

·THE·HISTORY·OF·  
·REYNARD·THE·FOX·

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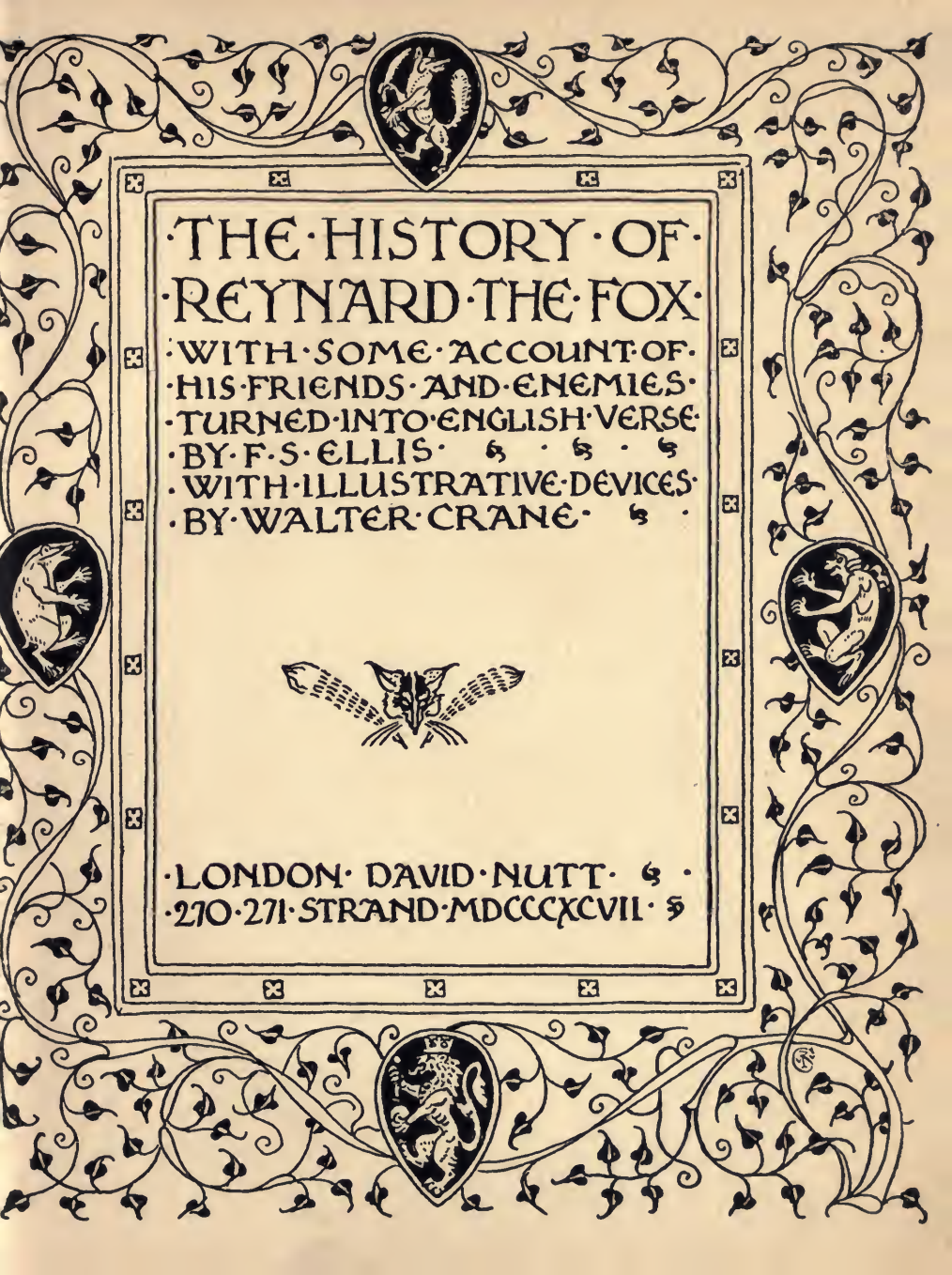


REYNARD THE FOX AT THE COURT  
OF THE LION KING NOBEL ❧ ❧

·THE·HISTORY·OF·  
·REYNARD·THE·FOX·  
·WITH·SOME·ACCOUNT·OF·  
·HIS·FRIENDS·AND·ENEMIES·  
·TURNED·INTO·ENGLISH·VERSE·  
·BY·F·S·ELLIS· 6 · 6 · 6 ·  
·WITH·ILLUSTRATIVE·DEVICES·  
·BY·WALTER·CRANE· 6 ·



·LONDON· DAVID· NUTT· 6 ·  
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THE · HISTORY · OF · REYNARD · THE  
FOX · HIS · FRIENDS · AND · HIS  
ENEMIES. HIS · CRIMES · HAIR-  
BREADTH · ESCAPES · AND · FINAL  
TRIUMPH. A · METRICAL · VERSION  
OF · THE · OLD · ENGLISH · TRANS-  
LATION · WITH · GLOSSARIAL · NOTES  
IN · VERSE · BY · F · S · ELLIS · WITH  
DEVICES · BY · WALTER · CRANE

LONDON  
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## CONCERNING THE STORY OF REYNARD THE FOX.

SINCE the author printed his version of "Reynard the Fox" in 1894, he has so often been asked, "What is the origin of the story?" that he determined whenever the book was re-written it should be accompanied by a full and complete dissertation on the literary history of Reynard, and thereto evoked the aid of one of the chief authorities on the subject. But when the account came to be fully set out, which should trace Reynard back to the beginning of his literary life, verily the story appeared to have as many obscure corners, twistings and turnings, complications, intricacies, and doubtful passages, as were to be found in his own stronghold of Malperdy, whereof we shall hear anon.

It has therefore been deemed advisable to put no more introduction to a book, the prime object of which is the amusement of the reader, than may be readily apprehended, and as lightly digested as were Reynard's two pigeons in chapter twenty-eight.

Suffice it to say here that scholars who have made a special study of the subject are agreed as to the extreme antiquity of stories and apologues concerning the subtlety and wiliness of the Fox, an antiquity, greater perhaps than that of literature itself.

That the origin of the story is Indo-European seems to be allowed on all hands, but whether France or Germany can lay the better claim to the building up of the legends in Europe is still a moot point.

The history of the text upon which the present version is founded, is shortly this: About the year 1250 an author

named Willem put together the story in Flemish verse from the various legends and tales then current. A little more than a hundred years later, about 1375, it was re-written, and a second part or sequel added, by an author whose name is unknown. This was subsequently turned into Dutch prose, and ultimately printed at Gouda in Holland by Gerard Leu in 1479. Scholars have decided that Caxton did not make use of this edition for his translation, but of some manuscript or printed version which is no longer extant. The variations, however, between Caxton's original and the Gouda edition of 1479 are of no great moment. Upon the edition printed by Caxton in 1481 and worthily reproduced at the Kelmscott Press in 1892 the present version is founded.

Those who desire to study the subject in all its fullness and detail, must be content to await the learned treatise on the literary genesis and evolution of Reynard promised by Professor Logeman by way of introduction to his projected critical edition of Caxton's translation.

The author is desirous that the version now printed should be considered as altogether superseding that which he published in 1894.

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**H**IDDEN within this story men may find  
Good learning, parables, and points diverse,  
Which every man should mark who hath a mind  
To master subtle knowledge (and the curse  
O'ercome, which mankind mostly doth immerse  
In ignorance and blindness), taught such things  
As wise men utter in the courts of Kings

Or lordly prelates when they council hold,  
Or where grave merchants meet to sift their cares,  
Or common folk foregathering on the wold  
To plain the hard dull lot of him who wears  
His life in servitude and hardly fares  
From birth till death's release. Good help and meed  
This book shall give to all who rightly read :

For he who readeth it, or lists it read,  
May gather witting of the base deceit  
Wherewith the world doth cozen goodlihead ;  
Not with the purpose cozenage to repeat  
Against his fellows, but such things to weet  
As serve for safeguard against wily shrews,  
Eschewing warily the arts they use.

And he who will good understanding gain  
Of all this matter, earnestly and well,  
With humble heart must con this book, and fain

Proem.

Shall he then grow past power of words to tell,  
Hoping for Heaven, and fearing nought of Hell.  
But one short reading no man will suffice  
To gather up fair wisdom's pearls of price,

Which, sought with pains, will yield a rich reward  
To those who treasure them with care and love.  
And many a gold-worth lesson will afford  
This tale to him who through life's storms would  
move

With calm content, ah! surely shall he prove  
Sweetness untold, despite the world's annoy,  
And passing hence find heaven's unending joy.



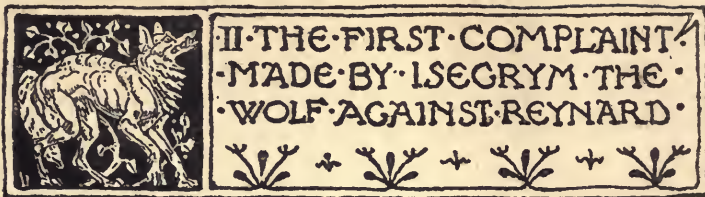


·HOW·THE·LION·KING·NOBEL·  
·SENT·OUT·HIS·MANDEMENT·  
·THAT·ALL·BEASTS·SHOULD·  
·COME·TO·HIS·COURT· ❧ ❧

'T WAS near the days of Pentecost,  
When woods grow green, and Winter's frost  
Is clean forgot ; when fragrant flowers  
Bedeck the meadows, brakes, and bowers,  
Yet once again, and every tree  
Resounds with gladsome harmony  
Of joyous birds, who sweetly sing  
Welcome to springtide's burgeoning,  
That Nobel, Lion-King, and Lord  
O'er every beast that treads the sward,  
Made known his will to hold High Court  
While dured the Feast, and bade resort  
Thither, all those who humbly bowed  
Beneath his sceptre ; straight a crowd  
Of lieges gathered, great and small,  
To keep the glorious festival  
Proclaimed by heralds ; nor was one  
Absent therefrom, except alone  
The Fox, within whose bosom grew  
Alarm for crimes whereof he knew  
His hands right guilty. Small desire  
He therefore had to face the ire  
Of those who justly might complain  
His theft and trespass, but full fain  
Was he to hide his head ; and when  
The King of Beasts appeared in ken  
Of all his subjects, quickly rose  
A storm of wrath from Reynard's foes

I. The King  
holds Court.

While each from out his breast unlocks  
Some long-pent grief against the Fox.



FIRST spoke the grey wolf Isegrym,  
Whose eager eye and quivering limb  
Betrayed his wrath: loud cried he: "Friends,  
Before this Court I claim amends  
Against the Fox, for crimes so great  
(Devised and done with spiteful hate  
Toward me and mine), that, when I speak  
Thereof, all words sound vain and weak.  
Give ear, most just and noble lord,  
Whilst I with aching heart record  
How Reynard hath destroyed my life:  
For not alone my well-loved wife  
Hath he insulted, but with mind  
To mar my lineage, sought to blind  
My three dear children as they lay  
In bed.

Forthwith was set a day,  
When Reynard forth should come and swear,  
By holy saints, that he had ne'er  
Thereof been guilty, but when brought  
Forth was the sacred book, he thought  
Him otherwise, and straightway stole  
Back to his thievish lurking hole,  
Crying that naught he set thereby.  
Dear King, all this is openly  
Beknown to many a beast who stands  
Before thee here: Nay, more! his hands

Are stained by evil deeds, which blot  
His life in such wise, that I wot  
No man exists whose tongue could tell  
All that I leave untold : so fell  
The trespass is that he hath done  
Against my wife, that while the sun  
Doth light the heavens no power shall save  
The Fox from that revenge I crave."

II. The Wolf  
complains.



AS ceased the Wolf, a hush profound  
Fell o'er the Court, when lo! a hound,  
Courtoys to wit, stood forth, and spake.  
"I, too," quoth he : "complaint would make  
Of Reynard Fox, who all the store,  
Laid up against the winter frore,  
Stole from my garner, so that I  
Of hunger's pangs scarce failed to die  
Through his most base misdeed."

Hereat,

Sprang sharply forward Tybert Cat,  
Whose swelling tail bespoke his ire,  
While flashed his grey-green eyes with fire,  
As cried he : "Gracious Lord and King,  
'Tis doubtless true that men may bring,  
With justice, many a charge of crime  
Against the Fox, but ill doth chime  
This plaint of Courtoys in mine ears ;  
'Tis but a tale of long past years,  
And I, not he, have right to make

III. Courtoys'  
ill sort.

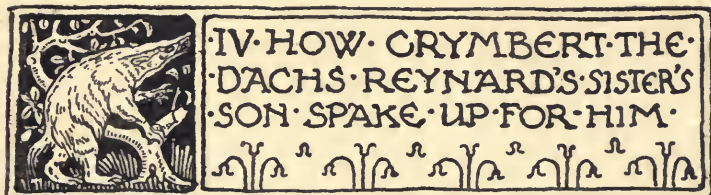
Complaint thereof ; the hound did take  
From me that sausage which by night  
I from the Miller won, despite  
His watchful care, while sound he slept.  
Courtoys in claiming it, outstept  
The bounds of truth ;—except through me  
He had therein no property.”

“ THOUGH Courtoys be to blame for this,”  
Exclaimed the Panther, “ strange it is  
That thou, O Tybert, shouldst appear  
To shelter Reynard, when 'tis clear,  
Past doubt or question, he hath been  
A thief and murderer ; well I ween  
That in this world no man doth live  
To whom he would in kindness give  
The meanest gift : nay, though the King  
Had direst need, no single thing  
This thief would do to help or save  
His life or worship ; but the grave  
Might o'er him close, without a sigh  
From Reynard, could he win thereby  
Some base advantage. List ye now  
The tale of Cuwaert Hare : a vow  
Did Reynard make that he would teach  
The guileless creature how to preach  
And say his *Credo*, so that he  
Might one day fill a chaplaincy.  
Betwixt his legs he made him sit,  
And *Credo, Credo* cry : as it  
Rose through the air I passed along,  
And wondering much to hear that song,  
Drew near the spot, and scarce need say  
That once again his wonted play  
The Fox enacted ; soon he ceased  
His task to teach the simple beast

How he should sing his *Credo* note,  
And grasped him tightly by the throat.  
Most haply, in the nick of time  
I came to save him, or the crime  
Had been fulfilled—behold! still fresh,  
The wound that scores his tender flesh.

“Great King it is for thee to stretch  
The hand of justice o’er this wretch,  
Lest you, and all your royal race,  
In shielding crime, should share disgrace.”

“Ye speak, Sir Panther, wholesome truth,”  
Cried Isegrym, “it were, forsooth,  
Idle to waste more words, this night  
I fain would see the gallows dight  
For Reynard, that his crimes surcease  
Might give the world new rest, and peace.”



U PROSE in haste then Grymbert Dachs,  
Exclaiming: “Sorely doth it tax  
Temper and patience thus to hear  
Foul charges made against my dear  
Good Uncle Reynard: dost thou deem  
That thou may’st slander thus mine Eme,  
O Isegrym, while silent I,  
His loving kinsman, stand anigh  
And nought reprove? That saw doth tell  
Good truth, which saith: ‘But rarely well  
Speaketh a foeman’s mouth’; right glad

IV. The  
Dachs  
explains.

Were I if trial could be had  
Betwixt ye twain : then should we see  
Which best deserved upon a tree  
To end his days. Stood Reynard near  
Our gracious Lord, and had his ear  
As thou hast had, then doubt I not  
The case were changed, for well I wot,  
Thy crimes made known, dismay would seize  
Thy dastard heart, and on thy knees  
Thou straight wouldst fall, and 'mercy' cry,  
Convict of lies, and treachery.  
How oft your sharp, white, grinning teeth  
With cruel grip have met beneath  
My dearest Uncle's russet fell,  
A busy tongue 'twould need to tell.  
But of more crimes than this I trow,  
Justice demands the Court should know  
The legend : did ye not misdo  
When Reynard flung the plaice to you  
From out the cart? Didst thou not eat  
His share, thou base-born hungry cheat,  
Leaving but prickly bone and gristle,  
Dry, hard, and tasteless as a thistle?  
Recall to mind that bacon fitch  
My Uncle stole, and ye so rich  
And dainty found, that all alone  
You gulped it down, nor left one bone  
To stay his hunger. Was it fair  
That, when he claimed a modest share,  
Ye laughing cried, with mocking scorn :  
'Nay, Reynard ! look not so forlorn,  
But if thou wilt, come take thy part  
From out my gullet ;' and did dart  
Therewith an angry murderous scowl,  
Set off with such a threatening growl,  
As well might scare him? And I deem



No scrap of that fair flitch my Eme  
E'er tasted, though at risk of life  
He gat it, when the farmer's wife  
A sack threw o'er him. Can ye trust  
One who hast proved himself unjust,  
Traucherous, and selfish past belief ;  
A rogue ingrained ; a common thief ?  
What trash this fable of the strife  
In days long past, about his wife !  
Reynard paid court to her, while she  
Received his love with courtesy ;  
And Isegrym in truth were wise,  
Such foolish scandal to despise,  
Instead of scattering far and wide  
A slanderous tale that well might bide  
Forgotten. Then of Cuwaert Hare,  
Good Heavens ! to think how great a scare  
Is raised, because an idle scholar  
Was gently shaken by the collar !  
Shall truants rest then, unreclaimed,  
Their faults excused, their masters blamed ?

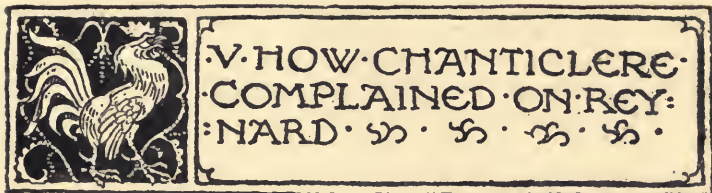
Courtoys has dared to make complaint,  
(As though he were himself a saint)  
That he some winter store hath lost,  
Laid up with special care and cost.  
Well had he done thereof to hold  
His peace, for, let the truth be told,  
He did but steal it—thus, pardee,  
*Male quesisti et male*  
*Perdidisti*, in English done :  
'Thou ill hast lost what ill was won'—  
Who blameth Reynard, for this deft  
And fair reprisal, made on theft ?  
His action simply was to levy  
Distrain in manner of replevy ;

IV. The  
Dachs  
explains.

A righteous deed. All those who know  
The law, right readily will trow  
My dearest Eme (as man of worth,  
Untainted honour, and high birth)  
Scorned stolen goods, nor had misdome  
To slay Courtoys outright—for none  
Thereof could blame him—but he knew  
Too well what high respect is due  
To legal form, and left the hound  
Unscathed, who well were hanged or drowned.  
Alas! What thanks, then, hath he gained?  
Nay, none; yet nobly hath disdained  
To answer slander, for a true  
And gentle heart is his. But few  
Hate falsehood like to him. He lives  
A saintly hermit life, and gives  
Heed to his priest's advice. No more  
He hunts and fishes as of yore,  
Nor taketh food but once a day,  
Vowing henceforth to put away  
From off his table all flesh meat.  
With strictest penance doth he treat  
His chastened body, and doth wear  
Against his flesh a shirt of hair.  
But yesterday I heard it said,  
By some who know him well, that dead  
He is to earthly joys. A cell  
He builds, as anchorite to dwell,  
Where once stood Castle Malperdy.  
For winning gold no longer he  
Hath lust, but cheerfully doth live  
On such poor alms as men may give  
To serve bare needs. He pale doth wax  
With fast and prayer, which sorely tax  
His strength, and humbly 'neath the sod  
Desires to rest, at peace with God."

As Grymbert boldly spake these words,  
 Broke on their view a troop of birds,  
 A-wending towards them down the hill ;  
 Chanticleere leads, while loud and shrill  
 Their wail of woe resounds ; a bier  
 Is seen—as slowly draw they near  
 The wondering Court—on which lies dead  
 A hen of fairest plume, whose head  
 The Fox hath bitten off. They sing  
 Sad funeral dirges, while they bring  
 Before the Court their deep distress,  
 And Reynard's untold gracelessness.

IV. The  
 Dachs  
 explains.



**T**HEN forth stood Chanticleere, and smote  
 Sadly his wings, the while his throat  
 Gave out a loud and piteous cry.  
 Beside the bier stood mournfully,  
 Two fair young hens, the sisters twain  
 Of her by ruthless Reynard slain,  
 This Crayant, and that Cantart, hight.  
 Each bare in hand a taper bright,  
 Of whitest wax. No finer hens,  
 Between fair Flanders and Ardennes,  
 E'er scratched or cackled. "Welaway!"  
 They cried, and "Ah! woe worth the day!"  
 Two plump-fed pullets bore the bier,  
 Who so bemoaned their mother dear  
 That far and wide their grief was heard:  
 And thus the sorrowful train appeared

V. The Cock  
laments. Before the King.

Then Chanticleere  
Exclaimed : " Great Lord, we pray thee hear  
What scathe thy loving friends, who stand  
Before thee, suffer at the hand  
Of Reynard Fox :

In April last,  
When spring o'er earth began to cast  
Her robe of green, I proudly walked  
Abroad, and with my children talked,  
Boasting the long drawn lineage we  
Could claim, and praised our ancestry.  
My noble brood I deemed unmatched,  
For never finer birds were hatched  
Than my fifteen ; dear daughters seven,  
As bright and fair as though from Heaven  
They claimed descent, and eight stout sons,  
Of blood as true as that which runs  
In royal veins. We safely dwelt  
Within a well-walled yard, and felt  
Secure, unharassed by a doubt  
Of prowling beasts of prey. Without  
Our high-walled yard there stood a shed  
Wherein six stalwart dogs were fed,  
Whose deep mouthed baying gave alarm,  
And thus, exempt from fear of harm,  
We lived content. Hereat so great  
The Fox's envy grew, and hate  
So deep and deadly filled his mind,  
That day and night he strove to find  
Some means whereby to scale the yard ;  
And though our vigilance debarred  
His schemes awhile, his soul became  
At last quite mad, and all aflame  
With hot desire ; but if anigh  
He came our trusty dogs would fly

So fiercely at him, that sweat broke  
From out his fell as thick as smoke.

“ No stomach had he more to climb  
Our wall, and quit were we long time  
Of Reynard's face, till clad in weed  
Of hermit coming : ‘ Prithee, read,’  
Quoth he, ‘ for love and charity,  
This letter,’ and displayed to me  
A scroll, which bore your royal crest  
And coat of arms in wax impressed.  
Therein 'twas written that the King  
Most earnestly desired to bring  
All birds and beasts, throughout the realm,  
Of which 'tis his to guide the helm,  
In sweet accord and loving peace.  
It bade all strife forthwith to cease,  
And said : ‘ let none henceforth scathe other  
But dwell as brother should with brother.’

The Fox declared that he no more  
In riot lived, as heretofore,  
Nor e'er again would rob and roister,  
But hermit-like, within a cloister,  
Would penance do for past misdeeds,  
With sighs and tears, and tell his beads  
Morn, noon, and night, for now he meant  
To pass as humble penitent  
His few remaining years. His gown,  
Made pilgrim fashion, fell adown  
Below his ankles, and he ware  
Beneath his robe, a shirt of hair,  
Rough, hard, and knotted. ‘ Now,’ quoth he  
‘ No more ye need have fear of me,  
Sir Chanticleere ; plain haws and hips  
Alone henceforth shall pass my lips,  
Varied, on feasts, by barley bread.

V. The Cock  
laments.

Already do I feel the thread  
Of life is worn, and near the goal  
My steps approach, therefore my soul  
I needs must think on, and but long  
To say sext, none, and evensong,  
And compline, lauds, and tierce, and prime,  
Day in, day out, and thus my time  
In pious works and prayers to spend,  
With hope to make a blessed end.'

"As thus he spake—and 'neath a thorn  
Lay down to rest—no child new-born  
Could seem more guileless. Then a book  
From out his vest he drew, with look  
So grave and studious, that I thought  
The way of holy life he sought  
Within its pages. Therefore, gay  
And blithe of heart, I went my way,  
And crowing, strolled without the wall  
In careless ease. My cheerful call  
Brought sons and daughters round in haste,  
And forth we strutted o'er the waste  
By fear unchecked.

List now the hate  
Of this false saint, and how, to sate  
His ravening maw, he broke the truce  
Thy law proclaimed. On some excuse  
He came abroad, and as we stept  
Across the green sward, slyly crept  
Behind a bush, and quickly snapped  
One of my children, which he clapped  
Within his wallet, and since then  
For cockerel, pullet, chick, or hen,  
He hourly watches; horns and hounds  
He scorns in suchwise, that no bounds  
His ravin knows. Erewhile, fifteen

Fair children knew me, now are seen  
To answer to my call, but four.  
Well may'st thou judge, great King, what sore,  
Keen sorrow racks my breast—see here  
My daughter Coppen on her bier,  
By Reynard slain but yesterday.  
For burial was she snatched away  
From out his clutches by our friends,  
The guardian dogs. Dear Lord, here ends  
My piteous tale; I leave to thee  
The Fox's doom and penalty.”

V. The Cock  
laments.





·VI·HOW·THE·KING·SPAKE·  
·TOUCHING·CHANTICLERE'S·  
·COMPLAINT· ♫ · ♫ · ♫ ·

BURST forth the King—whose wrath did wax  
Exceeding hot—"Sir Grymbert Dachs,  
What say ye now to this recluse,  
Your sainted Eme? A paltry ruse  
Appears this tale of fast and prayer,  
But hither shall the culprit fare,  
Ere twice the sun sinks 'neath the sea,  
To answer for his crime. Thy plea,  
Good Chanticlere, is witness strong  
Against the Fox, and thou ere long  
Shalt be avenged. The Church's rites  
Shall honour Coppen, and with lights  
And incense, shall be sadly sung  
Her vigil, while with pomp among  
Her kin, shall she be laid to earth."

Then hushed was every sound of mirth,  
While all in sad procession go,  
Singing *Placebo Domino*,  
With psalms, and versicles, and prayers,  
Thereto belonging. Pious cares  
Of vigil done, and commendation  
Said o'er, with funeral oration,  
The corse within the pit was laid.  
Above, a noble tomb was made  
Of purest marble, spotless white,  
Than glass more clear, than pearl more bright,  
And, deeply cut in during stone,



Her name and fate these words made known :

VI. The  
King's good  
word.

“Beneath the earth deep dolven, here  
Lies Coppen, child of Chanticlere :  
Reft of sweet life before her time  
Was she, by Reynard Fox's crime.  
Reader, not wasted were thy breath  
In one short sigh o'er her sad death.”

THE King then summoned round him wise  
And learned men, who should advise  
How past all doubt these murders might  
Be proved against the Fox, and Right  
Once more hold sway throughout the land.

Ere long went forth the royal command,  
That Reynard must appear before  
The Court in person, and no more,  
For cause or quip, should he refrain  
From coming thither, under pain  
Of hangman's rope.

Then Bruin Bear  
Was charged that he with wisest care  
Should do the message.

Quoth the King :  
“Sir Bruin, thine it is to bring  
The culprit hither, be thou steeled,  
Both ear and heart, against him : yield  
No trust or credence to his smiles,  
Sly, crafty speech, or flattering wiles :  
For doubt thou not that he will try  
On thee some scheme of treachery :  
Long have I known him for a shrew,  
Fairspoken, but of heart untrue.”

QUOTH Bruin : “Good, my Lord, let be,

VI. The  
King's good  
word.

Think you this thief deceiveth me?  
Or dost thou deem that I so ill  
Have learned my lesson, that the skill  
I lack to snare a Fox?"

So fared  
He forth with merry heart, prepared  
To brave the foe : assurance vain !  
Less joyous he returned amain.



VII · HOW · BRUIN · WAS ·  
SPED · OF · REYNARD · THE ·  
FOX ·

FORTH started Bruin on his way,  
Rejoicing, light of heart, and gay  
As bird in spring, and well assured  
That by no Fox could he be lured,  
To fault or folly, or could be  
O'ermatched in craft, and subtlety.  
The season was of opening June :  
The blackbird's note, the ringdove's croon,  
Sounded o'erhead, and far around  
Fair flowers bedecked each hedgerow mound,  
The hawthorn whitened every brake  
Wherefrom the winds sweet odour take,  
Ere pass they whispering through the sedge,  
Beside the brimming river's edge,  
Oft murmuring lovers' hopes and fears,  
As erst they told of Midas' ears.  
Hyacinth bells of purple deep,  
Awaked once more from winter sleep,  
And nature all, in wood and fell,  
For spring-tide's wake, kept festival.

Blind to the joys of waning spring,  
And deaf to birds' sweet carolling,  
Sped Bruin onward, till he stood  
Within a thick-grown darksome wood,  
Wherethrough a secret pathway went,  
Which Reynard oft-times took, when spent  
With close pursuit, and close anigh,  
A towering mountain rose, whose high  
Steep side he needs must climb, to go  
Towards Reynard's stronghold.

Ye must know

That many a dwelling had the Fox,  
But here, high up among the rocks,  
Was found the safest, and the best  
Of all his burrows : once at rest  
Within its well-built walls, he lay  
Secure and safe, when driven to bay.

NOW, when the Bear at last had come,  
Before the Fox's mountain home,  
Malperdy hight, he found the gate  
Fast shut, so on his tail he sate,  
In front thereof, and loudly cried :  
" Ho ! Reynard—be ye there inside  
Your castle wall ? Browning am I,  
Sent by the King, to notify  
His strict command, that forthwith ye  
Appear at Court to make your plea.  
He stoutly by his God hath sworn,  
That should you this his summons scorn,  
And dare refuse with me to go,  
To bide his dooming, and to show  
Him full submission, it shall cost  
You life and good, for either tost  
High on the gallows shall ye be,  
Or on the rack die wretchedly.

VII. The  
Bear's Intents.

Reynard, in time be wisely ruled  
By one who hath at Court been schooled  
In wit and wisdom : bow thine head  
Ere yet the hour of grace be sped."

Lay Reynard just inside the gate,  
Stretched forth at length. From tail to pate  
He sunned himself, with half shut eye,  
And dreamed of merry days gone by,  
When no one blamed his loselry.  
But when he heard the Bear begin  
This speech, at once he sought to win  
One of the cryptic spots, which he  
Had wrought in castle Malperdy.  
For this strong fortress, sooth to say,  
Had many a dark and hidden way,  
Narrow and crooked, short and long,  
Designed to make all those go wrong  
Who sought the Fox against his will :  
And, if some tracked his steps, he still  
Knew secret doors, where in and out,  
From hole to hole, he passed about  
With furtive steps, and stored his prey  
At night-time won, for feast by day.

THEN mused the Fox, how might he bring  
The Bear to grievous suffering  
And deep disgrace, the while he bode  
In worship, lightened of the load  
Of chastisement, his meed and due.

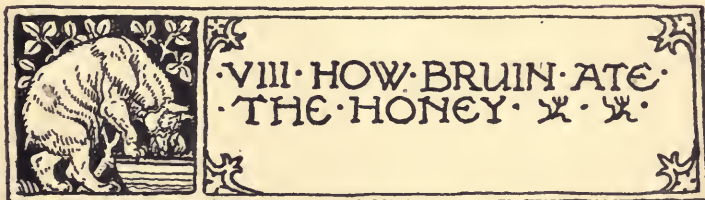
Having this worthy aim in view,  
He issued forth, and cried : " Dear Eme,  
Ye be right welcome ! if it seem  
That when ye called I tarried long,  
Believe me well, 'twas evensong

Held my attention at the time.  
But surely he who made one climb  
O'er this long hill, of your high rank,  
From me shall win but slender thank.  
The road is steep, and hot, and dreary,  
And grieves my heart to see thee weary,  
O'erworn, and faint, while sore doth reek  
With dust and sweat, thy honoured cheek :  
All needless too was this, for I  
Had come to Court, spontaneously,  
The morrow morn. But less I grieve,  
Seeing that now shall I receive  
Thy comfort, counsel, and support,  
To help my plea before the Court :  
Yet seems it strange the King assigned  
To you this office ; could he find  
No humbler messenger to send  
On such a duty ? Well 'tis kened  
Of all good men for true, that ye  
Rank next the King for family,  
Great wealth and lands. Ah ! well I would  
That in the Court e'en now we stood,  
As friends and brothers, side by side,  
But find it needful to abide  
At home to-day, through having fared  
On such rich meat, that if I dared  
To walk abroad, 'twere little wonder,  
Though that my belly burst asunder :  
The meat was new, and I for once,  
O'erstepped the bounds of temperance.  
Exclaimed the Bear : " Dear Nephew, say—  
What luscious food did Heaven purvey  
To give you such delight ? " " Dear Eme,"  
The Fox replied, " Small help I deem,  
'Twould be to thee, if I should tell  
The meat that savoureth me so well.

VII. The  
Bear's Intents.

It is forsooth but simple food,  
That suits the simple tastes of rude,  
Untutored country folk, who fain  
Must be to fill themselves with plain  
And homely viands : honeycombs  
I made repast on—in the homes  
Of poor and hungry men, such fare  
Is counted good.”

Cried out the Bear :  
“ Reynard ! so little set ye by  
Sweet honeycombs ? For my part I  
Esteem them foremost of all meat,  
Fragrant and luscious, soft and sweet,  
Past measure : help me to obtain  
Good store thereof, and ye shall gain  
My lasting friendship while I live :  
Prove only that thy hand can give  
Such food in plenteouswise to me,  
And count me thine eternally.”



QUOTH Reynard, seemingly agape,  
“ Dear Uncle, surely ye but jape ! ”  
Cried Bruin, with an oath : “ Nay, nay,  
My words are naught of game or play,  
But sober truth, no thing is this  
Whereof to jest or jape ywis.”

Then spake red Reynard : “ If it be  
Truth that ye love so heartily

Fair honeycombs, thou soon shalt hold  
A store of luscious, bee-wrought gold,  
In such great quantity that ten  
Or twelve grown bears might feast, and then  
A heap be left ; heaven grant that I  
Your friendly help may win thereby."  
"Nay ! dearest Nephew," quoth the Bear,  
"Such plenty scarce can be, for were  
Before me all that is for sale  
From here to far off Portingale,  
I, Bruin, all alone would eat,  
In one great feast, that dainty meat."

Quoth Reynard : " Eme, ye scarcely know  
What thing ye say, for I will show  
Thine eyes a farmstead, where doth dwell  
Lantfert, a husbandman, whose well  
Of honey ne'er was known to fail ;  
Nay, though ye drank it by the pail,  
'Twould not give out for seven long years."  
(Hereat the Bear pricked up his ears.)

" Now all this honey without end,  
Shalt thou possess, if thou befriend  
My cause at Court, and grant to me  
Thine aid to foil each enemy."

A solemn oath then Bruin swore,  
To be his nephew's friend before  
All other men, if so he might  
His belly fill, or day or night,  
With fragrant bee-borne honey. Laughed  
Thereat the shrew, with guileful craft,  
And said, " Yea ! soothly, would ye load  
Seven Hambro' barrels with that sweet food,  
Yet will I pledge me to obtain

VIII. The      Thy heart's desire, and make thee fain."  
Bear's reward. So well these words of Reynard pleased  
The Bear, that straightway was he seized  
With laughter, till he scarce could stand.  
Beside him sat the Fox with bland  
Deceitful smile, and thought: " Full soon,  
Friend Bruin, thou shalt laugh to tune."

Then cried he: " Now no longer may  
This matter tarry, let's away:  
'Tis meet I work for thy behoof,  
And put my friendship to the proof,  
Past doubt or question; thou shalt see  
That none can act more friendly.  
Of all my lineage lives not one,  
Except thine own dear self alone,  
For whom I thus would slave and swink."

" Thanks! thanks!" the Bear cried, " but I think  
'Tis time we sped—we tarry long."

" Dear Eme," quoth Reynard, " with a strong  
Quick pace step forward; follow me,  
Thou, ere one hour goes by, shalt see  
More honey than thou well canst bear."

The sly Fox bode the evil fare  
His foe should find, but that he meant  
A gibe, the Bear saw not, but went  
With willing steps toward Lantfert's yard.

NOW this same Lantfert laboured hard  
At woodman's work, and many an oak  
And elm he felled with sturdy stroke,  
And drew them homewards, to abide



His craftsman's work in wintertide.  
Within the yard it happed there lay  
A forest king, brought yesterday  
From out the wood, wherein he drove  
Great wedges, which wide open clove  
The massive trunk. Hereof was glad  
The wily Fox, for thus he had  
A ready snare to hand. Quoth he,  
"Dear friend, behold this cloven tree  
Whose hollowed body doth contain  
Unmeasured honey, which to gain,  
You need but place your nose between  
This open space, and soon I ween  
Will have thy fill : but prithee eat  
In sparing wise of this choice meat,  
For though the honeycombs be good,  
It yet were well ye understood  
The need for prudence, lest ye take  
Some hurt of body. For my sake  
I prithee have a care, lest blame  
Fell on my head if evil came  
To thee, my friend and guest."

"Nay, nay!"

Cried Bruin, "haste to put away  
Such thought, dear Reynard ; dost thou ween  
That I, sage Bruin, would be seen  
To act a fool's part ? moderation  
Incumbent is on men of station."  
Reynard replied : "Sound, wholesome truth  
Thy speech betokeneth well forsooth :  
Approach the tree's end now, and creep  
Within the cleft."

With lumbering leap  
The Bear trod toward the oak in haste,  
O'erjoyed to think he soon should taste  
The longed-for good ; his pointed nose

VIII. The Bear's reward. Down thrust he, and his forefeet toes  
Set well within the open space ;  
Forthwith leapt Reynard toward the place  
With lightning speed, and deftly twitched  
The wedges forth :—as if bewitched,  
The oak sprang to, and held the Bear  
With iron grip.

He well may spare  
To flatter, threaten, coax, or chide,  
Fast in the tree-trap must he bide,  
Imprisoned by the base deceit  
Of Reynard Fox ; for head nor feet,  
No craft or might, can freedom gain.  
The foe, of Bruin's misery fain,  
With light foot, gained a branching tree  
And thence, clear-voiced, sang merrily :

“WHENE’ER you go a Fox to trap,  
Bruin ! Bruin !  
Beware lest you by sad mishap  
Catch ruin ! ruin !  
’Twould seem the Fox has been your match,  
Bruin ! Bruin !  
And set a new-found trap to catch  
You in ! You in !  
No more wilt thou the Fox betray  
To ruin ! ruin !  
Farewell, then, till another day,  
Dear Bruin ! Bruin !”

The trapped, befooled, outwitted Bear,  
Rends the soft drowsy summer air  
With dismal howls. He strives to use  
His sturdy sinews and strong thews  
With such effect as might release  
His paws and head, nor doth he cease

To strike the ground with savage beat  
Of hinder paws, but both fore-feet,  
And head, and ears, are fixed as fast  
As though froze winter's fettering blast  
Held them ice-bound with iron hand.  
Finding force vain, he next with bland  
And friendly words essays to coax  
His wily foe. Quoth he: "A hoax,  
Dear Reynard, surely ye but play  
In merry sport; without delay  
Thrust in the wedge, and once more free,  
Such friendship will I show to thee,  
That next beside the King shalt thou  
Hold rule, and every beast shall bow  
To thy behest."

Loud Reynard laughed,  
Rejoiced to see his wiles and craft  
Had so far triumphed; then quoth he,  
In cruel jest, "It gladdens me  
That thou shouldst in that honey find  
A banquet suited to thy mind:  
But, prithee, Bruin, have a care,  
How ye enjoy that luscious fare,  
Lest while ye wallow in its wealth  
Delight should prove the bane of health,  
And sickness follow in such sort  
That thou shouldst be debarred from Court.  
If I mistake not, on the brink  
Of greater joys ye stand; some drink  
Thou surely needest, and I see  
Good Lantfert coming, doubtless he  
A cool draught brings to quench thy thirst;  
I trust that he will kindly first  
Use well the goodly oaken stick  
He bears to push well down the thick  
And clammy sweetness, which I fear

VIII. The  
Bear's reward.

Gives thee misease. No longer here  
My goodwill towards thee bids me stay,  
But trust thou mayst a pleasant day  
With Lantfert spend."

Then cheerily  
He trotted off towards Malperdy.

When Lantfert, hard at work indoors,  
Caught sound of Bruin's howls and roars,  
With haste he seized a stout oak stick  
Shod with an iron point, and quick  
As lightning ran whence came the din.  
Soon as he spied the Bear, "A gryn  
Of newest kind," he cried, "is this  
Wherein to catch a bear ywis!"  
He first with all his might belabours  
The helpless beast, and then his neighbours  
From round about he runs to call,  
With shouts that Bruin's heart appal,  
Of, "Hi! run quick, I've caught a bear,  
Speed! speed! good friends, the sport to share!"

THROUGHOUT the thorp the tidings rang  
Like tocsin call, and each man sprang  
To win some weapon; carls and wives  
Rushed forth, as though their very lives  
Hung on the race: Hal seized a stake  
From out the hedge, while Hob a rake  
Laid hurried hand on; Giles a broom  
Snatched up to help on Bruin's doom;  
The priest unto the winds did toss  
His book, and seized his long staff-cross,  
While quickly followed in his trail,  
The clerk, with heavy threshing flail.  
Distaff in hand, the priest's wife ran  
To watch the sport the while she span:  
Young girls, just turning life's first page,

And beldames, who in toothless age  
Spelt finis, all would join the fray,  
The Bear to bait, tease, maim, or slay :  
Against him now is each man's hand  
And, friendless, he the brunt must stand.

When Bruin heard the murderous shout  
That rose from all this rabble rout,  
With mighty wrestling did he strain  
Freedom of head and limbs to gain.  
His fore-feet freed with one great wrench  
From out the knotted oak's firm clench,  
He heeded little that his paws  
Were spoiled of those defensive claws  
That erst had armed them : then one more  
Wild, frantic effort, and he tore  
His head from out the cleft ; alack !  
With loss of ears ! started aback  
In panic fear the unhappy beast,  
When forthwith Lantfert and the priest  
Rushed on him, and from out the folk  
A fearful storm of blows thick broke  
O'er head and limbs, till death's dread fear  
Sickened his brain, as far and near  
Fresh foes come hastening, from whose eyes  
Gleam glances, murderous as their cries.  
Dickon the ploughman left his tillage  
And, shouting, ran adown the village,  
Coulter in hand : from forth his smithy  
Rushed Gervase, snatching from the stithy  
A red hot iron ; Wat the baker  
Left loaves to burn ; the deaf shoemaker,  
Seeing all run, threw down his last,  
And hurried forth, his apron cast  
Out on the road ; with clumsy gait  
Hastes halting Hugelyn, while his mate,

VIII. The  
Bear's reward.

Old Ludolf, long and broad of nose,  
Runs panting, lest the sport should close  
Ere he arrives ; with reaping hook  
Long fingered Bertolt comes ; a crook  
Tall Ottram brings, wherewith to smite  
The helpless victim ; strange delight  
Find Batkyn and Ave Abelquack,  
And old dame Bave, becrooked of back,  
And every soul from out each cot—  
Young, old, hale, sick, it mattered not,  
Each time that they a blow can add,  
To wound the Bear and drive him mad.  
That fellow feeling held their mind  
Was clear, but surely wondrous kind  
It made them not, for never yell,  
More fearful, burst from fiends of hell,  
Than out the stormy crowd arose  
Of Bruin's fell bloodthirsting foes.

Once more the Priest led on the fray,  
And with his staff-cross made dread play,  
While from his heavy threshing flail,  
The clerk rained blows like April hail ;  
Tall Ottram with his shepherd's crook  
Seized the beleaguered beast, who quook  
With mortal fear. While Bertolt fast,  
Firmhanded, held him, Ludolf cast  
A well-aimed spear, whose keen steel point  
Found home beneath the shoulder joint.

The victim quivered, groaned, and sighed,  
But whatsoe'er of ill betide  
Must needs endure. Of all his foes  
Stout Lantfert fiercest proved, and rose  
His voice o'er all the rout. Then sprang  
His brother forth, and wildly flang  
His staff athwart sad Bruin's eyes,

Blinding and maddening in such wise  
The wretched creature, that a rush  
At random made he through a bush  
That grew beside the stream ; there stood  
A heap of wives, and in the flood  
He drave them toppling off the steep  
High bank, within the rolling deep.  
Foremost of all, the parson's wife  
Was seen to struggle for her life  
Within the gurgling tide, and when  
Her spouse espied her, quickly then  
He lost all lust to bait the Bear,  
And cried : " Friends ! friends ! behold ye where  
Within the stream my wife is thrown,  
And 'neath its wave is like to drown :  
O help her ! save her ! if ye may,  
And henceforth shall ye from this day  
Have full forgiveness, and release  
Of all your sins, and Heaven's sweet peace  
Bedew your souls." Ye well may wot  
That all the crowd at once forgot  
The hunting of the struggling beast,  
And sought alone to serve their priest.

WHEN Bruin saw that every wight  
Forsook his baiting, and the plight  
Alone regarded of the wives,  
Who strove and struggled for their lives  
Like drowning sheep, he too leapt in  
And strongly swam, with hope to win  
His life and freedom : then with shout  
And frantic yell, the priest cried out :  
" Come back, false thief, come back, I say."  
The Bear swam on, and cried " Nay ! nay !  
Call as ye will, I come not back,  
Still sounds within mine ears the crack

VIII. The  
Bear's reward.

Of stones and staves, and mighty fain  
Of freedom am I once again."  
Most heartily the honey tree  
He banned, and cursed the Fox that he  
Had so betrayed him that he crept  
Fool-like therein, then wildly wept,  
Lamenting loss of ears and hood.  
Thus grieving, drave he down the flood  
A mile or more, then lastly waxed  
Awearry, and his strokes relaxed,  
Made for the bank and came aland,  
His limbs so bruised, he scarce could stand,  
But length-long stretched, lay still, and groaned,  
And sighed, and bitterly bemoaned  
His wretched fate, his breath came quick,  
Red blood suffused his eyes, and sick  
He felt in head and limb, and cried  
As one who recked not though he died.

HEARKEN what next the Fox hath done :  
From out of Lantfert's yard hath won  
His thievish hand, a well fed hen,  
And in his wallet laid her, then  
A by-track took he, that he weened  
Was known to him alone, well screened  
With thickset hedges ; as along  
This path he trod a merry song  
He tuned, and scarcely could contain  
His joy, so blithe of heart and fain  
He felt in deeming Bruin dead ;  
And cried : " Now have I right well sped,  
For he who most opposed and let  
My work at Court, is killed, and yet  
Wotteth no man the deed was mine,  
And therefore doth my heart incline  
To merriment." As he spoke these words,



His eyes the Fox cast riverwards,  
And spied where Bruin lay at rest.

VIII. The  
Bear's reward.

Then straightway was his heart oppressed  
With grief far greater than before  
His joy had been. Vexation tore  
His soul, and angrily he chid  
At Lantfert, who he deemed had rid  
The earth of Bruin :

“ Ah ! lewd fool ! ”

He cried, “ thou hast not in the school  
Of wisdom learned. God give to thee  
A shameful death, who could not see  
The chance thou hadst, but fool-like lost,  
Of good bear-venison free of cost,  
Unsought, yet placed within thine hand.”  
Thus chiding came he to a stand  
Near where the wounded Bear lay : bled  
The poor sick beast from ears and head,  
And whom but Reynard might he thank ?  
Then standing near him on the bank  
Loud spake the Fox, in cruel scorn :  
“ Dear priest, God give you a good morn.”

Within himself the victim cried  
“ Ah ! ribald thief ! would thou hadst died,  
Ere thou cam'st hither.” Reynard said :  
“ Forgat ye, when in haste ye sped  
From Lantfert's yard, ye had not paid  
For that rich honey which ye made  
So free to feast on ? Grievous shame  
Such conduct were, and worthy blame  
Of all good men. Wilt thou that I  
Requite the owner honestly  
On thy behalf ? Pray found ye nice  
And good that honey ? Did the price

VIII. The  
Bear's reward.

Well suit your purse? Desire ye more  
From that exhaustless honey store?  
And, dearest Eme, ere hence I go  
Indulge my ardent wish to know  
What holy order 'tis doth claim  
Thy sacred vows? Some house of fame  
Dost rule, as Abbot? Have the shears,  
Which gave ye tonsure, nipped your ears?  
The holy hood which hides your head  
Seems, like your gloves, of deep blood-red.  
Well fitted art thou, as I ween,  
Within the choir to sing Compline."

The Bear with wrathful sorrow heard  
These flouting gibes, yet not one word  
Of answer deigned, whereas he saw  
As yet no means whereby to draw  
A worthy vengeance on his foe.  
Slowly he turned his face to go  
His homeward road, and then the tide  
Once more he sought, and soon that side  
Where lay the Court, with swimming, wan.  
Alas! what troublous thoughts began  
Now to assail him; much he fears  
That when men note his loss of ears,  
His wretched state will prove but sport  
To those, who love him not, at Court.  
His foremost paws are reft of skin,  
And much he doubts his power to win  
His goal on foot, yet needs he must,  
And sitting upright, through the dust  
And mire he strove, and thus progressed  
A mile or twain, though sore distressed,  
Rolling and wentling as he might.  
When first from far he hove in sight,  
Much wondered those who saw him, who

Could be this uncouth beast ; none knew  
The late proud envoy, till the King,  
Foremost in this, as everything,  
Exclaimed : " Lord God ! is this the Bear  
Who in such sorry plight doth fare  
Again to Court ? where then hath he  
Been thus entreated shamefully ?  
Both ears he lacks, and o'er his head  
Where skin late was, is he bebled ;  
With what wild set can he have been ? "  
Therewith the Bear cried out : " I ween  
That never since this world was made  
Hath Bear more basely been betrayed."



· IX · THE · COMPLAINT ·  
· OF · THE · BEAR · UPON ·  
· THE · FOX ·    ♪ · ♪ · ♪ ·

**T**HEN through the beasts who stood in ring,  
Stepped Bruin forth, and said : " O King,  
To thee with earnest voice I cry  
For vengeance on the perfidy  
Of Reynard Fox : behold, I pray,  
How handled have I been this day,  
By base device, while thee I served,  
My body torn, my frame unnerved ;  
My foremost feet bereft of claws,  
My ears shorn off, and both my jaws  
All skinless made."

" Say then how durst,"  
Exclaimed the King, " this beast accurst  
Such crime commit ? Now by my crown  
I swear, that ere two suns go down

IX. The Bear's ill tale. Such vengeance on his head shall fall  
As Fox ne'er suffered."

Then for all  
The wisest beasts he sent, and sought  
Advice how justice might be wrought  
On Reynard Fox for this great wrong :  
And all the council, old and young,  
Concluded well it were that he  
Were once again dayed instantly  
Before the assembly, to abide  
Full judgment. Then all voices cried,  
"Our will it is that Tybert Cat  
Should serve the summons ; Bruin gat,  
'Tis true, sore handling, far more fit  
To match the Fox is Tybert's wit  
Than mere brute force."

The King, with grave  
And solemn nod, approval gave,  
And said no choice could better be  
In such extreme emergency.



·X·HOW·THE·KING·SENT·  
·TYBERT·THE·CAT·TO·THE·  
·FOX·&·HOW·HE·SPED·THERE·  
·IN·

**T**HEN spake the King : " Sir Tybert, thou  
Shalt seek out Reynard, as it now  
Hath been decreed, and shortly say  
That yet a second time hath day  
Been set whereon to bring his plea  
Before the Court. Although he be  
Right fell to other beasts, full trust  
He hath in thee, and surely must

Give heed to all that ye advise.  
But should he as a fool despise  
Thy friendly counsel, say thou then  
The King, advised by wisest men,  
The third dread warning will declare,  
And day him lastly.—Should he dare  
Refuse to come e'en then, we will  
No longer scruple to fulfil  
Stern duty, but hot wrath will deal,  
That knows nor mercy nor appeal,  
And fire and sword shall ruthless rage  
O'er all the Fox-born lineage.”  
Spake Tybert then : “ Dear Lord and King,  
The men who counsel thee this thing  
Are not my friends : what can I do  
To hale the Fox? Great King, with true  
And earnest heart I humbly call  
On thee to send some other ; small  
And feeble am I—if the Bear,  
Stout, bold, and strong, did evil fare,  
And fail to bring him, little hope  
Have I with such rude beast to cope.”

X. Tybert's  
hard days.

“ Nay, nay,” the King said, “ Tybert, ye  
Are wise and learned, though ye be  
Not big, and oftentimes good craft  
With better aim may speed a shaft  
Than mightiest strength.”

The Cat replied :

“ Dear Lord, thy will must I abide,  
And shoulder set to do this work :  
God give me grace, that though it irk  
My heart right sorely, yet I may  
Achieve the mission.”

Soon the way  
Took Tybert towards Malperdy's height,

Tybert's  
hard days.

And straightway hove within his sight  
Saint Martin's bird—he quickly kens  
The fowl of omen, bane of hens—  
And cries aloud : “ Hail, gentle bird,  
Since thou thy wings turn hitherward,  
Oh! fly the dexter side for luck,  
Therefrom may I advantage pluck.”  
Alas! towards the left side flew  
The bird, and sadly Tybert knew  
Presage of harm : if towards the right  
The fowl had flown, all gay and light  
The Cat had journeyed, now with sorrow  
He wended, fearing lest the morrow  
Should bring mishap, yet ne'ertheless  
He strove his failing heart to dress  
In pleasant hope, as men oft do  
Though boding fear their hearts imbue.

Malperdywards then Tybert ran,  
And, when the Fox's house he wan,  
Found Reynard standing at the gate.  
“ The rich God's blessing on you wait,”  
Quoth Tybert : “ from the King I come,  
Whose menace threats your life and home,  
Unless ye wend with me to Court.”

Replied the Fox : “ May every sort  
Of luck and blessing be thy lot,  
Dear Tybert.” Thoroughly did he wot  
That fairest words are small of cost ;  
Yet while he spake his heart was crost  
With evil schemes. “ This night,” said he,  
“ As guest shalt thou abide with me  
And share my homely frugal cheer :  
Soon as we see white dawn appear,  
Together Courtwards will we hie.

Dear Cousin, speak I truthfully,  
Affirming that of all my kin  
I love thee best, and hope to win  
Thy fond regard. But yesterday  
Came Bruin hither ; sooth to say,  
I like him not, he looked so shrewd,  
Of haughty mien, of manners rude,  
Of voice so loud, of form so strong ;  
And when he claimed that I along  
With him should fare, I said him nay :  
Though poor, much liefer would I pay  
A thousand marks than with him fare.  
But, Cousin, joy 'twill be to share  
The road with thee, so soon as dawn  
Doth drive drear night from wood and lawn."

Exclaimed the Cat : " What needs delay ?  
The waxing moon mocks waning day,  
And true delight it were together  
To fare in this sweet summer weather."

" Dear Cousin," quoth the Fox, " by night  
Forego we many a pleasant sight,  
The while, in open, cheerful day,  
Good hap find wenders by the way,  
When dark suspicion doth betide  
Night-faring folk, therefore abide  
Within my house."

" What sort of meat,"  
Quoth Tybert, " have ye then to eat,  
Should I make stay ?"

" For wholesome food,"  
Quoth Reynard, " lack we not, with good  
Sweet honeycomb—will that suffice ?"

Said Tybert : " Have ye then no mice ?"

X. Tybert's  
hard days.

By honeycomb I set small store,  
And though some folk esteem it more  
Than aught, I far prefer a mouse,  
Beyond all else the wealthiest house  
Can furnish."

"Say ye so indeed,  
Dear Tyb? thou then on mouse shalt feed  
In royal wise: a priest hard by  
Doth live, within whose barn there lie  
Such heaps that, thereto were he fain,  
A man with mice might fill a wain.  
I, many a time, have heard this priest  
Bemoan the harm they do; a feast  
Thou well may'st make there."

"Say ye so?"

Exclaimed the Cat: "pray let us go  
Thither at once, and I am thine."

Quoth Reynard: "Doth your heart incline  
Thereto so greatly, that above  
All else beside, fat mice ye love?"

"If mice I love!" the Cat exclaimed:  
"Yea! than all delicacies famed  
For savour—venison, flavmes, or pasty—  
I find fat mice more sweet and tasty;  
Lead on to where fat mice abound,  
And for all time shall I be found  
Thy firmest friend:—though thou hadst slain  
My sire and mother, and shouldst stain  
Thy hands with blood of all my kin,  
Such rare mouse feast my heart should win."

SAID Reynard: "Ye but mock and jape  
Therewith."

The Cat said: "I but shape



My tongue to truth, so help me God !”  
Said Reynard, with a gentle nod  
Of seeming doubt, “ If so I wist,  
It then should fall that, an ye list,  
Of mice ye might in truth be full.”

“ Full !” cried the Cat : “ therein ye pull  
A long-bow shot ; that scarce could be.”  
“ Ye jape,” quoth Reynard.

“ Nay,” quoth he :

“ A fat mouse liefer would I hold,  
Than noble, coined of finest gold.”

“ Forth fare we then,” cried out the Fox,  
“ And ere once more the chiming clocks  
With merry peal give out the hour,  
Mice, thick as raindrops in a shower,  
Shalt thou behold.”

“ Right well I know  
’Neath thy safe conduct may I go,”  
The Cat said, “ to Montpelier hence.”

“ Now speak’st thou like a cat of sense,”  
The Fox replied, “ but why delay ?  
Too long we tarry.”

Then away  
They fared, till near the barn they stood,  
Well built, and walled about with mud.  
Now so it happed, that through a hole  
Worked in the wall, the Fox oft stole  
A fatted hen, and yet one more  
Had snatched thereout the night before.  
The priest had noted this, and set  
A gryn with running noose, to let  
The prowling beast from further theft ;  
This Reynard saw, and planned a deft  
And cunning trick, his foe to trap.

X. Tybert's  
hard days.

So said, "Dear Tybert, lucky hap  
Hath left a hole through which to creep  
Within the barn, and there a heap  
Of mice awaits thee, hark! how shrill  
Their piping sounds—enjoy thy fill—  
In then! while I abide thee here.  
Nay, wherefore lingerest thou? doth fear  
Withhold thy steps? My heart doth burn  
With earnest longing to return  
To Ermelyne, whose smiles await  
Our coming, why dost hesitate?"

Quoth Tybert: "Is it then your rede,  
Dear friend, with fearless foot to speed  
Within this hole? These priests be oft  
Most wily shrews, for all their soft  
Fair glozing speech—I dread some harm."

"Oho! Dear Tybert, doth alarm  
Pervade thy breast?" false Reynard cried:  
"Dost fear that evil can betide  
While I stand near? What aileth thee?"  
The Cat, ashamed, sprang hastily  
Within the hole—the cruel gryn  
Flew home with sharp and sudden spin,  
And caught him, as though swung from bough  
With cord around the throat. Ah! now  
Hath Reynard foully snared his guest:  
Oh! treacherous host! Oh! Cat unblest.

In vain attempted he to spring  
From out the hole, the tightening string  
Held fast his neck. False Reynard saw  
His dupe's distress, and heard him wraw  
And shriek with pain, the while, above,  
He laughing stood, and cried: "D'ye love  
Fat mice, dear Tybert? are they good?"

Knew Martinet hereof, he would,  
I make no doubt, with pleasure bring  
Thee savoury sauce. How sweet ye sing  
The while ye dine! Is that I pray  
The custom used at Court to-day?  
Lord God! If Isegrym did share  
This feast with thee, I then should bear  
A heart as light as bird in May."

When nought availed to break away  
The cord which held him, Tybert mowed  
And galped so hideously and loud,  
That out his bed sprang Martinet,  
And cried: "Thank God! the gryn I set  
Hath caught the thief that stole our hens,  
And scared the sheep from out their pens.  
Arouse ye all to deal him due  
And fit reward! Haste, all of you!  
Shake off dull slumber and awaken!  
Up! Up! The villain Fox is taken!"

The priest, barefoot, ran through the dirt,  
All mother-naked but for shirt,  
And Julock called, his wife, to light  
An offering candle. Quickly dight  
Young Martinet a heavy stake,  
And dealt such strokes as well might break  
The prisoner's bones, and tore his eye  
From out the socket.

"Thou shalt die,"  
Roared forth the priest, and drave a blow  
Which missed its aim, or else allow  
The Cat had lain.

"Nay, then my life  
Shall dear be bought," above the strife  
Shrieked Tybert, as the parson's calf  
He seized and wellnigh bit in half.

X. Tybert's  
hard days.

"Harrowe!" yelled out the priest. "I'm dead."  
And fainting, kissed the ground, and bled  
In such full tide, that well 'twould seem  
His spirit drank drear Lethe's stream.

Hereat in wild despair his wife  
Screamed, "Help! Oh! help! my love, my life,  
Awake! look up! awake, I say,  
Ah me! alack and well-a-day!  
Accursèd be the hand which set  
This hideous trap, through which hath met  
My dearest man such evil fate!  
What though the Fox should extirpate  
All fowls that flock the teeming earth!  
Shall wretched birds be counted worth  
My husband's life?"

The while that she  
Thus raved, the Fox with ill-timed glee  
Stood by, and watched her wild affright,  
And then with mocking words made light  
Of her distress.

"Dame Julock, now,"  
Cried he, "'twere surely well to bow  
Your head in thankful resignation  
To Heaven's good will, a dispensation  
Of mercy can it fail to be,  
If thy dear man, from earth set free,  
Attains the heavenly mansions blest?  
There shall he find sweet peace and rest  
From thy sharp tongue. He loved to preach,  
Each week, what joy 'twould be to reach  
The home of saints. Nay, dry thy tears,  
And let sweet hope assuage thy fears:  
Though thou be widowed, yet thou may'st  
Ere long the joys of wedlock taste  
Once more, if fortune send some fool,

Unware how oft the cucking-stool  
Had charge of thee for thy sharp tongue  
In days gone by."

Then gaily sung  
The Fox for joy—and cried : " Good-day !  
Time wears, and I must needs away."

THUS, Bruin, priest, and Tybert marred,  
He blithely hied him burrowward.

Now hearken how the Cat escaped  
The jaws of death.

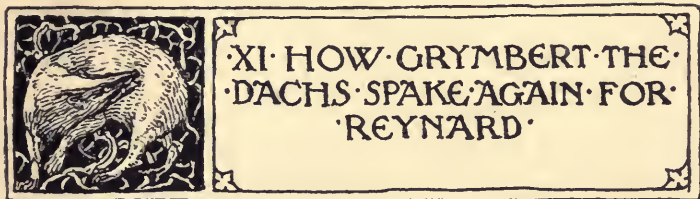
While all folk shaped  
Their hands to tend the wounded priest,  
They clean forgot the struggling beast,  
Who ceased thereon to yell and wraw,  
And plied his unspent strength to gnaw  
And bite apart the cruel gryn  
That wrung his neck, and thus to win  
Sweet freedom—this achieved, he ran  
With foot as swift as erewhile Pan  
Pursued fair Syrinx ; till at last,  
His strength foredone, his breath o'erpast,  
His wounds grown stiff, all worn and spent,  
With limp and stumble, forward went,  
Through darksome hours, the weary wight,  
Till morning waxed from grey to white  
Above the hills, and lastly came  
Before the Court, so bowed with shame,  
And bent with grief, as must betray  
To all men's eyes that he the play  
Had been of adverse Fortune. Nought  
He spake his woe, but humbly sought  
Before the throne to lay his grief.

EXCLAIMED the King : " Hath then this thief

X. Tybert's  
hard days.

And traitor once again defied  
Our high command, and dared deride  
Our envoy? Then by Heaven I swear  
My hand no longer shall forbear  
To crush this scorner of all right  
And justice."

Quickly bid he dight  
A solemn council, formed of wise  
And learned men, who might advise  
Some means whereby the Fox should be  
O'ermastered in his subtlety,  
And brought before the Court to make  
Submission, or the upshot take.



**W**HILE Reynard's friends rejoiced, his foes  
Wondered, when Grymbert Dachs arose  
(The Fox's sister's son) and said :  
" Dear Lord, though twice had trespassèd  
My Eme, beyond what he hath done,  
We have by no means yet o'ergone  
The remedies that may be used  
To bring him here. He hath refused  
Thy summons twice, now let him be  
A third time summoned, as a free,  
Unhindered man. And if again  
He scorn your bidding, quick must rain  
Death and destruction on his head."

" Say, then, who think ye would be sped

On such an errand," quoth the King,  
"And risk eyes, ears, and life to bring  
So fell a beast to bay? Not one,  
I trow, of all who live would own  
Himself so lightly for a fool."

Quoth Grymbert Dachs: "Beneath thy rule,  
So help me God! lives one who dare  
This stigma brave. I forth will fare  
In person, at thy word, to try  
My skill in this emergency."

"Go forth, Sir Grymbert, but see well,"  
The King replied, "that thou a fell  
And subtle beast must deal with: ware  
Ye need to be, lest he some snare  
Or pitfall shapeth."

"Rest content,"

Quoth Grymbert, as he gaily went  
His way, "that thou ere long shalt see  
The Fox fall low on bended knee."

With nimble foot, and cheerful heart,  
Malperdyward doth Grymbert start;  
And thither come the Fox he found  
At home, and littered on the ground  
In darksome corner, Ermelyne  
Lay with her whelps.

"Right well beseen

Ye be, dear Uncle, and fair Aunt,"  
Quoth Grymbert, "nought could more enchant  
Mine eyes than thus to find ye well,  
But dearest Eme, plain truth to tell,  
Great hurt your absence from the Court  
Is like to cause ye: ill report  
Men spread about thy life, and good  
It were no longer ye withstood

XI. Dachs'  
redes avail.

The King's command. Come, then, with me—  
For, should ye still withhold, 'twill be  
An evil case. 'Tis now the third  
And latest warning that my word  
Affords thee: plain unvarnished truth  
Is this advice, and if forsooth  
Ye dare neglect it, and abide  
Till falls the morrow's eventide,  
No wit can then avail to save  
Or thee or thine, but thou must brave  
Within three days a siege about  
Thine house and home. The King with rout  
Of armed men, will 'fore it set  
A rack and gallows; what shall let  
Thee then from death? List all I say  
For gospel truth, or on that day  
Nor thou, nor wife, nor child shall 'scape  
The grave, which open-mouthed doth gape  
For all your lives. 'Tis therefore best  
Ye Courtwards wend with me, and rest  
Assured that there shall well avail  
Thy subtle counsel: stranger tale  
Hath oft been heard, than that thou quit  
May'st go of all complaints, and sit  
In honour o'er the heads of those  
Ill beasts who boast themselves thy foes.  
Yea! many a time hast thou, ywis,  
Run much more dangerous risks than this."

THE Fox replied: "Good sooth ye say,  
Dear neighbour Grymbert, straightaway  
'Twere well to wend with you, e'en now,  
To face the Court, whereat I trow  
My subtle counsel sorely lacks.  
Once there, perchance the King may wax  
Kind, good, and merciful to me,



Can I but gain impartially  
His ear to weigh what I have done.  
Methinks, though my misdeeds had run  
Much greater lengths, yet scarce could stand  
The realm without me. 'Tis my hand  
Hath ordered all things, and the King  
Well knows my wit o'ermastering.  
Though some right fell to meward be,  
Yet, King and Lords, note carefully  
My sage advice. When all are blind,  
To Reynard must they turn to find  
True words of wisdom ; ever best  
His craft and cunning stand confessed.  
Some cruel men with mind accurst,  
Have sworn against my life the worst  
That lieth in them—that I own  
Hath ofttimes o'er my spirit thrown  
A pall of sadness—many may  
One friendless man to death betray.  
Yet, nathless, were it well to go  
With thee, dear friend, each bitter foe  
To face and answer, than to set  
At venture all our lives, and let  
Them thus be lost. Now forth we fare  
To meet my fate : right well aware  
And conscious am I of the might  
The King doth wield, and whatso right  
And just he counts, that thing must I  
Accept and bear with, patiently."

With tenderest voice, to Ermelyne  
He said : " Dear dame, on thee I lean  
To act as faithful prop and stay  
Of this dear home, while far away  
My duty calls me. Special care  
Give thou to both our sons, and rare

XI. Dachs'  
redes avail.

Shall be thy recompense ; first see  
Thou well to Reynkyn, who shall be  
My second self : dear Rosel's skill  
In theft hath promise, and he will  
In time, I trust, become a thief  
Of great renown : past all belief  
I love my children, and if God  
Should give me grace to 'scape the rod  
That threatens my life, and once again  
To reach my home, ah ! then with fain  
And grateful heart shall I to you  
Give loving thanks :—dear heart, adieu.”  
He turned and took the Courtward road.

Ah ! God ! how sorrowful abode  
Lone Ermelyne then beside her small  
Disfathered whelps, for he who all  
The house provided, now was gone,  
And she left helpless and alone,  
Bereft of him who was to her  
Protector, spouse, and victualler.



XII · HOW · REYNARD · WAS ·  
SHRIVEN · ON · HIS · WAY ·  
TO · THE · COURT ·

THE twain had fared but little while  
When Reynard said : “ I feel how vile  
My sins have been, and surely know  
That now in jeopardy I go  
To lose my life. I sore repent  
The unholy way in which I've spent  
So many years : no priest is here

To give me shriving, therefore, dear  
And worthy Nephew, unto thee  
Will I confess me—contritely ;  
Assured I feel, that were I shriven,  
I less should dread to go to Heaven.”

Said Grymbert : “ Eme, if thou a mind  
For shriving hast, thou must behind  
Thee leave all lust to rob and steal.”

Quoth Reynard : “ That I deeply feel,  
And so, *Confiteor tibi Pater*  
A heap of evil deeds, and later  
Will tell them fully, one by one,  
And shrift received, and penance done,  
Shall wend lighthearted.”

Grymbert said :

“ If thou the slough of sin wouldst shed  
Through shrift, then English speak, I pray.”

Said Reynard : “ Much I grieve to say,  
Few men have done more wickedness  
Than he who humbly doth confess  
To thee his sins, and penance craves.  
A many beasts have found their graves  
Through my misdeeds. Mine Eme, the Bear,  
With honeycombs did I ensnare ;  
And Tybert Cat, with hope of mice.  
Then Chanticleere did I entice  
From out his yard, with specious tale,  
And ate his children. Time would fail  
To go through all my crimes. The King  
And Queen I slandered with a string  
Of vilest falsehoods, which will stick  
For ever by them. Many a trick  
On Isegrym the Wolf I’ve played :

XII. Reynard  
shrift prays.

A monk at Eelmare was he made  
By my assistance, where I too  
Donned monkish hood and gown. He drew  
Therefrom small profit. When he sighed  
To ring the bells, I tightly tied  
The bell-rope round his feet, and soon  
He rang therewith so wild a tune,  
That, mazed and scared, folk ran to see  
Who made such hideous minstrelsy.  
And when 'twas found that Isegrim  
Rang out the chime, they fell on him  
With sticks and staves, till helpless left,  
Half dead he lay, of sense bereft.  
Another time the dullard sought  
Fishing to learn of me, and bought  
His knowledge dearly.

Just across  
The fallow fields, at Vermedos,  
A wealthy priest there lived, who kept  
A well stored spence, wherein I crept,  
When hunger prompted, through a hole,  
And many a flitch of bacon stole,  
Time and again. I thither led  
The Wolf one winter's day, and said :  
' Dear Isegrim, if you but creep  
Through this small hole, a wondrous heap  
Of beef and bacon may ye find.'  
With joy he crept therein, and blind  
To future chances, so much ate  
Of savoury viands, that too late  
He found so vastly had his size  
Of girth increased, that in no wise  
His body through that hole would pass  
By which he entry gained. ' Alas !  
Dear Reynard,' cried he, ' help me out !  
My answer was a deafening shout,

As sped I down the village street,  
And roused the neighbours ; then as fleet  
As drives the south-west wind, I ran  
To where the priest, good easy man,  
Was set to enjoy his midday meal—  
A fatted capon ; high the steel  
Was raised with purpose to dis sever  
The tempting morsel : with a clever  
And well aimed stroke the fowl I cleared  
From off the dish, and disappeared  
Like lightning flash, then made my way  
Towards the larder—‘ Stay, thief, stay,’  
Roared forth the priest, ‘ who ever saw  
So gross an outrage on the law,  
As that a Fox should dare to come  
And rob a priest, within his home?’

“ Therewith he cast at me the knife  
His right hand grasped, whereby my life  
Came near its ending—then, the board  
He loves so well, when richly stored  
With dainty viands, hastily  
Thrusting aside, right nimbly he  
Jumped up, and rushed forth crying : ‘ Maim  
Or slay the Fox!’ with either aim  
A raging crowd of people flew  
In hot pursuit, but passing through  
The hole where lately Isegrym  
Had made his entry, close to him  
I dropped the capon on the ground—  
Not for his benefit—but found  
The burden more than I could bear :  
And well it was I left it there,  
For when the priest burst ope the door,  
The capon found he on the floor  
Beside the Wolf, while through the hole

XII. Reynard    By which I entered, out I stole  
shrift prays.    And went my way.

At once the priest  
Clutched at the capon, and so ceased  
To track my steps, with wonder stricken  
To see the Wolf, (in whose eyes quicken  
Alarm and terror,) loud shouts he :  
' What wondrous vision do I see?  
A red fox snatched away my capon,  
And here the thief hath wolfish shape on !  
Lay on, good friends, beat, break and tear  
This plundering wretch, although he wear  
A magic form.' Then fiercely fell  
The crowd on Isegrym, pell-mell,  
With sticks and staves, until he lay  
As all foredone and dead ; away  
They dragged him over blocks and stones  
(A bag of bruised and broken bones)  
Without the village bounds, and cast  
His body in a ditch.

At last,  
Once more to health and strength he grew,  
But how that happed I never knew—  
Nor greatly cared—my grief but slight  
Had been though he had died outright.

" THE Wolf another time I led  
To rob a henroost, where I said  
A cock and seven fat hens arow  
Sat on a perch. As down below  
We stood and watched, a high fall-door  
I pointed out, and said : ' The floor,  
Where sit the birds, is just behind  
That door, climb up, and ye shall find  
Your heart's desire.' He laughing went,  
Suspecting nought, but all intent

On plenteous feasting ; here and there  
He snuffed about, then cried : ‘ Some snare  
I fear ye set, or jape ye play,  
Dear Nephew ; ’ softly quoth I, ‘ Nay !  
The man, dear Eme, who good will win  
Must something venture : further in  
The birds are roosting, ’ then a shove  
I gave, and lo ! the door above  
Fell with a thundering noise adown,  
That well might rouse a spell-bound town.

“ As through the house the clatter rang,  
The slumberers started up, and sprang  
From out their beds in wild affright,  
Shrieking aloud, ‘ A light ! a light ! ’  
And when they found ’twas Isegrim  
Who caused their fear, they set on him,  
And strook his body nigh to death.

“ Dear Nephew, shame admonisheth  
My tongue to leave some things untold  
That scarce were fitting to unfold  
To youthful ears, but deeply I  
Repent my past carnality.  
Here ends this woful roll of crimes  
That stain the memory of past times,  
And breed remorse within my breast :  
But now, unburdened and confessed,  
My mind feels easier, shrift I pray  
At thy kind hands, to drive away  
The clouds that hover o’er my soul,  
Thy healing words shall make me whole.”

GRYMBERT, who subtle was, and wise,  
Replied : “ Dear Eme, this tree supplies  
The means of penance ” ; straight he broke  
A slender twig, of fair grown oak,

XII. Reynard  
shrift prays.

And said, "Dear Uncle, wouldst thou quite  
Absolve thy soul, thy body smite  
Three times with this small rod, then bound  
Three times across it on the ground :  
Thou must not stumble, but keep straight  
Thy legs, if thou wouldst expiate  
Thy crimes : then take the rod in hand  
And three times kiss it, this will stand  
For token of obedience meek.  
No further penance need ye seek,  
But count your sins as wiped away,  
From childhood's hour till this same day."  
The Fox was glad.

Then Grymbert said :  
"Dear Eme, henceforward be ye wed  
To holy works, read well your psalms ;  
Keep fasts and holy days ; give alms ;  
Frequent the Church ; forthon leave sin,  
And theft and treason, so within  
Due time ye may to Heaven attain."  
The Fox declared his heart right fain  
Of holy counsel, and content  
Seemed Grymbert—straight they Courtward went.

Beside the road they took, there stood  
A Black-nuns' convent, fair and good  
Of structure : capons, hens, and geese,  
Strolled round the walls in careless peace ;  
Or basked in sprawling heaps together,  
Beneath the sunlit springtide weather.  
These Reynard noted ; spake he nought,  
But all astray his nephew brought,  
Until they neared the fowls, when he,  
All unawares, and suddenly,  
Snapped at a heedless capon, strayed  
Within his treacherous reach, and made



His feathers fly aloft in air.  
The Dachs turned sharply, saw the scare,  
And cried : " What Eme ! thou cursed man !  
Wilt thou again incur the ban  
Of sin, wherefrom thou art but free  
Some few short seconds ? Wilt thou be  
For one poor capon doomed to Hell ? "

" I own, dear Nephew, 'twas not well,"  
Quoth Reynard, " but I clean forgot  
My shrift—pray God I suffer not  
This once—I swear that nevermore  
Will I transgress ; " so turned they o'er  
A little bridge, but Reynard's eye  
Still watched the poultry—verily,  
" That thing which in the bone is bred,  
From out the flesh will ne'er be shed,"  
And though to hang on gallows tree  
Might be his fate, yet ever he  
Watched every bird that came in sight  
As passed they onward, left and right.  
His glances Grymbert saw, and spake :  
" Foul, false deceiver ! wilt thou take  
Thine eye no instant off the birds ? "

The Fox said : " Nephew, suchlike words  
Ye much misdo to use towards me,  
For sweet devotion, wofully,  
Your speech disturbs : I did but say  
A paternoster by the way,  
For all the souls of hens and geese,  
That through my means, have had surcease  
From watchful care of these good nuns.  
Alas ! my burdened memory shuns  
The wicked deeds of past ill days. "

Too well did Grymbert know the ways

XII. Reynard  
shrift prays.

Of Reynard Fox to give much heed  
To suchlike pious talk ; with greed  
The Fox's eyes still sought for prey.

So came they whence they went astray,  
And Courtward turned.

Sharp, quick, and short  
Came Reynard's breath as now the Court  
They neared, for all too well he knew  
How great his crimes, what meed his due.



·XIII·HOW·THE·FOX·CAME·  
·TO·THE·COURT·AND·HOW·  
·HE·EXCUSED·HIM·BEFORE·  
·THE·KING· ❧ · ❧ · ❧ ·

SO soon as through the Court 'twas known  
That Reynard Fox his face had shown  
Within its pale, not one so poor  
Was found of kin or friends, but sure  
He felt that, 'gainst the Fox complaint  
'Twas safe to make, though ne'er so faint  
And slight his grievance.

Reynard's look  
Was high and fearless, nought he shook  
Or trembled coweringly, but went  
With eye unmoved, and brow unbent,  
By Grymbert's side throughout the street.  
Yea! truly no King's son could meet  
The gazer's eye with prouder stare,  
As though the worth of one poor hair  
He had not trespassed or misdome.

So marched he boldly to the throne,

Where sat the King, and cried : “ God give  
To thee great Lord, the while you live,  
Honour and worship : never King  
Had servant who in everything  
Was truer liege, than I have been  
To thee through life : though some I ween  
Now stand within this Court, whose joy  
Would rise past words could they destroy  
Thine old-time friend, yet God I thank  
That nought believe ye them, but rank  
Such false deceiving liars rightly,  
Nor let their tales deceive thee lightly.  
It well to God may be complained,  
That lying flatterers have obtained  
In these last days too much belief  
In lordly Courts : with shame and grief  
Deceivers and false shrews I see  
In power and great authority,  
To good men’s scathe ; I humbly pray  
That God, to such, due hire will pay.

“ Peace ! ” cried the King, “ base thief and traitor,  
Of honest men most vile delator,  
Thou well canst gloze fair specious tales  
To blind men’s eyes, but nought avails  
By one poor straw thy flattering speech :  
Deem’st thou thereby to overreach  
Thy judge, and make of him a friend ?  
Too well he sees thine aim and end.  
Thy service towards thy King hath been  
So base and treacherous, that I ween  
Reward shall follow, just and due.  
Wouldst thou then have me deem it true  
That thou hast kept the peace I swore  
Throughout my realm ? ”

The Cock no more

XIII. Reynard  
at Court. Could hold his wrath hereat, but cried :  
“ Alas, ’twas through that peace that died  
My children.”

Said the King : “ Hold still  
Thy tongue, good friend, while I fulfil  
Stern duty towards this losel thief,  
’Tis mine to avenge thy thrice told grief.”

And then again did he address  
The Fox, stern-voiced and pitiless.

“ Oh, robber shrewd ! and murderer fell !  
How true thy boast to love me well,  
Thine hand hath shown on Bruin Bear  
And Tybert Cat, who both declare  
Thy deeds, though scant of words they be,  
But that day’s work shall cost to thee  
Thy life, I swear *In nomine  
Patris et Christi filii !*”—said  
The Fox : “ Dear Lord, if Bruin’s head  
Is blood besprent, with broken crown,  
Can ye with justice set that down  
To my account ? He basely stole  
Sweet honeycombs from out a bole  
Of oak, which lay in Lantfert’s yard.  
If, in revenge, their owner marred  
His head and limbs, am I to blame ?  
Surely, ere through the water came  
He hither, a beast so strong of limb  
Might lightly have avenged him,  
For all he suffered. Tybert Cat  
Next came, and friendly talk and chat  
Awhile we held, then lastly he,  
Scorning my counsel, suddenly,  
Went off to rob the parson’s house,  
Whence stole he many a dainty mouse,

And thereby came to grievous ill.  
My dear liege Lord, though thou shouldst spill  
My blood, or blind, hang, seethe or roast  
My body, yet I proudly boast  
A conscience clear. Thou, King, art strong,  
And I but feeble, yet no wrong  
I fear to suffer through thy might,  
'Fore all thou lovest truth and right."

As Reynard ended, Bellyn Ram  
Stood boldly forth, and cried : " No drachm  
Of truth or justice dost thou say,  
Thou base-born Fox, and Dame Olwey,  
My faithful spouse, will bear me out."

While yet he spake an angry shout  
Of loud complaint arose. The Bear  
With all his lineage, claimed a share  
In Reynard's censure. Tybert Cat  
Was joined with Isegrym, who sat  
In moody wrath : the fierce Wild-boar,  
Cuwaert the Hare, though trembling sore,  
The Goat and Kid, Brunel the Goose,  
Baldwin the Ass, from toil set loose,  
The Bull, the Camel, and the Ox,  
All raised their voices 'gainst the Fox,  
With loud demand that forthwith he  
Should be arrested. Readily  
The King thereto gave ear, and cried,  
" To prison with him—let him bide  
In closest bonds—right well I wot  
His crimes deserve a murderer's lot."

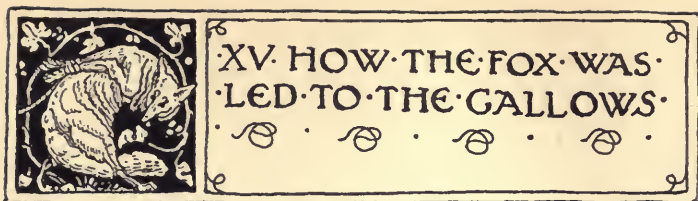


XIV · HOW · THE · FOX · WAS ·  
ARRESTED · AND · JUDGED ·  
TO · DEATH ·

HEREON a parliament was held,  
Which found that so unparalleled  
Were Reynard's deeds, that nought but death  
Could wash their vileness. In a breath,  
Reynard to each gave full reply,  
And though all men spontaneously  
Agreed that ne'er did beasts devise  
More sound impeachments, yet so wise  
Were Reynard's answers, that folk stood  
Amazed to hear their likelihood.  
But pleadings done, and both sides heard  
By King and Council, 'twas averred  
That guilty was he, past a doubt.—  
Take note how oft it falleth out,  
The feeblest hath the worst.—Then gave  
The Court its sentence—that the grave  
Must close o'er Reynard, and that he  
Should deck the gallows speedily.

Alas! though still he sought to reach  
His judges' hearts with flattering speech,  
Nought could avail him. All as one,  
Cried out that justice must be done  
As now decreed,—yet still were left  
Some faithful friends, whose hearts were cleft  
With woe to think the Fox must die,  
And roomed the Court most mournfully.  
The King took note, how younglings went,

Of Reynard's kin, with heads low bent  
In grief, and musing thereon said :  
" Behoveth counsel ere we shed  
The Fox's blood ; although a shrew,  
Past doubt or question, no small few  
Who own his lineage smack of good."  
While thus he communed, nearby stood  
The Cat, the Wolf, and Bruin Bear,  
On whom devolved the ungracious care  
Of hanging Reynard. Tybert cried :  
" How now? why lag ye? eventide  
Comes on apace, why friends so slow?  
See here stout hanging-trees arow,  
Whereon to sling the Fox ; if he  
Should 'scape this peril, who can see  
What next may hap? So great his wit,  
And subtle craft, that fraught were it  
With folly past belief, to give  
Him yet another chance to live,  
And mar us once again ; why stand  
We idle thus? Let each set hand  
To place the gibbet, ere 'tis night.  
Said Isegrym : " Here ready dight  
Behold a gallows," then he sighed ;  
That saw the Cat, and mocking cried :  
" What! Isegrym, be'st thou afeard?  
Or is thy memory grown so seared,  
That pity overmastereth will  
To hang the recreant who did kill  
Thy brethren twain? An' ye were good  
And wise, so long ye had not stood  
A-tarrying when ye might repay  
The debts of many a long past day."



**D**EEP growled the Wolf, and said : “Ye make,  
 Sir Tybert, much ado, and take  
 My will to task—in case we had  
 A halter here, most wondrous glad  
 And willing should I be to lend  
 My help to speed the traitor’s end.”

The Fox, who long had held his peace,  
 Now spoke, and said : “To me surcease  
 Ye well may give, and short my ’pain  
 If so ye will, behold the bane  
 That lightly doth the means afford :  
 See ! hangs round Tybert’s neck the cord  
 Which caught him, when his greed for mouse  
 Led him to rob the good priest’s house.  
 Active and lithe, he well can climb  
 And fix the rope ; why lose ye time ?  
 Ah ! Isegrym, ah ! Bruin Bear,  
 Say, is it meet that thus should fare  
 Your nephew at your ruthless hands ?  
 I live too long. The law commands  
 The deed ye do : let Bruin lead,  
 And Isegrym, take thou good heed  
 To hold thy prisoner, lest he take  
 Some chance his cruel bonds to break.”

Quoth Bruin : “Rarely have I heard  
 Friend Reynard speak so wise a word,  
 For long years past.”



Then Isegrym  
Prayed kith and kin, who stood by him,  
To see the prisoner did not slip  
By some new wile from out their grip :  
By beard and ears some held him fast,  
While others round his fore-feet cast  
A trammelling net.

The victim heard  
With grief their speech, which in him stirred  
Terror, and touched his heart anigh,  
Then lastly spake, with long-drawn sigh :  
“ Alas ! dear Eme, methinks much pain  
Ye take to do me scathe, yet fain  
Would I beg mercy : though my grief  
Seems to afford your heart relief  
And pleasure, yet I feel assured  
That, knew my Aunt what woe endured  
Her well-loved nephew, of old days  
She would bethink herself, and raise  
Her voice in his behalf. Now he  
Am I, to whom whatever be  
Your will, that can ye work. May shame,  
In life and death, surround your name,  
O Tybert Cat ; and Bruin Bear,  
May'st thou of shame have equal share,  
For both have done to me the worst  
Within your power. Though death at first  
Seem strange and hard, yet can I die  
But once. My Father's death did I  
Behold soon pass, and now I wend  
That unknown path, fear nought the end.”

Quoth Isegrym : “ Since ye bestow  
Your curse on us, because too slow  
Ye find our work, may ill betide  
Our souls if longer we abide.”

XV. Fox days  
seem short.

While Isegrym, upon the right,  
Warded and watched the wretched wight,  
Against his left was set the Bear,  
And thus they led him forth to where  
The gallows stood. With ready will  
Ran Tybert forwards, wearing still  
The cord around his neck which caught  
His head within the gryn, and wrought  
To him such punishment that yet  
He writhed beneath it—ne'er forget  
Could he the woes of that dread night,  
Fruit of the Fox's vengeful spite.

Thus Reynard, safely kept by three  
Stern gaolers, fared on towards the tree  
Where felons use to meet their fate.  
The King and Queen, in solemn state,  
Followed, and in their wake did wend  
Long courtier trains to watch the end.  
Then fell the Fox in mighty dread  
Of grisly death, and visions fled  
Athwart his brain of how he still  
Perchance might cozen fate, and fill  
With shame those men who sought his life,  
Setting the King with them at strife  
Through tales and leasings."

"Though," thought he,  
"My lord be now sore wroth with me  
For righteous cause, yet in the end  
Perchance he may become my friend:  
For if some specious tale I spin,  
So well invented as to win  
Credence of King and Council both,—  
Wise as they be,—and make them loth  
To hang me, then once more may I  
My foes o'ercome triumphantly.

Quoth Isegrym : " Consider well,  
Sir Bruin, how 'twas through this fell  
And evil beast your crown of red  
Ye came to wear, to-day his head  
Shall bear your burden. Tybert, climb  
The gallows swiftly, lose no time  
To bind a riding knot around  
The cross-branch, high above the ground :  
This day I trust, we all may see  
Our foeman's end ; beware lest free  
Again he break : Sir Bruin, now  
Hold fast, whilst I against the bough  
Set up the ladder." Bruin said :  
" I well shall help him."

Fear and dread,

Fell hard on Reynard, who exclaimed :  
" Now is my spirit quelled, and tamed,  
For death stands bare before mine eyes,  
And all my past misdeeds arise,  
To drive my soul to Hell : great King  
And gracious Queen, I ask one thing,  
Ere I depart, one little boon,  
That may in some degree attune  
To Heaven my spirit. 'Tis nor less  
Nor more than this, that I confess  
To thee, and those who stand anigh,  
My past misdealings openly.  
Thus purged, and cleansed, my soul no more  
Shall feel encumbered as of yore,  
Nor others be hereafter blamed  
For treason worked by me, or shamed  
For theft of mine. Hereby to me  
Grim death shall somewhat easier be,  
And when his waters o'er me roll,  
Pray God to spare my sinful soul."



·XVI·HOW·THE·FOX·MADE·  
·HIS·CONFESSION·OPENLY·BE·  
·FORE·THE·KING·AND·ALL·  
·THOSE·WHO·WOULD·HEAR·  
·IT·

WHEN those who stood anear him heard  
The humble boon the Fox preferred,  
They cried : "O hear him, gracious King,  
For is it not a little thing  
He lastly asketh of thee?" Said  
King Nobel : "Nay then, by my head,  
Since the desire it seems to be  
Of all this goodly company  
That Reynard full confession make  
Of crime, ere he the journey take  
Whence none return, I grant amain  
The boon he asks."

Oh, then was fain  
The Fox, who inwardly did cry :  
"Give aid, O Spiritus Domini!  
Though round about stands many a man  
Who willingly my life would ban ;  
Yet courage from despair I take,  
Good luck be mine!" and forth he spake :

"GOOD PEOPLE, hear the tale how I  
Have spent my days from infancy.  
From that first hour that I was weaned,  
Till dawned the day that saw me weaned,  
Believe ye well, the woodland wild  
Had ne'er beheld a sweeter child :  
Blameless and pure I lived, and played  
With tenderest lambkins, nought afraid

Or fraying, till I chanced to bite  
One of my playmates, then good-night  
To innocence ; so wondrous sweet  
I found the blood, that other meat  
I scorned henceforward : next I heard  
The bleat of kids and goats, which stirred  
My veins, and twain I straightway slew ;  
Forthwith I callous waxed, and knew  
No pleasure greater than to kill  
Hens, ducks, and geese, rejoiced to spill  
Their blood for sport.

One winter's day

I came on Isegrym, who lay  
Asleep within a hollowed oak ;  
Awaking, friendlywise he spoke,  
And forthwith claimed to be mine Eme :  
' If that be so,' quoth I, ' 'twould seem  
Well we were comrades ;' straight quoth he :  
' With right good will,' most cordially.  
Alas ! I sorely did repent  
Of that alliance—thus it went :  
Each gave his promise to be true  
Toward his fellow, and a due  
Fair share to give of each day's spoil :  
Then set we forth with earnest toil  
To hunt the woods and fields ; his part  
It was to rob great beasts, my art  
Sufficed the smaller things to steal :  
But when the business was to deal  
The food betwixt us, less than half  
Fell to my share ; if ram or calf,  
Or wether took we, for his own  
He claimed it, and the barest bone  
Would yield to stay my need, and drave  
Me off right rudely, as a slave.  
Then, when we gained a cow or ox

XVI. Old sins  
confessed.

Alas! still worse would fare the Fox,  
For Isegrym his wife would bring  
To join the banquet, and a string  
Of seven lean cubs, and quickly gone  
Was Reynard's share. But fortune shone  
Bright-eyed and gracious at this time,  
In suchwise that Golconda's clime  
Holds not more treasure than belongs  
To me this moment. Poet's songs  
Have ne'er imagined such untold  
And heaped-up riches. Silver, gold,  
And precious stones past counting, gems  
And pearls, befitting diadems  
Of mightiest kings lie gathered where  
My hands have hidden them, and there  
Must they remain, for now, alas!  
Those treasures never more can pass  
From out the darkness where they lie,  
Since he stands here, condemned to die,  
Who wots alone their lurking-place.  
Perchance some happy wight may trace  
In distant age his footstep thither,  
Where rests that hoard which nought can wither  
Or waste or change. The man who gains  
That glittering wealth, seven goodly wains  
Will need to bear it whence 'tis hid.

"My Lord, if thou hast will to rid  
The earth of him who hath the power  
This harvest in thy lap to shower,  
Speak thou the fatal word, and he  
Will humbly bow to thy decree."

At first the King had barely listened  
To Reynard's tale; but brightly glistened  
His eager eyes when once he heard

Fall from his lips the magic word  
Of GOLD, and straightway seized was he  
By hell's foul fiend cupidity.  
With hot desire his spirit burned  
To touch these riches, and he turned  
His voice, forthwith, from tone severe  
To blandest fluting: "Reynard, dear,  
Tell me," quoth he, "where may I find  
This glorious hoard? I have no mind  
To deal with thee severely; say  
Where dwells this treasure, and away  
Thy chains and shackles shall be cast."

O'er Reynard's sinking heart then passed  
A gleam of hope. "My Lord," he cried,  
"I fear lest you your best friend chide,  
When he avows that this great wealth  
Was gotten by an act of stealth.  
Nay, start thou not! except for that,  
The chance is great ye had not sat  
This day on that high throne where ye  
Fair justice deal so worthily.  
'Twould seem I was designed by Fate  
To drag to light and dissipate  
The vilest plot that ever yet  
Was planned by reckless men to set  
Themselves in place of those whom heaven  
Hath in its highest wisdom given  
To rule the world. Had this plot sped,  
Thou hadst been murdered in thy bed!"  
Therewith deep horror seized the Queen,  
And cried she: "Reynard, dost thou mean  
That men we trust in would imbue  
Their hands in blood? Conjure I you  
By that far road your soul must go,  
To clearly speak, and make us know

XVI. Old sins  
confessed. The full dread truth."

Oh, hearken now  
How Reynard's flattering words shall bow  
The King and Queen to give their love  
And kindly wills to him above  
All other men, and hinder those  
Who labour for his death ; unclose  
His pack of lies shall he, and fair  
Soft glozing speech so bring to bear  
On all his matters, that 'twould seem  
His life and acts with virtue teem.

With sorrowful countenance he spake,  
And said : " For thy beloved sake,  
Great Queen, since thou conjurest me,  
Will I relate the tale : 'twould be  
Of small effect that I should lie,  
Doomed, as I am, forthwith to die.  
Ye well may credit that my soul  
I will not jeopard, but the whole  
Plain truth set forth—for should I tell  
One falsehood, all the pains of Hell  
Must be my lot. I nought will say  
That may not be in plainest way  
Made good and sure.

Now hear it shown,  
How good King Nobel, by his own  
Most trusted servants should have been  
Murdered, and you, most gracious Queen,  
Had shared his fate. Alas ! what grief  
Wrings my sad heart to think the chief  
And foremost movers in this plot  
Were men of mine own blood. Did not  
My conscience urge me on to lay  
This treachery bare, would I betray,  
Think you, my nearest kith and kin ?



But that small voice which works within,  
Moves me to speak, devoid of fear."

XVI. Old sins  
confessed.

The King with grave and heavy cheer,  
Replied: "I charge thee, Reynard, now  
To say in face of death, if thou  
Herein dost speak plain, simple truth?"

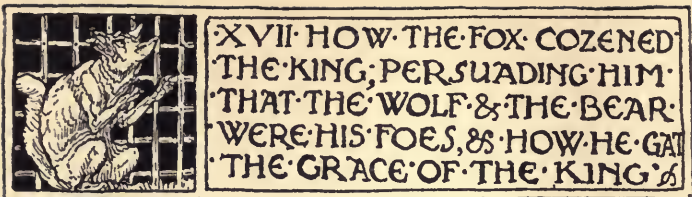
Exclaimed the Fox: "Deem'st thou forsooth,  
Here, standing on the very brink  
Of Heaven, or Hell, that I should think  
'Twould serve my turn to forge a lie?  
Nay! ten times would I rather die  
A thousand deaths than I should be  
Condemned to fire eternally."

Then with a mighty trembling shook  
His frame, as though death's agony strook  
His bones and marrow, but the while  
He inly laughed with cynic guile,  
For well he saw how matters turned.  
The Queen, whose heart with pity burned  
At Reynard's feigned distress, then prayed  
The King for grace, and begged that stayed  
Might be the strife of tongues, while pause  
Was given to Reynard, that his cause  
He might set forth, unchecked by dread  
Of evil hap.

King Nobel said:

"Let silence reign, that Reynard may  
Tell forth whate'er he hath to say."

Then spake the Fox: "Let all men hold  
Their peace, while clearly I unfold,  
As now commanded by the King,  
A tale of treason, that will bring  
Some great ones low—the truth shall spare  
No man—let guilty souls beware."



**N**OW hearken how the Fox began.  
 His eye around the Court he ran,  
 And then the faithful Grymbert called  
 To be his witness, and forestalled  
 Thereby the moment he might need  
 Support and help, for he would plead  
 Grymbert's good name, when any doubt  
 Was cast on tales he told about  
 His friends or foes.

"My Lord," quoth he,  
 "The onerous charge now laid on me  
 Is one which I have long forborne:  
 Past power to tell, my heart is torn  
 Betwixt stern duty, and the thought  
 That mine own honour must be bought  
 By others' woe—and lasting ruin  
 To Tybert, Isegrym, and Bruin.

"To clear the tale, must I go back  
 To days when lived my Sire—alack!  
 That his respected name should be  
 Involved in fraud and treachery.  
 Thus, then, it happed: my father found  
 Deep dolven down beneath the ground  
 The precious hoard of untold wealth,  
 Which great King Ermanric by stealth  
 In long-forgotten times concealed  
 From envious eyes. When now revealed

(By magic arts, none other knew)  
To my dear Sire, alas! he grew  
Henceforth so proud, that he aspired  
To rule the whole wide world, and fired  
With this strange madness, in despite  
Of law and reason, sense and right,  
Tybert the Cat, as envoy sent  
To journey o'er the vast extent  
Of wild Ardenne, seek out the Bear,  
Make him the offer of a share  
In wealth untold, with vows that he  
Would homage do and fealty  
To Bruin, and anoint him King  
In your despite, and shortly bring  
Your royal line to nought. The Bear,  
Dazzled at this great prospect, sware  
To follow out his rede, for long  
His heart had dreamed of suchlike wrong.

“ Hot foot, he straight to Flanders sped,  
And there, as he were King and head  
Of beasts, my Father hailed him. Then,  
With subtle wit past mortal ken,  
The wise and helpful Grymbert they  
Seduced to join them, nor made stay  
Thereat, but sought out Isegrym,  
And much I grieve to say, with him  
The Cat conspired.

Beside a thorp,  
'Twixt Ghent and Yft, the weft and warp  
Of treason wove these five, discussed  
Their plans, and boldly putting trust  
In help and counsel of the fiend  
Who reigns in Hell, they lightly weened,  
By aid from him, and through the store  
My Father owned, they need no more

XVII. The     Doubt full success.  
Fox well goes.

Oh! hearken now,  
Great King, how ill from ill doth grow.  
These five men pledged a solemn oath,  
And plighted each towards other troth,  
Confirmed by vows sworn on the head  
Of Isegrym, that in thy bed  
Thou shouldst be murdered, while the Bear  
Should mount thy throne, and boldly wear  
At Acon, sacred stole and crown :  
My Sire, moreover, vowed to drown,  
By bribes, all efforts that thy friends  
Or lineage made to stay the ends  
These traitors purposed, conquering right  
By ill-got wealth and hireling might,  
Till loyalty's voice was quenched in death.

“ But thus it happed—when morning's breath  
The conclave brake, my nephew dear,  
Young Grymbert Dachs, such merry cheer  
Had made o'ernight, that still he lay  
Fordrunken through the following day.  
And then to Dame Sleepcap, his wife,  
Told forth the plot, but on her life  
Charged her, that she should nought reveal  
To living man. Beneath the seal  
Of holy shrift my wife she told,  
On pilgrimage, but bade her hold  
Her shriving close, and made her swear  
By those three holy Kings, whose fair  
And precious shrine bedecks Cologne,  
She ne'er would make the plotting known  
Till death, nor dare for love or hate,  
In any form to violate  
The fateful secret that she held.  
Hidden she kept it till it welled

Forth from her burdened heart to me  
What time we next joined company ;  
But strictly charged that I should keep  
The dread disclosure hidden deep  
Within my breast. Moreover gave  
She then, with solemn words, such grave  
And certain tokens that she spoke  
Unblemished truth, that straight I broke  
Forth in a fearful death-cold sweat,  
The while she showed the wide-meshed net  
Of foul conspiracy. Like lead  
My heart became, and wellnigh dead  
Within me felt, while stood my fine  
Soft fur, like quills of porcupine,  
Straight out on end.

And then thought I,  
A likeness may be traced hereby  
Betwixt the Frogs and us,—they dwelt  
For ages free as air, yet felt  
Desire for change, and therefore cried  
To Jove, and prayed he would provide  
A Lord to rule them : and he gave  
To them King Stork, who made a grave  
Far down his throat, for all who said  
They owned their souls, and ere long dead  
Was half the Kingdom. Then they plained  
Their lot, and gladly had regained  
Their ancient freedom, but too late  
Came vain regret, henceforth their fate  
It was to suffer, for no more  
Could freedom reign as heretofore  
Within their state.

So doth it seem,  
That had this most nefarious dream  
Of wicked plotters once been brought  
To full fruition, past all thought

XVII. The  
Fox well goes.

Our woe had been—by traitors ruled !  
Ah ! then my heart was sharply schooled  
In dread and fear, when visions crossed  
My mind that Fortune's freak had tossed  
Us all beneath the shrewish might  
Of Bruin, who would those requite  
He loved not, with affliction's fire:  
But thee we know for Lord and Sire,  
Of noble birth, and soul benign,  
And should we tamely then resign  
Thy rule to live beneath a Bear?  
Whilst thou hast filled the kingly chair,  
All men have lived their lives in peace,  
Blessed with content, and fair increase  
Of worldly goods, and should we throw  
Thy house aside for one we know  
Hath bred in long ancestral line  
Folly and madness?

Grief was mine  
By day and night, the while I thought  
How I might wreck, and bring to nought  
My father's counsel, which would make  
This traitorous churl great lordship take  
Beyond his fellows : then I prayed  
On bended knees to Him who made  
This wondrous world, to safely keep  
With watchful love which knows not sleep  
Our gracious Lord and King in health,  
For nought I doubted that the wealth  
My father owned he would employ,  
In league with traitors, to destroy,  
Or set aside, our honoured Lord;  
Therefore I sought to trace that hoard  
From earliest dawn till darkling eve ;  
Nor did my zeal one corner leave  
Unsearched or covert; every stone

I dug beneath: each moss-o'ergrown  
And shaggy rock I hid behind,  
And through each dry stream-bed did wind  
To track my Father's slot or tread:  
And time and oft, above his head,  
'Mid leafy branches would I watch  
With patient eye, intent to catch  
Some hint of where the treasure lay—  
In shine or storm, by night and day,  
His every movement I espied.

“ At last it happed one Christmas-tide,  
That, as I flat upon the ground  
Lay couched, my parent with a bound  
Appeared from out a hole. My breath  
Came short and quick, for certain death  
Were mine in case my form were seen.  
He scanned around, but friendly screen  
A bush afforded, and I lay  
Unnoticed, ah! what words could say  
The throes I suffered?

When the land  
He deemed all clear, he scraped the sand  
With painful care across the hole,  
Yet worked with vigilance, and stole  
A frequent glance around to see  
If any watched: then, carefully,  
The sand once more made smooth and plain,  
With tongue and tail, till not one grain  
Appeared displaced; and thus I learned  
Some hints which I full oft have turned  
To good advantage.

Well content  
The ancient seemed, and straightway bent  
His steps towards home.

Ye well may wot

XVII. The  
Fox well goes.

My eyes had closely marked the spot,  
Long sought with sleepless pains, and when  
Its master well had passed from ken,  
I lightly bounded towards the hole,  
And burrowing deftly, as a mole,  
Scratched, clawed, and scraped, with eager feet,  
The sand away, till entry meet  
For one of slim-built form was made.

“ My Lord—I hesitate—afraid  
To put in words the view that burst  
In glory on me when I first  
Effected entrance. None I ween  
Who live, except myself have seen  
A sight so wondrous and so fair,  
Past dreaming, and beyond compare  
For sparkling splendour. Ne’er King reigned  
Since earth began, but with unfeigned  
Surprise and wonder had beheld  
The scene that dazed my vision. Quelled  
My spirit seemed within me when  
I gazed around : nor gods nor men,  
Foretime or late, have ever known  
More wealth and treasure than was shown  
In one vast heap—far flashing gold,  
Plenteous, as though Pactolus rolled  
His ruddy sands therein : moonlight  
Could scarce have made the cave more white  
Than glittering silver showed it ; gems  
Enough to broider all the hems  
Of royal robes that e’er were worn  
Since Kings first ruled : the gorgeous morn  
Ne’er dyed her mantling in such hues  
As flashed and sparkled : rich tissues  
From looms of Perse and Ind were there  
In bales unnumbered, and more rare



Than tongue can compass : from the wall  
Gleamed trophies fitted to recall  
Great tales of high romance : rich suits  
Of armour, such as fame reposes  
The godlike heroes bore of old ;  
Bright burnished steel, inlaid with gold ;  
Fair silver hauberks, fine as gauze  
Spun from the web the silkworm draws  
For shroud around him, yet as steel  
Hard tempered, that no blade could feel  
Its way therethrough.

Of suchlike gear

As queens and high born ladies wear,  
Mine eyes beheld a paradise  
Beyond all telling, past all price ;  
Necklets and bracelets, chains and rings,  
Beset with emeralds shaming spring's  
New undimmed raiment ; coronets bright  
With diamonds flashing like the light  
Of sundawn's bursting ; lustrous pearls,  
Dazzling as teeth of laughing girls  
In bloom of youth ; rich rubies, red  
As that young blood by Herod shed :  
Sapphires of such surpassing hue  
As mocked the heaven-reflected blue  
Of sunniest ocean : topaz rare,  
That flashed forth gold ; and opals fair,  
The myriad hued.

O'erhead there swung,

And through the cave sweet odours flung,  
Rich lamps, with dædal chasings wrought  
By curious craftsmanship, and fraught  
With fragrant spices.

Far around

In heaps, and scattered o'er the ground,  
Lay coins of every clime and realm.

XVII. The  
Fox well goes.

Lightly might wealth so great o'erwhelm  
My Father's mind with maddening dreams  
Of wild ambition. But meseems  
That powerless sound mere words to draw  
The faintest sketch of all I saw  
Within that wondrous cave. As vain  
It were to count the falling rain,  
Or number daisies on the lea,  
Or tell the myriads of the sea,  
As strive to bring before thine eyes  
By force of words, the wondrous prize  
Once lost, now thine.

My faithful wife  
I sought forthwith, who by her life  
And hopes of heaven, on bended knee  
Swore solemn oaths of secrecy.

"Then swinked we ceaseless, night and day,  
This good to carry far away,  
And hide within a deep haw-haw,  
And then vast tons of earth to draw,  
And heap o'erhead : now verdant grows  
The grass thereon, and waving rows  
Of willows mark the hiding-place  
Of this great treasure.

Ever apace,  
While thus we laboured, grew the plot  
Of treasonous crime. Ye well may wot  
That burning to fulfil his bent,  
With thrifty speed my Father went  
To join his miscreant friends, who backed  
His wild ambition till he lacked  
Ruth, fear, or pity.

Hear ye now  
Their hell-born project, and I trow  
Thou wilt accord that but for me,

Great King, thou'dst fared but wretchedly.

XVII. The  
Fox well goes.

“ The Bear and Wolf sent far and wide  
The news o'er all the countryside,  
That men might earn unheard-of wage,  
In ready coin, would they engage  
To fight for Bruin, while my Sire  
With nimble foot, which nought could tire,  
Bare treasonous letters through the land.  
Ah! little wist he while he planned  
And plotted thus, his treasure-store  
Had vanished! and he nevermore  
Should find thereof one penny, though  
He fondly hoped at one great blow  
To win the world.

When he had been  
O'er all the land that lies between  
The Elbe and Somme, and listed there  
A band of fighting men, who sware  
To haste to Bruin's aid as soon  
As springtide waked the ringdove's croon,  
Homeward he sped again to meet  
His friends and fellows, who did greet  
With open ears the tales he told  
Of scapes and dangers manifold,  
Endured and overcome, while he  
Had scoured the land of Saxony,  
Where hounds and hunters day by day  
Pursued him so, that scarce away  
He brake with life.

He next displayed  
Letters to that fell four, which made  
The treacherous heart of Bruin light  
And gladsome. Well equipped and dight  
With arms, they said, were seventy score  
Akin to Isegrym, who swore

XVII. The  
Fox well goes.

That they, with Foxes, Cats, and Bears  
Unnumbered, would from out their lairs  
Come trooping forth at trumpet call  
To Bruin's aid, but one and all  
Strict stipulation made that they  
Should first receive a full month's pay.

“ All this, thank God ! I heard and spied  
And noting how my Father hied  
Towards where he trowed his treasure lay,  
With hurried footsteps, in the grey  
Dim twilight followed, unperceived.  
Ye Gods ! My bosom throbbed and heaved  
Wellnigh to bursting as he drew  
Anigh the fateful spot : I knew  
What rage would seize him when the truth  
Flashed on his senses : and forsooth  
When came he near, and saw the hole  
Gape wide, across his visage stole  
A fearful look of blank despair,—  
He entered straight, and soon as ware  
Of what had happed, came rushing forth,  
Looked east, looked west, looked south, looked  
north,

But no man saw, for I lay hid  
Securely ; next he wildly chid  
His evil fortune, then a tree  
He mounted, and, O misery !  
Before mine eyes a corpse he swang,  
While through mine ears his death cry rang  
And ringeth yet.

Dull, dead and cold  
My heart still turns, as I behold  
In memory's glass that awful day :  
Yet who shall rashly dare to say  
That he hath erred, whose one pure aim

Hath been to shield from death and shame  
His sovereign Lord, and break the might  
Of bold rebellious men ?

XVII. The  
Fox well goes.

But Right

And Justice seem, alas ! astray,  
When I behold the unblushing way  
In which these traitors, round their King  
In Council seated, barefaced fling  
At me proud scornful looks, while I  
Am left,—despised and spurned,—to die !

“ To save thy life, dear Lord, I let  
My own dear Father perish ; yet  
Small thanks are mine. What other one  
Of all who stand around had run  
Such risks as fell to my sad lot ?  
I pause—’tis vain—they answer not ! ”

While Reynard spake, a fierce desire  
To win this treasure-hoard ’gan fire  
The hearts of King and Queen, who cried :  
“ Nay, Reynard, wilt thou not confide  
To us where this great storehouse lies ?  
Or wilt thou rashly dare despise  
To gain our mercy through this good ? ”

Quoth Reynard : “ Nay, then, by the rood !  
How should I tell so great a thing  
In face of traitors, who would bring  
My soul to death ? Each man of them  
Would inly triumph, and contemn  
The Fox for one of slender wit.”

“ Nay ! here we find occasion fit,”  
Exclaimed the Queen, “ to pardon all  
Thy past offences, and recall  
Thee to our Council, if but wise

XVII. The  
Fox well goes.

And true thou provest."

Quick replies

The Fox : " Dear Lady, should my Lord  
Of royal graciousness, afford  
To me full pardon, and forgive  
The past ill time, ne'er yet did live  
Monarch on whom so rich a shower  
Of wealth hath fallen, as shall dower  
His crown withal : for as 'tis said,  
The tale of stars that o'er us shed  
Their influence, hath alone been told  
By him who made them, so this gold  
No mortal man can tell."

Then cried

The King : " Ah ! Dame, would ye confide  
In legends Reynard doth relate ?  
Saving your reverence, innate  
It is with him to rob and lie,  
And though for once he willed to try  
Plain-spoken truth, so in his bone  
Is falsehood grafted, and so grown  
Within his flesh, that much I doubt  
If aught can drive that foul fiend out."

Replied the Queen : " Nay, good my Lord,  
'Twere well to trust the Fox's word,  
For though he showed so fell before,  
He now is changed, and will no more  
Lie, jape, or steal : we all have heard  
With what plain speech he hath preferred  
Against his nephew and his Father,  
Gross charge of crime, which he might rather  
Have laid on other beasts, if he  
Had mind to practise loselry."

Answered the King : " Great Dame, if thou

Wilt have it so, my mind shall bow  
To thy desire, e'en though I thought  
That my accord thereto were bought  
By some great scathe that might befall  
Myself or crown. Now hear men all :—  
An oath I swear by that same crown,  
And by my kingly ermined gown,  
That should the Fox but once again  
Misdo and trespass, I will rain  
Such vengeance down on him, and those  
Who own his lineage, that the crows,  
And other carrion birds, shall feed  
For years untold on all the breed  
Of Foxes, and their race shall be  
Destroyed till past the ninth degree.”

Then Reynard fixed his eyes stoundmele  
Against the King's ; such joy did feel  
His heart he scarce found voice to speak,  
But lastly, all subdued and weak,  
Said :

“ Gracious Lord, he were not wise  
Who strove with foolish japes and lies,  
To cozen one whose wit acute  
Hath long been held beyond dispute  
Or question ; thou for judgment sound  
Art through the world's wide space renowned,  
And shallow-pated must he be  
Who strives in wit to master thee.”

The King from off the greensward took  
A straw, with grave judicial look,  
Then said : “ E'en brittle as this straw,  
I count that stern time-honoured law,  
Whereby thou art condemned to die  
For murder, theft and villainy.

XVII. The  
Fox well goes.

See now, before thine eyes is broken  
In twain this straw, let that be token  
Of pardon for thy past misdeeds,  
And full oblivion for the redes '  
Whereby thy Father sought to ruin  
Our noble state, and 'stablish Bruin  
On that illustrious throne where we  
Hold rule with peace and equity."

Once more fair hope began to buoy  
The Fox's heart, which leapt for joy  
To hear these words, and in his brain  
Arose forthwith a brilliant train  
Of bold-eyed fiction, which the King  
Should blind and hoodwink, and the string  
Of lies he told make seeming fair  
In such degree, that Wolf and Bear,  
Cast down from high estate, might prove  
The woe of thraldom, while above  
Their abject heads exalt, he might  
As champion pose, of Truth and Right.







XVIII · HOW · THE · FOX · GAVE ·  
HIS · THANKS · TO · THE · KING · & ·  
TOLD · OF · THE · HIDING · PLACE ·  
OF · A · GREAT · TREASURE ·

THEN said he: "Gracious King and Queen,  
I praise my God that ye have seen  
It good, thus freely unto me  
To do such worship; heartily  
Thereof I thank ye, and will show  
What strong and grateful love doth glow  
Within my faithful breast: no King  
Holds rule within this wide world's ring  
Whose treasure-house shall equal thine;  
For that great wealth, which now is mine,  
To thee I freely give."

Then took  
The Fox a straw in hand, with look  
Of grave assurance: "Hold," quoth he,  
"This straw, and know most certainly,  
King Ermanric's great wealth henceforth  
Is thine."

As though 'twere thing of worth  
The King received the straw, and threw  
It gaily from him—then there flew  
Across his face a joyous smile.  
The Fox laughed inwardly the while,  
For now the King gave ready ear  
To all his counsel, and in fear  
Stood many lest they fared but ill  
Beneath the Fox's crafty will.  
Then quoth he straight: "I prithee lend  
Attention while I bring to end  
The tale of how this treasure may,

XVIII. The  
Wolf's dread  
care.

For ages lost and hidden away,  
Yet once again be won by thee,  
Its destined Lord by Heaven's decree :

“ In Flanders, on the eastern side,  
A forest lies, deep, dense and wide,  
Known as the wild-wood Hulsterlo.  
Most drear it is, and round it blow  
Fierce howling winds, while near to it  
Rolls the black tide called Krekynpit.  
A lone and savage wilderness  
Is all this land, and dire distress  
Find those who wend therein ; a year  
Oft flitteth by, when come anear  
To that sad spot nor man nor wife,  
Unless forwearied of their life.

“ Keep well the name of Krekynpit  
In memory's hold, for interknit  
Therewith is all the mystery  
Of where the precious hoard doth lie.  
Now prithee lend most careful ear  
The while I indicate a clear  
Unerring key by which to win  
The long-lost treasure that within  
The fosse lies hid. To me alone  
These mystic sentences are known :

King 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 !

“ These words thou thrice must boldly speak  
Whene'er the treasure-store ye seek,  
But go thou not alone the while,  
For as in that far distant isle  
The three sweet-voiced Hesperides  
Kept guard o'er golden fruit, so these  
Drear lands wherein my toil hath piled  
This golden hoard, are watched by wild,  
Fierce demon sprites. Have therefore care  
To choose some faithful friends to share  
This dangerous questing, and thy Queen  
Shall bear thee company, for ween  
Ye well no stranger canst thou trust  
In such emprise, but surely must  
Thy very self set hand thereto.

“ Now hearken further to the clue :  
Whene'er ye come to Krekynpit,  
Note where the lake in two doth split,  
Leaving a tongue of land between,  
With towering poplars well beseen :  
Then find two silver birchen trees,  
And search around the root of these  
Until ye see two small white stones,  
Graved with a skull and cross-laid bones.  
Then if ye six feet further follow,  
And stamp, an empty sound and hollow  
Shall greet thine ears : dig there, and ye,  
Six short feet down, a door shall see  
Made fast with curious bolts and locks,  
Contrived to overpass the shocks  
Of rage or rapine ; thrice stamp hard,  
And speak the watchword—straight unbarred  
Shall be the door, stretched open wide,  
Which strongest spoilers had defied,

XVIII. The  
Wolf's dread  
care.

And all the glorious glittering prize  
Lie bare before thy wondering eyes.

“ My tongue forbearcth to repeat  
The unheardof wealth that soon will greet  
Thy ravished sight, for thou ere long  
Wilt own that fable, tale, or song  
Hath never told of aught so rare  
As that thou ownest.

Yet more fair  
Than all beside do I esteem  
One marvel which the brightest dream  
Hath never pictured, 'tis the crown  
Of Ermanric, whose high renown  
Still fills the world. Of purest gold  
Deft dwarf hands forged it, in the old  
And mighty days : wot well that this  
Cost many a thousand mark, ywis,  
For precious stones : around it stand  
Storied, all deeds the King's right hand  
Victorious wrought o'er land and sea,  
Swaying the wide world mightily.

“ This glorious work, the traitorous Bear  
Aspired as sovereign Lord to wear :—  
Vain futile dream !—Thy goodly head  
Shall o'er that crown new lustre shed.

“ Dear Lord, when all this good is thine,  
And doth in radiant splendour shine  
Around thy throne, from brimming heart  
Thy voice shall cry : ‘ How true thou art,  
O Reynard Fox, whose subtle wit  
Won all this treasure, and with it  
Hast dowered thy King : God give to thee  
Fair fortune, wheresoe'er ye be.’ ”

“ The King looked wondrous grave, and shook

His head—seemed deep in thought—then strook  
His beard, and said : “Thou, too, must come  
To point the weird and distant home”  
Thy hands chose out for this great good ;  
Who else can thread the intricate wood  
But thee alone? I oft have heard  
Of London, and a household word  
Is Paris : Acon and Cologne,  
For sacring rites and shrines are known  
To all who live, but Krekynpit  
Doth sound as though thy japing wit  
Had forged the name.”

Of little good

These words to Reynard smacked, he stood  
Dumfounded, then with injured air  
Turned on the King a haughty stare,  
And cried, “My Lord, dost thou the way  
Desire to know that leads from May  
To Rome’s great city? Dost thou dream  
I’d lead thy steps towards Jordan’s stream?  
Your knowledge of the country’s lie  
Argues small wit in geography.  
'Fore heaven I wot not what ye ween,  
But when my witness thou hast seen,  
Thy weening changed will be I trow.”

Then with a calm unruffled brow,  
He cried : “Stand forth, O Cuwaert Hare,  
Before our gracious Lord, and bare  
Thy soul of everything thou know’st—  
Why gaze ye then as though a ghost  
Arose to scare thee? Wherefore quake  
Thy limbs thus wretchedly and shake  
With trembling as thou wert acold?  
Pluck up good heart, and speak with bold  
Clear utterance, by the faith and troth

XVIII. The  
Wolf's dread  
care.

Ye owe the King ; as on thine oath,  
I charge thee speak."

Then Cuwaert cried :

"Nay, trust ye well, although I died  
For speaking truth, I will not lie."  
Quoth Reynard : "Say then manfully,  
Know ye where standeth Krekynpit ?  
Or is thy mind all blank of it ?"

"Twelve years ago, I knew it well,"  
The Hare replied, "a place most fell  
And lone it is : within a wood  
Named Hulsterlo it stands ; small good  
Found ever woman, man, or child,  
In that obscure and lonesome wild.  
Sorrow and hunger, fear and cold,  
Past all that ever tongue hath told,  
I underwent in that drear spot.  
Some desperate men had cast their lot  
Therein with Father Symonet  
The Frisian, hoping thus to get  
Share in the villain coin he made,  
And by that base nefarious trade,  
Report gave out, that they and he,  
Caroused in jovial company.  
But that was ere the time I found  
Good fellowship with Ryn the hound,  
Who hath from many a danger saved  
My little life, and thereto braved  
The direst peril of his own.  
If he were here, most clearly shown  
'Twould be by his true tongue, that I  
Ne'er trespassed 'gainst his Majesty."

"Enough !" exclaimed the Fox : "refrain  
All further words, and quick regain  
Thine home, thy fellowship and friends."

Then turning towards the King : " this ends,  
I trust, my Lord, thy cruel doubt :  
Is not then all my tale without  
One blot or flaw ? "

" Forgive, I pray,"

The King replied, " that so astray  
Suspicion led me : now the road  
I prithee lead toward where is stowed  
The precious hoard."

" Dear King, I deem,"

Replied the Fox, " that strange 'twill seem  
Should I the least reluctance show  
To seek that good, but ye must know,  
That thou behold'st in me a man  
'Neath holy Church's curse and ban ;  
And therefore 'twould great censure bring  
On thy most reverend name of King  
If thou in company wert seen  
With one accurst, and well I ween  
'Twere grievous wrong should blur of blame  
Sully thy pure and spotless name  
Through my demerit. Hearken while  
I tell the wretched tale, though vile  
Perchance it make me in thine eyes.

" My condemnation did arise  
After this manner : Isegrym  
Was seized, long years past, with a whim  
To wear the shackle of such vows  
As monks are bound by, and to house  
Himself within a Convent's walls,  
'Neath shaven crown : but soon the calls  
Of hunger caused him to repent,  
And round the countryside he went,  
Complaining that his death 'twould be  
To stay within the monkery.

XVIII. The  
Wolf's dread  
care.

Although he day by day devoured  
As much good meat as would have dowered  
Six other monks with ample food,  
Yet stoutly swore he by the rood,  
That still he hungered, and complained  
That if the year through he remained  
Within the Cloister, he must die.  
This touched my tender heart, and I,  
As being near to him of kin,  
Advised that he no longer in  
The holy building should abide.  
Thereon he fled, and woe betide  
My wretched self; since then, accurst  
I wander o'er the land, athirst  
For Papal absolution; soon  
As breaks the morrow's dawn, that boon  
To seek, I take my way towards Rome,  
And, ere again I see my home,  
I must across the perilous sea  
Wend to the Holy Land, and ye  
Shall see my face no more until,  
The curse removed, I may fulful  
All tasks ye call on me to do.

“ To fare to Krekynpit with you  
While 'neath the Holy Father's ban  
Would more dishonour bring thee than  
I dare give thought to : men would say  
Ten thousand evil things should they  
Behold thee wend with one whose state  
Is known for excommunicate.”

The King said : “ Since it seems ye stand  
Beneath the Church's curse, and banned,  
In virtue of the Pope's decree,  
The danger seemeth verily



Supremely great, and might bring down  
Dishonour both on State and Crown,  
If I to Krekynpit should wend,  
Faring with thee as guide and friend.  
'Twere doubtless better that I take  
Cuwaert as pilot, till ye make  
Your peace with Holy Church, and I  
Strict counsel give ye, that ye try  
To rid thee rathely of this curse."

XVIII. The  
Wolf's dread  
care.

"My Lord," exclaimed the Fox, "lest worse  
My state should grow, I straightway start  
Towards Rome, and having made depart,  
My foot shall tire not, day nor night,  
Until my soul, made pure and white,  
From sin's dark stain once more shall be  
Fit for thy kingly company."

"Reynard," the King replied, "I deem  
That now in goodly train ye seem  
Towards holy life : God give ye grace  
The path of penitence to trace,  
Till all fulfilled is thy desire  
To free thy soul from curse so dire."

Whene'er this parleying was done,  
Raised on a high-built vantage-stone  
King Nobel spake, with strict command,  
That all the motley train should stand  
Around the throne within a ring  
Where sprang the fresh sweet grass, and bring  
Themselves in order of estate  
And birth. But foremost, and elate  
In royal favour, Reynard stood  
Without a blush beside the good  
And gracious Queen, whom he, above  
All others, had good cause to love.

XVIII. The  
Wolf's dread  
care.

Then spake the King : " All ye who here  
Stand round about, give careful ear  
To that I say. Or rich or poor,  
Or young, or those who near death's door,  
Must know, that in good days gone by,  
None in our counsels ranked more high  
Than Reynard Fox : until alas !  
In lapse of time it came to pass  
That he, by ill desires misled,  
Committed divers crimes, and fled  
The hand of Justice : taken and tried,  
Condemned and sentenced, he had died  
By hangman's hands : but all have heard  
How he, with plain straightforward word  
Hath laid all bare a fearful plot,  
And e'en hath hesitated not  
To charge therein his kin and friends.  
This have we counted full amends  
For trespass done, and hence the Queen,  
And we ourselves to mercy lean,  
And once more take him to our grace,  
Restored to fill his former place  
Within our Council, wherefore I  
Command that henceforth ye apply  
Your hearts in such wise as to give  
To him due worship, and to live  
With him, and all those beasts whom he  
Calls kin and friends, in amity.

" I charge, moreover, that ye pay  
Respect and honour every way  
To Reynard's wife and children, greet  
Them aye with deference, as is meet  
Toward those of rank.

Let no man dare  
Henceforward grievance to declare

Against the Fox.

XVIII. The  
Wolf's dread  
care.

“ In former days  
He hath misdone, but now betrays  
Awakened conscience and deep woe  
For ancient wrong, and fain would show  
Henceforth how deeply penitence  
Hath stirred his heart. He Romeward hence,  
So soon as rays of morning break,  
Will pass on pilgrimage, and take  
No thought of rest until he win  
The Pope's free pardon for the sin  
Which mars his life.

Then o'er the sea,  
Of peril heedless, fareth he  
As pilgrim through the Holy Land,  
And when his well-loved native strand  
He once more treads, exempt from stain  
Of sin, new life begin again.”

The Raven Tyselin, who spoke  
But rarely, gave a boding croak,  
And leapt across the Court to where  
In parlance stood the Wolf and Bear,  
With Tybert Cat beside them: “ Now  
What say ye caitiffs? for I trow,”  
Quoth he, “ your day henceforth is o'er ;  
The King will list your plaints no more :  
Afar from Court may ye retire  
Now Reynard courtier is, and squire ;  
In high esteem and favour great  
His sovereign holds him. Though of late  
Ye fondly hoped to overreach  
His plans, he may in turn impeach  
Your doings. While forgiveness free  
His trespass gains, the twain of ye

XVIII. The  
Wolf's dread  
care.

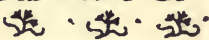
Are doomed for crime and treachery."

Cried Isegrym: "Think not that I  
Will credence give hereto, ye lie  
Sir Tyselin, bird of perjured throat."

"Not so," the Raven croaked, "ye dote,  
And dream half waked, ye foolish pair."

Then towards the King strode Wolf and Bear,  
While half in hiding Tybert Cat,  
In deadly fear and trembling, sat  
And listened: fain would he forgive  
Reynard his loss of eye to live  
In friendship with him now, for dread  
Shook him, lest hot resentment led  
His foe to do him mischief worse  
Than heretofore, and many a curse  
He poured on that ill day when Fate  
Brought him beneath the Fox's hate.



·XIX· HOW· THE· WOLF· &·  
·THE· BEAR· WERE· ARREST·  
·ED· BY· THE· LABOUR· OF·  
·REYNARD· 

WITH haughty step across the field  
Stalked Isegrym, resolved to yield  
No jot to Reynard. To the Queen  
He gave mock thanks, though angry spleen  
Shone through each specious word he spake,  
The while he shaped his tongue to make  
Fresh charge of crime against the Fox.

Burst forth the King : " Thy treason shocks  
All sense of justice : dost thou think  
That vaunting speech can make me shrink  
From that stern duty which I owe  
To all my subjects? Learn to know  
That laws once 'stablished may not be  
Made nought of with impunity."

XIX. The  
Wolf's lost  
shoes.

The Marshals forthwith gave he charge  
That they no longer left at large  
Bruin or Isegrym. Ne'er yet  
Were rabid dogs more ill beset  
Than this sad twain. So fast and hard  
Their limbs were pinioned, as debarred  
Or rest or movement, while sharp pain  
Each joint endured ; nor could they gain  
Relief by roaring. Through the night  
Thus lay they, nor did morning's light  
Assuage their wretchedness.

Hear now

How Reynard's envious heart did show  
Foul rancorous hate.

He firstly made

His suit before the Queen, that flayed  
Might be so much of Bruin's hide  
From off his back, as would provide  
Himself a useful travelling scrip,  
Of such good sort as might equip  
A pilgrim Romeward bound, and asked  
Moreover, seeing that he basked  
In favour now, the right to choose .  
Whereso he list two pairs of shoes.

Then mark again what vengeful spite  
Was masked beneath this plea to dight  
His feet with travelling-gear. Quoth he :

XIX. The  
Wolf's lost  
shoes.

“ Dear Queen, most needful 'tis to me  
That someone four good shoes should lend  
Of kind all pilgrims wear who wend  
To distant lands. Now Isegrym  
Hath four such shoes, and if from him  
I borrowed two, and then two more  
You gave me from the needless four  
Aunt Ersewyn wears (who loves her home  
So well that rarely doth she roam,  
And therefore hath but small excuse  
To keep two pair in constant use),  
Then would I, wending on my way,  
Thy soul's health make my matin lay,  
While, that ye meet no scathe or wrong,  
Should be my daily evensong :  
Before all else 'tis just and right  
Thy pilgrim should, both day and night,  
Assail the throne of Heaven with prayer  
To make thy soul its constant care,  
And grant that when ye pass from this  
Sad world ye find eternal bliss.”

The Queen replied : “ Dear Reynard, thou  
With wisdom speakest ; well, I trow,  
Behoveth it that two good pair  
Of shoes ye gain before ye fare  
So far afield. To keep thy feet  
Safe, sound, and whole, 'twere more than meet  
Ye be well shod, for ye must pass  
O'er rocks and mountains, and, alas !  
By many a sharp and stony way ;  
Therefore with firm assurance may  
Ye take one pair from Isegrym,  
And wherefore should ye not benym  
A pair from Ersewyn's feet, for those  
Will match your Uncle's ? Evil blows

The wind that carrieth nought of good  
 To one or other, and though should  
 The loss of shoes be loss to each  
 Of life, yet you thereby would reach  
 The pious end ye have in hand,  
 Namely to gain the Holy Land  
 With speed : despatch ye to engage  
 In this most needful pilgrimage.”

XIX. The  
 Wolf's lost  
 shoes.



XX. HOW ISEGVM & ERSEWYN MUST SUFFER THEIR SHOES TO BE PLUCKED OFF & HOW THEY WERE DONE ON TO REYNARD.

**S**UCHWISE did this false palmer trim  
 His tale, that he from Isegrym  
 Won two good shoes.

No fowl at roast,  
 Or victim lashed to whipping-post,  
 E'er lay or stood more helpless than  
 The wretched wolf : salt rivers ran  
 Adown his cheeks the while they haled  
 His claws from off his feet, nor failed  
 To lay the nerves and sinews bare,  
 Till red the life-blood flowed.

Like fare  
 Dame Ersewyn must befall : the claws  
 Were reft from both her hinder paws  
 As supine lay she on the grass  
 With heavy cheer, and so, alas !  
 Reynard hath gained what they have lost  
 With dire misease, and cruel cost.

Then laughed the Fox, and scorning spake :

XX. Reynard's far fare.

“ Dear Aunt, much sorrow for my sake  
Thou now dost suffer : poignant grief  
I feel thereat, yet some relief  
It is to know that thou (whose fond  
And kindly love I prize beyond  
That of all beasts who claim to be  
Of kith or kin allied to me)  
Shalt freely that sweet pardon share  
In search of which I now must fare  
Across the sea, sustained by hope  
Of mercy from our Lord the Pope.

So woe was Ersewyn, weak and worn,  
She scarce had voice to speak her scorn  
And wrath of heart, but feebly said :  
“ Ah ! Reynard, well thy spite hath sped  
Thus far, yet trust I heaven will send  
Such guerdon on thee, that thy end  
May carry warning for all time,  
That though unblushing fraud and crime  
Prosper awhile, yet those who sow  
The wind, the whirlwind's blast shall know.”

Bruin and Isegrym kept peace :  
Reproachful words give little ease  
To tortured backs, or shackled limbs ;  
Silent they lie, while anguish brims  
Their eyes with tears.

The wary Cat  
Had disappeared, well judging that  
Occasion given, small doubt it were  
The fate 'neath which the Wolf and Bear  
Now writhed, the Fox would put on those  
Who, friends to them, must be his foes.

No sooner rose the morrow's sun,



Than, willing work so well begun  
To carry through, the Fox with grease  
Prepared his shoes, and ne'er did cease  
To laugh the while he dight his feet  
Therewith, then made all haste to meet  
The King and Queen, 'fore whom he came  
With merry cheer, devoid of shame  
Or blush. Quoth he: "A fair good-morrow,  
Great Lord and Dame, unflecked by sorrow,  
Befall ye both; your royal grace  
I dare beseech, ere yet I trace  
My pilgrim steps, for one boon more.  
'Tis this: that as was used of yore,  
The Church's holy fellowship  
May bless the palmer's staff and scrip  
I bear from hence, for this would gain  
Me praise and honour, and I fain  
Beneath the Church's ward would wend.

The King exclaimed: "Ho! straightway send  
For Bellyng Ram," to whom quoth he:  
"Sir Bellyng, it behoves that ye  
For Reynard Fox should sing High Mass,  
Ere he on pilgrimage doth pass  
Across the sea. Scrip, shell and staff,  
Bless thou for him, on our behalf."

Replied the Ram: "An impious thing  
The Pope would count it, should I sing  
High Mass for one who 'neath the curse  
Of Holy Church lies bound, and worse  
Than death itself would hap to me."

Exclaimed the King: "That scarce can be!  
For, hath not Master Gelys said  
That though a man his life had wed

XX. Reynard's far fare.

To all the sins the world hath known,  
Yet, when he once the priest hath shown  
Goodwill to mend, and vice forsake,  
Desiring earnestly to take  
The Church's precious Sacrament  
Of holy penance, and be bent  
By ghostly counselling to live,  
That God will pardon, and forgive  
His sins in gracious mercy? So  
When Reynard shows desire to go  
Across the perilous wide sea,  
Throughout the Holy Land, shall he  
Be not of all his sins made clear,  
To live in God's most holy fear?"  
Then answered Bellyn:

"Gracious King,

On thy good safeguard must I fling  
Myself, if I this office do,  
Or else with bitter tears might rue  
The pains which Bishop Prendelor  
Would deftly wield, should he before  
His dread Archdeacon Loosandbind  
Call me to answer, or else find  
That it behoved him to employ  
Sir Rapiamus, whose prime joy  
Centres in worrying humble clerks."

The King waxed wroth, and cried: 'It marks  
Thee out least grateful among men,  
And proves thy churlish mind, that when  
But once for many a year I ask  
Of thee some light and simple task,  
Then straightly fall ye to excuse  
The debt ye owe me, and abuse  
My kindly nature: sooner I

Would hang than urge thee to comply  
With evil grace."

XX. Reynard's far fare.

When Bellyn saw  
The King thus wroth, the Church's law  
He clean forgat, and quook with fear—  
Then to the Altar drew anear,  
And having sung with solemn voice  
His Mass, from holy books made choice  
Of portions opportune to read  
O'er Reynard.

Marvellous small heed  
He set thereby, except that it  
Told to his weal and benefit  
That thus 'twas 'fore all eyes made known  
How much was he in worship grown.

When Bellyn Ram had duly sung  
His Mass devoutly through, he hung  
Around the Fox's neck the scrip  
Late cut from Bruin's hide. "Now grip,"  
Quoth he, "this palster straight and stout,  
And so thou art, beyond all doubt,  
Right well arrayed thy voyage to take."

Most woful cheer did Reynard make  
As came he towards the King, and feigned  
As though his eyelids scarce refrained  
From bitter tears : but no worse smart  
Distressed, in truth, his crafty heart  
Than keen vexation, that hard fare  
(Equal to that which Wolf and Bear  
Endured) some others had escaped,  
Yet nevertheless his face he shaped  
As worn with grief, and faltering spoke  
With sobs, as though each word would choke  
His utterance : "All good people pray

XX. Reynard's far fare.

For my lone soul when far away  
From home and friends, as I for ye  
Will duly tell my rosary."  
E'en while he glozed, the Fox would fain  
Begone from thence, for guilt's dark stain  
Lay on his soul, and well he knew  
What stern requital was his due.

"Dear Reynard," quoth the King, "I grieve  
Sorely ye take such hurried leave  
Of those who love thee: prithee stay  
Till night once more gives place to day."

Quoth he: "Dear King, the time is ripe  
That I should Romeward wend, to wipe  
Away the Church's ban, and wage  
War with the fiend in pilgrimage."

"May God go with thee," cried the King:  
And all those beasts, who in the ring  
Stood crowding round, he straight decreed  
Should lend their aid the Fox to speed  
With strictest safeguard on the way.

Alack for Wolf and Bear, who lay  
Fast bounden, while dared no man seek  
To salve their wounds, or even speak  
Them kindly words.

Oh! had ye seen  
How Reynard boldly trod the green  
And fragrant turf, with mincing gait,  
Of mien most grave, albeit elate,  
With wallet, staff and shoes equipped,  
Ye sore had laughed: no bride e'er tripped  
To Church in daintier sort than he  
Showed now to all men, outwardly.

Then crowed his heart with joy to think  
That men who strove to make him drink,  
But that same morn, Death's bitter cup,  
Were even those who now bore up  
His name in honour, and the King,  
Whose wrath had been the masterstring  
Of all his actions, so was fooled  
By cunning flattery, and o'erruled  
By greed of gain, that now was bent  
His will to suit his foe's intent !  
Oh Reynard ! Fox of double face,  
True pilgrim wert thou of deuce ace !

He loudly cried : " My Lord, I pray  
Ye come no further on the way  
Whither my steps tend, lest some harm  
Befall thereby : no small alarm  
I feel lest those two traitors, who  
Now lie in durance, might to you  
Work grievous ill, by treacherous plot  
Shouldst thou wend hence, for well I wot  
Their cunning schemes.

Therewith he stood

On hinder legs erect : " My good  
Dear King and friends," quoth he, " a great  
And precious pardon doth await  
My soul at Rome : if ye will be  
Partners of equal share with me  
Therein, let orison and prayer  
Besiege kind Heaven, to make its care  
Your faithful pilgrim."

" Rest," cried they,  
" Sure of our prayers, both night and day."

Then turning round his face, he bade

XX. Reynard's far fare.

The King a last adieu : so sad  
And doleful looked he, that but few  
Stood by who felt not pity's dew  
Bestream their cheeks. Then quickly he  
Cried out with merrier cheer : " I see  
Two dear friends close at hand who might  
Attend my steps, and thus make bright  
And cheerful, long and toilsome fare.  
Dear Bellyn Ram and Cuwaert Hare,  
We ever staunch good friends and true  
Have been since earliest breath we drew ;  
Through all the ills and woes of life,  
No angry words, or bickering strife  
Have ever torn our souls, nor e'er  
Your tongues have plained on me, but fair  
And evenhanded have ye been.  
Right virtuous, pure, and well beseen  
Moreover, is your mode of living,  
A notable example giving  
To other beasts of ghostly life ;  
Your hearts know nought of angry strife  
Or envious hate ; ye hanker not  
For flesh, but simple grass, I wot,  
And tender leaves, are all ye need.  
Ah ! once, from worldly longings freed,  
Such diet was my daily use  
When lived I as a poor recluse  
In hope of heaven."

With such fair words  
Of flattery, he these twain, like birds,  
Hath taken in his fowler's net  
Of wily speech : and so they let  
Him guile them, till they stood before  
Malperdy's dark and treacherous door.



·XXI· HOW· CUWART· THE·  
·HARE· WAS· SLAIN· BY·  
·REYNARD· THE· FOX· §

**T**HITHER arrived, the Fox exclaimed :  
“ Dear Bellyn, though in truth ashamed  
To stay my journey, yet great need  
I have of Cuwaert’s help to speed  
Some private matters ; rest thou here  
The while we enter ; much I fear  
That taking leave of Ermelyne  
Will be a sad, heart-breaking scene,  
When she perceiveth that I bear  
The scallop shell, and pilgrim gear ;  
And Cuwaert, in her sore distress,  
May speak sweet words of gentleness  
To solace her.”

The Ram replied :

“ Nay, rest assured I will abide  
Thy rathe return with ready heart,  
I see it wrings thy soul to part  
Thus quickly, and devoutly pray  
That Cuwaert’s kindly comfort may  
Assuagement bring to Ermelyne.

And thus with guileful speech ’tis seen  
How Reynard lured the simple Hare  
Within his Castle.

Found they there  
Dame Ermelyne and her cublings twain.  
Scarce could her eyes from tears refrain

XXI.  
Cuwaert's  
sad fate.

Of joy at Reynard's safe return.  
Small wonder that her heart should burn  
With anxious fear, lest gaol or death  
Her partner held, but now a breath  
Of deep relief she drew, yet saw  
With marvel that his dexter paw  
A palster held, the while a scrip  
Of bearskin, slung across his hip,  
He carried : short and quick, she said,  
"Oh ! tell, dear Reyner, hast thou sped ?  
And wherefore then this strange attire ?"  
Quoth he : "Thou'dst judge me for a liar  
Should I set forth the exciting tale  
Of prison and judgment—but a veil  
Shall rest thereon—yet must thou know  
Some news of moment : forth I go  
On pilgrimage far oversea.  
Nathless, with will to honour me,  
Our gracious Lord in pledge hath ta'en  
The Wolf and Bear, who safe remain  
In bondage, till once more I come  
Unscathed to my beloved home.  
Beyond this boon, a further debt  
I owe the King. With deep regret  
I needs must tell you that the Hare,  
Towards whom such kindly love we bare,  
Was first, by witness of the King,  
Among those men who dared to bring  
Foul charge against me, therefore he  
Is freely ours, and freely we  
With him may deal : by life and troth  
I feel my kindly heart wax wroth  
With such a traitor."

When he heard  
This oath, quick fear and anguish stirred  
The victim's breast, who fain had fled,



But, 'twixt the gate and him, with dread  
Ferocious aspect, Reynard stood,  
And cried : "O traitor ! nought but blood  
Can expiate thy many crimes  
Against me wrought in bygone times."

XXI.  
Cuwaert's  
sad fate.

Loud screamed the Hare : " Ho ! Bellyn ! aid,  
Ere this false pilgrim Fox hath made  
A victim of thy friend."

Small care

Had Reynard of his cries, but tare  
With ravenous teeth his throat atwo ;  
Then grinned : " Ha ! ha ! how kindly blew  
The wind that brought this timorous beast  
Within our borders—dainty feast  
We one and all of him may make,  
And having eaten well, will slake  
Our thirst with blood—right heartily  
I thank our noble Lord that he  
Hath blessed our board with generous cheer ;  
Feast we to-day devoid of fear,  
And if the King hath aught to say  
In reprobation of the way  
In which I've entertained the Hare,  
With lightsome hearts will we prepare  
To face the worst—no single snap  
Of fingers care I what may hap !

Quoth Ermelyne : " Ye but mock, I trow,  
And beg that ye will tell me how,  
Unscathed, thou didst escape from Court,  
And wherefore did the Hare escort  
Thy footsteps hither."

Quoth he : " Dame,

From deadliest foe, the King became  
My warmest friend, for so I plied

XXI.  
Cuwaert's  
sad fate.

His ear with flattering tales, that died  
Within his breast the cruel hate  
He lately bore me, and as great  
Became his love : but quickly, thin  
As frailest webs that spiders spin,  
His friendship yet will wax, I fear,  
If he through some kind friend should hear  
How Cuwaert happed to meet his death :  
Then doubtless would he waste his breath  
In oaths profane, and vows to check  
My course, and put around my neck  
A cord.

          Methinks 'twere well to steal  
From forth this spot, ere yet we feel  
His kindling ire, and strive to find  
Some countryside, where heaven is kind  
In giving plenteous food, and we  
May pass our life days jollily.  
I know a woodland, not far hence,  
Where shadowing trees and thickets dense  
Afford good shelter, and the air  
Is sweet and healthful past compare.  
Seven years 'twill serve us. Many a pheasant,  
Partridge, and woodcock, will those pleasant  
Green alleys give us : shady dells  
Are there, where bubble crystal wells  
Of freshest water, and thereout  
Ofttimes may we a spotted trout,  
Scoop up with nimble paw : Ah! God!  
What joyous days, despite the rod  
The King holds o'er us, may we spend  
In that sweet solitude, and end  
Our lives there, void of fear and woe.  
Truth is, the King hath let me go  
Because I led him to believe  
That he might wondrous wealth achieve

From out a fosse at Krekynpit  
(A place that lives but in my wit),  
By digging thence unheard-of treasure.  
We scarce need doubt, that past all measure  
Will rage his anger when the truth  
Flashes across him—then forsooth  
He'll hunt my life with most extreme  
And deadly hate: ye well may deem  
That many a bold and barefaced lie  
I had to forge, and many a sly,  
Well rounded tale must needs invent  
Before his stern resolve was bent  
From my destruction unto that  
Of my delators. Tybert Cat  
Hath fled away, and Bruin Bear,  
With Isegrym the Wolf, doth share  
The dreary prison lately mine.  
Peril and death no longer twine  
About my footsteps: wot ye well  
That having freed me out that hell  
Of woe, small lust have I to come  
Therein again. Now once my thumb  
Is safely drawn from out the mouth  
Of our most gracious Lord, no drouth  
Feel I to thrust therein my head."

"Ah! Reyner dear," Dame Ermelyne said,  
"My counsel is we wander not  
From out this forest; well we wot,  
In this our ancient home, each hole  
And all its windings; each tree bole  
Some friendly landmark points: its night  
Hath no more terror than the light  
Of fair-eyed day, and therefore I  
Give earnest counsel we should try  
No unexplored and stranger-land.

XXI.  
Cuwaert's  
sad fate.

Here have we subject 'neath our hand  
What thing soe'er our hearts desire.  
What Baron dares to boast of higher  
Or more established rank than thou  
Among our neighbours? Sweet, I trow,  
And pleasant is our ancient home,  
And, though our Lord the King should come  
On slaughter bent, and lay his siege  
Around us, dost thou deem our liege  
Could work us harm? Consider ye  
How many crossing-holes there be,  
And secret by-paths, ways, and tracks  
Known well to us, the while he lacks  
The wit to follow in and out  
Their dædal turnings; much I doubt  
That ever he will find his way  
Herein; but one thing sore dismay  
Doth cause within my loving heart,  
To wit—that thou must soon depart  
Far oversea."

Loud laughed the Fox,  
Then cried: "Dear Ermelyne, it shocks  
Me much to find that thou so ill  
Hast learned my practice: forthwith still  
Thy fear of this far faring; pray,  
Dost thou believe I must away  
Forth on this pilgrimage, because  
I spin a fable thin as gauze  
To blind the dull-eyed King? Dear Dame,  
Set nought thereby: no spark of shame  
Have I for broken vows. A man  
I knew of old (whose wit outran  
A thousand others) oft declared  
That he from perjury's guilt was spared  
Who took a forced bydwongen oath  
Pressed on, that is, to one that's loth,

And, as the vow was pressed on me,  
To make a pilgrim-voyage o'er sea  
To distant lands, against my will,  
Small purpose have I to fulfil  
The oath I sware. 'T would not avail  
To me the worth of one cat's tail  
To follow out this pilgrimage,  
And therefore will to your most sage  
And prudent counsel give good heed.  
What care I though the King should speed  
His hosts against us? Here abiding,  
And in our fastnesses confiding,  
We need not fear what strength or might  
Can work against us, but will fight  
Brute force by subtle wiles. Unkind  
Were Fortune's hand could we not find  
(When I unpin my pack of wares)  
Good means to foil the King's weak snares.  
If harm he seeks, by Heaven, I vow  
That ne'er on any man till now  
Did such a storm of ruin break,  
As that 'neath which his throne shall shake."

Now, while this murderous meal and chat  
Went forth inside, impatient sat  
Bellyn without, and lastly grew  
Impatience into anger: "You  
Long needless parleying hold," he cried,  
"Dost then suppose that nought beside  
I have to do, but loiter here  
And wait your pleasure? Doth a mere  
Adieu take all this time to say?  
Why, in the Devil's name, I pray,  
Doth Reynard keep you?"

When he heard  
This boisterous call, with gentle word

XXI.  
Cuwaert's  
sad fate.

Came Reynard forth, and softly said :  
"Dear Bellyn, prithee be not led  
To use harsh words towards thy friend  
Good Cuwaert Hare ; he doth but spend  
Brief space in comforting his Aunt,  
Whose loving mind grim fear doth haunt  
She ne'er shall see her husband more.  
Dost deem it fitting thou therefore  
Shouldst thus be wroth? 'Tis his desire  
That forward go ye, while her dire  
O'erwhelming grief he strives to assuage  
With kindly comfort ; I engage  
His flying foot will soon o'ertake  
Thy sober pace. 'Twould surely make  
Thy tender heart to bleed, if thou  
Shouldst see the anguished grief that now  
Bows down my wife to think that I  
Must wend as pilgrim."

"Verily,"

Quoth Bellyn, "When I called, I thought  
That Cuwaert cried for help, and sought  
To know what ailed him."

"Did ye fear,"

Exclaimed the Fox, "that evil cheer  
Had fallen on Cuwaert 'neath my roof?  
That would indeed be sharp reproof  
To my most hospitable house,  
Wherein, I trust, the meanest mouse  
Were safely sheltered. Hear ye then  
The sad and simple story: when  
Entering, I told dear Ermelyne  
That we must part, ye well may ween  
What sorrow seized her: straight she fell  
In deathlike swooning: surely well  
Might Cuwaert cry for aid, and he  
Shrieked therefore: "Bellyn, help thou me."

The Ram made answer : " Sore afraid  
Was I, when thus he cried for aid,  
That Cuwaert suffered grievous harm."

XXI.  
Cuwaert's  
sad fate.

" Good friend," the Fox cried, " no alarm  
Thou needst to feel for one who stays  
Beneath my roof-tree: it would raise  
Shame in my breast if I the life,  
E'en of my children or my wife,  
Accounted holier than the guest  
Who deigns 'neath my poor cot to rest."



·XXII·HOW·THE·FOX·SENT·  
·THE·HEAD·OF·CUART·THE·  
·HARE·TO·THE·KING·BY·  
·THE·HANDS·OF·BELLYN·  
·THE·RAM· ♡ · ♡ · ♡

**T**HEN quoth he further : " Bellyn, pray  
Rememberest thou how yesterday  
The King and Council gave command  
That ere I left my native land  
My special care should be to send  
To him two letters? Ready penned  
Behold them in my hands ; wilt thou  
Take charge of them ?"

" Shall I, then, trow,"

Quoth Bellyn, " that by thee were writ  
These letters? Though I knew thy wit  
Surpassing good, I never wist  
That so adroitly thou couldst twist  
Thy hand to such rare work ; 'twill fill  
My soul with joy to aid thy will ;  
But cursed by evil hap I lack

XXII. Bellyn A proper mail wherein to pack  
runs post. Epistles fit to please the King."

Quoth Reynard : " Such a trifling thing  
As that shall be no hindrance, see  
The famous scrip which purposely  
The King bade work from Bruin's hide :  
To none of all my friends beside  
Thyself I'd trust it : safe therein  
Will ride the letters writ to win  
Worship and praise from our good Lord."  
Quoth Bellyn : " Nought could else afford  
My heart such joy as this great trust."

Straight Reynard sped indoors, and thrust  
Within the scrip sad Cuwaert's head :  
Forth came again, and lightly said,  
With cheerful visage : " Let me deck  
With this fair scrip thy well-formed neck ;  
But wouldst thou love and friendship gain  
From those who rule at Court, abstain  
From reading that it holds, and if  
Ye deem our gracious Lord seem stiff  
And formal with you, well ye might  
Tell him your hand 'twas did endite  
The letters twain, and by your rede  
And solemn counsel were agreed  
The well-weighed matters found therein ;  
And thereby shalt thou doubtless win  
The Royal favour."

Waxed right glad  
The simple Ram, assured he had  
Rare chance of credit, thanks, and praise.

Quoth he : " How greatly 'twill amaze  
The King and Court to learn that I  
Can read and write so skilfully.



And though, in truth, thereof I know  
No jot, yet oft it happeth so,  
That God's good wisdom doth permit  
Some men, possessed of little wit,  
By means of simple trick or fraud,  
To gain their neighbours' meed and laud  
For work or sapience not their own :  
The truth hereof will soon be shown  
By my example. Tell me though,  
Dear Reynard, shall not Cuwaert go  
To witness my success at Court?"

Quoth Reynard : " He doth now exhort  
His Aunt to patience, saying she  
Should dry her tears : 'twould, therefore, be  
Well that ye part alone. Beside,  
I must in private speech confide  
To Cuwaert some most subtle things."

Sped Bellyn forth, as though the wings  
Of that gold-fleeced Ram he wore,  
Who, long days past, to Colchis bore  
Young Phryxus through the air.

Midday

Was barely past before where lay  
The full Court came he, and the King  
Much marvelled when he saw him bring  
Again the scrip but lately made  
From Bruin's fell : awhile he stayed  
In silent wonder lost, then cried :  
" Whence come ye, Bellyn ? wherefore tied  
About your neck is that same scrip  
Which Reynard's suit availed to clip  
From off the back of Bruin Bear ?  
And tell us on your honour, where  
Is now the Fox."

XXII. Bellyn  
runs post.

“Whate’er I know,  
Great Lord, most gladly will I show,”  
Replied the Ram : “at your command  
I went with Cuwaert hand in hand,  
To Reynard’s house : elapsed short space,  
When said he : ‘Haste thou to retrace  
Thy steps, dear Bellyn ; wilt thou take  
Two letters for our liege Lord’s sake?’  
‘Nay,’ quoth I, ‘by my hopes of Heaven,  
Most gladly would I carry seven  
To please our Lord ;’ forthwith brought he  
This scrip, wherein, as you may see,  
Are two epistles, writ with care,  
In whose inditing goodly share  
My hand is proud to claim : I trow  
That having read them, ye’ll allow  
That ne’er with subtler craft and skill  
Were letters framed.”

“It is our will,”  
The King replied, “that Bochart read  
These letters ; knoweth he at need  
All manner languages.”

The Cat  
Untied the scrip, while Bellyn sat,  
Proudly, with all-expectant eyes.  
Judge then his horrorstruck surprise,  
When Bochart drew forth Cuwaert’s head,  
And cried : “Alas ! behold this dread  
And ghastly sight !”

The King exclaimed :  
“By Heaven ! my wisdom lies ashamed  
That e’er my kindly heart believed  
This villain Fox, who hath deceived  
Our credence grossly.”

Then was seen  
Of all men, how the King and Queen

Were sick at heart, and grief so deep  
Assailed their Lord, that all the heap  
Of Courtiers held their breath afear'd :  
Till lastly he, with head upreared,  
Sent forth a loud and bitter cry  
That seemed to shake the very sky,  
And such deep terror spread around  
That none dared speak, but stood as bound  
By magic spell.

The King's near sib,  
The Pard, Sir Fyrapeel, with glib  
And fearless words was first to speak ;  
Quoth he : " Great Lord, it shows but weak  
For thee to sorrow madding-wise,  
As though the Queen were dead, arise,  
And show thyself of nobler cheer.  
Art thou not King? Do not all here  
Submit to thy unbounded sway ?

The King made answer : " Truth ye say,  
Sir Leopard, but this subtle shrew,  
This born deceiver, doth imbrue  
His hands in blood unchecked, and show  
Such reckless spirit that scarce I know  
Where wisdom mastereth wrath. My friends,  
The Wolf and Bear, to serve his ends  
Have I foredone, and now most sore  
Remorse doth rack me that, before  
My best and noblest Barons, I  
Gave my belief implicitly  
To this depraved and worthless Fox.  
'Tis through my wife that all these mocks  
And japes befall me ; ne'er I wot  
Hath man good sterling counsel got  
From woman, since our Mother Eve,  
Her trusting husband did deceive

XXII. Bellyn  
runs post.

In Eden's bowers with foolish prate.  
Now clearly I perceive, too late,  
That grossly have I been befooled,  
Letting my judgment be o'erruled  
By intercession of my wife,  
And through her vain advice my life  
Is spoiled and wasted : shamed will stand  
My name henceforth, throughout the land.

"What though," replied Sir Fyrapeel,  
"Thou hast herein misdome, I feel  
Assured that thou ere long canst take  
Such vigorous order, that 'twill make  
Amends in full to those misused.  
All past offence would stand excused  
By Isegrym and Bruin Bear  
And Ersewyn if ye let them share  
(To compensate for shoes and skin)  
Bellyn, and all his kith and kin,  
For evermore : with plainest breath  
The Ram declared that Cuwaert's death  
Was his contrivance, therefore he  
Deserves to abide the penalty.  
And passing this, I give ye rede,  
Delay no moment, but with speed  
Let one and all go forth to fetch  
This murderous Fox, condemned as wretch  
That hath no further claim on law,  
And hang him straightway ; this will draw  
All hearts to thee in full content—  
My bolt is shot—my counsel spent."



XXIII· HOW· BELLYN· THE·  
RAM; &· ALL· HIS· LINEAGE·  
WERE· GIVEN· INTO· THE· HANDS  
OF· ISEGRYM· &· BRUIN· &· HOW  
HE· WAS· SLAIN· ✠ · ✠ · ✠

“WITH ready heart,” the King replied,  
“I list this rede, and straight confide  
To thee, Sir Fyrapeel, the charge  
To comfort, soothe, and set at large  
The prisoners, whom 'tis clear that I  
Condemned to bonds too hastily.”

Quick-footed, towards the dungeon took  
Sir Fyrapeel his road, and strook  
From off the limbs of Wolf and Bear  
Their manacles, and cried: “A fair  
And ample pardon doth the King  
Award ye; straightly doth it wring  
His royal heart with bitterest woe,  
To think his wit hath wandered so  
From wisdom's path, as once to trow  
The tale this base Fox told, but now  
With heart afire doth he repent  
His folly, and through me hath sent  
Strongest assurance of his love,  
And earnest purpose, that above  
Your former state shall ye be set  
In highest honour, till his debt  
Of restitution be apaid.  
Moreover, Bellyn Ram is made  
Your dower in fee, with all his kin;  
Henceforward free from taint of sin  
His lineage ye may drive and slay,

XXIII. The  
Ram's  
checkmate.

Harry and bite, till dooming day  
Crack o'er the world.

Ye both may hunt  
Moreover Reynard, till the brunt  
Of sharpest vengeance he hath felt,  
And all his kindred have been dealt  
Measure and mark of crime's reward.

"The King's great bounty doth accord  
This goodly grant and grace to you  
In faith that ne'er will ye misdo  
Against his realm, but lieges be  
With homage, faith, and fealty.  
Hail, then, with grateful thanks the rede  
I give, and rolling years shall breed  
New honours, whence all honours spring."

Thus did the noble Leopard bring  
To happy end and good success  
His mission. But most dire distress  
Fell on the wretched Bellyn, who  
Forewent his life : nor after knew  
His kindred peace, for Wolf and Bear  
Held chartered right and power to share  
Betwixt them all the ovine race,  
In whatsoever time or place  
Occasion haps, and ne'er have they  
Found respite since that fatal day.

The King, to show new love and care  
For Isegrym and Bruin Bear  
Above all other beasts, the Court  
Commanded to the fields, where sport  
And cheerful joyance filled the hours  
Twelve days and nights ; the woodland bowers  
And upland plains with pipe and song

Resounded, while the merry throng,  
 Forgetting grief and woe and pain,  
 Rejoiced that Heaven smiled once again ;  
 For sorrows past are soon forgot  
 By beasts and men alike, God wot !

XXIII. The  
 Ram's  
 checkmate.



XXIV. HOW THE KING HELD  
 HIGH FEAST & HOW LAPREEL  
 THE CONEY COMPLAINED  
 UNTO THE KING OF REY:  
 NARD THE FOX

TO this most glorious feasting came  
 Each beast and bird, to which a name  
 Was given when erst beneath the shade  
 Of Eden's sinless groves arrayed,  
 Adam, uncursed, beheld them ; ne'er  
 Since man's dread fall, till now, had care  
 So fled their hearts, and made them light  
 And joyous as that first sweet night  
 They knew existence. Soul entranced  
 To merry piping shawms they danced  
 The stately hove-dance, timed with beat  
 Of faultless rhythmic touch : all feet  
 That twinkled there knew well the pleasure  
 Of perfect cadence fallen to measure  
 That now sunk low, and now swelled high  
 From out the storm of minstrelsy.  
 Unsparing tables well ordained  
 Were freely piled ; fair plenty reigned  
 Unchecked, and reptile, bird, and beast  
 Avowed that ne'er before a feast  
 So full and bounteous eye had seen.  
 Then, banquets ended, on the green,  
 They, stretched at ease in careless rows,

XXIV. Joy  
rules the  
Host.

Regaled their eyes with rarest shows,  
While music's murmur, like a sea,  
Brake on their ears unceasingly.  
Well may the hearts of all men long  
To see such pageants, hear such song  
Yet once again ; but now no more  
Like festals reign ; their time is o'er.

The only beast that held aloof  
Was Reynard Fox ; beneath his roof,  
Unheeding, lay he wait to do  
New harm or mischief ; well he knew  
Small welcome could he hope to find  
With that good King, whose trusting mind  
His lies had treacherously betrayed.

Hear once again how he displayed  
Good will towards his fellows.

When  
The feast had dured eight days, in ken  
Of all the joyful throng appeared  
Laprael the Coney (as it neared  
The stroke of noon), all out of breath  
He gasped, as one who barely death  
Hath 'scaped, and falling down before  
The King and Queen, cried : " I implore,  
Great Lord, that thou to my complaint  
Give gracious ear, while I attain  
Reynard the Fox of treacherous crime,  
Marring this happy restful time  
Of peace and joyance.

Yester morn,  
So soon as night's dark veil was torn  
From day's bright eyes, I came, with will  
To reach thy Court, o'er yonder hill  
Where Reynard's castle rears its head.



He stood without the gate, and said,  
With pious air, his beads ; a gown  
Of pilgrim form he wore, and down  
His eyes were cast, with studious look,  
Seeming to read some holy book.  
Noting him thus engaged, I thought  
To pass him by unharmed, and sought  
To speak him fair, so gently said,  
' Good-morrow, Reynard ; ' but instead  
Of kindly answering word, he raught  
His right foot forth, and therewith caught  
Me such a blow 'twixt eyes and ears,  
As wellnigh stunned me ; blinding tears  
Suffused my sight, while terror-tost  
My soul was, lest I forthwith lost  
My head ; but, God be thanked, so light  
And nimbly flits my foot, that right  
Across the path I sprang, and fled,  
Yet barely 'scaped his claws—a thread  
My life had hung upon—then he,  
With grinning scowl, snarled angrily.  
Nor void of reason was my fear,  
For as all men may see, one ear  
Alone is left me, and four holes,  
In girth as great as barley boles,  
His claws have riddled through my head ;  
So deep the wounds are, and they bled  
So fast, that nigh aswoon I fell,  
Yet leapt forth sharply, or you well  
May judge no Lapreel had to-day  
Stood here to tell his tale ; away  
I ran, nor stayed my course until  
Betwixt us lay yon towering hill.

“ Dear King, of tender pity, grant  
That ere the sun doth fall aslant

XXIV. Joy  
rules the  
Host.

The mountains, thy command shall fetch  
Forth from his lair this murderous wretch,  
For, he at large, no man can go  
In safety o'er the heath, or know  
Good peaceful days: this treacherous shrew  
But lives new schemes and plots to brew."



·XXV· HOW· CORBANT· THE·  
·ROOK· COMPLAINED· ON· THE·  
·FOX· FOR· THE· DEATH· OF· ∞  
·SHARPBECKE· HIS· WIFE· ∞

**N**O sooner Lapreel's tale was ended,  
Than through the summer sky descended  
The purple-plumaged Corbant-Rook:  
His beak stood wide, his feathers shook  
With wild excitement, while he cried:  
"The Fox most grossly hath defied  
Thy peace, great Lord, and swift redress  
I claim against his frowardness.  
But yester morrow forth I went,  
With Sharpbecke, spouse beloved, intent  
On frolic mirth and joyous play,  
To ramble o'er the heath: there lay  
Reynard, as though death's cold hand bound  
His limbs—like any caitiff hound.  
His glazed eyes stared, his lolling tongue,  
From out his mouth, all listless hung:  
And Sharpbecke, filled with pity, said:  
'Ah! well-a-day! the Fox is dead!'

"All round about his body we  
With tearful eyes searched carefully  
To note some certain sign of death.

As last resort, to test his breath,  
Sharpbecke, with tender love, her ear  
Laid close beside his mouth : no fear  
Or doubt had she, but that misfell  
In grievous wise, for, woe to tell !  
The felon Fox did only wait  
His time, and she alas ! too late  
Beheld her danger, for he caught  
Her head and bit it off ; distraught  
With horror, loud I shrieked, and cried :  
' Ah ! would to Heaven that I had died  
For thee, dear wife, alas ! alas !  
That such a fearful scene should pass  
Beneath mine eyes.' Then instantly  
He leapt afoot and ran at me,  
Scowling so murderously, that fear  
Of death shook all my plumes, but near  
The spot there haply stood a tree  
Where refuge sought I hastily.  
And thence, with heartstrings torn, I saw  
The murderer fill his ravenous maw  
With Sharpbecke's corse : a cynic grin  
His face bore while he slonked her in,  
Till flesh and feathers, beak and bone,  
Had disappeared. With many a groan  
I watched him feast, until he went  
Back to his lair : then, worn and spent,  
And whelmed with grief, adown I flew,  
And gathered up, to bear to you,  
The few poor plumes his greed had left.  
I sat awhile as one bereft  
Of life : a thousand marks would be,  
Though coined of gold of Araby,  
Sum all too small to tempt again  
My spirit to undergo such pain  
And peril. Sorely doth it irk

XXV. The  
Rook's great  
woe.

My soul to show the piteous work  
This caitiff wrought. If thou wouldst praise  
And worship gain, and happy days  
Of peaceful rest, 'tis thine to inflict  
On Reynard Fox a vengeance strict  
And lasting. No man then would dare  
To lightly heed the sword ye bear,  
Or hold your safeguard in despite ;  
Else surely nor by day or night  
Shall Lord or Liege in safety go  
Along the highway, to and fro  
As need impells them. Mighty Lords  
Should rule in such wise as affords  
Safety to all : they much misdo  
Who heed not this, and sore shall rue  
Their slackness lastly, when they be  
Found partners of foul felony  
Which duty called their hands to hold  
In check with firmest grasp. O'erbold  
Perchance ye count me, when I pray  
Thou keep thy foot in virtue's way."



·XXVI HOW THE KING·  
·WAS WRATHFUL AT·  
·THESE COMPLAINTS·

**K**ING Nobel's wrath was throughly stirred  
When thus, alike from beast and bird,  
Rose new complaints of outrage done  
By Reynard Fox : as fire doth run  
Through carded flax, so ran the spark  
Of anger through his veins, and dark  
His visage lowered, while shook his limbs.

E'en as a boiling pot o'erbrims  
And spits and hisses, so he burst  
Wellnigh with fury, swore and curst  
All those around him, while his eyes  
Shot fire as forth from leaden skies  
Forked lightning glances : loud he brayed  
As roars a furious bull ; affrayed  
Thereat were all his Court, and quoke  
With deadly fear. At last he spoke  
With voice of thunder : " By my life,  
And by the troth. I owe my wife,  
And by my crown, I vow and swear  
That now the law's strong arm, laid bare,  
Shall strike the Fox such deadly blow  
That henceforth all the world shall know  
To dread my vengeance ; and in times  
Far distant, through all lands and climes  
My wrath shall still be told. O'ernice  
Was I to let the Fox entice  
Me thus so lightly to receive  
His words for gospel and deceive  
My practised ear with lying speech  
Of how as pilgrim he would reach  
Rome and the Holy Land ; what touch  
Of falseness guides his tongue to smutch  
And hide the truth ! Oh, wily Fox,  
That thus can stuff thy sleeve with flocks !  
But out alas ! the font and spring,  
Of all these foolish acts, which bring  
To me disgrace, I count the Queen,  
'Twas her weak womanish rede I ween  
That spared the Fox. But not the first  
Am I who bent his ear to curst  
Weak prate of woman. Jezebel  
Brought Ahab down to very Hell  
By ill advice ; Macbeth did slay

XXVI. King  
Nobel raves.

Good Malcolm, Scotia's King, astray  
Led by his wife ; and thousands more  
Of men have rued the day with sore  
Repentance, that a woman's tongue  
Was suffered weight to bear among  
Their counsels. Now do I command  
And pray all nobles of the land  
Who hold of me, and have desire  
To keep my friendship, that they fire  
Their hearts and minds to wreck this great  
Unheard-of trespass, and abate  
This murderer's power, that henceforth we  
May live our days out peaceably  
In wealth and worship : forward go  
Our banners till the Fox lies low."

When Isegrym and Bruin heard  
With what stout speech the King upstirred  
All men against the Fox, they grew  
In hope that shortly vengeance due  
They might upon their foeman take,  
But dared no accusation make  
For very dread : at last the Queen,  
With stately port, and noble mien,  
Calm words of reason spake in French,  
Hoping thereby his wrath to quench :  
" Sire, pour Dieu ne croye toutes choses  
Qu'on vous dise, ni vous dispose  
À jurer légèrement, a man  
Of worship should not curse and ban  
Till all the matter doth appear  
Past doubt or question, fair and clear ;  
I prithee calm the unreasoning ire  
Thy words betray : as King and Sire  
Of those who bend before thy throne,  
Thou shouldst not let thy oaths be sown

Broadcast and heedlessly around.  
But give each question most profound  
And careful thought : at last when plain  
The whole is made, 'tis thine amain  
Thy course to steer betwixt the two  
Who claim a hearing, giving due  
And careful thought to try which one  
Of rival suitors hath misdome  
Against his neighbour : oft it haps  
That he who plains hath made the lapse,  
And *Audi alteram partem* is  
A proverb writ in gold ywis ;  
As such it should for ever be  
Shrined in a judge's memory.  
'Tis true I held the Fox for good  
And loyal, therefore 'twas I stood  
His friend, and time may prove him just.  
Thou deem'st he has betrayed my trust ;  
But whether he prove or good or ill,  
I trow thy kingly worship still  
Were best assured didst thou proceed  
With care and caution, giving heed  
To each nice point. Such seems to me  
The unblemished path of equity.  
'Tis clear that howsoe'er ye shape  
Your judgment, scarce may Reynard 'scape  
Your hands, but must forthwith obey  
Thy will, although at last ye slay  
Or bind him fast."

Quoth Fyrapeel :

" Dear Lord, methinks the Queen doth deal  
Herein with subtle wit, and ye  
May safely do that thing which she  
Now counsels. But 'twere well to call,  
In solemn conclave, one and all  
Of those ye count for just and wise :

XXVI. King  
Nobel raves.

Should their united wits advise  
That Reynard's guilt is clear, all doubt  
Ends, and at once may ye, without  
More question, hang him : but though he  
Were twice the thief and shrew that we  
Account him, yet my counsel 'twere  
He nathless should enjoy a fair  
And patient trial, and aright  
Be judged."

" Sir Fyrapeel, we quite  
Agree," quoth Isegrym, " to this,  
Seen, it displeaseth not, ywis,  
Our gracious King : just, fair, and good  
Thy speech is, but if Reynard stood  
Here, and could prove that he were thrice  
As clear of every crime and vice  
As child new christened, I could yet  
Show deeds as foul as e'er have met  
Desert on gibbet. Thus his life  
Is forfeit to the cord or knife  
Of outraged justice. Nought I say  
Thereof, but calmly wait the day  
Of his appearing. This one thing  
Note well : the Fox hath told the King  
Of wondrous treasure-hoards below  
The ground, far off at Hulsterlo,  
Near Krekynpit. No bolder lie  
Hath ever yet been forgèd by  
The father of all untruth, yet he  
With bold unmatched effrontery,  
Beguiled the King's belief, and sore  
And cruel racking pains therefore  
Have fallen on me and Bruin Bear :  
Yet mark ! my very life I dare  
To stake, that not the smallest word  
Is true that rounds the tale we heard



Told by this perjured thief.

E'en now

He pills and plunders men who go  
Bypast his house across the heath.  
Nathless, Sir Fyrapeel, beneath  
Thy wit and our good King's desire  
I bow me ; all that ye require  
Must needs have place. If will were his  
To heark the King's command, ere this  
The Fox had come, but each behest  
He laughs to scorn, as though a jest  
Or jape he counted it."

Then said

The King : " Now swear I by my head  
That furtherforth no envoys wend  
To this false Fox, nor will I spend  
More words or threats, but straight ordain  
To all true men whose hearts are fain  
To help their King, that ere six days  
Are past, by divers roads and ways,  
They come with bombards, guns and bows,  
Both horse and foot in serried rows,  
To march, whene'er their Lord and Liege  
Sends summons forth, and straight besiege  
Malperdy's height ; a solemn vow  
I make herewith : ere seaward go  
But seven day's suns, will I root out  
Reynard the Fox, lest men should doubt  
If he or I be King.

Ye sires

And noble lords, in whom the fires  
Of truth and loyal faith burn bright,  
Speak forth if lust ye have to fight  
In this just cause."

The summer air

XXVI. King  
Nobel raves.

Was rent with shouts, and swords sprang bare  
From untold scabbards to the cry  
Of "Nobel! death or victory!"



XXVII·HOW·GRYMBERT·THE·  
DACHS·WARNED·REYNARD·  
THAT·THE·KING·WAS·WROTH·  
WITH·HIM·&·WOULD·SLAY·HIM·



WHEN Grymbert Dachs, own sister's son  
To Reynard Fox, heard censure run  
One-voiced against his Eme, he stood  
Tongue-tied with terror, while the blood  
Tingled with anger through his veins:  
Well knew he, nought but loss of pains  
'Twould be (how bold soe'er he spake  
The wrathful words which wellnigh brake  
From out his lips) to seek to stay  
The tide of wrath, therefore away  
With hurried steps he turned and fled  
Forth from the Court, and hasting sped  
By shortest route to Malperdy.  
For bush, nor rock, nor haw, stayed he,  
But ran so swiftly that the sweat  
Bedewed his fell, for still the threat  
King Nobel uttered loudly rang  
Within his brain, and thereof sprang  
A thousand fears: the while he went  
(Although his strength was wellnigh spent  
And overworn), the kindly elf  
Thus talked and communed with himself.

"Alas! dear Eme, what evil plight  
Art thou now cast in! Death's drear night

Hangs o'er thine head, and little hope  
Seems left that thou and I may cope  
With this new danger ; yet to save  
My closest kinsman's life from grave  
And imminent peril will I try  
My furthest craft and subtlety.  
Behold ! fresh scalding tears bedew  
My cheeks to think what pitfalls strew  
Thy path, dear Reynard : shouldst thou die  
The death that threatens thee, may I  
Thy suffering share. As chiefest head  
Of all our lineage, thou hast led  
The clan through many a tangled maze.  
What other knows the intricate ways  
Of life to thread as thou dost ? Ne'er  
Art thou at loss to find some fair  
And good excuse to help thy friends  
In time of need : no man depends  
On thee in vain : with such keen skill  
Thou weavest words, that good seems ill,  
And ill seems good : thy wit doth win  
With ease each case thou speakest in."

XXVII.  
Grymbert's  
fears grow.

Sped on the wings of love and fear,  
Unhindered, Grymbert drew anear  
The Fox's stronghold, where he found  
His Eme without the gate : hale, sound  
And mirthful seeming, while he played  
With two young pigeons, who had made  
Impatient flight from out the nest,  
High-built aloft, with view to test  
Their half-fledged wings, and helpless lay  
Prone on the earth, till past that way  
Came Reynard, who, whene'er he spied  
The helpless nestlings, loudly cried  
With greedy joy, and brought them straight,

XXVII.  
Grymbert's  
fears grow.

To serve for supper, towards his gate,  
And there disported him.

When he  
Caught sight of Grymbert, suddenly,  
Ceasing his play, with pleasant voice  
He cried: "It truly doth rejoice  
My heart past measure, Nephew dear,  
To see thy cheerful face draw near  
My poor abode; no man I vow  
Could be more welcome than art thou  
In rain or shine: of all my kin  
None ever had the grace to win  
Like thee my love and high esteem.  
Prithee, how fares the Court? ye seem  
Asweat, as thou hadst ceaseless run  
Hither in haste: hath aught been done  
Or said of moment in the great  
And busy world, whereof of late  
I wot so little?"

"Ah! dear Eme,"

Exclaimed the Dachs: "my tongue doth teem  
With evil tidings; ye have lost  
Both life and good! for such the cost  
Must prove to thee if by his oath  
The King should stand, though I am loth  
To credit all that he hath sworn;  
To wit, that ere seven days are born,  
With trumpets blare, and roll of drum,  
All men who own his sway shall come  
Hither in arms; folk skilled with bows,  
Horsemen and footmen, and all those  
Who shoot with guns and bombards; brand  
And torch he bids them bear in hand  
To fire thy house: Oh! be thou ware  
Of this great peril and prepare  
Before the storm to bend thy head,

And thus once more escape the dread  
And fatal stroke. The King is now  
More clipped in friendship's bond, I trow,  
With Isegrym and Bruin Bear,  
Than I with thee ; they closely share  
His inmost counsels : what they will  
Is forthwith done, and both instil  
Into his mind such tales of thee  
As thief and murder carle, that he  
O'erbrims with anger. Then Lapreel  
And Corbant-Rook have made appeal  
For outrage fresh. Alas ! quite sick  
I feel at heart lest thou shouldst lick  
The dust in death."

XXVII.  
Grymbert's  
fears grow.

“ Puff ! ” cried the Fox ;  
“ Dear Nephew, deem'st thou on such rocks  
As these my long tried craft will split ?  
Nay ! cheer thy face, for not one whit  
Doth this affright me. Though the King  
And all his friends, whose voices ring  
So loudly through the Court, have sworn  
My death, I well may treat with scorn  
Their boastful threats ; doubt not that I  
Will o'er them ride triumphantly.

“ How loud soe'er they please to talk  
With clattering speech, my wit shall balk  
Their brainless babble ; ill would go  
The Court if I should cease to show  
My face there : mighty dull 'twould be  
Lacking my wiles and subtlety.”



·XXVIIJ· HOW ·REYNARD·  
·CAME· ANOTHER· TIME ·  
·TO· THE· COURT· ✱ · ✱ ·

“**D**EAR Nephew, well methinks it were,  
We gave no further thought or care  
To such light troubles ; come ye in,  
Though young, these pigeons be not thin,  
But plump and fat, no better meat  
Than pigeon knoweth man ; I eat  
Them bones and all ; e’en swallowed whole  
They suit digestion ; sometimes dole  
Affects my stomach, therefore light  
And tender food, I love at night  
As wholesome fare.

Dame Ermelyne,

Your loving Aunt, ye have not seen  
A fortnight past ; most friendlywise  
Will she receive thee ; but these lies  
That some have told of me, speak not  
Within her hearing, well I wot  
Her anxious heart, and fear that she  
Might take your news right heavily.  
To face all foes my heart is fain  
And, ere the dew dries, we again  
Will Courtward bend our steps, where, if  
I can but get fair hearing, stiff  
And sharp my speech shall be, and nigh  
The quick shall touch some shrews. Stand by  
Thine Eme, dear Nephew, as a friend  
Should do—nought fear I then the end.”  
“Dear Eme,” quoth Grymbert, “all my good

Is thine to deal with as ye would  
If 'twere thine own."

"May Heaven repay  
Thy kindness," said the Fox: "one day,  
If I but live, will I requite  
At full thy friendly love."

"Despite  
All that great Lords may say or do,"  
Quoth Grymbert, "faith is mine that you  
Will clean outspcak them."

Reynard said:  
"'Twould seem as though my favour sped  
Well with the Leopard and the Queen;  
Having their friendly help, I ween  
For all the rest I need not care  
The worth of one poor fragile hair,  
So for my safety rest content."

No more they spake hereof, but went  
Within the Castle, where they found  
Dame Ermelyne seated on the ground,  
Her cubs beside her: "Sit and rest,  
Dear Grymbert," cried she, "honoured guest  
Thou ever art." "Dear Dame," replied  
The Dachs, "my bosom swells with pride  
To see my cousins grow such fair  
And thriving youths, a nobler pair  
One scarce could meet with."

While he spake  
The Goodwife busied her to make  
The pigeons ready, and dight the feast.  
Exclaimed the Fox: "If but the least  
Foreshadowing had I thou hadst been  
Our guest, dear friend, past doubt were seen  
Our board more richly graced: so rare  
Thy visits are that scanty fare

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

To set before thee grieves my heart :  
But sit ye down, and take thy part  
With cordial welcome."

Doth it need  
To say that when four Foxes feed  
On two young pigeons, and a Dachs  
Doth join the banquet, surfeit lacks ?

The while they feasted " Tell me true,"  
Quoth Reynard to his guest, " how you  
Esteem my children, Reynardine  
And Rosel, both of them, I ween,  
Shall in due course bring great renown  
To all our lineage, handing down  
The Fox's name in high repute.  
Already are they most acute  
And cunning ; many an artful wile  
They deftly practise to beguile  
Pigeons or roosting fowls, and pluck  
From pond or stream fat goose or duck  
With wondrous skill ; I trust ere long  
To see them both so stalwart, strong,  
And crafty grown, that all our meat  
They win with ease : but first to cheat  
Hunters and hounds must they be taught,  
And well to know a gryn, lest caught  
Be they untimely. When their wit  
Is quite matured, I reckon it  
Will amply fill our larder store  
With delicate meats, that heretofore  
No fox has known.

And then again  
My fond paternal heart grows fain  
To see what touching likeness they  
Bear to their Sire, for, even in play,  
Ofttimes I note how they dissemble



Dark spite, and make their wrath resemble  
Sweet kindly love. I always teach  
My boys, that would they overreach  
Their fellows, they should strive to bear  
A seeming frank and careless air,  
And keep a pleasant genial smile  
About their lips, though hate and guile  
Possess the heart ; then when the foe  
Suspects no ill, a sudden blow  
Destroys him, or his throat asunder  
Is bitten : oft bystanders wonder  
To see the practice of the Fox :  
But though perchance it sometimes shocks  
Folk's feelings, 'tis a plan that I  
Have followed most successfully.  
My heart grows warm to see how runs  
The true Fox blood in both my sons."

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves

Grymbert replied : " With glad surprise  
I mark how prudent, grave, and wise  
My cousins wax, and oft with pride  
Shall thank kind Heaven, that I'm allied  
To younglings dowered with wit and worth."

The feasting o'er, the Fox brought forth  
The bowl, and cried : " Bereft of song  
And ruddy wine, life drags along  
With weary steps—fill high the glass !"  
And soon, *in vino veritas*,  
He sang with voicing loud and clear  
Devoid alike of care or fear :

I.  
" Ever since I was born  
I have felt bitter scorn  
For worthy respectable people,

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

So with merry heart sing,  
Here's a fig for the King,  
Nought care I for law, crown, or steeple.

2.

'Tis my honest belief  
An industrious thief  
Is a blessing to all good society,  
To the humdrumming round,  
Wherein most men are bound,  
He furnishes pleasant variety.

3.

At a good thumping lie,  
No one better than I,  
And thus always I get out of trouble,  
And if one's not enough,  
I can tell quantum suff.,  
And explain all away like a bubble.

4.

Suspicion and hate  
Lightly sit on my pate,  
As though they belonged to another,  
And when it doth suit,  
Though men call me a brute,  
They are ready to treat me as brother.

5.

Then all the world through,  
Perish thought, care and rue,  
For ever I'm happy and jolly,  
And respectable men  
Will all envy me when  
I am laughing at them for their folly."

As ended he this moral strain,  
Laughed Reynard, till he cried again,  
Then said: "Dear Grymbert, wears the day  
Far into night, 'tis time to stay  
Our revel, prithee take thy rest,  
See here a littered bed of best  
And softest straw that may be found  
For many a mile of country round  
To give repose to weary limbs."

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

Adown they lie, and slumber dims  
All eyes ere long, save only those  
Of Reynard, who no whit could close  
His mind to anxious thoughts, but still  
Conned o'er and o'er again those ill  
And threatening news that Grymbert brought :  
Though bold his speech, he knew them fraught  
With direst danger ; deep he sighed  
To think what evil might betide  
Unless a well devised excuse  
Could gain at least a short-lived truce,  
Till some new-forged and specious tale  
Might o'er the King's dull wit prevail  
Once more.

At last the morning loomed  
Above the hills, and Reynard roomed  
Malperdy's height with spirit sore  
And troubled, though he nathless bore  
His anguish calmly. Leave he took  
Of Ermelyne with dolorous look  
And anxious words.

"Alas!" quoth he,  
"How shall I bid adieu to thee,  
Partner of joys and pains? I go  
With Grymbert towards the Court, but know  
No reason why within short space

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

I should not, fain of heart, retrace  
My steps unscathed : but should I make  
A lengthened stay, let no fear shake  
Thy steadfast heart, and even though ill  
Report ye hear, yet do thou still  
Hold fast fair hope, and ever keep  
Our castle well. Forbear to weep,  
And rest assured that I shall blind  
The King with lies, and know to wind  
My foes around my fingers till  
They bow and bend to serve my will."

With tears spoke Ermelyne : " Reyner dear,  
Some undefined deep boding fear  
Weighs down my heart. Why shouldst thou deign  
To trust thy body once again  
Within the toils? Scarce yet is past  
The dread remembrance of your last  
Most perilous visit, when ye sware  
That no persuasion foul or fair  
Again should draw thee."

" Dame," quoth he,  
" Past doubt or question, wonderly  
This world's adventure is : it goes  
Ofttimes by other ways than those  
One weeneth of ; for sometime when  
Or this or that seems good to men,  
That seeming good must they forego :  
Now to the Court must I, although  
With most reluctant steps ; yet dread  
My heart is stranger to, and fed  
With hope am I, that five short days  
Elapsed, once more my hand will raise  
Our gate's familiar latch."

Away  
He turned his face, and while the grey

Dim twilight broke to morn he went  
With Grymbert courtward, sore intent  
On what might next betide.

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

The heath  
Was quickly gained, and straight the sheath  
Was drawn from Reynard's tongue.

“Dear friend,”

Quoth he: “’tis needful to amend  
The shriving given by thee days past:  
Most earnestly I hoped ’twould last  
For good and all, but since that time,  
I grieve to say, my life from crime  
Hath not been clear. Some shrewd ill turns  
My heart is conscious of, and burns  
Again for shrift. The wretched Bear  
I flayed alive, with wish to wear  
A scrip or wallet of his skin,  
And with excuse to travel in  
Stout gear, caused both the Wolves to lose,  
For my behoof, those well-made shoes  
That they were born with.

Then the King

I cozened with a fine-spun string  
Of lies more wild than erst were heard  
By mortal man, and thereby stirred  
His wrath against the Wolf and Bruin,  
In full persuasion they would ruin  
His royal estate, and basely slay  
Him and the Queen. I scarce need say  
’Twas mere invention:—false also  
Was that fine tale of Hulsterlo,  
Whose wondrous wealth of hidden gold  
Was nothing better than a bold  
Unblushing lie, for well I wist  
That no such place did e’er exist.

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

Then Cuwaert Hare, and Bellyn Ram,  
Decoyed I treacherously with sham  
Of kindly talk to Malperdy,  
Assurance given that they should be  
My fellow pilgrims : straight I slew  
And ate the Hare, and thereon grew  
So reckless, that in scorn I sent  
His head by Bellyn to present  
As gift to our most gracious King :  
From thee I learn that thence did spring  
A sea of sorrows to the Ram  
And all his kindred.

Next I am  
Bound to confess that yesterday,  
As Lapreel Coney, on his way  
To Court, by-passed my house, I gave  
Him such a buffet, that to save  
His life he forward leapt and ran  
Swift as aforetime sped that man  
Who outpaced Atalanta, or  
Most surely had he served me for  
A supper even as Cuwaert did.  
As to the mischief that betid  
Dame Sharpbecke, wife to Corbant-Rook,  
There's no denying that I took  
Her down at one great gulp, and he  
Might justly feel in some degree  
Displeased and angry.

But just now  
One thing recurs, which was, I trow,  
O'erlooked when last you gave me shrift.

" Confessed at full, I might uplift  
My heart to Heaven devoid of flaw,  
But now sad memory tends to draw  
My soul towards Hell—for gross deceit

Therein I practised : prithee treat  
My new shrift kindly.

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

As the way

I took with Isegrym one day  
Betwixt Houthulst and Elverding,  
Approaching near we heard the ring  
Of well shod hoofs : a fine red mare  
Soon overtook us, while a fair  
Well-fed black colt beside her went :  
As mostly haps, the Wolf was spent  
And wellnigh dead for hunger, so  
Quoth he : ' Dear Reynard, prithee go,  
And ask that Mare if she will sell  
Her foal ?'

Quoth I : ' The truth to tell,

I much mislike the ungrateful task,  
Yet nathless will make bold to ask  
The question : ' so with courteous air  
Spake forth : ' Dear madam, may I dare  
Without offence to inquire if you  
Will sell your daughter ?' No ado  
She made, but answered : ' Yea, sir, yea !  
'Tis quite the fashion of the day.'

Then said I : ' Prithee name the sum.'

Quoth she : ' If thou wilt kindly come  
Behind me, there may'st thou behold  
The price in plain-writ figures told ;  
Perchance some learned clerk ye be  
Who cons all writing readily.'

I marked her twinkling eye, and knew  
Its look meant mischief ; quoth I : ' You  
Mistake me, madam, weak and small  
My schoolcraft runs, but let me call  
My learned friend, 'tis he would buy  
Your foal.'

' Pray let him come anigh,'

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

Quoth she, 'his learning will suffice,  
I doubt me not, to spell the price  
Writ plain in figures on my hoof;  
Pray wherefore stands thy friend aloof?'

"To Isegrym then ran I straight,  
And cried: 'Now may'st thou satiate  
Thine appetite with well-fed colt;'  
'Ha! ha!' laughed he, 'the whole I'll bolt  
In one great feast.'

'Stay Isegrym,'  
Quoth I, 'the red Mare hath a whim  
Ye lift her hinder hoof and read  
The price for which 'tis well agreed  
That she the tender colt will sell:  
If thou a scholar art, right well  
May'st thou decipher what is writ,  
Though my dull eyes make nought of it,  
Seeing I truant played from school.'

"'Dear Nephew, deem'st thou me a fool?'  
The Wolf replied, 'pray, what should let  
My skill in reading? Never yet  
Were letters made by mortal man,  
But what with equal ease I can  
Read off, as though they spelt my name.  
My school was Oxenford, and shame  
Should count it could I not construe  
French, Latin, Dutch, and English. Few,  
Like me, are licensed in both laws,  
Or e'er had chance to gather saws  
From doctors of the finest wit.  
Ofttimes in higher courts I sit,  
And give forth sentence.

While I go



To lift the beldame's foot, and know  
Her daughter's value, rest thou here.  
Then forth he went, devoid of fear,  
Straight towards the Mare and asked if he  
Could buy her foal, and what would be  
The price.

Quoth she: 'No great amount:  
Lift thou my dexter hoof, and count  
The figures writ there.'

He replied:  
'Pray let me read:' when she aside  
Shot forth her hoof, just newly shod  
With six stout nails, and o'er the sod,  
Supine, lay Isegrym extended  
All motionless, as though were ended  
His earthly course.

The Mare and Foal  
Tripped lightly off, and then I stole  
Close up, where lay the Wolf half dead,  
Most sorely wounded. Out his head  
The blood poured forth, and like a hound  
Well thrashed he howled, until the sound  
Made echo hideous.

Then to him  
Quoth I: 'Dear Uncle Isegrym,  
How fares it with thee? Hast thou sated  
Thy maw with colt's flesh, and abated  
The pangs of hunger? Wherefore gave  
Ye nought to him who kindly drave  
For thee the bargain? What was writ  
Beneath the Mare's hind hoof? Was it  
In rhyme or prose? Canst thou rehearse  
Some passage, sentence, line or verse?  
I trow 'tis cantus that ye sing  
So clear that all the woodlands ring  
With thy sweet notes.'

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

‘ Ah! Reynard,’ cried

The Wolf, ‘twere well ye cast aside  
Your heartless japing, and that tone  
Of mocking ceased: a heart of stone  
Might well be melted at the plight  
In which ye see me. Never wight  
Endured worse handling as I ween  
Than gave me that long-legged quean.  
Within her iron shoe were pricked  
Six hard-wrought nails, wherewith she kicked  
My wretched head enough to cleave it—  
Ah! Reynard, wilt thou then believe it?  
Each nail I took to be a letter  
Most foully made of me its debtor!  
Never again shall I have need  
Letters of such-like sort to read.’

“ ‘ Dear Eme,’ exclaimed I, ‘ if the truth  
Thy mouth proclaimeth, then forsooth  
I marvel greatly, for it seemed  
From thine own telling that ye teemed  
With wit and wisdom, but ’tis clear,  
To judge from this strange tale I hear,  
That clerks by studying much in schools  
May sometimes grow most learned fools.’

“ Here ends the tale how Isegrym  
Suffered such scathe in head and limb  
As brought him nigh to death.

And so,

Dear Nephew, thus at full ye know  
All wrongful deeds my search can find  
In that great garner of the mind  
Which men call memory: now I feel  
Much eased, for holy shrift will steel  
My heart to suffer ill, and none

Can say how roughly chance may run  
Against my luck at Court. But fear  
Shall void my heart when, once more, clear  
My soul is made of deadly sin ;  
Though death fell on me, I should win  
Eternal bliss, and therefore light  
As air shall feel when throughly dight  
With holy shriving."

Grymbert said :

"Great trespass hast thou done, but dead  
Must he who once is dead remain,  
And crimes committed, ne'er again  
Can be recalled—yet I assoil  
Thee wholly, for within the toil  
Of death I greatly fear ye stand,  
Unless thou clean canst wash thine hand  
Of some foul acts, whereof the worst  
Is that ye dared, with heart accurst,  
To send the innocent Cuwaert's head  
(By Belyn Ram, as letters sped,)  
Within your wallet to the King.  
Moreover, with a trumped-up string  
Of leasings did ye seek to blind  
His heart and eyes with tales unkind  
Of other beasts.—'Twas evil done."

Answered the Fox : "What man can run  
His course throughout the world, and see  
Its crooked, wily ways, yet be  
Pure as a chrisom-child ? Nay, nay ;  
He lives not who can soothly say  
That, having honeycombs o'erpicked  
And handled, he hath never licked  
His fingers. Ofttimes grow I vexed  
To think how widely from that text  
I swerve, which bids each man to love

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

And duly reverence God above  
All things within this world, and then  
Each other one of Christian men  
E'en as himself he should regard.  
Nephew, I find most wondrous hard  
It is to keep this law. The will  
That works within my breast doth still  
Wage war against the outward wit,  
And when sometimes a holy fit  
Comes o'er my spirit, mighty dull  
I feel, as though a-gathering wool  
My wits had gone, and scarce know what  
It is that ails me, for a knot  
Of tangled thoughts disturbs my mind.  
Thank God! I now have left behind  
My sinful life and evil hate.  
No longer am I reprobate,  
But love pure holy thoughts, and climb  
In contemplation towards sublime  
And heavenly things—when quite alone—  
But many a rock and stumbling stone  
I find when through the world I fare.  
Loose Priests and Prelates meet I there,  
And in their wicked foot-spores tread,  
By fleshly lusts enticed and led  
To merry, jovial life, and thus  
Good thoughts are lost, and riotous  
Luxurious times succeed; men sing,  
Pipe, laugh, and play, till everything  
That tends to goodness is forgot.  
Prelates and Curates, as I wot,  
Do ill, yet preach all otherwise;  
From them I learned the japes and lies  
I now am famed for. In the Court  
Where haughty Churchmen most resort  
Are leasings freely plied; men dare

Scarce tell to these great Lords a fair  
Outspoken honest case, but must  
Use flattering falsehoods would they thrust  
Their causes forward, else the door  
Is in their faces flung, before  
Ever their plea be heard. And so,  
Dear Nephew, thus the world doth go :  
Here, men must flatter, pray, and curse,  
And there, some well-worn cheat rehearse,  
So twisted that it shows all fair.

“ Another time, with cautious care  
Seek out your neighbour's weakest point,  
And then (as through an armour joint  
Thou'dst thrust thy sword) with skill ye may  
Word-wound the foe, and gain the day.  
Or sometimes, if ye deal with simple,  
Unwary folk, ye may bewimple  
A lie in such unwonted wise  
That, 'neath its strange new-fangled guise,  
Semblance it bears to fair-eyed truth.

“ Or, if one be devoid of ruth,  
And glibly speak his sentence out,  
Unchecked by stammer, drawl, or doubt,  
Then, though he utter nought but lies,  
Success may follow, and for prize  
A scarlet robe may he obtain  
Fair trimmed with gryse, and ever fain  
May spend his life-days, seen he shall  
Find honour both in temporal  
And spiritual Courts, and do  
His own free will, whate'er ensue.

Great doctors tell us that at times  
To lie or jape, in small things, chimes

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

With life's hard needs, for that man who  
Speaks ever truth can scarce glide through  
This evil world. The best man may  
Lie when the need comes, but away  
Drive ill effect by later rede."

Cried Grymbert: "Surely thou shalt speed  
Dear Eme, in all ye undertake,  
For thy clear spirit is awake  
To every point that e'er hath been  
Made doubt or question of. I ween  
That whatsoever part ye took,  
Your subtle speech would make it look  
Or right or wrong, as pleased ye best.  
What need hast thou to be confessed  
Or seek my shrift? 'Tis thou shouldst be  
The Priest, and shriving give to me  
And other guileless sheep. Ye know  
The world's estate so well, and show  
Such subtle wit, no man could stand  
Against thy pleading, more than sand  
'Gainst hardest adamant."

Thus they talked  
In friendly fashion, while they walked  
The Courtward road: but when they neared  
The royal precincts, sore afeard  
Grew Reynard's heart: his courage sank  
To zero; yet no whit he shrank  
From gaze of those who stood around,  
But forward strode as he were bound  
On some high mission to the King.

The Dachs, with earnest will to bring  
Relief and comfort o'er his heart,  
Stood close beside him, and apart  
Whispered: "Good Uncle, have no fear,

Ofttimes much better than a year  
One day may prove."

XXVIII.  
The Fox  
all braves.

The Fox replied :  
" God thank you, Nephew, none beside  
Would solace give, as thou hast done."

Then forth he stepped with air of one  
Who boldly saith : " What will ye then ?  
Behold me !"

Close within his ken  
A many of his kinship stand,  
And some he knew for those whose hand  
Was aye against him, yet were some  
Who loved him well.

When lastly come  
Within the Court, upon his knees  
He fell, and straight a hum, like bees  
Swarming in haysel-time, arose  
From dearest friends and direst foes,  
While cried he : " Sire, for old days sake  
Lend me thine ear !"—and forth he spake.



·XXIX· HOW · THE · FOX ·  
·EXCUSED · HIM · BEFORE ·  
·THE · KING; & · HOW · THE ·  
·KING · ANSWERED ·

'MAY God from whom no thing is hid,  
And whose almighty power doth bid  
This lower world, and that unseen,  
Preserve ye both, great King and Queen,  
And grant ye, in his bounteous grace,  
With clear unerring wit to trace  
Which man hath right, and which hath wrong :

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

For many, alas ! there be among  
Your courtiers, who by outward show  
Belie their inmost minds and throw  
A veil o'er evil deeds thereby.  
I would that God showed openly  
Men's trespass, and all thoughts he writ  
Clearly on each man's brow : then it  
Were plainly seen, most gracious Lord,  
What wight is he that doth afford  
To thee due service, rathe and late  
Striving to cross unkindly fate  
For thy behoof, and all thy will  
To bring to birth, though nought but ill  
He hath from evil shrews, who thrust  
Thy truest friend aside. Unjust  
And cruel men now boldly charge  
Foul crimes against me, and a targe  
Have made of my fair name, to shoot  
Their poisoned darts at, though it boot  
Them little deal. Harrowe ! I cry  
On this false crew (who would belie  
My love to thee, most honoured Lord,)  
With trust that thou wilt ne'er accord  
Thine ear to those, whose aim and end  
Is death to thy most faithful friend.

“ Therefore, dear Lord, do I beseech  
That in thy wisdom, thou to each  
And every man wilt justice deal  
By right and law, and here appeal  
To thee as judge, that thou declare  
Where lies the guilt. I ask but fair  
And equal measure. Ere I go  
From out this Court, the world shall know  
What man stands here : no flatterer thou  
Behold'st before thee, for I vow



To set my life in such clear light  
That thou wilt cry : ' The Fox hath right.' ”

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

Silence profound as that of morn,  
Ere day's wild turmoil yet is born,  
Reigned o'er the Court as Reynard ceased ;  
But inwardly each listening beast  
Wondered to hear how stoutly spake  
The Fox, e'en while his heart must quake  
With conscious guilt.

At length the King  
Broke the dead hush.

“ Although ye bring  
Your case before us in suchwise  
As might deceive some folk, the lies  
And garbled truths, thou dar'st to speak  
With sounding phrase, are all too weak  
To help thee more. Nay, Reynard, nay !  
Thy race is run, and thou this day  
Shalt as a miscreant hang. The pain  
That thou must suffer I would fain  
Shorten, and thus forbear to chide  
Those crimes which thou wouldst gladly hide  
With glozing speech. How much of love  
Thou bearest towards us, nought could prove  
More plainly than the latest deeds  
Thy life is charged with ; evil weeds  
But evil garnering find ; the Rook  
With reason plains him, that ye took  
Treachurous advantage when his mate,  
Sharpbecke, would aid thee : murderous hate  
Against Lapreel hast thou displayed  
When he polite obeisance made  
In passing near thee. Know'st thou not  
The proverb, that an earthen pot  
May go too often to the well ?

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

So likewise, Reynard, thou may'st swell  
Thy pack of lies to bursting ; now,  
The measure of thy crimes I trow  
O'erbrims, and thou must surely die."

At these words Reynard's heart beat high,  
While deathlike sweat o'erspread his frame,  
And hot and cold his life-blood came.  
" Alas ! " thought he, " had I but known  
How things would turn, then far Cologne  
Had held me rather than this Court,  
Where risk is mine to be the sport  
Of adverse fortune. Now my cue  
It is to brave the matter through  
With new-framed falsehoods."

" Sire," he cried,

" Reason it were, ere ye decide  
My condemnation unto death,  
To suffer that my latest breath  
Were spent in self-defence ; for erst  
My counsel was by no means worst  
Or lightest reckoned in thy need ;  
Hath not the Fox been true to speed  
Thy good when other beasts have gone  
Their way, and left their King alone  
To combat fiercest foes ? If now  
Ill beasts belie me, will ye trow  
Their words, and bid that I refrain  
My tongue from daring to complain  
Against their slanders ? Time hath been  
When thy dread Majesty would ween  
My voice the worthiest. Old good deeds,  
And wise and worthy foretime redes,  
Must quicken in thy heart. See here,  
Moreover, how, flockmeal, anear  
Thy throne doth stand a goodly heap

Of those who own my lineage. Deep  
Would be their grief if I should lose  
My life ; for though light words they use  
To mewards, and would seem to set  
But little by me now, they yet  
Would sore resent it should they see  
Their kinsman suffer wrongfully.  
My Lord, I ask thee, dost thou dream  
That one who in his soul did deem  
Him guilty of such damning crimes,  
As I am charged with, would betimes  
Attend thy Court, as I this day,  
In midst of foemen ?

Nay, Sire, nay !

Most surely not for all the gold  
That wealthy Crassus held, thrice told,  
Had murderer ventured hither. Free  
I roamed, as fish that haunt the sea,  
Or birds that wing the air : what need  
Had I, if conscious of misdeed,  
To put myself in reach of law ?  
But God be thanked, so clear from flaw  
My life is, that I fearless come,  
As one who wins his well-loved home.

“ Though some ill shrews would do me spite  
In secret, yet in day’s fair light  
They dare not speak.

But yester eve,

As night her filmy web ’gan weave,  
My Nephew Grymbert brought the news  
That some vile dastard dared accuse  
Anew my blameless life ; at first  
My righteous indignation burst  
Beyond control. In rage I leapt  
About my Castle ; anger swept

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

My soul as mighty tempests sweep  
Across the slumbering ocean-deep  
And lash it into fury.

Grief

Succeeded anger, till relief  
My spirit sought beneath the dome  
Of spacious Heaven, and forth my home  
I wandered o'er the lonesome heath ;  
By good hap there I found beneath  
A tree, my Uncle, Martin hight,  
Wisest of apes, and well bedight,  
As many a priest, with ghostly lore,  
For, well ye wot, a plenteous store  
Thereof he gathered, when he lay  
Within the Palace of Cambray,  
Nine years, as Bishop's Advocate.  
At once, with voice compassionate  
And kindly, quoth he : ' What sad cheer  
Weighs down thy spirit, Nephew dear ?  
I see plain writ across thy face  
That some great trouble holdeth place  
Within thine heart, and ever well  
It is that man his grief should tell  
To priest or friend : most wondrous aid  
That wight shall find, who unafraid  
Lays bare his inmost soul to one  
With whom in perfect unison  
His spirit feels ; oft-times the man  
Who standeth by can better scan  
How troublous questions may be solved  
Than he whose interest is involved  
Most closely ; many a time when woe  
Deadens the heart, men act as though  
They had their inwit lost.'

' Dear Eme,'

Replied I quickly, ' thou dost deem

The case most wisely ; I am brought  
To this great heaviness by nought  
Blameworthy in myself ; as friends  
I ever treated those whose ends  
And evil aims now seem to be  
To wreck my life all utterly.

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

“ So happed it that as yesterday  
I sat before my door to say  
My Matin prayers, the Coney passed :  
“ Good-morrow,” quoth I, “ why so fast  
Dear Lapreel ? ” “ Reynard,” he replied,  
“ Have ye, by happy chance, inside  
Your house a scrap of meat ? I seek  
To gain the Court, but feel so weak  
With hunger, that I scarce can go  
Beyond thy threshold.”

“ Ye shall know,”

Cried I, “ the taste of manchet bread  
And sweet new butter ere ye tread  
Another step.”

I never eat  
On Wednesday, wot ye well, flesh meat,  
And rather had of hunger died,  
Than break my fast as Whitsuntide  
Drew near ; for whatso man will taste  
The overest wisdom, must not waste  
His life on earthly joys, but live  
In ghostly habitude and give  
Heed to the precepts of our Lord :  
Each man who would thereto accord  
His ways, must fast 'gainst festals high  
*Et vos estote parati* : my  
Most earnest longing 'tis to be  
Prepared to meet eternity.

“ When Lapreel to his full had eaten

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

Of butter sweet, and manchet wheaten  
(As white as new-burst may-bloom), comes  
My little Rosel, seeking crumbs  
Which dropt around, for day and night  
Have children keen-set appetite.  
In peace the dear child munched the chips,  
When, all at once, his tender lips  
The Coney smote, broke his white teeth,  
And stretched him swooning on the heath.  
Soon as his brother Reynkyn saw  
This wanton outrage on the law  
That governs friendly greeting, he  
Sprang forward so indignantly,  
That in one moment Lapreel's fate  
Had been decided, but I straight  
Seized Reynkyn, just in time to save  
The Coney's life, and thereon gave  
My son reproof, with many a stroke,  
Although, God knows, that wellnigh broke  
My fond paternal heart. Lapreel,  
Ye might suppose, unless of steel  
His soul was forged, would show some sign  
Of gratitude for my benign  
And all too friendly deed. But nay—  
Heedless of grace or thanks, away  
He sped to where the King doth hold  
His royal Court, and there, with bold  
Unblushing lies, his friend traduced.  
E'en then my tongue had not been loosed  
Against him had ye not with kind  
And sympathetic words my mind  
Unlocked ; for well 'tis known that ne'er  
My heart doth spite or malice bear.

“‘The selfsame day came Corbant-Rook  
In wretched plight, he sobbed, and shook  
His plumes 'mid fits of wildest grief.

Quoth I, "What aileth? some relief  
Perchance my rede may give." He said :  
' Ah! woe! alas! my wife is dead!  
See yonder on the heath a hare  
Lies mouldering, and she, feasting there,  
Replete with worms became; atwo  
They bit her throat, and I must rue  
Her loss for evermore."

Then I  
Asked how it happed, with will to try  
Sweet comfort's balsam, but he flew  
Straight off, and nothing more I knew,  
Until with wonderment I heard  
That this perverse ill-minded bird  
Complained at Court that I had slain  
His consort. What could be more vain?  
For say thou straightly, dearest Eme,  
Could any man with reason dream  
That one whose race hath trod the earth  
Since first creation gave it birth,  
By any means could come anigh  
A rook, whose nature 'tis to fly  
Through Heaven's expanse?

An outcast hound  
I better had been born, than bound  
To endure such scorning, but, perchance  
Wise Heaven sends suffering to enhance  
Our bliss hereafter, and past sin  
May thus full absolution win.  
Ill oft breeds good, and therefore I  
Will take my penance patiently.'

"The Ape replied: 'Dear Reynard, go  
At once to Court, and bow thee low  
Before the King and Lords.'

I cried : . . .  
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XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

'Dear Eme, no other thing beside  
Would so much glad my heart, but this  
Straight course is barred to me ywis.  
The great Archdeacon hath declared  
The Pope's dread curse on one who dared  
Time past to counsel Isegrym,  
That since he could in nowise trim  
His life to monkish rule, 'twere well  
That he should void his hated cell  
At Eelmare, and the cowl forsake,  
Rather than endless wailing make  
About the straightness of the ways  
That rule the Cloister.

Nights and days  
Of reading, chanting, and much prayer,  
Coupled with hard and scanty fare.

“ He plaining vowed, should he aby  
The Convent longer, he must die  
Ere summer came. As loving friend  
I pitied him, and helped to end  
The wretched state he scarce endured.  
Alas! my kindness but ensured  
His mortal hatred. Ever now  
His study day and night is how  
His benefactor may be hung.  
I feel my nervous frame unstrung,  
To think the Wolf hath understood  
My kindness in such wise that good  
Doth but engender ill. And so  
Ye well may judge that scarce I know  
Whither to turn for trusty friend  
To give me counsel; at an end  
Of all resource I seem to be;  
But what most wears the heart of me  
Is this—that I must leave my home,



And wife, and children, while at Rome  
I seek for absolution. Great  
Is my alarm to think what fate  
May hap to them while I engage  
In this long toilsome pilgrimage.

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

“‘From this dread curse absolved and free,  
Well might I go undauntedly  
Before the Court, and plead my cause  
So clearly, that worst foes would pause  
Ere they opposed me ; but I fear  
That should I unassoiled draw near  
To men uncursed, God’s direst plague  
Might light upon me.’

‘Let no vague  
Blind terror seize thee,’ quoth the Ape :  
‘Put faith in me, and thou shalt ’scape  
The Church’s censure ; well I know  
The wiles of Rome, and thou shalt go  
Through all unscathed, if thou but trust  
To counsel vigorous, wise, and just.  
Martin am I, the Bishop’s Clerk,  
Well versed and skilled in every dark  
And subtle method whereby folk  
Gain free deliverance from the yoke  
Of grossest crimes.

I first will cite  
The Archdeacon, and deny his right  
To hold thee ’neath the curse ; then next  
Will I discover fair pretext  
Why thou shouldst gain, despite his will,  
Full absolution, and until  
He grants it he shall know no peace,  
Nor, that accomplished, will I cease  
To aid thee. At the Pope’s Court dwells  
My Uncle Simon, who foretells

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

Unerringly how suits will hap  
For those who shower within his lap  
Abundant gifts : my trusty friends,  
Wayscathe and Takeall know the ends,  
Of those who salve their palms, to serve,  
And order take that law shall swerve  
To this side or to that, for those  
Through whom their meed and profit grows.  
Have courage, Nephew, when the West  
The sun once more hath gained, no rest  
My limbs shall find until my home  
I reach within the walls of Rome :  
And then forthwith my constant care  
Shall be thy business : ye may fare,  
Unhindered, straightway to the Court,  
Devoid of fear lest ye the sport  
Should be of plague or curse : I take  
Thy sins on mine own head, and make  
Ye clear as chrisom child.

When'er  
The Court ye come to, thou shalt there  
Seek out my wife and sisters twain,  
And children three, with all their train  
Of kin and lineage. Then thy tale  
Speak boldly forth ; my wife no frail  
Unstable woman is, but one  
Who knoweth all that may be done  
In cases like to thine ; right glad  
Is she to aid her friends, and sad  
Shall be his doom who cannot find  
Help at her hands. Keep this in mind,  
That though with friends ye sometimes bicker,  
Stick to them fast, for blood runs thicker  
Than water flows.

But if beset  
By fraudulent hindrance, ye can get

No judge who dare affirm your right ;  
Delay not, but through day and night  
Speed thou thy envoy unto Rome,  
And let him seek me 'neath the dome  
Of Holy Peter : make me know  
By what contrivance matters go  
Against thy suit, and I will wake  
Such storm of thunder as shall shake  
The land across from sea to sea :

“ Yea ! though thine enemy should be  
The mightiest Queen or lordliest King,  
My power is such that I can bring  
Their realms beneath the Papal curse,  
And if that fail, can send a worse  
And bitterer banning ; straight my hand  
Should cause to fall o'er all the land  
An interdict, which doth surpass  
All other woes ; the Holy Mass  
Doth cease ; sweet singing of the psalter  
Is heard no more ; before the altar  
No lover's vows are pledged ; the child  
Must die unchristened, and the wild  
Lamenting wail that mourns the dead  
Must rise o'er graves unhallowèd.  
With these dread weapons will I fight  
Should Courts withhold from thee due right.  
The Pope is nought ; he waxeth old ;  
And through the Cardinal of gold  
Are all things ruled and governed. Young  
Is he, and powerful friends among  
The great ones hath ; his concubine  
So closely doth his heart entwine  
With love, that what she lusts to do  
Is done, though Heaven and Earth should rue.  
This powerful Dame I own for niece,

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

Which kinship greatly doth increase  
My masterdom at Court, and thus  
It rarely haps that foes nonplus  
A cause I father.

  Seek the King  
Forthwith, and doubt not he will bring  
Thy quittance to effect, for he  
Judgeth no man relentlessly.'

"Great Lord, my inmost soul was stirred  
To laughter when this tale I heard,  
And joy o'erspread my heart the while,  
For Fortune deigned once more to smile  
Around my life; then gladly came  
I hither, that the unworthy, lame,  
And garbled tales that some have told  
To work me ill, I might unfold  
In light of truth.

  If any dare  
In this assembly to declare  
Real crimes against me, and can bring  
Some witness forth, with colouring  
Of honest fairness on his tongue,  
Then shall I count it first among  
My bounden duties that I make  
Him full amends, or thereon stake  
My life, if thou but set a day  
And field of meeting for array  
Of deadly combat—ever seen  
My foeman be not one of mean  
Or churlish birth, but like to me  
In race, long lineage, and degree.

"Who best acquits him in the field  
To him the palm of honour yield—  
In truth and justice am I strong,  
God save the right, and wreck the wrong

Then all the beasts, or rich or poor,  
Who thronged the Court from throne to door,  
Stood mute as senseless stones or stocks,  
To hear with what stout words the Fox  
Upheld his cause, while Corbant-Rook  
And Lapreel Coney scarce dared look  
Around for terror, but both fled  
Forth to the fields, then trembling said  
To one another : " Let us pray  
That He whose might rules all things, may  
On this fell murderous Fox bestow  
Due guerdon : he alone doth know  
Base falsehood so to hide and wrap  
In clouding words, that not one scrap  
Of crime he leaves unveiled, but true  
His speech as gospel soundeth. Few  
His falseness know like us, and how  
Should witnesses be found enow  
To overthrow his tale? To fly  
Is safer than the field to try  
Against this losel, for though five  
We were and he but one, alive  
No single man could 'scape, for he  
Fights as he speaks, right craftily."

Both Isegrym and Bruin Bear  
Felt sore abashed, and dire despair  
Fell on their hearts when they this twain  
Saw slink from Court, as they were fain  
To escape the Fox's wrath.

The King  
Then said : " Let whatso man will bring  
Complaint against the Fox, appear,  
That we, straightway, with equal ear,  
May judgment give ; but yesterday  
Against him stood a full array

XXIX. The Of cruel foes, their eyes aglow,  
Fox speaks. Angry, full-voiced, and eager—now  
fair. Uncharged he stands before my throne—  
What man is he will cast first stone?”

“My Lord,” quoth Reynard, “many men  
There be whose courage waxes when  
They see no adversary nigh,  
But should their foe dare make reply  
Their courage shrinks ; e’en now the Rook  
And Lapreel base advantage took  
To speak when I was far, yet flee  
With breathless haste whene’er my plea  
Is laid before thee, knowing well  
What fair plain truth my tongue doth tell.  
Nathless, had these two shrews implored  
Forgiveness, and hadst thou, great Lord,  
Laid thy command on me to give  
Them grace and pardon, they might live  
Unharm’d (although their trespass great  
Hath been towards me, and towards the state  
O’er which thou rulest) ; for I love  
Vengeance to leave to One above,  
And to reclaim my foes will try  
By mercy, love, and clemency.”

“Reynard,” the King replied, “’twould seem  
Thou art much changed ; but may I deem  
With safety that within thine heart  
This high-toned virtue hath such part  
As thy soft floyting words express ?  
All this new-found ingenuousness  
Seems somewhat doubtful ; simple, fair,  
And open sounds thy speech, but bear  
I well in mind what deeds of late  
Have stained thy guilty hands ; thy great

And grievous trespass I forgave  
And thou didst formulate with grave  
And solemn words, a vow that ye  
On pilgrimage, far over sea,  
Would wend your ways ; and did I not  
Send staff and scrip to make thy lot  
Of easier yoke ?

Ye then did send  
By Bellyn Ram, thy dupe and friend,  
The scrip again, and therein found  
Was Cuwaert's head ; ye thus have crowned  
Your former trespass by a crime  
Till now unknown ; throughout all time,  
What liege ere this hath ever sped  
To any Lord his servant's head ?  
A ghastly gift ! Deny it not !  
For Bellyn on this selfsame spot  
The deed confessed, and such reward  
As he hath found must we accord  
To thee likewise, or straight would be  
End to all law and equity."

Then waxed the Fox so sore afraid  
That speechless stood he ; disarrayed  
Were all his wits ; he looked about  
With piteous air among the rout  
Of those who flocked around, and spied  
Full many a well-known face, but died  
The heart within him when none spake—  
Alas ! no word of comfort brake  
The ominous silence, nor was stirred  
One hand or foot to help him.

Heard  
Was then once more the King's stern voice,  
High raised : " My duty knows no choice,  
Thou subtle felon and false shrew,

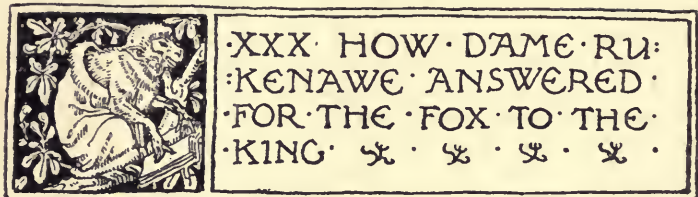
XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

XXIX. The  
Fox speaks  
fair.

But to pronounce the sentence due  
To fraud and murder—now all dumb  
Thou standest, what is then become  
Of thy much vaunted wit?"

Great dread

Crept over Reynard, and his head  
Swam round with fear, but blithe and gay  
Were Wolf and Bear, assured that they  
Would ride triumphant, while their foe  
The bitterness of death should know.



THE great She-Ape, Dame Rukenawe,  
The Fox's Aunt, with anger saw  
The turn things took : she with the Queen  
Stood high in favour, and I ween  
Her presence 'twas that helped the Fox  
To steer his course among the rocks  
And quicksands that beset him. Well  
She knew all wisdom, and could spell  
The subtle purpose of each cause  
That came before her ; dubious laws  
Could she expound with any man.  
The pandects of Justinian  
She knew by heart. Where'er she came  
The suitor gladdened at her name,  
Whose cause she held.

She rose and said :

" My Lord, all bias should be dead  
Within your breast whene'er ye sit



XXX. Dame  
Rukenawe's  
rede.

In judgment : wrath doth not befit  
Your noblesse : all the points of law  
I know, and every learned saw,  
Can far more skilfully set down  
Than those who plead in fur-trimmed gown,  
For not a few have learned of me  
The law's deep art and mystery.

“ Within the palace-house at Woerden,  
Where dwelt the Pope, I had for guerdon  
A fresh-made bed of fragrant hay,  
While other beasts who lodged there lay  
Their limbs on bare unlittered ground.

“ Already was I so renowned  
For perfect knowledge of the code,  
And for my wealth of words that flowed  
To loose each legal knot, that first  
My voice the Court allowed, nor durst  
Another interrupt my speech.

“ The famous Seneca doth teach  
That 'tis the duty of a Lord,  
Before aught else, that he afford  
To every man his lawful right,  
And suffer not that in despite  
Of safeguard granted, he should be  
Death-doomed, or sold to slavery.

“ Let every man who standeth here  
Bethink him if his life be clear,  
Through all its waves, of sin and crime,  
Or if perchance in bygone time  
His trespass hath not been as great  
As Reynard's. Let kind pity wait

XXX. Dame  
Rukenawe's  
rede.

Upon his judgment. Then recall,  
That he who standeth soon may fall,  
And that the Gospel's words are these :

*Estote misericordes*

[A she-ape speaks, and lightly she  
Must be excused false quantity],  
Be ever merciful—and more—

It standeth writ since days of yore :

*Nolite judicare, et*

*Non judicabimini*, and yet,

Spite of this sentence, men oft deem  
Their fellows as 'twould fairly seem  
These blessed words they had forgot,  
Or rashly dared to heed them not,  
Yet in those holy words we see  
'Judge not, that judgèd not ye be.'

"'Tis written how the Pharisees  
Charged a poor woman, even as these  
Charge Reynard, and with pitying eye  
Our Lord judged her adultery,  
And bid him cast first stone who could  
Declare him faultless, pure, and good.  
And which of these brave folk, I pray,  
Who crowd and throng the Court this day,  
With conscience clear could cast a stone  
At Reynard, being such an one  
As hath his life lived spotless, free  
From stain, in white robed purity ?

"Ofttimes a man will plain and sigh  
Because within his neighbour's eye  
He sees a mote, yet ne'er doth dream  
That in his own eye lies a beam !  
In very sooth, my Lord, I trow  
That many a man here standing now,

Ready to judge the Fox, is worse  
Than him he dares with lies to asperse.

XXX. Dame  
Rukenawe's  
rede.

“ Though one fall oft, yet if at last,  
Repentant, he resolve to cast  
From off his neck the yoke of sin,  
Shall not he God's sweet mercy win?  
Seeing his pity aye receives  
The vilest sinner, and relieves  
His shoulder of the load it bears.  
With heavy heart dear Reynard wears  
Sin's garment foul, and fain would he  
Don the white robe of sanctity.  
Have not his grandsire and his father  
Been worthy friends to you, much rather  
Than Isegrym and Bruin Bear,  
Who now your love and favour share  
(With all their ill-bred kin and race),  
To his exclusion and disgrace?  
Should I but draw comparison  
Betwixt what that false crew have done  
To give thee counselling and aid,  
And the brave part that Reynard played  
Oft and again within thy realm,  
My speech would utterly o'erwhelm  
That band with shame, for Reynard's rays  
Of wisdom still illumine thy days.

“ Methinketh wellnigh upside down  
The Court is turned, when each base clown,  
Unworthy flatterer, or false shrew,  
Usurps thine ear, and good and true  
Old counsellors are thrust aside,  
Whose constant labour, aim, and pride  
Hath been devoted to one thing  
'Fore all—the honour of their King!

XXX. Dame  
Rukenawe's  
rede.

Deem'st thou the welfare of the land  
'Neath losels, shrews, and churls can stand?"

The King said : " Dame, if thou hadst felt  
Such direful strokes as have been dealt  
To others by the Fox, I ween  
That much less ardent thou hadst been  
In his defence. If deadly hate,  
Which nought can smother or abate,  
Burn in my heart against him, why  
Shouldst thou thereon look wonderingly?  
My safeguard hath he set at nought,  
And, steeped in theft and murder, brought  
My realm in disrepute. If trust  
Thou feel'st that all his ways are just,  
Upright, and clear, 'twere well I deem  
That thou, to prove in what esteem  
Thou hold'st thy friend, shouldst forthwith set  
Him o'er the altar, and there let  
Him have thy worship as a Saint.  
Thy tongue alone hath power to paint  
His crimes as virtues. No one lives,  
I trow, in all the world who gives  
To Reynard Fox unstinted praise,  
But thee alone, and with amaze  
I list thy lauding: but beware  
Lest in the end ye find some snare  
Or crafty trap prepared to take  
Thee unawares; he doth awake  
No love responsive in the breast  
Of kin or friend; than this no test  
In all the world can surer be  
Of a life lived unworthily.

" I marvel much that thou shouldst own  
For comrade one whose deeds have shown

Such evil record. Never yet  
 In all my life days have I met  
 One man, save thou, who fellowship  
 Held with the Fox, across whose lip  
 A word of good or thanks did pass  
 Concerning him, for ever 'twas  
 His custom with his tail to strike  
 His friend—thy fate 'twill be belike."

XXX. Dame  
 Rukenawe's  
 rede.

"My Lord," the She-Ape quick replied,  
 "I love the Fox, and none beside  
 Esteem of equal worth. I know  
 A tale wherein he once did show  
 So much of well-poised careful wit,  
 Within your Court, that ye to it  
 Gave highest praise. Alack the while!  
 That now thy face no more doth smile  
 On his deserving: yet shall weight  
 Of worth bring down the scale, though fate  
 Seem fickle for a time. No day  
 A man should praise until away  
 'Tis worn toward eventide: good rede  
 Is lost if men be slack to heed.



XXXI · A · PARABLE · OF · A · MAN ·  
 · THAT · DELIVERED · A · SER ·  
 · PENT · FROM · THE · PERIL · ·  
 · OF · DEATH · S · S · S ·

"TWO years are fled since hither came  
 A Man and Serpent: each laid claim  
 To have the judgment of the Court  
 For his behoof. So strange and thwart  
 The question loomed, that held in doubt

XXXI.  
Strange ser-  
pent snare.

Were you and yours, nor could thereout  
The issue be divined. The case  
Thus stood betwixt them.

At a place  
Not distant far from this, it happed  
The Serpent, by ill chance, was trapped  
In gliding through a hedge: the snare  
So tightly gripped his neck, that there  
He must have perished, but the Man  
Passed near the place, and speeding ran,  
Responsive to the Serpent's cry,  
Who made his prayer most earnestly  
For aid ere yet the little breath  
Wherewith he spoke were snatched by death.  
The Man with kindly pity gave  
The needful help; 'But if I save  
Thy life,' quoth he, 'wilt thou make oath  
To harm me not? I else were loth  
To set thee free.'

The Serpent swore  
A binding curse that nevermore,  
Whate'er might hap or chance until  
His death-day broke, would he or spill  
His venom 'gainst him or devise  
His hurt or harm in any wise.

"This well agreed, the man set free  
The captive snake, and peaceably  
The new-found friends together fared  
O'er mountain, plain, and stream, and shared  
Whate'er of good or ill betid,  
Until the pangs of hunger bid  
The Serpent seek whereby he might  
Appease his ravenous appetite.

"The Man, as nearest food at hand,

Awhile with murderous eyes he scanned,  
Then at him darted, as he would  
Make now that friend to serve for food,  
Whose act had been the cause why he  
Felt hunger's tooth so cruelly.  
The man in terror started back,  
Crying, 'How now? wilt thou attack  
The friend who saved thy life? Thine oath  
Rings in mine ear, and I am loth  
To think so soon thou hast forgot  
The debt thou ows't me; didst thou not  
Swear lifelong friendship?'

Quoth the snake,

'Tis true that I did lately make  
A solemn oath that I would ne'er  
Do harm or scathe to thee, but fair  
It is at need to cast aside  
Rash oaths; as well might I have died  
Within the snare as now to lose  
My life by hunger, and must choose  
'Twixt death and breach of oath.'

The man

Replied: 'O knave! at least ye can  
Some respite give me, till we light  
On those who know to judge aright  
In such deep questions.'

Unto this

The Snake agreed, for nought amiss  
He found the plea, and met they soon  
Tyselin the Raven, with that loon  
His son Slyndpere, to whom they told  
The case at full: the Raven rolled  
His cunning eyes with joy, then said:  
'Tis clear the Serpent soon were dead  
Should he forbear the man to slay;  
Is it not therefore plain, I pray,

XXXI.  
Strange ser-  
pent snare.

That famine frees him from his oath ?  
The man must die, and surely both  
My son and I the feast may share.'

"Cried then the Serpent : 'Do ye dare,  
O Man, to question now my right  
To eat you ?'

Quoth the wretched wight :  
'How should a robber, who vile meed  
Would gain in judging, give good heed  
To righteous judgment ? All alone  
Doth Tyselin stand, too, and 'tis known  
Past doubt that two or three at least  
Should form a Court, for thus, increased  
Is hope of justice, and the law  
Should deemsters know, devoid of flaw.  
When two give sentence, I agree  
Thou then shalt work thy will on me  
Despite thine oath.'

Forth then they fare  
To seek new judgment, and the Bear  
And Wolf they met ere long, to whom  
They told their tale, demanding doom.

"They ruled forthwith the Snake might slay  
The man to quench his need : 'Always  
Doth hunger break an oath,' they said.  
Great horror seized the Man, for led  
By famine came his foe to cast  
His venom at him.

'Not so fast,'  
He shrieked, as with a spring he leapt  
Aside, while o'er his heart there crept  
A sickly terror, 'would ye kill  
The friend who saved you from the ill  
That flesh most fears ?'



‘How now?’ replied

The Serpent : ‘still unsatisfied  
Art thou, although the case hath been  
Twice fairly judged? Full well I ween  
This is enough!’

‘Yea,’ quoth the Man,

‘Robbers and murderers know to plan  
Such things betwixt them. I appeal  
From them to one in whom all feel  
Most perfect trust. Our gracious King  
Shall judge the cause, and whatso thing  
His will award ’twixt thee and me  
Both shall abide by, finally.’

The Serpent, Bear, and Wolf concurred  
To have the case at full referred  
To thy great wisdom ; vainly thought  
These shrews, that if they jointly sought  
Thy favour, they perchance might bend  
Thy noble soul to serve their end.

“I trow that ye remember well,  
Great Lord, how this same thing befell,  
Yet pardon me if I, in short  
And simple words, tell how the Court  
They filled with crowds of kith and kin,  
And how they boldly brought therein  
The Wolf’s two sons (cry void of wool),  
Called Empty-Belly and Never-Full,  
Hoping these brats might get some share,  
If so it happed thy judgment were  
Against the Man : as creatures mad  
For hunger howled they, till ye bade  
The pair to void your Court.

The Man

Stood in great dread, for now his span  
Of life on thy award did hang.

XXXI.  
Strange serpent  
snare.

Then through the Court his accents rang,  
As he appealed your grace, and told  
How the base Serpent claimed to hold  
The oath for nought 'gainst him who saved  
His life, and eloquently craved  
Impartial sentence.

Then replied  
The Serpent, saying: 'I had died,  
'Tis true, within the snare, but how  
Hath this Man saved my life if now  
I starve for hunger? Thus my claim  
Is just, great King, and nought of shame  
Lies on me if I break my oath.'

"Then ye, my Lord, were sorely loth  
To say on which side lay the right:  
For, if the Man must die, despite  
The Serpent's oath, although he'd shown  
Such kindness as is rarely known  
'Twixt man and beast, 'twould seem unjust,  
But yet 'twas clear the Serpent must  
Have food to save his life. Command  
Then gave ye, that the skilful hand  
And brain of learned Reynard should  
Thereto be set, for wise and good  
Was he in those old days esteemed,  
And sound and true his judgment deemed  
Before all other; and ye said:  
'Now be we all by Reynard led,  
For dowered is he with wit profound,  
And wotteth all the root and ground  
Of legal doubts.'

Then Reynard spoke,  
And in few words did he uncloak  
And clear the case.

'My Lord,' he cried,

“ By no just mean can ye decide  
From what these witnesses declare ;  
By one mode only can a fair  
Award be made : first let the Snake  
And Man forthwith themselves betake  
To that same spot where first they met,  
And when within the snare or net  
The former once again doth stand  
In equal peril whence the hand  
Of kindly pity set him free,  
Then, should the man again agree  
To loose his bonds, nor show him loth  
To trust once more the Serpent's oath,  
Who should gainsay? But if he will  
To leave the Serpent bounden still,  
No man hath right to say that he  
Therein hath acted blamefully.’

XXXI.  
Strange ser-  
pent snare.

“ ’Twas thus that Reynard's wit evolved  
Clearness from chaos, and resolved  
This knotty case, which had defied  
The brains of all thy Court beside.

“ My Lord, that judgment deemed ye good,  
And all the Counsellors who stood  
Around deep looks of envy wore,  
To see that thing, which had before  
His coming puzzled sore their wit,  
Made patent, and the Man go quit  
From death—’twas thus he wisely kept  
Thine honour, proving him adept  
In legal lore : this paradox  
None solved, till sought ye Reynard Fox.

“ When have the Wolf and Bear e'er done  
To thee like service since the sun

XXXI.  
Strange ser-  
pent snare.

First lit your life? To howl and brag  
They know right well, nor do they flag  
In plunder or dishonest work ;  
And where fat morsels are, they lurk  
In wait to seize them, and to fill  
Therewith their paunches. Ever still  
Foremost are they to scourge small thieves  
Of hens and chickens, but fat beeves,  
Milch cows, and horses will they steal,  
Without a blush, and though they deal  
Sharp justice towards some petty knave,  
Yet reckon they as nought their grave  
Outrageous robberies, whereof quit  
Too oft they go, and even sit  
On high as Lords of great estate,  
And void of doubt or scruple, rate  
Themselves with learned Avicene,  
Counting their little wit I ween  
To equal that of Solomon  
Or Aristotle.

Every one  
Of this base crew would fain be thought  
A hero, yet should each be sought,  
Not in the van, prepared to face  
All dangers, but in some snug place,  
Secure from harm.

These be not wise,  
Great Lord, who seek but to devise  
Their own advantage : tower and town,  
Lord, land, and people may go down  
To wrack and ruin, yet their souls  
Grieve nought thereof. If at the coals  
They may but warm them, they care not  
Whose house 'tis burns, one single jot.  
Self benefit alone they seek.

“ But if thou sufferest me to speak  
Of Reynard’s numerous kin and friends  
I fain would show how each one bends  
His native wit to serve thee well.  
It needs not my poor tongue to tell  
How wisdom ranks above mere boast,  
Or call to memory that a host  
Of subtle counsellors is thine  
In Reynard Fox : no other nine  
Can equal him, yet scant and small  
The meed and thanks are that befall  
The never dying love he feels  
For thee ; but as the morning steals  
With still sure foot, and driveth night  
Across the hills, e’en so shall spite  
And envy fail before the ray  
Of love, and thou in truth’s broad day  
Shalt thank the Fox, whose faithful care  
Hath saved thy life from secret snare.

XXXI.  
Strange ser-  
pent snare.

“ My Lord, of late I heard thee say  
That Reynard’s kindred fall away  
From backing him because they fear  
His falseness : trow I that right dear  
Such words had cost another man  
Than thee, great King, for short his span  
Of joy would be ere on his head  
Such wrack and vengeance fell, that dead  
He well might wish him. Thou art free  
To speak thy pleasure, for to thee  
We humbly bend ; though should some dare  
To scheme thy hurt, let them beware,  
For soon the whole Fox kin would show  
Such deeds in thy defence as grow  
From true and valiant men alone.

XXXI.  
Strange ser-  
pent snare.

“ In fiercest fight 'tis freely known  
They lead the van ; no dastard heart  
Hath with our lineage lot or part.  
I will, with your most gracious leave,  
So far as memory serves, achieve  
The tale of Reynard's kith and kin,  
Who all with one consentment pin  
Their faith to what the Fox doth say,  
And, recking nought, would cast away  
Both life and goods to serve him. I  
With cheerful heart would gladly die  
For his dear sake : although a wife  
And mother, yet should I my life  
Account well lost ; my children three,  
Well waxen and most dear to me,  
Would I adventure for his love,  
Which my true heart doth set above  
All else men prize.

Great Lord, I pray  
That wisdom guide your wit this day.



·XXXij· OF ·THE· FRIENDS·  
·AND· KIN· OF· REYNARD·  
·THE· FOX· ♪ · ♪ · ♪ ·  
· . . . . .

“ **M**Y first child Bitelives hath for name :  
Much cherished is he for the game  
And sport he makes, wherefore to eat  
He hath fat trenchers and good meat  
In such great plenty, that the crumbs  
His brother Fulrompe feed, who comes  
Next him in birth. My youngest child

A daughter is, by nature wild  
And tameless ; she is called Hatenet,  
Because from birth she never yet  
Was known by trammel to be held  
Against her will. None ever excelled  
These three in love to one another,  
And all three love I as a Mother  
Should love her offspring.”

XXXII.  
The droll  
Fox breed.

Then the three  
She beckoned towards her smilingly,  
And bade them all that they should stand  
By cousin Reynard ; next with bland  
Soft voice she cried : “ Come ye who own  
Kinship with me and Reynard ; none  
Need blush therefore ; ’tis ours to pray  
The King that he forthwith doth stay  
Process of law against our good  
Red kinsman.”

Then from those who stood  
Thickly around came forth anon  
A worthy heap. The black Martron,  
The Fitchew, and the Musehont grey,  
The Bonsing, and the Ferret : they  
All love the poultry yard as well  
As Reynard, and are scarce less fell  
Amongst its denizens ; Beavers brown  
From out their well-built island town  
Appeared ; the Otter and his wife  
(These and the Beavers were at strife  
With Reynard, but durst not gainsay  
Dame Rukenawe, who would fain display  
The fullest strength of Reynard’s kin),  
The Water-rat, and those atwin,  
The Genet, Squirrel, and Ostrole  
(Now known no more), the velvet Mole,  
The Hedgehog, clad in armour pointed,

XXXII.  
The droll  
Fox breed.

The Ermine, who to Kings anointed  
Doth furnish decking, and a score  
Of others, making somewhat more  
Than forty, issued forth to stand  
By Reynard's side, and formed a band  
That no man need despise.

Then cried  
Dame Rukenawe : " Can it be denied  
That Reynard hath, most gracious King,  
A great and goodly following ?  
Here in one posse may ye view  
The most devoted, loyal and true  
Of all your subjects, who at need  
Would spend their goods, or freely bleed  
In thy defence. Although of might  
Ye be in counsel, as in fight,  
Yet should the mightiest King be fain  
Alliance such as ours to gain.

" Let Reynard ponder in his mind  
Crimes laid against him ; if he find  
No way thereout by sound excuse,  
Then on his head may ye let loose  
The terrors of the Law ; bedight  
Thou justice, and God save the right ! "

Then spake the Queen : " But yesterday,  
With honeyed words, I strove to lay  
These very things before the King,  
Which thou, great Dame, with force dost bring  
Again within his ken, but he  
Then took my reasoning angrily,  
And scorned to bend thereto his ear."

Spake too Sir Fyrapeel : "'Tis clear,  
Great Sire, that as the ancients give



Their verdict, so must Reynard live  
Or die. For shouldst thou decide,  
Merely by force of mightful pride  
And wayward will, but scanty praise  
Would be thy due : keep thou the ways  
Of perfect justice ; duly hear  
Each side in turn, and void of fear  
Or favour, ever by the best  
And wisest counsel act."

“ Confessed  
These words must be for just and true,”  
The King exclaimed, “ but was not due  
Swift censure when the tale I heard  
Of Cuwaert’s death? Too rashly stirred  
Perchance I was to wrath, but dead  
To reason felt when Cuwaert’s head  
By Bellyn I received—yet now,  
On calm reflection, will allow  
That over hasty was my speech :  
Slowly doth sad experience teach.

“ Once more do we consent to list  
Reynard’s reply, and if I wist  
The exculpation good and sound,  
Then would my heart with joy rebound  
To set him free, and quell the fear  
Of those who hold their kinsman dear.”

These words made Reynard’s heart right glad :  
“ Thank God !” thought he, “ Mine Aunt hath clad  
Her speech in such fair guise that doom  
Is overpast—she maketh bloom  
Anew the lineage of the Fox,  
Unhurt by Fortune’s cruel shocks.  
Once more my nimble foot shall tread  
The merry dance of life ; my head

XXXII.  
The droll  
Fox breed.

XXXII.  
The droll  
Fox breed.

Once more shall scheme such glorious lies  
As well might startle and surprise  
The sire of leasings. Thus, the King  
Once more deceived, I'll safely bring  
My bark through raging storms to port,  
And laugh to scorn my foes at Court."



·XXXIIj· HOW· THE· FOX· WITH  
· SUBTLETY· EXCUSED· HIM· FOR·  
· THE· DEATH· OF· CUART· THE·  
· HARE· &· HOW· WITH· FLAT·  
· TERY· HE· CAT· AGAIN· HIS·  
· PEACE· WITH· THE· KING·

WITH well-feigned wonder Reynard gazed  
Around the Court, as one amazed  
At all he heard, then gently said :  
" My Lord, what say ye ? Is then dead  
My good friend Cuwaert ? Twice have ye  
Thereof made mention, yet to me  
'Tis strange and new, shall I no more  
Behold dear Cuwaert ? And wherefore  
Speakest thou thus of Bellyn Ram,  
For whose safe coming here I am  
Pledged to the hilt ? Did he not bring  
Three jewels ? One for thee, dear King,  
And two for our most gracious Queen ? "

The King replied : " We nought have seen,  
By Bellyn brought, save Cuwaert's head  
A ghastly sight ! and as he said,  
That of the letters, which the scrip  
Contained, with you in fellowship  
He was joint author, therefore quick  
The shafts of vengeance fell, and thick  
As woes on Job in bygone day."

'Alas!' quoth Reynard, "do ye say  
This thing for very truth? Ah woe!  
That ever I was born, for lo!  
Within that scrip three jewels rare  
I sent to thee: past all compare  
Are they for beauty, craft and worth;  
Cursed be the day that gave me birth  
If they be lost! no longer life  
Hath joy or savour; when my wife  
Doth learn this loss her heart will break,  
For in those jewels did she take  
Such pride that grievously I fear  
To lose her love."

"My nephew dear,"  
The She-Ape said, "ye nought can gain  
By such deep sorrow; weak and vain  
Is this lament; cast grief aside,  
For what availeth that ye chide  
With puling words?—stand forth and say  
What form these jewels bore: if they  
Are still existing on the earth,  
And treasures are of such great worth,  
We peradventure yet may find  
Sure means to speed on every wind  
The story of their priceless cost:  
We'll rack the world ere they be lost!  
The learned Master Akeryn,  
Shall books indite thereof, and spin  
Their fame through earth's remotest ways,  
Telling their likeness, worth, and praise.  
If even thus they be not found,  
Then every altar shall resound  
The Church's curse on those who dare  
To hold them hidden."

"Untold care,  
Dear aunt, thou liftest from my mind,"

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

Quoth Reynard, " for my heart doth find  
Your cheering words give wondrous ease,  
Yet doubt if even the mighty keys  
St. Peter wieldeth will induce  
The shrews who stole those gems to loose  
Their hold thereon ; the universe  
Knoweth no King whose treasure-purse  
Contains such precious things as those  
I mourn the loss of : pains and woes,  
Most cruel, shall I count as nought,  
Until, not only have I sought,  
But found those jewels, which excel  
Aught eye hath seen, aught tongue can tell."

Then in a false dissimuled tone  
The Fox cried : " Hear me, every one  
Of you my well-loved friends and kin,  
And blame my speech unless it win  
Your heartfelt sympathy in this  
Most bitter loss, which threatens, ywis,  
To darken all my life. Know ye  
The jewels that are lost, all three  
Hold virtues heretofore unknown.

" The first a ring was, which alone  
Excelled a Monarch's ransom, gold,  
Free from alloy as are the cold  
Bright ice-born streams, 'twas formed of : writ  
Inside the circle, which doth sit  
Close to the finger, was a trine  
Of letters which, enamelled, shine  
With azure, bright as noonday sky,  
And sable, whence there seemed to fly  
Sparkles of light. These letters were  
Three Hebrew names ; alas ! I ne'er  
Could spell that holy tongue, but then

I knew that marvel among men  
Hight Master Abrion of Trier,  
Than whom no other, far or near,  
Hath greater learning, well he knows  
All manner languages, and trows  
The virtues of all herbs ; no beast  
Doth live, so wild, but at the least  
Of words from him it will obey  
All his behests from that first day  
It comes before him ; precious stones,  
Sought out from earth's most distant zones,  
He calls by name, and knows to tell  
Each good effect or evil spell  
They cause to man, and yet a Jew  
He lives, and doth despise the true  
Sound faith of Holy Church. I showed  
To him this ring, and eager glowed  
His eyes with fire, the while he read  
The mystic words, then whispering said :  
'These are the names which holy Seth  
Brought out of Paradise, when death  
Drew near to Adam, and he sought  
For him the oil of mercy. Nought  
Need he who bears these holy names  
Fear witchcraft, thunder, or the flames  
Of scorching lightning ; though sin tempt  
His spirit, yet shall he exempt  
Be kept from stain, and though he lie  
Long nights afield, he shall aby  
Unharm'd the storms of winter frore.  
Such virtues and a thousand more  
These names aye bear to those who on  
Their power rely—trust Abrion.'

"Withoutforth of the ring, a stone,  
Of three most wondrous colours, shone ;

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Reynard's  
romance.

The one part showed like crystal—red,  
Bright sparkling, as live fire it bred  
Within its substance, in such wise,  
That where 'tis borne the darkness dies,  
Though round doth reign profoundest night  
For those who lack its inborn light,  
While those who know to use its ray  
Walk sure as though 'twere broad noonday.

“The second part was fair and clear,  
As though some skilful burnisher  
Had worked its surface ; whoso dole  
Of body feeleth, may be whole  
Of all disease, or pain or ache,  
Or falling sickness, if he take  
This stone and gently strike it o'er  
The part that suffereth ; nevermore  
Shall sickness touch him till he fall  
By that last stroke which comes to all.  
Or should it chance that evil meat  
Or venom causeth fever's heat  
To fire his blood, or rheum's sharp pain  
Should rack his limbs, a man may gain  
Relief therefrom if he but steep  
That stone in water, and a deep  
Long draught drink fasting.

Furthermore

This dear-worth stone within it bore  
Another colour, purest green  
Much like to glass, but yet were seen  
Therein some purple sprinkles : who  
Bare this, the master said for true,  
That never in his life need he  
Fear wound-stroke from an enemy.  
And though most mighty were his foe  
And strong and hardy, he alow

Should quickly lay him, whether day  
Or night beheld the weapon-play.  
But needeth well, whoso would reap  
These precious boons, must surely keep  
A holy fast the day before.

“ To these great wonders yet may more  
Be added : wheresoe'er he goes,  
Who holds this ring, his deadliest foes,  
Who erstwhile hated him above  
All others, shall with kindly love  
Embrace him ; soon as in men's sight  
He comes, each one shall feel delight  
To greet his hand with kindly grip  
Of warm and welcome fellowship.  
Moreover, though he naked stood  
Within a field against a brood  
Of mailed foes, a hundred strong,  
Yet should he cast adown that throng  
Unaided, winning stintless praise  
And plenteous love. But herein plays  
The wearer's birth momentous part,  
For not alone of noble heart  
Must he himself be, but his kin  
Must boast good lineage would he win  
Behoof and service through this stone,  
For unto such an one alone  
Its mystic powers respond, no churl  
Would vantage gain from this fair pearl  
Of peerless price.

And then I thought  
Within my heart most surely ought  
This precious gem to be in care  
Of one more worthy than I dare  
Esteem myself. To thee therefore,  
Great King, 'twas sent, for no man more

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

Is fit to wear it, or should be  
Guarded and kept more sovereignly  
Than thou (who art our very breath)  
From dread, from need, ill-luck, or death.

"This precious talisman was found  
Deep-dolven 'neath the darksome ground  
Among my father's treasure hoard.  
But list thou further, dearest Lord,  
What other wonders had new birth  
From that great storehouse of the earth.

"Thence 'twas with tremulous hands I won  
Two other glorious things, which none  
E'er matched or equalled yet : a glass  
And fair made comb, which overpass  
All else beside that eye hath seen,  
And therefore 'twas my lady Queen  
Should have them, though in truth my wife  
So loved the twain that no small strife  
Was bred betwixt us.

Weak and small

I feel my speech when I recall  
The passing wonders of this comb  
And all its virtues, for the dome  
Of spacious Heaven shields not the wight  
Who knows to chaunt its praise aright.  
'Tis made and fashioned of the bone  
Supplied by one rare beast alone  
In all the world, which hight Panthera  
(No fabled creature or chimera),  
Who 'neath the fragrant groves of spice  
'Twixt Ind and the Earthly Paradise  
Pastures him ever ; lusty, fair,  
And strong is he, and with all rare  
And varied hues his fell is dyed



Of rainbow beauty. And beside  
All this, a savour sweet bears he  
That healeth sickness wondrously.  
This wot the other beasts right well,  
And, for that pleasant savoured smell  
To heal them of their ailments, they  
Follow Panthera night and day.  
From out that bone whereof is made  
This jewel, fragrance doth not fade  
E'en when Panthera dies ; 'tis thin  
And broad and hard, and ever in  
One piece remaineth, though 'twere smitten  
On Vulcan's anvil, or were bitten  
By great Leviathan's jaw ; 'twill not  
Consume in Hell's fierce fire, or rot  
E'en in the flood of Styx ; though tight  
And hard of texture, 'tis more light  
Than down from Cupid's wings. So sweet  
Its fragrance is, that if it greet  
The nostrils once of any man,  
He loves it so that never can  
He henceforth follow any lust  
Or joy beside, yet ever must  
He be thereby of jocund heart,  
Free from misease, till death's quick dart  
Recalls him home. The comb is white  
As snow 'neath moonbeams, and as bright  
As burnished silver doth it shine.  
On the hither side, betwixt its nine  
Greater and smaller teeth, is left  
A field or space, whereon with deft  
And cunning skill are carven out  
Fair picturings, set all about  
With choice enamelling and gold,  
Such as no eye could e'er behold  
Unraptured. Then the field is checked

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

With sable curiously bedecked  
With little golden suns. Unrolled  
A legend is thereon of old  
Mysterious days, when Wisdom, Might,  
And Love each claimed unquestioned right  
To Beauty's palm. Hear thou the tale  
How Love did o'er all else prevail,  
And since that time hath ever ruled  
The world, by wit and might unschooled,  
Befooling ever, and befooled.

"The story tells of days long past,  
When Paris must his judgment cast  
'Twi'x three great dames of passing beauty,  
Who, each to draw him from the duty  
Which on him lay of justly deeming,  
Proffered rare gifts of such fair seeming  
As well might, though of justice fain  
As Rhadamanthus, turn his brain  
To partial sentence.

Thus the three  
Were named who strove for mastery :

"Juno, bright spouse of mighty Jove,  
Venus, the Queen of soft-eyed Love,  
And Pallas, whose exhaustless store  
Of wisdom grasps all worldly lore.  
In turn each claimed the first to be  
For perfect form and symmetry ;  
And each her beauty's wealth revealed,  
From folds diaphanous unsealed,  
Demanding that the untutored eyes  
Of Paris should adjudge the prize  
(An apple fair of ruddy gold)  
To her whom all the world might hold

Henceforth as fairest among fair,  
Past doubt, or question, or compare.

“ The untaught Paris was a young  
And simple herdsman, who among  
Green Ida's rocks and thickets wild  
Had dwelt, sweet nature's heart-free child.  
But now three Goddesses confess  
Him arbiter of loveliness.

“ First, Juno all her witcheries tried  
To warp his judgment to her side,  
With glorious promise she would dower  
Him and his line with unchecked power  
To rule the world.

Fair Pallas cried :

‘ Paris, wouldst thou in triumph ride  
Above thy fellows, thou mayst learn  
From me such wisdom as may turn  
Thy name from low estate, to live  
In deathless fame : and I will give  
To thee, moreover, power to wield  
Thine arms unconquered in the field  
Throughout thy days, until they close,  
Peaceful and sweet, in death's repose :  
Nay, even though dead, thy name shall ring  
Through time, of wit and arms a King.’

“ Then Venus spoke : ‘ How hast thou need  
Of power or riches, or indeed  
Of wit or might in arms ? Is not  
Priam thy father, who, God wot,  
Hath Asia 'neath his rule ? Own brother  
Art thou to Hector, whom none other  
Could ever vanquish or destroy ;  
And own ye not the high-walled Troy .

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Reynard's  
romance.

Among ye?

                  If thou wilt bestow  
On me the apple, thou shalt know  
A joy surpassing wealth or power,  
Or wit or conquest: I will dower  
Thine heart with that which soars above  
All these—the gift of woman's love!  
And to thy fond arms will I give  
The fairest woman that doth live  
On earth's wide round—than whom was ne'er  
One born more sweet and debonair.  
With this great treasure shalt thou be  
Richer than rich, for verily  
A gracious woman, fair and wise,  
Will be to thee far higher prize  
Than wealth, or learning, or success  
In warlike deeds. Let gentleness,  
With love and peace thy life control  
Through one good woman, and thy soul  
Shall need no other thing than this  
To bring thee joy and perfect bliss.'

“With eager longing Paris heard  
The welcome promise which the word  
Of Venus gave him, and he cried:  
'Say then, how name ye the sweet bride  
That hath such worth and goodlihead?  
Where shall I seek her?' Venus said:  
'Tis Helen, far surpassing Queen  
Of sunlit Greece, whose beauty's sheen  
Shall bless thine arms, and as thy wife  
Shed light and joyance o'er thy life.'

“To Venus straightway Paris gave  
The golden apple, for she drave  
With these fair words from out his mind

All thought but how forthwith to find  
His promised good.

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

How he was made  
Queen Helen's spouse by Venus' aid,  
And how he brought her home to Troy,  
And how their life sped by in joy  
And merry sport, is carved within  
The field in such wise as to win  
The praise of all men : and the story  
Stands writ beneath in fullest glory  
Of perfect pencraft :—mastering love  
Thus lastly proved to be above  
The power of riches, arms, or wit,  
And rode triumphant over it.

“ Such was the comb, but thence I pass  
To tell the story of the glass  
Or magic mirror, wherein lies  
Such wondrous virtue as defies  
All wealth of words to speak its praise.

“ Who knows aright therein to gaze,  
May ken of whatsoe'er is done  
A mile or more around ; each one  
Of men or beasts who moves a hand  
To work his need, or gives command  
To others, may be plainly seen  
Within its depths : ye well may ween  
Therefrom its worth—but more—besides  
This marvel, further it provides  
Witting of all that men would know  
Of deepest lore : great good will grow  
Moreover from a glance therein,  
To folk who guerison would win  
For eyes that suffer prick or smart,  
And motes and pearls will thence depart

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

As though by weird. What wonder then  
If wrath and sorrow move me when  
Such loss is mine.

The frame of wood,  
Wherein this precious mirror stood  
Was light yet hard, and hight Cetyne :  
For aye will it endure, I ween,  
Seeing in water ne'er 'twill rot,  
And noxious worms will pierce it not ;  
And therefore wise King Solomon,  
The sacred psalmist's glorious son,  
God's holy Temple caused to be  
Lined through with wood of Cetyne tree.  
Men prized it dear as finest gold,  
And counted it in days of old  
Of equal worth with ebony:  
Whereof King Crompart bade should be  
(For love he bore that peerless lass,  
Daughter of King Morcadigas)  
A horse constructed, and so made  
Within, that he who unafraid  
Bestrode it, might in one short hour  
Travel a hundred miles : the power  
To work this marvel soon was proved  
By Prince Cleomedes, who, moved  
To show his prowess, cried : ' How now !  
'Twere well to test this tale I trow.'  
Sturdy and young was he, and hardy,  
And ne'er in deeds of daring tardy,  
For much he loved to hear men own  
His chivalry and fair renown.

" Across the steed he lightly leapt—  
Quickly King Crompart forward stopt,  
And turned within its well-wrought breast  
A pin, when straight, with towering crest,

The wondrous beast rose high in air,  
And, while all watched with awestruck stare,  
Sped through the window of the hall,  
Far out of sight, beyond recall,  
A many miles, before that they  
Could one short *Paternoster* say.  
Cleomedes waxed sore afeard,  
When now those distant hills he neared,  
Whose pale blue outline well he knew  
From far, and great his terror grew  
Lest ne'er his steed should turn again,  
But ever riding, he his bane  
Should meet in unknown lands;—how far  
He sped, e'er yet his lucky star  
Decreed him knowledge of the law  
That ruled the pin—what sights he saw  
Ere thus he learned the magic horse  
To govern in his headlong course,  
And what great joyance filled his heart,  
When once he knew the mastering art  
By which to wheel his steed about,  
And with what loud triumphant shout  
His loving friends received him back,  
I leave untold since time doth lack.

“Beyond the glass the frame stood out  
A half-foot broad, all carved about  
With histories wondrous to behold,  
Dight various wise—with sunny gold,  
With moonbeam silver, sapphire blue,  
Rich cinnabar's vermilion hue,  
Bright yellow and darkest sable. Nought  
Was ever yet more rarely wrought  
Than those six colours; then beneath  
Each several carving was a wreath,  
Whereon in sharp-cut letters ye

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

Might read each gladsome history  
Enamelled. Subtle was the skill  
Of him who dight it, nought could fill  
Man's mind with more profound delight—  
Woe worth the day! now lost to sight.

“ Moreover round the framework's border  
Were deftly carved, in daintiest order,  
Three serried rows. Of beast and bird  
Were first and second formed, the third  
Was tricked with every fragrant flower  
That blooms in garden, mead, or bower.  
In untaught hands these works would be  
Marvels of man's dexterity ;  
For o'er each flower and bird and beast,  
The craftsman's skill hath framed such feast  
Of cunning handiwork, that rife  
Seems petal, hair, and plume with life.  
But when thou once hadst learned from me  
The trick-work of their enginery,  
Then, ever freely at thy will  
These wondrous carvings had proved still  
More wondrous, for thy magic words  
Should in a moment to the birds  
Give being ; sudden, as things alive  
Should they in emulation strive,  
With carolling of sweetest sound,  
Filling all heaven with newly found,  
Undreamed-of joyance ; every throat  
Chanting its native wilding note.  
Another magic word, and all  
The storm of harmony should fall  
Silent ; and quickly pass away,  
Broken the spell—their little day.

“ So with the beasts ; when'er thou wilt



Rouse them to life, the cross-barred hilt  
Of thy dread sword should smite the frame  
Lightly, and thou a mystic name  
Shouldst speak, and instantly 'twould make  
Their dead inanimate forms to take  
Quick life, and sense, and ready will  
To do thee service and fulfil  
All thy behests : then fair-carved wood  
Become once more, when thou saw'st good.

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

“The flowers likewise, whene'er their tips  
Were touched or breathed on by the lips  
Of thy fair Queen, would straight assume  
Bright hues, and fragrant rich perfume  
Exhale, as though within one's sight  
From out a garden's warm sunlight  
All freshly culled ; but when her will  
It were that they no more distill  
Sweet fragrance, but to carven wood  
Return, she then with hardihood  
Should cast them on the brands to burn,  
And they by magic would return  
To lifeless beauty as before—  
Their bright hues past, their fragrance o'er.

“Ne'er yet in my poor judgment were  
Such wondrous, beauteous, costly, rare  
And precious jewels seen, as these,  
Which on my soul's low bended knees  
I sent by Bellyn to my Lord,  
And now my heart, as with a sword,  
Is riven to deem such treasures gone  
For aye, to cold oblivion.

“Among the pleasant stories told  
Within the frame was one of old

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

Dim days of earth, when freely ran  
The Horse, unchecked or curbed of man.

“ He, lusty grown, well knit and strong,  
Envied the Hart, who sped along  
With foot that seemed to chase the wind,  
While he though swift, must lag behind.  
Till scheming in his mind how he  
Might o'er the Hart gain mastery,  
Thus to a passing herdsman spake :

‘ If, helped by thee, my foot o’ertake  
And put to death this light-foot deer,  
For guerdon thou shalt have to cheer  
Thy heart, his flesh, bones, horns and skin,  
To deal with as thou wilt, and win  
Thereby great good, the while I sate  
My wounded pride and envious hate  
Which every day doth aggravate.’

“ ‘ But,’ quoth the Herdsman, ‘ how may I  
Come near a beast that doth defy  
Thy swiftness ?’

Said the Horse : ‘ Astride  
My back leap thou, ’twill be my pride  
To bear thy weight, pursuing so  
The deer, until in mortal throe  
He fall out-jaded.’

Swiftly sprang  
The Herd across the Horse, and rang  
The wildwood loud with echoing cries :  
But ever the light-foot Hart defies  
Both Horse and huntsman till the chase  
Lagged ; then the steed cried : ‘ This wild race  
Hath wearied me, and I would fain  
Dismiss my burden, and again

Roam as aforetime, wild and free ;  
No longer have I need of thee.'

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

“ ‘Have need of me !’ the Herdsman cried,  
‘ That may be, but whate’er betide,  
No more wilt thou thy freedom gain,  
But henceforth must the guiding rein  
Obey at will, and on thine head  
Suffer a bridle, and be sped  
Therewith through time, the while my heels  
Carry the spur which ne’er appeals  
To tender flanks in vain. Thy master  
Thou now hast found, and either faster  
Or slower shalt thou go, as he  
Hath pleasure or necessity.’

*Fable*

“ My Lord, see how the Horse thus brought  
Himself in thralldom, while he sought  
Another’s ill. Thus doth it hap  
Full oft that he who plans a trap  
To mar his neighbour is beset  
And snared within his proper net.

“ Among the sculpturings, too, was found  
This tale about the Ass and Hound.

“ A Man who owned a fertile stead  
Loved a small Hound, which shared his bed,  
Fed daily, from his well-filled plate,  
On morsels rare and delicate,  
Sported around with many a trick,  
And in his loving play would lick  
His master’s mouth.

When daily care  
Gave place to ease, and in his chair  
The Man reposed, the dog would lie

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Reynard's  
romance.

Upon his knees asleep, or try  
With merry gambols to beguile  
The hours of rest.

But when awhile  
Baldwin, the patient Ass, had seen,  
How fared the Hound, quoth he : ' I ween  
'Tis strange what joy my master takes  
In this foul cur, while nought he makes  
Of one who patiently hath worked  
For his behoof, nor ever shirked  
The dreariest toil : for me no bed  
Is e'er prepared, nor am I fed  
With dainty fare, but e'en must lie  
On cold damp earth, and nought but dry  
Hard thistles fall to me for food,  
The while this useless Hound hath good  
And savoury trenchers given at will.  
With patience have I suffered ill,  
Nor e'er complained, but now no more  
Will brook this slight, as heretofore,  
But lay some careful well-schemed plan,  
Whereby with fair-built hope I can  
Expect my lord's regard and love,  
Which now he shows this tike above  
All else around.'

Just then came by  
His master, and with will to try  
To gain his grace, the Ass upreared  
His hoofs against his head, and peered  
Straight in his face, with hideous bray,  
Then kissed his cheek in self-same way  
As wonted to do the little Hound.  
Back stepped the master with a bound,  
And cried : ' Help ! help ! the Ass is mad !'  
Then forth rushed many a serving lad,  
And beat his hide till he was fain

To seek his shed, and once again  
Crop thistles rough, rank weeds, and grass,  
Content to live as lives an Ass.

“ In suchlike wise may'st thou requite  
Those men, dear Lord, whose rancorous spite  
Is shot against their fellows. Where  
Asses gain lordship, wondrous rare  
It is to find good rule. Small heed  
Have such of aught, except to speed  
Their own advancement, and the state  
Fares ill when losels rule its fate—  
May God such woe from us forefend.

“ Hearken again how once did wend  
My sire with Tybert Cat. They swore  
That good or ill should never more  
Dispart their friendship, and whate'er  
They won between them, each should share  
In equal parts.

While yet was young  
Their compact, came a rushing throng  
Of hounds and huntsmen : thenceward leapt  
The twain, and close together crept  
Aside for shelter.

‘ Whither now,  
Dear Tybert ? ’ cried my sire, ‘ and how  
Were 't best to flee ? We're well espied  
And round about on every side  
The hunters close us in.’

(Full trust  
My Father had in Tybert's just  
And true fulfilment of the oath  
Whose solemn curse had bound them both  
To mutual aid.)

He cheerly said,  
‘ Divest thy mind of doubt and dread,

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romance.

For well my sack is stuffed with wiles,  
The poorest one of which beguiles  
The keenest hunter.'

Tybert sighed

And said : ' Dear friend, ye may confide  
Well in your wiles, no doubt ; the Cat,  
Alas ! hath only one.' With that  
Aloft he sprang, high up a tree  
Thick grown with leaves, where none might see  
Or harm him.

Thus my sire was left

In jeopardy of his life, bereft  
Of Tybert's aid, while many a hound  
And hunter rushed close by 'mid sound  
Of horns, and hideous cries.

With mocks

And sneers the Cat cried : ' Reynard Fox,  
My dearest cousin, pray unbind  
Thy sack of wiles, which ye would find  
Most helpful—now in time of need !'

" This cruel scoff, and gibing rede,  
My father had to bear from one  
He trusted, and for whom he'd done  
A thousand friendly acts, and nigh  
He came to end his life days by  
This treacherous trick of Tybert Cat.  
Long on his belly lay he flat,  
While hounds and huntsmen near him passed,  
Then swiftly sped, until at last  
He gained a cave, and therein crept :  
Judge then, dear Lord, in what way kept  
The Cat his pledge !

Alas ! e'en now,

Full many a traitor lives, I trow,  
Who heedeth troth but little more

Than this false friend : and should, therefore,  
A deep and deadly spleen possess  
My heart towards Tybert, 'twere much less  
Than his desert, but need not tell  
That ever I love my soul too well  
Malice to bear. Yet should it hap  
That ruin like a thunder-clap  
Befell his life and goods, my heart  
Would scarcely break thereat. No part  
Within my breast hath envious hate,  
But trust the Cat will expiate  
His past misdeeds by worthier life.

The flesh doth wage most grievous strife  
Against the spirit when I think  
How nearly to destruction's brink  
The Cat hath brought me, but forgive  
His falseness though its memory live.  
For love of God, I seek to be  
With direst foes in charity.

“ Within that frame, too, men may read  
How from the Wolf a friendly deed  
Gained scanty thanks.

It happed one day,  
On yonder heath a carcass lay  
Which once had been a horse : all bare  
Of flesh 'twas stript, and none would dare,  
Except a ravening Wolf, to try  
And make a banquet off such dry  
Hard fare. But Isegrym so great  
Desire for food felt, that he ate  
Three, four or five large bones, nor stayed  
To bite or break them, as afraid  
To lose his meal, and thus one stack  
Across his throat, and neither back

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

Nor forward would it move ; great pain  
Thereof he found, and sought in vain  
Some skilful leech to give him ease,  
Assuring goodly gifts and fees  
To whosoe'er would take away  
The offending bone, and thereby stay  
The hand of Death.

At last the Crane  
He sought the aid of : ' I were fain,'  
Quoth he, ' to give thee rich reward  
And lasting love, shouldst thou afford  
Some potent remedy, whereby  
To save my life.'

' Most gladly I,'  
Replied the Crane, ' will try my skill.'  
And speaking thus, he thrust his bill  
Far down the Wolf's voracious throat,  
And in less time than one could note,  
Pulled forth the bone.

The Wolf aside  
In dudgeon started, as he cried,  
With wrathful voice, in feigned alarm :  
' How now ! Thou dost me grievous harm !  
Yet I forgive thee, but no more  
Try tricks on me, or thou wilt sore  
Repent it.'

Quoth the Crane : ' Thy whim  
Is surely now, Sir Isegrym,  
To jest : I prithe, kindly give  
Thy promised guerdon.'

' As I live,'  
Cried Isegrym, ' but this is good !  
'Tis I who suffered, and ye would  
Demand reward ! 'Tis thou who might  
Thank me, that I forbore to bite  
Thy head off, when thou didst insert



Thy bill far down my throat and hurt  
Me past all measure. If indeed  
One of us two deserveth meed,  
'Tis I, who kindly spared to close  
My teeth upon thee.'

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

Often those  
Who gather greatest good, repay  
That good with ill. In this our day  
When false and subtle traitors rise  
To power and profit, they despise  
Men of fair worship and estate,  
Who salved their woes when need was great,  
Yet find excuse to take offence,  
Claiming amends on false pretence  
Of wrongful deeds.

My Lord, 'twere well  
If those same men, so keen and fell  
On others' faults, themselves were free  
From trespass and obliquity.

"All this and more that hath escaped  
From out my memory's scroll, was shaped  
With cunning hand around the glass.  
He who devised it did surpass  
All compeers in his power to frame  
Fair subtle marvels, and high blame  
Had been my due, if I had sought  
To hold such gems, but duly thought  
That thou and thy dear Queen, alone  
In all the world, could rightly own  
These kingly treasures.

Men are now  
So niggard grown, that few, I trow,  
Of servitors in these days live  
Who to their Lords have grace to give  
Such precious gifts.

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

Past all belief

And measure was the o'erwhelming grief  
That smote my children, when I sent  
To you that glass, for oft they spent  
Long hours before it : their delight  
It was therein to gaze, bedight  
In fairest holiday array :  
How little dreamed I on the day  
I gave to Cuwaert Hare in trust  
These jewels, that so soon the dust  
Would be his doom. Alas ! I knew,  
Within the world, no other two  
In whom I safely could confide,  
Casting all doubt and fear aside,  
But him and Bellyn, they my best  
And dearest friends were. Now opprest  
With deepest grief am I to think  
That these dear comrades had to drink  
Death's bitter cup through me.

I cry

For vengeance most exemplary  
On Cuwaert's murderer : and although  
Around the wide world I must go  
To seek him, I will take no rest  
Till he be found, even though the quest  
Should be my life's bane.

Well 'tis said  
'Murder will out,' and though with dread  
I speak the word, yet who shall say  
But what some man stands here to-day  
Who had a hand in Cuwaert's death ?  
Alas ! the worst shrews oft draw breath  
In comradeship with honest men.

"Most strange it sounded to me when  
Just now I heard thee, dearest King,

Declare that never a worthy thing  
My father wrought for thine : so great  
And heavy fall the cares of state  
That little wonder 'tis if ye  
Let fall from out your memory  
Some matters fitting to be kept  
In sweet embalment.

Strangely crept  
Oblivion o'er ye when ye spake  
Thus of my sire. Dost thou then take  
No count of how (when yet ye were  
A youngling, and your father bare  
The sceptre) from Montpelier came  
My sire, endowed with wealth and fame,  
And by all men allowed to be  
In surgeon's skill and pharmacy  
Unrivalled ?

Perfectwise he knew  
Of herbs the value, and their true  
And full significance, and if  
Viscose they were, or laxatif.  
Of right he therefore claimed to wear  
A robe of silk, and girdle fair  
Of purple richly wrought with gold  
About his waist, which clearly told,  
In words unwritten, his degree  
In leechcraft's lore and surgery.

" Returning home to court, he found  
His sovereign sick, and seeming bound  
For speedy death : thereat his heart  
Was struck as though a cruel dart  
Had pierced it through, for ardent love  
Possessed him for your sire above  
All other lords, who when he knew  
Of Reynard's coming, cried : ' All you

Who stand around may hither walk,  
While I with learned Reynard talk  
Of life and death ;' then feebly said,  
With languid voice and drooping head :  
' Dear Reynard, sorely sick am I,  
And daily worsen, prithee try  
Thy leechcraft on me.' He replied :  
' Dear Lord, since thou dost so confide  
And trust in me, be thou assured  
That all thy sickness shall be cured  
Ere long : within this voiding glass  
'Tis firstly needful that thou pass  
Thy water—soon as I have seen  
Its aspect, I at once shall ween  
Thy bodily ill.'

Thy father did,  
Forthwith, what Reynard's wisdom bid,  
For fullest trust therein he placed.  
(Too well I know that he disgraced  
His later life through evil rede  
Of wicked beasts, which oft will lead  
Good men astray.) At once my sire  
Exclaimed : ' Dear Lord, it doth require,  
To heal thy sickness, that thou eat  
The liver plucked, while yet doth beat  
The heart, from out a wolf whose age  
Is seven—this done, my life I wage  
To cure thee quickly—else, to die  
Must be thy fate.'

The Wolf stood by  
But uttered never a word. To him  
The King cried out : ' Sir Isegrym,  
Ye heard but now what Reynard said,  
Wilt thou then see thy King lie dead,  
Or freely yield thyself, and give  
Thy liver, that thy Lord may live

Long years in health?’

‘Nay! nay! not so,’  
Exclaimed the Wolf, ‘for well ye know  
My years exceed not five.’

‘Away  
With him forthwith and I will say,’  
My father cried, ‘if it suffice;’  
Haled to the kitchen, in a trice  
The Wolf was opened, and the King  
Ate of the liver: straight, new spring  
Beamed on his life, and strict command  
He gave that, all throughout the land,  
The title of Master Reynard should  
Be his in token of the good  
His wit had worked.

Henceforth the King  
Approved my sire in everything  
He said or did, and forthward he  
Rode by his side in dignity,  
While by the royal hands his head  
With roses fair was garlanded.

“Alas! the worthy works he wrought  
Are clean forgotten, or as nought  
Accounted, while base ravenous shrews  
Usurp the high-seat, and abuse  
The posts their arts have gained: all wise  
And honest men do they despise  
And push unblushingly aback,  
Whereby it comes, true lords oft lack  
Of right, for men of lowly birth  
(Set up as great ones of the earth)  
Are void of pity, and will vend  
Justice for guerdon: thus they spend  
Luxurious lives, on nought intent  
But avarice and aggrandisement.

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

These base men flatter, fawn and play  
A thousand tricks in hope that they  
May thereby please their prince, and gain  
Their vile behoof through good men's pain.  
But if they see their prince have need  
Of their superfluous good, small heed  
Or care will give to his distress  
From out their own great plenteousness :  
E'en so the churlish Wolf stood by  
Your sire's sick couch unmoved, his eye  
Tearless, refusing to afford  
That which alone might save his Lord  
From death.

Far different had it been  
With me : to save my King or Queen  
A score of Wolves I fain would see  
Perish, and grieve but sparingly.  
These things my father did, befell  
When thou wert young ; their memory well  
May fade from thee, or be forgot  
Outright—new friends old friendships blot.

“I well bethink me of a time  
When thou, dear Lord, wert still in prime  
Of youthful joyance. One spring day  
With Isegrym I took my way  
Across the fields : a well-fed swine  
We caught betwixt us : such a whine  
And howl he made that soon to death  
We bit the noisy beast : the breath  
Was scarce from out his body when,  
All suddenly, within our ken,  
Thou, with our gracious Queen, appeared  
From out a grove, and when we neared,  
In courteous friendly manner spake,  
And bade us welcome. Ye would slake

Your hunger, which ye said was great,  
And prayed that we would separate  
Our winning equally. 'Pray seat  
Your Royal selves, and share our meat,'  
I cried with pleasant cheer and humble  
Obedient bow ; a muffled grumble  
Of discontent made Isegrym ;  
But I, without regard of him,  
Exclaimed : 'Dear Lord, take all ye will ;  
To serve thy needs doth but fulfil  
Our bounden duty.'

Selfish care

Took Isegrym, in partial share  
To deal the spoil : he barely gave  
To thee a quarter, but with grave  
And bold assurance quickly ate  
The rest, while I was left to sate,  
Through Isegrym's voracious greed,  
With half the lungs, my hunger's need.

"To God I humbly make my prayer,  
That he will leave to Satan's care  
The Wolf for that most evil deed,  
Nought is he but a worthless weed,  
Of meanest lineage basely sprung.

"Ere one a credo could have sung  
Your share was vanished, and ye fain  
Had eaten half as much again  
As he had dealt you—scarce a pause  
It gave your hunger—then because  
No more he proffered, up ye lift  
Your dexter paw, and gave him swift  
And well-earned blows betwixt his ears  
(Which from his eyes drew floods of tears),  
And tare the skin down o'er his sight.  
Bleeding and howling took he flight,

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

Like cowering cur ; and then ye cried :  
' Back ! back ! thou caitiff hound, provide  
Thy King with kindlier hand, haste thou  
To bring more meat, or worse, I trow,  
Will be thy fate.' Then straightway I  
Said : ' Suffer me, dear Lord, to try  
If I may help the Wolf obtain  
More meat wherewith to make ye fain.'

Ere long returned we with a calf,  
Whereat ye graciously did laugh  
With merry joyous heart, well pleased  
To know thy lack would be appeased  
With such fair feast, then kindly said :  
' Reynard, thy hunting well hath sped !  
St. Julian ! nobly dost thou prove  
By this fair gift, thy faithful love.  
This calf, so sleek and fat, no one  
Shall deal but thy safe hand alone.'  
' My Lord,' cried I, ' with right good will !  
The one half may suffice to kill  
Thy pangs of hunger, and I ween  
The second half our gracious Queen  
Hath clearest right to ;—then apart  
I set the liver, lungs, and heart  
To feed thy children ; bones and head  
I gave to Isegrym, and fed  
Myself with nought but shins and feet.  
Then said ye, ' Reynard, I entreat  
Thee tell me who instructed ye  
To carve so well and courteously ?'

“ My Lord,' cried I, ' 'tis this same priest  
Whose selfish serving of a feast  
Hath justly on his head brought down  
Thine anger, and with blood-stained crown  
Now sits apart.



In these last days

A many wolves there live, who raise  
Their heads against good men and true,  
Recking no wise what thing they do  
To gain and hold the overhand.  
Woe! woe! to that ill-ordered land  
Where such things hap. Most grievous fear  
Was mine (when I did lately hear  
Thee speak) that thou hadst clean forgot  
This tale as it had happened not.  
But would ye closely oversee  
The tables of your memory,  
Then doubt I not that ye would frame  
Your speech to give me praise—and blame  
Award the Wolf.

Have I not seen

The day when no great work hath been  
Wrought in this Court until my word  
As first and foremost had been heard?

“Beware! though now befalls a time  
When base men charge my life with crime  
And evil doing, yet it may  
So hap that words I speak this day  
Men will account for true and right  
'Fore those of others, when the light  
Reveals all clearly. I desire  
Nought else but justice, and require,  
Alone, that those who charge my soul  
With hateful deeds and trespass foul,  
Shall good unbiassed witness bring  
To prove their words, or else, great King,  
If my accusers fail to show  
Sound proof against me, then I throw  
Their accusation back, and claim  
A verdict: ‘Void of guilt or blame,’

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

By rule of this impartial Court."

"Reynard," the King said, "thy retort  
Hath reason backed with soundest sense ;  
'Tis true, this murderous, rank offence  
Against thee charged, of Cuwaert's death,  
Was whispered only by the breath  
Of dark suspicion ; true, I know  
Thereof no more than that dread show  
Which Bellyn made of Cuwaert's head  
Drawn from his wallet, all bebled.  
No witness ventures to declare  
That in his death thy hand had share—  
Go therefore free—of murder quit."

"Dear King," the Fox cried, "well doth fit  
Thy word with justice, may just God  
Give ye good thank, that ye have trod  
Herein the path of righteousness.  
Alas ! such grief and sore distress  
Is mine for Cuwaert's loss, that now  
Fit speech I lack to tell you how  
When he and dearest Bellyn went  
From out my house, so torn and rent  
My heart was, that I straightway fell  
In deathlike swoon : now may it well  
Be seen that this was token clear  
Of anguish deep : Oh heavy cheer !  
That thus with woe my soul is cleft,  
Of friends deprived, of gifts bereft !"

The most of those who stood and heard  
The grief and bitterness which stirred,  
Or seemed to stir, the Fox's heart,  
And noted how his face bore part  
With all the inward pangs he felt,

Were touched with pity, and did melt  
To gentle tears, for all believed  
That he in very truth was grieved  
Past power of words to speak. The King  
Said : " Reynard, suffer not the sting  
Of woe to wound thy heart." The Queen  
Exclaimed : " Dear Reynard, thou hast been  
Most sorely tried, and much it grieves  
Thy friends to see how Sorrow weaves  
Her web about thee. Cast aside  
Thy trouble now, and search the wide  
Far spreading world, until ye find  
These precious jewels."

So did blind  
The Fox's guile both King and Queen,  
With praise of treasures never seen  
By mortal eye, that fierce desire  
And will to have the gems did fire  
Their covetous hearts, which well might wot  
The vaunted goods existed not  
Except in Reynard's fertile brain,  
But avarice roused gives folly rein.

The crafty Fox well understood  
Their thoughts, and wondrous little good  
His heart felt towards them. Masking that,  
With head bowed down he tearful sat  
As one immersed in grief, then said :  
" May God reward your goodlihead  
And kindly words in this my woe.  
No rest by night or day shall know  
My foot, for through the world I'll wend  
North, south, east, west, from end to end,  
And throughly search. Though all my life  
Were spent in travel, toil and strife,  
Still would I seek, and lastly know

XXXIII.  
Reynard's  
romance.

Where lie those gems—nor slack nor slow  
Shall be my steps. Should that man dare  
Who holds them to despise my prayer,  
Scorn my request, and spurn my might,  
Then I entreat that thou wilt dight  
Thy power to aid me ; seen, the prize  
Is yours by gift, and little wise  
Is he who hugs it. Thine it is  
Murder and theft to avenge ywis.”

“Reynard,” the King made answer, “say  
Where bides the hoard, and not a day  
Shall pass ere I unsheathe my sword.”

The Fox replied : “Oh ! dearest Lord,  
Thy freehand friendship is too great,  
Would God that I could emulate  
Thy generous goodness, and requite  
With worthy deed thy helpful might.”

Now hath the Fox all fast and fair  
His matter, and in hand doth bear  
The King so safe and sure as he  
Scarce dared to hope the case might be.  
Such specious leasings hath he made  
That now he goes of none afraid,  
Save only Isegrym, who spurned  
His fluting phrase, and boldly turned  
Him towards the King, then proudly said :

“O noble Lord, art thou so dead  
To sense as like a child to take  
This false shrew's word for truth? Awake  
From drivelling dreams, nor suffer lies  
To guile thine heart and blind thine eyes.  
Long will it be ere snared or trapped  
Am I, by one whose life is wrapped

In murderous treason, and such crime  
 As doth the Fox's life begrieme.  
 He dares to beard thee to thy face  
 With mocking gibes, which bring disgrace  
 On thee, and grieve each true man's ear ;  
 Yet leaps my heart to see him here,  
 For now will I set forth a tale  
 Whereat his craven heart must quail,  
 And be thou judge if I or he  
 Speak fairly, well, and truthfully."

XXXIII.  
 Reynard's  
 romance.



·XXXIV· HOW·ISEGRYM·  
 ·THE·WOLF·COMPLAINED·  
 ·AGAIN·ON·THE·FOX· ❁  
 · ❁ · ❁ · ❁ · ❁ ·

"**L**IST now, my Lord, with careful heed  
 How this false knave with dastard deed  
 My dear wife's trustful heart betrayed.

"Winter his stern white hand had laid  
 On land and mere, when forth she went  
 On journey, and her pathway bent,  
 Faring with Reynard, o'er a lake ;  
 When quoth he : ' Ersewyn, would ye take  
 Some goodly fish from out the mere?  
 Say'st yea? Then sit thee quickly here,  
 Where, broken through the ice, we see  
 A fair round hole, wherein may ye  
 Let fall your tail, thereon will bite  
 The fish, and when the hairs stick tight  
 Betwixt their teeth, 'tis yours to whisk  
 Them forth beside you, free from risk,  
 While I secure them, on the ice ;

XXXIV. .  
The Wolf  
new cries.

Thus lightly winning in a trice  
A wholesome meal, enough for three.'

"Quoth then mine innocent wife : 'To thee  
I trust for counsel,' and she set  
Her tail deep down, in hope to get  
The spoil he promised : but ere long  
She found, alas ! that in the strong  
Hard ice 'twas frozen. He the while  
Sat by and watched, until a smile  
Broke o'er his face—one second after  
Burst from his lips unseemly laughter,  
And cried he : 'Dame, why move ye not ?  
Perchance in some more favoured spot  
The fish have keener appetite :  
How now ! your tail seems frozen tight  
Within the ice.'

She tugged and strained  
All bootlessly, her tail remained  
As strongly set and firmly held  
As iron bonds a smith doth weld  
At clear white heat with sturdy stroke.  
No word malicious Reynard spoke,  
But (she fast fixed with tail for tether)  
Caught from the ice a stray goose feather,  
And tickled therewith her eyes and face,  
With mocking grin and foul grimace.  
And then his unclean paw he claps  
Athwart her cheeks with stinging slaps,  
Crying : 'How like you fishing, pray ?  
Hast thou thy fill thereof to-day ?'

"Just then I chanced to reach the bank,  
And looking down beheld the rank  
And foul offence, which into fits  
Of anger drove me, till my wits

I wellnigh lost. Soon as anear  
He saw me draw, in dastard fear  
The wretch slunk off, and death's dark night  
Escaped by craven-hearted flight.

“ My utmost strength would scarce suffice  
To pull from out the hard-ribbed ice  
My dear wife's tail, and grievous pain  
She suffered ere she could regain  
Full freedom ; yea, so hard and fast  
'Twas fixed and frozen, that at last  
A gobbet still remained behind,  
Whereat she howled like one whose mind  
Was reft of reason, till the cry  
Roused from the hamlet built hard by  
A host of men, with bills and staves,  
Pitchforks and flails, and rusty glaives,  
And wives with distaffs armed, a crowd  
Of half-mad peasants, crying loud :  
'Slay ! slay ! destroy and kill outright  
The Wolves ; and but for friendly night,  
One long-legged angry knave, who bore  
A pike wherewith he pricked us sore,  
Had surely slain us. Many a quean  
Pursued our flying steps, with keen  
And angry vengeance, shrieking out  
That we the culprits were past doubt,  
Who, in the winter nights, when sleep  
Had slacked their vigil, stole the sheep.  
They raged, and swore with many a curse  
To wreck our lives, but nothing worse  
Befell us ; for our threatened doom  
We 'scaped by hiding where thick broom  
And bramble bushes grew, until  
The storm swept by, and all was still.

XXXIV.  
The Wolf  
new cries.

“ Note well, my Lord, that through this black  
And treacherous business nought doth lack  
Of cruel wrong and foul offence  
Against all law. To mark thy sense  
Of right and wrong, strike such a blow  
Against the Fox, that all may know,  
Throughout the wide and spreading land,  
Thy rule for just—for strong thine hand.”

Cried Reynard : “ Sire, if this were true,  
With reason fair the Wolf might sue  
For justice 'gainst me, for 'twould smutch  
My name with infamy, and touch  
My honour's core ; but God forbid  
That any grain of truth amid  
His lying words be found. No spark  
Of conscience binds him. Do but mark  
How fair and plain a tale I tell ;  
'Tis true I taught Dame Ersewyn well  
And deftly how to capture fish,  
Pricked on thereto by well-meant wish  
To do a friendly act of kindness,  
But she, with greed and eager blindness,  
Which lacked all judgment, forward ran,  
Rashly neglectful of the plan  
By me advised, and thrust her tail  
Beneath the ice ; nor did she fail  
E'en so to catch of fish good store,  
But longing hungrily for more  
Than well sufficed—stock still she stayed  
Some hours—her avarice was apaid  
By being frozen fast and tight ;  
With tender care, yet strenuous might,  
I strove my best to set her free :  
When all at once came suddenly  
Fierce Isegrym, with grinning teeth



And angry snarl, across the heath.  
Beyond all doubt, his envious eyes  
Were dazed by hate, and thus the lies  
Given forth by him of what he saw  
Are due to error, yet no law  
He set upon his lips, but spake  
Such words as caused mine ears to ache  
With shame and horror ; far away  
Forthwith I sped, lest he should slay  
Or maim me, blind with wrath. Plain truth  
Are these few words, nought else forsooth  
Shall ever by my mouth be told,  
E'en though ten thousand marks of gold  
Were falsehood's guerdon.

Time long past

The Fox's lineage hath held fast  
The sacred cause of truth. Now prays  
Thy servant respite of eight days  
With view to seek advice and bring  
Such witness forward, that nor King  
Nor Queen shall henceforth doubtful be  
Of his good faith and honesty.

“What with this Wolf have I to do?  
Alas ! it sends a shudder through  
My frame to think a wretch so vile  
And caitiff ever dared to style  
Himself my friend, as he hath done  
In days now worn : but here stands one—  
His wife to wit—whose tongue may soon  
Convince your minds (if she but tune  
Its sound aright) how fair and true  
Is every word I offer you.”

Then, high voiced, shrieked forth Ersewyn :  
“Ah ! villain Fox, wouldst then spin

XXXIV.  
The Wolf  
new cries.

Once more a web of floyting speech  
To catch my simple soul, and reach  
The King's high favour? Well thou know'st  
Leasings to utter and to boast  
Thy faith and honour in one breath,  
Yet shalt thou lastly die the death  
That God's good providence doth send  
To traitors—ware thou well the end.  
List thou, dear Lord, while I relate  
One deed of this vile reprobate.

“ Within the confines of the town  
Is seen a well, where up and down  
Two buckets work with pulleys, so  
That when one towards the top doth go,  
The other sinketh dark and deep.  
Passing, I heard one sigh and weep,  
And peering down saw thou didst sit,  
Base Fox, alone within the pit,  
Consumed with mortal fear and dread.  
I asked what ailed thee, and ye said  
That thou (with greediness accurst)  
Had eaten fish till nigh to burst,  
And thus within the well wert caught.  
I proffered help, and ye besought  
That in the bucket I would spring  
Which hangs above, and so might bring  
Thee timely aid. I scarce need tell  
That, leaping in, forthwith I fell  
Down to the bottom, while ye rose  
Atop as swift as pennon goes  
Up to the masthead. Then ye sprang  
With light foot on the sward, and rang  
Loud laughter from ye, while ye cried :  
'Dear Aunt, 'tis thus it doth betide  
Throughout the world, one man doth go

On high, his fellow falls below.  
With this base gibe, away ye went  
And basely left me all day pent,  
Hungry and cold, in that dark pit.”

XXXIV.  
The Wolf  
new cries.

Exclaimed the Fox : “’Twere far more fit  
That thou shouldst suffer thus than I,  
My dearest Aunt, for verily  
On one of two the stroke must fall.  
Pardon me, pray, if I recall  
The fact that herein much of good  
I taught thee : namely, that one should  
Take heed that ne’er in haste he trust  
His fellow man, for few are just  
To brother, cousin, eme or friend,  
But rather seek some selfish end.  
All Adam’s sons who be not blind  
Strive ever, day and night, to find  
Their own advantage, and a fool  
Alone forgets this golden rule  
Of life, whenso it haps that he  
Sees life or goods in jeopardy.”



·XXXV· A · FAIR · FABLE ·  
·OF · THE · FOX · AND · THE ·  
·WOLF · ♪ · ♪ · ♪ ·

“MY Lord,” Dame Ersewyn cried, “I pray  
That well ye mark the specious way  
This thief doth talk, and how he knows  
To shift, with every wind that blows,  
His crafty speech, and seem so fair  
That e’en the wisest men scarce dare  
To contradict him. Thus hath he

XXXV.  
The Ape's  
pleasance.

Done many a hurt and scathe to me."

The Wolf exclaimed : " He once betrayed  
Me basely to an Ape, and made  
Me lose thereby one half mine ear.  
I leave the Fox to give a clear  
Succinct account of what befell."  
" Yea," Reynard cried, " I that can tell  
Without a stammer, blink, or fault,  
Or need to hesitate or halt  
One single moment.

Through the wood  
Came Isegrym, and said that food  
He sorely lacked—but sooth to say  
I never yet have known the day,  
Howe'er well fed the Wolf might be  
But what he hungered ravenously  
For more and more. Where goes the meat  
This all-devouring beast doth eat  
Surpasses thought.—See now ! a grin  
Of eager hunger doth begin  
To wrinkle up his face.—

When he  
Complained and whined thus bitterly,  
I, too, for pity, feigned great lack  
Of food to suffer ; so, to track  
Some prey, we wandered far and wide  
Long weary hours, but nought espied.  
Most sorely then he wept and whined,  
And sware no longer had he mind  
To scour the woods. Just then I saw  
A huge hole, 'neath a spreading haw,  
Set thick with brambles, and a sound  
Rushed thence that seemed to shake the ground.  
' Dear Isegrym,' quoth I, ' go in  
And try if something ye can win

From out this cavern ; well I wot  
There may be food therein.'

XXXV.  
The Ape's  
pleasance

  'Nay! not  
For twenty marks,' quoth he, 'I'd creep,  
Risking my life, within that deep  
And dread abyss, unless I knew  
What thing it holds. 'Twere well that you  
Should enter first, while I abide  
Beneath this tree till ye have tried  
How lies the land : far more than me  
Can ye deal well and subtilely.  
Danger he thrust me on, poor wight !  
E'en as a dastard in the fight  
Sets one before him. He, though stout  
And hale and strong, abode without,  
Watchful of what might next betide,  
Nought recked he though his friend had died.

" Within this loathly cave such pain  
Oppressed my soul as ne'er again  
Would I, for wealth untold, endure.  
I entered boldly, and with sure,  
Firm, hardy foot advanced along  
A straight dark passage, till a strong  
Bright light burst on me from the side,  
And turning thither I descried  
A roomy vault, wherein there sat  
A gruesome beast—a great Mercatte,  
Baboon, or other monstrous ape,  
I trow not which, of hideous shape  
And giant form, with huge round eyes  
That glimmed like fire ; of monstrous size  
Her mouth was, set with long sharp teeth,  
Which like dread daggers bare of sheath  
Shone forth whene'er she spake ! like flails  
Her shag arms seemed, and such long nails

XXXV.  
The Ape's  
pleasance.

Her hands were furnished with, as strake  
Fear to my heart, and made it quake,  
Dismayed and horrified. Ne'er yet  
In all my life-days have I set  
Mine eyes on beast so foul. There lay  
Three children near to her, and they  
Were hideous as their dam. Such fear  
Crept o'er me when they came anear  
That nothing durst I speak but good,  
Else had they, past all likelihood,  
Rushed on me rudely, four to one,  
When shortly had I been fordone  
And killed outright.

Quoth I: 'Dear Aunt,

It doth past words my soul enchant  
To wish you all good luck this day:  
And are these lovely children, pray,  
Your own? my cousins? I will gage  
That never finer of their age  
Were seen on earth: Lord God! how fair  
Each one doth look, as he were heir  
To some great King. We ought of right  
To con ye thanks, who thus have dight  
Our lineage with such fair increase:  
No sooner heard I from your niece  
That thou with yet a babe wert blest,  
Than irksome to me seemed all rest  
Till I had paid the cradle call.'

"Quoth she: 'Dear Nephew, good befall  
To thee and thine: well is thy name  
Renowned for rectitude: thy fame  
For truth doth ever cause thy kin  
Great worship and high praise to win  
Where'er they go. Pray wouldst thou teach  
My children three, that they may reach

To virtue fair as thine?' Right pleased  
Was I to hear these words, which eased  
My heart of fears. A goodly thought  
It was to call her 'Aunt,' though nought  
Of sib or kin she was to me:  
My Aunt by consanguinity  
And right, is good Dame Rukenawe;  
Yet quoth I: 'Aunt, as binding law  
Thy wish doth count: at thy command  
Is all I have of goods or land,  
And ready is my heart to show  
Thy children all the Fox doth know  
Of wisdom's deep and subtle ways.'

"Quoth she: 'Thy kind consent betrays  
Thy noble gentleness of heart.  
But think not, nephew, to depart  
Till thou hast eaten. An ye did  
My heart would fear some ill betid  
Betwixt us twain.'

Therewith she rose

And led me where hung bucks and does,  
Fat pheasants, partridges, and hares,  
And meats befitting one who fares  
In sumptuous fashion every day.

"Awhile I stared at this array  
With wondering eyes, then took my fill  
Of choicest food with right good will.  
Quoth then the Ape: 'Take this fat hind  
To cheer thy wife, with my most kind  
And hearty love:' she lastly bade  
I should not let our friendship fade  
To nothingness, but soon again  
Return.

Judge well that I was fain

XXXV.  
The Ape's  
pleasance.

To make my exit thus well sped.  
On passing forth, I found, half dead  
And groaning sorely, Isegrym,  
And asking how it fared with him,  
He moaned : ' Ah ! wonder 'tis I live.  
Dear nephew, can your hand not give  
Some nouriture, or must I die  
For hunger ? ' Then most readily  
I gave him every scrap I had  
And saved his life. Therefore most sad  
It makes me now to note how he  
Demands my ruin constantly.

" Quickly he swallowed down the hind,  
Then quoth he : ' Reynard, did ye find  
Nought else of food within that hole ?  
For, as fierce fire well fed with coal  
Burns ever fiercer, so my teeth  
But sharpness gain from what beneath  
Their edge has fallen.'

I quick replied,  
' Dear Eme, I prithee haste inside  
That yawning gap : of goodly stuff  
Thou there wilt see stored up enough  
E'en thy huge appetite to daunt.  
There dwells an Ape, whom called I Aunt  
To win her grace. If thou wilt spare  
To tell the truth, and speak her fair,  
So may'st thou have thy full desire  
Of meat till such time as ye tire  
Your jaws with eating. Nought but lies  
Will please her fancy ; he who tries  
Aught else will speedily repent  
His folly.'

Thus, my Lord, he went  
Inside the hole well-warned, but rude



Ill-mannered beasts are always crude  
And rough of speech, with little mind  
To understand how well-refined  
And subtle words will work.

XXXV.  
The Ape's  
pleasance.

He said :

'Fear not, the Mercatte shall be fed  
With such fair leasings as ne'er yet  
Men heard.' But he no sooner met  
The evil favoured beast inside,  
And scanned her children, than he cried :  
'Avaunt ! ye foul-faced imps of Hell !  
What devil's spawn are these ? 'Twere well  
To drown them out of hand, their sight  
Causeth mine hair to stand upright.'

“ ‘Sir Isegrym,’ exclaimed their dam,  
'These are my children, and I am  
Proud of my offspring. One hath been  
But lately here, who nought hath seen  
But fairness in them, and I trow  
Far worthier judge was he than thou :  
For he could boast our kith and kin,  
And plainly vowed that cherubin  
Were they for beauty.'

Answered he :

'Well, let that stand as that may be,  
But say, afford ye any meat ?  
For I am starving, and would eat  
Gladly some food ; thereto my right  
Is far beyond each ghastly wight  
Thou call'st thine offspring.'

Loud cried she :

'Vile Wolf, is here no meat for thee.'

“ ‘Thou liest,’ he said, ‘behold enough .  
For any ten,’ therewith the rough

XXXV,  
The Ape's  
pleasance.

Discourteous beast essayed to make  
His way towards the food and take  
His fill thereof ; but straight the four  
Attacked him tooth and nail, and tore  
His head and ears, till o'er his eyes  
The blood streamed down. With fearful cries  
And hideous howls he rent the air,  
But, like a dastard, did not dare  
To make defence, but basely ran  
In terror wild until he wan  
The light of day ; his coat to-torn  
His visage furrowed, and half beshorn  
His dexter ear. About his head  
The skin hung down, and stark bebled  
Was all his body. Loud he groaned,  
And, wailing piteously, bemoaned  
His grievous plight.

Quoth I to him :

' Did ye well lie, dear Isegrym ?'

Quoth he : ' As I beheld, I spoke.

Dost thou suppose that such foul folk

From me should win fair words ?'

' Dear Eme,'

Quoth I, ' thus have ye, as 'twould seem,  
Reaped just reward. Ye should have said :

' Fair niece, what glorious goodlihead

Have thy sweet children ; radiant grace

Shines forth in each sweet comely face :

In faith it makes my heart feel proud

To think that I may be allowed

To call them cousins ; would that I

Could boast so fair a family.'

He answered : ' Liever would I hang

Than kinship claim with such a gang

Of misformed Apes.'

' Ye must deceive

Such folk with cozenage, or receive,  
Quoth I, 'such payment as I see  
By thine estate hath happed to thee ;  
More fitting 'tis at times, forsooth,  
To deal with lies, than speak plain truth,  
For many a man the world hath seen  
(Richer and wiser far, I ween,  
Than we poor wights) who thus hath done.'

"Dear Lord and King, the Wolf thus won  
His ruddy coif. Here now he stands  
With innocent mien, as though his hands  
Knew nought of harm. Demand, I pray,  
If he can this plain tale gainsay."



·XXXVJ· HOW· ISEGRYM·  
·PROFFERED· HIS· GLOVE·  
·TO· THE· FOX· TO· FIGHT·  
·WITH· HIM· \* · \* · \*

THE Wolf said: "I with scorn forbear  
Thy mocking japes, and have small care  
Of that most foul and venomous speech  
With which thou darest to impeach  
My faith and honour. Ah! strong thief!  
Deem'st thou the King will give belief  
To thy waste words? Ye falsely said  
That when anhungered and nigh dead  
Thou saw'st me, thou didst help my need ;  
But well ye wot thy selfish greed  
Nought gave me but a bare-stripped bone,  
Whence every scrap of flesh was gone  
Down thy fell throat. With churlish mock  
Ye strive to make a laughing-stock

XXXVI.  
The Wolf  
defies.

Of me, as here I stand, and say  
That o'er my countenance doth play  
A hungry grin : that charge doth touch  
My worship closely ; and too much  
Didst thou presume when, prompt by spite,  
Thou saidst that I and Bruin dight  
Some fearful plots, whereof none know  
(With hoardings hid at Hulsterlo),  
Against our Sovereign Lord the King.

“ Yet more : ye basely dared to bring  
My well-loved wife to depth of shame,  
And hast on her fair spotless fame  
Cast venomous slander. Did I not  
Avenge on thy foul head the blot  
Thus cast upon my scutcheon, I  
Should merit good men's contumely.  
I have forborne thee long, but now  
One of us twain the knee must bow  
As vanquished ; thou shalt not escape  
My vengeance longer ; Hell doth gape  
With ready mouth to gulp thee in,  
Thou faggot, wrought of guilt and sin.

“ Before my Lord, and all men here  
In conclave met, a murderer  
And traitor false do I proclaim  
The Fox, and gage to prove the same  
'Mid fair-set lists in open field,  
Body to body ; thereby sealed  
Shall be our strife, fought out to end ;  
I cast my glove, and God defend  
That man who hath the right ! ”

Then took

The Fox the glove up, but he shook  
With abject terror, for he thought :

“ My cunning now will count for nought  
Against the Wolf in open war.  
Already in mine ear the roar  
Of victory soundeth when at last  
He triumphs—but the die is cast.”

XXXVI.  
The Wolf  
defies.



·XXXVIj· HOW· THE· FOX·  
·TOOK·UP· THE· GLOVE, AND·  
·HOW· THE· KING· SET· THEM·  
·A· DAY· AND· FIELD· FOR· TO·  
·COME· AND· DO· BATTLE·

“ BUT,” thought the Fox, “ I yet may gain  
Advantage o’er the Wolf, sharp pain  
He still must suffer, for his paws  
Are scarcely healed wherefrom the claws  
Were lately reft, when he with rude  
Brute force was ruthlessly unshoed  
At my behest.” And then aloud,  
He vaunting cried : “ If any proud  
Bold man dare rashly to aver  
The Fox a thief and murderer,  
Or traitor towards his Sovereign Lord,  
I say he lies ! and will accord  
For combat place and time to him ;  
And thou, ’fore all, O Isegrym,  
Shalt at my hand sure vengeance taste :  
With what fierce joyance shall I haste :  
To meet thee in the lists : my pledge  
See here ; and all thou dost allege  
Against me will I prove to be  
Falsehood and basest perfidy.”

Then did the King from each receive  
His plight, and gave his gracious leave

XXXVII.  
The Fox  
must fight.

To set the battle—day and place—  
Where the two foemen, face to face,  
Should join in mortal strife, and both  
Gave borrows as a pledge of troth  
That on the morn should they appear,  
And, void of craven-hearted fear,  
Do deadly battle. Borrows were  
For Isegrym, the Cat, and Bear ;  
And Reynard ne'er good surety lacks  
While Bitelives breathes, and Grymbert Dachs.



XXXVIIJ · HOW · DAME · RUKEN ·  
· AWE · THE · SHE · APE · COUNSEL ·  
· LED · THE · FOX · OF · THE · WAY · HE ·  
· SHOULD · BEHAVE · HIM · IN · THE ·  
· FIELD · AGAINST · THE · WOLF · J ·

THE She-Ape said : “ Dear Reynard, see  
That on the battle-day ye be  
Cool, calm, and wise. Thine eme once taught  
To me a prayer which each man ought  
To know who arms him to the fight.  
A learned clerk it was who dight  
The precious words, long years ago,  
Lord Abbot hight of Baudelo :  
He said that whoso prayed this prayer  
Fasting, need feel nor dread nor care  
Of any foe he met that day ;  
Let not the Wolf, therefore, affray  
Thine heart ; to-morrow will I teach  
These words to thee ; let fear not bleach  
Thy cheek in doubt to hold thine own.”

“ Dear aunt, the kindness thou hast shown,”  
Replied the Fox, “ doth fire my heart

With newborn strength to play my part.  
My quarrel 'gainst the Wolf is just,  
And therefore feel assured I must  
Have good success."

XXXVIII.  
Dame  
Rukenawe's  
shield.

Then through the day  
The Fox-kin sought to while away  
The time with song and merry jest,  
While Reynard's aunt her wit addressed  
To seek how further she could serve  
Her nephew, and his spirit nerve  
To meet his foeman.

First, with care  
Past praise, she shaved all clean the hair  
From off his body, which with oil  
She then anointed, that his toil  
The Wolf might lose if he should try  
To hold a foe as slippery  
And smooth as any pike or eel.  
Moreover said she : " Would ye deal  
In cunning wise to foil your foe,  
List well my counsel, while I show  
The means thereto. Your thick brush tail,  
Well steeped in eisel, never fail  
To strike the Wolf with, o'er the eyes,  
Whene'er ye may, but otherwise,  
Your brush keep 'neath you, lest he try  
To catch and hold it, and thereby  
Obtain the vantage ; let your ears  
So flat lie down that nought appears  
His claws can seize on : at the first  
Pretend to flee, as though ye durst  
Not stand before him ; let him run  
And spring about till nigh fordone :  
Then to the windward haste ye quick,  
And with your forefeet raise a thick  
Dark cloud of dust, to leeward blown

XXXVIII.  
Dame  
Rukenawe's  
shield.

'Twill blind his eyes, as thickly sown  
As winter snow-drift : while his sight  
He strives to clear, thou well may'st bite  
And wound him past thy heart's desire :  
And then while rage his soul doth fire,  
Again, and yet again, thy tail  
Strike in his visage like a flail,  
And thereby cause his eyes such woe,  
That driven to madness will he go  
Round, round, and round, yet fail to find  
Your footsteps, being wellnigh blind.  
So let him run till he be spent  
And wearied out, his reason rent  
With savage wrath.

Behold my rede  
Good nephew mine, God give you speed ;  
Yet one word more : to gain success,  
Prefer thou ever craftiness  
To rude brute strength, and therefore set  
Yourself to think how ye may get  
Advantage by ingenious ruse,  
The while the Wolf doth madly use  
And spend his vital force.

Now list  
The holy spell, which doth consist  
Of six most precious words, and these  
Must thou say fasting, on thy knees :  
'BLAERDE . SHEHAY . ALPHEINO,  
KASBUE . CORSONS . ALBUFRIO.'  
Nephew, be sure, this charm well said,  
Kind Heaven will watch and guard thine head ;  
Further my counsel is, 'twere best  
That thou shouldst gain some peaceful rest,  
For shortly hence will break the morn,  
And 'twere not well your strength were worn  
With vigil ere fierce war ye wage



With Isegrym ; I will engage  
To break thy rest betimes."

"Dear aunt,"

The Fox exclaimed, "My Matin chant  
Shall be deep fervent thanks to thee  
For thy most sweet benignity.  
Alas ! One thing alone doth wear  
My mind, which is, that I can ne'er  
Have power to recompense or pay  
Such love until my dying day.  
Assured within my heart I feel  
That safer guard than hauberk's steel  
Are those most holy words to charm  
My life, and ward each deadly harm."

Then in a pleasant grass-grown bent,  
He stretched him 'neath a bush, and spent  
With all his labours, found such deep,  
Untroubled, and refreshing sleep  
As those enjoy who have a sense  
Of pure unblemished innocence,  
Or those who, steeped in whelming crime,  
Reckless of all, but bide their time.

No longer lay he, than till white  
Thin eastern streaks proclaimed that night  
Waxed old, for then the Otter came,  
Crying : "Dear cousin, it were shame  
Longer to lie this summer morn,  
And trow I well ye scarce will scorn  
With this young duck to break thy fast ;  
To win it for thee have I past  
Through many a danger."

Reynard cried :

"Well might ye count me quite beside  
My wits if this good hansel were

XXXVIII.  
Dame  
Rukenawe's  
shield.

XXXVIII.  
Dame  
Rukenawe's  
shield.

By me disdained, such dainty fare  
Is more than welcome : warmest thanks  
Be thine, dear friend : no creature ranks  
Kind deeds more highly than the Fox,  
And should my life escape the rocks  
And shoals that now appear ahead,  
Fair guerdon shall on thee be shed  
For this kind gift."

The duck he ate  
With appetite that would not wait  
For bread or condiment, then went  
With stout heart battleward, while rent  
The air with many an echoing shout,  
His kin and friends, in revel rout.



·XXXIX· HOW·THE·FOX·  
·CAME·INTO·THE·FIELD·



THE King beheld with wondering eyes  
The oiled and shaven Fox ; surprise  
Gave way to laughter, and he said :  
"Eh ! Fox, now swear I by mine head,  
That well thou knowest thyself to dight  
When thou wouldst foil a foe in fight,  
Yet verily is thine aspect foul."

The Fox returned nor smile nor scowl,  
Nor spake one word, but lowly kneeled  
To King and Queen, 'fore all the field,  
And then addressed him to his place.  
The Wolf, with grinning, angry face,  
Spake many a proud and vaunting word,

Which all unmoved his foeman heard.  
The Leopard and the Losse, who kept  
The lists between them, forward stept  
With book in hand, and thereon sware  
The Wolf, who pledged his oath to tear  
The mask from off the Fox, and prove  
On his fell body, that nor love  
Nor fear had he for King or Queen,  
But ever through his life had been  
With murder stained, and treason high  
Had plotted 'gainst his Majesty.

The Fox made oath the Wolf had lied  
Most falsely in his throat, and cried :  
“ Believe, no man, this knave and thief!  
To me 'tis verily a grief  
To enter lists with one so vile,  
But trust that gracious Heaven will smile  
On my emprise, and grant me might  
To cast him down to Hell's dark night.”

This done, the lords who ruled the fray  
Called on the combatants to stay  
All further speech, and boldly stand  
Forth to do battle, hand to hand.

Then all folk roomed the field except  
Dame Rukenawe, who closely kept  
Beside her nephew, and with care  
Bade him hold fast in mind the fair  
Good rede she learned him.”

“ Well I know,”

Quoth she, “ how ye had wit to go,  
When ye but seven years were of age,  
Unlit by lantern, and engage  
On darkest nights, devoid of moon,  
To gather good, or win some boon

XXXIX.  
The Fox  
well dight.

Your household needed. Thus your name  
For craft is honoured. Now new fame  
And worship will to thee arise  
If thou in battle bear the prize."

"My dearest aunt, in hour of need,"  
Replied the Fox, "ye far exceed  
All other redemen, and I hope  
By memory of thy love to cope  
In combat with my cruel foe  
In such good wise that Fame may blow  
The Fox's glory far and wide."

"Dear nephew," quoth she, "'tis my pride  
To hear thee speak such words, and trust  
In Heaven to aid the true and just.



XL HOW THE WOLF &  
THE FOX FOUGHT TO:  
GETHER † · † · † ·

**T**HEREWITH from out the field she went.  
Each combatant stept back, intent  
To see whence first the stroke might come.  
From out the crowd arose a hum  
As Isegrym trod forth and oped  
His long fore legs, 'twixt which he hoped  
To catch the Fox, but he aside  
Sprang lightly, and with nimble glide,  
Went straight between his legs: then next  
Round went the Wolf, most sorely vext  
Thus to have missed his mark, and chased  
His foe with rapid strides who faced

Him ne'er about, and though he oft  
O'ertook the Fox, and raised aloft  
His foot to strike him, he with swift  
And skilful movement would uplift  
His tail, and therewith deftly smite  
The Wolf across the eyes, till, sight  
Obscured by grievous pain and smart,  
Hither and thither would he dart,  
And strive meanwhile to clear his eyes :  
This Reynard sees, and quickly flies  
To windward, where the sandy dust  
In clouds he raises, and each gust  
Straight blows it in his foeman's face,  
Who finds no single moment's grace  
To wash his eyes, and clear his sight ;  
Then, ere that he can see aright  
The Fox leaps on him from behind,  
And cries : " Ah ! thief ! art thou now blind ? "  
Then next, inspired by wrathful spite,  
He hastes three grievous holes to bite  
Between his ears, then loudly screams,  
" How fares it with you now ? meseems  
Thou hast been wounded on the head :  
Rest thankful that ye be not dead,  
As yet may hap. How many a lamb  
Have ye destroyed ? and Bellyn Ram ?  
Did ye not eat him ? Falsely thou  
Hast here appealed me, but I trow  
Most bitterly for this shalt pay ;  
Ordered and pre-ordained to-day  
Am I to be thy bane—no more  
Will God permit thee, as of yore,  
To ravin, pillage, rob and lie,  
But hath appointed graciously  
(For safety of thine eternal soul)  
Me to assoil thy sins, and toll

XL. Fought  
is the field.

Thy passing bell : prepare to die !  
Fierce Hell shall be thy purgatory !  
But stay—within my mercy lies  
Thy life, and if that life ye prize,  
Kneel down and beg that I forgive  
Thy many crimes, and let thee live :  
Avow thy mighty strength o'ercome,  
And I will show to thee that some  
Of pity's sweetness doth remain  
Within my heart, for loth to stain  
My hands am I with blood—God wot !”

These mocks made Isegrym wax hot  
With wrath wellnigh to bursting : ne'er  
Could he have deemed the Fox would dare  
To speak such words ; and when at last  
His scattered thoughts came back, he cast  
About within his mind how yet  
He might once more the mastery get.

With one vast effort then he broke  
From 'neath the Fox, to whom a stroke  
He gave, like axe-blow on the head :  
Down dropped his foe, and lay as dead  
One moment ; now most surely thought  
The Wolf that lastly he had caught  
The wily Fox in death's embrace,  
But up he leapt, and once more chase  
He gave him o'er the field, and then  
Again they battled as two men  
Who war for death ; ten times the Fox  
Was caught, and e'en as one who locks  
His arms around his love or friend,  
Isegrym grasped him, but the end  
Was ever that his well-oiled skin  
Enabled him again to win

Escape and freedom. Oh! so snell  
The Fox was, that when weened right well  
The Wolf to hold him, sudden start  
He gave, and arrow-like would dart  
Betwixt his legs; and then a cuff  
Would deftly deal him with his rough  
Well-eiselled tail across the eyes,  
And ere from out his dazed surprise  
He woke, a second stroke would fall,  
And then a third, and after all  
These buffets, he would run and raise  
The dust in clouds, and therewith craze  
And blind the Wolf; but yet his strength  
Exceeded Reynard's, till with length  
Of warring was the Fox nigh done.

Sore anger'd was the Wolf, that one  
He so despised should thus outlast  
His force of arms, and thought, "One cast  
Will I attempt," so lay in wait,  
Till Reynard rushed upon his fate,  
And one great blow, that caught his head,  
Caused him to drop benumbed, as dead,  
And Isegrym, like lightning, bound  
His arms in firm-locked grip around  
The Fox's body, and then lay  
So heavily on him, that no way  
Could he get free, but life and breath  
Were nigh pressed out, and grimly death  
Glared in his face.

Then sore afraid  
Waxed Reynard's soul, and heavy weighed  
The hearts of all his friends; but glad,  
Yea, overjoyed were those who had  
Fixed faith in Isegrym.

With fierce

XL. Fought  
is the field.

And venomous snaps did Reynard pierce  
The Wolf's tough hide, but tooth and nail,  
Though sharply worked, could not avail  
To loose his foeman's grip; his teeth  
Fain would the Wolf use, but beneath  
Him so far lay his small made foe,  
He scarce could reach him.

Then did grow  
Death-horror in the Fox's mind,  
Till, in despair, he made a blind  
Last effort and with both his paws  
Reached Isegrym, and then, his claws  
Fixed firmly in his head, he tare  
Across his brows the skin and hair,  
Scratching his eyes till one hung out,  
Whereat he bellowed forth a shout  
Of rage and pain, then howled and wept,  
While all adown his visage swept  
Full streams of blood in stintless tide,  
Till earth's green sward was crimson dyed;  
And round that spot nought else there grew,  
Long years, but flowers of roseate hue.



·XLI· HOW· THE· FOX· BE·  
·ING· UNDER· THE· WOLF· X  
·SO· GLOZED· HIM· THAT· X  
·HE· CAME· ABOVE· AGAIN·

**T**O clear his ken the Wolf must lift  
His feet, and thus was forced to shift  
His grip of Reynard, whom a beam  
Of fair hope cheered like sunlit gleam  
Through clouds, for while his injured sight  
His foeman cleared he sprang with light



Quick leap from 'neath him :

“Nay! not so

XLI. The  
Fox nigh lost.

Shalt thou thus save thyself, and go  
Free of my vengeance,” Isegrym  
Exclaimed, and starting after him—  
Though bled he sore the while—he caught  
Him once more 'twixt his arms, and sought  
His soul from out its house to press ;  
And past all doubt in sore distress  
The Fox now lay, for as beneath  
The Wolf he fell, atwixt his teeth  
His foe secured his paw, then cried :  
“Despite all arts that thou hast tried,  
Now is thy life within my power,  
And thou no more shalt on me shower  
Vile sand and dust ; thine eiselled tail  
No more shall 'gainst mine eyes avail,  
Nor evermore shalt thou beguile  
Mine ear with specious words, no wile  
Can aid thee further. Times gone by  
Most gross and grievous injury  
Thine hands have done me ; nay ! e'en now  
Mine eye hast thou destroyed, and trow  
I well that many a grievous wound  
My body bears. Though thou entuned  
Thy floyting speech to charm mine ear,  
'Tis all too late, nor love nor fear  
Shall give me pause again.”

Now stood

The Fox in gloomiest fear ; for good  
Or evil ending must he choose,  
Whether without more words to lose  
His life forthwith, or subtly try  
Once more smooth-tongued cajolery.  
Short space it took him to decide  
That useless 'twere to mock or chide

XLI. The  
Fox nigh lost.

The bitter foe, whose fury held  
His life in scale, and therefore quelled  
All japes within his breast, and fair  
And softly spake, as though he were  
The Wolf's best friend. Quoth he :

“ Dear eme,

All past misdeeds will I redeem  
Without reserve, and be your man,  
To serve you through what little span  
May yet remain to me of life.  
All evil dealings towards thy wife  
With heartfelt sorrow I repent.  
Would God my dregs of life were spent  
In wending towards the Holy Grave  
Pardon to gain for thee, and crave  
From shrines throughout the Holy Land  
Rich gifts, which I with generous hand  
Would give thy cloister—profit rare  
Souls thence derive, and thine shall share  
(Yea, and thy father's too) the boon.  
I trow that ne'er since sun and moon  
First shone, such offer hath been made  
To any King ; and thou obeyed  
Shalt be as though the Pope ye were,  
Our Holy Father. Whatsoe'er  
I have henceforward will I hold  
Of thee, and 'neath thy flag enrolled  
Shall be my lineage, kith, and kin ;  
Thus shalt thou foremost honour win,  
Lord above Lords : what King should then  
Dare to withstand thee, seeing my men  
Increase thy forces? Furthermore,  
I promise whatsoever store  
I take of poultry, wild or tame,  
Or fish or flesh, or woodland game,  
Thou and thy children shall have choice

Ere I partake thereof ; thy voice  
Shall be my law whatso betide.  
As trusty guardian, near thy side  
Will I keep ward, that never scathe  
May touch thine head, for late and rathe  
Shall be my watch.

Bold, stout, and strong  
Art thou, while I, through all the throng  
Of men and beasts, am formed for wile,  
So with thy strength, and my fertile  
And subtle brain, could none withstand  
Emprise whereto we set joint hand.  
Besides, so close we be of kin,  
That past all doubt 'twere deadly sin  
If 'twixt us cruel war had place.  
Nay, could I but have found a case  
For good excuse, I had not fought  
This field against thee ; thou 'twas sought  
The quarrel first ; so little will  
Had I to injure thee that still  
While fighting have I striven to show  
Fair courteous bearing towards thee, though  
A mighty difference had men seen  
If so it happed that I had been  
Pitted against a stranger. Thou  
My dear eme art, and well I trow  
A nephew's duty. When I might  
Have seized a time perchance to smite,  
I stayed mine hand, or thou hadst not  
Escaped with such slight wounds, I wot,  
In this encounter. True your eye  
Hath somewhat suffered, and a sigh  
Escapes my bosom when I think  
That thou, dear eme, hast had to drink  
That draught of woe : oh ! would that it  
Had fallen on me, for much more fit

XLI. The  
Fox nigh lost.

It were that I should suffer, but  
It bears advantage—most men shut  
Two windows when they sleep—while one  
Thou wilt but need to close.

Well done

It were, 'fore all men, shouldst thou deem  
These words well spoken, dearest eme ;  
With heartfelt gratitude my wife  
And children would for thy dear life  
Make instant prayer, and falling down  
Before thy feet, beg Heaven to crown  
Thy days with joy.

I here confess

The trespass, lies and naughtiness  
That I 'gainst thee and thine have wrought ;  
But say, could any Lord have aught  
More noble than I proffer now  
With meek submission, as I bow  
My soul for mercy. Well I wot  
That thou my life may'st lightly blot  
This moment, but, and if thou didst,  
Consider how thou dwell'st amidst  
My friends and lineage, who would take  
Vengeance on thee for kinship's sake.

“ That man may well be counted wise  
Who doth not let his anger rise  
Against his own advantage. Some  
There be who suffer wrath to come  
Betwixt them and their own behoof ;  
Such action clearly ranks as proof  
That 'tis not wisdom's sceptre rules  
Their lives, for needs must they be fools  
Who suffer passion to o'erride  
Their wit, what thing soe'er betide.  
Dear eme, 'tis surely little gain

To any victor that he stain  
His laurel crown with foeman's blood,  
Sweet mercy oft breeds brotherhood.  
Much better should a man have peace  
And rest, and honour, than increase  
Of foes who ever lie in wait  
To seek his hurt. My wretched fate  
I reckon no whit, and do but give  
Good rede, how thou may'st glorious live."

XLI. The  
Fox nigh lost.

"Ay, thief!" the Wolf said, "thou wouldst fain  
Be once more free, that yet again  
Thou mightest scathe me. Wot I well  
That wert thou loosed, the broken shell  
Of one frail egg thou wouldst not reckon  
Of me or mine, but now in check  
I have thy life. Though thou didst hold  
In fee a world of ruddy gold,  
Piled high as yon grey mountains old,  
I would not spare thy life for gift  
Thereof, too well I wot the drift  
Of thy fair speaking. Nought I set  
By all thy kin, and should not fret  
To call them foes. Ere thou wast born  
I knew to choose 'twixt chaff and corn.

"Thy glozing speech thou might'st have said  
To one who knew thee not, and bred  
Therewith repute for love of truth  
And honest ways. But since thy youth  
Thy devious way of life have I  
Known to be vile and dastardly.  
Yea! with good reason might ye mock  
With gibing laugh should I unlock  
Mine arms at thy request, and free  
My deadly foe through—courtesy!

XLI. The = Thou hast, O noisome knave, declared  
Fox nigh lost. That out of pity ye had spared  
To do me hurt—see then mine head  
All torn and cruelly bebled,  
And was it thy sweet mercy pray  
Caused thee to pluck mine eye away  
From out its socket? Worse than fool  
Were I to hearken now ye pule  
And cry for mercy.

But beyond  
All other injuries, my fond  
And loving heart it most doth touch,  
To think how thou hast dared besmutch  
And slander my beloved wife,  
Whom count I dearer far than life,  
Or fame or goods: therefore my hate  
Nor time nor season can abate.”

While Isegrym in wrath thus spake,  
The Fox but schemed some means to make  
Escape from death.

The Wolf's red tongue,  
Wearied and parched with speaking, hung  
Outside his mouth; this Reynard saw—  
With one great jerk he freed his paw,  
Thrust up his head from underneath,  
Seized fast the tongue betwixt his teeth  
And hung thereto until the red  
Bright blood streamed down; then straightway fled  
All thought of Reynard, as forth rang  
Isegrym's scream of anguish. Sprang  
The Fox from 'neath him, and on high  
Raised pæans shrill of “Victory!”



·XLII· HOW· ISEGRYM· &  
· WAS· OVERCOME· BY· THE·  
· FOX· AND· HOW· THE· FOX·  
· HAD· THE· WORSHIP· &

ALTHOUGH to lose one eye sharp pain  
Had caused the Wolf, yet would he fain  
Have lost the second ere his tongue  
Had thus been bitten, for it wrung  
His frame with such sore agony, that  
Down fell he, prostrate, prone and flat,  
As one falls dead.

Then forward leapt  
The Fox, and on his body stept,  
Shrieked with delight, and shouted loud,  
Seized the Wolf's legs, and through the crowd  
Dragged him along for all to see,  
And stack and smote him lustily.

Ah! then what wrath and grief did wring  
The Wolf's befrienders, and the King  
Besought they, tearful-eyed, to stay  
All further combat.

Quick yeasay  
Was thereto given ; forthwith the Losse  
And Leopard nimbly stept across  
The lists and said : " We charge ye both  
To stay your hands ; the King is loth  
That further battle should be done,  
And straight commandment gives each one  
To cease the strife, for both have gained  
Honour and glory, and sustained  
Right well their worship. But the prize,"

XLII. Rey-  
nard vic-  
torious.

Quoth they, "O Fox, most clearly lies  
With thee, that King and Court award  
Who watched the strife."

"Whate'er our Lord

The King commands," the Fox replied ;  
"I own for law, and give beside  
My heartfelt thanks to all around,  
By whose fair judgment I am found  
Victor. With humble heart I pray  
My friends and counsellors to say  
What next they judge 'tis mine to do."

Not lukewarm now were friends, or few,  
To honour Reynard ; soon they came  
In tribes and troops ; I will but name  
Some who in earliest order hap.  
First Grymbert Dachs and Dame Sleepcap  
His faithful wife ; Dame Rukenawe,  
To whose good counsel and wise saw  
The Fox owed much, her hopeful sons,  
Bitelives and Fulrompe—wily ones—  
Hatenet her daughter ; then the house  
Of Weaseldom, the Flittermouse,  
And twenty more, who, if it so  
Had happed for Fate's dark hand to go  
Against the Fox in open field,  
Much tardier then had been to yield  
To him their homage : thus it is  
Through all the world's long tale, ywis,  
That who by good success doth raise  
His head on high shall win great praise .  
And fair renown ; but if in strife  
A man gets worsted, then in life  
Small laud he finds, and nought can save  
His worthy deeds from Lethe's wave.  
Yea, some of those grasped Reynard's hand



Who hitherto had care to stand  
Aloof, but now did they appear  
With friendly countenance, and cheer  
Most sweet and pleasant, as though nought  
But love had crossed their inmost thought.

What pen can write, what tongue can tell  
The merry feasts that now befell  
In Reynard's honour? Trumpets blew  
His fame abroad; and shawms with new  
And pleasant pipings, joined to song,  
Told how the Fox had right, and wrong  
Lay all with vanquished Isegrym.

Quoth Reynard: "Truly to the brim,  
Dear friends, my cup of joy is full,  
And honours lie on me as wool  
Bears down a sheep near shearing days."  
Then passed they through the praising ways  
In long procession towards the King,  
While sweet-voiced boys and maidens sing,  
With tuneful rhythm, songs of glee  
And other joyous minstrelsy.  
And as the revel rolled along  
Thus sounded somewhat of their song:

"All hail to Reynard! trumpet tongued  
His gallant deeds proclaim,  
His glory shines with golden glow  
Triumphant, while the Wolf alow  
Is cast, fulfilled of shame.  
Let loud acclaiming rend the sky  
For Reynard's well-won victory.

"The Bear, the Cat, the Wolf, each strove  
The Fox's power to fall,  
But he in counsel, court, and field,

XLII. Reynard victorious.

Hath forced each one in turn to yield,  
Uncrowned—yet Lord of all.  
Then let glad pæans rend the air,  
His friends great Reynard's glory share.

“Sing merrily forth our Master's praise,  
His name let all men bless,  
What though he win by fraud and guile,  
The world well loves lie, craft, and wile,  
Its watchword is success!  
Out-ringing peals to Heaven then fling  
For Reynard, and our Lord the King.”

With song and shout the royal throne  
They reached, where Reynard falling prone,  
The King exclaimed :

“I prithee stand,  
Dear Reynard ; by thine own right hand  
Thou hast most worshipfully kept  
Thy day : a warrior more adept  
Ne'er hath it been my luck to see ;  
Take full discharge, and go forth free  
To roam and pass whereso ye will.  
The matter now must rest until  
With counsellors and noble men  
The cause hath been discussed, and then  
When Isegrym of pain and dole  
Is eased, and once again made whole,  
My messengers shall bid you come,  
And I with wise men's aid will sum  
Up all the points, and straightway give  
Fair judgment how ye both may live  
As loving friends in full accord,  
And liegemen true, to serve your Lord.”



XLIIJ · AN · ENSAMPLE · OF  
THAT · THE · FOX · TOLD · &  
TO · THE · KING · AFTER · HE ·  
HAD · WON · THE · BATTLE ·

“**M**OST noble sire and gracious king,  
As one athirst doth hail a spring  
Of clear fresh water,” Reynard cried,  
“I hail thy words. When to abide  
Thy sentence first to Court I came,  
Some envious beasts desired my shame  
Who ne’er had hurt or scathe from me,  
Yet ne’ertheless did cruelly  
(As envious of my fair renown)  
Strive to oppress and hunt me down,  
Egged on by foolish men who deemed  
That on the Wolf thy favour beamed  
More brightly than it glanced on me.  
Dear Lord, how little subtlety  
These men possessed! or they had known  
That only by the end is shown  
Which men be happy.

Much are they  
Like certain hounds I saw one day  
Stand all aheap before a gate  
Where dwelt a wealthy lord; in wait  
They stood until a churl should bring  
Their daily platter;—issuing  
From out the kitchen came a hound  
Who to his seeming good had found  
Means to purloin a rib of beef.  
The sharp-eyed cook espied the thief,  
And running quickly with a bowl

XLIII. Gain  
at sore cost.

Of boiling water, cast the whole  
Athwart his hips ; the skin and hair  
Were scalded off, and showed all bare  
The naked flesh ; he nathless leapt  
Far out of reach and safely kept  
The stolen good so dearly won.  
His fellows saw him quickly run  
Forth to the meadow, holding still  
The rib, and then did envy fill  
Their foolish minds, and loud they cried :  
' Well doth thy friend the cook provide  
For thee, in giving such a bone  
Garnished with plenteous meat thereon.'  
' Ah ! little,' quoth the thief, ' ye know  
The inward truth from outward show,  
Ye praise what lies in front, but blind  
Are ye to that which lurks behind.  
See then my injured flesh and say  
What profit rests with me.'

When they  
Beheld his sodden scalded hips,  
Wherefrom the hair and skin in strips  
Hung down, a ghastly fearsome sight,  
They fled, and left the unhappy wight—  
The envied winner of the bone—  
To mourn his wretched state alone.

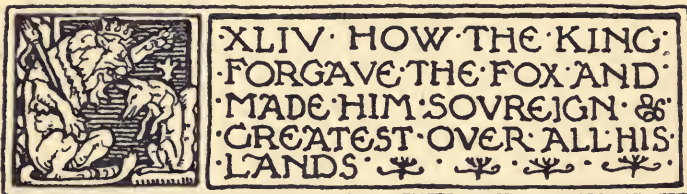
" And so these fulsome beasts who crowd  
Round thee, dear Lord, and strive aloud  
To gain thy grace and favour ; when  
They rise above their fellow men  
To place and power, forthwith they pill  
And rob the people ; soon their fill  
They take like lean forhungered hounds,  
And for a while their praise resounds  
From all men's mouths, and none dare say

One word against them, while their day  
 Of glory lasts ; nay, some will aid  
 Their evil deeds, that they apaid  
 May be by sharing part and lot  
 In evil-gotten gains, yet wot  
 I well, dear Lord, when comes the end  
 Towards which unrighteous actions tend,  
 Then grief and shame on them must fall,  
 And wormwood, bitterness, and gall  
 Shall be their portion : skin and hair  
 Shall they be shorn of, and all bare  
 Shall they go forth, as did that hound ;  
 That is, all those false friends they found  
 Shall fall away from them, nor more  
 Fawn at their feet as heretofore.  
 Dear Lord, I earnestly beseech  
 That thou wilt let this history teach  
 Thee somewhat of the world's dark ways ;  
 Well wot ye that in these last days  
 Cruel extortioners oppress,  
 With new-made modes of wickedness,  
 Poor helpless people, whom they get  
 By craft entangled in their net.  
 They're worse than that poor hound who bore  
 The bone away by 'stealth ; with sore  
 Facing and bracing bear they down  
 Poor folk in countryside and town ;  
 Freedom and privilege they sell  
 And drive poor wights to very hell,  
 For pelf and profit. Surely God  
 Will lastly scourge them with the rod  
 Of shame, and whosoe'er they be,  
 Will deal his judgments righteously.  
 But, Heaven be thanked ! the Fox ne'er wrought  
 In such vile wise, but ever taught  
 His fellows to avoid the crimes

XLIII. Gain  
at sore cost.

Which run so rife in these ill times,  
That clear and pure his name might show  
From smutch, as fair new-fallen snow.  
The Fox shall aye the Fox remain—  
The good man's friend, the bad man's bane.

Dear King, towards thee my heart doth burn  
With ardent love, nor will I turn  
That love from thee, whate'er betide,  
But to the utterest day will bide  
Thy faithful liegeman—otherwise,  
I doubt, some men have striven with lies  
Your Highness to persuade, but I  
Am true—or if I live or die.”



THE King said : “ Reynard, thou dost owe  
To me due homage—be not slow  
To do thy fealty, and command  
Shall then go forth throughout the land  
That thou be held in high estate  
As chiefest judge and magistrate.  
See well that ye no more misdo  
Or trespass, but deal honest, true,  
And righteous judgment all around  
With fearless conscience. Most profound  
We count thy wisdom, tact, and wit,  
And therefore give due heed to it.  
Well ponder all thy tongue hath said,  
Nor let thy dooming be misled

From virtue's path. 'Tis mine intent  
To let our sovereign will be bent  
Henceforth to work by thy advice ;  
And should foul jealousy entice  
Some envious churl to do thee ill  
In word or deeds, by Heaven, I will  
Shower down such vengeance on his head,  
Ere yet a second day be sped,  
That he shall curse the unhappy morn  
When Clotho cried "O man be born ;"  
Bailiff and warden of the realm,  
Thy hand alone must guide the helm."

XLIV. Reynard's state  
glorious.

Quoth Reynard : " How can I express  
Dear Lord, my heartfelt thankfulness ? "  
And all his friends and kindred said  
That each would answer, head by head,  
For Reynard's faith.

Dame Rukenawe  
Exclaimed : " Dear King, should Reynard draw  
His foot from strictest rectitude,  
Thereafter would a deadly feud  
Be ever set betwixt us twain."

Then forth spake Reynard once again  
And said : " A feeling doth oppress  
My heart of deep unworthiness  
Now thou so graciously hath dealt,  
Dear Lord, with me and mine. Ne'er felt  
A man more grateful than do I  
That thus ye let bygones go by."

NOW hearken ye how Isegrym,  
With bleeding wounds, and sore of limb,  
Lay stretched all helpless on the field.  
At first men deemed the fight had sealed

XLIV. Rey-  
nard's state  
glorious.

His fate for aye : but Ersewyn,  
With loving help from lupine kin  
(The Panther, Losse, and Bruin Bear),  
Raised him from off the ground with care,  
And made of sweet and fragrant hay  
A warm soft bed, whereon they lay  
His wounded body. Then with lint  
His hurts, when washed, were dressed ; no stint  
Of surgeons, wise and learned, came  
To tend his health, and men of fame  
From far and wide gave willing aid  
With subtlest leechcraft. Heavy weighed  
His wounded head, and when his eye  
They did but touch, with bitter cry  
He waked from out his swoon, and made  
Such fierce ado, that well afraid  
His kin and friends were lest his wits  
Were lost for ever ; but his fits  
Of madness passed when, drinking deep  
Of soothing draughts, he sank to sleep :  
And kindly words of comfort gave  
The learned masters, that though grave  
And deep his wounds, he would begin  
Ere long to mend. Dame Ersewyn  
With tears of joy gave hearty thanks  
To Heaven, and people of all ranks  
Rejoiced that they once more would see  
The Wolf all whole. Then speedily  
The Court broke up, and every beast  
Went home—for thus was closed the feast.





XLV · HOW · THE · FOX · WITH ·  
HIS · FRIENDS · DEPARTED ·  
NOBLY · FROM · THE · KING ·  
AND · WENT · TO · HIS · CASTLE ·  
OF · MALPERDY · § · § · §

WHEN Reynard took his final leave  
Of King and Queen, quoth they: "We grieve,  
Dear Reynard, that ye hence must go  
With speedy foot, but be not slow  
To come and glad our hearts again."

Replied he: "Nay, then, who more fain  
Than I to visit you at need,  
With wit, or body-help to speed  
All things that lie within my power?  
Ever the Fox doth, in the hour  
Of stress and storm, most freely give  
His aid to friends—long may ye live  
In great estate, and when ye die,  
Sweet-savoured be your memory."

Then fared he forth 'mid merry rout  
Of loving friends, with joyous shout  
And loud triumphant songs of glee,  
Till reached they Castle Malperdy,  
Where he with fair and courteous speech  
Said: "Dearest friends, I do beseech  
Ye one and all, that if ye need  
My help or counsel, ye but speed  
Hither at once; ye soon shall prove  
How faithful stands the Fox's love."

Then to his tender loving wife

XLV. He  
lives in scorn  
of folk cen-  
sorious.

He told the tale, how near his life  
To forfeit came, no single word  
Did he forego.

When now they heard  
His hairbreadth 'scapes, most wondrous fain  
His children were that once again,  
Unscathed, their father was restored  
To wealth, in honour with his Lord,  
And clear of charge. At Malperdy  
Henceforth he lived right jollily.

NOW well I wot, that who should set  
Himself in Reynard's craft might get,  
By lies and flattery, equal praise  
With him ; for crooked devious ways  
Are loved of Lords who haunt the Court,  
Whether they be of ghostly sort  
Or temporal state. The Fox hath left  
Behind him scholars who his heft  
May fit with blade and mighty wax,  
By threading those sly tortuous tracks  
That he so skilfully hath trod.  
But weary steps dull fools must plod  
Who know not well the Fox's wiles :  
On them the world but faintly smiles ;  
For crafty wit it is that brings  
Success to men in Courts of Kings  
And Popes, and Emperors, and each  
But striveth how to best o'erreach  
His fellow man, by simony,  
Brute force, deceit, or flattery.

Within the Court one thing alone  
Hath power unerring to atone

For all misdeeds—bright glittering gold!  
Whoso within his power doth hold  
This talisman shall ever be  
Received with joyous courtesy,  
Alike by highborn dames and lords.

XLV. He  
lives in scorn  
of folk cen-  
sorious.

Money to murder carles affords  
Protection. Money bringeth shame  
On purest souls. By money came  
Falsehood and lies. By money love  
Is bought and sold, which should above  
All price be counted. Money makes  
The foul seem fairest, and awakes  
Men's vilest lusts.

I sorely fear,  
From all I see around and hear  
Of murder, cruel deeds, and theft,  
And shameless vaunting of the deft  
And bold-eyed way in which the law  
Is set at naught, like some old saw  
Arust with age, that surely God,  
E'en though his wrath may seem to nod  
And slumber for a while, will bring  
Fierce vengeance on our misdoing.

Therefore with humble heart I pray  
All folk who read these words to stay  
From evil courses and amend  
While life still lasts, for soon the end  
Must come upon us, nor will spare  
This man or that, but each must bear  
The burden he himself hath cast  
Across his back.—Oh! turn ye fast  
Ere God's great day of grace be past.

## EPILOGUE.

**N**OW whosoever more or less hath said  
About the Fox, or deeds his hand hath done,  
Than what may be within this volume read,  
    Regard it not for sooth—the snares he spun,  
And pranks he played, this story doth record,  
His subtle shifts, and lastly his reward.

And he who giveth not belief at full  
    To all he finds set down within this book,  
Him should I hold to be a man of dull  
    Small wit, and one who hath, alas! forsook  
The true belief that every wight should hold  
Concerning that which Reynard wrought of old.

Nay, some there be, who, though their eyes had seen  
    All that which happed, would nathless doubt thereof,  
Yet many marvels in this world, I ween,  
    Have come to pass and left small room for scoff.  
And even as scenes in mysteries and plays  
(Which be but tropes) oft prove in diverse ways

Example good for folk who fain would use  
    And follow virtue's paths, so in this tale,  
The man who virtue loves, and vice eschews,  
    Shall find great help and wondrous good avail  
In time of need, although in jest or jape  
It doth from time to time its wisdom shape.

Within its page no good man hath been blamed,  
    Nor are its arrows sped at that or this,  
But if or here or there men find them shamed,  
    Then let them change their way of life, ywis,  
And for those folk whose footsteps have gone straight,  
I pray God keep them in that fair estate.

## SUMMA

**I**F THOU HEREIN HAST AUGHT DISCERNED WRIT,  
O READER, THAT OF GUILT CONVICTS THY HEART,  
MAKE QUICK AMENDS: OR HAST THOU CONSCIENCE QUIT  
OF ALL OFFENCE, GOD GRANT THOU NE'ER DEPART  
FROM WISDOM'S PLEASANT PATHS; BUT SHOULDST THOU START  
AT AUGHT THAT TASTE OR FINE-WROUGHT FEELING SHOCKS,  
SPARE THOU THE AUTHOR; BLAME ALONE

## THE FOX





GLOSSARIAL NOTES ON SOME PERSONS, PLACES, AND THINGS MENTIONED IN THE FOREGOING HISTORY, AND ON SOME WORDS USED BY REYNARD AND HIS FRIENDS WHICH HAVE FALLEN OUT OF OUR-DAY SPEECH.

- ABRION, *n.*,  
p. 197, l. 2.      The works of Master Abrion  
No modern eyes have looked upon.  
'Twould seem that wondrous paradox,  
The fertile brain of Reynard Fox,  
Bred him, that he in ages later  
Might vex the studious commentator.
- ACON, *n.*,  
p. 76, l. 9.      Aix-la-chapelle, as Acon known  
Was to our sires, but since has grown  
Strange to our ears with hard short A,  
And Aachen written 'tis to-day.
- AKERYN, *n.*,  
p. 195, l. 26.    The learned Master Akeryn  
To us is but a shadow thin.  
If e'er he wrote, his works are tost  
Into the limbo of books lost.  
Perhaps he, too, is a creation  
Of Reynard's brain, for our vexation.
- AVICENE, *n.*,  
p. 188, l. 17.    Than the great Arab Avicene,  
None wiser e'er was born, I ween.  
About the year ten-twelve he wrote  
The "Canon Medicinæ." Note  
And fame to him were given therefor  
While five long hundred years rolled o'er.
- BENYM, *v.*,  
p. 102, l. 33.    Although this word to ancient times  
Belongs, yet scanty are the rhymes

In "im ;" and so, though scholars treat  
Its use as past and obsolete,  
Wherefore should not poor rhymesters wake  
Its slumbers? It but means to take.

BEWIMPLE, *v.*, A head-gear formed with many a crimple,  
p. 157, l. 17. In Reynard's days was called a wimple,  
So, to bewimple meant to say,  
To hide and cover from the day.

BONSING, *n.*, This word as "Boussyng" may you see  
p. 191, l. 21. In the great Oxford N. E. D.  
Caxton's turned "n" misplaced it there.  
This name, in Dutch, do Polecats bear.

BORROWS, *n.*, Borrowes were hostages or bail,  
p. 246, l. 7. Whose goods were forfeit should they fail  
To bring the champions to the field,  
There to abide what fate should yield.

BURGEONING, To burgeon, most men wot, I trow,  
*pp.*, p. 3, l. 8. Is but to bud, burst forth, and grow.

BYDWONGEN, This word dragged straightway from the Dutch,  
*a.*, p. 116, l. 34. You'll say cannot be needed much,  
For centuries have left it lonely,  
Lurking in Caxton's writings only.  
It means enforced, constrained, compelled,  
By force kept backwards or withheld.

DACHS, *n.*, A badger, Caxton calls a Dachs,  
*passim.* Ta'en from the Dutch ; it strangely lacks  
In English word-books, yet the sound  
Is quite familiar of Dachs-hound.

DAYED, *v.*, In ancient times a man was dayed  
p. 36, l. 8. When accusation had been made  
Of crime against him ; then must he  
By oath and witness prove him free  
Of guilt, or boldly, hand to hand,  
Against his foe in combat stand  
On day declared and given out  
By trumpet clang and herald's shout.



- DEUCE-ACE,      That which is likened to deuce-ace  
*c.n.*, p. 109,      Hath in esteem the lowest place ;  
 l. 12.              For when a dicer makes his cast,  
                       Deuce-ace is reckoned least and last.
- EISEL, *n.*,        For this one needs not to seek far,  
 p. 247, l. 21.      All the world knows 'tis vinegar.
- EME, *n.*,          Though Eme for uncle may be dead  
*passim.*            In southern speech, it keeps its head  
                       Above oblivion in the north ;  
                       Nor hath it e'er been driven forth  
                       From poet's diction. 'Tis from "Ohm"  
                       Of Germans, or the Dutchmen's "Oom."
- ERMANRIC.        Great Ermanric was, in the fourth  
 p. 74, l. 24.        Of Christian centuries, the King  
                       And ruler of the stormy North :  
                       His feast-hall heard famed Widsith sing  
                       The earliest strain of English song ;  
                       Far travelled gleeman he, and guest  
                       Right welcome, when he sang the strong  
                       And glorious deeds by which long rest  
                       The King gave Northern lands, and rose  
                       Victorious o'er his Vandal foes.
- FLOCKS, *n.*,        The charge to "stuffe the sleve with flocks,"  
 p. 133, l. 27.      Made by the King against the Fox,  
                       At first reads like some ancient joke  
                       Wherewith he would false Reynard poke,  
                       And hence the phrase doth owe insertion,  
                       Nigh wholemeal dragged from Caxton's version ;  
                       Now fear I 'tis a mistranslation,  
                       At least, that's Logeman's explanation.
- FLOYT, *v.*,        If illustration you require  
 p. 257, l. 25.      Of this word, turn to Chaucer's Squire.  
                       To floyt doth mean to speak with soft,  
                       Alluring phrase, as knaves use oft.
- GELYS, *n.*,        As Chaucer of "mine author Lollius" tells  
 p. 105, l. 32.      In Troilus, whom no man ever found,  
                       So one suspects that Master Gelys dwells  
                       Alone in Reynard's pages : through the round

Of names of learned priests whose works abound  
On penitence and penance may one pore,  
Yet Master Gelys founden is no more.

GRYN, *n.*,  
p. 28, l. 11.

In Psalm one-forty may you see  
(The fifth verse) "they set grins for me."  
But our new versioners have reft  
The "r" alas! and "gins" 'tis left,  
Yet "grins," a true old English word,  
To mangled French should be preferred.

GRYSE, *n.*,  
p. 157, l. 27.

Gryse in old speech did grey fur mean,  
On robes of office oft-times seen.

JAPE, *v.*,  
*passim*.

To jape was but to gibe or joke,  
Or at one's neighbour fun to poke.

LEASINGS, *n.*,  
p. 66, l. 25.

He who our new-turned Bible tries  
For this good word, will now find "lies,"  
Psalm v., verse 6, or else "falsehood,"  
Psalm iv., verse 2, where "leasing" stood.

MUSEHONT, *n.*,  
p. 191, l. 20.

Musehont for Weasel still survives  
In the eastern counties, where their lives  
Lived out the Dutchmen, driven o'er sea  
By Alva's dread ferocity.

OSTROLE, *n.*,  
p. 191, l. 32.

This cryptogamic beast all search  
Eludes, and leaves us in the lurch.  
To naturalists he is unknown,  
And etymologists him disown;  
Muller hath tracked him all he can,  
Yet baffles he him and Logeman.

PALSTER, *n.*,  
p. 107, l. 18.

A palster carried in his hand  
Each pilgrim to the holy land.  
'Tis a Dutch word, that's why, I weet,  
'Tis not in Bradley nor in Skeat.  
(Right well I know "weet" should be "wot"  
And so it would if Skeat were Scott.)  
It was a staff five feet in length,  
And of good sturdiness and strength.

RATHE, *adj.*,  
p. 111, l. 15.

That rathe means early, each man knows  
Who's read of Milton's "rathe primrose."

- REDE, *v.*,  
*passim.* Rede doth advice or counsel mean,  
Oft scouted when 'tis good, I ween.
- ROOM, *v.*,  
p. 162, l. 28. The good old phrase "to room," of late  
Hath been supplanted by "vacate."
- SHREW, *n.*,  
*passim.* Though now a shrew but means a scold  
Or woman termagant, of old  
'Twas said of those of either sex  
Whose ill life other folk might vex.
- ST. MARTIN'S  
BIRD, *n.*,  
p. 38, l. 2. Good Randle Cotgrave 'tis alone  
Who to the searcher maketh known  
Hen Harrier as St. Martin's bird ;  
Vainly one seeks elsewhere the word.
- SIB, *n.*,  
p. 123, l. 9. A sib hath every man who lives,  
Unless he lack all relatives.
- SLONK, *v.*,  
p. 131, l. 23. This outland word hath fared but badly,  
Finding no place in Stratmann-Bradley.  
The reason is not hard to follow,  
'Tis Caxton's Anglo-Dutch for swallow.
- SNELL, *a.*,  
p. 255, l. 1. It scarcely needs to say that snell  
Means quick, for that the sense doth tell.
- SPENCE, *n.*,  
p. 52, l. 19. The old-time spence we now call larder,  
Wherefrom, as need might be, the warder  
Dis-spenced good things ; some rash man thence  
Might etymologize dispense.
- STEAD, *n.*,  
p. 211, l. 23. A farm in old speech was a stead,  
And to the stead-man's name oft wed.
- STOUNDMELE, *adv.*, p. 87,  
l. 16. This looks at first a strange word verily,  
It means no more than momentarily.
- SWINK, *v.*,  
p. 24, l. 16. Within this old word, "swink," doth lurk  
The meaning of our phrase, hard work

WENTLING, *v.*, To wentle was to roll or tumble,  
p. 34, l. 33. Or awkwardly along to stumble.

WONDERLY, The learned grammar-men who live  
*adj.*, p. 148, In these last days no adjective  
l. 21. Count "wonderly," but were I taxed on  
The use of it, good Father Caxton  
Should be my panoply and shield,  
For thus doth he the example yield :  
"Thaventure of the world," quoth he,  
(Cap. twenty-seven) "is wonderly."

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