

Bruin And Reynard

by Sir George Webbe Dasent
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The Bear and the Fox had once bought a firkin of butter together; they were to have it at Yule and hid it till then under a thick spruce bush.

After that they went a little way off and lay down on a sunny bank to sleep. So when they had lain a while the Fox got up, shook himself, and bawled out 'yes'.

Then he ran off straight to the firkin and ate a good third part of it. But when he came back, and the Bear asked him where he had been, since he was so fat about the paunch, he said:

'Don't you believe then that I was bidden to barsel, to a christening feast.'

'So, so', said the Bear, 'and pray what was the bairn's name.'

'Just-begun', said the Fox.

So they lay down to sleep again. In a little while up jumped the Fox again, bawled out 'yes', and ran off to the firkin.

This time too he ate a good lump. When he came back, and the Bear asked him again where he had been, he said:

'Oh, wasn't I bidden to barsel again, don't you think.'

'And pray what was the bairn's name this time', asked the Bear.

'Half-eaten', said the Fox.

The Bear thought that a very queer name, but he hadn't wondered long over it before he began to yawn and gape and fell asleep. Well, he hadn't lain long before the Fox jumped up as he had done twice before, bawled out 'yes' and ran off to the firkin, which this time he cleared right out. When he got back he had been bidden to barsel

again, and when the Bear wanted to know the bairn's name, he answered:

'Licked-to-the-bottom.'

After that they lay down again, and slept a long time; but then they were to go to the firkin to look at the butter, and when they found it eaten up, the Bear threw the blame on the Fox, and the Fox on the Bear; and each said the one had been at the firkin while the other slept.

'Well, well', said Reynard, 'we'll soon find this out, which of us has eaten the butter. We'll just lay down in the sunshine, and he whose cheeks and chaps are greasiest when we wake, he is the thief.'

Yes, that trial Bruin was ready to stand; and as he knew in his heart he had never so much as tasted the butter, he lay down without a care to sleep in the sun.

Then Reynard stole off to the firkin for a morsel of butter, which stuck there in a crack, and then he crept back to the Bear, and greased his chaps and cheeks with it; and then he, too, lay down to sleep as if nothing had happened.

So when they both woke, the sun had melted the butter, and the Bear's whiskers were all greasy; and so it was Bruin after all, and no one else, who had eaten the butter.