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KRILÓFF'S FABLES

Translated from the Russian into
English in the original metres

BY

C. FILLINGHAM COXWELL, M.D.

Author of Chronicles of Man, Through Russia in War Time

WITH 4 PLATES

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PREFACE

KRILÒFF is such a remarkable figure in Russian literature, and his Fables are so interesting and admirable that I have ventured to render eighty-six of them into English. No prose translation can do this poet-fabulist justice, but a rendering in metrical forms, corresponding with his own, may give readers some idea of his merits.

If it be recalled that the source of most fables is hidden in the mists of antiquity, then Krilòff's originality can scarcely fail to be a recommendation. He wrote, in all, 201 fables and there seems little doubt that, in four-fifths of them, he was not indebted to anyone. He began as a translator in verse of La Fontaine, into whose work he, before long, introduced fresh humorous touches. Next, striking boldly into the rich field of Russian life, he displayed power as a story teller and, calling to his aid terseness, genial humour and satire, succeeded at once in obtaining a foremost place in Russian letters. Of eighty-six fables here rendered into English, seventy-one are original. In the other fifteen fables, Krilòff has borrowed as to eight of them, sometimes merely the germ, sometimes the greater part of the story; while, in seven fables, he has followed Æsop or La Fontaine with little deviation. I have sought to be faithful to Krilòff's spirit and meaning,

and have observed the length of his lines and used rhyme forms answering to those of the original compositions. It need scarcely be said that literal translation into verse is impossible.

A certain directness of expression and a closeness of texture in Krilòff's work, combine with his strongly iambic metre, and varying length of line, to make his fables very characteristic. Their variety is astonishing. I have selected the shorter rather than the longer fables and have omitted occasionally the introductory or concluding "moral," as for instance when it seemed more or less superfluous.

My renderings have been made from the Fourth Edition of Krilòff's Fables, published by Messrs. Wolff, of Petrograd and Moscow. I am much beholden to M. A. Alexinsky's sketch of the fabulist's life which has afforded me biographical details, supplemented by Pletnev and one or two other Russian writers.

Kenèvich* has been almost wholly the source of the Notes. I have not wantonly deviated from the text, but once or twice it has not been easy to choose between retention and abandonment of a Russian method of speech or setting, in a book for English readers.

C. F. C.

* Bibliografeetcheskaya ee Istoreetcheskaya Primyetchniak Basnyam Krylova, Sostavil, V. F. Kenevich, Sankt Peterburg, 1869.

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KRILÓFF'S FABLES

INTRODUCTION

IVÁN ANDRÉEVICH KRILÓFF was born in Moscow, on February 14th, 1768. His father, a military officer, found himself at Orenburg during serious events. The poet Pushkin, in his "History of Pugatchèff's Rebellion," says "Fortunately in the fortress there was a Captain Krilòff, a man of decision and prudence. He at once took command of the garrison and made the necessary dispositions. Pugatchèff swore to hang not only Krilòff but all of his family. Thus, for a while, seemed destined to death the four-year old boy who later became the famous fabulist."

On leaving the army, the father went with his wife and son to Tver, where he became president of the district court of magistrates. The boy's education fell to the share of his mother, who endeavoured to encourage him in his lessons by a reward of a few kopecks; the money, as it amassed, being devoted by the child, under her direction, to small outlays necessary for his own benefit. Her subsequent plan of getting him educated under a French tutor, with a neighbouring landowner's children, did not turn out well, so the child returned to

her care. Although she did not know French, she made her son read in that language before her. When the father died, the mother could get no pension and the boy, then aged eleven, obtained employment in the chancellery where his father had presided. Ivàn's work allowed him plenty of time for talking to the common people in streets and squares and for listening to their conversation, and early impressions so gained became the storehouse whence he drew the racy and characteristic dialogues in his fables. But the mother did not slacken her efforts, and the boy occupied himself eagerly and indiscriminately with a trunkful of books which had belonged to his father. In his fifteenth year he composed the words of a comic opera in rhymed verse, "The Kofèinitza" ("The fortune teller by means of coffee grounds.").

Soon afterwards, under untoward stress of circumstances, the mother set forth to St. Petersburg in the hope of securing a pension for herself and a proper position for Ivàn. They arrived in the capital in 1783. Everything was very cheap at that time, thus this poor but admirable mother paid a servant only two roubles a year in wages. The lad obtained a place at an annual remuneration of twenty-five roubles. Five years later, Ivàn was left parentless but, as long as he lived, the great fabulist could not recall his mother without the deepest emotion.

On arriving in St. Petersburg, the youth turned his

first composition to good account. A foreigner named Breitkopf, printer and bookseller as well as musical devotee, bought "The Kofèinitza" for sixty paper roubles, or rather for their value in certain volumes of Racine and Molière, which young Krilòff preferred to Voltaire and Crébillon. The great French satirist doubtless influenced him strongly, but he was drawn to the heroes of Greece and of Rome by Racine, and soon produced a tragedy, "Cleopatra." Having submitted this work to the judgment of Dmitrieffsky, the famous actor, he called almost every day for the judge's opinion. After several months, Dmitrieffsky said that he wished to read the piece with the author and then explained its grave defects. A second tragedy "Philomela" finished in 1786, had no greater success.

After the death of his mother in 1788, Krilòff entered the public service, but retired in two years, for he was drawn to literary pursuits and aspired to become an editor. He thought that a periodical printed by himself might bring him independence and fame. For several years he thus busied himself with magazines, the printing establishment, and new pieces for the stage. "The Souls' Post" issued monthly, was interesting and carried on brightly but, in the course of a year, it ceased from lack of public support. However, Krilòff continued the printing business for himself and his partners. In 1792 he brought out a new journal, "The Spectator" for which a dramatic author, named

Klooshin, helped to supply articles. Throughout his long career Krilòff used to recall his association with this colleague pleurably. When this journal stopped, a new one, "The St. Petersburg Mercury," took its place, but only lasted a year. It contained several poems by Krilòff, marked by literary finish and lively thought. He constantly sought for improvement and widened his undertaking, but again betook himself to dramatic composition when Klooshin went abroad. After producing the comedy, "The Evil of Short-sight" and the opera, "The Americans," both in 1800, and the comedy, "Ready to Oblige," in 1801, he henceforth relinquished journalistic enterprise and became much engrossed with comedies in prose.

Little is known of Krilòff from 1795 to 1801. That no reference to this period occurs in any of his writings is considered remarkable, for he possessed several gifts such as painting and great skill on the violin, so that he took part in friendly concerts with the first musicians of the day; moreover, he enjoyed intimacy with actors, journalists and contemporary writers. To develop his ability in literature, Krilòff learnt Italian and could read freely in that language. He was not strange to the higher society of the capital, which at that time welcomed talented persons. But unfortunately, here he acquired a taste for cards, and sought places where he could give way to this weakness unrestrainedly. He would visit some other town in order to meet his

companions and indulge in cards. Although not avaricious, when young he played passionately.

At last he grew sick of such an inactive life. The Tsarina Maria Feodorovna recommended him (he being then thirty-two years of age) to the military governor of Riga—Prince Sergèy Feodorovich Golitsin, who employed him as secretary. Here his love of cards continued. He is said to have won a very large sum of money at play, and to have lost it almost as quickly. But his love of literature underwent no diminution and he circulated in manuscript a witticism under the name of "Trumf," founded on the absurdities perpetrated by Germans in their pronounciation of Russian. Two or three years later, Prince Golitsin, falling into disgrace and, retiring to the province of Saràtof, persuaded Krilòff to accompany him. It suited the poet's disposition to accept the invitation, for he loved a careless existence, and was glad to observe the country life of a grandee. Here he lived three years but, despite his friendly relations with the Prince, his position was not altogether congenial; thus, Krilòff could not avoid slight vexations at the hands of various persons who failed to appreciate his qualities and regarded him as useless. Such time as was not taken up by country amusements, social gatherings and meals, he devoted to the advantage of his host's children.

In 1805, after bidding a cordial farewell to Golitsin, he set out for St. Petersburg, to see his old friends and

to renew former occupations. Nature had given Krilòff an active, acute and even biting mind. In youth he was carried away by his first thought, whatever it might be, and was constantly devoted to novelty. This was why, with a widening circle of acquaintance and a reputation among authors, he devoted himself to nothing constantly and long remained without substantial success in the State service and in the profession of literature. At that time Russian literature flourished in Moscow. Not only Dmitrieff the fabulist, and Karamzìn the distinguished author of "A History of Russia" were transforming the nation's language and taste and attracting a younger generation to their models, but Zhukòvsky, the romantic poet and translator of Byron, had already acquired fame.

During 1806, Krilòff stayed for a time in Moscow, and found pleasure in the society of authors who lived for thought and style. Feeling attracted especially to Dmitrieff and, wishing to work at a subject of common interest, he translated La Fontaine's "The Oak and the Reed," as well as another fable, and, having submitted them, was delighted to gain Dmitrieff's warmest approval. The senior was so pleased with them that he recommended his future rival to devote himself to this form of poetry.

Returning to St. Petersburg, Krilòff developed his former passion for the theatre. His three stage pieces, printed in 1807, were probably prepared previously, it

may be, during his residence with Golitsin. The comedies, "The Fashion Shop" and "A Lesson for Daughters" are animated by Krilòff's strong disapproval of the prevailing passion among Russians for everything French. His fairy opera "Ilyà, the Hero," appeared in 1807. In the same year the poet published some new fables and poems, entitled "A Message on the Use of the Passions" and "The Guns and the Sails." In 1808, when forty years of age, Krilòff recognised his vocation and concentrated all his strength on one form of poetic activity. Zhukòvsky inserted several of Krilòff's translations from La Fontaine in "The Messenger of Europe," and is quoted by Pletnev as saying, "La Fontaine, who did not invent a single fable of his own, is honoured nevertheless as an original poet. The reason is that while borrowing the ideas of others, La Fontaine did not borrow his charm of style, nor his feelings, nor his truly poetical pictures, nor the simplicity with which he adorned, and, so to say, made his own, that which he borrowed. The story belonged to La Fontaine, and in a fable in verse, the story is the chief thing." The same critic continues:—"The imitator in verse can be original: while the translator in prose is a slave, the translator in verse is a rival." An explanation of this remark concerning rivalry is that educated Russians could compare the French and Russian versions, for instance, of "The Hermit and the Bear," which Krilòff improved

materially. Moreover, Zhukòvsky was probably thinking of translations in which is preserved little more than the spirit of the original. Happily the Russian fabulist wrote numerous fables for which he was indebted to no one, and his superiority to his French predecessor in the matter of originality soon became absolute.

A close acquaintance formed at this time with A. H. Olènin had a great influence on Krilòff's further fate. In Olènin's house, where contemporary Russian writers obtained a hearty welcome, Krilòff was recognised more as a fabulist than dramatist; and he determined henceforth to devote all his poetical activity to a form of fable full of wisdom and charm. The first edition, consisting of twenty-three fables, was issued in 1808. The book sold rapidly. We possess now 201 fables and (according to the poet's own account in the edition of 1843) only 30 were borrowed from other writers; the others belonging to himself, both as to story and treatment.

During the four years which elapsed between the appearance of the first edition of the Fables and Krilòff's entrance into an appointment at the Imperial Public Library, his attraction toward the stage cooled remarkably. The former dramatic writer and unvarying spectator of each new performance did not for ten consecutive years visit the theatre. Derzhàvin, the poet, himself appreciated Krilòff's new talent, and the

latter now belonged to a group of the best authors. In 1809, a " Society of Lovers of the Russian Language " was formed in the house of the singer Feleetsa and, as most of the members belonged to the Russian Academy, Krilòff (in 1810) was elected to the Academy, but his genius did not obtain much assistance from any learned meetings. He attended only on formal occasions.

When the Imperial Public Library was opened in 1811, A. H. Olènin was appointed director, and the posts of the secretaries and their assistants were allotted only to persons eminent in literature ; which rule was observed for several years. So that such men as Gnedich, the translator of the Iliad, and Lobanof the translator of Racine's " Iphigenie and Phèdre " became associated. Krilòff was given the post of assistant to Sopikof, the librarian in the department of Russian books. The poet's former acquaintance, Breitkopf, who had purchased from him " The Kofèinitsa," also entered the Library service, and as he had carefully preserved the manuscript of that precocious production, he was able to return it to the eager and now distinguished author. Apartments were allotted to the assistants in the chief building of the Library. From the beginning of this epoch Krilòff began a new life, quiet, monotonous and free from care, and it was continued till he retired after thirty years in the service. In 1816, he succeeded to the appointment hitherto held by Sopikoff. His fame had already become national

and, in the first year of his service, the Tsar Alexander I. conferred upon him, as a supplement to his salary, a pension of 1,500 paper roubles, an amount doubled eight years afterwards.

To the solitary and the easy going Krilòff there was no reason for worry and he lapsed into poetic inactivity ; his appointment and the society of a narrow select circle suiting him thoroughly. He duly discharged his not very onerous duties, but developed no fresh tastes. Nevertheless, he continued to compose from time to time new fables. He kept aloof from general society perhaps because he did not feel within him sufficient freshness of force to make his way among people successfully. But he was not forgotten and there were many new editions of his fables ; the last, that of 1843, being undertaken and finished by himself. Foreigners, as well as Russians, recognised Krilòff's merit, but an especial honour fell to his share in 1831, when Tsar Nicholas I. included his bust among new year's gifts to the Grand Duke who afterwards became Tsar Alexander II. Three years later, the poet's pension from the Imperial Treasury was again doubled, "in consideration of services rendered to Russian literature." He continued to lead an apparently inactive life, though probably his mind was often occupied with the selection of subjects for his fables and with deciding the best form of their treatment. When he was on official duty, at the appointed hour, the heavy figure

of the famous fabulist appeared among the assistants and slowly proceeded to his official place. These assistants usually were on duty in turn for twenty-four hours. Krilòff never asked for exemption, nor did "the good-hearted one," as he was called, ever become irritable like many another, during the trying summer weather. He was fond of making himself comfortable on a sofa and of killing time by reading stupid novels, even more than once. Nevertheless, for the more efficient distribution of the numerous brochures existing in the Russian department, he invented cases in the form of thick books and so conveniently classified ephemeral literature. He had moreover to work harder when he was given, as assistant, a poet of an easy going temperament similar to his own.

Domestic life called out his most striking peculiarities. He troubled little, if at all, about cleanliness and order ; his establishment being served by a hired woman and a girl, her daughter. Nobody had an idea of wiping dust from the furniture or from anything else. Of three fair-sized rooms looking on to the street, the middle room was a salon, the one on the left remained unused, and the last, cornering on the Nevsky Prospèkt, served as the poet's living room. Here, behind a partition, stood the bed. The poet's seat was on a sofa before a small table in the light part of the room. He had no study or writing table and it was hard to find pen, ink and paper. He begged affably that visitors should be

seated, but it was not always possible for them to find a suitably clean place. Krilòff constantly smoked a cigar with a mouthpiece, guarding his eyes from the heat and smoke. The cigar went out continually and then he rang. The girl, coming out of the kitchen across the salon, brought a thin wax candle without a candlestick, dropped some wax on the table and fixed the candle in an upright position before the poet. In the middle room, a small part of the windows was almost always open and Krilòff, by throwing grains of corn on the floor, tamed the pigeons from the great bazaar, called the Gostèny Dvor, so that they were as much at home in his rooms as they were in the street. The resulting condition of the place may be imagined. He rose rather late. Then, after enjoying a cigar and a novel, he passed the time sometimes with friends till he set out to dine at the English Club, so named from the nationality of the founder. A doze, or cards, followed dinner and next he returned home, though occasionally he visited Olènin. To strange visitors, whether literary or otherwise, he generally showed great politeness, but he never liked to enter into arguments, as he thought people change their opinions chiefly according to their experiences. He was even apt to agree in a mechanical way with others; though his sagacity and fineness of perception remained developed to the highest degree. The poet was imprudent in the use of food. For several years before his

last illness, he did not allow himself to eat many dishes, but moderation was seldom his virtue with the two or three which he allowed himself. It was his custom to pass the summer oftener in town, than in the country, leaving only to spend perhaps a fortnight with the Olénins. The Tsarina, Maria Feodorovna, sometimes invited him to Pavlovsk and the poet on such occasions never forgot to observe the old custom, beloved by the Empress, according to which men powdered the hair. She always acknowledged the attention by a few gracious but jesting words. It was in Pavlovsk that he wrote his charming fable, "The Cornflower," which he left as a mark of deep gratitude to his crowned benefactress, in one of the albums provided for visitors in the Rose pavilion. At the Empress' dinner table, another poet, Kapnist, once whispered to Krilòff, "You are eating enough for ten ; refuse just once, Ivàn Andrèevich ; and give the Empress a chance of inviting you to partake." "Well, but if she does not invite me?" answered Krilòff and continued to heap up his plate.

The best indications of the poet's manner of life and customs and inclinations are the stories related of him by his intimate contemporaries. Gnèdich relates that, to his astonishment, he found that Krilòff, even at the age of fifty, had quietly studied Greek, for two years. Having fulfilled his purpose, the poet let his new pursuit lapse, except occasionally to look at Æsop.

Once, when Krilòff called on a certain acquaintance, the servant said that his master was asleep. "No matter," answered Krilòff, "I will wait," and passing into the drawing room, he lay down on the sofa and slumbered also. Meantime, the gentleman of the house woke, and entering the room, there found to his astonishment a complete stranger. "What can I do for you?" Krilòff asked him. "Allow me to put the same question to you" was the reply, "because this is my house." "How is that? N——lives here." "No. I am living here now, but Mr. N—— may have lived here before me." After a little further conversation, the owner discovered Krilòff's identity, and, being delighted to see such a distinguished man, begged him to stay. "By no means," answered Krilòff. "I shall go. But at any rate we have had a look at each other," and he departed.

It is clear that the fabulist was capable of indulging in a certain bluntness and directness of speech. But, in spite of his wisdom as expressed in his fables, he was no cold philosopher. On the contrary he was swayed by very lively feelings. When N. E. Gnèdich, who had been Krilòff's intimate friend, left the service and retired on a pension, the poet suddenly began to avoid him and even passed without speaking. However, after two weeks, he came with bowed head and said:—"Nicholas Ivànovich, forgive me!" "For what, Ivàn Andrèevich? I am aware of a coldness, but I do not

know its cause." "Oh, pity me, honoured friend! I envied your pension and your good fortune, which you deserve. I abhor the feeling which entered my soul." Gnèdich embraced him and the past was forgotten.

Krilòff was well aware how greatly his talents were appreciated by his countrymen, but his head was not turned by adulation; he assumed no airs. Once he assured a friend that the first printed praise of any of his works had an immense influence on him. "I will say, openly, that I was given to laziness when young and I cannot get rid of it now. I wrote a certain trifle, and a printed commendation having aroused in me a wish for more, I began to exert myself. Let posterity judge if I have done anything; only I think, if that publication had not praised him, Ivàn Krilòff would not have written as he wrote afterwards."

Besides originality of ideas and highly developed artistic sense, a conscientious desire to do his best governed Krilòff, as is instanced by the corrections made in different editions of his Fables. He was inclined to display a graceful humility. One day, after dinner, Olènin remarked to him, "No writer equals you in fame; your fables have passed through ten editions." "That is not surprising" was the answer, "my fables are read by children, and the little ones destroy whatever they get hold of."

Yet he knew his worth and could show a rugged sturdiness, which scarcely befits a courtier. Once when

the Imperial family was at the Anichkoff Palace, and Krilòff lived at the Public Library, the Emperor Nicholas I. met the poet on the Nevsky Prospèkt. "Ah, Ivàn Andréevich. How do you do? It is long since we saw you," said the Tsar pleasantly. "Some little time, your Majesty," was the answer, "and yet we are neighbours." His qualities of determination and persistence, combined with a complete absence of truckling to the great are exemplified in the following anecdote:—

The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna once gave Krilòff, it is said, a porcelain cup and cover artistically adorned in cobalt, and then, recollecting that it was a gift from the Empress Maria Feodorovna, requested that it might be returned. When Krilòff heard the command, he answered, "Inform Her Majesty, that I will not return the cup because it has belonged to a dead person." Receiving the message, the Empress exclaimed, "What is to be done with the old man? Let him keep it." However, the cup was restored later.

Krilòff's humour and wit made him much sought after in the middle period of his life. At a gathering, a person was mentioned who possessed an income of more than six million roubles. "That is enormous" said Krilòff. "It is as if I had a blanket thirty yards long." But when moved by jealousy, that not uncommon bane of literary genius, Krilòff could excel in roughness.

During a literary evening, A. C. Pushkin read his

“Boris Godunòv.” All were in ecstacies, except Kriloff, who seemed indifferent. “Is it true, Ivàn Andréevich, that my ‘Boris’ does not please you?” asked Pushkin. “No, it is very well, it pleases me; only listen and I will tell you an anecdote. A certain preacher said that each of God’s creatures is perfect. A humpback, with a hump in front and behind, came to the pulpit and pointing to his affliction asked, ‘Am I then perfect?’ The preacher, astonished at the deformity, answered, ‘Yes, you are a perfect humpback.’ So is your drama, Alexander Sergèyevich, most excellent of its sort.”

An atmosphere of respect and fame did not spoil him and he remained extremely simple and approachable. One thing which bound him more than ever to the Olèns was the death of his brother Leo, whom he had supported in the provinces. Krilòff, who was tall and of massive proportions, with a face expressive of good nature and sly humour, was never married, an early attachment not having recommended itself to the young lady’s father because of the poet’s narrow means.

But in his hermit-like old age, he took pleasure in teaching little children to read and write, and in hearing their music lessons. Moreover, he adopted his god daughter’s family and domiciled them with himself, feeling cheered when the children dined and had tea with him or when they played in his room. On the

seventieth anniversary of his birth, various literary men celebrated the jubilee of the Russian fabulist, although already more than fifty years had elapsed since the appearance of "Philomela." A committee was formed to arrange the festival, which was attended by about three hundred distinguished persons. Before the dinner, Pletnev and another went to fetch Krilòff, who had received as yet but vague news of the event. Olènin welcomed him at the reception and the Minister of Public Instruction, after fixing a star upon the poet's breast, led him to a special chamber where two young Grand Dukes congratulated him. By all this Krilòff was moved to tears.

In 1841, he finally retired with a pension of about £600 a year, and crossed over to live in the Vassily Òstrov. Henceforward, he went out into the world less than ever, and became still heavier, though corpulence had long ago overtaken him. But on two occasions he appeared at masked balls in palaces and, in costume, recited one of his fables before the Imperial party. Unfortunately, his handwriting latterly became illegible, but he loved to copy out his corrected fables. All his life the poet enjoyed fine health, thanks to the simplicity in which he was brought up; neither his excessive appetite nor his sedentary life had injured him. Even two slight attacks of paralysis hardly affected his mode of existence, and he remained astonishingly calm in the face of death. When a friend, as it were accidentally,

spoke of calling in priestly aid, he asked Krilòff if he were a sceptic. The reply was, "You will judge from this:—Long ago when paralysis was threatening my hands, I went to a doctor and showed them to him. He asked me the same question that you have asked, and I answered 'No.' The doctor then told me I might become paralysed, and suggested that I should never eat any meat." "You of course followed his advice?" enquired the friend. "Yes, I followed it for two months, and then I thought no more about it. So you can judge whether I am a sceptic." A fire occurred in a neighbouring house, and Krilòff's servants bestirred themselves to preserve his most important papers and effects. But, contrary to his custom, for conflagrations had always greatly interested and excited him, he paid no attention to it. He ordered tea and lit a cigar, and later leisurely dressed; then, looking at the terrible scene, he said he would not move.

Krilòff was especially fond of Russian dishes, and his friends often provided them for him. His last illness succeeded to indulgence in a rich dish and, although the doctors could not save him, he preserved his cheerfulness, and even humorously related the following little fable to a bystander. "A peasant intended to offer for sale a load of dried fish. His horse was worn out and weak. Nevertheless, the peasant loaded him to the utmost. The neighbour laughed and predicted disaster, while the peasant said nothing. But, on the

road, he became convinced that you can overload a horse, even with dried fish. So with me. I thought some woodcock would do me no harm, but just the opposite! I'm done for." He received the last consolations of religion in a grateful and eager spirit, and passed away in his seventy-seventh year. He was buried in the Alexander Nèvsky convent beside Gnèdich and not far from Karamzìn. The day after his death, a thousand persons received a copy of the edition of the Fables which had been in preparation under his own supervision since 1843. On the first page was printed "An offering. In memory of Ivàn Andrèevich. By his wish. St. Petersburg, 1844. November 9th." This precious gift was chiefly an acknowledgment and expression of gratitude to those taking part in the celebration of his jubilee. Under the highest patronage, a public subscription was opened for erection of a memorial, and a great bronze statue on a granite pedestal was placed in the Summer Garden, where the children to whom he has given so much pleasure frequently play. Episodes from his best fables are depicted on bas reliefs. There he sits, clad in his every day surtout, while beneath and around him, are representatives of the numerous beasts, birds and insects of his fables.

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How came Krilòff to win fame so rapidly and why has he retained it? Before endeavouring to answer these questions it will be well to glance back. Numerous and varied forces kept the Russian people and literature undeveloped while the Western nations were making a steady advance in civilisation. A severe climate, great distances from the coast line, Tartar and Lithuanian invasions, serfdom, opposition of the Byzantine Church to intellectual advance; all these formed powerful obstacles to progress. But the character of the population, somewhat lacking in energy, tinged with mysticism and fatalism, and given at times to relieve their cares by intoxication, was itself a hindrance to rapid change and improvement. In Russia, a certain simple, easy-going kindness seems to have run counter to that wholesome restlessness which prompts the most virile races to continuous action.

The Russian folk-tales are simple narratives full of surprising and entertaining adventures arranged somewhat crudely and almost, as it were, in a haphazard fashion. Song has played an extraordinary part in the life history of the people. In addition to minor songs celebrating various occasions such as Christmas, harvest, betrothal, etc., there have been chanted for many centuries *byliny* (ballads). These were handed on from generation to generation without being written down. They partake of the nature of rhapsodies enumerating the fine actions of *bogatÿrs* (heroes),

each of whom is remarkable for certain traits. Thus, one is distinguished by good nature, another by boldness and cunning and another by attention to dress. The North-East Olònetz district has been a storehouse of these homely epics which recount very marvellous actions, quite credible to the hearers. But there have been special cycles of byliny, for instance there is the cycle of Nòvgorod, in which Sadko is a pious and energetic merchant and Vaska is a burgher given to terrible freaks. The Kìev cycle is still more famous. Here Ilyà of Mòurom, who represents the people's qualities and aspirations in contradistinction to those of the nobles, is the favourite personage. In the Ukràine, Volk Vseslàvevich was a fabulous hero who, in song, turned himself first into a falcon, then into a wolf, and at fifteen years of age collected seven thousand youths of fifteen in order to attack the Tsar of India.

A single written short epic has fortunately reached us;—"The Word of the Armament of Igor." Its date has been fixed so far back as 1185, and it relates how Igor sought to drive back the Polovtsy, at the command of Syatoslav, Prince of Kìev. This work is superior to the byliny in style, for it is distinguished by definite poetic attractions, such as metaphor and personification of Nature. But, in truth although St. Vladimir introduced Christianity into Russia in 988 A.D. a Pagan element of belief continued to figure in the various national songs. Perùn, the Thunderer, became Ilyà

of Mòurom. The songs are realistic but it cannot be said that they are lofty. They are never romantic. They diverted the mind and they perpetuated certain national qualities, but did not tend strongly to elevate. Century succeeded to century, and, in a Russia devoid of literature, woman continued to fill a prosaic part in all stories, songs and ballads, just as in actual life, she was subject to a severe husband. In Anglo-Saxon times domestic punishment was carefully prescribed ; and in the " Domostroi " or " House master," by the pope Sylvester, in the time of Ivàn the Terrible, the Russian wife was ordered to submit to chastisement " kindly and privately administered by her husband." Life was regarded sternly and sadness pervaded the songs. Even up to the time of Peter the Great's reforms, the wives and children of the boyars lived in semi-Oriental seclusion. Little by little, however, though late, the darkness began to diminish.

Even before the time of Peter, certain reformers had attacked various evils. That great 'Tsar, in order to assist Russia's emergence into the light, instituted an Academy whose members were to be Frenchmen or Germans. With curious boldness, someone here or there dared to advocate the abolition of serfdom, or to recommend universal education. Then suddenly books began to show the quality of imagination. Procopovich, a priestly writer who admired Western learning, founded a Slavo-Greek academy, and Kantèmir, who held an

appointment at the Russian Embassy in London from 1730-1738, wrote some satires in verse. Trediakòvsky, a grammarian and philologist, made valuable observations on the subject of rhythm in verse. His poems were not magnificent, though he composed more than one official ode. Alas, his position was unenviable. When summoned to take instructions for such a composition from the Minister, whom he in some way offended, he was sentenced by the latter to terrible corporal chastisement.

But Lomonòsoff (1711-1765), son of a fisherman, near Archangel, was the great stimulating spirit of the age. He was a savant of high scientific attainments and insight, who composed poetry in his leisure hours. Lomonòsoff, by blending various characteristics of previous writers, enriched and consolidated the language. He was the founder of a new epoch. To him Russia owes her first grammar and dictionary. A little later came Von Vizin, the author of two brilliant comedies; and Derzhàvin a poet of considerable powers, though his style may now appear stilted.

Several of those who used their pen too courageously in the latter part of Catherine's reign were treated with great severity. In the meantime quite a vogue had set in for fables, a form of literature long popular in the East, where open criticism in an epoch of absolute rule has always been perilous. Khènmitzer, a surgeon who went as consul to Smyrna, and Dmitrieff, who

became Minister of Justice, gained fame as fabulists. Russians have long appreciated condensations of popular wisdom in the form of proverbs, and allegories. It was in such circumstances that Ivàn Andrèevich Krilòff entered the lists for literary renown. His simplicity was greatly in his favour, and his realistic outlook on life was assuredly a recommendation to his readers. His astonishing versatility, combined with a susceptibility to different forms of poetic feeling, pleased a nation hitherto knowing poets few in number and of but moderate merit. No widespread delicate culture was in the field to criticise adversely his remarkable and many-sided performances. Derzhàvin, the poet, and Karamzìn, the gifted historian, obtained and deserved popularity; and Zhukòvsky won renown as translator of several foreign poems, but Krilòff had the advantage that he wrote of the people and for the people. The great romantic, Pushkin, was to belong to the next generation, and so Krilòff became the first national poet. His directness as a narrator no doubt suited a people well accustomed for many centuries to somewhat prosaic narrative in song.

A gallery of portraits exhibiting national characteristics with broad and genial humour must have been a godsend to a nation full of humorous individuals. Besides, the fables contained pleasant lessons for everyone, and drove home arguments for reforms into the hearts of all who were dissatisfied with public and

private weaknesses. Krilòff is particularly happy in his conversations which are racy and yet simple. However various his subjects may be, his treatment of them is harmonious: he has at his command short lines when he is in a light or bantering mood and longer ones for the expression of serious or pathetic ideas; while his power over rhyme adds to his resources. He occasionally rivals Æsop in simplicity, as in "The Peasant and the Workman," and in "The Gnat and the Shepherd," but he can be highly fanciful as in "The Man and his Shadow." He can be gentle and playful, as in "The Lamb," or hard and even savage, as in "The Pike," and "The Peasant and the Sheep."

His humour is exhibited in "The Hermit and the Bear," "The Mice in Council," "Demyàn's Fish Soup." He can be very light and airy, as in "The Fly and the Bee." Beauty and pathos are evinced in "The Nightingales," poetry characterises "The Cornflower," and "The Brook," "The Ass and the Nightingale," "The Steed and its Rider." Terrible satire gives force to "The Merchant," and "The Division." Fables such as "The Three Peasants," "The Wolf and the Cat," "The Peasant in distress" give us glimpses of Russian life, whose severe and tragic side, as regards the peasant, is satirised in "The Peasants and the River." "The Miser" shows us the peasant's superstition. Krilòff can deal with critics, as in "The Eagle and Fowls"; with persons of narrow range, as in "The Sightseer";

with treacherous friends as in "The Lion, the Chamois and the Fox"; with the avaricious, in "Fortune and the Beggar." He bravely attacks corruption and mismanagement in "The Fox and the Marmot," "The Sheep and the Dogs," "The Bear in charge of the Bees." But the fabulist seldom spares when he deals with the prevalent abuses of his day. As his work has the valuable qualities of being intrinsically admirable and of possessing a general applicability, even when the originating circumstances no longer exist, the fables have retained their popularity to an extraordinary degree. Kriloff's knowledge of his countrymen and of his topics was as thorough as his treatment was vigorous and generally simple; add to this that his stories are entertaining and you have sound reasons for their success.

The melodious and artistic setting of the fables delights Kriloff's countrymen, who possess a very delicate ear for rhythm. Russians are carried away by his verse. Clearly he, at first, copied La Fontaine's system of versification, but he expanded and developed it, and never recurred to the measures of classical regularity which he had successfully employed in the poems of his earlier days. Laughing, as it were, at fetters, he gave his work an appearance of ease and informality consonant with the Russian nature. As regards their metrical form, the fables are closely allied to the odes of several English poets, but they are

peculiarly rich in those double rhymes to which the Russian language lends itself. The lines are of very various lengths, but they are never arranged throughout the whole fable in couplets. Krilòff's rhyming is apt to be luxuriant, often three or four lines and, on rare occasions, even five or six lines rhyming together. A feature of his versification is that the lines are frequently, as it were, interlaced by the rhyme. He disliked fixed arrangements, and assigned to each fable a separate verse scheme which is altogether solitary. His dexterity seems as great as that of a juggler with his balls, but he takes care to change his effects. In the original, the reader, far from looking for a marked pause at fixed intervals, is kept in a state of pleasurable uncertainty. Regularity does not reign supreme, neither does irregularity. But the reader never doubts that the poet will bring his display to a triumphant conclusion. In one thing, Krilòff is strict—his metre is severely iambic, in which respect he agrees with prevailing English methods. He avoided trochaic and anapæstic measures.

It may naturally be enquired, what benefit is gained by a translator's adhesion to a poet's scheme of versification, especially if that scheme is highly complex. A poet's chosen metre stimulates his spirit and closely affects the quality and character of his poem. This is a very strong reason why the translation should show fidelity to the creator's plan of versification. Moreover,

although the original adornments may not always reappear in the foreign product (a certain latitude being indispensable to the success of the undertaking), it is manifest that, on the one hand, unwholesome abbreviation and, on the other hand, expansion and digression are guarded against by observance of the original metre. It was said in Russia that Krilòff's spirit was unrecognisable in the French and Italian translations made at the instance of Count Orloff in 1825, and certainly in length they varied vastly from the original fables. In order to gauge Krilòff's place in Russian and World literature with any degree of accuracy, it will be useful to consider rapidly the history of the Fable. Only by such means will it be possible to fix his proper position.

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Fables form a link between antiquity and our own day. It is surely remarkable that the same story, in the same form, is eagerly read by many readers, after a lapse of centuries and even thousands of years. It is a fact that fables have played an important part in the life of individuals and nations. In the first place, the child being overwhelmingly conscious of inferiority to its elders, welcomes enthusiastically acquaintanceship with the characters of a fable, who behave in such a simple and entertaining manner and whose actions

appear natural. But these short and unobtrusively didactic stories, fill a not unimportant part later on. The individual unconsciously treasures such early lessons, humorous or otherwise, and sometimes recalls in after years the logic of their events with no little satisfaction. The Hindus, the Persians, the Greeks, the French and the Russians, have been very appreciative of the fabulist's art. To take a single instance, Æsop's fables have no doubt had a considerable influence on man's moral development while, on a higher plane, Buddhistic and Biblical parables have exercised a cognate but more spiritual effect.

As regards the fable's form, while the terseness of prose narrative pleases many, the more æsthetic garb of verse attracts others. The famous prose "Fables of Bidpai," which were written in the Sanskrit, gave rise to the "Hitopadesa," a lengthy rhythmical narrative introducing, in quick succession, a host of beast-fables, each of which definitely points a moral. One of the greatest of men, Socrates, spent the day before his execution in rendering into verse some fables of Æsop. The graceful and witty La Fontaine became at once so fully appreciated by his countrymen and has continued in such favour that he might perhaps truthfully be called the national poet of France. Certainly Krilòff's strength, humour and poetic form have made him the best-known author in Russia.

Various explanations may be offered of the origin and

great vogue of fables. Man, in savage life, comes into frequent contact with animals and necessarily thinks a good deal about them ; he perceives that many similar traits animate himself and the beasts and, in his brighter and happier moments, sometimes exercises his reason and imagination in composing and relating stories concerning the animal world. Thus the Basutos have a legend of a hare which outmanœuvred a lion. This timid creature recognised that her opportunity had arrived when the king of beasts was lying beside some stout wooden stakes. She so interlaced his tail between them that he could not escape ; since the harder he pulled the tighter became the knot.

Probably, the widespread love of domestic animals paved the way for the beast-fable. Some moving incident in the life of a dumb pet may have formed the foundation of a short narrative conveying an excellent lesson for a child. Then skilful compression of a particularly striking story, with an added infusion of humour, may have fortified the fable, which was brought to a conclusion with a moral. In the East, where rulers have severe ideas of discipline and brook little interference, such a story has often been used to convey subtle criticism, all the more effectual because its appeal was indirect and guarded. Again, somewhat as good stories are bandied about in our every day life, and as heroic songs fill a great part in intercourse of semi-civilised races, so the recounting of fables may have

enlivened society among such a civilised people, as the Greeks of antiquity. But racial idiosyncrasy comes into play, thus it is said that an Arab will, on the spur of the moment, invent a fable in order to impress an argument. The personification of animals, an essential feature of the beast-fable, in which the characters act and speak according to their own natures, is doubtless assisted by prevalent beliefs and modes of thought among certain peoples. Thus the Hindus' doctrine of the transmigration of souls and their intense respect for all living things must assist them to credit beasts with a capacity for speech. The ancient Greeks, having a definite prevision of the ascent of man from animals, may well have been so led to represent them as talking creatures. But the dislike of the Darwinian theory, which is still common in highly civilized countries, would hardly obtain among primitive peoples. Savages have a belief in animal ancestry of man which is widespread and often takes a weird form. It is even possible, that such an idea had its origin in prehistoric times of extreme remoteness, when there was a similarity, greater than now exists, between man and the man-like apes. But, whatever their cause, fables came to stay and to thrive. Parents and teachers found them of practical use in the training of the young, which in itself formed an excellent reason for their survival.

Next, to weigh for a minute the intrinsic conditions favouring the fable's popularity. It is an arresting

circumstance that an animal should speak : the incongruity at once fixes our attention. While the animal is thus generously raised to human rank, man is thereby a little depreciated, but so subtly that the implication in no way offends. Early in the narrative, a human deficiency or weakness is associated with one of the beasts who, as events proceed, suffers for his folly, or fails in his wrong purpose, or becomes contemptible, and so on, and thus becomes a sort of imaginary "whipping boy," whose punishment reaches and teaches us painlessly. The terseness, naiveté and briskness of the narrative aid to bring about an intellectual triumph which, however unpretentious, is in its way, complete. The fabulist succeeds in gaining our respect and admiration while altogether discarding the love interest so much demanded in modern stories. The Æsopian fable is especially concentrated, clear and strong. It is slyly humorous and makes no mention of moral, the lesson being implied. The Indian variety is an almost endless narration formally introducing a succession of adventures in which the animals actively appear and speak. It is considered that Æsop's famous fable "The Lion and the Mouse" was probably borrowed from Indian sources, since the lion is secured by a net, much as the elephant is captured in Hindustan. On the other hand, the Indian fable of a jackal, who declined to enter his own cave, because he saw a lion's footsteps going in and none coming out, was probably taken from

Æsop's story of the fox, who would not enter the lion's cave because all the footmarks went in and none came out. As to the country of primary origin, it may conceivably have been Egypt, which held animals in such high esteem thousands of years before the Christian era, and where a very early representation has been found of "The Lion and the Mouse." Thence, the fable may have spread to Greece through the ancient Cretan civilisation. Great scholars have shown that Æsop's existence need no longer be doubted. Planudes, a monk of Constantinople, in 1447 wrote, in Greek, fables which he collected and ascribed to Æsop, incorrectly giving to the latter the personal traits belonging to Lokman, an Arabian fabulist of antiquity, from which reason confusion arose concerning the two fabulists. It seems highly probable that Æsop, a Phrygian living in the sixth century before Christ, composed fables and used them in speeches. A few centuries later Phædrus made a collection of fables and named them "Æsop." Using this collection and other sources, a German, in the fifteenth century, made the assemblage of fables now known to us as "Æsop."

With regard to the Indian fables, the most famous collection is in Sanskrit and called "Pankatantra" ("the five sections") or the "Fables of Bidpai," the latter word meaning, "beloved physician." This book has had a remarkable influence on World literature. In the sixth century A.D., the Persian monarch, Chosroes,

sent an emissary to India, to bring back a copy, which was translated into ancient Persian, then into Arabic, then into Hebrew, next into Latin (about the year 1270) and finally into German, French (1556), Spanish and Italian. In France, the work appeared as "Le plaisant et facétieux discours des animaux." La Fontaine, who was a great borrower, just as many a dramatist has been, had at his command in the second half of the seventeenth century an independent translation of the "Pankatantra," made in Paris by a Persian, named David Sahid, of Ispahan. The work was called "Les Livres des Lumières," and afterwards known as the "Fables of Pilpay," the last word being a corruption of "Bidpai."

Fabulists, in the past, have often modified their predecessors' stories, especially when translating. As Max Müller tells us, there is a story in the "Pankatantra" of a Brahmin, whose wealth consists of a pot of rice. He has lively visions of the prosperity it will bring him, one success leading immediately to another, and so on; after which he imagines that his wife has been inattentive, and that he has consequently kicked her. In reality he has inadvertently with his foot broken the pot of rice. In the "Hitopadesa" version, after a string of similar fancied successes due to possession of a plate of rice, he thinks he is punishing a wife for jealousy of the other three wives, but actually he is breaking the plate. In the Arabic, the fable concerns a jar of

oil and honey. The usual castles in the air are successively built, and the Brahmin finally fractures the jar, when he imagines he is beating a son neglectful of his studies. La Fontaine tells the tale thus, in his "La Laitière et le pot au lait." A milkmaid, having at her work filled a pail of milk, sees in her mind's eye a long series of triumphs resulting from the possession of such wealth. She is disillusioned only when her cow kicks over the milkpail.

But Europeans had been roused to admiration of the fable several centuries before La Fontaine. During the Middle Ages, the Crusades brought the Western nations into contact with Arabic versions of the Fables of Bidpai. A famous and immensely long work was soon written, "The History of Reynard the Fox," in which the animals speak, reason and act consistently with their characters. Another book which gained renown was the "Ysopet," or little Æsop, of Marie de France. This was written in graceful verse. In the fabulist firmament other lights shone (such as Gellert, in Germany, and Khemnitzer, in Russia) whose brilliancy has paled with time. But La Fontaine remains a star of the first magnitude. He borrowed his stories not only, as above related, from Bidpai, but from Æsop, Phædrus and Italian sources and produced 230 fables, which are lively, elegant, witty and arch. However, he was less versatile, forceful and humorous than Krilòff, who could also be poetical, tender or cuttingly satirical.

The latter struck boldly and earnestly at human weaknesses and national abuses.

Krilòff was especially a poet, as the Greeks used the term, that is, he was a maker, a creator; and the history of the Fable shows that any genuine accession to the rank of original Fabulists is a very unusual event. His Russian readers were open to impressions not only of sentiment and beauty, but of humour, wit, satire, power and action. ' They obtained delight from rhythmical narrative, and were unaccustomed to the subtle and vague suggestions of feelings and beauty, or to the frequent metaphors, that thrill and bewitch us at the present day. The sensitive, emotional and somewhat dreamy Russian appreciates economy of words in verse: he does not require a wealth of adjectives to arouse his poetic sensibility. Krilòff's mind had something of the universal character, being susceptible to, and capable of, every form of poetical expression. He chose his life's work carefully, and did it superlatively, employing a lyre of great power and of many strings.

KRILÒFF'S FABLES

I

THE MICE IN COUNCIL,

ONCE on a time, the mice aspired thro' deeds to glitter :
 Despising every cat of either sex,
They would the lives of cook and mistress vex,
 What topic than a mouse's glory could be fitter ?
 To hear it folk would strain their necks !
A council should be called, whither must come
 no sitter
Whose tail was not of special length ; tails were
 not wrong
 If as the body long :
A mouse with well-developed tail's a sound adviser,
 In all things wiser
 Than nibblers of less stately kind.
Here to extenuate, in honour let us mention,
 That, to a man's attire and beard, we give
 attention
 When we are critics of his mind.
'Twas held, by free consent and common feeling,
That none but long-tailed mice might tread the council
 room ;

Thus, if in fight any had met her doom
As to her tail, there could be no appealing,
Taillessness was of folly a revealing,
Or careless dealing :

There was no other course to choose :—
Tails lost, must warn the mice, no tails to lose.
So matters were arranged and duly came the
meeting :

As soon as darkest hours occurred,
In the great meal-bin, talk was heard ;
The mice were plans completing.
But scarcely they the task assail,
When lo ! arrives a rat without a tail.
Observing this, a tiny mouse and youthful
Nudges a grey-haired mate
And gently asks her, by what fate,
A tailless rat is there ; let her be truthful !
“ What then has happened to our law ?
Loud say, I pray, that he must instantly withdraw !
For sure, our people all dislike a crippled
creature ;
How should he prove of use, e'er of advantage be,
That could not keep himself from a misfortune
free ?

His presence in debate will be an evil feature.”
The elder answered thus :—“ Be sage and not a fool !
He was my friend at school.”

II

THE PIKE

AGAINST a pike was lodged the plaint :—
He'd made the pond a home unpleasant ;
It was a reason for restraint,
And, that the rogue in person should be present,
He, from the water, in a tub was brought.
The magistrates nearby, collecting,
In a rich meadow pasture sought,
Here is a list of those the captive's case affecting :—
Two asses gathered there,
Two ancient, sorry horses and of goats a pair,
While also, as a general inspector,
A fox was of the prosecution the director.
Among the people, rumour said :—
This pike supplied the fox with fish : his table
spread.
Nevertheless, the judges were in no way partial ;
Letting no wile or trend of vulpine tricks
Obscure their crystal vision, they must fix
Upon a judgment free from politics ;
Against the guilty one their forces marshal,
And sinners to deter, suspend him from a beam.
“ My lord,” pronounced the fox, “ I am for death
as sentence ;

Hanging is over good, despite the rogue's repentance ;
 The punishment should be remarkable, extreme ;
 To make a wicked life both dangerous and
 frightful,
 The pike should now be drowned." " A
 verdict rightful,"
 Exclaimed the judges, " surely no way spiteful,"
 And threw the pike into a stream. ^(NOTE)

III

THE EAGLE AND THE MOLE

OVER great forest regions flying,
 A splendid eagle sped, preceding far his mate.
 They purposed on a mighty oak to wait,
 Until among the branches should be lying,
 Within a nest, a brood derived from mutual love ;
 There they would tend their fledglings through sweet
 days of summer.
 Calls upward a fresh comer,
 Who views from earth the king above :—
 " This ancient tree is hardly fitted for a
 dwelling ;
 Through rotting roots, is insecure,
 Will topple : 'scape the woodman's felling."
 So utters, from a hole, a voice demure.

But, if a sovereign bird should take from a
benighted

And abject mole advice ; who then would praise,
In future days,
Eagles keen-sighted ?

How dared a mole reflect on higher beings' ways
So drily ?

The monarch sternly glanced, but nothing said,
Would hear no little mole, returned to work, instead ;

Deftly prepared a future bed

And rest for one he honoured highly ;

And welcomed with her, soon, precocious eaglets wily.
What next ? It happened once at dawn,

That, to the nest, flew with a tiny fawn

As a rich breakfast in his talons, the fond father.

The oak, as he alas ! must gather,

Had, with a crash, both mate and young to earth down
drawn.

“ Oh, anguish ! oh, what dread affliction !

Grievously am I curst !

Fate for my pride, has sent me punishment the worst,
Because I would not heed a wise and shrewd
prediction ;

Yet, how in truth could I expect,

An humble mole would sage advice to me direct ? ”

“ If you had not despised my message,”

Was muttered from below, “ you might have used my
presage ;



МЕДВѢДЬ У ПЧЕЛЪ

THE BEAR AMONG THE BEES

To face Page 43

I dig my holes beneath the earth,
Learn much of life well nigh from birth ;
Of news concerning trees, for moles there's never
dearth."

IV

THE BEAR AMONG THE BEES

IN spring, the beasts, perhaps with thoughts of nectar,
Appoint a surly bear of beehives their inspector,
Such officer alert to be and true.
Bruin's for honey over eager,
Of honesty but meagre ;
Yet brutes possess a curious point of view.
The post, although enthralling,
Does not suit everyone,
And so, in fun,
The bear assumes the calling.
But harm is done ;
Since Bruin, in his den, the honeycombs collected
Until the beasts, by rage affected,
For law pronounced it an affair.
Ere long, much nettled,
The judges settled,
The wicked rogue should spend the winter in his lair.

Many are here of justice lovers,
 Yet none the stolen combs recovers
 From one that evil boldly perpetrates ;
 So, long the happy self disporter,
 In his warm comfortable quarter,
 Calmly his taste for honey sates ;
 An expedition new awaits. (NOTE)

V

THE PEASANT AND THE SHEEP

A PEASANT haled a sheep to court,
 And pressed against her there a serious objection.
 A fox, as judge, is ready for a fault's detection,
 Hears plaintiff first and, then, defendant in retort ;
 Taking in turn each point, and cool, though others
 stammer,
 He seeks the cause of all the clamour.
 The peasant says :—" My lord ! when visiting my
 yard,
 I found two chickens missing ; 'twas in early
 morning ;
 Only their bones and feathers served me as a
 warning ;
 This sheep alone was there on guard ! "

The sheep replies :—“ No strange event my slumbers
 marred ;

Prithee, the evidence of neighbours don't
 discard ;

Against me ne'er was brought a charge of thieving
 Or other crime

At any time ;

As to my tasting flesh, 'tis notion past conceiving.”

Here are the fox's judgments from their earliest
 weaving :—

“ I noway can accept the pleadings of this sheep,
 Because all rogues are skilled to keep

Their wicked purposes from others.

'Tis clear from plaintiff's words that, on the given
 night,

Defendant held the fowl-house well in sight ;

Now, who can think she smothers

An inborn wish for viands choice ?

So I decide, by conscience' sacred voice,

She cannot have admitted

Hens were for her unfitted !

Her guilt is clear and lets the peasant win ;

The carcass comes to me, and he will get the
 skin.”

VI

THE OAK AND THE REED

ONCE a majestic oak said to a little reed :—
“Weakling! you surely are with Nature disenchanted,
To bear a tiny sparrow would your powers exceed!
If but a puff of wind to stifled folk be granted,
Forthwith you quiver, shake and, losing strength,
So far, in misery, lean over,
I’m pained to view your prostrate length.
I, like Caucasian heights, give mortals shade and cover;
Protect them fully from the sun’s infuriate rays,
Can laugh at whirlwinds, and the hurricane’s displays;
By my erectness men amaze,
As if by vast inviolable might befriended;
But, as for you, your life is restlessness unended.
Had you but grown in some fine neighbourhood
Famous for forest trees, enriched with oaken wonders,
I would have guarded you, even when Heaven thunders;
But cruel Nature set you near no wood,
Led you to troublous shores of blustering dominions,
Which little care or reck, concerning your opinions.”
“You are compassionate,” the little reed replied;
“But prithee, do not grieve, I can my lot abide;
For me no storms or whirlwinds matter,
I yield, but neither break nor shatter;

The tempests cause me little harm,
Perhaps they more yourself discomfort and alarm.
'Tis true that, till this hour, unaltered in position,
You have withstood the gale's ambition,
Survived its doughty blows ; need never humbly
bend ;

Well, let us wait the end ! ”

The reed has scarcely thus clear spoken,
When, from the far, tempestuous north,
Winds swept with rain and hail and noisy hurried forth.
At first the haughty oak stood firm, unbroken,
But, soon, the gusts drove with redoubled force
And shrieked, upwrenching in their course
The lofty form which strove toward heaven
dauntless-hearted,
While, with its roots, it touched the graves
of shades departed. (NOTE)

VII

THE GNAT AND THE SHEPHERD

RELYING on his dogs, a shepherd calmly slept ;
Till, spying him, a serpent hither crept
From neath a bush with motion sure and steady ;
Then brandishing its tongue, its fangs made ready.
A gnat adventurous, sly scheming to outwit,
Sharply the sleeper bit,

Who woke in time twin actions to commit :—
 He slew the snake ; as well the gnat, with force
 unfit,
 Being dazed with sleep, as after a draught
 heady.

In human life's strange circling eddy,
 Should but a weakling dare, meaning however
 well,
 To ope to truth the eyes of persons stronger,
 His chastisement will certain be, and longer,
 Than here befell.

VIII

THE CHEST

WHEN obstacles arrest
 Our steps, and courage test,
 Oh, then, without a good beginning,
 We've little chance of winning.

* * * * *

HOME from the maker's hands, was brought a
 handsome chest,
 Whose neatness exquisite and workmanship
 astounded,
 By its intrinsic charms observers all confounded.

But soon, into the room, a skilled mechanic pressed
And, looking at the box, said, "Yes, the scheme is hidden.

You will not find the lock ;

Though I will hunt it out, if only I am bidden,

But, kindly, do not at me mock !

The chest will open, for its secret I'll discover,
Of things mechanical I'm somewhat of a lover."

Keen for his task he brave began :

Oft turned the box to find the plan.

Ere long, perplexed, his head he scratches,

Importance unto this small nail or knob attaches,

Looks at the chest and still can find

A way to use his mind.

Folk whisper 'mongst themselves and even grow
unkind,

Hear all he to their ears can offer :—

"Not here, not so ; no, there ! " Yet looks he at the
coffer,

Perspires and grows fatigued. At last,

Far from the box he passed ;

Had no way guessed the truth, when trying first to
win it ;

The chest was open at that minute ! (NOTE)

IX

THE FOX AND THE MARMOT

“ Why now upon a journey art thou set intently ? ”

So, to a fox, a marmot spoke.

“ Dear friend, I flee from evil folk,

Falsely accused, depart ; they used me pestilently.

Thou knowest, I was in the poultry yard a judge,
There toiled and lost my health, as might a common
drudge ;

Mere scraps of food as mine could number ;

Obtained no proper slumber ;

Will never more the place encumber

With my superior form. Just for a moment think,

Oh, what will happen if to slander people sink ?

Do I extort ? Am I grown old and doting ?

Pray, has it ever come within thy careful
noting

That I to weaknesses am anyway inclined ?

Answer on carefully reflecting ! ”

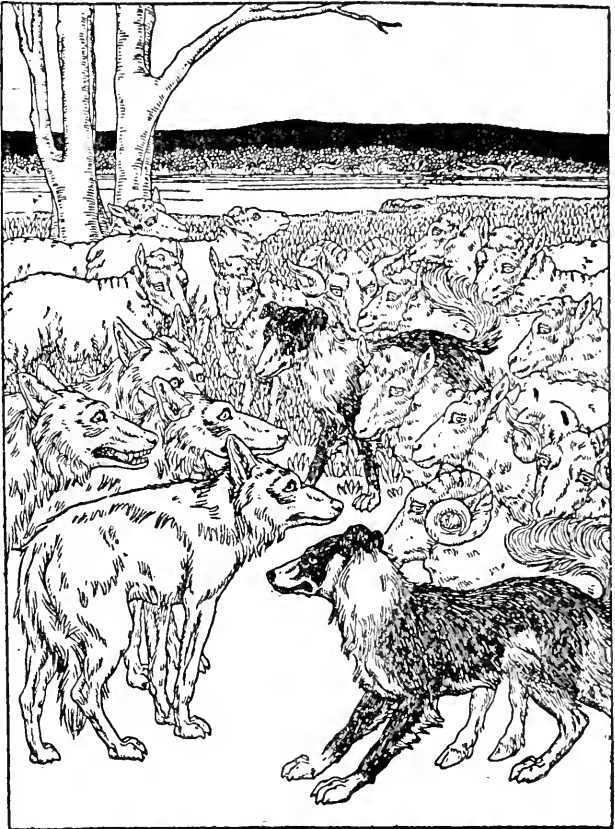
“ I've thought it strange, thy muzzle when inspecting,
Thereon a little down to find.”

* * * * *

What worries has the office holder !

The cost of living saddens, makes him older ;

-



ВОЛКИ И ОВЦЫ

THE WOLVES AND THE SHEEP

To face Page 51

But suddenly, becoming bolder,

He enters on a costly game,

His wife seeks fame ;

No fortune they've come into,

And yet to build a house, buy freeholds, they begin to ;

How can his salary provide for splendid shows ?

You will not far from truth be straying

Nor deeply erring, if you're saying,

“ Some specks of down appear upon his
nose.” (NOTE)

X

THE WOLVES AND THE SHEEP

In danger from such wolves, the lambs were sure to
perish ;

Hence, though delaying long, at last

The rulers of the beasts, thinking the sheep to
cherish,

Debated how their votes to cast,

And, then to needed action passed.

'Tis true that, at the council, wolves were in great
number ;

But none has proved, in wolves, kind feelings
always slumber.

Here is the truth exact :—wolves have been gazed at oft

That, with a manner almost pensive,
 Display, before their prey, a nature soft,
 Having well gorged themselves, are inoffensive ;
 They therefore properly, may on committees sit.

As sheep should not to misery submit,
 So wolves have rights, at times may benefit.

The conference is held in a deserted valley

Whither the beasts to argue rally,

With effort real construct a novel law,

Devoid of any seeming flaw :—

As soon as any wolf the flock shall worry,

A sheep forthwith to him shall hurry,

Desist not, though she fear him much,

But lightly on the paw him touch,

And lead him to a wood where one of several judges

Well settling each complaint,

In every righteous cause nor time nor labour
 grudges.

I've noted, since I've grown with all acquaint,

That, though the sheep should let no wolf annoy
 them,

Yet that, whoever's right in a dispute,

The savage wolves, fast speeding in pursuit

Of sheep, destroy them.

XI

THE ELEPHANT AS GOVERNOR

A RULER should be wise ;

With hoodwinked eyes

He scarce will notice wrongs, or judgment exercise.

* * * * *

AN elephant was called to government's emprise ;
Now, all his tribe are patient, trusty and sagacious,
And yet, in every race, come freaks vexatious.

This monarch gracious,

Of simple mind,

Oft foolish was, tho' kind :

Even to hurt a fly, for him were painful.

Being of duties ne'er disdainful,

The potentate receives from timid sheep this prayer:—

“ The wolves no more, the skins from off our backs
should tear ! ”

“ Oh, thieves ! ” he bellows forth, “ what hideous
transgression !

To rob ; and keep in your possession ! ”

“ Our father ! ” say the wolves, “ we humbly
would explain :—

Did we not understand that, for the winter season,

We were to tax the sheep and comforts thus obtain ?
 Therefore, if they lament, 'tis surely without reason.
 We asked for little :—but from each a single pelt ;
 Yet they have murmured, angry felt ! ”
 “ Justice,” replies the ruler, “ is a jewel,
 I cannot suffer you in aught to do a wrong :
 More than a skin from each were cruel,
 One only may to you belong.”

XII

THE MAN AND HIS SHADOW

A CERTAIN joker wished his shadow to embrace :
 He darted out, it flew ; he added to his pace,
 It yet advanced, so he began to race.
 The shadow quicker sped however fast he scurried,
 As if a ghost, it 'scaped attack.
 Then my original went swiftly back ;
 He looked around : already after him it hurried.

* * * * *

LADIES ! I many times have heard . . .
 What ? No, 'tis not of you, the thought's absurd !
 That Fortune often thus to treat mankind is stirred :

Here's one who wastes his time and labour,
Trying, with all his might, her favours to obtain ;
Another uses her, as if he were insane ;
To him she's truer than is any loving neighbour !

XIII

THE EAGLE AND THE BEE

SEEING a little bee at work among the flowers,
An eagle ceased his flight, contemptuously to
mutter,
“ Poor thing, you sadly waste your powers,
That, skilled and wise, so tirelessly can flutter !
Thousands in summer like you, in a common home,
Model with care the honey comb ;
But who allots to each her merit ?
The taste is strange that you inherit ;
To labour throughout life ! and have but what in view ?
To die obscure, with all who trifling ends pursue !
Weak mite ! you little me resemble !
When, on a wondrous course, I feel my pinions tremble,
Lone ; or where mates, 'neath clouds assemble ;
I everywhere awaken fear ;
Ay, and the terror reaches even feathered creatures ;
Too, shepherds must be wakeful, if to flocks I'm near,
Such time the fleetest hinds, on plains will not appear ;

Catching a glimpse of me, wear troubled features."
 The bee replies, "To thee, high honour now, and praise!
 Zeus lavishes on thee his gifts with hand unsparing!
 But knowledge that my toil helps others me repays,
 What is renown, to one for it uncaring?
 I feel a certain pleasure, when the comb preparing,
 For in it many a drop of my own honey stays." (NOTE)

XIV

THE LIAR

HOME coming from a far-off land,
 A count, perhaps a prince, of bearing rather grand,
 With an especial friend, along a road, was walking;
 Vaunted his travels in a voice serene,
 With idle tales, embellished objects he had seen;
 Said, other folk had seldom been
 To spots of which he now was talking.
 "A wretched hole is this!
 Sometimes a bitter north wind's blowing;
 The sun's invisible, or like a furnace glowing.
 But there, one's lot is bliss!
 The recollection brings me pleasure;
 You wear no furs, the time scarce measure,

Mark not the seasons, nor the shades of night,
But, all the year, enjoy entrancing summer light.

'Tis needless there the seed to scatter,

Nay, if a crop ne'er ripens, little does it matter.

For instance, once in Rome, a cucumber I saw ;

Oh, Nature's law !

Thou art of much the source and fountain !

You scarcely will believe, 'twas like a mountain."

"How great a rarity !" the friend amused replies
And adds, "O'er earth are wide distributed these
wonders,

But not to seek them out were haply wise !

Indeed we now approach a vast sensation,
And seldom 'tis that one on such a marvel blunders

In any place or nation.

Spanning the river, here, a bridge of curious class
Exists upon our road and o'er it we shall pass.

'Tis of peculiar action

On every liar who responds to its attraction ;

For ere he gets half-way across,

He disappears, and friends bewail his loss.

But, never gloss

Unwelcome truths, and you can step it boldly."

"Now tell me, is the water deep ? "

"The banks are steep ;

Look ! who could view the prospect of immersion
coldly ?

Your cucumber at Rome was tall, I do not doubt,

Large as, you said, a mountain? or a hill? about,
Let's say, a house, in order not the truth to flout!

Hard to receive it,

Not easy to believe it!

Ah, yes, this bridge is strange (to thrash the topic out),

It bears unwillingly vain storytellers;

Why only, in the recent spring,

It slew, mysteriously, some writers or news-sellers

That to it long were seen to cling;

A house-sized cucumber must be the oddest thing,

Prodigious, weird; if not exaggerated."

"Perhaps I have not well related,

But you shall hear the facts anew:—

Not of a size extreme is every dwelling,

Nor all excelling:

It may be great enough for two,

With ease and comfort true."

"But, surely, as should be repeated,

Your cucumber was monstrous, if it grew

Till folk within it could be seated.

Our bridge is, well, of such a kind

That liars, taking on it seven steps, it find

Alarming, very;

You say, the cucumber was higher"

"One moment, friend!" here interrupts the liar,

"Sooner than use the bridge, I'll seek the nearest
ferry." (NOTE)

XV

THE POND AND THE RIVER

“ WHY is it ? ” to a river said a neighbouring pond

“ (Forgive me, pray, for prying)

You are of exercise so fond ?

Or sister ! can it be, you of fatigue are dying ?

Looking afar, I always see on you

Deep-laden vessels come in view,

You patiently great rafts will carry ;

I speak not of the countless little boats and barques,

Or think of such ! And why do you yourself thus
harry ?

Strain would have left on me its marks ;

In truth, my lot, compared with yours, is mild
and pleasant ;

Of course, I am not present

Upon a map ; you occupy a page complete !

No songs or mighty odes their praise of me
repeat.

But that is scarce a matter vital !

To balance it, I vaunt my soft and reedy banks,

As maids for gentleness give thanks.

To quiet rapture I've a title ;

Not only, as to ships

And pleasure trips,

Have I, in no respect, to worry ;
 I cannot even guess the weight of any raft ;
 Myself I need not flurry
 If on me falls a leaf, that frail and tiny craft,
 When a light gale upspringing toward me one
 shall waft.

Could anything repay for loss of days so careless ?
 Never by winds or breezes stirred,
 I gaze on worldly vanities and trifles airless,
 Indulge in dreamy talk unheard."

" You reason simply, by this great law undeterred ;"
 (Began in turn the river)

" " To water, speed alone of freshness is the giver."
 If I have now become a rushing, wondrous
 stream,

It is in order that, forsaking calm supreme,
 I shall that edict follow ;
 Moreover every year,
 With copious water clear,
 I am a blessing ; I win honours far from
 hollow
 And shall continue yet for ages long to run,
 When you already, yes ! but slight existence
 showing,
 Shall be forgotten, known by none."
 Her words proved true ; for up to now she's
 flowing,
 While the poor pond, year after year, all wild,

Deeply o'ercast with gloom and shadows
darkest,
In misery the starkest,
Grows stagnant and defiled.

* * * * *

Art, skill and talent surely from the world will vanish,
Weakening every day
If sloth exert its sway :
Neglect and idleness must all successes banish.

XVI

THE MERCHANT

“ Ivàn, come hither, boy !

Why have you disappeared ? Be quick and
give me joy ;

Here's news that will astonish !

If you but copy me, I'll praise and not admonish.”
A merchant summoned thus his nephew to attend.

“ You know the Polish cloth ? that roll, the end
We've had awhile in stock ? A secret I'll confide :—

’Twas damp and rotten, small in value, growing old.
That more than doubtful piece, as English goods, I've
sold !

'Tis true! Within an hour, I've taken for it, fifty,
And a fool's wants supplied."

"Uncle, indeed you have," the nephew drily cried;
"Someone has foolish been; 'tis not to be denied;
But look! the note is false; your customer was
thrifty."

* * * * *

So he was cheated that would cheat! Nor is it
strange;
For view man's earthly range,
Nothing unglanced at, leaving,
You'll find that every one is crafty, politic,
And somehow, for his own advantage quick;
One will his neighbour slyly trick,
Another's apt at bold deceiving.

XVII

THE NIGHTINGALES

WHEN spring smiled, down the vales,
A man, beneath an oak, entrapped some nightingales,
Which, being put in cages, soon began to quaver;
Poor things! at liberty their efforts had been braver.
"Although a song in prison lacks the wonted ring,
What else shall we do here but sing?"

Thus ask the captives weary.

Among them all, a little wretched bird

Most feels the torment dreary,

For with his mate he can exchange no word.

“ It tastes of death, so far from heaven’s light,
Oh ! I would know again the ecstasy of flight ! ”

Lamenting night and day,

He suddenly exclaims, “ Sorrow, begone ! away !

Only a fool bewails misfortune,

The wise should fate importune,

By action cure their cruel wrongs ;

’Twere well to carol forth some pretty songs !

What seeks this man ? To view our feathers
glisten ?

It may be, to a few of my best notes he’d listen ;

If only I, by chance, could please him with my
voice,

’Tis like enough he’d soften ; bid me new
rejoice ;

Who knows ? He might indeed from prison bars
deliver ! ”

So reasoning, the bird begins to trill,

Always, at rosy eve becomes a joyous giver ;

At sunrise, his small form appears with bliss to
quiver.

What follows from his dainty skill ?

Far from deliverance, he gets no tiny guerdon.

Birds which sang feebly, long ago
 Were set at liberty and, rescued from their woe,
 Escaped captivity's dread burden.

But, for my sweetest songster frail,
 That never seems to tire or fail,
 No tender effort can avail.

XVIII

DEMYÀN'S FISH SOUP

"I BEG you! Be so kind!
 Just favour me and taste it!"

"Neighbour, I pray you, do not press me!"
 "Change your mind.

Another spoonful; do not waste it;
 This fish-soup is the thing, 'tis luscious, capital."
 "I've swallowed now three portions." "What of that?
 no matter,

Come now, no foolish chatter,
 Think of your health, and eat it all;

'Tis soup indeed, with many a ball

As if fine amber beads had hither chanced to fall!

Quick eat it, oh! my comrade dearest,
 Here's bream, with giblets nice; here's sturgeon
 where it's clearest;

Another little morsel? Wife, upon him call!"

Warm-hearted friend Demyàn thus urges Phòka keenly,
 Allows him never respite, smiles serenely.

Sweat starts, on Phòka's face, to gather as might
 rain,

Nevertheless, he lets himself be helped again,

Making an effort, though a drear one,

Finishes all. " Ah, you're the sort I love ! "

Remarks Demyàn, " You're not an appetite above ! "

" Another little plateful ? Come then, oh, my
 dear one ! "

But Phòka, hot and red,

Though liking fish-soup much, had grown a prey
 to dread,

And, fur cap grasping,

Painfully gasping,

Uprose without delay and fled ;

And, since, to friend Demyàn no word has said.

Author ! however blest, because true gifts possessing,

If you are prone to wander, many times digressing,

And grow by prolix ways distressing,

Know that your glorious prose, or transcendental
 verse

Becomes a blight and is than too much fish-
 soup worse.

XIX

THE COCK AND THE PEARL

A COCK that on a heap was scratching,
 Said, when he found, 'mongst rubbish, a fine pearl,
 "What's this?" and, with contemptuous twirl,
 Passed it, as not worth snatching.

"Oh, madly they behave, who value baubles high!
 I would less eagerly for such a plaything sigh
 Than for a grain of wheat which calls for action
 hasty,
 Is tasty."

The ignorant have soon enough
 Of what is past their ken; pronounce it wretched
 stuff. (NOTE)

XX

THE CORNFLOWER

A CORNFLOWER solitary grew,
 Throve, but, a-sudden pining, pitifully faded,
 Scarce raised its head; less bright of hue,
 Shrank, as by thoughts of death invaded;
 Then, to the gentle Zephyr, whispered soft and
 low:—

“ If only day itself would quickly show,
If but once more the sun should deign to prove
his glory,

I might, perhaps, revive to tell a grateful story.”

“ You strange and simple soul ! ”

Nearby a beetle grumbled from a hole,

“ Think you, the mighty sun has any thought concerning
Your humble look and health and growth ;
Cares if to blossom you are loth ?

Believe me that he lacks both time and taste for learning
Things vain as this.

If only you, by flight attained a higher bliss,

You'd see that here the meadows, fields and tillage
As close are bound to him, as unto God's a village.

For radiant ever, by his heat,

He helps the poplars, oaks, and cedars, yews and
beeches ;

So blossoms' wondrous forms and colours sweet
Reveal a puissance that to exquisiteness reaches.

Know even that he dowers

Matchless and gorgeous flowers,

With undreamed witcheries : their traits and powers
Are such, that time, with scythe regretful, strikes them !

Unblessed with fragrance, small of size,

You should not dare attract the sun's majestic eyes.
On forms like yours he never looks, perhaps dislikes
them ;

Cease to aspire forthwith, control thy vapid will,
 Wither, be still!

But the sun rose and shone and nature new delighted,
 Throughout the land of plants distributed his
 beams;

And the poor flower, that wilted in the hour of
 dreams,

With gratitude the boon requited.

* * * * *

O you! to whom fate gives, with pride of race,
 A lofty place!

My sun before you his example now advances.
 Cast glances

Unto whatever spot his light can reach! he's there
 To give to cedar, ay and grass, in equal share
 A radiance uncompelled, a happiness caressing.

As, in an eastern crystal, a spark burns,
 So, in the heart of each that sunward turns,

Are left an image and a blessing. ^(NOTE)

XXI

THE FLY AND THE BEE

IN Spring, along a waving stalk, a fly
Ascending sees set high
Above her on a flower,
A bee, ensconced as in a bower ;
And haughtily remarks :—“ A busy state is yours
That all the day from morn to eve, dull work
endures !

Called to vexatious toil, I might indeed have fainted.
Leading, toward labour coy,
In paradise, a life of joy,

I am with such a care acquainted
As flying 'mongst the guests at balls,
Where gracefully I publish how my sole connections
Are in the town's superior sections.

But you should know what glorious feasting to me
falls

At any rout or birthday party,
Whither I surely come the first
And eat off dainty porcelain. Next I quench my thirst,
Sipping choice wines from crystal, so that I feel hearty.
Before the other guests

I sate my needs ; with me to try the sweets it rests.
I force my way where'er a maid is,

Among the youthful beauties mix :

Yes, moments of inaction fix

On rosy cheek or snowy neck, among the ladies."

"All this I know full well," replies the modest bee,

"But there have reached me ugly rumours:—

You are from folk's affections free,

Even at weddings, plague with selfish humours ;

And so, if e'er they find you scheming in the home,

They drive you forth to roam."

"No matter," says the fly, "they cannot my sort
smother,

Being through one door chased, I enter by another."

XXII

THE QUARTET

AN ape, an ass, a goat and Bruin

In sport

Resort

To actions they are new in :

Together scheme to play quartet.

They filch the score, a 'cello, bass, two fiddles ;

Then, sitting 'neath a lime, to solve sound's riddles

And wide enchant, their brains they set ;

Using the bow with force, outrageous measures get.

“ Now, brothers stay,” the ape implores, “ a
moment linger.

’Tis melody we seek ! ” and lifts a warning finger.

“ Here, Bruin ! opposite the tenor, bring your bass,
I’ll, as first scraper, sit before the second ;
Our efforts so will come with better grace ;
On woods’ and hills’ applause I’ve reckoned.”
They moved ; and the quartet began
But scarcely favourably ran.

“ A minute, please, I’ve found a plan :—”
Brays out the ass, “ ’Twere more for us befitting,
In a line sitting.”

Obeying, they resumed with order, in a row.

But tuneful strains harmonious did not flow.

Came quarrels and disunion then as ever ;

But never

Agreed they where to stay.

A nightingale flew nigh who, hearkening in dismay,
Was forthwith asked by them to settle their
contention :—

“ Have patience with us, listen, and allay
dissension ;

How to ensure success, please indicate !

Each of us has a book, and instrument ; elate
To find our seats, we wait.”

“ For the musician’s art are needed comprehension,
Skill, taste and hearing sensitive ;

My candid words forgive !

Places! however you may change them,
 You'll shock your friends, nay more, estrange
 them!" (NOTE)

XXIII

THE DUCAT

OF worth is education?
 Of value vast, beyond a doubt!
 But, if we show ourselves devout
 In finer lore, we bring cessation
 Of sturdy forces needful for salvation.

'Twere prudent, therefore to examine close,
 Lest we of culture give an o'er compelling dose.
 Ne'er should enlightenment too much the mind
 engross!

We must not weaken spirit, undermine our
 manners,
 Annihilate the simple life.

Nor, having made the trivial rife,
 Should we enrol our folk beneath inglorious
 banners.

Aroused by such a cause for strife,
 One well could pen a book or make important
 speeches,
 But not to everyone this urgency yet reaches;
 So, writing as in play,

Insisting not o'er much, I'll hint what I would say.

* * * * *

A simple soul (this story of such teaches),
When walking home, upon the ground,
Amid the dust and dirt a ducat found.
The news being known, were offered, to the
peasant,
Three handfuls of bright coppers in exchange.
He pauses, waits awhile ; requests a larger present ;
Coveting wealth both new and pleasant,
Imagines craftily he better can arrange.
Sharp gravel, sand and chalk obtaining,
And, even pounding up a brick,
He thinks a fortune he is gaining,
Impatient strives and quick
Proceeds the ducat's sides and edge to brighten ;
Scratches and tears,
Then diligent repairs ;
Well, in a word, his treasure's brilliancy would heighten.
The grimy ducat thus was purified and
glossed ;
But, not as heavy
After his levy,
The piece of gold had thinned and half it's
value lost. (NOTE)

XXIV

THE EAGLE AND THE SPIDER

AN eagle, that o'er clouds,
His way thro' Caucasus was threading,
Perched on a cedar; far from crowds,
Gazed down on varied wonders spreading.
At once he seemed to view the kingdoms of the earth,
Great fertile plains that knew of winding streams no
dearth;

Here groves and meadows rich gave birth
To verdure bright and scenes engaging,
And there the mighty Caspian raging,
So dark was that, compared, it dulled the raven's
worth.

“ I praise thee, Zeus! that thou, when great events
ordaining,

Decided so to 'stablish me in vastness reigning,
That here I lightly move, a monarch of the world.”

He ceased. A small voice him saluted—

“ As well, my eyes perceived the beauties here
unfurled,

I have in flight your sway disputed,

You are a boaster rare! to me it seems,

That I, a spider, have your claims refuted!

Lower am I than you, O comrade, in my
dreams ? ”

The eagle looked—a spider had much done,
From a near branch around him, a web spun,
On a small twig was stirring,
Already of the sky the eagle's view was
blurring.

“ How cam'st thou to this glorious
height ? ”

Thus asked the eagle, “ Fright
Ere long possesses all that are in flying boldest,
Precludes the vantage that thou holdest !
Wingless, a weakling, really didst thou upward
crawl ? ”

“ Nay, I should ne'er have so decided ! ”

“ Then who thee safely hither guided ? ”

“ I to yourself my life confided,
E'en from below, I grasped your tail and
did not fall.

But I can here continue, quite at ease,
without you

And, though it does not enter my designs
to flout you,

I know that I” A gust, from where's
no consequence,

To an abyss blew down the spider thence.

* * * * *

How think you, Sirs? In truth, I do not
tremble,

Saying that such as give nor thought nor toil
But to grow rich, and round a great man coil,
In certain traits the spider close resemble.

They puff out well the chest,
And look as if endowed with a surpassing vigour ;
It only needs the wind's unrest,
And lo! they cut a wretched figure. ^(NOTE)

XXV

THE PEASANT AND THE ROBBER

A PEASANT, setting up a home,
Bought at a fair, a milkpail and a cow together ;
And then, in pleasant weather,
Journeying through the forest, to his farm would roam ;
But sudden he a robber came on,
Who left him bare as any lime-tree stripped of bark.
"Have pity," cried the peasant, "to my pleadings
hark,

Show of compassion just a spark!
For more than a whole year, I've centred every aim on
This handsome cow ; the wish has filled my
soul."

"'Tis well ; you shall my deeds control,"
Thus spoke the thief, "ne'er mercy stifle !

I do not lack a pail with which to milk your cow,
 So will allow
 That you shall have the wished-for trifle."

XXVI

THE LION AND THE PANTHER

A LION in past days
 Chanced on an agile panther ; and, in frequent frays,
 The ownership of sundry woods and dens disputed.
 Actions-at-law with beasts are not the usual mode,
 Animals strong and fierce being so constituted,
 That they observe a simple code :—
 Always the weaker bear the load.
 Howe'er, in order, not eternally to bicker ;
 Letting their wrath out-flicker,
 They thought than strife a legal settlement were
 quicker.
 Into their minds it came to cease their conflicts
 rude,
 And, with the brawl's suspension,
 To offer terms, eternal peace conclude,
 Till the next tension.
 " Let us appoint for each
 A secretary glib of speech,"
 Suggests the panther to the lion ; " his fine mettle
 Our feud will settle.

With such a purpose sound, I will engage a cat,
 A creature no way puissant, save to kill a rat,
 Do you appoint an ass, who is a being noted
 And, by the bye, excuse the thought,
 He'll surely prove to you enormously devoted !
 Believe me, as a friend :—your Council are as nought
 In sapience grave beside his muzzle.
 We can rest certain that
 My cat
 And he will solve the hardest puzzle.”
 The lion soon in all concurred
 As splendid ;
 But, liking not the ass, a fox to him preferred,
 In this particular the scheme amended ;
 Remarking to himself (showing he something knew),
 ’Tis well your enemy’s suggestions to eschew. ^(NOTE)

XXVII

THE WOLF IN THE KENNEL,

At night, a wolf with thoughts on sheepfolds centred,
 A kennel entered,
 And swift aroused the angry pack
 That, scenting near at hand the grey and horrid bully,
 Barked, ’gainst each other struggled, felt the insult fully.
 The huntsman crying, “ Lads ! we’re on his track,”

Prepared to meet the strange attack.
 Forthwith the kennel scene grows hellish,
 Men up with cudgels run,
 Or load a gun,
 " A light there ! bring a light ! " 'tis quickly done,
 The wolf retreats, the prospect does not relish,
 But grinds his teeth and sits, with bristling hair,
 Pressed in a corner, while his eyes with fury glare.
 Perceiving that no lambs the scene embellish
 And that he has indeed, at last,
 To settle for his thieving past,
 He opens, all aghast,
 Negotiations.

Thus craftily begins, " My friends, why raise this din ?
 I'm of your kith and kin ;
 Peace is my wish to-day, I love not altercations,
 Let us forget the past, and I'll observe this rule :—
 Not only toward your flocks will I my ardour cool,
 But, for their benefit, I other wolves shall school ;
 On oath as wolf, I promise and am willing,
 Always . . . Oh, neighbour, patient list ! "
 But says the huntsman, with raised fist :—
 " Fellow ; I'm greyer than you wist ;
 In wolfish matters, I a serious part am filling
 And, therefore, 'tis my custom, aye,
 In no respect with strolling wolves to play,
 Except to take their skins away ; "
 And instantly his dogs the visitor are killing. (NOTE)

XXVIII

APELLES AND THE YOUNG ASS

APELLES, the great artist, saw
 An ass colt, asked him on a visit.
 "I am an honoured guest, why is it?"
 The ass demanded; nigh some beast would draw
 And say:—"Apelles, often, in a hurry,
 Myself will worry,
 Ay, plague and torture me to serve some
 flattering end;
 I'm sure, he likes my look, dear friend,
 And sketches me as Pegasus, the noted."
 "Oh, no!" Apelles said, who happened to stand
 near;
 "I wished to find a model, long of ear,
 For Midas, whom the gods to be an ass promoted.
 Favour me with a call, I shall be very glad:
 Though I have countless donkeys' ears, at times,
 inspected,
 I ne'er, even among the old and sad,
 And full grown, good or bad,
 Discerned ears large as yours; therefore I you
 selected." (NOTE)

XXIX

THE MISER

A GOBLIN of the house, guarding a golden store,
Was by the demon chief called from beneath the floor,
And sent in far off lands to wander,
Exiled for many years, on other cares to ponder.

In service strict, the goblin could not well ignore
This secret authoritative bidding ;

But how was it to keep, despite the ridding,
The treasure safe, preserved from all attack
Until it should come back ?

To hire a proper guardian, or construct defences,
Would institute o'er great expenses.

To leave the chests alone would bring the risk of loss ;
That could not for a day be thought of,
Since thieves who came the place across
Would hindrances make naught of.

The spirit worried, brooded, satisfied at last,
Into the presence of the skinflint owner passed ;

Yet, first of all it dug, out of the ground, the
treasure.

It says, " Oh, master, please some news to hear,
I have to travel far, such is my ruler's pleasure ;

But you will be a recollection dear.

Now, at farewell, as friendship's token,

I have brought out this gorgeous array ;
Eat, drink, be ever gay,
Squander in course unbroken !
If it shall come to you to die,
Then who should be your heir but I ?
That is my sole condition ;
Meantime, may destiny promote your chief
ambition ! ”

It spoke, was gone. The goblin, after years a score,
Sudden from distant toil forbore,
Returned, once more
Through hidden regions sailing.

What sees it ? O, the joy ! Behold, the miser pressed,
Of hunger dead, upon his treasure chest ;
Nor riches there are failing.
The guardian takes again the gold,
No ducats losing,
Gloats that, since days of old,
Expenses have been nought, through plans of its
own choosing.

If any wealthy miser lives but as a mouse,
Who will receive his hoard ? The goblin of the
house ! ^(NOTE)

XXX

THE SIGHTSEER

“ Good day ! my best of friends ! tell me where you
have strayed ? ”

“ Oh, to the big museum ; really I’m afraid
I’ve walked at least three hours ; can you conceive
it ?

My mind’s so full, by talking I’d relieve it !

I have amazing sights surveyed.

A place remarkable, that hall of wonders !

There, Nature her extent and potency forth
thunders,

What beasts and birds have I, astounded, there not seen !

What butterflies, and beetles spiny,

And various flies, cockchafers shiny,

In hue, some coral like, and some of emerald green !

There, scarcely than a pin head greater,

Were ladybirds and curious works of the Creator.”

“ You saw the elephant ? describe his form and say,

Is he a mountain, past all question ? ”

“ He is not there ! ” “ Oh, yes ! ” “ Then, I

mistook the way,

Of such a thing got no suggestion.” (NOTE)

XXXI

THE MIRROR AND THE MONKEY

A MONKEY, having viewed her portrait in a glass,
Turned to a bear by whom she wished to pass ;
Touching him lightly, said :—“ What hideous ass

Can that be, my dear fellow ?

Always a fresh contortion, skip, grimace and stare ;
I'd hang myself, if I should wear
That look ridiculous, become but half as yellow.

I will however this confess :—

Among my friends, perhaps a dozen, more or less,
As awkward are and faces similar possess.”

“ What need acquaintances to reckon ?

When you within the mirror writhe and beckon ! ”

Thus Bruin sharply cried.

The ape, with angry look, heard only to deride.

* * * * *

Of such examples there are many ;

Satire, detraction, truth ! of these we love not any ;

I saw it even yesterday :—

Peter is not quite honest ; there are curious stories ;

'Tis said, in taking bribes, he glories,

And yet he looks at Paul in a peculiar way. ^(NOTE)

XXXII

THE TREE

SEEING a peasant passing, with an axe,
A sapling said to him :—" My kind and friendly
fellow,
Direct against the trees around me fierce attacks ;
They thwart my wish to spread and mellow ;
Scant light its way can hither thread,
My roots are cramped, secure no chance to spread ;
At liberty about me play no breezes,
O'erhead, a great mass intertwines, goes where it pleases !
If only every hindrance to my growth were less,
I should, within a year, a beauty rare possess,
Bestow a gracious shade on all the valley,
While, now, from wretchedness my spirits cannot
rally."

The peasant quickly got to work,
Was easily persuaded,
And well the grumbler aided :
Took care that near the tree, no living thing should
lurk.

Alas, the triumph did not long continue :
By the sun's rays the tree was baked,
Hail ruthless struck it till it ached,
A fearful tempest broke its inner fibrous sinew !

Thereon a serpent spoke :—“ Thou surely
 hast been mad,
 Brought on thyself this trouble sad !
 Well sheltered in the forest, would'st have shot up
 bravely,
 Nor sultriness, nor hurricane could thee have hurt,
 The older trees were present evil to avert ;
 Then if, at later date, inscrutably and gravely
 Destiny thought to strike them down,
 All, at the proper time, thou might'st have earned
 a crown,
 As an example rare of vigour ;
 Living to boast of strife wherein thou well didst figure ;
 O'ercoming many storms, have won a sure renown.”

XXXIII

THE BROOK

A SHEPHERD, once, approached a brook, in piteous
 grief ;
 Complaining sorely that a cruel, swollen river
 Had filched his lamb, a pretty giver
 Of simple comfort, joy too brief.
 The brook first heard, then said with exclamation
 bitter :—
 “ O stream insatiable ! if only thy broad bed,

Even as mine, were wed

To clearness pure and honest glitter!

If only folk thy victims but in chief could view

Who, despite mud, were easily revealed!

In thy position, I ashamed my strength would yield,

Had into corners shrunk and my deep shame
concealed.

If waters poured my channels through,

Swiftly as now they leave thy pastures spreading,

And they thy lovely banks are threading,

I would have done no creature harm,

Nor caused through noxious floods man's terrible
alarm;

Would have set angrily no bush nor flower in motion,

But, earning gratitude from every neighbouring
farm,

Had left the prosperous fields to breathe a peaceful calm,

For order would have shown devotion;

I, in a word, while doing good upon my way,

Would nowhere have produced the least disaster,

Nay, smiling, if thro' rains my bulk grew vaster,

I would have seaward gone benign and pure and gay."

So truly thought the brook, and spoke as to a
brother.

A peaceful week arrived; another,

Then, near at hand, a rain cloud burst upon a hill,

In torrents;

The brook, with watery wealth, could nigh a river fill
 And, showing rage held lately in abhorrence,

Has quickly forced its banks to know its muddy will.

It boils and roars and hurries foam in frothy
 masses,

Breaks trees, all boundaries passes,
 Deafens with noise that's heard afar ;

Thus the same shepherd sad, for whom it wordy
 war

Reproachfully had preached, arrived at desolation,

With his whole flock met devastation :

His home, and all was there forever were o'er thrown.
 How many brooks develop only kindness,

To evil lures exhibit blindness,

Because they force and volume never yet have
 known ? (NOTE)

XXXIV

THE KITE

A PAPER kite, that soared on high,

While looking down was able to descry

A joyous butterfly,

And cried, " We faintly see your foolish efforts
 zealous ;

Confess that you are rather jealous,

When you behold our elevated lot."

"Jealous? Oh, surely not.

Your grandeur is a phantom, or an empty vision,
Your tethered flight awakes, believe me, but derision ;

Can happiness be got

From an existence ever fettered ?

And how could life for me be bettered ?

As I aspire

I venture higher,

And never, solely for another's idle leisure

And pleasure,

Lose freedom I desire."

XXXV

THE IMPIOUS

OF old, among the peoples, dwelt a race in shame,

Who, sinning specially, their wicked hearts
enlisted

Fiercely against the gods, with arms resisted.

A thousand banners hurried, crowds of rebels came,
Carrying bows or slings, and vilely Heaven flouted.

The leaders of the throng, audacious, keen of
mind,

To rouse their folk to fury, words disgraceful
shouted,

Said that the court of Zeus severe is, ay, and
blind ;

“ Slumber perchance the gods ; but, doing
justice rarely

They now require a lesson of a kind ;
So, from the neighbouring hills, men, scheming not
unfairly,

Should hurl, against the great, a strength combined
Of arrows ; e'en Olympus smother.”

Dreading such portents strange, gods spoke with one
another

And, at a conference, this prayer to Zeus preferred :—

“ Do thou restrain this monstrous herd
Of creatures insolent ; forthwith, to action stirred,
Convince the anarchists ; rudely by peals of thunder
Or marvel, make them wonder ;

Or, by an inundation vast

Or an o'erwhelming shower of stones upon them
cast ! ”

At last,

Said Zeus :—“ If longer they remain unquiet,
Stiffnecked persist, of the immortals show not fear,
Their deeds will 'whelm them ; 'tis my fiat ! ”

Then clouds, as dark as night, appear ;

Huge stones and arrows sharp, from the insurgents
flying,

Cause ghastly wounds and countless deaths ; and tell
the dying,

That their own missiles swift have fallen on their
heads.

Doubt, as an agile foeman, treads ;

Its punishment sure spreads ;

The scoffs of evil prophets are but falsest
notions

Inciting, spurring 'gainst a goodness wise and true ;

The hour of death will, reaching even you,

As a deep piercing arrow summon dread
emotions. (NOTE)

XXXVI

THE MOUSE AND THE RAT

“ O neighbour, thou hast heard the news, of course ? ”

Up to a rat, a mouse came running.

“ Our cat has felt in conflict all the lion's force !

We'll move at ease, no more her presence shunning ! ”

“ Rejoice not yet, my dear,

True wisdom from a rat now hear :—

Away with strange beliefs unfounded !

If claws can interfere,

The lion soon will be astounded :

A cat in strength has no compeer ! ”

XXXVII

TWO PEASANTS

“GOOD morning, Thaddeus!” “Good morning,
friend Egòr,
How goes it with you? Well? I trust you're
cheerful!

Oh friend, you have not heard of my adventure
fearful,

I burnt my home; possessing one no more,
Too sadly I advance from door to door!”

“Because? Some accident regretful?”

“Well, at a Christmas party I became forgetful,
And with a candle went to give the horse a feed;
I own, just then, my head was humming;
Somehow I dropped the light, and no way could
succeed

The sudden flames in overcoming.

And you?” “Oh, Thaddeus! an accident
benumbing!

An angered God will retribution plan,

You see a legless man;

That I remain alive is nothing but a wonder,

I, too, at Christmas sought some beer, the dwelling
under;

Besides, must own, already had drunk wine
 With friends demanding pleasure,
 And feeling queer, I thought it a wise measure,
 Myself to darkness to confine.

The devil pushed, and I rolled down the steep incline ;
 Alas, as punishment for loving too much tippie,
 I go about a hopeless cripple."

" But blame yourselves, my friends ! "

Said to them, father Stephen ; " he's wise who
 comprehends,

There's nothing to astonish

In that you fired your house ; or you limp lame and
 slow ;

But mostly I such folk admonish

As, drinking much, in darkness choose to go."

XXXVIII

THE LION AND THE FOX

THE fox had ne'er a lion seen,

And, meeting one, she trembled, abject grew of
 mien.

A little after, she a second lion chanced on,
 And now a figure far less frightful glanced on !

When later came the third,

She was to conversation with the lion stirred ! (NOTE)

XXXIX

THE PEASANT AND THE SNAKE

A SNAKE aspired to live within a peasant's house,
 Avoiding an existence idle,
 Would feed the children, nurse them and their tempers
 bridle ;

Not emulate some lazy mouse.

“ I know too well,” she says, “ there is an ancient
 notion,

Widely among good people rife,
 That only strife

And every form of wild commotion

Follow our entry to the home :

You dare affirm that snakes are never grateful,

That, with a horrid purpose, serpents roam ;

More :—‘ Their behaviour, e'en to their own young
 is hateful.’

If there be wicked snakes, I am not one of such,

Ne'er, in an honest life, have I a victim bitten,

My fangs shall ne'er a creature touch.

Pining for genial deeds, I'm willing to do much,

Embrace the kitten,

Caress a maid love-smitten.

Despite her heartache,

A snake.

Would now the proper care of infants undertake ! ”
 “ E’en if your words,” the peasant answers, “ be not
 truthless,

I will not greet a shape so ruthless :

If I should weakly show

Any such liking,

Another snake would come ; we next her kin should
 know.

Ah ! woe !

A hundred fangs would be my children striking.

Therefore, I deem, O kind and gentle friend,

Because, alas, good snakes I can’t get used to,

A present wrong I’ll mend.”

Forthwith the peasant, not reduced to

Egregious folly, of the serpent made an

end. (NOTE)

XI,

THE BARREL,

“ For only three short days, I ask of you, my friend,
 Grant me a special boon, namely, a barrel lend ! ”

Now service is, to comrades, holy ;

’Tis different when the matter’s one of money solely,

Then love is less in question and one can refuse.

Why should not friends your barrel use ?

But soon it has returned ; arrives the pleasing news ;
 And, once again, is water holding.
 Alas ! no longer is it with the thing all well !
 Falling beneath a curse, or weird and curious spell,
 It lately has acquired a strangely vinous smell,
 A redolence that's fated of the jaunt to tell ;
 If it be filled with kvass or beer, is tolled their knell !
 The owner, a whole year, sly schemes unfolding,
 Now scalded, and now dried it in the wind,
 Oh, many methods shrewd designed,
 Could yet the subtle vapour find,
 And so, at last, exchanged the barrel for another.

* * * * *

Try, fathers ! to remember this my fable brief :—
 Company doubtful causes grief,
 Is bad for sister, as for brother ;
 Examples of ill deeds and words are apt to stay ;
 Far better keep a harm away,
 Than after-consequences smother ! (NOTE)

So the poor fox, by terror stirred,
Confused sprang vainly hither,
Or, but to loose himself, as desperately thither.
Luckily came a wolf. "Dear kind, good, honest friend,"
The fox implored, "Oh save me from a hideous end!"
The wolf his way arrests,
The difficulty sagely breasts;
With action that could scarcely fail,
Gnaws off the sure imprisoned tail.
Whereat, the luckless victim gratitude pretended,
Bereft of all his pride, his homeward journey wended.

XLII

THE SHEEP AND THE DOGS

IN order that a flock of sheep,
Despite ferocious wolves, may well and safely slumber,
The farmer's dogs are multiplied in number.
What then? So great a pack he wills to keep
That, though the flock, in truth, will ne'er through
wolves diminish,
The guardians fall in straits for food,
Have soon their teeth in blood imbrued;
Though snatching oft a ewe, become both wild and
thinnish.
Next, in a lonely field with many a victim strewed,
The dogs the last one finish.

XLIII

THE GEESE.

ARMED with his stick, a peasant
Was driving geese to market in the town.

But sad to say, the rustic clown
Persuaded oft the flock in manner far from pleasant ;
His mind being tuned to profit on a lofty scale,
And sometimes, in financial matters,
Greed to the winds consideration scatters.

Yet would I not this man assail ;
Although the geese, regarding him with angry passion,
And, having met by chance a passer-by,
Forth hissed their thought in candid fashion :—
“ Were geese unhappier e'er seen by any eye ?
This fellow leaves us never quiet,
Conveys to us, as unto common things, his fiat,
Churlishly thinks that little is our due ;

But he should show himself respectful,
Lost had been Rome if, once, our race had proved
untrue !
Our ancestors, in face of risk, were not neglectful,
Their cackling warned the sentries, who the foe repelled.”
“ Be pleased to add in what you have excelled,”
Demands the passer-by. “ Our ancestors . . .” “ That
meagre

Story is yet reported ; but to know, I'm eager,
If you yourselves have well behaved."

"Our ancestors the city saved."

"No doubt, but what have you yourselves
effected ? "

"We? Nothing, yet." "Then nothing yet to
you is owed.

Your ancestors were properly respected :

Rome due devotion to them showed ;

But you will roast, however well connected ! "

XLIV

THE PEASANTS AND THE RIVER.


PEASANTS, who cursed in consternation

The devastation

Wrought by the rivulets and streams,

At the Spring flooding ; not half-hearted

But keen for satisfaction, nursing pleasant
dreams,

Unto the River that received such brooks,
departed. 

Oh ! to denounce them there was cause,
For here the crops were scattered ;

Too, that the mills were washed away, such
mattered ;

Counting drowned beasts, one could not pause.
Yet peacefully the River flowed and hastened proudly !
How on its banks men, women sped
And nothing said
Against it e'er of evil loudly !
Its size the peasants touches, wears
Away their anger, undermines their reason.
When they have nearer come, they gaze, at that sad
season,
And surely know the River's treason.
Shamefully half their goods away it bears !
Yet, never troubling it with their affairs,
The simple peasants watched its course with silent
glances ;
Then at each other gave a look,
Their heads slow shook,
And the road took
Homewards ! They deemed, 'mid life's mischances,
To struggle 'gainst oppressors is but useless toil,
If base superiors are sharers in the spoil ! ^(NOTE)

XLV

THE WOLF AND THE CAT.

OUT of the forest ran a wolf in fear,
Made for a village, seeking shelter ;
Began to think his end was near

As the pursuing pack deep bayed in deafening welter.
 To gain a refuge sure, he looked for unlatched gates,
 And faced disaster,
 For bolts were more than he could master.
 Seeing a cat, instead of going faster,
 He waits.

“O puss! upon the fence,” he calls, “say, whom
 thou findest

Of all the peasants here the kindest.

Who will protect me from the anger of my foes?

Thou hearest the loud barking? ah, the din yet
 grows!

They’re coming after me.” “Better to Stephen
 hurry;

He is a first rate fellow,” ill at ease, Tom cries.

“I took his sheep; I love all woolly things and
 furry.”

“Suppose you dare Demyàn to worry?”

“I think he’d gaze at me with wicked eyes,
 I ate his lambkin white and gentle.”

“Trofèem lives there; be off, and quick!”

“Not to Trofèem, he’d meet me with a gun or stick;
 In Spring, I killed his kid, ’twas almost accidental.”

“Indeed! Well, try to get assistance from old Flick!”

“He lost a calf!” “My friend, your past is detrimental:
 You have the village folk, beyond a doubt,
 annoyed.”

And the cat added drily :—

“ By what defence is now your quaking soul upbuoyed ?
Our simple countrymen, though sometimes far from wily,
Will not be softened by your woeful, anxious plight ;
That you accuse yourself is right ;
Your day is past, now comes the night ! ”

XLVI

THE HERMIT AND THE BEAR

E'EN if, in troubled hours, we much to kindness owe,
Not everyone will soar to friendship's duties,
Exactly gauge and weigh its beauties :
An o'er officious fool can harm us like a foe !

* * * * *

A certain man once dwelt, kindred without, and lonely,
In a far waste and wilderness.
Now, though you greatly may a desert sojourn bless,
Seclusion may be painful, if it be yours only :
'Tis comforting for folk their joys and griefs to share.
“ Yes, but the meadows wild, the forests' gloom
impressive,
The little streams and hills, new tints and forms
successive,
Now, surely such as these are fair ! ”

Nay, all is dull without some intercourse expressive!

The hermit then, being bored,

His isolated, irksome days abhorred,

Would pierce the thickets dense, and jostle 'gainst a
neighbour :

Someone's acquaintance early make.

Yet, save a wolf, or snake,

Whom should he join with all his labour ?

In simple truth, ere long, he faces a great bear,

And bowing low, without a second losing,

Surveys the fellow with a genial stare.

As were the meeting one of his own choosing,

The bear extends his paw, and both with interchange

Of words, grow kindly,

Are drawn to one another blindly,

For further mutual happiness arrange.

But, as to how they shaped their private
conversation

With tales' embellishment, or sundry jests

Springing from humorous behests ;

Concerning that I'm quite unknowing.

The man is hardly talkative,

The bear without a word can live,

Is pleased when useful qualities he's showing.

And yet, whate'er may hap, the hermit's
wondrous glad ;

A pleasant friendship he has had.

He dwells with Bruin much, else falls a prey
to sickness ;

Follows on short excursions with sufficient
quickness.

Once, when the heat had stilled each bird,
Unto our friends to roam in woodlands it
occurred,

By love of hills and valleys stirred.

Now, than a shaggy bear's, the human frame is weaker ;

The hermit grew for rest a seeker

Much sooner than his friend,

In vain he tried his pace to mend.

Observing which, the bear pronounced a word
judicious :—

“ Lie down a little, brother, rest !

Among the pine trees 'twill be best,

And I will guard thee from all enemies
malicious.”

The hermit laid him down, and gave a yawn,
Had soon from earth withdrawn,

But Bruin stayed on watch : and fanned with
motion active

The features to a fly attractive.

About the nose it played,

There stayed,

Or sought the cheek, until he drove it off to
settle

Again upon the nose ;

It e'er such spots unfortunately chose.
 At last the bear, to show his honest mettle,
 Up in his paws a weighty cobble caught,
 Then, slowly crouching down, and silent forward
 bending,
 Remarked, " You nuisance, I to you must be
 attending,
 " 'Tis time for me this insect further to
 be sending ! "

And, using all his strength, the fly a lesson taught.
 After the mighty blow, his skull being sadly shattered,
 The hermit did not move ; and nothing to him
 mattered. (NOTE)

XLVII

THE EAGLE AND THE FOWLS

ONCE, on a glorious day, to fill his soul with
 wonders,
 An eagle, proudly soaring high,
 Flew swiftly by
 The realms whence issue thunders.
 Quitting at last the clouds he, not unmoved by scorn,
 Alighted haply on a kiln for drying corn.
 'Tis true, the humble perch was all for him unsuited ;
 The eagle yet might have a special taste,

Or, it is possible, he there himself low placed
 Because at hand was nothing grand, severe or
 chaste,

No rock, or oaken bough, quite undisputed.

I scarcely guess his reason ; merely certain know :—

It is not long, 'ere, lo !

He to a second kiln elects to go.

Observing this, forthwith a hen small-
 crested

Is drawn her gossip dear to ask,

“ Why does this bird in honour bask ?

Not for his powers of flight, as now by us attested !

Really, I only have to try,

In order, with success, from kiln to kiln to fly.

How comes it that we humbler birds are
 driven

To rank proud eagles far ourselves above !

They fly as low as we, and perch as we do, love ;

As e'en might know a simple dove,

They've no more eyes or legs than unto us are
 given.”

The king bird answers soon, by such dull words
 annoyed ;—

“ Your truth with folly is alloyed :

Eagles may chance to fly as low as barndoor
 chickens,

But ne'er a hen her way amidst the azure quickens.”

* * * * *

If you shall genius have to judge,
Search for its weaknesses ; you will not labour vainly ;
Note, too, its excellencies, and discuss them
sanely,
Despise not merit, nor to understand it grudge. (NOTE)

XLVIII

THE AGED LION

A LION, once the forest king,
When growing old, and nigh bereft of vigour,
Could not himself on foes, with proper fury, fling ;
Grieving, could no respect from other
creatures wring,
Nor onward, in his weakness, drag his splendid figure.
But chiefly he was pained,
That the inferior beasts his presence much
disdained,
By every means avenged the monarch's previous
slighting,
Seemed happy when his ancient overlordship
spiting.
At times, the stallion with its hoofs to strike
him dares
Whom next the wolf sharp tears ;
Or the horned bull his wrath declares.

KRILÒFF'S FABLES



ЛЕВЪ СОСТАРЪВШІЙСЯ

THE AGED LION

To face Page 108

The wretched ruler, all things soon deploring,
With a scarce beating heart, awaits a fatal end,
And only strives his woes to mend
With weary, feeble roaring.
At length he spies a donkey that, he surely feels,
Would strike him with its heels,
If it could only find a spot exposed and
tender.
“ Oh, gods ! ” the groaning lion now exclaims,
“ alas !
Has my condition reached this horrid pass ?
To the last stroke of fate I'll eagerly
surrender ;
Death's shock were not so crass
As that my soul should suffer insult from an ass.” (NOTE)

XLIX

THE MAN WITH THREE WIVES.

A MAN of horrid notions,
While yet his wife was living, dared to marry twice.
It happened that the Tsar, severe, precise
Was not inclined to wink at free emotions ;
And roused by such a strange misdeed,
He to the judges spoke, without delay decreed,
That, for the culprit, they a punishment should
hit on,

Which would deter the crowd
 From matching such a crime, or mentioning aloud
 The tale, as one to try its wit on.

“ And, if I think the penalty inflicted light,
 I'll hang, around the court, the judges from a height.”

The joke appears unpleasant,
 And the unhappy lawyers sweat again,
 Nor leave the court ; three days are present
 In order to devise a just and proper pain.

Of torments there are thousands, but experience
 teaches,

Rarely a penalty to cure wrongdoing reaches.

However, in due time, God made the judges
 sage.

The vile offender, summoned back, was given
 To know, the court had striven
 And felt unanimously driven

To say, that he with all three wives at once
 must 'suage

New misery. Thereon, the people
 frightened

Deemed that the angry Tsar would stretch the judges'
 necks.

Four days of strife the man so vex,
 That round his throat a cord he tightens !
 Which dismal fate has woke the citizens to dread,
 And no one cares three wives at once to wed,
 A life monotonous thus lightens. (NOTE)

I.

THE CLOUD

QUICK o'er a countryside athirst for copious showers,
A gloomy rain-cloud selfish passed,
Disdained to shed relief, exerted not its powers ;
Yet, coming to the sea, disgorged a torrent vast.
Vaunting, it calls to witness how it Nature
dowers !

“ What service have you done
To man and crops or flowers ? ”

Thus, having rude begun,

The hills remarked with deep emotion :—

“ If only the parched fields from thee a gift had
won,

Thou would'st have famine stayed, despite a
scorching sun ;

Oh, it was wickedness to waste thy store on
Ocean ! ” (NOTE)

LI

THE SPORTSMAN

A SPORTSMAN seized his bag, and cartridges
and gun,
Whistled to jolly Rover, trusty friend, light hearted,
And to the woods for birds departed ;
But loaded not his piece, as if the game were won ;
Novel was such a strange omission.
“ 'Tis well,” says he, “ relief from toil is my
ambition,
The birds are never near ; 'twill turn out, later,
right,
The coveys slowly come in sight,
And then I'll get to work and load with all my
might.”
Scarce had he left his dwelling,
When sudden (fate a jest against him might be telling)
Along the lake,
Some ducks flew up both swift and steady ;
The sportsman easily could take
Two pair or half a dozen, were he ready
To kill ;
For many days have food at will.
Alas, our reckless one not yet can try his skill,

Tho' he loads quickly. No! for now the birds were
showing

Themselves too knowing,
So, when he was at last prepared,
They loudly whirred, by fear excited,
And flew beyond the copse by the same hope united,
A wish for safety shared.

In vain the marksman paced the woods in many a
section,

Never a little sparrow went in his direction ;
But trouble fresh was piled on care,
Foul weather ne'er
Abated.

His weary spirits flag ;
He can his limbs and empty bag
Scarce homeward drag ;
Blaming vile fortune, cries the journey was
ill fated. (NOTE)

LII

THE LION, THE CHAMOIS AND THE FOX.

A LION, who a chamois followed
And now had nigh his quarry caught,
Indulged in many a luscious thought,
Enjoyed the morsels to be swallowed.

While nothing came hunter and prey between,
Blocking the further path, appeared a huge ravine.
But lo! the chamois, lightly gathering her forces,
Sprang like an arrow from a bow,
Flew high above deep water-courses,
And, from the other side, surveyed her foe
below.

The lion stops in wonder,
Regards in awe the spot where cliffs are rent
asunder.

Approaches then a fox
And says:—"Oh monarch agile, fleet, thou
never yieldest?
Thou greater vigour than a chamois wieldest,
'Tis surely possible to clear these little rocks,
The gulf is somewhat wide; still, from a hunter
eager,

'Twill need but effort meagre.
Rely upon thy friend's discretion, and be wise;
I would not such a peril to thee now advise,
Nor myself trouble,

But for thy skill in every enterprise."
The lion's blood begins to seethe and bubble,
He hurls himself with all his sinewy might,
But, failing to reach quite the object of his flight,
Head foremost falls—disaster meets past mending.

And what about his comrade true?
He, slily in the narrow cleft descending,

Forthwith, the uselessness of further fawning knew,
 And, wrought his pleasure,
 In comfort, ease and, at his leisure,
 Said for the dead a prayer alone,
 And nibbled, in a week, the lion to the bone. (NOTE)

LIII

THE WORKMAN AND THE PEASANT.

A WORKMAN and a peasant old
 At eve, slow homeward strolled,
 But sudden, where the wood was thickest,
 Were prompted to the question, who should 'scape
 the quickest !
 Scarce had the peasant breathed,
 Before a bear its claws unsheathed,
 And trod him under, turned him over, then selected
 Whither attentions finally should be directed.
 Clearly the old man's hour arrives.
 " Oh, dearest Stephen, hasten, strike with vigour ! "
 He calls, as 'neath the beast, to free himself
 he strives.
 Our modern Hercules, cutting a splendid figure,
 And using mighty force,
 Cleaves the bear's skull in twain ; shows new
 resource,

Thrusting in Bruin's paunch a pitchfork with all rigour,
 Loud roared the bear and soon, in pangs
 extreme,
 From earthly life departed.
 Whereon the peasant rose to scream
 Words that appeared the hardest-hearted.
 Astounded, Stephen stares aghast,
 "What's wrong?" he says. "What's wrong!
 only your folly vast!
 You ask me why I feel displeasure,
 The fur is spoilt through your mad measure!"

LIV

FORTUNE AND THE BEGGAR

HOLDING a threadbare sack,
 A beggar, loitering where signs of wealth abounded,
 Bewailed of all good things his lack;
 Reflecting, grew confounded
 That who, in opulence and luxury and ease,
 Inhabits choice apartments, is yet hard to please:
 However much his pockets may be bursting,
 For more is thirsting;
 Covets to such extent,
 That, in his crazy hunger,

He may, like any money-monger,
Lose all, and so to loud lament
Give vent.

“ How long, with what surpassing strokes of fortune,
Here an old merchant plied his trade !
Despite his riches vast, no one could him persuade
To take his leave of toil and, making less parade,
No more for gold a fickle fate importune.

O'er Ocean's surface, yet, he sent his ships to roam,
Lusting for gain, oft hostages to Nature offered
Till, last, the treasures, for the sea's destruction
proffered,

Found in the deep their home,
And his prodigious store remained beneath the foam.
Another here, a speculator,
A million roubles quickly won.

Alas ! attempts to double them were never
done,

Till losing all, he grew on chance a luckless
waiter !

Thousands of such examples rush into the mind ;
Men wilfully are blind ! ”

Here, strangely came Dame Fortune, and herself
presented,

Thus to the beggar said :—

“ Listen ! to help you I should more than be contented ;
These ducats shall be well augmented :
Your sack beneath, now spread !

But I will pour them forth, only on one condition :—
 Though golden are the coins that you from here
 will haul,

If e'er, from out the bag, a single one shall fall,
 Ended is your ambition !

By ne'er a chance forget, that clearly I forewarn
 How strictly you must keep the terms of this
 arrangement ;

The sack is very old ; ensure not my
 estrangement,

By letting it thro' greed be torn ! ”

The beggar, now, from joy is scarcely
 breathing ;

Smiles his whole countenance are
 wreathing.

He opens wide his bag, whither an unseen hand
 To pour a sum untold has generously planned.

“ The sack already's weighing somewhat
 heavy,

Is it enough ? ”—“ Not yet ! ”

“ Will it not crack ? ”—“ Oh, no.”

“ But look ! you Cræsus ! ” “ Still, I would
 a little levy,

A trifle more, please throw ! ”

“ Be cautious how you act, the bag is strained
 below ! ”

“ Another tiny pinch ! ” But now the sack is
 tearing,

LVI

THE MISTRESS AND HER TWO MAIDS

AN aged dame, addicted much to grumbling,
And ever her displeasure mumbling,
Had two young serving maids, unhappy, pale
and thin,
Whose task, from early morn till evening
latest,
Was tireless at the wheel to spin.
Their course of life remains the straitest ;
No change arrives, comes no advance ;
To keep them breathless at the spindle
Is the old woman's rule, her efforts never dwindle ;
She takes them from their slumber ; with imperious
glance,
Proceeds to make the spindle dance.
Perhaps the mistress harsh her rule had once retarded
But that at hand was kept a certain cock,
Which crowed until she sleep discarded,
Assumed a curious nightcap and a smock,
Next, in the stove, a faggot lighted,
And, threatening, made her way into the spinners'
room,
Thence roughly haled them to their day of painful
gloom ;

Or used for stubbornness a broom,
 Their weakness for repose successfully indicted.

How vainly they demur

To the command, with frequent yawns receive it!

Alas! although the warm bed they prefer,

They must, with suddenness decide to leave it:

Always, as soon as crows the soulless, eager bird,

The maidens, by the scolder's phrases greeted,

Are woke for treatment stern repeated.

"Would you were dead!" was often heard,

The spinners, through their teeth, thus angrily

complaining;

"But for your noise, we'd sleep, awhile in bed remaining;

Take care! you'll someday come to harm!"

Then, choosing a dark hour and scorning pity,

They twist its neck, cause no alarm.

And next? They, that desired a situation pretty,

Had brought about a scene reversed

From that rehearsed.

'Tis true, poor chanticler had ceased to do his

worst,

As he no more was breathing;

But dread of lateness in the mistress' mind was

seething;

She gave the maids small chance to shut their weary

eyes,

Before she came again, the wretches to surprise,

Far earlier than the cock had e'er his clamour
lifted.

The spinners truth from error sifted :—
They, from a hardship slight to evils vast had drifted.

LVII

TRISHKA'S COAT

OUR Trishka's coat has near the elbows given,
Should be forthwith repaired. When for a needle
he has striven,
He slices off a quarter from the sleeves,
And, binding well the ends, a victory achieves.
His naked arms are scarce a cause for
gladness ;
And yet, he feels no sadness
When others, laughing, ask if he is cool.
The little fellow says :—" I am not quite a fool,
And will repair my blunder ;
That sudden act of mine makes people wonder."
Oh, Trishka was indeed a sage,
Coat tail and lappets he divided,
And, having done his best an evil to assuage,
Wore, with the bliss of early age,
A novel garment oft derided.

* * * * *

I've noticed that, in this great land, some country
 squires,
 Indulging their desires,
 Are apt, in Trishka's mood, to argue drolly,
 Directing their affairs for present reasons wholly. (NOTE)

LVIII

THE ANT

A CERTAIN ant displayed a vigour strange and lusty ;
 Seldom his curious species to such force attains,
 For instance, on the word of a historian trusty,
 He could from off the ground upraise two barley
 grains !
 Moreover, his great courage caused undying wonder :
 For, if on walks he chanced to meet a worm,
 He'd tear its shape asunder ;
 Unaided, he could hold a spider firm !
 Moved by such recent truths, not legends hoary,
 Within the anthill, where he dwelt,
 With but his valiant deeds the conversation dealt.
 As for the hero bold of this surprising story,
 Homage from others was his life's especial glory ;
 Amused him well ;
 Afforded due nutrition
 For his ambition,
 When, 'neath the influence of travelling he fell.

For Town became his passion rooted,
There, his vast merits should be bruited.
On to a load of hay, betimes,
He safe beside the driver climbs,
And makes a journey long and splendid,
Though soon his pride receives a fearful blow!
He thinks the whole bazaar will haste to see the
show,
Alas! heigh-ho,
Scant notice is to him extended:
For each is busy with his own affairs.
Now the ant takes a leaf, its surface stretches;
Falls down, springs up again; a burden fetches;
Folk pass him unawares!
Fatigued, at length, with all such evolutions
thrilling
Vexed to the soul, he to the mastiff said,
That on his master's hay had made a
pleasant bed,
"Barbos! now to confess be willing,
That, in this wretched spot,
Both sight and sense are unbegot,
No passer-by implies that he a guerdon owes me;
An hour of toil has made me hot;
Better my daily lot!
At least, the far-off anthill knows me."
And grumbling thus, ashamed he homeward
went.

So one of simple bent
 And lonely,
 Fancies his wit the world confounds,
 But it astounds
 His little circle only.

LIX

THE CUCKOO AND THE EAGLE

A CUCKOO from the eagle won a prouder style ;
 Now, dubbed a nightingale, it
 Did of an aspen's shade avail it ;
 With valiant effort would beguile
 The other feathered singers.
 Forthwith all fly away !
 Some mock aloud and some with scornful notes inveigh.
 Angry, the cuckoo briefly lingers,
 Then to the eagle, with an urgent message, hastes :—
 I pardon ask," it ventures, " but, by your
 direction,
 Was I not raised to form the others' tastes ?
 And now they dare to laugh at my perfection ! ”
 “ My friend,” the eagle said. “ I wield no magic rod
 And cannot shield you from your present dire
 misfortune ;

That they should call you 'nightingale,' I could
 importune,
 But, as to changing you, tho' king, I am not
 God ! ”

LX

THE FALSE ACCUSATION

'Tis simple, if you wish a wicked deed to smother,
 To put the blame upon another !
 Men oft are prone to say,
 “ But that he prompted us, we had not acted ! ”
 Or, if in other ways attracted,
 They will the fault on Satan lay,
 Although he none has evilly distracted.
 Of such a tendency, behold an instance clear :—
 Turning to Eastern lore, a Brahmin's history
 hear,
 Who, while in word and aspect pious,
 Was not averse to doubtful deeds ;
 Brahmins may show a moral bias,
 A fact not unimportant for our story's
 needs.
 The brotherhood, one reads,
 Possessed a member young, less holy
 Than were his fellows, good and lowly.
 He erred in this :—He could resent

That chance for license came in his direction slowly,
But he ne'er openly acknowledged discontent.

However, the same Brahmin, not dejected,

Upon a fast day grew affected

Strangely ; ambitious felt to have a private feast.

Finding an egg, he paused, till midnight
tarried ;

And then from caution's need released,

His treasure to the candle carried.

Oh, steadily the egg above the light he turns,

And, watching zealously, in thought a morsel
swallows ;

While, next, a fear his chief may know, as surely, follows.

“ If of my sin he ever learns,

But no ! the tyrant ! I don't fear him !

Soon I shall eat and take my fill.”

Sudden, he feels a chill.

The dread superior's standing near him,

Astounded by the crime,

Fiercely demands an explanation.

The proof, self evident, precludes prevarication,

“ Oh, Father, grant sublime

Forgiveness from your nature gracious ! ”

Thus prays the Brahmin through his tears,

“ Alas ! I must confess that, spiteful and audacious,

The devil urged me with his horrid sneers.”

An imp's voice grates :—“ Behold, a scandal !

How dare you shift responsibility to us

To whom you've shown a plan both new and humorous ;
 Never before it happened thus
 To cook an egg upon a candle !”

LXI

THE SWIMMER AND THE SEA

HIGH tossed, by seething waves, upon a lonely shore,
 A swimmer fell exhausted ; raving in his slumber,
 Hurl'd, at the billows, grim reproaches without number.

“ Be curst, O deep, for evermore,
 Mad was I ever to adore

Ocean, first still and subtly charming,
 Next, treacherous, deceitful, grievous harming.”
 The sea arrives in mythologic guise,
 With human accents thus replies :—

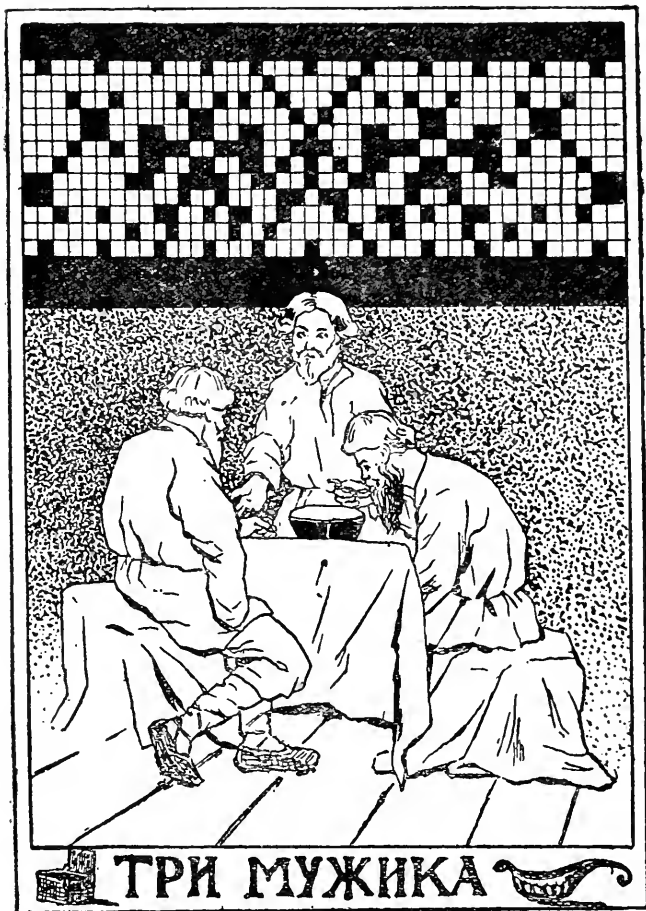
“ Nought than thy view could well be stranger,
 To cross my waters is ne'er frightful, brings
 no danger ;

But, when the frothy main is moved to fierceness vast,
 'Twere right the blame on Æolus to cast ;
 Enraged, he grants me never quiet ;

If thou believ'st me not, test for thyself his riot !
 I'm motionless as earth, when storms are past ;
 O send thy ships abroad when winds no longer last !”

* * * * *

KRILÒFF'S FABLES



ТРИ МУЖИКА

THREE PEASANTS

To face Page 129

“Fine counsel, I must say, and nothing’s newer ;
 Yet, sail without a wind ! we’ve need of something
 truer.” (NOTE)

LXII

THREE PEASANTS

THREE peasants halted in a village for the night ;
 They had in Petersburg, as drivers, stored up treasure,
 Though toiling hard, yet tasted pleasure ;
 Now homeward travelling, rejoiced in thoughts of
 leisure !

But, as no peasant loves to sleep with stomach
 light,

They hesitate, then ask their host to give them
 supper.

Oh, how luxurious the fare !

There was some cabbage soup, not much of it
 to share,

And a loaf’s lower part ; the host had used the
 upper.

“ ’Twas always more in Petersburg ! but why
 complain ?

To lie down hungry causes pain.”

At once, devoutly crossed himself each peasant,
 Grew busied with the present.

However, one of them, of notions free,

Quickly perceiving, there was not enough for
three ;

Without for further cheer applying
Remarked (upon a blithe and ready wit
relying)

“ My lads, concerning Thomas, have you heard the
news ?

Ill luck for him ! Conscribed ! to go he can't refuse ! ”

“ Conscribed ! how ? what ? ” “ Just so, a Chinese
war's the rumour,

China must pay us tribute, help the tea consumer ! ”

The other two began to argue and decide,
They sometimes read a journal, talked about it ;
But, as they had not seen one, now knew well, without it,
Who should command, the tactics to be tried.

The clever fellows, warming well in conversation,

Discussed reports and many a nation ;

Whereat, our friend with joy was overpowered
For, while they showed how highly they were metted
And moves of armies settled,

He, lifting not his voice, the bread and soup devoured.

* * * * *

On that with which he's idly swelling,

A foolish man descants more readily than all ;

What will occur in countries large or small,

He is disposed to bawl ;

You'll see, while other things enthrall,

Is burnt, before his eyes, his dwelling.

LXIII

THE SWAN, THE PIKE AND THE CRAYFISH

WHEN, among partners, concord there is not,
Successful issues scarce are got
And the result is loss, disaster and repining.

* * * * *

A crayfish, swan and pike combining,
Resolve to draw a cart and freight ;
In harness soon, their efforts ne'er abate.

However much they work, the load to stir refuses,
It seems to be perverse with selfwill vast endowed ;

The swan makes upward for a cloud,
The crayfish falls behind, the pike the river uses ;
To judge of each one's merit lies beyond my will ;
I know the cart remains there, still. (NOTE)

LXIV

THE WOLF AND THE STORK

THE world's aware that wolves are greedy.

A wolf, once scorning bones,
To swallow was o'er speedy.

But for his fault, he by misfortune dire atones,
 Nigh meets a sudden end from choking.
 He struggles hard, can scarcely draw his breath,
 In horror sees impending death.

A stork arrives, and her, with wild invoking,
 He somehow brings, at last, his hapless plight to know.
 Into the horrid throat below,

The bird her beak sets deeply,
 Extracts the bone ; but, aiding not her patient cheaply,
 She, for her skill, can not reward forego.

“ You joke ! ” snapped out the monster drily,
 “ Your trouble ? be more grateful ! value highly
 That 'twas to you vouchsafed to draw your awkward
 beak

And dismal countenance from jaws in no way weak.

Don't linger, friend, 'tis time for action,
 In future have a care, or I'll have satisfaction ! ” (NOTE)

LXV

THE ORACLE

A CERTAIN heathen shrine possessed a
 wooden god
 Wanted at times to give assurances
 prophetic,
 Or counsel clear and energetic.

A figure wonderful yet odd,
 With gold and silver ornamented,
 It stood with finery contented
 And sacrifices hung, with supplications cloaked
 And clouds of incense choked.
 All trust the oracle, and blindly,
 Until, oh marvel and oh shame,
 It sudden issues edicts tame,
 Responding often senselessly, unkindly.
 When, now, a supplicant for helpful news applies,
 He gets but folly, ignorance or lies.
 And, as the oracle thus blunders,
 It surely comes about that everybody wonders.
 Men have averred,
 The idol's hollow and, whene'er it speaks, is heard
 The voice of someone hidden ;
 And so,
 Filled by a being astute, the god can wisdom show ;
 But, ne'er a fool within should go,
 He'll nonsense talk, should be forbidden.
 'Tis said, is't true ? there were, of old,
 Within the court such judges
 As, well advised by poor but clever drudges,
 A wisdom that seemed native could unfold. (NOTE)

LXVI

THE SLANDERER AND THE SNAKE

THE view that devils are defective
In niceties of justice, calls for a corrective ;
For instance, as to right, they pass thro' moods
reflective ;
Concerning which I something strange can
tell.

Once on a time, it came to pass in Hell,
That to a snake, to march in solemn rites, it fell,
Behind a slanderer. With rivalry deep rooted,
The pair disputed

To whom belonged the honour of the chief advance.
Always in Hell, ill deeds the status much enhance :
Arch fiends precede ; such is the ordinance.
Now, in this contest keen, hot enmity was
nourished,

The slanderer his wicked tongue
Before the viper flung ;
While fiercely, in return, the snake his body flourished
And, hissing that he would not suffer disrespect,
Strove to supplant by methods indirect.
The slanderer well nigh had lost the best position,
So help of great Beelzebub obtained
Who from the hideous serpent gained
Submission :

Fast drove the crawling reptile back,
 Saying, " I no way will your character attack,
 Yet first you cannot go, your deeds are not as black !
 'Tis true your bite is swiftly mortal,
 Thus you are dangerous when near ;
 But e'er your venom's in the very portal
 Of your fell jaws ; while, far abroad, men trembling fear
 Those slanders which so deeply sear
 That neither waves nor lofty cliffs confer resistance,
 Safe distance.
 As this man's words can cause the strong
 to quake,
 You'll follow after him, nor strive to
 overtake !
 In Hell the slanderer's more honoured than the
 snake." (NOTE)

LXVII

THE APE

HOWEVER hard you toil,
 Fame will from you recoil ;
 Bring you nor gratitude nor leisure,
 Unless you offer others gain, or use, or
 pleasure.

* * * * *

A peasant drove his plough at dawn,
 With might and main unceasing laboured,
 Nobly employed his time and brawn ;
 Great beads of moisture, closely neighboured,
 On to his manly brow were drawn.
 Many a friend in turn approaches,
 Wishing good day and length of life ;
 And, then, upon the scene encroaches
 A little ape in whom this jealous hope is rife :—
 To push a log ; thus to fruition
 Assist a worthy effort of ambition.

With will

And curious noises shrill,
 Choosing a sapling on the hill,
 The ape it here and there embraces,
 Now hither drags it, thither places,
 Eager some purpose to fulfil.
 Awhile she pants, then waits, scarce breathing,
 But hears no meed of praise ; no smiles her face are
 wreathing.

Small wonder, poor and senseless thing !
 You strove with honest wish, but did not profit
 bring ! (NOTE)

LXVIII
THE SACK

AN anteroom's dark end!

Attend!

An empty sack, here lying
For footmen coarse and low,
A humble thing to wipe their boots on lowly
was supplying.

But, oh!

Our sack, to honour flying,
Being with glorious ducats filled,

Lay in a chest, with all resentful feelings stilled.
The master likes his bag to cherish,
Himself must guard the treasure well.

Upon it never fell

The softest breath of wind, nor any fly could perish.
Now all the town could sing
Its praises of the thing.

A visitor, for the proprietor arriving,
Will soon about it pleasant discourse be contriving
And, if the sack shall stay exposed,
The eyes of each have soon his love for it disclosed.

So, who by lucky chance sits nigh it,

Assuredly will smooth or pat, as if to try it.

Now, learning that it's won from all such high respect,

The sack with pride grows heated ;
 Wiseacre like, conceited,
Must open conversations, mightiness affect,
 Have views on many a topic ; trounces
 One as a fool
 Or fit for school,
And nearly everything denounces.
All greedy listen to it, though it nonsense talks :
Oh ! never inattention baulks
 Its flow resistless ;
 Let conversation turn on mighty gold,
 And people pause, their breath then hold,
 Never, by any chance, seem bored or listless.
Long did the sack enjoy such honour ? dwell
 select ?
 Always did folk caress it ?
 So long as in it ducats lingered, men would
 bless it ;
 Last, empty it was ousted, met with sheer
 neglect.
We hope we have not many, by mischance, offended ;
 How numberless the sacks
 Among financiers lax,
Who once, perhaps as waiters at some inn attended !
 They now make sharp attacks
As gamblers to acquire the money of another,
Would ever riches win, even defraud a brother.

With such a crew to-day are counts and princes both
Not loth
To be on terms. In fine homes stately,
Within whose anteroom these money-bags till lately
Ne'er dared to stand, they now play whist.
My friends! who once could scarce exist,
And now, as millionaires, exhibit yourselves proudly,
Should come misfortune's outlook black,
I tell the simple truth, and loudly,
The day you fall, they'll drive you forth, just like the
sack.

LXIX

THE BOY AND THE SNAKE

It chanced, a boy, who thought to catch an eel,
Snatched at a serpent; soon perceived his error
And blanched beneath excess of terror.

The snake imagining what dread the child must feel,
Said slowly, "Listen! if you do not grow up wiser,
Your boldness may not save, from peril always spare;
God will forgive to-day; but He continues e'er
A fool's chastiser."

LXX

THE PEASANT IN TROUBLE

ONE night, a cunning thief
Brought on a peasant cruel grief,
Crossing the yard, the store-rooms entered.

Examining the walls, the ceilings and the floors,
The rogue relentlessly explores,
Keeps every thought in profit grossly centred.

This peasant, who lay down in wealth,
Alas, awoke without a single penny,
Destined, a tramp, to beg from many ;
May none of us so lose in property and health !

Ere long, poor fellow, deep dejected,
He visits kin and trusty friends
To gain through sympathy amends.

“ Can you not help me ? ” asks he ; “ ruin
now impends,”

Then, quickly by his tale affected,

They freely offer counsel wise ;

Says gossip Karp, “ Light of my eyes !

You should not, to our faces happiness have boasted,
Alluded to your means.”

And Klèemich adds :—“ Dear soul ! my favour to you
leans ;

In future, have the store-rooms near the
cottage posted."

"Brothers, such prattle me astounds,"

'Tis Phòka now must reason:—

"To blame the store-rooms' site is treason;

My dove! keep in the yard some lively hounds!

Accept from me this puppy, he is clever;

Jòoshka's his mother and, in sorrow I would
never

Even upon her frown,

Much less her litter drown."

Briefly, from comrades old and blood relations
kindly,

Words of a thousand sorts jostle each other blindly.

Folk to him list,

But noway by their deeds the wretched man assist.

LXXI

THE PIKE AND THE CAT

A FIGHTING pike had strange desires,

Leaving its haunts, revealed ambitious fires,

Perhaps was sick of fishy fare, would choose a better.

Saying that habits past the future should not fetter.

I begged a neighbour puss of large and pleasant
kind,

To lead it gently when he went a-preying ;

Together they some mice might find.

“ All right ! ” the Tom replies, an interest deep
displaying,

“ You haply bear the task in mind ?

For us, you know, the work is nice and cheerful ;

If victims find it tearful,

We steal about, of peril never fearful.”

“ How good of you, my friend ! So I'm to catch
some mice !

No more for me will perch suffice.”

“ And now, 'tis time, let's go and take our places ! ”

Tom soon fulfils his utmost wish,

And hastes to see how fares it with the fish,

Which open-mouthed reclines, distressed and
feverish.

Rats on its tail have left their traces,

Alas ! the foolish thing is almost hope beyond,

So the cat hurries it with vigour to a pond.

This lesson is sound teaching,

Should be far reaching ;

Henceforth, Oh Pike ! be wise,

On land might come a grim surprise ! (NOTE)

LXXII

THE LEAVES AND THE ROOTS

IN summer hues arrayed,
And throwing o'er a dell deep shade,
Fluttering leaves to zephyrs whispered lightly ;
Vaunted their growth prolific, greenness pure.
'Twas thus they questioned with a bearing
sprightly :—

“ Does not our beauty form the valley's noblest
lure ?

Do we not clothe the tree with verdure clinging,
Adorn the shape, that, bold outflinging,
Sends shadows wide and far ? So singing,
We truth reveal and practice no deceit ;
Who guards the herd from sultry heat ?
On worn-out passers-by bestows a kind
protection ?

Blesses, with healthful cool and calm,
Coy shepherdesses dancing to perfection ?
Here, from each foe secure and every false
alarm,

Sweet nightingales agree to charm.

But sharp winds ! ne'er a curtain
Relieves us from your force, 'tis certain ! ”

“ Oh, leaves ! you render us no single word of
thanks ! ”

Here said, as if from underground a voice not loudly ;

“ 'Tis strange that you should boast so shamelessly
and proudly,

High o'er these earthy banks ;

How dare you deck yourselves with specious
glamour ? ”

The leaves keep silence and excuses cannot stammer !

“ Oh, hark !

And learn that we, e'er digging in the dark,
Bring nourishment. Do you not really know us ?

We are the mighty roots. Some gratitude
then show us !

Boast gently at the proper hour ;

Always remember, please, this difference in our
power :—

Only, awhile in spring, are newborn leaves appearing,

But ever roots their course are steering,

Else grows nor tree nor leaf nor flower.” (NOTE)

LXXIII

TWO CASKS

DOWN rolled two casks of wine :—one full, but void

The other,

Its brother.

The first e'er slow and noiseless, liked its easy
 motion ;
 The second a devotion
 Evinced to sound and roar ; was by each crash
 upbuoyed,
 And not annoyed
 When, quick in fear, a passer-by, who gained a notion
 In time of what was coming, stepped aside.
 However thunderous its stride,
 Its worth was not enough to vindicate its pride.

* * * * *

The man, who of his deeds would talk without
 cessation,
 Awakes not admiration ;
 But a soul capable can silently fulfil,
 Inspired by worthy plans, is often still,
 Maturing without noise, and yet completely,
 Discreetly. ^(NOTE)

LXXIV

THE PARISHIONER

ONCE, in a church, a pastor,
 Who looked on Plato as of eloquence a master,
 Discoursed, before his flock, concerning worthy
 deeds.

A speech mellifluous, of perfect form, proceeds
To treat of purest truths with art appearing artless.

As by a golden chain,

To heaven are lifted thoughts of hearers even heartless,
And all perceive the world is full of projects vain.

The orator has finished preaching,

And yet his listeners stay, being to glorious skies
Borne by the magic power of wondrous, lofty
teaching,

While pearly drops, escaping, flood their eyes.

And now the congregation leaves the temple holy,

“ How I his gifts admire ! ”

Says one man to the next, in modest tone and lowly,

“ What sweetness, touched with fire !

Such richness every heart to virtue has deflected ;

But, neighbour, you by it but little seem
affected,

Your cheek displays, methinks, no single
tear,

Have you not understood ? ” “ Yes, entertain no
fear !

But, with this parish, and folk here,

I, Sir, in no way am connected.” (NOTE)

LXXVI

THE RAVEN AND THE FOX

THIS truth within the heart is graven :—

All flattery is false ; and so, there's no excuse,
If listeners succumb when flatterers seduce.

Up on a little fir-tree lightly hopped a raven
That wished to breakfast at her ease,
And carried in her mouth a piece of fragrant
cheese.

But while she pondered, then a morsel tasted,
A fox adjudged the chance too perfect to be wasted,
Was taken captive by the cheesy scent ;
On looking up, no further on his journey went.

The rogue, on tip-toe, to the fir-tree slow
approaches,

Upon the bird's attention sly encroaches,
And gently says, in accents low and clear :—

“ Oh, songster exquisite and dear,
Your eyes are soft with love and pity,

I humbly bow to one so pretty,
Ne'er have I seen such feathers, such a beak !
Oh, queen of all the birds ! but let me hear you speak,
Or rather, deign to sing ! Enjoy a moment's
leisure

And charm the world with tones delightful beyond
measure,
Pour forth fine notes, my gracious treasure ! ”
The raven held her breath, and nearly died from
choking,
And then, as if a wild ambition in her burned,
She opened wide her mouth for harsh discordant
croaking,
And the fox gained the cheese his cunning skill
had earned.

LXXVII

THE FUNERAL

OF old, in Pharaohland, a custom strange persisted
Of paying mourners fees to weep and loud lament
At any funeral solemn, magnificent.
Once, for pretentious obsequies enlisted,
A crowd of honest folk, bewailed with ceaseless
din,
The loss of him that leaving woes diurnal
Would find in realms infernal
A purge for sin.
Behold, a stranger deeming that these signs external
Justly betrayed but relatives' sincere regret,
Said, “ Friends, oh, surely you were now with joy
transported,
If unto magic I resorted ?

I am a wizard, and can miracles beget
 By means of incantations easily provided,
 Which make the dead revive at once."

"Father, delight us so!" one uttered in response,
 Adding, "Another matter we would like decided:—

His breath no more shall last
 After five days are past.

As no advantage followed, when this man was living,
 A long existence were unwise;

Too, when he dies,
 Some will commands for further grief be
 giving." (NOTE)

LXXVIII

THE DIVISION

SOME honest merchants once had reached a wise decision;
 They would collect the profits of their trade;
 About to make a last division,
 Would meet with cheerful smiles and nothing leave
 unpaid.

Opposing interests bring collision.
 As to the goods and money grows a hubbub dire,
 Till suddenly is bellowed, "House afire!
 Be quick, yourselves take care of,
 Do not an instant wait!"

Cries one :—" Though danger well aware of,
 We must accounts investigate."
 And, while a second shouts, " Hand over now my
 share of
 The thousand pounds,"
 His voice despairingly resounds.
 " But I've had nothing, though the figures are
 conclusive ! "
 A third more rudely screams ;—" No, no, they are
 illusive ;
 Tell me what this is for, and why ! "
 Oblivious of the warning cry,
 They strangely long remained, near peril coasted
 Until, alas, the flames shot high
 And everyone, with all the property, was roasted. (NOTE)

LXXIX

THE ASS AND THE NIGHTINGALE

To a sweet nightingale, an ass
 Directs a suppliant word :—" Oh give me, friend,
 a hearing ;
 'Tis said, that you in song are foremost, soul
 endearing !
 I would a judgment pass ;
 Myself could form, by listening, a notion
 Wherefore your skill arouses such commotion."

The nightingale to show his quality began :—
 Trilling and whistling ran
 Or up or down in countless ways, the deftest notes
 controlling ;
 Now altered his harmonious plan,
 Echoed a distant reed quickly and subtly
 rolling,
 Now languished thro' the grove, with cadences
 cajoling.
 All heed the slightest sound
 Of such a dainty, perfect singer ;
 The breezes still themselves, no other bird-notes
 linger,
 Herds by the spell are bound.
 The silent shepherd stands, himself consoling
 With ecstasy profound,
 Neglects the shepherdess with whom he's idly strolling.
 The ass would scarce at once the warbler's feelings
 shock ;
 " Quite good," he brays, " a not unpleasing ditty,
 And yet I feel for you some pity.
 Obtain, oh, do not mock !
 Instruction of our cock ;
 I hold, in singing he's omniscient,
 So you perhaps might grow, in time, proficient."
 Astonished by such words, the little nightingale
 Fluttered and flew whither no critic should
 prevail. (NOTE)

LXXX

THE FROG AND THE OX

A FROG, that in a field was staring at an ox,
Dared to compare herself with such a bulky
creature ;

 Oft, envy vile at reason mocks !

Stretching, she hoped to swell in body, limb and feature,
And of a comrade asked, " Am I not great as he ? "
" By no means, friend ! Your figure is than his far
smaller."

 " Oh prithee, look again ! I've widened, and am
taller ;

 Do you not see,

An alteration wrought ? " To that I'll not agree."

 " Examine now ! " " Unchanged." The frog
intent on trying,

 Persisted till the fool, dreaming to grow
in size,

 Tiny and mighty equalize,

Burst with her efforts, and sank helpless dying.

LXXXI

THE ELEPHANT AND THE PUG

AN elephant, 'mid shouts and laughter,
 Was led along the street
 And, as when in our towns a spectacle we meet,
 Behind the wondrous beast, some gapers followed after.
 But wheresoe'er he went, ever a little pug
 Before him jumped, was now perverse and naughty,
 Barking with condescension haughty ;
 Now snapping, gave a vicious tug.
 " Oh, neighbour cease, you ask for trouble,"
 A spitz-dog warned her. " Ah, you shamelessly redouble
 Your din vociferous ; but he has unconcerned
 Not turned
 Nor noticed when you loudest whine, or spring your
 highest."
 " Know," says the pug in manner driest,
 " My spirit soars, though thou decriest,
 'Tis something, I can win attention
 Through practising from risk abstention.
 'Tis well that other dogs should mention :—
 ' The pug is not of us the least,
 She mocks a mighty beast.' "

LXXXII

THE LAMB

A LAMBKIN, straying,
Is bent a trick on playing,
Creeps, in a wolf-skin, 'mongst the flock,
Hopes at his frightened fellow-lambs to mock,
The dogs spy out the foolish jester,
Prepare to slay the cruel wood-infestor ;
They spring upon the foe and bear him to the
ground ;
Ah, sooner than the lamb a chance to breathe has
found,
They strive to tear his fragile form to pieces,
Till, at the shepherd's call, the fearful onslaught
ceases.
No joke is it to feel a dog's sharp pointed fangs !
The madcap, on this sad occasion,
Totters and seeks the pen without persuasion,
And there falls weak and faint, and knows unnumbered
pangs ;
A long while feebly groans, though speaking never.
Oh ! if a lamb were surely wise,
He would assume a wolfish guise
On no account whatever ! (NOTE)

LXXXIII

THE STEED AND HIS RIDER

A RIDER once had given his horse such perfect schooling,
Obedience strict was gained with little ruling ;
He lifted ne'er the whip, nor bridle stirred,
Controlled his steed without a word.

“ The reins are useless, brave and splendid
creature ! ”

The owner whispered, with fond look ;
To show the world a novel feature,
'Ere mounting on his horse, the bridle from him took.
The steed forgot his master,
Though slow at first, soon went a little faster ;
O'erjoyed,
High tossed his glorious head and, proudly his mane
shaking,
Pranced, for his soul to life was waking,
By liberty upbuoyed.
What means it ? Oh, mad dream of freedom unalloyed
And change unguessed ! Past ways forsaking,
Dances his blood and shines his glance, as if afire.
Is heard no single sound ; unfelt, the rider
Is hurried o'er the fields with swiftmess dire
By one who knows no guider.

Vainly the luckless horseman sought with trembling
hand

This wildness to withstand,

Would fix the bridle, was unskilful.

The steed e'er grew more strangely wilful,

At last could speed along, masterless and dismanned!

Then, like a raging storm, he hasted

On, on: nor stayed his rash career,

But to a deep ravine his course must steer,

Death's bitterness so tasted.

The man his grief thus showed:—

“Poor horse!” said he, “’twas I that brought thee
sadness

And evil fate.

Had I not once withheld the bridle's weight,

Thou ne'er hadst warmed to madness

Nor thrown thy master from thy side,

Nor perished in a fierce and new born
pride.” (NOTE)

LXXXIV

THE FINCH AND THE PIGEON

A LITTLE finch being caught within a horrid trap,
Uses its tiny force and pitifully flutters.

Then, a young pigeon jeering at her, spiteful mutters:—

“ Art not ashamed? in daylight! didst not see
the shutters?

For me were never such mishap!

I guarantee and bold maintain it!”

And yet the speaker can't, when tangled in
the snare,

Explain it.

O, pigeon! now to laugh at others' troubles, spare!

. LXXXV

THE SNAKE AND THE LAMB

A SNAKE beneath a faggot hidden,
Raging, denounced the world entire;
Was blest with ne'er a feeling higher

Than the envenomed hate by his own nature bidden.

Near by, a little lamb at unsuspecting play,

Saw not the hideous reptile in the way.

A-sudden the snake leapt, fiercely his teeth implanted;

And the poor victim fell and trembled, moaned and
panted.

The fatal poison, coursing free,

Tortured her, and she cried:—“ What have I done to
thee? ”

“ Who knows? perhaps you hither cunningly
intruded,”

So hissed the serpent, loud, " would strike me, even slay ;
 Therefore in cautious mood, I bit without delay."
 " Ah, no," the lamb gasped forth in death, " thou wert
 deluded."

LXXXVI
 THE GRANDEE

OFt tossed and turned a fevered ruler,
 Despite physicians, grew not, cooler,
 Forsook his couch to seek the land which Pluto sways ;
 Finished, in short, his earthly days,
 And soon in Hell, before the judges' dais falling,
 Was asked, his place of birth, the nature of his calling.
 " I breathed in Persia first, an honoured satrap
 dwelt,
 Yet, from my youthful days, but little vigour felt ;
 When faced with any fresh transaction,
 Endorsed my secretary's action."
 " What did you then?" " Slept, drank and ate,
 Signed documents before me set."
 " Send him to Paradise!" " But wherefore?
 what's the reason?"
 So ventured Mercury, with boldness, nearly treason.
 Said Aeacus, " O brother, thou,
 Unto the dead man shrewdness must allow,

He knew that Nature cannot all alike endow.

He neither willed to cause misfortune,

Nor would for complex tasks importune ;

 If he had brought afflictions vast,

 You swiftly would complaints have muttered ;

 Into high heaven he has passed

 Because he never folly uttered."

In court, I lately heard a judge so brief, concise,

I said, " His turn will come to dwell in paradise." (NOTE)

NOTES

- II. THE PIKE—This fable is aimed against legal and other corruption, prevalent at the time.
- IV. THE BEAR AMONG THE BEES—Kenévich remarks in a long note, that this fable is similar in object to that by Krilòff entitled, "The Dog." The moral drawn is:—the way to deal with a person guilty of corruption is to seize all which has come to him by unfair means: he must not be left in possession of the proceeds of his nefarious activities. Tsar Alexander I, in the first year of his reign, took steps to put down the great evil. In 1809, after the discovery of vast abuses in the Commissariat Department, he renewed old and severe ukases, such as that of Peter the Great against bribery, and that of Catherine the Great (1763) ordering severe corporal punishment and forfeiture of property, expulsion from the rank of honest persons and even the infliction of death. These Imperial efforts wrought but little improvement. Krilòff acted in support of the law-givers. Who the culprits were remains unknown.
- VI. THE OAK AND THE REED—Krilòff's first fable. Was published in "The Moscow Spectator." Krilòff follows La Fontaine closely. Æsop has "The Reed and the Tree."

- VIII. THE CHEST—This was the first printed original fable of Krilòff; it appeared in "The Dramatic Courier" and was signed "K."
- IX. THE FOX AND THE MARMOT—This fable is a general allusion to secret acquisition of wealth by corrupt means.
- XIII. THE EAGLE AND THE BEE—Pletnev says, Krilòff was dealing here with one of the highest and most comforting feelings known to the human heart. The poet saw that the expounding of this fable ought to be worthy of his subject. He chose noble and lofty language. There is nothing comical or amusing in the conception of "The Eagle and the Bee"; one represents might and the other industry.
- XIV. THE LIAR—More or less similar material forms the ground work of three fables quoted by Kenèvich, namely, Gellert's "Der Bauer and sein Sohn," Imbert's "Le paysan et son Fils," and Soumaròkov's "The Boaster." Krilòff follows in the same direction. He distinguishes himself by vigour, swing, closeness of construction and satisfactory termination.
- XVIII. DEMYÀN'S FISH SOUP—This fable was read by Krilòff at the "Society of the Friends of the Russian Language" in appropriate circumstances; for the event followed immediately on a tiresome and inordinately long paper with which someone had been trying the patience of the audience. Consequently, the reading of the fable caused much hilarity and applause. "Demyàn's Fish Soup" has a vague resemblance to Philippe Barbe's "La Politesse Villageoise." But Krilòff's work is immeasurably superior.

- XIX. THE COCK AND THE PEARL—The first form of this fable is in Phædrus. La Fontaine borrowed it and by altering the ending applied the fable to the inability of ignorant persons to make a proper use of learning.
- XX. THE CORNFLOWER—Referring to this fable, Lobanoff relates that of all the attachments of the second half of the life of Ivàn Andrèevitch, the attachment to the enlightened and kind hearted family of A. H. Olènin was the warmest and most sincere. In this hospitable family all noted authors, beginning with Derzhàvin and Karamzìn, found a pleasant refuge. Krilòff was there almost every day for dinner or supper or for conversation in the evening. It was pleasant to serve under such a chief, through whom he obtained the favour of the two monarchs, Alexander I and Nicholas I. The poet loved to be called caressingly Krilishko, by Olènin's wife and repaid her kindness by a son-like reverence. Hearing that Krilòff had passed through a serious illness at Olènin's house, the Empress Maria Feodorovna told Olènin to bring him to Pavlovsk saying, "he will quickly recover under my care." Krilòff poured out his gratitude to the Empress in this exquisite fable.
- XXI. THE FLY AND THE BEE—Phædrus has the fable "The Ant and the Fly"; and La Fontaine wrote the "Fly and the Ant." Krilòff's indebtedness to the latter is clear but, through error or forgetfulness, he did not state that his fable was borrowed.

- XXII. THE QUARTET—Kenèvich points out that this fable may apply to the useless subdivisions which occurred in the management of "The Society of Lovers of the Russian Language"; as well as to a similar condition of things in the State Council.
- XXIII. THE DUCAT—This fable was intended as advice to all who directed public instruction during the first half of the reign of Alexander I. Its most obvious meaning is that simplicity and thoroughness in education are more important than a culture that is widespread and superficial.
- XXIV. THE EAGLE AND THE SPIDER—This fable is most probably an attack on Sperànsky, a powerful minister under Tsar Alexander I. Sperànsky represented, in the popular mind, French ideas and was very unpopular, but he was a man of high character and did good work for his country. He was temporarily exiled in 1812. Ècouchard Lebrun (1729-1807) wrote a little ten-lined poem describing the appearance of a snail at the Eagle's court on an oak on the top of Mount Ida. The snail replies, when asked, how he arrived, "I crawled." Krilòff's great power in working up an idea is here well shown.
- XXVI. THE LION AND THE PANTHER—The fable makes a good general story. It was prompted apparently by the nomination of someone, now unknown, to a diplomatic post.

- xxvii. THE WOLF IN THE KENNEL.—Kenévich says, "In this fable, as is well known, Krilòff depicts Napoleon in Russia." The story runs that Krilòff copied out the fable and gave it to someone who forwarded it in a letter to Prince Kutùsov who, after the battle of Krasnoe, read it to some of his officers. When he came to the huntsman's allusion to his "greyness," he took off his cap and shook his bowed head.
- xxviii. APelles AND THE YOUNG ASS—According to a communication made in 1863 by N. E. Gretch, Krilòff was here referring to a certain young writer who complained in the Library that the fabulist was wearying him by incessant attentions. Krilòff had invited him twice.
- xxix. THE MISER—There is a Russian proverb:—"He looks in the grave, his farthings must save."
- xxx. THE SIGHTSEER—This fable is probably a criticism of very learned persons who busy themselves with minute investigation. But a certain writer soon after Krilòff's death, asserted that the fable was an attack on a versifier who enumerated three fabulists having the Christian names Ivàn (La Fontaine, Khémnitzer and Dmitrieff) but omitted to mention Krilòff.
- xxxi. THE MIRROR AND THE MONKEY—Krilòff seems to despair of correcting prevalent corruption by even his sharpest satire. He drives home his charge in the latter part of the fable.

- XXXIII. THE BROOK—This fable was an especial favourite with Krilòff. Its composition indicates wisdom, execution and facility in verse, with purity of language. It shows much feeling. Looking on man and his history, the author sees how difficult it is for those who obtain power to restrain themselves within former boundaries of love and moderation.
- XXXV. THE IMPIOUS—According to Pletnev, Krilòff was thinking of the French, when he wrote this fable. Like all his contemporaries, he ascribed the miseries of the Revolution and the ensuing burdens of the Napoleonic wars altogether to the influence of the "Philosophers."
- XXXVIII. THE LION AND THE FOX—This fable appears under the same title in Æsop.
- XXXIX. THE PEASANT AND THE SNAKE—Kenévich explains the fable as a protest against an evil which stirred the heart of Russian patriots after the Campaign of 1812, namely the custom of entrusting the education of children to foreigners, chiefly Frenchmen captured during the War.
- XI. THE BARREL—Krilòff was whole-heartedly in favour of simple education and of the inculcation of the elementary virtues. He was violently opposed to the free thought ideas introduced into Russia by the Frenchmen who became teachers in that country, after the retreat of Napoleon. Some have thought the fable is a warning against secret societies and the mystic doctrines which were making headway at that time.

- XLIII. THE GEESE—Read at the first meeting of "The Society of Lovers of the Russian Language."
- XLIV. THE PEASANTS AND THE RIVER—The peasants, being robbed, complained to the Authorities who should have protected them, but they desisted when they found that the protectors themselves received a proportion of the ill-gotten wealth.
- XLVI. THE HERMIT AND THE BEAR—Follows La Fontaine's "The Bear and the Garden-lover," but Krilòff has introduced his own treatment in places. La Fontaine had borrowed the story from "The Book of Lights, or The Conduct of Kings," a translation into French, through the Persian, from Bidpai.
- XLVII. THE EAGLE AND THE FOWLS—The contents and purpose suggest comparison with Dmitrieff's "The Eagle and the Capon," which was published in 1806.
- XLVIII. THE AGED LION—This fable was borrowed from La Fontaine, who had taken it from Phædrus. Three Russian fabulists, Tredyakòvsky, Soumaròkov and Izmailov had successively and recently treated the same subject.
- XLIX. THE MAN WITH THREE WIVES—Kenèvich relates the case of a man who did not wait for the pronouncement of a divorce decree, but married a second time in the Lutheran Church. Then quickly changing his faith to the Orthodox Church, he married again. These deeds brought him under the lash of Krilòff.

- I. THE CLOUD—According to Kenévich, this fable had a general and not a particular application.
- II. THE SPORTSMAN—The Russian proverb runs, "Do not defer till to-morrow what you can do to-day."
- III. THE LION, THE CHAMOIS AND THE FOX—Kenévich had access to manuscripts showing variants in many of the fables. An almost illegible draft of "The Lion, the Chamois and the Fox" contains great erasures and shows that Krilòff, when he had half-completed the fable was tempted to a reconstruction upon another plan. However he returned to his first idea.
- IV. THE HARE AT THE HUNT—The hare's behaviour has sometimes and probably erroneously been considered as written to symbolise Austria's attitude at the Congress of Vienna.
- V. THE MISTRESS AND HER TWO MAIDS—Æsop's "The Widow and her Servants" gave rise to La Fontaine's "The old woman and her two servants." In Æsop someone advised the servants to kill the cock, and the moral is deduced that to many people, advice brings misery. Krilòff borrowed both ground work and moral from La Fontaine, but made the fable more graphic and humorous.
- LVII. TRISHKA'S COAT—A writer, in 1867, said that the allusion here is to landed proprietors who used to pledge their properties and then, without paying the interest, pledged them again and at last got into such difficulties that they lost their possessions. The character in the fable is probably one of the servants.

- LXI. THE SWIMMER AND THE SEA—Krilòff borrowed this fable from Æsop but altered its matter somewhat.
- LXIII. THE SWAN, THE PIKE AND THE CRAYFISH—This fable has been applied to various Institutions, under joint but inharmonious control, and especially to the Imperial Council.
- LXIV. THE WOLF AND THE STORK—In this fable Krilòff pays homage to La Fontaine by scarcely departing from the original.
- LXV. THE ORACLE—The fundamental idea occurs in Krilòff's "The Souls' Post." The reliance of Justices on their Clerks has been noticed in countries other than Russia.
- LXVI. THE SLANDERER AND THE SNAKE—In the first printed copy, that is, in "Readings of the Society of the Friends of Russian," there is, as to lines 5-7, a variant in which Atilla, Nero and Napoleon are mentioned. Krilòff detested the French Emperor.
- LXVII. THE APE—Krilòff did not consider this fable as borrowed, but Kenèvich draws attention to the similarity of contents of Soumaròkov's "The Husbandman and the Ape."
- LXXI. THE PIKE AND THE CAT—The occasion of the composition of this fable was Admiral Tchitchagov's notorious failure in preventing Napoleon from crossing the Beresina in his great retreat from Moscow in 1812.

- I.XXII. THE LEAVES AND THE ROOTS—This fable occurs first in "Readings of the Society of Lovers of the Russian Language." By the roots is meant the peasants; by the leaves, the proprietors of the land. The abolition of serfdom was already occupying public attention, when the fable was written in 1811.
- I.XXIII. THE TWO CASKS—Gògol, laying stress on Krilòff's power of clear expression, says that wisdom and poetry were united in the fabulist. He quotes, with admiration, the concluding lines of this fable.
- I.XXIV. THE PARISHIONER — M. Baraton has an "Epigramme" entitled "Les Pleureurs," published in 1705: and Ècouchard Lebrun (1729-1807) has a little poem "Le Sermon." The general idea and the last line, in both of these, show a resemblance to "The Parishioner." But it is possible that Krilòff read the story in a certain book of anecdotes circulating in his time.
- I.XXVII. THE FUNERAL—This fable was composed by Krilòff for the Moscow "Society of the Lovers of Russian Literature," in 1816, after his election as a member. It was printed in the "Works of the Society."
- I.XXVIII. THE DIVISION—This fable is interpreted as referring to the mismanagement, confusion and contradictory counsels during the period of Napoleon's invasion. It is clear, however, that the story has a general and wide applicability.

- LXXXIX. THE ASS AND THE NIGHTINGALE—Read at the first meeting of "The Society of Lovers of the Russian Language."
- LXXXII. THE LAMB—According to B. A. Olèniu, the fable was written for her little sister Anna. The child-like language is a confirmation of this view.
- LXXXIII. THE STEED AND HIS RIDER—Kenèvich points out that the date on the original MS., "May 12, 1814," proves that Krilòff could not have been prompted to write the fable by the internal political strife, in connection with Decembrists, a few years later. In the edition of 1825, Krilòff placed the fable in the very beginning of the book.
- LXXXVI. THE GRANDEE—The appearance of this fable in print was accompanied by the following not uninteresting circumstances. Krilòff was sometimes invited to the Palace masquerades. Once, he was sitting gloomily at the Olènius' after dinner. "What is the matter?" asked one of the daughters, for whom the poet nourished a deep attachment. "Just this:—I have got to go to a fancy dress ball at the Palace and don't know how to dress." "But, grandad, if you would wash and shave and dress cleanly, nobody would recognise you there." His little favourite's candid joke cheered the old man but did not lessen his difficulty. Then someone suggested that he should go as a nobleman-cupbearer. In conformance with his part, Krilòff wrote some verses addressed to an imaginary Tsar, to whose rank (it is necessary to say) the particular guest, whose piece of cake happened to

contain a hidden bean, was temporarily elevated. The poem was witty and demanded a reward for the cupbearer from the "Sovereign." When the Tsar Nicholas heard the lines, he was visibly pleased, and Krilòff seized the opportunity to ask that, as a favour, he might read aloud "The Grandee." The whole fable and especially the conclusion, so delighted the monarch, that he embraced Krilòff, saying, "Write, old man, write!" The poet then sought successfully permission to print this fable.

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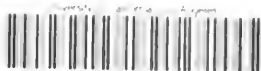
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