

'My friends, the product of that deadly grain,
 Seize now, and pull it root by root,
 Or surely you'll repent its fruit.'
 'False, babbling prophetess,' says one,
 'You'd set us at some pretty fun!
 To pull this field a thousand birds are needed,
 While thousands more with hemp are seeded.'
 The crop now quite mature,
 The swallow adds, 'Thus far I've fail'd of cure;
 I've prophesied in vain
 Against this fatal grain:
 It's grown. And now, my bonny birds,
 Though you have disbelieved my words
 Thus far, take heed at last,--
 When you shall see the seed-time past,
 And men, no crops to labour for,
 On birds shall wage their cruel war,
 With deadly net and noose;
 Of flying then beware,
 Unless you take the air,
 Like woodcock, crane, or goose.
 But stop; you're not in plight
 For such adventurous flight,
 O'er desert waves and sands,
 In search of other lands.
 Hence, then, to save your precious souls,
 Remaineth but to say,
 'Twill be the safest way,
 To chuck yourselves in holes.'
 Before she had thus far gone,
 The birdlings, tired of hearing,
 And laughing more than fearing,
 Set up a greater jargon
 Than did, before the Trojan slaughter,
 The Trojans round old Priam's daughter.^[9]
 And many a bird, in prison grate,
 Lamented soon a Trojan fate.

'Tis thus we heed no instincts but our own;
 Believe no evil till the evil's done.

[8] Aesop.

[9] *Priam's daughter*.--Cassandra, who predicted the fall of Troy, and was not heeded.

IX.--THE CITY RAT AND THE COUNTRY RAT.^[10]

A city rat, one night,
 Did, with a civil stoop,
 A country rat invite
 To end a turtle soup.

Upon a Turkey carpet

They found the table spread,
 And sure I need not harp it
 How well the fellows fed.

The entertainment was
 A truly noble one;
 But some unlucky cause
 Disturb'd it when begun.

It was a slight rat-tat,
 That put their joys to rout;
 Out ran the city rat;
 His guest, too, scamper'd out.

Our rats but fairly quit,
 The fearful knocking ceased.
 'Return we,' cried the cit,
 To finish there our feast.

'No,' said the rustic rat;
 'To-morrow dine with me.
 I'm not offended at
 Your feast so grand and free,--

'For I've no fare resembling;
 But then I eat at leisure,
 And would not swap, for pleasure
 So mix'd with fear and trembling.'

[10] Horace, *Satires*, II. 6: also in Aesop.

X.--THE WOLF AND THE LAMB.[11]

That innocence is not a shield,
 A story teaches, not the longest.
 The strongest reasons always yield
 To reasons of the strongest.

A lamb her thirst was slaking,
 Once, at a mountain rill.
 A hungry wolf was taking
 His hunt for sheep to kill,
 When, spying on the streamlet's brink
 This sheep of tender age,
 He howl'd in tones of rage,
 'How dare you roil my drink?
 Your impudence I shall chastise!
 'Let not your majesty,' the lamb replies,
 'Decide in haste or passion!
 For sure 'tis difficult to think
 In what respect or fashion
 My drinking here could roil your drink,