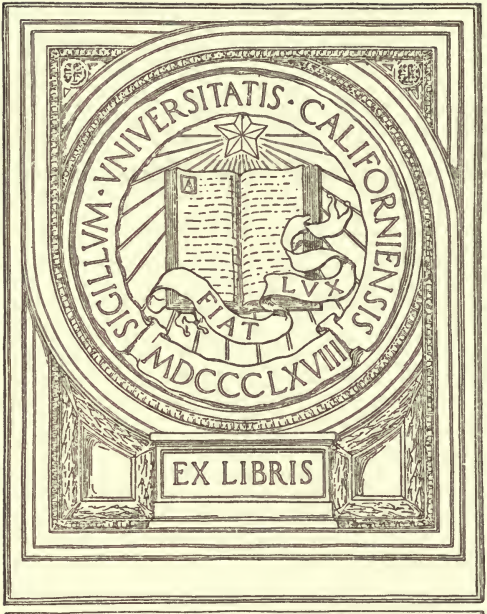
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AESOP AND HYSSOP

Aesop and Hyssop

Being

Fables Adapted and Original with the Morals Carefully Formulated

By

William Ellery Leonard

Duplex libelli dos est: quod risum movet,
Et quod prudenti vitam consilio monet.—*Phædrus*

But ye that holden this tale a folye,
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
Taketh the moralitee, good men.—*Chaucer.*

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1912

DEDICATION

TO LUDWIG LEWISOHN

To you, judicious and discerning
In wit, in poetry, and learning,
I dedicate these random pages.
Here is the wisdom of the ages;
No insight of the Galilean,
No visions to the empyrean;
But clever perspicacity
Of honest old sagacity,
That Man has often found amusing—
And in his conduct failed of using.
For, though the tales were made for reasons,
As fitting special times and seasons,
Yet, even as men are more than nations,
They still have divers applications.
They go by name of Æsop briefly—
Since Æsop didn't write them chiefly.
For some are earlier, some later.
You'll note, professor, how I cater
To current times and tastes, by adding
Felicities of puck-and-padding.

Thus Phædrus, La Fontaine, and Gay did;*
But I've done wiselier than they did:
Their aim finesse and delicacy—
Mine is the mischievous and racy.
At times indeed I'm frolicksomer
Than diner-out or traveling drummer.
(The mock address to babes and sucklings
Should aid the older reader's chucklings.)
And where some stupid predecessor
Quite missed the moral, O professor,
I've set it down, and would submit it
To your decision if I've hit it.
And sundry fables are provided
That (just between ourselves, sir) I did—
Entirely new, and, to my thinking,
As good as Æsop's in the inking,
That critics even of some pretensions
Will scarce detect as my inventions.

W. E. L.

* *I mentioned the distinguished Gay*
Because the rhyme was on my way.
In truth, his Fables, if you'll look,
Are not derived from Æsop's book.
Although the manner was suggested,
He didn't borrow as the rest did.
I add this note, as my relation
To culture and to education
Might be imperilled, should men say,
"The fellow doesn't know his Gay."
(I've read all books in belletristic,
Composed of old by that or this stick.) .. ..

PREFACE.

Children, old Plato tells how Socrates,
Condemned to death, in prison took his ease
By turning Æsop's Fables all the day
Into some homely verses. In this way,
I too, a lesser man than he, in pain
And, as it were, in prison, try again
His remedy for sorrow (for of late
I lost forevermore my friend and mate,
And need a little smiling). So you see
Wise Æsop set to homely rhymes by me.
And I'll be glad if in this exercise,
Begun for my own easement, your young eyes
Find something for instruction and surprise.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

Part I. Fables Adapted from Æsop.

Part II. Original Fables.

PART I.

FABLES ADAPTED FROM ÆSOP.

Mankind will still remember Æsop,
Though mountains melt and oceans freeze up.

EXPLANATORY NOTE.

A consideration of the three following facts, to wit,

1. that the hyssop was a plant furnishing a twig used in ancient purificatory rites,
2. that a small flexible twig is a switch, and
3. that a switch (especially of birch or young maple) is still used for purificatory rites,

will lead the reader to perceive a fourth fact, to wit,

4. that "Hyssop" in our title deftly adumbrates the purificatory effect this work is to produce on the moral nature of mankind.

Compare: "Bells and Pomegranates," "Sesame and Lilies."

THE GNAT AND THE BULL.

Upon a Bull's horn once there sat
A consequential little Gnat.
And, as he was about to fly,
He buzzed unto the Bull, "Goodbye,
May I go now?" "You tiny Hum,"
Said Bull, "I didn't know you'd come."

Moral.

Some people in their lives and labors
Seem larger to themselves than to their neighbors.

THE FOX AND THE CROW.

A seely Crow sate perched upon a tree,
A bit of stolen flesh within her beak.
Up strolled the Fox as hungry as could be,
And sate thereunder and began to speak:
"How beautiful thou art, thy back how sleek,
Thy poise how graceful. If thy voice and words
Were only equal, thou wert queen of birds."

The seely Crow, most anxious to refute
This slight reflection on her vocal flaw,
Tilted her neck, and, standing on one foot,
Opened her mouth and gave a glorious "caw."
The flesh fell down, as Mr. Fox foresaw:

Moral.

"Miss Crow, albeit your voice is lacking, it
Is still a little better than your wit."

THE MANSLAYER.

A Man of Egypt once upon a time
Committed murder—rightly deemed a crime—
And, being chased in a stupendous hurry
By all the dead man's kin throughout the territory,
He hastened first to Nile's deserted shore.
Here on the sands he heard a Lion roar,
And in new terror clambered up a tree.
Here in the branches, hissing frightfully,
A coiling Serpent clung. With chattering teeth
He jumped into the river underneath.
HERE, basking with a twinkle and a smile,
Floated a just and hungry Crocodile,
Who ate him, head and heel, with eager slaughter.

Moral.

Nature herself to bad folks gives no quarter,
Whether they take to Earth or Air or Water.

THE FROG AND THE FOX.

A Frog leapt grandly from a lake and sat
Upon a hummock on a little mat
Of oozy moss and made to every beast
Of field and forest, lying west and east,
His proclamation: "I'm a great physician;
I'll cure all ills, whatever your condition."

And this he uttered in a voice so grand,
In words so big you scarce could understand,
That all the beasts admired his brainy head.
At last the Fox in indignation said:
"O Frog, how can you have the impudence
Thus to beguile the world of all its sense?
For how can you with those thin lantern jaws,
Those loose bow-legs and slimy little paws,
That meagre face and that blotched skin impure,
Set up in hopes the rest of us to cure
Of our infirmities, you boggled elf."

Moral.

The wise Fox says: "Physician, heal thyself."

THE WASP AND THE SNAKE.

The Serpent slept upon his coilèd tail;
The supple Wasp, as slender as a nail,
Seated himself upon the Serpent's head,
And undertook for fun to sting him dead.
The Serpent, writhing in exceeding pain,
Saw coming up a heavy-laden wain,
And placed his head within the wagon rut,
And made his peace with all the Gods, and shut
His blood-shot eyes. "My enemy," he saith,
"And I shall go together down to death."

Moral.

Children, now show your casuistic skill:
Did Serpent Wasp or Wasp the Serpent kill?

THE MONKEY AND THE DOLPHIN.

A merchant, going on a lengthy trip,
Took for his own amusement on the ship
A Monkey. Sailing off the Grecian coast,
The merchant, Monkey, crew, and ship were tossed
Amid a violent tempest down the main.
A Dolphin, seeing in the waves and rain
The Monkey swim and thinking him a man
(As all good dolphins aid whene'er they can
Our *genus homo*), rescued from the brine
And bore him shoreward squatted on his spine.
And when the Dolphin came in sight of land
Not far from Athens, he did then demand
Of his base burden, if he were of breed
Athenian, and the Monkey said, "Indeed,
And from a noble family—come and see us."
The Dolphin asked him if he knew Piraeus
(That harbor famous since the world began).
The Monkey, thinking that he meant a man,
Replied, "Indeed? we're bound by family ties."
The Dolphin, angry at such monstrous lies,
Drowned the pretender hard by Salamis.

Moral.

Be what you are and shun an end like this.

THE SWALLOW AND THE COURT OF JUSTICE.

A Swallow builds her nest within the wall
Of Athens' Court of Justice, famous hall,

And hatches seven young. Two Serpents crawl
From out their hole and quickly eat them all.

Moral.

Let's have *our* Judges subject to recall.

THE MOUNTAIN IN LABOR.

A Mountain was in great distress and loud
She roared and rumbled, till there rushed a crowd
Of peasants, kings, and princes, looking at her
And wondering what of all things was the matter,
When mid her pangs there issued from her side
A Mouse—who gave one little squeak and died.

Moral.

The moral here is learnèd and occult—
The bigger fuss, the smaller the result.

THE LION AND THE MOUSE.

A Lion, dreaming in his pride of place,
Was waked by Mouse who ran across his face.
Rising in wrath he caught and was about
To claw and kill, when little Mouse cried out:
"O spare my life and I'll repay you well."
The Lion laughed and loosed him.....
It befell
A little later that some hunters bound
This king of beasts with ropes upon the ground;
When Mouse, who knew him by his roar, in glee
Came up and gnawed the ropes and set him free.

Moral.

Scorn no man's friendship, howso small he be.

THE ASS IN THE LION'S SKIN.

An Ass put on a Lion's skin and went
About the forest with much merriment,
Scaring the foolish beasts by brooks and rocks,
Till at the last he tried to scare the Fox.
But Reynard, hearing from beneath the mane
That raucous voice so petulant and vain,
Remarked, "O Ass, I too would run away,
But that I know your old familiar bray."

Moral.

That's just the way with asses, just the way.

THE KID AND THE WOLF.

Standing aloft on the Roof of a shed, a Kid was reviling,
Out of the reach of disaster, a Wolf in the fields underneath him.
"Sirrah," responded the Wolf looking up, "I hear thee, but mind thee
Never a bit—for it isn't thyself but the Roof that is talking."

Moral.

Often enough 'tis the Place that gives us our bumptious behavior.

THE HARES AND THE FROGS.

The Hares, oppressed with sense of their timidity,
And wearied by alarms, with much avidity
At last determined to compose their troubles
By leaping headlong down amid the bubbles
Of a deep lake. But as they neared the bogs,
From off the bank there jumped a thousand Frogs,
All helter-skelter in a fright tremendous.
Then cried a Hare, "What reason *we* should end us,
When here are other creatures still more fearful?"

Moral.

Behold your neighbor's case and you'll be cheerful.

THE TRAVELERS AND THE PLANE TREE.

Two Travelers, worn by heat of June,
Lay down upon their backs at noon
Beneath the branches of a Plane.
And as its shade revived again
Their sweltering heads and aching knees,
One said to other: "Of all trees
The Plane's most useless, for it bears
No fruit, as apples, peaches, pears;
And from its pithy wood you scarce
Could make a tent-pole or a stool."
The Plane replied: "Ungrateful fool,
Had I not kept from you the sun,
Both you and he had been undone."

Moral.

Mankind will ever be despising
Its greatest blessings—'tis surprising.

THE SERPENT AND THE EAGLE.

A Serpent and an Eagle on the hill
Fought one the other with intent to kill.
The Serpent had the bird around the neck,
Who thus could neither claw with foot, nor peck
With gasping beak, and would have shortly died,
Shorn of his soaring strength and lofty pride,
Had not a countryman come up and spied
And loosed the gleaming coil from throat and feet,
And set the Eagle free. The Serpent beat
With fangs in fury on the drinking horn
(Which the good countryman had always worn
Strapped to his belt), and let the poison fly
That he might venge himself upon the sly.
But when the rustic was about to sip,
Ignorant of danger with a careless lip,
The Eagle struck his hand with wing and bore
The horn within his talons down the shore.

Moral.

When strength and skill with gratitude combine,
The end, dear child, is something very fine.

THE BAT AND THE WEASELS.

A Bat who fell upon the ground was caught
By Mr. Weasel. Bat his life besought;
But Weasel said, "Not so,—for on my word
I'm the sworn enemy of every bird."
The Bat assured him that no bird was he,
But just a mouse—so Weasel let him be.
Then shortly after fell the Bat once more
And other Weasel caught him. "I implore,
O do not eat me." But this Weasel cries,
"I have one vast antipathy for mice."
The Bat assured him that no mouse was he,
But just a Bat—so Weasel let him be.

Moral.

One must be shifty in extremity.

THE FROGS WHO DESIRED A KING.

The Frogs, lamenting that they had no king,
Sent their ambassadors to mighty Zeus,
Beseeching. The Olympian God, who marked
Their green simplicity, in jest cast down
A ponderous log splashing into the lake.
The Frogs in terror hid their heads afar
Deep in the shadowy waters mid the roots
Of sallows and of flags. But when once more
The billows were composed and that great log
Lay motionless, they did despise their fears,

And swam about, or sat thereon asquat,
Until they came to feel the indignant blush
At such a lumpish sovereign, and sent
A second embassy to mighty Zeus.
The Olympian God appointed them an Eel,
For potentate. But when they saw how sleek,
How fat, how empty of all policy,
His Eelship was, they were aggrieved again
And sent again an embassy to Zeus:
The Olympian, ruffled from the Olympian calm
By foolish plaint reiterated, sent
In wrath the Heron of the stalking thighs
And long swift bill. And day by fatal day
This new king, like the King of Terrors, preyed
Upon the congregation of the Frogs,
Until the croaking in that ancient lake
Did cease forever, both at rising sun
And when the first star lies above the hill.

Moral.

O Mortals, O unhappy humankind,
Complain not overmuch unto the Gods.

THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE.

One day a Hare unto a Tortoise said:
"Laborious back, short feet and empty head!
You are the slowest crawler on the earth."
The Tortoise blinked and answered him in mirth:
"Though you be swift as wind and one who mocks,
I'll beat you, sir." "Agreed." They called the Fox

To choose the course and fix the goal. The day
Approached. The racers started on their way
Together. Tortoise never stopped, but stepped
With even pace, though slow. The Hare he slept
Midway amid the clover, trusting ever
His native swiftness more than all endeavor,
And woke at last to find the Tortoise there
Beyond the goal.

Moral.

Now child, don't be a Hare.

THE OLD MAN AND DEATH.

An aged Man, employed in cutting wood
And carrying faggots for a livelihood
To Corinth's market, being out of breath
And worn, sat down and called aloud on Death.
Death hastened at his summons down the road:
"Why callest me?" "That, lifting up my load,
Thou may'st replace it on my shoulders."

Moral.

I've
The same propensity to stay alive.

THE DOG AND HIS IMAGE,

A Dog, who clenched between his teeth a bone,
Was crossing, as it chanced, a bridge alone,

Intent upon a thicket where he might
Unseen indulge his canine appetite:
When looking down beside the plank he spied
His Image in the water magnified.
"Another Dog, and a more tempting bone;
In size," he thinks, "at least two times my own."
He makes a savage spring with opened jaws
And loses both the edibles, because:

Moral.

One must acquaint oneself with Nature's laws.

THE ONE-EYED DOE.

I sing a little tale of woe
About a gentle little Doe
  That comes into my mind.
It had the habit of surprise,
Besides four legs, two ears, two eyes,
  Of which the one was blind.

So it would always grazing be
Close to the cliff beside the sea
  Its good eye landward cast.
For thus it mused: "My danger lurks
In hounds' and hunters' evil works
  And not in Ocean's vast."

But sorrow, sorrow! Boatmen came
By chance, and, taking certain aim,

Did shoot her from the sea;
And as she died, she sobbed and said,
"O I was fearfully misled,
And now I cease to be."

Moral.

The moral here is literary,
And yet I think it ought to carry:
Had Wordsworth sung this song,
It would have been less energetic,
But surely ten times more pathetic,
And fifty times as long.

THE ASS AND THE IMAGE OF THE GOD.

An Ass once carried, tied upon his back,
A God's gold Image on a crimson sack,
Meant for the Temple out beyond the walls.
From street to street the population falls
Adoring on its hands and knees. The Ass,
Flattered indeed that this had come to pass,
Bristled with pride and gave himself such airs
He stopped stone-still. The driver whips and swears
Until the silly creature brays and begs
And draws his ropy tail between his legs
And drops his ears, and moves along again.

Moral.

It is stupidity that makes us vain.

THE PEACOCK AND THE CRANE.

A Peacock, spreading his resplendent tail,
Mocked at the ashen plumage of the Crane:
"Your lanky wings how pitiful and pale,
Beside the gold and purple in the grain
Of these my regal robes." "But I regain
The heights of heaven soaring to the sun,
While still your Lordship struts about the plain
Beside the dunghill," said the wiser one.

Moral.

The fabulist would teach you by these words:
Fine feathers, children, do not make fine birds.

THE FROGS AND THE SUN.

Once when the Sun declared he'd take a wife,
The little Frogs were frightened for their life,
And raised their voices clamoring to the sky.
Zeus, bothered by their croaking, grumbled, "Why
This new complaint that makes my God's ears
tingle?"
One answered: "Sire, the Sun, now being single,
Still parches up our marshes and compels
Us miserably to die by arid wells
And withered water-cresses on dry stones,
Where come the cats and feed upon our bones....
What, then, will be our future state when once
He shall beget a family of Suns?"

Moral.

Whether begetting offspring is a blessing
Depends, T. R., on whom you are addressing.

THE ASS AND THE GRASSHOPPERS.

An Ass, who hears some Grasshoppers
At song and chirp, his joy avers,
Demanding what the food may be
That gives their voice such melody.
They tell him "dew." The ambitious Ass
Eats dew....

Moral.

and dies of hunger in the grass.

THE MILK-MAID AND HER PAIL.

A farmer's daughter, carrying from the field
A Pail of foaming milk upon her head:
"The money that this morning's milk will yield
Will buy a hundred eggs or more," she said;
"The eggs will hatch me chickens, white and red,
Full ninety-five, allowing for mischances—
I'll sell them when the poultry price advances.

"And in a year I'll buy a gorgeous gown
And go to all the feasts and junketings,
And set the fellows crazy through the town,
Proposing to me—round my train and strings
And jaunty hat. But I will spread my wings

And give—like this—my head a toss and flirt."
She ceased—

Moral.

and saw her milk amid the dirt.

THE LION AND THE DOLPHIN.

A Lion, roaming by the wild seashore,
Beheld a Dolphin lift his silver head
Above the shining waves. The Lion said:
"Let's form a treaty of alliance, for,
As I am king of beasts forevermore
Upon the land, so thou of all that's bred
In ocean's deeps." The Dolphin bellowèd
A brave assent unto the Lion's roar.
But when the Lion, fighting with a bull,
Shrieked for the watchful Dolphin somewhat later,
Because the king of fishes couldn't pull
With fins o'er land, this Lion called him traitor.

Moral.

The moral is æsthetic: I am able
To make a sonnet out of Æsop's fable.

THE TOWN MOUSE AND THE COUNTRY MOUSE.

The Country Mouse invited his new friend,
The Town Mouse, to come up the road and spend
A day with him. And as they roamed the bare
Plough-lands and nibbled at the random fare
Of wheat stalks and the roots by hedge-rows dug,

The Town Mouse chattered with a perky shrug
Of his fore-shoulder blades: "I'm quite askance;
The life you live here is the life of ants.
Come back with me, my friend, and you shall find
Dainties and luxuries of every kind."
The Country Mouse returned with him to town;
Whereat the Town Mouse in his pride took down
Raisins, and figs, and honey, bread and pease,
Barley and beans, and bits of yellow cheese.
The Country Mouse, delighted at such cheer,
Began lamenting his own fate so drear
And meagre—when the Butler with a hamper
Bowled through the room, and both away did scamper,
Squeaking into a narrow dusty crack.
And then no sooner had they both crawled back
To feast once more, when frightened by the Cook,
Who came to get some sugar, they betook
Their little selves to refuge once again.
At last the Country Mouse remarked: "How vain,
My friend, your luxuries, while here we shake
And have the tempting smell but may not take.
Give me my plough-lands and my roots—poor cheer,

Moral.

But one can eat, and eat it without fear."

THE ASS AND HIS SHADOW.

A Traveler, who'd hiréd him an Ass,
Sat down beneath its shadow in the grass

To cool himself. The Owner, who desired
To do the same, declared the man had hired
The Ass, but not the Shadow. Whilst they fought
The Ass ran off, nor was thereafter caught.

Moral.

Those people who will make so much ado
About the Shadow lose the Substance too.

THE FOX AND THE GRAPES.

A famished Fox did chance to spy
Some ripe grape clusters hanging high.
She leapt, she pawed the tree, she screeched,
But not a single grape she reached.
She turned away and said, "I guess
They're after all a sour mess."

Moral.

When things go wrong, O Fox or Man,
Philosophize the best you can.

THE FATAL NUPTIALS

A Lion, grateful to a Mouse for aid,
"Whate'er thou wilt, I'll do for thee," he said.
The ambitious Mouse, "Then make thy daughter mine
In marriage." "Yes, the lady shall be thine."
But on the nuptial day the giddy bride,
The royal virgin, by her father's side

Approaching, set her paw upon her spouse
Unwittingly—and so no more of Mouse.

Moral.

Ambition ruins many a humble house.

THE PORCUPINE AND THE SNAKES.

A Porcupine, who wished a sheltered spot,
Prevailed on Snakes to let him share their grot.
The Snakes, ere long by bristling quills annoyed,
Asked Porcupine to leave. "But I've enjoyed
My housing here and think I'd like to stay;
If you're unhappy, go yourselves away."

Moral.

It's well, kind people, to reflect and see
On whom we lavish hospitality.

THE CRAB AND THE FOX.

A Crab, forsaking in disgust the sands
Along the shore, went up the meadow lands
For feeding grounds. A famished Fox who saw
Pounced down and ate him head and tail and claw.

Moral.

Contentment with our lot's a wholesome law.

THE KITES AND THE HORSE.

The Kites of old time had the gifts of song,
Even such as to their cousin swans belong;

But, once enchanted by the Horse's notes,
In imitation they so strained their throats
That the vain effort to achieve a neigh
Took all their native talent quite away.

Moral.

The search for benefits imagined, ends
In loss of present good, my little friends.

THE HEN AND THE GOLDEN EGGS.

A cottager and wife possessed a Hen
Who laid each day a golden Egg again;
So each one thought that in its fair inside
A lump of gold there surely must abide.
And thus they killed it in the hope of gain,
And found no more than entrails, quite as plain
As fill the insides of all mortal chicks.
The foolish pair were in a silly fix.

Moral.

And thus 'tis ever with the Get-rich-quicks.

THE OAK AND THE REEDS.

A mighty Oak, uprooted by the blast,
Among the Reeds along the stream was cast,
And thus it spake: "O Reeds, so weak and light,
How comes it that the winds don't crush you quite?"
The Reeds replied: "*You* struggle and contend
And are destroyed—but *we* have learned to bend."

Moral.

By stooping you may conquer in the end.

THE DOVE AND THE CROW.

A Dove in cage was boasting to the Crow
How large the family she hatched—"Not so;
The more you have of offspring, the more woe,
Since all within this prison must abide."

Moral.

This seems to argue for race-suicide.

THE DOGS AND THE HIDE.

Some famished Dogs one morning spied
Within a stream a bullock's hide
Laid there to steep. Not being versed
In diving and in fetching, first
To drink the river up they tried,
And shortly one by one they burst
And one by one they died and died.

Moral

However much you need an object,
Consider with some sense your project.

THE GEESE AND THE CRANES.

The Geese and Cranes together fed one day
In the same meadow; when there walked that way

A fowler with a snare. The Cranes thereat
Flew off, as being light of wing and swift;
The heavy Geese were captured.

Moral.

And the drift
Of this old fable is: don't be too fat.

THE LAMP.

A Lamp that soaked a deal of oil and flared
Beyond the wont of tapers thereabout
"I'm more refulgent than the sun" declared—
When came a puff of wind and blew it out.
Its owner chided, lighting it again:

Moral

"Learn thou to shine in silence, as is fit;
A boasting beacon is a thing in vain—
Nor sun nor stars require to be relit."

THE MULE.

A Mule, quite frolicsome from too much corn
And all too little work, cavorted round
And boasted to himself: "O I was born
Of some high-mettled sire, a swift and sound
Racer whose virtues I indeed inherit—
For I'm his own child both in speed and spirit."

But on the next day, driven hard and far,
And feeling very weary in his thighs,

With drooping ears he cursed his evil star:
"This sorry business opens both my eyes—
My father after all was but an Ass."

Moral.

It's well to know our pedigree and class.

THE CROW AND THE PITCHER.

A thirsty Crow approached a water-jar,
And, squinting with some fervor down the neck,
Discovered that the water lay too far
For him to reach: however much he'd peck
And twist his pudgy head, the dusky hollow
Would yield his black throat not a single swallow.

At last, with patient walking to and fro,
He gathered up a pile of stones hard by,
And dropped them in the pitcher down below,
Until the water rose to where 'twas high
Enough for easy suction through his beak.

Moral.

I'm sure this crow was something of a freak.

THE MICE IN COUNCIL.

The Mice in eager council sat
Discussing gravely this and that
How best to tell, in time to scat
  To their retreats,
The coming of the subtle cat
  Who springs and eats.

And they concluded they could tell
Most expeditiously and well
By hanging round her neck a bell,
  Whose tinkle-tinkle
Would warn them to be off pell-mell—
  A clever wrinkle....

Save that in all the council there
No Mouse was found the deed to dare.
And so their schemes dissolved in air.

Moral.

  The wide world teems
With silly councils everywhere
  And silly schemes.

THE BEE AND ZEUS.

The Queen-bee soared from out the dews
Of Mount Hymettus. Her ascent
Was toward Olympus to present
Some golden honey unto Zeus.

Pleased with the sweets, the Olympian said,
"Whate'er thou wilt, I'll give and bring."
The Queen-bee, "Give me, pray, a sting
That I may strike the mortal dead

Who pilfers in my hives." And Zeus,
Though grieved (because he loved the race
That worshiped him with upturned face),
Dared not the bold request refuse.

But so contrived that, when the bee
Thereafter should employ the sting,
The dart within the wound would cling
And cause its owner's death.

Moral.

We see
That evil wishes do not boost
Their base devisers very high,
But sooner, later, back they fly,
And come, like chickens, home to roost.

THE GODS AND MOMUS.

According to an ancient piece of news,
The first of all mankind was made by Zeus,
The first of bulls by green Poseidon, and
The first of houses by Athene's hand.
Now when the three devices were complete,
A quarrel rose regarding which was best,
And all agreed to come before the seat
Of Momus, mighty judge, for him to test
The work of each. He, envious of their skill,
Finds fault with all. He scorns
The bull, as fashioned very ill,
Because Poseidon had not set the horns
Below the eyes, that thus the creature might
See better where to butt and put to flight.
And Zeus he showed had blundered in the man,
In that he had not placed the heart outside,
So all good people can,

Without deception, know his evil pride.
And wise Athene's artifice was such
As could not be condemned too much:
For every house should on four wheels be set,
That, if a neighborhood became disgusting,
The household might remove, and get
A better site with little readjusting.
  The Gods, indignant at such vile rascalities,
And legal technicalities,
Cried out: "Shall Momus
Remain to overcome us—
Of justice thus to cheat and scrimp us!—"
And pitched him forth from out Olympus.

Moral.

All modern thinkers, save our doubting Thomases,
Are well aware how many, many Momuses
Sit handing down decisions base and bold—
Let's imitate the sturdy Gods of old.

THE MOUSE, THE FROG, AND THE HAWK.

A Mouse, whose home had always been
Among the stubble and the green,
Conceived a friendship for a Frog,
Who lived within the pool and bog.
The sleek Amphibian one day
Enticed the foolish Mouse away,
And with a string of water-cress,
His evil self he did address
To binding fast the Mouse's thigh

Unto his own upon the sly.
Then on the bank, a son of sin,
He croaked and dove jocosely in,
And down among the rushy roots
Methinks he squints and squats and scoots.
The hapless Mouse, as being tied
And never used to water, died;
And on the surface bobbed and floated,
With legs upturned and belly bloated.
A Hawk observed the morsel there,
And swooped and bore it off in air.
The frenzied Frog, as being tied
Unto the Mouse, he also died,
And added something to the feast
When Hawk had finished with the beast.

Moral.

Tie no one to you with a string,
And never do a wicked thing.

THE FOX AND THE CRANE.

A Fox, with reprobate design,
Invited home a Crane to dine,
And getting out a dish of stone,
The shallowest he chanced to own,
Poured into it a mess of soup.
The long-necked Crane began to stoop;
But every mouthful from his bill
Would bubble, sputter off, and spill;
At which the Fox, who knew a jest,
Laughed with complacency and zest.

The Crane, who wandered hungry home,
Thereafter asked the Fox to come,
And set a flagon on the ground
With narrow neck and bowl profound;
And easily inserting then
His head, he drank and drank again.
The Fox, unable to compete,
Admitted the retort was neat.

Moral.

You may be smart, but when you're through,
Others may be as smart as you.

THE ASTRONOMER.

An absent-minded old Astronomer
Was walking in the fields one summer night,
Gazing upon ten thousand stars that were,
In all their silent beauty, gleaming bright;
And, full of exaltation and delight,
With concentrated eyes and upturned chin,
He stumbled on a well and tumbled in.

And there he stood in water to his ears,
Grasping in vain against the mossy side
And roaring madly in his pain and fears
For rope and bucket; when a neighbor hied,
And, with more truth than charity, replied:

Moral.

"Of what avail to spy the heavens out,
When you can't see what's here on earth about?"

THE OLD WOMAN AND THE WATER-JAR.

A poor old Lady found an empty Jar,
Which lately had been filled with prime old wine.
She placed it to her nose, now near, now far,
Now tilting this way and now that: "Divine
And most delectable it must have been,
Since such a lovely perfume lurks within."

Moral.

Sweet is the memory of a good deed done,
And long 'twill live when he who did it's gone.

THE FISHERMEN.

Some Fishermen let down their nets and trawled;
And shortly toward the land they rowed and hawled,
The weight so heavy that they praised their luck
And sang for glee: on shore, they saw the truck—
A tangled mass of weeds and sand and stones.
The Fishers filled the ambient air with groans,
Until the white-haired eldest said: "My mates,
Let us no longer thus bewail our fates;
Sorrow was ever sister-twin of Mirth;
It is no marvel that we sons of earth,
After the joy a moment since we had,
Should now have something for to make us sad."

Moral.

'Tis true 'tis certain, and certainly too bad.

THE HUNTER AND THE WOODMAN.

A Hunter, used to shooting craven sparrows,
Marched round the forest with his bow and arrows,
And seeing there a Woodman at an oak
With sturdy ax, strolled up to him and spoke:
"O honest Woodman, can you tell me where
To find the lion's footprints or his lair?"
The Woodman: "Yonder on a kid he feasts—
Forthwith I'll bring you to the King of Beasts
Himself." The Hunter, turning pale, replied,
With chattering teeth and palpitating side:
"O never mind, sir; what I seek and lack
Is not the lion, but the lion's track."

Moral.

Some men are boldest in an enterprise
Before they're conscious where the danger lies.

THE COCKS AND THE EAGLE.

Two Cocks were fighting long and hard
For mastery of the farmer's yard,
Till one at last with bloody crest
Skulked vanquished off to hide and rest
Behind a bucket by the fence.
The victor with more pride than sense
Flew upward, lighting on a wall
And stretched himself, as lord of all,
With flapping wings and crowing neck.
An Eagle saw the living speck

From out his travels in the blue,
And on this Cock-a-doodle-doo
Did pounce, and in his talons lift
To his high nest along the clift.
The beaten Cock he tottered out
And reigned thereafter round about.

Moral.

Pride goes before a fall, no doubt.

THE FLEA AND THE OX.

A Flea remarked unto an Ox,
Who trudged uphill with load of rocks:
"What ails you, sir, that, huge and strong,
You thus endure to suffer wrong,
And slave from day to day for men,
And sleep at night in noisome pen,
Whilst I, though smaller than a pea,
A miserable little flea,
Feed on their flesh and suck their blood,
And get a jolly livelihood?"
The Ox replied: "The care I get,
The food I eat's the nicest yet;
In gratitude I bear these boulders—
Besides, men pat me on the shoulders."
"Ah woe indeed," exclaimed the Flea;
"This very patting don't agree,
When men employ it, sir, on me—
It breaks my wings, it gives me shocks,
And sometime it may slay me, Ox."

Moral.

It all depends on who is who,
And on the person's point of view.

THE VIPER AND THE FILE.

A Viper wriggled o'er
A blacksmith's floor,
And sought among the tools to light
On something for his ravenous appetite.
He set his fangs to work upon a File;
But with an iron smile
Remarked the savage Tool:
"O Viper, you're a fool,
If you expect to gather aught of one
Whose business always is to take
And never once to make
Return to any creature underneath the sun."

Moral.

You can't expect to get a meal,
Poor beggar, from a soul of steel.

THE FOX AND THE MASK.

A curious Fox went rummaging about an actor's attic,
And saw, among the properties prepared for use dramatic,
A painted mask; whereat he said, the pleasing object pawing,

"O what a beauteous head it is!"—then broke in
loud guffawing,
When, turning it upon its face, he noticed what
was lacking.

Moral.

A house where heads are void of brains is scarcely
worth ransacking.

THE WOLF AND HIS SHADOW.

A Wolf, who roamed the mountain side,
Beheld his Shadow stretching wide,
Considerably magnified,
Because 'twas nearing eventide.
Then said the Wolf, the while he eyed
That shadow with increasing pride:
"Why thus should I in fear abide
Of lion's roar or lion's stride—
Could I not eat him hair and hide?"
Meanwhile the hungry Lion spied
This most complacent Wolf and tried
The matter out.... the Wolf he died,
And dying, mournfully he cried:

Moral.

"Woe worth the fool self-satisfied."

THE DOG IN THE MANGER.

A savage Dog sat growling in a manger,
With curling lip presaging bites and danger.

The hungry Oxen at a distance gazing,
Remarked with sorrow: "This is quite amazing—
He will not eat the hay, and yet his plan
Is to prevent those eating it who can."

Moral.

Such meanness is unworthy dog or man.

THE THIRSTY PIGEON.

A thirsty Pigeon saw a cup
Upon a tavern sign-board painted;
She whirred along to drink it up—
And banged her silly pate and fainted.

The tavern-keeper brought her in,
As something good to bake and season.

Moral.

O child, before your woes begin,
Control your appetites by reason.

THE SEASIDE TRAVELERS.

Two Travelers, gazing down the bay,
Observe an object far away:
"A stately ship that's sailing home
With treasure, spite of wind and foam."
But as it nearer comes, they see
A stately ship it cannot be.

"A bounding skiff some fisher lad
Is steering, stocked with hawl of shad."
But as it nearer comes, they see
A bounding skiff it cannot be.
"A turtle of prodigious weight—
We'll have a soup at any rate."
But as it nearer comes, they see
A turtle, too, it cannot be.
The wild waves toss it up the beach—
A paltry stick; yet it can teach:

Moral I.

That in our hopes we're often lax
About our scrutiny of facts;

Moral II.

That often our anticipations
Confuse the truth of life's relations;

Moral III.

That men with such a visual twist
Should seek at once an oculist.

THE TWO FROGS.

Two Frogs, a Cart, a Pond, a Ditch
Have given me the scribbler's itch.
And I will write of land and water,
Of sage advice and sudden slaughter:
The Frog who in the ditch abode
Was warned to quit the dangerous road
By Frog whose home was in the pond
Some paces in the reeds beyond,

And still refusing (saying that
He liked his present habitat),
He found his belly, legs and head
Beneath a cart so widely spread
That what was left of him was dead.
The other Frog, though smit with grief,
Yet found at length some slight relief
In meditating by a stone
How such a fate was not his own.

Moral I.

Two Frogs, a Cart, a Pond, a Puddle!—
This life is such an awful muddle.

Moral II.

So, Children, learn to read and live
By parsing this my narrative.

THE THREE TRADESMEN.

A mighty city stood besieged, and all
Its people gathered in the city hall
To choose the proper substance for a wall.

A Mason called for bricks; a Carpenter
Stood out for timber; but the Tanner: "Sir,
Leather's the thing, unless I greatly err."

Moral.

The zeal of men to serve the state depends
Confoundedly upon their private ends.

THE HEIFER AND THE OX.

A Heifer, seeing hard at work an Ox
Chained to a plow and getting many knocks,
Jeered as he frisked about the fertile loam.
But shortly after at the harvest-home
The owner took from off the Ox the yoke,
And bound the Heifer with a cord and spoke:
"I lead thee to the altar, and will call
The priest to slay thee for the festival."

Moral.

Self-satisfaction endeth in a fall.

THE WILD BOAR AND THE FOX.

A wild Boar stood beneath a tree
And sharpened tusks against the bark.
A passing Fox, who failed to see
The aim of such activity,
Essayed the following remark:

"O what an idiot you be—
No hound nor hunter is in sight."
To which the Boar: "Advisedly—
For it would never do for me
To wait and fix them during fight."

Moral.

This fable teaches cogently
"In time of peace prepare for war"—

But, child, I hope you don't agree;
For 'tis a precept certainly
All Christian people should abhor.

THE MAN AND THE SATYR.

A Man and Satyr, growing fond,
Arranged between themselves a bond;
And in all sorts of wind and weather
Began to walk and eat together.
One winter morn outside the house
Man tucked his hands within his blouse;
Then drew them up before his lips
And blew upon the finger tips.
The curious Satyr he demands:
"Why this?" The Man: "To warm my hands."
That afternoon indoors they sate
At table, each by steaming plate.
The Man, attempting a few sips,
Raises the dish unto his lips,
And blows until the liquids quaver
In little ripples 'neath his slaver.
The uncouth Satyr with a whoop:
"Why this?" The Man: "To cool my soup."
Whereat the Satyr twitched an ear:
"I guess I'd better disappear;
I can no longer stay with thee—

Moral.

For one who with the self-same breath
Blows hot and cold (the Satyr saith)
Can never be the friend for me."

THE BEAR AND THE FOX.

A Bear stood up with neck atwist:
"Behold I'm a philanthropist;
Of all the beasts there's none who can
Prove such a high regard for man—
I won't even handle his dead body."
To whom the Fox: "That's rather shoddy—
We'd much prefer you'd eat and ruin
The dead and not the living, Bruin."

Moral.

This fable shows by its inanity
A lapse in Æsop's usual sanity.

THE TUNNY AND THE DOLPHIN.

A Tunny, once by Dolphin rude
Around and round the bay pursued,
Was flung by wind and wave and left
To gasp upon a barren cleft.
With glassy eye he chanced to light
On Dolphin in the self-same plight.
"I die," he moaned, "and yet with joy—
For you die with me too, my boy."

Moral.

Revenge is sweet, aye even in death—
That's what the heathen Tunny saith.
Perhaps 'tis true, perhaps 'tis funny,

And still 'twas wicked of the Tunny.
Though pard'ning the untutored fish,
*I'*d never harbor such a wish.

THE KID AND THE WOLF.

A Kid, who had wandered away from the lambs,
Was chased by a Wolf, who desired her hams;
And turning, she said: "Mister Wolf, in a minute
You'll open your mouth, and I will be in it;
But please, ere I die, will you pipe me a tune
To which I may dance by the light of the moon?"
And so 'twas agreed. But the beautiful sounds
Aroused in the distance the shepherd and hounds.
The Wolf as he scampered:

Moral.

"When wisdom is riper,
A beast who's a butcher will never turn piper."

THE BOAR AND THE ASS.

A little Ass with little sense,
But plenty of impertinence,
Remarked with impish mockery
And ears that flapped consumedly,
Unto the Boar, the lord of Swine:
"Your humble servant, brother mine."
The solemn Boar, as somewhat nettled,
In equanimity unsettled,

With noble snout began to dip
To give the Ass's flank a rip,
But stifling passion, satisfied
Resentment, as he thus replied:
"You spavined shank, you hide, you husk,
I will not foul my glorious tusk
By making such a creature bleed,
Though 'twere an easy feat indeed."

Moral.

True dignity will never bend
With its inferiors to contend.

THE TWO MONKEYS.

The monkey has two young at birth, they say.
The partial mother
Is wont to throw the one of them away
And keep the other.
But once it chanced a Monkey mama's mite,
Too closely pressed,
In an excess of Simian delight,
To hairy breast,
Was done to death for lack of needful air.
The sister-twin,
Meantime neglected, sojourned with a bear,
Who'd brought her in,
And with small tenderness, but honest sense,
Nursed her and fed,
Until she grew to wholesome corpulence
And lustihead.

Moral.

Whatever lesson in this tale you find,
Its ancient maker
Was certainly, according to my mind,
A nature-fakir.

THE AETHIOP.

A man, who bought a slave, contended
His dusky color could be mended,
As due to diet and to dirt.
He stripped the negro, shoe and shirt,
And dosed him well with chalk within,
And rubbed and drubbed and scrubbed his skin...
And sank exhausted, void of hope.

Moral.

Howe'er you try with douse or dope,
You cannot change the Aethiop.

THE MICE AND THE WEASELS.

In olden times the Mice and Weasels waged
A desperate warfare, shedding blood on blood
O'er field and bank, and still the Weasels won.
The armies of the miserable Mice
Chose out new captains, famous for descent
And craft and counsel, who should marshal all,
Battalionèd for victory. And now
The Herald Mouse went challenging the Host,

Whilst the proud captains bound their heads with straw—
Insignia of office, shining marks
Of hope and inspiration for the troops.
The battle scarce begun, the Mice again
Were whelmed in rout, and sped into their holes.
The captains, owing to their bristling crests,
Could enter not, and, captive to the foe,
Squeaked down the Weasels' throats to sombre death.

Moral.

The trappings of our military lords
Are mad pomposities that end in doom.

THE EAGLE AND THE KITE.

An Eagle bolted down a fish so big it burst her crop;
And round her dying on the shore, a Kite began to hop:
"No bird of air, should seek its fare from out the alien sea."

Moral.

O mind your proper business and achieve longevity.

THE WOLF AND THE CRANE.

A Wolf, with a bone in his throat, for a sum
Once hired a Crane in a hurry to come.

The Wolf on his haunches sat frightened and still;
The Crane then inserted his surgical bill,
And, extracting the sliver, demanded his pay.
The Wolf with a grin: "O Crane, go away—
It's surely enough that I left you alone,
When you stood with your head inside of my own."

Moral.

In serving the wicked, child, hope for no gains,
And be glad if you come out alive for your pains.

THE BELLY AND THE MEMBERS.

The Members of the Body once rebelled against the Belly:
"What use for us to labor thus to feed you jam and jelly,
And grind you corn both night and morn, and broil you little chickens?—
No more we'll work for such a shirk who treats us like the dickens."
And soon the Members, having done exactly as they stated,
Began to wither one by one, and, much debilitated,
The hands, the feet, the eyes, too late repented of their folly.

Moral.

If men will strike, they're very like to do the same, by golly.

THE MONKEY AND THE CAMEL.

The beasts of the forest invited the beasts
Of the hills and the plains to partake of a feast;
And after the dinner a Monkey advances,
And round in the center he dances and dances,
Retiring with grace. The applause was so loud
An envious Camel stepped forward and bowed:
Careering, careening, cavorting, he jumps,
Now kicking his legs, now arching his humps.
The beasts of the forest, the hills, and the plains
They drub him and club him away for his pains.

Moral.

If only our public were half as severe
With camels and humbugs of art around here!

THE GNAT AND THE LION.

A Gnat unto a Lion spoke:
"Your boasted strength is but a joke—
You bite with teeth, you scratch with nails
Like any woman when she rails."
And sounding then his horn, he goes
Directly to the Lion's nose,
Where all Zoologists declare
Is neither bristle, down, nor hair—
A tender spot. And here he stings.
The frenzied Lion madly flings
His paws about his face, and bleeds
From his own misdirected deeds.

The Gnat he buzzes forth a paean
And soars into the empyrean.
But shortly after, being tangled
In cobwebs, he was mauled and mangled;
And murmured: "What a fate is my own!
Here I who put to flight a Lion
Must perish by a wretched Spider
And find a petty grave inside her."

Moral.

The greatest danger often lies
In little things that we despise.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB.

A Wolf, encountering a wildered Lamb,
Astray and helpless, far from fold and dam,
Declared: "Sirrah, last year you baa-ed at me;
For this I think I will be eating thee."
"O no indeed," the Lamb began to mourn;
"Last year, believe me, Wolf, I wasn't born."
"You feed in pastures that belong to me;
For this, then, Lambkin, I'll be eating thee."
"O no indeed," the creature cried; "alas—
For up to now I've never tasted grass."
"But of my well you drink, and this shall be
Sufficient reason for my eating thee."
"O no indeed, I've drunk no water yet;
My mother's milk is all the drink I get."
Whereat the Wolf he seized and ate and said:
"But still I won't go supperless to bed."

Moral.

The tyrant ever finds his last excuse,
When logic fails him, in some private use.

THE THIEF AND THE INNKEEPER.

A Thief, intent his trade to ply,
Comes up before a hostelry,
Where, lounging on a bench outside
Beneath the sign-board swinging wide,
The host, removing then his feet,
Invites the man to take a seat.
The willing Thief begins to quote
Amusing tale and anecdote,
Observing with expectant eye
The Tavern-keeper's scarlet coat.
And then he seems to yawn and growl
With something of a wolfish howl.
"Why yawn you thus, my brother, why?"
"I'll tell you," says the Thief, "but first
Please hold my arms, for I am curst
With fits of yawning now and then—
A judgment on some ancient crime,
It may be, sir—however, when
The fit is on a second time,
I turn into a wolf, a beast
That snaps around and bites at men."
Whereat the Tavern-keeper rising
(Considering the case surprising),
Attempted to depart. The Thief,

As if in terror, begged relief,
With hand upon the scarlet coat,
And yawned and howled again by rote.
The Host he fled and left behind
The garment, as the Thief designed,
In wild credulity and fear.

Moral.

Don't swallow every yarn you hear.

THE SHE-GOATS.

The She-goats having by request from genial Zeus obtained
The favor of a sightly beard, the He-goats they complained.
"O let them keep the empty badge," the king of gods replied;
"So long as still in strength and skill your fame is magnified."

Moral.

O do not let the suffragette disturb your peace and pride.

THE MAN AND HIS SWEETHEARTS.

A Man, approaching middle life,
Courted together for his wife
A younger and an older dame.
The latter, being filled with shame
To have a lover at her ears

Her junior by so many years,
Plucked one by one his black hairs out.
The former, in distress about
A galant verging on decay,
Plucked by permission all the gray.
And there he stood, unhappy soul,
As bald as any upturned bowl.
The Ladies left him with chagrin.

Moral.

When with complacence you begin
To please all men or maids at once,
You'll end by pleasing none, you dunce.

THE SIRE AND SONS.

A Sire, whose Sons were most litigious,
With tempers sullen and prodigious,
Now having failed in exhortation,
Devised this simple illustration:
He gives to each of all the six
In turn a bundle, child, of sticks,
And bids them break them if they can.
In vain they try. The learnèd Man
Unties the bundle, giving then
To each a single stick; again
They try and snap them all at once.
Whereat he speaks: "You see, my Sons,

Moral.

United, ye will all prevail;
Divided, ye will surely fail."

THE HUSBANDMAN AND HIS SONS.

A Husbandman, upon the point of death,
Unto his Sons around the sofa saith:
"My vineyard hides a treasure bright and big."
Whereat the Sons with mattocks dig and dig.
They get no gold;

Moral.

but when the fall had come—
What rich red clusters at the harvest-home!

THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE OWL.

That blinking astronomic fowl,
The knowing mathematic Owl
That feeds by night and sleeps by day,
Was much disturbed by roundelay
Of Grasshopper. "You wretched purp.
And will you never cease to chirp?"
The more he scolded and entreated
The louder was the song repeated.
"My pretty little chatterer"
(He then began to flatter her),
"Since now I cannot sleep, because
You choose to sing without a pause
(A song, believe me, sweeter, higher,
Than even god Apollo's lyre),
I'm going to drink some nectar that
Athene from Olympus vat
Drew off not long ago for me—

And if you like, come here and be
My guest awhile." The Grasshopper
Had never yet been thirstier;
And so with merry thanks flew up.
But, scarcely perched upon the cup,
The Owl seized her with a will—
And dead she hung across his bill.

Moral.

Thus too much flattery may kill.

THE DAME AND HER MAIDS.

A bustling Dame was used to call
Her maids for work in kitchen, hall,
And barnyard every morning at
The crowing of her rooster. That
Displeased the Wenches, and the Cock
They slaughter on the chopping-block,
And think that now within their beds
They'll rest in peace their sleepy heads.
The furious Dame compelled them soon
To rise at midnight with the moon.

Moral.

A rash attempt to end our troubles
Troubles doubles, troubles doubles.

ZEUS AND THE CAMEL.

The Camel went to Zeus and said:
"The bull has horns upon his head,

The tiger claws upon his foot,
The boar a tusk, and even the newt
A tongue that darts, the bee a sting—
But, Zeus, I haven't anything,
Except my miserable humps
On which my Arab driver jumps—
I can't attack, defend I can't."
Then Zeus: "I'm not disposed to grant
My gifts to such extravagant
Impertinence; and soon the shears
Shall crop, you silly beast, your ears."

Moral.

Dissatisfaction with your lot
Diminishes the goods you've got.

THE TREES AND THE RUSTIC.

A Rustic Fellow to the greenwood went,
And looked about him. "What is your intent?"
Inquired the Beech. "A stick of wood that's sound
To serve as handle for the ax I've found."
The Trees politely grant a piece of ash;
Which having fitted, he begins to thrash
And lay about him stroke by villain stroke;
And Beech and Ash and Hickory and Oak
He fells, the noblest of the forest there,
And leaves a wilderness of stump and weed.

Moral.

Of all concessions unto private greed,
Ye Forests and ye Waterways, beware.

THE VILLAGER AND THE SNAKE.

A Villager in frosty winter found
A frozen Snake near death upon the ground
Beneath a hedge. He picks her up and sets
Upon the hearth. The genial warmth she gets
Soon thaws her out; and now with flaming eyes
She rears her head, she darts her tongue, she flies
At wife and children, hissing round the room.
The goodman comes, and with inverted broom
He smites her back and sends her to her doom.

Moral.

Beware, good fellow, for the family's sake,
What sort of people home with you you take.

THE MOUSE AND THE BULL.

A Bull was bitten by a Mouse; in fury,
As judge and executioner and jury,
He bellowed after her; the Mouse, however,
Reached home in safety, being spry and clever.
The Bull around her hole amid the stubble
Dug madly with his horns; but all his trouble
Being in vain, he crouched beside and slept.
The Mouse peeped out and furtively she crept
Along his flank and bit him on the ear,
Alert, as rose the Bull, to disappear
And murmur tauntingly:

Moral.

"Thus mischief springs,
O great and strong one, from the little things."

THE SICK KITE.

A Kite, almost at point of death,
Unto his grieving mother saith:
"O mourn not—rather pray the deities."
"O child of mine, how sad for me it is
To know there's not in field or city
A god or goddess who'll have pity.
For is there one you've not estranged—
The while so merrily you ranged—
By filching from the altar, even
When smoked the sacrifice to heaven?"

Moral.

Make friends, my friend, in your prosperity,
If in your woes you hope for charity.

CUPID AND DEATH.

The paukie lad ane simmer day
The skellum Cupid, squattlin' lay—
Ramfeezled wi' his jinkin' play
  By slap and heath—
Aboon a cave which bogles say
  Belangs auld Death.

His bonnie arrows frae the quiver
Hae faun, alake, amang the ither—
The bluidy darts Death hurls foriver
  Frae ivery airt
On mortal's craigie, wame, an' liver,
  An' doup an' heart.

And sae at last it maun befa'
When Cupid wakes and gaes awa',
He gathers up some darts frae a';
  And likewise Death,
When back he hirples to his ha',
  Takes hafflins baith.

Moral.

And sae it is we see the auld
Aft smit by Luve outowre the cauld,
Poor deils in thraws ayont the fauld,
  In vera hell;
And aft the birkies young and bauld
  By Death himsel'.

THE EAGLE AND THE ARROW.

A fallen Eagle, pierced along the heart,
Saw his own feathers on the fatal Dart.

Moral.

To our disasters we contribute part.

THE TAIL-LESS FOX.

A Fox, whose tail an ugly trap
Had sundered from his rump with snap,
Chagrined and horrified at seeing
Himself no more a normal being,
And ridiculed by all the pack,
Determined to make good the lack:
"My brother Foxes, you'll prevail
More speedily without the tail—
A needless weight, besides in essence
A base and hideous excrescence."
The Foxes wink to one another:
As if to say:

Moral.

"Our woeful brother
Would get some comfort could he see
Us as unfortunate as he."

THE ASS AND HIS DRIVER.

An Ass, along the highway goaded,
Disconsolate and heavy-loaded,
Wishing he had ne'er been colted,
With sudden desperation bolted
Off unto a precipice's
Brink, whereunder an abyss is—
A bottom piled with jagged stones,
On which to rest for aye his bones.
The eager Owner of the Pack-ass

Seized the tail of that poor Jackass,
Who gave a sudden lurch, however,
And rendered vain the man's endeavor.
Releasing expeditiously
The creature's latter end, said he:

Moral.

"Although to conquer you may boast,
Forsooth you conquer to your cost."

THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPER.

The Ants one winter day were drying grain,
Collected in the summer not in vain.
A famished Grasshopper desired to take,
He said, a little for his stomach's sake.
The Ants inquired: "Why didst thou nothing store
On those warm days in bounteous months of yore?"
The Grasshopper: "I had no leisure then;
I sang, and having sung, I sang again."

Moral.

"Who sings all summer," thus an old Ant said,
"In winter dances supperless to bed."

THE COCK AND THE JEWEL.

A Cock, who for himself and hens
Was scratching down along the fence,
Unearthed a precious stone; whereat

Philosophizing: "Look at that—
Now, if a Man had found it, he
Had been beside himself with glee
And set it in a ring of gold,
Or to some wealthy princess sold.
But I do pass it by with scorn—
I'd rather have one barley-corn."

Moral.

Thus market values fall or rise
From what we spurn or what we prize;
But who shall undertake to query
Why tastes to such degree will vary?

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER AND THE FULLER.

A Charcoal-burner to his friend
The Fuller: "Live with me; we'll spend
Less money and be better neighbors
And have companionship in labors."
The Fuller: "Such suggestions frighten;
For whatsoever I should whiten,
You'd blacken horridly and spoil."

Moral.

Be independent in your toil.

THE BOY HUNTING LOCUSTS.

A Boy, who'd caught a goodly lot
Of Locusts for his mother's pot,
Espied, half-hidden from the sun,

Beneath a leaf a Scorpion;
Whereon his eye so poorly focussed,
He thought it was another Locust.
But as he reached, the grewsome thing
Wriggled out and showed its sting:
"My boy, had you but touched me, you
Had lost me and your Locusts too."

Moral.

Yet don't, when danger lurks, expect
To be thus warned of your neglect.

THE MOLE AND HIS MOTHER.

A little Mole remarked: "Ha, ha,
I'm sure that I can see, mamma."
To prove to him his lack of sense,
His Mother set before his head
A paltry grain of frankincense:
"What's that?" — "A pebble round and red."—
"Not only blind, my son, but you
Have lost your power to smell things too."

Moral.

Conceit, when challenged, often shows
Us lacking both in eyes and nose.

HERCULES AND THE WAGONER.

A Carter drove his rumbling wain
Along a rough and rugged lane,
When sank the wheels deep down a rut.

He oped his mouth, his eyes he shut,
And roared aloft for Hercules
To come and lift his axle-trees.
The Giant came, but thus began:

Moral.

"Your shoulder to the wheel, my man;
Goad on your bullocks; cease to pray
Till you have tried the nearer way."

THE FISHER PIPING.

A Fisher piped out o'er the sea:
"Ye Fishes, dance up here to me."
But finding that his flute was vain,
He cast his net along the main;
And making quite a haul, observed
How every Fish was much unnerved,
And on the rock bounced here and there—
Whereat the Man: "Well, I declare;
You beasts perverse, you wouldn't dance
The while I piped and gave the chance;
But now I've ceased, you dance indeed."

Moral.

Be very good and you'll succeed.

THE TRAVELER AND HIS DOG.

A Traveler, about to jog,
Saw yawning by the door his Dog;

And chided sharply, being heady:
"Come—everything but you is ready;
'Tis many an hour after dawn—
Too late for dogs or men to yawn—
You lazy Creature, come instanter."
The Dog began to leap and canter,
With tail awagging fast and faster:
"I was so weary waiting, Master."

Moral.

Man, being not by birth acute,
His fault to others doth impute.

THE SWALLOW AND THE CROW.

The Swallow with the Crow disputed
About their plumage. Crow refuted:
"In spring you have some pretty feathers,
But mine protect me in all weathers."

Moral.

The value of a thing consists
In doing that for which the thing exists.

THE COWHERD AND THE BULL-CALF.

A Cowherd tending on the wold,
Lost a Bull-calf from the fold,
And swore he'd catch the thief and give
Him cause at once to cease to live;
And being too a pious man,

He vowed a kid to Hermes, Pan,
And all the Forest Deities.
Soon after, up a hill he ran,
And at the foot beyond he sees
A Lion feeding on the Calf.
He roars with a sardonic laugh:
"And now indeed I vow a Bull—
I need a whole Olympus-ful
Of gods and goddesses for help—
This beast will slay me like a whelp."

Moral.

At first we brag and then we yelp.

THE FAWN AND HIS MOTHER.

A Fawn unto his Mother said:
"You're bigger, swifter, sturdier bred
Than any Dog and have a head
Supplied with horns. Then, why this fright,
When once the hounds appear?"—"You're right;
But at a single bark my feet
Begin themselves their own retreat.
'Tis most lamentable and silly;
But fly I have to, willy-nilly."

Moral.

No arguments will ever put
Courage in a coward's foot.

THE FARMER AND THE STORK.

A Farmer laid some nets around
Upon his newly seeded ground
And trapped a flock of thievish Cranes—
Among them too a Stork whose shin
Was fractured, tangled in the gin:
"O save me, Master; note my pains;
I err not as those others err—
I have a goodly character—
I am my father's stay and mother's—
My plumes are different from the others—
A Stork I am and not a Crane."
But to this incoherent strain
The Farmer said: "It may be so—
But I know all I need to know:

Moral.

I found you by these robbers, who
Are soon to die—and with them you."

THE KINGDOM OF THE LION.

A Lion was king of the Beasts—no tyrannical
Monarch his folk to imprison and manacle,
Not given to wrath, but so gentle and sensible
That indeed in a Lion 'twas incomprehensible.
He published a summons for every Animal;
And when they arrive, and he's able to scan 'em all,
He proclaimeth a league and a peace so benignantly

That even the Wolf stops growling indignantly
And no longer pursueth the lambkin malignantly,
While Panthers by Kids, and Tigers by Antelopes
Lie together as quiet as squashes by cantelopes.
Then the Hare: "How I've longed for this grand
opportunity,
When the Weak by the Strong take their place
with impunity."

Moral.

Yet Reformers who argue for such a society
Are lacking absurdly in sense for variety,
And favor indeed with the zeal of stupidity
The petulent offspring of sloth and timidity.

THE POMEGRANATE, APPLE-TREE AND BRAMBLE.

The Apple-tree and Pomegranate
Gave each the other tit for tat:
"I am more beautiful than thou"—
"But I am rarer, anyhow."—
A Bramble from a neighboring hedge
(The ancient Fabulists allege)
Reproved with consequential air:
"Dear friends, for heaven's sake forbear
At least before my presence thus
To make so petulant a fuss."

Moral.

When rivals grow obstreperous,
The peace-maker is apt to say
Almost as silly things as they.

THE ASS, THE FOX, AND THE LION.

The Ass and Fox on hunting trip
Arranged a helpful partnership.
They met a Lion on the rocks,
Too hungry to be safe. The Fox,
To save himself from such a box,
Promised Lion to contrive
The means to capture Ass alive,
Provided Lion promised him
Immunity of life and limb.
The Lion pledged; and Fox's wit
Enticed the Ass into a pit.
The Lion, evil epicure,
Perceiving Ass was now secure,
Devoured the Fox, and from the dirt
Dragged up the Ass for his dessert.

Moral.

O Zeus, thou moral explicator,
Who slew the traitor by the traitor,
Why didst thou force the harmless Ass
To such a miserable pass?

THE FLIES AND THE HONEY-POT.

A Jar of Honey chanced to spill
Its contents on the window-sill
In many a viscous pool and rill.

The Flies, attracted by the sweet,
Began so greedily to eat,
They smeared their fragile wings and feet.

With many a twitch and pull in vain
They gasped to get away again,
And died in aromatic pain.

Moral.

O foolish creatures that destroy
Themselves for transitory joy.

THE MAN AND THE LION.

A Man and Lion on their travels tried
Each to convince the other in his pride
Of strength and prowess given to him alone;
And as they passed a statue carved in stone,
Labelled "A Lion strangled by a Man,"
The fellow said: "How strong we are, you can
From this conceive." The Lion he replied:
"Had but a Lion there the chisel plied,
The Man had been beneath the Lion's paws."

Moral.

"The point of view" is still the saving clause.

THE TORTOISE AND THE EAGLE.

A Tortoise, basking in the sun,
Maintained his fate a dreadful one:
"Ye swift birds, floating in the sky,

Who'll teach poor Tortoise how to fly?"
The Eagle answered: "That will I."
And, being promised, as a fee,
The riches of the old Red Sea,
He bore the Tortoise up on high,
Then loosed his talons—and she fell
Upon a crag and cracked her shell,
Uttering as a dying yell:
"O what had I to do with wings
And clouds and such aerial things,
When, as a lumbering beast by birth,
I've scarcely learned to crawl o'er earth."

Moral.

Know your place and what you're worth.

THE FARMER AND THE CRANES.

The Cranes began to peck and eat
On plough-lands newly sown with wheat.
The angry Farmer, brandishing
Around his head an empty sling,
Contrived to scare them off a while.
But when they marked the harmless wile,
Why, back they flocked and ate and ate
And let the man vociferate.
'Twas then he filled the sling with stones—
And all the Cranes they died with groans:

Moral.

"Though many a man prefer to bluff,
It doesn't prove he lacks the stuff."

THE OXEN AND THE AXLE-TREES.

A heavy wagon down a country lane
Was hauled by Oxen bent with toil and pain.
Loud groaned the Axle-trees and creaked the Hubs;
Whereat the Oxen: "You infernal Dubs;
You make the racket; we perform the work."

Moral.

The biggest outcry issues from the shirk.

THE SICK LION.

A Lion, through infirmities
No longer fit his food to seize,
Lies down within his den and feigns
That death's about to end his pains.
The beasts come one by one to see,
Expressing heartfelt sympathy.
And Lion reaches forth a paw,
And tucks them well within his maw.
A Fox, who notes the trick, to save
His hams remains outside the cave,
Inquiring how he feels to-day.
"O fair to middling; but I pray,
Why won't you, Reynard, nearer walk
And here within sit down and talk?"
—"So many prints of feet I ken
That lead *into* your dusky den,
But none of any *out* again."

Moral.

Well armed is he against surprises
Who learns from other folks' demises.

THE RAVEN AND THE SWAN.

A Raven saw a snow-white Swan,
Its plumage gleaming in the dawn;
And thinking that the color came
From frequent washings, tried the same,
Leaving the altars in the village,
Whereon his food he used to pillage,
To make his home by pool and lake.
This proved, it seems, a sad mistake—
Since soon he died—for simple lack
Of food—his feathers still as black.

Moral.

Though you may change your habitat,
Yourself you change not—ponder that.

THE LIONESS.

Each female beast in language bitter
Denounced her female neighbor's litter,
And boasted with conceited yelps
How large the number of her whelps.
They rushed unto the Lioness:
"And you perhaps will settle this?
And by the way, how many sons
Do you produce at birth at once?"—

"But one, and yet that one, in fine,"
She laughed, "is large and leonine;
And when your whelps are grown, they'll see
To their confusion"—

Moral.

Quality!

THE BEAR AND THE TRAVELERS.

Two Travelers upon a mountain path
Were once confronted by a Bear in wrath;
The one he clambered up a tree with vim
And sate contentedly upon a limb;
And so the other dropped and held his breath,
Lying upon his paunch and feigning death.
The Bear came up and nosed about his head,
And (as a Bear will never touch the dead)
He snorted off. Then from the tree the other,
Descending nimbly, jested: "Well, my brother,
What was it he was whispering in your ear?"—
"Why, he advised me not to travel here
And

Moral.

on all travels to avoid the chum
Who will desert one when disasters come."

THE BOASTING TRAVELER.

A man returning from his travels, told
Of his adventures strange and manifold—

Among the rest, he could recall, he said,
How once at Rhodes he had astonishèd
The populace by jumping farther than
Had ever jumped before a god or man,
And many a witness could aver it true—
Whereat a bystander: "No need for you
To summon witnesses. Our own abodes
Right here around you — feign that these are
Rhodes;
Then make your jump for us."

Moral.

These verses show
How one should deal with braggadocio.

THE GOAT AND THE GOATHERD.

A Goatherd in a fit of scorn
Cracked with a stone a Nanny's horn.
Unskilled to mend with paste or plaster,
He begged her not to tell his master.
"You're quite as silly, sir, as violent—
The horn will speak, though I be silent."

Moral.

Man oft repents of what he did—
For wicked deeds cannot be hid.

THE LION IN LOVE.

A Lion to a Woodcutter:
"Your daughter, may I marry her?"

The father, loath and yet suspecting
He'd suffer violence by rejecting,
Agreed by contract with the clause
To draw his teeth and cut his claws—
To which the Lion gave assent
(Love blinding him to the intent).
When next the Beast awooing came,
As harmless as a cat and tame,
The Woodcutter he seized an axe
And gave him sundry sudden whacks.

Moral.

A lover, who to win a wife
Surrenders all he's got in life,
Deserves to lose — — He's too romantic;
His lack of reason drives me frantic.

THE BOY AND THE FILBERTS.

A Youngster, greedy for the Filberts, grasped
Deep down a pitcher with his hand and clasped
His fingers and his thumb around so many
He seemed in danger of not getting any—
For narrow was the neck and big the fist.
And there he stuck in tears, until his mother
(The dame was something of a physicist)
Remarked: "Drop half, and then you can untwist
Your hand, my son, and save yourself the other."

Moral.

Don't grab too much at once, my Christian brother.

THE LABORER AND THE SNAKE.

A Snake from out his hole beneath
The cottage porch upon the heath
Crawled up and bit the infant son,
Who died from what the Snake had done.
The furious father with his flail
Missed the head, and mashed the tail.
And afterwards, for fear the Snake
On him might lethal vengeance take,
Set down some bread beside the hole,
To pacify and to cajole.
The Serpent hissed: "Between us twain
Henceforth no peace can be, 'tis plain:
Whene'er we meet, we will remember—
You your Son and I my Member."

Moral.

It sometimes happens that a feud
Imperils Christian brotherhood.

THE MISER.

A Miser bartered everything—
His house, his horse, his dog, his ring,
(And even his daughter, I've been told)—
For one enormous lump of gold;
The which he hid within a hole
Beside a wall. To glad his soul
Each morn and eve he went and took

A silent, solitary look.
A peasant in the fields nearby,
Observing, filched it on the sly.
And next when came the Miser there,
He beat his breast and tore his hair.
A friend advised: "Put there a stone
And gaze and call it all your own,
And fancy that's the lump of gold—
'Twill serve you quite as served the old."

Moral.

It was a very sage adviser
That made this comment to the Miser.

THE ASS AND THE MULE.

A Muleteer and Mule and Ass
Were trudging up a mountain pass.
The Ass, his load extraordinary,
Desired the Mule a part to carry.
The Mule refused the small request;
And Ass, with trembling legs and breast,
Sank down to his eternal rest.
The Muleteer, not knowing what
To do in such a desert spot,
Piled on the Mule, besides the load
The Mule was bearing up the road,
The Ass's pack, the Ass's hide.
The Mule with much contrition cried:

Moral.

"A fellow service once neglected
May bring us troubles unsuspected."

THE WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING.

Once on a time a Wolf, a vicious,
Decided 'twould be expeditious
To case himself inside the skin
That once a Sheep had wandered in.
Thus clad, he pastured on the wold,
Unmarked among the seely fold;
Thus clad, among the Sheep he sate
That night behind the wicker gate.
The shepherd came with lantern dim,
And with his knife he slaughtered him,
Supposing him the Sheep that he'd
Intended for to dress and bleed
And take to market on the morrow.

Moral.

Seek a harm and find a sorrow.

THE PORKER, THE SHEEP, AND THE GOAT.

A Pig was shut within the fold
That chanced a Sheep and Goat to hold.
And once the Shepherd handling him
With violence by an ear and limb,

He grunted and he squeeked, he did.
Whereat the Sheep and Goat they chid:
"'Tis most annoying all this fuss—
You see, he often handles us,
And we don't carry on, sir, thus."
—"He handles you for milk or wool,
But me when he begins to pull,
He handles for my very life;
And there's a difference—and a knife."

Moral.

When we are destined for the pot,
Such idle comments please us not
From those who have an easier lot.

THE FOX AND THE GOAT.

A Fox once fell into a well,
And how t' escape he couldn't tell;
When came a Goat with thirsty throat
And saw him down there half afloat.
And on the brink he stopped to think:
"And is the water good to drink?"
The Fox his fright concealed and plight:
"O yes, the water here's all right."
The Goat jumps in and barks his shin—
A victim of the Fox's sin.
"But now if you will only do
What I herewith instruct you to,
We'll both be free—you set your knee
Against the wall like this," said he,

"And up your back I'll make my track,
And save you by a simple knack."
Then o'er his horn the Fox in scorn
Did climb and leave the Goat forlorn.

Moral.

Oft, when we aid another soul,
At last he leaves us in the hole.

THE ASS AND THE LAP-DOG.

An Ass observed his master's pet,
The Lap-dog, and began to fret:
"I tread the mill to grind the grain;
I drag the plow, the log, the wain;
I feed on water, hay, and oats;
I sleep in stall among the goats—
While he, he rolls upon his back,
Or paws a tit-bit in a sack,
Or leaping on his master's knee
Snaps a sugar-plum in glee;
He laps a spoon of Chian wine;
He takes his naps on cushions fine—
Besides, I hate his silken ears."
Whereat the Ass his own he rears,
In sudden hope these things to alter:
He breaks away from cord and halter;
Into his master's house he reels
With fawning neck and frisking heels,
And smashes tables, dishes, chairs,

And kicks the baby up the stairs.
And, mindful of the poodle's trick,
He takes his Master unawares
And gives his cheek a whacking lick,
His fore-hoofs on the shoulder laid.
The Serfs, by hubbub strange dismayed,
Rush in, and bang with stones and staves,
Till back into the barn he raves.
And after he has had a chance
To think it over, thus he pants:

Moral.

"O honest toil should never itch
To imitate the idle rich."

THE SHEPHERD-BOY AND THE WOLF.

A Shepherd-boy beside a stream
"The Wolf, the Wolf," was used to scream,
And when the Villagers appeared,
He'd laugh and call them silly-eared.
A Wolf at last came down the steep—
"The Wolf, the Wolf,—my legs, my sheep."
The creature had a jolly feast,
Quite undisturbed, on boy and beast.

Moral.

For none believes the liar, forsooth
Even when the liar speaks the truth.

THE LION, THE MOUSE, AND THE FOX.

A Lion, fatigued by the heat of the day,
Asleep in his cave composedly lay,
When a Mouse, o'er his mane and his ears on its way,
Awoke him to fury; and round in the den
He roared and he reached without finding her, when
A Fox came along and lifting his brows:
"Majestical Lion, afraid of a Mouse!"—
"It isn't I fear her—but such a proceeding
Provokes me, as showing no shimmer of breeding."

Moral.

It's the pert little creatures around us so unctious
That make us grandees of the world so rambunctious.

THE SNAPPING DOG.

A Dog, who ran at people's heels by stealth
And snapped, imperiling their peace and health,
One morning found about his neck a bell,
Suspended by his master, to compel
Due notice of his coming everywhere.
The Dog began to give himself an air,
And tinkled with it round the market-place.
An old Hound said: "Why flaunt you your disgrace—

Sign of that evil nature you inherit—
As if insignia of an order of merit?"

Moral.

Some dogs who make a noise and get a name
Mistake their notoriety for fame.

THE OXEN AND THE BUTCHERS.

The Oxen gathered on a day,
Resolving how at once to slay
The Butchers—men whose trade to them
It seemed but natural to condemn.
When one, the chief in gravity,
Arose, a bold and bovine Nestor:
"Though these same Butchers," stated he,
"Us even unto death do pester,
They slaughter us with skilful knives
And little pain—our wretched lives
Would be more wretched with such satyrs
As less experienced operators,
Who'd gash and hack and choke our breath
And keep us half the day in dying—
And that would be a double death.
For surely there is no denying,
Though Butchers perished, 'tis our grief
That men will never lack for beef."

Moral.

This evil world is full of tricks,
And life itself's a pretty fix—

Our luck consists in clearing out
By what's the least protracted route.

THE HORSE AND THE GROOM.

A Groom, whose fancy went aroaming,
Spent his mornings currycombing,
But stole the oats and sold for ale.
At last the Horse: "Good master, hail—
But if you wish my coat to shine,
You'll feed me more and groom me less."

Moral.

You can't succeed in any line,
My friend, unless you have—success.

THE BOYS AND THE FROGS.

Some boys did pelt the Frogs with stones
And banged them on the brains;
And laughed to hear the dying groans
Of Rana Pipiens.

Till one petitioned with a croak,
His head above the water:
"Stop, Boys,—for what's to you a joke,
To us, to us is slaughter."

Moral.

O Heedless Harry, Tom, and Dick,
O little Paul and Percy,
Renounce your murderous stone and stick,
And join a Band of Mercy.

THE SALT PEDLAR AND THE ASS.

An Ass was trudging inland from the sea,
A load of salt upon his weary back,
When, as he crossed a ford, he slipped and fell.
Arising, he observed complacently
The weight was almost melted from the sack—
And life was brightening up for him a spell....

The Pedlar headed round, and at the brine
Refilled the pannier. In the stream again,
The Ass on purpose sank and sloughed the load;
And with a bray, triumphant, asinine,
Bounced up and on. The angry master then
Returned once more along the seaward road

And bought a string of sponges. At the ford
The Ass, who still would play the knave, fell ill—
Only to rise with burden multiplied.

Moral.

For 'tis a regulation of the Lord
That sponges hold a deal of water,—till
They're squeezed or dried.

ELEGIACS ON THE WOLVES AND THE SHEEP.

(Friends of the classical muse, I desire to show
you a clever
Sample of verse of the sort critics forbid us to
write,—

Cunning indeed as I am to pry with the lyrical lever
Rhymes from the rocks of Parnass, rhythms of ancient delight.)
"Come, and we'll end this implacable hatred between us forever,"
Argued the Wolves with the Sheep, planning a meal for the night;
"Surely the Dogs, the malicious, who bark at our honest endeavor,
Darken your judgment of Wolves, fill you absurdly with fright"...
So in a moment the Dogs they released, and afterwards never
Needed a warning again, Sheep of the heath and the height...
Bleating their last, as the Wolves their succulent vitals dissever—
Stomach and bowels and brain, kidney and liver and light.
O you would surely have shouted:

Moral

"How ghastly,
Mamma!—did you ever
See on your travels before—ugh!—such a horrible sight?"

THE SICK STAG.

A sick Stag, gathering up some food,
Sought out a corner of the wood.

His comrades came, solicitous
His cure and ailment to discuss,
While each one helped himself until
The Creature starved to death.

Moral.

And thus
The Kantian ethics, the "good will,"
Divorced from common sense, may kill.
(Or if that Moral's too abstruse,
This may be nearer to your use:
A Man himself from *Foes* defends—
But Heaven must save him from his *Friends.*)

THE JACKDAW.

Said Zeus with most Olympian words:
"I will appoint a king of Birds—
The Bird most beautiful to see,
By Styx I vow it, shall be he."
The day arrived for the convention,
And Birds too numerous to mention—
From rivers, fields, and woods, and hills—
Herons, Hawks, and Whippoorwills,
Ducks, Flamingoes, and Crossbills,
Warblers, Robins, Sandpipers,
Eagles, Veeries, Woodpeckers,
Juncos, Orioles, Purple Grackles,
Cooing Cuckoos, Geese with cackles,
Peacocks, Quails, and Ringdoves—all
The list enthusiasts may recall
From Whitman's "Leaves," or student sees

In standard ornithologies
(As Audubon's or Chapman's) flew—
Gold or black, or white or blue,
Speckled wing or crested head,
Belly brown or gold or red,
Such as Chaucer would have sung
In his merry antique tongue—
Perched about on balustrade
Or stalked along the colonnade
In courts of marble, onyx, jade.
Among them Zeus remarked the Jackdaw—
Now no ordinary black Daw;
Since, conscious of his ugliness,
He'd got himself another dress.
From every by-way, green, and shaw,
He'd gathered up whate'er he saw,
And stuck his body, tail to head,
With alien plumes the rest had shed.
When in delight Zeus at the sight
Had named this Creature king by right,
Each Bird began to chirp, or cheep,
Twitter, caw, or bark, or peep
(According to the natural status
Of his vocal apparatus),
And rushing madly plucked with vim
The feather that belonged to him —
And left the Daw his former state,
Ridiculous to contemplate.
All-seeing Zeus, in great chagrin
At being thus-wise taken in,
Dismissed the meeting.

Moral.

O my Son,
Feathers are no cri-ter-i-on:
They are indeed an idle show—
And borrowed too, for all you know.

THE VINE AND THE GOAT.

A Goat was nibbling on a Vine,
On glossy leaves and tendrils fine:
"Why wilt thou rend me thus, alas—
And is there then no good in grass?
But when the vintage comes, I'll be,
Thou bearded Goat, revenged on thee,—
For at the altar 'twill be mine
To furnish to the priest the wine
Which he with pious lips and eyes
Shall pour o'er thee, thou sacrifice
To Dionysos, god of grapes."

Moral.

From Nemesis, ye Jackanapes,
This world affordeth few escapes.

THE OX AND THE FROG.

An Ox, his gullet for to cool,
Once took a drink from out a pool.
And shortly after, Madame Frog,
Returning to her native bog,

Missed a member of her family:
"Where is your brother?" "O Mamma"
(They croaked around her, jumping clammily)
"The biggest Beast you ever saw
Just now with monstrous cloven heel
Crushed our Jimmy in the ooze
And left him there—a shapeless bruise,
Without a head, a leg, a squeal."
The Dame she swelled with furious puff:—
"Now am I, Froggies, big enough
To meet and slay this murderer?"—
"O Mother, if you only were!"

Moral.

Some situations are immutable—
And, Nature, thou art quite inscrutable.

THE PHILOSOPHER CAUTIONED.

A sympathetic, peripatetic, erratic, emphatic old
Philosopher,
Standing on a bluff,
Sees a vessel founder in the waves that pound
her,
And getting really cross over such a horrid toss
over,
Says: "This is pretty tough—
O Providence, subliminal and transcendental,
That punishest one criminal and makest an acci-
dental

End of all the rest—the good, the better, and the best!—
My views on teleology, and cosmology, and theology
Are scattered galley-west."
But while he speaks, he plants
Unwittingly his foot
Upon a neighboring nest
Of busy ants.
Now, one of evil brain and machinations vain,
Clambers up his boot,
And underneath his pants
Upon his tender skin gets well its nippers in.
Whereat he roars and jumps, and with his heel he thumps
Till, crushed and smothered in the loam,
All the poor ants are sent to their long home—
Except that single one
Who all the harm had done.

Moral.

This is a most peculiar universe;
And that against which we are prone to curse
Often by our own conduct we make worse.

THE FLY AND THE BALD MAN.

Upon a Bald Man's shining crown
A wingèd fly alit:
With legs apart and evil neck bent down,
The Creature bit.

The Man, to slay the Insect, gave
  Himself a slap in vain—
Whereat the Fly: "And art thou such a knave
  As to disdain

"Thy body, temple of thy soul
  That dwells, O Man, inside?
Or hast thou never practised self-control?"—
  The Man replied:

"With my own self I'll make my peace,
  Knowing my own intent;
And I'll repair ere long with cooling grease
  This accident.

"But thou, but thou, pestiferous,
  I still would gladly drub,
Impertinent, ill-favored little Cuss,
  Beelzebub,

"Who vilely suckest human veins,—
  Even though it bred
Immedicable, self-inflicted pains
  To smite thee dead."

Moral.

This fellow's sorry fit of pique,
  Alas, too plainly tells
How man prefers his vengeance for to wreak
  Before all else.

THE CAT AND APHRODITE.

A Cat observed a Youth, a stately,
And followed, loving desperately—
Rubbing on his legs and bowing,
Purring now, and now meowing
(For even the chaste, when smit by Cupid,
Are in their antics very stupid).
'Twas vain; and so with fancy flighty
She begged a boon of Aphrodite:
"Feline I, and he a human—
Change my form to that of woman!"
The Goddess heard—and lo, a lady
As fair as any Sue or Sady,
In whose shapely amorous fingers
No remnant of a claw now lingers,
From whose eyes the oblong iris
Is gone, like Ægypt and Osiris,
On whose lips no whiskers tickle
To still betray that cats are fickle,
And from whose rump the tail is pulled
(Or else of course no man were fooled).
It was a clever metamorphosis;
Indeed in Ovid's pages more fuss is
Often made about a lesser.
Well, then, the Youth he did address her
Making the ancient vows erotic
Which to repeat were idiotic;
And soon by priest, an empty pated,
The ill-assorted pair were mated.

But Aphrodite, the designing,
As once they sat at home reclining,
Let down a mouse athrough the ceiling,
And sent him round the chamber squealing.
The bride made after in a bee-line—
Sure indication of the feline.

Moral.

It is an olden saw and bitter:
A change of form won't change the *critter.*

THE NORTH WIND AND THE SUN.

The North wind and the Sun, disputing which
Has brought his power to the higher pitch,
Do each agree to try the matter out
Upon the cloak that wraps a man about
Who chances now upon the horizon's verge.
The North wind blows with a tremendous splurge,
The while the Chap, at each more furious blast,
Gathers anew the folds and makes more fast.
The Sun, however, with his genial rays
In patient silence round the shoulder plays—
Until the owner of his own free will
Removes his cloak and sits by yonder hill
Beneath a tree beside the water courses.

Moral.

Persuasion's far more forcible than Force is.

THE STAG AT THE POOL.

A thirsty Stag beside a pool—
Who meant to drink a belly-ful—
Observed with pride and with dejection
The outlines of his own reflection:
His branching antlers he admired,
His legs left much to be desired—
Calves scarcely thicker than a teat,
And such ridiculous splay-feet.
Just then a Lion hove in sight,
Whereat the Stag he took to flight;
And whilst upon the open lea,
He used his legs successfully;
But, entering a wood, he caught
Upon his antlers, quite distraught.
The Lion clawed: His Hour had come—
Reminding us of Absalom.

Moral 1.

The things that we despise may give
The very means whereby to live.

Moral 2.

The things we glory in may be
Destructive of longevity.

Moral 3.

O let us learn to estimate
Our functions at their proper rate.

Moral 4.

In this vile world of danger and abuse,
The test of values is not looks but use.

THE MILLER, HIS SON, AND THEIR ASS.

A Miller and his Son were driving
Their chubby Ass, a sleek and thriving,
To market with intent to sell.
They passed some damsels by a well,
Laughing, gossiping in troops:
"Just look at yonder nincompoops,"
They cry, "who trudge on foot beside
That beast that one at least might ride."
The sire, a man to whom advice
Was welcome, whatsoe'er the price,
Resented not the ladies' titter,
But set his son upon the critter;
When presently they met a crowd
Of gray-haired gentry, bent and bowed,
Before an inn in grave debate:
"There," argued one, "this proves the state
Of this degenerate age—Young Scamp,
Get down from off that Ass and tramp,
And give your sire a seat on him
To rest his weary length of limb."
The sire, a man to whom advice
Was welcome, whatsoe'er the price,
Resenting not this speech upon
His honest and obedient son,

Effected the exchange of seats;
When somewhat later on he meets
A throng of little girls and boys,
Who stop their play and make a noise:
"Old Codger, lazy Miller you,
You have an easy time, you do;
You ride along, but little sonny
Finds his travels far from funny."
The Miller, one to whom advice
Was welcome, whatsoe'er the price,
Resented not this juvenile
Impertinence, but with a smile
Contrived to have his offspring jump
Behind and sit upon the rump.
And now they'd almost reached the town.
A citizen was walking down:
"Pray, clever friend, may I inquire—
That Ass, sir, do you own or hire?"—
"I own him, yes."—"One wouldn't know it—
The way you load him doesn't show it.
Why, you are better fixed, you two,
To carry him than he, sirs, you."
The sire, a man to whom advice
Was welcome, whatsoe'er the price,
Resented not his angry eye:
"Perhaps so, sir; we can but try."
Whereat they both alit and bound
The Ass, upturned upon the ground,
And passed a pole between his legs,
And, like two carriers with kegs,
Behind, before, along they swung,

The pole upon their shoulders hung.
They struck the bridge. The citizens
Came roaring round by fives and tens.
The Ass, excited by the scandal,
And grieved that thus his masters handle
A faithful servant, brought to town—
Like garden truck, and upside down—
Burst his cords and broke the pole,
And o'er the rail with kick and roll
Tumbled madly in the river,
And passed from life with splash and shiver.
The Miller and his Son, regretting,
Trudged homeward petulantly fretting.

Moral.

Advice is good, but use your wit,
And do not always follow it.

THE SWAN AND THE GOOSE.

A rich man bought a Swan and Goose,—
That for song, and this for use.
It chanced his simple-minded cook
One night the Swan for Goose mistook.
But in the dark about to chop
The Swan in two above the crop,
He heard the lyric note and stayed
The action of the fatal blade.

Moral.

And thus we see a proper tune
Is sometimes very opportune.

THE EAGLE, THE CAT, AND THE WILD SOW.

An Eagle made her nest
In topmost branches of a lofty oak.
A Cat began to climb and poke
And found a place to rest
Within a rotted hole
Some half way up the bole
(Bole, children, means the trunk),
And, having lots of spunk,
She kittened there to boot.
But now
A lumbering nine-farrow Sow
Had taken hoggish shelter in a hollow at its foot.
The Cat resolved by arts of perfidy
To end each irksome, casual colony.
Up to the Eagle then she went:
"Destruction waits below for you and me—
The Sow you view each day in digging bent
Will soon uproot our tree."
She left the Eagle victimized,
And down beside the Sow advised:
"Look out; the Eagle there on top
Intends, when you're away, to drop
And seize your little pigs, my dear."
Thus both the Eagle and the Sow in fear
Remain at home and starve with all their teeny
Cunning, innocent progény.
(This stupid story makes my head so sleepy,
I'm getting shaky in my orthoépy.)

At any rate the Cat and kittens fed
For many days and fattened on the dead.

Moral.

It's easy to be clever,
O my little pupils,
If a man has never
Any moral scruples.

THE FOX AND THE HEDGEHOG.

A Fox who swam across a torrent
Was swept along by wave and current
Into a dank and dark ravine,
Where long he lay, until gangrene
Set in and made him most unclean
And wretched. (For upon the rocks
He'd gotten scratches, bruises, knocks.)
Besides, the vile retreat was warm.
So, soon there settled down a swarm
Of sucking flies upon the Fox.
The Hedgehog came commiserating,
In kindly words his purpose stating:
"I'll drive the horrid flies away."
"No, gentle Hedgehog, let them stay.
For these same flies are full of gore,
So full they can't suck any more.
They sting me little. I am freighted
At present with the satiated.
But should they leave, their hungry kin
Would come, and stick their suckers in,
And drink the blood that yet remains."

Moral.

In times of trouble use your brains.

THE WIDOW AND THE SHEEP.

A certain Widow, poor and lonely,
Had a sheep, her own and only.
At shearing time to save expense
Herself she clipped him by the fence,
But chopped the flesh as well as wool.
Whereat the Sheep with balk and pull:
"O mistress, mistress, give me peace—
My blood adds nothing to the fleece.
If 'tis my flesh that you desire,
You may the skilful butcher hire;
If 'tis my wool, the shearer's son
Can do the operati-on."
The Crone was obstinate and cracked—
And so she hacked and hacked and hacked,
Until the creature bled to pieces
In useless fragments, bones and greases;
Whilst the spoiled wool amid the ooze
Dyed red the Widow's wooden shoes.

Moral.

An expert's service and advice
Is likely to be worth the price.

THE DOLPHINS, THE WHALES, AND THE SPRAT.

The Dolphins and the Whales were splashing,
Lashing, dashing, smashing, crashing,

And round the rolling billows thrashing
In battle piscine and mammalian—
The Whales were more sesquipedalian;
The Dolphins in agility
Displayed the more facility.
We men, we like to watch a rumpus,
When combatants don't stop to thump us,—
Not so the tender-hearted Sprat.
He raised his head, and where he sat
Quite altruistical-ly gat
A shock of sudden grief at that.
"Don't pound each other to a jelly,
But state to me the casus belli,
And I'll adjudicate," he said.
"Duck under your confounded head,"
They roar, "and hold your clappers to—
We'd rather smite till all were dead
Than once defer to such as you."

Moral.

When Whales and Dolphins have a spat,
The peace tribunal is a Sprat;
When Nations at each other peg,
The peace tribunal is the Hague—
But which can better arbitrate,
Is not quite certain up to date.

THE TWO POTS.

Two Pots adown a river pass.
One is earthen, one is brass.
The Earthen to the Other saith:

"Don't come nigh *me*—you'll be my death,
For if you bump, you'll thump and shiver
All my person in the river,
And that would be a sorry end."

Moral.

An equal makes the only friend.

THE CRAB AND ITS MOTHER.

A Crab unto her progeny:
"Thou walkest so lop-sidedly;
A steady gait and straight ahead
Is more becoming and well-bred."
"But, Mother, show me, if you can,"
Replied the young Crustace-an.
The Mother's effort was an antic
Pedantic, frantic, unromantic,
A wriggling, wobbling, jerking, clawing
With bulging eyes, and head see-sawing—
A work ill-fitted to inspire
Respect, affection, or desire.
The infant Crab replied distracted:
"O Mama, Mama, how you acted!"

Moral 1.

Example is the only teacher
For man or crab or any creature.

Moral 2.

Parents, avoid such exhibitions
Before your children of conditions
That mock your worthy expositions.

THE OLIVE AND THE FIG-TREE.

The Olive ridiculed the Fig-tree: "Lo,
Through all the year my bright green leaves I keep;
But you, when winter winds begin to blow,
Are shorn as any sheep."

But on the Olive's foliage the snow
Fell all one night, and with the morning sun
The sparkling weight had bowed and cracked her so,
The Olive was undone,—

Yet left unharmed the gaunt and sturdy Fig,
Because it sifted to the earth below
Through the interstices of branch and twig.—
O children, ye should know:

Moral.

The robes of luxury, the pomp of ease,
Whereby mankind conceives himself so strong,
May prove his ruin, as it did the tree's,
When tempests come along.

THE FOX AND THE LION.

Lo, when the Fox on a day discovered the Lion the first time,
Truly his cunning was gone, truly his terror was great;

Yet, when he saw him again, he found that he
hadn't a worse time,
Feeling indeed, though alarmed, able to master
his state.
Then on occasion the third with a boldness surpris-
ing he waited,
Walking a while by his side, telling the Lion
the news.

Moral.

Children, recall that your terrors at last are often
abated,
After a season or so, after reflection and use.

THE CAT AND THE BIRDS.

A scrawny Cat whose food is failing,
On hearing that some Birds are ailing,
Procures a doctor's cap and cane
And spectacles and leather box;
Then, sauntering out through wind and rain,
Upon the Avi-ary knocks:
"For every ill, I have a pill."—
"We're very well and think we will
Undoubtedly remain so, if
You'll keep away," they say with sniff.

Moral.

Whate'er your troubles, whether reelings,
Or those dreadful tired feelings,
Whether * * * *, whether bunyons,

Stomach-ache from eating onions,
Pickles, lobsters, milk at night,
Or a pain in groin or light,
Or the more insistent growls
In the region of the * * * *,
Palpitation of the heart,
Tendency of skin to smart,
Coated tongue, or blackheads, or
Fistula, or running sore,
Goitre, carbuncle, or sty,
Wrinkles, rings around the eye,
* * * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * * * * * *
Whether rumblings in the ears,
Or unmentionable fears
That secretly do gnaw and vex us
About the kidneys, solar plexus,
Vermiform appendix, and
Bladder, liver, pineal gland,
Cortex, coccyx, and aorta—
But, as life is rather short, a
Partial list will have to do;
Although I might have added too
Apoplexies in the brains,
Knots and swellings in the veins,
Symptoms of consumptions, dropsies.
Fevers—plain without autopsies—
Baldness, scrofula, myopic
Eyesight—but my major topic:
Whate'er your troubles, don't be lax
In speedily avoiding quacks.

THE WOLF AND THE SHEPHERDS.

A passing Wolf who stopped before
A Shepherds' hut, through open door
Spied them eating, each a glutton,
Merrily a haunch of mutton.
"What a clamor there would be,
Should you shepherds once catch me
Doing what you're doing there."

Moral.

Children, children, have a care:
Do not loiter at the shops
Sucking nasty lollypops;
Do not fill your pants with worms,
Lobsters, or echinoderms.

THE HEN AND THE VIPER'S EGGS.

Hen once found the eggs of Viper,
And exclaimed rejoicing: "I per-
Ceive a chance for altruism."
(Clever female witticism.)
So she warmed them, so she nourished,
And the little vipers flourished
Till they swelled, and twitched and wriggled,
Burst their shells and waggled-wiggled
In the sands and round her toes,
Up her back and 'long her nose—
Wormy, squirmy vipers. "Blast it,"
Said the Hen, quite flabbergasted.

Moral.

Ladies, ladies, don't attempt to
Do the things you weren't meant to.
Keep at home and hatch your chickens,
Or you'll scamper like the dickens.

THE PUPPY AND THE OYSTER.

Mack, a puppy fond of eggs,
Waddles on his jointed legs
'Long the shore and spies an Oyster
Where no fishwives, men, nor boys stir—
On the lonely sands where dog
Can sun himself or bark or jog
Unmolested. As the Puppy
Feels the time has come to sup, he
Swallows down the bivalve whole—
Dying soon with twitch and roll,
From the torment in his stomach.

Moral.

O how silly and how dumb, Mack!
Lo, not everything that's round
Is an egg upon the ground.

THE FOX AND THE BRAMBLE.

A Fox, who 'long the cliffs would gambol,
Once fell and caught upon a Bramble,
And having pricked and torn his soles,
He roared indignant rigmaroles:
"Thou bush of a Satanic seed

That makest me, the Fox, to bleed!"
The Bramble patiently replied:
"Were 't not for me, you'd soon have died
Down there below the mountain-side."

Moral.

When remedies are rather drastic,
We do not wax enthusiastic.

THE FISHER AND THE LITTLE FISH.

A Fisherman, who lived upon
The paltry fish he chanced to get
By sitting out there in the sun
And whistling daily by his net,
Once caught as issue of his sport
At close of day one tiny short

And ungrown Fishling, who convul-
Sively began with panting breath:
"Are you indeed not very dull
To doom a fish like me to death,
The smallest fish on sea or earth—
What can so small a fish be worth?

"Wait till I've got my growth, and now
Return me quickly to the sea;
And in a year or so, I trow,
You'll find me much more good for thee—
A whopping, a surpassing fish,
A rich man's dish, a rich man's dish."

The Fisherman replied:

Moral.

"I were
Indeed a fool to throw away,
For something I must long defer,
Whatever I have got to-day—
Even though it be a shrimp like thee:
So, one small Fish, thou'lt come with me."

THE WASP, THE PARTRIDGE, AND THE FARMER.

The Wasps and Partridges, undone
With thirst beneath the summer sun,
Unto the Farmer come and ask
A sip or two from out his flask.
They promise to repay his favor:
"We birds will dig around your vines
And give your grapes a genial flavor."
"We Wasps will guard from thieves' designs
And scare the prowling urchins off."
The Farmer then: "Enough, enough;
I've two yoke-oxen who have long
Performed these services for me,
Faithful, intelligent, and strong—
No such arch-promisers as ye.
'Tis fitter I give drink to them."

Moral.

Phrase for yourselves the apothegm.

THE ASS AND THE HORSE.

An Ass besought a noble Steed
To spare him but a bit of feed.—
"If any's left when I have fed,
'Tis yours, my pretty Ass," he said.
"And if you'll come this evening back
To my own stall, I'll give a sack
Of barley—for noblesse oblige."
"Sir Horse, indeed, I'll not besiege
Your kindness further—keep your barley."

Moral.

At high folks' doors don't beg or parley.

THE BOY AND THE NETTLES.

A Youngster, by a Nettle stung,
Ran home to mother screaming, flung
Himself into her lap, and cried:
"Mamma, I am transmogrified
With anguish; yet I touched the thing
So very gently." "Hence the sting,"
The philosophic dame replied;
"My little son, next time you touch
A Nettle, firmly grasp and clutch,
And it will feel as soft as silk,
And hurt no more than Ass's milk."

Moral.

This tale has good advice no doubt;
And yet I'd hate to try it out.

THE PARTRIDGE AND THE FOWLER.

A Fowler caught a Partridge; but
The Partridge begged him not to cut
His head asunder, screaming: "Pray,
Master, let me live my day!—
And for you I will entice
Many Partridges." "Thou thrice
Accursed creature," said the man;
"Sizzle thou in baking pan!—
I've less scruple now, pardee,
In vigorously slaughtering thee,—
Who think'st to save thy neck at cost
Of thine own kin betrayed and lost."

Moral.

O Bird, most base and cowardly,
I wish I'd had a Hack at thee.

THE BALD KNIGHT.

A Bald-pate Knight, a dwarfish Runt
With flanging ears, went forth to hunt.
A puff of wind blew off his wig
And spun it like a whirligig
Across the fields. His friend began
To wink and laugh. The little Man,
Reining his horse and rising high:
"Aye, aye, I eye your eye, eye, eye!
And since you choose to gird me thusly,
I answer you cacophanously!—

What marvel that these borrowed hairs
Should fly away so unawares,
When those that once were truly mine
Forsook me likewise—ai, yai, yine!"

Moral.

'Twas most unfortunate the wind
And circumstances so combined
To spoil the pleasure of Sir Runt
That morning as he went to hunt;
But no true courtier will condone
His childish petulance of tone.

THE ROSE AND THE AMARANTH.

The Amaranth unto the Rose
(Each growing in one garden-close)
Wailed about her plain exterior—
Felt that Rose was much superior:
"Glorious Flower, bright your bloom,
Sweet your form and your perfume."
"Amaranth, O Amaranth,"..
Cried the hapless Rose with anth-
Ropomorphic sense of doom,
If no hand do pluck me, *I*
Last one season, ere I die—
Thou, as proves thy name to men,
Art immortal, ever free.
Hast thou then no comprehen-
Sibility—sibility?—
Needest not to envy me."

Moral.

The more we're favored by the gods,
The more we wail about the odds.

THE MOTHER AND THE WOLF.

A Wolf one morn in search of pottage,
Bone, or bread-crust, passed a cottage,
And heard the dame remark unto
Her little girl-in-arms: "If you
Don't stop your crying, I will pitch
You out the window, after which
The Wolf will come and eat you."—"That,"
Observed the Wolf, "'s worth waiting for."
And so he squatted at the door,
Till toward eve the Mother sat
And crooned a lullaby and said:—
"If old Wolf come, if old Wolf come,
We'll kill him dead, we'll kill him dead"—
Whereat the Wolf he scampered home,
With hunger gaping and with cold.
Then Mistress Wolf began to scold:
"Why this, why this?—you've nothing then
To stock the cupboard of our den?—
Why this?"—"Because," the Wolf averred,

Moral.

"I trusted in a woman's word."

THE FOWLER AND THE RING-DOVE.

A Fowler took his gun and went
Into the woods on shooting bent;
And on an oak limb up above
Among the leaves he spied a Dove.
He clapped his gun against his shoulder,
And set his foot upon a boulder;
But as his finger was about
To pull the trigger and let out
The lethal shot, an Adder which
He trod upon began to twitch.
It darted back and forth its head
And through his calf its poison shed.
In vain the Fowler dropped his gun;
And good Saint Patrick called upon;
In vain he took a sudden swig
From out a bottle brown and big.
The moon arose, the winds were sighing,—
The Fowler lay a-mortifying.

Moral.

O roam the woodland and the wild,
But do not shoot the birds, my Child;
For Mr. Audubon and others
Have told us that they be our brothers.
(And yet I wonder if the snake
Was stinging for the Ring-dove's sake.)

THE OAKS AND JUPITER.

The Oaks with melancholy air
Complained to sovereign Jupiter:
"We bear the load of life in vain;
Of all the trees on hill or plain—
Birch or butternut or beech,
Cherry-tree or pear or peach,
Eucalyptus or allaxis—
We suffer most from hacks of axes."
"The cause," replied the king of gods,
"Is due to neither spites nor frauds,—
But lies within yourselves, my Oaks:
For were you not a boon to folks,
Above all woods for posts and rails,
For roof-trees, handles, staves, and pails,
No man would come in leathern boots
With hacks of axes on your roots."

Moral.

Unusual gifts for doing good
May cost us dearer than we would.

THE BULL, THE LIONESS, AND THE WILD-BOAR HUNTER.

A Bull once gored a Lion's Kitten.
The Lioness was sorely smitten.
A Wild-Boar Hunter said afar:
"But think how many Dames there are

Who wail for offspring which you, *you*
Did pounce upon and slay and chew."

Moral.

When Fate has got us by the croup,
There's nothing left to do but stoop;
And least of all it helps to know
We used to handle others so.

THE FOX AND THE MONKEY.

A Fox and Monkey, bright and merry,
Once traveled through a cemetery:
"Behold these mighty monuments,
Erected at such vast expense
In honor of my ancestors"—
Exclaimed the Monkey on all fours.
Replied the Fox: "You've chosen well
The subject of the tale to tell—
For all your ancestors are dumb
And not a one of them can come
To contradict."

Moral.

When with the wise,
Be careful, Children, of your lies.

THE LION AND THE FOUR BULLS.

A Lion long with grief had viewed
Four bulls who evermore pursued

Their ways together, being friends
Thus to conserve their mutual ends.
Afraid all four to bid defiance,
He strove to sunder the alliance.
By divers whispers, hints, and shrugs
(More potent far than charms and drugs)
He soon fomented such suspicions
As altered sadly old conditions.
Each Bull went sulking off in huff
And gave the Lion chance enough;
And with his energetic paws
He then prepared them for his jaws
One after other.

Moral.

Two old saws:
"Remain united or you lose;"
And "Evil tongues can play the deuce."

THE ASS AND THE THISTLE.

An Ass, with good provisions laden
(Prepared by housewife, cook, and maiden),
Once walking out at harvesting
The reapers' dinners for to bring,
Did by the path along the field
Espy a thistle, and did yield
To that old impulse asinine
Upon the thistle for to dine.
And thus reflected: "To be sure,
How many a greedy Epicure

His salivated lips would smack
If his these viands in the sack
I carry on my assy back.
And yet to me the prickly thistles
Are much more worth."

Moral.

See Paul's Epistles,
Or any philosophic treatises,
Like Socrates's, Epictetus's
Or Emerson's, Aurelius's;
Each one convincingly discusses
The truth that pain and pleasure be
Dependent on the inner *me,*
And wrought through subjectivity.

HERMES AND THE SCULPTOR.

Hermes, determining to know how mortals
Regarded him, once entered by the portals
A Sculptor's studio. (He might, 'tis true
Have entered by the window or the flue,
Had he not ta'en the stature of a man
To hide his deity Olympian.)
And having cast his eye about, he said:
"How much for Zeus's and for Heré's head—
Those busts o'er yonder?"—pointing to a shelf.
"So, so, good, good—" Then, near by them, himself
Espying in marble, he remarked: "And this,
I take it's rather dearer, since it is
Image of Hermes, Messenger of Heaven,

Through whom to thee prosperity is given."
The Sculptor: "Well, if you will buy these other,
About a price for *that* we needn't bother—
I'll fling you *that* one in for luck and jest."
Hermes departed, silent and depressed.

Moral.

O gods and men, it hardly ever pays
To go about a-snooping after praise.

THE LARK AND THE FARMER.

A Lark whose nest was in the field
Which soon a ripened crop would yield,
Instructed well her little brood,
As forth she flew in search of food,
To make report of every word
That in her absence might be heard.
When back she came, the Young Ones fell
To chirping madly, and pell-mell
To quiver round her: "Mama Lark,
O fetch us off before 'tis dark!
The Farmer said unto his son:
'To-morrow early up and run
To all the *neighbors* of the plain,
That they may help us reap the grain.'"
The old Lark twittered: "Cease your sorrow;
The grain will not be reaped to-morrow."
Next day when back she flew again,
The Young Ones chirped a like refrain:
"O Mama Lark, O Mama Lark,

O fetch us off before 'tis dark!
The Farmer said unto his son:
'Of all our neighbors never one
It seems can be depended on.
To-morrow early up and run
To all our *cousins* of the plain
That they may help us reap the grain.'"
The old Lark twittered: "Cease your sorrow;
The grain will not be reaped to-morrow."
Next day when back she flew again,
The Young Ones chirped a like refrain:
"O Mama Lark, O Mama Lark,
O fetch us off before 'tis dark!
The Farmer said unto his son:
'With *kin* and *neighbors* I am done.
To-morrow early up and bring
Two sickles and the binding string;
And *we together* will proceed
To reap the grain.'" The Old Lark: "We'd
Do well to quit this nest indeed."

Moral.

When men at last are forced by fate
To work, they won't procrastinate.

PART II.

ORIGINAL FABLES.

Though Æsop, sage narrator, covered much,
Some points on this our life he failed to touch.

THE BEAR AND THE OWL.

A famished Bear, whose foot was clenched
Within a murderous engine, wrenched
And bounced about in fright and pain
Around the tree that held the chain,
Emitting many a hideous howl.
His state was noticed by an Owl,
Who, perched above him fat and free,
Philosophized from out the tree:
"Of what avail this fuss and noise?—
The thing you need, my Bear, is poise."

Moral.

Such counsels are most sage, we know—
But often how malapropos!

THE BALD MAN AND THE BEE.

A Bald Man fished upon a bank:
The air was hot; the ground was dank;
No fish would bite; and large supplies
Of woodticks, skeeters, fleas, and flies,
In yonder marsh and meadow bred,
Crawled unmolested o'er his head,
With many a tickle, sting and itch.
He wouldn't budge, he wouldn't twitch;
But, trusting in the universe,
He fished away from bad to worse.
At length it chanced a vicious Bee
From out the thicket in his rear

Sped forth with much alacrity
And pierced him with its little spear—
Just where his cowlick used to be.
The Bald Man slowly raised his hand:
"Now that's enough, now that's enough—
For *this,* I'd have you understand
(He sweeps his pate), you'll *all* get off."

Moral

Though one may be an optimist,
A Stoic, Christian Scientist,
And fish or fiddle with assurance,
There is a limit to endurance.

THE LION, THE LIONESS, AND HER KINSFOLK.

A Lion had a Lioness
That got to ailing more or less.
He walked with her in woodland air,
He found a more salubrious lair,
He foraged round for little lambs
And cooked their juiciest, tenderest hams,
He washed the plates and set on shelf,
And put the cubs to bed himself.
But just as she again was cheered,
Her mother, sisters, aunts appeared—
With twenty different bottles, pills,
And powders, naming twenty ills,
Until the creature, weak and wan,
From out this foolish world was gone.

Moral.

O Busy-Bodies at the door,
How much you have to answer for!

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE OWL.

A Nightingale, in song excelling all,
And Owl, whose gifts were astronomical,
Sat on the self-same night on self-same wall,
And watched the self-same moon, and in their throats
Fashioned from self-same air their sundry notes,
Yet swapped no courtesies nor anecdotes,
Each wishing other ruined, ripped, and rent.

Moral.

Children, men's hates are caused to large extent
By such diversities of temperament.

THE CROWS AND THE EAR OF CORN.

Three Crows, whose nests were in a single tree,
Long dwelt together in felicity,
Exchanging visits, swapping odds and ends
Of jest and fancy, as befitting friends;
Till one fine eve a farmer passed beneath
And dropped an Ear of Corn upon the heath
From out his sack, which spied by all at once,
All three together did upon it pounce;
And not content with taking each a third,

Each Crow most avariciously averred
The whole was his, as seen by him the first.

Moral.

O cruel lust of worldly goods accurst,
How many bonds of friendship hast thou burst!

THE MAN AND THE HEN AND THE OSTRICH EGG.

A Man with jerk and crawl and stoop
Emerged from out a chicken coop.
And as he rose, a child might see
That a distracted man was he.
It wasn't that his face was grimy,
It wasn't that his knees were slimy,
It wasn't even his ruffled hair
That gave him this distracted air.
It was the terror in his eyes,
His forehead knit in wild surprise,
It was the frenzy in his whoop
When rising from the chicken coop.
He strode a rod and back again,
He strode around from leg to leg—
His left arm held a cackling Hen,
His right a monstrous Ostrich Egg,
The circumstance was rather strange—
'Twould almost any man derange.
By rallying his nerves a bit,
He halted to consider it.

With feet akimbo, shock abated,
'Twas thus he ratiocinated:
"I won't believe it after all;
It surely isn't nat-ur-al."

Moral 1.

Don't trust too much, dear child to senses,
However strong the evidences.

Moral 2.

A timely grasp on nature's laws
May help us to discover flaws
In many a theory, many a cause.

Moral 3.

Undue excitement we may end
By reason, man's supernal friend.

Moral 4.

When one's belief is premature
Reflection is the only cure.

THE TWO DOGS AND THE PEACEFUL MAN.

One day a Bull-dog and his Wife
Fell to it in domestic strife
And gave some lively exhibitions
Of woeful marital conditions.
It chanced the Peaceful Man did sally
That moment down along the alley
And in the interests of remating

Began at once expostulating;
And getting each one by the scruff,
The Peaceful man was rather gruff.
The Dogs, at this intrusion nettled,
Forthwith their differences settled,
A common purpose now controlling.
The Peaceful Man went raving, rolling—
With little heart to dilly-dally,
And left two coat-tails in the alley.
(And when one's robbed of raiment thusly
He runneth rather ludi-crous-ly.)

Moral.

Avoid domestic interference,
For it may ruin your appearance.

THE DOG AND THE KETTLE.

A Kettle, swinging on a crane,
Sang a most contented strain,
And puffed, as if with self-esteem,
From out its nozzle jets of steam.
A Dog, who dozed upon the settle,
Was irritated by the Kettle;
With thoughtless bounce he clasped its nose
Between his teeth, as if to close
At once its singing and existence.
The Kettle offered no resistance—
Continuing unperturbed at ease
The natural functions of its being:
The Dog, however, turns and flees,

As if all life's activities
Concentered in the act of fleeing;
And out along the village ditches
In agonies he rolls and pitches,
Imbedding now and then his face
In some soft cooling oozy place.

Moral.

Before expressing too directly
Whate'er your hate of this or that is,
Examine rather circumspectly
The nature of the apparatus.

THE MAN AND THE SQUIRRELS.

A queer suburban Gentleman
Was strolling with a palm-leaf fan,
With philosophic step and slow,
And pate a-nodding to and fro,
Across the lawn that sloped you know
Around his leafy bungalow.
He marked the skipping Squirrels pause
Upon their haunches with their paws
Against their bosoms, each with head
Atilt and bowed. And then he said:
"I think I can explain the cause.
All men perceive how great I am,
And even the Squirrels here salaam;
And could they speak, they wouldn't fail
To add, 'O gracious Master, hail.'"

Whereat he tossed unto the dumb
A largesse of a nut and crumb.

Moral 1.

O blest is he who can construe
Whatever other people do,
To suit his pride and point of view.

Moral 2.

And blest is he whose self-conceit
Yet gives the hungry things to eat.

THE TOAD.

One glittering morning after rain,
From crevice in the wall, again
Into the middle of the road
There pops and hops a hungry Toad.
He snappeth, gulpeth worm on worm,
And feels them tickle as they squirm
Within his paunch, until its size
(The while he squats with blinking eyes)
Bulges out his knees and thighs.
An ass comes on with sturdy stride:
The Toad he thinks to move aside;
Yet each attempt at hop and spring
But sets his frame aquivering—
He cannot budge....And with a thud
The hoof imprints him on the mud.

Moral.

Whether your fare be worms or mutton,
O Toad or Man, don't be a glutton.

THE PARROT.

A Parrot, shipped across the sea
From Africa when young was he,
Became a lonely widow's pet.
The cage was by the window set;
And in the sun the passers-by
Could see the opal-jeweled eye,
The scarlet tail, the ebon beak
Thick-set against a whitish cheek,
And that magnificence of gray
On wing and back and breast, and they
Remarked, "It is a splendid dream,
A most successful color scheme.
O Psittacus erithacus,
We're glad to have you here with us."
The widow, both from sense of duty
And natural pride, baptized him "Beauty."
I will not dwell on Beauty's feats:
The peanuts how he cracks and eats,
A-perch and holding in his claw,
Then gargling them into his maw
With lifted head, beside the cup,
The widow's always filling up—
The way he waddles round the floor
When mistress opes his cage's door—
The words he speaks, so shrill and mystic,
And preternatur'ly linguistic—
I will not mention, for my aim
Is to expound his fateful name.
Ere many moons, there came o'er him

An itching in his every limb—
But whether caused by frequent bites
Of horrid little parasites,
Or by the harsh New England climate
(That ruins many a lusty Primate,
And hence might possibly nonplus
A tender, an oviparous,
A tropic bird), or by some particles
In wretchedly digested articles,
We have slight reason to suspect.
At any rate, he clawed and pecked
With all his passion, intellect,
And sinews of his bill and foot,
Upon his feathers to the root.
Now Beauty's tail was but a stump
That ill-concealed a tragic rump,
Now Beauty's wing-bones both were bare,
And ghastly purple was the skin
That held his bulging gullet in,
And in his eye a vacant stare;
And, as his remnants there he sunned,
Men saw that he was moribund.

Moral.

Don't call your bird or offspring by
A name his future may belie.

THE CORPUSCLE AND THE PHAGOCYTE AND THE STREPTOCOCCUS.

A Corpuscle began to fight
Absurdly with a Phagocyte:

"Indeed," he said, "I'm round and red,
And keep a man from falling dead.
I give him brains and nerve and muscle,"
Remarked the little red Corpuscle.
The Phagocyte: "And I am white,
And but for me you'd perish quite;
I go afloating round the serum,
And when I spy the bugs I queer 'em;
You owe your work, your freedom, joy
To me, the Phagocyte, my boy."
But then a stalwart Streptococcus—
Whose sterner functions needn't shock us—
Seeing his foe was occupied
With learnèd questions on the side,
Swooped down and bit him till he died.
And then the red Corpuscle cried:
"Nature appoints, as well she should,
To each his task—and each is good;
Even though the Streptococcus be
At last the best of all the three."

Moral.

The wretched Corpuscle has stated
The moral—which, if syndicated
And widely pondered, might prevent
Our present social discontent.

THE GEESE OF ATHABASCA.

Candidus anser.—Lucretius, IV, 681.

Somewhat southward from Alaska
Lie the moors of Athabasca;

And in these bleak uncouth dominions—
So far detached from our opinions
That none can ever misconstrue
The tale I want to tell to you—
There gathered at the equinox
Some eager migratory flocks
Of ganders, geese, and goslings—and
The *ganders* had the upper hand,
Debating with a gaping mouth
On whom to choose to lead them south.
In spite of casual disgressing
They thought the matter was progressing,
When all the *geese* began to flap
With wings, and cackle too, and rap
With bills on sundry sticks and stocks
And crane their necks around the flocks.
Their actions, though surprising, new,
(Bizarre at times it may be, too),
Betrayed such aim and fervor, surely
One shouldn't chide them prematurely,
And fiery hot as salamanders,
They much impressed the puzzled ganders,
Who paused and pondered in their pates,
What their vociferating mates
Intended by these frantic states.
"Give *us,*" they cry, "a chance to say
Who 'tis shall guide us on our way;
Give *us,*" they cry, "a voice, a voice—
Who shares the *risk,* should share the *choice.*"
And now and then from some old goose
More deft, it seems, in logic's use,

The ganders heard reflections meant
To ridicule their government,
As antiquated precedent,
And divers observations tending
To show how much it needed mending—
The *more*, since geese *were* different.
One says: "Our judgment lacks in poise,
And all we do is make a noise?—
But can't we tell as well as you
Where trees are green and skies are blue?"
Another: "You, sirs, should elect,
Since 'tis your business to protect?—
Define protection....more than skill
In thrusting out an angry bill
With anserine intent to kill.
Our *wings* are weapons, sirs, as good—
When clasped around the little brood."
Another: "Yes, the goslings, goslings?—
Now that's a point that's full of puzzlings
For these our ganders—Hear my queries!—
Have we no business with the dearies?—
Have *we* no right at all to say
Who's fit to lead *them* on the way?"
And then a younger goose, an active
And in her person most attractive,
Remarked with widely parted lips
That put her eyeballs in eclipse:
"We wouldn't be so charming,—pooh!—
If we should choose along with you?
You wouldn't like to see us sniffle,
And wrangle round—O piffle, piffle:

The fact is, nature made us so
That nothing we might undergo
Could take that *something* from us which
Oft gives your heartstrings such a twitch.
And furthermore, you'd better drop
The sugar-plum and lollypop—
That sort of argument won't please
The intellectual type of geese."
"The intellect, the intellect,"
Another cries, "they don't suspect—
And think the issue to confuse
By queer domestic interviews
About our *functions* and the aim—
As if the privilege we claim
Might shrink the size and number of
The eggs we lay, the chicks we love."
I do not note for special causes
The interjections and applauses.
"Give us," they cry again, " a voice,
Who share the *risk* should share the *choice*."
And though some points might need apology,
As shaky in their sociology,
That cry appealed to instincts, reason—
So ganders yielded for the season.
But whether it became a practice
In future times, and what the fact is
About the *sex* of guide and leader
The muse conceals from bard and reader,
Assuring only that they ne'er
Had made a trip more safe and fair
Down the continental air,

From the moors of Athabasca,
Somewhat southward of Alaska,
From those bleak, uncouth dominions
So far detached from our opinions
That none can *ever* misconstrue
The tale I here have told to you.

THE DUCK AND THE NIGHTINGALE.

An ancient Duck, complacent, fat,
Whose miserable habitat
Had been the stagnant pool behind
The barnyard of Boeotian hind,—
Save when she waddled by the fence
Among the roosters and the hens,
To snap with bony bill at corn
Her owner scattered every morn,
Or when within the crib she sate
To hatch her eggs and meditate,—
Began to make some slight pretense
To wisdom and experience.
She heard at dark a Nightingale
At no great distance down the dale—
The wingèd Nightingale who'd flown
In every sky, in every zone,
And sung while moon or morning star
Descended over hills afar —
And thus the Dame began to quack:
"O Nightingale, you'll surely crack
That voice of yours, unless your soul
Can learn a little self-control;

Try settling down and doing good,
And earn a sober livelihood."

Moral.

Conceited ignorance with ease
Pronounces its banalities.

THE POODLE AND THE PENDULUM.

A Poodle, wistful-eyed and glum,
Sate looking at a Pendulum,
That with a steady tick and tock,
Before the wall, beneath the clock,
Swang back and forth its brazen disk.
The Poodle gave his tail a whisk.
A sudden thought had crossed his brain—
"What once it did, it does again,
Again, again, again, again."
For you could scarce expect a Poodle
And his fuzzy-wuzzy noodle
Forsooth at once to comprehend
The mechanism and the end.
The Poodle's head, with both his eyes
And both his ears of goodly size,
Began to nod from right to left
As if of every sense bereft,
With a rhythmic motion mocking
Both the ticking and the tocking.
The Pendulum had first surprised him—
But now 't had surely hypnotized him.
With every tick and every nod

(So odd, so odd, so odd, so odd)
He gave a sudden little yelp;
But no one came to hold or help—
Or whistle, or provide a bone,
Or snap a finger, throw a stone,
Or do a thing upon the lists
Prescribed by psycho-therapists,
When Poodles or when Men get notions
From neurasthenical emotions.
And, since no Poodle can sustain
Existence on this mortal plain
Long by only yelps and nods,
He passed unto the Poodle-gods.
The Pendulum observed his jerk,
But kept unflustered at its work.

Moral.

Don't get to looking at devices
That tend to cause a mental crisis.

THE SHINGLE.

(Dedicated to that solid citizenship of our country that brooks no interference on the part of the effete and the unpatriotic in setting up its own architectural monuments.)

I. The Committee Meeting.

Our honest Paul and Pete and Bill,
With heels upon the window sill,
Sat musing, as the light grew dim,
On a memorial for Jim.

The funds, collected from the neighbors,
Who well remembered Jamie's labors,
Lay on the table at their backs
In several little leather sacks.
The question was, what man was fit
To shape the right design for it.
Said Paul, in a judicial vein
The while he toyed with fob and chain,
"There's none can set o'er Jamie's bones
A prettier piece than Carlton Coans.
I often see him at the dairy
When business isn't pressing very;
He'll take a half-pound butter-brick,
And pinch it thin and press it thick,
And in its sides his fingers stick,
And make you billikins and boats
And little cows and nanny goats—
I tell you, he can do it slick."
Said Pete, the while he slapped away
A fly upon his pate at play,
And Bill, with sturdy thumbs at rest
Within the armlets of his vest,
"There's nothing further to discuss;
Coans is indeed the man for us."

II. In the Studio.

Next morn with solemn steps and slow
To Coans the sage committee go.
They found him in the shed guffawing
Before a nail that he was *drawing*;
His fancy triumphed over death—

The man could even *draw* his breath.
So on a *Shingle* with a chalk
Coans made his cleverest notions talk—
Some lines to this side and to that,
Like whiskers sticking from a cat,
A row of circles filled with dots,
And bits of filigree in spots,
A broken column in the middle,
And at its base a broken fiddle
(Which, though it gave some folks the colic,
Was most appropriate and symbolic).
And all around the outer parts
Our Coans was strong on eggs-and-darts.
And though they couldn't quite make out
Exactly what 'twas all about,
And though they couldn't see completely
Just how 'twould work in stone concretely,
They took the plan—assured by Coans
He'd make things right with Jamie's bones.

III. The Exhibit.

They set the *Shingle* with the price
At Whitcomb's by a pail of rice,
That every one contributing
Might have a chance to see the thing.
In popped the village editor,
And burst in a sardonic roar,
"A monument like that," he saith,
"Adds a new terror unto death."
Says Paul with wistful soul and grim,
"If you had known our brother Jim,

You wouldn't make such fun of him."
(I must admit that Paul's objection
Is scarcely clear in its connection.)
School-master Ruskin Norton came,
"My friends, it is a sin, a shame;
A monument like this will shock,
And make the town a laughing stock."
Says Pete, "Young man, you're very smart,
But we don't want your style of art."
A sister from the "Ladies' Aid,"
While Whitcomb scooped her tea and weighed,
Remarked, "O Bill, O Pete, O Paul,
It will not do at all, at all.
For love of Jim who's dead and gone,
For love of us who linger on,
Turn that forever to the wall."
Says Bill, "You girls are always fretting
And round the village suffragetting;
We've got our notions and our votes,
And you've got only petticoats."

IV. Another Committee Meeting.

Disgruntled now, and ill at ease
At such perverted words as these,
Once more the sage committee sits
And uses its artistic wits.
Says Paul, "Our Jim was strong and tough,
And wants no namby-pamby stuff."
Says Pete, "And nothing French or Attic—
For Jim like us was democratic."
Says Bill, "And even if Jim were not

The best and bravest of the lot,
I'd give the job to Coans to show
This foolish village what we know.
It paid the money—more's the pity—
But ain't we fellows the committee?"

Moral.

(* * * * * * mulishness,
* * * * * * foolishness.
* * * * * crude condition—
* * * * * art commission.)*

THE FLUG† AND THE LION.

A Flug—I will not state the kind,
But one for horrid things designed—
With yellow stripes across his coat,
And spots of red around his throat,
And beady eyes and two antennæ,
And jointed legs, O many, many,
And little suckers on each foot
To help himself in staying put,
And irritating little buzz—
A certain Flug, I say, there was.
And though an entomologist
Might very angrily insist
That such a Flug could not exist,
There's no occasion here to doubt it,

* *Note.* I dare not set the moral down,
For fear some patriots would frown.

† Etymologically, flug = fl(y) + (b)ug.

If you don't stop to talk about it.
This certain Flug, whose weight indeed
Was equal to an apple-seed,
Procured a while as dupe and slave
A tawny Lion, large and brave.
And though some foolish naturalist
Declare such things could not exist,
This only shows what slight reliance
Can now be had in men of science,
The specialists who squint and grope
With tweezers and with microscope.
The Flug demanded on a day
The Lion help him take away
A withered yellow blade of grass
That scratched his side as he did pass
From out his cell when rose the sun.
The Lion put his paw upon
The blade, and though he did as well
As any Lion in his place,
He crushed the wretched sun-baked cell,
And all the store of food and eggs.
He makes a frightened rueful face
And begs and begs and begs and begs,
The Flug remorseless—for in spite
That Flug was not a neophyte—
Remarks: "I know you have some brains,
Some speed in scouring woods and plains,
Some resonance of voice, some force
In jaws and back and limb of course,
And that the King of Beasts you be—
But what are all these things to Me!

Moral.

Work if you must, for Thieves and Thugs;
But, children, never work for Flugs.

THE EPHEMERIS

Some people love their souls to ease
By thinking of the chimpanzees,
Of boa-constrictors and such cusses,
Or oblong hippopotamuses,
Of whales or crocodiles or gnus,
Giraffes and cows and caribous,
Or (if they have a turn for fun)
Of dinosaur or mastodon
And pterodactyl and those classic
Monsters of the old Jurassic.
'Twas Asshur-bani-pal who said,
"Men's tastes will differ till they're dead."
You all recall how Aristotle
Preferred the fish that's known as cuttle,
While the great sculptor Scopas says,
"My choice shall be octopuses."
And Poggio Bracciolini flew
Into a passion when they slew
The egg his favorite emu
Had laid with cackle of alarum
Behind Liber Facetiarum.
Some people love such beasts as these;
But I—without apologies—
I love the Ephemerides.

And having now admitted this,
I'll mention an Ephemeris
That one bright summer morn I spied
When sitting by the river side.
A half-transparent drop of jelly,
With filaments upon its belly,
It skimmed along the surface lightly,
Nor plunged beneath it reconditely,
Like some more bold investigator—
For instance, loon or alligator——
And then 'twould spread its wings and fare—
A-going up, child, in the air,
It knew not how, it cared not where,
Till it collapsed, a bug, a bubble—
Not having caused me any trouble,
And certainly not having done
The slightest good beneath the sun.
Why do I love such bugs as these
Sportive Ephemerides?—
Because I like to see them frolic?—
O no; because:

Moral.

They're so symbolic!

THE ASS AND THE SICK LION.

An Ass mistook the echo of his bray
For a celestial call to preach and pray;
And his own shadow, big upon the wall,
He deemed the everlasting Lord of All.
Besides he had some notions how to treat

Sinners and fetch them to the mercy seat.
So in a broad-cloth tailored coat, combined
With a white collar buttoned up behind,
He got himself a parish. In his flock
Was a sick Lion, panting on a rock.
(It was an arrow from a huntsman's bow
That laid this miserable Lion low.)
Him on his pastoral rounds the Reverend Ears
One morning thus addressed: "These groans and
tears,
How base and craven in the King of Beasts!
You need a moral tonic! Godless feasts
And midnight games and evil Lionesses
Have brought you, brother, to these sad distresses;
Think not that I will comfort or condole—
My cure is drastic, but 'twill save your soul."
Whereat he turned and in the Lion's face
Planted his hoofs with more of speed than grace,
Knocked out the teeth, and blinded both the eyes,
And left him, dying, to the sun and flies.

Moral.

This little fable, children, is a proof
That no profession, purpose, or disguise
Can change the action of an Ass's hoof.

THE NIGHTINGALE, THE PRAIRIE DOGS, THE OWLS, AND THE SNAKES.

A Nightingale from Athens, where
Promethean chorus filled the air,

And temples, statues, gods, looked down
On heroes, bards, and sages there,
Once came (for reasons hid from me)
Across the irrevocable sea
And dwelt in flat and sordid Town
Of Prairie Dogs, and Snakes, and Owls,
The name whereof was Gossip-ville.
The Owls, the Prairie Dogs, the Snakes
Began with fang and jaw and bill:
"That Creature's surely no great shakes—
The stupidest of all the Fowls
Of Sea, or Air, or Plains, or Lakes!—
Just see the way she soars a-wing,
Just hear the way she tries to sing,
As if she owned the sky and moon—
She's crazy, or she will be soon."

Moral.

Alas for one who giveth vent
To native genius, native bent,
Within the wrong environment!

THE COW AND THE OSTRICH.

A Cow with anthrax and the rickets,
Forlornly grazing in the thickets,
Tore off and swallowed at a gulp
A leaf-hid hornets' nest of pulp.
The hot-feet creatures did explore
With angry haste her stomachs four,
And rendered life to that same cow

A fourfold sadder problem now.
An Ostrich, with long whiskered neck,
Began upon her ear to peck,
And chided her for melancholy:
"The trouble's *in yourself,* girl, wholly—
You think about yourself too much—
You're egocentric—That is it!"

Moral.

Wise words, when said with tactful touch,
Are helpful for a moping fit.

THE LION IN PAIN.

A Lion in lands of old Osiris,
In the solemn reign of Cyrus,*
Splashing midst the Nile's papyrus,
Got a dose of Adder's virus
Which inflamed his either iris,
So that round the tomb of Cheops
He emitted two or three yawps.

Moral.

Universe of pain and yelling!—
What's the use of *our* rebelling?

THE STAG AND HIS FRIENDS.

A Stag, who'd lost his favorite Hind,
To keep from going mad in mind

* *Note.* But if you rise and say: "By Isis,
'Twas in the reign of good Cambyses,
Or that of Seti or Ramesis"—
It won't affect the moral thesis.

With grief and desolation, quaffed
The brook and watched the fish and laughed
At shoals of wriggling pollywogs,
And spiders on the sands and logs;
And sometimes he would run and crack
His antlers on a hackmatack,
And stop and look before and back
And laugh again; and he would test
His strength at leaping with a zest
O'er many a thicket, many a stone;
But shed no tear, and gave no groan,
And never bound his stalwart shape
With bands of melancholy crêpe,
And never went at night to rave
Above the solitary grave.
(His heart was bound with black despair;
The grave was with him everywhere.)
And so it was his quondam Friends—
The Crows, the Owls, the Bats, the Gends,
The Tookrous, Porgers and the Quail—
Began to criticize and rail:
"The shameless beast, without respect
For death and dead one! This neglect
Of mortuary decencies
And all our old proprieties!
Nay more!—This flaunting in our face
Of heartless mirth!—O what disgrace!"

Moral.

Some people's gifts of intellect
Are smaller than you might suspect.

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI.

A little lady at the door.
She stood so innocent and merry:
She was a vision extra-*or*-
Dinary.

She beckoned kindly, called and cooed;
And I was such a sombre cuss
That my alacrity was *lud*-
Icrous.

She drew me in and sate me down,
And handed me her tarts and tea;
And I devoured them O so *clown*-
Ishly.

And not a word she uttered then;
And I could ne'er the riddle guess:

Moral.

But ever since, I'm full of *pen*-
Siveness.

THE PIGEON AND THE SPARROW.

A Pigeon, sweeping from the clouds afar,
Lit on an oozy roof of pebbled tar,
Half melted in the summer sun. Her claws
And wing-tips soon were smeared; and grievous
laws

Of hot and glutinous viscosity
Entangled her. And, lo, a black monstrosity
Was she, and helpless as a sucking farrow.
This was the reason why an English Sparrow—
A dapper little sycophant and wheezer—
Popped in upon her back and gan to teaze her,
Picked off each feather, jabbed in either eye,
And then retired in hope to see her die,
From his cool perch upon a swaying wire.

Moral.

Mohammed states the moral we require,
In his great Surah of "The Bloody Pod"—
Thus: "Worraps el-tt-il yl-saem a-eb t'nod!"—
And who hath sung a deeper thought or higher!

THE SINE AND THE TANGENT.

A little Sine—(I do not mean
A placard on a post or screen,
Or twist of finger and of thumb
In language of the deaf and dumb)—
A little Sine of sort you see
In any Trigonometry,
Once boasted to the Tangent thus
With petulance cantankerous:
"I am perfection; for I grow
From ratio to ratio;
I change from Zero up to One—
Which is the symbol of the Sun."
The Tangent: "Petty simpleton,

From Zero to Infinity
By many a marvelous degree
'Tis mine to thrive forevermore:
Bow low thy head, sir, and adore
The Tangent, symbol most sublime
Of all of Space and all of Time."
Yet whilst they rend the air and wrangle,
Lo, all depends upon the Angle—
Lo, both their natures have their cause
In very transcendental laws!

Moral.

O Children, Children, if ye be
Afflicted still with Surquedry,
Remember that you but express
The Universe's More or Less—
It's not yourself, or ma or pa:
You're merely small Phen-om-en-a
Dependent for your essence on
A Hysteron and Proteron,
A Cosmic Complex megathrogous!—
Which ancient sages called the Logos.

THE CAT, THE RAVEN, AND THE PUBLIC.

A Cat and Raven quarreled once.
The Cat called Raven coward, dunce,
Lobster, blatherskite, poltroon,
Blackguard, scullion, and coon,
Hatchet-face and scrawny pate,
And other names I must not state

If I wish this tale to be
Sound in its morality.
And ere the Raven could reply,
The Cat had clawed it in the eye;
And ere the Raven had upsprung,
The Cat had bitten off its tongue.
The Public, ignorant of what
A handicap the Bird had got,
Admired its passive reticence
And said, "What dignity, what sense,
What lofty self-control! This Raven
Designs not to answer such a craven.
Aye, silence is the wise retort—
It makes your foe feel like a wart."

Moral.

It's often nothing of the sort!

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

Well, here's the Book of Fables, done
Whilst I had neither star nor sun,
And little cause, good friends, to jest—
Except one cause, and *that* the best.
I will explain. Some folks averred
To one another, having heard
That I had gone to Æsoping,
"His grief is but a paltry sting,
Or else he'd have no heart for jokes."
This world is full of stupid folks.
We mop our eye, we bow our pate,
We squat, or we vociferate,
Or shuffle round with rueful faces,
Alone in amateur cases,
When certain that by doing so
We'll get some luxury in woe.
Such amateur cases are:
A broken leg, a family jar,
A house burned down, a jealous throb,
Or being fired from our job.
But in the major griefs and pains
Afflicting homo sapiens,

We lift our heads, our eyes are dry,
We stalk about, and we defy—
We laugh—we laugh! 'Tis no pretense:
Self-preservation and defense
It is indeed. So desperate
In this grim world is now our state
That but one tear were death and date.
A major case?—I still am dumb;
But let that pass: my time shall come!