

Wise Little Renaud's Stories (*Les Histoires du Petit Père Renaud*)

Written and illustrated by Léopold Chauveau, Éditions Denoël et Steele (1932), 256 pp.

Target age group: 8-12

Genre: Short stories

Translation funding: French cultural organisations in the publisher's country (available from the translator upon request).

Interested publishers can contact: Public domain original

About: The book takes its title from the name of the author's son who died aged 12 and is remarkable for the fictionalised conversations between Léopold and Renaud, which combine humour and poignancy to convey an egalitarian, anti-didactic approach to childhood. The author and visual artist Léopold Chauveau (1870-1940) was a 'genius little-known' (Roland Topor), now enjoying a strong resurgence of interest, with a 2020 exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay attracting over 107,000 visitors. The museum has published two stories from the work proposed as standalone books; and a video based on other abridged stories, together with my written translation ([here](#)).

Nat Paterson is a translator and doctoral researcher specializing in Léopold Chauveau. He recently presented his work at an atelier run by the French national translation centre ATLAS and may be contacted at 2505036p@student.gla.ac.uk.

SAMPLE TRANSLATION

Translated extract by Nat Paterson (2022)

Reading available [here](#).

The Wolf and the Tortoise

Wise Little Renaud said, 'That was a good story!'

'You think so?'

'Yes! But I'm going to tell you a much nicer one.'

'Oh!'

'Yes! It's a fable I've learned.'

'A fable by La Fontaine?'

'No, a fable that mummy has made up and made me learn for your birthday. It'll be a surprise.'

'If you recite it to me now, it won't be a surprise anymore.'

'On the contrary, that will make two surprises: one today and then another one on your birthday. It's a fable called the wolf and the tortoise.'

And Wise Little Renaud recited:

As soon as the sun had set, the big tortoise swallowed her head and her legs into her shell. Before going to sleep, she laughed.

‘What a funny face the wolf will make when he comes, tonight, to eat me. He will only bite a pebble and break one or two teeth! Ha! Ha! Ha!’

And the tortoise pulled back, as far as she could, her head and her legs right into the warm, right to the bottom of her house, for fear of the fox who has a sharper nose than the wolf.



When she woke up, the next day, she wasn't laughing. She had forgotten to pull in her tail and the wolf had eaten it.



'Bravo!' I yelled. 'It's very pretty, your fable, and you've recited it very well.'

'Yes, I recite it very well, without mistakes. But sometimes I get mixed up when the tortoise pulls in her legs. Then I have to start all over again, from the beginning.'

'This time, luckily, you didn't get mixed up.'

'When I recite it to you, on your birthday, I might.'

'Then you'll start again.'

'Yes! Everything, from the beginning.'

'You might not.'

'Let's hope not... But, you know, I don't much like this fable.'

'It's very pretty though!'

'Yes! But it's too sad. You need to invent one where the tortoise won't be eaten.'

'I know one just like that. Here! I'm going to tell it to you straightaway.'