

# Turlypin the Fox

By Clive Fenn

Illustrated by Warwick Reynolds

**T**URLYPIN the fox had had a good day. It was a Sunday, too, and the fat pheasant he had found so unexpectedly down in a sheltered dip under the brown waste of bracken at the edge of a copse, had come in right handily. The pheasant thought it was safe. For weeks its life had been in danger, but the shooting-party from the Manor had overlooked the bird. That pheasant had grown sleek and fat, and then the spirit of overconfidence, so bad for pheasants, as for mortals, was its undoing. It had felt all was well with the world, and had disregarded caution by peeping out of its hiding-place, just at the identical moment when Turlypin came by. The pheasant noticed the presence of Reynard too late. It observed something—a strange touch in the atmosphere—but there was no time to act on the lightning-gained knowledge. One screech, and the pheasant had ceased to be interested in what was passing in the world it had known.

It was the finest pheasant Turlypin had ever tasted. "Done me a power of good!" he said, as he munched up the tempting bird, leaving only a few feathers to tell the tale, as it were. These feathers were swept away by the soft, scented wind. Turlypin felt good, and he went on his way with sleepy content, dwelling cheerily on the pheasant and the tit-bits of it, smacking his lips, and hoping that the winter would not be a worrying sort of one, with any over-zeal on the part of the pestilent fox hunters.

He was so pleased about things generally that, as he glided on his way, he gave a little

dog-like bark, just by way of triumph. The country was wonderful, all lambent and vivid in the warm autumn sunshine. The air suggested the hey-day of gay old summertime, but it was better, infinitely superior to the coloured riot of July. Besides, the cover was surer.

"I feel I could do with a nap," said Turlypin to himself, as he lingered again in memory over his meal. "I only wish my poor wife had had as good a dinner to-day, but, maybe, later on, something will turn up which I can take home to her—a rabbit, say. Rabbits are good enough for the household."

He paused and looked round as he reached an open stretch of country. Close to the stripped trunk of a mighty elm, which lay flat across the rough ground, making a bridge over a ditch in which there was fairly deep water, thanks to the autumn rains, a robin and a tufted greenfinch were having an argument about food. The discussion did not interest the fox. He snuggled down in a little hollow right under the massive elm trunk, and composed himself to sleep. He dreamed of pheasants—whole troops of them—and his tail twitched. The greenfinch and the robin had flown off to their respective headquarters. They had no liking for a fox. There was just that dangerous, over-familiar something in the atmosphere, you understand, when a fox was about, which makes one think of some appointment in the next field where the scent is not so obvious. But that was all nothing to Turlypin. Long experience of a somewhat uncharitably-minded world had rubbed off

his squeamishness. He had grown thick-skinned. Foxes are like that.

It was a really good sleep after that never-to-be-forgotten Sunday dinner. A whole pheasant, with no absurd worries about sharing the princely delicacy. Turlypin was, so to speak, dead to all around, for his spirit was moving amidst even pleasanter scenery than that provided by the browning woods, and the pale stubble fields where mushrooms were numerous, the edible kind, home-spun affairs, so different from the rich crimson aristocrats, the brilliant "russula emetica" of the thick copses, where the ground was made gorgeous with the deep red discs.

But as Turlypin slept the sleep of the just, strange things were happening overhead. The grand old elm had fallen aslant the little stream. It made a

splendid highway for lots of creatures which disliked water.

Very thoughtful of the elm! And as the fox slumbered there came a pattering, so faint as hardly to be heard. A

whole large, well-ordered family party of rabbits were making for the rich cabbage preserves of Farmer Smith a mile distant. The cabbage lands were situated the other side of the stream, quite a considerable distance and if the big tempest that night in April long before had not dragged the century-old elm from its roots and left it lying flat, the rabbits would never have dreamed of aspiring to the rich crop which had attracted their atten-

tion. For a rabbit hates water. Water is abominably bad for his fur. Avoid aqua pura or the other kind—that is the rabbit policy. But all this is neither here nor there.

Of course, the rabbit expedition into the practically unknown country presided over by Farmer Smith would never have been made had there been the least inkling of an idea that Turlypin was sleeping off the effects of pheasant just underneath the old elm trunk. One may be brave, but why take chances, and upset the nerves? No sense in that! Even a French rabbit, who calls himself a lapin, would know better than that! But to proceed. The rabbits had scouts, and these advance runners were keeping a sharp look-out. They had all heard of Turlypin. They knew his prowess. They hated the very sound of his



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name, but they disliked the special brand of atmosphere he carried about with him even more. Turlypin had carved a reputation for himself as a sort of pirate-cum-buccaneer all through that countryside.

"Hallo! What's this!" cried the rabbit



The leading rabbit stopped and sniffed uneasily. The scent was unmistakable; there was a fox about!

who was leading the way. He sniffed uneasily.

Then he sniffed again, as one does when one is not quite, quite sure. But the thing was unmistakable. You could not escape it. There was a fox somewhere near. The other rabbits were behind, dancing along the trunk, care-free, but then suddenly they, too, had a suspicious waft of the smell.

"There's a fox close by," sang out advance post number one.

"You are dreaming, surely?" replied another rabbit.

The rabbit who took the lead was a bold fellow as rabbits go, which is not saying much. But no matter. Anyhow, he had been selected

for his skill in tracking down peril. He was sniffing now, like mad. Then he took a furtive peep under the trunk, and his little white bunch of a tail certainly turned a shade whiter. For down there in the low growth he caught sight of the arch-enemy, Turlypin, the

villainous fox which ate rabbits all the year round. That was not all. The rabbit pride was trampled underfoot. The fox made no bones of his opinion, namely, that rabbit was merely what the French call a "faute de mieux"—a want of something better—and that's just the kind of mocking, contemptuous treatment which nobody, even if it is a rabbit which is in question, can stand.

"It's a mangy fox!" breathed the rabbit who had first spoken.

There could have been no greater insult. Had Turlypin but heard, he would have roused himself,

and charged the traducer! It is true he had got a touch of mange, but it was never referred to in the circles in which he moved.

"Well, he's asleep, sure enough," said the commander-in-chief of the rabbits. "What had we better do about it?"

"Tweak his nose!" cried one smart little bunny, who knew no better, for he had hardly as yet seen the world.

The leader chuckled, and called for volunteers for the job. The heedless little merry-hearted rabbit made a move to go forward, but its mother told it not to be so silly.

"This is no place for us. I feel we had better be going back," murmured a wise old

rabbit, who disliked anything unusual. "Besides—well, it is really impossible to linger here, and I left my eau-de-Cologne on the mantelpiece."

"Don't be so fidgety!" chimed in the leader. "After all, what is a fox—Turlypin, or any other? I ask you, what is he?"

"If this is a guessing competition," said another rabbit, "I tell you frankly you are putting it forward at the wrong time. I always want lots of leisure for such things, and there ought to be coupons, and heaps of prizes."

The leader clapped his green leaf handkerchief to his nose, for he could really hardly stand being so close to the fox.

"I will tell you what that creature is," he cried. "He is only preserved vermin. That's what he amounts to! Preserved vermin! I would say it to his face! If it were not for the fact that a lot of silly people like to go hunting, as they call it, he would not be here at all."

It was a plucky thing to say. Words carry like thistledown. The caustic remark pene-

trated even the dull brain of Turlypin. He woke with a start, reassembled his drowsy faculties, and he was conscious of a lot of nervous-looking rabbits grinning down at him.

"What insolence!" he roared, making a grab at one bunny.

"I'll take one of them—it will do for my wife's supper," he said.

The rabbits broke and fled. Such a scamper! But the victim which had been seized by Turlypin was very bright and lively for its age. It kicked, and said a lot of things. And then it got free by a lucky feint. The fox was still half-way over the frontier into the land of sleep—not at all his usual energetic self.

Splash! Into the water went the rabbit. It scrambled out, and was off like a streak of lightning, panting to overtake its fellows, and bemoaning the wetting of its precious fur.

"After all, one might go further and *fur* worse!" it gasped.

And Mrs. Vixen, harassed and irritated, went without her supper, after all!

THE END



## HINTS TO UNCLES!

Compiled by Tubby Muffin of Rookwood

1. Always mark on your kallender, in red ink, the date of your nephew's berth-day.

2. Do not send presents "in kind." That is to say, don't send your nephew a volume of the "Works of Harry Stottle," or a pear of socks, or a peashooter. Send cash every time—preferably a big check.

3. Don't write long letters of advice to your nephew. He duzzent need it. He gets quite enuff lectures at Rookwood. He duzzent want any from his own fambly!

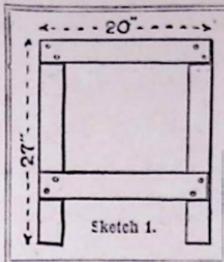
4. Letters sent with remittanses should be very short, such as: "My dear Tom, I have plezzure in enclosing a check for a hundred ginnies.—Your affeckshunate Uncle."

5. Although presents in cash are preferred, there is no objection to your sending a hamper of tuck in addition.

6. When you have occasion to vizzit your nephew at the school, "tip" him on your arrival, "tip" him at intervals of half an hour during your stay, and "tip" him again before you go. That is the proper caper.

7. Always studdy your nephew's whims. If he writes to say he is short of pocket-munney, send him the needful at once. You don't like to be kept waiting yourself? Very well, then, see that your nephew duzzent have to wait!

8. Carry out these instruckshuns to the letter, and you will be a very popular uncle!



## HOW TO MAKE A GARDEN TABLE

An Instructive Article which will appeal to Boys

**T**HE top of a bacon box will supply the necessary

wood, and the three sections which go to the round can be quite easily sawn to shape. If it prove necessary to make the top, the biggest job will be done when it is shaped and nailed together, with two under-pieces of rough wood to hold it. A disused copper lid makes an ideal top for the table, however.

Now for the legs: For a shilling I bought a bacon box and took it to pieces carefully, putting on one side all the nails. There was enough wood left over to have made the top also, had it been necessary.

The box was sawn up into six strips 27 inches long by 2½ inches wide, and a further six from the ends (which did not need sawing) produced six sections 20 inches long by 3 inches wide. I should here say that if an old crate which has contained a cycle, or something similar, can be obtained instead of the bacon box, a considerable amount of time can be saved in sawing pieces lengthwise, but I mention the box as being the article more readily obtainable.

With the top bought ready made in the shape of a copper-lid, or already built up by the amateur carpenter, the table is almost done.

The next step is to take two of the longer strips and see that you have the bottoms of same on a level; then nail two of the shorter lengths crosswise, as shown in Sketch 1. Repeat this operation twice with the remaining lengths, and you have three sections which simply need nailing together to form a triangular stand for the table-top.

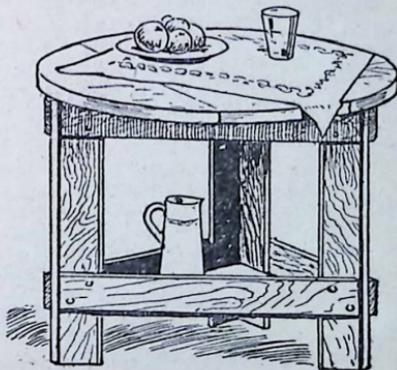
Now nail the latter on, and your table is practically complete.

Two really great improvements can now be added. The first is to turn the table upside-down and nail short lengths of the left-over wood to form a kind of tray near the bottom of the table as shown in Fig. 2. This proves a handy receptacle for books or the cake-stand when tea is taken down the garden. It is soon done, and besides being of use, steadies the table, whilst strengthening it.

Finally, buy a pint of creosote and make your table weatherproof by giving it one or two coats of this preserving fluid, at the same time considerably improving its appearance, and obliterating the marks of the bacon brand usually stamped upon the box.

Do not trouble to plane your wood, though you will probably prefer to do this for the top.

My table is used for all kinds of purposes and left out in all weathers. As the picture shows, it is anything but an eyesore in the garden.



Sketch 2.