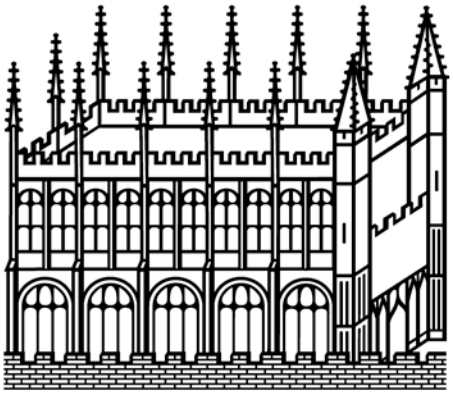

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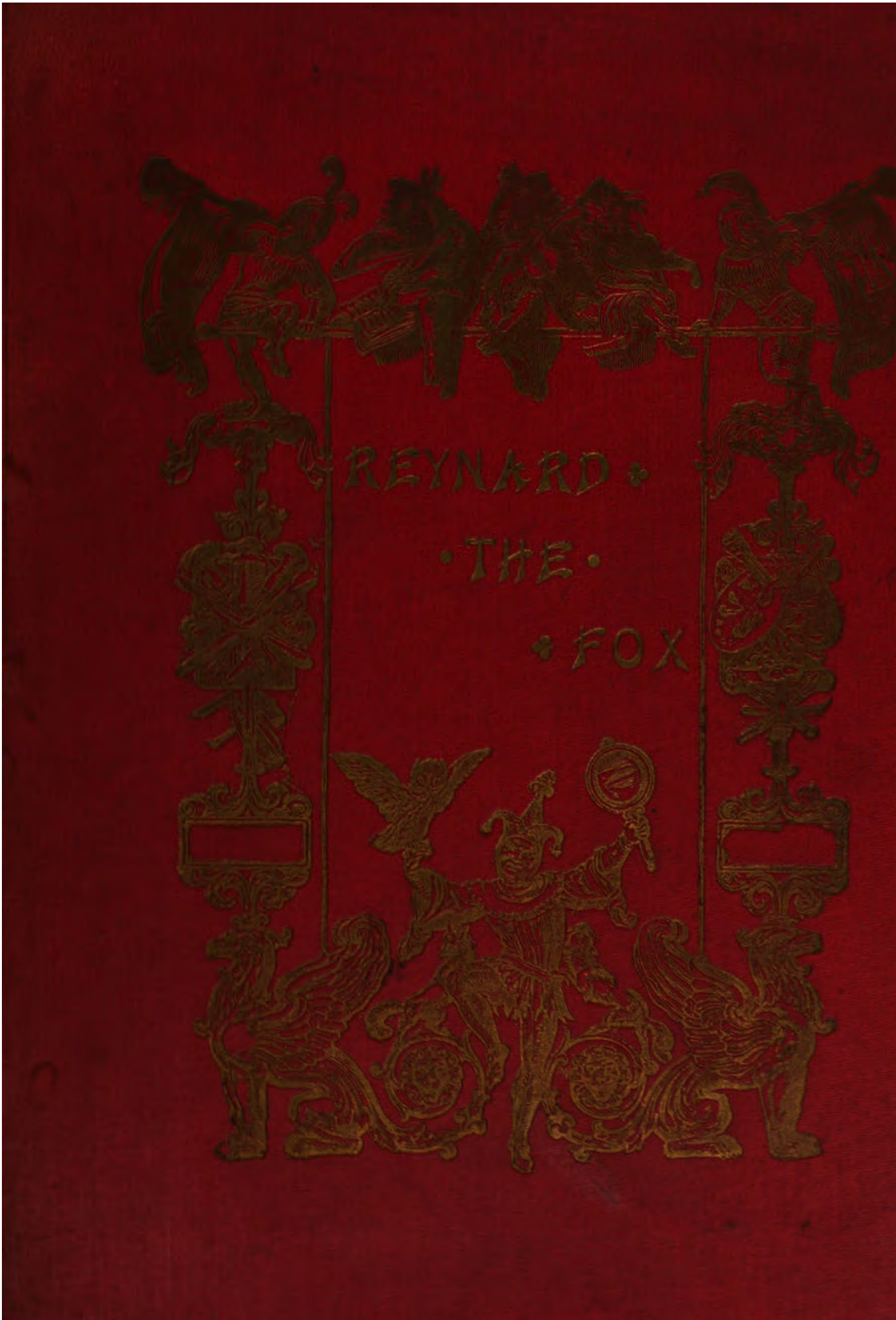
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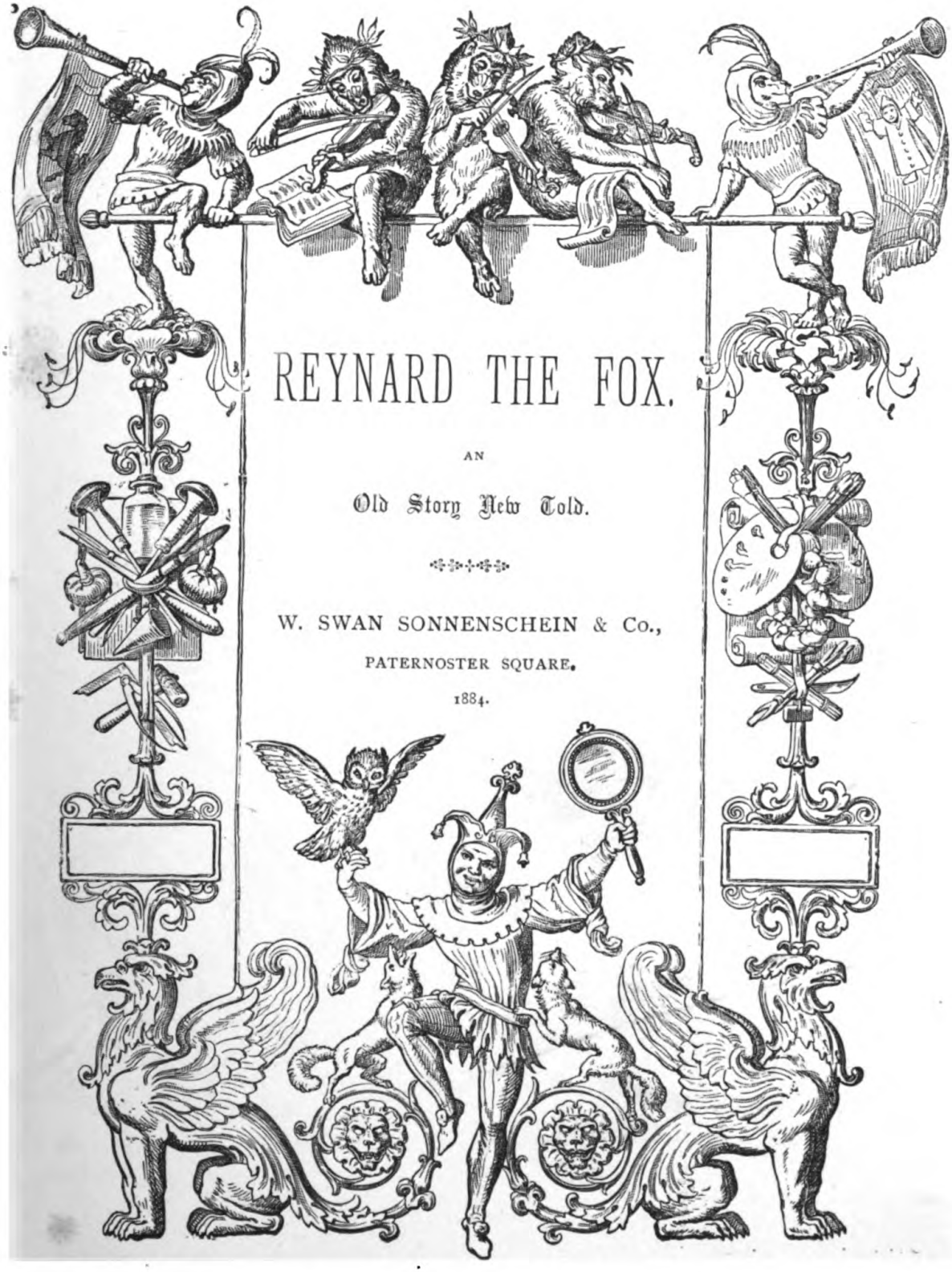
REYNARD THE FOX.

"He despised this high-born crowd with all his heart; still it gave him unspeakable satisfaction to see them cringe, and fawn and flatter." [*Frontispiece.*



REYNARD THE FOX.

AN

Old Story New Told.

W. SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & Co.,

PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1884.

REYNARD THE FOX

An Old Story Retold

BY

MME DE SANCTIS

LONDON
W. SWAN SONNENSCHEIN AND CO.
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1885

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REYNARD THE FOX.

CHAPTER I.

THE delightful festival of Whitsuntide was come; both field and wood, hill and valley, were green and fresh; the birds sang joyously; every meadow was decked with flowers; heaven and earth were alike beautiful.

So the lion, the king of beasts—Nobel was his name—determined to assemble all his court, so that he might receive the homage of his courtiers and vassals, and assure them of the continuance of his favour. His heralds were sent out far and wide throughout the forest to give notice of his Majesty's decree, and to

desire that all his loyal subjects should attend the court unless they would be considered traitors. So within a few days the beasts came flocking from all quarters to do homage and enjoy the feast. Only Reynard the fox was missing, because he was afraid to face the court, he had committed so many crimes.

First came the king's cousins, Bruin the bear and Isegrim the wolf, followed by their kindred and the nobles in great state, amongst them the bullock, stag, and boar, who were present as chamberlain, equerry, and gentleman in waiting. Besides these there were all the inhabitants of the air, from the eagle down to the smallest sparrow, who had a mind to go to court as well as the best of them. The motley company thronged in in such multitudes that the rest of the world seemed almost deserted, and Nobel the king received them right royally. He wore a golden crown and a royal mantle, and round his neck a chain supporting his household order in diamonds,—it represented a strangled lamb, and was

"The beasts came flocking from all quarters to do homage." [*face p* 2

emblematic of his majesty's peculiar amusement during leisure moments; he had also a sceptre in his hand, and was seated on a splendid throne, the top of which was ornamented with the royal motto, viz., "Give me what is yours and leave me what is mine." So they all came and kissed the lion's hands and feet, and if anyone was not great enough for such an honour, he was highly pleased at being allowed to kiss the tip of King Nobel's tail.

When the *levée* was over, the king looked round graciously, and, finding that everybody was present with a single exception, he desired to know what had prevented Reynard the fox from obeying the royal summons. At first there was general silence after this question, but then the king's cousin, Isegrim the wolf, came boldly forward and began the complaint. "There are so many here," said he, "whom Reynard has offended by his evil deeds, that fear keeps him at home, and if your majesty has not yet heard any accusation against him,

it is only because we all respect the day, and fear to spoil the royal enjoyment; but there are numberless charges against him, and all his accusers are only too anxious to bring them before your majesty."

"Justice before everything!" cried the king, and added that he was ready at once to hear the complaint of anyone who thought that he had been injured by Reynard.

Then Isegrim, as the eldest, began again, saying, "Most gracious lord and master, hear me! You are great, powerful, and generous. All receive justice before your judgment seat, and you heap benefits upon those who surround your throne. Listen, then, and be moved at my tale of the misery which Reynard is causing me. He insults my wife and children whenever he meets them; he even forced his way into my house, and ill-treated the young ones so that three of them lie there blind at this moment! I sent him a summons and challenged him to fight, but when the day came he crept into his hole and escaped. But

" There are so many whom Reynard has offended by his evil deeds, that fear keeps him at home." [*face p.* 4.

his tricks against me and my family are still going on, and even worse than ever. If I were to relate them, it would take me weeks; I could fill whole volumes with them!"

Here Isegrim stopped, breathless with passion, and a little dog called Wackerlos came forward, walking on tiptoe, and, with many nods and bows and much affectation, addressed the king in French, telling how once in the winter time he was very, very poor, and had nothing left but a little bit of sausage which was safely hidden under a bush, and how Reynard could not rest until he had smelt it out and stolen it, so that poor little Wackerlos was exposed to the risk of starvation.

But here Hintze the cat sprang in, indignantly exclaiming, "You should not take up the time of the court with such trifling nonsense! There is nobody here who might not justly accuse Reynard, the king more than any of us, because the rascal breaks the peace every day; but your complaint, Wackerlos, is simply ridiculous! In the first place, years

have passed since that affair, besides which the sausage was mine, so if anybody is to complain about it, I should be the one. I went out hunting one night, and in the course of my ramble went into a mill, where, as the miller's wife was asleep, I breakfasted in the well-stocked larder, and confess that I took away with me a little sausage, in case I should feel hungry before reaching home. Wackerlos found this sausage, upon which my forethought had certainly given me every right of property!"

"Where is the good of talking and lamenting?" began the panther. "Everybody knows that Reynard is a rogue, a thief, and a murderer; through him any one of the noblest amongst us, even his majesty himself, might lose both goods and honour, and he would only laugh if he did but get a bite at a fat capon! Let me tell you what he did yesterday to Lampe the hare; there he stands, the good little fellow whom nobody dislikes. Reynard pretended to be pious, and offered to teach him all that was necessary for a chap-

"Reynard had Lampe by the throat, and would certainly have killed him if I had not luckily come that way."

[*face p.* 7.

lain's office, so they sat down together and began to sing the Creed. But Reynard could not leave off his old tricks, but caught little Lampe by the throat with his claws. Now I was coming along the road, and wondered to hear the chant stop as soon as it began, so I went to see the reason, and knew Reynard at once,—he had Lampe by the throat, and would certainly have killed him if I had not, luckily, come that way. There he stands! Look at the wounds on his neck as the strongest evidence against the brigand who mocks at law and order. If a stop is not soon put to such doings, people will laugh at us all for cowards. O good king, if you allow this to go unpunished, let Reynard go free, and do not execute justice according to the law, your children in years to come will be slandered by the people for his crimes!"

"Oh! I wish he were dead and buried," cried Isegrim; "that would be the best thing for honest folk; we shall have no peace of our lives so long as *he* is allowed to go about!"

Here Grimbart the badger, who was Reynard's nephew, took up the speech, and bravely defended his uncle as follows:—

"Sir Isegrim," said he, "remember the old saying, 'An enemy's mouth seldom speaks truth'—what have you to say against my uncle? If he were present, and in as great favour with the king as you are, you would take good care not to speak as you have done. You can remember very exactly any little slips which my uncle may have made, but you say nothing about your own misdoings, though there are many here who could relate some of them. Take, for instance, that story about the fish-cart.

"There was a man driving a cart full of fresh plaice, and you would have liked some, but you had no money; so, in your greedy selfishness, you persuaded Reynard to lie down in the middle of the road as if he were dead. That was a cunning plot, indeed! When the man came near, he jumped down from the cart, and drew a large knife to kill my uncle, but the clever creature lay still and never stirred, as if he

were really dead. The man believed that he was, so he threw him on the cart, chuckling to himself as he thought how much money he should get for Reynard's beautiful coat and his brush. My uncle lay as still as he could, but, as the fisherman drove along, kept throwing down fish till he thought that Isegrim must have collected a fair number; then he got up, jumped down suddenly, and joined his friend, expecting, at least, to get his share of the treat. But no! There was Sir Isegrim offering him, with a broad grin, all the bones, and telling him how much it was to be hoped that such dainty food would not disagree with him!

"Another time it was just the same, when Reynard got him a fat pig one Christmas. It had just been killed, and, after a hard struggle with the watch-dog, my uncle managed to secure it, but he had received some painful wounds in the fight, and was obliged to have them dressed before he could go to supper. Isegrim received him in the most friendly manner, saying that one of the finest joints had been kept for him,

and what do you think was set on the table? Why, nothing but the nail from which the pig had been hanging!

"Sir King, there are hundreds more of such instances, which I will not quote; if Reynard were here in your gracious presence, he would defend himself far better than I can do.

"Now as to that fable about the hare. It is absurd to say that a master is not to be permitted to punish a lazy or careless scholar; if there were such a rule, how would young people grow up?

"Then there is the story about Wackerlos and his sausage. We have heard already that it was stolen, so the less he says about it the better, and how can my uncle be blamed because he took away stolen goods from the thief? Should men of birth and position encourage thieves and conceal their evil deeds? If Reynard had hanged the miserable cur upon the spot, it would have been excusable, but he let him go, out of respect for the king, who alone possesses the right of life and death. But

" They carried solemnly on a bier the body of a hen without head or neck."

[*face p.* 11.

however admirably my poor uncle may act, nobody gives him any credit for it!

"Since the king's peace has been proclaimed he has entirely altered his manner of living, and leads the life of a hermit; he eats only once a day, has given up meat, wears a hair shirt, and, as somebody who had been there told me yesterday, has left his castle Malepartus and built himself a hermitage. How thin he has become with all his austerities you will see when he comes to defend himself, and to cause all these artful and cowardly accusations to vanish as the morning clouds fade before the glorious presence of the rising sun."

As Grimbart was finishing his speech for the defence, the assembly saw, to their great astonishment, Henning the cock drawing near to them, with all his relations. They carried solemnly on a bier the body of a hen without head or neck,—it was Henning's favourite daughter Scratchfoot, who had laid more eggs in her short life than any other hen between Holland and France. Two young cockerels, her

brothers, named Kreyant and Kantart, walked on either side of the bier as mourners, and each carried a lighted taper.

"Most gracious lord and king," began Henning, interrupted every now and then by the sobs and cries of his relations, "see here what Reynard has done to me! This is a piece of his work! It was but this spring past that my happiness seemed boundless in every way. Ten fair sons and fourteen blooming daughters surrounded me, beaming with joy and health; the excellent hen, my wife, brought them all up in one year, and we enjoyed plenty and safety, having our home in the courtyard of a wealthy convent. The whole building is surrounded by strong and high walls, whilst the entrances are watched by six mastiffs; these brave warders loved my children and watched them carefully lest any harm should befall them. But the thief Reynard could not sleep in peace, for thinking of our perfect happiness and how we cared nothing about him. Night after night he used to creep round the walls, waiting for

"One day Reynard came to the gates dressed like a pilgrim, and bearing a sealed letter." [*face p.* 13.

a chance to steal in, and sniff at the doors, but once the dogs saw him, and he had to run away with the loss of some of his skin, although he managed to escape; after that he left us in peace for a time.

"But now hear his cunning. One day Reynard came to the gates dressed like a pilgrim, and bearing a sealed letter. When I saw that it was your Majesty's signet, I received him, and found there your royal order commanding absolute peace between all beasts and birds, of which I had already heard. He told me also that he had become a monk, and in obedience to his sacred vow must never touch meat again, so that in future all might feel at their ease so far as he was concerned. Besides this he showed me a certificate from the prior saying how abstemious he had become, and in witness of all pointed to a hair shirt under his coat. Then he said he must hurry away, as he had a great deal of business and had to sing evensong that day, and away he went reading his prayers most devoutly.

"Full of joy, I went to my family and told them the news, which they were all delighted to hear. Since Reynard had turned monk, we had nothing more to fear, and we agreed to make a little excursion into the fields the next day, by way of a change. But, alas! the traitor was hiding behind the bushes, and captured and carried off the finest of my sons!

"After having once tasted such delicious food, neither dogs nor guns could keep him away any longer. In some way or other he found means to enter the yard, and carried off my children one by one, till out of the whole number only five were left to me. Oh, have pity on my grief! Here you see the body of my daughter whom he killed yesterday—the dogs managed to rescue so much of her. There she lies dead, my sweet child, and Reynard is her murderer!"

"Draw nearer, Grimbart," said the king, "and see how the hermit fasts and does penance! If I live but a year, he shall rue it, but the time has gone by for words. Poor sad

Henning, the only thing possible to comfort you for your loss shall be done: your daughter shall be buried with every honour, and then I will consult with my nobles how best to punish the murderer."

So Henning's darling was buried with almost royal honours, and over her tomb there was set a beautiful marble monument, bearing these words:

"Scratchfoot, Henning's daughter,
the best of all hens, who laid
many eggs, and scratched discreetly.
Alas! here she lies through Reynard's
wickedness. Let all the world take note
of his cruel and false act, and weep for the dead."

The king held a council, at which he decided, with all his advisers, that a messenger should at once be sent to Reynard, to summon him to court, where his future fate was to be discussed as soon as he appeared, and Bruin the bear was appointed to the post of ambassador. The king warned him before he started to be very careful and wise, as there

were no limits to Reynard's cunning and treachery,—no doubt he would flatter the messenger, and try all sorts of tricks such as one never would dream of.

"Be easy, and do not trouble yourself about me," answered Bruin, with a touch of vanity; "if he attempts to plot against me, I will punish him severely."

"Bruin thought for a little while, and then knocked loudly."

[*face p.* 17.

CHAPTER II.

BRUIN the bear set out the next morning on his way to the mountains, and passing through a wide sandy desert, came to the hill where Reynard used to hide when he was hunted; but the bear went further, and came to Malepartus, which was his chief stronghold, and the best of all his castles and houses, of which he had many. Finding the gate locked and bolted, Bruin thought for a little while, and then knocked loudly, crying out at the same time, "Cousin, are you at home? Bruin the bear has come as a special messenger from the king. His majesty has vowed that he will see you at court, to judge who is right and who is wrong, you or your

enemies. It will cost you dear to disobey, for, if you do, there will only remain to you a choice between the gallows and the axe; so take a friend's advice, and follow me quietly at once."

Reynard heard every word, for he was slily peeping out of the window; but, so as to gain time and to think the matter over, he crept back again into the inner parts of Malepartus, without having been espied by the bear. There were a great many secret passages, entrances, and hiding places, in the castle, which could be used as places of refuge or for flight in case of need, and formed at all times excellent traps for the smaller animals, whom the robber murdered before the poor victims could find their way out again.

Having made sure, by a second peep, that the bear was alone without any followers, Reynard opened the door,—plotting all the time how he might be revenged upon the messenger for his insulting speech,—and came out craftily, bowing most politely, and exclaiming,

"Welcome, dear cousin! Excuse me if I kept you waiting, but I was just in the middle of evensong; that was the reason of my delay. Thank you so much for coming; it will certainly save me at court; at least, I hope so! Welcome a thousand times, cousin, but still I am sorry that you should have had the trouble of this long journey; how tired you must feel! Mercy, how hot you are! Your fur is all wet, and your paws are muddy! But had the king no other messenger to send but the one of his court whom he honours most? However, it will be all the more to my advantage; I beg of you to give me your powerful help at court, for then nobody can do me any harm. I meant to have gone there myself to-morrow, and let it be so still, for to-day I feel far too unwell for such a journey; I have eaten of a dish which never agrees with me, and this time it has upset me worse than ever."

"What dish was that, cousin?" asked Bruin.

"What good would it do me now to tell

you?" sighed Reynard. "You know that we poor people are not like the nobility, and cannot live as we should like to do, but are often obliged to put up with coarse food, when there is nothing better in the larder, even at the risk of being taken ill afterwards. It was a large honeycomb, all sweet and juicy, but I must own it is food which I never touch unless I am obliged."

"What do I hear?" cried Bruin; "do you speak with such contempt of honey, when many would be glad to get it at any price! For my part, I prefer it to any food. Do get me some; you shall not regret it. I shall be able to return your kindness some other time!"

"You are joking, cousin," answered Reynard.

"No, indeed," declared the bear; "I was never more in earnest in all my life."

"Since that is really the case," continued the fox, "I can easily oblige you. The farmer who lives at the foot of the mountains

has plenty of honey; I am sure that neither you nor any of your family ever saw so much of it together."

On hearing this account, Bruin's longing for the delicious food became irresistible.

"Oh, do take me there!" he cried, quite excited; "let us make haste and set off; I shall never forget your kindness, even if there should not be enough to satisfy me."

"Let us go," said Reynard; "you will find plenty of honey. My feet are very sore to-day, but my love for you will make me forget the hardness of the road. Indeed, I do not know anybody whom I respect so much as you, but you will reward my affection on the day when I have to defend myself against my enemies by giving me your valuable help. You shall be satisfied to-day as you never were before!"

The rascal meant all the blows that were awaiting the poor greedy bear.

The fox ran on before, and the bear followed after, blinded by desire and hope, and making

a fool of himself, as many others have done before and since. So, to Bruin's joy, they came at last to the farmer's house.

It was already dusk when they arrived, and Reynard knew that there had been a carpenter at work there, who, in order to split the trunk of an oak-tree which lay in the courtyard, had forced a large wedge into it on one side, so as to make a large opening. The fox led Bruin up to this, and said, "In this tree, cousin, you will find more honey than you expect if you only put your head in as far as you can; but do not eat too much at a time, or it may do you more harm than it has done me."

"Do you take me for a glutton?" said the bear; "moderation is good in all things."

At the same time he thrust his nose into the trunk as far as he could, right up to the ears, as well as his forepaws. Reynard at once set to work, tearing and knocking with all his might, till he managed to loosen the wedge out; the two sides of the trunk snapped

"Reynard was delighted to see the farmer, who he hoped would soon rid him altogether of Bruin."

[*face p.* 23.

together, and there was Bruin a prisoner. It was of no use for him to abuse Reynard, or to entreat mercy and scold; all that came of his howling and roaring was that the noise alarmed the farmer, who came out to see what was the matter and brought his billhook with him. Seeing a bear, he soon gave the alarm, and from all sides men and women came running, armed with axes, pitchforks, clubs, and stones.

Reynard was delighted to see the farmer, who he hoped would soon rid him altogether of Bruin, and thought this was the right moment to retire to Malepartus. Before starting, however, he could not help making a few remarks, such as "How do you like the honey, Bruin? Do not eat too much of it; the farmer will be here directly, and will bring you something to help your dinner down!"

Though Bruin could not see, he could hear the cries and shrieks of the approaching countryfolk; he thought his last hour had come, and with a desperate effort at last

freed his head from the wood, but, alas! all the skin of his face and nose remained behind, streams of blood were trickling down his cheeks, and besides all this, his paws were still held fast. At last he tore them out, in this case also leaving skin and claws behind, but by this time found himself surrounded by his enemies, who were attacking him mercilessly with whatever kind of weapon came first to hand. He could not possibly fight in his present condition, so, almost mad with pain and terror, made a rush at the women; they were dreadfully afraid of him even now, and ran away without looking where they were going, so that four or five of them fell into the river. Of course, there was a great confusion, and whilst the men were busy in saving the women, Bruin found an opportunity of crawling towards the water.

He had never tried to swim before, and hoped he should be drowned; but, to his great surprise, he floated; and when the farmer and his friends had time to think about the bear, the current

had already carried him a long way down, and he was fast disappearing. At once they turned against those whom, a moment before, they had been so anxious to save, and all cried out, "If women would only stop at home, the world would be a great deal better off! This escape of the bear will be a disgrace to us for ever!"

Then they went to look at the tree trunk, and there they found the skin and claws, so they laughed and said, "He is sure to come back; see, he has left something as a pledge of his return!"

Meanwhile the river had carried Bruin to a place where he could easily reach the shore, so he rested there a little; he could neither stand nor walk, and felt violent pains in his head. He thought he should never see another morning, and found only a little comfort in cursing Reynard, the farmer, and, above all, his own folly. What was he to do? He could hardly move; and if by some miracle he should manage to reach the court again, what should

he look like? He was disgraced for the rest of his life!

Reynard, after leaving the bear, had found the way to Malepartus rather long; so for a change he paid a visit to the hen-house, which he knew well enough how to find, caught a young chicken, and, as it looked very nice and tender, thought he might as well eat it up at once, so as to save the trouble of carrying it all the way home. Then he slowly loitered towards Malepartus, thinking to himself as he went, "To-day I have cleared off all old scores with Bruin. Oh, how pleased I am! He is dead, the stupid brute, and nobody can accuse me of his death; in any case he will never complain of me again, or injure me behind my back. Courage, Reynard! may all other enemies share his fate!"

But as he said these words he came to the river, and looking across to the opposite bank, he spied the bear resting, a sight which caused him the greatest grief and disappointment. "Oh, that clumsy fellow of a peasant!" exclaimed he;

"just fancy such a prize being brought to his very door, meat such as even noblemen would be glad to taste, and then to let it escape him!"

Still he saw with pleasure the miserable state in which his victim now was, and thought he would have a little more sport with him, so cried out, "What, cousin, is that you again! I hope you have not forgotten anything at the farmer's! Why, where are your gloves? Did you leave them in payment of all the honey you ate, and was it nice? How you have painted yourself; is that the latest fashion at court? And why do you wear a red cap?" with many more such wicked jeers.

Bruin felt too ill to answer; so, to avoid this unbearable talk, he crept again into the water, feeling thankful that it took him away. He only wished that somebody would put an end to his misery; but at last reason told him that the only way of having Reynard punished as he deserved was to reach the court at any cost. So he summoned up all his courage, and, since he could not walk, determined to get there

by rolling over and over, which, with much pain, he contrived to do in the course of four days.

The king was furious when he saw the state in which the bear had returned; everybody was quite frightened. He swore by his crown and sceptre that he would avenge his favourite, and the council was summoned at once to consider what was to be done. It was decided to send another messenger for Reynard, and this time Hinze the cat was selected. He only ventured a very modest objection; said that he did not think himself at all fit for such an errand, and how should he, who was so small and weak, succeed where Bruin the bear had failed? and so on; but the king would listen to no objections.

"Go," said Nobel. "It is true you are no giant, but little people with plenty of wit and cunning are the most powerful in the world. Go and order Reynard to appear; if he obliges us to send a third messenger, his disobedience will be visited upon him and his kindred till the end of time!"

Hinze bowed respectfully and said, "I obey

your will, and should I see a favourable sign on the right-hand side of my way, I shall believe that the journey will be a lucky one."

CHAPTER III.

HINZE had gone but a little way on the road to Malepartus when he perceived a linnet flying about before him. "Good luck, dear bird!" said he; "spread thy wings and fly to the right of my way!" But the linnet perched on a tree on the left-hand side, and began to sing. Hinze felt his spirits sink, but comforted himself, as people often do, by deciding in his own mind that such signs were only good for superstitious people, and not for him, and that he did not believe in them in the slightest. After saying this over to himself several times, he persuaded himself that it was true, and went boldly on his way to Malepartus.

"He found Reynard sitting before his door, enjoying the cool evening breeze." [*face p.* 31.

When he arrived there, he found Reynard sitting before his door, enjoying the cool evening breeze, in the midst of his family. He bowed politely, and said, "I wish you a long and happy life, and come with a message from the king calling you before him. You must defend yourself against your accusers, and if you disobey him, his Majesty threatens to visit it upon the whole of your race."

Reynard answered, "Welcome, my dear nephew; every blessing upon you," but in his wicked heart there were different thoughts. He continued, "Let us see, nephew; what can I offer you for supper? After a good meal we shall sleep better, and then be in a fit state to-morrow to take a long journey; let us start at daybreak. That greedy bear came here with threats and insults; he is strong and savage, and I would not have gone with him for the world, but now, of course, I shall obey the summons with pleasure. Of all my relations I like and trust you most."

"I think it would be better to start at once,"

objected Hinze; "the moon is shining beautifully, and I see nothing to keep us here any longer."

"Travelling at night is a dangerous affair," replied Reynard; "many who bow to us civilly enough in broad daylight may behave very differently in the dark."

"Well," said Hinze, "if I stop here, what are you going to give me for supper?"

"We are not very well off," answered Reynard, "but if you will kindly stop, I shall get you some honey, most delicious honey, all transparent.'

"I never touch such stuff," grumbled Hinze, turning up his nose; "if you have nothing better in the house, then let me have a mouse; I can be satisfied with that at any time, and leave the honey for somebody else."

"Are you so fond of mice?" asked Reynard; "oh, I can offer you plenty of those. My neighbour, the farmer, is always complaining that there are such numbers of mice in his barn, they destroy half his corn, and would

make a cartload or more if he could but catch them all; he hates them more and more every day."

"Do show me the barn," said Hinze eagerly; "I like a fine young mouse better than venison or anything."

"I am glad to hear of your fancy; you shall have a splendid feast, so let us not delay," exclaimed Reynard; and he really took the trustful cat to a barn close by. He had visited it before to steal some of the farmer's best chickens, and knew that to catch the thief a trap had been set in the opening through which the cat would have to creep. When they came to the right place, Reynard said, "Slip in, my dear nephew; just listen how the mice are squeaking! I will keep watch outside that no one may disturb you; when you have quite satisfied your appetite, come back to me; we will start as early as possible, and shorten the way with pleasant chat."

"Are you quite sure that I can enter without any danger?" asked Hinze doubt-

fully; "countryfolk are not always to be trusted."

"I did not know you were so timid," answered Reynard, "but, since you are, let us go home again; my wife will do her best to give us a good supper; and if it is not made of mice, let us enjoy it cheerfully all the same."

Hinze felt so much ashamed at Reynard's mocking tone, that he sprang in at the hole. The treacherous rope caught him round the neck at once, and in his struggles to get loose he was half strangled. He cried pitifully to the fox for help, but the rogue stood laughing outside.

"Are the mice very fat and tender?" he asked. "If only little Martin, the farmer's son, knew that you were there, he would bring you some mustard; he is such a well-bred boy. But is it the fashion at court to sing during meals? I wish Isegrim were here, and then all my friends could be feasted together!" And with these words Reynard ran away home.

Meanwhile the poor cat kept on crying and wailing, as cats do, to such an extent that he waked little Martin, who triumphantly called for help, as the thief who had stolen the chickens had evidently been caught in his trap. He and all the household came out, armed with sticks and pokers, to ill-treat their prisoner. Hinze, in despair, tried to gnaw the rope, and luckily at last managed to do so, but only after having lost one eye and being hurt and wounded in every possible way, so that it seemed almost a wonder that he was still alive. In great mental and bodily misery he reached the court next morning.

The king was so furious at seeing a second victim of Reynard's wickedness, that he threatened to have the traitor put to death without any judgment whatever. He at once called all his nobles and advisers to consult about the best means to get hold of the villain, when Grimbart the badger came forward, and said: "Many of those who are present are Reynard's enemies; but still I hope that none of them

would wish to deprive him of the right of defence which our law grants to every accused person. Let him be summoned a third time, and if he still refuses to come, then let the law take its course."

"I am afraid," replied the king, "that we should meet with some difficulty in finding a messenger. Who has an eye to spare? Who is daring enough to risk his life and health for the sake of this treacherous rogue? Nobody, I should think!"

"As to that," cried Grimbart, without hesitation, "I am quite at your service, in whatever capacity you please to send me, whether officially, as your Majesty's ambassador, or privately, as Reynard's friend and relation."

"Go, then," said Nobel; "you have heard all the complaints, and if after that you still mean to take your chance, good luck attend you! But be wise and careful, for you know with whom you have to deal, and he is a terrible person!"

Grimbart went straight to Malepartus, and

began by saying, "Uncle, I always knew that you were clever and cunning; how is it then that you make such blunders now? Don't you think that it is high time to leave off despising the king's commands? The number of your enemies is increasing every day, and complaints about you come in from all sides; if you are open to reasonable advice, take mine, and follow me at once to court. This is the third summons, and if you do not appear now, you will be condemned without the chance of defending yourself; the king will come with all his army, besiege you here in your castle, and destroy it; you will lose all your property, as well as your wife and children and your own life. You cannot defy the king for any length of time, so it will be far better for you to go to court; you have already passed through many a hard moment, and your wit and your clever tongue have saved you; why should they not do so again? Do as you have done before, —come happily out of the difficulty, and leave your enemies in shame and disgrace!"

"You are perfectly right there, nephew," answered Reynard, "and your advice is good; it will be much the wisest plan to go and defend myself. The king, no doubt, will be merciful to me, for he knows how useful my services are, and how much I am hated by many for that very reason; it was their jealousy that drove me from court. Even if my offences were ten times as great as they are, it would not harm me much in the end, because they cannot very well do without my advice, and so must needs overlook my weaknesses. Certainly I shall feel rather nervous in the presence of so many dangerous enemies, and that is the reason why I have been so unwilling to go to court; but the king is too powerful for me, and so I have no choice but to face them all, to save my wife and children from endless trouble."

Upon this Reynard bade a hearty good-bye to his family, and started at once with Grimbart. They continued their journey for a while without talking; at last the fox said:

"My heart is sorely heavy; I feel as if I were going to meet some dreadful fate! Let me then lighten the burden of my sins by confessing to you, since no priest is near; I shall not be the worse for it, even if I escape once more."

"In the first place," interrupted Grimbart, "you must forswear all robbery and thieving, and such-like disgraceful things; otherwise the confession cannot be of any use to you."

"I know that," sighed Reynard; "that is why I beg you to let me begin, and to listen attentively. I confess with shame," he continued, "that many a time I have ill-used Isegrim, Hinze, and others, but I will make amends for all. In some way or other I have offended nearly all the animals now living. I caught my cousin Bruin in the oak-tree, and sent him home bleeding and disgraced; Hinze lost an eye through my doings; and Henning is certainly right when he accuses me of stealing his children right and left whenever I came across them. Besides, I have insulted Isegrim

so often, that I could not tell you all the different cases.

"Once, for instance, we were strolling about together in one of the wealthiest parts of the country. I showed him how to get at the larder of a curate, which contained the finest ham and bacon I ever saw, as well as different sorts of other meat. We entered through a crevice in the wall, which Isegrim and I succeeded, after some trouble, in making wide enough to allow us to pass through. Of course, Isegrim, with his usual greediness, swallowed whatever he could get hold of, and at last found his body of such a size that every attempt to return by the same way proved useless. If I had left quietly, perhaps nobody in the village would have noticed his presence; but I ran about to attract attention, and at last I even entered the curate's dining room, where he was just making a hearty meal. A beautiful fat capon had been brought on the table; I snatched at it, and carried it away, dish and all. Up jumped his reverence to rescue his

"Up jumped his reverence to rescue his dinner from my clutches but in his fright knocked over the table."

[*face p.* 40.

dinner from my clutches, but in his fright knocked over the table with everything upon it. Of course he shouted out, and cried, 'Help! help! thieves! robbers! stop him!' In his anger he did not notice one of the bottles on the ground, slipped over it in trying to run, and down he fell. The first to appear was the cook, and in a few minutes a great many more came, so I ran away, and the whole crowd after me.

"When I reached the larder, I unluckily dropped my prize, for it was rather heavy to carry, but at any rate I had put them on Isegrim's track! When somebody stooped to pick up the capon, he noticed the wolf through the crevice, and I had the pleasure of knowing that I had not altogether failed by the shouts of 'Come here; another thief has caught himself! Don't let him escape also!' Isegrim paid dearly for his greediness this time; they hit and knocked him about so, that at last they made sure he was quite dead, so they dragged him out and threw him into a ditch some little

way off. How he recovered and managed to get home nobody knows; he did so, however, for after several weeks of illness, he made his appearance again in society.

"Though I had led him into such a horrible trap, he soon began to make up to me again, and assured me of his sincerest friendship. I knew the reason; he wanted a nice stock of fowls, and did not know how to get at them, so I thought of curing him by some other means, as the first punishment had evidently not been severe enough.

"I described to him a beam in a certain fowl-house, where the cock and seven hens, the best of their kind, used to roost; at least, that is what I told him. About midnight, in perfect darkness, I showed him the way through a garret window. 'You must go a little farther along this beam,' I said, 'for I myself have taken those that sit first.'

"'I am sure I cannot feel a single feather,' said Isegrim impatiently. Again I told him that fortune favoured the bold, and that if he

"Isegrim in a fright tried to run forward." [*face p.* 43.

was always so timid, he would never have any success, saying which I slipped out and banged the shutter.

"Isegrim in a fright tried to run forward, and fell right down from a considerable height, as only about one half of the beam was left; the other part, being rotten, had crumbled away long ago. The noise awakened the people, who came to see what could have tumbled in through the window, and you may easily imagine what followed, and how that business ended for Isegrim!"

Taking breath, Reynard continued, "Now I have told you all that weighed most heavily upon my conscience, so pray absolve me; I will humbly submit to any penance you choose."

Grimbart, as a man of the world, knew exactly how to behave under such circumstances. He made Reynard kneel down, and, breaking a little branch from a wayside bush, said—waving it three times in the air, as if he were going to strike the penitent—"Uncle,

you must now take this rod, put it on the ground, jump three times over it, and then kiss it as a sign of humility and obedience. That is the penance I inflict upon you, after which I absolve you from all your sins; you may feel your conscience clear, however great their number may have been before."

As soon as Reynard had done all that was ordered, with a good grace, Grimbart said, "Now, uncle, you must prove your repentance by your actions; read psalms and good books, go to church regularly, fast on the proper days, assist all whom you can in their troubles, be generous and kind to the poor, forswear all vice, all stealing and robbery, all treachery and wickedness, and you may be sure of your final salvation."

"Upon my solemn oath, I will do so!" said Reynard. And so the confession ended.

They went on their way quietly for a little while, until they came to where there was a nunnery a little way from the road, and many geese, fowls, and capons were feeding outside

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"'Uncle, you must now take this rod, put it on the ground, jump three times over it, and then kiss it.'" [*face p.* 44.

the wall; and as they talked the fox led Grimbart in that direction, pretending that it was the shortest way, though he was really thinking of the fowls which were walking about at their ease in the open field. He specially eyed one fine, plump young cock, which was walking rather behind the others, and all of a sudden he made a spring and caught it by the feathers, but the bird escaped.

"I am disgusted with your behaviour," exclaimed Grimbart indignantly; "is that the way you keep your vows? Only a minute ago you forswore all sin, and the mere sight of one poor little fowl is enough to make you take to evil ways again. It must be a fine sort of repentance that brings forth such fruits!"

But Reynard excused himself, saying, "My dearest nephew, I did it only through absence of mind; pray for me that this weakness of mine may be forgiven; it will certainly not happen again."

Next he led Grimbart over a little bridge,

and past another nunnery, where he had been before more than once, and knew from experience that the pious ladies who lived there also indulged in keeping all sorts of pets, especially poultry. Reynard tried to turn the badger's attention from himself by making an eloquent speech about cruelty in general, and particularly as shown in the case of Isegrim, whom he pointed out at some distance, dressed as a shepherd and attacking a ram, whilst, high up in the air, three eagles fought over an ewe which they had just carried off. He succeeded so far as that Grimbart entered deeply into the subject, and gave him an opportunity of quickly wringing a fowl's neck. Grimbart noticed nothing, even though Reynard had to drag his prey behind him for a time, until they passed a bush, which made a good place in which to hide it. But shortly after the badger saw that his companion was still glancing backwards towards where the fowls lived, and said:

"Fie, Reynard! where are your eyes wander-

'Reynard had to drag his prey behind him until they passed a bush, which made a good place in which to hide it.'

[*face p.* 46.

ing now? You really are a most dreadful glutton!"

"You should not be too hasty in your judgments," said the fox; "this time you are very much mistaken indeed! I was just praying for the souls of all the geese and fowls of which my cunning has deprived those holy women."

Grimbart pretended to believe him; but Reynard never turned away his eyes so long as he could perceive a feather.

At last they reached the main road again; and, as they drew near to the palace, Reynard felt his spirits sink, and dark clouds altogether overshadowed his mind, for his enemies were numerous and powerful enough to discourage the bravest.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN the rumour spread at court that Reynard was really coming, both great and small pressed forward to meet him, not from friendly reasons, but because everybody had something to complain about. Reynard looked as unconcerned as possible when, accompanied by Grimbart, he walked gracefully up to the steps of the throne, the picture of pride and conceit, as if he had been the king's own son, and had not the slightest weight upon his conscience. When he stood before Nobel, he quietly began:

"Mighty king and gracious lord, listen to me your most faithful servant, for such I well may call myself. I know that there are a

great many who hate me for that very reason; and I should certainly lose your favour if their slanders could, as they wish, influence your opinion. But fortunately your justice gives equal rights to accuser and accused; and, however much they may have invented during my absence, I trust your Majesty knows my devotion and faithfulness, and will find in them the chief reasons of my enemies' hatred."

"Silence!" commanded the king; "the time has gone by for talk and flattery; your misdeeds are known, and punishment awaits you. How have you kept the peace I ordained? There is Henning,—have you not stolen his children, you false and unfaithful servant, you thief! Besides, it seems to me that you try to prove the greatness of your devotion to me by despising and ill-treating my messengers. How did poor Hinze lose his health? How long will Bruin remain in torment before he recovers? But I shall not rebuke you any further. Here are the injured people; they

all complain of you, and you will find it difficult to say anything in your defence."

"My liege," cried Reynard, with affected surprise, "can I be answerable for other people's short-sightedness? Is it my fault that Bruin neglected your business, and went to steal the farmer's honey, and that the clumsy peasant punished him for the liberty? And why did he not defend himself? *Could* he not defend himself, instead of, like a coward, seeking refuge in the river? And if Hinze, whom I received with all honour, and offered anything that my house contained, preferred rather to go hunting the farmer's mice, in spite of all my warnings, how can I deserve punishment because of his folly? That would indeed be a slur upon your justice! But of course I am quite at your disposal, whether for good or for evil. If you like to see me roasted, blinded, hung, or beheaded, I am entirely in your power. We are all your inferiors, and where would be the use in the weak trying to resist the powerful? It can

give you but little satisfaction to kill me, but if it is to be so, here I am!"

Now all the accusers stepped forward, Bellyn the ram, Isegrim with his relations, Hinze, Bruin, and crowds of others; Baldwin the ass came, with Wackerlos, Lampe the hare, as well as goats, squirrels, weasels, and ermines. There were also the ox and the horse, with wild animals, such as the deer, roebuck, beaver, marten, and boar. They all came to lay some grievance before the king, and even the fowls of the air sent their representatives; there were the stork and crane, the duck, the goose, and foremost of all poor Henning in his great trouble. In fact, there were so many, that it is impossible to mention all their names; they all came with some more or less serious complaints against Reynard, and hoped to see him at last deservedly punished. Never had there been seen in court so many witnesses against one accused person since Nobel came to the throne.

Reynard, with cleverly chosen words, defended

himself in each particular case, and did it so artfully, that, in the end, he always made it appear that he himself was the injured person. But all his cunning could not save him this time. When it came to a decision, the king's counsel with one consent found him guilty of everything of which he had been accused, and declared, in consequence, that his life was forfeited, and condemned him to be hung by the neck till he was dead.

Reynard gave himself up for lost, since all his clever speeches had been of no avail, and feared his miserable end very much indeed. His friends were not less dispirited and taken by surprise at this turn of affairs. When they had heard the sentence, which the king himself pronounced, and saw Reynard bound, with so many ready to hurry him on to the place of execution, his relations, Martin the ape, Grimbart, and many others, expressed their discontent. Reynard was one of the chief among the barons, and now found himself not only deprived of his honours and privileges,

but condemned to a shameful death. What a blow to the whole nobility! So they determined to pay their respects to the king in a body, and to quit the court at once.

This annoyed Nobel very much; the loss of so many of his courtiers showed how powerful Reynard's party was after all, and the king remarked to one of his confidants: "To be sure, Reynard is very wicked; but we ought to have considered his relations, some of whom we absolutely cannot spare from court!"

Isegrim, Bruin, and Hinze were the busiest in helping Reynard to the gallows. They led him to the place of execution, and were in as great a hurry, and as much excited, as if they still felt afraid that their enemy might escape. During the preparations they were continually reminding one another of all the injuries they had received from the prisoner, and aggravating his misery by all sorts of insulting remarks. At last, when Isegrim kept on calling for a rope, Reynard felt his patience exhausted, and exclaimed:

"Since your hatred is so intense, and you are so over-anxious to help your cousin to his end, instead of defending him, why does not Hinze fetch you the rope you demand? He knows of a tolerably good and strong one, with which he first made acquaintance when he went after the farmer's mice, and met with nothing but shame and disgrace! Now, Bruin and Isegrim, make haste and despatch me; otherwise do not make too sure that I will not escape after all!"

The king, with his entire court, and even the queen and her attendants, was going to be present at Reynard's execution; they were followed by a numberless crowd of both the higher and lower classes, for whom such a sight had an equal attraction. Bruin led the prisoner, Isegrim held the ladder, whilst Hinze seemed particularly to enjoy his office; he had climbed up to the top of the tree that served as a gallows, and tried to tie the rope to it as fast as ever he could.

At this extreme moment Reynard racked his

"He spoke, from the top of the ladder, to the crowd." [*face p.* 55.

brains to find some bright idea by which he might save himself, and, at the same time, strike down with one blow his three deadly enemies. "Never despair!" said he to himself; "if I could only manage to get a chance of speaking once more! My friends are all gone, and I am surrounded by enemies; but never mind if I can only make them listen to me!"

So he spoke, from the top of the ladder, to the crowd, and said:

"I see death before me, and no more hope of escape; so let me beg of you to grant me one single favour before I leave this world,—that is, that you will allow me to confess publicly, and tell you of all the wrong I have done in my life, so that when I am dead and gone no innocent person may be accused of what I committed, unknown to all and unseen by any living eye. Thus I may, perhaps, be able to atone, to some small extent, for all the crimes which I now feel weighing upon my conscience."

Many pitied him, and a murmur went through

the crowd, which at last rose to a clamour in favour of granting his request. The king agreed to it, and again Reynard began to take a more hopeful view of matters. He began thus:

"As I look round, I notice but few whom I have not harmed in one way or another. When a mere cub, I used to attack little lambs and kids, and, after having once tasted their blood, I never left off the habit; besides, I learned to kill chickens, goslings, and other birds, and have often buried many of them, as I had become so dainty, that I only cared for their blood, scarcely ever touching the flesh. A few years later I met Isegrim; he explained to me at once how nearly related we were, and offered to enter into partnership; our business became most flourishing, as we worked well together, I giving the ideas, finding the prey, and catching little animals, Isegrim putting in execution what my bodily strength was insufficient to carry out. So far all went well, but Isegrim did not keep to the agreement by

which we were to divide all profits in equal shares; not only did I receive the smaller half of everything, but sometimes his wife and children had helped him to devour the whole animal before I came, leaving only the bones for me; and sometimes, even if I found them feasting, they would not allow me to partake of it, but growled and snapped at me till I resigned all my rights. This state of things would have been very serious indeed, and have meant starvation to any one who had no other resources to depend upon; but I did not grieve much about it, as my hidden treasures were large enough to ensure me against want. In fact, the heaps of silver and gold are of such a size, that my spending some of it has not made the slightest difference; there are still cartloads of it; I only wish it could be of any use to me now!"

King Nobel pricked up his ears when he heard Reynard mentioning a great treasure, and, leaning forward, he asked, "What stroke of luck put you in possession of such a secret hoard?"

"As it can do me no good to keep the secret from you any longer," answered Reynard, "and I cannot carry anything with me, I will obey your commands, and tell you the whole story; I will also unburden my heart on this point, because you must know that the treasure was stolen. Many had entered into a conspiracy to murder your Majesty, and it would have been done long ago had the treasure not been stolen at the right moment. The loss of it brought my poor old father into great trouble, and was the cause of his premature death, but it saved your life, my liege!"

The queen had listened with horror to Reynard's mysterious hints about a conspiracy to murder the king, about a hidden treasure, and about robbery.

"I entreat you, Reynard," she exclaimed, "remember the dark journey you have before you, and confess the truth, the whole truth, without any reservation."

The king added:

"Let us have perfect silence! Reynard is

to come down again to give us full information, as our own person is concerned in the matter."

To the great disappointment of his principal enemies, Reynard stepped down, and approached the seat of the royal couple, who examined him closely. He was already prepared to answer all their questions with the most impossible inventions; he had chosen "Thorough" for his motto, and he kept to it faithfully so far as his lies were concerned.

The queen once more entreated him to speak the truth; the king also charged him to say on his conscience whether he was to be trusted; but Reynard, looking him straight in the face, answered:

"How can you suppose that now, with death staring me in the face, I should aggravate my crimes by adding falsehood to them! I am but a poor sinner, but common-sense would hinder me from doing that; it would no longer be of the slightest use to me, and would only increase the weight of my guilt."

As he said this, Reynard seemed so broken-hearted and remorseful that nobody dared any longer to suspect his honest intentions, and the queen was so touched, that she said imploringly to her royal partner:

"Pray look more graciously on this poor penitent, considering how much evil may be averted by his confession; and let us listen to all he wishes to say as soon as possible."

Then the king repeated his command of absolute silence; and Reynard said:

"May it please your Majesties to receive all the information I can give. I have only my memory to rely upon, but it will prove as trustworthy as the best of chronicles, and I mean to tell all I know, without any regard for the persons who may be implicated by my disclosures."

CHAPTER V.

NOW let us hear what Reynard had to say, with what lies he managed to clear himself and to throw suspicion o nhis enemies. He told falsehoods without number, did not even spare his own dead father, uttered frightful slanders against Grimbart the badger, who had always been his sincere friend and had served him faithfully on many occasions, and did not shrink from any statement so long as it gave probability to his tale.

"My father," he began, "had the good luck to get possession of King Arthur's treasure, which he cunningly discovered; but it proved of little advantage to him, since it made him proud

and conceited; he no longer cared for his old friends, but only tried to associate with those who had much higher places in society than himself. He sent Hinze to the wild forest of Arden with a message to Bruin the bear that, if he liked to come over and trust my father, the latter would help him to become king. Bruin may, possibly, have cherished such wishes before; at any rate, he accepted the invitation at once, with the greatest pleasure.

"Isegrim and Grimbart the Wise were sent for, and one night they all met in a lonely place, and arranged everything about the plot. Isegrim and my father solemnly offered the crown to Bruin, who accepted it, and agreed as well to the conditions they made as to the privileges which all present were to enjoy. Baldwin the ass, as poet laureate and literary adviser, had worded everything beautifully and put it down on paper; he read it aloud, and then Bruin had to sign the document. Of course, the chief power lay in my father's hands, since he held the accursed gold. They all took a solemn oath to remain faithful

"Isegrim and my father solemnly offered the crown to Bruin." [*face p.* 62.

to one another, and then decided that Nobel the king was to be murdered, and Bruin was to be crowned in his place. If any one should object to, or rebel against, this state of affairs, my father was either to persuade him by his cleverness, to bribe him with his money, or even, as a last resource, to put down rebellion by armed force, which could easily be procured by means of his wealth.

"I got scent of the affair in a roundabout way. One day Grimbart had taken a glass too many, which made him talkative, and after charging her strictly to keep it secret, he told his wife the whole story. A few days later my wife met her, and, having almost taken a vow not to tell anybody, was informed of the secret; naturally, I was let into it also before many hours were over. It reminded me of the fable told about the frogs, who got tired of their perfect liberty and happiness, and kept on croaking to Heaven for a king, till Jupiter heard them and sent them the stork, who has hated and persecuted them ever since."

Reynard spoke with a loud voice, so that everybody around could easily understand him; and after a moment's pause he continued:

"Such would have been our fate had I not taken good care to prevent it, not expecting such a reward as I am now receiving! I knew Bruin's falsity, and many an ugly deed which he had before committed, so I said to myself, 'If he becomes king, we are utterly lost. Our present sovereign is high-born, powerful, and gracious; what a miserable exchange to have a clumsy country-lout in his place!' This idea haunted me for several weeks, without my being able to see how to avert the misfortune; one thing only was clear to me, viz., that if my father kept possession of the treasure, the king was lost, and the triumph of the rebels almost certain. So it became my chief aim to find out where the hoard was hidden.

"For a long time I followed my father about like his shadow, without his noticing me,—through fields and woods, by day and by night, in heat and frost, in sunshine and rain, never finding out

"There suddenly appeared the very person of whom I was thinking, carrying a heavy load of costly vessels, jewellery, and precious stones."

[*face p.* 65.

anything, until at last chance did more for me than all my skill.

"Resting one day under some trees, deep in thought as to how I should contrive to outwit my father in spite of all his wonderful cleverness, I saw something move; and quite near to me, almost from under the roots of an old pine tree, there suddenly appeared the very person of whom I was thinking, carrying a heavy load of costly vessels, jewellery, and precious stones. He came out cautiously, and looked around; I scarcely breathed for fear of betraying my presence. When he had satisfied himself that no living being was about, he closed the entrance carefully, and covered it so cunningly with moss, branches, and leaves, that no mortal eye could have seen a trace of it; then, as he went away, he cleverly whisked his brush over every footstep, so as to destroy all traces of his visit. I learnt the art of him on that occasion, and have since put it in practice many a time, with perfect success. He was a master of all cunning!

"He hurried away, and as soon as he was out

of sight I set to work to reopen the secret door which he had taken so much pains to cover up; before very long it gave way, and I could creep into a narrow gallery which led down to the cave where all the treasure was stored up. At first I felt quite dazed by the magnificence of the sight, —such mountains of silver and gold! I am sure that the oldest in this assembly never saw such quantities in all his life. I at once acquainted my wife with the result of my discovery, and we set to work to secure the riches; it gave us a great deal of trouble, as we could not use any conveyance for fear of attracting attention. We worked without ceasing, both day and night, and my faithful wife assisted me all the time; I never could have done it without her help.

"Fortunately we had carried off everything, and hidden all safely, before my father returned; he was too busily engaged with his fellow-conspirators, just about that time, even to look after his treasure.

"Now let me tell you what had been decided upon at their council, and do not be too much

shocked at the news. Bruin and Isegrim had sent agents all over the country to raise soldiers, with a promise of one year's pay in advance; my father went himself on the same errand, making the most splendid promises to all those who were willing to enlist. This he did freely, feeling certain of his enormous wealth; but if he had returned at that time, he would not have found a single penny—everything had been carried off. He travelled all over Germany, bringing back with him many recruits from the banks of the Elbe and the Rhine, and seemed to be, on the whole, well satisfied with his journey; but he had much to tell us about the troubles and dangers he had undergone. In Saxony, especially, the nobles never kept quietly in their castles; all day long they were out with horses and hounds, hunting and shooting, so that it seemed quite marvellous how he could have escaped; however, there he was with a good long list of recruits whom he had gained by promises and bribes. Twelve hundred of Isegrim's relations were on the road, with splendid teeth and

an insatiable greed for booty; some of Bruin and Hinze's family were also on the list, and not a single badger or glutton was missing; all would be at Bruin's orders the very moment they had received the promised advance of one year's pay.

"Thank goodness, we had been quicker than my father! When he went to fetch the necessary money, he could not find the least remains of his treasure; the more he dug the less there was to be found, and you ought to have seen his despair! His anger and shame were so great that—the dreadful memory haunts me night and day—my father put an end to his life by hanging himself to the nearest tree.

"All this I have done to serve the king, and do not regret it; still I should have thought my reward would have been a better one. Where Bruin and Isegrim, the traitors, are highly honoured and stand nearest the throne, thou, poor Reynard, who hast sacrificed thy father to save thy sovereign, shalt die on the gallows, although there are not so very many people in the world

who are ready to forget self in the interests of their monarch!"

The king and queen had begun to feel a strong desire to get possession of such a wonderful treasure, so they beckoned Reynard aside as soon as he had ceased to speak, and anxiously inquired where all this wealth was at the present time; they were very anxious to know that!

"What good would it do me," said he, "to give such information to the king, who condemns me to death and believes my enemies, the liars and traitors?"

"No!" exclaimed the queen, "no! it shall not be so. My lord will grant you a pardon, and forget all the past. But you must behave more wisely in future, and be more faithful to the king's commands."

"Gracious lady!" answered the fox, "if you can prevail upon his Majesty to pardon me, and to forget all my misdeeds and the annoyance I have unfortunately caused him,—if, I say, you can persuade him to do this, certainly no sovereign of our own days will be able to boast of such

a treasure as the king will call his own. Even after all that I have told you, you will still be astonished when I show you the hiding-place."

"Do not trust Reynard," said the king, "unless he speaks of theft, lying, and robbery; then perhaps you will be safe in believing him. Truly, a greater liar never lived!"

"His former life is certainly very much against him," replied the queen; "but consider, he has accused his nephew, the badger, and even his own father; if these were inventions, he would not be so foolish as to slander those near and dear to him, but would have thrown all the blame on his enemies."

"Do you really think so?" said the king thoughtfully; "well, then, I will let him off again this once, but, by my crown, it shall be the last time! Should he fall back into his evil ways, he shall suffer for it, and his descendants also to the tenth degree!"

Reynard, seeing how quickly the king had changed his mind, answered, "Who would dare

to tell such falsehoods, which must needs be found out in a day or two?"

So the king believed him and forgave all, both his crimes and his father's treachery. A triumphant joy came over Reynard at this happy hour, though he was far too clever to show any signs of it.

"My noble lord and master," said he, "may the kindness which you are showing me at this moment be repaid to you a hundredfold by a just Providence. I am but an unworthy subject to receive it; still I will show my gratitude as long as I live, and there breathes nobody under the sun in whose hands I would so gladly deposit all my wealth as in yours and in those of my gracious queen! So let me at once describe to you the place where the treasure lies hidden.

"In Flanders, towards the eastern part of the country, there is a desert in which a single bush grows; this bush is called Hüsterlo; mark the name! Near to it you will find a spring called Kerkelborn; you must be very careful to re-

member these names, Hüsterlo and Krekelborn. Between the bush and the spring are two birch trees, and right under their roots you will find the buried treasure, without digging very deep, as the place is safe enough in itself; it is not twice a year that a living being passes that way. Do not shrink from making this long journey in person; no messenger is trustworthy enough to go on such an errand. Among other masterpieces of jewellery, you will find King Arthur's crown, richly set with precious stones; its like is not to be found in the world; if Bruin had had his own way, he would wear it at the present moment. I feel sure that when you see it you will say to yourself, 'Bless you, my true, honest Reynard, for having so wisely taken care of these matchless things for me!'"

Thus spoke the hypocrite; but the king repeated, "Hüsterlo? Krekelborn? I never heard those names before! I have heard of Aix-la-Chapelle, and Lubeck, and Cologne, and Paris, but never of these places of yours. Of course, you must come with us; otherwise what proof

"Lampe, the hare, ... approached trembling and with hesitation." [*face p.* 73.

have we that you have not made up the names out of your own head?"

Reynard hardly liked the king's cautiousness, so he said, "Any one would think, from all your suspicions, that I had asked you to travel to the Holy Land! I still maintain that Hüsterlo and Krekelborn are in Flanders, and others can bear witness to the fact. Lampe!" cried he to the hare, "will you just come here, and tell their Majesties whether Hüsterlo and Krekelborn are not in Flanders."

Lampe the hare was frightened half out of his wits on hearing himself summoned by Reynard. He approached trembling and with hesitation, and would have answered "Yes" from sheer nervousness, even if the question had been whether he should not be hanged on the spot; besides, he was horribly afraid of contradicting such great people. So he declared that all the fox had said was true, to his certain knowledge, and was very glad when they told him he might go.

The king had, of course, to say that he was

sorry he had doubted Reynard's word, and begged him to be ready to start as their guide as soon as possible.

"How happy I should be to enter upon such an honourable office this very day," said the deceiver; "but, to tell the plain truth, I am under an excommunication from the Pope. Some time ago Isegrim took it into his head to turn monk, thinking he would have an easy time of it; you know how greedy he is! Well, though they gave him a portion large enough for six of the brethren, it was too little for him, and he was everlastingly complaining of hunger. I pitied the poor fellow so much that I advised him to run away, which he did, and for this offence I am excommunicated. His Holiness will not allow me to hear mass until I have made a pilgrimage to Rome, and from thence to Jerusalem. I had just made all my preparations for the journey when I was taken up, and I feel myself unworthy of being about your Majesty's person till I have attended to this duty. Besides, what would the world say if I, who have narrowly escaped being executed

by your orders, and who am in disgrace at Rome, should be seen as one of your daily attendants!"

"You are quite right there, Reynard," said Nobel, "but I knew nothing of all this before. Since you are excommunicated, of course your coming with me is out of the question; Lampe must be guide, or anybody else who knows the place. It is good and praiseworthy of you, Reynard, to try and make your peace with the Church; I willingly grant you a long leave for the purpose, and should be sorry to hinder your pilgrimage in any way, as I see in it a sign that you seriously intend to mend your ways and to turn over a new leaf. You are at liberty to start to-morrow; you have our blessing on your journey, and may it turn out happily in every way."

CHAPTER VI.

SO Reynard had again risen high in the royal favour, and the king himself advanced to speak to the public. All listened in breathless silence as soon as they had taken their places, each according to his rank, nearer or further away from the royal party. The fox stood next to the queen.

Then Nobel, glancing round the large assembly, said:

"Hear mé! all birds and beasts, both rich and poor, both great and small! Hear, all my barons and my court! Here stands Reynard in my power, and it is but a little while since he was condemned to be hanged; but he has told me some secrets of such importance that

a general pardon is granted to him, and he is restored to all his honours and offices. Also my beloved wife the queen interceded for him; therefore the past shall be forgotten, he again enjoys my full confidence and regard, and I wish to hear no more complaints against him, but desire every one to show him and his wife all the respect due to persons so nearly connected with the court. If he has done some wrong things in his former life, that will certainly not happen again, as he starts, at dawn to-morrow, on a pilgrimage to Rome, and from thence to Jerusalem, from whence he will not return until he has received absolution from all his guilt."

Hinze, quite startled, turned to Bruin and Isegrim, and said: "Now all is lost! Since Reynard is once more in favour with the king, he will certainly spare no device to ruin us three. I wish I were miles away from this place; I have already lost one eye, and fear for the other!"

Bruin and Isegrim were not wise enough to

make their remarks only in confidence; both lost their temper, and, instead of taking Hinze's advice to the contrary, went straight to the king and queen, and poured forth many most improper reproaches on the royal pair, and complaints against Reynard. Nobel, who now thought only of the promise which he had made to the fox, and remembered that his accusers were charged with treason, said angrily:

"Did you not understand my last speech? Reynard is restored to my full favour, and I do not wish to hear a single word against him!"

Saying which, he gave orders that both Bruin and Isegrim should be handcuffed at once, and taken to prison as rebels.

Reynard might surely have been satisfied at the turn things had taken, but he never rested until he had brought some further misery upon his two enemies. He complained to the queen that he was very badly furnished for his long journey, that he needed a wallet,

and that, to make this, Bruin might very well spare a small piece of his splendid hide, not more than a foot long by a foot broad. Then he needed shoes, and Isegrim and his wife had each of them four beautiful ones which were of no use to them, so each could well spare him two, especially the she-wolf, who was nearly always at home, and seldom walked.

The queen thought this request very reasonable, so Bruin, Isegrim, and his wife had to supply Reynard's wants by losing some of their skin. Bruin gave the wallet, Isegrim his gloves up to the wrists, and his wife her shoes as high as the ankles. The fox thanked the queen warmly for her generosity, promised to pray for her and the king at every shrine he passed, and then went to taunt his unhappy victims, who lay in fetters, all pain and wounds.

"Now look," he began, "how charmingly your shoes fit me! You have all given yourselves a great deal of trouble to ruin me, but I have returned the compliment, and, as you see,

more successfully; such are the ups and downs of life! You have had your turn; now mine is coming. And how pleasant it will be for me always to have these *souvenirs* of my dear relations with me! You will always be present to my memory, and you shall share with me any benefits which I may derive from my pilgrimage."

The wolf's wife said, sighing, "You have gained your ends, Sir Reynard; still I hope that Heaven will one day punish you for your wickedness." But Bruin and Isegrim kept silence.

When the fox found that they would not reply to his insults, he got tired of the joke, and went back again to the king to take his final leave, and to ask, in addition to their Majesties' good wishes, the Church's blessing. The king at once granted this request, and sent for Bellyn the ram, who was chaplain to the court. As soon as this worthy creature appeared, Nobel said, "Will you please to read one of your prayers, and give Reynard your blessing, so that he may

" Bellyn . . . . at once began to read his prayer for the departing pilgrim."

[*face p.* 81.

have a happy and successful journey, and come back again quickly to us."

"I understand," answered the chaplain, "that Reynard is still under sentence of excommunication; it would do me a great deal of harm if my bishop heard, as he easily might, of my blessing one who is cursed by the Church. I myself have nothing to say against Reynard, and if the responsibility were taken off my shoulders, and no blame were to fall upon me, who have to mind the bishop, and the provost, and the dean Rapiamus, why, then I should, of course, be most happy to give my blessing."

"You were not asked to make a long speech about little or nothing," said the king impatiently. "What have I to do with the bishop? Reynard is on his way to Rome; do you wish to prevent his going?"

Bellyn was so frightened at having made his royal master angry, that he at once began to read his prayer for the departing pilgrim; then he handed him his wallet and staff, and Reynard was thus quite ready to start. With some

hypocritical tears in his eyes, he took his leave, rather glad to get away from a place where his safety might be endangered at any moment should it leak out, by any unlucky chance, how he had been lying. The king, to show his regard for the penitent, even ordered some of the courtiers to escort him part of the way.

When it was at last time for them all to return home, Reynard looked so sad, and begged in such a humble way that Bellyn and Lampe would not yet leave him, that both felt their pity moved, and promised to keep him company a little longer.

"You are doing me the greatest kindness in every way," Reynard declared; "people will respect me again if they see me in company with such blameless and pious companions; I know how perfect your ways are, and how you live always as I used to do when a hermit, despising all substantial food, such as meat and bread, and never touching anything but grass or herbs."

Dazzled by flattery of this sort, the two did not

[*face p.* 83.

notice how time slipped away, until they arrived at Malepartus. Reynard invited Bellyn to taste the delicious herbs which he was cultivating in the grounds of his castle, while he took Lampe indoors, to help, as he said, in comforting his wife, who would be wretched at the news of his immediate departure. Lampe was easily persuaded, and followed his conductor into the house, where the fox's wife, Dame Ermelyn, and her children were anxiously waiting to hear how he had fared at court. When Ermelyn perceived her husband, she jumped up joyfully, and cried, "Reynard, my beloved, how are you, and what have you been doing all this time?"

"I was already sentenced to death, my dear," answered he, "bound and ready for execution, when, at the last minute, the king changed his mind, forgave me, and graciously restored me to favour. I have to start at once on a pilgrimage to Rome, leaving Bruin and Isegrim as hostages—that is to be all my penance; afterwards the king gave me Lampe as a compensation for all that I had suffered unjustly, and said that we might do

whatever we liked with him, for that it was he who really betrayed me, and he deserved severe punishment."

Lampe, hearing these threatening words, tried to escape, and ran towards the door; but Reynard caught hold of him, and his cries to Bellyn for help were soon over, as the fox began by biting his throat in two.

"Come along now, all of you!" cried Reynard, "and let us have a good meal; see how fat and tender the hare is! Indeed, it will be the first time that the simpleton has been good for anything."

They all enjoyed their dinner very much, and Dame Ermelyn cried out every now and then, "Bless their Majesties for sending us such a delicious meal!" Presently she said, "I should very much like to know how you contrived to free yourself."

"It would take me hours to repeat to you all the tales that I invented to deceive the king and queen, and I will not try to keep from you the fact that our renewed friendship will not last very

" Lampe's cries to Bellyn for help were soon over, as the fox began by biting his throat in two." [*face p.* 84.

long ; when he finds out the truth he will be in a terrible rage, and should I ever fall into his power again, neither silver nor gold will suffice to release me. Nobel will make war upon me, and I cannot flatter myself with the hope of ever again gaining his favour ; my fate will be certain death, —therefore let us flee. Let us go abroad, where nobody knows us ; let us flee to Swabia, where the sun shines so brightly ; with good luck we shall find nice chickens, geese, hares, and rabbits, also small birds, and grapes, dates, and figs, as well as bread and butter and eggs. The water there is clear, and peopled with fish called Anser, Gallus, and Pullus. These kinds are specially to my taste ; I lived upon them when I was a hermit. Yes, if we want to enjoy all these fine things in peace, we must go abroad ; of course, you will come with me, for you must know that the king let me go free this time only because I told him a tale about King Arthur's marvellous treasure, and that it was hidden near Krekelborn, in Flanders. When he goes to look for it, and finds neither place nor treasure, it will, naturally, be

worse for me than before ; and I assure you that I never yet was in such danger, and I hope I never shall be again."

" What will become of us," said his wife sadly, "leaving actual good for an uncertainty ! Besides, I do not see the least need for doing so. Here we are safe and happy, and even if the king did besiege us, have we not hundreds of hiding places ? You know that, even better than I ! He would find it rather hard work to get hold of you by force ; but what grieves me most is that you will go on such a long and dangerous journey."

" As to that, my beloved," said Reynard, " be of good cheer ; I was once told that a promise made under compulsion was not binding, so I do not mean to trouble my head much about the pilgrimage. Of course, I shall stop with you, even if I had taken a dozen oaths to go to Rome. If the king should harass us with war, we must try and make the best of it, since you prefer remaining here ; besides, who knows that he may not wear another fool's-cap of my making, if only the colours are glaring enough to suit his taste ! "

By this time Bellyn became rather impatient, and kept on knocking at the door and calling out to Lampe to know if he was ready to return, as it was getting late. Reynard went out and said, "Lampe begs of you to excuse him just for a little while longer, as he is enjoying himself so thoroughly with my wife and children that he cannot yet tear himself away; but if you do not mind starting alone, he will soon catch you, as he is very swift-footed."

"I heard some cries for help," replied Bellyn; "what was it all about? I hope you have not done him any harm!"

"Oh!" said Reynard, "Lampe in his blundering way told my wife straight out that I had to start at once for Rome and Jerusalem, and she fainted at hearing such unpleasant news so suddenly. Then he got dreadfully frightened at what he had done, as he thought she was dead, and began crying for help till I told him to be quiet."

"All I know," said Bellyn, "is that his cries were very agonized."

"There is not a hair of his body hurt," declared the fox; "you must not be anxious about him; I would rather suffer myself than that anything should happen to Lampe. As you are going to return at once," he continued, "may I trouble you with some letters? I daresay you heard the king asking my opinion on several points. Whilst Lampe feasted and made fun with my family, I put down my ideas and advice on paper, and would like to forward them safely as soon as possible."

"But how shall I carry them?" objected Bellyn; "I have nothing to put them in; and if I were to break the seals by accident, it would be the worse for me."

"You are right," answered Reynard, "but I think the wallet with which Bruin has presented me will just answer the purpose; and the king will receive you the better for bringing him a welcome message."

Bellyn believed every word he was told; so Reynard went in, took the wallet, and instead of letters put into it the head of the poor murdered

hare. "Be careful," he said to the ram, "not to loosen the fastening; there is a secret about it known only to the king and myself; he would therefore find you out at once if you had the curiosity to open it, and be very indignant indeed, because most important documents form the contents. But if you like, you may say that you helped me to compose them; it will bring you honour and advancement."

The ram, full of joy, jumped about and cried, "Now I can see that you really like me! Of course, I cannot put my thoughts into words so cleverly as you do, but it will be just as well to let them believe at court that I had some part in such important correspondence. I was lucky in following you; but do you not think that it would be as well if Lampe were to come with me without any further delay?"

"Not yet," answered Reynard, who never found himself at a loss for an excuse; "let him stay a little longer; I have not yet finished writing, and he can take the rest of my letters which are not ready; it will just suit my convenience."

Hearing this, Bellyn left, well satisfied, and wishing Reynard all happiness.

When he arrived at court, the king looked surprised to see him carrying the bearskin wallet, and asked, "Whence come you, Bellyn, and what has become of Reynard? How is it that you have his bag?"

"Why, gracious lord," answered the ram, "he gave it into my care that I might safely bring your Majesty some letters of great importance which we have written together; in fact, he wrote them by my advice, and I have no doubt they will be to your satisfaction."

The king sent at once for his secretaries, who were learned in all languages, and desired them to open the letters, and to let him know what was the important news which they contained. What was the general astonishment when they found only poor Lampe's head!

"Woe and alas!" cried Hinze, "what sort of letters do you call these? Who wrote them? Who can explain this mystery? My gracious

" What was the general astonishment when they found only poor Lampe's head !"

[*face p.* 90.

lord, here is nothing but poor Lampe's head; nobody can mistake it!"

Both the king and the queen shuddered at the sight, and Nobel, hanging down his head sadly, exclaimed, "Oh! if I only had him in my power once more! Reynard has deceived me! Oh that I had never believed his abominable lies!"

The royal couple seemed quite horror-stricken, and all the courtiers sympathized with them. At last Lupardus the leopard, the king's nearest kinsman, stepped forward and said, "I cannot see any occasion for all this disturbance; why should the king grieve, and the queen also? Take courage, sire, and do not permit yourself to be put to shame! Are not you the master of all? Has not everybody to obey you?"

"For that very reason it is natural that I should grieve," replied Nobel; "I have done a great wrong: the traitor has betrayed me by his cunning, and persuaded me to injure my best friends. Bruin and Isegrim are both dishonoured, and should I not repent such rashness? It will not add to my renown that I treated the best of

my barons so badly through believing a liar, and that I acted so imprudently. I listened too willingly to my wife, who had allowed herself to be talked over. Oh, if I had only been more firm! But now repentance comes too late!"

"Do not grieve any longer," said Lupardus again; "all may yet be well. Give Bellyn to Bruin and Isegrim as a compensation for their injuries; he owned most impudently that he had advised Lampe's death, so let him pay for it! Afterwards we will all go to catch Reynard, and put him to death at once, without delay; if he has time to talk, he will always manage to free himself, but he must not be allowed to say a single word, and as for Bruin and Isegrim, I feel sure that they can easily be appeased."

The king heard these words with pleasure, and said, "I like your advice, Lupardus; take care to publish my commands at once. Bruin and Isegrim shall again be amongst the first of my nobility, and everybody shall show them respect. On the other hand, people shall also know how disgracefully Reynard has behaved, what lies he

[*face p.* 93.

told, and how, at last, he murdered Lampe, with Bellyn's help. As to the ram, I will follow your advice, and give him and all his kindred, henceforth and for ever, to the two ill-used nobles, as a slight compensation for the injustice they have suffered."

Lupardus hastened off upon his pleasant errand, and when he came to the prison where Bruin and Isegrim were shut up he had them both set free, told them that he brought with him the king's pardon, and was charged to express to them his love and his sorrow for the wrong that had been done them. He told them also that they were to be restored to all their property and honours, and that Bellyn and his family were given into their power for ever, also that Nobel gave them leave to pursue, harm, and annoy Reynard and all his race whenever they got a chance of doing so, as it seemed to his Majesty that they would consider this permission a proof of his sincere regret for having believed the traitor and treated them so unkindly.

Such were the amends made by Nobel the

king to his offended barons, and they accepted his offers without any fear of losing their dignity. The reconciliation was sincere and perfect on both sides; but poor Bellyn had to pay for it with his head, and his children's children are still the victims of Bruin and Isegrim. Thus began the everlasting hatred between the races; the wolf and the bear kill sheep and lambs without shame or hesitation, because they consider that they have right on their side.

To show publicly how much in earnest he was, and to make some amends to his two injured nobles, the king gave orders for a great feast, which was to last twelve days.

[*face p.* 94.

"There was eating and drinking, dancing and singing, music, and all kinds of amusement, going on every day from morning till night." [*face p.* 95.

CHAPTER VII.

NOW was the court splendidly decorated and prepared, and many animals, as well as countless birds, flocked thither to feast, and to enjoy themselves in honour of Bruin and Isegrim. There was eating and drinking, dancing and singing, music and all kinds of amusement, going on every day from morning till night; the bear and the wolf, seated in state, felt so happy that they really forgot all their sufferings. But Reynard stayed quietly at home in hiding, and no more thought of going to court than he did of performing his promised pilgrimage; plotting fresh mischief was his favourite occupation.

At the end of eight days, as the king, with all his nobles, was seated at the table, he by the

side of the queen, in came the little rabbit Laprel, his fur all bespattered with blood, that came from several wounds in his head.

"Your Majesty," he began in a lamenting voice, "and all assembled here, have pity upon me! You have seldom heard of such treachery and such murderous deeds as those of Reynard. It was but yesterday that I was quietly going along the road past Malepartus; the fox was sitting outside the door, dressed as a pilgrim, and seemed to be reading his prayers with great attention. I was just on my way to court, thinking of amusement and everything pleasant, and when I saw Reynard get up and walk towards me I thought he was going to say, 'Good-morning,' and to wish me a pleasant journey, when all of a sudden he stretched out his claws and caught hold of my ears, forcing me down on the ground. I really believed that my last moments had come, but somehow succeeded in freeing myself, and, as I am such a swift runner, managed to make my escape, but all the way I could hear him swearing at me,

"All of a sudden he stretched out his claws, and caught hold of my ears, forcing me down on the ground." [*face p.* 96.

and vowing that he would catch me at some other opportunity. I did not answer, as I was only too glad to run away from him; but, as you see, I have lost one ear, and am bleeding from four painful wounds in my head. Now I beg of you to consider what is the good of the peace you have proclaimed, and who henceforth will have the courage to travel through the country, if robbers are allowed to waylay them in broad daylight?"

The rabbit had scarcely finished talking, when the crow appeared, and said :—

"Most gracious lord, sad news brings me here to-day. I shall not be able to tell you properly what is the matter; I am too much upset with grief; I fear my heart will break, such a dreadful thing has happened to me to-day. Sharpbeak, my wife, and I went out together for our usual morning walk on the heath, and there we found Reynard lying dead, his eyes turned up in their sockets, and his tongue hanging out of his wide-opened mouth. I felt quite grieved at the sight, and cried out

to my wife, 'Alas, how shocking! he is dead, and I am so sorry for him!' Then she came also, and we bewailed him together. My wife, in the kindness of her heart, tried to listen whether there was not any breath left, but she listened in vain. When her head was nearest to the monster's mouth, he snatched at her and bit it off at once; I need not tell you how frightened I was! 'Woe is me!' I cried, and had scarcely time to fly away, for the wretch now jumped up, and snapped at me also. Trembling, I reached the next tree in safety; but my joy at having escaped was marred by the horrible sight of Reynard eating my poor wife, whom he had very soon swallowed, without leaving a single little bone on the place. As soon as he had finished he hurried away, and, though my heart was breaking, I could not help returning to the spot; but all I found was some blood on the grass, and these few feathers which I have brought as evidence of Reynard's fearful crime. Now have pity, my lord, and avenge us! To delay justice

"My wife . . . . came also, and we bewailed him together."

[*face p.* 98.

any longer, and to spare the traitor who mocks at your command of general peace, would be to give rise to much idle talk, for people say that they are guilty of crime who have the power to punish criminals and do not. Everybody would then believe himself right in doing whatever his wicked mind might suggest to him!''

The court heard with amazement the complaints of the rabbit and the crow, and King Nobel took a great oath that Reynard should suffer for these crimes.

"Too readily," he sighed, "have I trusted the rascal, and allowed him to escape, furnished him forth as a pilgrim, and given him the best of my courtiers as an escort. What lies has he not told! How cunningly he managed to gain the queen's favour! She persuaded me to forgive him, and now he is far away and safe! But I am afraid I shall not be the last to repent of having listened to a woman's advice. It would really be a scandal if this culprit enjoyed his liberty much

longer; therefore, my lords, let us consider carefully as to the best means of making an end of Reynard."

Isegrim and Bruin enjoyed the king's speech, and said to themselves that at last the hour of vengeance had come; but they dared not speak, as the king was nearly beside himself with wrath.

At last the queen said, "You ought not to be so easily disturbed, my lord, and give way to such anger,—it can only lessen your authority and the weight of your word. The truth is by no means proved as yet. If Reynard were present here, many would be silent who now speak against him; his defence must be heard before sentence can be pronounced, and many a time people have accused others to hide their own guilt. I consider Reynard to be wise and clever, and if I spoke in his favour, I only had your welfare in view, for nobody could do better at any time than to follow his advice, though his life may not be all that it should be. Besides, you must not forget the importance of

his connections; so I pray you not to be hasty,—it could not better things, but would, on the contrary, only make them worse, and, after all, you must always remain lord and judge!"

Then said Lupardus, "You have listened to many, my king; grant this criminal the same favour. Let him be summoned, and let whatever you decide upon, after having heard him, be carried out at once. This, I suppose, is the general wish, in support of that of our gracious queen."

"Sir Lupardus," interrupted Isegrim, "of course you give your advice for the best; but if Reynard were here, and could even clear himself of this double accusation, I myself know enough about him to prove easily that he has forfeited his life. Though I do not wish to speak except in his presence, I must remind you of all the incredible tales which he told the king about the treasure hidden near Hüsterlo and Krekelborn, and his other coarse inventions; he has taken in every one of the assembly, and has disfigured

Bruin and me. I would wager all that I have that at the present moment he is abroad in the fields, robbing and murdering as much as he possibly can. Of course, what the king and his advisers decide upon will be for the best ; but if Reynard means to come to court at all, he ought to be here by this time; have not the king's messengers gone all over the country to invite guests? Why should Reynard alone not have been told of the festival in our honour, and have remained at home? "

"Why should we wait here any longer for him?" said the king; "all of you must be ready at the end of the sixth day from now to follow me, thoroughly armed, for I mean to put an end to these complaints. I expect you all to come well furnished with weapons, and to show bravery and spirit, and I hope to be able to knight many upon the field of battle. I mean to storm Reynard's castle, Malepartus, and to take possession of whatever it may contain."

"We will obey your Majesty with pleasure," answered all in chorus.

Grimbart alone of those who had been present

left quietly, and went in a great hurry to Malepartus to acquaint Reynard with all that had happened. "What will become of us," said he to himself, "if we lose Reynard, who always defended us at court, and whose ready wit could almost make black seem white? What can be done to avert such a calamity? We cannot afford to lose our uncle, the head and chief of all our race!"

When he reached the castle he found Reynard sitting at the door, occupied in cutting up two young pigeons; they had ventured out of the nest, but, their wings being still too short, had fallen down without being able to rise again, and had thus fallen into the clutches of the fox, who was always wide awake, so that nothing escaped his attention. He noticed Grimbart coming along, and went to meet him.

"Why are you in such a great hurry?" he exclaimed; "you are quite out of breath; is there any particular news?"

"The news I bring," replied Grimbart, "is not of a very agreeable nature; I come in fear and

excitement,—your life and property are lost,—I witnessed the king's anger; he has taken an oath to catch you and put you to death. In six days everybody has orders to appear armed with swords and spears, with guns and muskets; they will all march against Malepartus, and only think what will then become of you and all of us! Bruin and Isegrim are once more reconciled to the king, and are as friendly with him as I am with you,—everything they wish is done at once. Isegrim publicly calls you a ruffian, thief, and murderer, and thus influences others; you will see that in another week or two he will be made field-marshal! Besides, the crow and the rabbit appeared with serious complaints against you, and should the king get you in his power, there will soon be an end put to your career, and all right-thinking people must fear that!"

"Is that all?" asked Reynard quietly; "pray do not be uneasy about so little. If the king had taken three oaths in his council, so soon as I come it will all be forgotten; they advise and advise him, and never hit upon the right thing.

Do let us forget business matters just for a little while, my dear nephew, and come and have a look at what I am going to offer you. There are two young pigeons, fat and tender, which I have just caught; it is really my favourite food. They are nutritious and digestible at the same time, they melt away in one's mouth like sweets, and the bones are so delicious,—like a mixture of milk and blood; that sort of thing agrees with me, and my wife shares my taste. Come, she will give you a hearty welcome; but for goodness' sake do not let her guess the purpose of your visit, she feels every trifle so much. To-morrow we will go to court, and I hope you will give me your valuable help, as becomes so near a kinsman."

"My life and goods are at your service!" cried Grimbart fervently.

"I shall remember your kindness," answered Reynard; "if my life should be spared for any length of time, I shall find an opportunity of showing my gratitude."

"Be of good cheer," returned Grimbart, "and

defend yourself bravely; even Lupardus thought that you ought to have the opportunity of doing so, and the queen pleaded graciously for you; I tell you these facts, as they may prove of use to you hereafter."

"Certainly," said Reynard, "if the king's temper is ruffled, it will soon smooth down again when I talk to him!"

He then took Grimbart into Dame Ermelyn's rooms, who entertained them with the best her house could offer; the little pigeons especially met with general approval, and it was regretted that there were not more at hand. Reynard also introduced his sons to Grimbart, —Rossel and Reynardine,—and told him what a great source of joy they were to him, showing very happy dispositions in every way; they already caught fowls and chickens on their own account, and dived beautifully for goslings and ducks. "They would keep the house provided," he continued, "if I allowed them to go hunting as often as they chose, but I am still afraid of dogs and game-

keepers, and they must learn many a lesson of prudence and caution before I can leave them quite to themselves; but I am not at all afraid for the future. They will provide amply for my old age."

Grimbart expressed his pleasure at hearing such good accounts of his little cousins, and said that he was proud of being allowed to call them by that name. Then they retired, and Grimbart was glad of a comfortable rest after his long journey and great excitement; but Reynard could not go to sleep, though his bed was soft and luxurious, all made of hay and leaves. His pretended indifference now gave way to serious anxiety and fear, and the dawn found him still awake, thinking and meditating what he should do. He then said to his wife, "Grimbart has come to ask me to go to court with him; do not put yourself out about it, only have the place well guarded during my absence."

"I think it very strange," cried Dame Ermelyn, "that you should dare again to go

to court, where they all hate you so, and wish you ill! Are you obliged to go? I see no need for it; pray remember the past!"

"Certainly," said Reynard; "it was very serious, and I passed through great trouble; but the strangest things under the sun will happen, the unexpected comes to pass, and those who made sure of their prey find themselves without it. So let me go; I have some business to settle there. Do not be anxious about me, I beg of you; there is not the slightest occasion for it; in five or six days you will see me coming back again safely; till then good-bye, my beloved."

After this, Reynard started without delay, in Grimbart's company.

" Reynard started without delay in Grimbart's company." [*face p.* 108.

[*face p* 109.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOR a little while both walked silently, occupied with their own thoughts; at last Reynard said:

"However it may be, I feel somehow this time that I am going to court under happy auspices; still I should feel the better for it if you would allow me to confess to you again, as since I last did so I have again fallen into wicked ways, and I might also mention a few sins which I forgot on the former occasion.

"Bruin was deprived through me of one of the finest pieces of his hide; Isegrim and his wife were obliged to provide me with shoes; and all three suffered a great deal under the operation. I got them into this trouble

through the abominable lies I told the king and queen, and all my inventions about that treasure; besides all this I murdered Lampe the hare, and even made Bellyn take his head to the king,—the ram had to pay dearly for his folly! As to the rabbit, I very nearly killed him, and felt extremely vexed at the time to see him escape. The crow, also, does not complain without good reason, for I really did eat up his little wife. These are my latest misdeeds, but I forgot to tell you something before.

"It is some time ago that I was strolling about with Isegrim, when we met a beautiful black mare with her foal of perhaps four months. Isegrim, suffering, as he always did, from great hunger, begged of me to go and inquire whether the mare was willing to sell her colt, and at what price? I risked the question, went forward, and said, 'Dear Madam Mare, this foal belongs to you; would you mind selling it?' 'I will part with it for a good price,' answered she, 'and you will

find the amount written on one of my hind legs.' I understood what she meant, so I said, 'I am not so expert in reading and writing as I could wish to be; besides, I do not want the foal for myself; Isegrim sent me to inquire about it.' 'Let him come,' she replied, 'and he will get an answer that will satisfy him.' The wolf was waiting impatiently, and I told him, 'The mare is quite willing to let you have her foal, and the price is written under one of her hind-feet; she was going to show it to me, but, as on many former occasions, I found it a great drawback not to be able to read; perhaps you will manage it, not having been so lazy at school as I was.' 'It would be strange if I could not read,' exclaimed Isegrim; "I should not mind if it were even written in French, German, Italian, or Latin. I learnt them all at Erfurt, and since I left the university I have always tried to mix with learned men of every sort; so never fear,—whatever the inscription may be, I shall read it off as

easily as if it were my own name.' So he cried out to the mare, 'Let me see the price of the foal; I hope it will be a bargain!' 'You are quite welcome to look,' answered she, and raised her hoof from the grass; she was shod with six large new nails, and hit him so well with them right on the forehead that he fell down, was quite stunned, and remained unconscious for, perhaps, an hour. When he came to again, the mare and foal had, of course, run away long ago, and Isegrim howled with pain; so I went to him and asked him whether the foal tasted nice, and reproached him for not having left any of it for me when I had made all the inquiries. 'What was the writing like?' I asked. "It must have been rather hard work to read it, since you found it necessary to take a nap afterwards.' 'Are you laughing at me?' complained Isegrim; 'I should think the stones would feel pity for me, after I have been treated so badly. I wish somebody would pay out that long-legged mare, bad luck to

"The mare hit him so well, right on the forehead, that he fell down quite stunned."

[*face p.* 112.

her! Those feet of hers were armed with iron; that was the inscription! New nails! And I have six wounds in my head!'

"Now, my dear nephew," continued Reynard, "absolve me from my sins! Whatever may be in store for me, I have cleared my conscience; so teach me how to amend my life, and to re-enter a state of sanctity."

Grimbart answered, "Again I find you guilty of many a crime! It is true that the mere fact of confession does not restore your victims to life; but considering the great dangers which you are going to face at court, and which threaten your life, I will once more give you absolution, as I fear the worst for you! The head of Lampe particularly cries to Heaven for vengeance; it was shameless impudence to send it to the king, and the deed is more against you than your careless mind imagines!"

"As to that," replied the rogue, with a smile, "no matter! Living in the world, we cannot keep our actions so holy as in a con-

vent; he who deals in honey must needs find his fingers sticky, and who shall prevent him from sometimes licking them just a little bit? Lampe irritated me very much by his behaviour, jumping to and fro, without keeping quiet for a moment; as to Bellyn, there was never much love lost between us; besides, am I not quits with them? They suffered, but I have to bear the sin on my conscience! And was I to make much ceremony with two such dull, coarse creatures? I felt little inclined for it,—particularly after having just escaped from the gallows! Of course, one ought to love one's neighbour; but for these two individuals I had not the slightest sympathy, and, as you yourself say, the dead are dead, so let us speak of something else in these bad, dangerous times. Look only at the example set us by the highest in the land! Certainly our tongues are tied in public, but still we may have our own thoughts and opinions. Does not the king steal as much as he can? We know it! And all that he

chances to leave is laid hold of by bears and wolves with his permission, and, forsooth, that is perfectly right! There is not a soul who has the courage to tell them the truth,—no confessor, no chaplain; they all wink at it, and why? Because they enjoy their share of the plunder, however small it may be. The lion is our master; he considers it his right, and only the tribute due to his dignity, to take possession of what does not belong to him, and what a mighty one has once in his clutches is lost for ever! Will you allow me to speak out, dear nephew? The king particularly likes and favours those who do not come to him with empty hands, and who are ready to dance to his majesty's tune. The wolf and bear have come again into power, and will sorely grieve many a poor wretch; they steal and rob, but the king loves them, so of course nobody offers an objection; but if poor Reynard takes a single little fowl, up they start all together, and agree to put him to death. So I cannot help thinking that

there is not much harm done by my little fault, when others are more guilty in every way than I am! Of course my conscience pricks me at times, and threatens me with eternal punishment, but that never lasts very long. Virtue and vice are the two contrasts in this world; but who can find the scales to weigh the exact quantity of either in any person's life, and where is he to be found whose merits are not thrown into the shade by many dark stains upon his great name?"

"Uncle," interrupted Grimbart, "it seems to me as if you were confessing other people's shortcomings, and not your own! I think you have quite enough, and had better let others answer for themselves."

During this conversation they had walked on, and were now quite near the palace, when they met Reynard's cousin, Martin the ape, who, with a friendly greeting, told them that he was just on his way to Rome. He spoke encouraging words to Reynard, and assured him that, if he only kept up his

spirits, he would get safely out of his newest troubles.

"Fortune has treated me very badly lately," answered the fox with a deep sigh. "Some scoundrels have again risen against me,—especially the crow and the rabbit; one lost his wife, the other an ear, and there they are both accusing me as if I had been appointed to watch over them! But the worst of it is that I am still excommunicated, and this I suffer only for Isegrim's sake, whom I helped to escape from his convent;—I regret now that I did so, since he tries to injure me at court by impossible slanders. What shall I do? Go to Rome, and leave Isegrim here unmolested? What would then become of my wife and children during my absence? If only I had made my peace with the church, I could remain here to defend them and myself against all our enemies at court!"

"So far as that goes," said Martin, "I can easily help you. It fortunately happens that, as I have already told you, I am just on my way to

Rome; I have a great many connections there, and know how to go to work, having already had some practice, owing to my position as secretary to the bishop. Never fear! they will not trouble you in any way; I shall soon get your absolution, and will bring it you in writing on my return. There is my uncle Simon, with his friends, who will all help me, and Doctor Graball,—he *is* a man! I know how to deal with that sort of people; I sent on my money beforehand, and you must know that this is the best of all introductions there, it makes me feel sure of a hearty welcome! Nobody resists the attractions of gold; if you have plenty, you will get absolution and indulgences; if you are without, be prepared to find all doors shut against you. You can remain quietly here, and I will settle all about the excommunication. If you will take my advice, you will go to my wife, Dame Ruckenau, as soon as you reach the court; the king admires her very much, and the queen no less, for her vivacity and quick understanding; go and consult her, she is always ready to help her

friends, and has a large circle of relations to back her. You will find their moral support of some weight at court ; and if, which I do not believe, this should prove insufficient, let me know at once, and I will contrive to have the whole country put under an interdict ; we will soon see how long they will bear to have all the churches closed,—no weddings, no christenings, no funerals ! So, be of good cheer, cousin. The king knows very well how powerful I am, and that I shall not forsake you in the hour of need ; therefore, good-bye once more, and let us hope for the best in every way.

"In truth, you do comfort me," said Reynard, "and I want comfort more than you, perhaps, would think ! I shall never forget your kindness if I manage to escape this time."

More easy in his mind than he had felt during the last twenty-four hours, Reynard continued his way with Grimbart, and soon reached the court, where so many hated him and longed for their revenge.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Reynard, in walking up to the throne, had to pass the files of enemies who were all eagerly waiting for his arrest and death, he felt his courage fail; but Grimbart was near, and whispered in his ear, "Remember, uncle, that the world belongs to the bold!" So he held his head high, and then, for the first time, noticed how many friends and relations were also present, as well as his foes.

"May heaven bless your majesty and my gracious queen," said Reynard, kneeling down, "and endow both with that greatest of gifts, wisdom, whereby alone one can distinguish between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, since a great deal of the latter is to be

found in the world at the present time. Oh! if folk could only wear their hearts upon their sleeves, your majesty would see that mine is all faithfulness and devotion, although my enemies may paint my character as black as night, and that I am anxious above everything to serve you. But never mind! the slanders of the wicked cannot harm me in the end; I trust in your kingly love of justice!"

Though Reynard's enemies hated him sincerely, they could not help admiring his boldness, and the agreeable way in which he did everything; their curiosity, also, was great to know what his cunning would now invent as an excuse, when his guilt had been made as clear as daylight.

"Silence!" exclaimed the king, "no words can save you this time, Reynard,—the time has gone by for talking. You proved your faithfulness to me by treating the rabbit and the crow as you did,—is not that what you mean? This alone would be enough to condemn you, but worse tidings come from all parts. Well, we

must all take comfort from the thought that your tricks will not trouble the world much longer!"

On hearing this Reynard wished with all his heart that he were safe back within the four walls of Malepartus; but, as it was impossible to flee, he summoned all his wits together, and said:

"Most noble lord, whenever you have been under the impression that I deserved punishment or death, you have not considered things in the right light, and that is the reason why I entreat your majesty to listen to me. If, after that, I am found guilty, I shall willingly submit to your judgment, but I feel sure that you will be convinced by my arguments, as you have always been before when I presumed to give any advice. I am happy to say that my counsel has never been bad, or led your majesty into any difficulties; on the contrary, it has sometimes saved you from those which others had created, who now, in my absence, take every opportunity of ruining me, in hopes that your majesty will afterwards be weak enough to be ruled by them. Do you really believe that I would have ven-

tured to come to court if my conscience had not been perfectly clear? Had I felt myself guilty in any way, I would certainly have avoided your presence, as well as that of my enemies. Malepartus is strong enough, and I would not have quitted it for the world; there I was free and happy, enjoying all the pleasure and delights that life could offer; but, as I felt perfectly innocent of any wrong, I came at once when Grimbart desired me to do so. My greatest anxiety was about the pilgrimage which I had to postpone; but my cousin Martin has promised me to settle that affair. He is now on his way to Rome, and, being well versed in that sort of thing, as secretary to the bishop, I daresay that he will arrange matters even better than I could have done myself; whilst as regards his desire to oblige me, I have no reason to doubt it for a moment. So I am easy about this important matter, and have come to clear myself from all these false accusations. Laprel the rabbit has slandered me; where is the little hypocrite now, when Reynard is present to tell the true story?

The other day, I was just reading my morning prayers when he passed by on his way to court, and, as he complained of hunger and thirst, I invited him to enter and take some refreshment. I fast on Wednesdays, so there was nothing in the house but fruit and such light things, which I offered him with pleasure, though there is really some danger in being kind to people whom you do not know very well,—they first enjoy your hospitality, and then turn against you, to show their gratitude, I suppose! The rabbit sat down, and seemed very happy over his cherries and bread and butter, when my youngest son came and snatched some from the plate; of course it was very naughty of him, but one cannot always help these trifles, young folk will be greedy sometimes! However, Laprel did not seem to look at it in that light; he lost his temper, and gave the little fellow such a slap in the face that he ran out of the room crying, and with a bleeding lip. His elder brother seeing this jumped at the rabbit, and, as he is pretty big and strong for his age, I will not answer

for what might have become of Laprel in the struggle if I had not fortunately been at hand to part them. I punished both youngsters at once for their bad behaviour, and would like to know in what way I have done the rabbit any harm, and of what he is complaining?

"As for the crow, he came to me one day lamenting; he said that his wife had swallowed a fish with all its bones, and was choking, and almost dying. I advised him at once to call in a surgeon, who might save her; so he left me in a great hurry, and I heard no more of it, and and now when I come here I am told that I murdered her! Good gracious! I really believe that he did it himself, since he accuses others of such deeds. And what a clumsy invention! I would like somebody to teach me how to catch a crow without having wings! It is true that I am a pretty fast runner, but I never yet managed to run in the air; I almost wish that I could do so, that I might punish such wicked lies! Now, who else has anything to say against me? Here I stand, ready to answer any accusations properly

proved by witnesses, or, if that does not please the accusers, let us fight it out! Let all those who are my equals in birth and standing come forward, if they choose, and each meet me in single combat; that will at once decide the question upon which side are right and honour. This is the ancient privilege of our nobility, and why should we not avail ourselves of it under the present circumstances?"

Reynard had spoken so boldly that both the crow and the rabbit felt quite nervous, and, instead of coming forward, left the court unnoticed, saying to each other, "He asks for witnesses; there was not a soul near when he attacked us, so we should only get the worst of it if we appeared now! As for fighting a duel, I should think that ten such as we are would not be a match for him!"

Bruin and Isegrim were very much annoyed when they noticed the absence of these two, especially when the king exclaimed, "Is there nobody now who has a complaint to make? Step forward, and let us hear what you have to

say; yesterday there were more than I could listen to; what has become of them all?"

"That is the usual course of things!" cried Reynard; "there are always plenty who are ready to accuse the absent, but as soon as the accused puts in an appearance matters take a very different turn! But I forgive the crow and the rabbit with all my heart, since they only tried to injure me personally; whereas the welfare of the whole State is often endangered by the tricks of such plotters. They teach sovereigns, over and over again, the great lesson that no slander against faithful servants ought ever to be believed."

"You need not talk in that proud way," said Nobel, angrily; "even granting that these two have accused you wrongly, you are a detestable traitor all the same, or what could have induced you to murder Lampe, — poor, peaceful little being!—in so horrible a way? And, not satisfied with this crime, you had the impudence to send me his head in the very bag which I presented to you for your pilgrimage to Rome, after

forgiving you all your former misdeeds. How dare you insult your king in that way? And Bellyn, too, he went about telling everybody that he was carrying important letters, which you wrote to me by his advice. Well, he has already paid for it with his head, and your turn will come next!"

"Do I hear rightly?" cried Reynard, "are both Lampe and Bellyn dead? Then I would that I also were gone, for with them the finest jewel of my treasure is lost for ever. I foolishly entrusted them with it; but who could ever have supposed that Bellyn would murder Lampe to get possession of it!"

The king was so angry that he would not listen to Reynard any longer, but retired suddenly to his private apartments before the fox had time to finish his sentence. He wished to forget all his troubles for a while, and the surest means of doing so was certainly to join his own charming family circle. He found his wife and children attended by Dame Ruckenau, Martin the ape's wife; but, though the sight of his

dear ones had always a soothing effect upon him, still he could not recover his temper all at once.

When Dame Ruckenau saw this, she said, "Would it be taking too great a liberty if I ventured to make a remark? Your majesty has kindly listened to me many a time before: should I not, therefore, speak now, when it concerns a near relation of mine?"

Now, Nobel knew the Dame to be a very clever and well-informed creature, and he liked her better than any other of the queen's attendants; so he said, rather sulkily, though he did not mean to be unkind, "Proceed!"

"Reynard," continued she, "is my near kinsman, and I cannot help being sorry for him in his troubles, which I believe to be quite undeserved, since he appeared here at once; that does not look as if he were very guilty! How many worthy members of society have been attacked from sheer envy and jealousy, and have often been able to clear themselves from the most shameful accusations? Reynard may be in

the same case. How much his father, my late uncle, had to suffer from the schemes of the wolf and bear, and I do not see in what way the younger folk can lay claim to being any better than their forefathers. On the contrary, their ways are very much against them! It is undoubtedly in Reynard's favour that he is the wisest of all your counsellors; when nobody can find the way out of a difficulty he is always at hand with some capital plan. Does your majesty remember the case of the snake against a peasant, when nobody knew what to do?"

"Why, yes, I remember it," replied the king, "but you may as well tell me the story; I may have forgotten some of the particulars, and shall listen to you with pleasure."

"It may be some two years since," continued Dame Ruckenau, "that a snake and a peasant appeared before your Majesty, asking you to decide their quarrel. The snake had caught itself in a rope that was hidden by the thickly grown leaves of some hedge, and, finding it quite impossible to get free, begged and

[*face p.* 131.

entreated so much of the man, who happened to be passing by, that he consented to help it, if it would take a solemn oath not to hurt him after being set free. The captive did so, but when once more at liberty attacked the poor peasant, making the excuse that hunger was stronger than any oath; at last, the snake consented, at his entreaties, to spare him until a judge had decided which of them was in the right. They soon met a raven, and, putting the question to him, were informed that the snake had justice on his side,—the wicked bird hoped to get a share of the feast for himself,—but the man objected to the sentence of a robber. So they went on, till they met with a wolf and a bear; these also took the snake's part, and the poor man began to feel very uncomfortable in such company. At last he said, 'Let us go to the king; I will submit to whatever he decides;' so they came to the court. Your Majesty had pity upon the poor man who had treated the snake so kindly, but on the other hand, you knew how powerful is

hunger, that it has been the means of overthrowing kingdoms, and will for ever remain the first law of Nature, so it was rather a difficult case to decide. Nobody could advise your Majesty what to do, until Reynard said that he should like to see the place where the snake was caught, and the exact position of the reptile when the man passed. Seeing it again safely tied up, the fox said:

"'Now the decision seems to me very easy; everything is as it was before, and it rests entirely with the man whether he wishes to save the snake or not. As the latter did not keep a solemn promise, it is but fair to let the man have his choice. This seems to me to be the only way of settling the difficulty; if anyone knows of a better, he is welcome to make it known.'

"Then everybody praised Reynard's wisdom, and you and the queen were greatly pleased with him. The case has been the same, if you remember well, in all difficult causes. You have no adviser to equal Reynard, and that is

why I beg you to forgive him again, even if there should have been some wrong on his side; it is the best thing your Majesty can do!"

"I will take what you say into consideration," replied the king, "but I do not understand how you can take the part of such a rascal,—for he is one, without the slightest doubt!"

This conversation had done much towards smoothing the king's ruffled temper, so that, once more feeling equal to his public duties, he returned to the assembly. When he glanced round there, he saw a great many of Reynard's party whom he could not afford to lose. Dame Ruckenau was right as usual; he would have to be easy with the rogue after all!

CHAPTER X.

HAVING made these reflections, the king began quietly: "Tell me, Reynard, can you find any excuse for having murdered Lampe with Bellyn's assistance? What makes your crime worse is your sending me his head under pretence of sending letters. I have already punished Bellyn, and you may expect the same fate!"

"Alas!" cried Reynard, "if I have done wrong, it was only in trusting Bellyn too much; my thoughtlessness has cost Lampe his life, and me the most valuable jewels in existence. Oh that I did but know where to seek for this lost treasure!"

"Do not despair," said Dame Ruckenau

[*face p.* 135.

kindly; "so long as a thing exists it may still be found."

"Oh!" replied Reynard, "whoever is now in possession of those priceless things will take good care of them! But if I should regain my liberty after this trial, I will travel all over the world in search of them, even though the adventure should cost me my life. Will your Majesty allow me," he continued, "to describe these jewels, which were sent as presents to you and the queen?"

"Yes," said the king, "but do not be too long about it."

"The first of the trinkets," began the artful one, "is unique throughout the world, and that is why I felt myself unworthy of possessing such a treasure. It was a golden ring, with a diamond set in it, of such a size that it lighted up the darkest room, but this outer splendour was the least of its virtues. When I first found it amongst my father's hoards, I noticed at once that it had some curiously written words inside, which nobody could read.

This excited my curiosity, and I always carried the ring about with me on my travels, till at last I met with an old Jew of Frankfort who could read and understand them. He was learned in all Eastern languages, and also in the hidden powers of Nature; so he explained to me that these words were in Syriac, and were names which the pious Seth had preserved, and brought with him from Paradise. They would protect anybody who wore the ring from lightning and witchcraft, as well as many other evils that might befall him; he would feel neither heat nor cold, never be liable to illness, and even be cured of any which might already trouble him, simply by touching this amulet. From death alone the ring could not save its wearer; but it would afford him, during his lifetime, every possible protection from fire and water, from starvation, and from any other danger threatening him on long journeys; he need not fear his enemies' arrows, nor the poison which they might give to him secretly. Besides, the virtue and the

"Out rushed Isegrim, ... and after him the old baboon and her charming children, all in an incredible rage." [*face p.* 136.

beauty of the ring would soon influence its wearer to such an extent, that nobody could hate him for long, but would be conquered by his irresistible beauty and perfection, which would equal that of the ring. This was the present which I meant to offer your Majesty, as a token of my everlasting gratitude; but alas! where can it now be?

"Besides, Bellyn was the bearer of a comb and looking-glass for my gracious queen. The former was most artistically carved, and made of the bone of a wonderful beast called Panthera, which lives somewhere between India and Paradise; it gave out the sweetest perfume, enough to charm anyone! My wife's greatest desire was to possess this comb, but I never would let her have such a masterpiece of workmanship. In the middle it showed the story of that quarrel between the three goddesses, when each of them boasted of being the handsomest; till, at last, they asked Paris to decide the question by giving a golden apple to the most beautiful. There you saw

Juno whispering in his ear,—'If you give it to me, you shall be the richest of all men that ever lived;' Minerva coaxed him on the other side, promising to lay the world at his feet, and to give him such power as no mortal before ever possessed; but Venus only smiled with contempt, and said loudly,—'What are riches or power worth? I offer you the best of all gifts, a lovely wife of unrivalled beauty and charm!' Then he gave her the apple.

"All this might be seen on the comb; whilst as for the mirror, it gave one in pictures a history of all the chief events of your grandfather's reign. The mirror itself consisted of one beautifully-cut beryl of the finest water; and whoever had a speck or blemish on the face would lose it at once, and be cured of every imperfection, simply by looking in this glass. The frame, of some wonderful wood, showed in each corner an episode from the life of your ancestors.

"The first was an event of which you have, probably, already heard. It happened in the

"He took the finest thistle he could find, and brought it to the king, standing on his hind-legs, wagging his tail, and prancing about."

[*face p.* 139.

days when the ass had not yet gained a social position, but was simply employed to carry sacks of corn and flour to and from the mill. One day, passing near your grandfather's country-house, he saw how the old king was playing with a pet dog, how he petted him, and fed him with sugar, and how the little dog did nothing in return except kiss his master's hand, bark, and sometimes bring him things that had fallen on the ground. 'Why,' thought the ass, 'all that I might do as well as he, and be liked and petted instead of being hard-worked and ill-treated'; so he took the finest thistle he could find, and brought it to the king, standing on his hind-legs, wagging his tail, and prancing about, as he had seen dogs do. The old monarch got quite frightened when he saw this performance; and, though he was soon rescued from the attack by his servants, he said that such ideas could only arise from idleness, and the ass was put to much harder work than before. This picture taught how stupid conceit met with its deserts;

the next, how envy and wickedness were punished.

"One day the horse wished to race with the stag; but finding that he could not win, left the course, ran to a shepherd, and said, 'Come! mount on my back, and I will take you to a place where you will find a splendid stag; you may have his antlers and his whole body if you will come!' The man did not wait for a second invitation, he jumped on the horse's back, and off they went at a tremendous speed; but before they had reached the stag the horse was exhausted, and said to the man, 'I am tired now, get down and let me rest.' 'Certainly not,' replied the rider, 'now thou shalt feel the spur; thou thyself hast chosen me for a master, and so thou shalt remain a slave for ever and ever.'

"The next two pictures showed Isegrim's doings, proofs of his selfishness and ingratitude.

"Once, whilst gnawing very greedily at some bones, it chanced that a little splinter of one

" He put his long neck and beak into Isegrim's mouth, . . . and managed to draw out the bone." [*face* p. 141.

of them stuck in his throat, and threatened to choke him. He suffered great pain, and sent, of course, for assistance, but no doctor would help him. He offered a large sum as a reward, but it was of no use, until, at last, the crane and his friends came. Hearing of the wolf's trouble, and of the great reward offered for saving him, he put his long neck and beak into Isegrim's mouth, right down the throat, and managed to draw out the bone. The patient howled, and cried, 'Ah, how you hurt me! but I forgive you. But I advise you not to do so again; from anybody else I would not have borne it!' The crane comforted him, saying that all was now over, and that he might consider himself quite out of danger; but, when he asked for his fee, Isegrim became very angry, and said that he had never heard of greater impudence than first causing him so much pain, and then asking to be paid for it! He said that the crane might think himself very lucky not to have had his head bitten off, when it was placed so conveniently!

'If there is any question of payment or reward,' he continued, 'I ought to receive it, for suffering so much pain, and then sparing your skull and neck when they were entirely in my power, and I had only to close my jaws to kill you!'

"In the last of the pictures was to be seen the illness of his late majesty, how he lay dying on his bed, and everybody was weeping, and despairing of his recovery. At last, they thought of calling my grandfather, who was famous for his deep knowledge of all things; so he was sent for in a great hurry and came at once. After a careful examination he found the king's condition very critical indeed, but declared, at the same time, that a wolf's liver would still save him without fail. As soon as Isegrim heard this, he bluntly declared that his life was quite as precious as the king's, and that he was not fool enough to sacrifice it for nothing. With this he left altogether. Very soon, however, they caught a young wolf, who, when he heard my grandfather

"His late majesty . . . lay dying on his bed, and everybody was weeping, and despairing of his recovery."

[*face p.* 142.

say that the liver ought to be from an animal seven years old, asserted, upon his honour, that he was not more than five; but they killed him, without paying attention to this, and the liver was found to be quite satisfactory. It was at once prepared according to my grandfather's prescription, and as soon as the patient had eaten of it he felt better, and entirely recovered in a short time. That is how my family have always served their sovereign, and Isegrim's race are still the same,—they have not altered in their selfishness and want of devotion; as if it could hurt anybody, or matter in the slightest, if twenty wolves lost their lives, so long as our beloved king, and his gracious queen, were spared for the benefit of all in the country!

"Your majesty cannot, of course, remember all these things, as you were scarcely three years old when they happened, but they are, nevertheless, perfectly true. To preserve these facts for posterity, the frame of that looking-glass had been skilfully carved, and I wished

to deposit it for ever in her care who alone was worthy of possessing it; if I could but trace it again, I would willingly sacrifice life and fortune!"

Here Reynard paused, and the king said:

"You are quite right; I do not remember in the slightest any of these events, nor have I ever been told of them; but, of course, that is no reason why I should doubt the merits of your grandfather,—it is quite possible that they were as great as you say, without my knowing anything about it. But how comes it that I never hear your own spoken of, if they exist? The news about you is, without exception, quite to the contrary; can that always be slander? In any case, the suspicion is very strong that you were an accomplice in murdering Lampe and sending his head to me, poor little creature! I was very fond of him, and I cannot tell you how sad I felt when I saw his bleeding head! But, as I have already told you, you shall not be condemned without your guilt having been

proved in proper form by witnesses; if that is once done, nothing can save you from sharing Bellyn's fate."

"Your majesty is good and kind as always," answered Reynard, "and I thank you most humbly. As to Bellyn and Lampe, nobody can be more grieved at their end than I am; and although I am not superstitious, I remember feeling particularly sad when they left me,—it was like a foreboding of some approaching evil. I set it down then to my wife and children being very much vexed and disappointed at my sending away those beautiful things, but now I understand the real cause."

Reynard spoke so earnestly, and in such seeming good faith, that all believed his story of the precious things which he had so minutely described. The king would have liked to call them his own, so he said,—

"Try and recover your lost property; travel about and inquire for it. If once you trace it, all will be well; even if you are not strong

enough to recover all,—let me know, and my forces will be at your disposal."

Some of the courtiers even came to Reynard, and tried to comfort him with kind words about his great loss; it was evident that pity had, to a great extent, taken the place of the general hatred.

The fox renewed his promise of not shrinking from danger, fatigue, or trouble in his search for the lost treasures, and the king was well-pleased to hear it, hoping that, after all, they would come into his possession. Reynard was still more pleased to be again able to do as he liked, and to go and travel when and where he chose without the slightest danger.

CHAPTER XI.

THIS state of affairs proved too much for Isegrim. After a while, he came forward in great excitement, and said, with suppressed passion,—

"So your majesty is going to believe this thief and liar again, who has deceived you over and over! Do you not see that he is playing you false once more? But never mind, he shall not escape so easily from me! I know of three of his crimes, and if I cannot meet with other justice, I will fight it out with him. Are witnesses wanted? Why, if they stood here and talked for days he would always find an answer for everything, and turn it to his own advantage. Nobody dares to speak against him! The best proofs

are the cases of the rabbit and the crow,—but I will not mention them any more, I will only relate what he has committed against me and my house.

"Once, for instance, he induced my wife to enter a pond, telling her that, if she kept her tail for a while in deep water, the fish would bite as if it were a fishing rod. The weather was very cold, and she suffered considerably; but Reynard entreated her, several times, to have a little more patience. She is so innocent that it never occurred to her that he would play another of his fiendish tricks, and she remained quietly in the water till at last she felt a heavy weight on her tail. Thinking that some gigantic fish was hanging on to it, she wanted to leave the pond; but to her horror found it impossible to move, for her tail was frozen fast in the ice! When Reynard saw that she actually could not stir an inch, he laughed at her for a time, and then went away altogether. She would, certainly, have died from cold and starvation had

chance not brought me into the neighbourhood, so that I could hear her cries for help. With some trouble I succeeded at last in freeing her, but she lost a piece of her tail during the operation, and her moaning and crying had attracted the attention of the whole village; all the people came to attack her, and when we took to flight pursued us with such fury that I never thought we could escape; at last we reached, somewhere between the reeds, a safe hiding-place,—though we were more dead than alive, especially my poor wife. You must see, my liege, that Reynard's intention was to kill her; and if such an intended crime is not to be considered as one punishable by death, what is?"

"There you are perfectly right," answered the king, "but now let us hear what answer Reynard can give to your accusation."

"If the story were exactly as Isegrim tells it," said the fox, "my behaviour would, certainly, have been disgraceful; but there are two sides to everything. I do not deny that

I taught his wife how to fish, but that was only out of kindness; I did not tell her to stop so long in the water; only when she heard me mention these fine fish that were there, her greediness made her forget every precaution, and she experienced what so many have done before her, viz., that whoso wants too much of a good thing is apt to lose all. And, if the country-folk did pursue her, and make her run as fast as she could, the exercise was all for her good, and prevented her from taking cold."

Here Isegrim's wife, Dame Gieremund, struck in, saying, —

"Perhaps it was also out of sheer kindness when, on another occasion, you made me go down to that terrible cold spring! Some time ago I passed one of those old-fashioned wells, where two pails hang on a cross-beam, so that one side must rise as the other goes down. Reynard, I do not know for what purpose, had entered one of the pails, and found himself down below in no time, without being able

to come up again. When he heard me pass, he cried out to me that he had found such delicious fish down there in the water, but complained that he had eaten so many as to feel quite poorly. Of course I did not suspect any harm, and entered the other pail, which took me slowly down; but half-way I met with Reynard, who was rising as I was sinking, and somehow I felt nervous and afraid; I had been caught in a trap! I knew it when he said, in passing me, 'Such are the ups and downs of life! To-day it is your turn to be at the top of the tree, and to-morrow it is mine!' Then he jumped out and ran away, leaving me in misery and fear. I had to wait till the people found me, and raised me up again with the intention of killing me; and, although they did not succeed in doing that, I passed through one of the worst days of my life, and returned home covered with bruises and wounds, which they had inflicted in their attempts to get hold of me."

Isegrim here struck in. "Please to remember

the day," said he, "when you persuaded me to enter that precious cave of your cousins, the apes,—when, as you said, I was to be introduced to your aunt! He knew well enough, sire, that I should come to harm, but that was the very reason why he wanted me to enter that black hole; and I feel sure that, if he regrets anything, it is that I escaped without losing my life, or at least my eyesight."

"Here I must beg to differ a little," answered Reynard, before all the court. "Martin and his honoured lady are my cousins, and I feel proud of the relationship; but Isegrim must really have lost his wits to mistake those creatures for apes. They were baboons, and as ugly as sin! If I did call the old witch my cousin on that occasion, it was only from diplomacy, because we were hard up and I hoped to enjoy their hospitality. I was not disappointed; my little bit of flattery procured me the most brilliant reception imaginable, and Isegrim now insists upon their being relations of mine only to insult me!

"We had a hard day's hunting together, without being able to bring home anything; moreover, we had lost our way, and Isegrim complained, as usual, that he was dying of hunger. I did not know how to help him, so, at last, I advised him to enter a dark cave which we could see at some distance, and see if it were not inhabited by somebody; but the coward would not do it. He asked me to try first what it contained, and he would wait for my answer under the next tree, telling me that I was so much cleverer in dealing with strangers, and so much more experienced in that sort of thing, and that, if I found anything to eat, there would be plenty of time to introduce him afterwards. Although I was not deceived by his flattery, I entered the cave; I felt rather curious myself to know what might be at the end of it. After going for a while through a dark and narrow passage, I found a space like a large room; but heavens! what monsters inhabited it! There sat the mother, evidently—a gigantic creature with projecting

teeth and frightful claws, and a younger generation were around her, still worse in appearance, if that were possible; everything was the picture of neglect and filth, and altogether the place was equally offensive to sight and smell. What would I not have given to be once more far away in the open air! But that was impossible; the situation looked dangerous enough,—I quite alone with these strong, wicked-looking monsters,—my only safety was in diplomacy.

"So I bowed politely and familiarly, as if we were old friends, called them cousins, asked how they were, expressed my astonishment at finding all the children so much grown and so handsome, the very images of their mother,—with a great many more such things which one says under similar circumstances.

"This conduct had its effect. The old hag distorted her face into a broad grin that almost frightened me out of my wits, and returned me a flood of compliments, though I felt very nervous and uncomfortable all the

same. At last she finished by telling me how happy my visit made her, that she hoped I would soon repeat it, and that, as I liked her children so much, she hoped I would find them good places at court, and so forth. She then invited me to partake of some refreshment, and I assure you that I was not prepared to find such abundance of good fare in that disgusting place: fish and venison, vegetables and fruit, the greatest dainties were served; and after I had partaken of everything, she packed a large hamper, and begged me to take it home with me for my children.

"When I regained the open air I felt very thankful indeed, and, of course, gave my provisions to Isegrim; but he was not satisfied, and wanted to get some more. I told him the state of the case, and warned him seriously not to show the impression the terrible place must make upon every visitor; but he would not listen to me, and answered rudely that he was old enough to know how to behave, and what to say. He proved once

more that grey hairs are not always evidence of wisdom and prudence!

"Coarsely and ill-temperedly as he answered me, he must have joined the family circle; I did not hear what he said, but guess it from the result, for it was not very long before I heard a great noise, and out rushed Isegrim, all over scratches and covered with blood, howling and swearing, and after him the old baboon and her charming children, all in an incredible rage. However, they stopped at the entrance of their den, and I only heard her shouting, 'Just you try to come here a second time and insult my children! Only a minute ago Reynard paid us a visit, and I should think he knows a little more of the world and good breeding than you do! He told me, over and over again, how charming my children were; they looked like real princes, he said, and he felt quite proud to call them cousins.'

"Now if your majesty will ask Isegrim, he must own that I have been telling the truth,

and that he cannot deny a single word of my statement."

Before the king had time to speak, Isegrim broke in.

"Matters," said he, "have gone so far between us two, that words can never settle our differences. Let us, therefore, decide the case by deeds; let us fight it out once and for all, and whoever wins will, at last, be freed from the sight of his deadly enemy. You have tried to ruin me, Reynard, by inventing a conspiracy of which I appeared to be one of the chief leaders; you invented the whole story about the treasure; taking it for all in all, without going into particulars, I call you publicly a murderer, a traitor, and a thief,—and will add to this the name of coward if you do not accept my challenge, and pick up the glove that I throw at your feet! The king and all his nobles are our witnesses!"

Reynard thought, "This looks rather serious, as he is strong and I am comparatively weak!" But he never betrayed his feelings,

so he threw his glove at Isegrim's feet without wincing, and said,—

"All that you have called me I return you, and tell you besides that you are the greatest liar I have ever met! Since you ask for a fight I am only too pleased to grant it,—it has been my wish for a long time!"

Then they picked up each other's gloves, and gave them as pledges to the king, who appointed the next day for a decisive encounter, desiring them to choose their seconds. Bruin the bear and Hinze the cat offered themselves at once to Isegrim, and Reynard chose Grimbart and young Martin, his second cousin.

This being done everybody retired; but Dame Ruckenau invited Reynard to her house, to give him some good advice. She and all her family took good care that he should be strong, and in good condition for the fight next morning. They made him drink the best beef-tea, and served him up several chickens and goslings to prevent his feeling

" His cousins themselves shaved all his coat, and oiled the skin over and over, so that it became quite slippery." [*face p.* 159.

faint; whilst his cousins themselves shaved all his coat, and oiled the skin over and over, so that it became quite slippery, and he was as difficult to catch as any fish.

When this was done, Dame Ruckenau soaked his brush in vinegar, and said, "Now, Reynard, listen to my advice, and do not forget it. To-morrow, pretend at first to be frightened, and run a little way; when Isegrim follows you, wipe your brush over his eyes, and the vinegar will blind him for a time. When he recovers, run again, and against the wind, sweeping all the dust in his face, so that he will be absolutely blind. Repeat this stratagem once or twice, and he will be entirely in your power without danger or hard fighting; so now go to bed and sleep soundly till we call you at dawn to-morrow morning."

Reynard obeyed, and when they came to wake him up, he felt wonderfully refreshed, and in good spirits. He left at once, accompanied by his faithful relatives and friends, for the place appointed by the king for this exciting contest.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN the king saw Reynard with his body all shaved and oiled, and his skin as slippery as that of an eel, he laughed, and said, "People are right in their common saying 'as sly as a fox'; there is never an occasion when he does not display some new idea of which nobody else would have dreamed. I doubt whether anything could ever cause him any difficulty!"

Reynard made a low bow to the king, and a still lower to the queen, and then stepped gracefully into the ring measured out for the contest, where Isegrim with his friends were already waiting. The fox heard many an unkind wish towards him uttered on the other side;

"Now the fox thought it the right moment to jump at his adversary." [*face p.* 161.

but he felt full of hope and confidence, and did not mind it in the slightest. Soon after, the signal was given for every outsider to leave the wrestling-ground, and Dame Ruckenau had just time to whisper in Reynard's ear, "Do not forget my advice," when a second flourish of trumpets called spectators to their places. For the king and queen a sort of throne with a canopy had been erected in a great hurry; under this they took their seats, surrounded by their courtiers, and all those happy creatures who enjoyed the privilege of breathing the same air as this exalted company. At the third signal the barrier fell, and the two adversaries at once engaged in a struggle.

Reynard followed, in every point, Dame Ruckenau's clever advice, and before long Isegrim was surrounded by an immense cloud of dust, and busily employed in rubbing his eyes; through this action he, naturally, made matters worse by rubbing the vinegar more and more into them. Now the fox thought it the right moment to jump at his adversary, and to do

his best in biting and scratching; indeed, he found himself so much master of the situation that he could not refrain from adding insult to the physical pain he was inflicting upon the wolf, saying,—

"Many a little lamb has become the victim of your cruelty, but now the poor creatures shall live in peace; you will not be able to harm them much in future! If this should be a privation to you, you must comfort yourself by thinking what an advantage the sacrifice will be to your spiritual life; but, unless you beg of me very humbly to spare you, I shall not give you much time to settle your accounts!"

Speaking thus he bit and scratched Isegrim's face, and tore one of his eyes out,—without reflecting that he was thus bringing his enemy to the verge of despair. The wolf, almost mad with rage and pain, rallied all his strength, and by a sudden movement caught hold of Reynard, threw him down on the ground, and stood over him, crying, "Dare to move, and I

will bite your paw off!" as he took the fox's right paw between his teeth.

Reynard's position was awkward enough, and he quite realized it; he did not want to lose his paw, and besides he was entirely in the power of the wolf, who would not release him unless he confessed himself overcome. To lose the day was the worst of all evils, so he again took refuge in stratagem, and said,—

"Dear Sir, I will willingly acknowledge that you have the mastery in every way, recall all that I have said against you, and pay you tribute on a large scale; in fact, I am ready to deliver all booty up to you, and to be satisfied with what you choose to give me. You are renowned for your strength, as I for my shrewdness; if we were to act in concert the whole world would be ours. You see that I am promising you more than I would even to the king, and you know also that I was always against this fight; but, as you insisted upon it, I could not very well decline without being suspected of cowardice. I never

meant to hurt you, and if your eye has suffered, I am sorry for it; but even this loss has, like everything else, its advantages, for, in future, when you wish to go to sleep, you will only have the trouble of shutting one eye, when we others are all bothered with two. And what would be the good of killing me? New enemies would only arise in all my friends and relations,—whereas they will worship you if you are generous enough to spare me; and what greater satisfaction is there for a noble mind than forgiving the weak and helpless?"

"False thief!" cried Isegrim, "would you not like to see me fall into such a trap? you see now to what all your tricks have led you, —your shaving, and oiling, and the dust, and so on! It has cost me my eye, but you shall pay dearly for it; if the world were made of gold, and you offered it all to me, you should not escape this time, and as for your friends and relations; I think I can afford to bear their enmity!"

Isegrim spoke thus, thinking himself to be

"The king . . . . invested him with the highest order." [*face p.* 165.

very wise indeed, as he did not believe in Reynard's promises; but in his passion he had not noticed how the fox, softly and quietly, drew the right paw out of his mouth. As soon as Reynard had managed to get it free, he clutched Isegrim's throat with both his claws, and throttled him so violently that the wolf, in his fright, not only let him go free, but rolled over, struggling for breath. Reynard, finding his enemy almost stifled and unconscious, dragged him triumphantly round the place. Isegrim's friends, seeing him in such a plight, entreated the king to put an end to the struggle, which he immediately did by giving a sign to the seconds. These interposed at once, telling Reynard that the king considered the question settled, and wished him not to take his adversary's life, as there was no occasion for such cruelty; he had conquered Isegrim in the presence of the whole court, so he must feel satisfied, and wish for no more.

Reynard submitted with all possible good

grace to the royal wish, and when he left the field of his glory, he was astonished to see what a number of friends he had, and how his party now surpassed Isegrim's by, perhaps, one half; he once more realized the fact that the mob follows success with the same eagerness as it deserts misfortune. He despised this high-born crowd with all his heart; still it gave him unspeakable satisfaction to see them cringe, and fawn, and flatter, all the way along, as he was taken triumphantly to court.

The king received him at a solemn audience, invested him with the highest order, and said,—

"Reynard, you have surpassed my greatest expectations by your bravery and your ability in every way; therefore all the past shall be forgiven and forgotten. I wish to see you always near me as the first and most trustworthy of my advisers, who will help me to decide everything for the best; shrewdness and virtue united cannot fail to achieve the most difficult tasks. In

"It is hardly necessary to describe the misery in which Isegrim passed his days; . . . . the cleverest doctors were summoned to his assistance."

[*face p.* 166.

"He enjoyed the most charming family life imaginable at Malepartus."

[*face p.* 167.

future, I shall listen to no complaints whatever against you, and hereby appoint you chancellor and lord privy seal."

Reynard thanked the king very humbly, expressed a hope that he should always prove worthy of this great confidence, and asked permission to take a short leave, so as to inform his family in person of the happy turn which his fortunes had suddenly taken. This was granted, and he started at once for Malepartus, his heart full of joy.

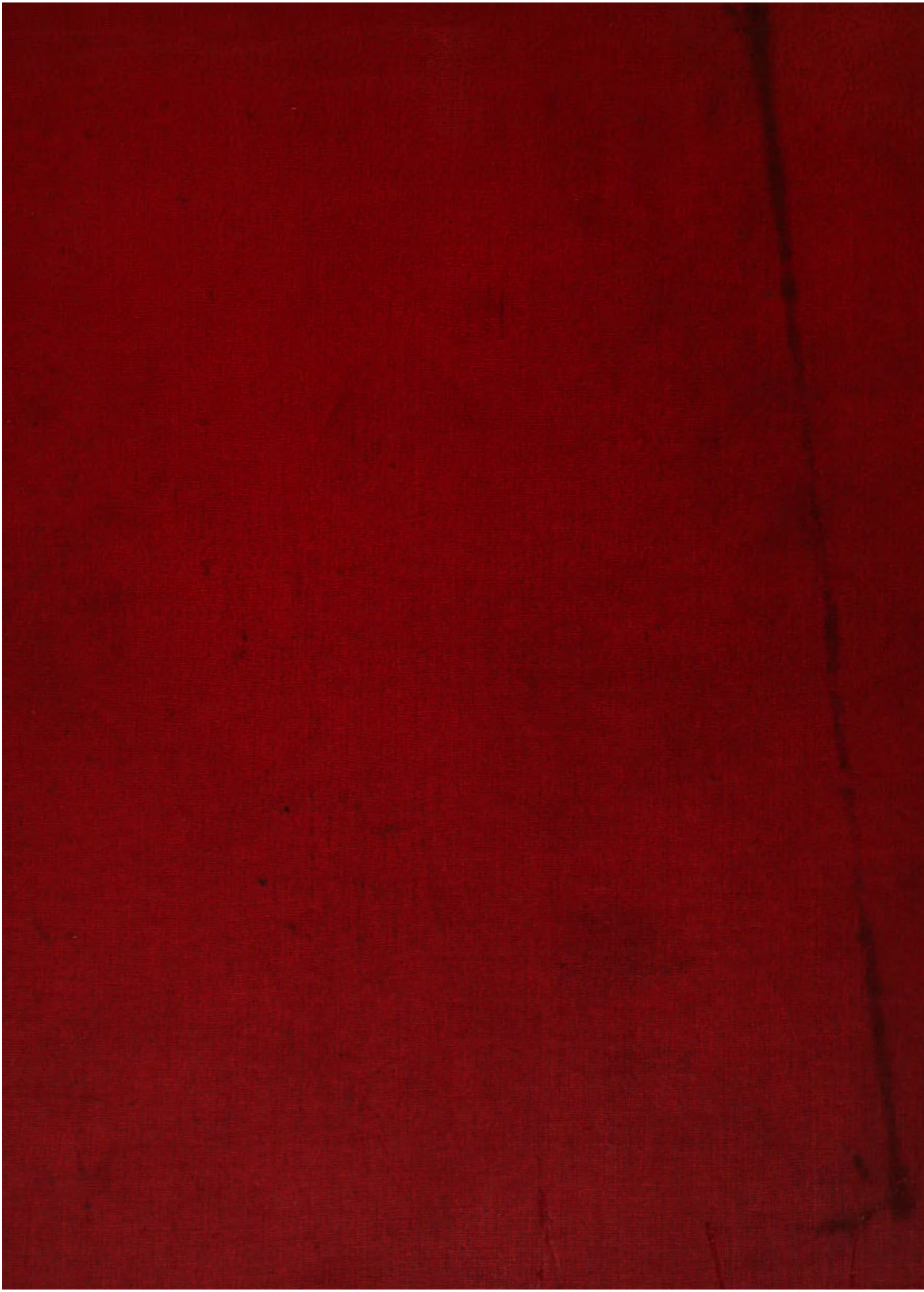
It is hardly necessary to describe the misery in which Isegrim passed his days; he had been wounded in dozens of places. The cleverest doctors were summoned to his assistance, but they could not prevent a long and painful illness, and, though he recovered at last from his bodily wounds, the moral death which he had received on that day embittered all the rest of his life, for it was an irreparable defeat and dishonour for him and all his family.

Meanwhile Reynard reached Malepartus; and his wife and children gave him such a welcome

that he almost forgot the court and all its magnificence.

Henceforth the fox's life was one series of happiness; he was honoured at court, and, consequently, everywhere else; had the power to show himself grateful to those who had assisted him in his troubles; saw a brilliant future for his sons; and he enjoyed the most charming family-life imaginable at Malepartus, where he retired whenever his public duties allowed him to do so. "Children," he used to say to his sons, "you must not long for riches and honour, but for wisdom; be clever, be sharp, and all the rest will come without the seeking!"

This is the story of Reynard the Fox; and, as the world was always much the same as it is now, and will remain the same till the crack of doom, his story will last as long, and will be always new, and always full of truth, for those who are not afraid of hearing it.

THE END.

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