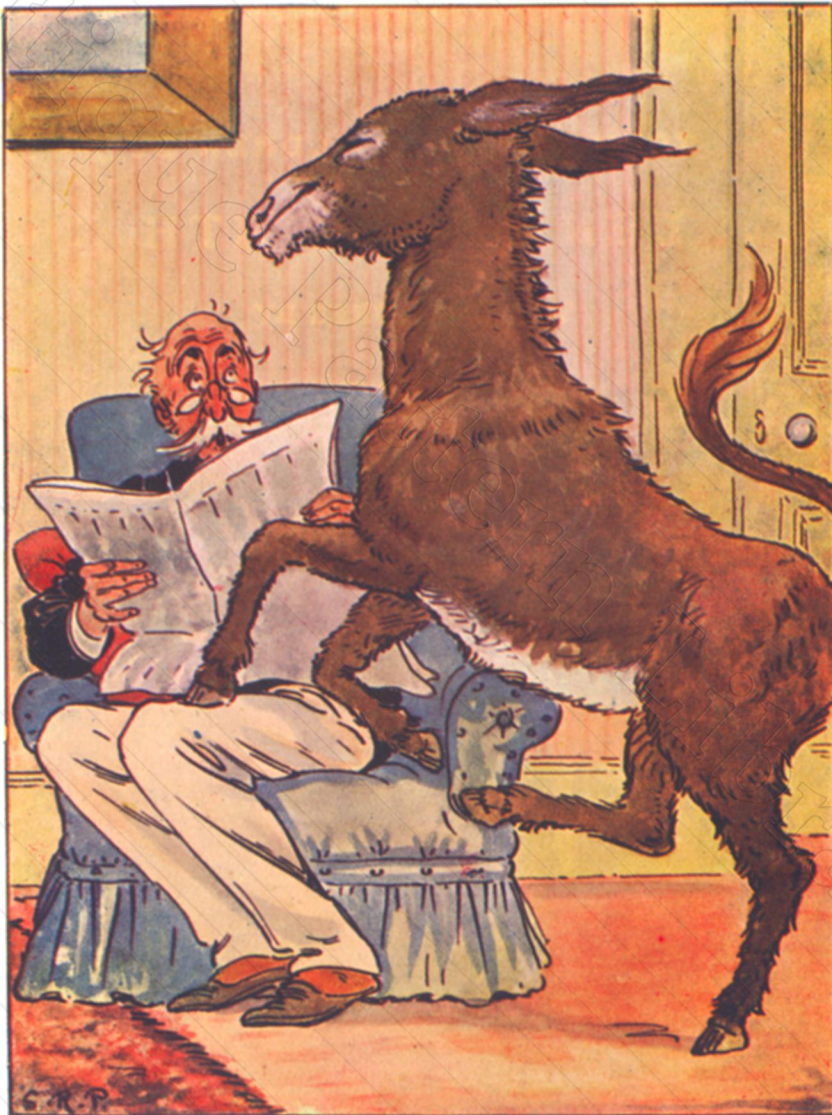


AESOP'S FABLES



GOLD-TO-GEE-CHILDREN



ÆSOP'S FABLES

TOLD TO THE CHILDREN BY

LENA DALKEITH

WITH PICTURES BY

S. R. PRAEGER



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Antique Pattern Library

TO LITTLE GEOFF

ABOUT THIS BOOK

A long time ago and a very long time—more than two thousand years—there was born in Greece a little boy slave. Now this little slave grew up to be very good and wise. So many wise things did he say and do, that at last his master set him free, and he went to live at the court of a great king, who soon honoured him more than any other of the wise men there: and much power was given him, and riches and great fame.

This man's name was Æsop, and these are the stories that he told to kings, and princes, and many great folks. And they liked to listen to him, not only for the sake of the stories, but because it helped them to be good. Whenever Æsop saw people about to do a wrong, or a cruel, or an unjust thing, he told them

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a tale to warn them. Most of these tales were about animals, and he made his animals talk and act so as to show the difference between good deeds and bad deeds.

Some people when they heard the tales were ashamed and did not do the wicked things, but others were angry and hated the man who showed them their faults. And when Æsop was old, I am sorry to say these wicked people killed him. But all the stories that he had told were remembered and written down after his death, and in time they were written in many different languages, so that every one could read them. Here are some that have been chosen, and pictured, and put into a book for you to read.

LENA DALKEITH.

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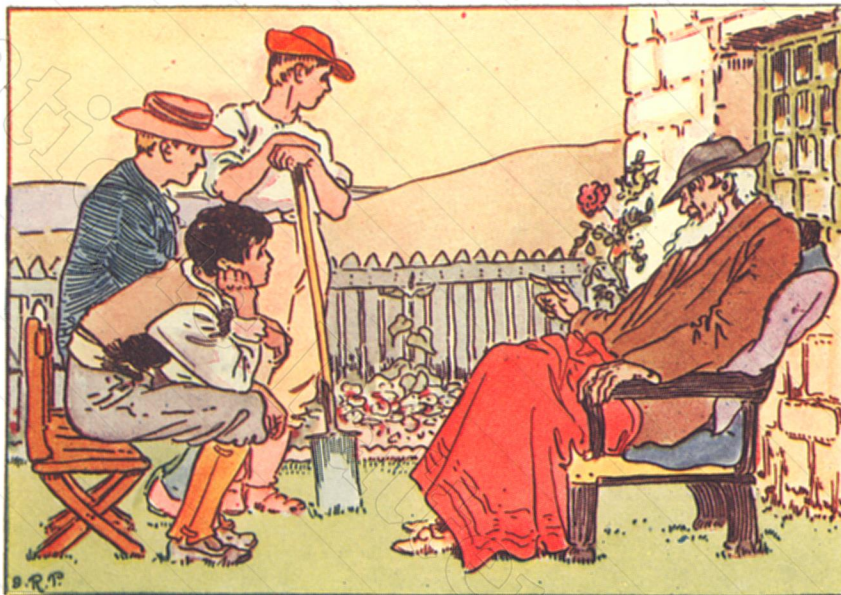
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THE ASS AND THE LITTLE DOG

An ass, who noticed how fond his master was of a little dog, said to himself, 'Why should not I be petted and fondled and given nice things to eat as well as that dog?' He saw that the favourite did nothing to deserve his good fortune, but only gambolled about, and barked, and wagged his tail, and jumped on his master's knee. So the ass made up his mind to behave just in that way himself, hoping that he too would be rewarded.

Soon afterwards, when the master came home and sat resting in his armchair, the ass pranced in and began to gambol and kick up his heels and bray, until the man could not help laughing at the funny sight. Then the ass came nearer and placed his fore-feet upon his master's knee and prepared to jump into his lap, but that was too much of a joke. 'Help!' shouted the man, and the servants came running in, and when they saw their master in such a plight, they beat the ass with heavy sticks until his bones ached, and he was thankful to run back to his own stable.



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THE FIELD OF TREASURE

A dying farmer, wishing his sons to know what treasure is to be found in honest work, called them to him and said, 'My sons, I am dying. All the treasure that I have is yours, and, if you will look, you will find it hidden in yonder field.'

Some time after the father's death, the sons began to look for the treasure. They carefully dug up the field from one end to the other, but no gold could they find.

'Well!' said one, 'since we have taken so much trouble digging the field, we might as well sow it with corn.'

This they did, and in time there sprang up a crop five times richer than any there had been before in that field.

Seeing this, the sons remembered their father's words, and understood that at last they had found the hidden treasure, not in gold, but in the fruits of honest labour.

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THE LARK AND THE CORNFIELD

A family of larks lived in a ripe cornfield. The mother knew that, when the reapers came, her nest would be spoiled, so she ordered the young ones to watch well, and to tell her of everything that happened while she was away.

One day, on returning home, she found the little larks very frightened. 'The farmer has passed,' they screamed, 'and he is going to call in the neighbours to reap the field!'

'That is well,' said the mother. 'If he trusts to his neighbours, there is no need to fear.'

The next day the farmer came again. 'Call your uncles and cousins,' he said to his son, 'and with their help we shall begin to-morrow.'

When the little larks, more frightened than ever, told their mother this, she answered, 'We need not fear yet; his relations are busy cutting their own corn.'

But a few days afterwards, when the mother lark heard that the farmer had passed again, saying, 'We shall ourselves reap the field to-morrow,' she cried, 'Now we must go! When a man says that he will do his work himself, it is sure to be done.'

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THE VAIN JACKDAW

A jackdaw picked up some beautiful feathers left by the peacocks on the ground. He stuck them into his own tail, and, thinking himself too fine to mix with the other daws, strutted off to the peacocks, expecting to be welcomed as one of themselves.

The peacocks at once saw through his disguise, and, despising him for his foolishness and conceit, began to peck him, and soon he was stripped of all his borrowed plumes.

Very much ashamed, the jackdaw went sadly home, meaning to join his old friends as if nothing had happened. But they, remembering how he had scorned them before, chased him away and would have nothing to do with him.

‘If you had been content,’ said one, ‘to remain as nature made you, instead of trying to be what you are not, you would have neither been punished by your betters nor despised by your equals.’

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THE FROGS AND THEIR KING

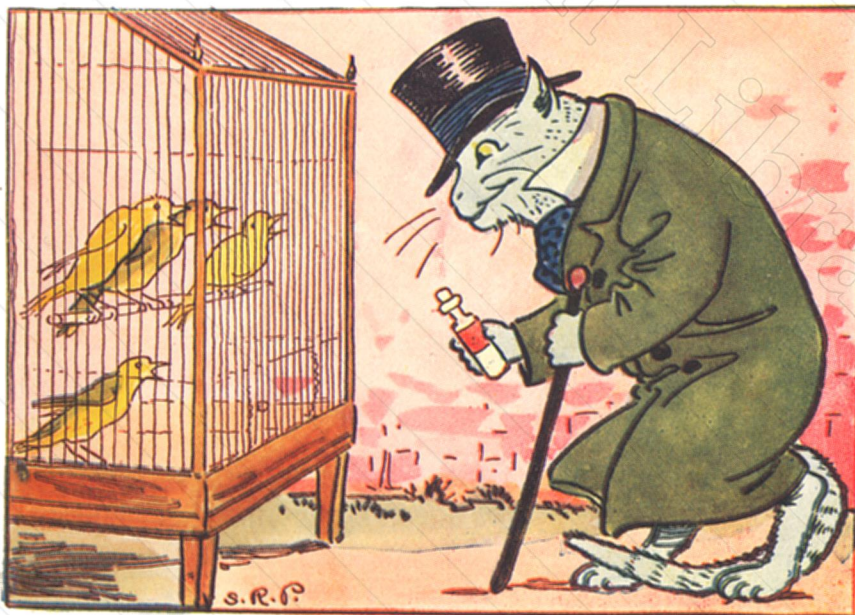
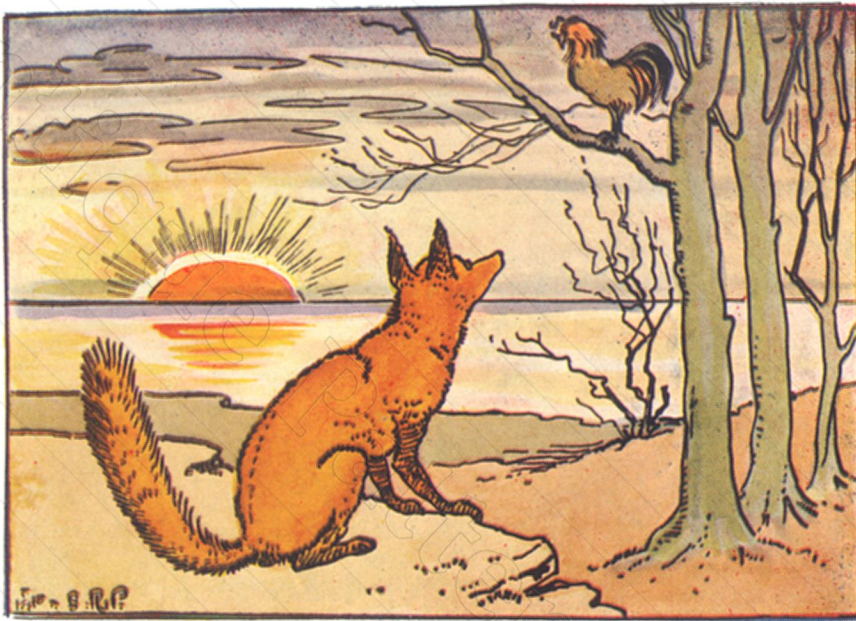
One day the frogs, having grown tired of their pleasant free life in the marshes, asked Jupiter to let them have a king. Jupiter, laughing heartily at their foolishness, threw down a little log into a pool, saying, 'There is a king for you!' The log made a great splash in the water, and this frightened the frogs so much that they did not dare to go near.

After a time, however, seeing that it did not move, they grew bolder and leaped upon it. Soon, however, they grew discontented, and, despising their dull king, sent again to Jupiter to ask for another.

This time he gave them a stork, who at once set to work to eat them up, one after the other, as fast as he could.

In despair they prayed Jupiter either to give them another king or to let them live free as before.

'No,' said Jupiter, 'this serves you right. You were not content until I gave you a king, and now that you have one you must keep him.'



THE COCK AND THE FOX

A cock stood crowing on a tree top. 'Come down,' said the fox, from below, wishing to make a meal of him, 'I have great news for you!'

'What news?' asked the cock.

'All the birds and the beasts have sworn peace,' answered Reynard. 'There will be no more war, but we shall all live like brothers now: come down then that I may congratulate you!' The cock did not answer, but strained his neck as if looking at something in the distance.

'What do you see?' asked the fox.

'A pack of hounds, I think,' was the answer. Upon this the fox started up to go.

'Surely there is no need to hurry,' said the cock, 'now that all are at peace!'

'No . . . no!' stammered Reynard, making off quickly, 'but they may not have heard the news.'

'I quite understand you,' the cock shouted after him.

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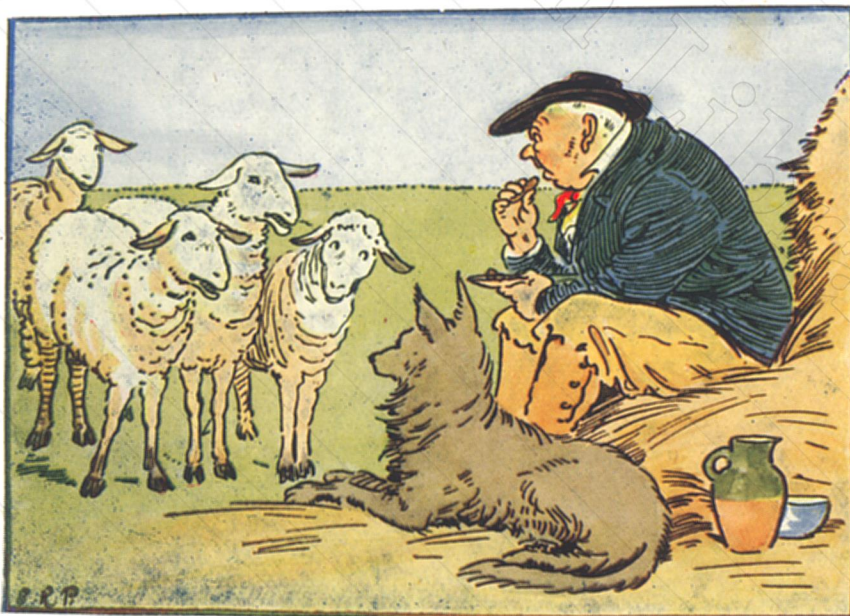
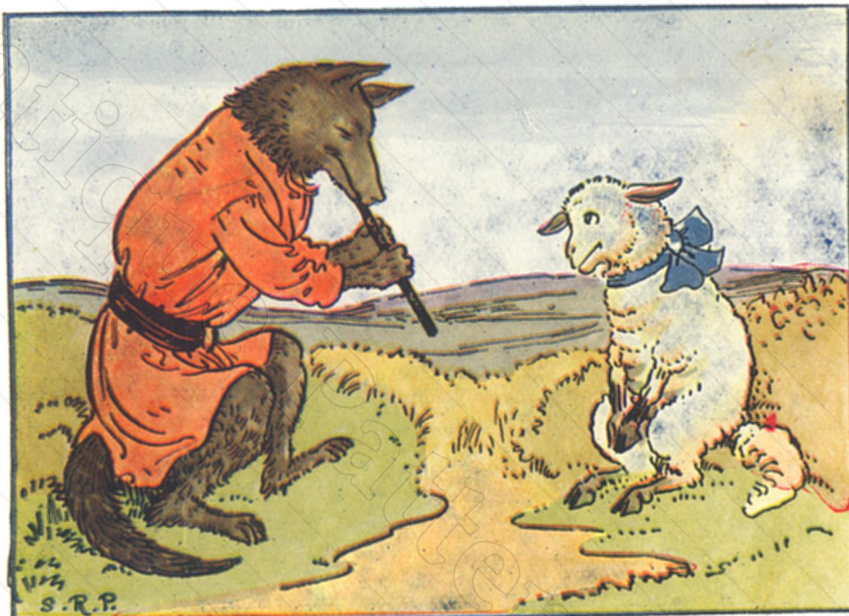
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THE CAT AND THE BIRDS

One morning a cat with much care dressed himself up like a doctor, and went to call on some little birds that lived in a cage near by.

'Good morning,' he said, 'I heard from a friend that there was illness amongst you, and, being very much grieved, I hastened here as quickly as I could to see if I could help you in any way.'

'No, thank you,' cried all the little birds in a chorus, 'there is nothing the matter with us. We are very well indeed, and we shall all keep very well so long as our door is shut and you are on the outside of it.'



THE WOLF AS PIPER

A lamb, having been by chance separated from her mother, met with a wolf, who straightway seized her. He would also have devoured her, had she not, in the hope of gaining time, pleaded cleverly for a moment's grace.

'I have so often heard,' she said, 'of your beautiful flute-playing, and I long to hear you. Now I know you mean to kill me, but if you will only play one tune to me first, I shall die more willingly afterwards.'

The wolf, much flattered, let go his hold of her, took out his flute, sat down and began to play.

While he was thus piping, some hounds who were hunting the wolf to kill him, came rushing to the place. The lamb had hoped for this, and while the wolf was fiercely defending himself, she slipped away and ran safely back to the fold.

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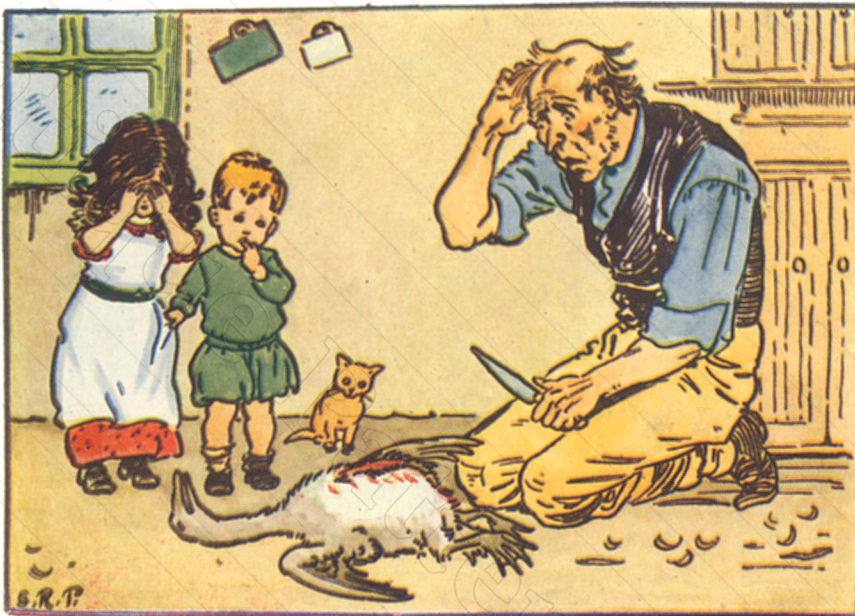
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THE SHEEP AND THE DOG

In the days when animals could speak, some sheep said to their master, 'We do not understand how it is that you give us only grass which we can find easily for ourselves, when you feed the dog upon all the good things that come from your own table. It is not fair, for we make you rich with our lambs and our wool, whilst the dog gives you nothing in return for all your favour.'

Then the dog, who had been listening to this speech, cried out, 'Yes, but you must remember that it is I who prevent you from being stolen by thieves or devoured by wolves. If I were not there to guard you, you would not even be able to eat the grass, for fear of being killed.'

This answer contented the sheep, and ever since they have agreed that the dog is worthy of all the honour shown to him.



**THE GOOSE WITH THE GOLDEN
EGGS**

Once upon a time a greedy and avaricious man had a goose. This goose every single day of her life, laid him a golden egg. But the man, not content with this, grew greedier than ever, till at last he said to himself, 'If I kill the goose, I shall be able to have all the golden eggs that are inside her at once, without waiting for them day by day.'

He therefore killed the goose. But on looking inside the body, to his great grief and disappointment, he found, instead of the wonderful treasure that he fancied would be there—nothing at all.

So, through greediness and discontent he lost both his goose and her golden eggs for ever.

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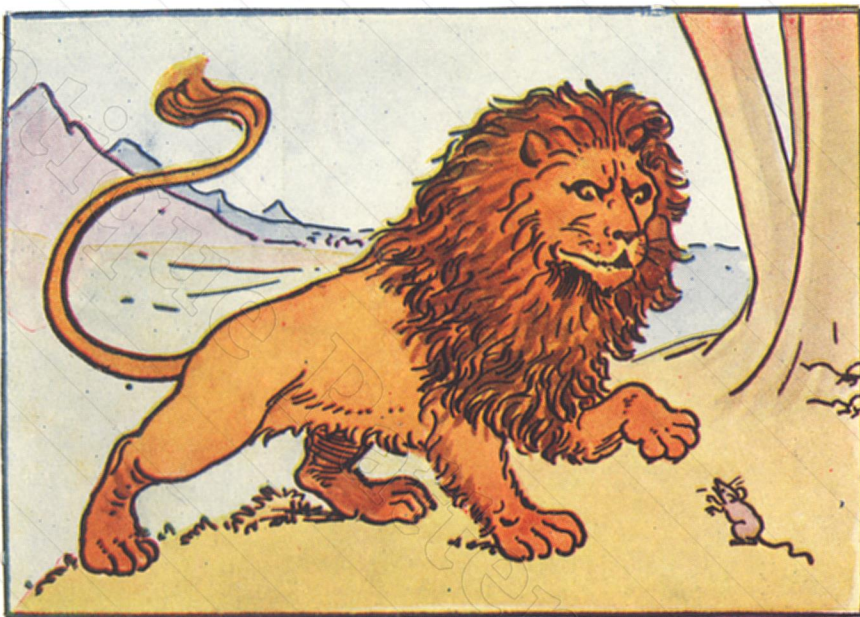
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THE MISER

A miser went every day to look at his treasure which he had put into a bag, and hidden in a hole in the earth. A workman who had often watched him, and who guessed the reason of these visits, followed him and saw where the treasure lay buried. Then one day when the miser was not there, the workman dug up the gold and took it away.

The next day, on discovering his loss, the miser tore his hair, and cried aloud in despair. A passer-by, seeing his distress, asked what troubled him, and, on being told, said, 'I see no cause for so much sorrow. Your treasure did not bring you any great joy. Take therefore a stone, hide it in the same hole, and pretend that it is your gold. It will serve your purpose just as well, for when you had the gold you made no use of it.'

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THE LION AND THE MOUSE

A lion, tired with hunting, lay down to rest under an oak-tree. While he slept, a little mouse ran across his back and woke him. In a rage he started up, clapped his paw on her, and would have put her to death straightway. But the little mouse begged for mercy in so sweet and piteous a manner, that the kindly beast let her go.

A few days afterwards, the lion while hunting in the forest was caught in a net put there to entrap him. He fought and struggled to escape; but in vain, the net held him fast, and in despair the lion set up a loud roar.

The grateful mouse, hearing the voice, and knowing it to be that of her friend, ran to the place, and bidding the poor beast have no fear, without more ado she began to nibble at the knots and fastenings of the net. These were strong, but the teeth of the mouse were sharp as steel, and soon knots and fastenings were bitten through and the lion was set free.

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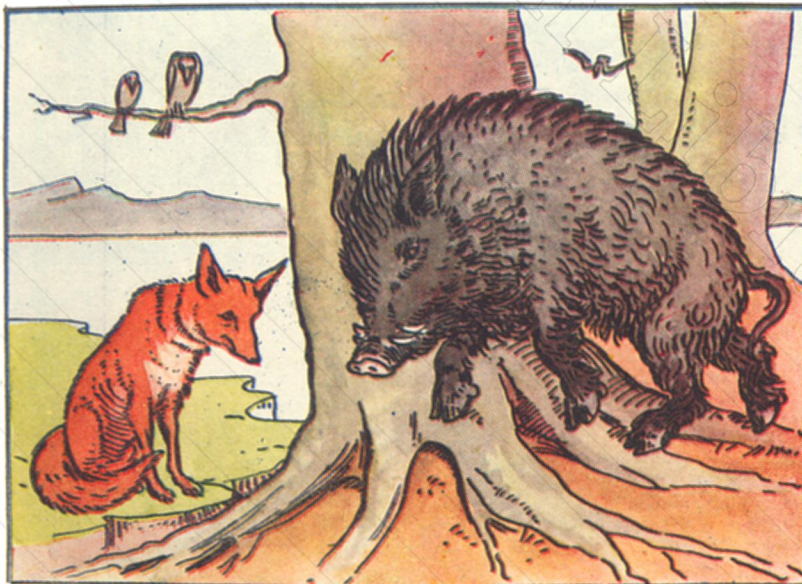
THE TRAVELLERS AND THE BEAR

Two travellers before entering a forest promised to help each other in any trouble that might arise on the way, either from wild beasts or from robbers.

They had not journeyed far before a large bear rushed out of the thicket. One traveller climbed up a tree. The other, left to fend for himself, fell flat on his face, and held his breath. The beast came up to the man on the ground, sniffed at him carefully, and then thinking him dead, walked off, for, as the traveller knew, bears will not touch any one dead.

When the coast was clear, the traveller who had fled first, came down from his tree, and, joining the other, said with a pleasant smile: 'What was it the bear said to you? I noticed he clapped his mouth close to your ear!'

'Oh!' answered the other, 'he told me not to believe again in the promises of such cowardly rascals as you.'



THE TWO FROGS

Two frogs lived in a marsh. The marsh having been dried up by the heat of the summer, the frogs made up their minds to leave it and look for another home. After travelling for some time they came to a very deep well.

‘Oh,’ cried one of the frogs, ‘now we shall perhaps be more comfortable! There is surely water here. Dear friend, let us both leap to the bottom and see.’

‘No,’ answered the other, who was wiser and more thoughtful than his friend, ‘the water in this well may be dried up too, and if this is so and we leap to the bottom, how are we to climb up again?’

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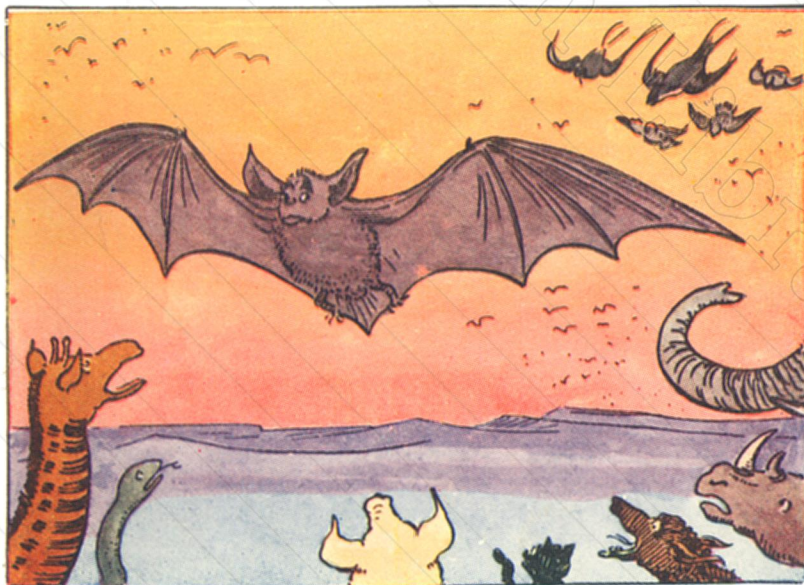
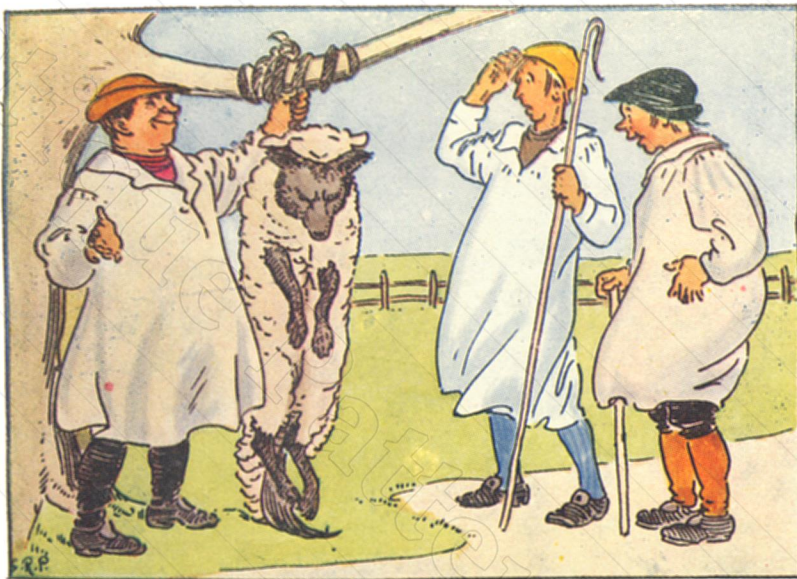
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THE FOX AND THE WILD BOAR

One day a boar stood by a tree, busily sharpening his tusks.

A fox who happened to be passing at the time said to him, 'What is the good of your sharpening your tusks now? All is quiet: there is nothing to fear either from the hunter or from any of your enemies!'

The boar answered, 'You may be sure that I am not doing this without a reason. It is true I am in no danger at present, yet who knows but I might suddenly be attacked, and then, if my tusks were not ready, I should lose time in sharpening them, whereas now I am able to defend myself at once against any foe that may come.'



THE WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

A wolf put on the skin of a sheep, and getting in among the flock by means of this disguise, killed many of the sheep. The shepherd, who wondered why so many of his flock had disappeared, at last discovered the deceit. He fastened a rope cunningly round the pretended sheep's neck, led him to a tree, and there hanged him.

Some other shepherds passing that way and seeing what they thought was a sheep hanging from a tree, said, 'What, brother! Surely you do not hang sheep?'

'No,' answered the shepherd, 'but I hang wolves when I catch them dressed up in sheep's skins!'

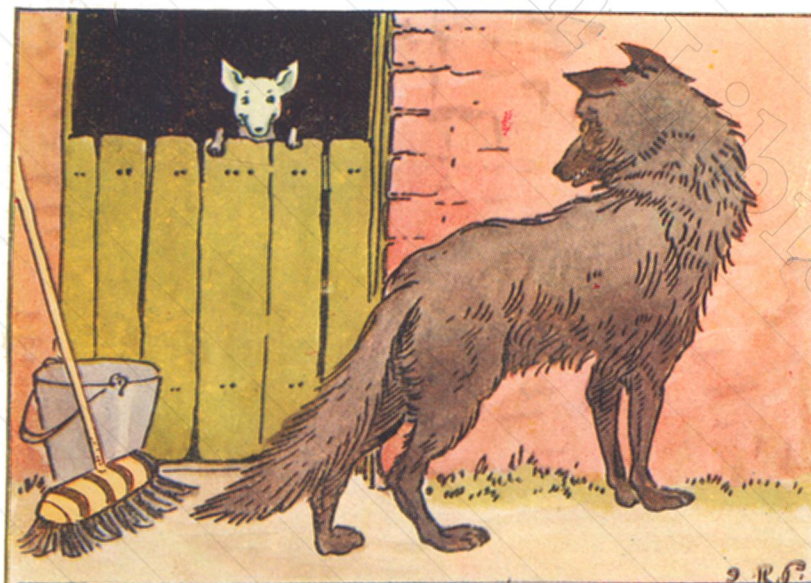
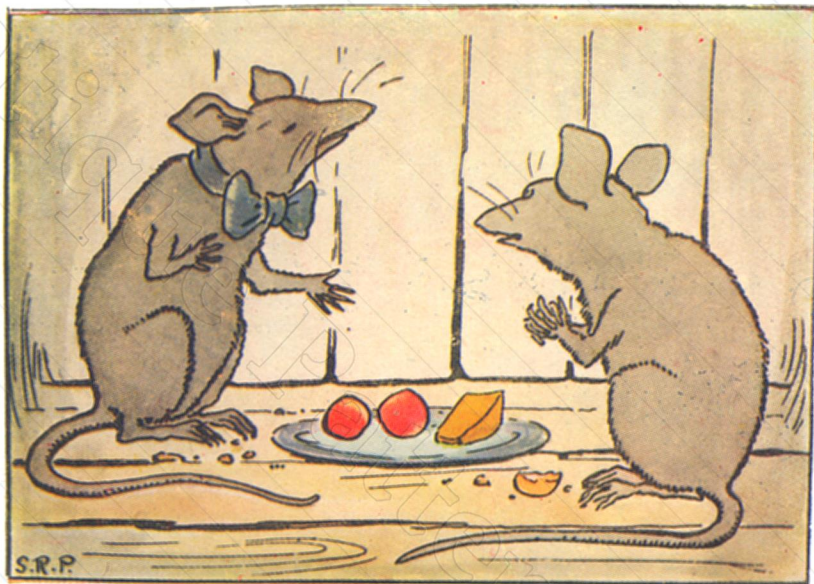
Then he showed them their mistake, and they praised the justice of the deed he had done.

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THE BIRDS, THE BEASTS AND THE BAT

Once a great war was declared between the birds and the beasts. The bat, being half a bird and half a beast, hoped to escape fighting, and so save his skin. On the day of battle, the bat, thinking the birds were most likely to win, flew up in the air, taking care, nevertheless, to keep at some distance, so as to see how the matter went. After much fighting, the beasts appeared to be having the best of it. Down flew the cowardly bat to join them. He told them that as his body was very like that of a mouse, it was to them he owed allegiance. The beasts agreed to receive him, and he swore to be true always to their cause. However, in the end the birds, through the cleverness of their general, the eagle, won the day, and the bat, in fear of his life, took to flight. Since then, as if ashamed to show himself, he hides in caves and hollow trees, never appearing until dusk, when all the birds have gone to roost.



**THE TOWN MOUSE AND THE
COUNTRY MOUSE**

A town mouse once came to see a country mouse in his barn. As they were old friends the country mouse gave his guest of the very best of his store—peas, fine oatmeal, the rind of a new cheese, and, as dessert, a piece of ripe apple. There not being enough for two, he himself politely nibbled wheaten straw.

The feast over, the town mouse said, 'Excuse my frankness, but how can you bear to live in this dirty place, and to eat such common food? Come with me to town and see what a fine life I lead!'

Accordingly together they went to town and entered a house where there had been a grand supper the night before. The town mouse led his friend to the supper-room, and the two began to feast on the rich scraps and leavings. Suddenly the door opened, servants entered, and the mice scurried off in terror. Next, the dogs barked fiercely, and this so frightened the country mouse that he bade good-bye to his friend, saying, 'You may enjoy this town life, but I prefer a peaceful barn and plain food to these riches beset with danger.'

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THE HOUSE-DOG AND THE WOLF

One moonlight night, a hungry wolf met a plump, well-fed dog.

Said the wolf, 'How is it that you are so much fatter than I? I am always busy looking for food, and yet I am but skin and bone!'

'Come with me and guard the house from thieves and you will soon grow fat!' said the dog.

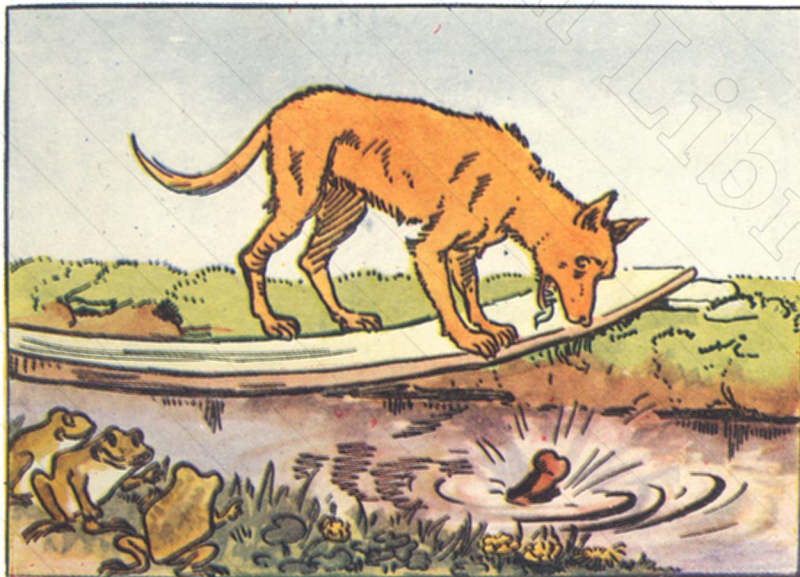
'With all my heart,' answered the wolf.

Now, as they were trotting along together, the wolf saw a mark on the dog's neck. 'What is that?' he asked curiously.

The dog, a little ashamed, answered, 'If you must know, it is the mark of my chain. As I am somewhat fierce I am tied up by day, but at night I go where I please: my master brings me dainty scraps, and all the household pets me. Oh, you will soon see how happy your life will be!'

'No,' said the wolf, 'you can keep your happiness. I would rather be hungry and free than well-fed and chained. Good-night to you.'

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THE WOMAN AND HER SERVANTS

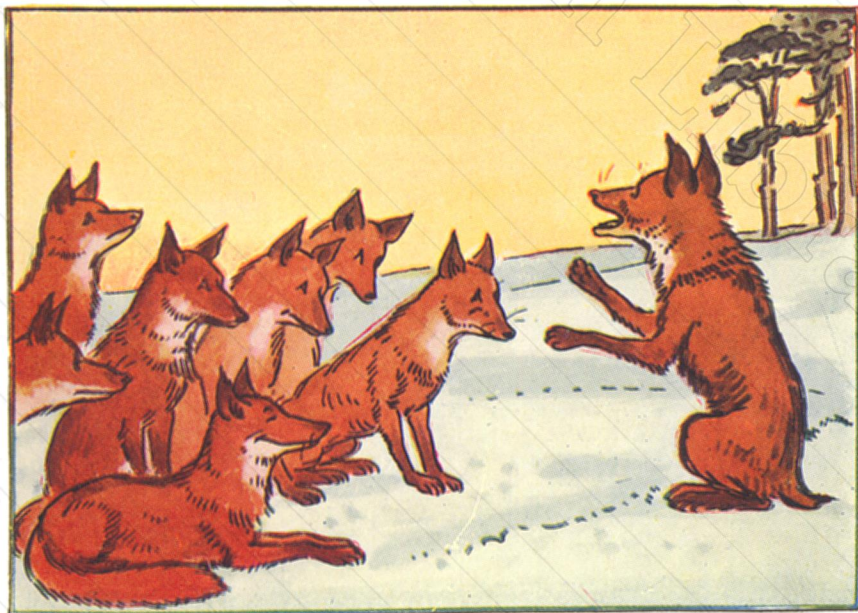
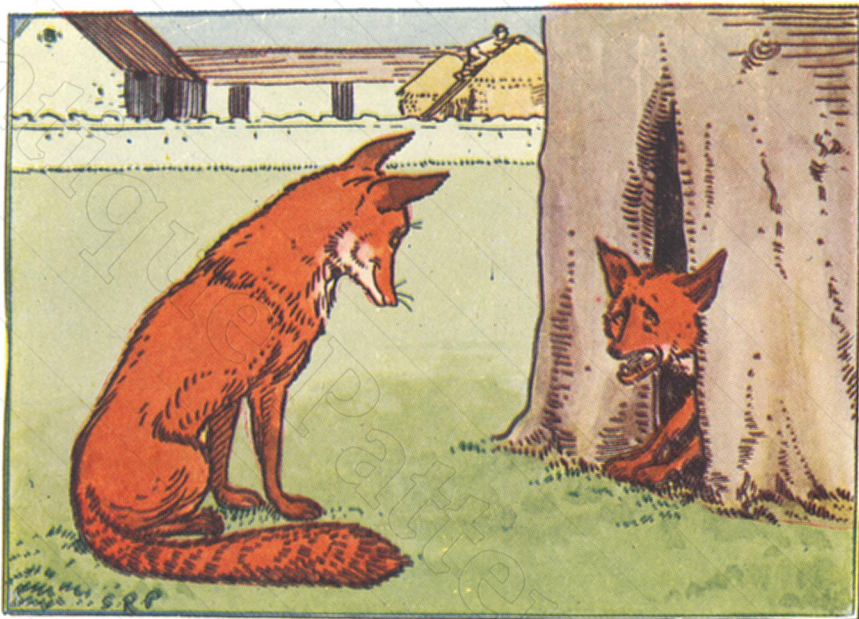
An old widow-woman loved work so dearly that she got up every morning as soon as she heard the cock crow: and, more than this, she made all her servants get up at the same time. They, not liking to get out of bed at so early an hour, grew very discontented, and thinking it was the fault of the cock for waking their mistress, they made up their minds to kill him. This they did, and hoped that afterwards they would be able to sleep till later, but their cruel deed had its own reward, for the widow, having no cock to arouse her at a regular hour, from that time forward woke them up very much earlier—sometimes even in the middle of the night.

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THE DOG AND HIS SHADOW

A dog, who was running away with a large piece of meat which he had stolen, came to a stream over which was a little bridge. As he was crossing the bridge he looked down and saw, as he thought, another dog with another large piece of meat in his mouth. Not knowing that what he saw was only the reflection of himself in the clear water, he greedily dropped his own meat and made a snatch at the other. But, instead of getting anything by his thievish ways, he lost all, for as he let go his hold of the stolen meat, it fell into the water and sank at once to the bottom of the stream.



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THE OVER-FED FOX

A fox was hungry. Seeing, in the hollow of a tree, some bread and meat left there by a shepherd, he slipped through the hole into the tree and feasted merrily. Having devoured everything, he was about to come out, when he discovered that through over-eating he had grown too plump and fat to squeeze back through the hole. Upon this he started to howl wofully. Another fox who was passing heard the noise and came to ask what was the matter. When the imprisoned fox told his sad tale, the other said, 'Patience, my friend, time cures all misfortunes. The only thing for you to do is to stay where you are until you become as lean as you were when you entered. Then you will be able to slip out easily.'

ÆSOP'S FABLES

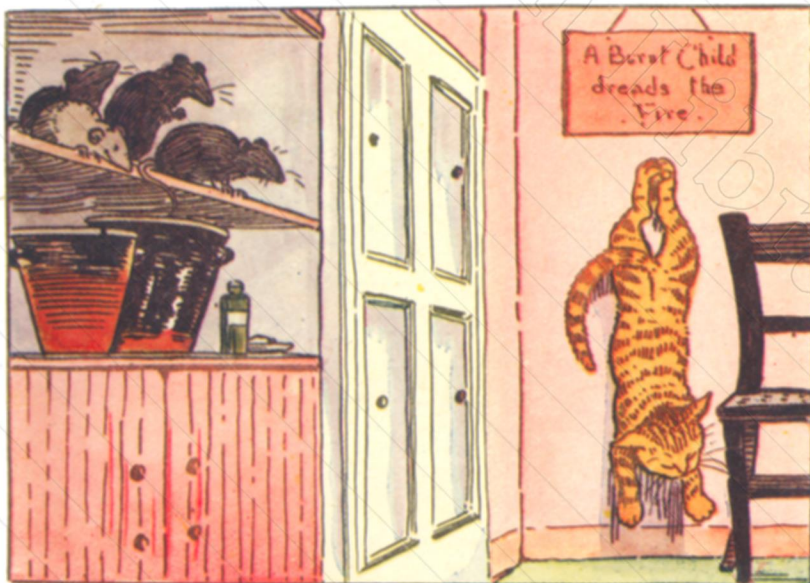
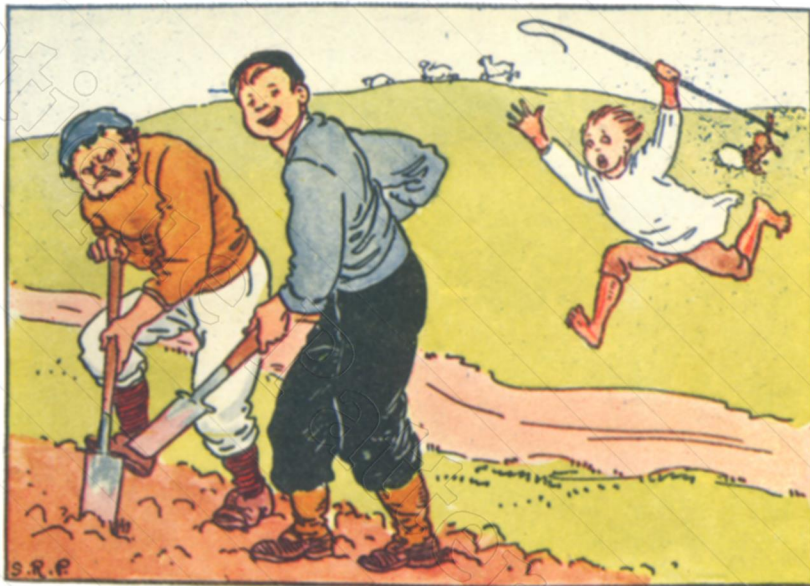
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THE FOX WITHOUT A TAIL

A fox lost his tail in escaping from a steel trap. When he began to go about again, he found that every one looked down upon or laughed at him. Not liking this, he thought to himself that if he could persuade the other foxes to cut off their tails, his own loss would not be so noticeable.

Accordingly he called together the foxes and said : 'How is it that you still wear your tails? Of what use are they? They are in the way, they often get caught in traps, they are heavy to carry and not pretty to look upon. Believe me, we are far better without them. Cut off your tails, my friends, and you will see how much more comfortable it is. I for my part have never enjoyed myself so much nor found life so pleasant as I have since I lost mine.'

Upon this, a sly old fox, seeing through the trick, cried, 'It seems to me, my friend, that you would not be so anxious for us to cut off our tails, if you had not already lost yours.'



**THE SHEPHERD BOY AND
THE WOLF**

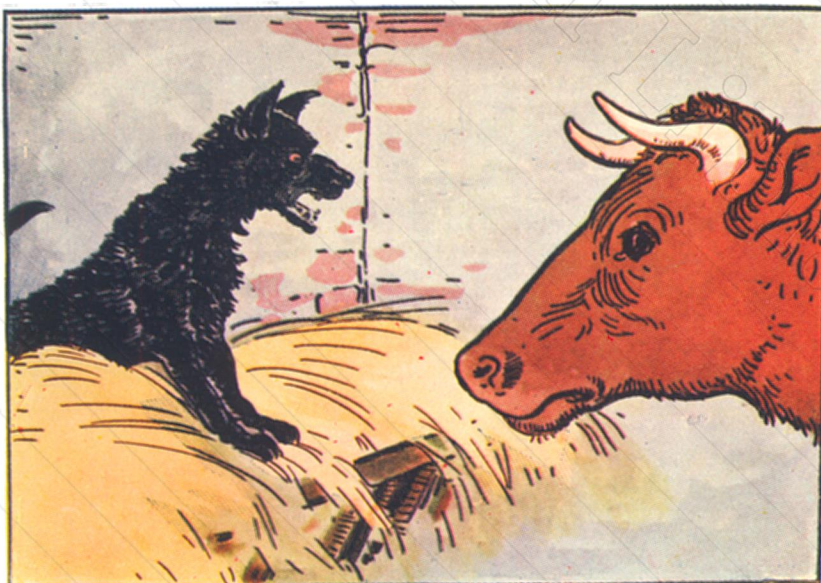
A young shepherd kept his sheep upon a common often visited by wolves. Out of very mischief the boy from time to time would cry, as if in fear, 'The wolf! the wolf!' Hearing this, the men from the fields near by rushed to save him, as they thought. But they found no wolf. This happened so many times that at last the men made up their minds not to stir should the boy again call out. One day the wolf did really come. The boy this time cried in earnest, 'The wolf! the wolf!' but as no one came to his aid (for all the men thought he was playing his old tricks), the wolf killed the boy and devoured the sheep at his ease.

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THE CAT AND THE MICE

A certain house was overrun with mice. By and by a cat arrived who caught and ate them every day, until at last there were very few left. Seeing this, the remaining mice held a parliament and passed a law that none should go down further than the upper shelf. The mice thus keeping out of reach, the hungry cat thought of a plan by which to entice them down. She hung herself by the hind legs on a peg of the wall and pretended to be dead. Seeing this, a sly old mouse popped his head over the shelf and cried out to her, 'Aha! I see you there, old friend! And you may stay as long as you like, we do not care. We would not trust you, no, not even if you were stuffed with straw!'



THE FOX AND THE STORK

The fox asked the stork to dinner. Wishing to amuse himself by making fun of his guest, he gave him only one large flat dish of soup. Thus the stork, who could but dip the end of his long beak into the dish was not able to eat anything, while the fox lapped up every drop, laughing all the time at his clever trick. The stork said nothing, but in a few days the fox received from him an invitation to dinner. On arriving, Reynard found that they were to feast on mince-meat, and that the mince-meat had been put into a glass jar with a long thin neck. The stork after telling his guest to begin, thrust his bill into the jar and ate a hearty meal, but all the hungry fox could do was to lick what crumbs were left on the brim. At first he was very angry, but afterwards he confessed that it served him right, for it was he who had set the bad example, by breaking the laws of kindness and hospitality.

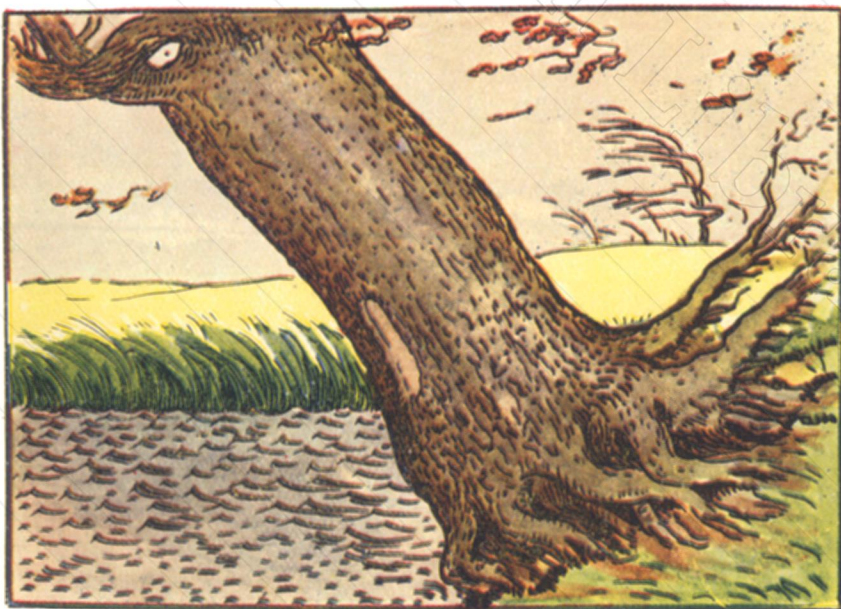
ÆSOP'S FABLES

27

THE DOG IN THE MANGER

A dog made himself a comfortable bed in a manger full of hay. An ox who was hungry came to the manger and tried to eat the hay, but upon this the dog, being an ill-tempered and spiteful beast, sprang up, and, snapping and snarling at him fiercely, would not let him touch it. Then the ox, becoming angry, and rightly so, cried out bitterly, 'Shame on you! you miserable mean-spirited wretch! You deserve to be whipped and starved for the rest of your life, for you will neither eat the hay yourself nor allow any one else to do so.'

F



THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

A fox who was very hungry, as he had been looking for food for several days and had found none, came at last to a vineyard. There he saw beautiful purple grapes hanging from a high trellis. He leapt up to snatch at them, but he did not leap high enough. He tried again and again and yet again until he was quite tired out, and still he could not reach even one of them. At last, seeing that he would have to go without, he passed on, muttering, 'Well, what does it matter? The grapes are sour.'

ÆSOP'S FABLES

29

THE OAK TREE AND THE REED

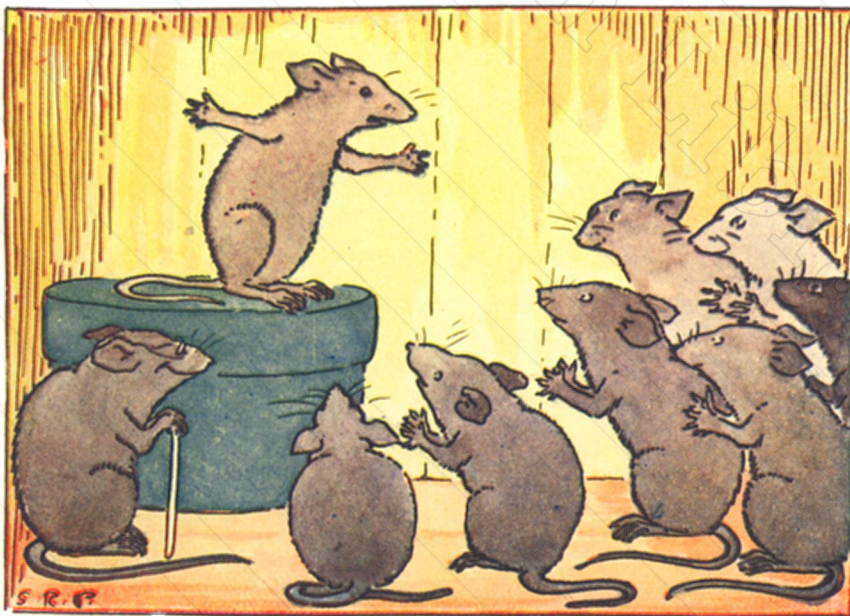
An oak tree quarrelled with a reed about the best way of behaving in a storm.

‘As for me,’ said the oak proudly, ‘I stand up bravely and strongly against whatever wind may blow: I do not, like you, bend my head to the ground in fear, at every little breeze.’

To this insult the reed made no answer, except to quiver and sway a little, as if too angry to speak.

In a little while there arose a great storm of wind which lasted all through the night. In the morning the oak tree fell to the ground with a crash.

‘It seems after all that my way is best,’ said the reed. ‘If you had not stood up so stiffly and stubbornly against that which is stronger than you are, you would not be lying broken in two like this.’



ÆSOP'S FABLES

THE COUNTRY MAID AND HER MILK-PAN

A country maid, walking along the road with a pan of sweet milk on her head, said to herself, 'With the money I get for this milk I shall buy eggs, then I shall put them under the old hen, and when the chickens are hatched, I shall feed them until they are big enough and plump enough to fetch a high price. With the money I get for them I shall buy me a fine new gown, and on market day I shall look so comely in it that all the farmers will admire me. But I shall not look at them, I shall toss my head and turn away.'

At this point, the foolish maid, forgetting the milk-pan, and thinking only of how she would flout her admirers, really did toss her head. Down tumbled the pan, out ran the milk over the road, and with it disappeared all chance of ever having either eggs, chickens, fowls, fine gowns, or admirers to flout.

ÆSOP'S FABLES

31

THE MICE IN COUNCIL

Some mice were in great fear of a cat. She watched the place so carefully that not one of them dared venture out from his hole in search of food. They were therefore in danger of being starved.

In their trouble they called a meeting, and while they were talking the matter over, a conceited young mouse stood up and said, 'Dear friends, after much deep thought I have discovered a plan which will save us all. I propose that we tie a bell round the cat's neck so that by its ringing we shall always know when she is near.' Then he sat down amidst great applause.

All the mice were delighted with the clever plan. Presently an old mouse, who had not spoken before, said, 'I agree that the plan is excellent, and since our young friend has been so clever as to think of it, perhaps he will also tell us how to carry it out. What I want to know is, "Who is going to bell the cat?"'



ÆSOP'S FABLES

THE WIND AND THE SUN

The wind and the sun once had a dispute as to which was the stronger. At last, as neither would give in, they agreed each to try his strength upon a traveller, and the one who managed to get off the man's cloak first was to be the winner.

The wind began. He blew cold blasts and hurricanes, poured down showers of rain and hail, stormed, and raged and howled, but with no success, for the stronger he blew, the closer the man drew his cloak about him.

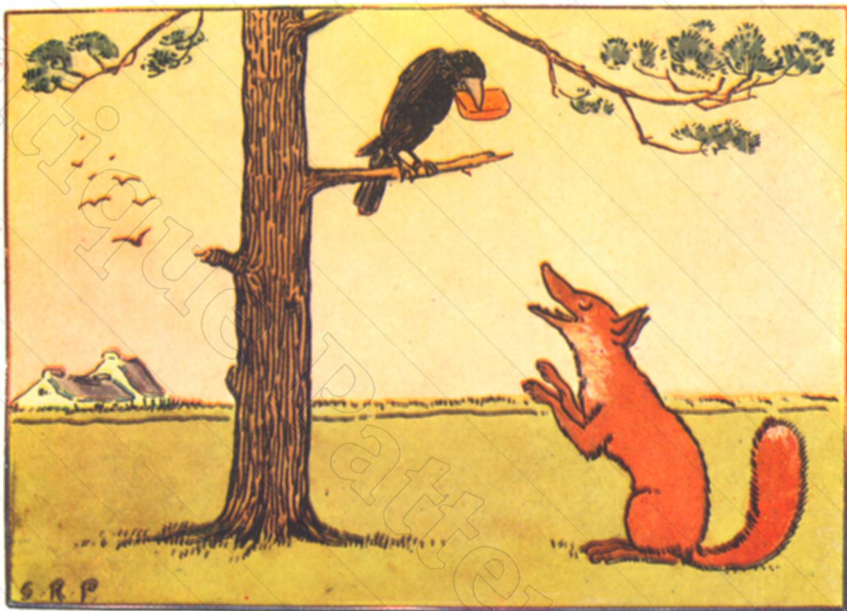
Next came the sun, who, dispelling the cold clouds and mist from the sky, sent down his bright rays upon the poor weather-beaten traveller. No sooner did the man feel the comforting warmth, than he threw off his heavy cloak, and went happily on his way.

ÆSOP'S FABLES

33

THE OLD MAN AND HIS SONS

An old man had a great many sons who were always quarrelling amongst themselves. This made the father sad, for although he did all he could to keep peace among them, they would never listen to him. At last he thought of a way to show them their folly. He ordered all his sons to be called before him, and, taking a short bundle of sticks, he commanded them, one by one, to break it. They all tried hard and they all failed, for the sticks were so closely bound up that it was impossible to break the bundle. Then the father untying it, and giving a single stick to each son told him to break it. This each did easily, upon which the father cried, 'Oh my sons, see how strong are all united things! If you would only live bound together by love and friendship one for the other, no mortal power could hurt you. But divided as you are, unloving, unfriendly, it would be as easy for any one to do you harm, as it was for you to break these single sticks in two.'



THE FOX AND THE CROW

A crow having stolen a large piece of cheese from a cottage window, flew with it to a high tree near by. A cunning fox, noticing this, came and sat underneath the tree and looking up, as if in great astonishment and admiration, cried, 'You beautiful creature! I never before saw such delicate white feathers! What a lovely shape you have, and doubtless your voice is as wonderful. I protest, if your song matches your beauty, there is no bird in the world that could hope to rival you!'

At this the vain and silly crow was so overcome with delight that she nearly tumbled off her perch, and wishing to show the fox that her voice was quite equal to her beauty, she opened her mouth and gave a loud caw. Down dropped the cheese, and this being all the fox wanted, he picked it up, swallowed it in a moment, and trotted off laughing at the foolish vanity of the crow.

ÆSOP'S FABLES

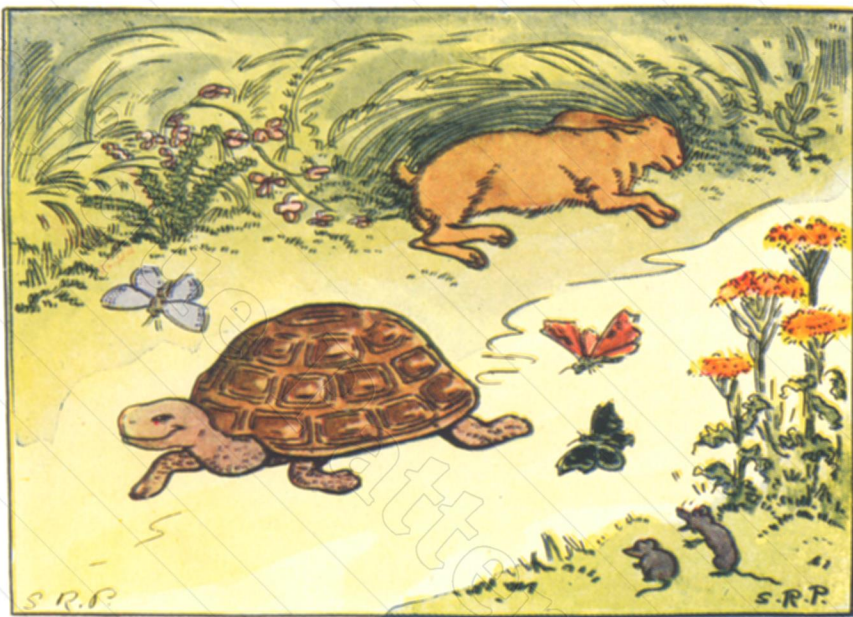
35

THE ASTROLOGER

An astrologer, who was famed for his great learning and his knowledge of the stars, went out for a walk. As he walked, all the time looking up at the sky, he said to himself, 'Oh, how much wiser am I than most men! All the secrets of the stars are known to me. I read them as other men read books. What a fine thing it is to have brains, and how glad I am not to be stupid as some are!'

Thus speaking, he came to a well, but being far too busy praising his own cleverness to notice it, he tripped and fell in headlong, and there he had to stay until his servant, hearing his cries, came and pulled him out.

G



THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

A hare boasted loudly to a tortoise of her speed in running, at the same time insulting him because of his slowness.

‘Let us have a race,’ answered the tortoise. ‘For five pounds I will run with you five miles, and the fox over yonder shall be the judge.’

The hare with a scornful smile agreed, and away they started together.

Soon the hare left the tortoise far behind, and, feeling a little tired, lay down on a tuft of grass that grew by the way. ‘If that slow-coach passes, I shall see him and easily catch him up again,’ she said to herself, and fell asleep.

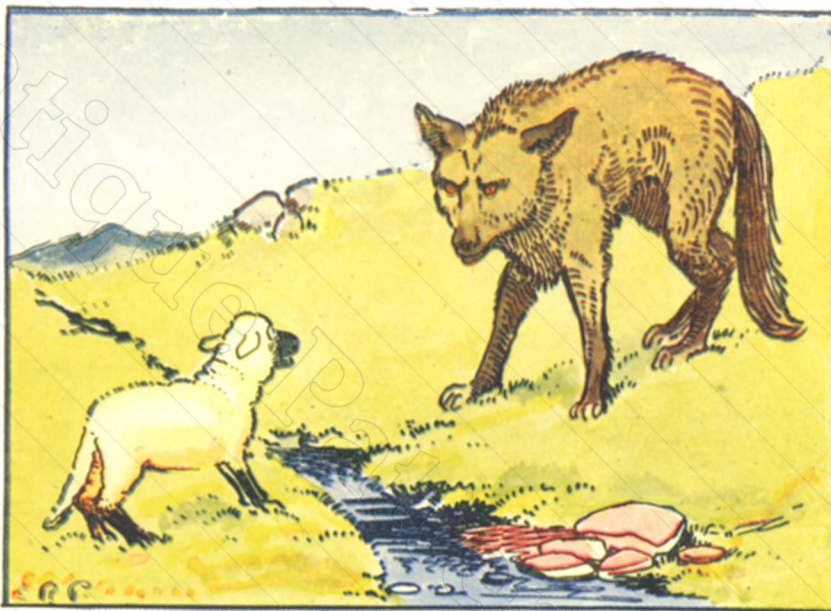
In the meantime the tortoise plodded on, slowly but surely. After a time, she passed the hare, who, sure of reaching the goal first, still slept, and awoke only to find that the tortoise had reached it before her.

ÆSOP'S FABLES

37

THE CROW AND THE PITCHER

A crow, whose throat was parched and dry with thirst, saw a pitcher in the distance. In great joy he flew to it, but found that it held only a little water, and even that was too near the bottom to be reached, for all his stooping and straining. Next he tried to overturn the pitcher, thinking that he would at least be able to catch some of the water as it trickled out. But this he was not strong enough to do. In the end he found some pebbles lying near, and by dropping them one by one into the pitcher, he managed at last to raise the water up to the very brim, and thus was able to quench his thirst.



ÆSOP'S FABLES

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

A wolf, who was drinking at the head of a running stream, saw a lamb paddling in the water lower down. He at once made up his mind that he would have her for supper, but he tried first to find a good reason for seizing her.

'Villain,' he cried, running up to the poor little lamb, 'how dare you make the water muddy when I am drinking it?'

'Indeed,' said the lamb meekly, 'I do not see how I can have disturbed you, for the stream runs down from you to me!'

'Well,' answered the wolf, 'that may be so, but at any rate you called me bad names a year ago.'

'Oh, sir,' cried the trembling lamb, 'you are quite mistaken, for I was not born a year ago.'

'If it was not you, then it must have been your father,' cried the wolf, 'and it is all the same.'

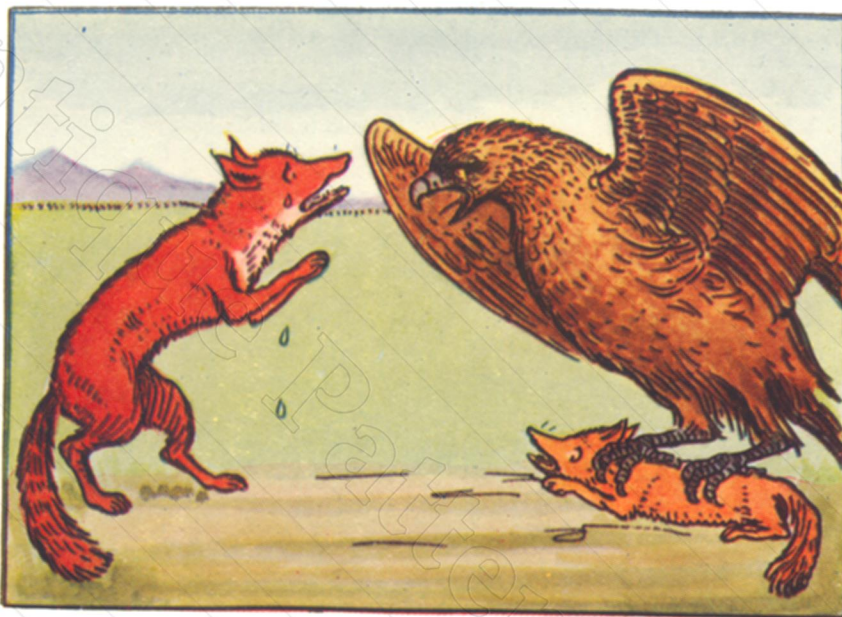
So making any excuse serve his wicked purpose, he seized the lamb and tore her to pieces.

ÆSOP'S FABLES

39

THE ASS WITH THE LOAD OF SALT

An ass with a load of salt fell by chance into a stream. The salt melted in the water and the ass went home rejoicing that his load had become so light. The next day, crossing the stream at the same place with another load, and remembering what had happened before, the ass slipped and fell in on purpose, so to rid himself of his load. This he would always have done had not his master, making up his mind to cure the lazy beast of his tricks, loaded him one day with sponges instead of salt. The ass, as usual, when he came to the stream, took care to fall in, but this time instead of losing his load he gained a heavier one, for the sponges, soaked with water, weighed ten times more than they had done before.



THE FOX AND THE EAGLE

An eagle in search of food for her young, saw a fox's cub playing happily in the sun. She swooped down and caught it in her claws, but before she had carried it off, the old mother fox came home and begged her, with tears in her eyes, to spare the little cub.

But the eagle, whose nest was in a high tree, thought herself quite safe from the fox, and so took away the cub to her little ones, without paying any attention to the poor mother's distress.

Then the mother fox ran quickly to a field near by, where a fire was burning, and, seizing a lighted stick, rushed to the tree where the eagle's nest was built. There with the flaming wood between her teeth she began to climb. Scarcely had she reached the first branch when the eagle, afraid that her nest and her little ones would be burnt, flew down with the cub, and very humbly gave it back safe and sound to the clever mother fox.

ÆSOP'S FABLES

41

THE FAITHLESS PARTRIDGE

A falconer one day caught a partridge in his net. As he was taking it out to kill it, the bird begged earnestly that his life might be spared, promising that if this were granted him, he would in return help the falconer by enticing other partridges into the net.

'No!' answered the falconer, when the bird had finished speaking, 'even if I had meant to spare your life before, I would not do it now: your own words have condemned you, for he who is such a wretch as to offer to betray his friends in order to save himself, deserves if possible to die a hundred deaths.'



ÆSOP'S FABLES

THE CAT AND THE FOX

The fox and the cat were talking together in the middle of the forest. Said Reynard, 'Whatever happens I am safe, for I have a thousand tricks by which to escape from either hunters or dogs. Now Mrs. Puss, pray what would you do if you were to be suddenly attacked?'

'Alas!' answered the cat, 'I have only one plan for avoiding my enemies, and if that fail me, I am undone.'

'I am very sorry for you then,' cried the fox, 'and gladly would I teach you some of my tricks, but, as you know, in times like these it is not wise to trust any one. Every one must look out for himself, and I must do likewise.'

As he spoke, a pack of hounds came rushing through the woods. The cat, following her usual plan, ran up a tree and stayed there safely until the danger was past. But the fox amongst all his thousand tricks found not one to help him, for he was overtaken by the dogs and killed instantly.

ÆSOP'S FABLES

43

THE FOX IN THE WELL

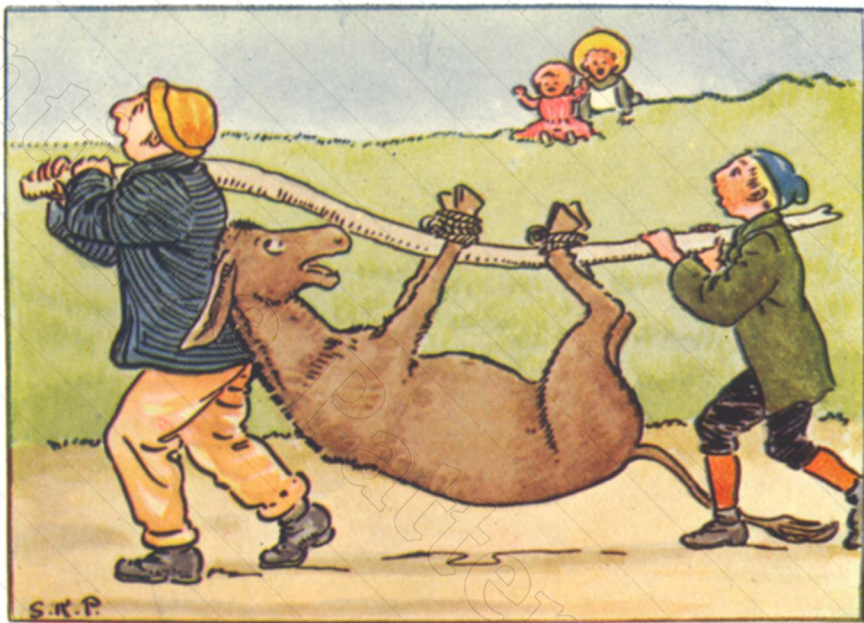
A fox had the misfortune to fall into a well, but by digging his claws into the sides of it, and so keeping his head above water, he managed to escape drowning. In a little while a wolf came and looked over the edge.

‘Sweet friend!’ quoth the fox, ‘I beseech you bring me a rope or a long pole and help me out of this miserable place.’

‘Poor unfortunate,’ cried the wolf, not offering to move, ‘yours is indeed a desperate case, and I pity you with all my heart. How ever did you come to be so unlucky?’

To which the fox answered with some degree of anger, ‘Do not stand there pitying me! If you wish me well, you will lend me your help as quickly as possible. Pity is but poor comfort when one is up to the chin in cold water, and in danger every moment of being either drowned or starved.’

H



THE MAN, HIS SON AND HIS ASS

A man and his son were leading their ass to market. A girl, seeing them, cried, 'Why walk when you can ride?' On hearing this, the man set his son upon the ass.

Going further, they heard an old man say, 'Shame for the young to ride while old people walk!' Thereupon the man made his son get down and rode himself.

Presently they met some women who cried, 'Look at the poor tired son and lazy father!' Hearing this, the man took his son up beside him and so they rode into the town.

There a young man called to them, 'Two men on one beast! It seems to me you are more fit to carry the ass than he is to carry you.'

Then they got down, tied the beast's legs to a pole, and carried him thus till they came to a bridge. As they went, the children shouted so loudly that the ass took fright—kicked his legs free, and jumped over the bridge into the river.

Thus having lost his ass, the man went home, crying, 'Try to please everybody and you will please nobody, not even yourself!'

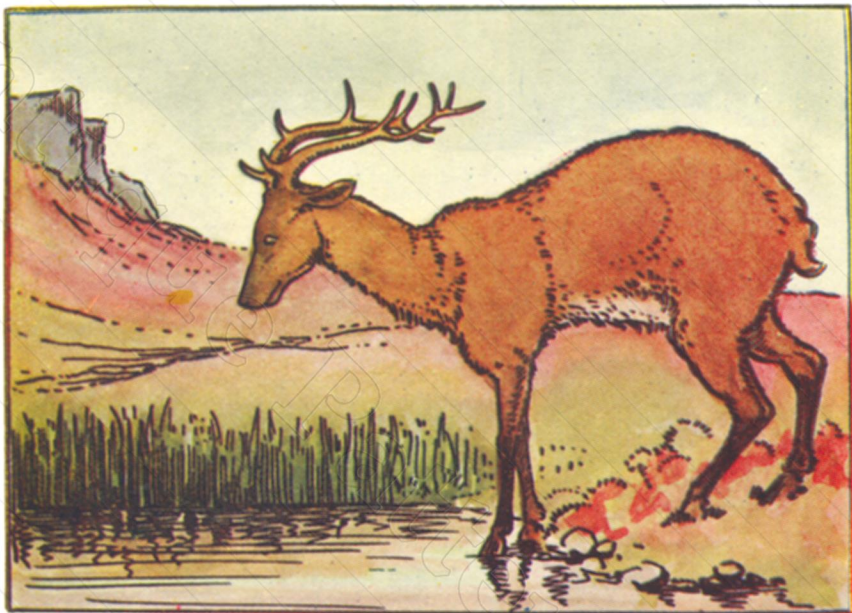
ÆSOP'S FABLES

45

THE OLD WOMAN AND HER FAT HEN

There was once an old woman who had a beautiful hen. Every morning the hen used to lay an egg, and this pleased the old woman very much. But by and by she thought, 'It would be very nice to have two eggs a day instead of one. Surely if I give my hen twice as much barley for her breakfast, she will lay twice as many eggs.'

So the old woman began to feed the hen with twice as much barley as she had given it before, but ere long it grew so fat and sleek that it left off laying any eggs at all.



ÆSOP'S FABLES

THE STAG AT THE SPRING

A stag, as he bent over a spring to drink, saw himself reflected in the water, and stood still to admire the picture.

'Ah!' he said, 'what a splendid pair of horns I have. If the rest of my body was as beautiful, I should be the handsomest animal alive. But I cannot bear to look at my thin legs. I really am ashamed of them.'

Just then he heard the angry roar of a lion, and was off like the wind. The legs which he had despised carried him so swiftly that very soon the lion was left far behind.

But, as he went through a tangled wood, his splendid horns caught in the branches of a tree, and he was held a prisoner until the lion came up and made an end of him.

So it was that, after all, the horns which he had admired so much were the cause of his death.

ÆSOP'S FABLES

47

MERCURY AND THE WOODMAN

A poor woodman, by mischance, dropped his axe into the river. As he sat weeping on the bank, Mercury appeared to him, and on being told of the misfortune, plunged into the stream and brought out a golden axe. This the man refused to take, saying that it was not his. Again the god dived and brought out a silver axe, and again the honest man would not take what was not his own. Once more Mercury plunged in, and this time brought out the real axe, and upon the man claiming it as his, the god, pleased with his honesty, gave him both the gold and the silver axes as well as his own.

The woodman went home joyfully and told his friends of the happy adventure. Thereupon one of them going to the river, threw in his axe, and sat down on the bank and wept loudly.

Mercury came as before, but this woodman was dishonest, and on being shown the golden axe, he lied, and swore that it was his. This made the god so angry that he sent the man away, without even giving him back his own axe.

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