

**WOOD MAGIC;
A FABLE. VOL. II**

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Wood magic; a fable. Vol. II by Richard Jefferies

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RICHARD JEFFERIES

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A FABLE. VOL. II**

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A Fable.

BY

RICHARD JEFFERIES,

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ABOUT A GREAT ESTATE."

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WOOD MAGIC.

CHAPTER I.

THE COUNCIL.

BEFORE Bevis could ask any questions, the Squirrel went off to speak to the Rook, and to show him a good bough to perch on near the Owl's castle. He then came back and conducted Bevis to the seat in the ash-stole, where he was hidden by the honeysuckle, but could see well about him. Hardly had Bevis comfortably seated himself than the councillors began to arrive. They were all there; even the Rat did not dare stay away, lest his loyalty should be suspected, but took up his station at the foot of the pollard-tree, and the Mouse sat beside him. The Rook sat on the oak, no great way from the Squirrel; Kauc, the crow, chose a branch of ash which projected close to the pollard. So envious was he of the crow that he could not stay far from it.

Cloctaw, the jaekdaw, who had flown to the council with him, upon arrival, left his side, and perched rather in the rear. Reynard, the fox, and See, the stoat, his friend, waited the approach of the king by some fern near the foot of the pollard. The Owl every now and then appeared at the window of his castle, sometimes to see who had arrived, and sometimes to look for the king, who was not yet in sight. Having glanced round, the Owl retreated to his study, doubtless to prepare his speech for this important occasion. The heaving up of the leaves and earth, as if an underground plough was at work, showed that the mole had not forgotten his duty; he had come to show his loyalty, and he brought a message from the badger, who had long since been left outside the concert of the animals and birds, humbly begging king Kapchack to accept his homage.

It is true that neither the Hare nor the rabbit were present, but that signified nothing, for they had no influence whatever. But the pheasant, who often stood aloof from the court, in his pride of lineage despising Kapchack though he was king, came on this occasion, for he too, like the

Squirrel, was alarmed at the progress of Choo Hoo, and dreaded a scarcity of the berries of the earth. Tchink, the chaffinch, one of the first to come, could not perch still, but restlessly passed round the circle, now talking to one and now to another, and sometimes peering in at the Owl's window. But merry as he was, he turned his back upon Te-te, the tom-tit, and chief of the spies, disdainng the acquaintance of a common informer. Te-te, not one whit abashed, sat on a willow, and lifted his voice from time to time.

The Jay came presently, and for some reason or other he was in high good spirits, and dressed in his gayest feathers. He chaffed the Owl, and joked with Tchink; then he laughed to himself, and tried to upset the grave old Cloctaw from his seat, and in short, played all sorts of pranks to the astonishment of everybody, who had hitherto seen him in such distress for the loss of his lady-love. Everybody thought he had lost his senses. Eric, the favourite missel-thrush (not the conspirator) took his station very high up on the ash above Kauc, whom he hated and suspected of treason, not hesitating even to say so aloud. Kauc, indeed, was not now quite comfort-

able in his position, but kept slyly glancing up at the missel-thrush, and would have gone elsewhere had it not been that everybody was looking.

The wood-pigeon came to the hawthorn, some little way from the castle; he represented, and was the chief of those pigeons who dwelt peacefully in Kapchack's kingdom, although aliens by race. His position was difficult in the extreme, for upon the one hand he knew full well that Kapchack was suspicious of him lest he should go over to Choo Hoo, and might at any moment order his destruction, and upon the other hand he had had several messages from Choo Hoo calling upon him to join his brethren, the invaders, on pain of severe punishment. Uncertain as to his fate, the wood-pigeon perched on the hawthorn at the skirt of the council place, hoping from thence to get some start if obliged to flee for his life. The dove, his friend, constant in misfortune, sat near him to keep him in countenance.

The humble-bee, the bee, the butterfly, the cricket, the grasshopper, the beetle, and many others arrived as the hour drew on. Last of all came Ki Ki, lord of all the hawks, attended with his retinue, and heralding the approach of the king. Ki Ki perched