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Keynard the Fox.

Richards,  
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# Reynard the Fox

A renowned Apologue  
of the Middle Age,  
reproduced in  
Rhyme.

*Peinture de Vore*

*Si quis vocat sub umbra hominis  
Fides et hinc in animum vivat et phrosos*



Longmans, London.

*MA. Dec. 11.*

PT 4846  
R4 E59  
1844

TO  
H. C. ROBINSON, Esq.  
IN TOKEN OF  
EARLY FRIENDSHIP, AND LASTING REGARD,  
THIS REPRODUCTION OF  
AN OLD FAVOURITE  
IS AFFECTIONATELY  
INSCRIBED.

In the progress through the press of a Poem of between six and seven thousand lines, it was not to be expected that either Author or Printer should be exempt from the ordinary perils of their craft. Would that the sins of omission by the one, were as easily rectified as those of commission by the other! Amongst these last, perhaps the courtesy of the Reader will concede the few following instances, as of sufficient importance to require correction by the pen; other more obvious errors in pointing will suggest themselves.

Page xxix. line 18, for *anxious*, read *axiom*.  
— lxxviii. line the last, for *ran*, read *run*  
— lxxxvii. — 13, for *signed*, read *seized*  
— ci. — 11, for *who*, read *whom*  
— cii. — 27, for *know* read *knew*  
— cxli. — 16, for *countries*, read *cities*  
— cxxiv. — 22, for *for*, read *to*  
— cxxxiii. — 9, for *tyk*, read *dike*.

Preface.

Waltu witten der Werlde Staat,  
So liess det Boek, dat ist ghut khat.

Heinrich von Alkmar.

## Preface.

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**A**RE you aware, said Herder to Goethe, that we have an epic poem, in German, as wise and as original as the Odyssey—Reynard the Fox? Goethe confessed that, having only heard of the book as modernised by Gottsched, he had not thought it worthy of any particular notice. The

book was produced: Goethe carried it away with him, and almost immediately began his work."

The above anecdote is related by a valued friend of the writer, on the authority of Knebel, who was present at the time. The work so commenced by Goethe is the well-known *Umarbeitung* (working up) of the old poem, shortly afterwards published, and now recognized as the standard *classical* edition throughout Germany.

Many years have elapsed since first the great Bard recommended to my notice, during a sojourn at Weimar, the earlier edition of this favourite epic, of which (he observed) he had found but few of my countrymen who had heard. I followed not his advice to the letter—preferring, at that time, the music of his own flowing hexameters, to the more

laborious reading of the Low-German original : from that instant, however, “the secretforce of fascination (as old Thomas Fuller aptly expresses) did cause the sparks of the author’s wit to lay hold on the reader, and inflame him with a desire of love, liking, and imitation :” and shortly afterwards meeting with the Low-German *Rynke der Voss*; bearing the name of Heinrich von Alkmar, the meditated project was seriously commenced, by way of palatable relief to studies of a less trivial nature.

The Low-German edition, accordingly, is that from which I have worked : “hovering (if I may be allowed to appropriate what Goethe said, in reference to his own delightful version), between translation and paraphrase.” It is in the irregular verse (doggerel is not the precise term) of the Low-German version of Alkmar. After the example of

Goethe, the poem has been divided into cantos, or, more properly, pauses (here called fyttes), which, in the earlier editions, are distributed over numerous books, and these again subdivided into chapters; an arrangement by no means so favourable to the continuity of the narrative, as the method here substituted.

The present reproduction of this almost forgotten epic, can assert no claim to be considered in the light of a strictly verbal translation of Alkmar's, or indeed, of any one, in particular, of the numerous continental versions of the *Reynard* which have grown to be considered as the true originals in the several countries of their respective discovery or adoption. In books, as in other works of invention, the oldest is not always the best; for my part, I have found more genuine humour in the edition of Alkmar, as to matter, and a better adap-

tation of style to subject, than in the others with which I am acquainted, and I have therefore worked principally from his model. I have endeavoured to make my version as comprehensive in idea, for readers of the present day, as was Alkmar's, compared with its predecessors, for the public of his time; using the same liberty (probably rather more) with his text, as was used by him with his original, and by Goethe, subsequently, with his model—mindful ever of the requisitions insisted on by Novalis, in all paraphrastic translations, that they should convey accurately an idea of the first type, whilst, at the same time, the translator make his author speak after that appreciation of his work which exists in his own mind, no less than according to the poet's original conception. Acting on this observance, I have struck out some obvious

interpolations engrafted on the old Epos, such, for instance, as the hacknied Fable of "the Ass and the Lap-dog," which would have found its place in the tenth Fytte: this, together with some other passages purloined from the early fabulists, has been altogether omitted from the present version. Further portions towards the end have been likewise curtailed, *meo periculo*, as the diluent amplifications of o'erlabouring editors.

*Au reste*, I can assure those of my readers who are familiar (to apprehension) with the literary licenses of the early satirists, in the words of Prior's Sparrow, of the care taken "that no immodest word offend the ear." Modern delicacy has likewise demanded a discretion in some matters of less refined sentiment than is countenanced in the present day; accordingly I have not been

indifferent to the merit of its observance, as enjoined by the fastidious translator of Casti, and not infrequently have I been fain to

“Let go my author’s skirt,  
Whenever he has plunged thro’ mire and dirt.”

For those who would have more in the way of warning from a translator, and are still unsatisfied as they proceed, there is no help for the censure of such; “non intret Cato theatrum nostrum, aut, si intraverit spectet.”

I had long been collecting materials for a series of much desired notes to the poem, but a glance at the heap of matter already amassed, and the conviction of its insufficiency towards a comprehensive gloss upon the text, has satisfied me that not seven volumes of equal bulk with the present would suffice to do justice to all that has

ever been, or yet remains to be, written in elucidation of the multifarious topics arising out of this hand-book of the world. The wisdom of that golden rule was but too applicable to an undertaking of the kind; "sumite materiam vestris qui scribitis æquam viribus." And I consoled myself accordingly.

S. NAYLOR.

MIDDLE TEMPLE,  
*December, 1844.*

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## Introduction.

To life, to life give back thine ear ;  
Ye who are longing to be rid  
Of Fable, though to Truth subservient, hear !

WORDSWORTH.

## Introduction.

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**N**OT without reason on their side, are they who charge it against our learned writers upon books, as a very heinous sin of omission, that they should barely have alluded to the existence of a work, perhaps the most notable of all the compositions which have come down to us from the early Middle Age; and that, whilst the later Hero-Romances of the Trouveurs have called up a host of able critics and commentators to

embalm the mouldering remains of *their* household associations, it should be left the legacy of comparatively subordinate pens to revive the admiration of Englishmen for a work not inaptly characterised as "that unholy Bible of the world," whose more familiar appellative figures on our title-page. Not so far distant is the period when the European celebrity of the *Reynard* appears to have been echoed on our shores: there yet remains abundant testimony to its abiding popular acceptance amongst us, in the paintings and carvings still extant in our cathedrals, of subjects from its scenes, not improbably designed and executed by the foreign artists whose services were extensively retained to embellish our early architecture. But the time is long since passed when the *Reynard* was a handbook for the million with us. Our critics, for the most part, have been content with the annotations of antiquaries on its old-world themes, and (with one honourable exception alone) their imperfect sympathy with the solid excellence of this marvellous product of the past stands reproachfully confessed. It is to the Continent, accordingly, we must turn for the sources of all our information, and there we shall find it, for ages, treasured for its intrinsic sterling worth, and serving, without interval, as a fertile theme for the elaborate learning and research of much of the

modern scholarship of the Netherlands, France, and Germany, particularly the last named.

As to its origin, all is dark and uncertain: the more we investigate, the older grows the poem: the deeper we penetrate, the more "intertwisted and inveterately convolved" appear the roots of the primeval stem.\* What tournays and joustings amongst the learned have been tilted within the lists of this time-honoured edifice! yet where are they, the declared victors? How many have toiled and groped amongst the penetralia of this enchanted ground, and failed in the discovery of all clue to its labyrinths! Where Méon, Gottsched, Rollenhagen, Grimm, Willems, Gervinus, and a host of *such* critics† have laboured in vain, what

\* In the lyrical pieces of the chivalresque period, mention is made of this poem, as older than any production of the Trouveurs now extant: and Richard Cœur de Lion refers to it in one of his *Sirventes*.

† Of these, the learned Jacob Grimm has been among the most indefatigable. So recently as 1841, this persevering critic put forth a newly-discovered version of the old Epos in Greek! No wonder that Willems should imagine there was "little likelihood of the *Fox-hunt* being up," though this time the scholar of Berlin, like his predecessor of Oxford, may have choked his Quarry with the magic "*Græcum est!*" The Brute-Epic was scarcely within the scope of Lessing's Treatise on the Esopic Works, and he has accordingly left the *Reynard* almost unnoticed.

Whatever may be the merits of this Hellenic Poem, it is

hope remains for future gleaners in the same field of exhausted inquiry—where the little that is known and certain, is so insignificant, compared with the much that is conjectural and vague?

Whilst yet the Muse of Chivalry tarried the accomplishment of those knightly “deedes of arms” which were to arouse the world to admiration, and the Minnesingers awaited the appointed season of their song, still Poetry, even at that period, had, by the innate force of her own vigorous sap, become popular amongst the Germans, to an extent scarcely yet sufficiently appreciated by us mo-

certain that the Fable-Epic never flourished in ancient Greece. “The ancients, in their poetical, no less than in their artistical compositions, alone recognized the aspirations after Heroes and Gods. Their gaze was directed uniformly upwards: they left the lower region of fable to slaves and strangers. By way of exception, indeed, a *Batrachomyomachia* might appear, for what did that nation (Greece) not produce?” (*Geschichte der poetischen National-Literatur der Deutschen, von G. G. Gervinus, Leipzig, 1840.*)

From the above passage, it should seem that Gervinus adopts the notion generally received on the authority of Planudes, the Constantinopolitan monk, that the great Æsop himself was no Greek. This opinion derives confirmation from a comparison of the fable, bearing his name, of “*The Fox and the Grapes*” (against which it has been objected that foxes never did eat grapes, sour or sweet) with a passage occurring in the Song of Solomon, proving clearly that the Eastern Reynards were good Bacchanals from infancy,—“*Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines.*”

derns, who, in the midst of much jejune, sickly sentimentality, proper to those hundreds (for so they have been numbered) of degenerations from the Bards of Provence, have been long living in wilful blindness to the rich and racy products of the age that preceded the Swabian times, more generally known out of Germany as the Troubadour period. To the indefatigable industry of the Bodmers and Bouterweks, in the last century, and the more learned labours of Grimm and Gerwinus, in the present day, we are indebted, nevertheless, for much available assistance through this limbo of the dark Age, where, so soon as the mists that yet linger in its region shall have been finally dispelled, we shall find a universe of rude, perhaps, although rich elements of mental development in the less courtly, less artificial monuments of the people's poetry. To the detector of analogies, the contrast between these two juxtaposed periods might suggest a comparison, on the one hand, between the larger and more municipal spirit of a Saxon shrewd intelligence, and wit-engendering freedom of institution, with its more marked individualities of character and tone—and on the other, the forced features of a Norman feudality of subjection, with its concomitant chivalresque evenness and uniformity. The diversity, indeed, is most notable between the productions of the period

preceding that of the Hohenstauffen emperors, and those which properly belong to, and follow it, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as must be obvious to any pilgrim of the past whose steps have ever once lingered around that mountain of dynastic rule and glory, from its base in Rudolph of Hapsburg to its culm in the fourth Conrad. Curious indeed were the inquiry, and worthy the devotion of all true lovers of letters, to investigate the sources of those ballad-*tales* of the people, which obtained so universal a currency in the Carlovingian Age, when poetry was cultivated without "systems" and "methods," in a soil of spontaneous fertility, and produced in an abundance, and of a quality altogether marvellous—now breathing the pastorals of love, now railing in the licence of satire—and not seldom teaching the truths of Life's philosophy and the world's wisdom, in a language simple as its precepts were true. Pleasant is it to learn how in those days the Priests (good souls!) *pro salute animæ*, anathematised and embargoed the favourite effusions of the lower orders of their flocks, as *Teufels-Lieder* (*carmina diabolica*), and caused them to be interdicted as the corrupters of morals, and the underminers of religion and the state. The Church's canticles stood no chance against these profane ditties. No wonder that the Superiors

of religious houses prohibited their communities (particularly the nuns, we are told) from all seductive indulgence in these dangerous delights of the ninth and tenth centuries, nor that they should have discouraged their dissemination amongst the people, so soon as these had caught up the satirical spirit of the compositions, and pointed the finger of ridicule at ruling powers in the persons of Duke Reinhard of Lothringen, and Count Isengrim of Austria,—the originals, if tradition speak truly, of the chief characters in our epic.\*

Between this epoch and the era of the Troubadours and Minnesingers is a brief but important interval,† in which the citizen class made gigantic efforts towards the erection of that order of middle

\* “Rein, *callidus, astutus.*” Galli inde habent *Renard, Vulpes.* (Wachter’s *Glossarium Germanicum*, p. 1270.) Grimm enters largely into the etymology of the word *Reinhart*, which he interprets *expers consilii*. The curious in such matters will find much entertainment in his learned researches, concerning its derivation.

† It is much to be regretted that the illustrious author of the “History of Literature in the Middle Ages,” should have thus dismissed a period of so deep an interest: “In the latter part of the 13th century (he writes), we find less of feeling and invention, but a more didactic and moral tone, sometimes veiled in *Æsopic* fables, sometimes openly satirical.” For many particulars respecting the sources of the *Völklieder*, the reader may consult Schmidt, *Geschichte der Deutschen*, vol. ii. 108 et seq., and the pages of Bouterwek, Koch, Flögel, Scheller, Van der Hagen, Möser, and others.

rank in the continental states throughout Germany and Flanders, no less than in Italy and France—in all laying the foundations of that fabric which speedily grew up into a rival stronghold of political power, and set up the burgher commonalty of the towns, in array against the feudatories of the territorial lords. Already had the genius of commerce made her habitation in the Hanseatic Towns; whilst Augsburg, Nuremberg, and other cities of Northern Germany, were fast following in the wake of busy enterprise and mercantile activity—in amassing the gold which was to be freely bartered for the purchase of privileges from needy barons, made bankrupt by the costly rage for crusading in the Holy Land. These were times of earnestness and endeavour—everything was earnest; men were earnest, and so were their thoughts—their writings; even the romance of life consisted in its reality. Action was the sphere of the higher and ruling, as fact and unsophistical observation of things as they were, the province of the recluse and reflecting classes. In the camp was bustle and alarum; at the mart was venture and enterprise; in the Church no sleeping, and in the cloister no lassitude: princes, priests, peasants and peers, were alike busy, and alike observed. Even “the Schoolmaster” was out and abroad—and then,

more than at any time since, men lived *sub ferulâ* of the satirical spirit of the age: apologues, apothegms, fables, didactic tales, and pointed pithy diatribes, soaring at the higher quarries, and stooping to the meanest game, were hurtling their shafts through the air, and helping the Walpurgis din of human life—"What a marvellous period is this middle age! (exclaims the fervent Görres.) How does the earth, inebriate with love, and instinct with life, teem and glow! How strong, then, were the people, shooting and unfolding like vigorous buds! no evanescence, no pallor—all fresh and full of sap: every pulse beating evenly, each well-spring copiously gushing universal fulness of lusty life!—Then, with energetic, truthful, life-reality, stood idealising, spiritualising poetry, in intimate union, and, like meteors across a sky, flashed the corruscations of wit over all, in their indiscriminate wilful course. In after-times the Court-fools came to stand in the stead of books, and time furnished Courts with a smooth polished mirror, in whose shining surface the reflected image of his dwarfed grotesque visage sardonically grinned: the libertine spirit that lurked beneath a belled cap, was tolerated as an irresponsible product of bizarre Nature: dramatically indeed did this spirit reveal itself in the uncouth and the unfamiliar; in the feasts of

unreason, and in the high solemnities of fools and mountebanks—this, too, at a season when nothing that was natural and genuine in man could bear to be repressed—when the harlequinade of humanity was revelling in mid career, and leaping summersaults over every thing laying claim to reverence and respectability—reproducing itself, and ramifying in endless successions of jack-pudding jokes, and merry-andrew mag's-diversions, till, at length, in a climax of bitter and earnest significance, Reynard the Fox—that great world-panorama—was evoked, and stood out in relief, for our solace and instruction—the literal shadow of an imperishable age.”\*

“Like traditional tales (writes Gervinus, after one of those comprehensive falcon-views, in which he delights to glance occasionally over what may be considered not so immediately beneath his survey, as it is properly within ken, however remote) or *Contes devots*, do the German *Reinharts*, and the French branches of the *Renart*, resuscitate along with the merry jests and witty conceits of the middle age. In the thirteenth century, various kinds of these had already then appeared in Germany: many more existed in manuscript. In France few were known; though in the *Koloczür Codex* in the collection of Müller,

\* Die Teutsche Volksbücher, p. 295.

in Lassberg's Gallery of Songs, in the *Alt-deutsche Wälder*, in *Bragur*, and elsewhere, they were printed and circulated by shoals. These little booklings are of the most diversified contents:—*Tenzoni*, allegories, novels or romances, compendiously treated; subtle law points; sophistical problems; practical jokes on the unwary; tricks on simpletons; devices of roguery, cunning, and deception; tales; love stories—often turned to moral account in axioms and mottoes—in nothing are they more libertine than on the married state; never more malicious than when monks or nuns are the themes; and always most inventive in ribaldry. In the art of making these enticing, the French themselves, so rich in cognate materials, are rivalled, if not surpassed, by their neighbours, John of Briberg, Dietrich von der Glezze, and many more without a name. They delight especially in shewing up the reverse-side of the world, and revel in all exhibitions pertaining to the lower Burgher and Boor-life, leaving the aristocracy entirely out of their canvas. In their compositions one feels the geneality of home: never stirring from the precincts of hamlet or ville, cloister, or chimney-corner—amongst the genuine humanities of our own flesh and blood: all the minor relationships of life, all its intimate domesticities, are opened to our view.—On the close confines

of the chivalresque romances, we are yet treading the firm soil of fact and reality.\*

In bold relief amid this grotesque and fanciful group of Gothic carved work—the product of a Saturnalian Sabbath of the imagination—and preeminent for its sharp chiselling and finely-traced angular outline, stands our Epic, at a time when the world of letters was yet enveloped in that cloud of darkness which overshadowed the western hemisphere long after the so-called Swabian era had passed away, and the family of the Hohenstauffen had descended for ever from the throne of the Germanic empire. In what precise spot of territory this ancient gem first saw the light—whether in Germany or Flanders, or elsewhere in that region—will ever remain a mystery, for few and indistinct were the national contrasts of character distinguishing the neighbouring people of that continent from each other :

\* *Gervinus, ut suprâ*, in whose pages will be found a very elaborate exposition of the origin and development of the Fable-Works, and an accurate statement of the learned investigations of Grimm in the same direction, together with a just estimate of the services done by him and his brother to this branch of the literature of their country. The clear and palpable discrimination between Brute-Fable (*Thier-fabel*) of Eastern origin, and Brute-epic (*Thier-epos*) of Gothic growth, and, as peculiar to the Teutonic family of the great Frankish race, distinctively stamped as the people's poetry (*volks-poesie*), is thoroughly examined, and elucidated.

the mere accident of territorial division still leaving the homogeneity of thought, feeling, manners, and modes of action, unmarked by any specific contrasts.

The weight of evidence in this controversy is, nevertheless, on the side of those who assign to Flanders the honour of its birth—a conclusion resting on further presumptive proof supplied by the latest treasure turned up in the Flemish vein of this yet unexhausted mine, being no other than a Latin manuscript, entitled *Reinardus Vulpes*, which Mone, in the preface to his edition of it, unhesitatingly ascribes to a Fleming of the period between the ninth and twelfth centuries. It must not however be overlooked, that a version in High German was already then current, as the production of one Heinrich der Glicheser.\* Of the Flemish manuscript, Gervinus, indeed, affirms that its compiler had a French source (but states not his authority for the assumption) before him, from whence he derived his version. Raynouard too, in the *Journal des Savans*, asserts that allusions to the characters of the fable were in use popularly, and understood in a vernacular sense by the people of that country and period. In short, Germans, Flemings and French,

\* A fragment of this MS. was discovered, and edited by Grimm, in 1840. *Sendschreiben an Karl Lachmann, Leipzig, 1840.*

have all laboured long and learnedly in this debatable land, where "fresh fields and pastures new" seem ever to lie stretching beyond the sight, in directions whither it is no part of our plan to follow them.\* Let it suffice us to know that

\* For the general reader, the further prosecution of this inquiry would prove but a profitless digging of dry bones. With the book and its soul, not with the parchment and its integuments, does *our* business consist. There is, however, one question of interest involved in the discussion, which it would be wilful here to overlook. Willems, in Holland, has published the last of these manuscripts. It is in Dutch, and professes to be transcribed by Nicolaus von Aachen, in the beginning of the 15th century. The author, or compiler, was Willem van Utenhoven, a priest (or monk) of Aerdenburg, who composed this "masterpiece of the middle age" (as the Rev. Mr. Bosworth, in his "History of the Dutch," very properly styles it), about the year 1250. The poem opens with these lines, which, for measure and rhythm, have been pronounced only next to anaerontic:—

Willem die Madok maecte  
Daer hi dicken omme waecte  
Hem vernoide so haerde  
Dat die Geeste van Reinaerde  
Niet te recht en es geschreven  
  
Daerom dedi de vite soeken  
Ende heefste uten walschen boeken  
In Dietshe aldus begonnen.

Willem, who did Madok make,  
Being on all these things awake,  
Annoyed and harassed was full sore,  
That Reynard's deeds in days of yore  
Should incorrectly written be.  
  
Therefore he each trick and freak  
All out of foreign books did seek,  
And hath them thus in Dutch begun.

Utenhoven's complaint of these faulty versions of the poem, is sufficiently indicative of his futile endeavours, after any one *versio princeps* of the already polyglot manuscripts. He was reechoed by Jacob van Maerlant, the patriarch of Flemish chroniclers and poets, who in 1270 exclaims against the alterations and additions to the merry jests and conceits of the original *Reinaert*. Our own Hearne, in more modern times, takes up the burden of the lament,

not until we meet with the *printed* editions of the poem can anything like certainty be attained: of these the earliest yet extant is the edition of Gheraert Leew, printed at Goude, in Holland,

and regretfully cries out upon the changes in the poem, which are so "strange to see!" (*Nota et Spicelegium*, vol. iii. p. 744). A perception of this it was, in all probability, that led Mr. Carlyle to light on the happy expedient for making clear to himself and contemporaries what seems so continuously to have puzzled our forefathers, by admitting the changes, on their authority, but, on his own judgment, pronouncing them improvements. Our English Richter, with a swing of his unerring crab-stick, has thrashed out the obvious truth, in affirming that "the fable nowise derived its completeness from any one individual or nation, but rather that, being in old times universally current, it was taken up by poets and satirists of all countries, from each received some accession or improvement, and properly has no single author," and so it continued down to the age of Alkmar, or Nicolaus Baumann, or whomsoever he might be—"some Lower Saxon, who found the story, and blowing on it with the breath of genius raised it up into a consistent fable."—(*Miscellanies*, vol. ii. p. 437.) According to Grimm, Baumann was the producer of the first Low-German *Reynard*, at Mecklenburg, in the latter end of the 15th century; and this work it was which, a century later, Alkmar so skilfully worked up.

Modern critics on the *Reynard*, have evinced a disposition to treat Alkmar as a daw in borrowed plumes: and some have even indulged in treasonable meditations on the manner of "plucking him from that throne of eminence, he has so long, and so unjustly, usurped." Such truculent imaginings do indeed stand out in *Gargantuesque* contrast with the modest attributes of Alkmar's book! Alack, for our insurrectionary members of the levelling republic of Critic-land! It never pretended

and bears date in 1479. This is the accredited original, whence Caxton in England borrowed his own prose translation. Caxton's, too, stands next in the order of time, as will be presently seen.

to other "eminence" than what an enamoured posterity has always awarded it—as the first, and the best, version of the *Reynard*, in the Low German tongue. The discovery of Willem's Flemish *Reinaert*, has, doubtless, superseded Alkmar's in point of priority; but who shall say how much the transcriber of the MS. of Utenhoven (Nicolaus, of Aachen) may not have added to the work of *his* original? Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? who will be bail for the Scribes?

Indeed it is next to impossible to read the Fight with the Cat, in the third Fytte, and the second Confession of the Fox's sins, in the eighth, without being forcibly impressed with the belief that the two incidents are (in Painter's phrase) merely 'repeats' with proper variations, of successful hits in their respective precursors—the Fight with the Bear, and the Confession to the Badger, before delineated. These, therefore, may be pronounced "glaring instances" of the several hands engaged in the completion of the poem, as it now stands.

But these prefatorial stanzas of Utenhoven, are valuable in quite another sense. "Madok" is the name of a son of the Welsh Prince, Owen Gwynneth: this Madok is reputed to have discovered America about the middle of the 12th century. The word has a talismanic charm for poets of the 19th, no less than for bards of the 13th century, and irresistibly excites our speculation on the hidden and mysterious sympathies that may have led the Priest of Aerdenburg, in 1250, and our late Laureate, nearly 600 years afterwards, to fall in love with the cacophonous dissyllable. The author of the Dutch Madok (another item in the catalogue of lost epics!) tells us that he collected from foreign (*wälschen*) sources the materials for his *Reynard*. Upon the meaning of this

A catalogue raisonnée of the printed editions of the Reynard would be here beside our purpose; but a few of the principal versions of the poem, may not be out of place.

term, an inquiry of much interest to some—in short, no other than the gist of the solution to what Mr. Carlyle calls the “excessive debate and learned sharpshooting” on the much mooted origin of the Poem—may be said to depend. By the term *wülsch*, there can be no doubt that French may be inclusively understood, *i. e.* *French*, as implied in *Foreign*. In this sense both Bouterwek and Flögel, had the MS. in question been then known, would assuredly have derived strong confirmation of their views in favour of the claims of France to the parentage of Reynard. Flögel indeed, in his hyperbolic impartiality, professes to have found no better guide through this labyrinth of honorable contention than is offered in the verdicts of the repeated inquests held by antiquaries upon the several manuscripts in the Bibliothèque du Roi at Paris, and elsewhere, of the French *Renart*. (*Geschichte der Komischen Literatur*, vol. iii. p. 33.) He further adduces, in support of his conclusion, a certain French romance by Jacquemars de Gielée, placed by Eccard at the end of the year 1290. This is the celebrated “*Roman du Nouveau Renard*,” from which nearly all the subsequent French versions are derived, and from the title it follows that another and older poem of *Renard* was known at the time, in contradistinction to this *new* one. From the *Nouveau Renard*, it appears that Jacquemars (like Bunyan) was in love with allegory, and accordingly he treats of the tricks of Reynard under the similitude of a dream. To him they were too good to be true! How sadly the whole epopœia of the poem is injured by this mediatising process, it is easy to conceive. Jacquemars wrote his *Nouveau Renard*, as he tells us in his preface, at Lisle, in Flanders. It is strange, if the *Renard* was known so well to his countrymen, that he should have been at

In these, Germany is by far the most prolific, though, in point of time, Holland stands first on the list. To begin, however, with Germany:—In 1498 Heinrich von Alkmar printed his *Rynke de Voss* at

the trouble of a trip to Flanders on what was evidently a *petere fontes* errand! What is more likely, than that being in those parts—nay, even journeying thither for the express purpose of learning to read in its original this very book (a course not more improbable in him than in any modern lover of legendary lore, if we agree with the Rev. Mr. Bosworth, who affirms that it is sufficient inducement for any person to learn Dutch for the pleasure of reading *Reinaert* in it)—he should have profited by the occasion to give his countrymen a better version than they before possessed? Now, that the term *wülsch* did not only *not* mean French exclusively, in the sense in which it is employed by Utenhoven, but was used in very contradistinction to it, seems clear from the fact of this same word having been adopted by Alkmar, a couple of centuries later, in the printed low-German edition of his *Rynke de Voss*, and employed by him in a manner which altogether forbids the supposition. Alkmar tells us that his version is “from foreign AND French tongues sought out” (*ut wülscher unde französcher sprake gesocht*), thus clearly discriminating the sense of the one (*ex vi termini*) from the meaning of the other (*è contextu*) by an express reference to both: from all which it appears that Utenhoven did nowise necessarily imply the French, as amongst his *wülscher sprake*, but rather any other than French;—that they might have been Latin, is possible; but most likely of all that they were its cognate Walloon, or German, the language that had already given birth to a *Nibelungen Lay*, and was ready to produce an *Eulenspiegel*,—the one a perfect Epos, the other a pleasing jest-book; and both, in the German *Reinhart* exemplified and combined. Raynourard confesses his difficulties on this subject with

Lübeck, in the Low-German tongue. To Alkmar the Germans are indebted for having permanently revived the popularity of the Poem: and it is from his edition that Goethe, in later times, prepared his hexameter version, which, however excellent, like all the labours of *his* mind, yet cannot be said to have superseded the other, as the numerous recent reprints of it abundantly prove.\*

the candour and liberality of an enlarged mind, agreeing, however, with Méon, that the authorship of the first complete poem of the *Renart* is due to Pierre de St. Cloud, a French Trouveur of the thirteenth century. "Au reste," he adds, "je me contente d'exposer les faits, à fin de mettre sur la voie les personnes dont les recherches ultérieures découvroient d'autres monumens littéraires, qui serviroient à confirmer ou à réfuter mes conjectures." —*Journal des Savans*, 1826, p. 337. How the above striking explanation of the meaning of the term *wälsch*, as employed by Alkmar, should have escaped the notice of all the army of commentators on the Reynard, is a question claiming place in the long list of curiosities of Literature.

I have not been able to meet with an account of any Walloon version of the *Reynard*. "The Walloon tongue, (says Plate), belongs to the category of Gaulish dialects. It is distinguishable from the French, not only by sound and words, but by the grammatical construction. It is no more French than the Alemannish or Lower Saxon is a vitiated form of High German. The French tongue is a mixture of Celtish and Latin; the Walloon, on the other hand, a compound of Latin and Germanic."

\* Goethe himself tells us that we are indebted to the blockade of Mainz, in which city he was then sojourning, for this version of the Reynard: undertaken as much to gratify his spleen against the men and things of the time so "out of joint," as for the purpose

Countless are the editions of the poem which, since the time of Alkmar, have appeared in Germany alone.

In France, the story of *Renart* was known in print so early as 1487, when an edition was published in Paris, under the title of "Le Livre de Maistre Reynard et de Dame Hersant sa Femme—livre plaisant et facetieux." Méon's edition of the *Roman du Renart* is, amongst the printed editions of the French Epos, the best. It was published at Paris in 1826, from MSS. of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries, preserved in the Royal Library there, and is, in substance, very similar to the *Reinaert*, and *Rynke*, already then known in the versions of Holland and Germany, the more pungent satire, and stricter epic construction of both of which latter, would well warrant the preference of either one of those countries as claimants for the true ownership.\*

of an exercise in the composition of hexameter verse, the ripened fruits of which appeared three years afterwards in his "Hermann und Dorothea."—*Tag-und-Jahres-Hefte Anno 1793, Werke*, vol. xxxi. p. 22.

\* Méon rests the claim of his country upon the alleged exclusive evidences of its existence in the French, so early as the 12th century, at which period, as more recent investigations have established, the German and Dutch versions were already current in those countries respectively; and he concludes with a notice of the assertions of some who affirmed the detection of its traces in the *Sagas* of the North, and of others again who will

It is now, however, beyond all question that in the *Rynke de Voss* of the Germans, and the *Reinaert de Vos* of the Dutch, the Poem first assumed its true artistic attributes, as an Epic, and at once established its title to be considered a perfect work of art, larger in scope, and more ela-

have its birthplace amongst the Orientals. In the cycle of eastern fable, called after *Pitpay* (or *Bidpat*), and also in Loqman's collection, many points of resemblance occur. I cannot, however, find any precise prototype of our northern *Reynard*. The Jackall, in the East, appears to play the part assigned to our Fox, but his attributes are Esopian, with less of naïve humour, and more of the didactic in his composition. He is the fox *en philosophe*. In the Mahratta version, I am informed, he is made the Lion's prime-minister. Méon advances no further testimony in support of his claim than the mention made of the poem by Gautier de Coinsi, prior of Vic-sur-Aisne, and who died in 1236. The prior is related to complain, with a naïveté very natural in a priest, of the people of quality in his day who lavished their substance in adorning their walls with designs from Reynard, instead of spending their money in the purchase of saints' and other votive images for the churches. This complaint would have been somewhat malàpropos in our own country, where, according to Mr. D'Israeli, "are to be found on the old altarpiece of Canterbury cathedral several paintings from this pungent satire." (*Amenities of Literature*.) In the cathedral of St. David's, also, are said to be similar embellishments; and many of our ancient ecclesiastical carvings might doubtless be elucidated by reference to the same original. There is a psalter of Queen Mary's, in the British Museum, the pages of which are illuminated (!) with sundry subjects traceable to scenes from the *Reynard*, though from their generic fable-character it would be hasty to pronounce them express illustrations of the poem.

borate in execution, than any known composition of its kind in that age, "maintaining an imperishable existence, not from any merely fortuitous fact of its handing down to a half-sympathising posterity, the particular points of communion between it and its ancestors of a more barbarous age, but by reason of its bold grasp, and racy unctuous handling of the universal properties and affinities common to the great family of human-kind.—It is this which constitutes the æsthetic worth of the poem."\*

"To the country of the industrious burghers of the Netherlands," says the same writer, "it is now pretty clear that all investigation points as the birth-place of the poem. In the language of that country it appeared in its most perfectly developed form; completest in the *Reinaert*, and anterior to the blossoming of the chivalresque romances of the 12th century."† Thus, too,

\* Geschichte, &c. Gervinus.

† "The fable-works could only strike deep root, and develop their rich growth among a people-whose love of nature and still-life caused them a pleasure in the contemplation of the rustic relationships of ordinary persons and events. This last is the peculiar characteristic of the Dutch; the whole together may not inappropriately be affirmed of Germany at large. In the latter country the Fable-epic may have been received and adopted, but in the former it was the first to reach maturity—to be trained and moulded to exhibit the precepts of world-wisdom—and not unlikely was it born there. In Flanders, the lower-life school of

thought our countryman William Caxton, who published his folio "Historye of Reynart the Foxe, which was in Dutche," translated from the earliest known Dutch edition of 1479, at Westminster, in 1481.\* This is, besides being one of the earliest printed copies of the tale, now extant, the first known version of the old Epos in the English language.† It was followed, amongst

Art was first and longest fostered and cherished—in landscape and cattle subjects especially. There, too, was educated the lower school of Poetry. The scenes of the *Reynard* are, in poetry, what the boor life of the Netherlanders is in their paintings."—*Gervinus*. A deep root, indeed, must the fable have struck in Flanders, when in the early part of the thirteenth century we find the term *Isangrini* (from *Isengrin*, the wolf) affixed as a party name to the adherents of Mathilda, the Countess of Flanders, then at war with her subjects.

\* Brunet, Manuel du Libraire, sub voce *Reinhart*; and see Panzer's *Annal. Art. Typog.*

† It is in prose: I believe only three copies are known in this country. One in the British Museum: another in the library of the Right Honourable Thomas Grenville: and the third, in Earl Spencer's collection. A reprint of this rare book has been recently published by the Percy Society, under the careful superintendence of W. J. Thoms, Esq. To this publication the zealous editor has prefixed a discourse, in which much entertaining matter proper to the bibliographical history of the *Reynard* will be found collected with the pains that ever accompany a "labour of love." But it must be confessed that these prose versions of the Old Epos, how valuable soever as draughts from the copious well of "English undefiled," yet are lamentable things to read after their originals in rhyme. They are the husks without the kernels; the body without the

others (*longo intervallo*), by the metrical version of John Shurley, in heroic measure;\* and this again, at intervals, by several black-letter editions, copies of which are still to be met with in the libraries of Collectors. To these, however, there is frequently appended a spurious performance entitled "The Shifts of Reynardine," an imputed son of Reynard—a work by comparatively modern hands, and, like all supposititious offspring, easily detected in its *unlikeness* to the great original.†

soul: "'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more!" Imagine the mighty Cudworth done into Hudibrastic couplets, and one may conceive of its tolerable converse in a prose Reynard. Even in the pages of Boccaccio, who does not languish for the loved rhythm of Chaucer? O fortunate Alighieri! whom no tramontane Caxton selected for his ursine hug!

Of the Reynardine MSS. we, in England, possess none of note. That known as the Amsterdam copy was purchased in London, at the instance of Willems, for the Belgian government, who deposited it in the Museum at Brussels, where it now is. A MS. of the fourteenth century, of the *Roman du Renart*, was lately purchased for the British Museum, at the sale of Mr. Bright's collection. It is not perfect.

\* This book is by no means common. I am indebted to the courtesy of that "Passionate Pilgrim" to the sources of our black-letter Helicon, J. P. Collier, Esq. for its perusal. With this erudite critic the *Reynard* has long been a favourite (indeed, with whom has it not, who have ever once known it?) and I have reason to believe that a new version of the old poem, from his indefatigable pen, would long since have been hailed, but for the pressure of other and more learned avocations.

† The title of this addendum is thus given by Sir Egerton

In 1567 Hartman Schopper printed at Frankfurt his version of *Reinardus*, in Latin iambics, from which a translation into English heroic couplets was made, and published in London in 1706 by some unknown hand, under the title of "The Crafty Courtier, or the Fable of Reynard the Fox, newly done in English Verse." In this performance it has pleased the translator that much of the reverend eld and racy mother-wit of the original *Reinhart* should be entirely sup-

Bridges, in his *Censura Literaria*: "The Shifts of Reynardine, the Son of Reynard the Fox, or a pleasant History of his Life and Death, full of variety &c. and may fitly be applied to the late Times: now published for the reformation of men's manners."

The titles to some of the contemporaneous editions are amusing enough: amongst others take the following. One is styled:

"Livre plaisant et facétieux, contenant maints propos et subtils passages couverts et cellèz, pour monstrier les conditions et mœurs de plusieurs etats et offices, comme il sera declaré cy-après. On le vend en la grande rue Saint Jacques à l'enseigne de la rose blanche couronnée."

Another in 1516 has the merit of being "Traité utile à toutes personnes, contenant les cautelles et principes que faisoit le dit Maistre Regnard, avec plusieurs beaux exemples prins sur les cautelles du dit Maistre Regnard."

In the wake of the later English versions is sometimes found "The History of Cawood the Rook, or the assembly of birds, with the several speeches they made to the Eagle, in the hopes to have the government in his absence. How the Rook was banished, with *the reason why crafty Fellows are called Rooks.*" More of the like sort may be seen in *Ftögel*.

pressed, and, in their stead, we are treated with a narrative poem of the mock-heroic school, in which allusions to the persons and politics of the period are not sparingly introduced. There is also said to be a translation of Reynard into English doggrel, by one Soltau, a German:\* with him we will conclude our list.

With respect to the poem itself—obstinate and long has been the controversy on the alleged masked meaning of the author, who has suffered the common fate of his race, at the hands of the mystery-loving commentators. Mr. D'Israeli has affirmed the simple truth in his delineation of it as “an exquisite satire on the vices of priests, the devices of courtiers, and not sparing majesty itself.”† Its plot is developed in the course of a

\* Known as the translator of *Hudibras* into German.

† D'Israeli's *Amenities of Literature*, vol. ii. p. 44.—The same writer observes: “The learned Germans hold it to be a complete picture of the feudal manners; and Heineccius, one of their most able jurists, declares that it has often assisted him in clearing up the jurisprudence of Germany, and that for the genius of the writer, the volume deserves to be ranked with the classics of antiquity.” To “learned Germans” who lecture on pandects abroad, might be fitly added, “learned gentlemen” who lead juries at home, as equally open to profit from its “assistance” in most things pertaining to the craftsmanship of subtle pleading, and all other the *juriscopeia* of appliances

“To shake a jury-box of brains,  
Till verdicts tumble out like mains.”

“Renart est un Vaurien, un impudent, un franc libertin, un

humorous narrative of the rogueries of Reynard the Fox, whose talent and resources in extricating himself from the complication of a series of life-long villainies, and happy invention in frustrating the endeavours of the whole community to procure his condign punishment as an incorrigible *mauvais sujet*, are wrought up, with the pungent pen of a finely pointed satire, into a series of mediæval portraitures, which, for breadth of outline and depth of colouring, can be compared alone with the living delineations of a master-moralist, such as Hogarth,\* alike conversant with the main-

fornicateur, un adultère, un impie qui ne songe jamais qu'à jouer des tours malins ou méchants aux autres animaux—faisant quelque fois le mal pour le plaisir du mal même."—*Journal des Savans, Raynouard*. Whatever the French *Renard* may have become in the hand of *Jacquemars*, it is certain that the German *Reinecke*, and the Flemish *Reinaert*, exhibit quite other characteristics than would seem to be implied in the French epithet *Vaurien*. Reynard's renown is of ample scope to redeem him from so depreciating a portraiture.

\* The name of Hogarth, in connexion with the *Epopœia of Satire*, suggests to the mind the peculiar fitness of the *Reynard* for pictorial illustration. The old wood-block engravers were not slow to discover this, and, accordingly, there are few of the "thousand and one" black-letter editions of the book unadorned with choice specimens of the art of their day. Their sublimity is, however, scarcely comparable with the choice recreations of an unbreeched urchin, elaborated on his virgin slate. The pictorial accompaniments of Works of Fable have, of late years, made rapid strides in advance of their predecessors in this parti-

spring of human actions, their motives and im-

cular branch of art, as must be obvious to all who are familiar with the various editions of the many Fable works which have appeared during the two centuries prior to our own. Everdingen, in Flanders, whose clever etchings have recently been reprinted from the original plates, under the auspices of the tasteful editor of "The Home Treasury," may be regarded as the forerunner, rather than the founder, of a school sprung up since his day. Our own imperishable Landseer has, by the power of his deeper intuition, "discoursed most eloquent music" for minds attuned to a larger sympathy with creatures not our fellows only for that they were created in subjection to our will. The lamented Seymour lived but long enough to afford small earnest of the things he was capable of in this line. Our neighbours of France have their Grandville, whose genius, inclining more to the caricatura, than to the grotesque, in accordance with that of his countrymen, has familiarized this delightful method of instruction to the readers of Florian and Lafontaine; whilst, in Germany, Rambach and Otto Spekter have already acquired a celebrity that stands in need of no exaltation here, where their works (those of the latter especially) have become sufficiently well-known. To their names may now be added one other of already well-established renown in the *higher* departments of art, and of whom it is but just to affirm that he has elevated this lower range of it to a point of excellence not before attained, and portrayed the expression of brute physiognomy with a force and felicity hitherto unequalled in design, as unsurpassed in execution—Kaulbach. From his pencil there is now preparing for publication, by the house of Cotta and Co. of Stutgardt, a series of engravings of subjects from the Reynard, which will very far surpass anything before achieved in that country of a similar character. As perfect works of art their reputation here, as elsewhere in Europe, is certain; may the enterprise of the publishers be crowned with an equal success!

pulses, as with their multifarious modes of development: whilst, incidental to the narrative, is recounted many a "pleasant hystorye" of the tricks and devices played off by Reynard (related sometimes by himself with the true epicurean relish of remembrance) on those to whom he especially delighted to "owe a turn," yet all striking on the same key-note:

—— "Si vis me flere, *dolendum est*  
*Primum ipse tibi.*"

Indeed, what is there which this *vade mecum* of world-craft does *not* contain? The king, the noble, the statesman, the prelate, the lawyer, the druggier, are here fitted to their hearts' content. Their "order" is typified, and their individuality satirized, in a charming exposition of the predominating *esprit de métier*. Institutions are attacked, their defence-walls scaled, and a burning torch thrown in to light up their cavernous interiors. The Church and the Law are the great stumbling blocks here, and their abuses are dragged into poetic day. The confessional no longer has its *impenetrabilia*,—not even the domicile of the priest asserts its sanctities; whilst the slow processes and formularies of the devoted ministrants in the Temple of Themis are made to tell as main ingredients in the repertorium of an adept, too

cautious to commit perjury, but not too nice to do a murder, or perpetrate any other enormity, provided there are none at hand to blab! What are the chivalric *prestiges* of a "wager of battel," or appeal to God, to one who, like Reynard—in that, the crowning rascality of his career—can win his advantages by the very nobleness of his opponent, and deal him the damning blow, under cover of an exhortation to his merciful forbearance? What speciality of grace can the fasts and the feasts of the Church confer on one so abandoned to their abuse as the Fox? yet Reynard is, in every particular of those outward observances which the Papal Church has long built up for buttresses and bulwarks, essentially what the piety of our ancestors delighted to canonize as "a good Catholic!"

Whether or not the fable-characters of the poem were designed by the author as referable to living persons (which Mone, and Eckhardt before him, maintained), or whether the allusions were intended as simply applicable to classes, rather than to individuals, are questions of little moment; for what is true of particulars in the same category may be affirmed of the rest, and, in either case, the rule has been long held sound law—*ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?* Strong opinions in favour of the former hypothesis have been strenuously ad-

vanced by Willems and others, and no less doggedly denied by Grimm and Raynouard. "Playful allusions," says Gervinus, "to suitable characters and persons have always been considered as within the scope of the fable-works:" and he then refers to the fact, that the more we come to learn of this kind of composition, the more obvious and intelligible are the pervading allegorical allusions in them all, particularly the later productions of their class, in which this species of tropology stands unquestionably confessed.\* In the Reynard,

\* The mania for allegorising seems to have been coeval with the compositions of the middle-age poets. The *Romanse of the Rose* is one of the earliest notable examples of this tendency, which continued to increase as the race of commentators grew up, in whose sight no production, not strictly classical, found any favour, unless that which it professed to *imply*, might not be otherwise and mysteriously *expounded*. The *Divina Commedia* is another instance of this continued passion for perverting the Prosopopœia; and even Tasso, obliged to bow down before its authority, was fain to invent an *ex post factum* allegory for his own poem, to sop the Cerberus of his day. Our own Spenser sagaciously conformed to the prevailing humour of the period, and wrote a professed allegory; by which course he saved himself a world of travel to explain, and his readers a voyage of discovery to understand, his meaning. "Persons and incidents in allegorical fiction (it has been well said) are noses of wax, ever to be shaped by a more adroit finger."

Casti, in his *Animali parlanti*, probably had the Reynard in view; although the pasquinading tendency of *his* poem would place it, according to some, in the *infima species* of the *genus*.

surely, the conclusions must be affirmed to point the other way: there is so obviously one simple yet incontrovertible world-axiom ever uppermost in the poet's mind, from first to last, throughout his elaborated work, that he who could rise from the perusal without feeling his conviction of its truth strengthened and confirmed, will have read a wise book with a witless apprehension. In the impressive development of that truth, and of its universality, the real purpose of this most didactic as well as amusing of compositions is clearly discerned. The *Fourberies* of the Fox, who, although he may figuratively be considered (like Goethe's Mephistopheles) its hero of immorality, are but "the cogs, and arcs, the cylinders, and wheels,"

Coleridge has correctly defined allegory to be, "but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language, which is in itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses:" long usage, however, acquiescing in the poverty of our language, has sanctioned its uncritical acceptance, and, for want of a better word, we apply it indiscriminately to symbols of *persons* as well as *things*. How difficult it were to draw the precise line of demarcation between the two, is clear from the fact recorded by Southey in his life of Bunyan, that the characters in the finest allegory ever written, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, were avowedly impersonated from living originals of the world of Bedford; not the less true, *for that*, are they of the world of Christian man. From the *microcosm* to the *macrocosm*, it is but the turning of a page,—as all who are familiar with the greatest poem of the age will not fail to have learned in the first scene of their *Faust*.

by which the machinery is contrived to act on that perilous stuff which makes up the individual foibles of the remaining characters—the motive power impelling onwards a concatenated series of disastrous results, the fruits of fatal indulgence when prompted by the devices of a devil—whether fox or fiend. It is the *one fault*, or infirmity, the weak side of the victim, by means of which Reynard, the arch-impostor, commands the whole of his success. The greater sagacity of the Fox arises not so much from any larger endowments, as from the remorseless, heartless, passionless obliquity of his nature. His cunning, unlike the cunning of all merely clever fellows, is not entirely compounded of the selfish craft of wakeful and shrewd observation, nor does his wisdom consist exclusively in the trite observances of every-day experience. His wits are sharpened to a finer point by something more than their constant activity. It is by the exercise of inborn astuteness that the idiosyncrasy of each victim is exposed to his intuition, and the means made at once available for his artful practices on the side of the sore so patent to his view. The Fox's is the art to conceal art: his very nature is art,\* and artifice his element: his marvellous

\* Substituting another phrase for *Frauen*, the happy couplet of Goethe will occur to all:

“Ach! das naturel der *Fuchsen*  
Ist so nah mit kunst verwandt.”

speciousness is never present to himself: he has a moral squint in his mind's eye: he cannot see aright without looking askance: treachery and deceit are to him familiar as household things, and to act without their instrumentality would be to will without incentive: no thought but what is furtive can occur to him, no course, but the crooked, can he fancy straight: the thunder of the "crack o' doom" would fail to startle him into propriety: he is of kin with the irreclaimable spirit denounced by the indignant Roman:

"Flamma per incensas citius sedetur aristas,  
Fluminaque ad fontis sint reditura caput,

\* \* \* \*

Quàm possit quisquam vestros reprehendere cursus,  
Et rapidæ stimulos frangere nequitiae!"

What need, then, to ascribe to the poet any other aim than that of enunciating this great secret of mundane success—the *knowledge of the weak side of the world around us*, and the exposition of the golden rule by which that knowledge is alone made available,—namely, *to play upon it without remorse*, as the great essential to the attainment of all selfish ends? No personal allusion is here needed: to confine, is to cramp the genius of the poet, whose scope is amply large, if we take it in the extent he has himself defined, when he assures us, in his conclusion, with a mock earnestness

worthy of the veriest Punchinello, that his sole object has been to teach wisdom, inculcate virtue, and denounce vice "in a pleasant picture of the way of the world."\* As types of the passions and propensities of man, the brute creation affords unquestionably the most cognate symbols; and without their aid, seen and seized on by the earliest and the greatest teachers of the human race, the vices and the ignorance of men would have remained without the most intelligible of all monitors; and satire, the severest scourge of rogues and fools, had slept for want of an appropriate vicarious object on which to visit its correctionary lesson for the world. It is of small moment whether or not the early fables were didactic in their origin, or merely feigned for entertainment, as Grimm will have them; certain it is that the ancients early selected them as their means of "teaching in parables," and the monks of the middle ages were not slow to adapt them to the requisitions of satirical writing.† Their use, then,

\* "Sporting with the world, and its evils, in kind mockery" is Mr. Carlyle's phrase, for happily characterising the poem. He might have cited the authority of Dryden for this exposition of "satire nicely writ," that

"——— No humour stings,  
But theirs who merit praise in other things."

† Grimm will insist that "none but a monk could have written with the terseness and circumstantiality of the satirical outpour-

is unequivocal, in so far as their application has obtained amongst Europeans in all ages.

There can be no greater proof of the sufficiency of one test, in especial, as applied to the merits of all works whose memory "men will not willingly let die," than their self-contained power of reproduction in all places, and at all times. Of the

ings of the *Reynard*." And Douce, in speaking of a collection of tales and fables ascribed to Odo de Ceriton, a Cistercian monk of the twelfth century, alludes to "the difficulty of ascertaining the real authors of works of the Middle Ages—especially where there occurs any thing satirical against religious abuses. Such sarcasms, even against the clergy themselves, do not militate against the idea of ecclesiastical manufacture: numerous instances are on record to show the satirical spirit of the clergy frequently towards each other, and generally against the Church of Rome."—*Gesta Romanorum*.

"The poem of *Reynard* acquired its highest importance at the period when the contests between the clergy and laity first arose. It receded as they subsided, and started again into vitality when their renewal called it once more from oblivion. Of what importance the poem must have been in the various epochs of the Reformation, is easily imagined. The great fight against absolutism, Machiavelism, caprice, and arbitrary sway, on the part of the people, and their hostility to the sordid craft of statesmanship, which at that time was systematically established, found here a redoubtable champion in the poetical art."—*Germanicus*.

A glance at the very severe sarcasms so plentiful throughout the *Reynard*, on the vicious points of doctrine of the Holy Roman Church, no less than on the backslidings of its priests ministrant, will serve to show in what way the followers of Wickliffe

truth of this, the Reynard offers a glaring instance on record. The prevailing taste for the satirical form of composition may have yielded, at various times, to delicate longings after the tender pathos and more imaginative seductions of the later chivalresque romances, whose influence over the higher classes was irresistible as extensive: but the less fastidious liking of the *people* has never once been estranged from their favourite; hence its continued popularity in all the countries into whose rhymed vernacular it has once found its way—another proof of the power of idiom to serve as familiar exposition of the law ordaining “the indestructible vitality of worth, however rude!”\*

and the Lollards, and, in later times, of Jerome, and Huss, were prepared for the reception of those early Reformers. Connected with this topic, it may be mentioned that there is a street at Tours, in France, called *Rue du Renard*, from the cry “*Aux Renards! aux Renards!*” being there first raised in the year 1562, by the fanatics, against some Protestants, as objects of popular fury and persecution, on the occasion of a religious festival.

\* “So imperishable is the truth of the old Netherlandish poem, so ineffaceable its beauty, that each succeeding paraphrase or remodelling of it actually appears as an original production, and is suggestive of some new delight. What has been at various times added to, or derived from, the work, has been subjected to the controlling and affiliating organism of its innate excellence” (*Carlylicè*, its “Poetic Soul.”) Thus writes Dr. A. F. H. Geyder, in the preface to his recently published translation into high German of the Dutch MS. ascribed to Utenhoven, and edited by Willem. Dr. Geyder’s translation unfortunately has only reached

The capabilities of the poem for a new nativity in the English language cannot be better defined

my hands whilst these pages are in press,—in no sufficient season for more than brief allusion to a work which bids fair to rank amongst the best of the annotated *Reynards*. The learned translator, who is *Doctor utriusque juris*, has supplied his version with copious notes pertaining to the elucidation of the feudal laws and institutes of the middle age, as exemplified in the original poem. From a cursory glance at these labours, their value is apparent, no less in a chronological, than an historical point of view; for, by a converse process, they might be instrumental to determine the period of production of each imputed divarification, or “branch,” of the poem, by means of a comparison with the other extant versions. There is likewise a good etymological index prefixed to this edition, which those who are desirous of instruction in “the *Tongues*” will do well to peruse; but for those who dabble more deliberately in the “chandler-ware of words,” Grimm’s elaborate treatise must still hold the vanward position in the Reynardine Logomachia.

Whether this identical MS. in high-middle-Dutch (*hoch-middel Niederländisch*) be the veritable version of the epic, as delivered by the holy man of Aerdenburg, admits of some doubt. Who shall say what the scribe of Aachen (Nicolaus,—who tells us, at the end, that he has transcribed the particular MS. as the poem of Willem van Utenhoven) has not himself added, out of his own invention,—a temptation too winning to be resisted by one addicted to the habit of rhyming? Upwards of seven thousand lines are required to render that which the Low German of Alkmar comprises in little more than six thousand. There are other evidences tending to the same conclusion. The characters of the poem are multiplied, whilst the incidents are untouched: the names of persons and places point to multitudinous sources; many of them are of French origin, and occur in the Gallic branches of the *Renard*; and there is observable, throughout, a laboured

than in the words of an estimable friend, well known as a ripe German scholar, to whose judgment I feel peculiar pleasure in appealing: "It is," says he, "so full of fancy and gaiety, that I know of no work of imagination, in any language, offering so many inducements to the competent translator. The verse should be that in which Prior excelled, and who, of our classics of a bygone age, would best have performed the task—Swift would have done it *con amore*."\* To our thinking, the author of *Hudibras* would have been the *Triumvir* for addition. Of any such translation as either of those above designated, it cannot be supposed that the present one would claim to supply the place. This is as little the age of Butlers, as of Priors, or Swifts: worse in many respects, better in more: yet, in order that a modern version of this undying work may not be wanting to the present generation, the service has been attempted, not without misgivings as to fitness, although in no niggard admiration of that great original which Gervinus, the most erudite, and essay to "gild refined gold," and "paint the lily." Still further indices of its modernized aspect are found in the mention of firearms (not used before the battle of Crecy), and also an allusion to the Papal residence at Avignon, which again would point to the middle of the 14th century.

\* H. C. Robinson, Esq. to whom we are indebted, amongst other good things, for a useful *Catalogue raisonnée* of the works

not the least enthusiastic, of the German critics on the Reynard, has eloquently defined to hold "the same species of obverse relation to the chivalresque romances, as Aristophanes to the Greek tragedians: as the one contrasts, in high relief, the depravity of the age with the earnest drama of the antique times, and its heroic mind; so, in the other, the hacknied doings of every-day life make the point of antithesis to the sublime bearing of the Epic heroes. The lofty grandeur of the ancient drama forced down to the ridiculous all things opposed to its nature: otherwise *here*, where there is no perceptible spark of sublimity, because the groundwork of the whole is the real present, which had to be lit up into a præternatural glare: hence the fable-epic drew out humanity from the present, in order expressly to abase the one as much as she exalted the other—a world of action won with such wonderful success—a temple so solidly and surely based on these foundations, cannot fail to be other than, like to the immortal works of the Athenian comedian, of co-extensive duration and comeliness."

"Thus has our old Fable (to conclude with the words of Mr. Carlyle in his admirable essay

of Goethe, published in the Monthly Repository. Since the announcement of this often interrupted version, no less than three distinct republications in prose (two of them reprints, *exceptis excipiendis*) have appeared in this country.

on Early German Literature), rising like some river in the remote distance, from obscure rivulets, gathered strength out of every valley, out of every country, as it rolled on. It is European in two senses; for as all Europe contributed to it, so all Europe has enjoyed it. Among the Germans, *Reinecke Fuchs* was long a house-book, and universal best-companion: it has been lectured on in universities; quoted in Imperial council-halls; it lay on the toilette of princesses; and was thumbed to pieces on the bench of the artizan: we hear of grave men ranking it only next to their Bible. Neither was its popularity confined to home; nor was that same stall-honour,—which has been reckoned the truest literary celebrity,—refused it here; perhaps, many a reader of these pages may, like the writer of them, recollect the hours when, hidden from the unfeeling gaze of pedagogue, he swallowed, like stolen waters, with a timorous joy, *The most pleasant and delightful History of Reynard the Fox.*”



Keynard the Fox.

FYTTE I.

### Argument.

**PEACECOCK** being arriv'd, Noble, the Lion, King of all the Animals, proclaims a general amnesty, and causes the lieges to be sunnmoned to court.—How Reynard, the Fox, is accused before the King, by the Wolf and others; and how he is defended by Greybeard the Badger, who thereupon calls the Wolf to account for certain ugly occurrences.—How the Cock, in great tribulation, comes and complains before the King of Reynard, and particularises the latter's misdeeds; whereupon the King advises with his Ministers and Councillors.—In what wise he is fain to deal with the villanies of the Fox, according to law.—Bruin the Bear is despatched to Reynard with credentials.

Fytte i. *Canto*



**N**OW Pentecost, the Feast, by some  
Called "merry Whitsuntide," was come!  
The fields shewed brave, with kingcups dight,  
And hawthorns kercheft were in white:  
Her low-breathed lute the fresh'ning rill  
Unto the wakened woods 'gan trill;  
Whilst, hid in leafy bower remote,  
The Cuckoo tuned his herald-note:  
The meads were prankt in gold and green,  
And 'leetel fowles' of liveried sheen,  
Their pipes with *Jubilate!* swelling,  
From bush and spray were philomelling—

The breeze came balmy from the west,  
 And April, harnessed in her best,  
 The laughing sun led forth to see—  
 When Noble (Lion-King was he,  
 And sceptre swayed o'er Bird and Beast)  
 Held ancient ways, and kept the Feast.  
 The trumpets clanged loud proclamation—  
 The couriers coursed throughout the nation—  
 Full many a Brave and many a Bold  
 Came hastening in troops untold—  
 Valiant worthies, Lords of Feud—  
 From russet glade and good green wood;  
 Long-Bill, and Haggie, the Crane and the  
 With all th' elite nobility.— [Pie,  
 For as the King was full intent  
 On entertaining all who went  
 With royal cheer and deep bibation,  
 They scented far the invitation,  
 Great and little, all, save one—  
 True model of his mother's son :—  
 The Fox: despite his devil-may-care,  
 He dared not up to court repair:  
 The evil-doer dreads the light;  
 And so with Reynard 'twas—false wight!  
 As none could speak in his behoof  
 He judged it wise to keep aloof:  
 And straightway when the court began  
 T' assemble, almost every man  
 'Gainst Reynard 'had a thing to say;  
 The Badger only venturing 'nay!'

And first the Wolf, fierce **Isengrim**,  
 His kith and kin surrounding him,  
 Approached the throne: as all drew nigh  
 'Gan **Isengrim** the colloquy:

**A**ll hail, puissant King! abound  
 Might, majesty, and peace around!  
 A suitor craves for justice—grace—  
 His wrongs redress! his rights replace!  
 Foul **Reynard** is the traitor here,  
 From whom have I, this many a year,  
 Much wrong sustained: and now, the deuce  
 He jeers my wife, my girls abuses! [is!  
 He tugs their tails, he slaps their hides;  
 Does very nasty tricks besides.  
 E'en I myself, by no means, quite  
 Escape the rancour of his spite:  
 Nay, once so far I had succeeded—  
 I brought my action: he sham-pleaded:  
 Our Sompnour on the skulker pounced  
 And dragged him into court—he bounced,  
 Protested, raved, reviled, and offered  
 To kiss the book, but when 'twas proffered  
 Thought better on't, and stole away  
 To where his foul recesses lay.  
 Believe me, Sire! the longest pate  
 'Twould puzzle to enumerate  
 What **Reynard** hath, from first to last,—  
 The caitiff!—on my household cast.  
 There's not the cloth or parchment sold  
 In Netherlands or Ghent, I'm bold

T' affirm, would sum the catalogue  
 Of the devices of the rogue!  
 Therefore I'll not attempt it, I!  
 But, as for my wife's ignominy—  
 Of vengeance she shall take her fill!  
 I'll have the law, come what come will!

**W**hen Isengrim's complaint was ended,

A Poodle small his tale appended:  
 Hight Hopsy was the little henchman;  
 With much *ça-ça* (he was a Frenchman).  
 In winter-time he 'd been, he said,  
 So miserably ill besped,  
 He 'd fain (and took his oath *par foy!*)  
 Long husbanded a saveloy—  
 And hid it in a bush so snug,  
 When Reynard pouched it in his mug!  
 Thereon the Cat, Crimalkin, rose,  
 And twirled his whiskers round his nose.  
 For very wrath he scarce could utter  
 One syllable without a splutter.  
 "Most gracious Majesty! There's not  
 A subject, old or young, God wot!  
 But stands in awe and more afraid  
 Of Reynard than your royal head.  
 What Hopsy now, in sooth, bewails  
 Took place an age ago—the tale's  
 My own, if rightly told—and why?  
 The sausage was *my* property!  
 The point of law I'll not preface;  
 But once, when following the chase,

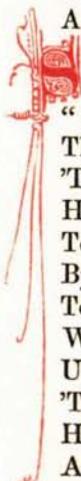
O'erta'en by night, a mill I spied :  
 The miller slept, and snored beside—  
 I took the sausage—I have said it!  
 The prize I waive, but claim the credit."  
 This said, again he 'gan to stroke  
 His whiskers, and the Panther spoke :

**D**rimalkin, 'tis not hard to see  
 The case you quote lacks equity.  
 Fine feeling 's out of Reynard's way,  
 A robber, wretch, and thief, I say!  
 Maintain, and swear it, by my troth!  
 These Gentles will avouch my oath.  
 He filches both from Cat and Pard,  
 And hath for no one soul regard—  
 Not e'en the King, our Lord and Master,  
 Whom he, with every known disaster,  
 In life and limb, would gladly compass;  
 He loves the kicking up a rumpus,  
 Tho' he no greater gain can pick  
 Than by her scratching doth a chick.  
 Only to prove my statements true,  
 Listen to what I promise you  
 But yesterday was brought to light—  
 A deed of wanton fell despite,  
 On Lappet done, the harmless Hare.  
 As up to court they both repair,  
 He undertook to shew the mode  
 Of safest conduct on the road;  
 And, journeying onwards, to beguile  
 The way, taught him to sing the while;

Chanted a *Credo*, word for word :  
 But to his old tricks soon recurred  
 The hypocrite—he seizes Puss,  
 And grips him that he can't get loose ;  
 Belabours him with bangs and thumps,  
 His skull was all one heap of bumps.  
 By rare good luck I passed that way,  
 And heard them both the *Credo* say ;  
 The service then was scarce half thro',  
 When, suddenly, the voices two  
 Both ceased, and, as I nearer drew,  
 I pounced on Master Reynard, who,  
 By dint of fib and fisty-cuff,  
 Had well nigh given his man enough :  
 He 'd kill'd him in a trice, God bless you !  
 Had I not hastened to the rescue.  
 Look here ! his bleeding wounds can tell  
 What evil chance poor Puss befell.  
 The worthy soul ! See here his bruises !  
 What fiend the man of peace ill-uses ?  
 To you, my Liege, and all, in brief,  
 I swear that, with so great a thief,  
 The King's pass, and the kingdom's quiet,  
 Are opportunities for riot."


 ried Isengrim, " It is too true !  
 The Devil's deeds are dark to do !  
 Once dead—a corpse—it were a sight  
 To comfort every peaceful wight !  
 For even were he wholly pardoned  
 Up to this hour, a wretch so hardened

Would, in a trice, a world contrive  
 Of snares for every thing alive."  
 The Badger, **Reynard's** nephew, rose  
 With saucy mien, as one who knows  
 In court a client's case to garnish,  
 And gloze the damaged parts with varnish:

 **S**ir Isengrim," the Badger said,  
 "There runs an adage in my head,  
 That 'Praise proceeds not from a foe;'  
 'Tis e'en with my good uncle so.  
 Had he, like you, the King's invite  
 To court—or were he dubbed a knight,—  
 By troth! ye scarce had ventured thus  
 To make so much ado and fuss,  
 With rueful face and words of willow,  
 Up-grubbing each old peccadillo!—  
 'Tis known to many Gentles here  
 How you and he made common cheer,  
 And dwelt in fellowship together;  
 When once it chanced, in winter weather,  
 My uncle thro' the Wolf well nigh  
 An unexpected death came by.  
 Thus happen'd it—as I've heard say:  
 A man with fish-cart came one day,  
 Whereat the Wolf 'gan lick his snout,  
 But fumbled all in vain about  
 His empty pockets: off he flew  
 To uncle **Reynard** in his stew,  
 And begged, besought him, "What to do?"

So light of purse, and credit low,  
 To help him **Reynard** scarce saw how:  
 But soon his wits stood him in stead:  
 Down in the road he dropt as dead—  
 The man of fish doth slow approach,  
 And there, stretch'd stiff as any roach,  
 He sees my uncle—draws his knife—  
 And, for the skin, foredooms his life.  
**Reynard**, his fate upon a thread,  
 Lies still: the man believes him dead:  
 So chucks the carcase on his fish—  
 (And all to gratify the wish  
 Of **Æsengrim!**) The cart jogs on—  
 The Wolf sneaks close, and feasts upon  
 The fish my uncle slides him down,  
 And eats till he can eat no more:  
 When, shaken 'till his bones are sore,  
 Down uncle jumps for *his* tuck in—  
 The Wolf had left him not a fin!  
 He'd stuffed and crammed in such a wise,  
 That swoll'n he was to twice his size:  
 Some bones he 'd found too indigestible,  
 Yet called the *marrow* quite *comestible*,  
 With pretty picking in them, still:  
 So bade my uncle take his fill!


**D**ow here's another—(honour bright!)  
 Once **Reynard**, as he prowled by night,  
 Knew of a slaughtered pig, hung up,  
 And made the Wolf his 'halves' at sup.

Straight to the booty both repair,  
 And **Reynard** spares no end of care :  
 In at the window, bounce ! he springs,  
 And forth the squeaker deftly brings,  
 The better to divide the prize ;  
 When savage dogs, of monstrous size,  
 Rush on and chase him round about ;  
 Whilst Wolf eats piggy to the snout.  
 Soon as the dogs were off his track  
 My uncle to the Wolf comes back,  
 Tells his disasters, claims his share—  
 Says **Isengrim**, ‘I’ve saved it ! there !  
 The most tit bit ! all fat and gravy !  
 Well chew it, or it will sit heavy.’  
 The morsel was produced, and lo !  
 The *piece of stick* that, as you know,  
 Suspends a pig !—The Fox said nought :  
 Ye may imagine what he *thought*.”


**M**ost gracious Sovereign ! I wager  
 A score of tricks by this old stager  
 Were quickly found—I (understand me)  
 Relate but what comes pat and handy.  
 Were **Reynard** here, he could with ease  
 Recount a hundred such as these  
 Right on, nor stop to pause or falter—  
 You’d think a clerk read from a psalter.  
 Besides, your Highness must perceive  
 The Wolf hath, certes, taken leave  
 Of his discretion, as all here  
 Have witness’d, for the fact is clear.

He rants in public of the wife,  
Whose fame should dearer be than life;  
Not feed the vulgar appetite.

**Reynard**, whilome a wandering knight,  
The skittish **Creedall** did inspire—  
'Twas at a tournament, Love's fire  
Fused her too yielding soul—I paint  
But what mine eyes saw with constraint—  
They met—Ah! nothing loth—and oft  
Repeated those endearments soft—  
Enough! The dame's not plaintiff here,  
Nor can resent a sin so dear.  
Were **Isengrim** but wise, he'd hold  
His peace, nor toss his antlers bold,"

**O**reybeard resumed.—“And then the Hare—  
The Pard must lay *his* grievance bare!  
The guffaw! If he chose to sing  
All out of tune, how clear the thing,  
That **Reynard** had full right, as master,  
To urge the drawling dolt on faster!  
If dunces are to go scot free,  
Better there were no A, B, C!  
Next **Hopsy** tells his *Winter Tale*  
About a shrivelled sausage stale  
And stowed away—'Twere better left,  
Seeing it fix'd him with a theft!  
Troth! 'Easy come and easy go!  
'Twas rightful forfeit all must know!  
Can **Reynard** be to blame, because  
He saved some trouble to the laws?”

What man alive, from churl to chief,  
But sets his face against a thief?  
Or thinks foul scorn of any toil  
To chouse the robber of his spoil?  
I grant it you, had **Reynard** here  
(Which was not so, as doth appear),  
Killed **Hopsy** for the theft committed,  
He had (the fact *must* be admitted),  
Meddled with the prerogative  
Of Majesty, in whom doth live,  
As ancient law-books lay it down,  
Sole sway o'er all, from Prince to Clown.  
**Reynard** 's an estimable man—  
He brooks not evil deeds to scan:  
And since the King's last peace, you'll find,  
Its breach hath shunned of every kind.  
One daily meal he scarce partakes,  
And lives, like Anchorite, on cakes.  
With stripes his body chasteneth sore—  
All out of godliness—nay, more—  
The holy man coarse sackcloth wears,  
Eschews all flesh—on salt fish fares:  
No tempter can the saint entice  
From **Dalepart**, his fortalice:  
In cloister-cell, pinched, wan, and wasted,  
He moans his sins, and leaves untasted  
All day his frugal meal, to fast,  
Till penance lift his load at last.  
What matter, then, these idle notions  
To one *so* rapt in his devotions?

I feel you with me, and I've done."  
 He ceased: and scarce a sand had run  
 When **Chanticleer** and all his clan  
 Appeared in court: right in the van  
 A pullet's corse accompanied,  
 'Clept Dem'selle **Scratch-claw** ere she died;  
 By **Reynard's** bite decapitated—  
 This wise the tidings were related.

**L**ose to the throne the Cock drew nigh:  
 Deep anguish dimmed his upturned eye:  
 Two little Bantams, right and left,  
 Wept bitter tears, as birds bereft.  
 Sir **Flapwing** was of high degree,  
 As fine a bantling as you'd see  
 'Twixt Amsterdam and Paris, he.  
 Sir **Strain-neck** was the other 'clept,  
 And, like the first one, proudly stept.  
 Before them, each a torch they bear,  
 Alike the same; for twins they were.  
 Young Cocks yet twain bare up the pall,  
 And helped the wail with voices small.  
 Then **Chanticleer**, before the King  
 Commenced, in tones deep harrowing:

**H** gracious Lord and King! give ear  
 To my disastrous tale! The tear  
 Of pity shed on us who stand  
 For justice suppliants at your hand.

Sire! thus it chanced:—The frosted beard  
Of Winter scarce had disappear'd;  
Scarce had the thorny brake put by  
Its hosiery of fleece, and I  
As happy felt as though a chicken;  
About me, strutting, crowing, picking,  
In comeliness my little ones:  
I counted up ten stalwart sons;  
Of daughters, too, a wondrous store—  
Plump **Ortolans**, and full a score.  
My dame, the thoughtful prudent Hen,  
Had trained their youth beneath her ken,  
All virtues cardinal to practise,  
Best learned from mothers, as the fact is.  
Our house was in the convent yard,  
High wall'd around: six dogs stood guard;—  
All kept for our peculiar care,  
By night and day to shield us there.  
The prowling Fox was gravelled quite,  
Their kennels kept our roost in sight,  
Like sentries on the sharp look out,  
To apprehend each vagrant lout.  
The thief, thus baulked, at plottings worked:  
Oftimes behind a buttress lurked  
Ensnconced, and lowered his evil eye;  
Though, 'gat the Dogs but scent, to fly  
Straightway was **Reynard** fain. One night  
They left him in a dismal plight;  
With jacket torn he leapt the fence,  
And we were freed of him sithence.

Now, gracious Liege! mark what I tell.  
Reynard, (the knave!) with cockle shell  
And pilgrim's staff, well worn, appears,  
Bearing a packet: as he nears,  
I note your royal seal, and read  
Announcement of the truce decreed:  
No more, he said, he play'd the royster,  
But sought repentance in a cloister:  
Observed the rule o' th' strictest sect,  
His sins to purge with sure effect;  
Whereby myself might, to the end,  
My life secure and fearless spend.  
Said he, 'flesh diet I have sworn  
Never to touch from night to morn.'  
I noted, too, his shaven crown;  
Saw what had penned the Prior down  
For his *Viaticum* to town.  
He raised his vest; beneath I saw  
The coarse hair-cloth: then tow'rds the door  
He turned and said, 'May God protect  
Your house and you! I daren't neglect  
My duties grave, for since last Christmas,  
I've read the vesper prayers for this mass,  
Besides the matins.' Having ended,  
Away the arch dissembler wended,  
Muttering *Placebos* as he went.  
With glee I took the tidings sent  
Unto my children all, I stated  
The royal message, then related  
How Reynard had assumed the cowl,  
And left off hankering after fowl.

Myself I led them far and wide,  
When lo! the Fox's guile defied  
My anxious cares: in that same hour  
He 'd marked a victim for his power!  
Perdu behind a bush he lay,  
And took, before mine eyes, his prey!  
The best of all my brood he seized,  
And ate her up. The morsel pleased  
His scoundrel maw—'twas dainty meat—  
And soon he sought another treat.  
No dog nor keeper baulked his will;  
He tracked us over dale and hill!  
By day and night he spread his coil,  
And fleshed his tooth in the fat spoil.  
'Tis thus the robber hath my brood  
Daily diminished for his food.  
My stock have dwindled from my house:  
A watchful parent; constant spouse:  
Full four-and-twenty hopeful chicks  
As e'er pecked corn from out fresh ricks  
Were mine,—and now, as I'm alive,  
The villain 's killed them all but five!  
Pity, O King! my sorrowing tale:  
Grant succour in this hour of wail!  
But yesterday, the huntsman's cry  
Surprised him in the act to fly  
With **Scratchclaw's** body, which you see  
Killed by his murd'rous tooth—ah me!  
'Tis here as witness of my woe—  
Oh that my hard hap to your heart may go!"

**A**nraged, the King: "Sir Badger, ho!  
 The monk your uncle (troth!) doth know  
 To keep his fast,—the holy man!—  
 Match me the like of this who can?  
 What need of further question here?  
 Draw nigh and listen, **Chanticleer!**  
 Ourself your daughter dead will see  
 Entombed with all solemnity  
 Of dirge and mass, in her last slumber,  
 And vigils also without number.  
 This done, from these our lieges true,  
 We'll crave their help and counsel, too,  
 Touching the murder and the vengeance due."  
 And thereupon he bade all there  
 The vigils (young and old) prepare:  
 The mandate was obeyed—this done  
 Incontinent the throng begun  
 Singing *Placebo Domino,*  
*Et cætera,* as the phrases go.  
 I'd tell you, were it not too long,  
 Who led the service, who the song;  
 But these particulars we pass,  
 Wishing God speed them at their mass!

**A**ll in the grave the corpse was laid!  
 Above of whitest marble made,  
 And polished smooth as glass, there shone  
 The quaint-carved monumental stone.  
 In letters graven might you see  
 The title, age and pedigree

Of the defunct below; and thus  
Th' inscription ran, in well-turned verse :

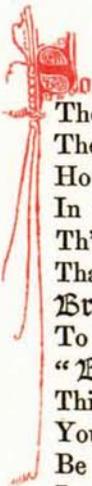
**Scratchclaw**

Beneath this stone lies buried here :  
Her Sire the noble

**Chanticleer !**

The fairest of his Daughters, she  
Laid eggs, and cackled joyously :  
Till seized in ruthless Reynard's grip,  
To other realms she took a trip—  
A victim to his brutal greed.  
Pause, Gentle Stranger, as you read,  
And drop, for pity's sake, a tear !  
For Scratchclaw's murdered corse lies here !

— o —

 ran th' inscription to the end.  
The King now summoned all to lend  
Their counsel, and the means devise  
How best th' avenger might arise  
In wrath to punish crimes so vast :  
Th' assembly was agreed at last,  
That for his rank and high degree  
Bruin the messenger should be.  
To Bruin then the King thus spake :  
"Bruin ! look well you undertake  
This journey with despatch—'Tis I,  
Your sov'reign, calls upon you—fly !  
Be wise and wary : Reynard's guile  
Is practised in each crafty wile."

“ My liege !” said Bruin, “ let it not  
Disturb your royal mind one jot.  
God help me never more, so be  
I’m tricked by his cajolery !  
Leave all to me : I ’ll make him laugh :  
He ’ll bellow like a sucking calf :  
His tricks and traps, and tread-behinds,  
Like this, I ’ll scatter to the winds !”



**Reynard the Fox.**

**FYTTE II.**

### Argument.

**H**OW Bruin the Bear discovers Reynard; and what conversation passes.—How Reynard plays off a trick upon him, and leaves him stuck fast in a stump.—Bruin made prisoner by the countrymen, is evilly entreated by them; at length he escapes, and betakes himself to the river.—His lamentation.—How Reynard meets with the discomfited Bruin, by the river side, derides him and leaves him in the sulks.—How Bruin arrives at Court, and recounts his disasters.—Grimalkin the Cat is thereupon dispatched by the King to summon Reynard forthwith to hear judgment in Bruin's case.—What evil befalls the messenger.

Fytte ij.



**S** **DDP Bruin** off in haste did scamper  
Up hill and down, like any tramper:  
Through forests thick, and many a wide brook,  
He toiled his way without a guide-book:  
At length he at a spot arrived  
Where two tall mountains, man-and-wived  
By Nature, rose into the ether;  
Here **Reynard** rested months together—  
But yesterday he'd hunted there—  
The battlement that rose in air,  
From this point in the distance seen,  
Was Malepartus, as I ween:

Of all the places **Reynard** owned,  
 His favourite this—a bastioned  
 Deep-moated house he felt secure in,  
 And snug as in her nest a Moor-hen.

**When Bruin** crossed the castle yard,  
 And saw the gate was locked and barred;  
 Feeling a little bit perplexed,  
 He paused and pondered well—"What next?"  
 "Good **Reynard**! uncle mine! what ho!"  
 At length his phlegm found overflow—  
 "Behold the royal message! odds  
 My life; the King hath sworn, by Gods!  
 That come ye not to court, to hear  
 The plaints against ye, and to clear  
 Yourself from stain,—will not with me  
 Return in friendly custody,  
 To give and take the law its due,—  
 Your obstinacy you shall rue.  
 Absent yourself, the forfeit's fixed:  
 The cord and wheel, with torture mixed;  
 I rede ye lose no time, but come!"

**Goodsooth**, to this, albeit dumb,  
 Was **Reynard** no whit deaf as well,  
 But listened every syllable,  
 As close within ensconced he lay.  
 Thinks he, "Could I the Bear repay  
 For all his growl about the law,  
 'T would not so vastly choke my maw."

I'll con the matter thro' and thro'—"  
 This said, deep in his den withdrew.  
 Cramm'd full was **Halepartus'** sides  
 Of crevice-chinks, and panel-slides ;  
 With many a sharp and narrow winding,  
 And passages for exit finding,  
 Which he, when he would lie secure,  
 With locks and bolts made doubly sure.  
 Whene'er with booty he returned,  
 Or, when some lurking foeman burned  
 A recent injury to repay,  
 Here found he safe retreat alway.  
 Here many an unsuspecting beast  
 Walked in, and served his bloody feast.

**W**hen **Reynard Bruin's** message heard,  
 And weighed its import, word by word,  
 He felt in no particular haste  
 To take for granted all that past :  
 Suspected treachery behind,  
 And listened long, some clue to find,  
 If **Bruin** came alone ? which when  
 He ascertained, he left his den,  
 And with the Bear held converse then.  
 " 'Tis **Bruin** sure ! welcome at once !  
 I crave your pardon for the nonce.  
 At vespers was I, when ye knock'd,  
 And must apologize—I'm shocked—  
 Welcome ! thrice welcome to my tent !  
 Small thanks to him, I ween, who sent

A gentleman of your degree  
 To take so long a journey—see!  
 Dear coz! you're tired, and panting hot:  
 Our lord the King hath he (God wot!)  
 No one in all his territory  
 But 't is yourself must take such very  
 Long errands?—'pon my life! small thank!  
 One, too, of your exalted rank!  
 The first in consequence at Court,  
 As foremost in the public thought!  
 Whose weight and influence with the King  
 I'd count on as a priceless thing!—  
 In sooth, had you not come, I meant  
 At Court my poor self to present  
 This morrow, which I'm quite denied—  
 My wish, perforce, must lay aside—  
 In short, my stomach 's out of sorts,  
 My diet 's meagre, nor comports  
 With my accustomed ways.—The question  
 Is ref'able to indigestion."

**W**hen **Stuïn**, with commiserate look:  
 "Of what the food which you partook?"  
 Quoth **Reynard**, "'T is a dish, my dear,  
 Which you will heed not, when you hear.  
 Indifferent has been my fare  
 Of late—in truth, the poor man's share.  
 Often my Dame and I, at home  
 Eat rav'nously of honeycomb:  
 For lack of more substantial food,  
 We bolt down this, and call it good.

Forced thus against my will to swallow,  
 Sans appetite, what else should follow,  
 But colic, bile, dyspepsia?—Why,  
 I'd never budge a foot, not I,  
 For all the honey in an apiary!"

**Then** thus the Bear, with ears erect,  
 ("What's this? His stomach doth reject  
 The honeycomb divine! Gadzooks!  
 I smell it in his savoury looks!  
 I'd walk the world, o'er dale and hill,  
 Could I of honey get my fill!)  
 Beseech you, help me to the treasure!  
 Thenceforward I'm at your good pleasure."  
 "Ye jest, friend **Bruin**!" **Reynard** cried.  
 "By heaven! I jest not!" he replied;  
 "I never jest!" (that was not needed—  
 The Fox, the cunning rogue, proceeded)  
 "In earnest, quotha? You shall see  
 If I spake aught but verity.  
 From hence above scarce half a mile  
 There lives a peasant—**Rustypile**—  
 He's got the honey! hive on hive!  
 Enough for all the Bears alive!"

**Bruin** was out of bounds at this;  
 For honey was his God, I wis!  
 Relaxing his sagacious snout,  
 He begged to know the whereabouts  
 Of **Rustypile** and his rich store?  
 Said he, "I'll serve you evermore."

And then began to think, did he,  
 If one could find satiety  
 In honey, or get half enough—  
 (He'd yet to learn the quantum suff.)  
 Quoth Reynard, "Come! an ye were twenty,  
 Of honey shall ye sup, and plenty!  
 What tho' for walking I'm but queasy,  
 No pains I'll spare, no toil, to please ye.  
 For trust me, Cousin, when I say  
 I've held you next my heart alway.  
 An influential man art thou:  
 And, squares it with your mood, canst now  
 Important services confer  
 Whene'er your friend shall ask ye, Sir.  
 This day ye surfeit on such honey  
 As never Bear, for love or money,  
 Did elsewhere get!"

**Now Reynard wight,**

Altho' this wise he spake, thought quite  
 In other fashion,—for, in sooth,  
 He knew the art to lie like truth.  
 The Bear, poor dupe! did not once question  
 The treat in store, nor good digestion.  
 Thought Reynard, "What a chance is here  
 To trounce the churl!" When lo! appear  
 The cotter's hut and snug inclosure!  
 Bruin, with ill-pourtrayed composure,  
 Awaits the feast—nor dreamt mishaps,  
 (The way with fools!) nor afterclaps.

'Twas night when Reynard Bruin led :  
 The clod-pole slumbered sound a-bed :  
 A wheelwright was the man by trade,  
 And (Reynard knew it well) had laid  
 An oak stump in the yard, which he  
 Was shaping for an axletree.  
 The stump a good half way was riven,  
 And in the cleft a wedge deep driven  
 Six inches down : quoth Reynard, " See!  
 More honey, coz! lies in this tree  
 Than you may think—just pop your snout in  
 The chink, there, and you'll not be doubting—  
 But do not spill the luscious comb!  
 Shouldst feed like a true gastronome,  
 With all deliberation due—  
 Now, with good appetite, fall to!"  
 "Reynard!" said Bruin, "never fear!  
 I ever held one anxious clear:  
 'All things in moderation,' dear!"

**P**oor Bruin thus was sheer betwattled,  
 And in his hurry, well nigh throttled.  
 At length his snout well in he squeezed—  
 Reynard, alert, the moment seized—  
 Slap! went the wedge from out the cleft!  
 And in the instant Bruin left  
 In pillory transfix'd to swing!  
 No help his cries and curses bring—  
 Not twenty Elephants could free  
 His nose and paws from chancery.

With piteous howl he tore the ground,  
 And filled with fright the country round:  
 E'en **Rustyfile's** tromboning nose  
 Its music ceased, whilst he arose,  
 And sallied out with half his clothes:  
 Much marvelling what the noise could be!  
 With him, for his security,  
 A cutting-bill he tightly gripped  
 To use at need; and, thus equipped,  
 Alighted on poor **Bruin**, who  
 Still struggled to get back or thro'—  
 In vain! His taper nasals fast stick,  
 As though the tree distilled gum-mastic!  
 Well pleased was **Keynard**, as I wot,  
 To view the progress of his plot:  
 But when, with bill in hand, he spied  
 The clodpole coming down, he cried,  
 "Ho! **Bruin** there! what *are* you at?  
 You'll get too much, be sure of that!  
 Now say, is th' honey of the best?  
 Here's **Rustyfile** to give it zest!  
 Maybe a *schnaps* he'll proffer you:  
 'Tis no bad thing, that mountain dew!"  
 This said, he hitched up to his waist  
 His sackcloth, and set off in haste.

**W**hen **Rustyfile** arrived, and found  
**Bruin** close pris'ner on his ground,  
 Away he ran with all his might  
 And main (for it was gala-night)

To where the villagers were met  
For dance and revelry.—“ Now let,”  
Cried he, “ the people, one and all,  
Along with me, and stop the ball !  
A Bear within my yard is caught,  
So, come, and all enjoy the sport !”

**B**elter-skelter, off they run,  
And leave the fiddles for the fun.  
Each seizes what he chance may step on,  
And takes what comes to hand for weapon.  
Prongs, pitchforks, axes, flails, and rakes,  
Are snatched—and, last, the garden-stakes :  
Some few, well-seasoned cudgels carried,  
And thick—that Bruin might be harried :  
The parish priest, and eke the chorister,  
Took arms against the limbo'd forester :  
The Parson's maid, the pretty Jude,  
(Who cooked the daintiest dish of food,  
And knew to brew the well-spiced cup—  
The goodman's “ nightcap ” after sup),  
With spindle arm'd she skipped along,  
Intent,—the roguish amazon !—  
To lace poor Bruin's coat ; whilst he,  
Aware of boisterous company,  
On mischief bent, for life or death  
One effort made, with tightened breath,  
And freed at length his snout—albeit,  
The limb made not its swift retreat  
With little scathe—from nose to ear  
The skin was peeled off Bruin sheer !

Down streamed the blood! nor was this all:  
 The cleft still held his paws in thrall:  
 These too, at length, he tore away  
 By force—but left the claws to stay!  
 His feet both crushed, the skin clean gone,  
 By torments racked through flesh and bone,  
 He cursed the “scoundrel Fox,” and swore  
 To think of honey “nevermore.”  
 How cleverly had been fulfilled  
 His embassy! then ’gan to build  
 His fancy, as it roamed, the more  
 On coming things that cast before  
 Dark shadows—as, what honours now  
 Would deck his diplomatic brow?—  
 What hope of orders, collars, stars,  
 To patch his ignominious scars?  
 With beard besmear’d, and foundered feet,  
 Advance he could not, nor retreat.

**R**ap! rung out **Rustyfile** the onslaught:  
 And proved that howsoever once thought  
 Below, in courage, point of zero,  
 ’Fore company he was a hero!—  
 Blows, cuffs, whacks, bangs, and cudgel-play  
 Were now the order of the day.  
 The Priest, with weapon couched, lay by,  
 Watching his opportunity:  
 He stood with clothes-prop poised and planted,  
 Aimed sure, and hit the part he wanted!  
**Bruin** could neither crawl nor creep;  
 They fell upon him heap on heap;

All armed with implements of slaughter,  
 By foemen used who give no quarter.  
 Spades, axes, bill-hooks, pikes, and stones,  
 Rained, hailed, and shower'd about his bones!  
 The Smith, with hammer fit to batter  
 The heaviest forge, made crash and clatter!  
 Here, side by side, fought **Stubbs** and **Skreggs**,  
 And **Benbow** with the bandy legs:  
 Long **Tom**, with one-eyed **Joe**, and thick **Mat**,  
 From arm of catapult hurled brickbat:  
 But **Sandyman**, surnamed "The Canny,"  
 He worsted him the worst of any.  
 There, **Wolfram** with the flattened nose,  
 And **Lothair** with the greasy hose,  
 (A punchy, squat, four-fingered fellow),  
 Vied manfully to make him bellow.

**T**he roll of heroines to sing  
 Doubtless it were a pleasant thing:  
 But this time must we prætermit  
**Jude**, and the Scullion with the spit,  
 With score of valiant Shes, to boot,  
 Who battled in the war hirsute.  
 Yet not to praise where praise is due,  
 The Poet scorns, I promise you.  
 And one there was amid that band,  
 Born of the best blood in the land—  
 The valiant **Cuckoo-cry**, whose lungs  
 Made noise enough for twenty tongues.  
 His place he kept far in the rear,  
 But clamoured so that all might hear,

And warwhooped with incessant cheer !  
 His mother was Dame **Furbelow** ;  
 Himself his father did *not* know :  
 Howbeit gossips winked, and said  
 It was the old Franciscan dead.  
 A very proud man was the son.  
 Alas ! poor **Bruin** could not run  
 From his loud roar, nor scape the launch  
 Of missile at his shaggy haunch !  
 At length, one valorous chieftain, bent  
 On a particular errand, lent  
 So loud a tap with crab-tree butt  
 On **Bruin's** battered occiput,  
 That down he fell like dead, and lay  
 A moment stunn'd—but soon at bay  
 He held the pack once more, and there,  
 Where all the women gathered were,  
 Making a rush, right bodily,  
 (In sailor-phrase) he made them fly !  
 Some fell into a brook hard by,  
 Head over ears !—The priest loud bawled,  
 “ **Jude's** in the water ! Help ! (he called)  
 My maid—my **Jude** is drowning ! Hark !  
 Two tuns of ale, and this gold mark,  
 With absolutions evermore,  
 To whomso shall my maid restore !”

**T**hey left the Bear, to death nigh worried,  
 And at the parson's summons hurried,  
 To help first **Jude**, and then the rest—

Jude first, because, as they confest,  
The *mark* would make them know her best.

**W**eanwhile, in the confusion, Bruin  
Took heart, and soon was up and doing :  
With madd'ning yell he made a rush  
Right in the river's mud and slush :  
On swimming never dreamt he once ;  
His only thought to cool his sconce,  
And 'scape the mob ; but this time he  
From danger pluck'd security ;  
For float he did—which, when the foe  
Beheld, they rallied, crying " Oh !  
Shame on us ! fools, now, that we be !  
'Tis all the women's doings ! see !  
What business had they here ? why look !  
The enemy hath ta'en the brook !"  
They turned, and stumbled on the wood  
Clogged thick with Bruin's skin and blood  
From ear and paw.—How they did chuck !  
They shout " Come back again, my buck !  
Your cap and gloves you've left in pawn !"  
Thus adding ribaldry to scorn.

**T**hough Bruin right rejoiceful was  
At his escape, he cursed the cause  
Of his disasters—damned the tree  
That held him fast, and specially  
The Fox blasphemed, in unctuous phrase,  
And vast variety of ways.

It was to Heaven his prayer of wrath,  
 As he lay wallowing in the bath.  
 The stream was rapid in its flow  
 And swiftly carried him below;  
 So that in little time, he'd swum  
 A mile or more—at least had come—  
 On shore he landed out of breath;  
 Beat, bruised, cut, wounded, fagged to death:  
 Was never Bear in such sad pickle!  
 He vowed to quit a world so fickle.—  
 “Oh **Reynard!** wretch! (he cried) thou lump  
 Of lies!” and then his thoughts would jump  
 And dwell upon the rustics—so  
 Betwixt the twain, he to and fro  
 Alternated delirious babble— [rabble.  
 Of rabble and **Reynard,** and **Reynard** and

**W**hen **Reynard** to his heart's content  
 Had conn'd the Bear's predicament,  
 Some nice tit-bit, some bagatelle  
 He wisely deemed would relish well  
 After the feat; and what so pat  
 As a young pullet, prime and fat?  
 The practised poacher knew to find  
 His game, and bagg'd one to his mind.  
 To slake his thirst he took a drink  
 Of Adam's ale from river brink:  
 “What nuts for me (he 'gan to chuckle)  
 The Bear got such a rap o' th' knuckle!  
 Oh no! I dare say, no good will  
 Had **Rustypile** to take his fill!

The Bear and I are quits, I trow ;  
 I'm not his debtor, any how !  
 Cozen, i'feck! the tree will prove  
 How close I hug him in my love!"—

**F**ox on he went, by chance he roamed  
 To where poor Bruin lay and moaned ;  
 Which, when he saw, straightway his joy  
 Was damp'd at once: "How now, old boy!  
 Old Rustyfile! resolve me this!  
 A very sumph art thou, I wis!  
 What! Bear's flesh tickle not your palate!  
 There is not many a friar's wallet,  
 With such a dainty meat provided!  
 I see, though, Bruin hath confided  
 A pledge or two in your safe keeping!"  
 Whilst muttering thus, the Fox kept peeping  
 At Bruin, who there lay, quite spent,  
 With blood begrimed;—incontinent  
 Then burst he into boisterous laughter,  
 With "Coz! what are you looking after?  
 Have you left any thing behind?  
 Friend Rustyfile, be sure, will find  
 Your property; and, if he's smart, he  
 May 'light upon yourself, my hearty!  
 You could not, surely, tap his store  
 Without once rubbing off the score?  
 I wonder what the deuce it was  
 Dyed you so red about the claws?  
 You liked the honey? come, Coz! pho!—  
 I've plenty left; now don't say no!

Yet tell me, Coz, (but put no joke on  
 Your friend) what order may betoken  
 The cap of red upon your sconce?  
 Art made a cardinal at once?  
 And see! the bungling barber-monsieur  
 Hath clipped your ears to make your tonsure!  
 Why, 'sdeath! the scalp he hath not saved,  
 And cheeks as well as whiskers shaved!  
 I marvel, too, what moved the lout  
 To turn your kid gloves inside out!"—

**W**hilst **Reynard** thus the Bear reviled,  
**Bruin**, with feigned indifference, smiled;  
 Yet longed, internally, to feel  
 The Fox's weasand with cold steel;  
 As one may wish another dead,  
 Becomingly, when things are said  
 Too civil by one half. Howe'er,  
**Bruin** could speak not for despair,  
 Nor take revenge in any way  
 For what the rascal Fox did say:  
 To 'scape his jibes one chance remained—  
 The river;—in he plunged and gained,  
 Like bellows panting, th' other bank,  
 And on it quite exhausted sank,  
 With this soliloquy—" I would  
 They 'd killed me dead outright!—what good  
 Can I do more?—or how get back  
 To Court? (my poor bones! how they rack!)  
 At Court they'll point at me, and cry  
 'There goes the dupe of **Reynard** sly!"—

The villain's very bile's all rife  
 To see how I've escaped with life!"  
 'Twas after six days' toil and pain,  
 He shewed himself at Court again.

**W**hen that the Bear the King espied,  
 With loud rebellowing voice he cried—  
 "How now!—by all the gods! I vow  
 'Tis Bruin!—what a worricow  
 The man doth look!"—

**Before** the King

Bruin advanced: then offering  
 His homage, stood awhile and waited  
 The royal nod ere he related.  
 Then spake the King, with flashing eye:  
 "What ho! this is some villainy  
 That calls for our revenge! say on!  
 Now can the Fox this thing have done?  
 We trust not—ne'ertheless we swear,  
 By crown and sceptre! to repair  
 The injuries of the much wronged Bruin,  
 Nor shave our beard the whiles 'tis doing!"  
 And thereupon he bade them all,  
 Both young and old, obey the call  
 To council, and the means devise  
 For punishing such infamies.

**S**hort the debate in that arena:  
 They voted it high misdemeanour:  
 When this amendment by a Housefly  
 Was put and carried unanimously,

That Reynard should by capias  
 Be taken: then by habeas  
 Be brought: lest he, perchance, transmare  
 Decamped; or else by certiorari,  
 Or other quirk, for aught they then knew,  
 To Malepart might change the venue.

**T**he Cat, for wariness long famed,  
 Was on this delicate mission named:  
 "He was the man to do the thing"—  
 "It likes me well!" replied the King:  
 Straightway his majesty addressed  
 The Cat:

"**Crimalkin!** 'fore the rest  
 I honour thee!—but take thou heed  
 To let the Fox know what's decreed.  
 Persuasive be; yet firm: and dwell on  
 The law that doth pronounce a felon  
 Whoso our summons thrice neglects:  
 Thereto the case-books and the texts  
 Omit not!—and—**Now all men know!**  
 We constitute you Plenipo!  
 With full authority to summon  
 Reynard's whole household, man and woman.  
 Haste! ere some outrage new take root.  
 Fail not!—Farewell!—and look ye to't!"

**C**rimalkin then:—"For good or evil  
 What dare I urge on such a devil?  
 If I might venture to observe—  
 I fain would plead my want of nerve—

Consider! men of my dimension  
 (This fact I urge on your attention)  
 Are obviously unfit, by nature,  
 For what a Polypheme in stature,  
 Like **Bruin**, could not do, sans blunder:—  
 How ever shall I act, I wonder?"—

**T**o him the King, in courtly wise:

"A fico for your want of size!  
 Your little men are oft'nest found  
 In wisdom, prudence, foresight, sound:  
 The lack of which your great big hulk  
 Poorly compensates by his bulk.

Granted, good friend, ye are but small;  
 Yet well we know ye have these all."

"Sire! I submit me to your nod,  
 (**Grimalkin** said). Oh! that some God  
 A sign upon my right might shew,  
 This enterprise to prosper!" Lo!—  
 In that same instant, high on wing,  
 St. Martin's bird was hovering!

He saw, and thus apostrophised  
 The omen, which the while stood poised:

**E**ither direct your happy flight,

O bird! and settle on my *right*!"—

He watched the bird its pinions spread;—

Towards a tree, in mazy thread,

That grew upon the *left*, it tended!

His troubled spirit apprehended

The oracle—he cursed the sign;—  
 But did the same, as I opine,  
 Would others—swiggd his pocket-pistol,  
 And cared not for the Fates a whistle:  
 Then drew from travelling-bag a chart,  
 And pickt his way to **Halepart**.

**W**hen **Halkin** stood the porch before,  
 The Fox he found at his own door:  
 With wife and cubs he sunned him there;  
 And thus the envoy, debonnair:—  
 “Well met, fair Coz! God grant, I pray,  
 His benediction here alway!  
 The King commands me to announce  
 He wills you settle some accounts  
 Outstanding; to the which end he  
 In council hath emphatically  
 Decreed—unless to Court you hasten,  
 Yourself and all your house he’ll chasten.  
 The sentence I proclaim, to urge ye:—  
*Death, without benefit of clergy!*”

**“Ye’re welcome,” Reynard** cried, “(you  
 spalpeen!)  
 Welcome! my nephew, good **Crimalkin!**  
 May God much prosper you, my dear!  
 I thank him who hath sent you here.”  
 Now **Reynard** was (the lying faggot!)  
 As full of mischief as a maggot  
 Is full of meat.—This warm reception  
 Was all a villainous deception:—

The whole time through, his head was running  
On each device of craft and cunning  
To take Grimalkin unaware,  
And serve him as he'd served the Bear.  
"Nephew!" he said, "tho' poor my store,  
(He stiled him Nephew as before :)  
The larder's at your service: say  
What would you like for lunch to-day?  
You'll dine with me, and stay the night,  
To rest you?—then, by morrow's light,  
Together to the Court we'll trot;  
For tho' I say it, that should not,  
Of all my kinsmen you are he  
I do affect especially.  
The uncouth Bear, so rough and surly,  
Brought nothing here but hurly-burly :  
At heart he hated me, I know :  
So insincere he is, and slow!  
Alone with him, and in the dark,  
I would not, for a thousand mark,  
A journey undertake!—with you  
'Tis quite another thing, Nephew.  
We'll start, so please ye, on our way  
Tomorrow morn, at break of day.—  
Since this proposal you've concurred in"—  
Grimalkin watched to slip a word in :—  
"No, no! this instant let us haste  
Together to the Court! we waste  
The precious time—the moon shines bright  
Upon the moor—a lovely night!—  
Road excellent!"—"But travelling,

Quoth **Reynard**, 's not a pleasant thing  
 By night: at daytime, if we meet  
 A passenger, we pass and greet:  
 By night your travellers are pads:  
 For throat or purse—they 're cutting lads."

**H**em!" said **Malkin**, in the tone  
 Which people use when fain to own  
 They wish the argument at end—  
 "What have you in your pantry, friend?"  
 Inquired the Cat: but **Reynard** shrugged  
 His shoulders—"Is it leveret jugged  
 You're thinking of?—My humble home  
 Small things can boast—I've honeycomb,—  
 It's very sweet"—"I make no doubt—  
 Rejoined the Cat—"I'll do without.  
 Is nothing else within the house?  
 A cockroach, now, or plump fat mouse?—  
 It is the food I'm partial to—  
 But as for honeycomb—pho! whew!"

**Oh!** what!" quoth **Reynard**, "is it mice  
 You're dreaming of?—now say it twice,  
 That I may labour not in doubt!  
 A clergyman lives hereabout  
 Whose tythe-barn is of spacious size:  
 'Twould load a waggon to the skies  
 To fill it with the Messieurs Mus,  
 They are so fat and plenteous:  
 Many's the time and oft he'll say  
 They do devour him night and day."

Quoth 'Dalkin—"ven'son can't be better!  
 Shew me the barn, and I'm your debtor!  
 Of all the sports in venerie  
 There's none to equal this for me!"  
 To him the Fox: "I'll warrant you  
 I shew you sport enough for two:  
 Now that I know your taste aright,  
 My pride shall be to gratify 't."

**T**hus, blindly trusting, 'Dalkin wends  
 His way unto the barn: the friends  
 Steal underneath a wall of mud,  
 Which 'stead of brick and mortar stood.  
 The night before, the Priest had missed  
 A fowl—('t had served the Fox for grist!  
 At break of day, right thro' the wall,  
 He'd made an early morning call!)  
 The Priest's son Martin was the first  
 To find it out;—he sware and curst  
 All thieves,—the scented thief the worst!  
 Then cooled a bit, and, like a Turk,  
 Deliberately he set to work.  
 A cord athwart the hole he slung,  
 And made it tight; the end he hung  
 A foot or so behind, and tied  
 A slip-knot, which he looped up wide,  
 To catch the thief. This Reynard knew,  
 And said to 'Dalkin, "Go you through  
 This hole, and mouse at pleasure: I'll  
 Stay here, to keep look out the while.

Give me a dark night for a freak  
 Like this!—Hark! Nephew, how they squeak!  
 Now in! and don't return until  
 You've played them well, and ta'en your fill.  
 Don't hurry, darling! I can wait:  
 And mind! we must not separate  
 This night; for in the morn we go  
 Betimes unto the Court, you know."

**Q**uoth 'Malkin, "Is it quite safe, nunky?  
 Because I do feel somewhat funky!—  
 I never like to trust a priest!"  
 Quoth Reynard, then—"Now what a beast  
 Were I, to lead a timid man  
 In danger's way!—There's none who can  
 Say this of me! If you're afraid,  
 Let us go back at once, my blade!  
 My wife, at home, will warm us up  
 Some broth of well-picked bones for sup;  
 There's lots of welcome in my house,  
 But, candidly, there's not one mouse!"  
 Grimalkin stayed no further flouting;  
 For, nettled at the Fox's doubting  
 His pluck, he made a vigorous spring  
 In at the hole. The plaguy string  
 Was by the sudden jerk pulled taught;  
 And round his neck Grimalkin caught.  
 "So much for 'Malkin!" Reynard thought.  
 The Cat, nigh choking, strove amain  
 To ease the griping knot;—in vain!  
 The more he struggled, tighter grew

The treacherous string:—and when in two  
 He found he could not snap the twine,  
 Most piteously he 'gan to whine  
 "Help, help, there! **Reynard**! uncle mine!"  
 Which words when **Reynard** listened, he  
 Low whispered, "**Halkin**! body o' me!  
 You sportsmen, while the chase is going,  
 Are all so fond of tally-hoing!  
 Be quiet, pray!—How do you find  
 The ven'son?—fat and to your mind?  
 Now if the Priest's son only knew,  
 He'd send you salt, and sweet sauce too!"  
 This having said, he turned off short,  
 And left the Cat for other sport.

**D**igression's ever out of place,  
 Or easy were the task to trace  
 How much your practices heroic  
 Will nauseate the rigid'st stoic,  
 Unless the repetition be  
 By some new dress or scenery  
 Enhanced, to feed the love of change  
 Infecting men, as dogs the mange.  
 So **Reynard**, measuring by rule  
 Of Epicurus and *that* school,  
 Resolved, refiningly, to do  
 A spicy thing might count for two;  
 With heinousness enough to relish it,  
 And serve for condiment—videlicet:  
 Insult the Wolf, and with 't (O fine!)  
 A mischief on the wife combine.

The pilfering trick was but, for him,  
A constantly recurring whim,—  
A thing he let not out of sight,—  
A craving nature's appetite:—  
Yet since he held that life should be  
Chequered with some variety,  
Howbeit small, by methods ample  
He sought that solace:—for example:  
In swindling, robbery, and murder  
He was alike adept—nay further  
'Par parenthèse,'—'non par vocation,'  
He loved a little fornication;  
The burglar's and the footpad's art  
He practised both: but, in his heart,  
Of all the joys this earth could find  
For one of his elaborate mind,  
To overreach a body stood  
His first, his last, his one great good!



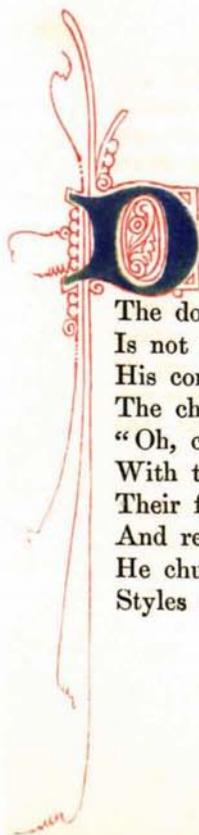
**Reynard the Fox.**

FYTTE III.

### Argument.

**HOWA KEYNARD**, after chousing the Cat, proceedeth shamelessly to abuse Gredall, the Wolf's wife.—Grimalkin, beaten, and otherwise maltreated, finally escapes.—How the King summons a Great Council, or Aittanagemot, and delivers himself of a speech from the throne.—Greybeard, the Badger, offers to take Keynard into custody.—His services accepted. His mission related, and the manner of its accomplishment.—Keynard confesses his sins by the way, and receives absolution for the same.—What transpires as they pass a certain convent, and the wholesome reproof to which the occurrence gives rise. The Travellers at length arrive in sight of the royal Citadel.

Fytte iii.



**D**AME Creedall's dwelling seeks the Fox ;  
Arrived before the gate, he knocks :  
The door is opened, but the Dame  
Is not at home : 't is all the same :  
His compliments he begs, and " might  
The children gratify his sight ?"—  
" Oh, certainly !" and down they come,  
With trumpet tin, and penny drum,  
Their frills and pinafores awry,—  
And redolent of nursery :  
He chucks them underneath the chin ;  
Styles them his " Godsons," with a grin :

He dandles them, and calls them "pets,"  
 And hears them all their alphabets;  
 Plays romps with each, till, out of breath,  
 And of the urchins sick to death,—  
 His brain-pan split with so much jabber,  
 Nigh choked with gingerbread and slabber—  
 He wishes them all dead and buried,  
 Or e'er he'd been by brats so worried!  
 So kissing all his "little wards,"  
 He leaves "Mama" his "best regards:"  
 Then to a roost, hard by, repairs,  
 To take some stray fowl unawares.

**W**hat time the chariot-wheels of Night  
 Caught on their agate tires the light  
 Of purple Day, and morn-star fires  
 Grew pale, comes back the Dame; inquires  
 "What visitors had been?" They tell her  
 How **Reynard** call'd, and said "nice fellow"  
 To this—to that, "sweet-heart," and ha!  
*He* was (he said) their *real* Papa!  
 Enough! away the vixen flew,  
 Straightway her very worst to do  
 Upon the Fox. Soon on his track  
 She came, nor cast about for lack  
 Of choice vernacular effusion,  
 From "marry! come up!" to the conclusion.  
 This o'er, she showed her teeth, and hastened  
 To seize the Fox, and would have fastened  
 On **Reynard's** beard, but he was fain

To duck, as men, on battle-plain,  
 Are wont t' avoid a random shot,  
 And then made off. The Dame would not  
 Outwitted be, but gave him chase.  
 Now mark what followed!

**N**ear that place  
 There stood an ancient Castle-wall,  
 Decayed, and full of gaps withal:  
 Through one of these the Fox made way:  
 The Dame, too hot her course to stay,  
 Rushed after, but the treacherous gap,  
 His refuge, proved, for her, a trap.  
 The hole was small, the Dame was stout,  
 Midway she stuck, half in, half out:  
 She struggled hard to find release,  
 In vain! it only helped t' increase  
 Her bondage! which, when **Reynard** spied,  
 Round doubled he, in circuit wide,  
 And came upon her rear! She cried,  
 "Villain! I'll be revenged on thee!"  
 Quoth **Reynard**, "Madam, we shall see."

**T**he history were past belief  
 Of what she suffered from the thief.  
 At length the Dame got loose, but lo!  
 The spoiler had decamped! E'en so  
 Will we, and leave them both, to tell  
 The mischiefs that the Cat befel.  
 Poor **'Halkin**, in the noose once ta'en,  
 'Gan halloo loud, with might and main.

The noise reached **Martin**, as he napp'd,  
 Who, doubting not the Fox was trapp'd,  
 Soon up and dressed, and struck a light,  
 To wake the household, left and right,  
 With "**Father! Mother! Sue! and Bess!**  
 Get up, I say, and quickly dress!  
 The Fox is in the noose!" They hear;  
 And big and little quick appear.

**T**he Priest *in puris* hurried down—  
 Save cassock on, for dressing-gown:  
 Right earnest, **Martin** went to work,  
 And seized from wall the toasting-fork,  
 On **Malkin** rushed, with furious stride,  
 And thrust and lunged against his hide:  
 He fenced and poked him—one! two! three!  
 And pinked one eye out cleverly!  
 The Priest, with prong, kept up a racket,  
 And dusted well **Grimalkin's** jacket.  
 They all stood round, and told their blows,  
 Like smiths at anchor-forge, in rows:  
 One after t' other, down they fell!  
 Whilst **Martin**, like an Imp of hell,  
 Skipped round, and made the toastfork tell.  
 The stalwart **Sue**, with well-aimed whop,  
 From vigorous arm plied musty mop:  
 Her wrist, in trundling practised, pat on  
**Grimalkin's** pate let fall the baton,  
 Like wand of harlequin! nor less  
 The feats achieved by sister **Bess**:  
 With kitchen-tongs she made a grip

At 'Dalkin's tail, and seized the tip!  
 She tugged at it; she lugged at it:  
 She dreamed the root relaxed a bit!—  
 (The pertinacious tongs tight stick,  
 As erst did Dunstan's pair to Nick)—  
 But no: spite all her pains to dock it,  
 The 'purtnance would not budge from socket.  
 Then 'Dalkin wished he had a pocket  
 To put it in—in vain! so, chafed, he  
 The limb tucked underneath for safety.

**B**ehind, before, the conflict's strife  
 Raged dire—"T was "war unto the knife:"  
 And so it lasted, till the sun  
 Uprising saw the work undone.  
 Then Martin, more than all, sore vext  
 To note their efforts almost next  
 To nothing 'gainst the foe prevail,  
 Set on afresh with tooth and nail:  
 So full of holes he'd pricked the Cat,  
 By dint of fence and foil-play, that  
 His sides like colanders let through  
 The blood, which trickled to his shoe,  
 Till no more flowed. Now seemed the hour  
 Approaching, when in victor's power,  
 'Dalkin should fall! and now the fork,  
 By Martin turned to tomahawk,  
 Sore visited his ears and nose,  
 And worried him with worlds of blows.  
 Crimalkin drooped! Already fated  
 His life he deemed; yet unabated

His courage kept him still from thinking  
 His ninth life on the verge of sinking.  
 One eye still left, did make him more  
 Observant than he was before:  
 For 't is a fact, whilst two have men,  
 They never know the blind side then!

**N**o 'Walkin stood, like wary sentry  
 In watchbox placed to guard the entry;  
 Keeping his telescopic eye  
 At the right focus constantly,  
 He marked, manœuv'ring in his rear,  
 The Priest with brandished prong steal near,—  
 Then, trumpeting a blast of squalls,  
 (Like warriors of his tribe, on walls  
 Who meet, in dire nocturnal fray,  
 To swear and spit till break of day,  
 He springs upon the Foe, and pulls his  
 Bare shanks about! No linsey-woolsies  
 Protect his shins from tooth of Tom-cat!—  
 (The slippered champion rushed to combat  
 Without his greaves!) In madd'ning pain  
 His Reverence rolls upon the plain.  
 The victor o'er his prostrate foe  
 Exults, and works him mickle woe,  
 By ire implacable suggested,  
 And fell revenge,—nor tired, nor rested,  
 Until his paunch, in every part,  
 Shewed cross-bar, like a raspberry tart,  
 From scratch and scar, received in fight,  
 And feline wound-inflicting bite.

For—(pardon, Muse! I needs must tell it)—  
 He 'd made an eunuch of the prelate!  
 “The devil 's in the cat, I swear!  
 (Cried cooky): Goodness gracious!—there!”  
 Whilst Molly shrieked “Ah, wo is me!  
 To see the thing that now I see!”  
 Their sighs and sobs in swooning ended;  
 The Priest was put to bed and tended.

**S**ooner had the foe withdrawn  
 To howl around the Priest forlorn,  
 Than 'Malkin set to work and gnawed  
 In twain the vile offending cord.  
 Quoth he, “This is no place for me:  
 The barn and I part company.”  
 Right nimbly through the hole he sprung,  
 And started off, with panting lung,  
 Along the high road on his way  
 To Court, which, when he reached, 't was day.  
 In accents wild, and touching tone,  
 He made his mortal sufferings known:  
 With tragic emphasis he stated  
 Each woe; and recapitulated  
 The whole, *ab ovo*, then *de novo*—  
 The Badger yawned, and some cried “Oh oh!”  
 Scraped, coughed, and hemm'd, and did all that;  
 And one mewed, monstrous like a cat,  
 “Something too much of this” to find:  
 But 'Malkin, marv'lous to his mind,  
 Had proved by ratiocination  
 The Fox the Devil's own incarnation.

**T**he King, incensed, sware high and low,  
 The Fox, or reason why he'd know,  
 Should answer it. Again attend  
 The summoned peers: they recommend  
 The question to th'assembled nation  
 Should be referred for legislation.  
 To open then the parliament  
 His Majesty in person went;  
 There, in a voice whose angry thunder  
 Nigh split the lieges' ears in sunder,  
**Reynard's** foul deeds in full related,  
 And thus his speech he perorated:  
 "To my ambassadors I hear  
 Disbursements for the current year  
 Are due, on special missions sent  
 At home, as on the Continent.  
**Crimalkin**, **Bruin** eke, pray care for:  
 They've done the state good service, therefore  
 I recommend to the sense of th' House  
 A grant of honey—and a mouse!"  
 At these words both the twain looked pale,  
 And on th'assembly straight turned tail:  
 Declaring politics a nuisance,  
 They paired off, in that phrase's true sense.

**H**is Majesty, when that so far he went,  
 Concluded thus his speech to Parliament:  
 "In **Reynard's** case, what's right, that do!  
 And wisdom ever wait on you!"  
 Th' address was moved by **Owl** of Screech:  
 It was mere echo of the speech.

This done, they all, in fierce debate,  
 On **Reynard's** case thicke congregate.  
 They talked of treason and misprision,  
 And called aloud for a division:  
 Some counselled this, some argued that,  
 When **Greybeard**, taking off his hat,  
 Arose and said: "Sire! gentlemen!  
 Who would not rue the instant when  
 Our ancient customs went for nought?  
 The thing requires no second thought:  
 A liegeman thrice must summoned be,  
 Ere this tribunal pass decree.  
 It matters not, whos'e'er the name—  
**Reynard's** or other's—'t is the same.  
 If on the third he comes not, then  
 To what you say, I'll say Amen!"  
 The King inquired what man there was  
 Who'd put himself in **Reynard's** jaws?  
 What doughty champion would arise  
 His life and limb to jeopardize  
 In vain attempt to bring away  
 The slippery Fox? "I mean to say,  
 There's no one here would undertake it!"

**Yes**, one!"

"Who's he?"

"The same that spake it!"

Cried **Greybeard**: "Sire! your slave doth ask  
 Permission to achieve this task.  
 Be it by open means or secret,  
 I'll bring the Fox within a week yet!"

To him the King: "Success attend  
 Your chivalrous emprise, my friend!  
 Be circumspect: for well we wot,  
 There's ne'er a knave, if **Reynard**'s not."  
 Said **Greybeard**, "I will bring him thence,  
 Or never more shew countenance!"  
 To **Malepart** he hied him straight,  
 And swiftly passed the drawbridge gate:  
 Paused as the portal he did reach,  
 And boldly thus preferred his speech:

**B**ebe ye good den, sweet Uncle, yonder!  
 How ever can it be, I wonder,  
 That one so gifted o'er the rest  
 As you, should take in merry jest  
 The royal mandate? What! alack!  
 Yours is the last year's almanack!  
 And so the day you made mistake in?  
 The King is in a dreadful taking!  
 A truce to all this shilly-shallying!  
 Your enemies in hosts are rallying!  
 I heard them say the King assembled  
 His troops—I heard, I say, and trembled!  
 Intent this fortalice to 'leaguer,  
 For its swift demolition eager,  
 And your whole household's ruin. Come!  
 Why, you can twirl 'em round your thumb!  
 Come, then, along with me! Of course  
 You've many a ready-made resource  
 In your own clever brain, might serve

To shield a man of much less nerve ;  
 Full many a heavier, uglier thump  
 Than this, you 've weathered, like a trump!  
 Let this crook'd corner be once rounded,  
 You'll make 'confusion worse confounded.'  
 The effort made—I know you'll do't—  
 Foil all, and make them fools to boot!"

**R**eynard replied, "Your counsel, Coz,  
 Sounds well! upon my life it does!  
 With you I'll go; beyond all doubt,  
 I'll put the rascals to the rout!  
 The King, I trust, will still accord  
 His ever-gracious, kindly word.  
 The King (God bless him!) oft hath found  
 That frequently had gone aground  
 The vessel of the state, were't not  
 That I cut thro' the gordian knot.  
 Of this my enemies are 'ware;  
 And thus to plot my ruin dare.  
 Could I but see the King once more,  
 I'm confident I could restore  
 Things as they used to be before.  
 The King, it may be, lacks not many  
 Wise men about the Court: but, can he  
 Feel heart and soul with such as those  
 Who see no further than their nose?  
 Besides, he must have more than thought once  
 Upon the very vast importance  
 Of keeping me within his regence,

Nor suffer me to shift allegiance.  
Crown'd heads are never very sorry  
To welcome to their territory  
Distinguished men from neighbouring states :  
And, as for me, the kindly Fates  
Will still direct : besides, I'm not  
Particular in my whereabouts.  
One little incident I'll state :  
A certain nameless potentate,  
Whose own affairs more black and sinister  
Than usual looked, to make me minister  
Strong overtures repeated thrice ;  
But I withstood. 'T was over nice,  
You'll say : but I preferred my King,  
And him and his, to everything.  
In difficulties, 't used to be  
The cry, ' Where's **Reynard** ?' ' Who but he ?'  
'T is **Reynard** only all their knots  
Unravels, and plans counterplots.  
It cannot fall out otherwise,  
But many are the enemies :  
My name hath raised : tho' this I say,  
If they prevail now—' C'en est fait !'  
They can't e'en understand a jest !  
That's it so weighs upon my breast.  
Of solemn asses half a score,  
Who kick, when tickled with a straw !  
Their numbers, not their power, I dread :  
Their bray will so confuse my head !  
Yet, spite of all, I must confess

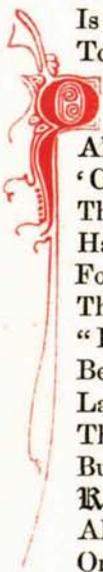
I long for something like redress,  
 And will with you to Court repair,  
 To plead my cause in person there.  
 These cavils, aiming at my life,  
 Deeply distress my anxious wife;  
 Stir up my children's curiosity  
 To know the grounds of animosity.  
 The King's a gentleman, and fit to  
 Impose what gentles may submit to:  
 Should he not take my part, the sure way  
 Is to endure what I can't cure—eh?"

**Quoth Reynard** then unto his spouse  
 "My doxy dear! my vixen! rouse!  
 The hour that parts us draweth nigh:  
 I leave 'neath your maternal eye  
 The children all—  
 And oh! brood watchful as a hen, hard  
 Sitting on eggs, o'er little **Reynard**!  
 My youngest born—my unbreeched boy!  
 The focus of his father's joy!  
 His tiny beard like down doth shew  
 His piccaniny chin below—  
 I hope he'll grow up like his dad!—  
 There's **Killchick**, too; the chubby lad!  
 Whom long o' nights I nursed last year  
 Whilst cutting teeth—watch them, my dear!  
 And let me know, at my returning,  
 How they've behaved, and what been learning.  
 Now buss me!"

One long tender look  
 At wife and bairns, he, lingering, took :  
 And left, just as he was apparelled,  
 At which the dame and he nigh quarrelled.

**H**ieu all over, off they started ;  
 And Reynard thus his thoughts imparted :  
 “Greybeard, my friend and kinsman dear!  
 I ’m haunted by incessant fear—  
 Greybeard! I pray you pay attention!  
 I ’m seized, I say, with apprehension,  
 There ’s none—my foes are all so rife—  
 Would budge a foot to save my life,  
 Or lift their little finger e’en,  
 In my behoof. In short, I mean,  
 My death ’s at hand, or I ’m mistaken!  
 The thought of this doth inly waken  
 My conscience, in a great degree,  
 To make a clean breast on’t—you see.  
 On this account, I would confess  
 My sins, ere further we progress,  
 In case of accident—that ’s all :  
 ’Tis wise to reef before the squall.  
 No priest ’s at hand : so in your ear  
 I ’ll empt my bosom free and clear.  
 My shrivèd sins and I, once parted,  
 ’T will leave me all the lighter-hearted.”  
 Said Greybeard, “Have a care lest you  
 Peril your soul and body too ;  
 For should one little sin remain

Unscheduled, everlasting pain  
 And torment will your portion be!  
 At shrift, reserve 's a dangerous plea!  
 For you, who art grown old and hoary,  
 A perilous long category  
 Of thefts and crimes of every sort  
 Is yours to tell! Let me exhort  
 To full confession, or 't will go for nought."


**D** worth **Keynard** then, "No need to mention  
 All that!—I'm ready—pay attention!  
 'Confiteor tibi, pater et mater,'  
 The Cat by land, the Otter by water,  
 Have both by me been sore maltreated,  
 For this I'd do the penance meted."—  
 The Badger t' interpose thought right:  
 "I do not understand you quite:  
 Begin again; for, Coz, you see  
 Latin's as good as Greek to me.  
 The matter, an thou wilt, make stingo,  
 But English, if you please, the lingo."  
**Keynard** proceeded: "I've inflicted  
 All kinds of evil interdicted  
 On every thing (I think) alive;  
 For all the which I'm come to shrive.  
 The Bear, my kinsman, I betrayed,  
 And of his ills a mockery made:  
 I left him trapped, and then made sheer off:  
 His suff'rings you can't form idea of.  
 The Cat I led to mouse in barn,

And left him hanging in a yarn :  
 His eye knocked out, his carcase slit,  
 And none but me to blame for it.  
 Justly the Cock did me accuse :  
 I stole his brood, by many a ruse ;  
 Big and little, hens and cocks,  
 Were gobbled up by me, the Fox.  
 The King himself hath not escaped :  
 Him frequently I've jackanaped.  
 Likewise the Queen I've used as (said he)  
 No gentleman should use a lady.  
 But most the Wolf I've wronged : necessity  
 Compels particulars to specify.

**R**eynard resumed : it may be now  
 Some six years—say six years—or so,  
 He came to me, at that time very  
 Secluded in a monastery,  
 For health of soul, and begg'd my aid :  
 He would a bell-ringer be made ;  
 It suited him, and nothing else,  
 And straight began to chime the bells.  
 ' Ringing was what he loved.' He wagers  
 A triple peel of true bob-majors,  
 He'll pull a bell with me :—I take it ;  
 Then seize the bell-rope's end, and make it  
 Fast round his legs—to stop his fooling,  
 And let him have his swing at pulling.  
 No sooner were the bells in motion,  
 Than up the town rose, like an ocean,

To hear the chimes so jarred and jangled :  
 Men could not guess what odd new-fangled  
 Crotchets the bells had got put in  
 Their heads, to kick up such a din !  
 The mob run up and down the street,  
 And stop short every one they meet :  
 Till all collect in one dense throng,  
 And to the bell-tower pour along.  
 The Wolf can't hear—all other sound  
 In what he made himself was drowned :  
 Half blind with sweat, with heat nigh melting,  
 The mob close in, and 'gin a-pelting ;  
 They set on him with club and knife,  
 So that he barely 'scaped with life.  
 To me he flies, and bares his sconce,  
 And begs I'll make him monk at once.  
 ' Agreed !' forthwith I clap him down,  
 And singe the hair from off his crown :  
 The knives already had so hacked it,  
 The little left he scarcely lacked it :  
 So what with cut, and kick, and cuff,  
 'T was plain he'd that time had enough !


**S**nce too, I showed him how to tickle  
 Trout-fish, and left him in a pickle.  
 Another time he was by me  
 Conducted to a seminary,  
 Kept by a priest, who loved fat hogs :  
 His chimney, from the iron dogs  
 To midway up (it was his pride)

Was stored with many a bacon side,  
 Hung there to cure: up this I rammed  
 The greedy Wolf, who gorged and crammed  
 Till in the flue his paunch got jammed.  
 He made a mighty great to-do,  
 But could not budge from out the flue:  
 For, entering with his stomach empty,  
 Of glutt'nous growth once never dreamt he!

**W**eanwhile the household all I raised,  
 And left him in his scrape, half crazed.  
 Then ran to find the Priest, and nicked him  
 Just sitting down (like t' other victim)  
 To dine—off capon and a roast—  
 'T had stirred the stomach of a ghost  
 To see the holy man tuck in!  
 I leapt up, like a harlequin,  
 And snatched the capon off his platter.  
 You never heard so loud a clatter  
 As made the astonished Priest! he sprung  
 Right up, and all the while gave tongue.  
 But ere his Reverence could bethink,  
 Down went the table—meat and drink  
 And all! The Parson, in his flurry,  
 Upset the whole! now, hurry-scurry,  
 The serving-men, and women too,  
 Rush in, and lo! drowned in the stew,  
 The Priest they find, and wipe his locks,  
 When all join chorus—'Seize the Fox!  
 Away I ran—they follow after;

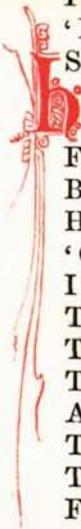
And swear and shout amid their laughter.  
 The Priest loud bawls to find relief:  
 'Was ever such a brazen thief?'  
 Straight for the flue I make my way  
 Where **Æsengrim** in bondage lay:  
 And, finding him fixed there so neat,  
 I drop the capon at his feet—  
 Then leave him.—(Sadly I'm to blame,  
 And will do penance for the same!)

**W**as time I 'scaped; for, soon as I  
 Rush out, they all rush in, full cry!  
 Perceive the capon—as 't was meant—  
 And spy the Wolf incontinent.  
 'A wolf! a wolf!' they cry, 'have at him!  
 If he escape us this time, 'drat him!  
 The joke will then be everybody's:  
 They 'll call us all a pack of noddies!  
 Friend **Æsengrim**, in evil hour,  
 Did fall in that same Parson's power!  
 They kicked him sore, and beat him more,  
 Till he perspired at every pore.  
 They laid it on, and roared the while;  
 The shouts and yells were heard a mile.  
 New foes flocked in, and helped the fray:  
 The Wolf had never in his day  
 Been so bemauled—certes, it would  
 Have done a limner service good  
 To paint on cloth (or I'm mistaken)  
 How **Æsengrim** paid for his bacon!

At length their strength, and eke their wrath,  
 Exhausted both, they drag him forth  
 And souse him in a stagnant pool  
 Of slush, his basted limbs to cool!  
 All night he lay embalmed in mud,  
 Evoking seas of soap and sud,  
 And other sovereign detergents,  
 For ease of mind in his emergence.  
 However he got out, to me  
 Is to this day a mystery!

**W**ell! as your Thebans learned have found,  
 Time's whirligig goes swiftly round,  
 Making things opposite agree:  
 So 't was with *Æsengrim* and me.  
 We met, shook hands, and dined together;  
 Which made us better friends than ever.  
 Anew his troth to me he plighted—  
 But all for self: thereto incited  
 By my ability to cater  
 The meat that made his mouth to water.  
 His project was, that I should find  
 Fat capons flavored to his mind.  
 I told him of a hen-roost handy,  
 With capons stored, all sweet as candy.  
 An hour past midnight to the spot  
 I led him, and contrived a plot.  
 An open casement I perceive,  
 And at it jump, but make believe  
 To wait, for manners: 'After you,'

I say, and *Æsengrim* leaps through.  
'In with you, and a good fat hen  
Select—you'll have your choice of ten.'



**P**alf in he crept, and with his snout  
Fumbled sagaciously about;  
But swore, upon his 'honour bright,'  
He could not nose one, left or right!  
'Gadso!' I cry; 'I quite forgot!  
I've eat up all the foremost lot!  
The rest shan't leave us in the lurch;  
Try up at t' other end o' th' perch!  
The rail whereon he stept was small,  
And thin, and much decayed withal;  
Thinks I, 'How easy it would be  
To do it now!' Then, noiselessly,  
From underneath the frame I draw  
The pin that propp'd it; with a roar,  
Like blunderbuss let off, it rang.  
The Wolf was startled at the bang,  
And losing hold, quick canted off  
The rail, and tumbled in a trough!  
The hinds, around the embers stretched,  
In neighbouring kitchen, woke, and fetched  
A light. Said they, 'Hark! what a crash!  
Something has fallen thro' the sash!  
The cause discovered, in they rush,  
And rain their blows about his plush.  
With cudgels some, and threshing-flails,  
They beat him one wide mass of wales!

His carcase (as I don't forget)  
 Was meshed with stripe-marks like a net.  
 In this wise, many a scurvy trick  
 I played the Wolf,—'t would make you sick  
 Were I th' whole catalogue to run thro':  
 One, would 't were possible to undo!  
 A mischief on the wife inflicted,  
 But which were better not depicted.  
 Cozen, these are my sins,—my own bent  
 Impels to adequate atonement;  
 Full heavy on my soul they weigh:  
 Grant me your absolution, pray!  
 And what the penance fitting, say."

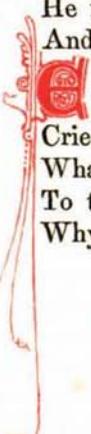
**O**reybeard consid'rately revolved  
 How best such sins might be absolved.  
 At length, a twig he snapped from tree,  
 And said: "Coz! give yourself stripes three  
 With this small twig; thereafter do  
 As furthermore I tell to you.  
 Set down the twig; then over it  
 Jump thrice: and turn about a bit:  
 Then back again, and kneel down low:  
 (Nor sign of hate nor malice, shew)  
 And kiss the rod. This is expedient:  
 It 'tokeneth you are obedient.  
 Behold the penance I impose!  
 And from its due observance flows  
 Forgiveness of all sins on earth,  
 Committed from the hour of birth."

Then **Reynard** cheerfully obeyed,  
 And straight dispatched the penance laid.  
 The Badger, next, the Fox did raise,  
 And said, "My son, now go your ways:  
 Reform your manners; banish hence  
 All ill, with prayer and penitence,—  
 Sure means t' obliterate the past—  
 Obey the law; observe each fast:  
 Keep well the Church's ordinances:  
 Leave fowl: shun all seductive fancies:  
 Molest no more your neighbour's wife:  
 Reflect: amend your reckless life:  
 Theft, murder, wrong of every kind,  
 Abhor, and certain grace you'll find!"  
 Quoth **Reynard**, then, "So be it: I  
 Will walk a new life till I die!"



**W**hen **Reynard** ended his confession,  
 They both resumed the road to Session—  
 The Fox and his Confessor—and  
 As on they journeyed, close at hand  
 Behold a convent doth appear!  
 In all the country far and near  
 Renowned for nuns of pious order,  
 And many a strict religious boarder,  
 Who praised God from morn to night,  
 And practised the things deemed right.  
 In this domain were to be seen  
 All kinds of fowl, gray goose and green,  
 Duck, capon, pigeon, turkey, poult,

With what besides doth feather moult.  
 This **Reynard** knew, without divining;  
 For often, at the sun's declining,  
 When they from roost had, loitering, strayed,  
 Repeatedly he'd visits made.  
 Quoth **Reynard**, as they passed it by,  
 "The right road's through yon nunnery!"  
 (He had the capons in his eye. [ing  
 He marked them 'neath the walls,—some scratch-  
 For grains among the grit; some hatching  
 Their eggs upon a heap of straw.)  
 Then, loitering hindermost, the more  
 His eyes roamed here and there unsated,  
 He felt his inner man elated  
 As forth the gallinaceous broods  
 Walked out for pastime to the woods.  
 One Cock, before th' attendant train  
 Of Hens (inordinately vain!)  
 Slow strutted, with defiant air,  
 As who should say—"Back, fellow, there!"  
 Well-favoured, fat, and young was he;  
 As **Reynard** judged; for suddenly  
 He made a spring right at the dandy,  
 And laid him by the heels quite handy!


**C**! what! have you forgot your vow?"  
 Cried **Greybeard**: "uncle mine, how now?  
 What can have put it in your brain  
 To take to the old trade again?  
 Why make confession, if you meant

Your sins in this way to repent?"  
 Reynard replied, in earnest sort,  
 "Good Coz, I did but *sin in thought*.  
 Pray Heaven the whim to overlook  
 This once! henceforth I'll live by book."

**A**gain they start; and now their way  
 Across a narrow foot-bridge lay:  
 Reynard went last; in furtive glance  
 Oft turned his longing countenance  
 Back on the fowl: he could not off it,  
 No! not e'en had his head paid forfeit!  
 Which, had it been chopped off by bill,  
 Had ta'en the same direction still.  
 It was a mere toss up, e'en now,  
 He'd find his way back yet, somehow.  
 Greybeard the tendency perceived  
 Of Reynard's mind, and said, "I'm grieved  
 To see denoted in your eye  
 The *hidden sin* of gluttony:  
 Heed not the fowl!"—"What speech is this!"  
 Quoth Reynard; "much I take amiss  
 Such impious talk! Now may I choke,  
 If I did other than invoke  
 A Paternoster and a prayer  
 From those same holy ladies there,  
 For all the souls of all the Hens  
 I've slain by dozens and by tens  
 Within that cloister!"

**Answer** none

The Badger offered. Soon they won  
The road just left: but **Reynard** took  
Repeatedly one more last look,  
Till they were out of sight: e'en then  
He turned, unconsciously, his ken.  
The knack he'd got of turning, grew  
So natural, he scarcely knew  
The point of compass they were making,  
Nor felt how much his neck was aching.  
His heart with heaviness opprest  
Betrayed the struggles of his breast,  
For lo! the citadel in sight!  
Whose guardian "genius loci" might  
Prove his good angel, or his evil sprite.



**Keynard the Fox.**

FYTTE IV.

## Argument.

**HOW KEYNARD** and his Nephew arrive at Court. The reception accorded to them.—The Fox is accused on all sides of many and grievous misdeeds.—The defence.—The judgment.—How Keynard is led forth to execution.—His last dying speech and confession, and its marvellous effects upon the assembled hearers, particularly on the King and Queen.—Keynard's prospects brighten.

**Fytte iv.**



**W**HEN it was bruited round the Court  
How **Reynard** was by **Greybeard** brought,  
In flocks and crowds the people stream,  
And strive which should be first to see him.  
Few were there 'mid the gathered throng  
Who had not charges loud and long  
In form preferred—tho' their vicinity  
Disturbed not much his equanimity:  
Felt or feigned, his nonchalance he  
So well displayed, that men to fancy  
Began, they had too harshly judged—  
Too little of allowance grudged

To one so very out of fashion  
 As was the Fox;—in short, compassion  
 Throughout the public bosom 'gan  
 Deep root to strike apace, and ran,  
 As brambles do about green gorse,  
 Pricking the conscience with remorse:  
 Whilst proud and positive his tread,  
 As thro' the throngèd streets they thread:  
 His look, like Kings' sons', shewed *abandon* :  
 There was no man could lay his hand on  
 His breast, and give 't as his conviction  
 'Twas humbug, *impudence*, or fiction !

**I**n sight of all, his thoughts collected,  
 His step towards the throne directed,  
 He made his way ; nor pushed the crowd  
 Aside, but paused for them, and bowed,  
 Conciliatory—deprecating—  
 As tho' he underwent a fêting !  
 Their loathsome contact was defiling—  
 He felt the fetid taint : yet, smiling,—  
 His forehead, smooth as weapon-sheath,  
 Screening the daggered thoughts beneath—  
 From out the mass made exit clean,  
 Then stood before the king, serene,  
 And thus he spake :

“ *Imperial* Sire !

By blood of ancestors whose fire  
 Now rolls within your veins ! and by  
 Your badge of sacred sov'reignty !

A patient hearing I entreat ;  
 Then will await the sentence meet.  
 No liegeman to his lord and seigneur  
 Bides trustier in troth or tenure  
 Than I to you.—Most clear it is  
 I'm compassed round by enemies,  
 In deadly league bound, linked, and banded,  
 Who shrink to meet me even-handed ;  
 Court-access deeming me debarred,  
 They'd rob me of my King's regard  
 Thro' lies and villainies.—Sire! you  
 The power possess of piercing through  
 Appearances: vain their deceit!  
 Your majesty well knows to treat  
 The cunning of these low maligners,  
 And brand the pack, for base designers.  
 Anathemas at me they fling  
 Because I'm stedfast to my King.”—

**I**n wrath the King: “Cease, hypocrite!  
 Your flummery helps you not a whit!  
 With you, as law alone directs,  
 I'll deal—that you be made th' effects  
 Of disobedience to feel—  
 Thou fungus of the commonweal!  
 How oft hast thou not scorned and hooted  
 Th' authorities as constituted?  
 My proclamation how respected?  
 And how my envoys intercepted?—  
 Here stands the Cock: on you he lays

The loss of half (at least) his race!  
 False thief! and darest thou presume  
 About *thy* loyalty to fume?  
 A scurvy jest it is, to hit on;  
 And one my very grooms might spit on.  
 Grimalkin, there, one eye hath lost:  
 His scalp from Bruin's head been forced:  
 No more!—The rest I'll not afflict  
 With these recitals—I convict  
 Thee, wretch! of all!—Upon the tree  
 Thy rebel life shall forfeit be!"

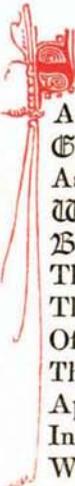
**When Reynard:** "Liege! could I prevent  
 The noble Bruin's accident?  
 Am I to blame for his precipitance?  
 Or answer for his want of diffidence?  
 Indeed I gave him not *carte blanche*  
 To take the honey from the branch,  
 And eat it: tall enough and stout  
 Is he: and built to stand a bout  
 At quarter-staff, or cudgel-play;  
 If he got injured in the fray,  
 Why take the water, for example,  
 Before he 'd had revenge, and ample?  
 Grimalkin, too—what grievance can  
 Be *his* to tell? The little man  
 I welcom'd with my best of fare,  
 And gave him up my easy chair:  
 Certes, he, 'spite of my advice,

Insisted on the Parson's mice:  
 If Martin's welcome was too warm,  
 Why blame *me*, innocent of harm?  
 Whoso will think on these at large  
 At once must 'quit me of all charge.

**D**o what thou wilt—I'm but a straw  
 Before your breath—your word's my law:  
 One thing, at least, is clear as day—  
 My innocence: to your just sway  
 I bow, as to a mighty wave,  
 All powerful to whelm or save:  
 Boiled, burned, beheaded, blinded, hung,  
 My sentence trembles on your tongue:  
 I'm in your hands: 'tis yours, I say,  
 To order—mine is to obey:  
 For you are great and mighty, I  
 Am weak, without authority—  
 Of small account, with influence none—  
 A minim I, to you, a ton!  
 Whate'er your judgment, one thing's plain—  
 Small glory by my death you'll gain;  
 Ignoble your revenge: my trust is,  
 In this affair, on your known justice."

**H**ereon the Ram, as Court official  
 These words (of which the signs initial  
 Were only audible), to spell  
 And mumble 'gan, like muffled bell:

Who hath to plead,  
 Let him proceed,  
 And kiss the book,  
 And this way look,  
 And say the truth, in very sooth,  
 The truth, and nothing but the truth!



Straightway the Wolf, and all his race,  
 And Bruin, with the bandaged face;  
 Grimalkin, too, and many others,  
 As Noppsy, with his little brothers:  
 Wakeful, the Weasel, and Neddy, the Ass,  
 Billy, the He-goat, and Nancy, his lass,  
 The Marten, and the Stoat beside,  
 The Horse, and Ox, and a vast tide  
 Of foresters, in troops, debouch—  
 The Stag, the Hart, on fern that couch—  
 Ape, Rabbit, Wild-Boar, Stork, and Pie,—  
 In fine, the Noachian family!—  
 With Duck, and Goose, and many more,  
 Start up, and, ranged the throne before,  
 Ope wide their mouths.—Yet might you hear  
 The sobs of weeping Chanticleer  
 Loud o'er the rest!—'T would turn my pate  
 The flesh and fowl t' enumerate  
 Who did the plaintive choir begin,  
 Or swell th' accusatory din:  
 Suffice to say, the raging clamour  
 No tap of presidential hammer  
 Could quell: was nothing like it heard,

From Iceland to the Cape de Verd!  
 Each victim with his neighbour vies  
 To paint his case in deepest dyes,  
 And do the Fox, with din, to death:  
 They halted not, nor paused for breath:  
 Loose pranks of **Reynard's** perpetrating  
 Lost nothing in the mode of stating:  
 Did any fail for want of proof,  
 Or, stood appearances aloof,  
 Straightway they rang another chime,  
 And charged him with constructive crime—  
 With any thing, in short, to fasten  
 Guilt on him—burglary—e'en arson!  
 Like counts in an indictment, each meant  
 To render cavil-proof th' impeachment.

**S**ardless the noise continued there,  
 Whilst **Reynard** balanced to a hair  
 Each argument—the *pro* and *con*;  
 Till, finding legs to stand upon,  
 Delib'rately to all replied.  
 Was never in this world so wide  
 Such heaps of charges dire preferred,  
 As all that livelong day were heard  
 From feathered plaintiff, and from furr'd!  
 Yet, when the Fox conspicuous stood  
 On his defence, it did one good  
 To mark how deftly he demolish'd  
 The string of proofs with speech fine polish'd,  
 And plausible excuse: no sinner

E'er left the dock so large a winner,  
Where tongue-bang was the stake! he dosed  
The prosecutors, and exposed  
In phrase so apt, with such deep learning,  
The arguments, by twist and turning,  
That all were seized with admiration,  
And taken captive on th' occasion;  
For never in their lives had they  
Heard half so wondrous a display;  
Nor dreamt the power of moods and tenses  
Could make men doubt their proper senses.

**N**ot long that lasted—soon some few,  
More victimized than others, drew  
On fancy less, and fact the more,  
And felt, then, as they'd felt before.  
The Fox' fine trope and apothegm  
Made transient impress on their phlegm:  
Soon, through their murmurings, the spell  
Was broken—others swiftly fell  
Precisely to their way of thinking—  
In fine, things shifted in a twinkling:  
A host of witnesses were found,  
Highly respectable all round;  
These did demonstrate, ocularly,  
Guilt placed beyond all doubt or parley.

**T**he king made instant preparation  
The case to sum: in expectation  
Th' assembly buzzed a bit, then stopt—

A pin had sounded, had it dropt!  
 This done, aloud for 'elbow room'  
 King Noble called, and eke a plume!  
 To write in black and white his doom.  
 The King himself the sentence spake;  
 Which caused the prisoner to quake:

*Be Keynard, For, to death condemned!*

*His corse from gallows-tree depend!*

*Fiat B. Rey!*

(Signed at the end.)

**S**o no avail his protest loud:  
 His game was up: his pluck was cowed:  
 He trembled, like to one in swound;  
 And thereupon was signed and bound.  
 The criminal secured, they made him  
 Close prisoner, and thence conveyed him  
 To cell condemned—a darksome dungeon—  
 And set his bread and water luncheon.  
 Now **Keynard's** friends, who to the Court  
 In no scant numbers made resort  
 On this occasion—as, the Stoat,  
 Who'd studied law, and learned to quote  
 Cant terms, with **Greybeard** and some few  
 By blood allied,—soon as they knew  
 The sentence of the king, deplored  
 Their kinsman's fate with one accord.  
 “ Was he (they argued seeming rightly)  
 Descending from a stock full knightly,  
 To be thus low humiliated?—

Nay—to a common gallows fated?"  
 'Twas thus their rising discontent  
 In angry murmurings found vent:  
 They group, confer upon a plea,  
 And audience crave *pour prendre congee*.  
 The King in dudgeon took to heart  
 So many nobles should depart:  
 For powerful was **Reynard's** clan,  
 And they 'd resolv'd on 't, to a man.  
 "Truly on tender ground we tread,  
 (The King to those about him said)  
 We 'd best not hurry it; for though  
**Reynard** 's a villain, as we know,  
 Many there are of his connexion  
 I hold in singular affection,  
 And would not willingly excite  
 Their animosity or spite!"

**I**t length, both time and place selected,  
 A lofty gallows was erected;  
 The King and his nobility,  
 And all of high and low degree,  
 Together with the Queen, 't was bruided,  
 Went forth to see him executed:  
 Whilst mob and raff, with jeer and scoff,  
 'Turned out' to see the Fox 'turned off';  
 But chief the softer sex, who came  
 To notice if the 'Cove died game.'  
 The Wolf, and wife, the Cat, and Bear,  
 Took charge of him, and brought him there.

An office was it, every way,  
 In which their whole devotion lay :  
 And, as they guarded him along,  
 They bantered him before the throng :  
 So dense the mob, that, as they passed,  
 They feared to lose their prize at last.

**T**hen loudly 'gan the Wolf to shout  
 To all the bystanders, "Look out!  
 Take heed! lest he escape us yet!"  
 His face he then to **Creedall's** set,  
 And whispered in her ear: "Wife! thou  
 Come help!—and keep a tight hold now!"  
 To **Bruin** next he turned, and said:  
 "If he get off, you're good as dead!  
**Crímalkín** shall the hangman be,  
 He's handier with the rope, than we!  
 And" (winking knowingly the while)  
 "He ties a noose in **Martin's** style!"  
 I'll place the ladder firm, and fix it;  
 For when we're on, I bet he kicks it."  
 Said **Bruin**, "place the ladder right;  
 I'll prop it, like a man of might!"  
**Reynard** the trio then address:  
 "What profiteth my death, at best,  
 To you who should protection give  
 To me, your kinsman, whilst you live,  
 And bear me sympathy in trouble—  
 Not, by indiff'rence, make it double?  
 But worst the Wolf's heart must be aching

To see the part his wife is taking;  
 No more she thinks on days gone by;  
 Else would she screen from infamy  
 Her once dear, now defenceless, lover!  
 Since hap it must, I would 't were over!  
 Ah! well I recollect the time  
 They hanged my father for a crime;  
 He dangled in a twinkling—though  
 The crowd was not so vast below:  
 Shame on ye to procrastinate,  
 Cold-blooded as ye are, my fate!"  
 Cried Bruin: "Hear the scoundrel prating!  
 A likely thing *we*'d keep him waiting!"

**I**ntense was Reynard's agony  
 As drew the awful moment nigh:  
 Yet were his thoughts collected, all,  
 As from his own to others' fall  
 They turned, and busied thus his mind:  
 "Help me, good fortune! now, to find  
 Some masterstroke, some mighty touch  
 Of powerful spell, that I may clutch  
 At life once more, and, victor, rise  
 To trample on my enemies!  
 The King's incensed: the people storm:  
 Two giants leagued against a worm!  
 One chance remains!—could I but get  
 To make a speech, I'd foil them yet!  
 Let them but list to what I'll say,  
 I'll swing not yet this many a day."

Soon thought, soon done: and, halting there,  
He smoothed his front, on which *set fair*  
Seemed written plain as 'twere a dial:  
Then, plying oft his smelling-phial,  
Composed a speech, and thus 't was phrased:

**G**ood people all! be not amazed  
To hear a penitent's last words,  
As on the gallows, bound with cords,  
He stands: you'll grant my prayer, I know:  
Ere from the midst of ye I go!  
One boon I beg, by all that's dear!  
One little trifling boon—'tis here;  
That you will move the King's good grace  
For my reprieve one instant's space,  
Whilst I before ye all confess me,  
And shrive my soul of sins that press me;  
Whereby the world may learn to shun  
The thorns thro' which my feet have run,  
And 'ware the courses that, you see,  
Have brought me to the fatal tree.  
I would not one man's curse; but rather  
By all be mourned as their own father."

**T**he words were scarcely uttered, ere  
The mass were touched by **Reynard's** prayer.  
Said they: "It is a trifling thing;  
To grant it him we'll urge the King."  
No sooner was 't accorded, than  
**Reynard** once more to breathe began,  
And fervently ejaculated

"Thank God! I'm safe!" With mien prostrated,  
 Deep hollow voice, and upcast eye,  
 He groaned, "*Spiritus Domini!*  
 Now help me! as I live, I see  
 None here whom I've not wronged: ah me!  
 All sorts of wickedness were sweet  
 To me, before I left the teat!  
 From early infancy inured  
 To waywardness—in vice matured!  
 The flesh of lambs was my delight!  
 Stray kids I chased from morn to night!  
 Their lamentable cries for me  
 Made most enchanting melody!  
 My lickerous tooth was never sated,  
 After its tasté was titillated  
 With their warm blood, so sweet and tender:  
 Four kidlings and a lambkin slender  
 Made my first meal; but as I grew  
 In size, my gluttony waxed too:  
 Both cocks and hens I made my prey,  
 And geese and ducks I did waylay;  
 And after feasting, what was over  
 I hoarded up in secret cover  
 Of bush, or hid in sand the treasure,  
 To feast my appetite at leisure.


**O**ne dreary winter, pinched for food,  
 The Wolf upon my threshold stood:  
 Spake of our blood relationship,  
 And strove to hide his empty scrip;  
 Whilst, with much eloquence, he shewed

What great advantages accrued  
 From partnerships; and then displayed  
 How mutual profit might be made  
 By clubbing, each, his several ration,  
 To make joint-stock association  
 Of all our booty.—Well-a-way!  
 I rued the bargain from that day!  
 Full sorely was my patience tried;  
 For when the spoil we did divide  
 I never got my share by half:  
 And were it sheep, or ox, or calf,  
 Or pig, or goat, or what beside,  
 Right o'er the carcase he would stride  
 And gobble all—his share and mine!  
 Then ask me 'where I meant to dine?'  
 Nor was this all: for did we hap  
 On something savoury to snap,  
 His wife and seven children straight  
 Came up, and all my portion ate;  
 Nothing but bones for me were left,  
 And these were of the flesh clean reft.  
 Tho' (God be praised, he knew it not!)  
 Great store of wealth and means I'd got  
 In secret place—pearls, stones, and gold,  
 The which ten waggons would not hold"—

**Thereat** the King, with ears erect:  
 "Whence did you all these goods collect?"  
**Reynard** continued: "Why should I  
 Of this make any mystery?"

I'll tell you—they were stolen, all,  
 From those who once conspired your fall,  
 By me, who, now about to shed  
 My blood, whilome did save your head!  
 The theft was mine; the goods belonged  
 To my own father, who had wronged  
 Your Highness; but your servant scented  
 The damnèd plot, and so prevented.  
 I saved my Sov'reign's life that time,  
 Certes!—if that be any crime."

**N**o sooner had the Fox made mention  
 Of plot, and murder, and prevention,  
 Than at the words the Queen, alarmed,  
 Nigh swooned before her fears were calmed  
 For her dear lord and master's life:  
 And when her speech returned, the wife,  
 Triumphant o'er the Queen, prevailed  
 'Gainst etiquette, and loud she railed:  
 Exhibited her teeth and claws,  
 And, opening her majestic jaws,  
 Forthwith she bade them ease the rope;  
 Conjured the Fox, by his last hope  
 Of mercy, and of happiness  
 Hereafter, he would straight confess  
 The whole of what he knew concerning  
 The treason; for her soul was burning  
 With thirst for vengeance!

**Said** the King:

"Let all the multitude form ring!

And from the gallows **Reynard** lift,  
Whilst we this bloody treason sift.  
The matter is of moment clearly!  
Our person it concerneth nearly!"

**R**ight joyous was the Fox to find  
Matters thus managed to his mind.  
They bade him first descend: this done,  
Their Majesties would speak alone  
With **Reynard**, and aside they go,  
More full particulars to know.  
He'd many a lie to help him yet.  
Thought he, "If I but once could get  
The King and Queen upon my side,  
My enemies I'll scatter wide,  
And come off with a clean whole skin:  
But I must lie thro' thick and thin!"  
The King resumed: "My friend (said he)  
Give us the full true history  
Of this affair, and tell the whole,  
That so it weigh not on your soul!"

**Quoth Reynard**: "Sure am I to die,  
And what would't profit me to lie?  
Should I my soul with sins encumber,  
Already more than I can number?  
No! better far the truth I stated,  
E'en though the matters implicated  
My flesh and blood: should I conceal,  
Hell torments I shall surely feel."

**H**e ceased: the King was sore perplexed,  
As one who deals with "questions vexed."  
"An 't were but true?" quoth he. "O sire!  
Believe, this once I am no liar!  
(**Reynard** replied) of what avail  
To damn myself to make a tale?  
Your Highness knows full well my case:  
Grim death hard staring in my face—  
None to entreat, to sigh, to groan—  
Nor worth a rap to call my own,  
Or fee a counsel for the nonce,  
To prove my innocence at once."  
Thereat he shook and trembled so,  
That, at the spectacle of woe,  
The tender-hearted Queen entreated  
Her lord that **Reynard** might be seated,  
And grace accorded him straightway  
To speak whate'er he wished to say.  
The King, acceding, gave the word;  
And **Reynard** then his speech preferred.

**Reynard the Fox.**

FYTTE V.

### Argument.

**KEYNARD** proceedeth in his disclosures.—A mighty plot brought to light.—The penitent's own father accused, and many nobles of the land deeply implicated.—Keynard reveals various particulars concerning hidden treasure, and offers to go in search of it (for the King) and of absolution (for himself).—The tables turned.—A proverb exemplified, "Look to your upper leathers." The Wolf and the Bear are made painfully alibe to its truth.—Grimalkin takes "a stitch in time," and Keynard rejoiceth in his altered fortune.

Pytte v.



**G**IVE ear, O King! that so I may  
Black treason paint as clear as day!"  
Thus **Reynard** spake: now hearken well  
Unto the Fox, and hear him tell  
A tale so fair, so seeming sooth,  
You'd suck it in for soberest truth.  
It mattered not, nor cared he how  
His father, dead and buried now,  
The son dishonoured: not a straw  
It weighed with him, to think how sore  
The Badger—faithful, constant, kind,—  
He hurt in body or in mind:

His only aim to reach his foes,  
 Heedless of who beside got blows:  
 Indeed, the more his friends he wounded,  
 The more like truth his statements sounded!  
 Now listen to the Fox's story!

**H**is father (who is now in glory!)  
 Found out, as once he roamed abroad,  
 King **Emrick's** wondrous treasure-hoard;  
 The which, in secret, safe he stowed.  
 Now, so it was, that this vast load  
 Of wealth so puffed him up with pride,  
 That he at haughty distance wide  
 Looked down on all. Then first it was  
 He won **Grimalkin** to his cause;  
 And forth dispatched him to the glens  
 And forests dense of wild Ardennes,  
 Where **Bruin** dwelt; whom, when he met,  
**Malkin** addressed in phrase well set,  
 Inviting him to Flanders, where,  
 If minded, they would crown him there.

**B**ruin, delighted to perceive  
 The thing he'd often longed to thieve  
 Placed in his grasp, bowed low his snout;  
 And both for Flanderland set out.  
 There dwelt my father; him they sought,  
 And plotted, whilst they soaked his port.  
 A meeting was contrived, thro' him,  
 Where **Greybeard** came, and **Isengrim**:

These set the treason well a-foot,  
And 'Halkin made a party to 't.  
A spot hard by to Ghent was named—  
Ytre—whereat the scheme they framed:  
The plot was hatched at dead of night,  
Not by God's help, but devil's might!  
And chiefly (for it must be told)  
Promoted by my father's gold.  
There each to kill the King took oath,  
And o'er the Wolf's head swore their troth  
To Bruin, who they then proclaimed  
Their King elect. The day was named  
To crown him with the crown of gold  
At Aix, like all the kings of old:  
The treasure was to be applied  
To bribe the King's friends to their side:  
My father was to do his best  
To buy up some, and coax the rest.  
All this one day was told to me—  
That is—imparted privily:  
And thus it happed—as now I think:  
Greybeard, who 'd ta'en a drop more drink  
Than usual, blabb'd it to his wife,  
With strict injunction, on her life,  
To tell no soul on earth, which she  
Promised, and, for security,  
Lest she should blurt it in her sleep,  
The secret gave *my* wife to keep,  
And made her swear by all that's good,  
And in the three Kings' names, she would

Tell it to mortal none; but she,  
 Big with the bursting mystery,  
 Told all to me;—I found, in sooth,  
 The woman spoken had the truth.

**D**istressed was I, beyond all bounds,  
 And sadly stirred within: the sounds  
 Of treachery haunted me all day:  
 I thought how, once, the Frogs did pray  
 To **Jupiter**, a King to send,  
 Their state of anarchy to mend,  
 And put an end to revolution  
 By granting them a constitution.  
**Jove** sent the Stork, who forthwith, seated  
 Upon his throne, the Frogs maltreated:  
 He sat in judgment, morn and night,  
 And decimated them outright.  
 Again they pray to **Jove**—too late!  
 The Stork, their ruler, swayed their fate!"  
 This spake the Fox quite glib—no trace  
 Of hesitation in his face:  
 He stood, and, looking full on all,  
 Continued then:

"**The** thought did fall  
 At once upon my mind, that thus  
 Like fate might reach each one of us:  
 I thought, too, Sire! on you, alas!  
 Who think'st not now—but let that pass!  
 I know him for a rogue, the Bear,  
 Right well: aught good of him who dare

To speak, I say they lie!—that thought  
 It was, that in my mind so wrought:  
 Were he our King at any cost,  
 We all were given up for lost!  
 I knew the King; nor less I knew  
 My duty as a subject true:  
 I pictured him, and, by his side,  
 Seated in loveliness, his bride!  
 I thought, besides, how sad 't would be,  
 The Bear, or any scamp like he,  
 Should be so honour'd;—night and morn  
 Rankled within my breast this thorn:  
 I ponder'd long and seriously  
 How all might yet prevented be—

**B** **hick** to me one thing was clear,  
 And cause of all did plain appear—  
 The treasure! Once if 'twere removed!  
 To plan this, foremost it behoved:  
 The crafty old one, where had he  
 Concealed it? was the mystery—  
 I hunted o'er and o'er again  
 The fields and woods, in snow, and rain,  
 Thro' heat and cold, 'neath sun and moon,  
 I searched, and searched, and searched aboone—  
 At length it happened, on a day,  
 As, tired, upon the ground I lay,  
 Deep sorrowing on the case too plain,  
 That all my labour was in vain,  
 I saw from out a rocky cleft

My father creep, as tho' a theft  
 He'd just committed: down I dropped,  
 Feigning deep sleep: my Father popped  
 His head up, looked around, to see  
 What stirred in that vicinity:  
 He marked me not, thought none was near  
 To spy, so deemed the coast all clear—  
 With sand he strewed the rock's bald face,  
 And stealing softly, left the place.  
 I saw it all,—I marked him, too,  
 Efface the footprints of his shoe  
 From out the sand, with his long tail—  
 (A lesson good I did not fail  
 To practise after my papa—  
 Through life my light and éxemplar!)

**W**hen he was gone, and out of sight,  
 I wondered if the treasure might  
 Beneath the stone lie hid? and straight  
 I set to work, with heart elate,  
 Found out the cave, and inside stood:  
 Then burst upon my eyes a flood  
 Of silver, jewelry, and gold—  
 The sum whereof cannot be told!  
 Not all the heaps that all now here  
 Have ever seen, but would appear  
 As nought in the comparison!  
 I toiled, long after set of sun,  
 Backwards and forwards with the load;  
 No tram was there nor carriage-road:

But then my wife, dame **Ermeline**,  
 Assisted me. This way, in fine,  
 We did transport the treasure all,  
 And lodged it safe.

“**The King's** swift fall  
 Was now resolved: my father buckled  
 Right well to work, and **Bruin** chuckled;  
 Whilst **Isengrim** sent letters forth  
 To stir the factions, south and north;  
 Engaging for—the plot t' enhance—  
 Good pay, with bounty in advance.  
 My father scoured o'er dale and lea  
 The letters to distribute: (he  
 Knew nothing of the treasure's loss;  
 In my opinion, it's a toss  
 E'en now, had all his plans succeeded,  
 And he one halfpenny but needed  
 To buy him bread—he'd starved for lack!  
 He'd ne'er have got a stiver back!)

**Well!** many a league, by night and day,  
 My father toiled his weary way  
 'Twixt Elbe and Rhine, t' enlist recruits:  
 He'd not a sole left to his boots!  
 The Bear and his companions then  
 He sought, and told how many men  
 Had entered service, and recounted  
 The difficulties huge surmounted;  
 How he had divers times been chased  
 By hounds in Saxony, and placed

In peril of his life nigh daily.  
 When they had listened to his tale, he  
 Produced the letters from each friend,  
 Which all Five read unto the end.  
 From **I**sengrim's allies would come  
 Twelve hundred, at the beat of drum,  
 All sharp of tooth, and hard of hide:  
 The Cats, and all the Bears beside,  
 Would run to arms in **B**ruin's cause:  
 The Badgers, and the Beasts with claws,  
 From Saxony, Thuringia,  
 And places that adjacent lay,  
 The signal given, any morning,  
 Would march them at a moment's warning:  
 Month's pay in hand, condition stated,—  
 All which by me was clean frustrated!

**A**s soon as things were thus in train,  
 My father hies him to the plain,  
 Upon his cavern'd horde to gaze bent—  
 When lo! aghast he stood: amazement  
 Seized on him, as, the more he sought,  
 The more he saw that there was nought!  
 His treasure had been stol'n away!  
 Full heavily I rue that day!  
 For, soon as my poor father spoke,  
 And told of this untoward stroke,  
 The other Four in conclave meet,  
 And vote it every way discreet  
 To kill my father, and o'erreach,

By that means, any plan to peach  
 He might have framed. They feared, too, he  
 Himself had thieved the property!  
 Incontinent they hanged him there  
 Upon the spot!—

**The** Bear's affair

From thence no soul presumed to mention—  
 'Twas stump'd by my prompt intervention.  
 Yet mark how poor is my reward!  
 For me, indeed, the case how hard!  
 To see the Bear and Wolf there stand  
 Honour'd, whilst I, on t' other hand,  
 Am prosecuted here!—That I,  
 Who caused my father's penury,  
 And brought about his death, to save  
 My King—not one poor thank should have!  
 Shew me the man, O King! who'd run  
 For you the risks that I have done!"

**The** King, and eke the Queen, I guess,  
 Both longed the treasure to possess.  
 The Fox again they took and tasked:  
 "Speak, Reynard, to the questions asked—  
 Canst truly tell us *where* do lie  
 The silver, gold, and jewelry?"  
 "What good would serve me the disclosure?  
 (Reynard replied, with cool composure)  
 Should I my worldly wealth make over,  
 That all my foes might live in clover,  
 By bounty of the King, who now

Perceives how much my overthrow  
Lies at their hearts? Whilst I'm discarded,  
Their treachery forsooth 's rewarded!"

**N**ay, Reynard! (said the Queen so fair)  
The King, I'm sure, your life will spare;  
Forgive you graciously henceforth,  
And turn on others all his wrath,  
So you but his good bidding do,  
And to my lord make answer true."  
Then said the Fox:

“**E**xalted lady,  
To do your 'hest I'm ever ready!  
And let the King but pass his word  
Full grace and pardon to accord  
For my imputed guilt, I will  
The place reveal whence he may fill  
His coffers with King **Emrick's** gold—  
Cræsus in such vast wealth ne'er rolled!"

**H**ereat the King: “Don't trust him, wife!  
These are but lies to save his life.  
An 'twere of his own tricks and plunder  
He told, I should not then much wonder  
It were the truth!"

**T**he Queen replied,  
In playful privilege's pride:  
“Nay, husband; granted, until now,  
His life hath graceless been, I vow  
This time, I'd trust him. As you see,

To save your Highness' Majesty,  
 He scrupled not to rob his father:  
 Then doubt not, but believe, the rather,  
 His statement true; for well I wot  
 Like him a liar talketh not;  
 Had this been all a fabrication,  
 Persons of quite another station  
 He had accused: this time, I'm sure,  
 Your Majesty may feel secure."

**D**oſt think ſo? (ſaid the King.) If we,  
 Acting on thy advice, could ſee  
 Our way, nor miſchief apprehend,  
 We'd look on **Reynard** as a friend;  
 Of all his crimes, however great,  
 Acquit him, and absolve him ſtraight.  
 Of every insult, all affronts,  
 I'd ſpeak him wholly free at once—  
 Yet, by my diadem! I ſwear  
 If all is falſe that ſeems ſo fair,  
 I'll have his blood, his ſon's and mother's;  
 His aunt's, his ſiſter's, and his brother's—  
 And all his kith-and-kin relations  
 For twenty coming generations  
 Shall puniſh'd be!"

**When Reynard** heard  
 Theſe words, a cordial comfort ſtirr'd  
 His boſom, whiſt his lips did ſay:  
 "Sire! 'twere a ſorry jeſt to play  
 To make appear, in ſpeech, what I

Should fail, in act, to testify,  
How, when, and where, the proof you'll try."

**I**n favour then the King received  
The Fox, whose triumph thus achieved,  
Was freely 'quitted of his own,  
And of his sire's (now dead and gone)  
Misdeeds. Then felt he all his fears  
Departing—like a cloud whose tears  
Are seen in sunbows 'thwart the plain—  
And **Reynard** was himself again!  
Salaaming towards the King, he said:  
"God shield your reverential head!  
Your face let shine once more on me,  
And I will ever thankful be:  
For there is none beneath the sun  
Who could or would such things have done  
As you for me! and none doth live  
To whom the treasure I would give  
More willingly than you, my liege!  
I count it a great privilege  
In your own proper hands to lay  
King **Emrick's** treasure, and to say  
'Tis whole, just as he left it. Now  
Listen whilst I describe well how  
Its whereabouts, without the least  
Reserve, to find.

**Up** tow'rds the east  
Of Flanderland there stretcheth wide  
A wilderness: close at its side

A thicket grows, called **Husterloh** ;  
 (Mark well the name!) hard by doth flow  
 A brook, which men call **Krekelpit**—  
 (Observe the names you rightly hit!).  
 Close by the thicket it doth run:  
 Throughout the long year scarcely one  
 Of living kind is there e'er found—  
 So desolate is all around—  
 Nought e'en the owls and bats to scare!  
 That is the spot! the treasure's there!

**R**emember well the name! for all  
 Depends on accent critical.  
 Yourself the place must go explore—  
 You and the Queen—but mind! no more  
 Take with you! for this reason, see—  
 You can't trust one man's honesty!  
 Now when, my liege, the spot you've found,  
 And ta'en the pathway leading round  
 The thicket in a gentle bend,  
 You'll see before you, straight on end,  
 Two birch-trees—Pray observe them well!  
 Close by a brook-side, in a dell,  
 They stand: up to these birches hie,  
 For there the treasure all doth lie.  
 Search carefully, and you'll discover  
 Some moss, which stirring lightly over,  
 You'll see the cavern that doth hold  
 The silver, jewelry, and gold.  
 Also King **Emrick's** crown is there;

The same which should have crowned the Bear,  
 Had all things happened to his mind.  
 Likewise gold chalices you'll find,  
 And many a silver salver, too,  
 With heaps of turquoise from Peru;—  
 Ah, Sire! when you shall 'light upon  
 The treasure, now become your own,  
 Your royal lungs will crow, elate,  
 'Certes, thy faith and truth are great,  
 Who didst this treasure set apart—  
 God bless thee! whosoe'er thou art.' ”

**U**hen spake the King: “This very day  
 Conduct me thither! for the way  
 I doubt if I shall find alone.—  
 Bruges, Ghent, Aix, Paris, and Cologne,  
 Those countries do I right well know:  
 But **Krekelpit!** and **Husterloh!**  
 The names smack so of gibberish,  
 And hocus-pocus!” Many a ‘pish!’  
 Aside made **Reynard**, ere he said:  
 “My gracious liege, don't be afraid  
 I'm sending you to Jericho,  
 That you should e'en suspect me so!  
 'Tis here, close by, in Flanders! (pother!)  
 The right names are they, and none other!  
 But, to convince you of the fact,  
 My own assertion shall be backed  
 By others here, who can depose  
 That **Krekelpit** near **Husterloh** 's.”

**U**hen summoned he the Hare, who shrunk  
 At **Reynard's** voice, and shook with funk,  
 As criminals when called at last  
 To hear their final sentence passed.  
 But **Reynard** said: "There 's none to harm ye,  
 Friend **Duss**! Come nearer—do n't alarm ye!  
 The King commands ye 'll answer true  
 The question I shall put to you,  
 Upon your oath and fealty. Where—  
 (Heed what you say ere you declare;  
 And let us have no con and pro!)—  
 Where 's **Krekelpit**? where **Husterloh**?"  
 And then the Fox he eyed him so!—  
 The Hare, hysterical: "I know!  
**Krekelpit** lies near **Husterloh**:  
 It is a thicket (name so spelt)  
 Where **They**, the Jew and smasher, dwelt,  
 And coined false money many a year.  
 Oft there have I the hours in fear  
 And trembling passed; thro' frost and rain;  
 By hunger pinched and preyed on; fain  
 To lie perdu from Greyhound's sight,  
 Full many a weary day and night"—

**Sufficeth!** (quoth the Fox): stop there!  
 Retire! back to your place repair  
 Amongst the hinds! My lord hath heard  
 Enough." Then said the King: "His word  
 I'll take. I see, I am to blame  
 For doubting you: tho' sure the name

Did make me fancy something wrong :  
We'll go at once with you along."

**O**f such an honour (**Reynard** bowed,  
And said) I should indeed feel proud—  
Might I your Majesty escort  
Up thither! yet, alas! comport  
It would not with my circumstances,  
As you shall see. 'Mongst other fancies  
That **Isengrim** took into 's head  
When he became a monk, he said  
He never had enough to eat :  
(Altho' they gave him as much meat  
As any other six together!)  
He grumbled so at this, that, whether  
'Twas true or not, sore grieved was I  
At his apparent misery ;  
And never rested till I wrought  
Him free, and out of convent brought.  
Me, sinner, for th' offence so great  
The Pope did excommunicate!—

**T**hou, Sire! alone can help me thro'  
'This strait!—and grant me leave to do  
A thing of easy execution—  
*Scil :* ask the Pope for absolution!  
To Rome forthwith I would repair  
For this—which can be done but there :  
From thence betake me o'er the sea,  
And spend, in acts of piety,

A little year or two's brief space;  
 That, when again before your face  
 I stand, my altered life may prove  
 Deserving of your kingly love.  
 But now, if once the fact got wind,  
 Your Majesty with one so sinned  
 As me, t' hold company were wont,  
 The folk would make a scandal on't,  
 And say: 'what does our lord the King  
 With **Reynard** out a-pilgriming?  
 'Twas but the other day that he  
 Did sentence him to death! now, see!  
 He takes to honour, love, and cherish,  
 Whom Holy Church casts out to perish!"

**H**y! true! (the King replied) there's weight  
 In that: I'll think on what you state:  
 We'll take some other for our guide—  
 Perhaps the Hare.—Let what betide  
 In this respect, you, **Reynard**, pray!  
 Devise the most effectual way  
 T' appease the Pope.—Quick! hie to Rome!  
 Proceed at once! and, hasten home!  
 Forthwith depart! Waste not the time!  
 I speak ye free of every crime!  
 Now go! lest aught divert your bent—  
 And may God prosper your intent!"  
 This having said, the King from high  
 Bade every Animal draw nigh,  
 And cease awhile from conversation.—

The Fox kept by the Queen his station—  
 The others on the grass form ring,  
 Each in his place: whilst thus the King:

**I**ncline your ears, good people, all!  
 Ye Birds and Beasts, both great and small!  
 Barons and Nobles of this land!  
 Behold! within my power doth stand  
 One who this day his life had yielded,  
 But whom his loyalty hath shielded  
 From bitter death.—The Queen and I  
 Both have approved his constancy:  
 Seldom the Queen entreats in vain;  
 To favour he's restored again:  
 And furthermore his faith to bind,  
 I speak him free of every kind  
 Of crime; his property I spare him,  
 And safe in life and limb declare him;  
 Himself, his wife, and household, hence  
 You'll honour; and, on no pretence,  
 Afflict or persecute, whene'er  
 You meet them, day or night, nor bear  
 False accusations any more  
 'Gainst whom I've stretched my sceptre o'er.  
 Another life to lead he's sworn;  
 And will to-morrow, at the dawn,  
 Take knapsack, and away to Rome:  
 Thence, over sea, nor reach his home  
 Till absolution he has got,  
 And wiped from off him every blot."

“Our labour’s vain! what we’ve been doing  
 (Quoth **Halkin** to the Wolf and **Bruin**)  
 All goes for nought! Would we’d been near  
 The blarneying rogue, the whole to hear!  
 If once to favour he’s restored,  
 The very first thing—take my word—  
 He’ll serve all three out! by the rood!  
 My one eye lost, the other’s good  
 As gone already.”—

“**Plain** advice

(Said **Bruin**) now were ’yond all price!”  
 Then **Isengrim**: “How stands the case?—  
 Let us before the King apace!”  
 With mien deject, and countenance  
 Dismayed, the Bear and Wolf advance  
 Before the throne; there, at the feet  
 Of King and Queen, all three repeat  
 Against the Fox their accusation.

**W**hat means the fools’ infatuation!  
 (Exclaimed the King, with rage transported)  
 Must my commandments be thus thwarted!  
 Who’s he dare **Reynard** to accuse?  
 Shall I not honour whom I choose?”  
 And thereupon in fury he  
 Gave order they should fettered be,  
 Ere they could ask the reason why:  
 ’Twas plain the Fox’s history,  
 Which deeply did all implicate,  
 Inspired the King with deadly hate.

**N**ow deftly shifted was the scene  
 By **Reynard**, which for him had been  
 But recently so dark and drear:  
 Certes, he was without compeer  
 In art to turn the tables round,  
 And, in a strait, take vantage ground!  
 Half measures he did aye eschew,  
 But with his purpose went right through:  
 His malice nothing seemed to glut—  
 He asked the King if he might cut  
 A piece of skin from **Bruin's** back,  
 To serve him for a haversack?—  
 A piece foot-square was all he wanted.  
 No sooner was it asked than granted!  
 Then, turning to the Queen, besought  
 Her Majesty, in merry sport,  
 A pair of high-lows at her hands:

**M**adam, (quoth he) to distant lands  
 I go, your pilgrim, forth to wander;  
 Whilst **Isengrim**, the Wolf, there yonder,  
 He stays at home, and to his feet  
 Requires no covering: I entreat  
 Two of the shoes he now hath on,—  
 I pray you urge my prayer upon  
 The King! There's **Creedall**, too, can spare  
 From off her feet another pair;—  
 Socks better do become the fair!"  
 Replied the Queen to **Reynard** straight:  
 If **Isengrim**, and eke his mate,

Refuse, they shall repent it dearly!"  
 "Thank you! (said **Keynard** cavalierly).  
 Four shoes, and sound, I shall possess:  
 And all the good I do, no less  
 To you, my lieges, will be found  
 Than to your servant to redound;  
 For 't is a meritorious deed  
 The wandering pilgrim's way to speed,  
 And freely grant him his behest:  
 In me your praise is manifest."

**T**hey set to work accordingly,  
 And stripped the Wolf's skin from the knee;  
 Whilst both the hind-legs of the dame  
 Were lightened, like her lord's, the same.  
 They were sad spectacles of rue  
 To all but master **Keynard**, who  
 To each foot had an extra shoe;  
 Whilst jauntily his shoulders flout  
 The Bear's hide, belted fur-side out.  
 To **Creedall** turning, then he said:  
 "Good dame, how very wide your tread!  
 They've given me your shoes to wear—  
 Take heed! for if your feet go bare,  
 Comes sternutation and catarrh;  
 Both which to be avoided are.  
 You'll not forget me in your prayers?  
 And that's some comfort for my cares."  
 Intense was **Creedall's** agony:  
 Scarce found she speech to make reply

In feeble tones: "Good Lord! arise  
And 'venge us on his villainies!"  
This while, the Wolf lay howling there,  
In concert with his friend, the Bear,  
Who felt him in no better heart  
Than t' other, as he growled apart.  
On either side foot-bound they lay,  
Whilst Reynard had a thing to say  
To each. One thought his mind much fretted—  
The Cat's escape: *that* he regretted!  
To bolt was 'Halkin well advised,  
Or he too had been victimized.

**Keynard the Fox.**

FYTTE VI.

### Argument.

**HOW KEYNARD**, after performing toilette, seeks the King, and applies for the Church's benediction.— He obtains the same at the hands of Belline, the Kam.—The leave-taking, and its pathetic incidents.— How Keynard sets out, escorted by his particular friends the Kam and the Ware.—The episode of the Ware, briefly, but circumstantially, narrated.—The Kam returns to Court, charged by Keynard with despatches.—The Envoy's arrival, and the manner of his reward; an enactment is passed which hath been ever since faithfully observed, and remaineth in force to this day.

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**N**OW, soon as morn was ushered in,  
To black his shoes, and shave his chin,  
Was Reynard's care: this done, he stayed  
No let, but sought the King, and said:  
"Sire, lo! your servant doth depart  
Forth on his tour; but, ere he start,  
He 'd crave the Church's benediction;  
Without the which, 'tis his conviction,  
No good intent can aught avail."  
And thereupon the King did hail  
Belline, the Ram, "to see to it!"  
(Capellan was he, every whit,

As well as Registrar.)—"What! eh!  
 (Quoth then the Ram) I heard him say  
 How he was 'excommunicate!  
 The Bishop would not cease to rate,  
 Were I to give the Church's blessing  
 To any of her fold transgressing:  
 Besides, the Provost would look blue:  
 There 's Doctor **Rapianus**, too,  
 The Dean—he never would forgive  
 My rashness, long as I might live.  
 It can't be done by hook or crook,  
 Unless your Highness undertook  
 To see me thro' the matter clean,  
 With Bishop, Provost, and with Dean:  
 In that case, I will not demur  
 To bless him, and the risk incur."

**E**nough (the King) all balderdash!  
 I'll none of it! so cease the trash!  
 By hook or crook, I'll have it done!  
 So to 't make up your mind, my son.  
 What 's Bishop, Provost, Dean, to me?  
 Dost hear? he 's bound for th' Holy See  
 For health of soul—wilt thou prevent him?"  
**Belling** then scratched his pate, and bent him  
 To do it: (for he well divined,  
 Needs must, when *Somebody* 's behind!)  
 And spake the blessing, which but little  
 Availed the Fox; for not one tittle  
 Cared he for aught beyond the nonce  
 That shaped his ends, or served his wants.—

A fierce anathema from Hell  
Had done the business just as well!

**T**he blessing given, **Reynard** straight  
Prepared for start immediate.  
The knapsack on his back he clasped,  
And in his hand a staff well grasped;  
Then, turning where the compass pointed  
To Rome, he (like a saint anointed!)  
Stood gazing—whilst the tears found vent,  
And steeped his bosom penitent.  
Of those false tears the reason true  
Was that his victims were so few—  
His sole regret (if felt at all)  
For that he held his victory small,  
Failing some mischief to contrive  
For every Animal alive—  
So many as about the Court  
Were congregated there!—In short,  
He was not half well pleased: albeit  
Well knew he humbly to entreat  
The prayers of all for his soul's health;  
For "prayers to him were more than wealth!"  
To leave them, then, full loth he seemed:  
Yet with such holy zeal he beamed,  
T' accomplish his devout intent,  
That, not to sway him from his bent,  
It seem'd of each th' assiduous care  
From all dissuasion to forbear.—  
At length the King: "I take to heart,  
**Reynard!** that you must hence depart!"

"Nay (quoth the Fox), my liege! Time flies:  
 Whoso on a good errand hies,  
 Should hasten: pray you let me go!"  
 The King replied: "Then be it so!"  
 Thereon forth went the royal word,  
 That all their presence should afford,  
*En masse*, the Pilgrim to escort,  
 And grace his exit from the Court:  
 The Wolf and Bear were not excused;  
 With bodies maimed and limbs contused,  
 Placed hindmost, did the Twain appear,  
 And, lumber-like, brought up the rear.

**H**is last adieux, then, **Reynard** took,  
 And from his feet the dust well shook  
 Of Court and Courtiers, King and Queen.  
 It was a racy sight, I ween,  
 To see him on his errand hastened,  
 With knapsack well to shoulder fastened,  
 And staff in hand, like wand'rer bound  
 For Rome and other holy ground;  
 With which to do he had quite full  
 As much as had the Great Mogul!  
 What mattered that?—The King was fitted  
 With nose of wax, made to be twitted,  
 And crooked, and curled, as **Reynard** listed,  
 Who, o'er and o'er again persisted  
 To blacken **Isegrim** and **Bruin**;  
 Prognosticating utter ruin  
 To King and kingdom, an the Twain  
 At large were suffered to remain.

And now the King and Court take leave  
 Of **Reynard**, which did make him grieve  
 Anew: so loud his wailing cry,  
 All wept for very sympathy.  
 Then to the Hare he turned, and spake,  
 As tho' his bursting heart would break:—

**O** **Lappet!** must we part at last?  
 Would that this bitter hour were past!  
 Grant me yet one request, my friend!—  
 That thou and he—**Belline**—attend  
 My steps a trifle! Long the way;  
 And loth am I to leave ye!—Say,  
 A little farther yet ye 'll come,  
 And speed me tow'rs my desert home?—  
 Both of ye long I've recollected  
 For honest folk, and unaffected;  
 And on your goodness can rely,  
 As on my own, implicitly:  
 On greens and herbs, the whole year round,  
 Ye feed, depasturing the ground:  
 In peace ye still your need so scant,  
 And nibble nice each savoury plant:  
 For flesh and blood no tooth have ye,  
 But couch in blest satiety!"  
 The fools accepted not amiss  
 Cajolery and cant like this!  
 With him the journey they pursue,  
 Till **Halepartus** rose to view:  
 Soon reached it **Reynard** and the two.

**Q**uoth **Reynard**, as, with sudden thought,  
 Before the portal stopping short:  
 "Welline! excuse, my friend! whilst I  
 Just peep in-doors, quite hurriedly—  
 Friend **Duss** may come; his conversation  
 Will soothe my poor wife's tribulation;  
 Whilst I a thing or two in haste  
 Pack up, and just a mouthful taste."  
 The words were uttered, as they stood,  
 In tone of deep solicitude.  
 The Ram replied: "Proceed, my dear!  
 Take **Duss** within: I'll wait you here."  
 They enter: there, upon the ground,  
 The weeping wife and cubs they found:  
 She never dreamt to see him come  
 Again within her widowed home:  
 But when she view'd him now, with staff  
 And knapsack on—almost to laugh  
 'Twixt grief and wonderment, she 'gan,  
 And **Reynard** o'er and o'er to scan  
 Continued; till at length her tongue  
 Found speech, as on his neck she hung:  
 "Tell me, my **Reynard**! jewel! do:  
 How ever didst thou get thee thro'?"

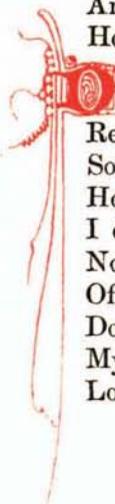
**S**aid he: in prison cast to die,  
 The King conferred my liberty.  
 On pilgrimage o'er sea I sail,  
 Leaving the Bear and Wolf as bail.  
 The King (God shield him, everywhere!)

Hath giv'n into my hands the Hare,  
 To kill and eat, as (said the King)  
 Propitiatory offering!  
 His fate at our discretion lies,  
 And, wife, if thou consent'st, he dies!  
 What sayst thou, duck?"—

**When** Puss did hear  
 These words, he quailed, and cried "Oh dear!"  
 And tried to bolt; but **Reynard** flew  
 Before the door, and banged it to—  
 Then seized his victim by the weasand,  
 With murderous grip; for well he reason'd,  
 The larder, stored when last he went,  
 By this time lacked replenishment.  
 The Hare in agony 'gan shout,  
 "Help! help! **Belline**, there! help! without!  
 The Pilgrim 's at my throat!"—'Twas all  
 He uttered: soon a heavy fall  
 Upon the ground cut short the scene—  
 The Fox had bit his head off clean!

**R**eynard, who for his guest first cared,  
 After his fashion, next prepared  
 To his own person to attend;  
 Whipt out his knife, and paunch'd his friend.  
 This done, to eat him he proceeded;  
 And bade his wife come do as he did.  
 "A nice fat morsel is he, sure!  
 (Quoth **Reynard**) what is left we'll cure.  
 The precious fool! it serves him right!

An awfully long score of spite  
 He run me up: 'tis crossed though, now;  
 And paid with interest, I trow!  
 Come, eat, my Tit! ('twas thus he chaffed her)  
 There's plenty for the children after."  
 The Dame her high delight expresses  
 In thanks, and other prettinesses,  
 To King and Queen by her small lip  
 Pronounced: and to their healths did sip.  
 She wished them "blessed with every good;  
 For sending such delicious food!"  
 Whilst Reynard, first his spouse well treated,  
 Next bade the children all 'be seated!  
 And munch away! there's more at hand—  
 I'll not stop short till all the band  
 Of my defamers I've digested!  
 'Nay!' (prettily the Dame protested)  
 And then besought: "Now tell me, dear!  
 However didst thou 'scape? let's hear!"



**D**eep yawned the Fox: whilst, with a grin, he  
 Replied: "I will relate it, Hinny!  
 Some other time: and you shall hear  
 How King and Queen were humbugged sheer.  
 I do opine their amity's  
 No thicker than the surface ice  
 Of hoar-frosts, which the morning sun  
 Doth melt, and make to water run.  
 My subterfuge will not remain  
 Long undiscovered, and the twain

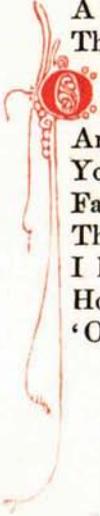
Will scruple not to call me 'Rogue,'  
 And heap on me a catalogue  
 Of epithets opprobrious.  
 The King will make a monstrous fuss  
 About it, when he finds it out:  
 He'll have my head, without a doubt!  
 Once let him catch me, soon or late,  
 I shall be hanged, as sure as fate!—

**W**e must away to Swabia!  
 No living soul doth know us there:—  
 Thither we'll live, as others do—  
 Bake bread, churn butter-milk, and brew:  
 Besides, it is a fertile land:  
 Soil yielding crops—much game at hand—  
 Geese, ducks (both native broods, and foreign)  
 Pigeons, and rabbits by the warren—  
 Eggs, chickens, stores of bacon-fitch;  
 With other dainties fat and rich:  
 Clear water from the springs so sweet;  
 And climate, which to breathe is meat!  
 Then, fish there be of various kinds,  
 Which sea affords, or river finds;  
 And quainter rarities, as *Auca*,  
 (For instance) *Gallus*, *Pauca*:  
 Of fish I'm not so very fond:  
 Swimming or diving in a pond  
 Is not my forte: tho' once, indeed,  
 On salt-fish I was fain to feed,  
 The whilst in orders as a monk—  
 I thought it worse than stinking junk!

**W**ife, trust me, Swabia 's the place  
 To flit to! there no nose can trace  
 Our whereabouts: and, to the end  
 That thou mayst fully comprehend  
 My motive for the step, just list ye  
 How finally the King dismiss'd me  
 From Court.—'Twas thus: I stipulated  
 To shew him where was situated  
 King **Emrick's** treasure-horde, which I  
 Deposited was buried snug, hard by  
 To **Husterloh**—(you don't know it—  
 All 's one for that)—at **Krekelpit**:  
 Thither I sent him, but I doubt it,  
 Though he should spend a year about it,  
 He'll get much good: but, wife! why, zounds!  
 His anger it will know no bounds,  
 When he the whole cheat hath descried!  
 Fancy, how thick I must have lied  
 In order to escape!—From hence,  
 I vow, I swear, on no pretence  
 The King's regard to seek again;  
 Court-favour 's such a weather-vane!  
 Thrice lucky is the wight who draws  
 His head from out the Lion's jaws!"

**W**hen spake the Lady **Ermeline**:  
 "What sayst thou, darling husband mine!  
 Our country quit, and thither hie,  
 Where not one single family  
 We know? Are you not lord and master  
 In your demesne here? over pastor,

And peasant, bear'st unquestion'd sway?  
 And now wouldst hurriedly away—  
 Seeking uncertain good to find  
 In far-off lands? Can nothing bind  
 Your roving mood?—how snug our home!  
 Our fortress strong 'gainst all who come!  
 E'en were the King to 'leaguer you,  
 And block up every avenue,  
 We have so many a sally-port  
 And cul-de-sac, we can't be caught!  
 No thank you!—Then, the souterrains—  
 None know the tortuous turns and lanes  
 Of these, but our two selves—no, no!  
 The castle must be levell'd low  
 Ere us they seize—I'm sure of it!  
 Who cares then?—You? pooh! deuce a bit!  
 But **Reynard**, darling! this I say  
 'Twill grieve me sadly, many a day,  
 To think ye've sworn an oath to make  
 A pilgrimage 'yond sea—I take  
 That more to heart than anything!"—


**S**ur loud the Fox 'gan laugh and sing,  
 And said: "Ne'er fash yourself for that!  
 Your Elephant may prove a gnat!  
 Far better 'tis an oath to break,  
 Than in the air a dance to take!  
 I heard a learned monk once tell  
 How oaths were made evasible:—  
 'Obligatory vows weigh light,'

The father said, and he was right.  
 'Tis plain my oath on this occasion  
 Implied a mental reservation,  
 To *not* observe it.—Odds, my life!  
 I'm quite of your opinion, wife!  
 For twenty oaths I would not budge  
 One inch to Rome; and as to trudge  
 Alone to th' Holy 'City's site—  
 I *rather* think 'that Cock won't fight!  
 Here I'll remain: no place is better:  
 Wife!—for the notion I'm your debtor:  
 And should the King our peace molest,  
 Let him look sharp! he'll find 'twere best  
 He'd minded to let well alone!  
 For all he's fat, and big of bone,  
 I'll fit him with a cap, or ere  
 I've done yet, he won't like to wear!"

**B**elline, his patience nigh outworn,  
 And tired of waiting there till morn,  
 At length gave tongue: "What ho! within!  
 A deuce of a long time you've been,  
 Friend Lappet! come, and let 's be off!"—  
 Thereat the Fox, with hem and cough,  
 And other edifying ways,  
 Appeared, and, wishing 'length of days,'  
 Congeed, politely then began:  
 "Puss greets you, exemplary man!  
 And begs you'll take it not amiss  
 He stays so long; the truth is this,

My wife his step-dame is, and she  
 Won't let him from her company."—  
**Belline** exclaimed: "How very queer!  
 'Twas **Duss's** voice fell on mine ear—  
 'Help, help, **Belline!**' he seemed to shriek—  
 What meant the cry? beseech you speak!"

**N**othing is easier explained:  
 (Said **Reynard**) **Ermeline** was pained  
 To hear me say I must proceed  
 'Yond sea, on pilgrimage: 'Indeed!  
 Quoth she, you don't mean that?'—  
 Then fell into hysterics, flat.—  
 To help her, friendly **Duss** did hasten,  
 And called for water and a basin:  
 'Help, help!' he shouted, loud and shrill,  
 'My dear old dame is taken ill!"  
**Belline** opined: "It may be so—  
 His cry was piercing shrill, I know."  
 "Nay, my good friend! (the Fox replied)  
 Believe me; whatsoe'er betide,  
 I'd suffer any ignominy,  
 Than **Lappet** lost a hair by me!—  
 (**Reynard** continued:) You're aware,  
 With me to promise is to swear,  
 My friend, **Belline?**—to prove this true  
 I'll write, as I am pledged to do,  
 Unto the King, and you shall be  
 The honoured messenger,—d'ye see?—  
 The letter 's of my own inditing,

And is a matchless piece of writing :  
 The Hare is fagged, and scarcely fit  
 For journeying—he'll rest a bit,  
 And gossip with our good mamma,  
 Of weather, news, et cætera :  
 Yourself can crop a hasty meal,  
 Whilst I go superscribe and seal."

**Q**uoth then the Ram: "My friend! I hope  
 The letter 's in an envelope?  
 I have no case to put it in,  
 And nothing rubs like ass's skin."  
 Then **Reynard**: "'Tis on vellum-scrip—  
 Indelible the penmanship!  
 Moreover you shall wear the pack  
 Of Bear's-hide, cut from **Bruin's** back :  
 It 's tough enough, I promise you,  
 To last a trip to Timbuctoo!  
 This, well secured with strap and tag,  
 Will make a splendid letter-bag.  
 Great things may out of this ensue,  
 Be sure!—the King, to honour you,  
 Will grant you audience on the throne—  
 The credit will be all your own!  
 Your fame on every tongue be heard!"—  
 (The Ram believed it, every word!)

**H**is said, straight **Reynard** disappears :  
 And taking **Puss's** head and ears,  
 The first compresses, th' others ties,

Note-fashion, in a world of plies—  
 Close knotted, all, and none to waste—  
 Then labell'd it with 'haste! post haste!  
 This, well secured 'neath wax and tape,  
 And folded in four-corner'd shape,  
 Lay snug enough in Bruin's jacket—  
 A very business-looking packet.

**T**hese cares, so delicate and nice,  
 Were soon despatched, and in a trice  
 Reynard rejoined Belline, his friend,  
 And thus accosted him: "Attend!  
 This knapsack take! the letter 's in it!—  
 And strap it tight: count well each minute  
 Until you reach the Court; and mind!  
 Forbear to pry! Eschew all kind  
 Of curiosity! don't peep  
 Within!—In fact, 't were best to sleep  
 At night with knapsack on: 't will lie  
 Beneath, and keep your shoulders dry.  
 The King, by this means, cannot fail  
 In commendation of the mail;  
 And will reward accordingly.  
 Now, if you 're wise, you 'll profit by  
 Th' occasion, and will tell the King,  
 The packet whilst delivering,  
 The whole conception was your own,  
 And but by me resolved upon  
 At your most earnest instigation:  
 The King's clear sight and penetration  
 Will, at a glance, perceive the merit

So obviously your due, and ferret  
 The matter to the bottom, straight.  
 Depend on 't, long you will not wait,  
 Before the consequence is seen  
 In a most marked result, I ween."

**E**xtrabagant his joy, and great  
 Belline's bewilderment of pate!  
 He frisked and leapt a yard or more,  
 And felt as ne'er he felt before:  
 His frenzy to that acme rose,  
 He caught the Fox, and hugged him close,  
 And pressed him fervently and oft:  
 "Reynard! (he bleated thrilling soft)  
 My gossip dear, and friend! I feel  
 How near your heart my worldly weal  
 Doth at this very moment lie!—  
 I take your counsel thankfully:  
 For, sure, at Court, they underprize  
 My scholarly abilities;  
 But now, they 'll see with half an eye  
 I can be clever when I try!  
 Gramercy! who'd have thought it true—  
 I, reckoned on a par with *you*?  
 An even bet I'd wager fain  
 They rate me cleverer of the twain!  
 But fancy not, I beg, my friend,  
 I shall the twaddling Hare attend—  
 You would not have me wait that snail?"  
 "By no means! that would scarce avail;  
 (Quoth Reynard, and caressed his tail.)

At once start you; the Hare will stay;  
I have a word or two to say  
Of some concernment to us both."  
The Ram then: "Do you school the sloth;  
I'll lose no time.—I'm off! adieu!"  
Reynard rejoined: "God prosper you!"

**B**elline reached Court next day, at noon:  
His quick arrival, bruited soon,  
Was told the King, who hied him down,  
To know what brought the Ram to town?  
But when he saw Belline did wear  
The knapsack furnished by the Bear,  
In wonderment he roared amain:  
"The Oaf hath Reynard's knapsack ta'en!  
Whence comes he? whither bound, good lack!  
That he should bear the Fox's pack?"  
My gracious Lord! (Belline then said)  
From Reynard I'm accredited.  
I bring despatches to your Highness!"—  
He paused: then, with affected shyness,  
Continued:—"I would beg, my Liege,  
To crave a scholar's privilege,  
And state that I it was, in fact,  
Who did originate this act  
On Reynard's part, and helped him thro',  
And offered to convey to you  
In person, what, in every sense,  
Demanded special confidence."  
'T was spoken fair; and sounded pat,

As though 'You'll see! I'm not the flat  
 You take me for!' he'd said; then added:  
 "'T is here, all safely packed and padded!"  
 King Noble pondered for a space;  
 Then said: "Let summoned be apace  
 Our notary, the Beaver! he  
 Deep skilled is in chirography:  
 Let him decipher the despatch!"  
 With him he also bade attach  
 The Cat, whose claws might needful be  
 The packet from the knots to free.  
 They came; and were commanded, straight,  
 Each to his task. In easy state  
 The King; the others tiptoe, wait.

**T**he knapsack opened wide, behold  
 A sight to make one's blood run cold!  
 Poor Lapper's head!—Crimalkin drew  
 It forth, and held it up to view!  
 "'Fore Jove! (he cried) the writer's forte  
 Lies in the hieroglyphic sort!  
 'T is writ in **CAPITALS**, I'm weening,  
 And no mistake about the meaning!"  
 King, Queen, and Court, were struck aghast  
 At an enormity so vast:  
 And when they lower'd from on high  
 The head, with agonizing sigh  
 The King, back-sinking, groaned aloud:  
 "Oh, were it but that villain's shroud!"  
 The royal pair wept tears of gall;

Whilst heavy sadness reign'd o'er all  
 Awhile: at length the King found speech:

**I**n lawful liege to overreach,  
 The villain hath at nothing stayed:  
 Alas! 't is plain I am betrayed!  
 Hoaxed! cozened! and, to crown the whole,  
 Murder 'makes up the muster-roll!"  
 So loud and long his piercing wail,  
 The hardiest there turn'd deadly pale.  
 The Leopard, kinsman to the King,  
 Who sat the nearest of the ring  
 About the throne, and with the nation  
 Stood high in general estimation,  
 Then rose and said: "I see not why  
 This thing should touch your Majesty,  
 As though—what Fate be long preventing!—  
 Your own right heir you were lamenting.  
 Indulge not this o'erwhelming grief!—  
 Tears bring not to the Dead relief!  
 All sorrow, what availeth it  
 When from this shadowy vale we flit?  
 Give o'er this transport, Sire! I pray:  
 Consider what the world will say!  
 You are our lord and master dear;  
 Whom all do honour, love, and fear!"

**I**n deep dejected, mournful tone,  
 The King: "Kinsman! yourself must own,  
 Good reason hath my heart to bleed,

When you reflect upon the deed  
 Of harsh injustice I've been doing  
 On worthy **J**sengrim and Bruin:  
 'Tis *that* with which my heart's opprest!  
 'Tis *that* weighs lead-like on my breast,  
 And tortures me with pangs of shame!  
 Thou know'st how spotless was my name,  
 Till that incarnate scoundrel came,  
 And practised on my wife and me,  
 T' abuse our best Nobility.—

Ah spouse! 'tis thou hast done it all!  
 Thou held'st my better sense in thrall:  
 'Twas thou prevail'dst, when I was firm,  
 And made this viper seem a worm:  
 Woman! hadst thou, in evil hour,  
 Not wagg'd thy tongue, within my power  
 The caitiff had remained!—Now see  
 What flows from she-ascendancy!"

**T**he Leopard then: "Sire! moderate  
 The rancour of your grief so great:  
 This spiteful stroke of Fate untoward  
 Ourselves will cure, or it shall go hard.  
 Let all the victims be appeased—  
**B**elline, the Ram, *imprimis*, seized,  
 And handed to the Wolf and Bear,  
 To die the death which for the Hare  
 The wretch devised: and, vengeance sated,  
 When he shall be decapitated,  
 We'll forth in *posse comitatus*,

And take the Fox, ere he escape us :  
 Without a moment's pause he dies ;—  
 We'll hang him ere he speechifies !  
 For if he but contrive a cough,  
 They'll listen : and he'll get clean off !  
 Let this be done, and all will bide—  
 E'en Bear and Wolf—well satisfied."

**S**on which the King: "O ripe of years !  
 Deep wisdom in thy speech appears.  
 Go thou, and bring within my ken  
 The two much injured gentlemen ;  
 That all may know they are restored  
 To favour, of their King's accord.  
 Send, far and near, the heralds forth,  
 By blast of trump to tell my wrath !  
**Reynard** an outlaw be proclaimed !  
 And on his head a price be named !  
 Our royal will make farther known  
 In every Wapentake, Guild, Town,  
 That **Isengrim** and **Bruin** be  
 Honoured of all men specially !—  
 The Ram shall forfeit pay with life  
 For his black crime !—his child and wife  
 Shall forth be led before his eyes,  
 To die in lingering agonies !"

**P**roceeded then the Leopard, straight,  
 To where—bemoaning their sad fate—  
 The Wolf and Bear in fetters lay.

The heavy bonds he knocked away  
And said: "I bring good tidings—rise!  
(The twain stared long; then rubbed their eyes:)  
The Fox's guile is manifest:  
That ye're the victims, stands confest—  
The King is conscious of the slight  
Put on you both, and offers you  
Ample apologies, as due—  
He gives you, as propitiation,  
The Ram, and all his race, for ration,  
(The reason plainly shall appear  
Hereafter, if you'll lend your ear),  
To strangle, kill, and eat, where'er  
Ye find them, without stint or spare,  
And whether singly or in flocks:—  
Item into your hands the Fox  
Our King doth, of his grace, deliver;  
To hunt and chase, o'er dale, thro' river,  
With fire and sword t' exterminate;  
And, be it early, be it late,  
Him and his house, by night and day,  
To startle, harass, and waylay:  
And this of his prerogative  
The King doth, by his patent, give.  
The grant hath passed, and *sub sigillo*  
Enregistered by Armadillo,  
The Garter-king—that every wight  
May notice your prescriptive right.  
Henceforth, upon the footing stated,  
This matter stands accommodated:

Returns his former self unto  
The King—to your allegiance, you!”

**T**he reconciliation thus  
Accomplished was with little fuss.  
The Leopard, waiting no response,  
(Shrewd diplomate!) withdrew at once.  
Now, from that day to this, no sheep  
Himself secure from Wolf can keep;  
Whose ancient privilege holds good,  
To kill a mutton for his food  
Where'er he list, in fold or field,  
And never will the feud be healed.



### Confabulation.

**K**ing **P**oble hath sent, far and wide, trusty messengers over the land,  
**T**o bid us to Court with all speed, nor let any impediment stand!"

**H**urrah! It's all up with the Fox!—there's some comfort, my hearties, in that!"

**H**e's lost the King's favour at home!" "And all chance of a Cardinal's hat!"

**L**et all this assemblage agree to form one long procession in line,  
**A**nd in the King's ear, one and all, a full chorus of complaints chirrup fine!

**I**mpeachments, indictments, warrantos, and all sorts of suits we'll prefer!"

**W**e'll ding him with law and with logic: nor cease for one instant our stir,  
**T**ill **R**eynard be hung on the gallows; and every man rid of the thief!

**W**hy! has he not stolen our litters?" "Nay! has he not taken, in brief,  
**D**ureggs?"—"our chickens?"—"our cublings?"—"our broods?"—"our relations?"—"and friends?"

**H**ow else, in the name of all righteous! will ever the Rogue make amends?"

**H**ow mind! let us pull well together! and stand by and help one another!

**T**hat so the vile rascal escape not!" "By fair means, or foul, one or other,  
**W**e're sure of him, this time—that's certain! and had we but acted before,  
**I**n like concert, and pitched it well in, we had long ago settled the score!"

**W**e'll hang him though, now that we've got him, for all he's so cunning and sly!

**A**nd make him atone his rascalities, deep howsoever their dye!

**F**or hath not the King himself said it?—the Rogue shall be hung, sans reprieve?"

**T**hat's some satisfaction!" "Alack! yes: but better were less to receive!"

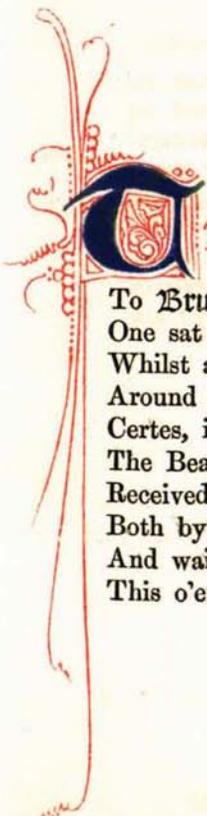
**Keynard the Fox.**

FYTTÉ VII.

### Argument.

**UPON ROULE**, after feasting the Bear and the Wolf, makes a great rebel at Court, at which all the world is present.—The gaieties last for eight days; on the ninth, the Rabbit and the Rook figure conspicuously on the scene; Reynard is again transgressor. The King is excited, as before.—The Badger withdraws privately to seek the Fox.—Their conference.—Family resemblances indicated; parental partiality displayed. Reynard reads his wife a 'curtain lecture,' and prepares for departure to Court once more.

*Fytte vij.*



**A** *THE* swiftly sped: within at least  
A week, King Noble gave a feast  
To Bruin and to Isengrim:  
One sat on either side of him;  
Whilst all the Barons of the land  
Around the board take up their stand:  
Certes, it was a sight to see  
The Bear and Wolf right royally  
Received, and toasted, and (what's best)  
Both by the King in person press'd,  
And waited on by all the rest!  
This o'er, the Queen and ladies all

The King impórtuned for a ball—  
 “They died for it (they said)—they panted”—  
 In other words, they teased:—’t was granted.

**T**he day was fixed, the notice framed,  
 And festival and dance proclaimed:  
 For pomp, the like was never seen  
 Displayed, before or since, I ween.  
 Four-footed notables, and eke  
 Variety of bill and beak,  
 In concourse vast assembled there,  
 To honour both the Wolf and Bear:  
 The hall with pledge and troth resounded;  
 Good fellowship and mirth abounded:  
 Gavots, cotillons, minuets  
 Were danced with partners, and in sets:  
 Whilst lute, harp, bagpipe, and trombone  
 Boomed, might and main, with twang and groan,  
 From roof-tree down to paving-stone.  
 The King had invitations sent  
 To all and sundry; and there went  
 Such numbers, many a luckless wight  
 Was fainting carried out that night.

**A**mid the vast assembly none  
 Was missing—save the Fox alone;  
 ‘Of all things, he disliked a crush—  
 The clown-treads so befoul’d his brush!’  
 Thus that sham pilgrim (losel knave!)  
 Thought fit his quality to save,

The old game still repeating! whiles,  
 At Court, the King his bows and smiles  
 On all around benignly rained,  
 That none might feel himself constrained  
 For lack of grace and condescension.  
 'Twere out of measure hard to mention  
 How fleetly tripp'd the wingèd hours  
 With wit and wine in beauty's bowers:  
 How mirth and music, dance and glee,  
 Brought night about right jollily:—  
 How crested knights, apparelled brave,  
 Surged to and fro, like wave on wave,  
 With plum'd retainers 'mid the throng;  
 Whilst Bards of fame their deeds in song  
 Recounted, with poetic fire,  
 By aid of harp and minstrel-quire—  
 As, from the Dais raised on high,  
 The King looked on with well-pleased eye.

**H**igh days elapsed: how changed the scene!  
 The King, and, by his side, the Queen,  
 With all the courtiers in a ring  
 At table sat—when to the King  
 A little Cony, Bunn by name,  
 With deep dejected aspect came,  
 And sobbing spake:

“**O King!** give ear:

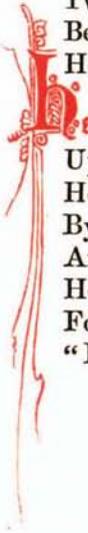
And you, ye magnates sitting here!  
 Let pity from your bosoms flow,  
 And hearken to my tale of wo!

May ne'er befall to other kine  
So horrible a hap as mine!  
At sunrise, early yester-morn,  
I sallied forth; and in the dawn  
Perceived the arch-roguish **Reynard**, waiting  
Before his portal's iron grating,  
On staff of Pilgrim as he leant!  
I marked—and, unmolested, meant  
To pass him, which I thought to dare  
Securely—for he seemed in prayer.  
No sooner had I caught his sight,  
Then down to me he came, full right:  
To greet him friendly, I—whilst he,  
With gesture complimentary,  
As tho' he would embrace, made shew:  
But suddenly, without ado,  
He squared and boxed me, left and right;  
And hit with all his main and might  
Between my ears—it seemed to me  
My head and trunk in twain did flee!  
His claws athwart my loins then gripped;  
But, luckily for me! I slipped  
From out his clutch, and left him there,  
To storm, and rave, and curse, and swear,  
Tho' not before one ear he tore  
Clean off, and holes in places four  
In my skull knocked.—See here my head!  
How thro' the bandage it hath bled!  
My case in your regard, O King!  
I leave; for 'twere a monstrous thing,

Should royal mandates prove a trap  
For Reynard thus his prey to snap !”

**C**arce had he said, when lo! from high,  
**Catwood**, the Rook, plump'd hurriedly!  
His haste betokening fresh disaster:—  
“Most mighty King, and gracious Master!  
(He said) my mournful tidings hear!  
Prepare the hot and scalding tear!—  
’T will break my heart! ah, wel-a-wa!  
That I should live to see this day!  
At early morn, as forth I wended,  
By **Toptwig**, my poor wife, attended,  
There lay—we saw him with our eyes—  
The Fox—just as a carcase lies—  
Stretched on the sod! both eyelids closed:  
His limbs, as tho’ in death, reposed:  
Beyond his teeth, his tongue protruded:  
Of all life’s attributes denuded,  
He lay; a carcase stiff and stark!  
We skimmed right o’er—the corpse to mark;  
I wailed with grief at what I saw;  
And **Toptwig** gave one loud long *caw*!  
We called on him—in vain! Sobbed I  
‘He’s dead!’ She echoed back my sigh,  
‘Alas, poor **Reynard**!’ Whilst she tore  
Her locks, I smote my bosom sore:  
Then **Toptwig** softly crept to see  
If token of vitality  
There yet remained; and popped her head

Inside the jaws, that, gaping, spread  
 Wide open. Horror! in a trice  
 Her head, imprisoned in that vice,  
 Was snapped clean off! 'Oh! villainy!  
 I shrieked aloud; but **Reynard**, he  
 On all his legs leapt up, and sprang,  
 I just escaped his murderous fang,  
 And on a tall elm perched; from thence  
 I witnessed what my harrowed sense  
 Constrained was to see—my wife  
 Torn piecemeal, and deprived of life!  
 He bolted feathers, bones and all;  
 And seemed to fancy her too small  
 By half, to break his morning's fast:  
 He wiped his mouth, and left, at last.  
 When to the spot I made repair,  
 But small remaining trace was there,  
 To mark the ruthless ruin done:—  
 Two feathers and one claw alone!  
 Behold them here, to testify  
 Her lamentable history!"


 ceased: like to a chafing wave,  
 Upheaving, 'gan the King to rave.  
 He swore by many a mighty oath,  
 By marriage-vow, and fealty-troth,  
 And solemn deep asseveration,  
 He'd rouse the forces of the nation  
 For retribution, sure tho' slow.—  
 "Deep grieved am I, ye all must know,

(He cried) that ever I did free  
 That scoundrel from the gallows-tree,  
 And yielded to his lies belief;—  
 Deluded by the specious thief  
 The vile dissembler to uncage,  
 And let him forth on pilgrimage:  
 I'm bearded properly, I trow!  
 Wife! wife! to answer this hast thou!  
 Woman! I suffered thee seduce  
 My better reason—fool! what use  
 Our faculties 'gainst woman's sway?  
 'T is theirs to Eve our wits away!  
 Thank Heaven! I'm not the only son  
 Of earth, since Adam was, undone  
 By that arch-mischief woman! Ay,  
 Some comfort in that thought doth lie!"

**N**ow, what the King was pleased to say  
 Found acceptance every way  
 With **Isengrim** and **Bruin**, who  
 Had doubtless urged the King to do  
 His worst on **Reynard**; but they stood  
 And trembled at the King's fell mood.  
 At length the Queen a word put in;  
 And, pouting prettily, to win  
 Some notice, did protest and vow  
 She liked not such an angry brow—  
 "Besides, (quoth she), I can't approve  
 That you, my Liege, whom I so love,

Should feel yourself thus implicated  
 By what deponents both have stated  
 Concerning **Reynard** :—recollect  
 'Tis none so easy to detect  
 'Twixt what is true, what soothly sounding,  
 When prejudice is so abounding.  
 Were **Reynard** here, 'tis not unlike  
 That many, who are quick to strike  
 Behind his back, would gladly shrink  
 From sight of him. Now, don't you think  
 'Twere well to wait till he returned,  
 And let the matters stand adjourned?

**I** heard the Leopard state one day,  
 ' *Audiat et altera* :'  
 Wrong-doers often plaintiffs are ;  
 The Fox is wise, indeed ; but far  
 From wicked : as for me, I own  
 His ways don't seem to evil prone :  
 Such great abilities expose  
 Their owner to a host of foes :  
 Then, right or wrong, which way soever  
 You view him, he is always clever ;  
 Also his family is good,  
 He comes of very noble blood—  
 Connexions influential, all—  
 Let go the weakest to the wall !  
 Your star, that shines so brightly hued,  
 Must set not in a Barons' feud !  
 Your power in fitting time put forth,

And **Reynard** seize, but not in wrath:  
 A wile will do it better, when  
 Your mind's made up—but wait till then."

**U**theron the Leopard: "Woman's mind  
 Inventive is, as 'tis refined!  
 The wisdom found in female sense  
 Surpasseth all in excellence!  
 Well doth her Majesty advise  
 With **Reynard** to diplomatisè;  
 Too fine he is for force, and far  
 In scruples from particular.  
 The Queen in this hath well exprest  
 The sober views of all the rest."  
 Then **Isegrim**: "The reason why  
 We others should be silent, I,  
 For my part, can't at all perceive:  
 Therefore, Sir Leopard, by your leave  
 I'd crave a word: Were **Reynard** now  
 Before us, face to face, I trow,  
 For all his art and sophistry,  
 I'd make the Rogue *peccavi* cry!  
 Further I do not wish to speak  
 Just now. I'll wait a little week;  
 Rememb'ring well the tale he told  
 Of **Husterloh**, and all its gold;—  
 A bigger lie than which ne'er fell  
 From lips that uttered syllable!  
 I let that other matter be,  
 Which will not long, I flatter me,

On Bruin's hands remain, nor mine,  
 Unsettled—so he'll not decline  
 The invitation when it comes.  
 I promise you no biting thumbs—  
 No word-war, will the pastime be!  
 Of other sort, entirely!  
 Meanwhile, let him go roam at will,  
 And waylay, rob, and murder, still!"

**W**hen thus the King: "For why, I ask,  
 Must it remain our daily task  
 To hear these plaints? Attend ye, all!  
 'T is my command to great and small!  
 In six days meet me on the plain!  
 Bring catapult and battering train!  
 I'll make an end of this complaining,  
 And give the rascal Fox a braining!  
 Arm each, without delay, and come  
 With helm, and habergeon, and drum—  
 With cross-bow, axe, and two-edged sword,  
 Meet me upon the sounding sward!  
 We'll thence to *Malepartus* hie,  
 In fight to conquer or to die.  
 Whomso his falchion well shall wield,  
 I'll dub him Knight upon the field!"

**O**ut shouted all, with one accord,  
 "God and King Noble! be the word!"  
 A hundred blades then gleamed aloft,  
 Whilst hats and caps, by thousands doffed,

From villeins' sconces, high in air  
 Were hurled; and long huzzas declare  
 How heart and soul the commons' zeal  
 Up-rallied for the general weal.  
 No sooner was the plan resolved,  
 And **Reynard** thus in feud involved,  
 Than **Greybeard**, who was all along  
 Prepared for such a dénouement,  
 The fitting moment, anxious, sought,  
 And off he ran, as swift as thought,  
 To **Halepart**, with information  
 Of the attack in preparation.

**H**las! good uncle **Reynard**! Head"  
 (**Greybeard**, in self-communion, said)  
 "Of all our house! they triumph now,  
 Because thou wert not there, to cow  
 Their courage, and the tables turn,  
 As wont, on the vile crew, who burn  
 With savage rancour 'gainst our race!"  
 Thus grieved at heart, he quickened pace,  
 And reached the gate: there **Reynard** spied  
 Before the door, much occupied  
 With two young Doves that from the wood  
 Had ventured sooner than they should.  
 He'd marked them practising to fly,  
 And proved to them the reason why  
 They ne'er could rise from off the heather,  
 With such a cumbrous load of feather;  
 Which then he plucked; and, after that,

Proved also that they were too fat  
 For anything but eating; so  
 He undertook this lesson too.  
**G**reybeard in view, the Fox made haste  
 And eat them up, with none to waste.  
 "Welcome, my nephew! (then he cried),  
 In thee I recognize the pride  
 Of our whole family—but what  
 Can make you look so piping hot?  
 My darling boy! too much you'll lose  
 In flesh, at this rate: what's the news?"

**U**hereat the Badger: "I am come  
 With tidings that will make you glum.  
 The King, and they whom you so hate,  
 Have vowed your goods to confiscate;  
 Your house and race must be uprooted;  
 And you yourself be executed!  
 Against you, all the Court take part,  
 And on the sixth day are to start  
 In mail, with ram and battering-train,  
 This fortress to beleaguer:—vain  
 Resistance all!—the troops are led  
 By Bear and Wolf, and at their head  
 The King himself, armed cap-a-pie,  
 Accompanies. The Wolf is he  
 At bottom of it all! he swore  
 With you he had a rattling score  
 To settle, as had Bruin, too,  
 And said you ambush'd, robb'd, and slew

Wayfarers,—that a greater thief  
 There was not in the world:—in brief,  
 His passion rose to such a pass,  
 The King, to pacify the ass,  
 And stop his mouth's offensive flow,  
 Declared him Generalissimo!  
 Likewise the Rabbit, and the Crow,  
 Were loud in their abuse. Indeed,  
 The peril 's great whereof I rede."

**B**osh! (said the Fox), that's quite enough!  
 A rotten nut 's of better stuff  
 Than all these fellows—Mind you that!  
 I 'd fear a scarecrow's batter'd hat  
 More than them all! Is this the threat  
 Has thrown you into such a sweat?  
 The King can swear as he may choose;  
 I, too, can play at 'whose to lose.'  
 I'll box them, one and all, at words;  
 Turn, any day, their milk to curds;  
 And make them fools. They know it well,  
 Their right hands from their left to tell,  
 Without my help, they don't know how:  
 So, Nephew, we'll dismiss them now,  
 And in to dinner.

**C**ome, and see  
 What charms my larder hath for thee:  
 I 've pigeons fresh and fat—so sweet!  
 We do delight in pigeon-meat;—  
 Nutritious 't is: not prone to rising:

So delicate—so appetising!  
 The little bones make luscious food,—  
 Like sugar-sticks, half milk, half blood.

**My** wife and I do both agree  
 Light feeding is, unquestionably,  
 The wholesomest. So come. She will  
 Delighted be a jug to fill,  
 And drink with you; but it were best,  
 Perhaps, your errand were not press'd  
 On her particular attention:  
 For women are the worst to mention  
 These things before. They're apt to be  
 Frightened most unaccountably  
 At any little trifling cause.  
 I've known the rustling of some straws  
 Throw **Ermeline** in fits, for fright.  
 It is their nature, Sir. To-night  
 We'll none of these hysterics: so  
 I pray you in with me to go,  
 Good gossip! as my honoured guest;  
 As kinsman should, by kinsman press'd.  
 To-morrow we'll to Court, and thou,  
**Greybeard**, wilt back me, as I trow."

**Quoth Greybeard**: "I will stand you by,  
 In person and in property."  
**Reynard** replied: "Thanks, Kinsman mine!  
 I will repay you nine times nine!"  
 With other protestations fine.

Said **Greybeard** : " As for that, you may  
 Betake yourself, on any day,  
 In person there, your cause to plead,  
 Since Queen and Leopard, both, agreed  
 'T were well to hear your own defence,  
 Ere anything of consequence  
 Should be resolved."

"**Ha!** said they so?  
 (Quoth **Reynard**), why then off I'll go!  
 Let me but only have my say,  
 The odds are on me every way."  
 Conversing thus, they entered in,  
 Where graciously Dame **Ermeline**  
 Received the Badger. On the board  
 The best the pantry could afford,  
 Appeared in shape of pigeons. Fast  
 They vanished all; and when the last  
 Was eaten, each did feel as tho'  
 His stomach still had room for two.

**G**reybeard, (said **Reynard**, as they sat  
 Cozing in after-dinner chat),  
 Regard those boys; and tell me, then,  
 Are they not stuff to make me men?  
 In **Killchick**, and young **Reynard**, too,  
 Our patronym will sprout anew.  
 Already can they prowl alone,  
 And know the gristle from the bone.  
 They chase their tails, for practice, round:  
 And pounce at rabbits on the ground.

In water they can dive, and duck,  
 Young goslings underneath to suck.  
 In hunting-craft an eagerness  
 They shew, which I would fain repress,  
 For fear of covered traps and hounds.  
 When they have learn'd these sights and sounds  
 To know, and eke the art to double,  
 They 'll save us both a world of trouble  
 In foraging for spoil, and fill  
 The larder well, with what they kill.  
 They 've learn'd to steal and take a prey  
 In quite mine own peculiar way.  
 Right at the gorge they aim, so neat,  
 And make their new-cut grinders meet  
 Midway. With me this never fails:  
 For, note, the *parties* can't tell tales!"

 **Haide Greybeard:** "'T is a happy state,  
 When sons are prone to emulate  
 Their sires, and prattlers at the knee  
 Shew genius indicatory  
 Of circumvention, and of gaining,—  
 The ripened fruits of watchful training!  
 Our flesh hath aye ensample shewn  
 Of what 's engendered in the bone."  
 Then **Reynard:** "Kinsman, that is true.  
 But sleep, I see, is wooing you.  
 Goodsooth, ye must be tired." This said,  
 Each sought his couch, with clean straw spread,

And hay, sans stint. Greybeard, of trews  
 Devested, curled himself for snooze.  
 But Reynard, all night long, his eyes  
 Closed not; and when the streaky skies  
 Morn ushered in, unto his spouse  
 He turned, and said:

“*Wife*, I must rouse

Our guest, and with him start this day  
 For Court. Now, not a word, I pray,  
 Of opposition or lament;  
 For on this journey I am bent!  
 Should any gossiping dull drone  
 Pay visit here whilst I am gone,  
 Or wish with me to speak a word,  
 Pretend the knocker can’t be heard.  
 Let no one in; be on your guard;  
 And keep a constant watch and ward.”

**H**ereat the Dame: “Ah! Husband, who  
 To this can have persuaded you?  
 Eh, lack! with wonder am I rapt!  
 Forget’st thou what before hath happ’d?”  
 The Fox replied: “’Tis true, indeed,  
 Experience past well do I heed;  
 But then I ’d many a secret foe,  
 And often ’tis the case, you know,  
 The pitcher o’er and o’er doth make  
 Its journey to the well, nor break.  
 Luck ever hath its run—let be!  
 Once more I’ll try the lottery

At Court ; so moderate your fear.  
In five days I'll be back, my dear,  
If nothing hinder." Thus they parted,  
The loving wife nigh broken-hearted.



**Keynard the Fox.**

**FYTTE VIII.**

### Argument.

**HOMER KEYNARD** departs a second time with the Badger to Court.—The Fox indulgeth again in a confession by the way; and remarks freely upon the hierarchy.—Now Jocko, the Baboon, encounters them on the road; what conversation passes.—He proffers his services at Rome, which Keynard thankfully accepts. Keynard and Greybeard arrive at Court.—Keynard proceedeth to defend himself, and challenges his accusers to the proof, in a good set speech.—The Rabbit and the Rook are discomfited, for want of witnesses.

Fytte viij.



**A** **RR** locked in arm, conversing, strode  
Reynard and Greybeard on the road  
Direct for Court. "Good kinsman mine!  
(Quoth Reynard) much do I incline  
To argue issue prosperous,  
Of journey undertaken thus.  
Howbeit, sure, 'tis good to be  
Ready against contingency  
Of every kind; and, as of yore,  
With conscience settled we the score,  
(As thou wilt well remember), so  
At this time I would likewise do.

Great efficacy I derived  
 Aforetime, when with thee I shrived;  
 And of my since-committed sins  
 I'd be absolved;—so here begins;  
 The catalogue is none so small,  
 Tho' passing brief the interval.

**T**he skin I cut from Bruin's back,  
 And of the Bear's hide made a pack;  
 The shoes from Greedall's feet I rended.  
 From Isengrim (whom I pretended  
 Wore boots) I caused to be slit  
 His skin, which was for high-lows fit:  
 ('They'd save my feet *en route* to Rome.')

They made me good galoshes home!  
 The King himself was duped by me,  
 Deceived, and done, most arrantly;  
 With treasure-trove I dinged his brain:  
 I doubt if he'll be right again,  
 By harping on it overmuch:  
 But not a stiver will he touch.

**W**hen, let me see,—I did inveigle  
 The Hare, and snapped him like a Beagle.  
 His head I wrapped, in merry sport,  
 And sent it by the Ram to Court,  
 Which got *him* in a mess. The Cony  
 I made about the ears feel funny;  
 I'd killed him with a smarter cuff,  
 But did not hit him hard enough;

So he escaped, to my vexation.  
 One yet remains for declaration :—  
 The Rook me righteously accused:  
 I dined upon his wife, then used  
 Her claws for toothpicks. These are all  
 Of modern date, though several,  
 Now I bethink me, were omitted  
 Last time; and sadly have they twitted  
 My conscience, which no longer can  
 Live underneath its own just ban.  
 The Wolf hath, many a score of times,  
 The causer been of grievous crimes  
 By me committed, which, had he  
 Been dead, had ne'er been done by me.

**B**ere's one. It fell, as cheek by jowl  
 We strolled, we saw a Mare and Foal.  
 The Foal, it seemed, was rising four—  
 Not years, but months.—The Wolf was sore  
 Perplexed for hunger, and he prayed  
 I'd ask—quite in the way of trade—  
 The mother, if disposed at all,  
 Her Foal to sell, and what withal  
 The price to pay? Thinks I, here's sport!  
 Then to the Mare, in earnest sort,  
 Approaching, 'Madam Mare,' quoth I,  
 'That little Foal's your property,  
 I apprehend—wilt sell the Tit?'  
 She looked me in the face a bit,  
 Then answered, keeping whiles aloof:

'Yes, sure; the price is on my hoof.  
 Read it, if you're on business bent.'  
 Then lifted she, incontinent,  
 Her hinder leg, to let me see;  
 But I declined, with courtesy;  
 Protested that my sight was bad,  
 And aye was weakly, from a lad;  
 I said, the Wolf desired to treat:—  
 Quoth she, 'tis written plain and neat:  
 Bid *him* peruse! To help the whim  
 I turned, and said to *Æsengrim*:  
 'All's right! The Foal's for sale! the price  
 Stands writ in numerals, quite nice,  
 Upon her hoof! I cannot read;  
 Which often vexes me, indeed.'


**When *Æsengrim***: 'No sort of writ  
 But I'm a dab at reading it!  
 Greek, Roman, Dutch, Sanscrit, by rule  
 I learned in Oxford's classic school:  
 A class-man am I!—*Ego sum!*  
 (That's Latin!) *Discip: Mat: Lit: Hum!*  
 And with a Freshman, once, from Eton,  
 Disputed long, and was not beaten!  
 I took my A. S. S. degree;  
 And now stand well for Q. E. D.  
 To me all print is just the same:  
 I read it easy as my name.'  
 And thereupon straight to the Mare  
 He strode, and, with a business air,

Asked 'If the figure he might know?'  
 Quoth she, 'With pleasure!—'tis below.'  
 Then lifted leisurely her heel,  
 New shod, with nails; whilst he, to feel  
 For what was written 'gan to pry—  
 The Mare, then, suddenly let fly  
 Her hoof; whose swift unerring blows  
 Told on his pate!—A bloody nose  
 And two black eyes attested well,  
 In characters indelible,  
 The nature of the type struck off—  
 There lay the Wolf, of both the scoff!  
 Away they cantered at a bound,  
 And left him, howling like a hound.


**I** waited till the fool came to:  
 Then, walking up, I asked 'Is't you?  
 How did you manage 'bout the Foal?  
 You surely did not gorge him whole?  
 Deciphered you the writing? Say—  
 And what the characters, I pray?'  
 'Ah, Reynard! 'tis (quoth he) no jest!  
 Was never wight so sorely press'd!  
 A stone would turn to pity! Oh!  
 The long legged devil kicked me so!  
 With iron were her hoofs provided—  
 The deuce a bit of writing I did  
 Perceive: but, of the nails, see here!  
 The proof impression is too clear!  
 In this wise was the Wolf nigh killed:

And all fell out, just as I willed.  
 What retribution I may owe  
 I say not, but 'tis good, I know,  
 Of every sin to make confession,  
 And shrift procure for each transgression.  
 I earnestly desire to be  
 Absolved from all iniquity:  
 And cheerfully will I endeavour  
 Tow'rds good, and sin eschew for ever."

**Q**uoth **Greybeard**: "Great your sins, indeed!  
 And great the medicinal need  
 For your soul's health! The wise man wrote  
 'No bane's without its antidote:'  
 As wrong cries out for retribution,  
 So sin doth thirst for absolution.  
 'Tis thus with you: but much I fear  
 My help will not avail to clear  
 That matter touching **Lapper's** head!—  
 No shrift will call to life the dead!"—  
 "Tut! tut! (quoth **Reynard**), what the King  
 May think of that, 's a trifling thing.  
 'T were hard on us poor country-folk,  
 Who love th' enjoyment of a joke,  
 To make our little world a cloister,  
 And sentence each **Ralph-Royster-Doyster**  
 His beads to tell, and say his prayers,  
 Lest he be trapped in Satan's snares!  
 And as for **Lapper**—see you, Coz!  
 The mischief his own making was.

So fat and sleek he frisked about,  
 And leered so saucily (the lout!)  
 My stomach could not bide the sight!

**B**elline and I were never right!—  
 The sin is mine, and theirs the sorrow:  
 An thou shouldst argue till tomorrow,  
 It comes to this:—The fact surpasses  
 Belief, how such a pair of asses  
 Had lived so long!—I think it right  
 To add, just then to be polite  
 Was farthest from my thoughts; which they  
 Might have perceived, and gone their way.—  
 I know we should our neighbours love:  
 I know, too, (for the truth doth move  
 My lips to speak) I've not done this;  
 Therefore I've acted much amiss:  
 But let that pass!"—

**And** then began  
**Reynard** a world of things to scan;  
 Disserting much, from King to Clown,  
 The vices of the Court and Town.  
 But chief the Hierarchy lent  
 The staple to his argument:  
 And many a sad, severe reflection,  
 With sign of much sincere affection,  
 On holy men and things he uttered:  
 Like bitter bread, with honey buttered,  
 It smacked; and so the Badger thought,  
 As on his mind the sarcasm wrought.

The fond regretful tone he used  
 In his anathemas, infused  
 A spicy flavour over all—  
 The sugared spoon that stirred the gall!

**T**he King by rapine lived, he said,  
 As others did: and on this head  
 The difference, he asserted flat,  
 Was just no more than 'round the hat!  
 What's virtue in the one, was vice  
 In t'other, by distinction nice.  
 But were it not for monks and priests,  
 He said, who rioted at feasts,  
 And in excess of every sort  
 Grew fat, and frolicksome for sport,  
 And in their wantonness of heart  
 Such bad example did impart,  
 That others of less holy station  
 Could not escape contamination—  
*He* never had to sin inclined,  
 Nor steeped in wickedness his mind:  
 To carnal thoughts had ne'er descended;  
 Nor had his feet once thither tended  
 Where Mother Church forbad to stray,  
 Had not her Sons first led the way.

**Yes, Greybeard!** Just look at the clergy!  
 Good mixed with bad!—and yet, e'er heard ye  
 Of any greater sins to others  
 Ascribed, than to our surpliced brothers?  
 Or special excellence allied

With black cloth, or a neck white-tied ?  
The *Rule of Life* in them should be  
Mirrored, as in a glass you see;  
But now, 't is nothing but *the Rule  
Of Faith!* and every man's a fool  
Who judges for himself the food  
That nourisheth his spiritual blood!  
The Tables of the Law itself  
They make appear like fractured delf;  
With paint and plaister, puttied o'er,  
From time to time, by which the more  
Illegible the letters are:  
That what was plain and popular,  
Now puzzles men to tell what writ  
The tongue is, ere they construe it!  
For, since religious light can't be  
Too dim for eyes of laity,  
And Gospel rays that shine by proxy,  
Alone can count for orthodoxy;  
The Church's loving care hath been  
In this displayed:—to hold a screen  
Of dogmas dense, by help of which  
The sight is trained to focus-pitch,  
And all that 'Writing on the wall'  
Perused thro' lens canonical—  
(As men at Sol's eclipses do  
Smoke glasses to survey him thro'!)  
The letters are colossal, and  
The meaning hard to understand,  
'T is true: but Light doth never fail"—

Thereat the Badger switched his tail,  
 And pursed his mouth, in disapproval  
 Of doctrines dangerous as novel.—  
 In converse thus, they scarcely 'spy  
 The royal residence, now nigh:  
**R**eynard an instant felt befustered—  
 Recovering himself, he mustered  
 Courage to cool from brief calenture,  
 Then forward did resolve to venture.

**N**ow Jocko, the Baboon, for Rome  
 On pilgrimage had left his home  
 That morn, in penance for some sin:  
 With him the Travellers fell in.  
 “Gossip! (quoth **J**ocko), is it you?  
 Whatever canst *thou* have to do  
 At Court?”—The Fox to him replied:  
 “My enemies have multiplied  
 Of late, to such a pass, and all  
 Are so inveterate for my fall,  
 That 'gainst this sea of troubles I  
 Must arm, and combat manfully.  
 You'd scarcely think it—there's the Rook,  
 And Rabbit, both have kissed the book!  
 The brazen rascals are suborned  
 T' accuse me falsely, as I'm warned;  
 And all for what?—Why, one hath lost  
 His wife! a blackguard brawl hath cost  
 The other half his ear! and lo!  
 They make *me* author of each woe!

With perjury I'll charge them both,  
 And swear it on them, oath for oath!  
 But cause there is for worse vexation—  
 The Church's excommunication  
 Sits heavily upon my soul!"—

**H**e paused; appearing to controul  
 His anguish: **Jocko**, ta'en aback,  
 Pulled from his pouch a nut to crack:  
 Whilst **Greybeard** thrice his bosom struck,  
 Said prayers, and crossed himself for luck.—  
**Reynard** resumed: "My friend! in me  
 Exemplified instructively  
 Behold an instance of the way  
 Our good deeds snare us! Day by day  
 Did **Isengrim's** distressful cry  
 Implore my aid to help him fly  
 Out of that cursed monastery,  
 In which he said he was so very  
 Disconsolate—they starved him so—  
 That I, quite melted by his woe,  
 Devised for his escape a plan:  
 For this the Church pronounced her ban.  
 No sooner was he out, than he  
 Treated me most ungratefully:  
 And now, of all my enemies  
 The fiercest he! In fact, his lies  
 Are such as I perforce must meet;  
 And turn from Rome my wandering feet."

**Quoth Jocko**: "Make yourself quite easy:  
 To Rome I'm going straight: so please ye,  
 I will his Holiness possess  
 Of all the facts: and, you may guess,  
 I'll put him in a nice quandary!  
 I am the Bishop's Secretary—  
 And thro' the Cardinals contrive,  
 Sometimes, a coach and six to drive.  
 The Pope is easier, by far,  
 To manage than the others are;  
 I know a thing or two at Rome!  
 And how to push, there, matters home—  
 My Uncle **Simoní**'s the man,  
 Who, people, that afford it can,  
 Is ever ready to assist.—

**Besides**, there's Doctor **Pluralist**,  
 And **Cobetall**, the Canon, both  
 Good friends of mine, and nothing loth  
 To lighten my exchequer, for  
 At Rome, I on our Banker draw,  
 And when that's gone I send for more.  
 The money makes me welcome there,  
 Where all make scramble for a share.  
 If you've an ugly case, untie  
 The money bag, and straight let fly  
 At every man in office, who  
 Will stoop—bow low—pick up—let thro'!  
 The Churchmen are the lads for pelf!  
 Who comes without, may serve himself!

Take money, if you'd sue at Rome:  
Without it, better stay at home.

**P**ray Gossip, trust this thing to me:  
Go you to Court, contentedly:  
My wife you'll see, and she stands high  
In favour there, with royalty:  
The Queen doth count on her advice  
In all things. To her, in a trice,  
And state your case: she will be proud  
To shew her influence to the crowd:  
Should that not prosper, I will do  
My best at Rome to get you thro'."  
Quoth **Reynard**: "Well ye know to give  
True consolation: if I live  
I'll not forget you." Thus they parted;  
And each upon his errand started.

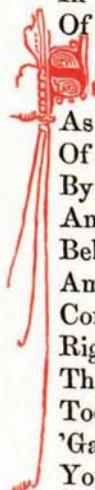
**A**t length, arrived behold the twain!  
The presence of the Throne to gain  
Their foremost care. The Court had met,—  
But not one other sound, as yet,  
Was heard, save imprecations loud  
On **Reynard**, through that motley crowd.  
By all, on every side assailed,  
His courage for an instant quailed:  
The mob pressed in, and seemed to vie  
Who first should strike:—but in his eye  
There housed so fine a subtilty,  
That none dared venture! This he saw,

And felt his pluck return once more.  
 Right thro' the Barons, up he passed—  
 The Badger by his side—at last,  
 Before the King they stood; when, soft,  
 With hand to mouth, as tho' he coughed,  
 The Badger whispered:

“**Now**'s the time,  
 Your heart with boldness well to prime.  
 No skulking! that will scarce avail:  
 Pluck up! look saucy! flaunt the tail!”  
 Then **Reynard**, in the Badger's ear:  
 “Thanks for th' encouragement, my dear!  
 Your words have cheered me: when I'm thro',  
 I'll not forget this trait in you.”  
 He glanced around him—left and right,  
 On every side, there met his sight  
 Some old ally, or blood-relation,  
 Now banded in confederation  
 With direst foes: but few remained,  
 On whom he any hold retained  
 For sympathy or help, and these  
 His presence seemed to curdle—freeze!  
 Before the King, on bended knee,  
 He paused—then spake unfalteringly:

**May** He to whom all things are known,  
 From yonder empyrean Throne  
 Look down, benignly, from on high,  
 And bless this goodly company!  
 His wisdom be your constant guide!

His justice in your courts preside!  
 And temper all your counsels! for,  
 In this world, do the wicked roar,  
 Like raging **WOLVES**, and tear their lungs  
 To blurt forth, with blaspheming tongues,  
 Lies foul and hideous! Would to Heaven  
 Our hearts were on our foreheads graven!  
 That every man might read, and you,  
 Sire! see with whom you had to do.  
 Then might my Lord vouchsafe, in grace,  
 Perusal of his servant's face,  
 In which the clear crystalline hue  
 Of truth would glisten, pure as dew!

ee the alternative!—I stand  
 As one impeached—seared with the brand  
 Of calumny—by lies astounded—  
 By purjured panders pinned and hounded,  
 And all the mongrels vile, that bark  
 Behind my back; and, in the dark,  
 Am by assassins stabbed! yet I  
 Confront them still, and give the lie  
 Right in their teeth! for well I know  
 Their slanders 'yond your ears ne'er go.  
 Too wise ye are, to give belief,  
 'Gainst me, to things that fit a thief!  
 Your kingly mind can never swerve  
 Aside, nor from its wonted nerve  
 Relax one instant in the route  
 That honour, truth, and law point out.

No secret foe shall aught avail  
 To dart his fang, or fix his nail!  
 With me detraction's nought to do,  
 Whilst justice sits enthroned in you!"  
 No sooner had th' assembly heard  
 The speech by **Reynard** thus preferred,  
 Than simultaneously a rush—  
 Mid cries of 'silence, there!' and 'hush!'—  
 Was made by all, the Fox to see.  
 A general wonder seemed to be  
 Depicted on each gaping front,  
 To know how he would brave the brunt?  
 What further answer he would frame?  
 'They'd like to hear, they would, that same!

**W**hen spake the King: "Thou Reprobate!  
 Thou mak'st me to forget my state,  
 With thy false tongue, which hath so oft  
 At our imperial pardon scoffed!  
 At last I have thee! and by all  
 That's holy! thou shalt not forestall,  
 This time, the hangman of his due!  
 Thy heart is of the Devil's hue!  
 Thy robber hands are steeped in blood!  
 The earth is stained, whereon thou 'st stood!  
 Thy monstrous guilt in such a sort  
 Doth shew, as mountains to a wart,  
 Compared by others' crimes! 't is plain!  
 A villain ever thou 'lt remain—  
 Incurrible!—Lies, deceit,

Hast lived by, as we live by meat!  
 The end, at length, is come; and by  
 The Saints above! thine hour draws nigh!"

**H**o! (thought the Fox) Is 't there you are?  
 Better I 'd stayed at home, by far!  
 To carry me the crisis thro',  
 Something, 't is plain, is here to do!—  
 Guide me, good angels, to the clue!  
 "My Liege doth speak his full conviction,  
 And who would offer contradiction  
 Unto his King? But sure (said he)  
 Your Majesty most shamefully  
 Hath been abused!—I only ask  
 One little instant to unmask  
 The vile conspiracy, devised  
 To compass that, which, realized,  
 Your Majesty would rue the most—  
 My death:—

"**I** am not wont to boast:  
 But this I know, there lives not one  
 Who hath for King and Country run  
 More risk, in person, or in purse,  
 Than he who utters it! Reverse  
 Of fortune in the state ne'er made  
 Me shrink, when others were afraid.  
 My time I 've giv'n; my talents lent;  
 My blood have spilt; my money spent;  
 When others have deserted, fled,  
 And thought of scurvy self, instead

Of King and country! Even now,—  
 Whilst meditating on my vow  
 To seek in Rome that meed of grace,  
 Without the which nor time nor place  
 Were fitting for the high emprise  
 Wherewith my King, in gracious wise,  
 Entrusted me.—E'en now! I say,  
 The fiends are filching fast away  
 My character, and weave their skein  
 Of meshes, tangling to the brain,  
 And hard t' unravel, round my feet;  
 With devilish machinations, meet  
 To drag me from a distant home,  
 Packed ready for my start to Rome!

**C**oncerning this new-hatched complaint—  
 My soul aweary is, and faint  
 Of all the tribe!—They can't supply  
 The merit of variety  
 To recommend them! and the tale is,  
 E'erlasting, *ab incepto qualis!*  
 The characters are changed; that's all!  
 The plot's the same, with great and small!  
 The Wolf and Bear first play their parts:  
 And, next, up Rook, then Rabbit, starts  
 Upon the scene!—pushed forward, both,  
 To swear me down by weight of oath!  
 'That two should ever so conspire  
 Is not to be supposed!'—I tire  
 Your Majesty—but this, to me,

Is matter of much moment—See!  
 How stand the facts! These fellows are  
 My debtors in particular,  
 For special kindnesses conferred,  
 And many a friendly helping word  
 Of good advice.—

“**The** other morn  
 The Rabbit, early as the dawn,  
 Before my fortress I espied:  
 He bowed, and wished me ‘well-betide!’  
 With matins was I busied then,  
 And answer none returned: this when  
 The Varlet noticed, nigh he drew,  
 And asked ‘What can I do for you  
 At Court? I’m going thither?’ ‘Friend,  
 Quoth I, ‘God’s providence attend  
 You there!’ Thereon he ’gan to squeak  
 For food—He ’d fasted for a week,  
 He said; and for a morsel cried:  
 I told him I was ill supplied  
 With what he liked, but would provide  
 Some nourishment. We passed some trees,  
 From which I picked him blackberries,  
 And buttered him a savoury crust  
 To eat with them;—for ne’er, I trust,  
 In Lent-time was the scandal known,  
 So much as e’en a chicken-bone  
 My pantry tainted.—

**When** that he  
 Had munched of food sufficiently,

And leant him back, with belly tight  
 As bladder blown, my young one, hight  
**Killchick**—as boys are wont—approached  
 To eat the crumbs, nor dreamt he poached  
 On **Bunny's** waste. The Rabbit saw,  
 And cuffed him soundly with his paw.  
 His elder brother, **Reynardine**,  
 (Another son, my Liege, of mine)  
 Thereat, to take his brother's part,  
 Jumped up, and tapped the Rabbit smart;  
 Which **Bunn** resented, nothing loth—  
 I gave the boys a thrashing, both.  
 The fact of all the matter's pother  
 Is this alone, and just none other.  
 Whate'er the Rabbit got, he well  
 Deserved! Nor had he lived to tell  
 His grievance, if, as he pretends,  
 I was his enemy! No ends  
 The artful means can justify,  
 By which my hospitality  
 He makes a pitfall to appear;  
 Swearing 'twas I knocked off his ear—  
 Whereas it was my little son!  
 In quarrel with the lads 'twas done!

**T**he Rook's a simpler case is: thus:  
 One day, for liquor all the worse,  
 He came to me, quite fuddled: said—  
 Or hiccupped out—whilst tears he shed,

His wife, when he to fetch a neighbour  
 Had gone, with pangs of sudden labour  
 Was seized, and died ere his return.  
 But now 'gainst me he comes, in turn,  
 And says I did it! Well he knows  
 Himself is causer of his woes!  
 Had he not loitered in a tap  
 To booze, he 'd not have mourned that hap!  
 How can it be, that I molest  
 The people of the aery nest,  
 Or storm their citadel sublime?  
 No wings have I—and cannot climb!  
 Besides, the flesh of Rooks is coarse:  
 I'd rather have a glandered Horse  
 For supper, than a rank-fed Rook!—


**D**oreover, business-men do look  
 For evidence; yet none is here!  
 When will the witnesses appear?  
*Quo teste?* as the Lawyers say—  
 The axiom's not of yesterday:  
 Am I, a freeman born and bred,  
 To be condemned to lose my head,  
 On accusations such as these?  
 What Plaintiff, in the *Bench* or *Pleas*,  
 Unless his witnesses were brought,  
 Could hope for audience in the Court?  
 None have they!  
 "Just art thou, my Liege!  
 Respect a Baron's privilege:

And let the truth determined be  
 By laws of honoured chivalry :  
 Be time and place both named, and one  
 Of equal rank be fixed upon,  
 As Champion for the two accusers :  
 Disgrace and shame be, then, the loser's !  
 My cause in person I'll maintain,  
 And fight till one of us be slain.  
 This high appeal to arms hath aye  
 Made innocence as clear as day :  
 For might and right in it are found  
 Wedded, as echo is to sound.  
 Speak, Sire ! the word ! I'll instant fling  
 My glove, to combat challenging !


**O**reat King ! I've spoken : and will bear  
 What punishment you may prepare,  
 Whene'er my fault you ascertain ;  
 Endure I will, and not complain,  
 Tho' prejudice inflict.—In sooth  
 I've served you lovingly, from youth  
 To manhood—certain, if I ever  
 Stood self-accused of lame endeavour  
 In your behalf, my conscience did  
 Reprove ; whilst, from your presence hid,  
 My heart found opportunity  
 In calm retirement to pry  
 Inward upon itself ; and so  
 The cause why oft I ne'er did go  
 To Court is manifest—Ah, no !

Not for a mint of money, then,  
I'd ventured in the throng of men!"—

**H**e ceased: and not a soul who heard,  
But marvelled at his every word;  
Amazement on their faces sat:  
The fowls, from Buzzard-Hawk to Bat,  
Drew close: but most of all the two—  
The Rook and Rabbit—nervous grew:  
They thought not, knew not, what to utter;  
Their efforts ended all in stutter:  
They stammered, in their agony,  
"Alas! No witnesses have we!"  
A firmament of eyes were turned  
Full on them, and their foreheads burned  
With fear, confusion, shame, despair—  
They rent their garments—tore their hair—  
And fainting, were led out for air.

**I**ncensed were **Isengrim** and **Bruin**,  
To see the couple such a stew in,  
Whilst **Reynard** spake; but when he ended,  
And neither one a word appended,  
For sheer distraction, in denial,  
Quoth **Bruin**: "I've a mind for trial  
Of strength with him; but I've no claws,  
And therefore am not fit for wars!"  
Their colloquy was by the King  
Cut short, with: "Is there any thing  
Of further accusation now

Forthcoming? Yesterday, I trow,  
 A chorus of complainants rose—  
 Now **Reynard** 's here, no plaintiff shews!"

**H**! Sire, (quoth **Reynard**), blind our hearts!  
 Could we but see our counterparts,  
 How others' failings, by our own,  
 Would dwindle in comparison!  
 The absent are decreed to be  
 The victims of duplicity!  
 Thus is it with those two false knaves—  
 The Rook and Rabbit: first, one raves,  
 Then t' other—all behind my back—  
 I come, confront them—lo! they pack!"



**Keynard the Fox.**

FYTTE IX.

### Argument.

**KEYNARD** continues to besiege the King's ear.—He is at a loss to account for the Hare's disappearance, but hazards a highly probable conjecture, which there are none liking to dispute.—How Keynard delectably relates about the Magic King, and other faery curiosities, of costly workmanship, and miraculous endowments.—Discusses the great virtues of his progenitor.—How to carve at meat.—The King's heart softens towards Keynard.—The magnanimous yearning of a noble soul to deal justly with its fellows.—A little interlude, parte sinistra, principal performers Greybeard and Keynard.

*Pytte ix.*



**S** spake the Fox: then interposed  
The King: "I'll have the truth disclosed!  
What devil could have prompted you,  
The Hare, my envoy tried and true,  
To murder? Ragamuffin! say,  
How could you that sweet Martyr slay?  
I gave thee knapsack, shoes, and staff—  
Bamboozled by thy vows, thou Raff!  
On pilgrimage to Rome to go,  
And kiss his Holiness's toe.  
Impostor! ere one day was sped,  
Thou kill'dst the Hare, and sent his head

In token of thy reformation!  
 'Twas done, in vile premeditation,  
 'Twixt thee and that most arrant knave—  
 The Ram—whom nought on earth could save  
 From sacrifice at **Lappet's** shrine—  
 His fate, thou monster! shall be thine!"

**W**hen **Reynard**: "Is it—can it be?  
**Lappet** no more!—**Belline**, too?—he!  
 Unparalleled barbarity!  
 Alack! that ever I was born!  
 Of **Vulpians** most deject, forlorn!  
 The **Ram**, of all the folks I know,  
 The last to have been tempted so!  
 First rob the presents I did send  
 By **Lappet**, then destroy his friend!  
 Whoever could have thought it!"

*Now,*  
 Whilst **Reynard** of his grief made show,  
 King **Noble** rose, and, swoll'n with ire,  
 Withdrew alone (his body-squire  
 Excepted) to the Queen; with her  
 On **Reynard's** statements to confer:  
 Where lo! the attendant dames among,  
**Jock's** helpmate, radiant in the throng.  
 A favourite at Court was she,  
 And counted on especially  
 By King and Queen. Her influence now  
 Was seen in the subsiding brow  
 Of Majesty, as from his face

The dame did pluck that 'herb o' grace'  
Encouragement—her power to wield,  
And from the threatening storm to shield  
Her old ally, the Fox. Her wit  
Was ready ever. Deuce a bit  
Of opportunity she let  
Unheeded slip. Each stepping-stone  
Adroitly did she make her own,  
Her point to gain. She urged the King  
To pause awhile, ere any thing  
He should resolve, perchance lest he  
Determined aught too hastily.  
'Twas fitting—so it was—but far  
From wise, to be particular  
With **Reynard**, whom she then confess'd  
The pride for talents, tho' the pest,  
For cunning and contrivance, was  
Of all the realm: the more because  
Their Majesties had tried, and found  
His words weighed more than empty sound,  
Full many a time, when all but he  
Had shewn a vast deficiency.



**A**nd then she instanced how arose  
That knotty question 'twixt the Crows  
And Jackdaws, touching warranty  
Of title to a hollow tree,  
In which an Owl had built her nest,  
Refusing to be dispossess'd,  
Until the Court had set at rest

The question of the 'rightful claimant.'  
 No one but **Reynard** knew what they meant  
 In bandying Law's *Αλφα Βηγα*,  
*Scintilla juris*, *Bracton*, *Fleta*,  
 With other jargon of the sort—  
 Indeed, the judgment of the Court  
 Proceeded, if she recollected,  
 Wholly as **Reynard** then directed.

**Q**uher the king: "What! speakst thou, Dame,  
 In praise of **Reynard**? Fie! for shame!"  
 "Permit me, gracious Sire! (quoth she)  
 I did precise the contrary,  
 So please your Majesty. I said  
 His *heart* was faulty—not his *head*.  
 And in a Councillor of state  
 The point is not of trifling weight.  
 The judgment in the Jackdaw case  
 Is quoted oft, in many a place,  
 As well-established precedent:  
 I fancy by that phrase is meant  
 Something beside the common."—"True!  
 (Replied the King) I warrant you,  
 Therein did **Reynard** help us much."

**O**n other merits might I touch,  
 (The dame continued) I refrain,  
 For special reasons: 'tis with pain  
 I 've spoken what might seem to plead  
 For **Reynard**, when far other need

My counsel prompts—the thought of you,  
My Liege, and what the State would do,  
Deprived of him.”—

“So; let it be:

(Rejoined the King half musingly);  
In what you say there’s wisdom.” Then  
He passed into the Hall again;  
Where, waiting his return, there stood,  
Round Reynard, his allies by blood:  
From Greybeard had they ta’en the cue,  
And darkly lower’d, like clouds that brew  
A gathering storm. The King perceived:  
The thought that he ‘must be reprieved’  
Flashed on him, as the group he scanned:  
Then spake—his eye upon the band:—

**R**eynard! Stand forth! unsheath your sword;  
And swear me, on a Liegeman’s word,  
To answer make, anent the Hare!”  
The Fox responded loud: “I swear!”  
And thus proceeded: “Wo is me,  
To paint what I did never see!  
I am a simple, witless wight;  
No claim have I to second-sight,  
That I should e’en to guess pretend  
Why Lappet by his bosom friend,  
The Ram, was murdered—save it were  
To rob him after, of his share  
Of all the precious things they brought  
As presents to the Queen and Court—

The Ram's no more; and from his tongue  
The truth can not be racked, nor wrung!"

**N**ow Jocko's wife, who, with the Queen,  
Desired to witness all the scene,  
The King's return soon followed, and  
Beside the Throne had ta'en her stand.  
Quoth she: "I pray you, Reynard, do  
Inform us, in a word or two,  
Of what the presents did consist?  
Thou 'lt well remember them, I wist?  
A narrow search, I make no doubt,  
Would soon detect their whereabouts:  
For, when they 're worth the finding, sure  
The seeking is a certain cure  
For stolen goods."

"It not too late!

For much my fears prognosticate  
(Quoth Reynard) great persuasion will  
Be needful, and no little skill,  
To coax them from their hiding place.  
I would not for a trifle face  
My wife, when she the tidings hears!  
Her strong remonstrances and fears  
(I heed them *now!*) were all in vain!  
I, careless oaf! deserve the pain  
Their loss occasions; for I slighted  
My wife's advice! I 'm well requited!  
Were I from all suspicion free,  
I 'd journey forth, thro' land, o'er sea,

And never pause, nor stop to rest,  
 Till all the goods were repossess'd!"  
 (Then, turning to the King,) "Ah, Sire!"  
 Quoth he, "your Highness would but tire  
 Were I to try, in my poor way,  
 A little *précis résumé*  
 Of what the packet held in chief?"—

**H**ereat the King: "Say on: be brief!"  
 Then Reynard—round about him turning  
 His eyes, as tho' he'd set a churning  
 His brain, not overmuch to task it—  
 Proceeded to describe the Casket  
 Containing all. First, with an air, he  
 Related how some beauteous Fairy  
 Upon a wandering Ethiop Prince  
 Conferred the gift, long centuries since:  
 "That Prince, my Liege, the same is he  
 Who was transformed, by grammarie,  
 Into an Animal, like us;  
 And, in that shape, a beauteous,  
 But spell-bound, Lady's heart did win:  
 He wooed her in a Fox's skin;  
 Memorial whereof to save,  
 That Casket to our House he gave,  
 From sire to son to be transmitted:  
 And with a secret spring 't was fitted."

**W**ell I remember (said the King)  
 In boyhood hearing such a thing,

From my old nurse: full many a night  
 The legend formed my youth's delight:  
 But never, surely, I suspected  
 The Prince a *Fox's* shape affected!"  
 Quoth *Reynard*: "I am well aware  
 Tradition gives it to the Bear:  
 But that's an error. I opine  
 The casket had been theirs, not mine,  
 If as a Bear the Prince had wooed:  
 Besides, the Bears are rough and rude—  
 The Prince until this day had sued,  
 In vain, to win his winsome bride,  
 Had he assumed a Bear's, for hide.  
 The casket having mentioned, I  
 Its contents next will specify.

**A**nd first; it held a curious Ring  
 Of gold, with pearl enamelling.  
 The workmanship most wondrous was,  
 And to a Magian in Shiráz  
 Did once belong. The rim was chased:  
 Chaldaic characters were traced  
 Around the spaces intervening—  
 No man could comprehend their meaning!  
 But not the less their power availed  
 When evil Genii assailed.  
 The Rabbi *Nicodemus*, who  
 In Bagdad dwelt—that learned Jew,  
 Who every written tongue could read,  
 From Adam's lingo, down—agreed  
 With others, who did so maintain,

The letters were by Tubal Cain  
Engraved; and, put together, spelt  
A word, which, uttered thrice, was felt  
To purge the elements of harm :  
From lightning's stroke, and witches' charm ;  
From hot Simoom, and torrid sky,  
Black pestilence, sour Evil-eye,  
And hags, on besom-sticks that fly ;—  
O'er quagmire, bog, and desert waste,  
The wearer walked secure, encased ;  
In sickness, health it did restore ;  
And whosoever once it wore,  
Did feel as ne'er he felt before.

**Moreover,** 't had the special virtue  
To warn of whatsoe'er would hurt you :  
And, as the danger drew the nigher,  
The Carbuncle straight paled its fire,  
Magnetically moved ! 'T was found  
You might be shipwrecked—but not drowned ;  
Wounded—but never killed : in short,  
The Ring aye to its owner brought  
Some special element of power.  
More copious details at this hour  
I spare : and only will observe,  
Had I not wanted strength of nerve,  
Nor felt my own unworthiness  
To wear the Amulet,—the mess  
I now am in, no doubt, thro' it  
Had been averted every bit !

This jewel sent I to my King,  
Alone as worthy such a thing.

**C**ontained within the casket, too,  
A Comb and Mirror were; this knew,  
Alas! the traitorous *Belline*;  
They were both presents for the Queen.  
I chose them out of all the hoard  
My father had aforetime stored;  
My wife did plague my life out, nigh,  
To let her have the custody  
Of these two things; and much she wept  
Because I resolutely kept  
Them both as presents for my Queen;  
Which caused me many a bitter scene.  
But I remembered well the time  
When Majesty, with mien sublime,  
Whilst foes were plotting o'er my head—  
By native grace and goodness led,  
Stepped in, to shelter me from harm.—  
My feelings, naturally warm,  
Did long reflect on fit requital,  
In manner that might set to right all.  
The Comb and Mirror seemed to me  
For this designed especially:  
I packed them in the casket safe,  
And sent them—why! a Saint 't would chafe,  
To think these precious gems are waif!"

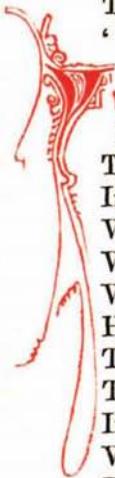
**H**e paused, t' express his deep vexation;  
Then thus continued the narration:

"The Comb of Civet-ball was made,  
 And eke with precious stones inlaid.  
 (The Civet, as we're taught at school,  
 Doth bear a scented reticule;  
 So that the Animals may find  
 His whereabouts, and walk behind;  
 For whoso of the musk doth smell,  
 Straightway of all his ills is well.)  
 Of musk, too, was the said Comb's handle,  
 And more than cinnamon or sandal  
 The perfume smelt; but that was nought,  
 Compared with the intaglios wrought  
 On both its sides! On this, there shone  
 Diana and Endymion:  
 On that, the Judgment of the Boy  
 Who smuggled Helen into Troy,  
 What time the lovely Ladies three  
 About their charms did disagree!  
 A most sweet story is it, sooth!—  
 That of the Lady-Gods and Youth!  
 I'll tell it you—it's none so long:  
 Mine differs from the ancient Song.



**I**n sudden fit of harum-scarum,  
 They chose for *elegantiarum*  
*Arbiter*, the youthful Paris;  
 In whom the *status pupillaris*  
 Might pleaded be, in any Forum,  
 To silence sticklers for decorum.  
 Then, bribery was much the fashion,

As now—and they indulged that passion.  
 Grand Juno promised power and might;  
 Pallas, to make him erudite;  
 Whilst Venus (cunning minx!) knew where  
 The tender side of Man lay bare,  
 And touched it gently, safe to win,  
 As Paris gave the verdict in.  
 Before his eyes a film there came—  
 The *Goddess* melted in the *Dame*!  
 The youth with faltering accents sighed:  
 ‘Venus would make the loveliest bride.’



**W**rought was all! The carving told  
 How Paris in embrace did fold  
 The Venus Victrix' matchless mould;  
 In Grecian Helen's form! The boy,  
 With looks of languishment and joy,  
 Was beautifully carved: whilst she,  
 With fondness filled, did lovingly  
 His neck entwine. How swimm'd the sight!  
 To gaze thereon was such delight!  
 The explanation underneath  
 In scroll-work, serving for the teeth,  
 Was chiselled, that whoe'er did look  
 Thereon, might read as in a book.



**O**ne word or two remains to say  
 About the Mirror—listen, pray!  
 'T was formed of chrysolite, so clear  
 That thro' the surface you might peer;

And see, as far as eye could reach,  
 Into the *Future*—(I beseech  
 Your marked attention!) Quite as well  
 The *Past* was also visible.  
 By night as well as day it shone,  
 And whoso turned his eyes thereon,  
 Could well discern a mile in space,  
 And see what in that sweep took place.  
 Likewise each spot and blemish there,  
 Were back reflected, to a hair.”—  
 And then proceeded he to paint  
 The numerous devices quaint  
 Upon the framework of the glass:  
 The story of the ‘Man and Ass’  
 Thereon was sculptured: and, beside,  
 How Man first sat the Horse astride:  
 All which was chisell’d on the frame,  
 With legends proper to the same.  
 Also a curious story told,  
 How *Walkin* once the old Fox sold,  
 By jumping up a tree, one day,  
 When hounds and hunters came that way;  
 Where sitting, he enacted scout,  
 To point the Fox’s covert out.

**W**hen *Reynard* thus perceived the sport  
 His tales afforded to the Court,  
 And how they riveted attention,  
 There seemed no end to his invention,—  
 He told them stories short and long;

They seemed like Cantos to a Song,  
Each of the other quite suggestive,  
Converting gloomy thoughts to festive—  
As how the Stork was once provoked  
By *Æsengrim*, when well-nigh choked  
With some great bone: for *Long-bill* he  
Sent off, to come immediately.  
The Doctor to his roost had ta'en,  
But quickly rose, and grasped his cane;  
Slipp'd on his shoes and shovel hat,  
And sought the Wolf, who moaning sat:  
He could not speak, but pointed to  
His throat.—The Stork, as wont to do,  
First felt his pulse, then shook his head,  
Cried 'hem!' and said, 'you must be bled!  
Whereat the Wolf, in angry wise,  
Unto the Doctor's wondering eyes  
Made plain the grievance—'Is it there?'  
Quoth *Long-bill*, and began to stare  
Adown his gorge—'I'll have it out  
In no time!' Then, to feel about  
For spectacles he did begin,  
And asked 'Who could have put it in?'  
The Wolf could make no answer, so  
The Stork had nothing more to do  
Than operate; tho' much it went  
Against his inclination's bent,  
To prætermit what forms prescribe—  
Like all th' Apothecary tribe!—

With bill for forceps, leisurely,  
 The sticking bone he then did free;  
 And held his hand out for the fee.  
 Quoth **Hengrim**: 'No fee is due!  
 The luckiest leech alive are you!  
 Within my jaws your sponce hath lain—  
 Yet see! thou hast it whole again!  
 All this and more was on the frame,  
 Said **Reynard**, and each date and name  
 Was carved thereon—Oh! would 't were here,  
 That mirror! In its crystal clear  
 The murderer would then appear!

**M**y Liege, there is but one thing more  
 I would relate, and then give o'er.  
 I saw it in the mirror plain!  
 It happened, in your Father's reign,  
 The King fell sick, and soon had he  
 By physic and the faculty  
 Been killed, as many patients are,  
 Of which my Father was aware.  
 Your druggers he did aye despise:  
 Compared them to those swarms of flies  
 That on corrupted bodies batten,  
 And live, on others' waste to fatten.  
 He held the learning of the College  
 Quite cheap, as lacking useful knowledge.  
 My Father, on the other hand,  
 Had travelled over many a land:  
 All theoretics did eschew,

And helped himself to what he knew.  
 Amongst the things he 'd made his own,  
 Not least the healing art was one:  
 My Father came—your Father saw—  
 And straight prescribed a liver raw,  
 Fresh taken from a Wolf in teens,  
 As proper medicinal means  
 T' effect a cure. Now, close at hand,  
 The sire of *Æsengrim* did stand:  
 On him my Father fixed his eye,  
 And, gazing very steadfastly  
 The while, quoth he: 'For you, my King,  
*His* liver is the very thing!

**T**he Sire of *Æsengrim* replied,—  
 Imputing that my Father lied:  
 He long had passed his teens, he said.  
 My Father, with a shake o' th' head,  
 Rejoined: 'Let me his liver see!  
 I'll tell his age immediately!  
 The King commanded: he was seized:  
 They ripped him, and his liver squeezed  
 From out his body. Of the liver  
 The King partook, and thanked the giver.  
 Soon after he was convalescent!—

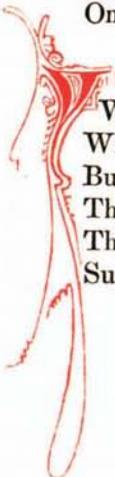
**T**ating from thence, the star was crescent  
 O'er all our House. The King's command  
 Was heralded throughout the land,  
 My Father should precedence have,

And counted bravest of the brave.  
 A crimson hat and feathers new,  
 They gave him, and he daily grew  
 In favour with the King and Queen,  
 And sat their Majesties between—  
 All which was in the mirror seen!  
 Methinks I still gaze on it there,  
 As tho' but yesterday it were.  
 For tho', my liege, these things did pass  
 Long years ago, yet from the glass  
 No image once impressed could fade:  
 Each fresh one no effacement made.  
 I'd venture life and limb, could I  
 Succeed in its recovery!"

**W**hen spake the King: "All that may be  
 Quite true: I have no memory  
 Concerning things of such long date  
 As these you now enumerate:  
 Events more recent—of a kind  
 Far opposite, possess my mind  
 Just now. I would't were otherwise—  
 Your friends, and not your enemies,  
 I'd rather hear—your praise, not blame—  
 But still the story is the same!"  
 Next Reynard:

"Sire, what others say  
 Imports not: acts alone do weigh!  
 To you, my Liege, I've ever shewn  
 My duty: never to the throne

Been wanting in devotion. Vast  
 The difference, when you contrast  
 My deeds with others' words—as seen  
 When *Æsengrim* and I had been  
 Once hunting, and a Pig picked up :  
 As he and I sat down to sup,  
 Your Majesties came by, and said  
 For two whole days ye had not fed.  
 'Give us of your good fare!' quoth you :  
 Whereat the Wolf was in a stew.  
 He grumbled 'yes!' for manners' sake ;  
 But turned, wry faces first to make—  
 I said, 'Most proud!' much good may 't do !  
 Who carves?'—Said *Æsengrim*, 'Not you !'  
 He set him to the work, and cut  
 The Pig in quarters: one he put  
 Before the Queen—one in his vest  
 He crammed—gave one to you, the rest  
 He beckoned me with him to share.  
 The greedy-guts would scarcely spare  
 A morsel for myself. I got  
 One ear, the snout, and half a trot !



**Y**our Majesties, as I descried,  
 Were anything but satisfied  
 With such a meal. The Wolf saw, too :  
 But never from his pocket drew,  
 The piece of Pig he 'd placed therein.  
 There sat he, buttoned to the chin.  
 Such conduct so incensing was,

You caught his head between your claws,  
 And pulled him smartly by his ear ;  
 Saying, 'Go, slaughter us a Steer  
 For supper! Hasten!'—'Say ye so?'  
 Quoth I: 'a drove of Steers I know.  
 I'll with him, to point out the booty—  
 I think I know a subject's duty.'

**W**e found a Calf, quite fat and prime,  
 And brought him home in little time.  
 'My Liege,' quoth I, 'the carcasse wholly  
 Is yours—your servants, solely  
 As your Esquires, do claim our part—  
 The lights, the liver, and the heart.  
 To me belong the trotters four :  
 To Isengrim the horns and gore!  
 Then asked your Majesty of me,  
 'Who taught thee carve so prettily?'  
 Emboldened, then, reply to make,  
 Quoth I, 'I did a lesson take  
 From this our friend here.' 'Very clever!  
 Your wits you have about you, ever!  
 Your Majesty replied.

“**T**is thus,

Were we the topic to discuss  
 Till next new moon ; each deed he 's done  
 Exhibits the comparison.  
 The Wolf 's a varlet born and bred,  
 And though he stand the very head  
 Of all your officers, my Liege,

He doth abuse that privilege,  
 To league with perjurers and punks,  
 To slander me—then off he skunks!  
 Thus ever will it be the case,  
 Whilst Wolves appointed are to place.  
 They 're harsh; they hunger after pelf;  
 Oppressive, greedy, all for self;  
 Restless, until they 've gorged and gloated,  
 Whilst we, the Reynards, are well noted  
 For qualities the opposite  
 To these; for 't is our whole delight,  
 Whate'er we have, or may acquire,  
 To hold in trust for you, great Sire!  
 Be 't land or goods—whate'er the tenure—  
 'Tis yours, my Liege, *par droit de Seigneur*.  
 Think of the Pig and Steer! then judge  
 Which speaks the truth—and which the fudge?  
 Whose sound like facts? Whose smack like  
 whims?

Mine—Reynard's? or his, Isengrim's?


 I there here present, I would know,  
 One tongue well able—yes, or no?—  
 To *prove* me in the wrong? I say  
 Let such appear at once!—this day!—  
 Adduce the proofs! I challenge all,  
 Without reserve; the great, the small!  
 My goods to theirs I 'll stake!—my Wife!  
 No goods, no wife; then life to life!  
 I 'll bide the issue to the last;  
 And die the death, if I be cast!"

The King, at Reynard's last appeal,  
 Vainly attempted to conceal  
 His great perplexity of mind.  
 He cast about, some form to find  
 Of words, his meaning to convey in,  
 And not commit him in the saying.  
 When, after sundry rolls and wallows,  
 He spake, with emphasis, as follows:

**R**eynard! I'd have you understand,  
 That whilst I over this wide land  
 Bear sway, none who for justice ask  
 Shall go unheeded. Hard the task  
 To arbitrate 'twixt right and wrong!  
 You must have seen *that* all along,  
 In your own case. Both sides I hear,  
 But neither makes the matter clear.  
 The Hare is killed—that's certain! granted!  
 Who killed him? Here the answer's wanted.  
 Some link is missing in the chain;  
 Therefore, at present, I refrain  
 From further comment—nothing less  
 I like, than law that's made to guess  
 At guilt;—and the accused, 't is writ,  
 Of doubt shall have the benefit."

**Q**uoth Reynard then: "My King hath won  
 A victory o'er Solomon,  
 In wisdom, equity, and law!"  
 He turned, and by his side he saw

The Badger, who, from first to last,  
Had marked with interest the cast  
Of all the dice: he had reliance  
On Reynard's tact, and looked defiance  
To all around—their glances met—  
At their embrace each eye was wet!  
With smothered laughter bursting nigh,  
Reynard made feint a deep-drawn sigh  
To heave, whilst (winking all the while)  
He whispered to his friend "Old File!  
We 've done 'em!"—then aloud, "One kiss!  
Oh! Greybeard, what a world is this!"



Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.

**Keynard the Fox.**

FYTTE X.

### Argument.

**HOW JERONIA** is incited to accuse Reynard of 'groping for Trout in a peculiar river.'—Reynard's rejoinder.—Greedall relates the 'passage at the well.'—Reynard's illustration of the praxis of ethics.—The challenge.—The acceptation.—The gages exchanged; the sponsors named, and the fight looked forward to.—How Jocko's wife comforts Reynard; puts her champion into training, and instructs him in the noble art of self-defence.—How the lists are prepared, en champ clos, with the manner of ordering the 'Wager of Battle.'—The combat described.—The denouement—The conclusion.

Pyte r.



**I**n this wise, Reynard, batch by batch,  
O'er all his foes—a more than match—  
Prevailed: nor should that wondrous seem:  
To hear him, sounded like a dream,  
Whilst on the Casket he dilated,  
And, one by one, its stores created  
Just as he wanted them: no pains  
Was there—no ransack of the brains:  
Nay; these had furnished raw material  
For millions of such mounds aerial!  
There stood he, single—self-posessed!  
His physiognomy expressed

Such sweet simplicity! And, then,  
 So earnest his demeanour, when  
 The Casket's loss was brought to light!  
 The crowd was captivated quite:  
 And all who heard him, wished that he  
 Would talk on, to eternity—  
 Let Juvenal say what he will,  
 Good list'ning 's a great virtue, still!

**T**he Queen these sentiments in common  
 Partook: she was a very woman:  
 And, being flesh and blood, not stone,  
 The Comb and Mirror longed to own.  
 She thought they yet might be recovered;  
 And on their loss she harped and hovered  
 So much, that **Reynard**, 'for her sake,'  
 Proposed at once to undertake  
 An expedition in their search;  
 And offer masses at the church  
 For good deliv'rance. This the King  
 Approved of, as a 'handsome thing  
 On **Reynard's** part,' and much applauded  
 The Fox, who should be well rewarded.

**M**uch too much, this, for **Isengrim!**  
 The lupine spirit groaned in him  
 At **Reynard's** each successive move:  
 He saw thro' all, yet never strove  
 To interfere—the odds were such  
 Upon the Fox!—no straw to clutch

Was left him, poor, lost, drowning wight!  
 But when the King approved outright,  
 What **Reynard** to the Queen suggested,  
 To seek the Casket,—torn, tempèsted  
 By all the fury of his hate,  
 Headlong he plunged precipitate!  
 His bosom long the storm up-pent,  
 Surcharged with stifling element  
 That stuffed the cracking heart within,  
 Till all was one chaotic din  
 Of wrongs, resentments, rage and rancour:  
 His silence served no more for anchor;  
 It strained, and heaved—gave way at last,  
 And off he drave before the blast!

**H**ear me, O King! By heaven above!  
 By earth beneath! By what doth move  
 In ether, and in water! By  
 Creation's vast infinity!  
 By all that pleads to ears or eyes!  
 By widows' tears! By orphans' cries!  
 By every Saint who sits up there!  
 By **Lappet's** murther'd corse!—I swear!  
 He lies! the thief! the base poltroon!  
 The sneak! the lily-liver'd loon!  
 His victims we!—by many a dozen!  
 His dupes are ye! whom he doth cozen  
 And hoax, as heretofore, with lies,  
 Devices, foul scurrilities,  
 That no foundation have in fact,

But serve his purpose to distract,  
 Confuse, mislead, perplex, and stay  
 The course of justice, on her way  
 To reach his perjured head!"—

**He** paused.

His words a great commotion caused  
 Throughout the crowd: they gaped, and stared,  
 For such an outburst unprepared.  
 The Wolf by that huge effort felt  
 Relieved: then, loosening his belt—  
 To get his wind—in milder strain  
 Addressed him to the Throne again:

**S** King! I have no wish to rake  
 Past grievances; nor would awake  
 The memory of woes untold,  
 Inflicted by that bad man bold,  
 Whose very image to recall,  
 Is wormwood, bitterness, and gall!  
 But when thus slandered by a knave,  
 And spat on, sure, my grey hairs crave  
 Some sympathy! At any rate,  
 My long-tried service in the State,  
 Some title to a claim can shew  
 That he should not unanswered go.  
 My Liege! There's not one crime on earth  
 He's not committed! Not for dearth  
 Of matter, I forbear to state  
 The whole;—I will enumerate  
 But one—altho' their numbers teem  
 Like midges in a solar beam.

**P**oor my wife hath been his prey!

Full many a snare the rogue would lay  
 Her ruin to effect. One day  
 He met her by the water side,  
 And stopped to watch the fishes glide:  
 Whereat my dame, suspecting nought,  
 Stopped also, to enjoy the sport.  
 Said she, 'They 'd make a pretty dish!  
 Quoth **Reynard**: 'Are you fond of fish?  
 I know a way to catch them all:  
 I'll shew you: since I'm not so tall  
 As you, the better plan will be—  
 You grope, whilst I stand by, and see;  
*Groping* 's the phrase, tho' some dislike  
 That way, and call 't unsportsmanlike:  
 These favour 'fishing with an angle.'—  
 My plan is thus: your tail you dangle  
 Close at the water's edge; the tip  
 Should barely 'neath the surface dip:  
 There keep it, very still: you'll feel  
 The fishes round and round it wheel  
 In shoals; they'll take it for the keel  
 Of some small craft there moored, and stick,  
 And hang like barnacles, quite thick:  
 When you perceive no room for more,  
 Up! Drag them, tail and all, to shore!"

**P**oor **Creedall**, swallowing all he said,  
 Was by him to the margin led;  
 Where, after wading with much care,

She found a shallow place, and there  
Down squatted, with her tail immersed—  
(O villain! of a race accursed!  
In evil hour my wife by thee  
Was brought to shame and infamy!)  
That night the frost was so severe,  
The weather-glass had fall'n to near  
Fifteen degrees 'neath freezing point:  
My poor wife's tail, in every joint,  
Was nipped: full soon the water (quite  
To ice converted) held it tight!  
Which she, imagining were trout,  
Pulled hard, and tried to jerk them out.  
She found—or thought she found—resistance;  
And lustily implored assistance!



**O** Liege! I've neither heart, nor face,  
To dwell upon my wife's disgrace—  
Imagine you, what then took place!—  
I found her there. With much ado  
I broke the ice, with heel and toe;  
And freed her tail—surprised to find  
One half of it remained behind!  
We reached our home in dismal plight;  
For had it not been dark that night,  
The people, who had flocked to see  
What shrieked and howled so fearfully,  
Had killed us with their sticks and staves;  
And both, ere this, had found our graves.  
O King! who is there fails to see,  
In this, the rascal's villainy?"

**T**he King, on that appeal, declared  
 To judge the thing he was prepared:  
 'But what had the accused to say?'—  
 "There's not the shadow of a ray  
 Of doubt, my Liege! (quoth **Reynard**, pat)  
 If *all* now uttered by yon flat  
 Be true, a wretch indeed were I.  
*Some* truth is in the history—  
 That I allow: but all the rest  
 Is fable, fancy, fiction. Pest!  
 The woman to the water went  
 Herself: voraciously intent  
 On catching all the fish she could,  
 And not one word of warning would  
 From me accept: I told her how  
 'Twas freezing hard; but such a row  
 She made at my remonstrance, that  
 I soon desisted: down I sat,  
 To be, in case of need, at hand,  
 And help her out again to land.  
 And, sure enough! unless for me,  
 She had been drowned—decidedly!"

**W**hilst **Reynard** spake, the Wolf's wife sat,  
 Scarce knowing what she would be at;  
 Her self-control was ebbing fast:  
 She heard them all;—but lie the last  
 Too much for her digestion proved:  
 She thought it very ill behoved  
 A woman to sit by, and hear

Her wilfulness in terms so clear  
 Arraigned—and by a foul seducer!  
 So up she rose, and thus let loose her  
 Long tongue on Reynard, who sat close:  
 His hands firm thrust within his hose.

**T**ell thee thou 'rt a villain, Fox!  
 Saving the presence, here, I 'd box  
 Thine ears, and soundly! Not a word  
 Thou 'st uttered as the facts occurred!  
 A double sense thy meaning hath—  
 Rubbish, and plaister, all, and lath,  
 Thy rotten edifice of talk!  
 The same as once, when, in my walk,  
 I heard thee shouting from a well,  
 Loud bellowing below, to tell  
 How I should help thee, in thy strait,  
 By jumping hard, with all my weight,  
 Into the bucket at the top,  
 Which, thou assuredst me, would drop  
 Down gently; then, together, we  
 Might both ascend in company—  
 Right in I jumped—(more fool was I!)  
 And did descend accordingly:  
 Whilst thou, being lighter, didst ascend,  
 And came up at the other end.  
 I wondered, as you passed me, why  
 You waited not, for gallantry,  
 Until I had the bottom reached:—  
 When lo! the margin gained, you screeched

As loud as you could bawl 'Be—low!  
 Good Dame! this little trip will shew  
 The way the world hath wagged, since Esau;  
 'Tis a perpetual game of see-saw!  
 First one, then t' other—ebb and flow—  
 For at the first 't was written so:  
 The low now high—the high low now—  
 Madam! I make my high-low bow!  
 Away you scampered, leaving me  
 At bottom of the well to be.  
 There lay I, all that night, and next;  
 With fear and anguish much perplext:  
 For when the peasants came, to draw  
 The water, and a Wolf they saw,  
 They let the bucket drop with fright,  
 And left me there another night—  
 To die of hunger, till, at last,  
 Deeming my sad existence pass'd,  
 They drew me up, to satisfy  
 Themselves—but, this time, off made I."

**R**eynard broad-grinned: "And who, I pray,  
 Had acted any other way?  
 You saved me, certainly! that thought  
 Surely its own reward had brought,  
 Had you considered it aright,  
 And scanned it in its proper light!  
 Of ethics you were ever fond,  
 And many an hour its precepts conned,  
 When we together used to court—"

You called it, then, 'enchanting sport'—  
 These things were running thro' my pate,  
 Whilst in the well, disconsolate:  
 I seized th' occasion (this the fact is!)  
 To shew how ethics worked in practice."  
 At this the whole assembly fell  
 To laughter irrepressible:  
 A tittering fit the ladies seized;  
 They coughed, they turned aside, they sneezed,  
 In vain! for, spurning every bound,  
 The cachinnation took all round!  
 'Was **Creedall** so confessed a blue?—  
 Quoth **Reynard**, "'Pon my life, it's true!"

**O**roaned **Isengrim**: "This is too much;  
 A tender point is that to touch!"  
 And thereupon he 'gan to bristle:  
 He looked an incarnated thistle,  
 With *noli me* on every side  
 Indisputably typified:  
 Said *sotto voce*, "Odds my life!  
 Is **Creedall** not my lawful wife?  
 And shall she be the laughing-stock  
 Of every addle-headed block  
 About the Court? What next, I wonder?  
*He*'s crowing, now—I'm knocking under,  
 They think! I'll shew them their mistake."  
 With loud "Ahem!" that made all quake  
 To hear it, then the Wolf advanced:  
 His step was firm, his eye-balls glanced,

As to the middle of the Hall  
 He strode: his figure, gaunt and tall,  
 Then halted, whilst his labouring breast  
 Was of its perilous load divest.

**E**nough! I take him at his word!  
 His perjury shall by the sword  
 Be proven! Here—where I now stand—  
 The Fox as *infamous* I brand!  
 Of lust, of lies, of treachery,  
 I do accuse him! I defy  
 His malice! and I challenge him  
 To mortal combat! limb for limb  
 I'll have! and of his recreant heart  
 I'll make a meal, or ere we part!"  
 He ceased: gazed fervently above;  
 Then flung at **Keynard's** feet his glove.

**T**he King, the Queen, and all who heard,  
 To martial ebullition stirred,  
 Perceived their blood to seethe and boil;  
 But **Keynard** felt his heart recoil,  
 And eke his feet, a step or two,  
 As **Isengrim** the gauntlet threw.  
 Thought he: "What awkward turns things take  
 Sometimes! Now, for a woman's sake,  
 My challenge to return! and so  
 All my address for nought must go!  
 A bigger chap he is than I:  
 That's true: but then his armoury

With mine will not compare, because  
 I got him sliced of all his claws  
 But lately: that the odds will turn  
 On my side!"—Balancing the urn  
 Of chance, thus, **Reynard** felt that he  
 Stood fair to win. Effrontery,  
 As wont, came to his aid, uncourted;  
 And on the Wolf he thus retorted:

**B**ack in your teeth the lie I give!  
 A villain *thou!* which, as I live!  
 I'll prove upon your craven hide,  
 And hack your bones on every side!  
 I'll meet you, hand to hand! and fight  
 Till one of us be slain outright!  
 This moment I have longed for—See!  
 'Tis come at last!"—Then valiantly  
 His gage by **Isengrim's** he threw,  
 And both on either side withdrew.  
 The King commanded, then, the pages  
 To hand him up the champions' gages.  
 Demanded, next, "who were to be  
 Sponsors *par droit de chevalrie*?—  
 Let them be named at once!" quoth he.

**D**alkin and Bruin for the one;  
 For t' other, **Greybeard** and **Jocko's** son,  
 Then offered, and accepted were.  
 Homeward, in groups, the crowd repair,

Discuss the fight, 'mid winks and nods,  
And back their favourites 'gainst odds.

**N**ow Jocko's wife, who was by blood  
Related, ever friendly stood  
Tow'rds Reynard, and to him she hied,  
To cheer him up, and help provide  
Such counsel as she thought might be  
Welcome in the emergency.  
Quoth she, "I've something you to tell:  
My husband knew an Abbot well,  
Upon a time: a famous sage,  
And learnèd, far beyond his age:  
Also in magic was he trained:  
From him my husband once obtained  
A charm, of power o'er death and hell:  
Most potent is it as a spell!  
Its virtue from all harm can save!  
This secret to my husband gave  
The Abbot: he to me imparted:  
So cheer ye up! don't be down-hearted!  
To morrow early I'll begin  
The charm—you're certain, then, to win."

**T**he Fox replied: "My thanks are due,  
Fair Lady! I will think on you  
When in the thickest of the fight!  
I'll prosper! On my side is right!"  
That eve, his friends did with him sit  
To coze, and pass the time a bit;

Whilst Jock's wife, with consummate tact,  
 Contrived his musings to distract,  
 By every means she could suggest.  
 She helped her champion to divest  
 Of all his hair, from crown to tail,  
 In front, so that the Wolf might fail  
 To grip him fast; and furthermore  
 She had him smeared with oil all o'er;  
 Like Circus gladiators were,  
 When they for contest did prepare.  
 The Fox shewed well; and well content  
 The dame: she paid him compliment  
 On his appearance sleek and round;  
 Her int'rest seemed to pass all bound.  
 She shewed him how to hold his fists;  
 And how to bear him in the lists:  
 Discoursing with free use of tropes,  
 As 'fibbing,' 'boreing to the ropes,'  
 'Sparring,' 'cross-buttocking,' and 'squaring.'  
 Quoth she, "You wonder at my daring  
 To understand these pastimes rude;  
 But I have witnessed many a feud  
 Amongst my country-folk at home,  
 Where, finally, 't is sure to come  
 To blows and fisticuffs; and hence  
 I learned the 'art of self-defence.'


**O**ur ancestors come o'er from France,  
 (Where breed Baboons *en abondance*):  
 They settled on the British shore,

When Norman William first sailed o'er;  
 My family went with the tide  
 To England, where they still reside.  
 Amongst the last, I 've one relation,  
 Whom, visiting in the vacation,  
 When quite a little thing, and raw,  
 A contest, called 'a fight,' I saw.  
 There, every one 's a Pugilist,  
 And handy ever with the fist:  
 A weapon 't is one can't put by  
 At will, and that 's the reason why  
 Your English folk are very slow  
 At vapouring: their word 's a blow!  
 For, whatsoever king doth reign,  
 This rule he sweareth to maintain—  
 '*Fight first; and afterwards explain!*'

**T**hese tactics try on *Æsengrim*:

I warrant you, they 'll puzzle him!  
 Watch when his strength to fail begins,  
 Close in, and kick him on the shins:  
 A Cornish custom 't is, and sound  
 In theory; for, on the ground  
 The foe is very apt to drop:  
 Now, when he 's down, kick on! don't stop!  
 He 'll soon get up—you feign retreat—  
 He 'll follow—then, with both your feet,  
 Scrape up the dirt, but, as you go,  
 Keep well to windward of him, so  
 The dust right in his face may fly,

And help to blind him presently.  
 Whene'er he stops to wipe it, you  
 Commence to kick his shins anew ;  
 And get him down, and keep him there.  
 Then, if they shout, 'Let go!' 'Not fair!'  
 Ne'er heed them! kick the harder for 't!  
 'Your business 't is, not theirs,' retort."

**Quoth Reynard :** For the lesson thanks !  
 I'll not omit to ply his shanks :  
 But can you not, fair Lady, pray,  
 The Abbot's charm, ere parting, say ?"  
 "That can I, (quoth the Dame) be sure!  
 And will—'t is Algebra, and pure!  
 Have only faith, and you will feel  
 Its potency invincible."  
 Thereat, she on his bare head laid  
 Her hands, made many signs, and said :

*Al deboronti phoski sum !  
 Anthropophagos ego sum !  
 Voite, toite, presto joss !  
 Deautontimorumenos !  
 Adeste, teste, procul O !  
 Semini nihili numero !  
 Cony ompany,  
 Ompany  
 Cony  
 X*

This office done, her knight she press'd,  
That he would early seek his rest:  
Be up betimes the morrow-morn,  
To answer to the Herald's horn.

**H**oundly, that night, he slept, the Fox;  
Scarce woke at the repeated knocks  
Of Greybeard, and his friend, the Otter,  
Who called him up, and with them brought a  
Young duckling from a neighbouring tyke:  
Quoth Reynard, "This looks business-like!"  
Then, chatting gaily all the while,  
The duckling polished off in style.  
This done, th' Esquires their Knight prepare,  
And to the Tilt-yard all repair.  
The lists were ready, and the throng  
So dense, they scarce could squeeze along:  
The Pursuivants, with arms outstrained,  
Pushed back the mob, and thus they gained  
The barriers: as they passed, the rout  
Loud "Reynard to the rescue!" shout.

**S**ooner did King Noble look  
On Reynard, than his sides both shook  
With hearty laughter, at the trim  
The Fox displayed; then said to him:  
"Friend Reynard! what new guise is this  
Thou dost affect? 'T is not amiss!  
Just like thee, Fox! thou'rt ready, ever,  
With what's original and clever!"

'Reynard the ready' is thy name,  
 And well thy nature suits the same."  
 By this time all was expectation:  
 The ladies ceased their conversation:  
 Whilst, from the concourse' living walls,  
 A humming buzz, at intervals,  
 Betrayed the mob's excitement, which  
 Was wound up to the highest pitch,  
 As Reynard vaulted in the list,  
 And waited his antagonist.

**B**ack! hark! the tuckets sound on high!  
 "He comes! Sir Isengrim!" they cry.  
 The Wolf and all his kith and kin  
 Approach in long array! The din  
 Their multitudinous tramping made,  
 Resounded like a cavalcade  
 Of mailed warriors on the march,—  
 Or winds that, thro' a wood of larch,  
 The groaning branches swing and sway,  
 And thunder out, and roar away.  
 Still forward they their course observe;  
 Neither to right nor left they swerve;  
 But onward to the lists the band  
 March up, then halt, and take their stand.

**W**hen first the Wolf: "I here repeat  
 The Fox a villain is; and cheat!  
 I brand him murderer to boot!  
 Adulterer! with heart, as soot

Is, black! That solemn truth do I  
 Wager on hazard of this die!"  
 Then **Reynard**: "What the Wolf alleges  
 Are lies! I'll prove it! and my pledge is  
 The victory, which I, by battle,  
 This day will gain o'er yon base cattle!"

**T**he Marshal of the lists then cried:  
 "The right shall by the might be tried!  
 What fair and fetis is, that do!  
 The God of battles prosper you!"  
 He said! then towards the sides withdrew:  
 The rest soon followed; save the two,  
 Who occupied alone the space,  
 And stood for action—face to face!  
 But **Flocko's** wife, she left the last,  
 And whispered, as she hurried past,  
 "Remember what I said!" Then he:  
 "Right well I prize your sympathy,  
 Fair Dame! I feel as tho' I'd won  
 Already! think on what I've done  
 In many a worse adventure's way:  
 They weaned me long ere yesterday,  
 And all my wisdom-teeth are thro':  
 Content you, then: I promise you,  
 This braggart here in hand I'll take,  
 And smash him, ere he's well awake.  
 I'll take his shine out! then, astride  
 Upon the palings he shall ride!  
 Be sure the Wolf's a losing game is:  
 The glory, mine will be—the shame, his!"

The marshal, now, with plumèd hat on,  
 Beside the barrier stood: his baton  
 Of office, thrice he whirled aloft;  
 And not a soul or spake or coughed.  
 "Oyez! oyez! oyez; (he cried)  
 Will each of ye the issue bide?"  
 "We will!" they answer—"Are ye ready?"  
 "Yes!" "Yes!"—"Then *laissez aller!*" said he.

**R**eynard addressed him then to fight:  
 And Isengrim commenced to bite  
 The air, and shew'd his teeth, by way  
 Of prelude to the coming fray;  
 Next, reared his snout, and brought the jowl  
 To Reynard's level: one loud howl  
 He uttered, ere he crouched, then bounded  
 To where the Fox, no whit astounded  
 By noises so unknighly, stood;  
 For, raising lofty as he could  
 His voice, the foe in terms defied:—  
 "Come on!" he resolutely cried.  
 The struggle was commenced! The sternest  
 There present, felt it was right earnest.  
 The onslaught angry was indeed!  
 Already, shrieks and cries, "they bleed!"  
 Within the gay pavilion sounded,  
 Where, by the ladies thick surrounded,  
 The Queen surveyed the combat fierce.  
 It seemed as tho' their teeth did pierce  
 Right thro' the bones, and meet midway!

In sooth, it was most pretty play,  
 On both sides. "Well done, Wolf!" roared out  
 The King: at which the Queen would pout,  
 Till **Reynard** had some 'vantage gained,  
 When every lady's throat seemed strained  
 To countercheer the Fox. Each man  
 There present, felt as partizan;  
 Tho' nothing in the world to do  
 With either, had they (save some few);  
 So difficult it is to see  
 A fight, and feel indifferently.  
 The Fox, as smaller of the two,  
 Was favourite: and when he drew  
 'First claret,' at that tapping action  
 The mob expressed their satisfaction;  
 Exclaiming, "Go it! ten to one  
 Upon the varmint little 'un!"

**B**y this time, had Dan Phœbus clomb  
 The summit of his glowing dome;  
 And **Isengrim** his power to feel  
 Began, which made the Wolf to reel.  
 He mourned his hapless want of claws:  
 His teeth, too, battered by the paws  
 Of **Reynard**, wofully he missed:  
 For, grasped within his well-clench'd fist,  
 The Fox a flint-stone firmly held,  
 With which he deftly aimed, and felled,  
 One after t' other, every fang,  
 Till down his weasand, at each bang,

Successively they flew. This thing—  
 To **Æsengrim** so punishing—  
 Set him forthwith to calculate  
 The odds on his superior weight—  
 How best it might the foeman tell on—  
 Which done, he threw himself pêle-mêle on  
 The Fox, to bear him down intending,  
 But **Keynard** saw: instead of spending  
 His strength in any vain endeavour  
 'Gainst **Æsengrim**, he waited ever  
 Upon the Wolf.—So, this time, he  
 Perceived the rushing enemy,  
 And, as he neared him, slipped aside—  
 The Wolf came on with awful stride,  
 But meeting not with **Keynard** there,  
 He buffeted the yielding air  
 Instead!—found no impediment—  
 His force, him to the barrier sent,  
 Where toppling, heels o'er head he went,  
 With emphasis—a heavy flop!  
 “My eyes! (the mob cry) what a whop!”


**W**hen **Keynard** to the Wolf stepped close,  
 And said aloud, “How lik'st the dose,  
 Friend **Æsengrim**? there yet may be  
 For pardon opportunity  
 Ere thou departest! only, speed ye!  
 Or else the wandering ghosts (I rede ye)  
 Of all the Lambs and Kids thou 'st slain,  
 Will haunt thee thro' the wide champain

Whither thou 'rt ebbing fast, down yonder!—  
 But softly! Is he killed, I wonder?"  
 For so it seemed!—Through that vast crowd,  
 A pin-drop had resounded loud!  
 Thought Reynard, "He *has* got it now!  
 I'll rest awhile: for, any how,  
 If he the fight again begin,  
 I'll try the trick upon his shin!"

**S**tunned lay the prostrate Wolf—quite still,  
 And stiff! nor moved a peg, until  
 His 'squires, much fearing for his life,  
 Rushed in, preceded by the wife,  
 And, lifting him upon their knees,  
 They gave him salts, to make him sneeze;  
 Which thirteen times he did repeat,  
 Then started lively to his feet!—  
 A feeling of relief ran thro'  
 The crowd, whose visages looked rue,  
 To think their fun forestall'd and spent  
 By that untoward accident.  
 Again the tuckets sound! Again  
 The dauntless Heroes give the rein  
 To their revenge! The Fox now charges  
 The Wolf, and both his eyes enlarges,  
 With right-and-lefters, planted well,  
 And punches on the nob, that tell!  
 So hard and fast the bangs and thumps,  
 You'd thought that firemen at their pumps  
 Were working might and main! Nor less

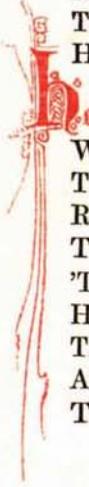
Reynard the foeman's shins did press,  
 As, from his well-directed toes,  
 Kicks there, made echo to the blows  
 Above—so that, 'twixt shank and skull,  
 The Wolf had got a bellyfull!

**T**he day was hot: he, spent with drought:  
 And, one and all, his teeth knocked out:  
 His right eye blinded: shins all bruised:  
 His head a jelly: brain confused:  
 And (worse than all!) there stood the foe,  
 Scarce touched! or, but a trifle so!  
 At sight of this, his soul grew sick—  
 “Could I but that vile rascal lick!”  
 He fervently ejaculated—  
 Then, with a new-born fury freighted,  
 He darted on the Fox, and fastened  
 Upon his throat! He would have hastened  
 To finish him, at once—outright—  
 “Hold! do as it becomes a knight!”  
 Quick shouted Reynard, in a twinkling.  
 “Caitiff! (quoth Isengrim) base inkling  
 For thy doomed life thou dost exhibit!  
 Yield thee! abortion of the gibbet!  
 Redeemed from thence by fate's decree,  
 And high instrumentality,  
 Thro' issue of this fight to shew  
 How Heaven's great arm is sure, tho' slow,  
 To vindicate Truth's majesty!—  
 Once more, I charge thee—Yield, or die!”

**W**hat dead'ning presage of defeat  
 Forbad his faltering pulse to beat,  
 As there he lay? you ask. Just none!  
 The question, "what was to be *done*?"  
 Already busied him: thought he,  
 "If I don't yield, he'll strangle me;  
 If yield I do, my doom is sealed—  
 The Wolf's then victor of the field!  
 A middle course—yes! who can doubt it?  
 Would be the thing—I'll set about it."  
 In accents, then, whose earnest tone  
 Had pierced a hangman's heart of stone,  
 He said:

**"Oh Isengrim!** my friend!  
 My kinsman! foster-brother! lend  
 Your ear! too long have I repress'd  
 The thoughts that lacerate my breast!  
 Oh, Isengrim! thou canst not tell  
 How vain each effort to dispel  
 Ideas with deeds that ill contrasted,  
 The whole time thro' this fight hath lasted!  
 What agony was mine, to see  
 This hand 'gainst one o' th' family  
 Uplifted in unnatural strife!  
 Oh! would thou 'dst never ta'en a wife!  
 Of all our broils and enmities  
 Some woman aye at bottom is!  
 From Eve, thro' Helen, down to her  
 Whose beauty (or whose hate) doth stir  
 This quarrel 'twixt us two—the same

Whom thou dost dignify by name  
 Of spouse, I mean—she—**Creedall!** ah!  
 Think on this most unholy war,  
 Which we—near kinsmen—I may say  
 Sworn brothers, only yesterday,  
 Do wage to outrance, here, in 'spy  
 Of all the world, who witness! Why  
 What outrage on morality  
 Is this! what must the public think?  
 Long in their nostrils it will stink—  
 This deed so foul! he who surviveth  
 Will walk a target, whilst he liveth,  
 For the illiterate and low  
 To point at, whispering as they go—  
 'Mark yon pale spectacle of woe!  
 His face how haggard! form how blighted!  
 His angry passions him incited  
 To kill his nearest kinsman—see!  
 How piteous his misery!"

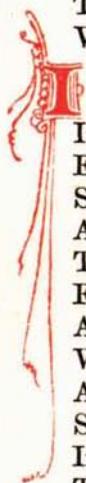


**H**e paused: the Wolf stared, struck aghast  
 With apprehensions clouding fast;  
 Then, starting, as from stroke of bullet,  
 Relaxed his hold on **Reynard's** gullet.  
 The Fox felt easier after that:  
 'T was like the loos'ning a cravat!  
 He fetched his breath: his pulse subsided:  
 The crisis past, his thoughts calm glided,  
 As wont; whilst he, no time to waste,  
 To profit by the hit made haste.

At this inexplicable scene  
 Great wonder 'what it all could mean'  
 Pervaded King and Queen and mob;  
 Dials popped in and out from fob,  
 Repeatedly; and 'Time!' was called  
 So oft, that hoarse the Heralds bawled.  
 At length the King began to shout:  
 "What are the combatants about?"  
 The Wolf was on the point to snarl  
 Reply; but **Reynard**: "We imparle,  
 Your Highness!" interposing, said:  
 And thereupon resumed the thread  
 Of talk with **Æsengrim**, by saying:

**O**p mind, indeed, hath long been weighing  
 The grievous losses you incur,  
 Should I my pilgrimage defer  
 Much longer; for at Rome, you see,  
 The Pope, who hath regard for me,  
 My supplication sure would grant,  
 And not refuse the thing you want  
 No less than I do—absolution:  
 I, for my open-faced collusion  
 At your escape from holy orders;  
 You, for th' affront upon the boarders,  
 In taking to your heels! Moreover,  
 Oh **Æsengrim**! what life of clover  
 Might you and I not pass together—  
 The Church's ban removed! All weather  
 Would be the same to us! for we  
 Would dwell in perfect amity!

Should Lamb's flesh fail, and times get harder  
 Than common, you might ply my larder:  
 Your strength, and my sharp sight, combined,  
 No wish, as 'O that I had dined!  
 Could e'er escape our well-lined throats!  
 For, then, if you 'd no Lambs, my Goats  
 The void could fill: and I perceive  
 This hateful tournay will not leave  
 One tooth remaining in your jaws!  
 You cannot take a prey with claws  
 Alone! tho' wise you are, and wary,  
 Some dental aid is necessary  
 To help you kill, when you have caught:  
 Who is to do this?—have you thought?



**I** make small 'count of eyesight gone  
 In this encounter, since you've one  
 Eye yet unscathed,—that's quite  
 Sufficient to admit the light!  
 And handier to close at night  
 Than two! Bethink! if me you slay,  
 Forth dating from this very day,  
 A feud between our Houses both  
 Will breed: my boys, of tender growth  
 As yet, have sworn a solemn oath,  
 So soon as they have beards, to lie  
 In ambush, and your family  
 To cut up, root and branch! Besides,  
 How small the quarrel that divides  
 Our hearts this moment from each other!

Reach me the hand of friendship, brother!  
 I'll grasp it to my heart of hearts,  
 And keep it there, till death us parts.  
 Be thou magnanimous, and great!  
 Prove to the world how void of hate  
 Your soul is! Let the kingdom own  
 The days of chivalry not flown!"

**D**eber! (exclaimed the Wolf): thou scamp!  
 I've got thee! and thy dirty lamp  
 Of life shall out! Prepare to die!"—  
 But, pending this brief colloquy  
 The Fox was pondering the mode  
 To settle all, by other Code  
 Than that of the duello. Now  
 Whilst **Isengrim** his '*thee* and *thou*'  
 Indulged, the crafty **Reynard**, quick  
 Deliver'd him a villain kick  
 Right in the midriff!—down he dropp'd!  
 Like some tall forester, when lopp'd  
 By stroke of woodman's axe!—'t was all!  
 He spake not, groaned not, in his fall!  
 Outstretched upon the ground, there lay  
 The Wolf—he 'd fainted clean away!  
 No Herald's voice—no tucket's cheer,  
 The noble **Isengrim** could hear!  
 An all-but-victor lately—now,  
 Prostrated, palsied, by one blow!  
 Nay, not so!—by a kick unknighly—  
 Foul aimed, yet for the mark too rightly!

Alas! its only merit, that!  
 But what cared Reynard? It was pat!  
 And told! and did its business well!  
 'T was everything desirable!—

**T**he fight was o'er—the Wolf dragged out,  
 More dead than living, mid the shout  
 Of rabble; whilst the Heralds cry,  
 'Largesse!' the others 'Victory!'  
 The air with noise and din resounded;  
 The friends of Isengrim, confounded,  
 Slunk off, whilst Reynard's stayed: indeed,  
 The very people who agreed  
 The Fox's death a public good  
 Had been, now 'mong the foremost stood,  
 By acclamations to attest  
 Regard, outheroing the rest!

**A**scenting, then, from off his throne—  
 Whilst Reynard, his obeisance shewn,  
 Knelt down—the King, up-standing, spake:  
 "Reynard! this sword, as guerdon, take!  
 Bravely in combat hast thou borne thee!—  
 Friends all! let this great verdict warn ye,  
 How wag your tongues in accusation  
 'Gainst characters of rank, and station!  
 For thee, thou champion! now, and here,  
 Of infamy I speak thee clear!  
 As newly-driven snow is, white!  
*Sans peur, et sans reproche*, in fight!

By this, we constitute thee Knight!  
 Rise up! and, hence departing, go—  
**Sir Reynard the Fox, of Husterloh!**  
 Then loud and long-continued cheers  
 Made music to the Fox's ears,  
 From every side. Without alloy  
 That moment of ecstatic joy!  
 The Badger to his old friend stept,  
 And, on his bosom falling, wept  
 Big tears of huge delight; but he  
 The Knight—observed new dignity,  
 Betok'ning distance somewhat long—  
 As **Greybeard** thought—he *might* be wrong.  
 This little episode soon o'er,  
 The Knight stood up the King before,  
 And said:

“**May** 't please you, mighty Sire!  
 Great merit only can aspire  
 To honours such as these—I'll try  
 To bear their burthen blushingly.  
 But e'en in this exultant hour,  
 Recurring thoughts will rise, to sour  
 The sweets of triumph! many here  
 There are, who once to me were dear,  
 But never can be more—for why?  
 They did accuse me wrongfully!  
 By **Asengrim** and his vile art  
 Seduced to choose the hostile part,  
 'Gainst one who often, for their good,  
 Had walked thro' fire, and braved the flood—

By envy eaten up, they saw  
 Me prosper; looking all before,  
 But never once behind! E'en so  
 As once those Curs, that used to go  
 And hang about the kitchen door-sill,  
 To snap up any savoury morsel—  
 At length, one, cleverer than the rest,  
 Rushed in, and seized a chicken-breast—  
 Not scatheless, tho'—for Madam Cook  
 From off the fire the saucepan took,  
 And did th' intruder's tail well scald.  
 The others, on his exit, bawled:  
 'The Cook and he in league are! See!  
 'T is *he* gets all the meat! whilst we  
 Go starve!'—'Nay, not so fast, my friends!  
 (Rejoined the other) Fortune sends  
 To all alike—each one a bit—  
 The luck lies in the fetching it!  
 Ye look no further than your nose—  
 See what my hinder parts disclose!  
 With horror, then, they turned, and saw  
 His tail all scarified and raw!  
 Then off they went, and left him there!—

**T**hus is it with the world! O rare!  
 Succeeds a man—(no matter what  
 The cost)—they say, 'The meat *he* 's got!  
 They never stop t' inquire the 'how?'—  
 'He 's *got* it!' say they: that 's enow!—  
 To ends they look, not means; and therefore,

The meat, and not the man, they care for!  
 His tail may scalded be—the skin  
 Clean gone—they 'll offer not a pin  
 To help him—off they scamper, all!  
 And leave him, leaning to the wall!  
 Some here can have no hesitation  
 To fit the fable's application!"—  
 He said, and singled by his look  
 A score or two—that none mistook.

**Q**uereon the King: "Well hast thou said,  
 Friend **Reynard**! well illustrated  
 The ruling passion of our kind—  
 The sum, sans reckoning, to find!  
 Thy groat of wit is worth a ducat!  
 Wear nothing for the Daws to pluck at!  
 Be good, as thou art wise! and I  
 New lustre to thy dignity  
 Will add: my subjects thou shalt lead:  
 Our Privy Councillor in need:  
 First Noble in our famed land  
 Be thou! and sit on our right hand!  
 Our Keeper of the Seals shalt be!  
 Our conscience in thy custody  
 We place; and, furthermore, create  
 Thee, **Reynard**, Chancellor of State!"

**I**n this wise was the Fox promoted:  
 With honours, stars, distinctions, coated,  
 Till almost cumbersome they felt—  
 So fast the trumping cards were dealt!

At length, departing from the scene,  
 Which had for him so shifting been,  
 He travelled home by easy stages,  
 With trains of servitors and pages.  
 In pride of place and new promotion,  
 His hopes unbounded as the ocean,  
 He entered **Malpart** once more :  
 His wife and cublings, at the door  
 Received him, with unwonted state ;  
 Whilst neighbours did illuminate.  
 He soon affected pomp viceregal :  
 The boys rejoiced in Hawk and Beagle ;  
 And ever, when they walked abroad,  
 Each, armed with hunting-whip and cord,  
 Belayed the passengers they met,  
 In merry sport, and none to let !  
 More sons like these the Fox's dame  
 Brought forth, in course of time : the same,  
 In disposition, as their sire.

**N**ow—if you curiously inquire—  
 The **Keynards** are, proverbially,  
 A numerous, scattered family :  
 Search where you will throughout the map  
 Of Christendom, its vigorous sap  
 Hath rooted ; and the branches shoot  
 Leaves evergreen, and clustering fruit :  
 All, more or less, in some degree,  
 Take after the old parent tree :

Tho' heralds make a fuss and clatter  
 About the quarterings—no matter!

**G**ood Gentles! heark'neth what I say:  
 And bear it well in mind, alway:  
 Let every man to wisdom turn!  
 Love virtue!—evil only spurn!—  
 For that alone this book was writ:  
 None other drift there is in it!  
 About your hearts this precept bind:  
**Keep good before, thrust sin behind.**  
 Cheap, too, this book: with it you buy  
 Experience, free of penalty,  
 The 'world and all its ways' is here  
 (For money, and the cost not dear!)  
 In pleasant masque: read it! 't will cheer  
 Your Christmas hearth, for many a year!

**God shield us all from sin and folly!  
 And purge our thoughts of melancholy!**

**Finis.**

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