

## REYNARD THE FOX



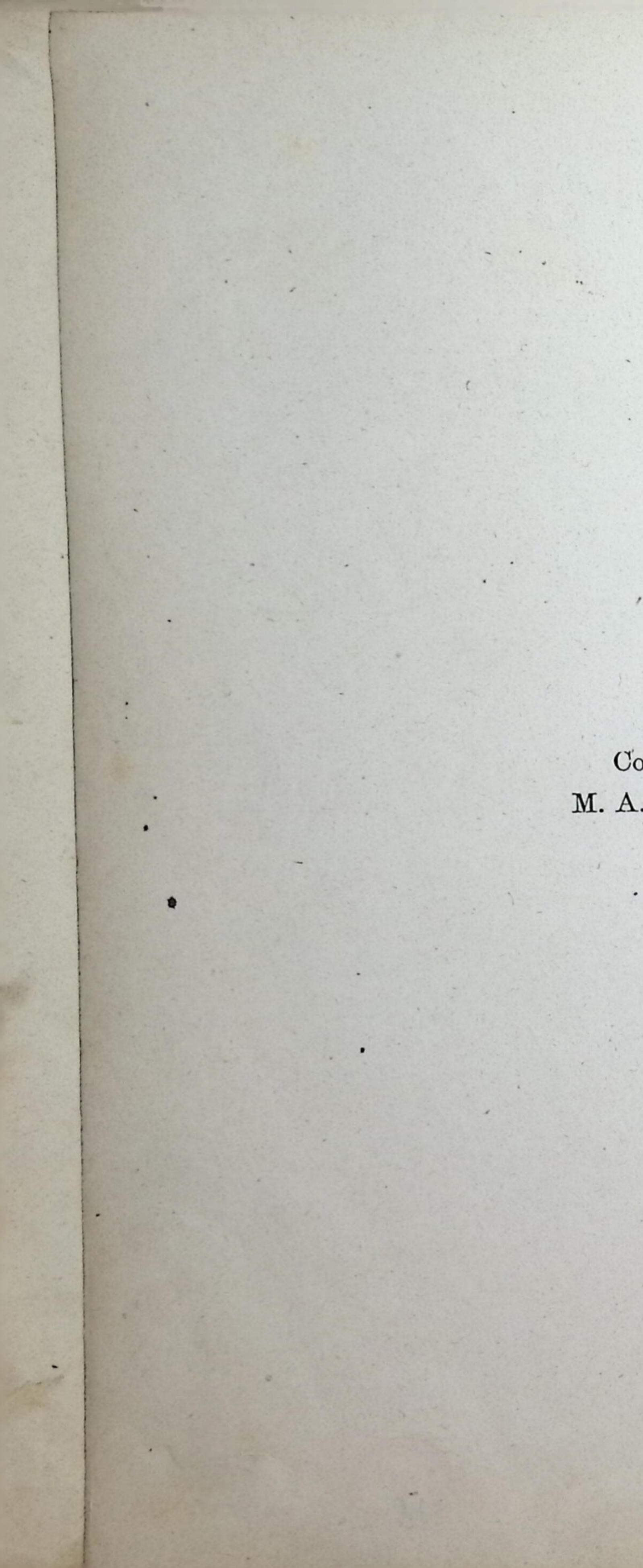
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Profusely Illustrated

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Reynard the Fox

OW when all the beasts met in grave court in view of the King, Reynard the Fox had but few friends. Each foe made a charge, so that this sly rogue grew blacker in their thoughts. Of these, Isgrim the Wolf was the chief. He had a train of blood friends, who felt joy in his sight, and proud of his speech to the King.

When Isgrim the Wolf had said what he felt, a small

Hound, Curtise, told his tale to the King. He said that in a cold time of the year, when no food was to be had in the shape of prey, and with naught but a piece of cake to keep life in him, the Fox took it from him by stealth.

Ere these words were out of the Hound's mouth, in sprang Tibert the Cat. He fell down in view of the King, and said: "My lord, I must own that the Fox is here made to seem worse than he is. As to what the Hound said, the theft was done some years since, and, though I do not mind it now, yet was the cake mine, and not his; for I got it one night from a mill, while the watch was in bed."

When the Lynx heard these words of Tibert, he said: "Do you think, Tibert, that the Fox should not have his crimes brought home to his door? Why, the whole world knows he is a thief and sheds blood, and that he is void of love for aught that has life.

"Ay, Sir Lynx," said the Wolf, "you say true; it is but right that those who wish to live in peace should be dealt with in a right way."

Then spoke Grimbard the Brock (who was near of kin to the Fox), warm with rage: "Wolf, you are vile. What can you lay to the charge of my friend? I tell you that were the Fox here in Court, and as much in the King's good will as you are, it would be your turn to sue for grace.

Grave wrongs, hath the Wolf done to the Fox, and I pray the Court to judge if such are to be borne.

Reynard the Fox-3.

"Then, the last charge was made by Curtise, who said that he, with great toil, had found some cake late in the year, when food was hard to get. I think he had best have held his tongue, as he has shown he stole it, for goods ill got do not thrive. Who can blame the Fox for such an act? He but took from a thief. Pshaw! How do these tales hurt him? My near and dear friend comes of good blood, and is a true Fox. Nor can I hear lies. Reynard likes to hurt none, for he eats but once a day, and lives like a monk. He has gone from his fort, and now dwells in a mean crib, far out of the way. He hath sworn not to hunt. He lives but by alms, and the gifts of good men."



a freak of the Fox.

The Cock went first. As if in deep grief, he smote his feet with his wings. On each side of the bier were two hens. Each held a tall, bright wax light. Two young hens bore the bier, who gave such vent to their grief, that the hills gave forth the wild wail. When they came in the King's sight, the Cock knelt down and spoke thus:

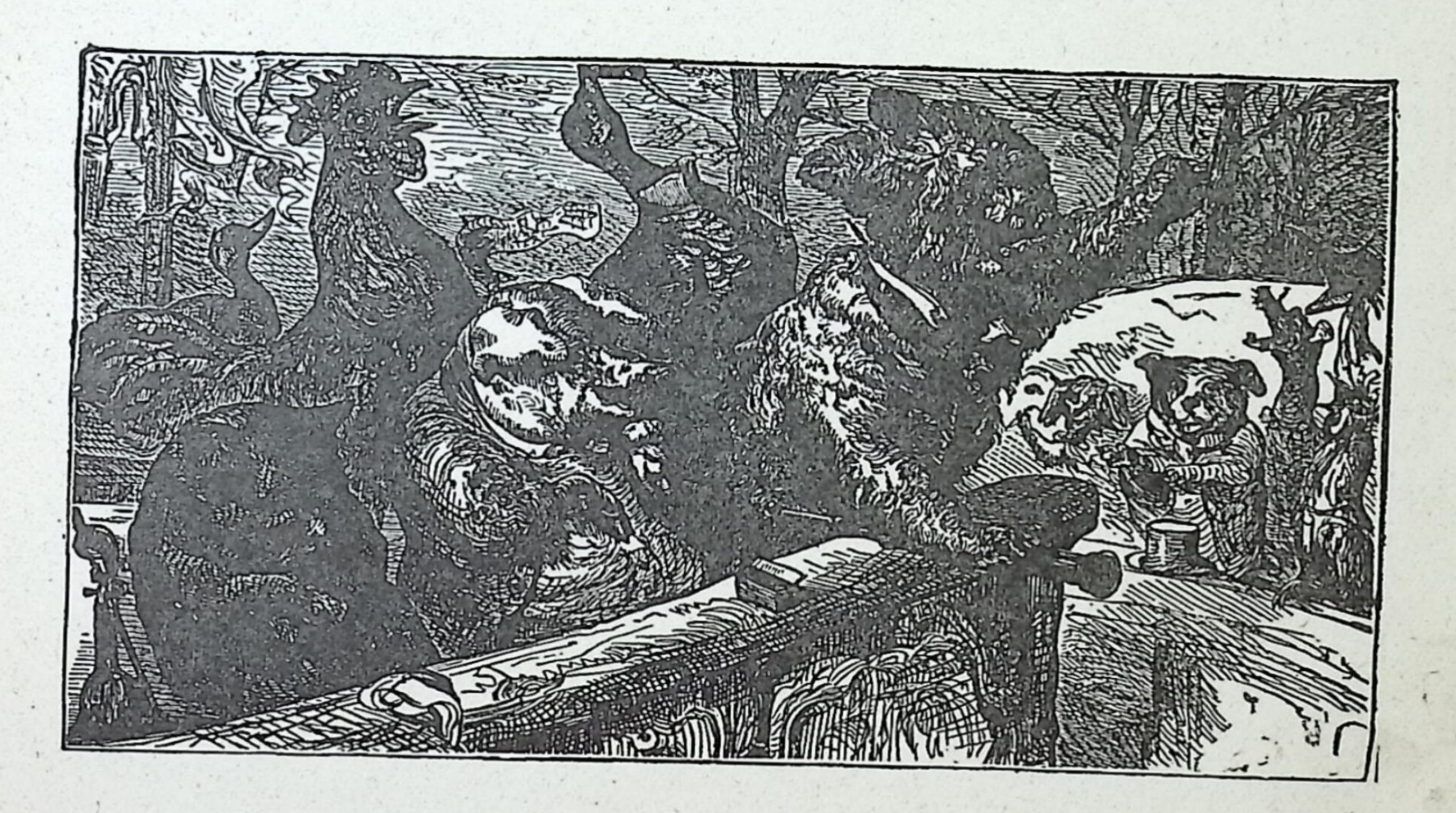
A few hours since she who lies here dead was torn from his claws by a pack of hounds. I crave of you, the source of might and right, to feel for me, and mete out just pain for the death of my fair chicks."

Reynarl the Fox-4.

Ere the Brock had quite done his speech, they saw stout Chanticleer the Cock strut down the hill with a dead hen on a bier, who had lost her head by

Then spoke the King: "Sir Grimbard, hear you this of one of your kin who apes the monk? Now, heed what I say: if I live, he shall rue it. As for you, Chanticleer, your tale is heard, and what is just shall be done." Then they sang a dirge, laid the corpse in the grave, and put on the top a stone slab, on which were cut these words: "Here lies Chanticleer's child, Copple, whom Reynard the Fox hath slain. Mourn, ye who read this; for her death was most swift and sad."

So the King sent for his lords of State, to judge of the mode in which the vile Fox chould be dealt with. They all took the same view of the case; and it was made known that the Fox should come forth to the Court, and that Bruin the Bear should serve him with the King's writ.



When the King had the Bear brought to him, "Sir Bruin," said he, "it "My liege," said Bruin, "let me but get sight of the Fox. I am not quite

is our will that you take these words from us; yet have great heed." such a one as to be made his dupe, knave as he is." Thus, full of joy, Bruin set out, and if he comes back in such high glee, we shall hear how he will brag.

The next day, as soon as the sun shone forth, Bruin set out in quest of Reynard. As he went through a thick wood, he saw a high hill, which he must needs climb to get to the house. Now Reynard had not a few seats, but none were so fine as this.

Reynard the Fox-5.

• When Bruin got to this fort, he found the gates shut. Then did he knock hard and shout with a will: "Sir Reynard, are you at home? I am Bruin, one of your own kin, whom the King hath sent to call you to the court to say aught that can be said to the foul tales told of you. I pray, my fair friend, that you will this once be led by me, and go with me to the Court." "My dear friend," said Bruin, "what meat is this, pray, which makes you so ill?



"In truth," quoth Reynard, "it was mean food, at the best; we poor folk are not lords, as you well know; we eat not from choice. It was bees' comb, large and full, and so good, that sheer want made me gulp it with greed." "Ah!" said Bruin, "bees' comb! And do you speak in so light a way of this? Why, it is meat fit for the best king in the world. Fair Reynard, help me but to a share, and your slave will I be from this time forth." "Sure, my dear friend," quoth Reynard, "you do but jest." "Jest!" said Bruin, "ill fare my heart, then, for I pledge my troth, that for one lick of it you shall make me more in love with you than all your clan." Reynard the Fox-6.



"Nay," said Reynard, "if what you say be true, I will bring you where so much is to be had, that ten of you shall have more than your fill." "Not ten of us," said Bruin, "that is not the case; for had I all such rare food to be found from Maine to Texas, I could in a short time eat it up." "Well, then, my dear friend," said Reynard, "there dwells hard by a man whose name is Lanfert. He owns so much comb that you could not get through it in eight years; and the whole of it shall be yours."



Bruin made a vow that he would prove Reynard's firm friend, and would stop the mouths of all his foes. "If you want eight tons, my friend, you shall have it," said Reynard.

Bruin gave him thanks, and so off they went. At last they got to Lanfert's house, the mere sight of which made Bruin's heart jump for joy.

Now Lanfert had brought to his yard a large oak, which he cleft in twain, and then drove in a wedge so as to leave a wide gap. At this Reynard was glad, and, with a smile on his face, said to Bruin: "See now, dear friend, this stanch tree; there is much sweet food hid in it. Try if you can reach to where it lies. But take care how you get to it, and do not eat too much; for, though the comb be rich and good, yet too large a meal may hurt you." "Take no thought for me, my friend Reynard," quoth Bruin; "do not think I am such a fool as to let my wants tempt me to glut my maw." "It is true, my good friend; I was too bold. I pray you get in, and you shall at once find what you seek."

Bruin with all haste thrust his head in the cleft right up to his neck. When Reynard saw the scrape Bruin was in, he drew each wedge out of the tree, so that the Bear could not stir an inch. Poor Bruin then tore with his claws, and made such a fierce noise, that Lanfert came out of his house. The Fox, who was not far off, saw the man, and said in jest to Bruin, "Is the comb good, my friend? I pray you do not eat too much. It may cause you to be late for the Court, should you err in this way."



As soon as Lanfert found Bruin fast in the tree, he ran to his friends, who came with him to his yard. When the fact got known, all the folk of the town came in haste to the spot. So large a host put Bruin in sore fright; so that he did pull and drag with might and main, till he got his head clear out, glad to get free with the loss of his ears and skin. In sooth, a beast so torn and foul could nowhere be found.

While in this strait, Lanfert and his friends laid on him with hard thumps. One and all fell on the poor beast.

Poor Bruin could but sit and groan as he felt their blows, of which Lanfert's were the worst, till, as he woke from his swoon, he gave a quick jump, which brought him in the midst of a deep stream close by. The Bear swam off as Reynard the Fox-8.

fast as he could, full of joy that he had got free with his life; yet did he curse, with warmth of heart and strength of words, the comb which did tempt hand Reynard who did lure him with his glib tongue.

He swam some three miles down the stream, and grew so faint, that he went on the bank to rest.

In the mean time, Reynard, in his route home, stole a fat hen, and slunk through a duct not known, and so he came down to the stream. He felt quite gay, as he thought that the bear was slain; which made him muse thus: "My fate is as I could wish; for the worst foe I had in Court is dead, and all men will think that my hands are free from blood." But as he spoke these words he spied



Bruin resting on the bank. This sight struck his heart with grief, so he did rail at Lanfert till he came to where Bruin lay, then he said in a mock tone of voice: "I hope I see you well?"

"Oh, thou foul red wretch!" quoth Bruin, "what a face of brass is thine!" But Reynard went on with his speech, and said— "Dear friend—I trust you will call to mind all the things that took place at Lanfert's, and that you paid for the comb; if you did not, it will look bad, and blast your fame. The comb was sweet, and I know a great deal more at the same price. But, dear friend, what a strange sort of coif you wear on your head. Why, when you did shave your crown you gave your ears a crop, too!

Reynard to Fox-9.

and you have no gloves! Fie, my friend! you should not go out with bare hands; it does not suit one of your rank." These taunts made Bruin mad with rage.

As soon as he could move, Bruin once more sought the stream and swam to the far side, where he thought how best he could get to the Court. He could not walk, but he must needs go; so at last he lay down on his side and did roll on the road. By this means he found his way to the Court. As he came in view, the lords were struck with the strange sight, and when the King knew him he grew wild with rage. "It is," quoth he, "Sir Bruin, whom I sent, forth from this Court. What vile foes have put you in this plight?"



"Oh, my dread liege," said Bruin, "see how I am at death's door; I pray you blame Reynard for this; for shame and grief have come to me through him." "Then," quoth the King, "by my Crown, I swear I will sate my ire, and make that base imp quake."

At once the King sent for his best lords of State to learn in what way they should act. It was then thought that once more Reynard should be sent for to put in a plea, and that this time Tibert the Cat should make known the Court's will. At this the King was right glad at heart.

Then the King sent for Sir Tibert the Cat, to whom he thus spoke: "Sir Tibert, you shall go to Reynard, and urge him once more to haste and let the Court Reynard the Fox-10.

hear what he has got to say. Let him know that if he fail in this I will treat his and his kin in such a way that, for all time to come, they who scorn my will, and do such deeds as are laid to his charge, will fear to take the risk."

Then said Tibert: "I pray you, my liege lord, send some one of more weight. If Sir Bruin could not bring him, how can I hope to do so?"

To which the King said: "It is for that you are wise, and not for your. strength, Sir Tibert, that I thus make use of you. Art and skill may hit a mark, while rude strength would strive in vain to reach it."

"Well" said Tibert, "since it is your will, sire, it must be done." So Tibert made haste and went on to the house, where he found Reynard

in front of the gates which led to the fort.



"Health to thee, my dear friend Reynard," said Tibert; "the King, by me calls you hence to Court; and if you fail, a quick death must, of a truth, be yours."

Then said Reynard: "Right glad am I to see you here, dear Tibert, who art one of my own kin; may the King have long life, and days of bliss void of pain! Let me beg of you rest with me this night, and in the morn we will both set out for the Court."

Quoth Tibert, "You speak like a brave knight, as thou art; but I think it best to set out now, for the moon shines as bright as day." "Nay, dear guest," said Reynard, "let us take day for our route; the night

is full of risk."

Reynard the Fox-11.

Well," said Tibert, "if such be your will, let it be so: what shall we eat?" Reynard said, "Of a truth my store is small; the best I have is some NAW' comb; what think you of it'?' Quoth Tibert, "It is meat not much to my mind, which I eat but at rare time. One mouse would be more to me than all the comb the globe could yield." "A mouse!" said Reynard: "Why, my dear friend, there dwells a man hard by who hath a barn near his grange so full of mice that I think half the wains in the town would not hold them." "Oh, good Reynard," quoth Tibert, "do but lead me there, and make me your slave from this time forth!" "Well, then," quoth Reynard, "if what you say be true, I will give you as much as you can eat."

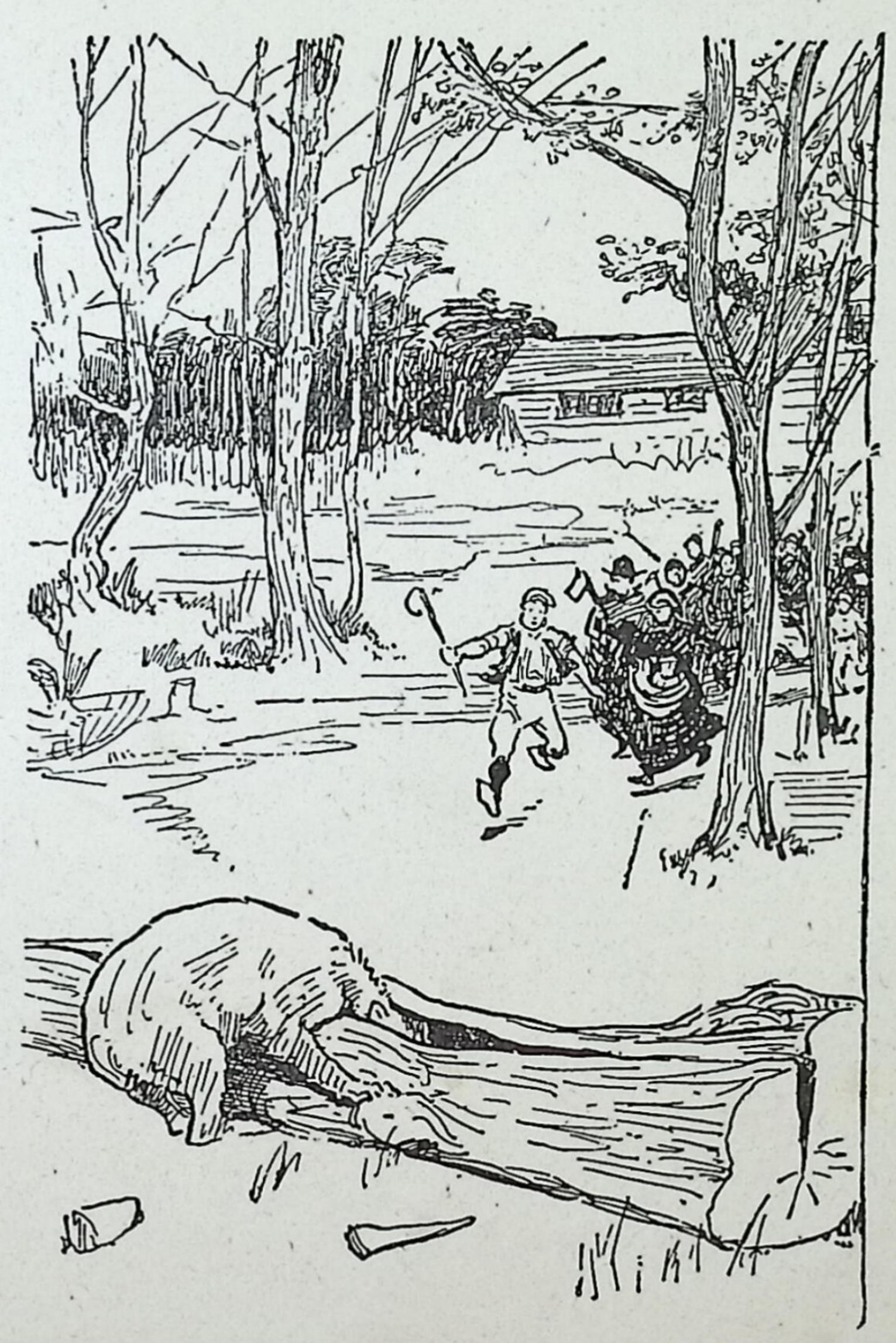


"Come with me then, and I will lead you at once to the spot." Thus off they went to the barn, where but a night since Reynard had made off with a fat hen. This theft put the man who kept the barn in a rage, so that he had set a snare in front of the hole to catch the Fox when next he came. This Reynard well knew, and hence he said: "Sir Tibert, creep in at this hole, and it shall not be long ere you clutch more mice than you can eat. I will wait for you at this hole, and at break of day both of us will go to the Court. Then said Tibert, "Will it be safe for me to go in at this hole?"

Reynard the Foz-12.

"Why, my dear friend," said Reynard, "I have not seen you show fear till now. You start at your own thoughts." At this taunt Tibert felt shame, when he sprang in at the hole, but was at once caught by the neck. He tried in vain to get free, and he could not well gain breath, which made him whine and shriek for help. Reynard stood in

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front of the hole, and thus did mock his poor dupe: "My own dear Tibert, do you love mice? I hope, for your sake, they will be well fed. I think you sing at your meat. Is that what they do at Court? If it be so, I would Isgrim were close to you, that all my friends may feast at the same time." All this while poor Tibert did mew in so shrill and loud a tone, as to wake the man of the house, who made all those in the grange jump out of bed by Reynard the Fox-13.

his cries of "The Fox is caught! the Fox is caught!" All his kin were soon at the spot, so that Tibert got smart blows. Sir Tibert thought his death was nigh, so when free he sprang on the man, and struck his teeth and claws deep in his foe, which made him roar for aid.

All this time Reynard stood not far from the hole, and saw and heard all that went on. But the poor man fell down in a swoon, so that each one left Tibert to give him aid.

Reynard now slunk off, and went home, as he thought Tibert was past all hope. But Tibert, when he saw his fierce foes had left him, sprang out of the hole, when he went on to the King's Court.

Ere he got to the Court the sun had sunk, and the hour was late. He came in so sad a plight, his bones were out of place, one of his eyes were gone, and his skin was torn.

When the King saw Tibert in such a state, he got in a great rage, and once more spoke with the lords of his Court.

While the Court sat, Grimbard the Brock, Reynard's near of kin, spoke thus: "My good lords, though my friend were twice as bad as these plaints make him, there is a cure for such ills: it is fit you do what is just to a beast of rank; he must have a call three times, and then, if he spurn it, let his peers rule that what has been laid to his charge is true."

All the beasts now felt grief that the Fox was in so dire a scrape, so they did pray the King to grant him his wish. This was done, and then the Fox spoke:

"I see no one here to whom I have not done wrong of some sort; yet I was not born with this bad trait. In my youth I was thought mild and coy. I staid with the lambs all day long, and was glad to course on green meads with them. But whilst in my play I bit one, and the taste of the blood was so sweet that I still crave it. This greed drew me to woods where I found goats, when I slew a kid, which made me so bold that I went from bad to worse, and took the lives of geese, hens, and what I could clutch. Once, late in the year, I met with Isgrim, as he lay hid in the trunk of an old tree, when he told me we were bound by ties of blood, and did trace my race in so plain a way that we were firm friends from that time forth, which I may well rue to this day, for then we set out to steal and take life. He stole the great things; I, the small. When he got a sheep or a calf, his greed was so great that he would scarce give me the bones to pick. This I say, not that I was in want, for it is well known I have more plate, gems, and coin, than half a score carts would hold, but just to show how he dealt with me, and what a bad heart is his." When the King heard him speak of his hoard, his pulse beat quick, and

he said, "Reynard where is that vast wealth of yours?"

. . .

Reynard the Fox-14.

To which Reynard said, "My lord, I am proud to tell you. True it is I stole the hoard; but, were it not for this, it had cost you your life, which I pray, for the sake of your Realm, may long be safe."

The King grew grave and said, "Can what you state be true?" Quoth Reynard, "Ah, my dread lord, you see how I stand, and that there is not much sand left to run in my poor glass; think you, can I lie?" And then a sad shade came on his face, so the Queen felt for his state, and by her wish the King made all the beasts hold their peace till Reynard told all he knew. Then spoke he in this wise:-

"May it please my liege, I will let you hear the whole plot. Know, then, my lord, that my sire, while at work on his farm, found King Ermenrich's hoard



-a large mass of wealth. When he got this, he grew so proud that he held in scorn all the beasts of the woods who, up to that time, were his close friends. At length he sent Tibert to the woods of Ardenne to see Bruin, who was told how my sire did love him well, and would make him king. Bruin said he would wear the crown if he got it, and with this view came to Flanders, where he did feast like a prince; then he sent Grimbard, who is of my own stock, for Isgrim and for Tibert, and these five went to a place near Ghent, where they spoke of their scheme for the space of a whole night. A plan was laid to slay the King, place Bruin in the chair and to set the crown on his head. Reynard the Fox-15.

"Now for a strange tale. Once my friend Grimbard drank too much wine when he told this foul plot to dame Slopard his wife; but on her life she was not to let it pass her lips. But she told it, as a firm friend, to my wife; who, as soon as she met with me, let the cat out of the bag, but made me vow I should keep it hid. My heart now was like lead, cold and dull in my breast. I felt grief for the King, though it was of slight use.

"Then strove I to bring to naught my sire's plot to rob you of your Crown. As his wealth might be the means of this base act, I sought where to find it. Night and day did I watch, and kept a close eye on my sire's steps. Once, while I lay flat on the ground, I saw him creep out of a hole and look to see if all was clear. He then put sand in the place, and did rub the print of his feet with his tail to make the ground smooth. Then he went off. But I soon found where his hoard lay. I took Ermeline, my wife, to help me; and we did not cease to toil till it was put far from his reach. In the mean time Isgrim went with my sire through the Realm, and said he should give to all who would hail him as king a full year's pay. Bruin was shown the roll of names; . a host of which the clan of the Bear, the Fox, the Cat, and the Brock made up the chief part. But when my sire went to his cave and saw that his hoard was gone, all hope fled, he put a rope round his neck and tied it to a graff of the next tree he came to, where he hung till he was dead.

"Thus by my art did I spoil the plot to strip you, my liege, of your Crown, and rob the State of its King. For this I am to yield up my life. O, my lord, what can one do more for his King than lose his own blood?"

Then spoke the Queen: "Fear not, Reynard, the King shall spare thy life; and, more than this, you shall be made one of the first lords of his Court." Quoth Reynard, "Dear Queen, if the King but have faith in me, no king

was, or will be, so rich as I will make him."

Then the King did chide the Queen, and said, "Dame, you want me to trust the Fox. 'Know you not, that his chief traits are to lie and cheat and steal?" The Queen said to this: "My dear lord, you may trust him this time, for he is not what he has been; grief has made a change in him. Had he not told the truth he might with ease have laid this crime on those he did not love!"

"Well, dame," said the King, "you shall for this once rule me, and the Fox shall be set free; yet let me tell you, should but a slight charge be made by one beast whom he may wrong or harm, I will drive his whole race, root and branch, out of my Realm."

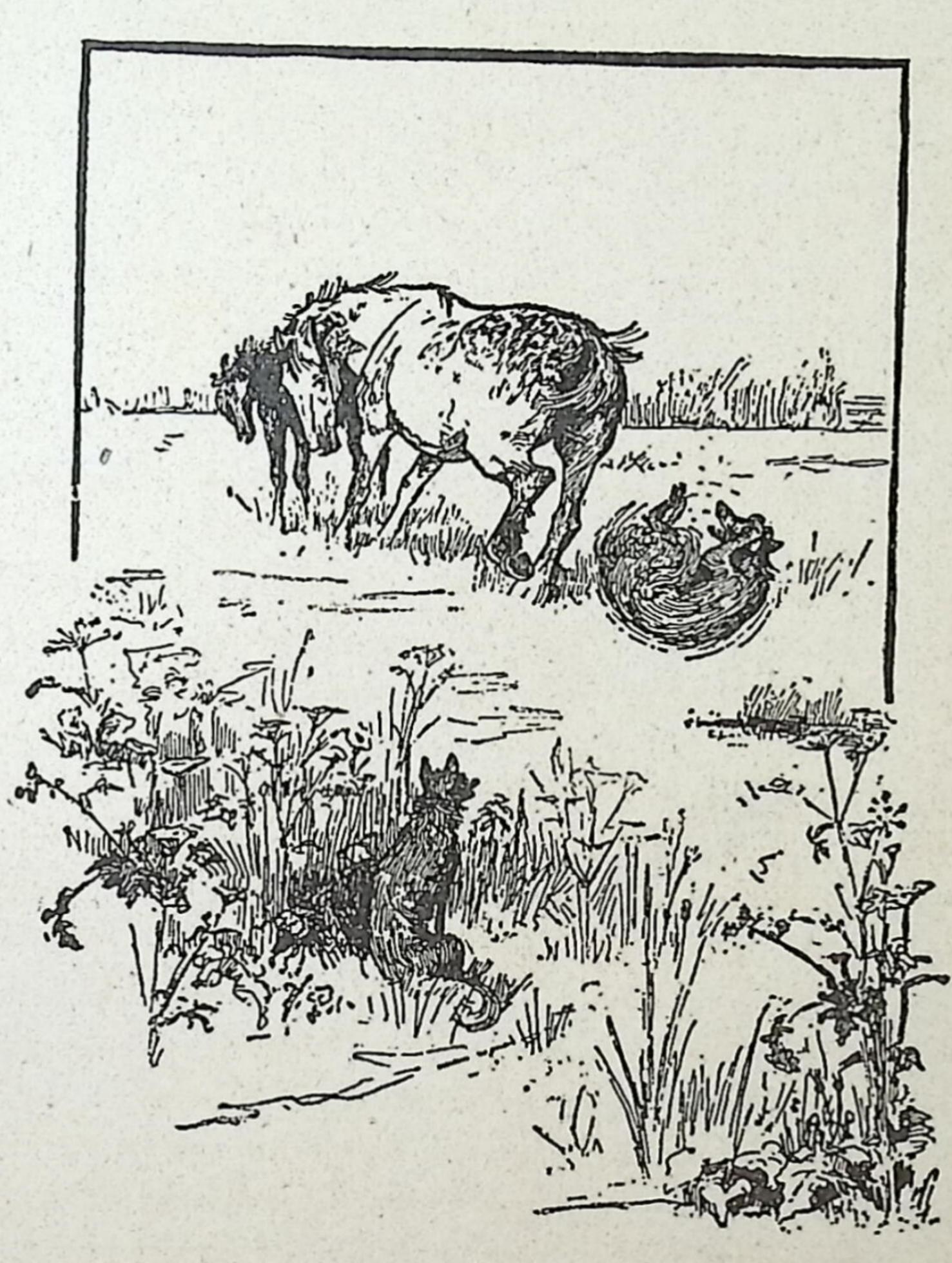
glad at heart.

The Fox now said to the King: "My good lord, you must know that at the west end of Flanders there is a wood known by the name of Husterloe, Reynard the Fox-16.

When the King spoke thus, gloom sat on Reynard's face, while he was

near to which runs the brook Crekenpit. Here have I hid this wealth, to which spot I would that you, sire, and your Queen would go, for there is one seen whom I could trust. When my lord gets there, you shall see two birch trees close to a pit. You shall go in, and there you shall find the hoard. There shall you find rare stones, and when you clasp them in your hands, think of the love that Reynard bears you."

Quoth the King, "Sir Reynard, you must of a truth dig up this hoard, for sure I am I shall not find it. I have heard of Paris, London, Aix la Chapelle, and



Cologne, but Crekenpit I do not know; hence I fear you mean to trick me." At these words a blush sat on Reynard's face, and he said, "Does my lord doubt of my faith?" With that he bade Kayward the Hare come forth. When he was told, by the love he bore the King and Queen, to speak the truth, the Hare said-

"I will speak the truth in all things, though I were sure to die for the same."

Reynard the Fox-17.

Quoth Reynard, "Know you not where is Crekenpit?" "Yes," said the Hare, "I have known it these twelve years. It is in the wood Husterloe."

"Well," said Reynard, "I have done with you now; you may go hence." Then said the Fox, "My liege lord, what say you now; can you doubt me more?"

The King said, "No, Reynard; and I pray you let this pass. Let us at once seek the pit where the hoard lies hid."

The Fox said, "Ah, my lord, think you would I not set out with joy, could I but act as I please? Just hear what I have to say, though it may cause you to think the worse of me. When Isgrim would fain turn monk, the meat that was meant for six of his guild was less than he could eat. He told me this, and I felt for him, so I saw it were best he should run off, which he did. Now I stand with the Pope's ban on my head, and at break of dawn must wend my way to Rome; and will not come back till I have done so much good that I may be a fit knight to wait on my liege lord."

When the King heard this he said, "In such case I dare not have you at Court; and hence I will take Kayward with me to Crekenpit. I but ask you, Reynard not to stay too long."

"My lord," said Reynard, "I will not rest night nor day till I am in my own land."

good be with you."

Then the King sat on his high throne, and said that each beast that heard him should speak not a word, but take the place fit for his birth or rank. Reynard was the sole lord put next to the King and Queen. Then said the King: "Hear, all peers, knights, squires, and you of still less name, this Reynard is now made one of the prime lords of my Court. He hath this day done such good to the State, that both the Queen and I felt bound to show him the best proof of our grace. Hence, we did grant him his life, let him go free, clear him of his crimes, and give him back his goods which he hath lost. That he is staid now, and means well, I know for a fact. At the hour of Prime he goes on to Rome, where he will buy what will cleanse him from his sins! then he will set out for the Holy Land, and is the chief friend of the King."

Then went the Wolf and Bear to the King. Isgrim, with great pomp and pride, came near to the Throne, and with sharp words spoke so ill of Reynard that both the Bear and he were bound fast, so that they could not stir an inch. When Reynard had by guile thus caught his foes in a snare, he got leave of the Queen to have so much of the Bear's skin as would make him a large

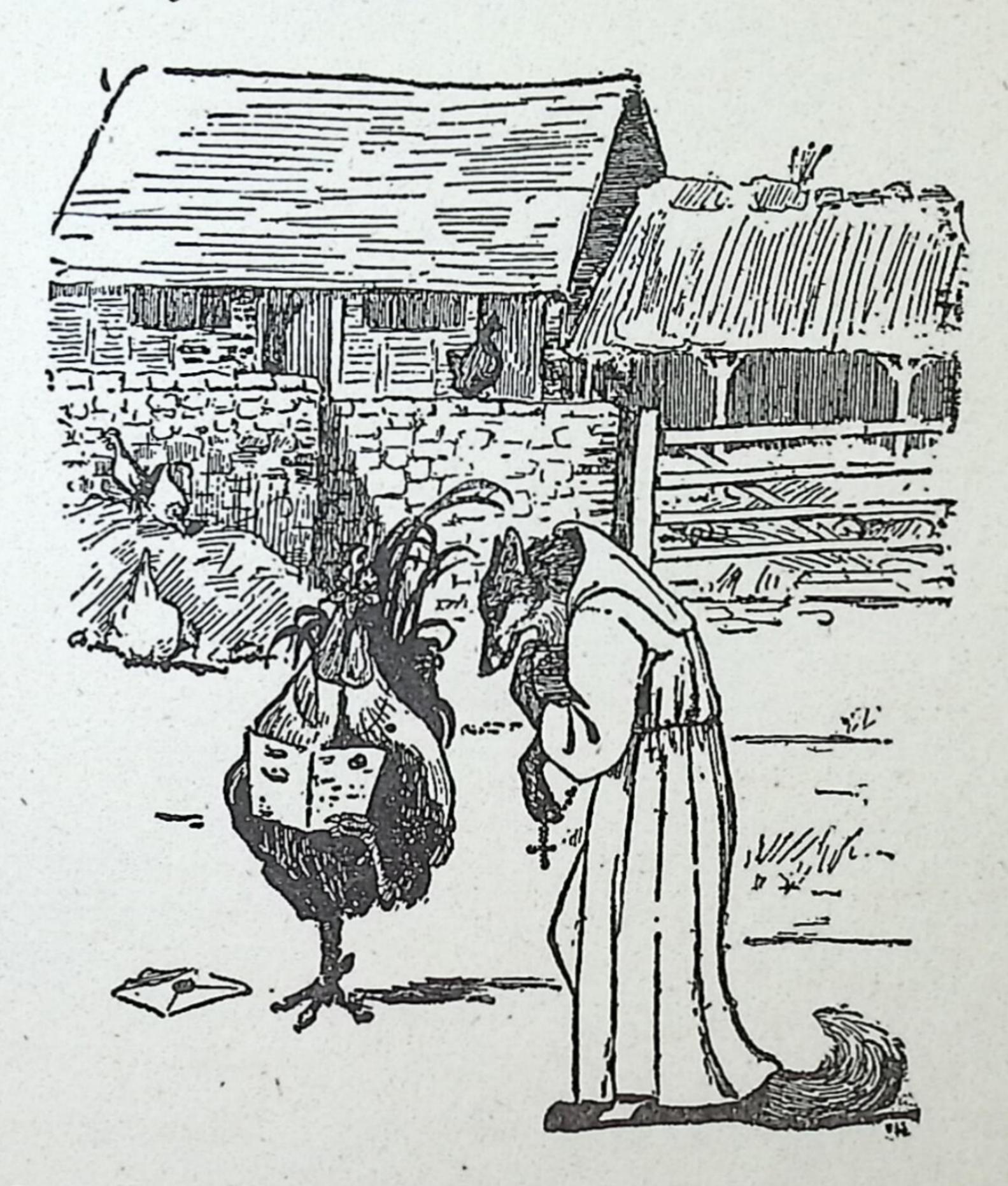
scrip, for use on his way to Rome. Still he was in dire need of a strong pair Reynard the Fox-18.

"I like the course you take," said the King." Go your way, and may all

of shoes; so he said to the Queen, "Dread dame, I am your poor friend, and The Queen said, "No doubt, Reynard, you will want such shoes, for your

may it please your Grace to know that Sir Isgrim wears a pair of shoes that will last long, which, if you deign to give me, I will pray for you all the way." road is strewn with stones and hard grit; hence, you shall have a pair to guard your soft feet."

Then was Isgrim caught hold of, and the skin tore from his front feet in. so cruel a way as to lay bare his nerves.



Isgrim and Bruin lay mute, for they felt the keen smart of their wounds too much to let them speak.

. Ere Reynard set out, he put oil on his shoes, and made them fit as well and as close to his feet as they did on those of Isgrim. He then went to the King and Queen, and said, "My grand lord, and my bland Queen, your poor friend bows low in your sight; I pray thee give me my mail and staff, and with such forms as are due to one like me."

Then the King sent for Bellin the Ram, and told him to hang round Reynard's neck the mail made of the Bear's skin, and to place the staff in his Reynard the Fox-19.

right paw. Then he took leave of the lords, and left the Court. So the King said to him, "It grieves me, Reynard, that we must part so soon." Quoth Reynard, "There is no cure for it, my liege, that I know of; nor ought

I to be slow in an act so full of praise, and which will ease my soul." Then the King gave strict word to all his Court, save the Bear and Wolf, to go with Reynard a part of the way. Reynard put on grave airs, whilst his heart was full of glee. He felt proud to find his foes his slaves, and the

King, whom he made a fool of by his tricks, walk with him, as if he, too, were a prince of the blood.

They had not gone far when Reynard said, "I beg, my lord, that you will not move one step more, but think of the risk you run on this lone road. You have left two base beasts in chains at your Court, and should they get free, you know not what may take place. It may cost you your Crown."

Then he took quick leave of the King, in a sad way; when he at once spoke to Kayward and Bellin in this strain: "My best friends, shall we part so soon? Do not leave me, I pray you. I like your bland words and staid ways, for you are mild, kind, and wise, just as I was when I first put on a monk's cowl." The poor beasts, struck with his fair speech, and too dull to grasp its drift,

were led to go on with him.

"Hail to my lord the King, and to my good Queen," Said Reynard, and may they be led to see whose cause is right and whose is wrong; for in this world lies oft wear the gloss of truth, and the face proves not a sure guide to the heart. Still I know that you, my lord, and your Queen, can soon sift the chaff from the wheat; that your minds are clear to see, and your hearts just to judge, what is right in my case. Trust me, my lord, it shall be known, ere I leave your Court, that I do bear a name on which none can fix a blot."

But the King, with a proud air, said: "Reynard, I see you in no new dress; I know what a gift you have for guile; but soft words will not now get you out of your scrape: I fear this day will be the last of your pride, and that your fall is sure. Your crimes have gone on so long that they bring you to grief in the end."

"My lord," quoth Reynard, "it is just that you hear what I have to say, for let my faults be worse than they are set forth, or than pique can paint them, still the law gives me the right of speech. In this Court I now view a host of my own kin who care not one whit for me. Think you, sire, could I but own to this guilt, that I would have come here of my own free will, and face such a throng? Not I, my lord. When Grimbard, one of my own kin, brought me the news, had I not been on my way to Rome, I would have got here ere the last charge was made. Then I met on the route my friend Martin the Ape, who, when he saw me in such grief, quoth he, 'Dear Reynard, why are you thus Reynard the Fox-20.

cast down? grief is light, and may be borne when friends share it.' Then said I, 'You speak the truth, dear Ape; woe, in sooth, weighs me down. False tales are told of me at court by the Rabbit, whom I took for one of my stanch friends. A day since he came to my house, weak and worn, so I at once gave him a loaf of fine bread and some rich cheese. My young son, Rossel, came in just ere he had quite done his meal, and said he would take off what crumbs were left,



when the Rabbit smote my boy on the mouth, and he fell down in a swoon. Reynardine, my heir, saw the brute give the blow, when he sprang forth, caught him by the head, and would have slain him had I not been there. Then I gave my son stripes for his fault, to teach him he should love those who did him hurt, and that two wrongs could not make a right. But Laprel the Rabbit posts to my lord the King, and says that I sought to kill him. So good deeds have Reynard the Fox-21.

been my bane. Thus, dear Ape, you see how crimes are laid to my charge from which I am as free as you are.' Then said the ape to me, 'My dear friend, you shall go to the Court and show that it is not in you to do such black deeds.' 'Ah,' quoth I, 'it must not be yet, at least, for I am on my way to Rome, to buy a brief from the Pope, so that I may get quit of all my sins I have done to this day.' Then said the Ape, 'Friend, cast off your care, for I know the road to Rome well, and how to do these sort of things; so I will go there and bring you back the brief you want, with the seal of the Keys on it. So, cast your grief to the winds, and get to the Court as soon as you can.'

"At this, my dread lord, I was full of joy; so I made up my mind to come here and speak out my whole mind. Let now but one in this Court come forth and charge me with the least crime, and prove it in due form of law, or else meet me hand to hand in fair fight, and let us have war to the knife. When I shall hold my own, and prove by the death of my foe how free I am from fault!"

The bold air Reynard put on, and the warm words he spoke, made all the beasts stare at him half in fear.

But the King said, "Let him stand forth who wants to charge Reynard and he shall be heard. A day since we could not get to the end of his crimes; this day, where are they? Here is Reynard, who will speak in turn?"

Then said Reynard, "Foes are bold when those they wish to harm are far off; when near, it daunts them. You may see this, sire, both by the Rabbit and the Rook. But I mind it not; for I could not hate those who do me ill and wish not to pay them back in the same coin. I leave you, my lord, to mete out what is just."

Quoth the King, "Reynard, you speak well; yet I much fear you sham grief. I must charge you with one thing, which is, that when I set you free, and you gave me your faith you would go to Rome, and then cross seas to Palestine, you got mail and staff, and all things else to aid you in your good work, and then out of sheer scorn you sent me back the head of Kayward. You dare not say nay to this, for Bellin at his death made known the fact. The gain he got shall be yours; trust me, you shall course the meads no more."

When the King told him what his doom would be, he shook with fear, and his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. Then quoth the King, "Thou false, vile slave, how comes it that thou art for once dumb? Art thou hoarse, or hast thou caught a cold?" But Reynard gave a deep sigh, as if his heart would burst; so that all the beasts felt grief for him save the Bear and the Wolf, who were glad to find their old foe brought low at last.

Then Reynard said, "My lord, my worst grief is that you should say no good was done by my sire or me. The cares of state may well cause kings to have blunt minds for some things, or else my liege might know how in the days of your

Reynard the Fox-22.

sire's reign, and you were a prince of two years old, my sire came from a high school where he won great fame for the skill he had in drugs, that he wore robes of silk and a belt of gold lace. When he came to Court, the King was so ill that it was thought his death was sure. My sire felt sad at this news, for he had great love for his liege lord, who was glad to see him, and would let no one else come nigh his sick bed. Your sire said, 'Reynard, I am in much pain, and in a low state.' My sire felt his pulse, made him thrust out his tongue, put on grave airs, and thought of his case for some time; then quoth he, 'My dear lord, I know what will cure you at once; so, if you want to mend, you must eat the heart of a wolf six years old, else, I fear, you will not live, and



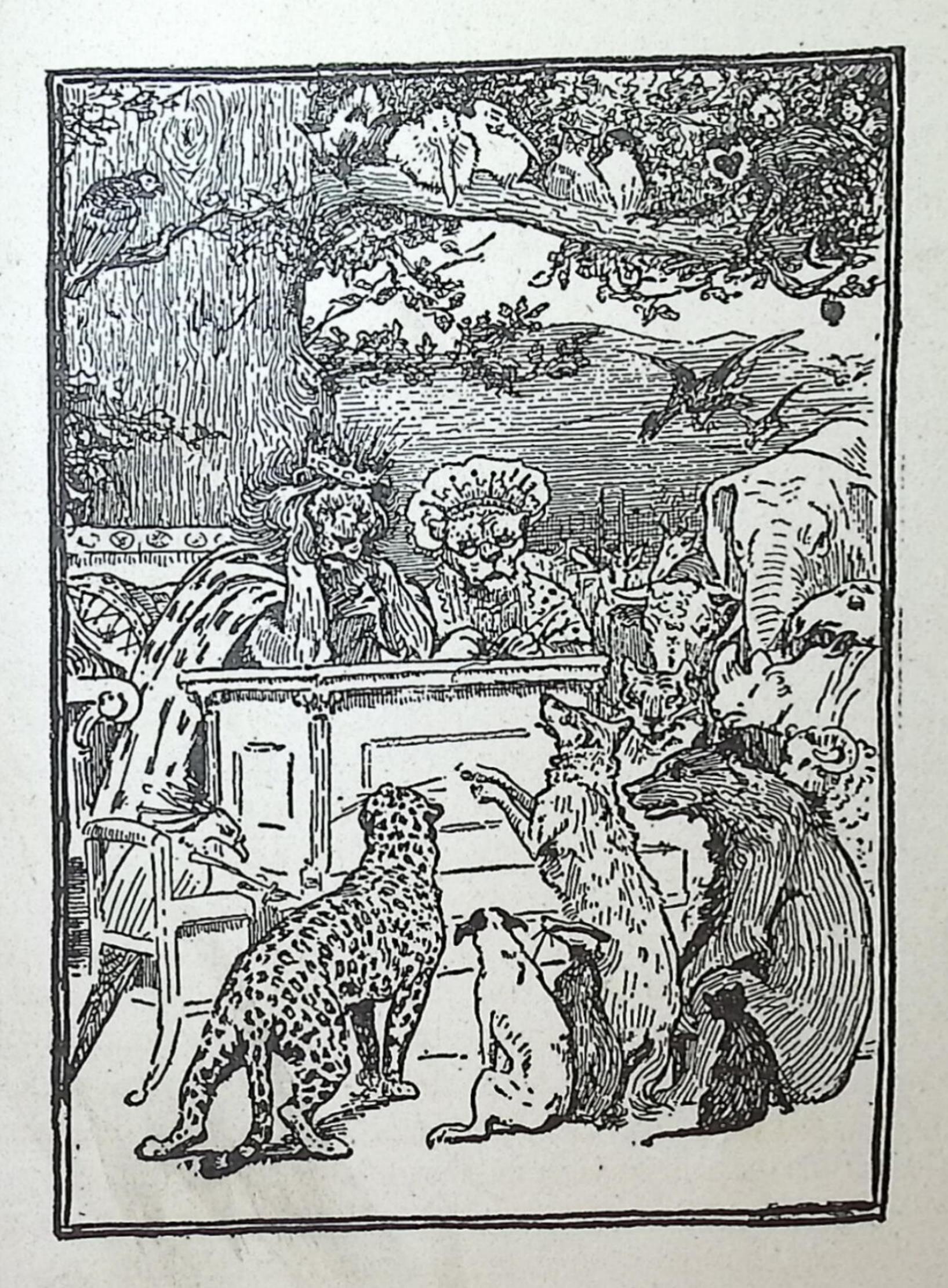
my skill can do no more.' The Wolf at that time stood some way off, but spoke not a word. Then quoth the King, 'Sir Isgrim, you hear there is but one cure left for me, which is your heart.' The Wolf said, 'Not so, I pray; my liege, for I am not yet five years old.' 'It must needs be,' quoth my sire; 'let him be slit; and when I view his heart I will tell you if it will do.' Then the Wolf was brought to the garth, and his heart was cut out, which the King ate, and he soon grew well. Then my sire got the thanks of the King, who made a law that on pain of death all the beasts of his Realm should call him Sir Reynard. Then he had a post in the Court; and the King had such love for him as to have him wear a wreath round his head, as a mark of his high grade. <u>Reynard the Fox-23.</u> "What I have now, told you my liege, fell out in your youth, and it may well slip your mind. But I boast not when I say that I, too, have shown my love for the Throne, though that may not be borne in your thoughts, from the length of time since it took place. I tell you this not to grieve you, but to show my vaunt is not in vain.

"Once in our sport Sir Isgrim and I caught a pig, which gave such fierce grunts that we had to kill it. At this time you came out of a grove, spoke to us as if we had been friends, and said that you and the Queen felt the want of food; so you bade us give you part of our chase. Isgrim did not like the thought, and gave a scowl; but quoth I, in warmth, 'With all my heart, my lord; and had I a more fit meal, it would be too mean for you.' Then Isgrim gave a growl, as is his wont, and in a glum way caught hold of one half the pig, so that he left but a forth part each for you and the Queen; while poor I had to make the best of the draff. You still had not food for your wants, and as Isgrim would give up none, you dealt him a blow with your foot, which tore the skin from his ears, and sent him off in throes of pain. Then you told him to get you more meat, and then come back at once; so he crept off in search of game, though he would fain stay where he was. Then quoth I, 'If it be my lord's will, I will go and cause him to make more haste.' So off we went and soon caught a calf, which, when you saw it, made you laugh. Then you said that I was swift, and had a rare gift for sport, to find my game so soon, and then you bade me have it. I did so, and gave a cut each to you and the Queen, while our kin, who were with you, got the tripe; the head I gave to the Wolf, while'I kept but the feet. Then said my lord, 'Ah Reynard, who taught you to carve prey so well?' 'My lord,' quoth I, 'he who doth soss here with a gash in his head, for he lost his skin through his own fault, and his greed brought him to shame.' But I shall say no more of this: there be wolves in these days that would eat up their best friends and kin, nay, the King's self, for they love and fear no one. But woe to that land where such imps as these have sway.

"This, my lord, and deeds of a like kind, have I done to serve my King, though they find no place in your mind at this long date; still I hope that time and my zeal for the Throne will bring them back with force. I have seen the day when my words had full weight with the Court, and I may live to see it once more. I have lost caste; yet it my be I shall rise to my late height, when faith in me may be as firm as of yore; so long as it swerves not from what is just, which is my sole aim. Now, my lord, I sue at your feet for what is meet. Let him who brings a charge to my hurt, vouch it in due form of law, and on strong proof, and I stand here to hail my doom. Should this not be the case, and crimes are laid on my head through sheer spite, of which I am free; then I claim the palm!"

Reynard the Fox-24.

Quoth the King, "Reynard, you say well. I reck not of Kayward's death more than that his head was brought to me by Bellin the Ram. Hence I feel bound to free you from the blame as well as from the pain, which the law doth make the wage of such a crime as was laid, void of proof, at your door." "My dread lord," said the Fox, "I thank you from the depths of my heart; but Kayward's death makes me mourn so much that I must not let



it pass in a light way. I know my soul was sad when he set out, and I had dark thoughts which were the sure signs of the dread loss that was to be mine." At these words and sad looks of the Fox, all those in Court could not check their sighs; for they put faith in his words and drank them in with greed. The King and Queen, in like way, felt one touch of that law which makes the whole world kin. But the lost gems were much to their minds; so they said Rey-Reynard the Fox-25. nard should do all he could to find such; and as they had heard that this rare prize was for them, though they had it not, yet did Reynard meet with the same thanks as if they had.

Reynard heard with joy those words of the King; and though he knew he could not put his vow in force, yet swore he would search the world through, till he had found the gems.

The King at once said he should grant Reynard all due aid, so soon as he could learn where the gems were. Reynard gave meet thanks to his liege: he thought by his false tales and bland speech he had so bound the King to him with a leash of love, that none durst speak a word much less bring a charge to his hurt. But Isgrim stood gruff and mute. At length his thoughts grew too strong for him; so he had to give them vent.

"Oh, my lord," said he, "how can you thus put faith in the words of one who takes pride in his guile? Let not his glib tongue and low art lead you to think he means what he says. He has shed blood more times than I can count; is false to the Throne, and scoffs in your face. I am glad he is now here that I may show up his guilt in so strong a light that all the lies he can hatch will serve him not a jot. First, let me tell you, my lord, in how vile a way he dealt with Dame Herswin a short time since. One day, at the bleak time of the year, when both were by a lake, he told my wife he would teach her a new and sure way to catch fish with her tail. Well, my poor wife did not see the joke; so she went through the deep mire till she came to where he told her; then she held down her tail, and thought the fish would come and bite. But the cold was so keen, and she stood still so long, that her tail grew firm in the ice, and with all her strength she could not pull it out. Then pain and cold made her howl; but the rude rogue gave her taunts and not help. When I heard my wife's groans, I came at once to give my mite of aid; when I saw Reynard run off, swift as a roe. I had hard work of it to break the ice and set her free; but with all my toil and pains she had to leave a piece of her tail in the lake. We both ran the worst of risks; for my poor wife's groans made such a fuss in the vill close by that the folks came with stones and bills, and flails and forks, and the dames with the staffs with which they spin, and they beat us and said, 'Kill, kill!' and 'Slay, slay!' that it was the worst plight we were in. One stout and swift boor hurt us much with the staff of a pike, and were it not the night stood our friend we would scarce have got off with our lives. Thence we came to a field, full of broom and furze, where we hid from our foes. Thus, my good lord, have you lent a kind ear to what this vile wretch hath done to us; and we now claim what the law deems just. Though he wears a sleek face, he lives in fear of the axe and the rope; one of which will be his fate at last.

Reynard the Fox-26.

Then up spoke Reynard, "My liege, if what the Wolf says were true, I grant it would touch my good name. I now tell him he durst not prove his words, and fling back his foul charge right full in his face. I know I taught his wife to catch fish, and how to get to the lake. But her greed, when she heard me name the fish, made her rush in such hot haste that she would not pay the least heed to what I said. When she got to the lake she stood to long there that her tail grew firm in the ice, though she caught as much fish as a score of wolves would eat, whose maws were of the main size. But it is a trite phrase, 'Crave all, lose all'; and, in sooth, greed works but ill to him who has it, and brings no good home. So soon as I saw her fast bound, did all I could to free her; but it was of no use; I could not move her.

"Just at that time Isgrim came, and when he found the plight his wife was in he fell in a huge rage; he spoke in a harsh and foul way to her; while the worst names he could think of were too good for me; nay, he said, I should bear the brunt; so that more to get rid of his noise than from fear of him, I left the spot. Then he got to the edge of the lake, and by dint of pulls and hauls, till he was nigh out of breath, he set her free from the ice, when numb and half dead with cold they ran up and down the fields to gain warmth. What I say is the truth; for I would not lie to the king for all this world's wealth. Truth, my lord, is my badge, and has for all time been the pride of my race. Should you have the least doubt of what I say, I ask but eight days to speak with such friends whose skill in the law is well known; at the end of which time I shall prove my words in due form, and by the lips of those you can trust, who are good beasts and free from guile. Then both you, my lord, and the Court, will find how just is my cause; and that I would as lief lose my life as lie to the King. What have I to do with the Wolf? He is more vile than the worst beast that prowls the woods, and is false to the Throne as well. As to the trick which he says I had the spite to play on his wife, I now ask her if this be not a base lie? that is, if she stand not in such awe of her spouse that she dare not speak the truth, let the cause be what it might."

speak the truth, let the cause be what it might. At this Dame Herswin came forth and said, "Oh, Reynard, why dost thou oil thy tongue so, that no one is safe from thy wiles? Not once, but scores of times have you led me wrong and brought me to grief. Think how ill thou didst use me at the well, where two pails hung by one rope which ran through a groove, so that when one went down the next came up. Thou didst stand in one pail and then fall down souse as far as thou couldst go; there thou wast in great fear till I heard thy moans and sped in haste to help thee. 'How didst thou get in this plight?' quoth I. 'I am in seach of fish,' saidst thou, 'and have had such a glut that I dread I shall burst.' 'How shall I come to thee?' said I. Then a saidst thou, 'Aunt, leap right in the pail which hangs by you; and thou wilt be

Reynard the Fox-27.-

down soon.' This I did; and as I was of more bulk than you I was borne down in a trice; while you got safe to the top. The ruse was shrewd, and when I grew cross at this low trick of yours, quoth you, to taunt me, 'Aunt, this is but the way of the world; one falls that some one else may rise.' Then didst thou leap out of the pail and hie off, while I was left in the well all day in cold and with no food to eat, and ere I could get out I was so much hurt from . blows that I had well nigh lost my life." "Aunt," said the Fox, "though the blows gave you pain, it were best you had them and not me; for you are strong and can bear them; which I could not. Then think, Aunt, what a nice bit of lore thou hast learnt, which is, not to put trust in friend or foe when what he says tends to free him from a scrape; for we all love self best."

Then spoke Dame Herswin to the King: "I pray you, my lord, to mark well how this knave can blow all winds with the same breath, and paint all hues with the same brush: It would fail me to tell of half his vile pranks. Once he led my spouse to a great ape, which, by the way, cost him one of his ears. If the Fox dare for once to speak the truth, the best proof he can give, or I can wish for, is his own tale."

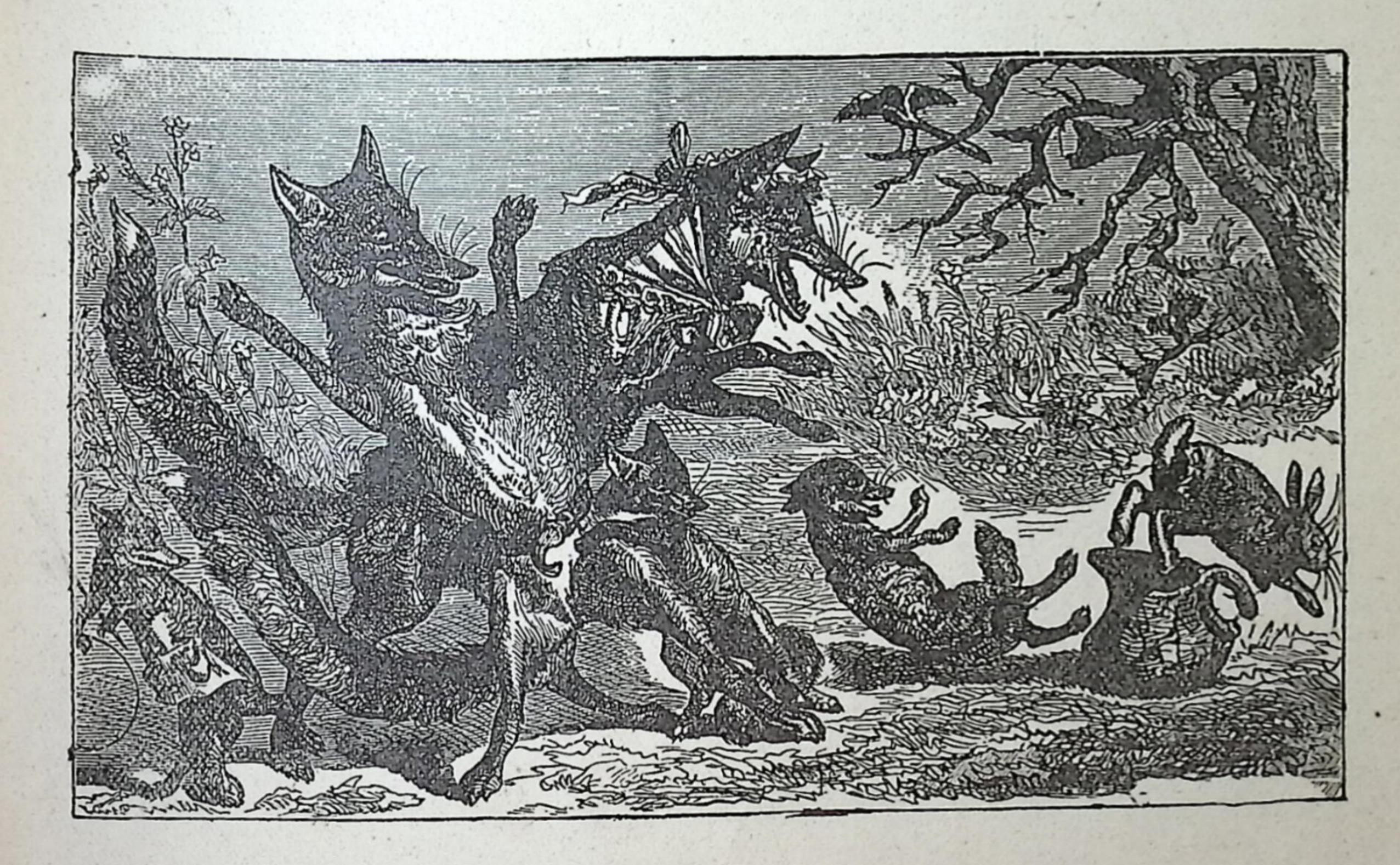
At once Reynard caught at these words, and said, "Most glad will I be to do this. I shall tell the truth and not flinch; and hence I pray the King to lend his ear to what I now state.

"Once the Wolf came to me while in the woods, and said in a whine that he had no meat to eat and was in great want, though I thought at the time he was sleek and full; for one must not trust a word he says. I felt ruth at last, and gave him to know that I stood in need of a meal as much as he did. So off we set, side by side, in search of prey. When half the day had gone, and we found our chase in vain, he said he could not move a step more. In the nick of time our eye fell on a gap close by a thorn tree, and we heard a queer kind of low dull sound come from it, the cause of which we could not make out. I told the Wolf to creep in and try if he could find aught that would serve us in our need, for I knew there must be some kind of game in the place. But, quoth he, 'Friend, I durst not do so 'for the King's crown, till I first know what is in the hole; I would not take the risk; but, what if you try, who have arts and parts to get you quick out of a strait; I will stay hard by this tree till you come back; and I pray you take time by the front lock, and let me know what the spoil is when you clutch it.'

"Thus, my lord, did he cause me, a poor weak beast, to put my head first in a poke, and chance my life, while he, who is stout and firm of limb, lay in peace. I got in the den as he bade me, and found the way dark, dank, and long, but at last I saw a strong glare of light come in at the mouth of the cave,

Reynard the Fox-28.

and by it my eye caught a huge she Ape, with eyes like fire, her mouth set round with long sharp teeth, and with nails on her paws as fine as pins. By her side lay a brood as grim and fierce as their dam. They gave a gape with their mouths when they saw me, at which I took fright; but I thought that now I was in, I would brave it as well as I could. Hence I set my eyes full on her, till she grew as big as Isgrim, and the least of her young ones as large as I am. There they lay in mire and dirt; but I made up my mind, as I thought it the best course, to speak them fair; and hence I said, 'Long life to you, dear aunt, and may you have more bliss than you can wish. I do so much like your fine brood; they look so sleek and slim; you may well be proud of such a stock, for they would not shame a prince had one been their sire. When I got to these parts I would



not lose a day, but came at once to see you; and now my cup of joy is full.' Quoth she, 'My friend Reynard, I greet you well; you have found me in a sad state, more like a blowz than is my wont, but I thank you for all that; we are now and then caught by our friends when things are not quite as straight as they ought to be. You are known all through the King's realm for your wit and store of lore that lies in one small head, and hence your call is a great boon. I beg you to take charge of my young ones and teach them some of the grand arts, that they may know how to live and thrive in the world. From the time they were born I have had you in my mind; and I know they can Reynard the Fox-29.

find none to guide them so well; for you have the best traits, and walk with those who are wise and good.'

"These words gave me ease, which came of my kind speech; for she felt proud of the term aunt, though she is none of my kith or kin; for my true aunt is Dame Rukenaw, who stands a short way off, and can boast of a fine brood. Then said I to the foul thing, 'Aunt, my life and my goods are both at your beck; and to serve you night or day shall be my chief pride.' Had I lost all of my wealth I would have felt rich were I but clear of the cave; for it was so rank and close I thought I should choke. Then I felt for Isgrim, who all this while had no food; so I took my leave, on the ground that my wife would grieve at my long stay. Quoth she, 'Dear friend, you must not quit this place till you have had a slight meal. I do not take it as kind of you thus to make such swift haste, for your time is your own, I go bail.' Then she rose up and led me to a large room close at hand where there was a row of prime red deer and roes, and such piles of rare birds that my eyes shed tears at the sight. I set to work and made a rich feast, and when I had done she gave me a whole side and half a haunch of a fat doe to bring home to my wife, which I felt shame to take; but she saw at a glance how loath I was to have her gifts, and hence did press them on me. Then I took my leave; and when she gave me her hand to kiss, said I would see them all soon, and felt right glad that I had sped so well.

"When I came out of the cave I saw Isgrim plump on the ground, while his groans rent the air. He told me he was so faint that if he could not get some meat he would be sure to give up the ghost. Then I gave him the prime haunch I brought with me; so that he owes his life to me. For this act he gave me thanks at the time, much as he seeks to do me hurt now. When he could eat no more, quoth he, 'Reynard, my good friend, what else did you find in the hole? for I need to eat more than when you gave me the haunch; that wee bit but whets my greed and gives me a gust for good things.' 'Isgrim,' said I, 'you creep in at the cave's mouth, and there you will find my aunt, with her whole brood; if you please her ear with fine words and speak her fair, you need dread no ill, and all will go as you would wish.'

"I think, my lord, to one who had a grain of sense in his head such hints would tell him how to act; but dull dolts will walk in their own ways, do what one might, and it is but waste of words to teach them. Isgrim said he would do as I bade him, and so in he went to the moist den, where he found the huge Ape, quite snug, with her young ones at her feet, which made him blench at first sight. He gave a shrill squeak, and said, 'What foul sty is this I have come to? and what grim whelps! Drown them! pray drown them! their gruff looks put me in a fume and make mine hair stand on end. And then, they glare so: I trust I shall not once more set eyes on such waifs and strays; they

Reynard the Fox-30.

serve but to scare the crows!' 'Sir Isgrim,' said the Ape, ''tis true I can say not a word in praise of their good looks; but it is not their fault that I know of; nor do I see what it has to do with you. They are my brood, and I am their dam. One of your kin has but just gone from hence, who is of high rank, and wise, which you are not. He told me they are fair and have good looks; so I care not a straw what you think, and you may trudge as soon as you please.' Isgrim blurts out, 'Dame, you carp at what I say. Now, I want some of the meat you have in store; it is more fit for me to have it than these brats of yours." She told him she had no meat for him; but he said he would soon find as much as he could eat; and with that he caught hold of some, when up got my aunt (as she claims to be) and her brood, who tore him with their sharp nails, that the blood ran down his ears and chaps. I heard him yelp and yell as if he had got bad pains, and naught was left for him but to scape from the den as fast as he could, mulct of his meat. When I saw him he was black and blue and full of gore from the blows and bites he got. Here and there he had a slash in his skin, and one ear he left in the hole as a pledge that he would act with more tact the next time he gave the Ape a call.

"When I saw him in this sad state it made me yearn; so I said—but not to twit him—he had not made that good use of his tongue he might have done. He told me he spoke as he felt and as he found them, for the dame was a foul beast and the young ones a set of grim runts. I told him he should have been mild of speech, spoke of their fair looks, and laid claim to them as his best of kin; but he said he would have seen them hung first. Then quoth I, 'You must shut your chaps and not whine more, for you are to blame. Fair words cost not a groat; and keep fresh and good all the year. To be bland one need not lie; and those of high grade will go as far as to say that, and, in sooth, more so, if the truth be told.'

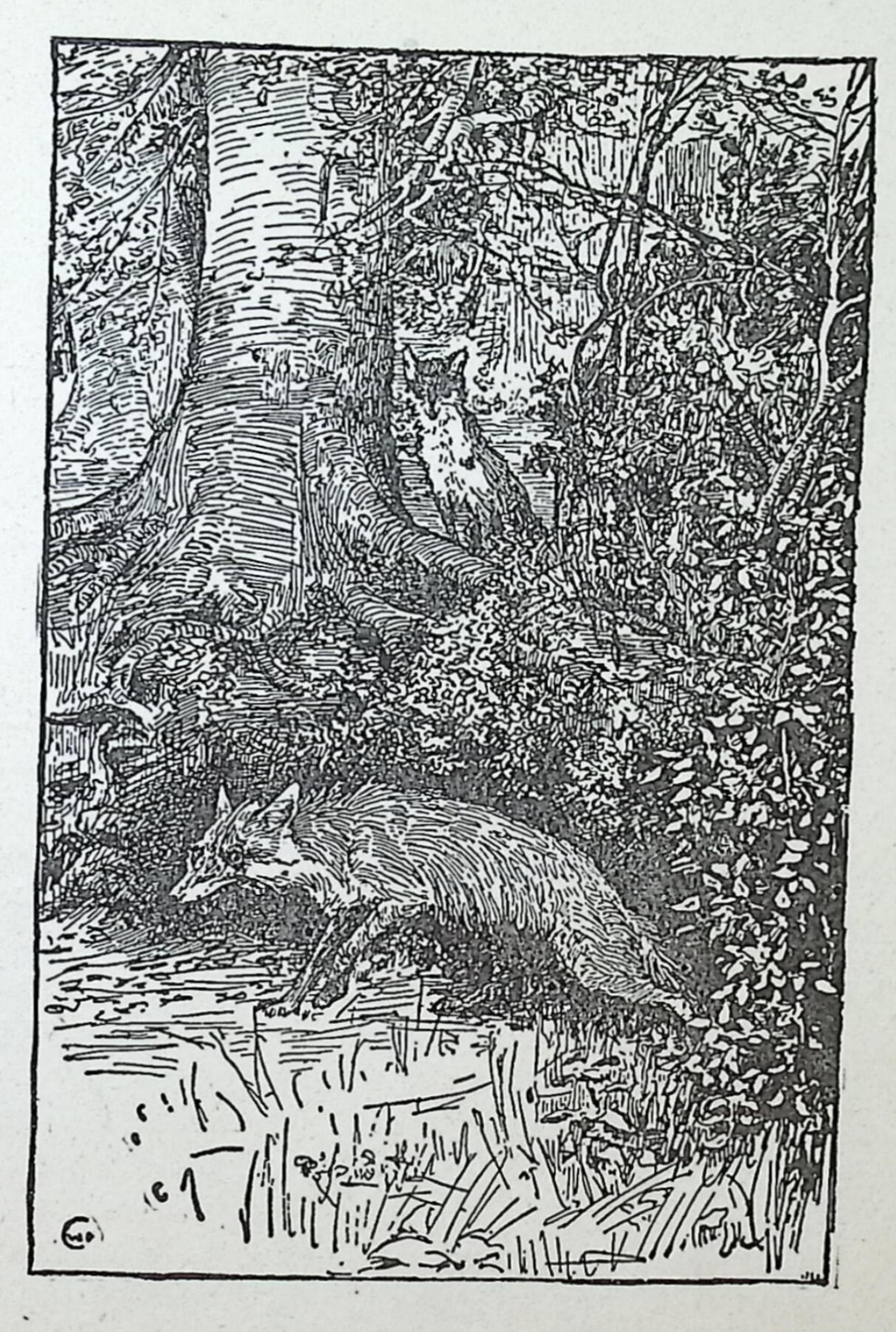
"Thus, my lord, have I been frank with you, and told you how Isgrim came by his red night cap. No word of his can mar what I say; for it is the whole truth, in which there is not a patch of guile; for I would be the last one in the world to fly in the face of, or to foist false tales on, my liege King."

Then said Isgrim to Reynard, "Vile knave that thou art, I heed not thy gibes and scowls, but I will tell of the hurt thou hast done me. You say I was in great need and you came to my help. You lie like a dog! You gave me naught but a bare bone, from which thou didst champ off the meat. You charge me with high crimes, such as that I laid a plot to change the form of the State and to take the King's life, just to gain a hoard hid in Husterloe. This, too, is a bold and base lie. I have borne with you thus long, but find I must sneap you at last. Hence, my lord the King, and you my brave knights, my friends and kin, I here state and vouch to the last gasp of my life that thou, Reynard the Fox, Reynard the Fox-31. art a vile knave, and that thou hast the red stain of blood on thy head; and this I will make good on thy foul skin, in face of the King, by fair fight, till one of us shall fall. In proof of this I here cast thee my glove, which I dare thee to take up; that my wrongs may be set right, or else die like a loon."

Reynard, when he heard these words of wrath, felt ill at ease. He knew he was weak whilst the Wolf was strong, so he thought he might fare the worst. Still he did not quite want to shirk the fight; for he knew that were he to wince, it would stick as scurf to his name and blur his shield. But then he brought to mind that he had one chance left, as the Wolf's claws had been off and his foot was still sore; so he said in a loud voice: "He who says I am a knave, and that I plot to kill the King, and that I shed blood, I say lies in his throat, and Isgrim most of all. Fool that thou art! thou dost thirst for thy own bale; which I shall not balk thee of. All thy lax words I will prove to be false, and that they mar the weal of the Realm. In mark of this I take up thy gage, and here throw thee mine."

When this was done, the King took the pledge of each, and gave them the right to try a feat of strength; but he said they must find sound bail that the fight should take place on the next day. Then the Bear and the Cat came forth as bail for the Wolf, and Grimbard the Brock and Bitelas the young Ape in like way for the Fox. As soon as all the forms had been gone through, Dame Rukenaw took Reynard to the porch of the Court, and said, "Your dear aunt hopes you will take care and not get hit or hurt in this fight. One, near of kin to us, once told me of a charm good for those who meet a foe and cross swords with him; he learned it, he said, from an old priest who had much skill in such kind of art. He who will say the words of the charm while he fasts from food, shall come off best should he face a foe that day. Hence, my dear Reynard, fear not; for ere you take to the field, I will read it to you, and the Wolf shall lose the palm." The Fox gave her his best thanks, and said he had no doubt that through her means he would come off well, and not get a scratch, as on his part the fight was fair and just, for he held no pique, and but sought to clear his fair name of foul blots. Then he stayed all night long with his horde, who made time wane by good cheer and blithe talk as to what fate had in store for the Fox.

Dame Rukenaw thought well how she might work for Reynard's good in the fight that was to come off; so she got him close shorn from head to his tail, and then put oil on his skin. This made him smooth and hard to hold, that the Wolf must fail should he try to catch him; the more so, as he was round, fat and plump. Then she told him not to wax warm at the first set to, nor to get too close, that his foe may toil and run at him when he meant to deal a blow, and that in such case he was to get where there was most dust, which he should Reynard the Fox-32. strive to whisk up with his feet and thick tail, so as to make it fly in the Wolf's eyes. At the same time he was to keep his tail as close as he could, so that his foe might not seize it and pull him to the ground. She said when the Wolf's eyes were half blind from dust, he should not let that time slip, but bite him where he might do him most hurt; then wend and thwack him in the eyes with



his tail to tease him and get him in a maze, that by this means he might lose a chance. "And thus," quoth she, "you will so tire and wear him out, that he will fail to get at you; the more so as the wounds on his feet are still raw from the loss of his shoes, which you took off from him; for though he is a big size, yet his heart is small and frail as that of a chick. This, Reynard, is what I tell you Reynard the Fox-33.

to do; and take an old dame's word for it, that, in such a case, guile is more than force. I pray you, then, be of good cheer, and hope for the best; so that not you but all your kin may have joy and gain fame and a proud name by the palm you will win this day. And this is the charm which Monk Martin taught me, by which no foe, let him be as fierce as he may, can strike you. These are the words of the weird spell." Then she laid her hands on his head and said:

"Now, dear Reynard, you may be sure that you are quite safe from all hurt or harm; so go to rest for a short time, for it is just day, and a nice nap will give you strength and help you to win the fight."

The Fox gave his aunt his best thanks, and told her he would put full faith in the might of the charm, and that he would love and serve her more and more from that time forth. Then he lay down to sleep on the grass, near to a tree, till the sun rose, when the Otter came to rouse him, and gave him a fat young duck with which to break his fast. "Dear friend," said he, "I have kept strict watch all the live long night to get this snack for you. I stole it from the man who shot it, and I find it fresh and good; here, take and eat it, for it will give you nerve to meet your foe."

The Fox was glad of this treat; said it was a stroke of good luck to get it; and that, should he live out that day, he would do some kind deed for the Otter, who was a friend in need. He then ate the duck, to which keen greed and the crisp air gave the sole sauce; and took four large draughts at a brook to wash it down. Then in high glee he and all his kin and clan went to the field where the fight was to take place.

When the King saw Reynard so shorn and full of grease he said to him, "Well, Reynard, I see you mean to get safe out of this fray; you look as if you meant more to shun harm than to gain a prize."

The Fox was dumb for the nonce, and, with staid airs, bent to the earth in sight of the King and Queen, as though he would lick the dust. He then went forth to the sward where the match was to be fought, and where he was met by the Wolf, whose tongue must needs wag with vain taunts at his foe, and proud boasts of how he would serve him out.

The Leopard and the Lynx were the chiefs of arms, and led the lists. First, the Wolf was bade to make his call, when he said the Fox was false to his "King and to the Realm, and that on his plate lay the stain of blood, which he would prove on his vile hide, or else be known as a mean churl.

When the set forms had been gone through, the chiefs of arms held them to the call; when they came to the bout. Then all the tribe of beasts went

Reynard the Fox-34.

## "Blaerde Sbcay Alpbenio, "kashue Corsons Alsbuifrio.

off from the lists, save Dame Rukenaw who stood by Reynard and bade him dwell on the words she spoke, and the hints she gave him. She told him to call to mind how, when he was but a few years old, he was thought most wise and shrewd by all the beasts; and now that time had taught him more craft than he then knew, while his strength was not less, she bade him fight so as to win the day, which would add to the pride of his bright fame and that of his race while time should last.

To this quoth Reynard, "Thanks, my dear good aunt, and, trust me, I will do my best in this bout, and not let slip from my mind one jot of what you have told me. I doubt not that my deeds will bring fame to my friends,



and cast shame on my foes. Now, then, to let loose the dogs of war and put one more star on my breast."

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"Thus may it be," said the Ape, who then left the lists. As soon as Reynard came in the King's sight he fell on his knees; but the King took him by the hand and said, "Lord Reynard, you have this day won a proud prize, and now we raise you to the rank of a peer of our Realm, so that you will be known as the Earl of Hedgewood. Hence we burst your bonds, and set you free to go where you have a mind. When Isgrim gets well from his wounds, I will call all the wise beasts of my State to the Court, when both of Reynard the Fox-35.

you shall be sent for, so that the bay you have won may be put on your brow, with the star and sash to which your new rank lays claim."

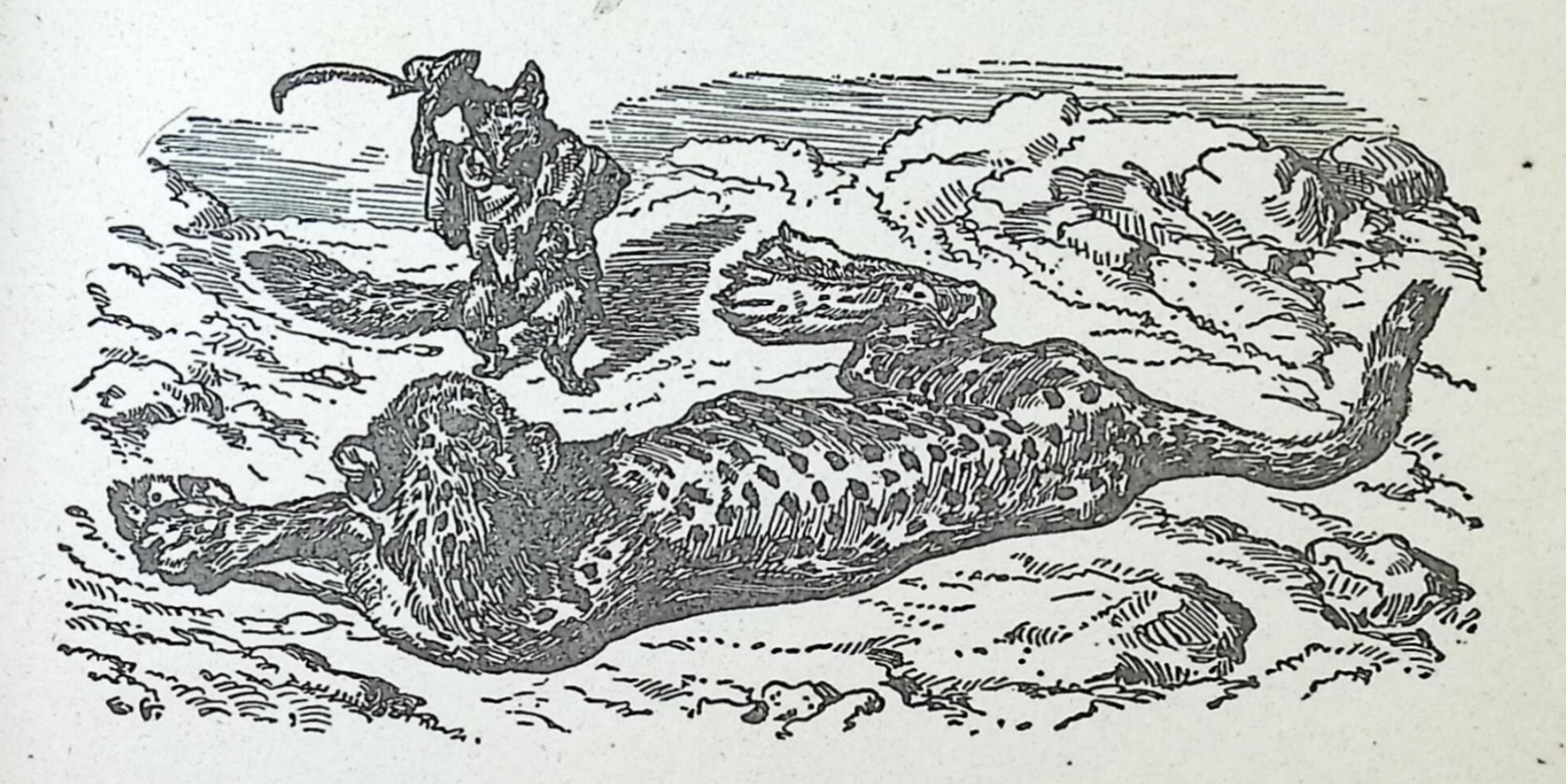
"My dread liege," quoth Reynard, "I am but too well paid with the way it doth please you to judge of my deeds in the field. But, my lord, when first I came to Court, I found a host of beasts there to whom I had done no hurt, who sought my life, and with this view made a league with my sworn foes. They thought the Wolf was more in your good grace than I, and this was all the ground they had for their poor spite. They put me in mind of a pack of hounds whom I once saw near to a large manse where monks dwelt in ease. They stood there to wait for one of their flock who had slunk to the room where the food was kept, and who came out in quick time with a fat piece of beef in his jaws. But the cook was soon at his heels, who flung at him a pan of hot broth, which made him yell at a fierce rate. Then those base brutes, who saw but the meat, said, 'Oh, how rich thou art, and how much art thou bound to love the kind cook who gave thee such a prize!' But when he came near to them, and they saw the skin all off his back, and how he did writhe in pain, then they sought to flout and not heed him, and at last drove him from their pack. Such, my liege, are those who now boast that they are my new friends. I may cheat and rob the Church and the poor, and they will both praise and aid me, so that they may lick their thumbs and get a share of the spoil. Now my lord, none may say ought to wound me: I am the dog with the shin of beef in my mouth. But, tush! if I get a scald, then have I got a plague spot, . and am in sooth not fit to speak with a soul; so that, were I wise, I should be thought a fool; and thought a saint, the worst wretch in the world-all would pass me by in scorn."

Then quoth the King, "Lord Reynard, you, more than all beasts, ought to be a staunch friend to our Throne, and we doubt not but you will give us your best aid, so as to help us to guide the Ship of State in a straight course, and keep her clear from shoals and rocks; for these are sad times, when beasts who were wont to keep the peace and bow to our will fall out and fight, and no more dwell as they were wont to do. The wit and good parts you have shown will, we think, help us to see that the law is well kept. Hence it seems good to us to make you one of our chief lords, and we hope you will wear your new rank in such a way that no foe, should you have one, can fix a slur on you. We, by our grace, raise you to a high grade, and to a post of vast trust, and we look to you to mete out what is just to all who seek your help. Think of the tale you have told in our ears, and love truth and seek pure aims. Let but your keen wit and fine lore lead you to do good acts, and you will form such a strong link in the chain of State that we dare not snap you off. While you work for us and with us, and try to make all things right, not a beast in our realm shall - harm you but we will at once make him rue his deed." Reynard the Fox-36.

These bland words of the King made Reynard's friends feel proud of him. Proud were they too, to own the sway of such a wise and just liege, for whom they would lay down their lives. Then the King said he would, for their sakes, raise Lord Reynard to a rank still more high did he but act in a fair way; and the King gave a slight hint that it may be as well for them to warn him should they see his zeal on the wane.

"Fear not, my lord," said Dame Rukenaw, "we will all watch him well; and if he fail in what he hath said to you, we will give him up."

Reynard gave his best thanks to the King, and said, "My dread liege, I owe you a debt I may not hope to pay, and I know of naught in me for which



you should thus heap rich gifts on my head. 1 own I have sought them not nor do I think I ought to have such high marks of your grace thrust on me; still I will try and wear them in a meek way. From this time forth I but live for my King and the Realm he rules so well."

In the mean time Bruin and Tibert and Dame Herswin, and his chief friends drew Isgrim from the field, laid him down on soft hay, and wrapt him up well. They then sent for men of skill, who came and bound up his wounds, which were just one score and five. As he still lay in a swoon, they had to chafe his brow with strong scents, and rub his eyes and cheek bones till he woke from his dull state, when he gave such a loud yelp as made all who stood by start at the sound. Then he got a drink to rouse him, and in a short time a drug to soothe his nerves; while Dame Herswin heard the good news that she need not have the least fear for the life of her spouse.

Reynard the Fox-37. ]

When the Court broke up, Reynard took his leave with the rest; when the King and Queen said in kind tones, it was their will that he should not stay long , from his post. Reynard told them it would be his chief thought and pride to do the King's wish, and he would pledge that all his friends and his whole clan should act in the like way. Then he set out for his seat at Malepardus, right glad to get off so well, and to be so high in the King's grace. He then told his friends he could now lift up and pull down; and that while those who stood firm to him in the hour of need should have high posts and rich gain, he would make his foes eat the sour leek, strip them of all they had, and see them live to mourn their acts.

The route was long, but at length Reynard and his friends got safe to Malepardus, where they took leave of Reynard, who gave them his best thanks for their kind aid. He said he would bear both them and the great good they did him in mind, and would help them with his life and goods, could such be of use. He then shook hands with, and took kind leave of all his friends, who went to their own homes.

Then Reynard sped with all haste to Dame Ermeline, who was glad to see her dear spouse once more safe and back in the old fort where his sires had so long dwelt, and the walls of which were moist with age. She met him with marks of deep love, and her sweet smiles made him feel as blithe as on the day he wed her. He then told her and her brood all the strange things he had met with at the Court since he left home, and did not miss a jot. The tale of his good luck made all their hearts beat high and feel light at the core, and he spent the rest of his days with them in bliss and peace. Reynard the Fox-38.





