

REYNARD THE FOX



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
L. R. BRIGHTWELL



Class PZ8

Book P33

1923
PRESENTED BY





REYNARD THE FOX





“GOOD EVENING,” said the Cat.
“The King orders you
to return without delay.”



REYNARD THE FOX

TOLD BY C. S. EVANS
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
L. R. BRIGHTWELL



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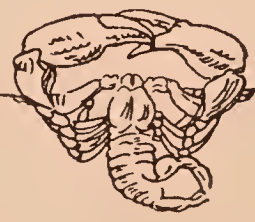
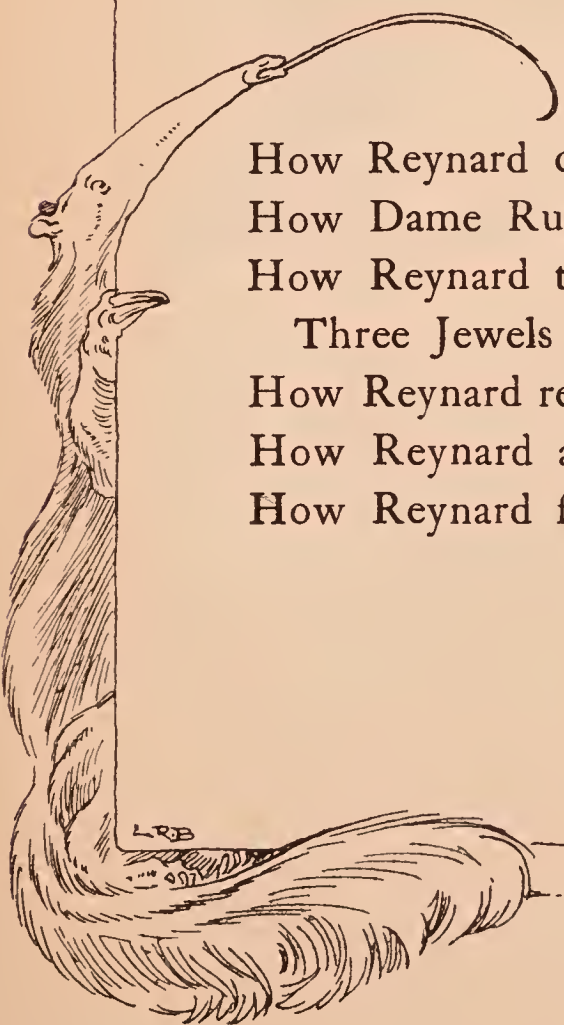






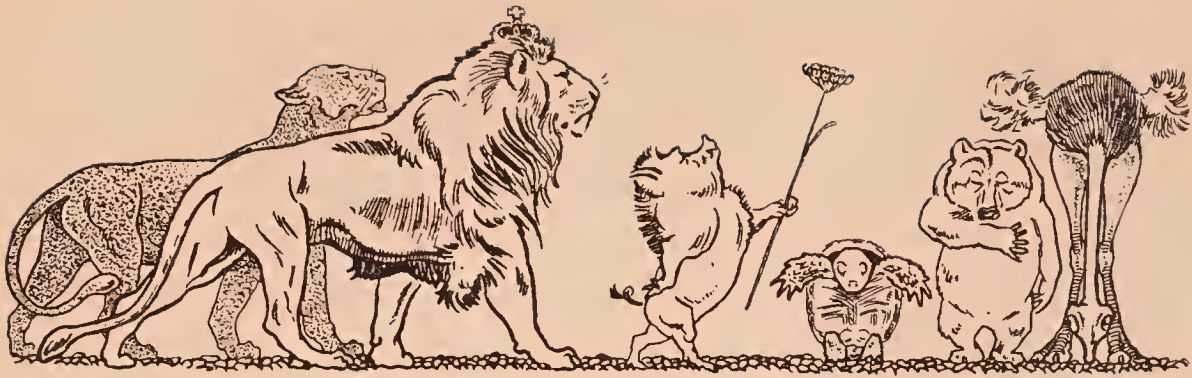
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THE WICKED FOX CARRIES HOME
HIS PREY.



WHY REYNARD WAS NOT AT COURT



T was Whitsuntide ; the forest and the fields were gay with flowers and sweet singing birds. All the beasts were stirring, for this was the day on which the great meeting of animals was to take place. King Lion had bidden all his subjects to come to his Court. None must be absent. So along every way they came : the Wolf, the Wild Cat, the Dog, the Panther, the Badger, Bruin the Bear, and a host of others. One alone was not there, and that was Reynard the Fox.

The reason for his absence was soon seen. There was hardly one of the beasts who had not some complaint to make about him. The angriest one of all was the Wolf.

“Your Majesty,” he said, “will you please punish that rascal Reynard ? Not a day passes but what he does some mischief to me. It would take many a week to tell

you of all the evil he has done. Three of my little children are now sitting at home crying because Reynard has blinded them with dust."

"You are not the only one he has harmed," said the Dog. "One winter, great King, Reynard stole my last meal, a piece of sausage which I had hidden in a bush."

"You have little to grumble about," said the Wild Cat. "The sausage was mine, your Majesty! I took it from a shelf

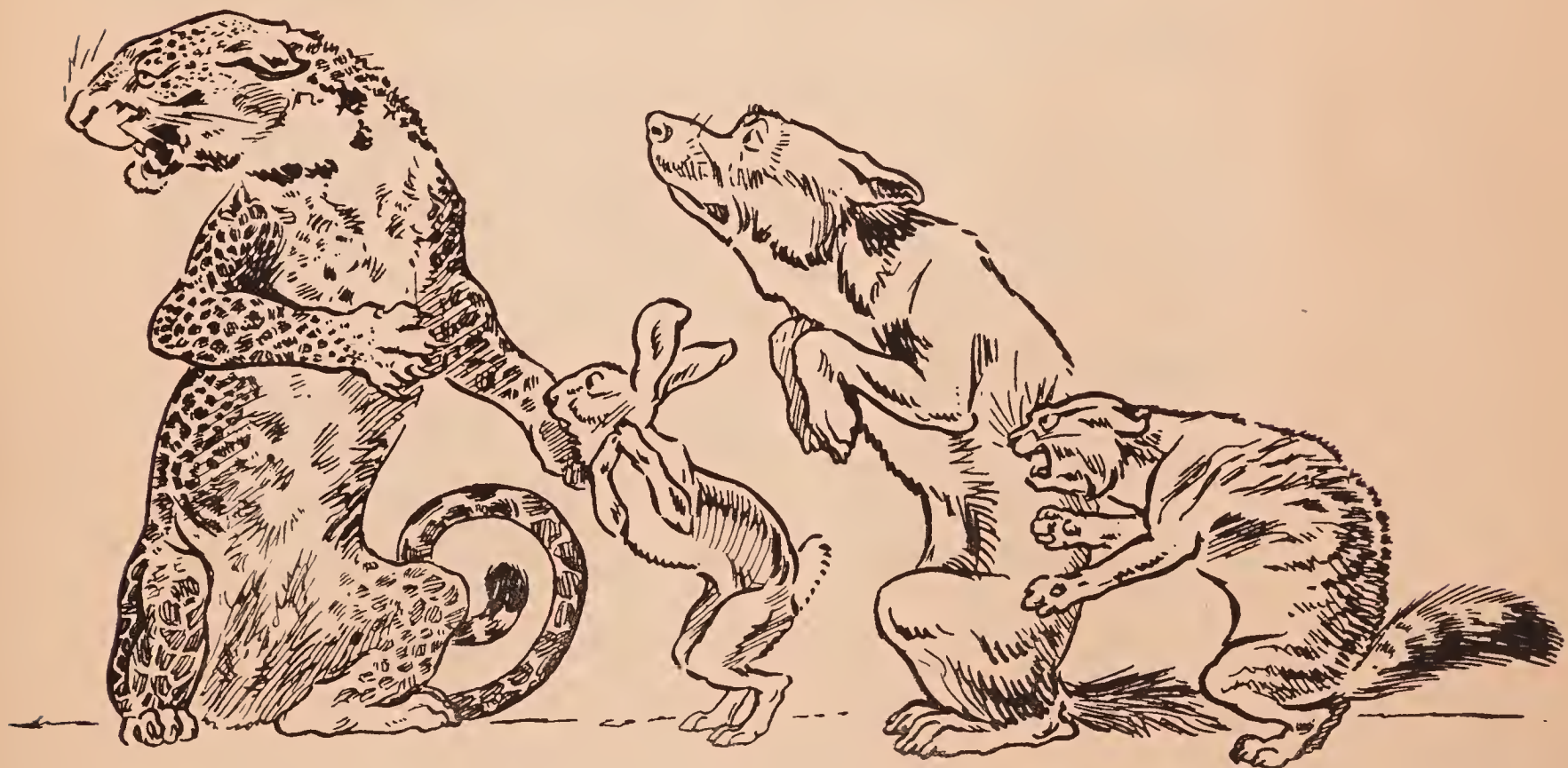


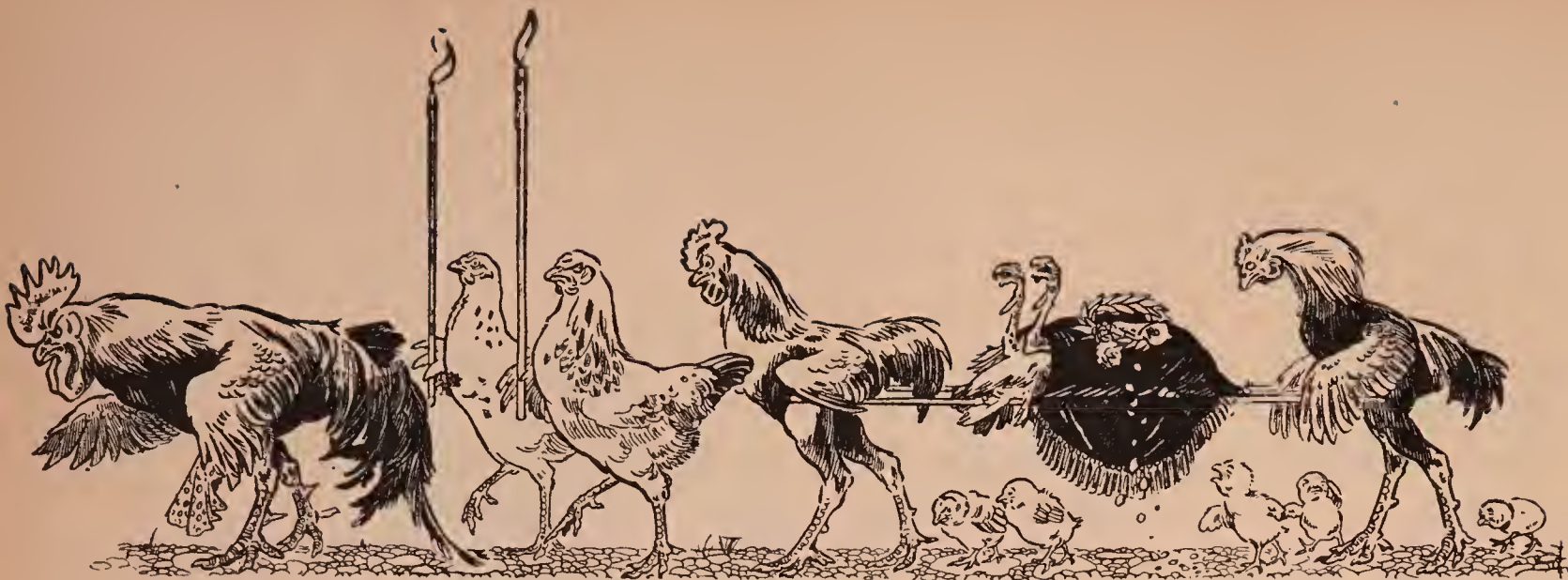
L. R. BRIGHTWELL.

in the mill while the miller's wife was asleep. The Dog stole it from me."

"Look what Reynard did to the Hare!" said the Panther, pointing to a wound in the Hare's neck. "This poor fellow met the Fox last week. 'Let me teach you how to say your prayers in Latin,' said Reynard, 'and then you will be able to take a good post in the church.' The Hare agreed, and Reynard made him get down on his knees, but before he had said half-a-dozen words Reynard seized him by the throat, and if I had not come along just then he certainly would have killed him."

"These tales would not be told if my uncle were present," cried Reynard's nephew, the Badger, angrily. "The Wolf has treated my uncle in a very evil manner more than once. Some time ago the Wolf and Reynard agreed to





work together and share whatever food they got. One day as they were walking behind the hedge that borders the road they saw a man come along with a cartload of fish. Their mouths watered, for they were both hungry, and Reynard soon thought of a plan to get some of the fish.

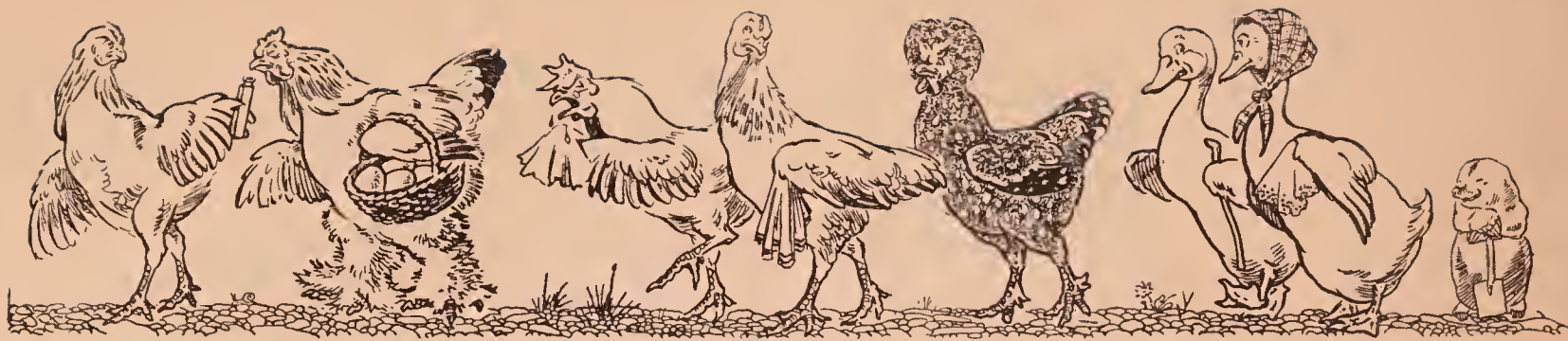
“ ‘ You stay behind the cart and keep a good watch,’ he said to the Wolf. Then he ran along by the hedge, and came out into the road a long way in front of the carter. Here he lay down in a rut, and when the cart drew near, shut his eyes, held his breath and stiffened his body.

“ ‘ Ah ! ’ said the man when he saw Reynard. ‘ Here’s a dead fox. His skin ought to fetch a good sum of money in the next town.’ With that he picked up the Fox and threw him on the back of the cart. No sooner was the man’s back turned than Reynard came to life again. Fish after fish he kicked into the roadway, while the Wolf followed and picked them up.

“ When the Fox had thrown down enough, he jumped to the Wolf for a share of the plunder.

“ ‘ Here is your share,’ said the Wolf, as he pointed to a heap of fish bones. ‘ I hope you’ll enjoy the feast.’ And off he went.”

“ Well ! ” said the King, “ is there anything more ? ”



“ There is,” said the Badger. “ Another time the Wolf and the Fox heard that a peasant had killed a fat pig and hung it up on a wooden peg in his larder. They both felt very hungry for this pig, so they went to the peasant’s house. After a great deal of trouble my uncle was able to get through a window into the larder. With a struggle he managed to throw the pig, peg as well, out of the window. The Wolf ran off with the prize, leaving Reynard to get out as best he could. When the Fox did get out of the house he was set upon by the peasant’s dogs. They gave him a sorry time, but after a long run he escaped from them and made his way back.

“ When he came up to the Wolf, who looked fat and happy, he could see no sign of the pig. ‘ Haven’t you saved any for me ? ’ he asked angrily.

“ ‘ Why, of course,’ answered the Wolf. ‘ Nobody can say I am greedy. Here’s a tasty tit-bit for you.’ And he flung the Fox the wooden peg on which the pig had been hung.”

Just as the Badger ended his tale there was a commotion outside, and the next minute there marched into the Court a very strange procession.

In front was Henning the Cock ; behind him were two young cocks, bearing a bier on which lay the headless body of Henning’s daughter, Scratchfoot. On either side walked

a brother of the dead hen carrying a white candle ; and after him came many relations of the deceased, all crying most miserably.

“ What does all this mean ? ” asked the King.

“ Alas ! sire ! ” said Henning, pointing to the bier, “ this is Reynard’s work. I had ten sons and fifteen daughters and we all lived happily in a farmyard belonging to rich monks. Round the yard was a strong wall, and six large dogs were inside to protect us. Many a time has Reynard tried to get into the yard, but the dogs at last gave him such a bad time that he left us alone.

“ One day we heard a knocking at the gate, and looking over, I saw the Fox dressed as a hermit.

“ ‘ You need not be afraid of me any more,’ he said. ‘ I have taken a vow never again to eat flesh. I am going to read holy books and pray for the rest of my life. My only food will be berries and barley bread. Good-bye, dear Henning, for it is now time for me to go and say my prayers.’

“ I called all my children together and told them the good news, that they need no longer go in mortal fear of



the Fox. Away out of the gate they ran. But that sly Reynard was hiding in a bush, and in a moment he sprang upon my children and killed fifteen of them. Poor Scratchfoot's body was the only one he did not eat, for the dogs came along just in time to stop him."

When the King heard Henning's sad story he was very angry with Reynard and his nephew, the Badger.

He ordered that Scratchfoot should be given a grand funeral, and caused a marble slab to be placed over her grave; and on the slab these words were written:—

" Here lies SCRATCHFOOT,
Daughter of Henning the Cock,
She was skilful in scratching, and laid many eggs."

As for Reynard, a messenger was to be sent to order him to appear at the Court at once. Bruin the Bear was chosen as messenger.

"Be careful," said the King, before Bruin started. "Reynard is full of sly ways, and he will play a trick on you if you are not watchful."

"I know all his tricks," said the Bear proudly. "He won't get the better of me."





HOW BRUIN TOOK THE KING'S MESSAGE



RUIN started off at once on his journey to find the Fox and give him the King's order.

Now Reynard was rich enough to own several houses. The strongest of them all was the Castle of Malpertuis, built high among the rocks. Here the Fox was able to hide himself, even if his enemies got over the strong walls. Underneath the house ran thousands of passages, all twisted and dark, and nobody knew his way along these passages

except Reynard and his wife.

So Bruin set out to find Reynard, and after visiting all his houses in turn came at last to the Castle of Malpertuis. The gates were locked, and everything was quiet when the Bear arrived. Bang! Bang! knocked Bruin on the door. Not a sound was heard.



Everyone left his work to come. All had some weapon to beat poor Bruin.



POOR BRUIN.

“Reynard! Reynard!” he cried loudly. “Open the door. I am Bruin the Bear, and I come from King Lion to bid you appear before him at once.”

Still not a sound was heard; for although the Fox heard every word, he was not going to open the gate till he knew that the Bear was alone.

When he was certain that only the Bear was outside he ran inside and put on his hermit's gown. Then, holding a book in his hand, he opened the gate.

“I am very sorry I have kept you waiting. I was just in the middle of my prayers. You cannot know how pleased I am to see you. Come inside and rest yourself. I am not feeling well enough to start for the Court to-day. You know I've given up eating flesh, and honey is the only food that is plentiful about here. I am afraid I feel ill through the eating of too much of the nasty stuff.”

“Nasty stuff!” said Bruin, to whom honey was the nicest thing in the world. “If you can show me where to get my fill I will do my best for you at the Court.”

“Do you say so?” answered Reynard. “Why, I know a place where there is so much honey that you could not drink it dry in seven years. If you will be a friend to me at Court I will show you the place.”

“Let us go at once,” said Bruin, whose mouth was watering. “I will do all I can for you.”

So the two set off for the farm-





yard of a woodcutter who lived in the valley. In the yard lay a huge oak tree which the woodcutter had felled the day before. To split this he had driven in two big wedges which made a great crack right along the trunk. No one was in the yard, for the woodcutter had gone into the house for a nap.

“Here is the well,” said Reynard, pointing to the crack in the tree. “Put your mouth down as far as you can and eat as much honey as you like.”

It was not long before Bruin had his head and forefeet in the crack, and as soon as Reynard saw that the Bear was busy he gave a hard tug at the wedges. Out they came, the trunk closed up, and Bruin was caught in a trap.

Such a roaring and struggling as the Bear set up! You

never heard such a noise. The Fox grinned, and told himself it was time to be off.

“ How do you like the taste of the honey ? ” said Reynard. “ Do not eat too much, for the woodcutter will bring you something else to eat in a moment. Good-day ! ” and off he went.

Meanwhile, the woodcutter, hearing the noise, came out to see what was the matter. When he saw what had happened he shouted : “ Neighbours ! here’s a bear caught in my yard. Come and have some sport ! ”

Everybody in the village left his work to come. Some carried sticks, some spades, some axes, and others hammers. All had some weapon to beat poor Bruin. So great a hail of blows rained on his back that, with a furious tug he pulled himself free from the tree, leaving behind him his ears and claws. Away he went down the road, and away after him went the crowd. Sticks were thrown at him, and at every corner some one would spring out and give him a blow. Blinded with pain he neither saw nor cared where he went, and suddenly he ran into a crowd of women who were standing by the river watching the fun.

Over went the Priest’s cook into the water. “ Two silver crowns to the man who gets her out,” shouted the Priest. Every one left the Bear to save the cook. Bruin took the chance of escape, and jumped into the river and swam away.

A mile or two down the river



he climbed on the bank, and for a long time lay as if dead. Then he arose and turned towards home.

For four days he crawled along covered with bruises and blood. Hardly able to put one foot before the other he reached the Court. No one would have seen in the miserable creature that returned the lordly Bear who had gone out a few days before.

“ Surely this is not Bruin,” said the King. “ Whatever has happened ? ”

When the Bear had told his story the King’s anger was terrible to see, and he uttered threats of vengeance.

“ Where strength has failed cunning may succeed,” said he. “ I will send the Cat to fetch Reynard to Court. He is not very big, but he has all his wits about him.”





HOW THE WILD CAT FARED



HE Cat did not care very much for the work he had to do ; but he started off, making up his mind not to be tricked as Bruin had been. It was evening when he reached Malpertuis and found Reynard sitting in his front garden.

“ Good evening ! ” said the Cat.
“ The King orders you to return with me without delay.”

“ I hope you are in good health,” answered the Fox.
“ I will certainly come with you in the morning. In the meantime, will you not step inside and have something to eat ? I would have returned with Bruin, only he was such an ill-mannered fellow.”

“ I think we had better go at once,” said the Cat. “ It is a fine night ; the moon is shining and the roads are dry.”

“ But, my dear Cat,” said Reynard, “ it is so much

more pleasant in the daytime, and all sorts of rascals are about at night.”

“ Well, if I stay, what can you give me to eat ? ” he asked.

“ I am very poor and live plainly,” said Reynard, “ but I think I can find you a good meal of honey.”

“ No ! ” said the Cat, remembering in what a sad state poor Bruin had come back. “ I am not fond of honey. Now, if you had a mouse, I could manage with that.”

“ Mouse ! ” said the Fox, “ why, I know a barn not far from here where there are wagon-loads of mice. The Priest who lives there is always grumbling about the mischief they do.”

“ I should very much like to go and see the place of which you speak,” said the Cat.

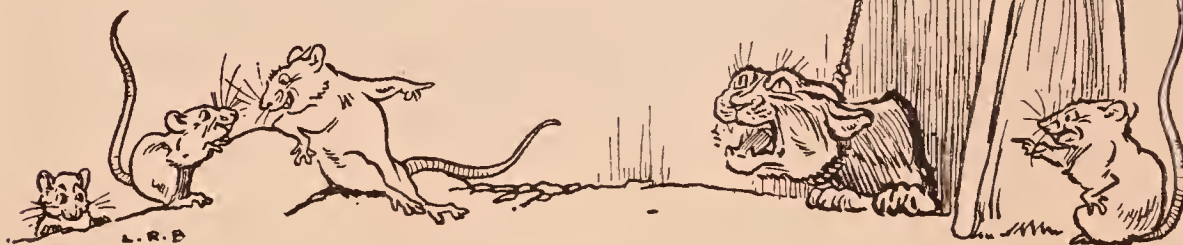
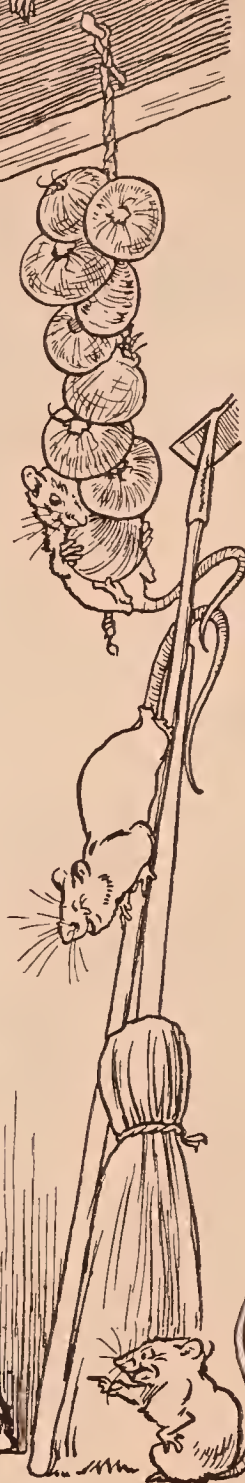
“ Come on, then,” said Reynard, and away down the road the two went together.

A day or two before this the Fox had found out that the Priest kept his chickens in the barn. So he made a big hole under the wall and stole the finest bird he could find. The Priest’s little son, Martin, had made up his mind to catch the Fox if he came that way again, so getting a piece of string he had tied one end to a nail, and at the other end he had made a slip-knot, which he placed over the hole. But Reynard was too sly to be caught easily. It did not take him long to find out about the trap that had been set for him, and he had taken good care not to venture inside that barn again.

“ Here’s the place,” said Reynard, when they reached the barn. “ Can’t you hear the mice squeaking ? The



IN WENT THE CAT—
and
before
he
knew
what
had
happened
THE SLIP-KNOT
WAS ROUND HIS NECK!



hole at the bottom of the wall leads right inside. I'll keep watch outside while you go in ; but don't be long, for we must be up early in the morning to make ready for our journey."

In went the Cat, and before he knew what had happened the slip-knot was round his neck. He tugged and tugged, but the more he pulled the tighter the string became, and the poor thing felt that he would very soon choke.

"Are the mice tasty and fat?" shouted Reynard through the hole. "Don't make so much noise or you'll frighten them all away. It's a pity you have to eat them cold, but Martin will bring you something warm in a minute," and, calling on his way at another farmyard to get a chicken for supper, the Fox trotted home.

The noise made by the Cat awoke Martin, whose bedroom was close by. "Father, get up!" he shouted. "The Fox is caught in my trap!"

Up jumped the Priest, and putting on a cloak, he ran downstairs with Martin to the barn. The servants all rushed out of their bedrooms when they heard the clatter, thinking that the house must be on fire. Away went all of them pell-mell to the barn to repay the Fox for his theft. It was too dark to see that it was no Fox that was caught in the trap, so the poor Cat got a terrible beating, besides being blinded in one eye. Mad with pain, he sprang at the nearest person to him, who happened to be the Priest. The Priest's legs were so covered with bites and scratches that he had to be carried into the house and the Cat was left alone.



Mad with pain, he sprang at the nearest person to him, who happened to be the Priest.

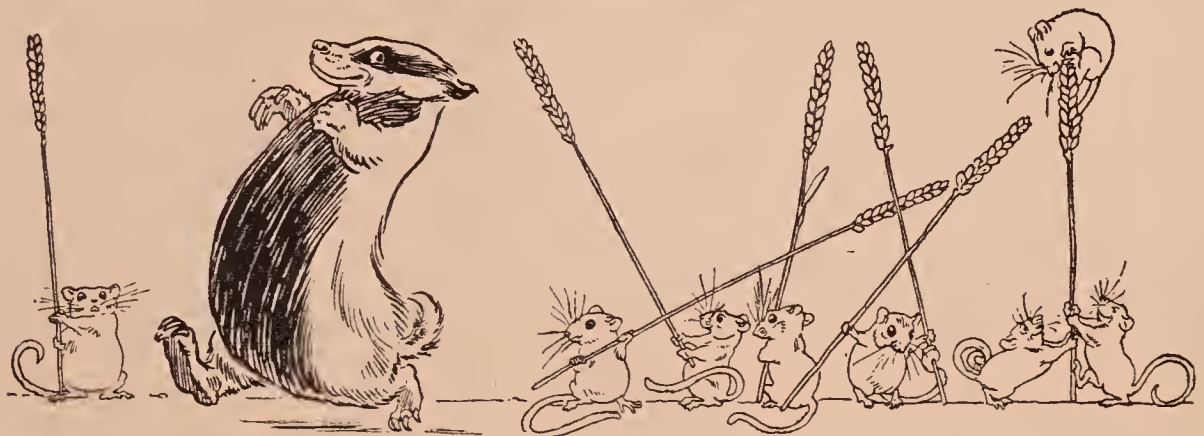
Though he nearly felt dead he knew that now was his only chance of getting free, for if his enemies returned there would be little left of him. So he gnawed as hard as he could at the string, and was just able to get loose as some of the servants returned.

The next morning into the Court of King Lion there walked the most miserable cat that any one ever saw. Blind in one eye, covered with bruises, and with patches of fur missing, he looked the most unhappy of cats. When the King heard his tale he was angrier than ever.

“ I will punish Reynard without a trial,” he said. “ He has had too many chances. Call all of my soldiers together ; we will burn him out of Malpertuis and give him no mercy.”

“ Great King ! ” said the Badger. “ Reynard may have done much wrong, but he has the right to be called to Court three times. If he does not come the next time, then let him be found guilty. Please allow him to be sent for once more.”

“ Well ! as you are so anxious for Reynard,” said the Lion, “ you shall fetch him yourself. Mind you do not return without him, or you will be sorry for it.”



THE NEXT MORNING THERE LIMPED INTO
THE COURT OF KING LION

the

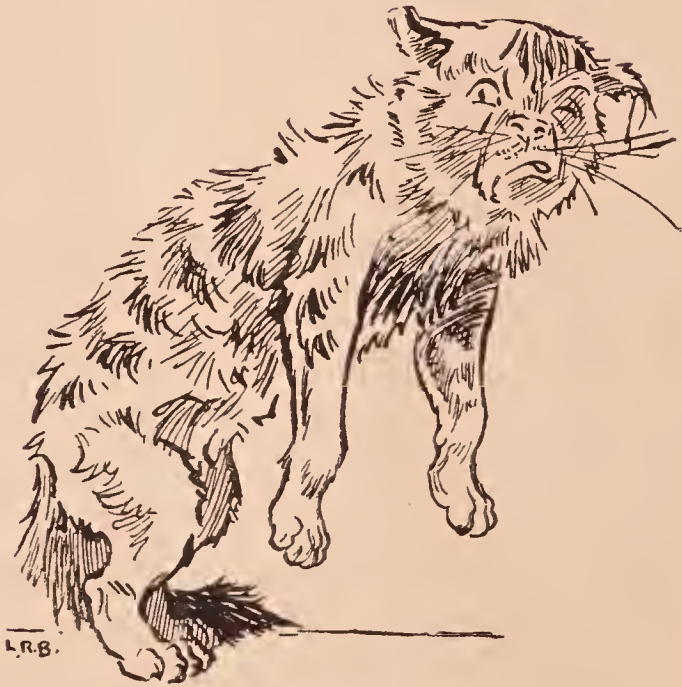
most

MISERABLE CAT

anyone

ever

saw.





HOW REYNARD CAME TO COURT



FF then went Grimbert the Badger, and it was not long before he was knocking at the door of Castle Malpertius. Reynard himself came and let him in, and then led the way to an inner room, where his wife lay with a litter of cubs around her.

“ Good morning, dear Uncle and Aunt,” said Grimbert. “ I am glad to see you and the children so well.”

“ Good morning,” said Reynard, “ and what brings you all this way ? ”

“ Well, to tell the truth,” said Grimbert, “ the King sent me to bring you to Court, and if you take my advice you will come quietly, for he is very angry with you. If you do not come he swears that he will lay siege to your castle, or burn you out of it, if necessary ! ”

“ Will the King try to punish me ? ” asked Reynard.

“ Yes, he will,” said the Badger ; “ but what need you

care about that? Have you not still your nimble wit and cunning? They will not fail you, I am sure. Many a time have you run much greater risks."

Reynard thought for a little. "Very well, nephew," he said at last, "I will return with you. Let us set out at once. And you, wife," he added, turning to the mother fox, "take care of the little ones while I am away, and especially Reynkin. I love him the best of all, for every day he grows more like myself, and should make a thief of great renown in time!"

Then, after taking a tender farewell of Mrs. Reynard and the children, the two set out, and before long arrived at the Court of King Lion.

All the beasts were gathered together in the judgment place, for the news of Reynard's coming had spread far and wide. There sat King Lion on his throne with the Queen beside him. On one side the Tiger held the Royal Standard, and on the other was the Leopard. Bruin the Bear had a front place, and sat rubbing his sore nose, and there, too, was Tybert the Cat, with the rope that had nearly choked him still hanging round his neck.

Reynard did not show any sign of fear. Marching boldly up to the throne, he bowed low and said: "Hail, King! Reynard, your true and faithful servant, comes at your command. They tell me that wicked beasts have spoken evil of me. Let them speak their lies to my face, and I will answer them!"

"Peace, vile traitor!" cried the King. "Not again shall your cunning words deceive me. Answer me this: Have you kept the peace I swore throughout my realm?"



“ HAIL, KING !

Reynard,
your
true
and
faithful
servant,
comes
at
your
command.”







REYNARD IN
COURT DRESS

At this the Cock, who had been listening eagerly, could no longer keep silence, and called out :

“ Aye, the peace ! Did he keep the peace when he killed my children ? ”

“ Hold your tongue,” said the King, “ justice shall be done.” Then to the Fox he said : “ Robber and murderer, answer for what you did to my good friends Bruin the Bear and Tybert the Cat.”

“ Answer, indeed,” grumbled the Fox. “ Is it my fault if Bruin has a sore nose ? He stole the farmer’s honey and got a good beating for his pains. Am I to blame ? As for Tybert the Cat, I did all I could to stop him from going to the Priest’s house, but he took no notice. He loved mice better than good deeds. Am I to blame for that ? ”



At this the Ram started forward. "There is no truth in what this villain says, O King!" he cried. "He has deserved death. Let him die!"

And then all the other beasts cried out for Reynard to be given up to them.



And LOUDEST of all
cried Bruin the Bear,
and Isegrim the Wolf,
and Tybert the Cat,
and _____



Chanticleer the Cock. Even the timid Hare, though he
was trembling with fright, raised his voice,
and the
Goose
came
and
quacked
her
loudest.



So loud grew the din that it was a long time before the
King could make himself heard. Then,
“ Let him be arrested,”
he cried,
“ and cast into prison.
We will decide
what
his punishment
shall be.”





HOW THE FOX WAS CONDEMNED TO DEATH



It did not take the Court very long to decide that Reynard was guilty of all the crimes with which he had been charged. He had not a single friend among the animals, except Grimbert the Badger, and although Grimbert did his best to save him, it was all in vain. He was brought from prison to hear his doom.

“Reynard,” said King Lion, “you have been judged fairly, and found guilty of murder, theft, and many other crimes. The sentence of the Court is that you be hanged. Have you anything to say?”

The wily Fox at once began a long and flattering speech, for he thought that even at the last minute he might get off. The King listened gravely, but in silence, and at the end signed for the Fox to be taken away to the place of execution.

Tybert the Cat, Isegrim the Wolf, and Bruin the Bear

had been chosen as executioners, and they at once seized upon poor Reynard and dragged him off to a high tree that stood close by.

“Here is a gallows ready-made for us,” said Isegrim; “let us make haste and hang the villain, for he is so cunning that if we delay he may escape us again!”

“Yes, make haste,” said the Fox. “I wish nothing better than to be put out of my misery. See, Tybert has a cord. It hangs round his neck—it is the same one that nearly choked him to death when he went to steal the Priest’s mice. He is good at climbing. Let him hurry and fix the rope.”

“That’s the first wise thing I’ve heard you say to-day,” grumbled Bruin the Bear. “Up with you, Tybert. We’ll hold him fast while you go.”

So Tybert ran quickly up the tree and tied the rope on to a stout branch. Then a ladder was brought, and everything was ready.

“Now,” said Bruin, “say your prayers, villain, for you have only two minutes more!”

“Before I die,” said Reynard, “I would like to speak one word to the King. Will you ask him to draw near to me?”

At first the Bear flatly refused, but Reynard told him what he had to say was very important, and at last he agreed. So the King and Queen came up to the gallows tree.

“What is it you want?” asked King Lion.

“I wish to beg one boon, O King,” said Reynard. “Before I die let me confess my sins to you and plead for your forgiveness.”

“ Very well,” said the King, “ I see no harm in that, but you must be quick about it.”

“ I have led a very wicked life, O King,” said Reynard. “ I freely confess it, and I am sorry for it. But yet there is a good deal to be said for me. It is true I killed Chanticleer’s children, the little chickens, but then it is my nature to kill, and my mother taught me so to get my food. It is true also that by cunning tricks I got the better of Tybert the Cat and Bruin the Bear, but then it is my nature to be cunning, and this my mother taught me also. Sly Reynard am I called with truth, but if I had not been sly I should long ago have died of starvation ! ”

“ And a good riddance ! ” said Bruin.

Reynard did not even look at him. “ A hard life was mine from my babyhood, your Majesty,” he went on. “ Many a day have I gone hungry, and many a time have I been nearly beaten to death by men when I went to rob their hen roosts. Only one stroke of fortune have I ever had in all my life, and that was when I discovered a cave full of silver and gold.”

The King pricked up his ears at this.

“ A cave full of gold did you say ? ” he asked.

“ Yes, your Majesty,” sighed Reynard. “ A cave full of treasures so rich that nobody could count them all—silver and gold and precious stones past all belief. Little good will those riches do me now when I am so soon to die.”

“ But, Reynard, my dear friend,” said the King, “ you will surely not die before you have told me where I can find these wonderful treasures ! ”

“ Alas ! ” answered Reynard, “ I would gladly tell your

Majesty if you alone were concerned, but how can I speak in front of all these creatures who hate me, and who, even now, when I am so near to death, think that I am merely telling you a lying tale to save my skin ? ”

It was true. Bruin the Bear was already opening his mouth to speak, and Tybert the Cat was pulling at the rope, for they both saw their enemy about to escape from their hands.

The King, too, had doubts, but his greed overcame his prudence, and he bade all the animals stand back.



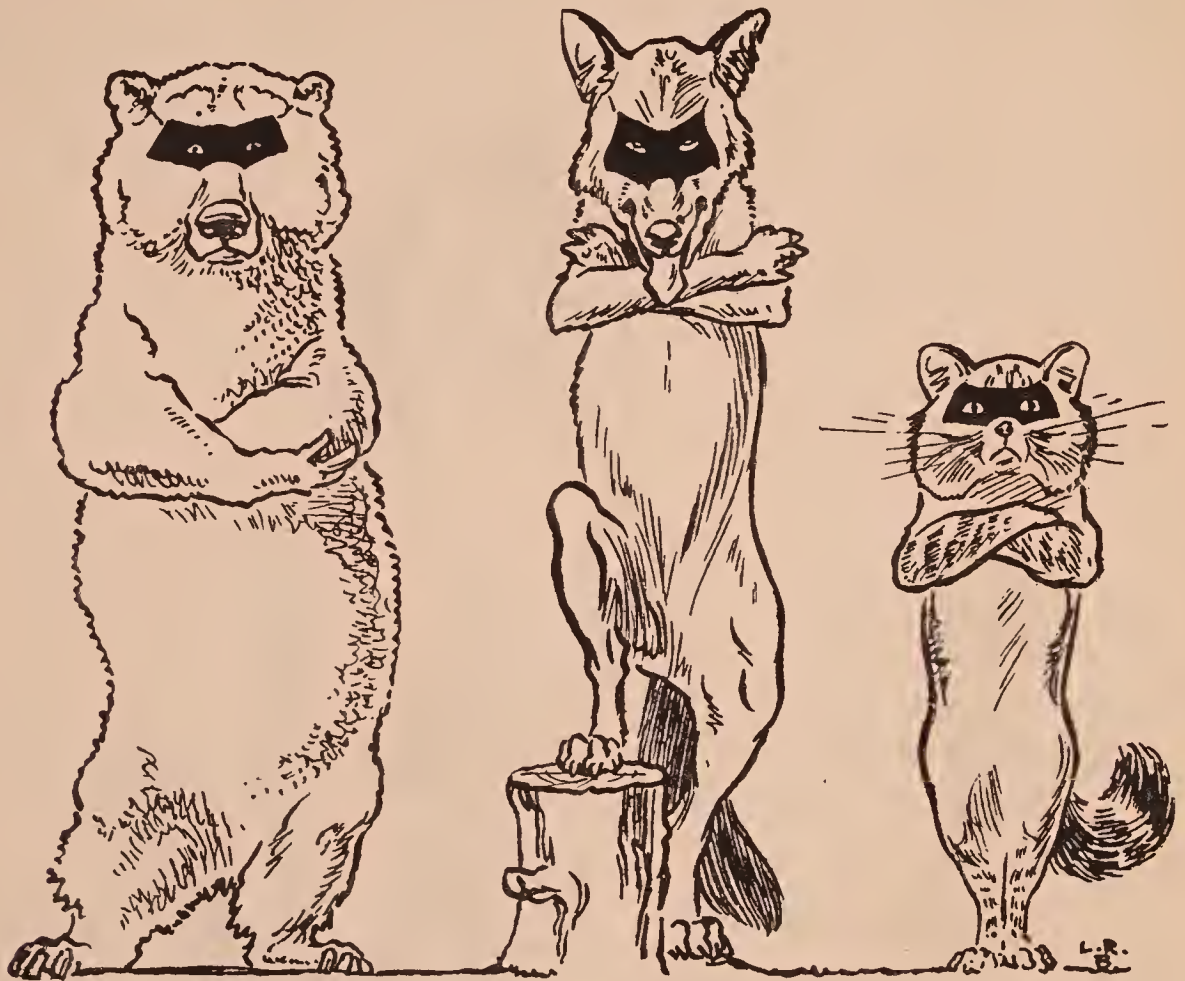
“ Now, Reynard,” said he, “ we are alone and nobody can hear. Tell me where this cave of treasures lies.”

Then Reynard looked at the King and hid a smile, for he knew that his life was safe.

“ And what reward will your Majesty give me,” he asked boldly, “ if I make you richer than any of the kings on the earth ? ”

“ Why, what reward do you wish ? ” asked the King.

“ My life ! ” said Reynard, “ my life to serve you well henceforward, and to be at your command.”



The King was silent a moment. Then, "I grant it," he said. "Now, tell me quickly."

"Will your Majesty not first of all tell all the creatures that you have shown me mercy?" asked the cunning Reynard. He knew that once King Lion had declared his will to his subjects he would not for very pride depart from it.

So then King Lion stepped back from the tree, and bending down, picked up a straw from the grass. Then, turning to his people, he gravely broke the straw in two and said :



“ Even as this straw is broken, so I declare the law broken that condemned my friend Reynard to death. He has proved to me his goodwill. Cast off his bonds and set him free ! ”

There was an angry cry from all the beasts, but it was kept under, for none dared to rebel against the King’s command. Grimbert the Badger ran eagerly forward and hastened to undo the rope from his uncle’s neck.

“ O, clever Reynard ! ” he whispered. “ Did I not tell you that your wit was more than a match for these dullards ! Look how Tybert the Cat is swelling his tail ! He can hardly see for anger ! ”



This is
TYBERT
THE
CAT



HOW REYNARD TOLD OF THE TREASURE



AS soon as Reynard was set free the King commanded him to come and tell him of the whereabouts of the treasure.

“All in good time,” said Reynard. “First let me describe the cave itself and how I found it. One day, when I was out hunting, I came upon a hole, and thinking it would make a fine earth for me I entered. The hole was narrow at first and winding,

and after a time it widened out, and I found myself in a vast hall lit by many lamps. What did I see there? How can I describe the wonders that met my eyes?”

“Gold?” asked the King, licking his dry lips.

“Aye, gold and gold and gold! Golden vessels and

vases and bars, gold-embroidered robes, and golden armour, and swords and spears. Gold in heaps so that the eye was dazzled by it. And this was not all," Reynard went on, looking towards the Queen, "for there also, in bales and packages, were sparkling jewels—necklaces and bracelets of diamonds flashing in the light, and ropes of pearls, beautiful as the sheen on the sea!"

"And crowns, too?" asked the Queen, "diamond crowns for ladies' brows?"

"Aye, Queen," said the Fox, "even crowns of a richness and value to match your beauty."

"But where is the cave?" asked the King. "I am all on fire to go to it. Tell me at once."

"In Flanders," said the Fox, "there is a deep, dark forest called Hulsterlo. Drear it is, and dense, and dark, and the fierce wind howls through it. And near this forest is a pool called KREKYNPIT. Mark well that word, for it is the key that will unlock the treasure cave. I alone in all the world know the secret, and I will tell it to you.

"When you get to the forest you must find the pool. And when you have found the pool you must walk along its sides until you come to a place where it splits in two, leaving a narrow neck of land in between. You will easily know the place, for on that split of land grow two poplar trees, so tall that they tower above all the other trees in the forest. Search among the roots of these trees and you will find two small white stones, graved with a skull and crossbones. From these step six paces to the right, and there, if you stamp your feet, an empty hollow sound will answer you. Dig in that place about six feet down, and

you will come to a door, fast barred and locked. No key will open it, nor will any strength break it down. But here is what you must do. Step back from the door and say these magic words :

“ **K**ing am I and master here,
Right o’er all this wealth I claim,
Each man who his life holds dear
Knoweth well to fear my name.
Yield before my might, O gates,
Nobel bids ye to obey,
Powerful is the prince who waits.
I am he who brooks no nay,
Think ye not to shun the Fates ;
Bolts and bars, away ! away !

“ Three times you must speak these words, and the door will open to you.”





HOW THE WICKED FOX WON FREEDOM BY TREACHERY



THE King stood for a moment in silence after Reynard had ended his tale of the wonderful treasure. Then, stroking his beard, he said :

“ It all sounds very fine, but where is this wood named Hulsterlo, and the lake called Krekynpit ? London I have heard of, and Paris too ; but I never heard of Krekynpit in my life.”

Reynard turned on the King with an injured air.

“ Does your Majesty, then, doubt my word ? ” he asked. “ If you will forgive my saying so, you must have but a very small knowledge of geography. Everybody knows the wood of Hulsterlo, even Cuwaert the Hare here. Stand forth, Cuwaert, and tell the King ! ”

The poor Hare, who had never heard of the place in his life, stepped forward tremblingly. He felt Reynard's baleful glance upon him, and dared not tell the truth. "I—I—I know it perfectly, your Majesty," he stammered. "Hulsterlo is the name of the wood and Krekynpit the name of the lake. They are dreary places, both of them—and nobody ever found any good there to my knowledge. They are in the county of—now, let me see—in the county of——"

"That will do, Cuwaert," said Reynard hurriedly. "Step back to your place, my friend, and don't weary His Majesty with your talk."

"It is all very well," said the King, "but I am not much wiser than I was before. I will tell you what, Reynard. You yourself shall lead us to the place where the treasure is hidden. And"—here the King's voice grew very stern—"woe betide you if you cannot find it!"

For a moment the wily Fox was dumbfounded, but he quickly recovered himself. "I will lead the way with pleasure, your Majesty," he answered. "But think a little before you order me to do a thing that may work harm to your fair fame. I am quite ready to set out for Krekynpit this instant, if you like, but have you forgotten that I am under the ban of the Church for that little matter of robbing the Priest's farmyard? If you go on a journey with me as your companion you will bring the wrath of the Church

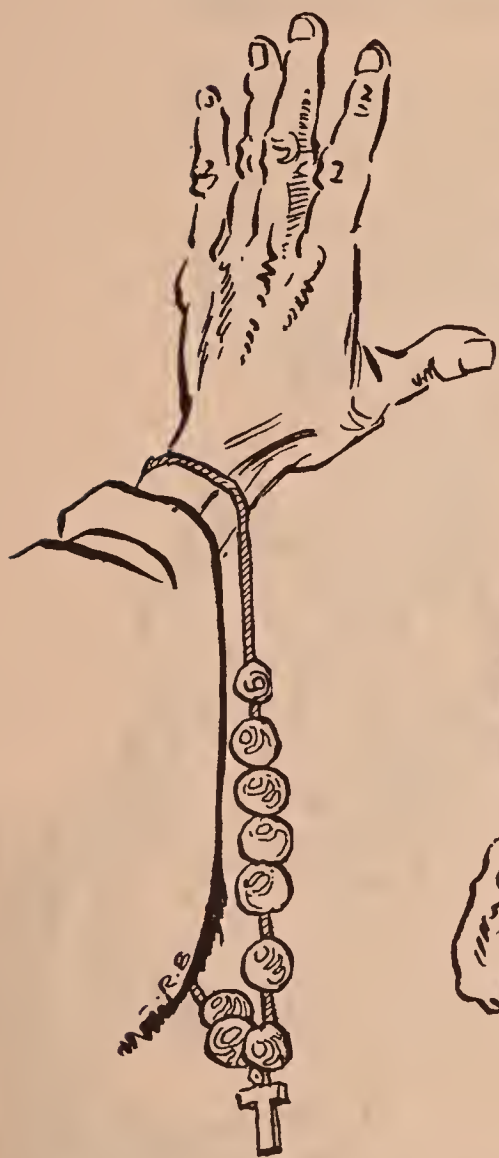


down on your own head also, and that, as you know, is a very serious thing."

"You are right," said the King thoughtfully. "But what, then, are we to do?"

Reynard pretended to think very hard. "I have it, your Majesty," he said at last. "There is no particular hurry for us to make this journey. The treasure is quite safe. Nobody will steal it, I can promise you. Let me set off at once to Rome to ask pardon of the Pope. Then, when I come back all will be well, and we can start at once."

"That is not a bad idea," said the King, "but how am I to ensure that once out of my reach you will ever come back? You have deceived me before, you know!"



“Why, as to that,” answered Reynard, “you can send somebody with me. Here’s Cuwaert the Hare who can run faster than I can myself; one would not escape from him in a hurry. Let him be sent with me, and Bellyn the Ram as well. I ask for Bellyn because, as everybody knows, he is a very good-living beast, and before I ask the Pope for pardon I would like to improve my mind by listening to his talk.”

“It sounds a good idea,” said the King again. “Very good, then, set off with you at once, and be as quick as you can, for I don’t mind telling you that I am all on fire to enter the cave and see the gold. You, Cuwaert, and you, Bellyn, look after Reynard, and see that he does not play any tricks. I hold you responsible for his safe-keeping.”





HOW CUWAERT THE HARE MET A DREADFUL FATE



SOON afterwards the Fox and his two companions set off on their long journey. The Pope lived at Rome, and Rome was a very long way off—many weeks' journey, even though they travelled at the top of their speed all the time.

No sooner were they out of sight of the King's Court than Reynard said :

“ I am so glad you have been able to come with me, dear friends. I asked for you, Cuwaert, and you, Bellyn, because I well know that you are the only two among all the beasts who are to be trusted. Never had a Fox such faithful friends, and I am looking forward

immensely to our journey together. Before we go, however, I would like to say farewell to my wife. Poor thing, she does not know yet that I am a changed beast. She has often wept over my sins, and she will be full of joy to hear that I have repented, and that I am to ask forgiveness of the Pope. My Castle of Malpertuis is not very far out of our road. I am sure you will not mind coming there with me. I promise you I will not stay long."

The Hare and the Ram both agreed, and before long the three stood at the gate of Reynard's castle.

"Here we are," said the Fox cheerfully. "Now, Bellyn, you wait outside here. I have something important I want to say to Cuwaert, so he can go in with me. There is no other gate to the castle, so I cannot get out without your knowing."

The solemn and stupid old Ram at once sat down on the step to wait, while Cuwaert and the Fox entered the castle. Through the underground passages Reynard led the way until they came at last to the inner chamber where the Vixen lay with her cubs.

They entered, and Reynard carefully closed and locked the door.

"Good-day, wife," said he. "Here I am, you see, come back again like a bad penny—all safe and sound, ha, ha! And I've brought my dear friend Cuwaert to see you—the sweetest companion a Fox ever had."

His wicked eyes gleamed.

"Why, husband," said the Vixen, "I am glad indeed to see you back again. I made sure that the King would lock you up in prison or do something else equally unpleasant.



pardon for my sins from the Pope, so that I could lead him to it ! ”

“ The treasure of Krekynpit ? ” said the Vixen, puzzled. “ What is that ? I have never heard of it. ”

“ Nor I, either, until this morning, ” answered Reynard. “ But I invented a beautiful story

How did you manage to get away ? ”

“ Oh, ” answered Reynard, “ I told His Majesty about the treasure of Krekynpit, and he was so anxious to get his paws on the gold that he sent me off to Rome to ask a





about it and it was good enough for the King, wasn't it, Cuwaert, my friend?"

He turned his gaze upon the trembling Hare, who now saw the trap into which he had been led, and was crouching in a corner.

"Let me out, Reynard," he implored; "let me out, and I will promise not to tell the King!"

"What!" roared the



Fox. "You would be a traitor to His Majesty, would you? You would be false to our good King Nobel, who put his trust in you? What shall we do, wife, with such an arrant rogue?"

He began to creep stealthily towards the poor Hare, licking his chops and glowering.

"Help, Bellyn, help!" screamed Cuwaert. "The Fox is going to kill me. Come quickly or I am lost."

But he had hardly uttered the words before the cruel Fox was at his throat, and a minute later there was an end of Cuwaert for ever!

"There's meat for us for a long time," said the Fox, rising. "Fools that they are, all of them, to match their wits against mine! Now, wife, we had better get away quickly from this place, for very soon we shall have the hue and cry out after us. I know a wood, not far from here, where there is plenty of shelter, and everything we may require. The coverts in it are full of fat pheasants and partridges; there are shady dells where you and the young ones can take your ease, and there is plenty of fresh water."

"I would much rather stay where I am," answered his wife, "and I think you would be wise to stay here also. What can the King do? Even if he comes and lays siege to the castle, you know very well he could never catch us. There are a thousand different passages here underground, and many different holes to escape from. He might as well look for a needle in a haystack as search for us, even if he gained an entrance."

So they began to argue the matter, and all the time they

were talking old Bellyn the Ram sat, solemn and grave as a judge, waiting patiently for Reynard to come out.

At last, even the Ram's patience gave way, and he called out angrily: "Come along, you two! How much longer are you going to keep me waiting here? Do you think that I have nothing better to do than to sit on a cold step all day?"

There was no answer.

"Come, Reynard," he cried again. "It's a very long farewell you are taking. I could have said good-bye in a quarter of the time!"

At this, Reynard, who had heard his shouts, put his head out of the door and said:

"Don't be angry, dear Bellyn. Good Cuwaert is within comforting my wife, who is in a dreadful way, I can tell you. Nothing will persuade her that I am not going to my death, and she is crying as if her heart would break. I could not stand it any longer by myself, and simply had to come away."

"So that was the sound I heard," said Bellyn. "I fancied I heard a cry a while ago, but it sounded to me like



Cuwaert's voice. For the moment I thought he was crying for help."

"For help!" said Reynard reprovingly. "Do you, then, think so ill of me as to fear that anything could happen to him in my house? I know I have been wicked, but I hope I have not fallen so low as to betray a guest!"

"It is all right," said Bellyn; "it must have been my fancy."

"I forgive you," said the Fox, smiling sweetly. "Now I will tell you what to do, Bellyn. I have just thought of a message I must send to the King with a parcel. Will you take them back for me? By the time you return Cuwaert will be ready, and we will all set out together."

Bellyn agreed, and the Fox, going back to his chamber, took the head of poor Cuwaert and put it into a bag, and having tied the bag tightly, sealed it, and delivered it to the Ram to take to the King.





HOW BELLYN RAM RETURNED TO COURT



IN the last story I told you how the cunning Fox set off with the Ram and Hare to make his journey to Rome. You will remember that, having by his artful words brought the two to his Castle of Malpertuis, he killed the poor Hare, and was now going to send his head in a bag to the King.

The stupid Ram believed everything that Reynard said, and when the Fox told him that the bag contained an important letter, he was only too anxious to be off.

“Let me tie it round your neck,” said Reynard. “This letter is far too valuable to be lost. I would not have the King miss it for all I possess in the world. You must take care of it, Bellyn!”

“Trust me!” said the Ram. “I’d like to see anybody try to take it from me, that’s all!”

“ And whatever you do,” said Reynard, “ don’t open the bag and look at the letter that is inside. I have written down secret things, and only to know them is death to anybody but myself. If the King thought you had read the letter, or even as much as peeped at it, he would immediately order you to be hanged.”

“ Will the King be pleased with me for bringing it, do you think ? ” asked Bellyn.

“ Pleased ! ” said Reynard. “ Why, pleased isn’t the word. I should not be surprised if he gave you a rich reward. Only you must make haste and not delay on the road.”



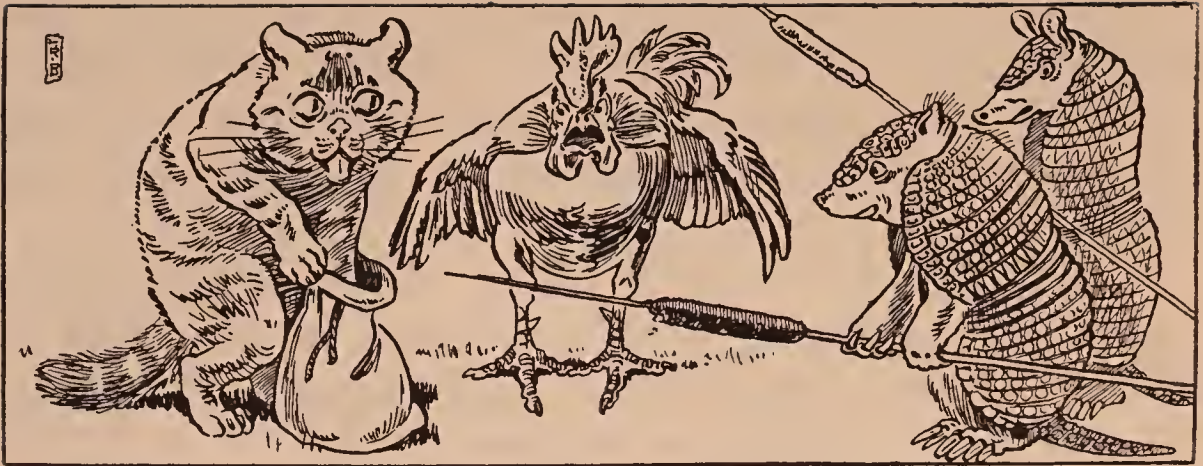
“ I’m gone,” said Bellyn, and off he went there and then with a clumsy trot, the bag swinging from his neck.

Shortly after noon the same day he arrived at Court, and you may imagine how surprised everybody was to see him back again.

“ Why, Bellyn ! ” cried the King. “ What brings you here ? I thought you were miles away on your path to Rome. And where are Cuwaert and Reynard ?—and what is that bag that is hanging round your neck ? ”

Then the Ram told the King everything that had happened, and at the end of the tale handed up the scrip, so that the King might break the seal himself and take





out Reynard's letter. This, however, the King refused to do. "I am not good at my letters," said he. "Here, Tybert, you are good at languages! Untie me this bag and read this precious letter."

So Tybert the Cat took the bag, and untied it carefully, and drew out the head of poor Cuwaert.

"See," said he, holding the head aloft. "Reynard's writing, truly! Are you satisfied, O King?"

And the King bowed his head in grief and sorrow. "I have been vain and foolish," said he, "and I am well punished for trusting the word of one who a hundred times was proved a liar and thief." Then, turning to the beasts that stood around his throne, he cried in a loud voice: "Is there none of you all, you who call yourselves my subjects and friends, who will rid me of this cruel monster?"

But no voice answered him.



HOW MORE COMPLAINTS OF REYNARD'S WICKEDNESS WERE BROUGHT TO THE KING



SUDDENLY there came the sound of flying feet, and the crowd of beasts opened and stood aside. The newcomer was little Lapreel the Rabbit, who, panting and breathless, rushed up and threw himself at the King's feet.

"Help, your Majesty!" he gasped. "Give me justice, I pray!"

"Who has wronged you?" asked the King, frowning. Indeed, he knew the answer before the Rabbit spoke.

"It is that villain Reynard, my lord," panted Lapreel. "Oh, I am near to death."

"Tell your tale," said the King, "but waste no words."

"It is short enough," answered Lapreel. "This morning, as I was coming over the hill, I passed by the gate of Reynard's castle. He was standing there, dressed in a



long robe, his head cast down as though he were praying. I was near him before I knew, and my first thought was to run away, but seeing him so quiet and still, and having heard how his heart was changed, I took courage and made to pass him by, and as I went I spoke to him in a gentle voice and said, 'Good-morrow, Reynard.'

"Instead of answering me, he raised his right foot and gave me such a kick between the eyes that I was well-nigh stunned, and fell to the ground. I did not quite lose my senses, however, and in a moment I was up again and running for my life. But I only escaped by the skin of my teeth, for as I sprang forward I felt his cruel claws in my side. See, King, my wounds, how they bleed! Of your might, give me justice against that cruel beast!"

Poor Lapreel stopped and stood trembling, and hardly had finished his story than there came a whirl of wings, and Corbant the Rook, his feathers all draggled and awry, flew down to the foot of the King's throne.

"I, too, King!" he cried. "I, too, claim justice against Reynard the Fox. This morning I set out with Sharpbeak, my wife, to ramble over the heath. We had not gone far before we came across Reynard stretched out upon the ground as if he were dead. His tongue was lolling

from his mouth ; his limbs were stiff ; no movement came from his body. We were sorry to see him in such a plight, and we walked round him several times to see if we could discover a sign of life, but he lay quite still. At last Sharpbeak put her ear close to his mouth to listen for his breath, and as she did so—snap ! the cruel jaws snapped, and my poor wife was a headless corpse !

“ How can I tell your Majesty my feelings when I saw this dreadful scene ! Would that I had died in her place. As it was, I was so stunned by the terrible sight that I had barely strength to fly to a neighbouring tree, where I remained while the Fox made his terrible meal. All of her he ate, my liege—all of her, beak, bone, flesh and feathers, and all the time he gazed upon me with a disgusting grin. At last he slunk off to his lair, and I made all haste to fly to your Majesty to appeal for justice.”

In silence King Lion listened to the Rook's tale, nor did he speak when the story was ended, but remained with downcast, gloomy gaze. Then the Rook spoke again :

“ Why are you silent, King ? If ever you would enjoy peace in this your realm you must destroy this evil beast.



The blood of many innocent creatures cries out for vengeance. Will you listen to that cry ? ”

Then the King raised his head and spoke in a loud voice.

“ I swear,” said he, “ by all I hold most dear—by my own crown, by my kingdom, yea, even by my life—that I will exact from this villain Fox the utmost penalty for his crimes. Such a vengeance will I take that the fame of it shall echo round the world, and evildoers in lands far away shall tremble. I have been over-merciful and perhaps a little foolish, but never again shall Reynard’s lies pass for truth with me. Now do I lay my commands upon you all, high and low ; steel your hearts to grim resolve. Set yourselves one task and one alone—to bring to judgment this creature who disturbs our peace ; and never look back until that task is accomplished ! ”



Nobody heard this speech with greater pleasure than Isegrim the Wolf and Bruin the Bear, who, as we know, had good cause to hate Reynard. But Grimbert the Badger raised his voice :

“ Surely, King,” said he, “ you would not order us to kill Reynard at sight. Villain he may be, but no matter how great his crimes he ought at least to have a fair trial before he is condemned to death. It would ill become your nobility to sentence him without giving him a chance to say a word in his own defence ! ”

“ A fig for trials ! ” growled Isegrim. “ Trials are all very well in their way, but we know what a trial means where Master Reynard is concerned. If he came here to-day, I well believe he could prove himself innocent of crime as a baby a day old ; but he would be a villain none the less. A speedy end to him, I say, a speedy end and no talking ; just a tree and a good strong rope ! ”

“ And if you killed him,” said Grimbert, “ what would become of the treasure of Krekynpit, of which he alone knows the secret ? ”



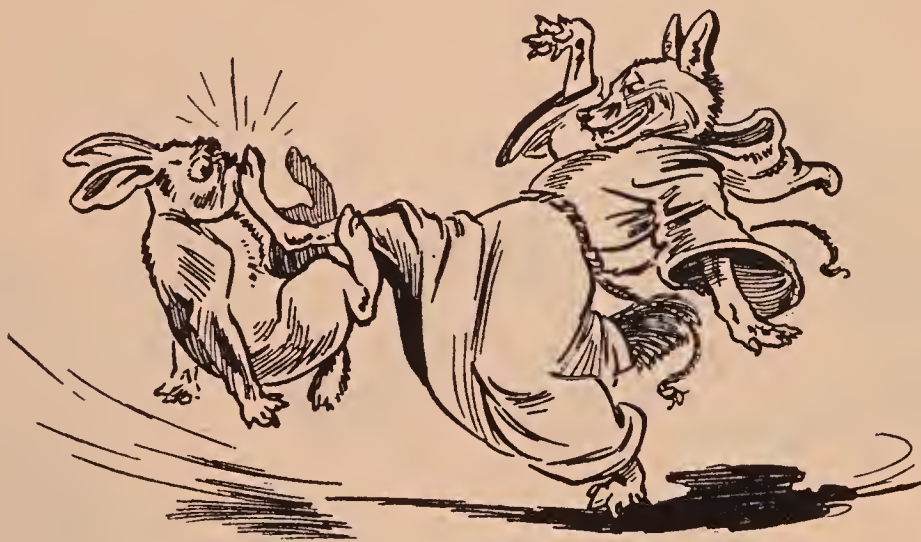
“The treasure of Krekynpit!” growled the Wolf. “Treasure, indeed! a fine treasure that! It never existed outside his own evil mind. Fools were all of us who believed that lying tale!”

“At least let us send a messenger to Reynard to bid him attend the Court and answer for his crimes,” pleaded Grimbert.

“No!” thundered the King. “I will send no more envoys. My mind is made up. We will not give the Fox the chance to deceive us again, but go to his castle and dig him out of it like a rat out of a hole; and then, as Isegrim says, a speedy end, with a high tree, and a stout cord about his villain neck.”

At this a great cry arose from all the beasts that stood around the throne:

“Death to the traitor! Lead on, O King, and we will follow.”





HOW GRIMBERT THE BADGER WARNED REYNARD



HEN Grimbert the Badger heard the King swear to be avenged on Reynard, he made up his mind to give his uncle warning. Unnoticed by anybody he slunk to the edge of the crowd, and then, while all the beasts were still cheering the King's words, he set off running as fast as he could to the Fox's castle. Straight as the crow flies he went, over hill and dale, jumping streams and crashing through woods, until he came at last to Malpertuis.

The Fox was standing at the gate. He looked very hale and well, and he had grown a good deal fatter. He was playing with a couple of young pigeons which he had just killed, and he looked up from them to grin at his nephew, who arrived panting and out of breath.

“ Why, good-morrow, Grimbert,” said Reynard. “ I am glad to see you. How are things going at Court? You seem to have come in a great hurry ; has anything of moment happened while I have been away? Upon my word, I live here the life of a hermit, and get no news at all.”

“ If it’s news you want,” said Grimbert, “ I have plenty and to spare. But it’s not good news, I’m sorry to say.

Oh, uncle ! fly for your life ! Do not waste a minute, for King Nobel has sworn that he will have your blood, and even now he may be marching against you ! ”

“ Come, come ! ” said the Fox, smiling, “ surely there’s no great hurry ! ”

“ It is all very well to laugh,” said Grimbert, “ but I assure you things are very serious indeed this



time. The King is going to bring an army to besiege your castle, and he will dig you out like a rat from its hole—those were his very words ! ”

“ And why has the King taken this sudden resolve ? ” asked Reynard.

“ You should know that,” answered Grimbert. “ What about Cuwaert’s head that you sent to the King in a bag ? And what about the treasure ? ” (Here the Fox grinned.) “ And even that is not all, for this morning who should come to Court but little Lapreel the Rabbit, whining because you nearly made a meal of him. His tale made the King show his teeth, I can tell you ! And hardly had he finished when Corbant the Rook flew down, looking for all the world as though he’d combed his feathers the wrong way, and cried out that you had eaten his wife ! ”



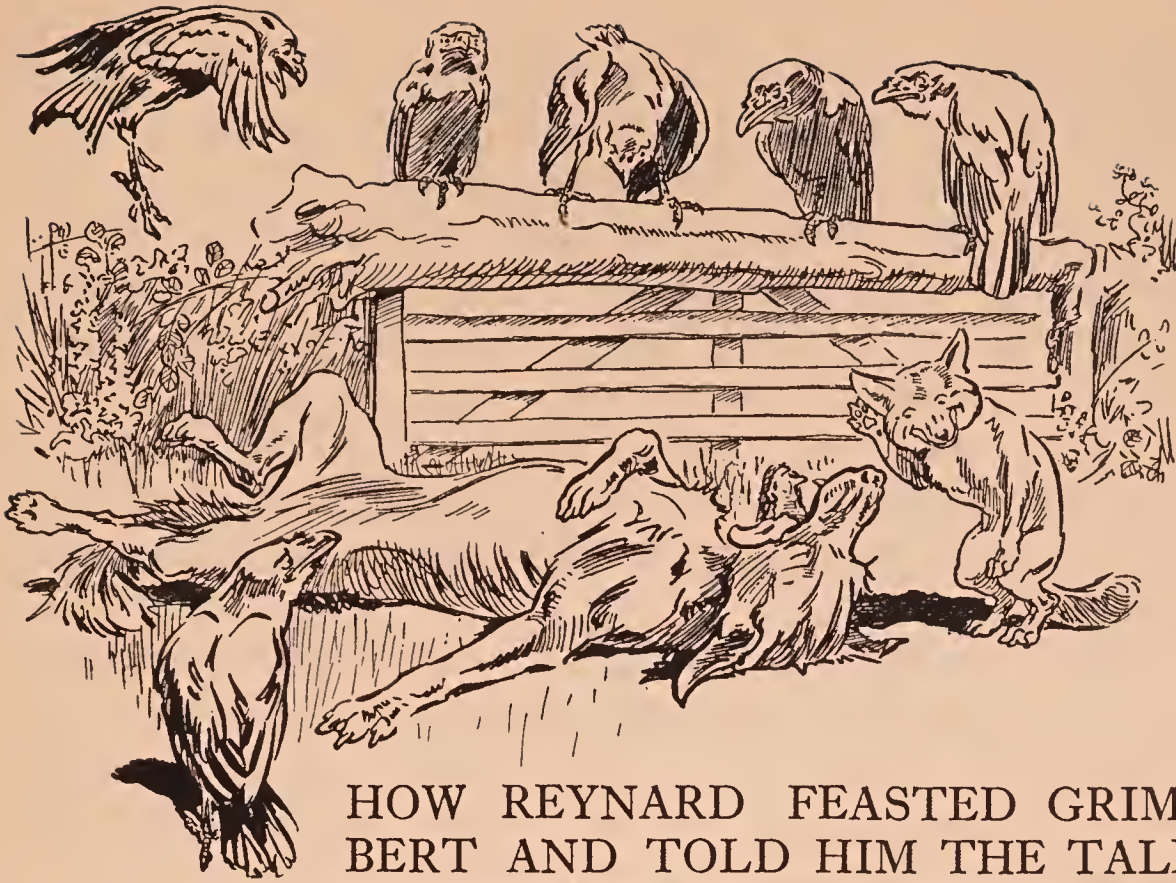
“ So I had,” grinned Reynard. “ And very nice she tasted.”

“ There you go, laughing again !” said Grimbert. “ But it’s no laughing matter. The King is deadly angry. Ah, Reynard, I’m very much afraid your last hour is near !”

“ Pouf !” said the Fox. “ A fig for your last hour ! What, Grimbert, do you know me so little as to imagine that I cannot find a way to outwit the King this time as I did before ? The Court have sworn my death, have they ? We’ll see !

“ But come, Grimbert, don’t pull such a long face ! You must be very tired after your journey. Step inside with me, and my wife shall cook us these two plump pigeons that I caught this morning. Then, after dinner, we’ll have a friendly talk, and I will tell you my plans.”





HOW REYNARD FEASTED GRIMBERT AND TOLD HIM THE TALE OF THE MARE WHO WOULD NOT SELL HER COLT



O Grimbert followed the Fox into his underground lair, and paid his respects to Reynard's wife, who was there as usual with her cubs. She made him welcome, and set about preparing the meal at once. Presently the pigeons were cooked to a turn, and the good wife set them on the table.

"I'm sorry I've nothing better to offer you," said Reynard. "If I had known you were coming I would have prepared for you. Two pigeons won't go very far, I'm afraid, between a Badger and a Fox and his wife,

to say nothing of four cubs, who shall have the bones if they're good. What do you think of my children, Grimbert? Aren't they fine youngsters? There's young Reynkin, now; I have great hopes of him. One day he'll grow up to be as cunning a thief as his father! And as for Rosel, you just ought to see him at the game of snaring fowls—it's a sight for sore eyes, I promise you!"

"They are very fine children indeed," answered Grimbert, with his mouth full. "I am proud to call them my cousins! Will you pass a bit more of that juicy wing, Reynard, dear?"

After the dinner was over the Fox brought out a bottle of wine, and the two sat drinking together for some time. Master Reynard grew very merry and sang a song. It was a very long song, and I cannot remember all the verses of it, but this is how the first verse went:—

“ Ever since I was born,
I have felt bitter scorn
For working, respectable people;
So with merry heart sing,
Here's a fig for the King;
Nought care I for law, crown or steeple.”

"Now," said Reynard, when the song was finished, "it is time for us to talk business. I have quite made up my mind what to do. To-morrow morning we will set out for the Court together, you and I, and we will see what the King has in store for us!"

"Go to Court?" stammered Grimbert. "Are you mad?"

"Not a bit!" said Reynard. "You leave everything to

me, and do not worry. Let us go to bed now so as to get a good night's rest, and we will be afoot before dawn."

Very much troubled, poor Grimberty retired to rest. He tried to think how the Fox meant to escape his just punishment, but thinking was not his strong point, and it only made his head ache and kept him awake for hours. As for the Fox, he was snoring almost as soon as his head touched the pillow.

The next morning before dawn the Fox arose and made a journey all through the castle. Truth to tell, in spite of the bold air he had put on when talking to Grimberty, he was more than a little troubled, and he wondered, as he passed through the rooms of his house, whether he would ever see any of them again.

His tour ended, he awoke Grimberty, and then went to say farewell to his wife. "Good-bye, wife," said he. "Look after the little ones, and don't worry about me. I hope to be back again very shortly; but even if I stay away a long time you must not feel alarmed—not even if you hear bad news. Just trust me to find a way out of this coil, as I have found a way out of others."

Then, in the grey dawn, the two set out across the heath towards the King's Court. And as they went Reynard asked: "Tell me, Grimberty, did Isegrim the Wolf speak ill of me to the King?"

"Aye, that he did," answered Grimberty. "His voice was raised above all the others. A long cord and a short shrift would be your fate if he were allowed to have his way!"



“ I know he hates me,” said Reynard. “ Did I ever tell you the story of the red mare and her colt ? ”

“ No,” said Grimbert, “ not that I remember.”

“ Well then, listen,” said Reynard, “ and you will understand why Isegrim is so bitter against me.”

“ One day, a long time ago, when Isegrim and I were good friends, we went out hunting together. On the way to the woods we crossed a field where a fine red mare was browsing along with her colt, a fine plump youngster.

“ ‘ Here, Reynard,’ said Isegrim to me, ‘ go and ask the mare if she’ll sell that colt ; if so, I’ll buy him.’

“ Well, I did not much like the task, but I was anxious to oblige Isegrim ; so up I went to the mare and said, ‘ Excuse me, madam, but may I inquire whether you are willing to sell your colt ? ’

“ ‘ Why, certainly,’ answered she ; ‘ it is quite the fashion among mares to sell their children.’

“ ‘ And how much,’ said I, ‘ if I may be so bold as to inquire, are you asking for him ? ’

“ ‘ Why, as to that,’ said the mare, ‘ if you will come behind me and lift my right hoof you will find the price written there in plain figures. It is our custom, you know.’

“ Now as she said this, she looked at me with such a wicked eye that I easily saw she was laying a trap for me. So I edged away quickly and went back to the Wolf.

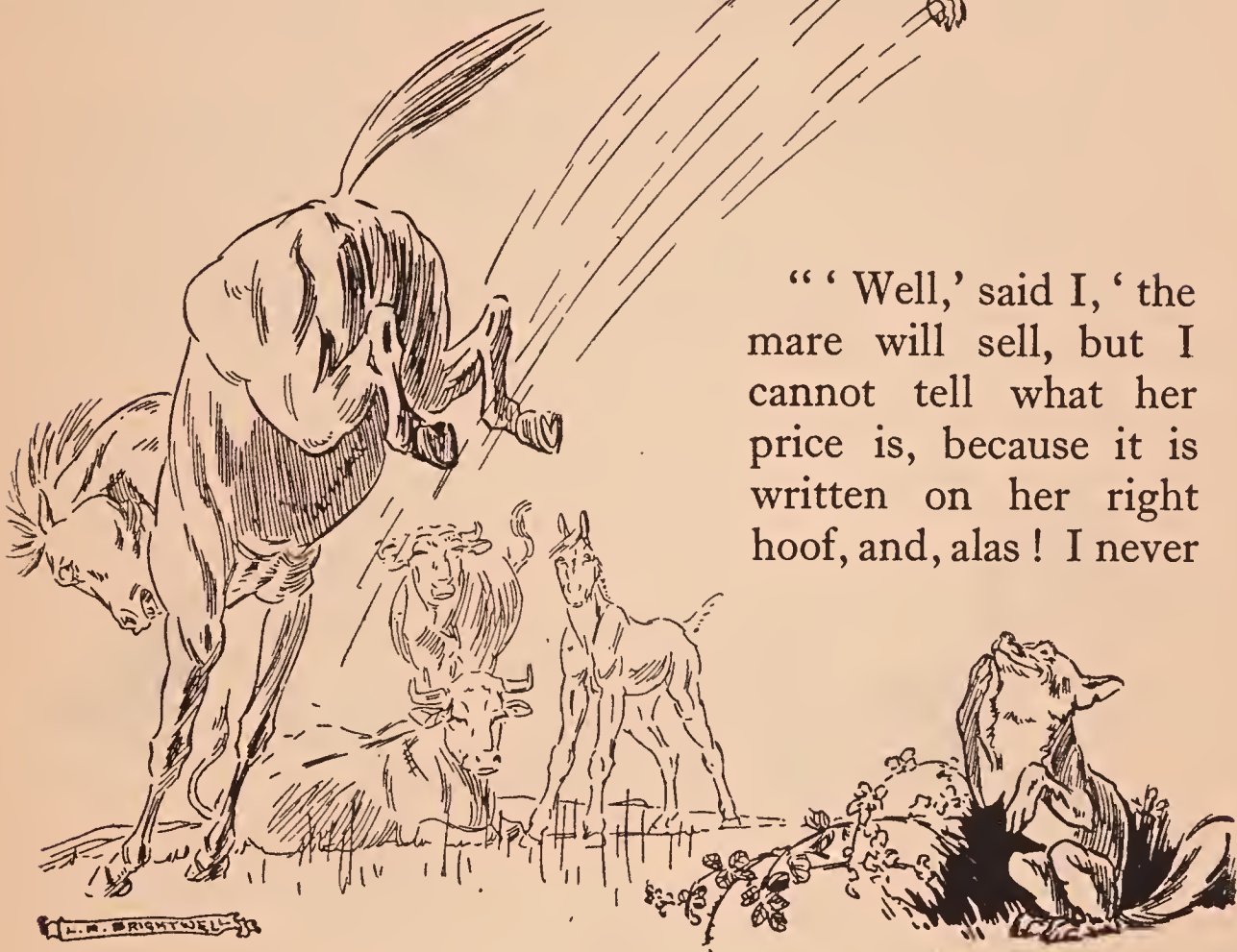
“ ‘ Well ? ’ said Isegrim.

“ ‘ She’ll sell,’ said I.

“ ‘ Good ! ’ said he. ‘ Now I shall make a good meal.’

“ ‘ And how about me ? ’ I asked. ‘ I hope you will give me a share ! ’

“ ‘ Give you a share, indeed!’ laughed Isegrim. ‘ That’s a good joke if ever I heard one! Yes, my friend, you shall have the hair and the hide.’ Then I understood what sort of a friend I had in Isegrim, but I did not let him see I was annoyed.



“ ‘ Well,’ said I, ‘ the mare will sell, but I cannot tell what her price is, because it is written on her right hoof, and, alas! I never

learned to read. I don't suppose you can read either, can you ?'

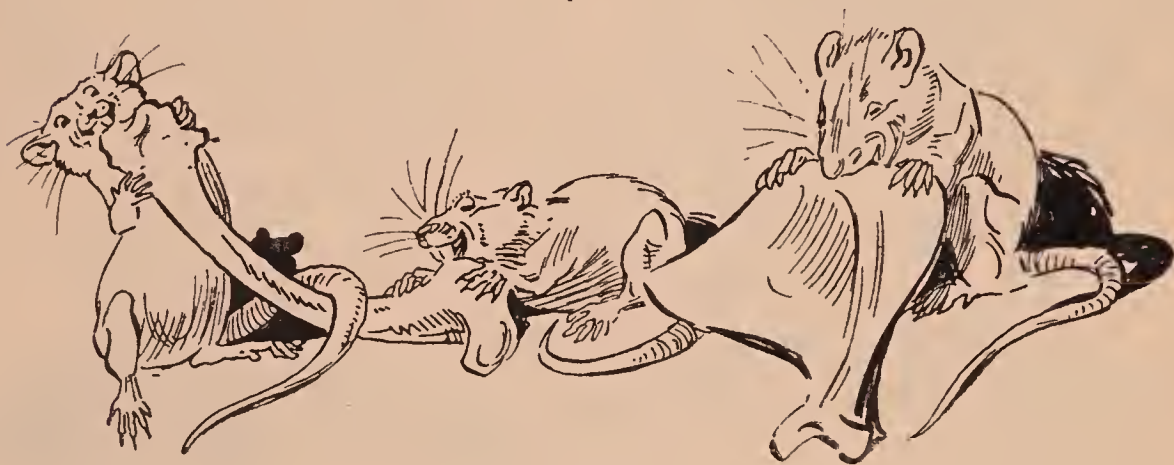
" ' Can I not ! ' cried Isegrim. ' Why, I'm one of the most learned scholars in the realm. I'll soon find out what the price is ; you watch me ! ' "

" So up he marched to the mare, and went to lift her right hinder foot. But as soon as he came near the mare kicked out at him with all her might, and sent him flying across the road. Then she and her colt scampered away.

" I rushed up to where Isegrim lay, all battered and bleeding.

" ' Well, Isegrim, ' I asked, ' did you see the figures ? How much did she want for the colt ? ' But he did not answer.

" Then I asked him again. ' Come, clever one, what was written on the hoof ? Was it in verse or prose ? ' But still he did not answer. And so I told him that learned fools were often the biggest fools of all, and came away. And ever since then Isegrim has been my deadliest enemy. "





HOW REYNARD CAME TO COURT A SECOND TIME



O Grimbert the Badger and Reynard the Fox talked together until at last they came to the Court of the King.

And all the beasts were gathered together round the King's throne, and there was silence as the Fox passed by.

But Reynard held his head high, and did not seem a bit ashamed, and when he stood in front of the King he fell down upon his knees and said :

“ Sire, and my lord, I pray you, for our old friendship's sake, give ear to what I have to say in my defence.”

And the King frowned at him and answered nothing. So Reynard went on :



“ Dear lord, I am told that my enemies have dared to slander me when I was not here to give them the lie. They have accused me of I know not what crimes. If I am guilty, let me be punished ; but if you will listen to me, I will prove that I am not the villain you think. I am no flatterer when I say that you are just, and I can so explain my actions that you will be bound to confess that I am in the right.”

“ Reynard,” said the King, “ a pot may go so often to the water that it is broken at last. You have deceived me many times, but I have sworn that you shall do so no

more.” At these words Reynard inwardly quaked with fear, but he gave no sign of it.

“ Sire,” he cried, “ if I had known myself guilty, do you think I should have come here to-day to place myself in your power and in that of my foes ? I was free to go where I liked, and had I chosen to escape I could have done so ; yet directly I heard of the lying tales that had been told about me, I hurried to Court, and I would have been here sooner had I not gone some distance on my way to Rome.”

“ And Lapreel the Rabbit, whom you treated so vilely,” said the King, “ what have you to say about him ? ”

“ Why,” answered Reynard, “ here is the truth of that

matter. Yesterday morning, as I stood at my door saying my morning prayers, the Rabbit came by. 'Good-morrow, dear Lapreel,' I said. 'Where are you going in such a hurry?'

" 'Reynard,' he answered, 'have you by any chance a scrap of meat in the house? I am on my way to Court, but I am so weak with hunger that I shall never reach there if I do not get some food quickly.'

" 'Why,' said I, 'come in, my dear friend. I have no meat at all, because, you know, I always fast on a Wednesday, but I have plenty of bread, and that you shall have, with some of the finest butter you ever tasted.'

" So Lapreel followed me into my home, and I set a good meal before him, and he ate until he could eat no more. Then Rosel, my little son, who had not yet had his breakfast, came to the table and took a piece of the bread that was left; and suddenly Lapreel hit him with all his force in the mouth, making him bleed badly. Seeing this, his brother Reynkin sprung upon the Rabbit and would have killed him had I not torn him away. As a matter of fact, that wicked fellow Lapreel has to thank me for saving his life, and yet he complains to the King that I tried to murder him!"

" Hum!" said King Nobel. " And Corbant the Rook—what of him?"

" It was the same day, my lord," answered Reynard " Corbant the Rook came to me with his feathers all draggled, and he was crying bitterly.

" 'Why, what ails you?' I asked.

" 'Alas!' said he, 'my poor wife is dead. She found

a dead hare on the heath yonder and ate some of the flesh, and the hare had been dead a long time, and the flesh poisoned her.'

"Then I tried to comfort the poor fellow, but he would not listen to my words, and flew off to a high tree, and the next thing I hear is that he accuses me of killing his wife! How could I kill her when she has wings and I go afoot? How could I come near her? Now, O King, I have told you all the truth, and if any doubt my words I am willing to stand against them in fair fight!"

All the Court was silent when they heard Reynard speak thus stoutly, but the King cried:

"You have heard what Reynard says. Come forth, you who accuse him, and speak before his face. Yesterday there were many who came to complain of him. Who will speak now that he is here?"

But no one answered, for all the beasts were afraid of Reynard's fierceness and cunning, and as for Lapreel the Rabbit and Corbant the Rook, they had long ago fled in fear.

"Well, Reynard," said the King, "you may be right in



what you say. It seems so, indeed, since none of your accusers come forward ; but there is still one matter—the gravest of all—that you have not explained. When you were here before and were condemned to die I listened to your pleadings and granted you mercy. I sent you to Rome that you might beg forgiveness of the Pope, and at your own request I sent Bellyn the Ram and Cuwaert the Hare with you. Bellyn the Ram came back—but what of Cuwaert the Hare ? Him we saw no more, only the head of him, which, with an insolence greater than all your crimes, you sent back in the very scrip I gave you to take to Rome ! What have you to say to this ? ”

Then Reynard was very much afraid, and even his ready wit failed him for a time. He stood there confused and trembling, and the King’s stern voice was raised again.

“ You false villain ! ” cried he, and his eyes flashed with anger. “ Why do you not speak ? Are you struck dumb by the memory of your crimes ? ”

But Reynard still stood confused and trembling, and not a word could he say.





The
Serpent
was
HUNGRY



HOW DAME RUKENAW CAME TO REYNARD'S AID



OW, among the beasts that stood around the King's throne was Dame Rukenaw, the wife of Martin the Ape. She was Reynard's aunt, and she stood high in favour with the Queen. When she saw the turn things were taking she was sorry for Reynard and stood forward to say a word in his defence. She reminded the King of the Fox's cunning and wisdom, and bade him remember how often he had done good service in days gone by.

“Do not judge hastily, my lord,” said she. “Remember there are always two sides to a tale, and you have heard but one. The very fact that the Fox cannot answer you



is to me proof of his innocence, for everybody knows his ready wit. Had he expected to face this dreadful charge, who can doubt but that he would have prepared a tale that would have explained everything away?

“Moreover, my lord, the Fox is just. Do you remember how he dealt with

that case of the man and the Serpent two years ago?

“The Serpent had been caught in a snare as he was gliding through a hedge.

“The noose was round his neck, and in spite of all his writhings he could not free himself.

“Presently a man came by, and the Serpent called out to him for help. The man was sorry for the Serpent and was minded to release him, but being a prudent fellow, he said, ‘If I set you free, will you promise to do me no harm?’ So the Serpent promised, and the man set him free, and the two went on together.

“Now, the Serpent was hungry, and before they had gone very far he sprang upon the man, and would have killed him. But the man leapt aside, and said, ‘What,

have you forgotten the oath you swore, that you would do me no harm ? ’

“ And the Serpent made answer, ‘ Hunger may cause a man to break an oath.’ So the man said, ‘ Give me at least a chance, and let us go on until we meet with some one who can judge between us.’

“ The Serpent granted this, and they went on until they met the Raven, who thought it right that the Serpent should eat the man. The Raven said this because he hoped to have a share also.

“ But the man said, ‘ How shall a robber judge justly ? ’ And so they went on again until they met the Wolf and the Bear, to whom also they told their case, and both judged that the Serpent was right to eat the man.

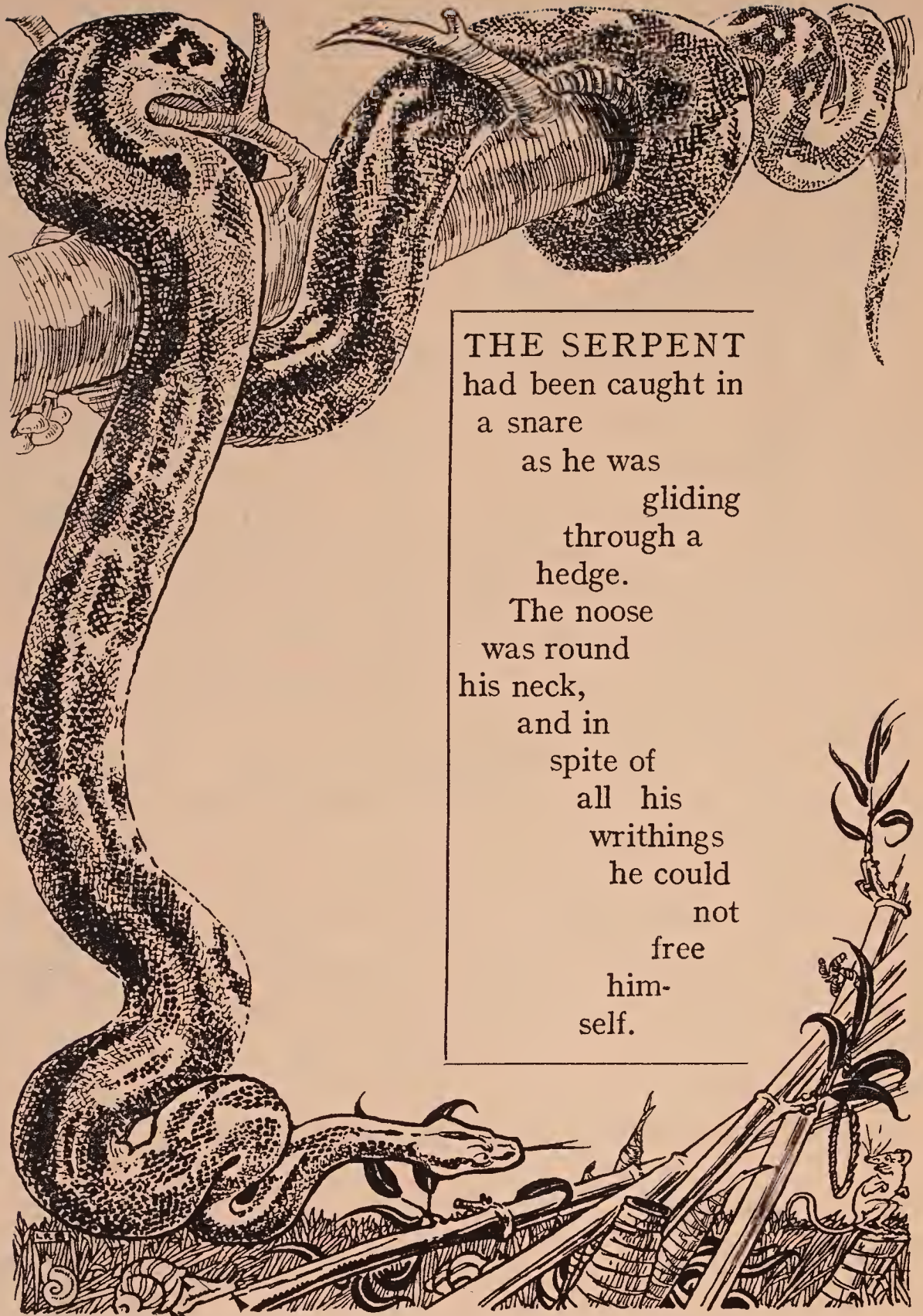
“ So once again the Serpent sprang upon him, but once again the man leapt away.

“ ‘ My case is not fairly judged,’ said he. ‘ Those who have spoken so far are themselves robbers and murderers. I appeal to the King ! ’

“ So it was agreed, and they came to this Court, and your Majesty will remember that you were sorely puzzled, and could not give judgment, for you thought that, as the Serpent said, hunger may cause a man to break an oath.

“ Then came Reynard the Fox, and the





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case was told to him, because of his wisdom. And Reynard said :

“ ‘ This is a hard case, and I cannot judge unless I see exactly how the man found the Serpent in the first place. Let me see the Serpent in the hedge with the snare round his neck.’

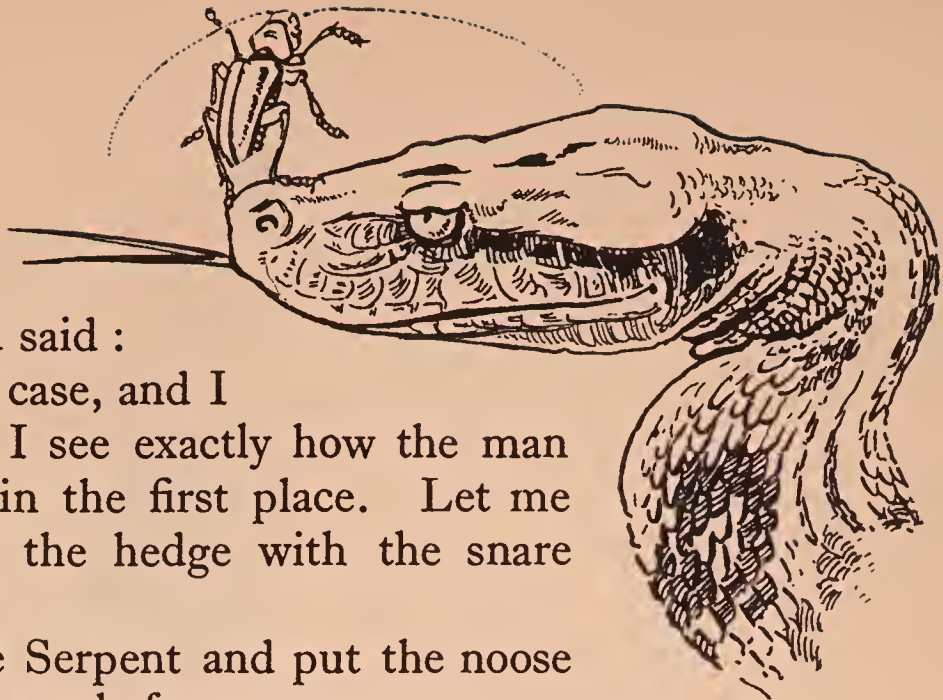
“ So they took the Serpent and put the noose round his neck as it was before.

“ Then Reynard called the man, and said : ‘ Was it just like this that you found him ? ’ And the man said it was so.

“ ‘ Then,’ said Reynard, ‘ begin the matter all over again. Let the man, knowing what he knows, set the Serpent free if he will, and if he does not care to let the Serpent free, then must the Serpent’s neck remain in the noose ! ’

“ That was the Fox’s judgment, O King, and right well did you applaud it. Was that the judgment of a wicked man ? I, myself, will stand for Reynard’s honour, and I am not the only one. Stand forth, all of you who are of my kin and of Reynard’s, and pray the King to have mercy upon him.”

Then a crowd of beasts stepped forward, headed by Grimbert the Badger, Reynard’s nephew. And the King said, “ It is well. I will give Reynard another chance, and listen to what he has to say. Let him explain, if he can, how Cuwaert the Hare came by his death.”





REYNARD'S
AUNT.



HOW REYNARD TOLD A WONDROUS TALE OF THREE JEWELS



NOW all the time that Dame Rukewaw had been speaking Reynard had stood silent with bent head, like one confused. But when he heard the King's voice bidding him explain Cuwaert's death, he raised his head and said :

“ What is this you say of my poor friend Cuwaert ? Twice have you told me that he is dead. Is it true, and shall I never see him again ? ”

The King looked at him sternly, but Reynard boldly met his gaze.

“ Full well you know it, Reynard,” said King Nobel. “ Did you not send Bellyn the Ram to me with Cuwaert's head in a bag ? ”

“ I cannot understand,” said Reynard, in a puzzled way. “ Where, then, is Bellyn ? I pledged my honour he should come safe to you.”

“ He came surely enough,” quoth the King grimly, “ but you will never see him again, for I condemned him to death as a traitor and a fool.”

“ But the jewels !” said Reynard wonderingly. “ Did he bring the jewels safely to your Majesty ? ”

The King pricked up his ears. “ Eh, what’s that ? ” asked he. “ The jewels ! What jewels do you mean ? ”

“ I gave him three jewels to carry to my liege lord,” said Reynard, “ three jewels worth a king’s ransom. And for the better safety of them, because I knew Bellyn the Ram to be thick-witted at his best, I sealed them in the scrip your Majesty gave me to bear with me to Rome.”

By this time both the King and Queen and most of the Court also were all agog with excitement.

“ I pray your Majesty do not tell me my precious jewels are lost,” cried Reynard pleadingly. “ Oh, they were gems beyond compare. No others were there in the world like them for beauty or worth. Alas that I was born ! Woe is me ! ”

“ Come, come, Reynard ! ” said Dame Rukenaw. “ Do not give way. You will not find your jewels again by crying about them. Describe them to us, and perhaps we shall find a way to win them back.”

“ They were for my gracious lord, the King,” said Reynard, in a broken voice, “ for the King and his sweet spouse, my lady Queen. They were a part of the treasure of Krekynpit, and I had kept them a long time hidden

in a secret place in my castle. It was to get them that I broke my journey to Rome."

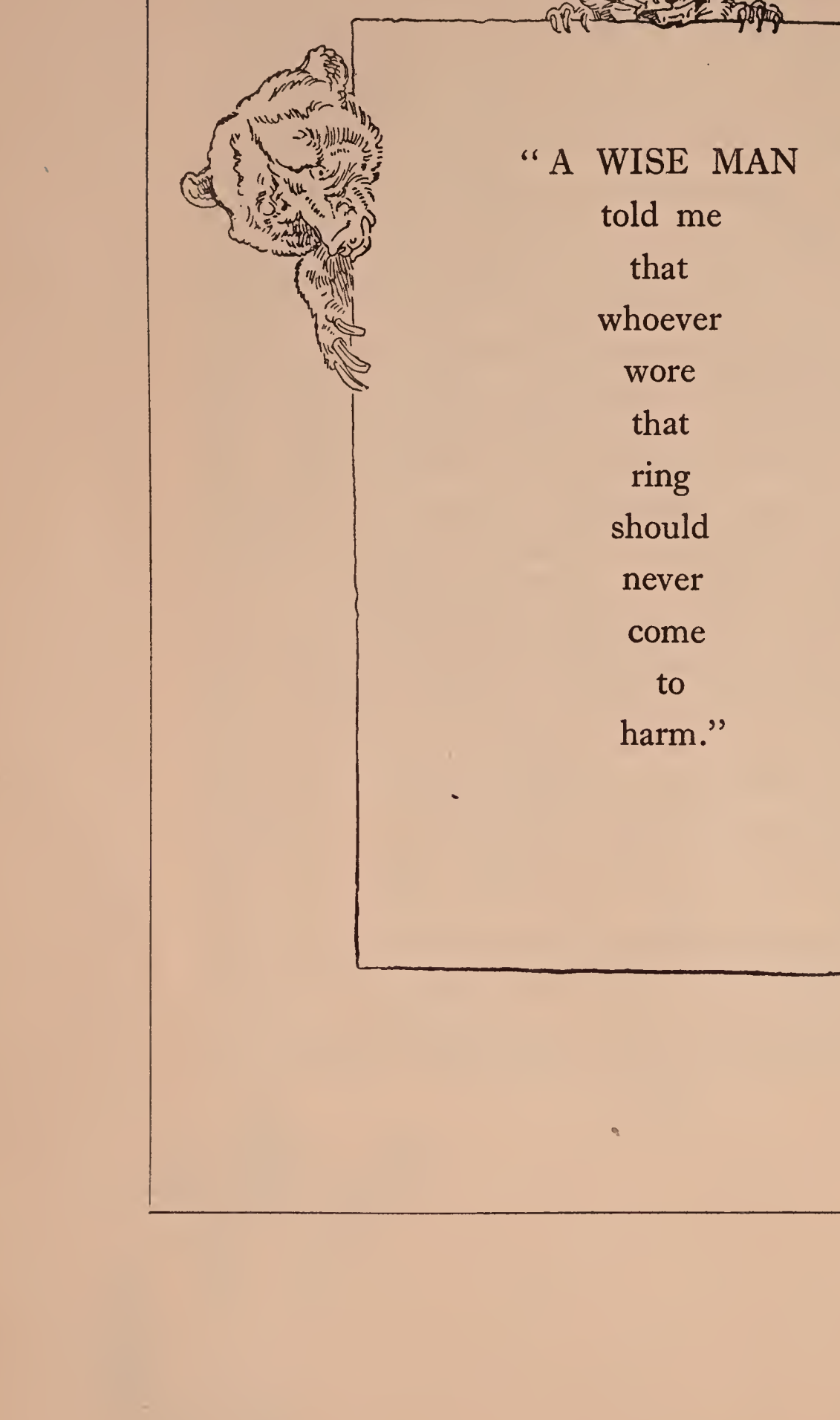
"What were they like?" cried the Queen. "Tell me quickly, dear Reynard, I pray you. Were they of great worth?"

"Not all the treasure of this realm could purchase them," answered Reynard, "for each jewel had magic powers of its own. Listen while I tell you what they were. The first was a ring made of fine gold. Inside it were engraved three words in a strange tongue, which I could not read. I showed them, however, to a wise man once, and he told me that whoever wore that ring should never come to harm by thunder or lightning, neither could heat burn, nor cold freeze him. On the top of the ring was set a gem coloured in three tints—red, white and green. And the red part of the stone was a charm against darkness, so that the owner of the ring had but to touch it and his way was illumined on the blackest night. The white part of the stone was even more powerful, for if a man had any disease of his body he had but to touch the unhealthy part with this ring and he was made whole again. As for the green part of the stone, that was a potent charm in war-time, for the owner of the ring who bore it on his finger need never fear the thrust of the enemy's weapon. No spear could pierce, no arrow wound him; he was invincible in war."

"Ah, me," replied the King, "that such a ring should be lost to me! Go on, dear Reynard. The second jewel—what was that?"

"A wonder, sire, that would have made the Queen's





“ A WISE MAN
told me
that
whoever
wore
that
ring
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never
come
to
harm.”







THE
WISE
MAN.

heart glad. It was a comb of gold, fit, as no other comb in all the world may be, to touch Her Majesty's beautiful hair! A comb of gold, O Queen, most marvellously fashioned, with big teeth and small teeth, and on the back



of its histories wonderfully carved—tales of the heroes of old—of Troy Town, and fair Helen, and Paris the false and fair. Never was such a gem of workmanship, and my heart is sick to think that it is lost ! ”

“ Mine, too,” said the Queen. “ Oh, Reynard, why did you entrust such a treasure to such a messenger ? ”

“ How could I know ? ” answered Reynard. “ And even yet I have not told you all. For whoever used that comb, her tresses should never lose their youthful colour or turn grey with age.”

“ And the third treasure,” broke in the King, “ what about that ? ”

“ That also was for the Queen, your Majesty,” said Reynard. “ It was a mirror of polished crystal glass. Whoever looked into that mirror could see what was done by man or beast a mile away, and if he had any disease of the eye he was immediately cured of it. The frame was of ebony, wrought with gold and inset with jewels, and on it, too, were carved many wonderful histories.

“ There was first the history of the horse and hart.

“ The horse was in full chase after a hart, and the hart outran him, and the horse was angry. So, meeting a herdsman, the horse said to him, ‘ Leave your sheep and help me to catch this hart. When we have caught him I will give him to you, and you can sell his hide and horns ! ’

“ ‘ I should like it very well,’ said the herdsman, ‘ but how are we to catch him ? ’

“ ‘ Jump upon my back,’ said the horse, ‘ and I will show you.’

“ So the herdsman took a rope for a bridle, and jumped

upon the horse's back, and they rode after the hart, but they could not catch him.

“ So at last the horse said, ‘ It is no use, he is too fleet for us. Let me rest now, for, indeed, I am winded.’

“ But the man said, ‘ I have a bridle in your mouth, and I am your master. I will subdue you, and henceforth you shall carry me where I will, for it is better to ride than to walk.’

“ So the horse was taken captive into slavery, and he has been a slave to man ever since.

“ And there was graven on the mirror yet another tale of the ass and the hound, which both lived with a certain rich man. Now the man loved his hound, and would often play with him, but he never played with the ass, and when the ass saw this he said to himself :

“ ‘ I wonder what my master sees in this fool of a hound to make such a fuss about ? I do more work in a day than he does in a year, yet he sits by him at table and feeds on the



choicest foods, while I have nothing to eat but thistles and nettles, and no bed but the hard ground. I have seen him leap upon my master and lick his face. Perhaps that is why he is loved so dearly. I will do the same, and try to earn my master's love.'

"So the next time the man came in the ass leapt upon him, and grinned and brayed, and planted one of his hoofs in his master's ear, and the other one in his master's eye. And he tried to lick his face with his long tongue. And the man cried out in fear :

" ' Help ! Help ! This villain ass will slay me. Come quickly ! ' "

"So the servants came with thick cudgels and belaboured the poor ass soundly, and he went back sadly to his stable and ate again of his nettles and thistles.

"And there is yet another story of my father and Tybert the Cat, which is written on the mirror.

"My father and Tybert were once great friends, and they hunted together, and swore never to part one from the other. And one day the huntsmen and the hounds came after them, and they had to fly for their lives.

" ' Do not fear, Tybert, ' said my father, as they sped along. ' I have a sackful of tricks to play on these huntsmen. Trust to me. ' "

"And Tybert was very much afraid, and he replied,

‘ Alas ! I have but one trick, and I must trust to that.’

“ So when the huntsmen came on, my father tried each of his tricks in turn, but nothing came of them. But the Cat played his one trick with success, for he climbed a tree and hid among the leaves, and laughed at the huntsmen as they scurried by. My poor father doubled and turned, but it was no use, and the Cat cried out and mocked him, and said, ‘ Come, Reynard, untie your bag of tricks and let me see them.’ He only just managed to escape with his life by running into a hole, and ever since then I and my kin have hated Tybert the Cat.

“ These and many more histories every whit as interesting were graven on that mirror, O Queen. I intended it for you, and well would it have beguiled many an idle hour. Ah, woe is me that it is lost ! ”

“ But did you give these treasures to Bellyn ? ” asked the King excitedly.

“ Yes, lord, to Bellyn, sealed in a bag, as I have said. And with Bellyn I sent Cuwaert the Hare to run before and bring the news to your Majesty of the coming of my gifts. Little did I think when I bade farewell to Cuwaert that the faithful creature was so near his death. I loved him best of all, and not for all the treasures of Krekynpit would I have had him die ! Bellyn, too, was my friend, and both

of them have come to their end through me. I cry for justice, O King, upon the murderer. Perhaps he is here among us even now. If so, let him tremble, for though he place the world between us I will find him out and run him down. He was wily to kill the Hare and fool poor Bellyn into taking his friend's head instead of the jewels to Court, but his wile will be no match for mine. I will have vengeance, I swear it!"

Then all the Court was silent, pondering this new tale that Reynard had told. But the King and Queen could think of naught but the jewels—the King of the ring that would give him power, and the Queen of the comb and the mirror that would bring her beauty and pleasure.





HOW REYNARD REMINDED THE KING OF HIS VIRTUES



WHEN Reynard saw that his tale of the three wonderful jewels had awakened interest in the minds of the King and the Queen he was very glad, but he was far too cunning to show his pleasure. He kept still a stern, grave face, and after a little silence began to speak again. "Do you still doubt my faith, O King?" he said. "Who among all your friends is there who would bring you such precious gifts? My wife wept when she saw me put the jewels in the bag to send to your Majesty, for, woman-like, she treasured them exceedingly and especially the mirror.



Well do I know who has poisoned your heart against me—it is that treacherous thief, Isegrim the Wolf, who has always hated me and would work my ruin if he could ! ”

Isegrim glared at Reynard and showed his teeth in a wicked snarl ; and if looks could kill, Reynard would have died that day. As it was, however, he took no notice of the Wolf’s scowls, and went on speaking.

“ There was a time, your Majesty, and not so very long ago, when you knew well how to judge between the Wolf and me. Do you remember that day when the Wolf and I were in the forest together ? We had caught a pig, and were about to make our dinner from it when your Majesty and my lady Queen came out of a grove and prayed us to give you a part. You had been out hunting, and had caught nothing, and you were very hungry.

“ How did I answer you ? ‘ Yea, lord,’ I said, ‘ with a good will.’ But the Wolf (do you remember), like the ill-mannered cur that he is, growled out sulkily, and took a half of the pig for himself and left only a quarter each for you and the Queen. And he gave me only the skinny part of the pig’s tail for my dinner. And I was very hungry, lord. Bad luck to him for a greedy knave !

“ And what was half a pig between you and the Queen ? You remember how you ate it up quickly and asked for more, and when he neither gave nor offered you any you lifted up your right foot and kicked him until he howled for mercy. Then you said to him, ‘ Make haste and bring us some more food, and we will see that the next meal is shared better.’

“ I went with him, and it was not long before we killed a fat calf, and brought it back to you. Then you praised me, and said I was swift in hunting, and bade me deal out the meat. So I dealt it out, and



I said, 'One half the meat shall be for the King and the other half for the Queen. Isegrim shall have the head and I will have the feet.'

"Then you said to me, 'Well done, Reynard! Who taught you to share so well?'

"And I answered, 'Isegrim taught me, my lord; because he got a broken pate for being greedy.'

"At this you were well pleased and took me into favour, but you sent Isegrim about his business and would have nothing more to do with him, and you were wise in that. This was not the only time that I proved my worth to you in days gone by. I could recall many more things to your



Here

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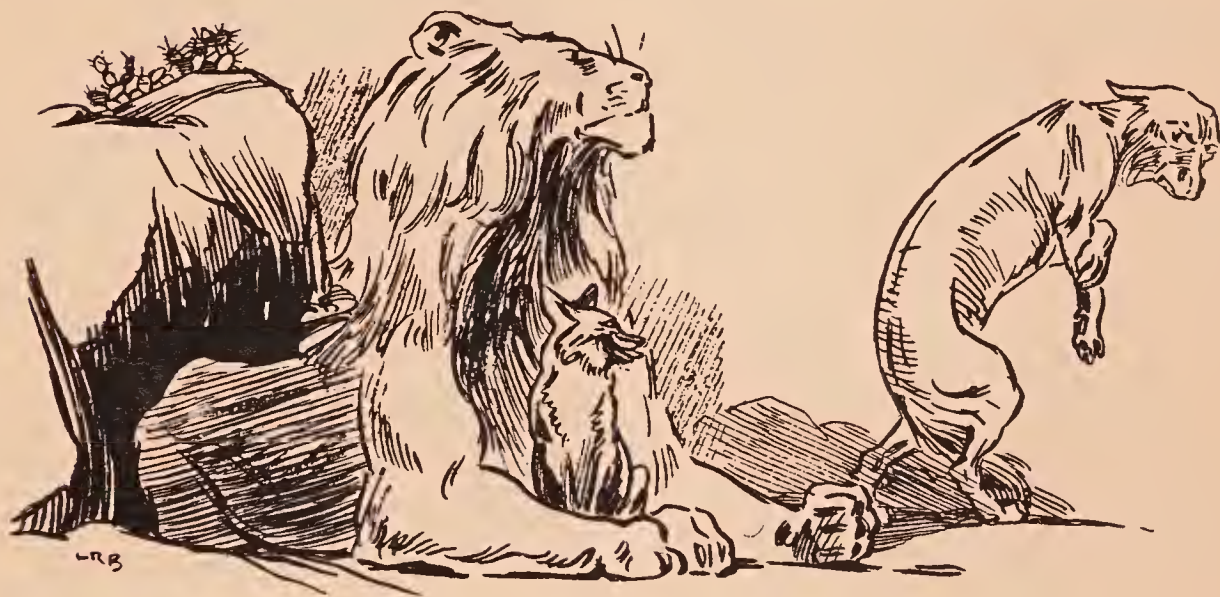
rolled down

his cheeks.

mind if it would not take too long. Now, alas ! you have forsaken me, who was always your friend, and believe the lies my enemies tell of me.”

Here Reynard broke down and sobbed, while large tears rolled down his cheeks.

“ Come, Reynard,” said the King kindly. “ Do not give way. I am far from believing everything I hear, you know. As a matter of fact, now I come to think of it, all that I know of Cuwaert’s death is the fact that Bellyn brought his head here in a bag. There is no proof that you had anything to do with the killing of him.”

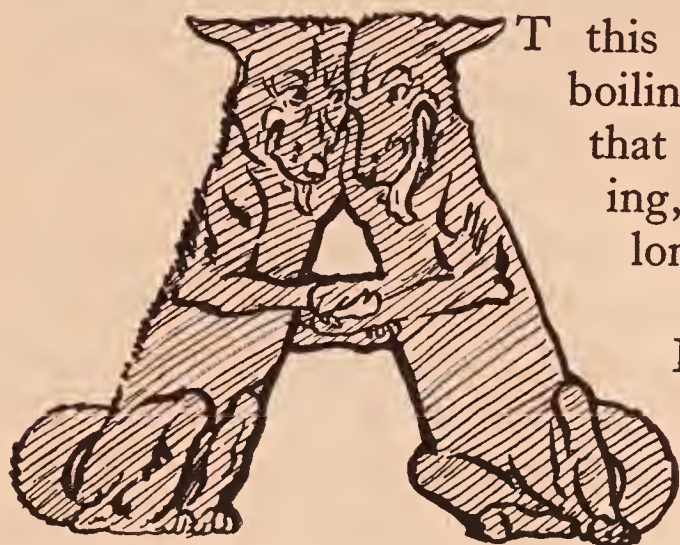




THE KING



HOW REYNARD ANSWERED HIS ACCUSERS



At this the Wolf, who had been boiling with rage all the time that Reynard had been speaking, could keep silence no longer.

“Do not be deceived, O King,” he burst out.

“Every word this false Fox utters is a lie. Listen, while I tell you

what he did to my poor wife.

“One cold winter’s day, when food was hard to get, he met my wife in the forest, and asked her if she liked fish. She said she did. So Reynard told her that he would show her how she might catch plenty of them. ‘All you have to do,’ said he, ‘is to go out into the middle of the

river and make a hole in the ice. Then sit down over the hole and let your tail dangle in the water, and before long so many fish will bite at it that there will be enough and to spare for four people ! ’

“ Well, my lord, my poor trusting wife did as the villain told her. She made a hole in the ice, and let her tail down in the water, and sat there for many hours, but never a fish did she catch ; and when she got tired of waiting, and tried to get away, she found that her tail was frozen hard into the ice, and she could not move. She tugged and tugged, but it was all in vain, and every time she tugged it hurt her dreadfully, my lord ! I heard her screaming, and came to her aid, and as soon as Reynard saw me he ran away, laughing. I got her out at last, but she had to leave the end of her tail behind, and the noise she made brought every man within a mile on our track. It was only by good luck that we escaped death. What has the villain to say to that ? ”

Reynard turned his eyes to heaven. “ How they slander me ! ” he sighed. “ Here is the truth of the matter, O King. It is true that I taught Dame Ersewin to catch fish with her tail, and a very good trick it is. But like her husband, she is eaten up with greediness, and though she caught many fish, she was not content and wanted more. So she stayed on the ice until her tail was frozen in. Can I be blamed for her foolishness ? ”

Dame Ersewin, the Wolf’s wife, who had been listening, was so angry that she could hardly speak. “ You are a false, ungrateful rogue, Reynard, ” said she. “ This is how you repay me for saving your life ! What about

that time when I found you at the bottom of a well? You had fallen in, and you were seated in a bucket at the bottom to keep yourself out of the water, and whining for help. I heard your cries, and asked you how you came to be in such a plight.

“‘I came down to look for fish,’ you answered, ‘and I have eaten so many that I am full to bursting. Now I am so heavy I cannot get up.’”

“‘How shall I help you?’ I asked.

“‘Then you said, ‘Get into the other bucket, Aunt, and come to me.’ And I got into the other





bucket, and it fell quickly with my weight ; and as I went down you came up, until I was at the bottom and you were at the top.

“ Then you got out of the well and grinned down at me, and said, ‘ So the world wags, dear Aunt ; one goes up and another goes down.’ And with that you went away. As for me, I had to stay there until I was nearly dead with the cold. A man came at last and wound up the bucket, and pulled me out, and would have killed me ; and although I escaped him, he gave me so many hard blows that I was sore for many a day.”

The Fox grinned slyly when Dame Ersewin finished her tale. “ Well, Aunt,” said he, “ I don’t see what you have got to grumble about. Did I not teach you wisdom ? It is true that you had some hard blows, but one must always suffer to be wise, and I had rather you had them than I. At any rate, you learnt not to believe everything that was told you.”

The Wolf's wife growled, and Isegrim spoke up again.
" See how he mocks at us again, my lord," he cried.
" Many a time has he brought me into trouble. See, I
have only one ear ; the other was torn away by the She-Ape,
and all because of him. Ask him about it, and let him
speak the truth for once in his life."



One
day
THE
WOLF
came
and
complained
that
he
WAS
VERY HUNGRY





“ I have nothing to conceal,” answered Reynard. “ Here is the truth of that matter :

“ One day the Wolf came to me and complained that he was very hungry, and begged me to find him some food. So we went off together in search of it, and travelled half the day, but found nothing. Then at last I spied a big hole in the bank, half hidden by branches, and heard a growling noise from within it.

“ ‘ Go in, Isegrim,’ said I, ‘ and see if there is anything to eat in there.’

“ But he was trembling like a kitten, and said, ‘ I would not go in for the King’s crown.’

“ Then I, that am small and weak, crept into the hole to face the danger, while he, the great hulking coward, stayed outside in safety.

“ The hole was very dark, and it was full of the most horrible smell I have ever smelled, and all the time I crept forward the fierce growling continued. I was a little afraid, but I kept on. At last I saw a great she-ape, as strong and ugly a beast as ever I set eyes on. Near her were three little apes, and they were uglier than their mother, but if anything could smell more horrible than she did it was those children of hers. I was almost overcome with the stench, but I spoke quite politely, and said, ‘ Good morrow, dear Aunt ! How do you do, and all your lovely children ? Indeed, they are the most beautiful children that ever I saw.’

“ She was pleased at this and smiled at me. (She had

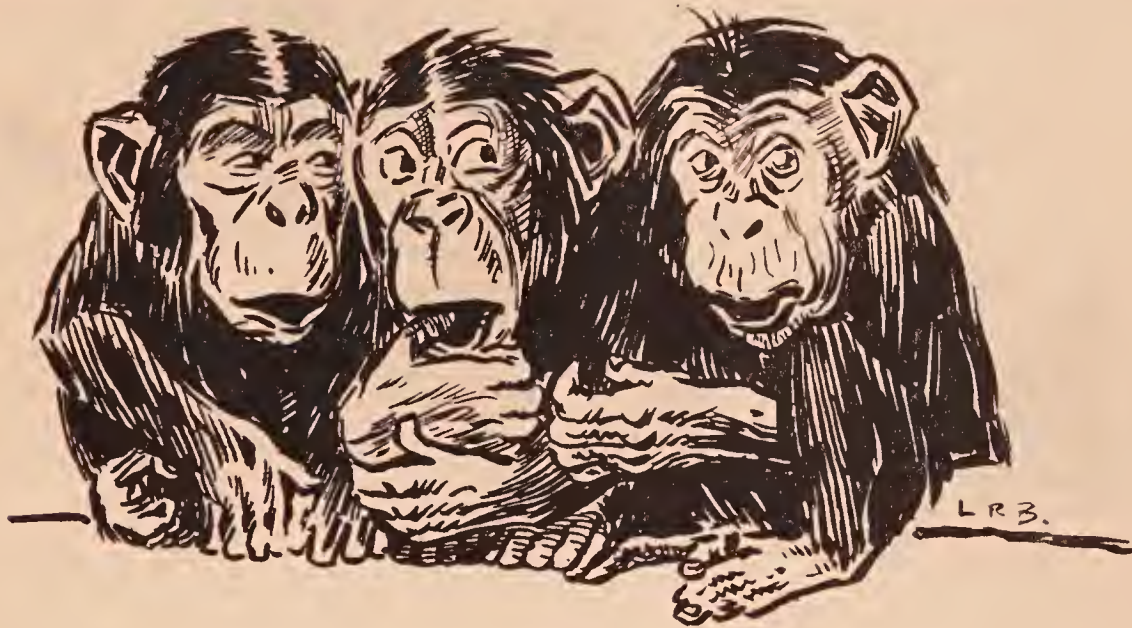
big teeth, my lord.) 'Welcome, Reynard,' she answered. 'You must stay here awhile and teach my little ones some of your tricks.'

"But I told her I was in a hurry, and could not stay just then; but that I would come again some other day. So then she took me to her larder, where she kept a good supply of meat of all kinds, and bade me eat my fill. And when I was satisfied she gave me a big piece to take home to my wife, and bade me a fair good day.

"When I came out of the cave I found Isegrim groaning with hunger. So I took pity on him, and gave him my piece of meat, and he gobbled it down in two mouthfuls.

"'Where did you get it, Reynard?' he asked.

"'In the cave,' said I. 'A she-ape gave it to me, and she has plenty more. Go you in and get some. But be careful, and praise her children, for she loves them.'



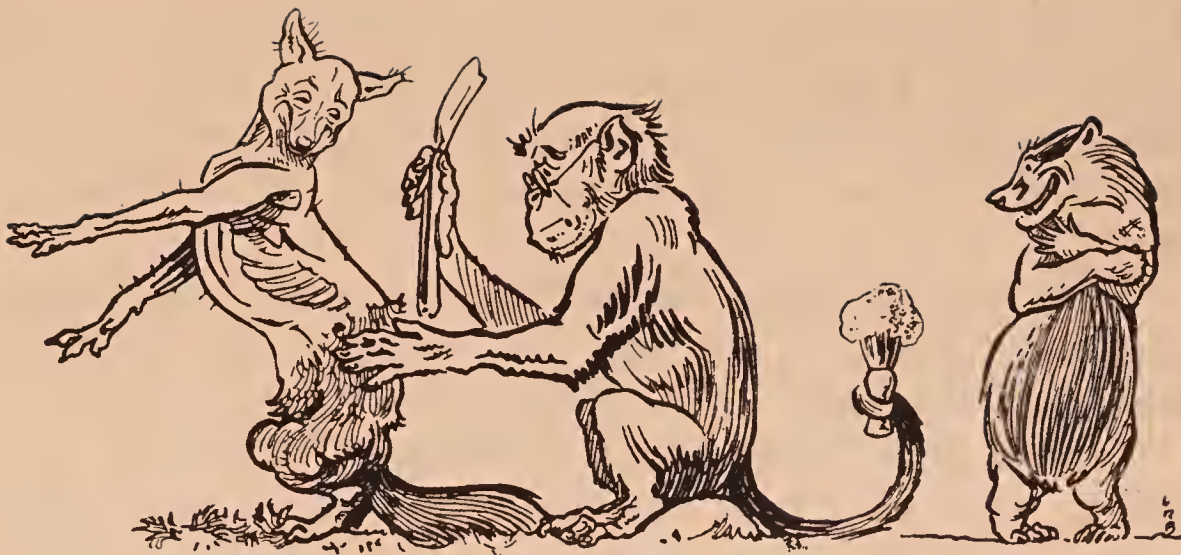
“ So then Isegrim crept into the hole. But when he smelt the smell of the cave and saw the ugliness of the little apes, he cried out, ‘ Oh, go and drown them quickly. They make my hair stand on end. I came here for some meat, not to gaze upon your filthy brats ! ’

“ When she heard this the she-ape was angry, and quite right, too. She sprang upon the Wolf, and tore him with her claws, and bit off one of his ears. Serve him right, I say, for an ill-mannered cur.”

At this the Wolf fairly raved with fury.

“ I will stand no more of it,” he cried. “ We will see who is the traitor. Here and now I challenge you to mortal combat. Let us prove by ordeal of battle which of us is worthy.”





HOW REYNARD FOUGHT ISEGRIM THE WOLF



WHEN Reynard heard the Wolf challenge him to fight, he felt afraid.

“He is ever so much stronger than I am,” he thought. “I

shall never be able to stand against him in open battle, and it does not seem to me as if my cunning will be of very much use.”

To refuse the challenge, however, would, of course, be to turn the King against him, so he had no choice but to accept it with the best grace he could muster.

Then the King bade the two choose their seconds, and

Reynard chose Grimbert the Badger, and Betelas, the young Ape, son of Dame Rukenaw, while Isegrim chose Bruin the Bear and Tybert the Cat. The battle was fixed for the next day, and both sides went away at once to get ready.

That same evening Dame Rukenaw came to Reynard, and asked him how he felt. He looked at her dolefully, and shook his head. "The Wolf is very strong," quoth he.

"Come now," said Dame Rukenaw. "Keep up your heart. You are a long way from dead yet. I have made up my mind that you shall win to-morrow, and I am going to help you."

Then she took a razor and very carefully shaved every hair from off Reynard's body, until he stood so smooth and thin that his own mother would not have known him. This done, Dame Rukenaw brought a flask of oil and rubbed it over his body until he was as slippery as an eel.

"Now then," said she, "that is the beginning. You are a little harder to get hold of than you were before, my dear Reynard, and I am thinking that Mr. Isegrim is going to get the surprise of his life. Now listen carefully to what I am going to say.

"The Wolf is stronger than you, and he knows it. If once you allow him to come to close grips with you, you are as good as dead. What you have to do is to keep at a distance at the very beginning. Pretend to run away, and when he runs after you flop dust in his eyes with your tail ; but be very careful that he does not seize your tail with his teeth. Keep your ears down flat to your head so that his claws cannot get at them, and dance in and out and round

and round so that he will tire himself trying to get at you. And now, my dear Reynard, you had better lie down and get some sleep, for you will need all your strength in the morning."

Reynard thanked his aunt and made himself a couch in some dry fern. Here he lay down and slept soundly.

Early the next morning Reynard's cousin, the Otter, came and brought him a fine fat duck for his breakfast. Reynard ate it with a good appetite and washed it down with a draught of cold water from the stream. Then he set off for the place of battle.

A great space had been prepared in front of the King's throne, and round about, in a ring, stood all the animals who had come to see the fight. When the King saw Reynard, all smooth and oily, he gave a great roar of laughter.

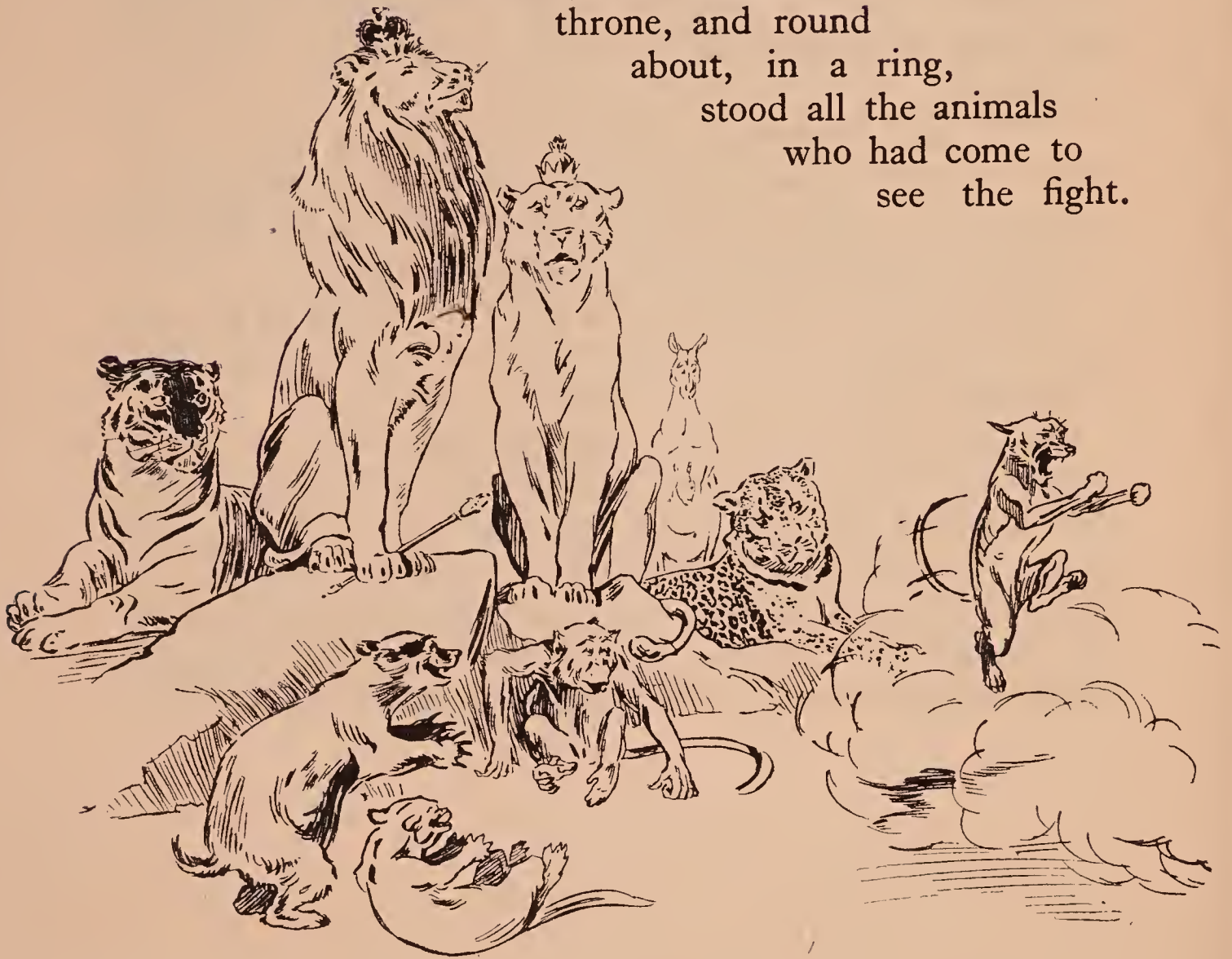
"Ho, ho! Reynard," said he, "you are a wily Fox if ever there was one. No doubt you know what you are doing, yet I swear by my head that I never in my life saw an uglier beast than you have made of yourself!"

Reynard said nothing, but he lifted the corner of his lips in a savage grin, and presently the Wolf came out, and the King gave the signal for the battle to begin.

Isegrim wasted no time. With a savage growl he sprang forward at Reynard, trying to strike him with his fore-paws, but Reynard was too quick for him, and jumped aside. Again the Wolf sprang, and this time Reynard turned and ran away as fast as he could with Isegrim after him. Round and round the lists they tore. Now and again Reynard slackened pace and let the Wolf come nearly up to him ;

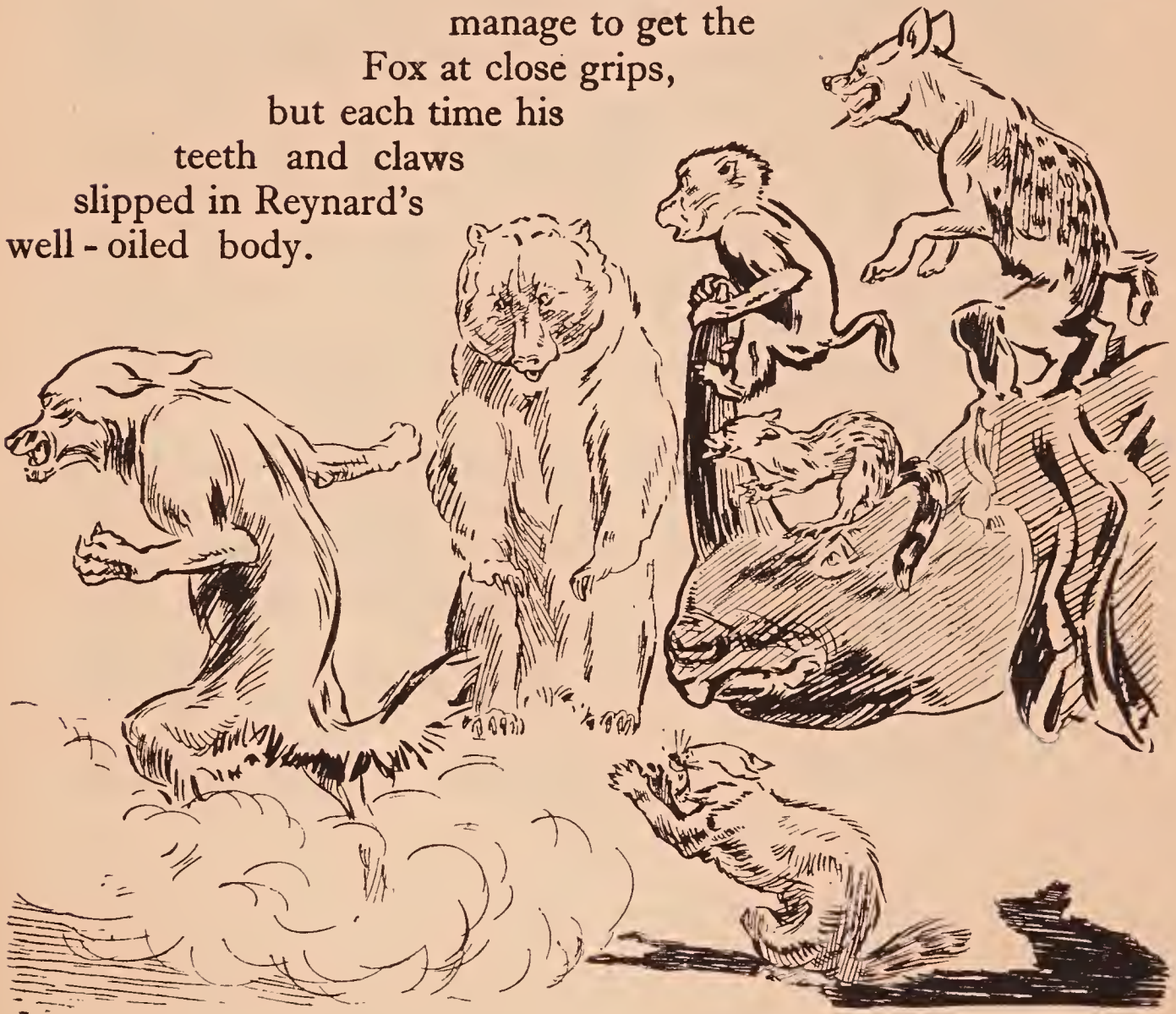


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Ten times
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but each time as Isegrim raised his paws to strike Reynard struck his tail on the ground and raised such a cloud of dust and sand that before long his enemy was half-blinded.

At last the Wolf was obliged to stop to rub the dust out of his eyes, but no sooner had he done so than Reynard turned in a flash and bit him three times in the neck.

“ Now,” said Reynard, “ you are at my mercy. Kneel down and crave my pardon, and I will spare your life.”

For answer the Wolf gave a roar of anger, and, lifting up his foot, struck Reynard such a terrible blow on his head that he fell stunned to the ground. It was only for a moment, however. Before Isegrim could follow up his advantage Reynard was on his feet again, and thanks to his slippery body, wriggled out of the Wolf’s grasp before he could do him any great harm.

So, for a long time the fight went on. Ten times did the Wolf manage to get the Fox at close grips, but each time his teeth and claws slipped in Reynard’s well-oiled body, and he could not deal him a serious wound. At last, as he was running round and round, Reynard’s foot slipped, and, in a moment the Wolf was on him, bearing him down with his weight.

Now all seemed ended to Reynard, and he felt the terror of death in his heart. He squirmed and wriggled like an eel, and, though he could not get away, he managed to turn on his back, and raising his hind leg, he scratched the Wolf in the face with his sharp claws.

“ You villain,” howled the Wolf. “ You have put out my eye.”

“ All the better ! ” panted Reynard, “ you will only have

one to wink with in the future, and it will save you a lot of trouble.”

For answer the Wolf redoubled his efforts to seize Reynard by the throat ; but, what with the slippery body and the clawing hind-feet, he could not succeed.

“ I have you now ! ” he kept on saying. “ In a minute I shall kill you.” And, indeed things looked very bad for poor Reynard, who, try as he might, could not get free. He put his wits to work while the struggle went on. The Wolf managed to bite his head.

“ Well, are you beaten ? ” said he.

“ What’s the use of my saying I am beaten if you are going to kill me ? ” asked Reynard. “ If you were a knightly foe it would be different ; you would know that it is a base thing to slay a vanquished enemy.”

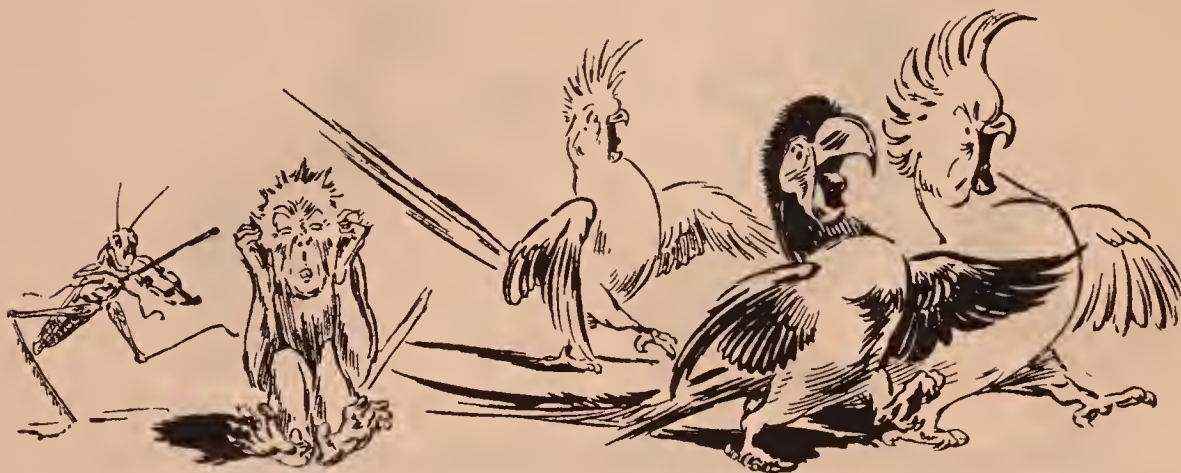
“ I will kill you with as little pity as one shows to vermin,” said the Wolf grimly. “ Do not think to play any more of your tricks on me—I know you too well. You will never make a fool of me again ! ”



Now, it is unwise to make long speeches when one is fighting. Talk wastes the breath and takes up the attention. Just as the Wolf said the last words Reynard saw his chance, and doubling forward swiftly, he fixed his teeth in the Wolf's throat. Isegrim, already weak with loss of blood, and half dead with fatigue, fell back in a swoon, and the Fox sprang free. For a moment he stood warily waiting, then, finding that his enemy did not rise, he seized him by the legs and dragged him round the lists in triumph, so that everybody could see that he was victor.

Now, what a cheer went up from all the animals who were watching. Reynard's friends shouted with delight, and even those who hated the Fox cheered too, because they were afraid to be silent. But Isegrim's brother ran to the King and begged him to stop the fight and save the Wolf's life, and this the King did.

"You are victor now, Reynard," said he, "victor in a fair-fought fight, and mercy well becomes a conqueror. I charge you, let the Wolf go free."

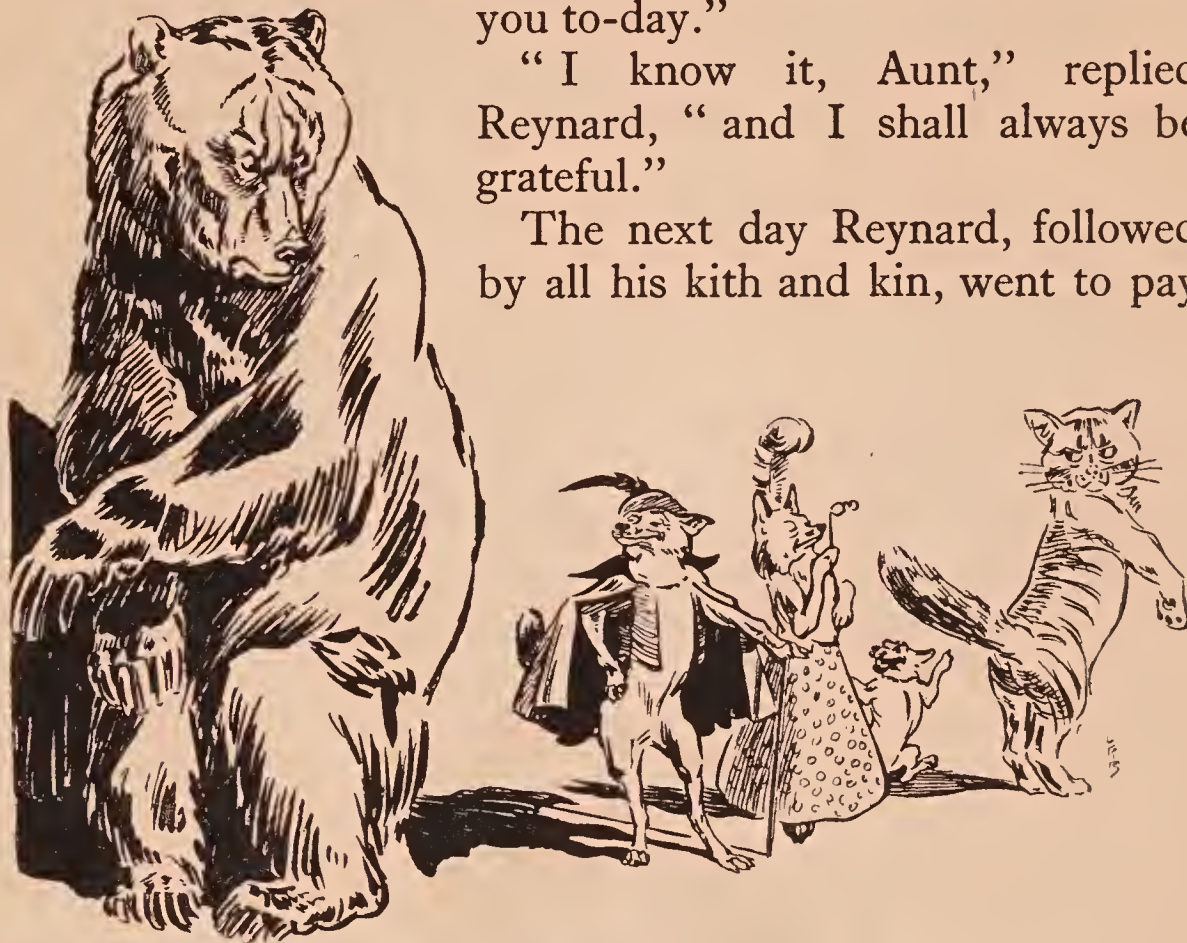


So Bruin the Bear and Tybert the Cat came and bore the senseless form of Isegrim away on a litter. They took him to a secret place in the woods and dressed his hurts, and brought the cleverest doctor among all the animals to attend him. And it turned out after all that the Wolf was not seriously wounded, although he was badly scratched and torn, and before long the doctor was able to send a messenger to his wife to say that he would live. Reynard, too, went away with Dame Rukenaw, who bathed his wounds and praised him for following her commands so well.

“It is a good thing for you that you had me on your side,” said she, “else things would have gone ill with you to-day.”

“I know it, Aunt,” replied Reynard, “and I shall always be grateful.”

The next day Reynard, followed by all his kith and kin, went to pay



his homage to the King, and the Lion smiled upon him and did him honour.

“ Sir Reynard,” said he, “ you have borne yourself right nobly. I raise you to the office of a peer in my realm, and I am sure you will occupy it well. Now you are free to go where you will.”

And Reynard answered : “ O King, I love you above all others in the world, and not for all its treasures would I be unfaithful to you.”

So a little while later, headed by a band of music, Reynard and all his friends made their way to his castle of Malpertuis, where he set a great feast for them that lasted many days. I need not tell you how pleased his wife was to see him, and how proud she was of her husband, whose wit and cunning were greater than those of any other creature.

Now, this is the end of my story of Reynard the Fox and there is not a little bit of it that is true. But the wise man who first told this tale long ago set it down for a parable to his fellows. For in a company of stupid men he who has most cunning shall be lord, and when men, forgetting their humanity, prey one upon another as the animals do, then he who is most ruthless among them shall rise to greatest honour.

Yours, children, is the kingdom of the future. Shall the Fox be lord in it ?







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