

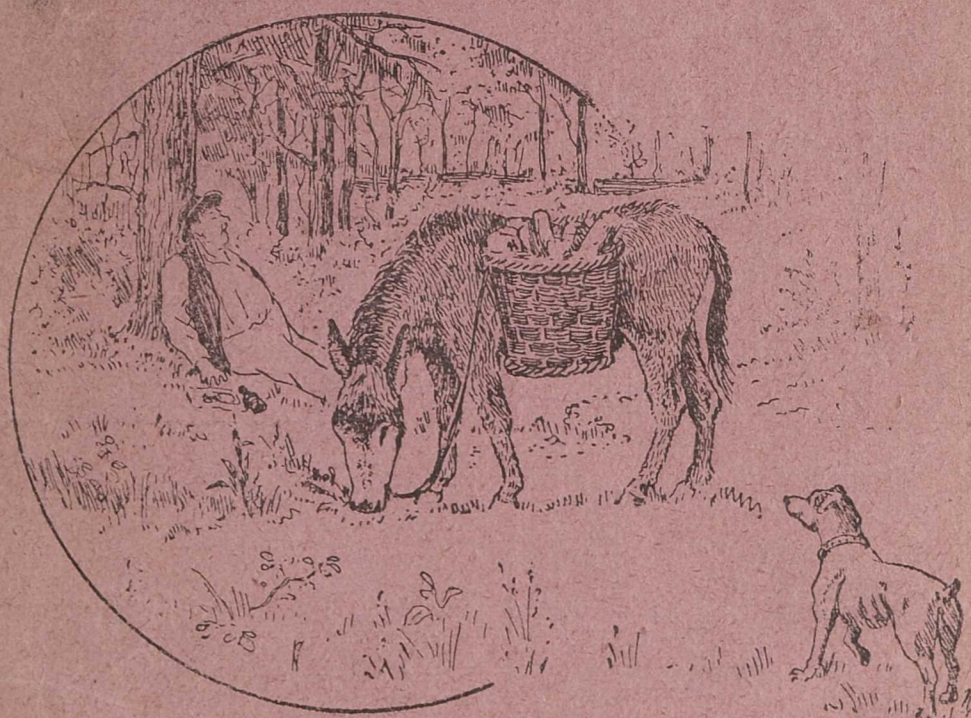
BOOKS FOR THE BAIRNS.—XLV.

EDITED BY W. T. STEAD.

THE
FABLES ^{OF} LA FONTAINE

A Selection for Little Children.

ILLUSTRATED BY BRINSLEY LE FANU.



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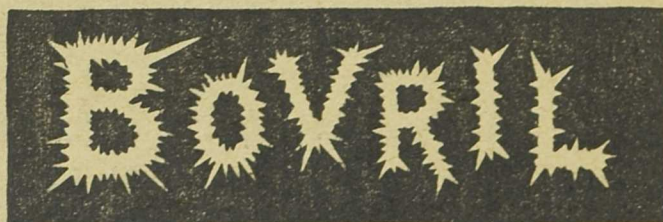
THE LANCET (July 3rd, 1897) says:—

“VAN HOUTEN'S Cocoa yields a maximum
“proportion of the valuable food constituents
“of the bean, more easy of digestion than
“cocoa not so prepared.”

You can therefore get more strength and
nourishment out of a cup of VAN HOUTEN'S
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BOOKS FOR THE BAIRNS.—XLV.

FABLES

BY

LA FONTAINE.

ILLUSTRATED BY BRINSLEY LE FANU.

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LONDON :

“REVIEW OF REVIEWS” OFFICE

[ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.]

FABLES BY LA FONTAINE.

THE CITY RAT AND THE COUNTRY RAT.

A city rat, one night,
Did, with a civil stoop,
A country rat invite
To end a turtle soup.

Upon a Turkey carpet
They found the table spread,
And sure I need not harp it
How well the fellows fed.

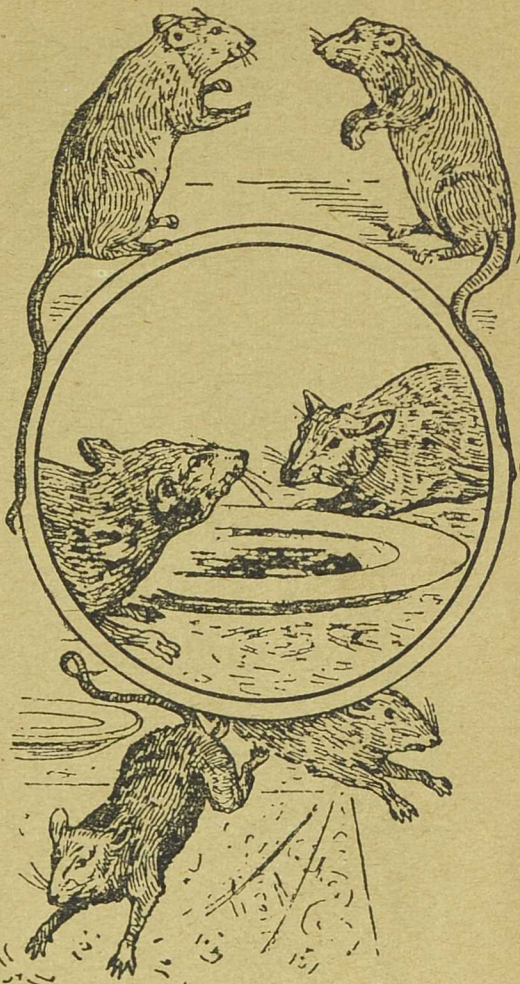
The entertainment was
A truly noble one;
But some unlucky cause
Disturb'd it when begun.

It was a slight rat-tat,
That put their joys to rout,
Out ran the city rat;
His guest too scamper'd out.

Our rats but fairly quit,
The fearful knocking ceased.
"Return we," cried the cit,
"To finish there our feast."

"No," said the rustic rat;
"To-morrow dine with me.
I'm not offended at
Your feast so grand and
free,—

"For I've no fare resembling;
But then I eat at leisure,
And would not swap, for pleasure
So mix'd with fear and
trembling."





THE WOLF AND THE DOG.

THE WOLF AND THE DOG.

A PROWLING wolf, whose shaggy skin
So strict the watch of dogs had been)
Hid little but his bones,

Once met a mastiff dog astray.

A prouder, fatter, sleeker Tray
No human mortal owns.

Sir Wolf, in famish'd plight,
Would fain have made a ration
Upon his fat relation ;

But then he first must fight ;
And well the dog seem'd able
To save from wolfish table

His carcase snug and tight.

So, then, in civil conversation,
The wolf express'd his admiration

Of Tray's fine case. Said Tray, politely,

" Yourself, good sir, may be as sightly ;
Quit but the woods, advised by me—

For all your fellows here, I see,
Are shabby wretches, lean and gaunt,
Belike to die of haggard want.

With such a pack, of course it follo
One fights for every bit he swallows.

Come, then, with me, and share
On equal terms our princely fare."

" But what with you
Has one to do ? "

Inquires the wolf. " Light work indeed,

Replies the dog ; " you only need

To bark a little now and then,

To chase off duns and beggar men,
To fawn on friends that come or go forth,
Your master please, and so forth ;

For which you have to eat
 All sorts of well-cook'd meat—
 Cold pullets, pigeons, savoury messes—
 Besides unnumber'd fond caresses."

The wolf, by force of appetite,
 Accepts the terms outright.

Tears glistening in his eyes,
 But faring on, he spies

A gall'd spot on the mastiff's neck.

"What's that?" he cries. "O, nothing but a speck."
 "A speck?" "Ay, ay; 'tis not enough to pain me;
 Perhaps the collar's mark by which they chain me."

"Chain! chain you! What! run you not, then,
 Just where you please, and when?"

"Not always, sir; but what of that?"

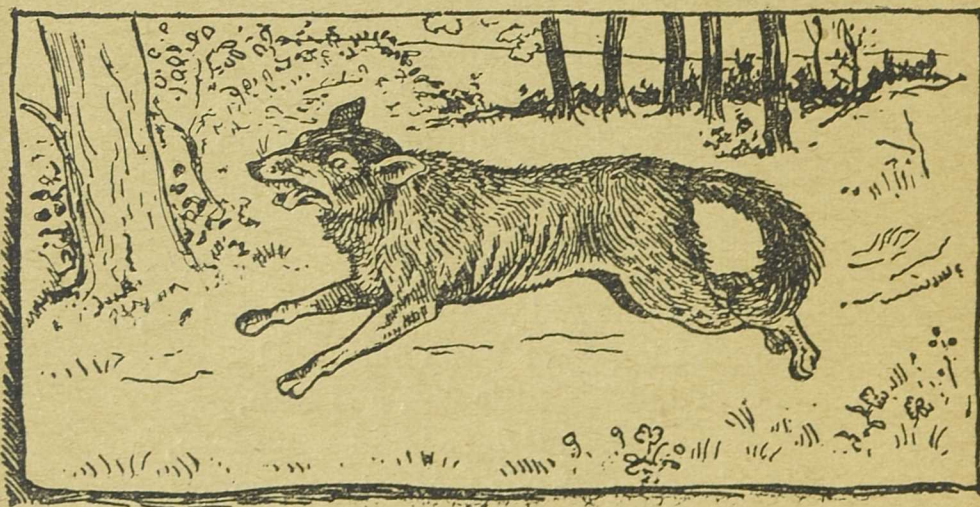
"Enough for me, to spoil your fat!

It ought to be a precious price

Which could to servile chains entice;

For me, I'll shun them while I've wit."

So ran Sir Wolf, and runneth yet.



THE DAIRYMAID AND THE POT OF MILK.

A POT of milk upon her
 cushion'd crown,
 Good Peggy hasten'd to the
 market town;
 Short clad and light, with
 speed she went,
 Not fearing any accident;
 Indeed, to be the nimbler
 tripper,
 Her dress that day,
 The truth to say,
 Was simple petticoat and
 slipper.
 And thus bedight,
 Good Peggy, light,—
 Her gains already counted,—
 Laid out the cash
 At single dash,
 Which to a hundred eggs
 amounted.
 Three nests she made,
 Which by the aid
 Of diligence and care were
 hatch'd.
 "To raise the chicks,
 I'll easy fix,"
 Said she, "beside our cottage
 thatch'd.
 The fox must get
 More cunning yet,
 Or leave enough to buy a
 pig.
 With little care
 And any fare,
 He'll grow quite fat and big;
 And then the price
 Will be so nice,
 For which the pork will sell!



'Twill go quite hard
But in our yard
I'll bring a cow and calf to dwell—
A calf to frisk among the flock !”
The thought made Peggy do the same ;
And down at once the milk-pot came,
And perish'd with the shock.

Calf, cow, and pig, and chicks, adieu !
Your mistress' face is sad to view ;
She gives a tear to fortune spilt ;
Then with the downcast look of guilt
Home to her husband empty goes,
Somewhat in danger of his blows.

Who buildeth not, sometimes, in air
His cots, or seats, or castles fair ?
From kings to dairywomen,—all,—
The wise, the foolish, great and small,—
Each thinks his waking dream the best.
Some flattering error fills the breast :
The world with all its wealth is ours,
Its honours, dames, and loveliest bowers.
Instinct with valour, when alone,
I hurl the monarch from his throne ;
The people, glad to see him dead,
Elect me monarch in his stead,
And diadems rain on my head.
Some accident then calls me back,
And I'm no more than simple Jack.



NEVER COUNT YOUR CHICKENS BEFORE THEY ARE HATCHED.

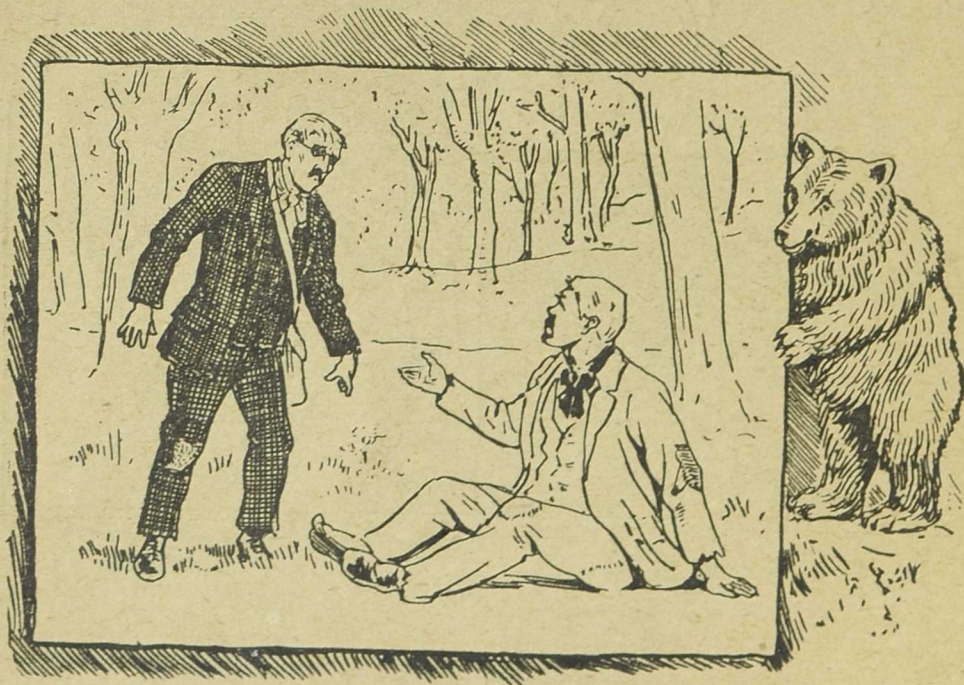
THE BEAR AND THE TWO COMPANIONS.

Two fellows, needing funds, and bold,
A bearskin to a furrier sold,
Of which the bear was living still,
But which they presently would kill—
At least they said they would.
And, if their word was good,
It was a king of bears—an Ursa Major—
The biggest bear beneath the sun.
Its skin, the chaps would wager,
Was cheap at double cost;
'Twould make one laugh at frost—
And make two robes as well as one.
Old Dindenaut, in sheep who dealt,
Less prized his sheep, than they their pelt—
(In their account 'twas theirs,
But in his own, the bear's.)
By bargain struck upon the skin,
Two days at most must bring it in.
Forth went the two. More easy found than got,
The bear came growling at them on the trot.
Behold our dealers both confounded,
As if by thunderbolt astounded!
Their bargain vanish'd suddenly in air;
For who could plead his interest with a bear?
One of the friends sprung up a tree,
The other, cold as ice could be,
Fell on his face, feign'd death,
And closely held his breath—
He having somewhere heard it said
The bear ne'er preys upon the dead.
Sir Bear, sad blockhead, was deceived—
The prostrate man a corpse believed;



FIRST KILL THE BEAR.

But, half suspecting some deceit,
He feels and snuffs from head to feet,
And in the nostrils blows.
The body's surely dead, he thinks.
"I'll leave it," says he, "for it stinks";
And off into the woods he goes.
The other dealer, from his tree
Descending cautiously, to see
His comrade lying in the dirt,
Consoling, says, "It is a wonder
That, by the monster forced asunder,
We're, after all, more scared than hurt.
But," addeth he, "what of the creature's skin?
He held his muzzle very near;
What did he whisper in your ear?"
"He gave this caution,—'Never dare
Again to sell the skin of bear
Its owner has not ceased to wear.'"



THE SATYR AND THE TRAVELLER.

WITHIN a savage forest grot
A satyr and his chips
Were taking down their porridge
hot ;
Their cups were at their lips.

You might have seen in mossy
den,
Himself, his wife, and brood ;
They had not tailor-clothes, like
men,
But appetites as good.

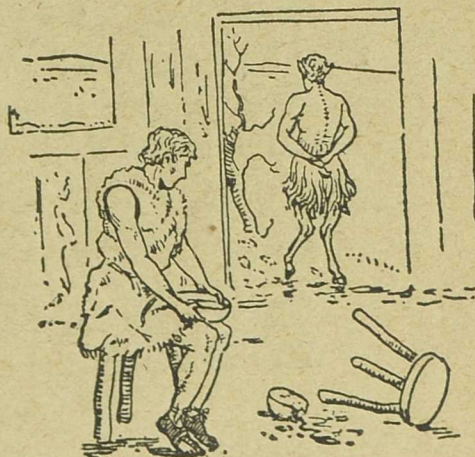
In came a traveller, benighted,
All hungry, cold, and wet,
Who heard himself to eat invited
With nothing like regret.

He did not give his host the pain
His asking to repeat ;
But first he blew with might and
main
To give his fingers heat.

Then in his steaming porridge dish
He delicately blew.
The wondering satyr said, "I wish
The use of both I knew."

"Why, first, my blowing warms
my hand,
And then it cools my porridge."
"Ah!" said his host, "then
understand
I cannot give you storage.

"To sleep beneath one roof with
you
I may not be so bold.
Far be it from me that mouth
untrue
Which blows both hot and cold."



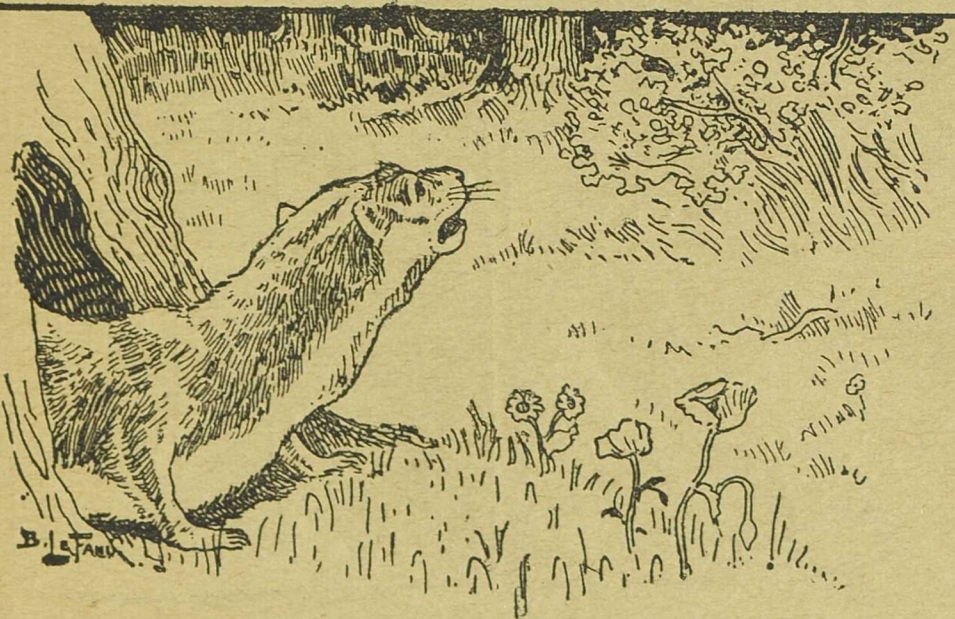
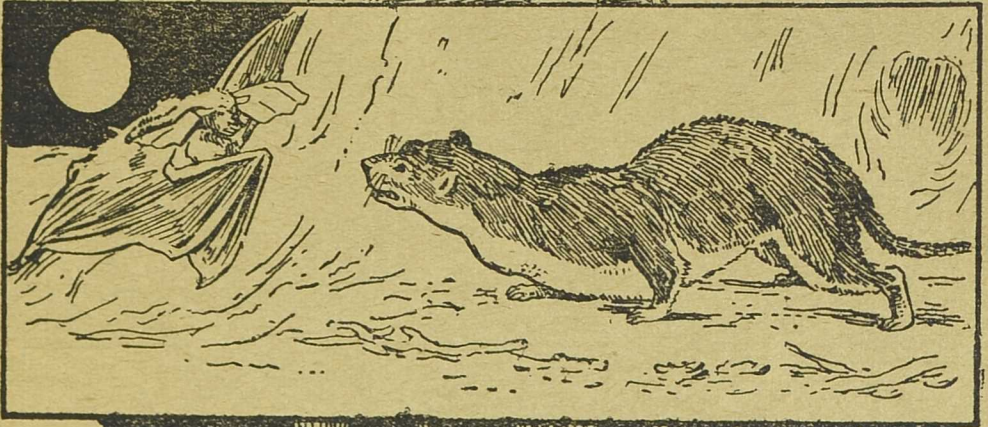
THE BAT AND THE TWO WEASELS.

A BLUNDERING bat once struck her head
Into a wakeful weasel's bed ;
Whereat the mistress of the house,
A deadly foe of rats and mice,
Was making ready in a trice
To eat the stranger as a mouse.

"What! do you dare," she said, "to creep in
The very bed I sometimes sleep in,
Now, after all the provocation
I've suffer'd from your thievish nation?
Are you not really a mouse,
That gnawing pest of every house,
Your special aim to do the cheese ill?
Ay, that you are, or I'm no weasel."

"I beg your pardon," said the bat;
"My kind is very far from that.
What! I a mouse! Who told you such a lie?
Why, ma'am, I am a bird;
And, if you doubt my word,
Just see the wings with which I fly.
Long live the mice that cleave the sky!"

These reasons had so fair a show,
The weasel let the creature go.



THE BAT AND THE WEASEL,



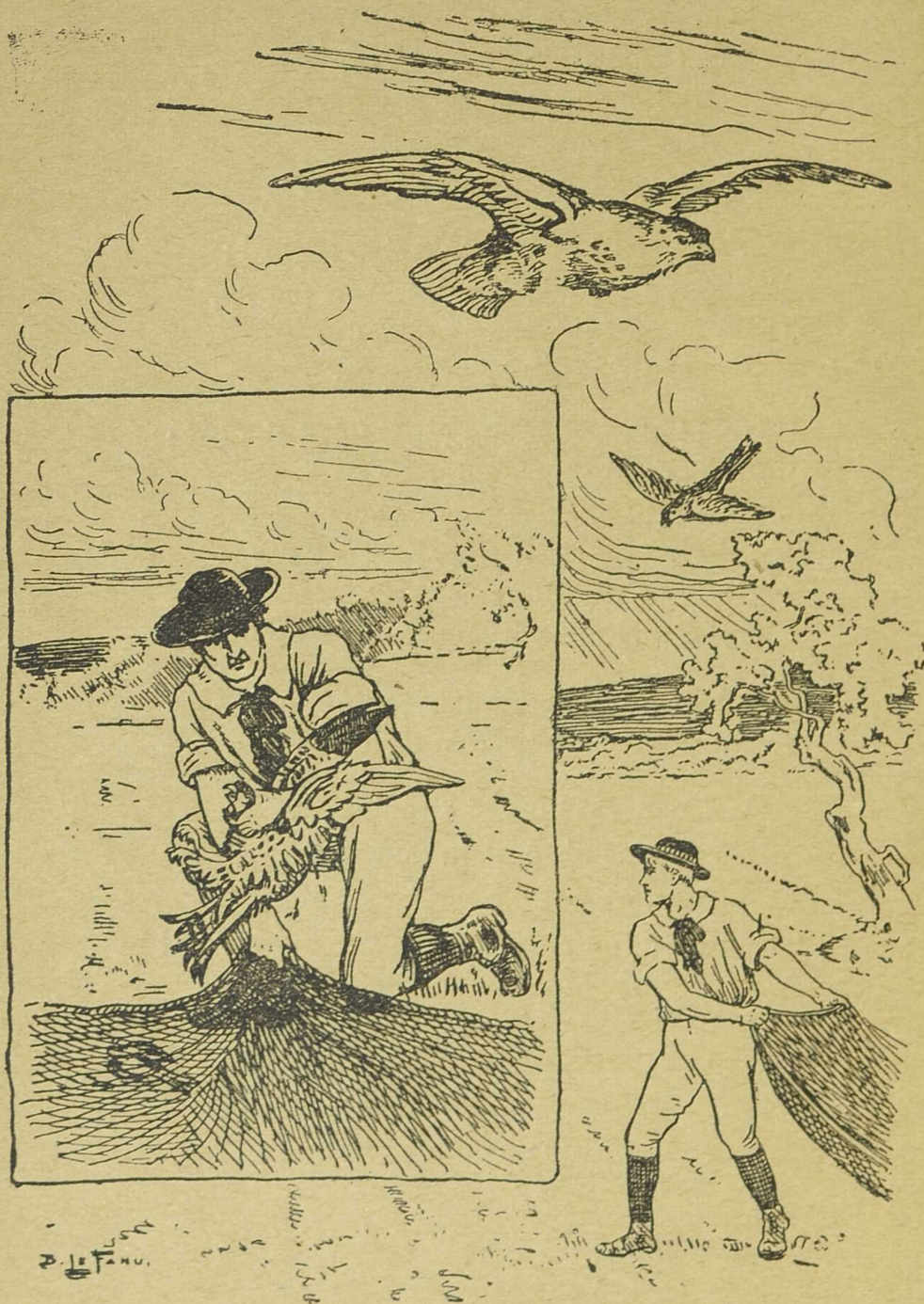
By some strange fancy led,
The same wise blunderhead,
But two or three days later,
Had chosen for her rest
Another weasel's nest,
This last, of birds a special hater.

New peril brought this step absurd :
Without a moment's thought or puzzle,
Dame weasel oped her peaked muzzle
To eat th' intruder as a bird.

"Hold ! do not wrong me," cried the bat ;
"I'm truly no such thing as that.
Your eyesight strange conclusions gathers.
What makes a bird, I pray ? Its feathers.
I'm cousin of the mice and rats.
Great Jupiter confound the cats !"

The bat, by such adroit replying,
Twice saved herself from dying.

And many a human stranger
Thus turns his coat in danger ;
And sings, as suits, where'er he goes,
"God save the King !"—or "save his foes !"



THE BITER BIT.

THE FOWLER, THE HAWK, AND THE LARK;

OR, THE BITER BIT.

FROM wrongs of wicked men we draw

Excuses for our own :—

Such is the universal law.

Would you have mercy shown,

Let yours be clearly known.

A fowler's mirror served to snare

The little tenants of the air.

A lark there saw her pretty face,

And was approaching to the place.

A hawk, that sailed on high

Like vapour in the sky,

Came down, as still as infant's breath,

On her who sang so near her death.

She thus escaped the fowler's steel,

The hawk's malignant claws to feel.

While in his cruel way,

The pirate pluck'd his prey,

Upon himself the net was sprung.

"O fowler," pray'd he in the hawkish tongue,

"Release me in thy clemency !

I never did a wrong to thee."

The man replied, "'Tis true ;

And did the lark to you ?"

THE CAMEL AND THE FLOATING STICKS;

OR, SOME THINGS ARE NOT SO DREADFUL AS THEY SEEM.

THE first who saw the humpback'd camel
Fled off for life; the next approach'd with care;
The third with tyrant rope did boldly dare
The desert wanderer to trammel.

Such is the power of use to change
The face of objects new and strange;
Which grow, by looking at, so tame,
They do not even seem the same.
And since this theme is up for our attention,
A certain watchman I will mention,
Who, seeing something far
Away upon the ocean,
Could not but speak his notion
That 'twas a ship of war.
Some minutes more had past,—
A bomb-ketch 'twas without a sail,
And then a boat, and then a bale,
And floating sticks of wood at last!

Full many things on earth, I wot,
Will claim this tale—and well they may;
They're something dreadful far away,
But near at hand—they're not.





THE MAN AND THE WOODEN GOD.

A PAGAN kept a god of wood,—
A sort that never hears,
Though furnish'd well with ears,—
From which he hoped for wondrous good.
The idol cost the board of three ;
So much enrich'd was he
With vows and offerings vain,
With bullocks garlanded and slain :
No idol ever had, as that,
A kitchen quite so full and fat.
But all this worship at his shrine
Brought not from this same block divine
Inheritance, or hidden mine,
Or luck at play, or any favour.
Nay, more, if any storm whatever
Brew'd trouble here or there,
The man was sure to have his share,
And suffer in his purse,
Although the god fared none the worse.
At last, by sheer impatience bold,
The man a crowbar seizes,
His idol breaks in pieces,
And finds it richly stuff'd with gold.
“How's this? Have I devoutly treated,”
Says he, “your godship, to be cheated?
Now leave my house, and go your way,
And search for altars where you may.
You're like those natures, dull and gross,
From which comes nothing but by blows ;
The more I gave, the less I got ;
I'll now be rich, and you may rot !”

THE WOLF, THE GOAT, AND THE KID.

As went the goat her pendent dugs to fill,
 And browse the herbage of a distant hill,
 She latch'd her door, and bid,
 With matron care, her kid :—
 “ My daughter, as you live,
 This portal don't undo
 To any creature who
 This watchword does not give :
 ‘ Death take the wolf and all his race ! ’ ”
 The wolf was passing near the place
 By chance, and heard the words with pleasure,
 And laid them up as useful treasure ;
 And hardly need we mention,
 Escaped the goat's attention.
 No sooner did he see
 The matron off, than he,
 With hypocritic tone and face,
 Cried out before the place,
 “ Death take the wolf and all his race ! ”
 Not doubting thus to gain admission.
 The kid, not void of all suspicion,
 Peer'd through a crack, and cried,
 “ Show me white paw before
 You ask me to undo the door.”
 The wolf could not, if he had died,
 For wolves have no connexion
 With paws of that complexion.
 So, much surprised, our gormandiser
 Retired to fast till he was wiser.
 How would the kid have been undone
 Had she but trusted to the word
 The wolf by chance had overheard !
 Two sureties better are than one ;
 And caution's worth its cost,
 Though sometimes seeming lost.



"CAUTION IS WORTH ITS COST."



THE LION GOING TO WAR;

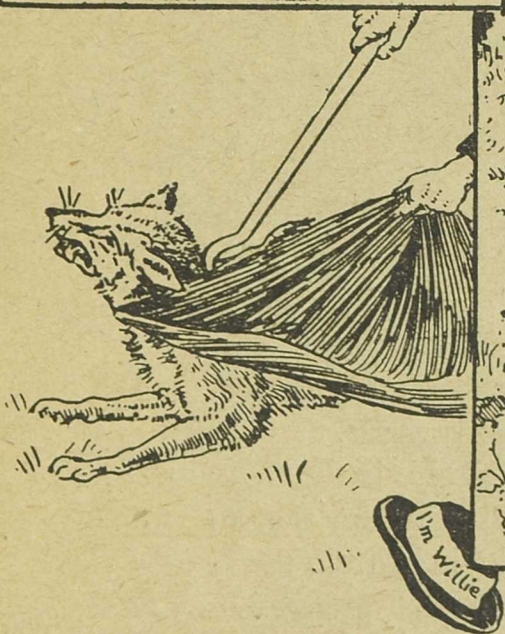
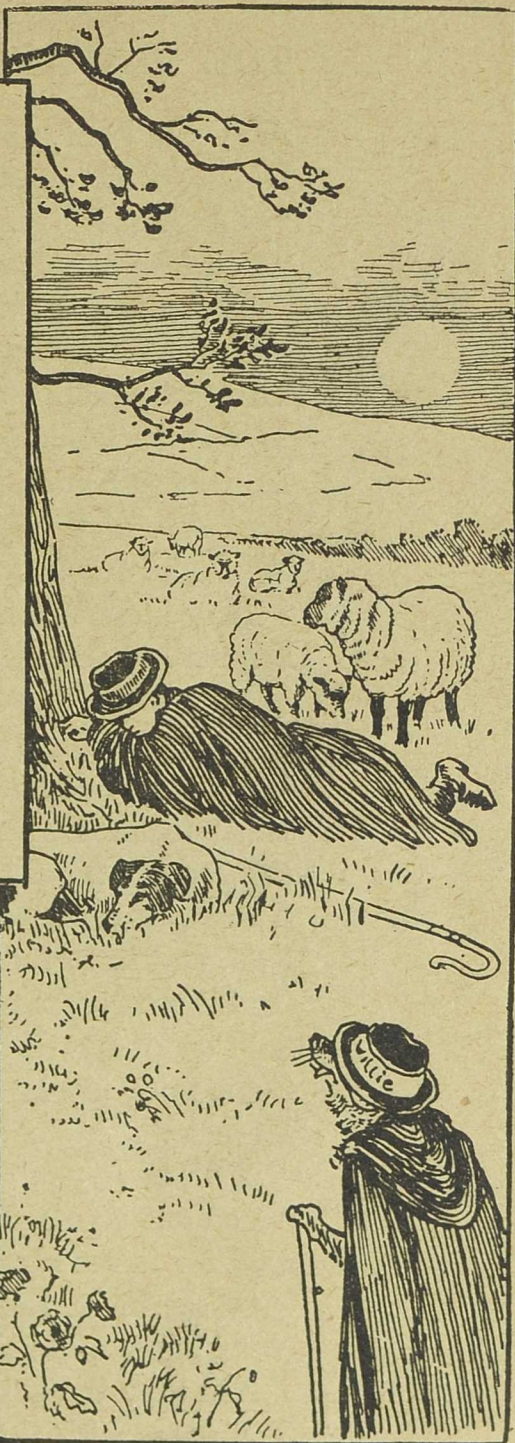
OR, THERE'S NOTHING USELESS TO A MAN OF SENSE.

THE lion had an enterprise in hand ;
Held a war-council, sent his provost-marshal,
And gave the animals a call impartial—
Each, in his way, to serve his high command.
The elephant should carry on his back
The tools of war, the mighty public pack,
And fight in elephantine way and form ;
The bear should hold himself prepared to storm ;
The fox all secret stratagems should fix ;
The monkey should amuse the foe by tricks.
“Dismiss,” said one, “the blockhead asses,
And hares, too cowardly and fleet.”
“No,” said the king ; “I use all classes ;
Without their aid my force were incomplete.
The ass shall be our trumpeter, to scare
Our enemy. And then the nimble hare
Our royal bulletins shall homeward bear.”

A monarch provident and wise
Will hold his subjects all of consequence,
And know in each what talent lies.
There's nothing useless to a man of sense.

THE WOLF TURNED SHEPHERD.

A WOLF, whose gettings from the flocks
 Began to be but few,
 Bethought himself to play the fox
 In character quite new.
 A shepherd's hat and coat he took,
 A cudgel for a crook,
 Nor e'en the pipe forgot :
 And more to seem what he was not,
 Himself upon his hat he wrote,
 "I'm Willie, shepherd of these sheep."
 His person thus complete,
 His crook in upraised feet,
 The impostor Willie stole upon the keep.
 The real Willie, on the grass asleep,
 Slept there, indeed, profoundly,
 His dog and pipe slept, also soundly ;
 His drowsy sheep around him lay.
 As for the greatest number,
 Much bless'd the hypocrite their slumber,
 And hoped to drive away the flock,
 Could he the shepherd's voice but mock.
 He thought undoubtedly he could.
 He tried : the tone in which he spoke,
 Loud echoing from the wood,
 The plot and slumber broke ;
 Sheep, dog, and man awoke.
 The wolf in sorry plight,
 In hampering coat bedight,
 Could neither run nor fight.
 There's always leakage of deceit
 Which makes it never safe to cheat.
 Whoever is a wolf had better
 Keep clear of hypocritic fetter.



THE FLY AND THE ANT.

A FLY and ant, upon a sunny bank,
Discuss'd the question of their rank.

"O Jupiter!" the former said,

"Can love of self so turn the head,
That one so mean and crawling,

And of so low a calling,

To boast equality shall dare

With me, the daughter of the air?

In palaces I am a guest,

And even at thy glorious feast.

Whene'er the people that adore thee

May immolate for thee a bullock,

I'm sure to taste the meat before thee.

Meanwhile this starveling, in her hillock,

Is living on some bit of straw

Which she has labour'd home to draw.

But tell me now, my little thing,

Do you camp ever on a king,

An emperor, or lady?

I do, and have full many a play-day

On fairest bosom of the fair,

And sport myself upon her hair.

Come now, my hearty, rack your brain

To make a case about your grain."

"Well, have you done?" replied the ant.

"You enter palaces, I grant,

And for it get right soundly cursed.

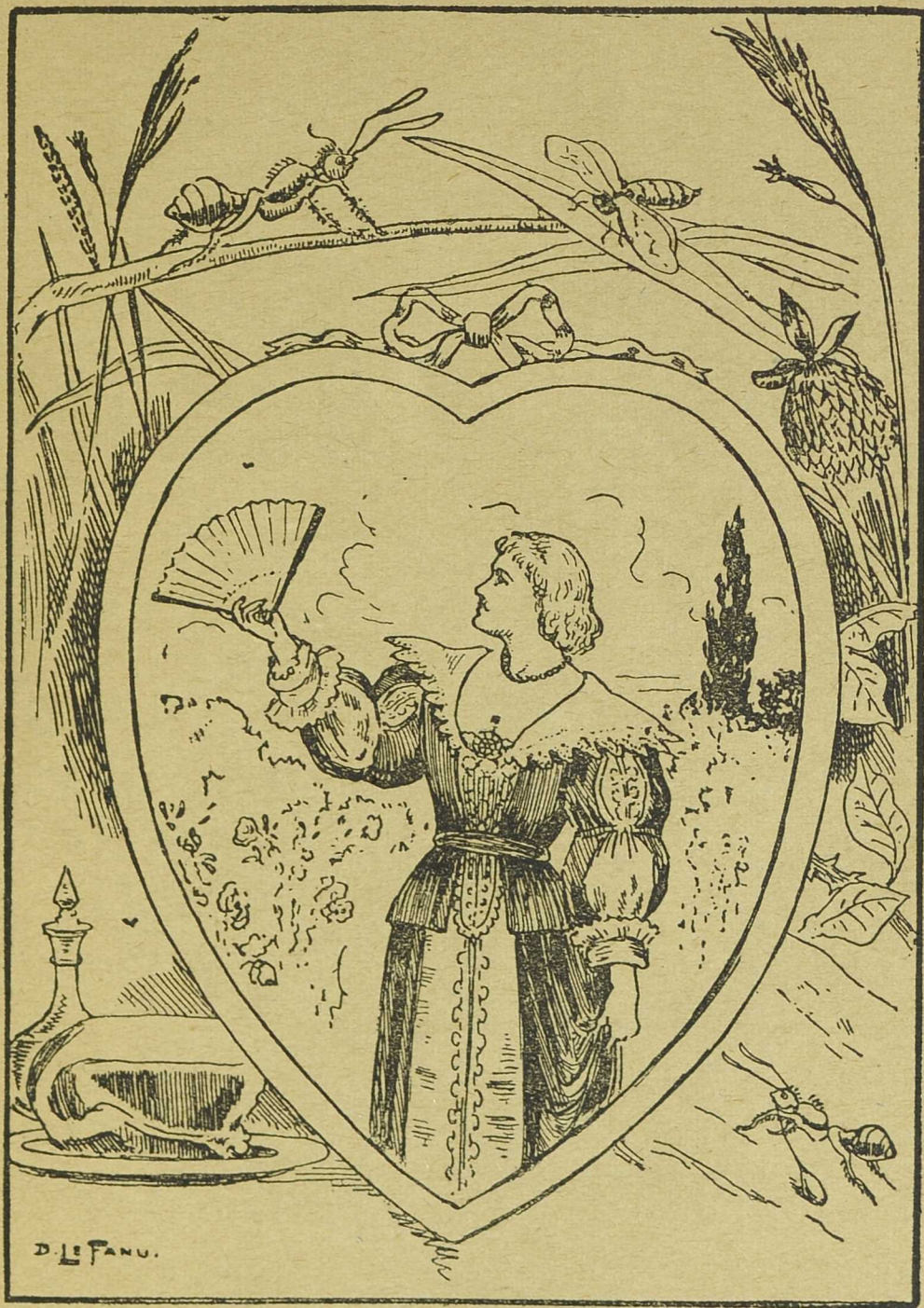
Of sacrifices, rich and fat,

Your taste, quite likely, is the first;—

Are they the better off for that?

You enter with the holy train;

So enters many a wretch profane.

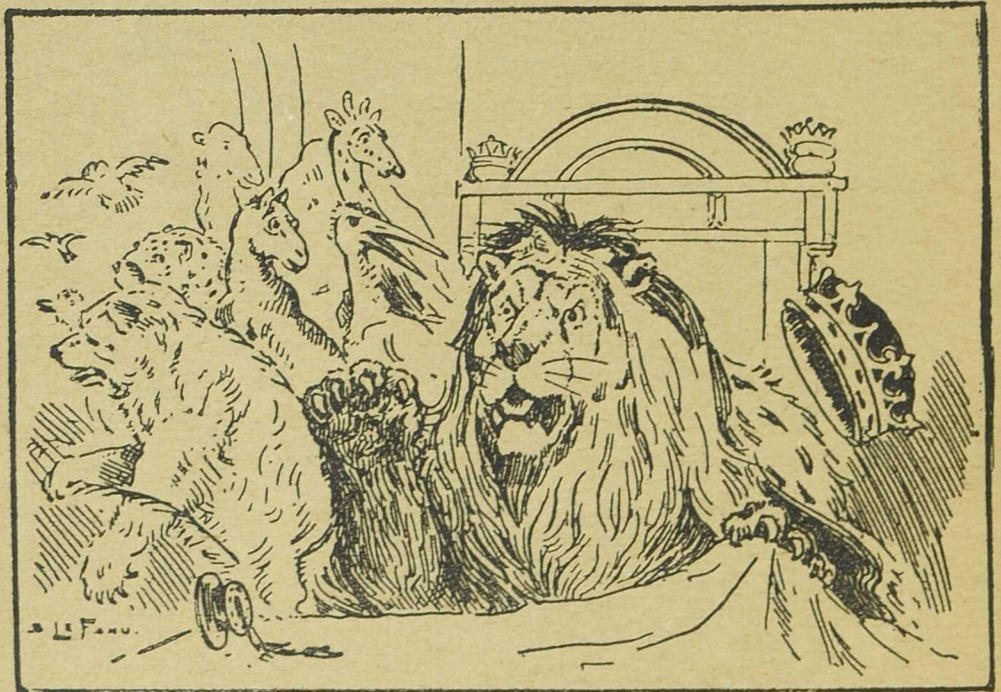
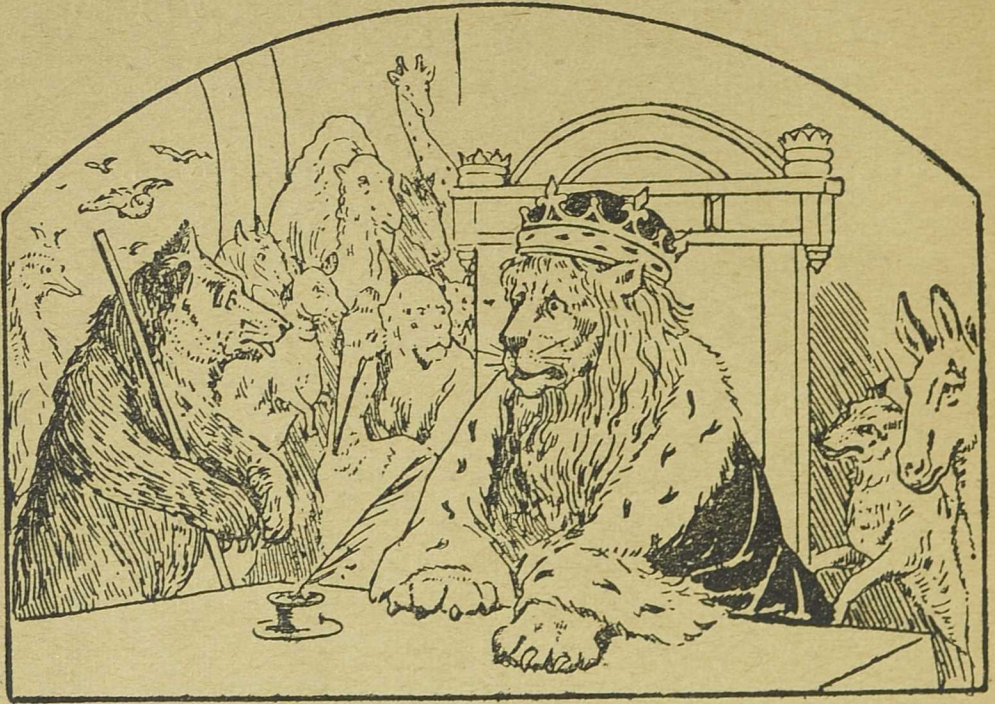


THE FLY AND FALSE GLORY.



THE ANT AND TRUE GLORY.

On heads of kings and asses you may squat;
Deny your vaunting I will not;
But well such impudence, I know,
Provokes a sometimes fatal blow.
The name in which your vanity delights
Is own'd as well by parasites,
And spies that die by ropes—as you soon will
By famine or by ague-chill,
When Phœbus goes to cheer
The other hemisphere,—
The very time to me most dear.
Not forced abroad to go
Through wind, and rain, and snow,
My summer's work I then enjoy,
And happily my mind employ,
From care by care exempted.
By which this truth I leave to you,
That by two sorts of glory we are tempted,
The false one and the true.
Work waits, time flies; adieu:—
This gabble does not fill
My granary or till."



THE GNAT MAKES WAR ON THE LION.

THE LION AND THE GNAT.

"Go, paltry insect, nature's meanest brat!"

Thus said the royal lion to the gnat.

The gnat declared immediate war.

"Think you," said he, "your royal name
To me worth caring for?"

Think you I tremble at your power or fame

The ox is bigger far than you,

Yet him I drive, and all his crew."

This said, as one that did no fear owe,

Himself he blew the battle charge,

Himself both trumpeter and hero.

At first he play'd about at large,

Then on the lion's neck, at leisure, settled,

And there the royal beast full sorely nettled.

With foaming mouth, and flashing eye,

He roars. All creatures hide or fly—

Such mortal terror at

The work of one poor gnat!

With constant change of his attack,

The snout now stinging, now the back,

And now the chambers of the nose;

The pigmy fly no mercy shows.

The lion's rage was at its height;

His viewless foe now laugh'd outright,

When on his battle-ground he saw

That every savage tooth and claw

Had got its proper beauty

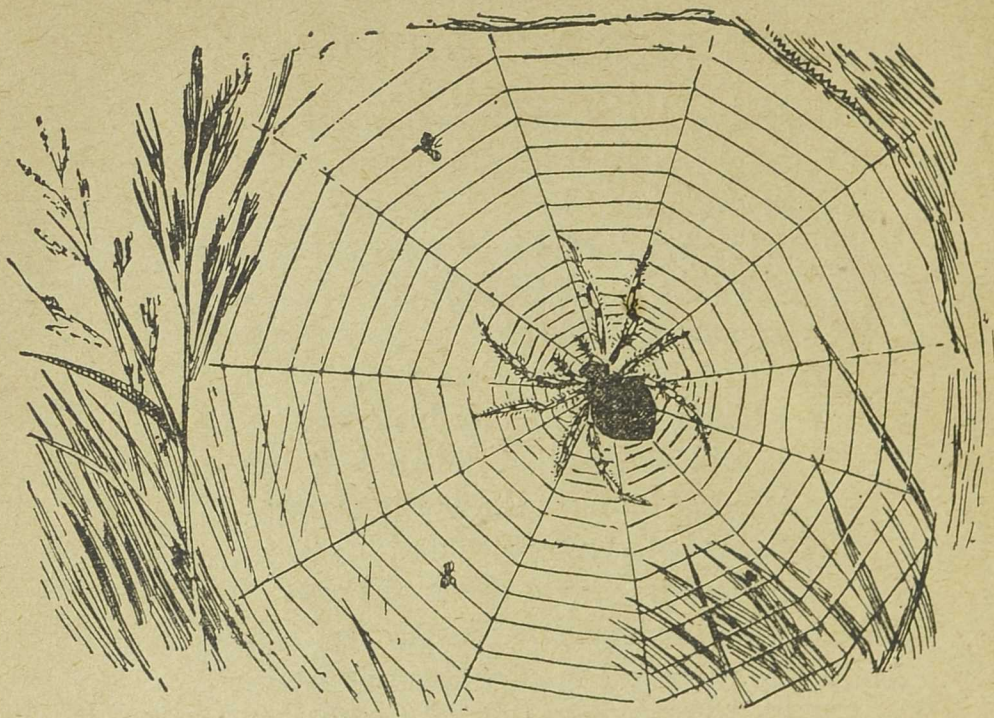
By doing blood-red duty;

Himself, the hapless lion, tore his hide,

And lash'd with sounding tail from side to side.

Ah! bootless blow, and bite, and curse!

He beat the harmless air, and worse;



For, though so fierce and stout,
By effort wearied out,
He fainted, fell, gave up the quarrel.
The gnat retires with verdant laurel.
Now rings his trumpet clang,
As at the charge it rang.
But while his triumph note he blows,
Straight on our valiant conqueror goes
A spider's ambuscade to meet,
And make its web his winding-sheet.

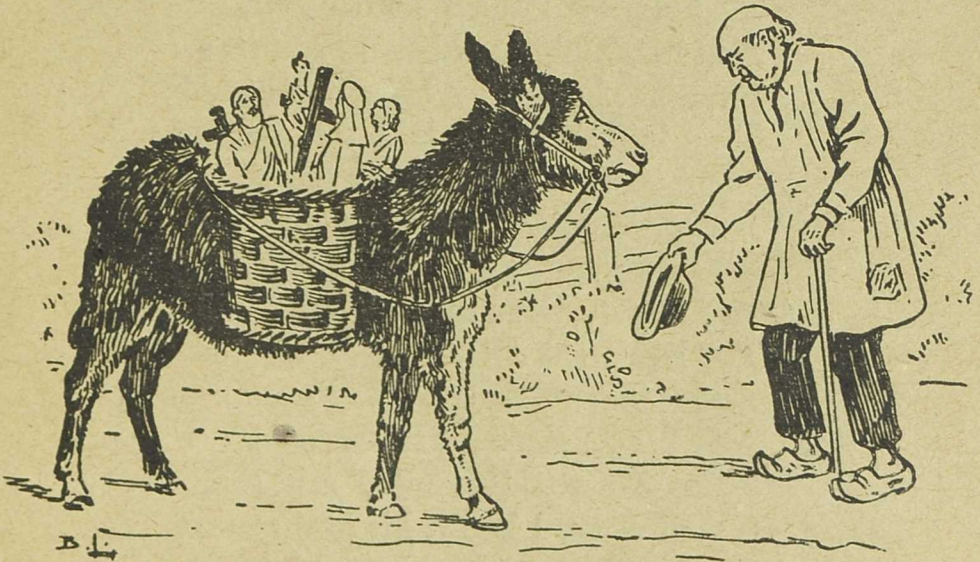
We often have the most to fear
From those we most despise ;
Again, great risks a man may clear,
Who by the smallest dies.

THE ASS CARRYING RELICS;

OR, THE COAT DOES NOT MAKE THE MAN.

AN ass, with relics for his load,
Supposed the worship on the road
Meant for himself alone,
And took on lofty airs,
Receiving as his own
The incense and the prayers.
Some one, who saw his great mistake,
Cried, "Master Donkey, do not make
Yourself so big a fool.
Not you they worship, but your pack;
They praise the idols on your back,
And count yourself a paltry tool."

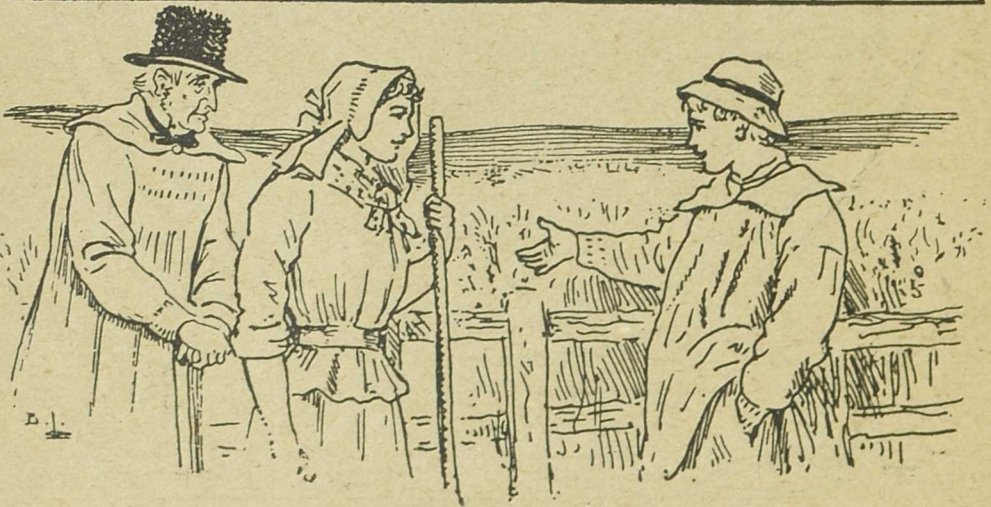
'Tis thus a brainless magistrate
Is honour'd for his robe of state.



THE LARK AND HER YOUNG ONES WITH THE
OWNER OF A FIELD.

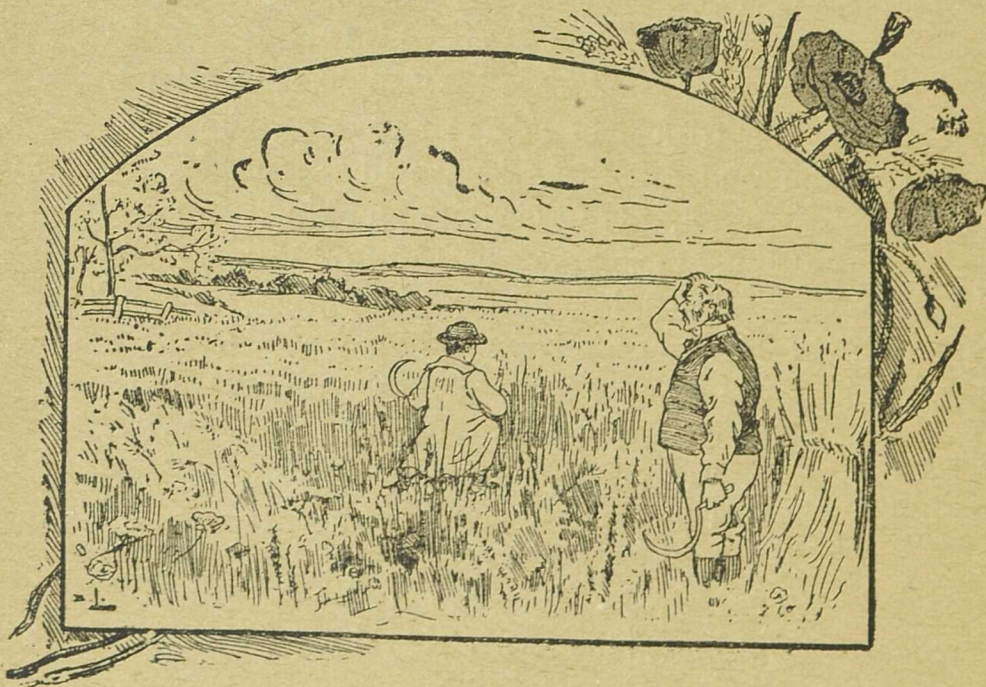
“DEPEND upon yourself alone,”
Has to a common proverb grown.
’Tis thus confirm’d in *Æsop*’s way:—
The larks to build their nests are seen
Among the wheat-crops young and green ;
That is to say,
What time all things, Dame Nature heeding,
Betake themselves to love and breeding—
The monstrous whales and sharks
Beneath the briny flood,
The tigers in the wood,
And in the fields, the larks.
One she, however, of these last
Found more than half the spring-time past
Without the taste of spring-time pleasures ;
When firmly she set up her will
That she would be a mother still,
And resolutely took her measures ;—
First, got herself by Hymen match’d ;
Then built her nest, laid, sat, and hatch’d.
All went as well as such things could.
The wheat-crop ripening ere the brood
Were strong enough to take their flight,
Aware how perilous their plight,
The lark went out to search for food,
And told her young to listen well,
And keep a constant sentinel.
“The owner of this field,” said she,
“Will come, I know, his grain to see.
Hear all he says ; we little birds
Must shape our conduct by his words.”





No sooner was the lark away,
Than came the owner with his son.
"This wheat is ripe," said he : "now run
And give our friends a call
To bring their sickles all,
And help us great and small,
To-morrow, at the break of day."
The lark, returning, found no harm,
Except her nest in wild alarm.
Says one, "We heard the owner say,
Go, give our friends a call
To help, to-morrow, break of day."
Replied the lark, "If that is all,
We need not be in any fear,
But only keep an open ear.
As gay as larks, now eat your victuals."
They ate and slept—the great and littles.
The dawn arrives, but not the friends ;
The lark soars up, the owner wends
His usual round to view his land.
"This grain," says he, "ought not to stand.
Our friends do wrong ; and so does he
Who trusts that friends will friendly be.
My son, go call our kith and kin
To help us get our harvest in."
This second order made
The little larks still more afraid.
"He sent for kindred, mother, by his son ;
The work will now, indeed, be done."
"No, darlings ; go to sleep ;
Our lowly nest we'll keep."
With reason said ; for kindred there came none.
Thus, tired of expectation vain,
Once more the owner view'd his grain.

“My son,” said he, “we’re surely fools
To wait for other people’s tools;
As if one might, for love or pelf,
Have friends more faithful than himself!
Engrave this lesson deep, my son.
And know you now what must be done?
We must ourselves our sickles bring,
And, while the larks their matins sing,
Begin the work; and, on this plan,
Get in our harvest as we can.”
This plan the lark no sooner knew,
Than, “Now’s the time,” she said, “my chicks;”
And, taking little time to fix,
Away they flew;
All fluttering, soaring, often grounding,
Decamp’d without a trumpet sounding.



THE GOOSE WITH THE GOLDEN EGGS

How avarice loseth all,
By striving all to gain,
I need no witness call
But him whose thrifty goose,
As by the fable we are told,
Laid every day an egg of gold.
“She hath a treasure in her body,”
Bethinks the avaricious noddie.
He kills and opens—vexed to find
All things like geese of common kind.
Thus spoil’d the source of all his riches,
To misers he a lesson teaches.
In these last changes of the moon,
How often doth one see
Men made as poor as he
By force of getting rich too soon!



THE OYSTER AND THE LITIGANTS.

Two pilgrims on the sand espied
 An oyster thrown up by the tide.
 In hope, both swallow'd ocean's fruit;
 But ere the fact there came dispute.
 While one stoop'd down to take the prey,
 The other push'd him quite away.

Said he, "'Twere rather meet
 To settle which shall eat.

Why, he who first the oyster saw
 Should be its eater, by the law;
 The other should but see him do it."
 Replied his mate, "If thus you view it,
 Thank God the lucky eye is mine."

"But I've an eye not worse than thine,"
 The other cried, "and will be cursed,
 If, too, I didn't see it first."

"You saw it, did you? Grant it true,
 I saw it then, and felt it too."

Amidst this sweet affair,
 Arrived a person very big,
 Yelept Sir Nincom Periwig.

They made him judge,—to set the matter square.

Sir Nincom, with a solemn face,

Took up the oyster and the case:

In opening both, the first he swallow'd,

And, in due time, his judgment follow'd.

"Attend: the court awards you each a shell
 Cost free; depart in peace, and use them well."

Foot up the cost of suits at law,

The leavings reckon and awards,

The cash you'll see Sir Nincom draw,

And leave the parties—purse and cards.



THE MONKEY AND THE CAT.

SLY Bertrand and Ratto in company sat,
(The one was a monkey, the other a cat,)

Co-servants and lodgers:

More mischievous codgers

Ne'er mess'd from a platter, since platters were flat.

Was anything wrong in the house or about it,

The neighbours were blameless,—no mortal could doubt it;

For Bertrand was thievish, and Ratto so nice,

More attentive to cheese than he was to the mice.

One day the two plunderers sat by the fire,

Where chestnuts were roasting, with looks of desire.

To steal them would be a right noble affair.

A double inducement our heroes drew there—

'Twould benefit them, could they swallow their fill,

And then 'twould occasion to somebody ill.

Said Bertrand to Ratto, "My brother, to-day

Exhibit your powers in a masterly way,

And take me these chestnuts, I pray;

Which, were I but otherwise fitted

(As I am ingeniously witted)

For pulling things out of the flame,

Would stand but a pitiful game."

"'Tis done," replied Ratto, all prompt to obey;

And thrust out his paw in a delicate way.

First giving the ashes a scratch,

He open'd the coveted batch;

Then lightly and quickly impinging,

He drew out, in spite of the singeing,

One after another, the chestnuts at last,—

While Bertrand contrived to devour them as fast.

A servant girl enters. Adieu to the fun.

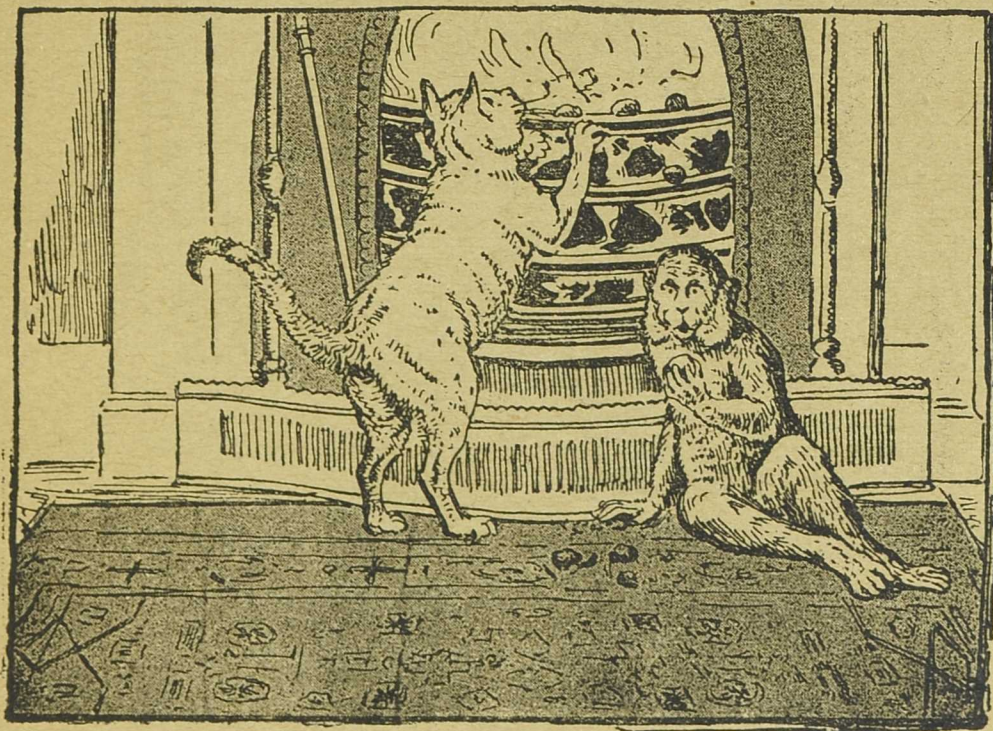
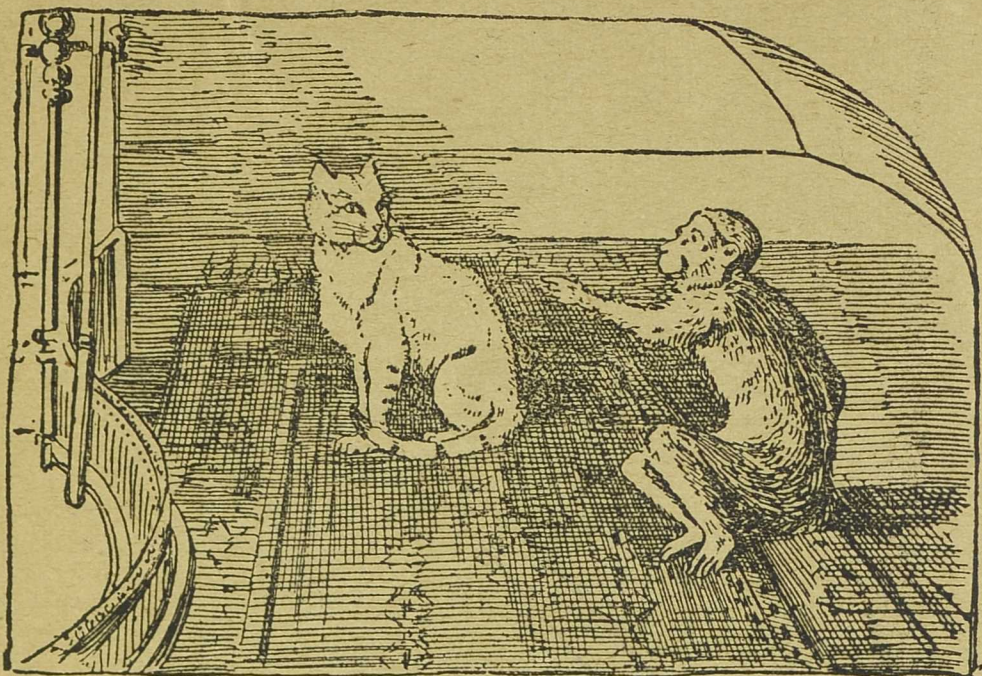
Our Ratto was hardly contented, says one.

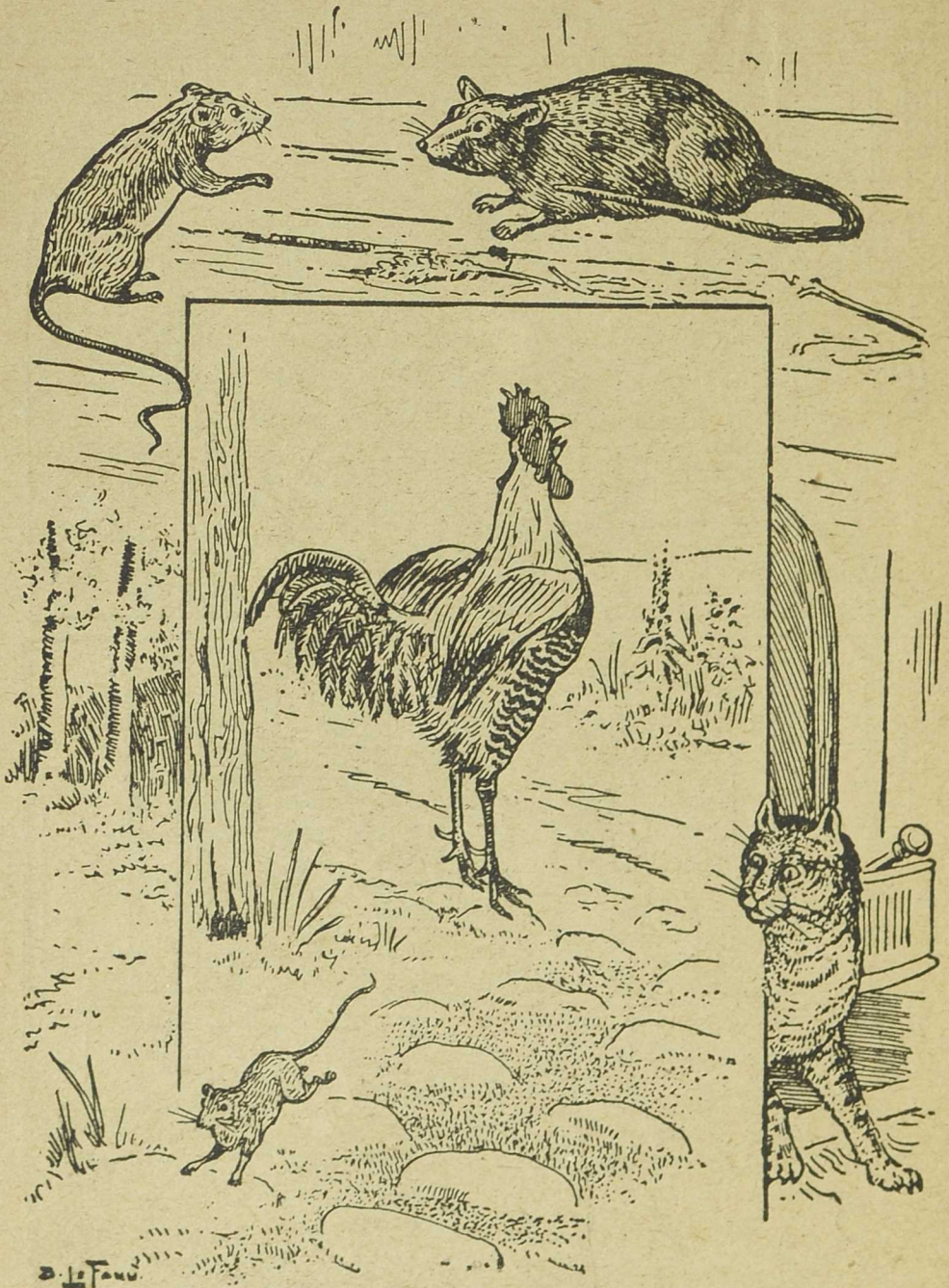
No more are the princes, by flattery paid

For furnishing help in a different trade,

And burning their fingers to bring

More power to some mightier king.





THE COCKEREL, THE CAT, AND THE YOUNG
MOUSE.

A YOUTHFUL mouse, not up to trap,
Had almost met a sad mishap.
The story hear him thus relate,
 With great importance, to his mother :—
“I pass’d the mountain bounds of this estate,
 And off was trotting on another,
Like some young rat with nought to do
But see things wonderful and new,
When two strange creatures came in view.
The one was mild, benign, and gracious ;
The other, turbulent, rapacious,
With voice terrific, shrill, and rough,
And on his head a bit of stuff
That look’d like raw and blood-red meat,
Raised up a sort of arms, and beat
The air, as if he meant to fly,
And bore his plummy tail on high.”

A cock, that just began to crow,
 As if some nondescript,
 From far New Holland shipp’d,
Was what our mousling pictured so.
“He beat his arms,” said he, “and raised his voice,
 And made so terrible a noise,
That I, who, thanks to Heaven, may justly boast
 Myself as bold as any mouse,
Scud off (his voice would even scare a ghost !)
 And cursed himself and all his house ;
For, but for him, I should have stayed,
And doubtless an acquaintance made
 With her who seem’d so mild and good.

Like us, in velvet cloak and hood,
She wears a tail that's full of grace,
A very sweet and humble face,—
No mouse more kindness could desire,—
And yet her eye is full of fire.
I do believe the lovely creature
A friend of rats and mice by nature.
Her ears, though, like herself, they're bigger,
Are just like ours in form and figure.
To her I was approaching, when,
Aloft on what appear'd his den,
The other scream'd,—and off I fled.”
“My son,” his cautious mother said,
 “That sweet one was the cat,
 The mortal foe of mouse and rat,
 Who seeks by smooth deceit,
 Her appetite to treat.
So far the other is from that,
 We yet may eat
 His dainty meat;
Whereas the cruel cat,
Whene'er she can, devours
No other meat than ours.”

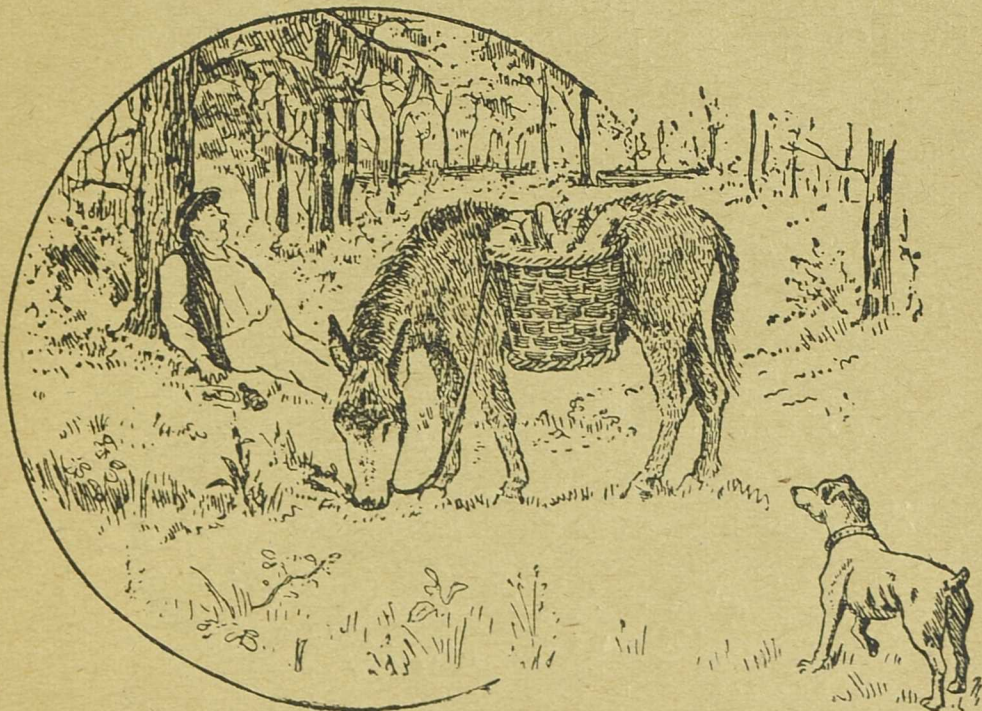
Remember while you live,
It is by looks that men deceive.

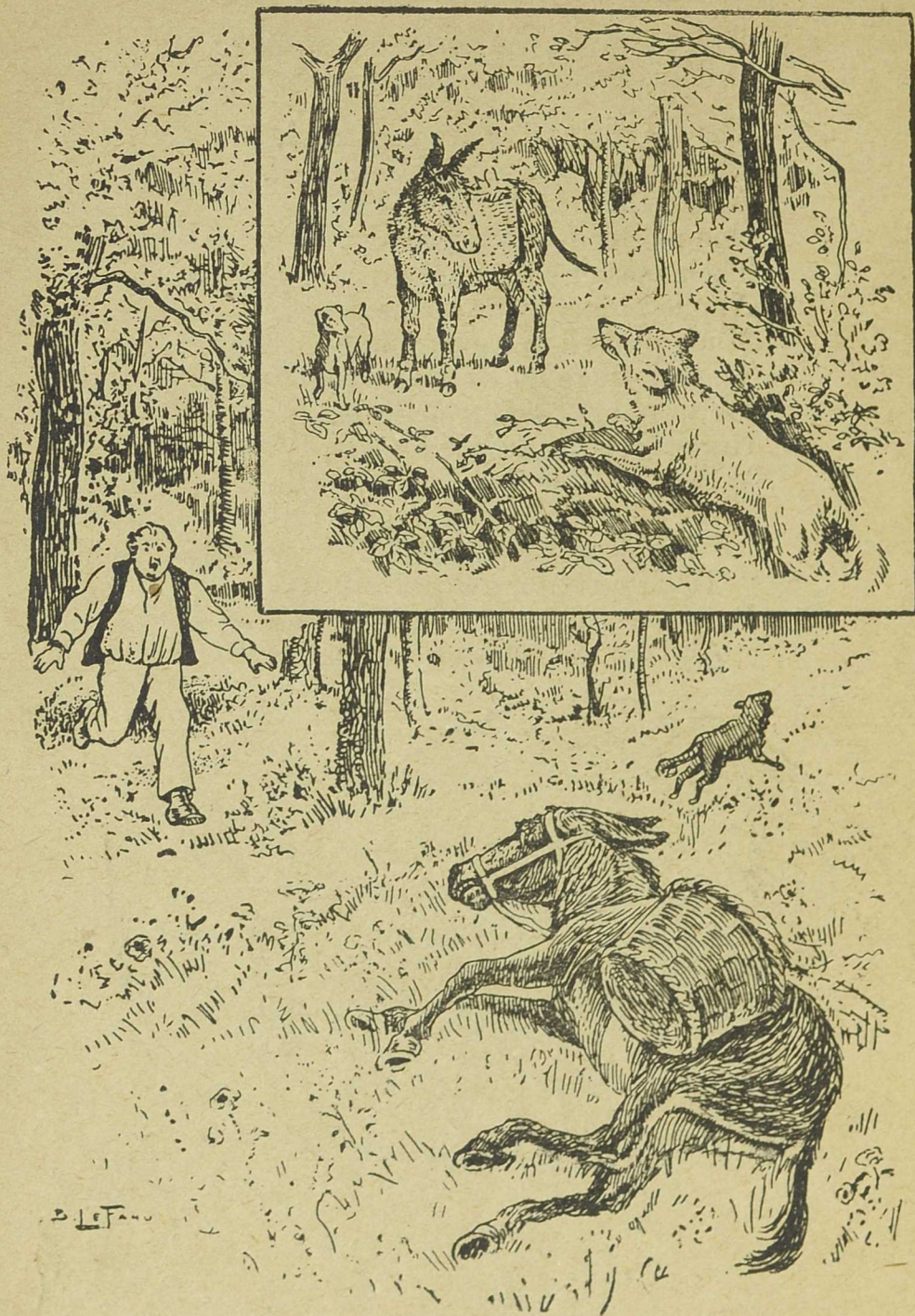
THE ASS AND THE DOG.

DAME Nature, our respected mother,
Ordains that we should aid each other.

The ass this ordinance neglected,
Though not a creature ill-affected.
Along the road a dog and he
One master follow'd silently.
Their master slept: meanwhile, the ass
Applied his nippers to the grass,
Much pleased in such a place to stop,
Though there no thistle he could crop.
He would not be too delicate,
Nor spoil a dinner for a plate,
Which, but for that, his favourite dish,
Were all that any ass could wish.

"My dear companion," Towser said—
"Tis as a starving dog I ask it—
Pray lower down your loaded basket,
And let me get a piece of bread."



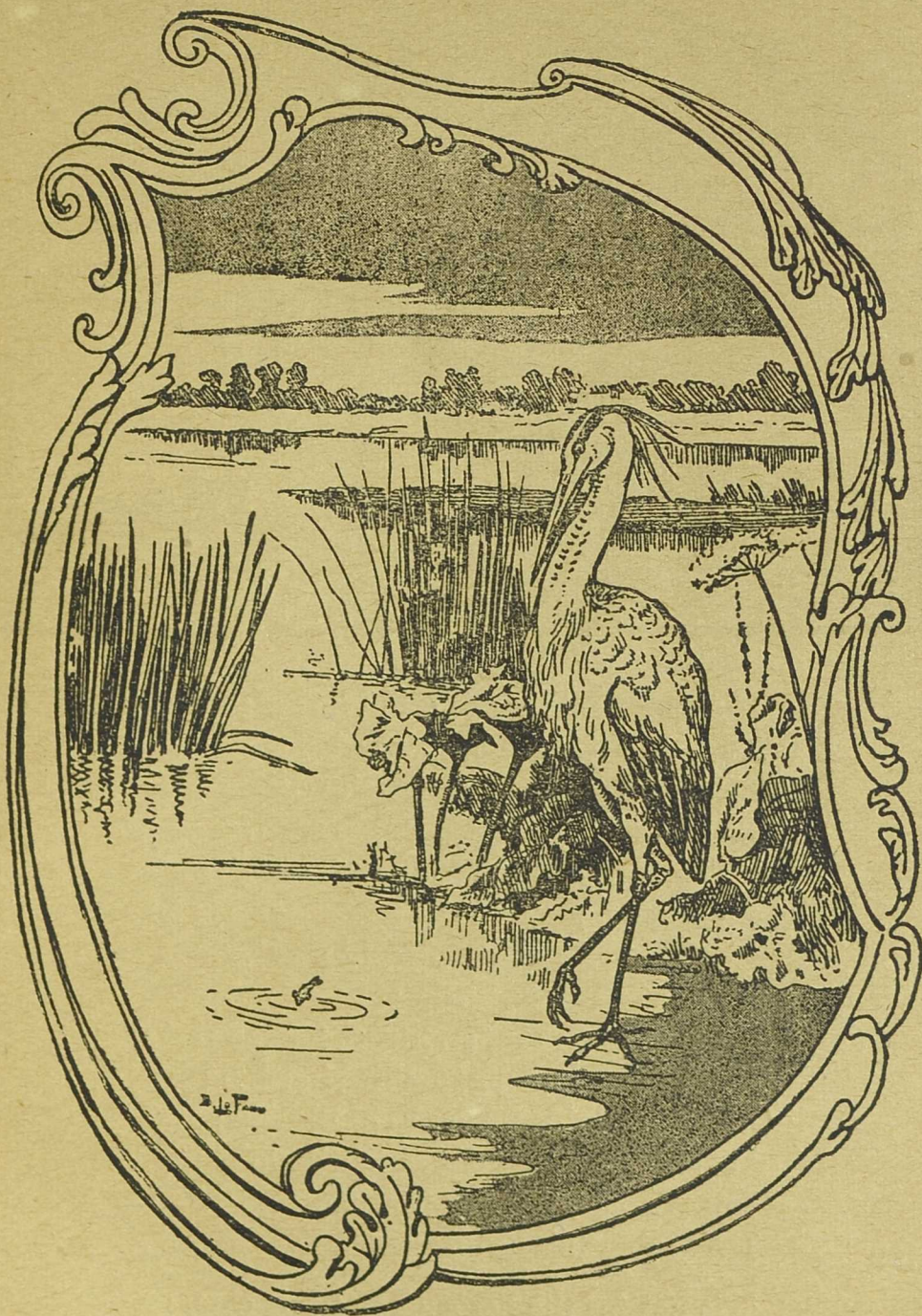


No answer—not a word!—indeed,
The truth was, our Arcadian steed
Fear'd lest, for every moment's flight,
His nimble teeth should lose a bite.
At last, "I counsel you," said he, "to wait
Till master is himself awake,
Who then, unless I much mistake,
Will give his dog the usual bait."
Meanwhile, there issued from the wood
A creature of the wolfish brood,
Himself by famine sorely pinch'd.
At sight of him the donkey flinch'd,
And begg'd the dog to give him aid.
The dog budged not, but answer made,—
"I counsel thee, my friend, to run,
Till master's nap is fairly done;
There can, indeed, be no mistake,
That he will very soon awake;
Till then, scud off with all your might;
And should he snap you in your flight,
This ugly wolf,—why, let him feel
The greeting of your well-shod heel.
I do not doubt, at all, but that
Will be enough to lay him flat."
But ere he ceased it was too late;
The ass had met his cruel fate.

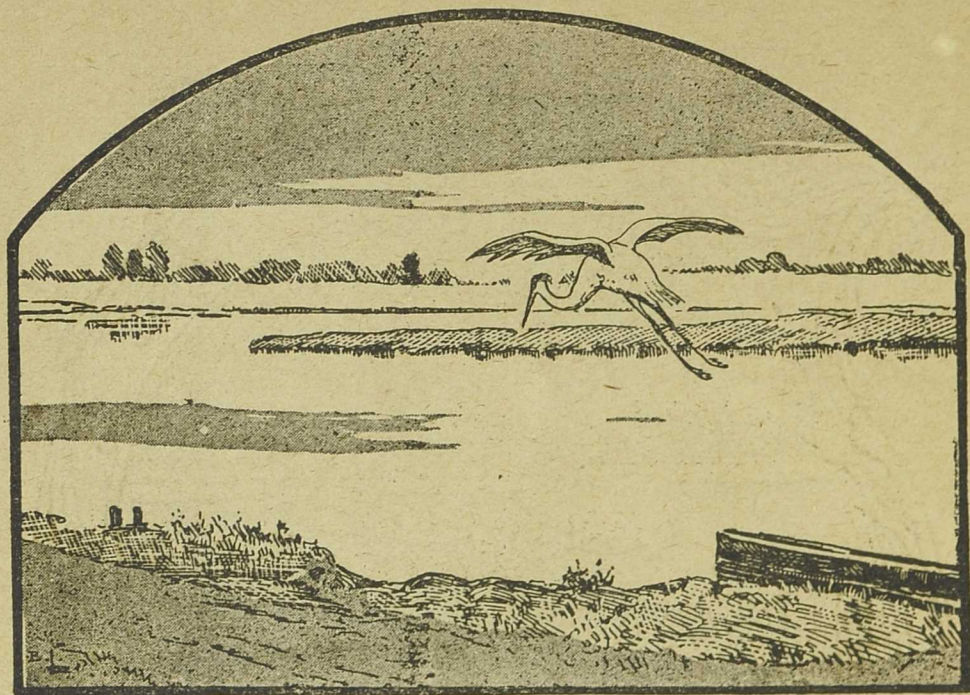
Thus selfishness we reprobate.

THE HERON.

ONE day,—no matter when or where,—
A long-legg'd heron chanced to fare
By a certain river's brink,
With his long, sharp beak
Helved on his slender neck ;
'Twas a fish-spear, you might think.
The water was clear and still,
The carp and the pike there at will
Pursued their silent fun,
Turning up, ever and anon,
A golden side to the sun.
With ease might the heron have made
Great profits in his fishing trade.
So near came the scaly fry,
They might be caught by the passer-by.
But he thought he better might
Wait for a better appetite—
For he lived by rule, and could not eat,
Except at his hours, the best of meat.
Anon his appetite return'd once more ;
So, approaching again the shore,
He saw some tench taking their leaps,
Now and then, from their lowest deeps.
With as dainty a taste as Horace's rat,
He turn'd away from such food as that.
"What, tench for a heron ! poh !
I scorn the thought, and let them go."
The tench refused, there came a gudgeon ;
"For all that," said the bird, "I budge on.
I'll ne'er open my beak, if the gods please,
For such mean little fishes as these."
He did it for less ;
For it came to pass,



THE DISDAINFUL HERON.



That not another fish could he see ;
 And, at last, so hungry was he,
 That he thought it of some avail
 To find on the bank a single snail.

Such is the sure result
 Of being too difficult.

Would you be strong and great,
 Learn to accommodate.

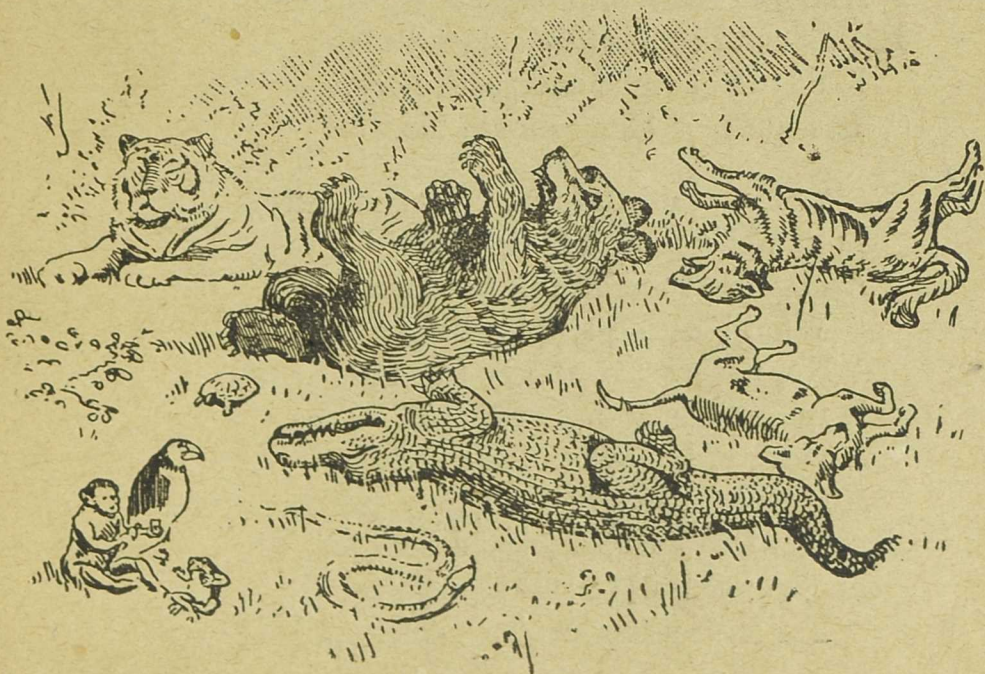
Get what you can, and trust for the rest ;
 The whole is oft lost by seeking the best.
 Above all things, beware of disdain ;
 Where, at most, you have little to gain.
 The people are many that make
 Every day this sad mistake.

'Tis not for the herons I put this case,
 Ye featherless people of human race.

THE ANIMALS SICK OF THE PLAGUE.

THE sorest ill that Heaven hath
Sent on this lower world in wrath—
The plague (to call it by its name),
One single day of which
Would Pluto's ferryman enrich—
Waged war on beasts, both wild and tame.
They died not all, but all were sick :
No hunting now, by force or trick,
To save what might so soon expire,
No food excited their desire ;
Nor wolf nor fox now watch'd to slay
The innocent and tender prey.

The turtles fled ;
So love and therefore joy were dead.
The lion council held, and said :
“ My friends, I do believe
This awful scourge, for which we grieve,



Is for our sins a punishment
 Most righteously by Heaven sent.
 Let us our guiltiest beast resign,
 A sacrifice to wrath divine.
 Perhaps this offering, truly small,
 May gain the life and health of all.
 By history we find it noted
 That lives have been just so devoted.
 Then let us all turn eyes within,
 And ferret out the hidden sin.
 Himself let no one spare nor flatter,
 But make clean conscience in the matter.
 For me, my appetite has play'd the glutton
 Too much and often upon mutton.
 What harm had e'er my victims done?
 I answer, truly, None.
 Perhaps, sometimes, by hunger press'd,
 I've ate the shepherd with the rest.
 I yield myself, if need there be:
 And yet I think, in equity,
 Each should confess his sins with me;
 For laws of right and justice cry,
 The guiltiest alone should die."

"Sire," said the fox, "your majesty
 Is humbler than a king should be,
 And over-squeamish in the case.

What! eating stupid sheep a crime?
 No, never, sire, at any time.
 It rather was an act of grace,
 A mark of honour to their race.
 And as to shepherds, one may swear,
 The fate your majesty describes,
 Is recompense less full than fair
 For such usurpers o'er our tribes."



Thus Reynard glibly spoke,
And loud applause from flatterers broke.
Of neither tiger, boar, nor bear,
Did any keen inquirer dare
To ask for crimes of high degree ;
The fighters, biters, scratchers, all
From every mortal sin were free ;
The very dogs, both great and small,
Were saints, as far as dogs could be.

The ass, confessing in his turn,
Thus spoke in tones of deep concern :—
“ I happen'd through a mead to pass ;
The monks, its owners, were at mass ;
Keen hunger, leisure, tender grass,
And add to these the devil too,
All tempted me the deed to do.
I browsed the bigness of my tongue ;
Since truth must out, I own it wrong.”

On this, a hue and cry arose,
As if the beasts were all his foes :
A wolf, haranguing lawyer-wise,
Denounced the ass for sacrifice—
The bald-pate, scabby, ragged lout,
By whom the plague had come, no doubt.
His fault was judged a hanging crime.

“ What ? eat another's grass ? O shame !
The noose of rope and death sublime,
For that offence, were all too tame ! ”
And soon poor Grizzle felt the same.

Thus human courts acquit the strong,
And doom the weak, as therefore wrong.

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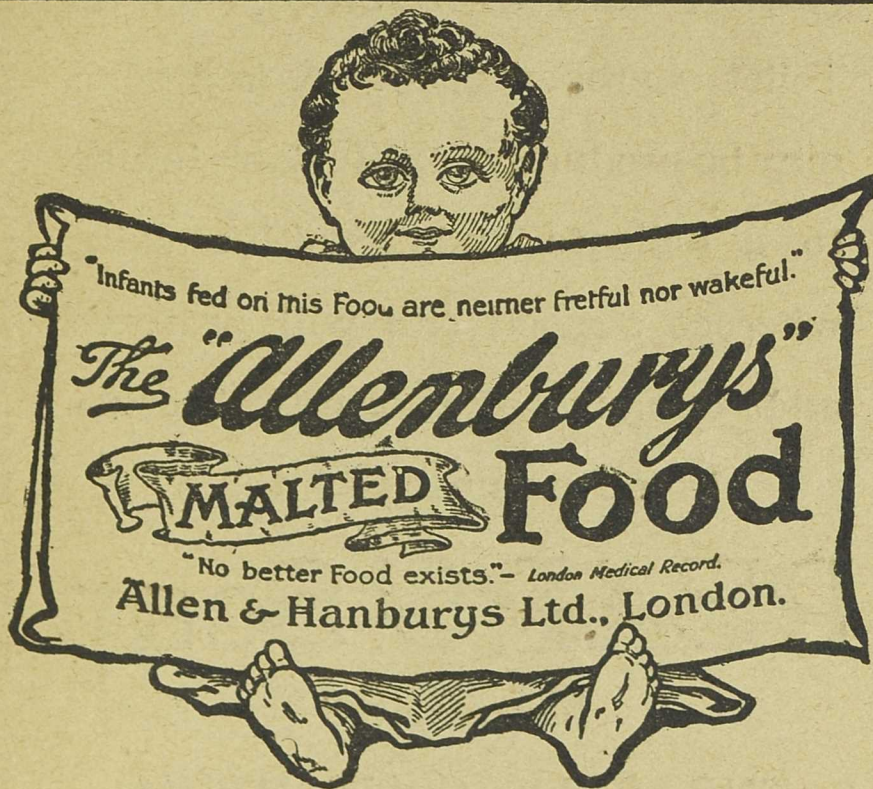
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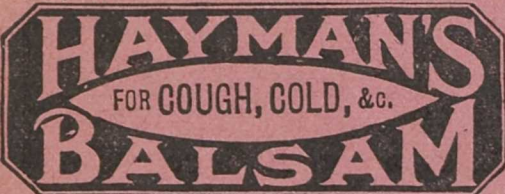
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