for I am nearly dead with thirst."

So he jumped down, and drank as much water as he wanted.

"Oh, how refreshing!" cried he.

"Yes," said the Fox; "and now, if you have finished drinking, let me ask how you expect to get out of this well again."

"Oh, I don't know," replied the Goat. "How do you expect to get out?"

"That is what I have been wondering about for the last hour," said the Fox, "and have just now thought of a good plan. If you will put your forefeet high up on the wall, I will climb up your back, and so get out, and then, of course, I can help you out."

"Very well," said the Goat, who was a simple creature, "that is a good plan. How I wish I had your brains!" He put his forefeet on the wall, and the Fox easily climbed out and started to go on his way.

"Wait a moment," called the Goat; "you forgot to help me out."

“You foolish fellow!” said the Fox, with a mocking laugh; “you ought to have thought how you would get out, before you jumped down. I fell in, but you went down of your own accord. Look before you leap next time,” and off he ran.

THE WOMAN AND HER HEN

A WOMAN had a Hen that laid an egg every day. The eggs were large, and sold for a good price. The Woman often thought, as she took them to market: “How glad they all are to get my eggs! I could sell as many more just as easily.”

It began to look a small thing to her to get but a single egg each day. “If I were to give a double allowance of barley, the Hen might be made to lay two eggs a day instead of one,” she said.

So she doubled the food, and the Hen grew very fat and sleek; but she stopped laying eggs.

THE DOG IN THE MANGER

A SLEEPY Dog went to the barn, and jumped into a manger full of hay, curling himself up there for an afternoon nap.

When he had been sleeping comfortably for some time, the Oxen came in for their supper.

The Dog awoke in a great rage at being disturbed, and began to growl and bark at them. He would not let them get at the hay.

“Stop a moment,” said one of the Oxen. “Do you want to eat this hay?”

“No,” said the Dog; “I shouldn’t think of such a thing.”

“Very well, then,” said the Ox, “we do want to eat it, for we are hungry and tired.”

“Oh, go away,” growled the Dog, “and let me sleep.”

“What an ugly, snappish fellow!” said the Ox. “He will neither eat the hay himself nor let us eat it!”

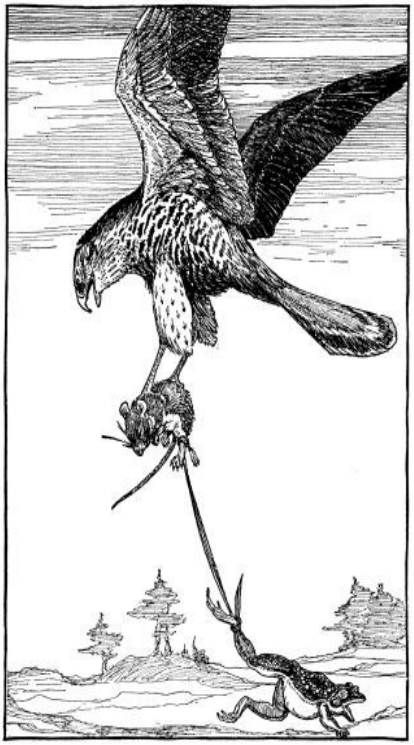
THE MOUSE, THE FROG, AND THE HAWK

A MOUSE, who had always lived on the land, and a Frog, who passed most of his time in the water, became friends.

The Mouse showed the Frog his nest and everything he could think of that was pleasant to see; and the Frog invited the Mouse to go home with him and see all the beautiful things that are under the water.

“Can you swim?” asked the Frog.

“Not much,” said the Mouse.



“No matter,” said the Frog; “I will tie your foot to my foot with a piece of this strong grass, and then I can pull you along nicely.” The Frog laughed as he said this. He thought it would be good fun for him, but he well knew that the Mouse would not enjoy it.

When the Frog had tied the Mouse’s foot to his own, they started together across the meadow. They soon came to the edge of the water, and the Frog jumped in, pulling the Mouse in with him.

“Oh, how cool and nice the water is, after the dry, hot land!” said the Frog, as he swam gayly about. But the poor Mouse was frightened.

“Please let me go,” said he, “or I shall die.”

“Oh, never mind,” said the unkind Frog; “you will get used to the water. I just love it.”

But soon the poor Mouse was drowned, and floated up to the top of the water, while the Frog frisked about down below.

Just then a Hawk saw the Mouse, and pounced upon it.

As he flew away with it the Frog was dragged out of the water, too, for he was still tied to the Mouse.

“Stop, stop!” cried the Frog. “Let me go. It is the Mouse you want.”

“Come along,” said the Hawk; “I want you both. I will eat you first, for I like Frog meat even better than I do Mouse.”

In a few moments the Hawk had made a good supper, and there was nothing left of either the false Frog or the foolish Mouse.

THE SHEPHERD'S BOY AND THE WOLF

A MAN who had a fine flock of Sheep put them all into a field, and hired a Boy to take care of them, while he worked near by with his Men.

The Sheep went nibbling the grass all day, up and down the hills and along the brook; and all that the Boy had to do was to look out for the Wolf, and see that he did not come prowling into the field.

After a while the Boy began to wish that something would happen, it was so tiresome staying there all alone, with no one to speak to and nothing to do. He wished he could be with the Men in the next field, or that they could come and stay with him. All at once he thought to himself, "I will make them think the Wolf has come. That will be great fun."

So he called out as loudly as he could, "Help! help! The Wolf!" and all the Men came running up.

When they found it was only a joke, they laughed, and went back to their work.

On the next day the Boy tried the same trick again. As before, the Men dropped their mattocks and spades, for fear there might be danger, and ran to the help of the Boy. He only laughed at them for their pains, and this time they did not relish the joke. Still the Boy did not give it up. Again he shouted "Wolf! Wolf!" till the Men took no notice of him when he called them, no matter how loudly or how long he shouted.

After a while, the Wolf did get into the field. Then in real terror the Boy called and called: "Pray do come and help me. The Wolf is killing the sheep. The Wolf! the Wolf!" But no one gave heed to his

cries. Finding only a terrified coward in care of the flock, the Wolf left few of them uninjured.

THE FISHERMAN AND THE LITTLE FISH

ALL day long a Fisherman had been toiling and had caught nothing.

"I will make one more effort," thought he, "and then I must go home."

He threw in his line, and soon drew up a very small perch.

The little Fish was terribly frightened when he found himself out of water, and with a sharp hook sticking in his mouth; and he said to the Fisherman:

"O sir, take pity upon me, and throw me into the water again! See what a little thing I am. I should not make one mouthful for you now; but if you leave me in the water, I shall grow large and stout, and then I shall be worth catching. You can make a dinner of me then, or sell me for a good price."

"Ah!" said the Fisherman, "it is true you are small, but I have you safely now. If I should throw you back, I might never catch you again. You are better than nothing. I will keep you"; and he put the little Fish into his basket, and took him home with him.

THE FOX AND THE CROW

A CROW stole a piece of cheese one day, and flew with it up into a tree, so as to eat it at her leisure.

As she sat there, holding it in her beak, a Fox chanced to pass by, and looking up saw her. “How good that cheese smells!” thought he; “I’ll have it, sure as I’m a Fox.”

Coming close to the tree, he said, “My dear Madam, what a beautiful creature you are! I was not aware till this moment what rare beauty your family possesses. What eyes! What glossy feathers! What grace of form! Is your voice as charming to hear, as your person is to look upon? If it is, you well deserve to be called the Queen of Birds. Will you not do me the favor to sing to me?”

Now it is well known that the Caw! Caw! of the Crow family is not musical. She ought to have been on her guard, but so delighted was she with the flattery of the Fox that she forgot to be wary. She opened her mouth to show the Fox the sweetness of her voice, when —down fell the bit of cheese, which was exactly what was expected.

The Fox ate it at one mouthful, then stopped to say, “Thank you, madam. I am quite satisfied. Your voice is well enough, I have no doubt. What a pity it is you are so sadly wanting in wit!”

The Crow learned that we do well to be on our guard when people flatter us.

THE PARTRIDGE AND THE FOWLER

A FOWLER caught a Partridge, and was just going to kill it.

"Wait a moment," said the Partridge; "don't kill me."

"Why not?" said the Fowler.

"Because I like to live," said the Partridge; "and, besides, if you let me go, I will bring some of my friends and neighbors here, and you can catch them, and that will be better than only one poor bird."

"You are willing, then, that your friends and neighbors should die, to save your own life?" said the Fowler. "Wicked Partridge! you have lived long enough." And he killed it.

THE THIRSTY PIGEON

A PIGEON who was very thirsty saw a goblet of water painted on a signboard.

Without stopping to see what it was, she flew to it with a loud whir, and dashing against the signboard, jarred herself terribly. Having broken her wings, she fell to the ground, and was caught by a man, who said, “Your zeal should never outrun your caution.”

THE THREE TRADESMEN

A GREAT city was once besieged, and all its inhabitants were gathered together to consider by what means it might be protected from the enemy.

A Bricklayer earnestly recommended bricks as the best materials for successful defense.

A Carpenter with equal energy proposed timber as a preferable means of defense.

Hearing which, a Currier stood up and said, “Sirs, I differ with you wholly. There is no material for resistance equal to a covering of hides, and nothing in the present case so good as leather.”

Every man for his own trade.

THE HARES AND THE FROGS

IN A FOREST, deep, shady, and still, there once lived a company of Hares.

Whenever a leaf fell rustling to the ground, or a squirrel, jumping in the branches, broke a twig, the Hares started and trembled, they were so timid.

One day there came a great wind, rushing through the tops of the trees with a roaring noise, and waving the branches back and forth.

It frightened the Hares so much that they all started together, running as fast as they could to get out of the forest, which had been their home.

“What a sad state is ours,” they said, “never to eat in comfort, to sleep always in fear, to be startled by a shadow, and fly with beating heart at the rustling of the leaves. Better death, by far. Let us drown ourselves in yonder lake.”

But when they came to the lake, it happened that there were scores of frogs sporting on the banks; who, when they heard the sound of footsteps, jumped into the water.

The timid Hares were startled by the splash; but, as they saw the frogs dive to the bottom of the lake, a wise old Hare said, “Stop a moment! let us consider. Here are creatures that are more timid than we—they are afraid even of us. See, they are drowning themselves for fear of us! It may not be so bad with us as we thought. Perhaps we have been foolish, as foolish as the frogs, who are alarmed when there is no danger. Let us make the best of our lot, and try to be brave in it.” So back they went again to the forest.

THE EAGLE AND THE ARROW

A MOST rapacious Eagle had his eyrie on a lofty rock. Sitting there, he could watch the movements of the animals he wished to make his prey, and, waiting his opportunity, seize them and bear them away.

The poor creatures had no protection from such a foe. But an archer saw him one day watching, from his place of concealment, the movements of an unsuspicious hare; and, taking aim, he wounded him mortally.

The Eagle gave one look at the Arrow that had entered his heart, and saw that its feathers had been furnished by himself, when descending to secure prey.



“Ah!” said the Eagle, “it is indeed a double grief that I should perish by an Arrow feathered from my own wing.”

THE EAGLE AND THE FOX

ONE day a mother Eagle came flying out of her nest to look for food for her babies. She circled round and round, far up in the air, looking down upon the earth with her keen eyes.

By and by she saw a little baby Fox, whose mother had left it alone while, like the Eagle, she went for food.

Down came the bird, whir went her wings, and away she soared again, with the little Fox clutched fast in her claws.

The poor mother Fox just at that moment came running home to her child, and saw it being carried away.

“O Eagle!” she cried, “leave me my one little baby. Remember your own children, and how you would feel if one of them should be taken away. Oh, bring back my poor cub!”

But the cruel Eagle, thinking that the Fox could never reach her, in her nest high in the pine tree, flew away with the little Fox, and left the poor mother to cry.

But the mother Fox did not stop to cry long. She ran to a fire that was burning in the field, caught up a blazing stick of wood, and ran with it in her mouth to the pine tree where the Eagle had her nest.

The Eagle saw her coming, and knew that the Fox would soon have the tree on fire, and that all her young ones would be burned. So, to save her own brood, she begged the Fox to stop, and brought her back her little one, safe and sound.

THE DRUM AND THE VASE OF SWEET HERBS

A DRUM once boasted to a Vase of Sweet Herbs in this way: “Listen to me! My voice is loud and can be heard far off. I stir the hearts of men so that when they hear my bold roaring they march out bravely to battle.”

The Vase spoke no words, but gave out a fine, sweet perfume, which filled the air and seemed to say: “I cannot speak, and it is not well to be proud, but I am full of good things that are hidden within me, and that gladly come forth to give cheer and comfort. People are drawn to me in their need, and they remember me afterward with gratitude. But you have nothing in you but noise, and you must be struck to make you give that out. I would not boast so much if I were you.”

THE TWO FROGS

ONCE there were two Frogs who were dear friends.

One lived in a deep pond in the woods, where the trees hung over the water, and where no one came to disturb him.

The other lived in a small pool. This was not a good place for a Frog, or any one else, to live in, for the country road passed through the pool, and all the horses and wagons had to go that way, so that it was not quiet like the pond, and the horses made the water muddy and foul.

One day the Frog from the pond said to the other, “Do come and live with me; I have plenty of food and water, and nothing to disturb me; and it is so pleasant in my pond. Now here there is very little food, and not much water, and the road passes through your pool, so that you must always be afraid of passers-by.”

“Thank you,” said the other Frog; “you are very kind, but I am quite content here. There is water enough; those who pass never trouble me; and as to food, I had a good dinner day before yesterday. I am used to this place, you know, and do not like change. But come and see me as often as you can.”

The next time the Frog from the pond came to visit his friend, he could not find him.

“Too late!” sang a Bird, who lived in a tree that overhung the pool.

“What do you mean?” said the Frog.

“Dead and gone!” said the Bird. “Run over by a wagon and killed, two days ago, and a big Hawk came and carried him off.”

“Alas! if he had only taken my advice, he might have been well and happy now,” said the Frog, as he turned sadly towards home;

“but he would have his way, and I have lost my friend.”

THE LION AND THE MOUSE

IT ONCE happened that a hungry Lion woke to find a Mouse just under his paw. He caught the tiny creature, and was about to make a mouthful of him, when the little fellow looked up, and began to beg for his life.

In most piteous tones the Mouse said: “Do not eat me. I meant no harm coming so near you. If you would only spare my life now, O Lion, I would be sure to repay you!”

The Lion laughed scornfully at this, but it amused him so much that he lifted his paw and let his brave little prisoner go free.

It befell the great Lion, not long afterward, to be in as evil a case as had been the helpless Mouse. And it came about that his life was to be saved by the keeping of the promise he had ridiculed.

He was caught by some hunters, who bound him with a strong rope, while they went away to find means for killing him.

Hearing his loud groans, the Mouse came promptly to his rescue, and gnawed the great rope till the royal captive could set himself free.

“You laughed,” the little Mouse said, “at the idea of my being able to be of service to you. You little thought I should repay you. But you see it has come to pass that you are as grateful to me as I was once to you. The weak have their place in the world as truly as the strong.”

THE MOUSE, THE CAT, AND THE COCK

A YOUNG Mouse, that had not seen much of the world, came home one day and said: “O mother! I have had such a fright! I saw a great creature strutting about on two legs. I wonder what it was! On his head was a red cap. His eyes were fierce and stared at me, and he had a sharp mouth.

“All at once he stretched his long neck, and opened his mouth so wide, and roared so loud, that I thought he was going to eat me up, and I ran home as fast as I could. I was sorry that I met him, for I had just seen a lovely animal, greater even than he, and would have made friends with her. She had soft fur like ours, only it was gray and white. Her eyes were mild and sleepy, and she looked at me very gently and waved her long tail from side to side. I thought she wished to speak to me, and I would have gone near her, but that dreadful thing began to roar, and I ran away.”

“My dear child,” said the mother, “you did well to run away. The fierce thing you speak of would have done you no harm. It was a harmless Cock. But that soft, pretty thing was the Cat, and she would have eaten you up in a minute, for she is the worst enemy you have in the whole world. Appearances are not always to be trusted.”

THE AX AND THE TREES

ONCE upon a time a man came to a forest to ask the Trees if they would give him some wood to make a handle for his Ax.

The Trees thought this was very little to ask of them, and they gave him a good piece of hard wood. But as soon as the man had fitted the handle to his Ax, he went to work to chop down all the best Trees in the forest.

As they fell groaning and crashing to the ground, they said mournfully one to another, “Our kindness was misplaced. We suffer for our own foolishness.”

THE JACKDAW AND THE SHEEP

A JACKDAW sat chattering upon the back of a Sheep.

“Peace, I pray you, noisy bird,” said the Sheep. “You are wearing my life out If I were a dog, you would not think of serving me so.”

“That is true,” replied the Jackdaw; “you are right. I never meddle with the surly and revengeful; but I love to plague gentle, helpless creatures like you, that can not do me any harm in return.”

“I wonder if all cowards are not like the Jackdaw,” mused the Sheep, as it went on contentedly browsing on the hillside.

THE CAT AND THE COCK

A HUNGRY Cat, who had tried in vain to find a Mouse for her supper, at last caught a young Cock.

"You are a noisy creature," she said to him, "and have lived long enough. You disturb every one in the house by your loud crowing in the morning."

"You are mistaken," answered the Cock; "I disturb no one. I crow to wake the family. They would not know when to get up but for me."

"Never mind," said the Cat; "don't trouble yourself to make excuses; I have had no breakfast and no dinner; I shall eat you for my supper."

THE WOLF AND THE GOAT

A WOLF saw a Goat feeding at the top of a steep precipice, where he could not reach her.

"My dear friend," said the Wolf, "be careful! I am afraid you will fall and break your neck. Do come down to the meadow, where the grass is fresh and green."

"Are you very hungry?" said the Goat. "And is it your dinner time? And would you like to eat me? I think I will not go down to the meadow to-day, thank you."

And she capered contentedly about on the edge of the rock, as safe from falling as she was from the greedy Wolf with his false care for her.


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THE HEN AND THE SWALLOW

A HEN who had no nest of her own found some eggs, and, in the kindness of her heart, thought she would take care of them, and keep them warm.

But they were the eggs of a viper; and by and by the little snakes began to come out of the shell.

A Swallow, who was passing, stopped to look at them.

“What a foolish creature you were, to hatch those eggs!” said the Swallow. “Don’t you know that as soon as the little snakes grow big enough, they will bite some one—probably *you* first of all?”

“Then,” said the Hen, as she stood on one leg and looked at the ugly little snakes, first with one eye and then with the other, “you think I have done more harm than good?”

“I certainly do,” said the Swallow, as she flew away. “Good judgment is better than thoughtless kindness.”

STONE BROTH

ONE very stormy day a Poor Man came to a rich man's house to beg.

"Away with you!" said the servants; "do not come here troubling us."

Then said the Man, "Only let me come in and dry my clothes at your fire." This, the servants thought, would not cost them anything; so they let him come in.

The Poor Man then asked the cook to let him have a pan, so that he could make some stone broth.

"Stone broth!" said the cook. "I should like to see how you can make broth out of a stone"; so she gave him a pan. The Man filled it with water from the pump, and then put into it a stone from the road. "But you must have some salt," said the cook.

"Do you think so?" courteously replied the stranger. She gave him the salt, and before long she added some peas, some mint, and thyme. At last she brought him all the scraps of meat she could find, so that the Poor Man's broth made him a good dinner.

"You see," said the Man, "that if you only try long enough, and are cheerful, making the best of what you have, you may at last get what you want."

THE MULE AND THE GRASSHOPPERS

A MULE, hearing some Grasshoppers chirping, was much pleased with the sound, and wished that he could make such sweet music.

"What sort of food do you eat," said he to the Grasshoppers, "that your voices are so charming?"

The Grasshoppers replied, "We live upon dew."

The Mule then decided that he too would live upon dew. And in a short time he died of hunger, just from trying to do what he saw others doing, without first learning their reason for it.

THE GNAT AND THE BULL

A GNAT, who had flown about until he was tired, sat down to rest on the horn of a Bull.

After sitting there a long time, he thought he would go home. So he made a loud buzzing noise and said to the Bull, “Would you like to have me stay longer, or shall I go now?”

“Just as you please,” said the Bull. “I did not know when you came, and I am sure I shall not miss you when you go away.”

“What an amount of self-importance for such a tiny creature,” thought the sleepy Bull.

A FOX AND A CRAB

A HUNGRY Fox surprised a Crab, who had left the sea and was lying upon the beach.

"What good luck, to find a breakfast so easily," said the Fox, as he pounced upon him.

"Well," said the Crab, when he found that he was to be eaten, "this comes of going where I have no business; I should have stayed in the water, where I belonged."

THE DONKEY AND THE FROGS

A DONKEY was one day walking through a pond, with a load of wood on his back, when his foot slipped and he fell.

"Help, help!" cried the poor Donkey, as he struggled and kicked in the water. But his load was so heavy that he could not rise, and he groaned aloud.

The Frogs heard his groans but showed no pity. "What a foolish fellow," said they, "to make such a fuss about a little fall into the water. What would you say if you had to live here always, as we do?"

THE NURSE AND THE WOLF

A WOLF, prowling about to find something for supper, heard a Child crying in a house. Listening, he heard the Nurse say, “Stop crying this minute, or I will throw you out of doors to the Wolf.”

The Wolf sat down near the door, thinking within himself, “I shall soon have a good supper.”

The Baby cried and cried, till at last it went to sleep; and then the Wolf heard the Nurse say: “There, that’s a good Baby. If the naughty old Wolf comes for my darling, we’ll beat him, so we will.”

The Wolf trotted sadly home. On his way he met the Fox.

“What makes you look so sour and so forlorn, my friend?” said the Fox.

“Don’t speak to me!” growled the Wolf. “I have lost my supper just because I believed what a Nurse said to a Baby.”

THE CAT AND THE MARTINS

A CAT, hearing that some Birds who lived in a martin box near by were ill, put on his spectacles and his overcoat, and made himself look as much as possible like a doctor, and went and knocked at their door.

"I hear that you are all sick," said he, "and have come to call on you. Let me in, and I will give you some medicine and cure you."

"No, thank you," said the Birds, who saw his whiskers and knew he was their enemy the Cat; "we are well enough—much better than if we should open our door and let you in."

THE COCK AND THE FOX

A FOX went prowling about a farmyard, not seeing a trap which the farmer had hidden there to catch him. Snap! went the trap, and the Fox found himself held fast by a strong cord. He howled horribly and was almost beside himself with rage.

A Cock, hearing the noise, flew to the top of the fence. Looking over, he saw the Fox and was terribly frightened—not daring to go near him, even when he found that his old enemy could not move. But he could not refrain from giving an exulting crow.

The Fox, looking up, said: “Dear Mr. Cock, you see how unlucky I have been, and all because I came here to inquire after your health. Do please help me to break this string, or at least do not let any one know that I am caught until I have time to gnaw it with my teeth.”

The Cock said nothing, but went as fast as he could and told his master all about it. So the crafty Fox was served as the Cock thought he deserved to be.

THE HORSE AND HIS RIDER

A CAVALRY officer took the greatest of pains with his charger. As long as the war lasted, the Horse was looked upon as a companion and fellow helper. He was carefully groomed every day, and fed with hay and oats.

But when the war was over, the allowance of grain and hay ceased, and the Horse was fed with chaff and whatever he might find by the wayside. He was made a drudge too, and was often forced to carry loads much too heavy for his strength.

When, in course of time, war was again proclaimed, the soldier brought his military trappings and put them on his charger; and, after having arrayed his own person with his heavy coat of mail, he mounted to ride to battle.

But the Horse, no longer equal to the burden, fell down straightway under the weight.

"You must go to the war on foot," he said to his master, "for you have transformed me from a horse into an ass."

He who slights his friends when he does not need their best offices must not expect them to serve him when he needs them again.

THE FOX AND THE STORK

THE Fox and the Stork were on what seemed to be friendly terms. The Fox invited the Stork to a dinner for which nothing was provided but a soup, which was served on a wide, shallow dish.

The Fox presided at the feast with great dignity, and, as if to set his friend an example, proceeded to lap the soup. This *he* could do with the greatest ease; but the Stork, who could only dip the tip of his bill in the dish and get the tempting odor, fared badly. He praised the dinner, but soon took leave, saying to his friend that he should do himself the honor to return the compliment.

This he did in a few days, but ordered that nothing be brought to the table but some minced meat in a glass jar, the neck of which was so narrow and deep that, though he himself could eat very well, the Fox could not reach it, and so could only lick the brim for the bits that clung to it.

Reynard could not conceal his vexation, but was obliged to own that he had been rightly used.

They who practice cunning must expect to suffer by it, and he laughs best who laughs last.

THE DOG, THE COCK, AND THE FOX

A DOG and a Cock, who were neighbors, once made a little journey together.

When night came on, the Cock flew up into the branches of a tree to sleep; and the Dog found a hollow in the trunk, into which he could creep and lie down. They slept well, and as soon as the morning dawned, the Cock, as usual, began to crow.

A Fox, hearing the sound and thinking he was sure of a good breakfast, came and stood under the branches. “Good morning,” said he to the Cock.

“How glad I am to make the acquaintance of the owner of such a voice! Will you not come down here where we can chat a little?”

“Thank you, I cannot just yet,” replied the Cock; “but if you would like to come up here, go around the tree trunk, and wake my servant. He will open the door and let you in.”

The Fox did as he was requested; but as he approached the tree, the Dog sprang upon him, and tore him to pieces.

“Two can play at the same game,” said the Cock, as he looked down upon the scene.



THE FLY AND THE MOTH

A FLY alighted one night upon a pot of honey, and finding it very much to his taste, began to eat it along the edges.

Little by little, however, he had soon crept away from the edge and into the jar, until at last he found himself stuck fast. His legs and wings had become so smeared with the honey that he could not use them.

Just then a Moth flew by, and seeing him struggling there, said: “Oh, you foolish Fly! Were you so greedy as to be caught like that? Your appetite was too much for you.”

The poor Fly had nothing to say in reply. What the Moth said was true. But by and by, when evening came, he saw the Moth flying round a lighted candle in the giddiest way, and each time a little closer to the flame, until at last he flew straight into it and was burned.

“What!” said the Fly, “are you foolish, too? You found fault with me for being too fond of honey; yet all your wisdom did not keep you from playing with fire.” It is sometimes easier to see the foolishness of others than to detect our own.

THE BOY BATHING

A LITTLE Boy once went in bathing where the water was too deep for him. When he found himself sinking, he cried out to a Man who was passing by, to come and help him.

"Can't you swim?" asked the Man.

"No," replied the Boy, "I don't know how."

"How foolish you were, then," said the Man, "to go into deep water! Didn't you know better?"

"Oh, good sir, please help me now, or I shall drown!" cried the Boy. "You can scold me when I am safe on shore again."

THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

A HARE one day made himself merry over the slow pace of the Tortoise, vainly boasting of his own great speed in running.

The Tortoise took the laughing and boasting in good part. “Let us try a race,” she said; “I will run with you five miles for five dollars, and the Fox out yonder shall be the judge.”

The Hare agreed, a course was arranged, and away they started together. True to his boasting the Hare was out of sight in a moment.

The Tortoise never for a moment stopped, but jogged along with a slow, steady pace, straight to the end of the course. Full of sport, the Hare first outran the Tortoise, then fell behind. Having come midway to the goal, he began to nibble at the young herbage, and to amuse himself in many ways. After a while, the day being warm, he lay down for a nap, saying: “She is behind me now. If she should go by, I can easily enough catch up.”

When the Hare awoke, the Tortoise was not in sight; and running as fast as he could, he found her comfortably dozing at their goal.

Those who are very quick are apt to be too sure. Slow and steady often wins the race.

THE ARAB AND HIS CAMEL

AS AN Arab sat in his tent one cold night, he saw the curtain gently lifted, and the face of his Camel looking in.

"What is it?" he asked kindly.

"It is cold, master," said the Camel; "suffer me, I pray thee, to hold my head within the tent."

"By all means," replied the hospitable Arab; and the Camel stood with his head inside the tent.

"Might I also warm my neck a little?" he entreated after a moment.

The Arab readily consented, and the Camel's neck was thrust within the tent.

He stood, moving his head from side to side uneasily, and presently said: "It is awkward standing thus. It would take but little more room if I were to place my forelegs inside the tent."

"You may place your forelegs within the tent," said the Arab. And now he had to move a little to make room, for the tent was small.

The Camel spoke again: "I keep the tent open by standing thus, and make it cold for us both. May I not stand wholly within?"

"Yes," said the Arab, whose compassion included his beast as well as himself; "come in wholly if you wish." But now the tent proved to be too small to hold both.

"I think, after all," said the Camel, as he crowded himself in, "that there will not be room here for us both. You are the smaller; it will be best for you to stand outside. There will be room then for me." So he pushed a little, and the Arab with all haste went outside the tent.

THE FOX WHO HAD LOST HIS TAIL

A FOX was once caught in a trap by his tail. He succeeded in getting away, but was forced to leave his “brush” behind. He soon realized that his life would be a burden, from the shame and ridicule to which his tailless condition would expose him.

“I must not own that it is a misfortune not to have a bushy tail,” he said to himself.

So he set about to induce all the other Foxes to part with theirs. At the next assembly he boldly made a speech, in which he set forth the advantages of his present state.

“The tail,” he said, “is no real part of our persons, and besides being very ugly to see, it exposes us to danger from the dogs. I have never moved about with such ease as since I gave up my own.”

When he had ended his speech, a sly old Fox arose, and giving his own brush a graceful wave, said, with the kind of sneer which all Foxes know so well how to give, that if he had lost by accident his own tail, he should, without doubt, agree with his friend; but that, as the brush was a fox’s chief ornament and distinction, until such a mishap should occur as had befallen his friend, he should retain his own and should advise the others to do the same. And the vote to retain the tails was given by a wave of the brush. Yet many fashions have been set by Foxes who have met with some such accident.

THE BOYS AND THE FROGS

SOME Boys, playing near a pond, saw a number of Frogs sporting in the water.

“Let us see if we can hit them; it is great fun to make them dive,” said one; and they all began to pelt them with stones.

At last, after several Frogs had been hit, one of them put his head up out of the water, and said: “Pray stop, Boys. Throwing stones at us may be great sport for you, but it is death to us. We have done you no harm, and alas! you have already killed or wounded three of our family.”

THE SWALLOW AND THE OTHER BIRDS

A WISE Swallow, seeing a man sow seed in a field, went behind him and picked up one of the seeds to see what it was.

She found that it was flax. “When this flax has grown,” she said to herself, “the man will make it into linen thread and use it to make nets for catching us Birds.”

So she went to all the Birds and told them what she had discovered, begging them to come and help her eat up the flaxseed before it should sprout. “This field,” she said, “is as much ours as it is his. And while one of us can do but little, all working together can quickly remove our danger.”

But the Birds would not listen to her. Not one of them could she persuade to help her pick up the seeds which the farmer had sown.

By and by the flax sprang up, and the Swallow tried again to persuade the Birds to pull the young flax before it grew large. But they all made fun of her caution and let the flax keep growing.

When she saw how heedless all the Birds were, the Swallow would have nothing more to do with them, but left the woods where they lived and came among men, building her nests in barns and along the eaves of houses.

THE FARMER AND THE SNAKE

ONE wintry day a Farmer found a Snake lying on the frozen ground, quite stiff and nearly dead with cold.

In a fit of compassion the Farmer brought him carefully to his house, and laid him near the fire. But as soon as the Snake began to feel the pleasant warmth, he raised his head and tried to bite his kind friend.

“Oh!” said the Farmer, “is that the way you repay me for my trouble? You are a venomous creature, I am sure, and the sooner you die the better.” And he killed him with one blow of his stick.

THE RAVEN AND THE SWAN

A RAVEN saw a snowy Swan floating on the lake.

"No wonder the Swan is so white," thought the Raven, as he looked at his own black feathers. "I dare say *I* should be, if I were all the time washing myself. I believe I'll try it."

Then he left his home, where he always found plenty to eat, and came and lived by the lake. He washed himself from morning till night, but he grew no whiter; and, as he found nothing to eat, he came near dying for want of food.

THE BIRDS, THE BEASTS, AND THE BAT

THERE was once a big battle between the Birds and the Beasts. Hesitating as to which to join, the Bat kept away from the contest and looked on till he thought the Beasts would win the day.

Then he went among them. When they saw him, they said, “But you are a Bird.”

“No, indeed,” said the Bat. “Look at my body covered with hair and at my mouth with its sharp teeth.”

After a while, as the fight went on, the Birds began to have the best of it, and then away flew the Bat to their side. “What Beast comes here?” said the Birds.

“I am not a Beast,” said the Bat; “I am a Bird. Look at my wings. This is my battle as truly as it is yours.”

But the Birds would have nothing to do with him. And to this day the Bat seems ashamed to show himself in the daytime but hides in lonely places, away from all other creatures, and only flits about noiselessly in the dark, when both Birds and Beasts are asleep.

THE MAN, HIS SON, AND HIS DONKEY

A MAN and his Son were once driving their Donkey along a country road, to sell him at the fair. They soon passed some girls, who were drawing water at a well.

"Look," said one of the girls; "see those silly people trudging along in the dust, while their Donkey walks at his ease."

The Man heard what they said, and put his boy on the Donkey's back. They had not gone far before they came to some old men.

"See here, now," said one of them to the others, "this shows that what I said is true. Nowadays the young take no care of the old. See this boy riding while his poor old father has to walk by his side."

Hearing this, the Man told his Son to get down, and he mounted the Donkey himself. In a little while they met three women with children in their arms.

"For shame!" said the women. "How can you let that poor boy walk when he looks so tired, and you ride like a king?"

The Man then took the boy up behind him on the saddle, and they rode on to the town. Just before they got there, some young men stopped them and said:

"Is that Donkey yours?"

"Yes," said the Man.

"One would not think so," said they, "by the way you load him. You look more fit to carry him than he to carry you."

So the Man and the boy got off, tied the Donkey's legs with a rope, fastened him to a pole, and, each taking one end of the pole, carried him along, while every one they met laughed outright.

By and by they came to a bridge. Then the Donkey began to kick, and breaking the rope, fell into the water and was drowned.

The old Man and his Son made their way home as best they could, thinking to themselves, "When we try to please everybody, we please nobody."

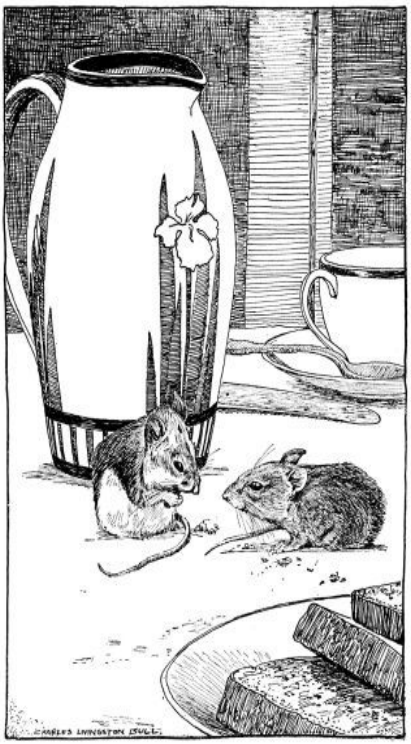
THE COUNTRY MOUSE AND THE CITY MOUSE

A MOUSE from the city went on a visit to a friend in the country.

The Country Mouse, with many apologies, brought out the best that he had and waited on his guest.

There was plenty of oatmeal and peas, a nice scrap of bacon, and even a paring of cheese for dessert. While the guest was dining, the Country Mouse, out of politeness, would eat none of these dainties, for fear there should not be enough for both, but nibbled a piece of straw to keep his guest company.

When the dinner was over, the City Mouse said: “Old friend, I thank you for your courtesy, but I must have a plain talk with you. I do not see how you can bear to live so poor a life in this little hole. Why not come with me to the city, where you will have all sorts of good things to eat and a gay time? You are wasting your life. When you have once seen the city you will never be willing to return to this quiet place.”



After being urged a long time, the Country Mouse at last agreed to go to the city that very night. So they started off together, and about midnight came to the great house where the City Mouse lived. In the dining room was spread a rich feast; and the City Mouse,[105] [106] with many airs and graces, ran about the table, and, picking out the nicest bits, waited upon his country friend, who, amazed at the good things, ate to his heart's content.

All at once the doors of the dining room were flung open, and in came a crowd of people, followed by a big dog, who barked loudly and ran about the room.

The Mice rushed for the hole, to escape, and the little field Mouse almost died of fright. As soon as he was able to speak, he said:

“Well! if this is city life, I have seen enough of it. Stay in this fine place if you like. I shall be only too glad to get home to my quiet, safer, country house and my plain oatmeal and peas.”

THE COCK AND THE JEWEL

“COME, my dears,” said a Cock to his hens one morning; “I am hungry, and so are you. Let us go out. I will scratch up some nice worms and beetles for our breakfast.”

The hens stood waiting while he scratched.

But the first thing that he found was neither a beetle nor a worm but a precious stone. It may have been a ruby or an emerald.

“Dear me!” said the Cock; “what is this? a Jewel! How glad anybody else might be to have found such a prize; but I have no need of it. I would rather have a few kernels of good corn than all the Jewels in the world.”

“And so would we,” said the hens. “Nothing can do us good if it is not a thing that we ourselves want.”

THE OLD HOUND

ONCE there was a beautiful Hound. He had long, silky ears and a smooth, bright skin; and he was not only beautiful but strong and swift, and a faithful servant. Whenever his master went hunting, the Hound went with him and chased the deer. After many years the Hound grew old and feeble, but still he followed his master, with the other dogs.

One day a stag had been chased till it was almost tired out, and the old Hound came up with it and seized it; but his teeth were old and broken and could not hold fast, so that the stag gave a sudden bound and got away. Just then the master rode up, and seeing what had happened, was very angry. He took his whip to strike his faithful old Hound.

"Hold! hold! O dear Master," said he, "do not strike me. I meant to do well. It is not my fault that I am old. Remember what I have been, if you do not like me as I am now."

THE VAIN JACKDAW

JUPITER having determined, it is said, to appoint a sovereign over the birds, proclamation was made that on a certain day the candidates should present themselves before him, and he would choose the most beautiful to be king.

The Jackdaw, knowing his own ugliness, yet wishing to rule over the birds, searched through woods and fields for feathers which had fallen from the wings of his companions, and stuck them all over his body.

When the appointed day arrived, and the birds had assembled, the Jackdaw made his appearance in his many-feathered finery, and Jupiter proposed to make him king.

Upon seeing this, the other birds were indignant, and each plucking from the Jackdaw his own kind of feathers, they left the proposed king a plain Jackdaw with no claim to superior beauty.

THE DONKEY AND THE LAP DOG

THERE was once a man who had a Donkey and a little pet Dog. The Donkey worked all day in the fields and slept in the barn at night.

But the Lap Dog frisked about and played, jumping in his master's lap whenever he pleased, feeding from his hand, and sleeping by his bed at night.

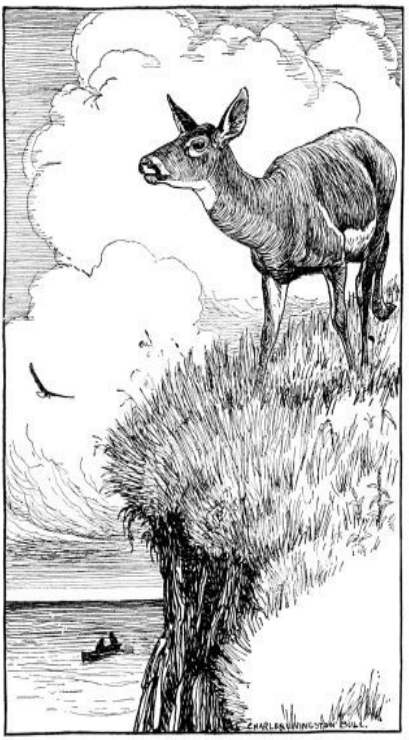
The Donkey grumbled a great deal at this. "How hard I work!" said he, "and I never get any pay but blows and hard words. Why should I not be petted like that wretched little Dog? It may be partly my own fault. Perhaps if I played with my master as he does, I too might be treated like him."

So the Donkey pushed his way into the house, and jumped up on his master's knee, putting his forefeet on his shoulders and giving a loud bray.

The master, almost deafened by the noise and in danger from the great clumsy creature, called out, "Help! help!" and the servants, running in, drove the Donkey out of doors with sticks and stones.

THE ONE-EYED DOE

A DOE, blind in one eye, used to graze as near as she could to the edge of a cliff, so that she might keep her blind eye to the water, while with the other she kept watch against the approach of hunters or hounds on the shore.



Some boatmen sailing by saw her standing thus on the edge of a cliff, and finding that she did not perceive[113]
[114] their approach, they came very close, and taking aim, shot her.

Finding herself wounded, she said, “O unhappy creature that I am, to take such care as I did against the dangers of the land, and then, after all, to find this seashore, to which I had come for safety, so much more perilous!”

THE CAMEL

WHEN man first beheld the Camel, he was so awed by his vast size that he fled away from him in terror.

But after a time, perceiving the meekness and gentleness of the animal's temper, he summoned courage to approach him. The Camel so readily obeyed the commands that were given him, and seemed so wanting in spirit, that at last the man put a bridle in his mouth and set a child to guide him.

Since then Camels are valued for the service they render.

THE WOLF AND THE HOUSE DOG

A WOLF met a Dog, and seeing that he looked fat and sleek, said to him, “How does it happen, my friend, that you are so plump, while I, although I run after game day and night, am half starved?”

“Why,” said the Dog, “I do not have to run after my food. I only guard the house at night, and all the family pet me and feed me with scraps from their own plates. Come and live with me, and you shall be as well off as I am.”

“That I should like,” said the Wolf. “I will at least go with you and try the life.”

As they trotted along the road together, the Wolf saw a mark on the Dog’s neck, and asked him what it was.

“Oh, that is nothing,” said the Dog; “only a little mark made by the fretting of my chain.”

“Do you wear a chain?” asked the Wolf; “and do you mean to say that you are tied up?”

“Why, yes,” said the Dog; “they tie me in the daytime, but at night I can go where I please. It is a bit annoying at first, but one soon gets used to it.”

“Good-by,” said the Wolf; “that is enough for me. Though I may not be fat, I will at least be free.”

THE OAK AND THE REED

ON THE bank of a river grew a tall Oak Tree. It stood with its roots firm in the ground, and its head high in the air, and said to itself: “How strong I am! Nothing shall make me bow. I look down upon all the other trees.”

But one day there was a storm. The terrible unseen wind came and struck the proud Oak. Crash! went the trunk, down came all the beautiful branches, and the Tree fell into the river. As the water carried it away, it passed a Reed that grew on the bank. The little Reed stood up tall and slender, and looked at the poor broken Tree.

“O Reed,” said the Tree, “how did it happen that you were not broken down and spoiled when the wind came? You are so little and weak, and I was so strong and proud.”

“Ah, poor Tree!” said the Reed, “that is just the reason that the wind did not hurt me. I bent low until it had gone by, but you stood stiff and tried to stop it on its way. No one can stop the wind. It must go where it is sent, but it will not hurt those who are not proud and stubborn.”

THE DOG AND THE HARE

A DOG once gave chase to a Hare. Having not long since made a good meal, the Dog was not hungry, and so was not in haste to end the sport by killing the Hare.



At times he would snap at his prey, and at times play with him and lick[119]
[120] him with his tongue, till at last the bewildered Hare cried:

"Pray tell me, are you an enemy or a friend? If a friend, why do you bite me so? and if an enemy, why do you caress me?"

No one can trust a person who is neither the one thing nor the other.

THE HAWK, KITE, AND PIGEONS

THE Pigeons, terrified by the frequent appearance of a Kite, asked the Hawk to help them.

"You are the only bird of our acquaintance," they said, "that can protect us from our enemy. If you will take care of us, we shall feel safe."

The Hawk at once consented, and took up his abode in the dovecote. But when the Pigeons had let him come in, they found that he slew more of them in a single day than the Kite could possibly pounce upon in a whole year.

The oldest, wisest pigeon among them said: "When we are in trouble, we must not forget that there are other dangers than the ones we are suffering from. There is a proverb among men that tells them to avoid a remedy that is worse than the disease."

THE WAR HORSE AND THE MULE

A WAR Horse, ready for battle, with his splendid saddle and jingling bridle, came galloping swiftly along the highroad, his hoofs sounding like thunder on the hard ground.

A poor old Mule, with a heavy load on his back, was going slowly down the same road.

"Out of my way," said the War Horse, "or I will trample you in the dust!"

The poor Mule made room for him as fast as he could, and the Horse went proudly on his way.

Not long after this the Horse was shot in the eye; and, as he was no longer fit for the army, his fine saddle and bridle were taken off, and he was sold to a farmer, who made him drag heavy loads.

Since he had not been trained to the work, it came hard to him, and he complained bitterly.

The Mule, meeting him soon after, knew him and called out: "Aha! is it you? I thought pride would have a fall some day."

THE WIND AND THE SUN

THE North Wind and the Sun once fell into a dispute as to which was the stronger of the two. They related their most famous exploits, and each ended as he began, by thinking he had the greater power.

Just then a traveler came in sight, and they agreed to test the matter by trying to see which of them could soonest make the traveler remove his cloak.

The boastful North Wind was the first to try, the Sun meanwhile watching behind a gray cloud. He blew a furious blast and nearly tore the cloak from its fastenings; but the Man only held his cloak more closely, and old Boreas spent his strength in vain.

Mortified by his failure to do so simple a thing, the Wind withdrew at last in despair. “I don’t believe you can do it, either,” he said.

Then out came the kindly Sun in all his splendor, dispelling the clouds that had gathered and sending his warmest rays down upon the traveler’s head.

The Man looked up gratefully, but, growing faint with sudden heat, he quickly flung aside his cloak, and hastened for comfort to the nearest shade.

Persuasion is often better than force.

THE BEAR AND THE TWO TRAVELERS

TWO men were traveling together, when a Bear suddenly crossed their path.

One of the men climbed quickly into a tree, and tried to conceal himself in its branches.

Seeing that he must be attacked, the other one fell flat upon the ground; and when the Bear came up, felt him with his snout, and smelt him all over, the man held his breath, feigning death.

The Bear soon left him, for it is said a Bear will not touch a dead body.

When the Bear had gone, the man in the tree came down to join his companion, and, as a pleasant joke, inquired, “What was it that the Bear whispered in your ear when he bent over you for so long?”

His friend replied very gravely: “He gave me this bit of advice, ‘Never travel with a friend who deserts you at the approach of danger.’”

THE TWO GOATS

TWO Goats started at the same moment, from opposite ends, to cross a rude bridge that was only wide enough for one to cross at a time.

Meeting at the middle of the bridge, neither would yield to the other. They locked horns and fought for the right of way, until both fell into the torrent below and were drowned.

THE BULL AND THE CALF

A BULL was once striving with all his might to squeeze himself through a narrow passage which led to his stall.

"I will go through," said a young Calf, "and show you the way. I have done it many a time."

"Save yourself the trouble," said the Bull; "I knew the way before you were born."

THE FAWN AND HIS MOTHER

A YOUNG Fawn once said to his Mother: “I do not see, Mother, how it is that you should be so afraid of the dogs. You are larger than a dog, and swifter; and you are much more used to running. Why is it that the mere mention of a hound puts you into such a terrible fright?”

The Mother smiled upon her brave young son. “I know very well,” she said, “that all you say is true. I look at my long legs, and remember all the advantages that you mention, yet when I hear the bark of but a single dog, I faint with terror.”


CHARLES LIVINGSTON BULL.

THE MULE AND HIS SHADOW

ONE very hot day a Traveler hired a Mule with his driver to carry some merchandise to a distant place.

The way lay across a sandy plain, and the day being intensely hot, the Traveler called upon the driver to stop for rest. To escape from the direct heat of the sun, which was shining in all its strength, the Traveler proceeded to sit down in the shadow of the Mule.

But a violent dispute arose, for the shadow was sufficient for but one, and the driver, a lusty fellow, rudely pushed the Traveler one side, claiming the spot for himself, saying: “When you hired this Mule of me, you said nothing about the shadow. If now you want that too, you must pay for it.”

The discussion grew so violent that they forgot the Mule, who took advantage of his freedom and ran away. And so, in disputing about the shadow they lost the substance.

THE BLIND MAN AND THE LAME MAN

A BLIND Man, being stopped in a bad piece of road, met a Lame Man, and entreated him to help him out of the difficulty into which he had fallen.

"How can I," replied the Lame Man, "since I can scarcely drag myself along? I am lame, and you look very strong."

"I am strong enough," said the other. "I could go if I could but see the way."

"Oh, then we may help each other," said the Lame Man. "If you will take me on your shoulders, we will seek our fortunes together. I will be eyes for you, and you shall be feet for me."

"With all my heart," said the Blind Man. "Let us render each other our mutual services." So he took his lame companion upon his back, and they traveled on with safety and pleasure.

THE TWO POTS

A RIVER carried down, in its stream, two Pots, one made of Earthenware and the other of Brass.

The Brass Pot was disposed to be social. “Since we must be companions, let us be friendly,” he said. “In union is strength. Though we are carried away against our will, it is of no use to repine. We may yet see much good.”

But the Earthen Pot said: “I beg you not to come so near me. I am as much afraid of you as of the river; for if you do but touch me ever so slightly, I shall be sure to break. To be really social and friendly people must have ways and needs in common.”

THE QUACK FROG

THERE was once a Frog who made proclamation that he was a learned physician, able to heal all diseases.

He went so far as to tell the beasts that it was their own fault that they were ill, since if they would but submit to his treatment, he would restore them to perfect health.

A Fox, hearing it, asked: “How is it, since you can do such great things for others, you do not first try to mend your own ugly gait and your wrinkled skin? They who assume to help others should first improve themselves.”

THE WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

A WOLF once clothed himself in the fleece of a sheep, and being mistaken for one of the flock, got into the fold. He had a chance to make way with as many sheep as he liked; but his time for doing so was short, for the Shepherd, coming into the fold during the night, discovered him.

Tying him to a tree, he left him hanging there, still in his sheep's dress, as a warning to other wolves who might be prowling about.

Some shepherds who chanced to pass by saw him there, and stopped to inquire why sheep should be thus served. As they came nearer and saw that it was not a sheep but a Wolf, the Shepherd said, "This is the way I serve a Wolf, even though I find him wearing the habit of a sheep."

THE BOY AND THE FILBERTS

A BOY once thrust his hand into a pitcher nearly filled with Filberts. He grasped as many as his hand could possibly hold; but when he tried to draw out his closed fist, the narrowness of the neck prevented him from doing so. Unwilling to lose his nuts, yet unable to get them by drawing out his hand, he burst into tears and bitterly lamented his hard fortune. A person standing by finally gave him this wise and reasonable advice:

"Be satisfied to take half as many, my boy, and you will get them easily."

THE MISER

A MISER who had buried a lump of gold in the ground came to the spot every day to look at it.

Finding one day that it had been stolen, he began to tear his hair and lament loudly.

A neighbor, seeing him, said: “Pray do not grieve so. Bury a stone in the same hole and fancy it is the gold. It will serve you just as well, for when the gold was there you made no use of it.”

THE WIDOW AND HER LITTLE MAIDS

A WIDOW who had great reputation as a housekeeper, because she was so fond of cleaning, was waited upon by two little Maids.

She herself was wakened before dawn by the crowing of the cock, and would rise at once and call her Maids.

The Maids, who had no taste for such excessive tidiness, and who were kept weary by such constant labor, held a spite against the poor cock for rousing their mistress so early.

“If it were not for him,” they said, “the mistress would sleep till the sun is well up. Let us kill the cock, since there is no other way to stop his loud crowing.”

But the mistress, no longer hearing the cock, was unable to tell the time, and so often woke her Maids in the middle of the night and set them to work.

THE CHARCOAL BURNER AND THE FULLER

A CHARCOAL Burner carried on his trade at his own house. One day he met a friend who was a Fuller, and begged him to come and live with him.

"We shall be far better friends if we live together," he said, "and then our housekeeping expenses will be greatly lessened."

The Fuller replied: "The arrangement would not suit me in the least, for whatever I should take pains to whiten, your charcoal would immediately blacken. I am afraid we should not grow better friends under such circumstances."

THE PORCUPINE AND THE SNAKES

A PRICKLY Porcupine came wandering along one day, looking for a place to live.

He found a family of Snakes in a warm cave, and asked them to let him share their shelter.

The Snakes consented, though much against their will, and the Porcupine crept into their home. But it was not long before they found that his sharp quills stuck into them and hurt them, and they wished they had never let him in.



“Dear Porcupine, please go away,” they said; “you are so large and so prickly.”

But the Porcupine was very rude, and said: “Oh, no. If you do not like it here, you can go away. I find it very comfortable.”

It was too late that the Snakes learned that it is easier to keep an intruder out than to compel him to go when you have once let him in.

THE BUNDLE OF STICKS

AN Old Man had many Sons, who were often quarreling. He tried to make them good friends, but could not. As the end of his life drew near, the old Man called them all to him and showed them a bundle of sticks tied tightly together.

"Now," said the Father, "see if you can break this bundle of sticks."

Each of the Sons in turn took the bundle and tried with all his might to break it, but could not. When all had tried and given it up, the Father said, "Untie the bundle, and each of you take a stick and see if you can break that." This they could do very easily. Then said the Father:

"You saw when the sticks were bound together how strong they were; but as soon as they were untied, you broke them easily. Now, if you will stop quarreling and stand by each other, you will be like the bundle of sticks—no one can do you any harm; but if you do not keep together, you will be as weak as is one of the little sticks by itself, which any one can break."

THE MISCHIEVOUS DOG

THERE was once a Dog who used to run at every one whom he met, but so quietly that no one suspected harm from him till he began to bite his heels.

In order to give notice to strangers that the Dog could not be trusted, and at the same time to punish the Dog himself, the master would sometimes hang a bell about his neck and compel him to drag a heavy clog, which he firmly attached to his collar by a chain.

For a time the Dog hung his head; but seeing that his bell and clog brought him into notice, he grew proud of them, and ran about the market place to display them and attract attention to himself. He even went so far as to give himself airs with the other dogs, who had no such mark of distinction.

An old Hound, seeing it, said: “Why do you make such an exhibition of yourself, as if your bell and clog were marks of merit? They do indeed bring you into notice; but when their meaning is understood, they are marks of disgrace—a reminder that you are an ill-mannered cur. It is one thing to be renowned when our virtues give occasion for it; it is quite another to become notorious for our faults.”

THE DOG AND THE OYSTER

A DOG, seeing an Oyster, took it to be an egg and swallowed it. Soon after, suffering great pain, he said, “It was my greedy haste that brought me this torment.”

THE FOX AND THE LEOPARD

THE Fox and the Leopard once disputed who was the more beautiful. The Leopard exhibited, one by one, the various spots which covered his skin. The Fox, who was even more proud of his wits than of his person, interrupted him at last by saying: “Yet when all is said, how much more beautiful am I, who am decorated not simply in body but in mind. The person should be of more value than his coat.”

THE DOGS AND THE HIDES

SOME Dogs, famished with hunger, saw cowhides steeping in a river, close by a tannery, and thought they might be eaten. Not being able to reach them, they set to work first to drink up the river, but burst themselves with drinking long before they reached the hides.

THE WOODMAN AND THE TREES

A WOODMAN came into a forest, and made a petition to the Trees to provide him a handle for his ax.

The Trees, honored by his civility, acceded to his request, and held a consultation to decide which of them should be given him.

Without a dissenting voice, they chose the Ash, who, it seems, is not a favorite among the Trees. Some of them were bold enough to say that bad luck went with the Ash, and that at heart they were not bound to be in sympathy with woodcutters.

The Woodman cut down the Tree, and fitted the handle to his ax; then to the dismay of the Trees, set to work and, with strong strokes, quickly felled all the noblest giants of the forest.

Lamenting too late the fate of his companions, an old Oak remarked to a neighboring Cedar:

"The first step has lost us all. If we had not so willingly given up the rights of the Ash, we might have stood for ages."

THE MILKMAID AND HER PAIL OF MILK

DOLLY the Milkmaid having been a good girl and careful in her work, her mistress gave her a pail of new milk for herself.

With the pail upon her head, Dolly tripped gayly along on her way to the town, whither she was going to sell her milk.

"For this milk," said Dolly, "I shall get a shilling, and with it I will buy twenty of the eggs laid by our neighbor's fine fowls. The mistress will surely lend me a hen, and, allowing for all mishaps, I shall raise a good dozen of chicks. They will be well grown before the next fair-time comes around, and it is then that chickens bring the highest price. I shall be able to sell mine for a guinea.

"Then I shall buy that jacket that I saw in the village the other day, and a hat and ribbons too. And when I go to the fair, how smart I shall be!

"Robin will be there, and will come up and offer to be friends again. But I won't make up too easily; and when he wants me for a partner in the dance, I shall just toss up my head and—"

Here Dolly gave her head the least bit of a toss, when down came the pail, and all the milk was spilled upon the ground.

Poor Dolly! it was her good-by to eggs, chickens, jacket, hat, ribbons, and all.

THE CAT AND THE FOX

THE Cat and the Fox were once talking together in the middle of the forest.

"I do not care what happens," said the Fox, "for I have a thousand tricks, any one of which would get me out of difficulty. But pray, Mrs. Puss," he added, "what would you do if there should be an invasion?"



"I have but one course," Puss replied. "If that would not serve me, I should be undone."

“I am sorry for you,” said the Fox. “I would gladly teach you one or two of my tricks, but it is not wise to trust another. We must each take care for himself.”

These words were hardly spoken, when a pack of hounds came upon them in full cry.

The Cat, by means of her one well-proved safeguard, ran up a tree and sat serenely among the branches. “This is my way,” she said to the Fox. “What is yours to be?”

The Fox, with all his thousand tricks, was not able to get out of sight, and fell a prey to the dogs.

THE MONKEY AND THE CAT

A MONKEY and a Cat lived in the same family, and it was hard to tell which was the greater thief.

One day, as they were roaming together, they spied some chestnuts roasting in the ashes of a fire.

"Come," said the cunning Monkey, "we shall not go dinnerless to-day. Your claws are better than mine for the purpose; pull the chestnuts out of the ashes and you shall have half."

Puss pulled them out, burning her paws very much in doing so. When she had stolen every one, she turned to the Monkey for her share of the booty; but, to her chagrin, she could find no chestnuts, for he had eaten them all.

THE WOLF AND THE SHEPHERD

FOR a long time the Wolf had followed the Sheep without attempting to injure one of them.

The Shepherd stood on his guard against him for a while, and kept strict watch that he did not come too near. But as day after day passed and the Wolf showed no disposition to injure any of the flock, he allowed him to approach nearer, till at last he came among the Sheep, and seemed to watch over them like a dog.

“He is really quite a help to me,” said the Shepherd to himself; “and I have never seen him make the slightest effort to seize a sheep or a lamb.”

So, having occasion to go to town one day, he left his flock in the care of the Wolf, whom he regarded as a guardian over them.

But no sooner was the man gone, than the Wolf, seeing his opportunity, fell upon the Sheep and destroyed the greater part of them.

“I have been rightly served,” said the Shepherd, on his return. “Why did I not know better than to trust my Sheep to their worst enemy? Soon or late, nature will show itself.”

THE WOLF, THE FOX, AND THE APE

A WOLF accused of theft a Fox, who utterly denied the charge, whereupon an Ape undertook to adjudge the matter in question.

When each had fully stated his case, the Ape pronounced this sentence:

"I am fully satisfied that you, Wolf, never lost what you claim." Then turning to the Fox, he said, "And I believe you to have done that which you so stoutly deny."

THE BLIND MAN AND THE WHELP

A BLIND Man was accustomed to distinguish different animals by touching them with his hands.

The whelp of a wolf was brought him, with the request that he should feel it and tell what it was.

Being in doubt, he said, “I do not quite know whether it is the cub of a fox or the whelp of a wolf; but this I know full well, that it would not be safe to admit it to the sheepfold.”

THE SPENDTHRIFT AND THE SWALLOW

A YOUNG man who had been a great spendthrift, and had run through all the money he had inherited, and even sold all his outer clothing except his cloak, saw a Swallow skimming over the meadows in the early springtime and twittering gayly. Believing that summer was really come, he sold his cloak also.

The next day there happened to be a severe frost, and, shivering himself, he found the Swallow lying frozen and stiff upon the ground.

“Unhappy bird,” he said, “had you not come before your time, I should not now be so wretched, and you might have escaped your fate. A single swallow does not make a summer.”

THE BOAR AND THE FOX

A BOAR stood whetting his tusks against a tree.

“What do you mean,” asked a Fox, “by such warlike preparation? There is no enemy in sight.”

“When the enemy is in sight,” said the Boar, “it is time to think of something else.”

HERCULES AND THE WAGONER

AS A WAGONER drove his wagon through a miry lane, the wheels stuck fast in the clay, so that the horses could proceed no further.

The Man, without making the least effort to remedy the matter, fell upon his knees and began to call upon Hercules to come and help him out of his trouble.

“Lazy fellow,” said Hercules, “lay your own shoulder to the wheel. Stir yourself and do what you can. Then, if you want aid from the gods, you shall have it. Remember the proverb, Heaven helps those who help themselves.”

THE MULES AND THE ROBBERS

TWO Mules, laden with packs, were trudging along the highway. One carried panniers filled with money, the other sacks of grain.

The Mule that carried the treasure walked with head erect and stately step, jingling the bells about his neck as he went.

His companion followed at a quiet, easy pace.

Suddenly a band of Robbers sprang upon them, attracted by the strong, proud step and the jingling bells. The Mule that carried the gold made so great an ado that the Robbers seized his pack, wounding him with their weapons, and, hearing footsteps, fled.

“I am glad,” said the other, “that I was thought of so little consequence, for I have lost nothing, nor am I hurt with any wound.”

THE SWALLOW AND THE CROW

THE Swallow and the Crow were once contending about their plumage. The Crow finally put an end to the dispute by saying, “Your feathers are well enough now while it is warm, but mine protect me against the winter.”

JUPITER AND THE BEE

A BEE made Jupiter a present of a pot of honey, which was so kindly taken that he bade her ask what she would in exchange.

The Bee, who was nursing a private spite for the loss of some of her winter's store, desired of Jupiter that wherever she should set her sting it might be mortal.

Jupiter was loath to leave mankind at the mercy of a little spiteful insect, and was annoyed at the ill nature shown in her wish. He said, therefore, that while, for his promise's sake, he would give her the power to harm, she must be careful how she used the power, for where she planted her sting, she would leave it, and would thereby risk her own life.

Ill will often does greater harm to the one who acts from it than to the one on whom it falls.

THE TWO TRAVELERS

AS TWO men were traveling through a wood, one of them took up an ax which he saw lying upon the ground. “Look here,” said he to his companion; “I have found an ax.”

“Don’t say *I* have found it,” said the other, “but *we*. As we are companions, we ought to share it between us.”

“No,” said the first, “I found the ax. It is mine.”

They had not gone far when they heard the owner of the ax pursuing them, and calling out to them in great passion.

“We are in for it now,” said he who had the ax.

“Nay,” said the other; “say *I* am in for it, not *we*. When you thought you had a prize, you would not let me share it with you, and now you cannot expect me to share in the danger.”

THE KID AND THE WOLF

A KID, mounted on a high rock where she felt safe, bestowed all manner of abuse upon a Wolf on the ground below.

The Wolf replied: “Do not think, silly little creature, that you can annoy me. This ill language that you are using I regard as coming, not from you, but from the safe place on which you stand. You would be in a different mood if you were down here by my side.”

THE GOURD AND THE PINE

A GOURD was once planted close beside a large and noble Pine Tree. The season was kindly, and the Gourd shot itself up in a short time, climbing by the boughs and twining about them, till it covered and overtopped the Tree itself.

The leaves were so large and the flowers and fruit so fair that the Gourd, comparing them with the slender needles of the Pine, had the assurance to think itself of greater value in the comparison.

"Why," said the Gourd, "you have been more years in growing to this stature than I have been days."

"That is true," said the Pine; "but after the many winters and summers that I have endured, the many blasting colds and parching heats, you see me the very same that I was long years ago. Nothing has overcome me. But when your race is put to the proof, the first blight or frost is sure to bring down that pride of yours. In an hour you are stripped of all your glory."

THE HARE AND THE HOUND

A HOUND, having started a Hare which proved to be a capital runner, at length gave up the chase. His master, seeing it, said, “The little one is the best runner, eh?”

“Ah, Master,” answered the Dog, “it’s all very well to laugh; but you do not see the difference between us. He was running for his life, while I was only running for my dinner.”

THE OWL AND THE GRASSHOPPER

AN Owl, who was sitting in a hollow tree, dozing away a long summer afternoon, was much disturbed by a rogue of a Grasshopper, singing in the grass below.

So far from moving away at the request of the Owl, or keeping quiet, the Grasshopper sang all the more, saying that honest people got their sleep at night.



The Owl waited in silence for a while, and then artfully addressed the Grasshopper thus: “I suppose I ought to be angry with you, my

dear, for I confess I would rather sleep than listen to your singing. But if one cannot be allowed to sleep, it is something to be kept awake by such a pleasant little pipe as yours. And now it occurs to[165]
[166] me that I have some delicious nectar with which to reward a musician who sings so sweetly. If you will take the trouble to come up, you shall have a drop. It will clear your voice nicely."

The silly Grasshopper came hopping up to the Owl, who at once caught and killed him, and so finished her nap in comfort.

THE MULE EATING THISTLES

A MULE, laden with choice provision of several sorts, was on his way to the field. His master and the reapers were at work there, and the provision that he carried was for the refreshment of both man and beast.

Seeing a large, strong thistle by the roadside, he stopped to eat it. “Many people would wonder,” thought he, “that, with such dainty food upon my back, I should have appetite for the despised thistle; but to me the bitter, prickly weed has a more savory relish than anything else in the world. Let others choose what they will, but give me a fine, juicy thistle like this, and I shall be content. Every one to his taste. It is wisely ordered that what one rejects should be the choice of another. A wise man has said that a weed is a plant that people have not yet found a use for.”

THE SICK STAG

A STAG, whose joints had become stiff with age, was at great pains to gather an abundant supply of food—enough, as he thought, for the remainder of his days.

He stretched himself beside it, in a quiet, sunny corner of his pasture, and now dozing, now nibbling, was passing a happy old age.

He had been a favorite among his companions, and they now came often, and in great numbers, to call upon him and wish him good luck. He made them welcome in a hospitable manner, and each, as often as he came, helped himself to a little of the food so abundantly provided.

The end of the matter was, that the poor Stag died, not so much from either sickness or old age as from want of the food which his friends had eaten for him. Before doing a thing, it is well sometimes to consider, “What if every one should do it?”

THE WOLF AND THE SHEPHERDS

A WOLF, passing by, saw some Shepherds in a hut, eating for their dinner a haunch of mutton. Approaching them, he said: “Ah! gentlemen, you are feasting on mutton. I like your taste. But what a hue and cry you would raise if *I* were to do it.”

THE BOY AND THE NETTLE

A BOY was once stung by a Nettle. Crying with pain, he ran home and told his mother, saying, “Although it pains me so much, I did but touch it ever so gently, for I had been hurt by it before.”

“That was just it,” said his mother. “It was that which gave you so bad a sting. The next time you have occasion to touch a Nettle, grasp it boldly, with courage and resolution. It will be as soft as silk in your hand and will not hurt you in the least. And you will meet many persons, as well as things, that must be handled in the same way, if you would escape discomfort from them.”

THE HARES AND THE FOXES

THE Hares waged war with the Eagles and called upon the Foxes to help them.

The Foxes replied: “We would willingly have helped you, if we had not known so well who you were and with whom you were fighting. Before we can commit ourselves, we must count the cost.”

MERCURY AND THE WOODMAN

A WOODMAN, felling a tree by the side of a river, let his ax drop by accident into the stream.

Being thus suddenly deprived of the tool by means of which he gained his livelihood, he sat down upon the bank and lamented his hard fate.

To his surprise Mercury appeared and asked him what was the matter. Having heard the story of the man's misfortune, he dived to the bottom of the river, and bringing up a golden ax, inquired if that was the one he had lost.

On his saying that it was not his, Mercury dived a second time, and returning with a silver ax in his hand, again demanded of the Woodman if it was his.

This also the Woodman refused, saying that it was none of his. Mercury disappeared a third time and brought up the ax that the man had lost. This the poor man took with joy and thankfulness.

So pleased was Mercury with the honesty of the man, that he gave him the other two axes in addition to his own.

The Woodman, on his return home, related to his companions all that had happened. One of them resolved to see if he could secure the same good fortune to himself.

He ran to the river and threw his ax in, then sat down upon the bank to lament his sad fate.

Mercury appeared as before and demanded to know the cause of his grief. After hearing the man's account, he dived and brought up a golden ax and asked the man if that was his.

Transported at the sight of the precious metal, the fellow eagerly answered that it was, and greedily attempted to snatch it. The god, detecting his falsehood and greed, not only declined to give him the golden ax but refused to recover for him his own.

THE RAT AND THE ELEPHANT

A RAT, traveling on the highway, met a huge Elephant, bearing his royal master and the master's favorite dog, cat, parrot, and monkey. Behind them came a retinue of servants and many courtiers.

An admiring crowd followed the great beast and his attendants, so that the entire road was filled.

"How foolish you are," said the Rat to the people, "to make such a fuss at seeing an elephant. Is it his great bulk that you so much admire? Mere size is nothing. At most it can only frighten little girls and boys, and I can do that as well. I am a beast as well as he. I have as many legs, and ears, and eyes. If you will take the trouble to compare us, you will see that I have finer parts. What right, then, has he to take up all the highway, which belongs to me as well as to him?"

At this moment, the Cat from her high place spied the Rat. She jumped to the ground and soon convinced him that he was not an Elephant.

THE HUSBANDMAN AND THE STORK

A HUSBANDMAN pitched a net in his fields, to take the cranes and wild geese that came daily to feed upon the newly sown corn.

In this net he captured several cranes and geese, and among them, on one occasion, was a Stork. The cranes and geese accepted their lot as one of the chances to which such lives as theirs were subject; but the Stork was in very sad case and pleaded hard for his life.

Among other reasons why he should not be put to death, the Stork urged that he was neither goose nor crane but a poor, harmless Stork, who performed his duty to his parents as well as ever he could, feeding them when they were old, and carrying them, when required, from place to place upon his back.

“All this may be true,” replied the Husbandman; “but, as I have taken you in bad company, and in the same crime, you must expect to suffer the same punishment.”

THE SATYR AND THE TRAVELER

A SATYR, ranging in the forest in winter, once came across a Traveler who was half starved and nearly frozen.

He took pity upon him and invited him to come to his cave for food and shelter.

On their way, the Man kept blowing upon his fingers. “Why do you do that?” said the Satyr, who had seen but little of the world of men.

“To warm my hands,” replied the Man; “they are nearly frozen.”

Arriving at the cave, the Satyr poured out a smoking mess of pottage and set it before the Traveler, who eagerly seized it and began to blow upon it with all his might.

“What, blowing again!” exclaimed the Satyr. “Is it not hot enough?”

“It is, indeed,” answered the Man; “that is the very reason why I am blowing it. I want to cool it enough to be able to eat it.”

Upon this the Satyr exclaimed in alarm, “Be off with you! I will have no part with a Man who can blow hot and cold from the same mouth.”



THE STAG AT THE LAKE

A STAG, one hot day, came to drink from a clear lake, and stopped to look at his own image in the water.

"How beautiful are my fine spreading horns!" said he. "How strong and graceful they are, branching from each side of my head! What a pity it is that my legs should be so thin and ugly!"

Just at this moment a lion came crashing through the forest and made ready to spring upon him. Away went the stag! and the legs that he had despised would soon have carried him out of danger; but when he came to the thick woods, his beautiful antlers, of which he had been so vain, caught in the branches and held him fast until the lion came up and seized him.

THE PEASANT AND THE APPLE TREE

A PEASANT had in his garden an Apple Tree which for year after year had borne no fruit, but served only as a harbor for sparrows and grasshoppers.

Seeing no good to himself in the tree, he resolved to cut it down, and, taking his ax in his hand, he made a bold stroke at its roots.

Each in his own way, the grasshoppers and sparrows entreated him not to cut down the tree that sheltered them. “We will do our best to make up to you the worth of the wood, if you will spare it,” they said, “lightening your labor by our cheering songs.” But he paid no heed to them and gave a second and a third blow with his ax.

When he reached the hollow of the tree, he found a hive full of honey. He tasted the honeycomb and at once threw down his ax. From that time the greatest of care was taken of the tree, and the sparrows and grasshoppers still found shelter in it. They could not forget, however, that the man had only saved their home for them from self-interest.

JUPITER, NEPTUNE, MINERVA, AND MOMUS

ACCORDING to an old legend, the first man was made by Jupiter, the first bull by Neptune, and the first house by Minerva.

On the completion of their labors, a dispute arose as to which had made the most perfect work.

They agreed to rest the decision with Momus, a judge, and to abide by his word.

Momus, however, being very envious of the handicraft of each, found fault in turn with all.

He criticized the work of Neptune because he had not made the horns of the bull below the eyes, that the animal might better see where to strike.

He condemned the work of Jupiter because he had not placed the heart of man on the outside, so that every one might read the thoughts of the evil-disposed and take precautions against intended mischief.

And last of all, he inveighed against Minerva, not because of any fault in the house itself but because she had not contrived iron wheels in its foundation, so that its inhabitants might more easily remove if a neighbor proved unpleasant.

Indignant at such inveterate fault-finding, Jupiter drove Momus from his office as judge and expelled him from the mansions of Olympus.

THE FARTHING RUSHLIGHT

A RUSHLIGHT, in love with its own brilliancy, once boasted that its light was brighter even than that of the sun, the moon, and the stars.

Just then a door opened, and a puff of wind blew it out.

As the owner relighted it, he said: “Cease now your boasting. Be content to shine in silence. Heavenly lights do not blow out. Know that not even the stars need to be relit.”

THE HORSE AND THE GROOM

A GROOM, who used to steal a Horse's corn and sell it, was yet very busy all the day long in grooming and wisping him. "If you really wish me," said the Horse, "to look sleek and fine, give me less currying and more corn."

THE TRUMPETER TAKEN PRISONER

A TRUMPETER who had been taken prisoner in a battle begged hard for his life. “Spare me, I entreat you,” said he; “put me not to death without cause. I have killed no one, nor do I carry arms, but only this trumpet.”

“For that very reason,” said they who held him captive, “you shall the more surely die; for though without the spirit to fight yourself, you stir up others to violence and bloodshed.”

He who incites to strife is worse than he who takes part in it.

THE BOASTING TRAVELER

A MAN who had traveled in foreign parts bragged, on his return home, of the great feats he had performed in different places. In Rhodes, for instance, he had taken so extraordinary a leap that no man could approach it; and, he said, he had witnesses there to prove that it was so.

"It is quite possible," said one who heard him boasting of it, "but just suppose this to be Rhodes, and try the leap again."

THE HEDGE AND THE VINEYARD

A FOOLISH young Heir, who had come into possession of his wise father's estate, broke up all the Hedges about his Vineyard because they bore no grapes. The throwing down of these fences laid his grounds open to man and beast, and his vines were presently destroyed. The simple fellow learned, when it was too late, that it was quite as necessary to protect his Vineyard as to possess it.

THE MOUSE AND THE WEASEL

A LITTLE starveling Mouse had made his way with some difficulty into a basket of corn, where, finding the entertainment much to his liking, he stuffed and crammed himself to such an extent that when he was ready to get out again, he found the hole by which he had entered too small to allow his puffed-out body to pass through. A Weasel, who was drawn to the spot by his cries, thus counseled him: “Stay where you are, my friend, and fast till you are thin; for you will never come out till you reduce yourself to the same condition as when you went in.”

THE WOLF AND THE SHEEP

A WOLF, that had been bitten by a dog and was unable to move, begged a Sheep that passed by to take pity on his sad case and fetch him some water from a stream. “If you will bring me a drink,” said he, “I will find meat myself.”

“Yes,” said the Sheep, “I make no doubt of it; for if I come near enough to give you the drink, you will make mincemeat of *me*.”

A WIDOW AND HER SHEEP

A CERTAIN widow, who had only a single Sheep and wished to make the most of his wool, sheared him so closely as to cut his skin as well as his fleece. The Sheep, smarting under this treatment, cried out: “Why do you torture me thus? It is no gain to yourself. My blood will not add to the weight of the wool. If you are after flesh send for the Butcher, who will end my misery; but if it is only wool that you want, send for the Shearer, who will clip my fleece without drawing my blood.”

THE MAN AND THE LION

A MAN and a Lion were once journeying together and came at length to high words as to which was the braver and stronger creature of the two. As the dispute waxed warmer they happened to pass, on the roadside, the statue of a man strangling a lion. “See there,” said the Man. “What more proof can you have of our undeniable superiority than that?”

“That,” said the Lion, “is a man’s version of the story; let us be the sculptors, and for one lion under the feet of a man, you shall have twenty men under the paws of lions.”

THE LIONESS

A GREAT stir was once made as to which of the Beasts could boast of the largest family. They came in turn to the Lioness. “And how many,” was asked, “do you have at a birth?”

“One,” she replied; “but that one is a Lion!”

Quality is before quantity.

THE BOY WHO STOLE APPLES

AN Old Man once found a rude Boy in his Apple Tree and sternly ordered him to come down. The young rogue answered that he would not.

"Then I will fetch you down," said the Old Man. So he threw twigs and bundles of grass up at him, but this only made the young scapegrace laugh.

"Very well," said the Old Man. "If neither words nor grass will bring you down, I will try what virtue there is in stones." With that he pelted the Boy heartily with stones, which soon brought him down from the tree to beg the Old Man's pardon.

THE GOOSE WITH THE GOLDEN EGGS

A CERTAIN man had the good fortune to possess a Goose which laid him a Golden Egg each day of the year. For a while the man rejoiced in his daily gain, but becoming impatient with so slow an income, he killed the Goose, to get all at once the gold which he thought was inside her. When he had laid her open, he found that she was exactly like all other geese.

Wanting more, he lost all.

THE OLD MAN AND DEATH

AN Old Laborer, bent with age and toil, was gathering brush in a forest. Growing tired and hopeless, he threw down his bundle and cried out: “I can bear this no longer! If only Death would come and relieve me!”

As he spoke Death came and asked him what it was that he wanted. “Pray, good sir,” replied the Man, “do me but the favor to lift this bundle of sticks to my back.”

A FATHER AND HIS TWO DAUGHTERS

A MAN who had two Daughters married one to a Gardener, the other to a Potter. Going to visit at the Gardener's, he asked his Daughter how it fared with her. "Excellently well," said she; "we have all that we want if only we may have a heavy rain to water our plants."

Going on to the Potter's, he asked his other Daughter how matters went with her. "There is nothing that we want but that this fine weather and hot sun may continue, so that our tiles will bake well."

"Alas," said the Father, "if you wish for fine weather, and your sister for rain, which shall I myself pray for?"

THE SICK LION AND THE FOX

A LION who was too old and feeble to hunt for prey saw that he must get it, if at all, by cunning. He crept into a corner of his den and feigned sickness. All the animals that came by went in to take a look at him, and, as they came, he sprang upon them and ate them up. Now, when this had happened to a good many, the Fox, who had guessed the trick, came by. From a safe distance he called to the Lion, asking how he did. The Lion said he was very sick and asked the Fox to come in and see him. “So I would, gladly,” replied the Fox, “but I notice that all the footprints point into the den, and there are none pointing out.”

THE MOUNTAIN IN LABOR

IN DAYS of old, a mighty rumbling was heard in a Mountain. It was said to be in Labor, and multitudes of people flocked together, from near and from far, to see what the great Mountain would produce. After long expectation and wise conjecturing from the bystanders, out popped—a mouse.

A magnificent promise, but a paltry performance.

JUPITER AND THE CAMEL

THE Camel, in days of yore, besought Jupiter to grant him horns, because it was a great grief to him to see other animals furnished with what he had not. Jupiter not only refused him horns but cropped his ears short for his foolish importunity.

By asking for what we do not need, we may lose what we already have.

THE MOON AND HER MOTHER

THE Moon once asked her Mother to make her a little coat that would fit her well. “How,” replied the Mother, “can I make a cloak to fit you, when now you are a New Moon, and then a Full Moon, and then again neither the one nor the other?”

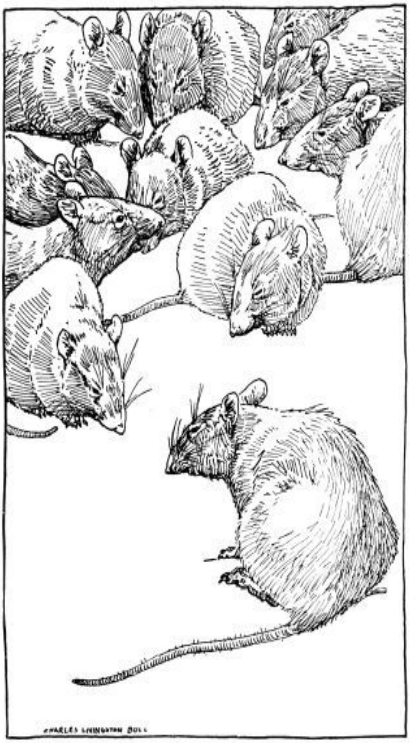
THE HORSE AND THE STAG

A HORSE once had the whole range of a meadow to himself; but when a Stag came and threatened to damage the pasture, the Horse asked a Man to assist him in ridding him of the Stag. “I will,” said the Man, “if you will let me put a bit in your mouth and get upon your back so as to go and find weapons.” The Horse consented, and the Man accordingly mounted. But instead of being revenged on the Stag, the Horse has been from that time the slave of Man.

Revenge is dearly punished at the price of liberty.

THE COUNCIL HELD BY THE RATS

OLD Rodiland, a certain Cat,
Such havoc of the Rats had made
'Twas difficult to find a Rat
With nature's debt unpaid.
The few that did remain,
To leave their holes afraid,
From usual food abstain,
Not eating half their fill.
And wonder no one will
That one who made on Rats his revel,
With Rats passed not for Cat, but devil.



Now, on a day, this dread rat-eater,
Who had a wife, went out to meet her.
And while he held his caterwauling,
The unkilled Rats, their chapter calling,
Discussed the point, in grave debate,
How they might shun impending fate.
Their dean, a prudent Rat,
Thought best, and better soon than late,
To bell the fatal Cat;
That, when he took his hunting round,
The Rats, well cautioned by the sound,
Might hide in safety under ground.
Indeed, he knew no other means;
And all the rest

[199]

[200] At once confessed
Their minds were with the dean's.
No better plan, they all believed,
Could possibly have been conceived.
No doubt the thing would work right well
If any one would hang the bell.
But one by one said every Rat,
"I'm not so big a fool as that."
The plan knocked up in this respect,
The council closed without effect.
And many a council I have seen,
Or reverend chapter, with its dean,
That, thus resolving wisely,
Fell through like this, precisely.

To argue or refute,
    Wise councilors abound.
The man to execute
    Is harder to be found.

THE RAIN CLOUD

A GREAT Cloud passed rapidly over a country which was parched by heat, but did not let fall a single drop to refresh it. Presently it poured copious streams of rain into the sea and, when it had done so, began to boast of its generosity in the hearing of the neighboring Mountain.

But the Mountain replied: “What good have you done by such generosity? and how can any one help being pained at the sight of it? If you had poured your showers over the land, you might have saved a whole district from famine. But as to the sea, my friend, it has plenty of water already, without additions from you.”

THE ELEPHANT IN FAVOR

ONCE upon a time the Elephant stood high in the good graces of the Lion. The forest immediately began to talk of the matter, and, as usual, many guesses were made as to the means by which the Elephant had gained such favor.

"It is no beauty," say the beasts to each other, "and it is not amusing; and what habits it has! what manners!"

"If it had possessed such a bushy tail as mine, I should not have wondered," says the Fox.

"Or, sister," says the Bear, "if it had gotten into favor on account of its claws, no one would have found the matter at all extraordinary; but it has no claws at all, as we all know well."

"Isn't it its tusks that have gotten it into favor?" thus the Ox broke in upon their conversation. "Haven't they, perhaps, been mistaken for horns?"

Then said the Ass, shaking its ears, "Is it possible that you don't know how it has succeeded in making itself liked, and in becoming distinguished. Why, I have guessed the reason. If it hadn't been remarkable for its long ears, it would never in the world have gotten into favor."

THE CUCKOO AND THE EAGLE

THE Eagle promoted the Cuckoo to the rank of a Nightingale, and at once, proud of its new position, the Cuckoo seated itself upon an aspen and began to exercise its musical talents.

After a time it looked around. All the other birds were flying away, some laughing and others abusing it. The Cuckoo grew angry, and hastened to the Eagle with a complaint against the birds.

"Have pity on me!" it begged. "I have been appointed Nightingale to these woods, and yet the birds dare laugh at my singing."

"My friend," answered the Eagle, "I am a king, but I am not a god. It is impossible for me to remedy the cause of your complaint. I can order a Cuckoo to be styled a Nightingale, but to make a Nightingale out of a Cuckoo—that I cannot do."


CHARLES LIVINGSTON BULL.

THE FOX IN THE ICE

VERY early one winter morning, during a hard frost, a Fox was drinking at a hole in the ice not far from the haunts of men.

Meanwhile, whether by accident or from negligence does not matter, the end of its tail got wet and froze to the ice.

No great harm was done; the Fox could easily remedy it. It had only to give a tolerably hard pull and leave about a score of hairs behind; then it could run home quickly before any one came.

But how could it make up its mind to spoil its tail? Such a bushy tail as it was—so ample, so golden! No; better wait a little. Surely men are sleeping still. It is even possible that a thaw may set in meanwhile. In that case it will be able to withdraw its tail easily from the ice hole.

So it waits; it goes on waiting, but its tail only freezes all the more. The Fox looks round; the day is already beginning to dawn. People are stirring; voices are to be heard. Our poor Fox begins to move wildly about, now this way and now that. But still it cannot free itself from the hole.

Luckily, a Wolf comes running that way.

“Dear friend! father!” cries the Fox; “do save me; I am all but lost!”

So the Wolf stopped and set to work to rescue the Fox. Its method was a simple one—it bit the tail clean off.

So our foolish friend went home tailless, but rejoicing that its skin was still on its back.

THE INQUISITIVE MAN

“GOOD day, dear friend; where do you come from?”

“From the Museum, where I have spent three hours. I saw everything they have there, and examined it carefully. So much have I seen to astonish me that, if you will believe me, I am neither strong nor clever enough to give you the description of it. Upon my word, it is a palace of wonders.

“How rich is Nature in inventions! What birds and beasts have I not seen there! What flies, butterflies, cockroaches, and curious beetles—some like emeralds, others like corals! And what tiny cochineal insects! Why, really, some of them are smaller than a pin’s head.”

“But did you see the elephant? What did you think of it? I’ll be bound you felt as if you were at a mountain.”

“The elephant? Are you quite sure it is there?”

“Quite sure.”

“Well, brother, you mustn’t be too hard on me; but to tell the truth, I didn’t remark the elephant.”

THE SQUIRREL IN SERVICE

A SQUIRREL once served a Lion—I know not where or in what capacity. But this much is certain—the Squirrel found favor in the Lion's eyes, and to satisfy the Lion is certainly no light affair.

In return for this he was promised a whole wagonload of nuts.

Promised—yes; but meanwhile time continues to fly by. The Squirrel often suffers hunger and, while grinning in his masters presence, has eyes full of tears.

When he looks around in the forest, his former comrades show themselves here and there, high up among the trees. He looks at them till his eyes begin to blink, but they keep on cracking nuts.

The Squirrel takes a look at them—he can do no more. At one time he is called away; at another, even dragged off in the Lion's service.

But see! At last the Squirrel has grown old and become tiresome to the Lion. It is time for him to retire. They have granted the Squirrel his discharge, and they have actually given him the full load of nuts —excellent nuts, such as the world has never seen before; all picked fruit, one as good as another, a perfect marvel. Only one thing is unlucky—the Squirrel has long ago lost all his teeth.

THE WOLF AND THE CAT

A WOLF ran out of the forest into a village—not to pay a visit, but to save its life; for it trembled for its skin.

The huntsman and a pack of hounds were after it.

It would fain have rushed in through the first gateway, but there was this unfortunate circumstance in the way—all the gateways were closed.

The Wolf saw a Cat on a partition fence and said pleadingly: "Vaska, my friend, tell me quickly, which of the moujiks here is the kindest, so that I may hide myself from my evil foes. Listen to the cry of the dogs and the terrible sound of the horns. All that noise is actually made in chase of me."

"Go quickly and ask Stefan," said Vaska, the Cat; "he is a very kind man."

"Quite true; only I have torn the skin off one of his sheep."

"Well, then, try Demian."

"I'm afraid he's angry with me, too; I carried off one of his kids."

"Run over there, then; Trofim lives there."

"Trofim! I should be afraid of even meeting him. Ever since the spring he has been threatening me about a lamb."

"Dear me, that's bad! But perhaps Klim will protect you."



“Oh, Vaska, I have killed one of his calves!”

“What do I hear, friend? You’ve quarreled with all the village,” said Vaska to the Wolf. “What sort of protection can you hope for here? No, no; our peasants are not so destitute of sense as to be willing to save you to their own hurt. And, really, you have only yourself to blame. What you have sown, that you must now reap.”

APPENDIX

NOTE. Since the purpose of the fable is not merely to entertain but especially to point some general truth or to draw a helpful lesson, no two versions of the same fable are exactly alike. In editions of Æsop intended for young children, it has been the custom to elaborate the slender story in such a way as to arouse thoroughly the child's interest before the moral is drawn. Hence the modern popular versions often contain conversations and descriptive details not to be found in the accounts which are truest to the Greek versions. This popular elaborated form of the fable, however, needs no apology so long as the editor is true to the spirit of the original. In the preceding fables, the spirit, if not the letter of the most trustworthy account available, has been carefully adhered to, but the editor has had always in mind the youthful readers and has neglected no opportunity to make the text fit their limited experience and understanding. But to both teacher and pupil the current short forms of some of the longer fables will have interest. In this Appendix, therefore, have been collected the short forms of the first fables which appear in the text. Much pleasure and profit can be had from a comparison of the two renderings, and such a comparison will open the way to a discussion of the difficulties in handing down literature orally and in preserving it in correct form.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

A WOLF and a Lamb came to a running brook to quench their thirst. The Wolf stood high up the stream and the Lamb a little distance below. Having made up his mind to seize the Lamb, the Wolf bethought himself how he might justify his act of violence. Running down to her, he roared, “How dare you muddle the water so that I cannot drink it?”

The Lamb, affrighted by the charge, humbly replied that she could not see how that could be, since the water ran down from him to her and not from her to him. “Be that as it may,” retorted the Wolf. “You are a rascal, all the same, and I have heard that you said bad things of me last year behind my back.”

“Nay,” said the Lamb, “that could not have been, for a year ago I was not born.”

“Well, if it was not you it was your father, and that is all the same,” replied the Wolf, and he fell upon the Lamb and tore her to pieces.

THE FOX AND THE LION

THE first time the Fox saw the Lion, he was ready to die of fear. The second time he took courage and could even bear to look upon him. The third time he had the impudence to come up to him, to salute him, and to enter into familiar conversation with him.

THE DOG AND HIS SHADOW

A DOG had stolen a piece of meat out of a butcher's shop and was crossing a river on his way home, when he saw his own shadow reflected in the stream below. Thinking it was another dog with another piece of meat, he resolved to secure it. He snapped at his supposed treasure, but in doing so dropped the piece he was carrying and so lost all.

THE CRAB AND HIS MOTHER

SAID an old Crab to a young one, “Why do you walk so crooked, child? Walk straight!” “Mother,” said the young Crab, “show me the way, will you? When I see you taking a straight course, I will try and follow.”

Example is better than precept.

THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

A FOX came at vintage time to a place where ripe grapes were hanging in tempting clusters over the branch of a tree. “I will get them,” said the Fox. He made many a spring and jump, but failing each time to secure the prize, he at length walked away, muttering, “Well, what does it matter? The grapes are sour.”

THE WOLF AND THE CRANE

A WOLF had a bone in his throat and ran up and down in the greatest agony, begging every animal he met to relieve him, hinting at the same time that there would be a substantial reward. A Crane, moved by his entreaties, ventured her long neck down the Wolf's throat and drew forth the bone. When she had done it, she modestly asked for the promised reward. To which the Wolf, grinning and showing his teeth, replied, "Ungrateful creature, is it not enough that you have had your head in a Wolf's mouth and brought it out safe?"

THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPERS

A COLONY of Ants were busily employed in the care and preservation of their food, which they exposed to the air in heaps around their country habitation.

A Grasshopper, who had chanced to out-live the summer and was ready to die from cold and hunger, approached with great humility and begged that they would relieve his necessity with one grain of wheat or rye. One of the Ants asked him how he had disposed of his time in the summer, that he had not taken pains and laid in a stock as they had done.

“Alas! gentlemen,” said he, “I passed away the time merrily and pleasantly in drinking, singing, and dancing, and never once thought of winter.”

“If that be the case,” replied the Ant, “all I have to say is that they who drink, sing, and dance in summer must starve in winter.”

THE FROGS WHO ASKED FOR A KING

THE commonwealth of Frogs, a discontented race, weary of liberty and fond of change, petitioned Jupiter to grant them a King.

The good-natured deity, in order to grant their request with as little mischief to them as possible, threw them down a Log. The splash sent them into the greatest terror and amazement, and at first they regarded their new monarch with great reverence and kept at a respectful distance. But by degrees, perceiving his amiable and peaceable disposition, they gradually ventured to approach him with more familiarity, till at length they conceived for him the utmost contempt.

Dissatisfied with this state of things, they renewed their request to Jupiter and entreated him to bestow upon them another King.

In his wrath the Thunderer sent them a Crane, who no sooner took possession of his new dominion than he began to devour his subjects, one after another.

They were now far more dissatisfied than before. Applying to Jupiter a third time, they were dismissed with the reproof that the evil of which they complained they had imprudently brought upon themselves; and that now they had no other remedy but to submit to it with patience.

THE DONKEY IN THE LION'S SKIN

A DONKEY, having put on the skin of a Lion, which he found drying by the roadside, roamed about the forest and amused himself by frightening all the animals that he met. At length, meeting a Fox, he tried to frighten him also; but the Fox no sooner heard the sound of his voice than he exclaimed, "I might possibly have been frightened if I had not heard you bray."

THE MICE IN COUNCIL

THE Mice, being sadly distressed on account of their common enemy the Cat, called a council to devise means of ridding themselves of the annoyance. Many plans were proposed and rejected, till at last it was suggested by a young Mouse that a bell should be hung round the Cat's neck, that having notice of her coming, they might escape to their holes.

The proposal was hailed with applause and agreed to unanimously. Whereupon an old Mouse, who had sat in silence, got up and said, "That is well, but who will bell the Cat?" The Mice looked one at another, but no one answered.

The old Mouse said, "It is easy to advise; what is wanted is some one to act."

THE KID AND THE WOLF

A KID, coming alone from its pasture, was pursued by a Wolf. With great presence of mind the kid turned and said: “I know, Friend Wolf, that you mean to kill me; but as my life is to be short, let it be a merry one. Do you pipe and let me have one more dance before I die.” While the Wolf was piping and the Kid was dancing, some Dogs, hearing the music, ran to the place to see what was going on; and the Wolf was glad to take himself off as fast as his legs would carry him.

THE HAWK AND THE NIGHTINGALE

THE Nightingale, sitting aloft upon an oak, was seen by a Hawk, who swooped down and seized her. The Nightingale earnestly prayed the Hawk to let her go, saying that she was not big enough to satisfy the hunger of a Hawk, who ought to find plenty of larger birds. “Do you happen to see many large birds flying about?” the Hawk asked. “I should be foolish, indeed, to let you go for the sake of larger birds that are not in sight. A morsel is better than nothing.”

THE CROW AND THE PITCHER

A CROW who was nearly perishing with thirst spied a pitcher with a little water in it. Reaching down, he found the water so low that, stooping and straining as he might, he was unable to reach it with his beak. Thereupon he tried to overturn and break the Pitcher. This he was not strong enough to do. At last, seeing some small pebbles, he brought a great many and dropped them one by one, and so raised the water to the brim and quenched his thirst.

THE ANT AND THE DOVE

GOING to a fountain to quench his thirst, an Ant tumbled in and was ready to drown. But a Dove happened to be perching on a neighboring tree and saw the Ant's danger. Plucking a leaf, the Dove dropped it down into the water, so that the Ant mounting upon it was blown safely to the shore. A Fowler, shortly after, spread his net to entrap the unwary Dove. This the Ant perceived, and bit the Fowler's heel. Distracted by the pain, the Fowler dropped his net with a quick start, and the Dove, aroused to a sense of danger, flew away.

One good turn deserves another.

THE OX AND THE FROG

AN Ox, grazing in a swampy meadow, chanced to set his foot among a number of young Frogs and trampled nearly all of them to death. One that escaped ran off to his mother with the dreadful news. “It was a beast—such a big four-footed beast—that did it.”

“Big?” asked the old Frog, and she puffed herself out, “as big as this?”

“A great deal bigger,” said the little one.

“Well, was it so big?” and she swelled herself out yet more.

“Indeed, Mother, but it was; and if you were to burst yourself you would never reach half its size.” Vexed that her child should disparage her powers, the Mother Frog made one more trial and burst herself indeed.

THE BAT AND THE WEASELS

A BAT, falling to the ground, was caught by a Weasel, whom he entreated not to take his life. The Weasel protested that it was against nature for a weasel to let a bird go. Whereupon the Bat insisted that he was not a bird, and to prove it, called attention to his mouselike head and ears, which so confused the Weasel that he let the Bat go.

Some time afterward, on another flight, the Bat fell again to the ground, and another Weasel caught him. On perceiving that the Weasel thought he was a mouse, the Bat contended that he had wings and therefore was not a mouse, and was again allowed to go free.

THE FOX AND THE GOAT

A FOX who had fallen into a deep well was casting about to find how he should get out again. At length a Goat came to the place, and seeing Reynard, asked whether the water was good, and if there was plenty.

Hiding the real danger in his case, the Fox replied: “The best in the world, and so much of it that it cannot be exhausted. Come down and see.” Whereupon the Goat jumped down without more ado. Upon this the crafty Fox jumped upon her horns and nimbly leaped out, remarking to the deluded Goat, “If you had brains to match your beard, you would have looked before you leaped.”

THE WOMAN AND HER HEN

A THRIFTY Woman kept a Hen that could be depended on to lay an egg every morning. The watchful Woman thought within herself, “If I were to double my Hen’s allowance of barley, she would lay twice a day.” So she tried her plan, and the Hen became so fat and sleek that she left off laying at all.

Thrift sometimes overreaches, and figures are not always facts.

THE DOG IN THE MANGER

A DOG once made his bed in a manger and lay there snarling and growling at whoever came by. The Oxen coming for their provender said: “What a miserable cur! neither to eat the grain himself nor to let any one else eat it!”

THE MOUSE, THE FROG, AND THE HAWK

A MOUSE in an evil day made the acquaintance of a Frog, and together they set off on their travels. On pretense of affection and of keeping his companion safe from harm, the Frog tied the Mouse's forefoot to his own hind leg, and thus they proceeded. It worked well enough till they came to some water, and the Frog, bidding the Mouse to have good courage, plunged in and began to swim across. They were barely halfway when the Frog took a sudden plunge to the bottom, dragging the unfortunate Mouse after him. But the struggling of the Mouse made so great a commotion in the water that it attracted the attention of a Hawk, who, pouncing down and bearing away the Mouse, carried the Frog also.

Alliances that are ill-matched generally end in disaster; and the one who compasses the destruction of his neighbor is often caught in his own snare.

THE SHEPHERD BOY AND THE WOLF

A SHEPHERD boy, tending his flock on the edge of a village, used to amuse himself at times by crying out, “Wolf! Wolf!” Twice or thrice his trick succeeded. The whole village ran to his assistance, only to be laughed at for their pains. At last, one day, the Wolf came indeed. The Boy cried out as before, and this time in earnest. But the villagers, supposing him to be at his old sport, paid no heed to his cries, and the Wolf devoured the sheep.

THE FISHERMAN AND THE LITTLE FISH

AFTER toiling all day and catching nothing, a Fisherman pulled up a little Fish. The Fish besought him to let him go, for he was small now, but by and by he would grow to be a big fish and so be worth catching. But the Fisherman answered, “No, no, I have you now, it would be foolish for me to let you go; I might not get you when you had grown bigger.”

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

THE FOX AND THE CROW

A CROW snatched a piece of cheese out of a window and flew with it up into a tree, to eat it at leisure. A Fox passing by chanced to look up and saw her. He coveted the prize and thus made his approaches to secure it. “O Crow,” said he, “how beautiful are thy wings and how bright are thine eyes! how graceful thy neck! What a pity that such a bird should want only a voice!” Yielding to the flattery, the Crow opened her mouth to surprise the Fox with her caw, when down dropped the cheese, which the Fox, snapping up, ate as he walked away, remarking that whatever he had said of her voice he did not say of her brains.

THE PARTRIDGE AND THE FOWLER

A PARTRIDGE, having been taken in the net of a Fowler, cried out piteously, “Spare me, good Master Fowler, and I promise you, on my word, that I will decoy other partridges into your net.”

“No,” replied the man, “whatever I might have done, I am determined now not to let you go; for no death is too bad for one who is ready to betray his friends.”

THE THIRSTY PIGEON

A PIGEON, pressed by thirst and seeing a glass of water painted on a sign, supposed it to be real. Dashing down at it with all her might, she struck against the hard board, and breaking her wing, she fell helpless to the ground and was soon captured by one who passed by.

Great haste is not always good speed.

THE THREE TRADESMEN

THERE was a certain city in danger of being besieged, and a council was called accordingly, to consider the best means of fortifying it. A Bricklayer gave his judgment that no material was so good for the purpose as brick. A Carpenter begged leave to suggest that timber would be preferable, upon which a Currier started up and said, “Sirs, when all has been said that can be said, there is nothing in the world like leather.”

THE HARES AND THE FROGS

IN DESPERATION over the hard times they had on account of their many enemies, the Hares came together and, after rehearsing their situation, came to the sad conclusion that nothing was left to them but to drown themselves as the most miserable and unfortunate of creatures. They repaired to a pond to throw themselves off a rock into the water and thus make an end of their troubles. A shoal of frogs were sitting around the edge of the pond, and at the approach of the Hares they were startled, and with the greatest confusion jumped into the water. Whereupon the foremost of the Hares said to his fellows: “Nay, then, friends, our case may not be as desperate as we thought. Here are other creatures more faint-hearted than are we.”

THE EAGLE AND THE FOX

AN EAGLE and a Fox had lived together as good neighbors, the former on the summit of a high tree, the latter in a hole at the foot of it. One day when the Fox was abroad, the Eagle swooped down and snatched the Fox's cub and carried it up to her nest, thinking that her high dwelling made her secure from the Fox's revenge. The Fox returning upbraided the Eagle for such a breach of confidence and begged to have her young one returned to her. Finding that her entreaties availed nothing, the Fox snatched a brand from an altar fire which had been lighted hard by and proceeded to involve the whole tree in flames. The Eagle, to protect her nest and her own young ones, restored the cub to its mother, which she would not do in answer to the most earnest entreaties.

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