

## The Lark and Her Young Ones

A lark made her nest in a field of young wheat. As the days passed, the wheat stalks grew tall and the young birds, too, grew in strength. Then one day, when the ripe golden grain waved in the breeze, the farmer and his son came into the field. "This wheat is now ready for reaping," said the farmer. "We must call in our neighbors and friends to help us harvest it."

The young larks in their nest close by were much frightened, for they knew they would be in great danger if they did not leave the nest before the reapers came. When the mother lark returned with food for them, they told her what they had heard. "Do not be frightened, children," said the mother lark. "If the farmer said he would call in his neighbors and friends to help him do his work, this wheat will not be reaped for a while yet."

A few days later, the wheat was so ripe that when the wind shook the stalks, a hail of wheat grains came rustling down on the young larks' heads. "If this wheat is not harvested at once," said the farmer, "we shall lose half the crop. We cannot wait any longer for help from our friends. Tomorrow we must set to work ourselves."

When the young larks told their mother what they had heard that day, she said, "Then we must be off at once. When a man decides to do his own work and not depend on anyone else, then you may be sure there will be no more delay." There was much fluttering and trying out of wings that afternoon, and at sunrise the next day, when the farmer and his son cut down the grain, they found an empty nest.

**Moral:** Self-help is the best help.

## Belling the Cat

The mice once called a meeting to decide on a plan to free themselves of their enemy, the cat. At least they wished to find some way of knowing when she was coming, so they might have time to run away. Indeed, something had to be done, for they lived in such constant fear of her claws that they hardly dared stir from their dens by night or day. Many plans were discussed, but none of them was thought good enough. At last, a very young mouse got up and said, "I have a plan that seems very simple, but I know it will be successful. All we have to do is to hang a bell about the cat's neck. When we hear the bell ringing, we will know immediately that our enemy is coming."

All the mice were much surprised that they had not thought of such a plan before. But in the midst of the rejoicing over their good fortune, an old mouse arose and said, "I will say that the plan of the young mouse is very good. But let me ask one question: Who will bell the cat?"

**Moral:** It is easy to say that something should be done; it's difficult to do it.

## The Frogs and the Well

Two frogs dwelt in the same pool. When the pool dried up under the summer's heat, they left it and set out together for another home. As they went along, they chanced to pass a deep well, amply supplied with water. When they saw it, one of the frogs said to the other, "Let us descend and make our abode in this well. It will furnish us with shelter and food."

The other replied with greater caution, "But suppose the water should fail us. How can we get out again from so great a depth?"

**Moral:** The first solution is not always the best one.

## The Fox and the Goat

A fox fell into a well, and though it was not very deep, he found that he could not get out again. After he had been in the well a long time, a thirsty goat came by. The goat thought the fox had gone down to drink, and so he asked if the water was good. "The finest in the whole country," said the crafty fox. "Jump in and try it. There is more than enough for both of us." The thirsty goat immediately jumped in and began to drink. The fox just as quickly jumped on the goat's back and leaped from the tip of the goat's horns out of the well. The foolish goat now saw what a plight he had got into and begged the fox to help him out. But the fox was already on his way to the woods. "If you had as much sense as you have beard, old fellow," he said as he ran, "you would have been more cautious about finding a way to get out again before you jumped in."

**Moral:** It's easy to mock someone for making the same mistake you have made.

## The Donkey and the Grasshopper

One day as a donkey was walking in the pasture, he found some grasshoppers chirping merrily in a grassy corner of the field. He listened with a great deal of admiration to the song of the grasshoppers. It was such a joyful song that his pleasure-loving heart was filled with a wish to sing as they did. "What is it," he asked very respectfully, "that has given you such beautiful voices? Is there any special food you eat or is it some divine nectar that makes you sing so wonderfully?"

"Yes," said the grasshoppers, who were very fond of a joke. "It is the dew we drink! Try some and see." So thereafter, the donkey would eat nothing and drink nothing but dew. Naturally, the poor foolish donkey soon died.

**Moral:** Other people's advice should be tempered with your own common sense.