

The Cock and the Fox

by Jean de La Fontaine

Upon a tree there mounted guard
 A veteran cock, adroit and cunning;
 When to the roots a fox up running,
Spoke thus, in tones of kind regard:--
 "Our quarrel, brother, 's at an end;
 Henceforth I hope to live your friend;
 For peace now reigns
 Throughout the animal domains.
I bear the news:--come down, I pray,
 And give me the embrace fraternal;
And please, my brother, don't delay.
 So much the tidings do concern all,
 That I must spread them far to-day.
Now you and yours can take your walks
 Without a fear or thought of hawks.
And should you clash with them or others,
In us you'll find the best of brothers;--
For which you may, this joyful night,
 Your merry bonfires light.
 But, first, let's seal the bliss
 With one fraternal kiss."
"Good friend," the cock replied, "upon my word,
A better thing I never heard;
 And doubly I rejoice
 To hear it from your voice;
And, really there must be something in it,
For yonder come two greyhounds, which I flatter
Myself are couriers on this very matter.
 They come so fast, they'll be here in a minute.
I'll down, and all of us will seal the blessing
 With general kissing and caressing."
"Adieu," said fox; "my errand's pressing;
 I'll hurry on my way,
 And we'll rejoice some other day."
So off the fellow scamper'd, quick and light,
To gain the fox-holes of a neighbouring height,

Less happy in his stratagem than flight.
The cock laugh'd sweetly in his sleeve;--
'Tis doubly sweet deceiver to deceive.