

ABC Short Stories

BILINGUAL EDITION:
ENGLISH-FRENCH

ABC Petits Contes

JULES LEMAÎTRE

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ABC SHORT STORIES, BILINGUAL EDITION: ENGLISH–FRENCH

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*This book is dedicated to our very dear friends,
the Owczarek-Boyer family.*

On pense souvent à vous.



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INTRODUCTION

François Élie Jules Lemaître was born on April 27, 1853, in Vennecy, Loiret, in north-central France. He became well known in France for his literary criticism before becoming a professor at the University of Grenoble in 1883. This position only lasted for one year before Lemaître resigned to devote his time to literature. He became the drama critic for the *Journal des Débats*, and later for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. His insightful writing on modern authors allowed him to be admitted to the French Academy on January 16, 1896. He died in Tavers, Loiret, on August 4, 1914, at the age of 61.

Learning a foreign language can be difficult. A common method of practicing sentence structure and increasing vocabulary is to read fiction or poetry in the foreign language. But pausing to consult a dictionary or grammar reference can break your concentration and disrupt the flow of the story. With a bilingual text, the native language text that corresponds to the foreign language is on the facing page, making it a much simpler matter to glance across the spine and consult the familiar wording.

Sleeping Cat Press is proud to present this series of bilingual English–French books. Given the nature of foreign language translations and the differences in grammar conventions between English and French, the same paragraph in each language is rarely made up of the same number of words. At times this leads to inelegant paragraph spacing. Some paragraphs in this volume are condensed, while others are widely spaced, and

there are some spaces between paragraphs. But it is essential for each paragraph to begin on the same line in both language versions, so these spacing inconsistencies could not be helped.

We hope you find this volume useful as you expand your understanding of the new language.

Sarah E. Holroyd

PREFACE

Jules Lemaître loved children. He had himself, when he was a professor at Grenoble, a little girl, Madeleine, who died at one month old and he was never consoled.

Later he became a wonderful godfather many times. Everyone knows the charming stories he wrote for his goddaughters and godsons, like *The Ideas of Liette*, *Princess Lilli's Love*, *Boum*, this strange little girl from Bagdad, and in the margin of the Tales of Perrault, *The White Rabbit and the Four-Leaf Clovers*.

In Paris, in his large studio in the Rue d'Artois, lined with pale gold tapestries, Jules Lemaître liked to entertain children, filling them with cakes and sweets and opening for them a mysterious chest in his library, which then spilled onto the carpet unexpected toys, collected with nearly as much love as the books.

It is thus that he was led to write an *Alphabet*. He began in the summer of 1913, in Royan, where he was spending a long holiday. He looked for subjects on his short-stepped walks—he was already out of breath—between the pines and the sea, and in the evening he told his tales, to “test” them, to my African nephews, laughing with them, or saying, disappointed when they remained indifferent: “This is ironic and too short! Like primitive people, children hate the spirit and love the detail; make it simpler!”

And the next day, he began his tale again.

One of his last joys, in May of 1914, when the doctor had forbidden any inventive work, was to recopy himself, increasingly

PRÉFACE

Jules Lemaître a beaucoup aimé les enfants. Il eut lui-même, lorsqu'il fut professeur à Grenoble, une petite fille, Madeleine, qui mourut au bout d'un mois et dont il ne se consola jamais.

Plus tard il devint un parrain multiple et délicieux. Tout le monde connaît les contes charmants écrits pour ses filleules et ses filleuls, comme les *Idées de Liette*, *les Amoureux de la Princesse Lilli*, *Boum*, cette étrange petite fille de Bagdad, et celui en marge des Contes de Perrault, le *Lapin blanc et les Trèfles à quatre feuilles*.

A Paris, dans son grand atelier de la rue d'Artois, tapissé de l'or pâli des précieuses reliures, Jules Lemaître se plaisait à recevoir des enfants, les comblait de gâteaux et de sucreries et ouvrait pour eux un bahut mystérieux de sa bibliothèque, qui répandait alors sur le tapis les jouets les plus inattendus, collectionnés avec presque autant d'amour que les livres.

C'est ainsi qu'il fut amené à écrire un *Alphabet*. Il le commença l'été de 1913, à Royan, où il fit un assez long séjour. Il en chercha les sujets en se promenant à petits pas,—il était déjà très essoufflé,—entre les pins et la mer, et le soir il racontait ses contes, pour les «essayer», à mes neveux africains, riant avec eux, ou disant, déçu quand ils restaient indifférents: «C'est ironique et trop bref! Comme les peuples primitifs, les enfants détestent l'esprit et adorent les détails; amplifions avec simplicité!»

Et le lendemain, il recommençait son conte.

Une de ses dernières joies, en mai 1914, alors que le médecin lui avait défendu tout travail inventif, fut de recopier lui-même,

tinier and lighter, the children's stories.

He received the proofs in Tavers, at the end of July.

Already his sight was failing. He looked, in melancholy, at the images, then said with a sad smile, "I am going to relearn to read my own alphabet!"

Some days later came the war, and Jules Lemaître had a heart attack that took him. However, he had again commanded me to correct the proofs, and, because of excessive scruples, directed me to report that all the stories were not entirely of his imagination, but that they were sometimes inspired by Andersen, Florian and even, in the case of *Ram*, the Schmid canon.

The war suspended the publication of the *Alphabet*. Today, only the Mame house offers to children, illustrated by Job, this last book from their great friend, who maintained until the end his tender and childish soul.

Neuilly, May 8, 1919

Myriam Harry

d'une écriture de plus en plus menue et immatérielle, les contes enfantins.

Il en reçut les épreuves à Tavers, fin juillet.

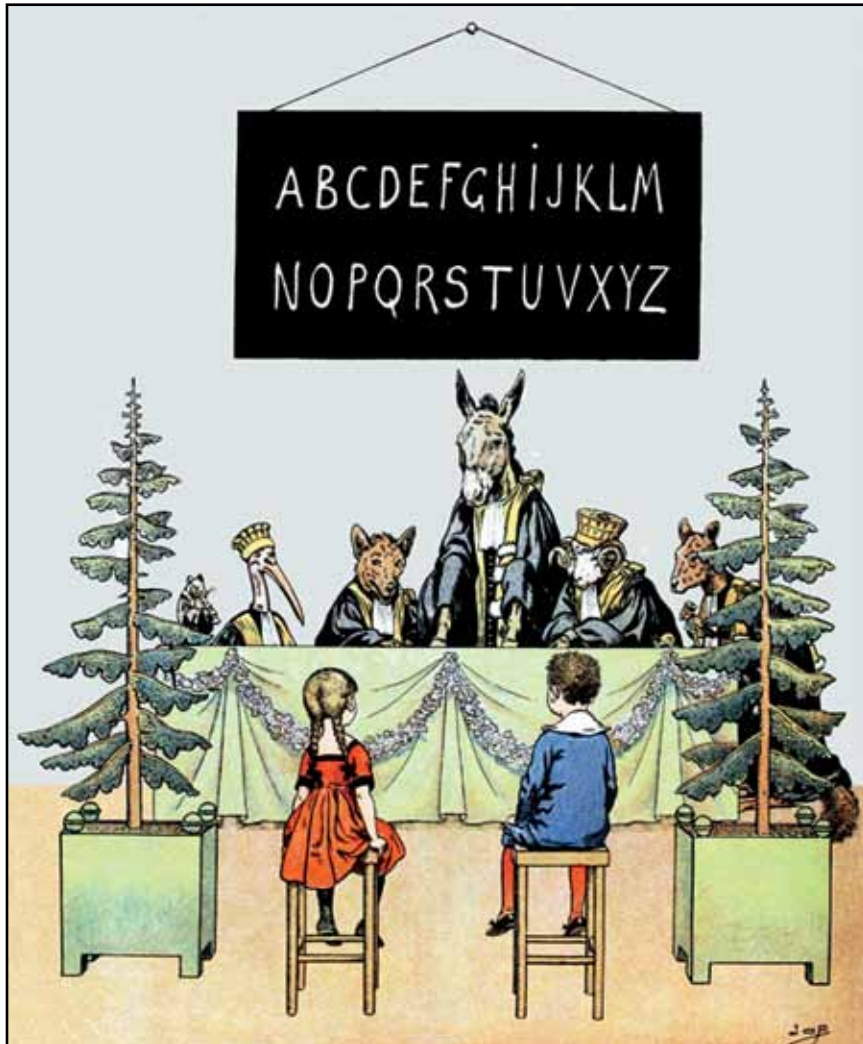
Déjà la cécité verbale l'avait accablé. Il regarda, mélancolique, les images, puis dit avec un navrant sourire: «Je vais réapprendre à lire dans mon propre alphabet!»

Quelques jours plus tard la guerre survint, et Jules Lemaître eut une crise cardiaque qui devait l'emporter. Cependant il songea à me recommander la correction des épreuves, et, par un scrupule excessif, me chargea d'indiquer que tous les contes n'étaient pas entièrement de son imagination, mais qu'il s'était inspiré parfois d'Andersen, de Florian et même, comme pour le Bélier, du chanoine Schmid.

La guerre suspendit la publication de l'*Alphabet*. Aujourd'hui, seulement, la maison Mame offre aux enfants, illustré par Job, ce dernier livre de leur grand ami, qui a su conserver jusqu'à la fin son âme tendre et puérile.

Neuilly, le 8 mai 1919.

Myriam HARRY.



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DONKEY

There once was, in a village, a poor old woman who had no one for company but a small donkey. She loved it very much, because it was smart and good, and it was always happy to carry on its back the vegetables from the garden to the market in the city.

But some mean boys made fun of the old woman and her small donkey when they met them on the road.

One day, they cried to the old woman:

“Hello, Mother Donkey!”

“Hello, my boys!” she answered them.

The donkey seemed to make fun of them in turn, shaking his ears, and the mean boys could not find anything to say.



A NE

Il y avait, dans un village, une pauvre vieille femme qui n'avait pour toute compagnie qu'un petit âne. Elle l'aimait beaucoup, car il était intelligent et bon, et il paraissait content de porter sur son dos les légumes du jardin au marché de la ville.

Mais de méchants garçons se moquaient de la vieille femme et de son petit âne quand ils la rencontraient.

Un jour, ils crièrent à la vieille femme:

«Bonjour, la mère âne!

—Bonjour, mes fils!» leur répondit-elle.

L'âne eut l'air de se moquer d'eux à son tour en remuant ses oreilles, et les méchants garçons ne trouvèrent plus rien à dire.

