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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## Old Granny Fox: Three Vain And Foolish Wishes (14/29)

There's nothing so foolishly silly and vain  
As to wish for a thing you can never attain.

—Old Granny Fox.

We all know that, yet most of us are just foolish enough to make such a wish now and then. I guess you have done it. I know I have. Peter Rabbit has done it often and then laughed at himself afterwards. I suspect that even shrewd, clever old Granny Fox has been guilty of it more than once. So it is not surprising that Reddy Fox, terribly hungry as he was, should do a little foolish wishing.

When he left home to go to the Old Pasture, in the hope that he would be able to find something to eat there, he started off bravely. It was cold, very cold indeed, but his fur coat kept him warm as long as he was moving. The Green Meadows were glistening white with snow. All the world, at least all that part of it with which Reddy was acquainted, was white. It was beautiful, very beautiful, as millions of sparkles flashed in the sun. But Reddy had no thought for beauty; the only thought he had room for was to get something to put in the empty stomachs of himself and Granny Fox. Jack Frost had hardened the snow so that Reddy no longer had to wade through it. He could run on the

crust now without breaking through. This made it much easier, so he trotted along swiftly. He had intended to go straight to the Old Pasture, but there suddenly popped into his head a memory of the shelter down in a far corner of the Old Orchard which Farmer Brown's boy had built for Bob White. Probably the Bob White family were there now, and he might surprise them. He would go there first. Reddy stopped and looked carefully to make sure that Farmer Brown's boy and Bowser the Hound were nowhere in sight. Then he ran swiftly towards the Old Orchard. Just as he entered it he heard a merry voice just over his head: "Dee, dee, dee, dee, dee!" Reddy stopped and



looked up. There was Tommy Tit the Chickadee clinging tightly to a big piece of fresh suet tied fast to a branch of a tree, and Tommy was stuffing himself. Reddy sat down right underneath that suet and looked up longingly. The sight of it made his mouth water so that it was

almost more than he could stand. He jumped once. He jumped twice. He jumped three times. But all his jumping was in vain. That suet was beyond his reach. There was no possible way of reaching it save by flying or climbing. Reddy's tongue hung out of his mouth with longing. "I wish I could climb," said Reddy. But he couldn't climb, and all the wishing in the world wouldn't enable him to, as he very well knew. So after a little he

started on. As he drew near the far corner of the Old Orchard, he saw Bob White and Mrs. Bob and all the young Bobs picking up grain which Farmer Brown's boy had scattered for them just in front of the shelter he had built for them. Reddy crouched down and very slowly, an inch at a time, he crept forward, his eyes shining with eagerness. Just as he was almost within springing distance, Bob White gave a signal, and away flew the Bob Whites to the safety of a hemlock-tree on the edge of the Green Forest.

Tears of rage and disappointment welled up in Reddy's eyes. "I wish I could fly," he muttered, as he watched the brown birds disappear in the big hemlock-tree.

This was quite as foolish a wish as the other, so Reddy trotted on and decided to go down past the Smiling Pool. When he got there he found it, as he expected, frozen over. But just where the Laughing Brook joins it there was a little place where there was open water. Billy Mink was on the ice at its edge, and just as Reddy got there Billy dived in. A minute later he climbed out with a fish in his mouth. "Give me a bite," begged Reddy. "Catch your own fish," retorted Billy Mink. "I have to work hard enough for what I get as it is."

Reddy was afraid to go out on the ice where Billy was, and so he sat and watched him eat that fine fish. Then Billy dived into the water again and disappeared. Reddy waited a long time, but Billy did not return. "I wish I could dive," gulped Reddy, thinking of the fine fish somewhere under the ice.

And this wish was quite as foolish as the other wishes.