

THE FROGS DESIRING A KING

The Frogs were living as happy as could be in a marshy swamp that just suited them; they went splashing about caring for nobody and nobody troubling with them. But some of them thought that this was not right, that they should have a king and a proper constitution, so they determined to send up a petition to Jove to give them what they wanted. 'Mighty Jove,' they cried, 'send unto us a king that will rule over us and keep us in order.' Jove laughed at their croaking, and threw down into the swamp a huge Log, which came downrplashto the swamp. The Frogs were frightened out of their lives by the commotion made in their midst, and all rushed to the bank to look at the horrible monster; but after a time, seeing that it did not move, one or two of the boldest of them ventured out towards the Log, and even dared to touch it; still it did not move. Then the greatest hero of the Frogs jumped upon the Log and commenced dancing up and down upon it, thereupon all the Frogs came and did the same; and for some time the Frogs went about their business every day without taking the slightest notice of their new King Log lying in their midst. But this did not suit them, so they sent another petition to Jove, and said to him, 'We want a real king; one that will really rule over us.' Now this made Jove angry, so he sent among them a big Stork that soon set to work gobbling them all up. Then the

Frogs repented when too late.
Better no rule than cruel rule.

THE HARES AND THE FROGS

The Hares were so persecuted by the other beasts, they did not know where to go. As soon as they saw a single animal approach them, off they used to run. One day they saw a troop of wild Horses stampeding about, and in quite a panic all the Hares scuttled off to a lake hard by, determined to drown themselves rather than live in such a continual state of fear. But just as they got near the bank of the lake, a troop of Frogs, frightened in their turn by the approach of the Hares scuttled off, and jumped into the water. 'Truly,' said one of the Hares, 'things are not so bad as they seem:

‘There is always someone worse off than yourself.’

THE WOODMAN AND THE SERPENT

One wintry day a Woodman was tramping home from his work when he saw something black lying on the snow. When he came closer he saw it was a Serpent to all appearance dead. But he took it up and put it in his bosom to warm while he hurried home. As soon as he got indoors he put the Serpent down on the hearth before the fire. The children watched it and saw it slowly come to life again. Then one of them stooped down to stroke it, but the Serpent raised its head and put out its fangs and was about to sting the child to death. So the Woodman seized his axe, and with one stroke cut the Serpent in two. 'Ah,' said he, 'No gratitude from the wicked.'

THE JAY AND THE PEACOCK

A Jay venturing into a yard where Peacocks used to walk, found there a number of feathers which had fallen from the Peacocks when they were moulting. He tied them all to his tail and strutted down towards the Peacocks. When he came near them they soon discovered the cheat, and striding up to him pecked at him and plucked away his borrowed plumes. So the Jay could do no better than go back to the other Jays, who had watched his behaviour from a distance; but they were equally annoyed with him, and told him:

‘It is not only fine feathers that make fine birds.’

THE FROG AND THE OX

‘Oh Father,’ said a little Frog to the big one sitting by the side of a pool, ‘I have seen such a terrible monster! It was as big as a mountain, with horns on its head, and a long tail, and it had hoofs divided in two.’

‘Tush, child, tush,’ said the old Frog, ‘that was only Farmer White’s Ox. It isn’t so big either; he may be a little bit taller than I, but I could easily make myself quite as broad; just you see.’ So he blew himself out, and blew himself out, and blew himself out. ‘Was he as big as that?’ asked he.

‘Oh, much bigger than that,’ said the young Frog.

Again the old one blew himself out, and asked the young one if the Ox was as big as that.

‘Bigger, father, bigger,’ was the reply.

So the Frog took a deep breath, and blew and blew and blew, and swelled and swelled and swelled. And then he said: ‘I’m sure the Ox is not as big asBut at this moment he burst.

Self-conceit may lead to self-destruction.

THE DOG AND THE WOLF

A gaunt Wolf was almost dead with hunger when he happened to meet a House-dog who was passing by. 'Ah, Cousin,' said the Dog. 'I knew how it would be; your irregular life will soon be the ruin of you. Why do you not work steadily as I do, and get your food regularly given to you?'

'I would have no objection,' said the Wolf, 'if I could only get a place.'

'I will easily arrange that for you,' said the Dog; 'come with me to my master and you shall share my work.'

So the Wolf and the Dog went towards the town together. On the way there the Wolf noticed that the hair on a certain part of the Dog's neck was very much worn away, so he asked him how that had come about.

'Oh, it is nothing,' said the Dog. 'That is only the place where the collar is put on at night to keep me chained up; it chafes a bit, but one soon gets used to it.'

'Is that all?' said the Wolf. 'Then good-bye to you, Master Dog.'

Better starve free than be a fat slave.