

THE FOURTH READER

READING-LITERATURE
FOURTH READER

BY

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AND

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YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS
ITHACA, NEW YORK

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This edition, first published in 2021 by Yesterday's Classics, an imprint of Yesterday's Classics, LLC, is an unabridged republication of the work originally published by Row, Peterson & Company in 1913. For the complete listing of the books that are published by Yesterday's Classics, please visit www.yesterdaysclassics.com. Yesterday's Classics is the publishing arm of Gateway to the Classics which presents the complete text of hundreds of classic books for children at www.gatewaytotheclassics.com.

ISBN-13: 978-1-59915-414-5

Yesterday's Classics, LLC

PO Box 339

Ithaca, NY 14850

Purpose and Plan

One needs to examine the Primer, First, Second and Third Readers of this series in order to understand the purpose and plan of the books—to train children in reading and appreciating literature through *reading-literature*.

The Primer contains nine of the best folk tales, true to the original, and yet written in such a simple style that children can begin reading the *real story* during the first week in school. The First Reader contains thirteen similar stories, of gradually increasing difficulty, and thirty-three of the best rhymes and jingles suitable for young children. This constitutes *a course in literature*, twenty-two stories and thirty-three child poems, as well adapted to first-grade children as are the selections for “college entrance requirements” to high-school students.

The Second Reader introduces fables and fairy stories and continues folk tales and simple poems. Others have used some of the same material in readers, but in a quite different way. Their purpose seems to have been to “mix thoroughly.” We have organized the material: a group of fables, several groups of folk and fairy stories, a group of Mother Goose, of Rossetti, of Stevenson, and so on; so that the child may get a body, not a mere bit, of one kind of material before passing to another. Thus from the

first he is trained to associate related literature and to organize what he reads.

The transition to the Third Reader will be found easy and to accord with the normal interests of the children. In prose the folk and fairy story is retained, but is merged into the wonder tale, which becomes a dominant note, while the fable gives place to more extended and more modern animal stories. The poetry begins with the group from Stevenson, whom the children have already learned to enjoy. Then follow selections from Lydia Maria Child, Lucy Larcom, Eugene Field, and a score of others dealing mainly with children's interests in animals and other forms of nature.

The Fourth Reader has been made essentially the book of myths and legends, because it is believed that these stories represent the next step in the development of the child's interests in literature. In this year's work the child studies eighteen of the best myths and legends, including some from Greek, Norse, German, Austrian, and American sources.

The poetry is selected with the same care as in the earlier books, with special reference to the child's feeling for rhythm, love of animated nature, and enjoyment of fun.

With these books, besides merely learning to read, the child has the joy of reading the *best in the language*, and he is forming his taste for all

subsequent reading. This development of taste should be recognized and encouraged. From time to time the children should be asked to choose what they would like to reread as a class, or individuals who read well aloud may be asked to select something already studied to read to the others. This kind of work gives the teacher opportunity to find out what is in a selection that the children like, and to commend what seems to her best.

The fact that some children voluntarily memorize a story or a poem should have hearty approval. It shows abiding interest and enjoyment, and it is likely to give, for the young child at least, the maximum of *literary saturation*.

THE AUTHORS.

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How Thor Found His Hammer

The frost-giants were always trying to get into Asgard. For more than half the year they held the world in their grasp. They locked up the streams in their rocky beds, hushing their music and the music of the birds as well. They left nothing but a wild waste under the cold sky. They hated the warm sunshine which stirs the wild flowers out of their sleep, and covers the mountains with verdure, and sets all the birds a-singing in the tree-tops. Above all, they hated Thor, whose flashing hammer drove them back into Jotunheim and guarded the summer sky. So long as Thor had his hammer Asgard was safe against the giants.

One morning Thor awoke from a long, deep sleep, and put out his hand for the hammer; but no hammer was there. Not a sign of it could be found anywhere, although Thor searched for it. Then a thought of the

giants came suddenly to his mind; and his anger rose till his eyes flashed like great fires, and his red beard trembled with his wrath.

“Look now, Loke,” he shouted, “they have stolen my hammer by enchantment, and no one on earth or in heaven knows where they have hidden it.”

“We will get Freyja’s falcon-guise and search for it,” answered Loke, who was always quick to get into trouble or to get out of it again. So they went to Freyja, and Thor said, “My hammer has been stolen by enchantment. Will you lend me the falcon-guise, that I may search for it?”

“Though it were silver, or even gold, you should have it and welcome,” answered Freyja. She was glad to help Thor find the wonderful hammer that kept them all safe from the hands of the frost-giants.

So the falcon-guise was brought, and Loke put it on and flew swiftly out of Asgard to the home of the giants. His great wings made broad shadows over the ripe fields as

he swept along. The reapers, looking up from their work, wondered what mighty bird was flying seaward. At last he reached Jotunheim. No sooner had he touched ground and taken off the falcon-guise than he came upon the giant Thrym, who was sitting on a hill twisting golden collars for his dogs and stroking the long manes of his horses.

“Welcome, Loke,” said the giant. “How fares it with the gods and the elves, and what has brought you to Jotunheim?”

“It fares ill with both gods and elves since you stole Thor’s hammer,” replied Loke, guessing quickly that Thrym was the thief; “and I have come to find where you have hidden it.”

Thrym laughed as only a giant can when he knows he has made trouble for somebody.

“You won’t find it,” he said at last. “I have buried it eight miles under ground, and no one shall take it away unless he gets Freyja for me as my wife.”

The giant looked as if he meant what he



said, and Loke, seeing no other way of finding the hammer, put on his falcon-guise and flew back to Asgard. Thor was waiting to hear what news he brought, and both were soon at the great doors of Folkvang.

“Put on your bridal dress, Freyja,” said Thor, “and we will ride swiftly to Jotunheim.”

But Freyja had no idea of marrying a giant just to please Thor. “Do you think I am a weak,

love-sick girl, to follow you to Jotunheim and marry Thrym?" she cried.

Finding they could do nothing with Freyja, Thor and Loke called all the gods together to talk over the matter, and to decide what should be done to get back the hammer.

The gods were much alarmed, because they knew the frost-giants would come upon Asgard as soon as they knew the hammer was gone. They thought long and earnestly. Still they could find no way of getting hold of the hammer.

"We must have the hammer at once, or Asgard will be in danger," they said. "If Freyja will not go, let Thor be dressed up and go in her place. Let keys jingle from his waist and woman's dress fall about his feet. Put precious stones upon his breast, braid his hair like a woman's, hang the necklace around his neck, and bind the bridal veil around his head."

Thor frowned angrily. "If I dress like a woman," he said, "you will jeer at me."

"Don't talk of jeers," retorted Loke. "Unless

that hammer is brought back quickly the giants will rule in our places.”

Thor said no more, but allowed himself to be dressed like a bride, and soon drove off to Jotunheim. Loke went with him disguised as a servant-maid. There was never such a wedding journey before. They rode in Thor’s chariot and the goats drew them, plunging swiftly along the way. Thunder pealed through the mountains and the frightened earth blazed and smoked as they passed. When Thrym saw the bridal party coming he was filled with delight.

“Stand up, you giants,” he shouted. “Place cushions upon the benches and bring in Freyja, my bride. My yards are full of golden-horned cows, great wealth and many treasures are mine, and Freyja is all I lack.”

It was evening when the bride came driving into the giant’s court in her blazing chariot. The feast was already spread. Her veil modestly covered her face. She was seated at the great table, and Thrym was beside himself

with delight. It wasn't every giant who could marry a goddess.

The bridal journey had been so strange that any one but a foolish giant would have hesitated to marry a wife who came in such a turmoil of fire and storm. Besides, her conduct at the table ought to have put Thrym on his guard, for never had a bride such an appetite before. The great tables groaned under the load of good things, but they were quickly relieved of their burden by the bride.

She ate a whole ox before the astonished giant had fairly begun to enjoy his meal. Then she devoured eight large salmon, one after the other, without stopping to take breath. Having eaten the part of the feast prepared for the men, she turned to the dainties made for herself and the women.

Thrym looked on with wondering eyes. At last, when she had added to these solid foods, three barrels of mead, his amazement got the better of his politeness. And he called out, "Did any one ever see such an appetite

in a bride before, or know a maid who could drink so much mead?”

Then Loke, who was playing the part of a serving-maid, feared that the giant might be suspicious. He whispered to him, “Freyja was so happy in the thought of coming here that she has eaten nothing for eight whole days.”

Thrym was so pleased at these words that he leaned forward and raised the veil as gently as a giant could, but he instantly dropped it and sprang back the whole length of the hall, before the bride’s terrible eyes.

“Why are Freyja’s eyes so sharp?” he called to Loke. “They burn me like fire.”

“Oh,” said the cunning serving-maid, “she has not slept for a week, so anxious has she been to come here. That is why her eyes are so fiery.”

Everybody looked at the bride and nobody envied Thrym. They thought it was too much like marrying a thunderstorm.

The giant’s sister came into the hall just

then, and seeing the veiled form of the bride sitting there, went up to her and asked for a bridal gift. “If you would have my love and friendship give me those rings of gold upon your fingers.”

But the bride sat perfectly silent. No one had yet seen her face or heard her voice.

Thrym became very impatient. “Bring in the hammer,” he shouted, “that we may be wed in the name of Var.”

If the giant could have seen the bride’s eyes when she heard these words, he would have sent her home as quickly as possible, and looked elsewhere for a wife.

The hammer was brought and placed in the bride’s lap. Everybody looked to see the marriage ceremony, but the wedding was more strange and terrible than the bridal journey had been.

No sooner did the bride’s fingers close round the handle of the hammer than the veil was torn from her face and there stood Thor. His terrible eyes blazed with wrath. The

giants shuddered and shrank away from those flaming eyes, the sight of which they dreaded more than anything else in the world. But there was no chance of escape. Thor swung the hammer round his head and the great house rocked to and fro. There was a vivid flash of lightning, an awful crash of thunder, and the burning roof and walls buried the whole company in one common ruin.

Thrym was punished for stealing the hammer, his wedding guests got crushing blows instead of bridal gifts, and Thor and Loke went back to Asgard, where the presence of the hammer made the gods safe once more.

— *Adapted from Hamilton Wright Mabie*

The Apples of Idun

Once upon a time Odin, Loke and Hener started on a journey. They had often traveled together on all sorts of errands, for they had a great many things to look after. More than once they had fallen into trouble through the meddlesome Loke, who was never so happy as when he was doing wrong.

When the gods went on a journey they traveled fast and hard, for they were strong, active spirits. They loved nothing so much as hard work, hard blows, storm, peril, and struggle. There were no roads through the country over which they made their way; only high mountains to be climbed by rocky paths, deep valleys to be crossed and swift-rushing streams, as cold as ice. Not a bird flew through the air, not an animal sprang through the trees. It was as still as a desert.

The gods walked on and on, getting more

tired and hungry at every step. The sun was sinking low over the pine-crested mountains, and the travelers had not yet eaten. Even Odin was beginning to feel the pangs of hunger, when suddenly, entering a little valley, the hungry gods came upon a herd of cattle. It was the work of a minute to kill a great ox and to have the carcass swinging in a huge pot over a roaring fire.

But never were gods so unlucky before! In spite of their hunger the pot would not boil. They piled on the wood until the great flames crackled and licked the pot with their fiery tongues. But every time the cover was lifted, there was the meat just as raw as when it was put in. The travelers were not in very good humor. They talked about it, and wondered how it could be. Suddenly a voice called out from the oak overhead, "If you will give me my fill, I'll make the pot boil."

The gods looked at each other and then into the tree, and there they discovered a great eagle. They were glad enough to get their supper on any terms, so they told the



eagle he might have what he wanted if he would only get the meat cooked.

The bird was as good as his word, and in less time than it takes to tell it supper was ready. Then the eagle flew down and picked out both shoulders and both legs. This was a pretty large share, and Loke, who was always angry when anybody got more than he, seized a great pole and began to beat the bird.

Whereupon a very strange thing happened: the pole stuck fast in the huge talons of the eagle at one end, and Loke stuck fast at the other end. Struggle as he might, he could not get loose; and as the great bird sailed away, Loke went pounding along on the ground, striking against rocks and branches until he was bruised half to death.

The eagle was no ordinary bird, as Loke soon found when he begged for mercy. The giant Thjasse happened to be flying abroad in his eagle plumage, when the hungry travelers came under the oak and tried to cook the ox. It was into his hands that Loke had fallen, and he was not to get away until he had promised to pay roundly for his freedom.

If there was one thing which the gods prized above all their other treasures in Asgard, it was the beautiful fruit of Idun. This was kept by the goddess in a golden casket and given to the gods to keep them forever young and fair. Without these Apples, all their power could not have kept them from getting old like the meanest of mortals.

Without these Apples of Idun, Asgard itself would have lost its charm. For what would heaven be without youth and beauty forever shining through it?

Thjasse told Loke that he could not go unless he would promise to bring him the Apples of Idun. Loke hesitated. The eagle dashed hither and thither, flinging him against the sides of the mountains and dragging him through the great boughs of the oaks. At last his courage gave out entirely, and he promised to steal the Apples out of Asgard and give them to the giant.

Loke was bruised and sore enough to be willing to keep his promise. But how were the Apples to be gotten? Idun guarded the golden fruit day and night. No one ever touched it but herself. A beautiful sight it was to see her fair hands spread it forth for the morning feasts in Asgard.

The other gods had no thought of Loke's doing wrong, because they never did wrong themselves.



Not long after this Loke came carelessly up to Idun as she was gathering her Apples into the beautiful carven box which she carried.

“Good morning, goddess,” said he. “How fair and golden your Apples are!”

“Yes,” answered Idun, “the bloom of youth keeps them always beautiful.”

“I never saw anything like them,” continued Loke slowly, as if he were talking

about a matter of no importance, “until the other day.”

Idun looked up at once with the greatest interest and curiosity in her face. She was very proud of her Apples, and she knew that no earthly trees could bear such immortal fruit.

“Where have you seen any Apples like them?” she asked.

“Oh, just outside the gates,” said Loke, carelessly. “If you care to see them I’ll take you there. It will keep you but a moment. The tree is only a little way off.”

Idun was anxious to go at once.

“Better take your Apples with you to compare them with the others,” said the wily god. Idun gathered up the golden Apples and went out of Asgard, carrying with her all that made it heaven. No sooner was she beyond the gates than a mighty rushing sound was heard, like the coming of a tempest. Before she could think or act, the giant Thjasse, in

his eagle plumage, was bearing her swiftly away to his icy home. He wanted to eat the Apples and be forever young like the gods. She refused to give them up, so he kept her a lonely prisoner.

Loke, after keeping his promise and giving Idun into the hands of the giant, strayed back into Asgard as if nothing had happened. The next morning, when the gods assembled for their feast, there was no Idun.

Day after day went by, and still the beautiful goddess did not come. Little by little the light of youth and beauty faded from the home of the gods. They became old and haggard. Their strong, young faces were lined with care and furrowed by age. Their raven locks passed from gray to white. Their flashing eyes became dim and hollow. Brage, the god of poetry, could make no music, for his beautiful wife, Idun, was gone he knew not whither.

Finally, the gods could bear the loss of power and joy no longer. They made inquiry.

They tracked Loke on that fair morning when he led Idun beyond the gates. They seized him and brought him into the council. He read in their haggard faces the hate in their hearts and his courage failed. He promised to bring Idun back to Asgard, if the goddess Freyja would lend him her falcon-guise. No sooner said than done; and with eager gaze the gods watched him as he flew away, becoming at last only a dark speck against the sky.

After a long and weary flight, Loke was glad enough to find Thjasse gone to sea and Idun alone in his dreary house. He changed her instantly into a nut, and taking her in his talons, flew away as fast as his wings could carry him.

Loke had need of all his speed, for Thjasse came suddenly home and found Idun and her precious fruit gone. He guessed what had happened. He put on his eagle plumage and flew forth in a mighty rage. Like the rushing wings of a tempest, his mighty wings beat the air and bore him swiftly onward. From

mountain peak to mountain peak he flew. Now he almost touched the murmuring pine forests. Now he swept high in mid-air with nothing above but the arching sky, and nothing beneath but the tossing sea.

At last Thjasse sees the falcon far ahead. His flight becomes like the flash of the lightning for swiftness, and like the rushing of clouds for uproar. The haggard faces of the gods line the walls of Asgard and watch the race with eagerness.

Youth and endless life are staked upon the winning of Loke. He is weary enough and frightened enough, too, as the eagle sweeps not far behind him. But he makes a great effort to widen the distance between them. Little by little the eagle gains on the falcon. The gods grow white with fear. They rush off and prepare great fires upon the walls. With fainting, drooping wings, the falcon passes over and drops exhausted by the wall.

In an instant the fires have been lighted, and the great flames roar to heaven. The

eagle sweeps across the fiery line a second later, and falls, maimed and burned, to the ground. A dozen fierce hands smite out his life. Thus the great giant Thjasse perishes among his foes.

Idun resumes her natural form, as Brage rushes to meet her. The gods crowd round her. She spreads the feast. The golden Apples gleam in the eyes of the gods. They eat; and once more their faces glow with the beauty of undying youth, and their eyes flash with divine power. Idun stands like a star of beauty among the throng. The song of Brage is heard once more. Poetry and everlasting life are wedded again.

— *Adapted from Hamilton Wright Mabee*