

Belling the Cat



The Mice once called a meeting to decide on a plan to free themselves of their enemy, the Cat. At least they wished to find some way of knowing when she was coming, so they might have time to run away. Indeed, something had to be done, for they lived in such constant fear of her claws that they hardly dared stir from their dens by night or day.

Many plans were discussed, but none of them was thought good enough. At last a very young Mouse got up and said:

“I have a plan that seems very simple, but I know it will be successful.

All we have to do is to hang a bell about the Cat’s neck. When we hear the bell ringing we will know immediately that our enemy is coming.”

All the Mice were much surprised that they had not thought of such a plan before. But in the midst of the rejoicing over their good fortune, an old Mouse arose and said:

“I will say that the plan of the young Mouse is very good. But let me ask one question: *Who* will bell the Cat?”

It is one thing to say that something should be done, but quite a different matter to do it.

The Fox and the Grapes

A Fox one day saw a beautiful bunch of ripe grapes hanging from the branches of a tree. The grapes looked sweet and juicy, and the Fox wanted them very much.

The bunch hung from a high branch, and the Fox had to jump for it. He tried again and again, but he was unable to reach them.

Now he sat down and looked at the grapes in disgust.

“What a fool I am,” he said. “Here I am wearing myself out when I’m sure those grapes are sour.” And he walked away.



There are many who pretend not to want that which is beyond their reach.

The Country Mouse and the Town Mouse

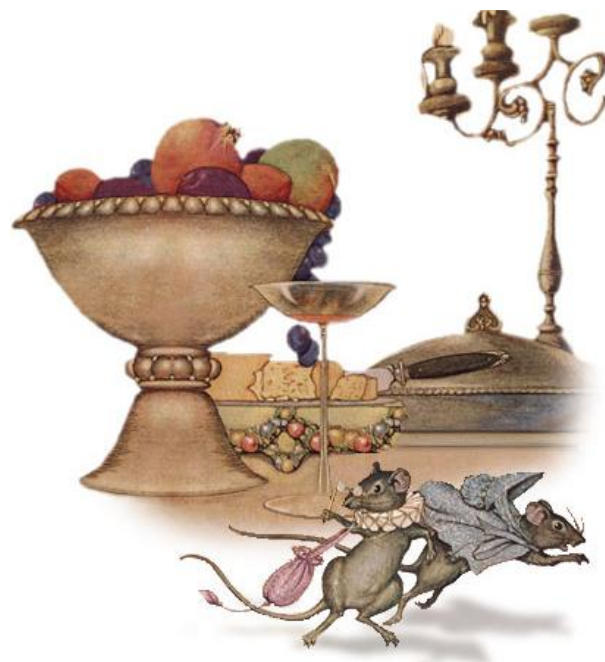


A poor Country Mouse invited his friend from the town to visit, and served lunch of roots and dried berries. The Town Mouse said, “How can you put up with such food as this? Come with me to the town and I will show you what you are missing!”

So they went together to the big town. The Town Mouse led the Country Mouse to a big dining table where there was all sorts of delicious food, such as cheese and crackers, nuts, and fruit. But just as they were starting to eat, a large cat attacked them! As they were running from the cat, they were almost caught in a mouse trap. And as they ran out into the street, they were almost run over.

Said the Country Mouse to the Town Mouse, “Thanks all the same, but I’m going home to my hole in the field with my roots and dried berries!”

Better simple things in peace and safety, than to be in danger.



The Wolf and the Crane



A Wolf had been feasting too greedily, and a bone had stuck crosswise in his throat. He could get it neither up nor down, and of course he could not eat a thing. Naturally that was an awful state of affairs for a greedy Wolf.

So away he hurried to the Crane. He was sure that she, with her long neck and bill, would easily be able to reach the bone and pull it out.

“I will reward you very handsomely,” said the Wolf, “if you pull that bone out for me.”

The Crane, as you can imagine, was very uneasy about putting her head in a Wolf’s throat. But she wanted the reward, so she did what the Wolf asked her to do.

When the Wolf felt that the bone was gone, he started to walk away.

“But what about my reward! ” called the Crane anxiously.

“What!” snarled the Wolf, whirling around. “Haven’t you got it? Isn’t it enough that I let you take your head out of my mouth without snapping it off?”

Expect no reward for serving the wicked.

The Lion and the Mouse

A Lion lay asleep in the forest, his great head resting on his paws. A timid little Mouse came upon him unexpectedly, and in her fright and haste to get away, ran across the Lion's nose. Awakened from his nap, the Lion laid his huge paw angrily on the tiny creature to kill her.

"Spare me!" begged the poor Mouse. "Please let me go and some day I will surely repay you."

The Lion laughed to think that a Mouse could ever help him. But the mouse was hardly a meal for him, so he let the Mouse go.

Some days later, the Lion was caught in a hunter's net. Unable to free himself, he filled the forest with his angry roaring. The Mouse knew the voice and quickly found the Lion struggling in the net. Running to one of the great ropes that bound him, she gnawed it until it parted, and soon the Lion was free.



"You laughed when I said I would repay you," said the Mouse. "Now you see that even a Mouse can help a Lion."

A kindness is never wasted.

The Sycamore Tree



Two Travellers, walking in the noonday sun, sought the shade of a wide spreading tree to rest. As they lay there looking up among the leaves, they saw that it was a Sycamore Tree.

“How useless is the Sycamore!” said one of them. “It gives no fruit or nut you can eat, and the wood is not good for building or firewood.”

“Ungrateful creatures!” said a voice from the Sycamore Tree. “You lie here in my cooling shade, and yet you say I am useless!”

We often don't appreciate the good things around us.

The Crow and the Pitcher



During a time of dry weather, when the Birds could find very little to drink, a thirsty Crow found a pitcher with a little water in it. But the pitcher was high and had a narrow neck, and no matter how he tried, the Crow could not reach the water. The poor Bird felt as if he might die of thirst.

Then an idea came to him. Picking up some small pebbles, he dropped them into the pitcher one by one. With each pebble the water rose a little higher until at last it was near enough so he could drink.

Careful thought and patient work solve many a problem.

The Two Goats



Two Goats that lived on the rocky slopes of a mountain valley, chanced to meet, one on each side of a deep chasm through which poured a mighty mountain stream. The trunk of a fallen tree formed the only means of crossing the chasm, and on this not even two squirrels could have passed each other in safety. Since the two goats reached the bridge at the same time, their pride would not permit either to stand aside for the other.

One set her foot on the log. The other did likewise. In the middle they met horn to horn. Neither would give way, and so they both fell, to be swept away by the roaring water below.

It is better to yield than to come to misfortune through stubbornness.

The Heron

A Heron was walking sedately along the bank of a stream, his eyes on the clear water, and his long neck and pointed bill ready to snap up a likely morsel for his breakfast. The clear water swarmed with fish, but Master Heron was hard to please that morning.



“No small fish for me!” said the proud Heron.

As the sun rose, the fish left the shallow water near the shore and swam below into the cool depths toward the middle. The Heron saw no more fish, and finally had breakfast of a tiny Snail.

Do not be too hard to please or you may have less or nothing at all.

The Fox and the Stork

The Fox one day thought of a plan to amuse himself at the expense of the Stork, at whose odd appearance he was always laughing.

“You must come and dine with me today,” he said to the Stork, smiling to himself at the trick he was going to play. The Stork gladly accepted the invitation and arrived in good time and with a very good appetite.

For dinner the Fox served soup. But it was set out in a very shallow dish, and all the Stork could do was to wet the very tip of his bill. Not a drop of soup could he get. But the Fox lapped it up easily, and, to increase the disappointment of the Stork, made a great show of enjoyment.



The hungry Stork was much displeased at the trick, but he saw no good in complaining. Instead he invited the Fox to dine with him in turn, and the Stork served a fish dinner that had a very appetizing smell. But it was served in a tall jar with a very narrow neck. The Stork could easily get at the food with his long bill, but all the Fox could do was to lick the outside of the jar, and sniff at the delicious odor. And when the Fox lost his temper, the Stork said calmly:

Do not play tricks on your neighbors unless you can stand the same treatment yourself.

The Fox and the Goat

A Fox fell into a well, and though it was not very deep, he found that he could not get out again. After he had been in the well a long time, a thirsty Goat came by. The Goat thought the Fox had gone down to drink, and so he asked if the water was good.

“The finest in the whole country,” said the crafty Fox, “jump in and try it. There is more than enough for both of us.”

The thirsty Goat immediately jumped in and began to drink. The Fox just as quickly jumped on the Goat’s back and leaped from the tip of the Goat’s horns out of the well

The foolish Goat now saw what a plight he had got into, and begged the Fox to help him out. But the Fox was already on his way to the woods.



“If you had as much sense as you have beard, old fellow,” he said as he ran, “you would have been more cautious about finding a way to get out again before you jumped in.”

Look before you leap.

The Boy Who Cried “Wolf”



A Shepherd Boy tended Sheep near a dark forest not far from the village. Soon he found life in the pasture very dull. All he could do to amuse himself was to talk to his dog or play on his shepherd’s pipe.

One day as he sat watching the Sheep and the quiet forest, and thinking what he would do should he see a Wolf, he thought of a plan to amuse himself. So now, though he had not seen anything that even looked like a Wolf, he ran toward the village shouting at the top of his voice, “Wolf! Wolf!”

The Villagers ran in great excitement to the pasture, but there was no wolf to be seen. A few days later the Shepherd Boy again shouted, “Wolf! Wolf!” Again the Villagers ran to help him, to find no sign of a wolf.

Then one evening as the sun was setting behind the forest and the shadows were creeping out over the pasture, a Wolf really did spring from the underbrush and fall upon the Sheep.

In terror the Boy ran toward the village shouting “Wolf! Wolf!” But though the Villagers heard the cry, they did not run to help him as they had before. “He cannot fool us again,” they said.

The Wolf killed a great many of the Boy’s sheep and then slipped away into the forest.

Liars are not believed even when they speak the truth.

The Travelers and the Purse

Two men were traveling together along the road when one of them picked up a well-filled purse.

“How lucky I am!” he said. “I have found a purse. Judging by its weight it must be full of gold.”

“Do not say ‘I have found a purse,’” said his companion. “Say rather ‘we have found a purse’ and ‘how lucky we are.’ Travelers ought to share alike the fortunes or misfortunes of the road.”

“No, no,” replied the other angrily. “I found it and I am going to keep it.”

Just then they heard a shout of “Stop, thief!” and looking around, saw a mob of people armed with clubs coming down the road.

The man who had found the purse fell into a panic.

“We are lost if they find the purse on us,” he cried.

“No, no,” replied the other, “You would not say ‘we’ before, so now stick to your ‘I’. Say ‘I am lost.’”



We cannot expect anyone to share our misfortunes unless we are willing to share our good fortune also.

The Lion and the Donkey

One day as the Lion walked proudly down a forest aisle, and the animals respectfully made way for him, a Donkey brayed a scornful remark as he passed.



The Lion felt a flash of anger. But when he turned his head and saw who had spoken, he walked quietly on. He would not honor the fool with even so much as a stroke of his claws.

Do not resent the remarks of a fool. Ignore them.

The Bear and the Bees

A Bear roaming the woods in search of berries happened on a fallen tree in which a swarm of Bees had stored their honey. The Bear began to nose around the log very carefully to find out if the Bees were at home. Just then one of the swarm came home from the clover field with a load of sweets. Guessing what the Bear was after, the Bee flew at him, stung him sharply and then disappeared into the hollow log.

The Bear lost his temper in an instant, and sprang upon the log tooth and claw, to destroy the nest. But this only brought out the whole swarm. The poor Bear had to take to his heels, and he was able to save himself only by diving into a pool of water.



It is wiser to suffer a single injury in silence than to provoke a thousand by flying into a rage.

The Dog in the Manger

A Dog asleep in a manger filled with hay, was awakened by the Cattle, which came in tired and hungry from working in the field. But the Dog would not let them get near the manger, and snarled and snapped as if it were filled with the best of meat and bones, all for himself.

The Cattle looked at the Dog in disgust. “How selfish he is!” said one. “He cannot eat the hay and yet he will not let us eat it who are so hungry for it!”



Now the farmer came in. When he saw how the Dog was acting, he seized a stick and drove him out of the stable with many a blow for his selfish behavior.

Do not grudge others what you cannot enjoy yourself.

The Wolf and the Goat

A hungry Wolf spied a Goat browsing at the top of a steep cliff where he could not possibly get at her.

“That is a very dangerous place for you,” he called out, pretending to be very anxious about the Goat’s safety. “What if you should fall! Please listen to me and come down! Here you can get all you want of the finest, tenderest grass in the country.”

The Goat looked over the edge of the cliff.



“How very, very anxious you are about me,” she said, “and how generous you are with your grass! But I know you! It’s your own appetite you are thinking of, not mine!”

An invitation prompted by selfishness is not to be accepted.