

### The gifted man

*Once upon a time there was a man who could understand the language of animals and birds. God had given him that precious science provided that he would die the day he said a word to anybody about what he had heard or understood.*

*This man had an orchard where an ox worked a water-wheel and a donkey who manured the soil. One afternoon, the ox got fed up with his hard work. The donkey advised him to pretend to be ill then the master wouldn't make him work and he could rest. The ox followed the donkey's advice. The following morning it was the donkey who had to labour in his place the whole day in the orchard. That night he found the ox resting in the stable and crying mournfully. The donkey said: our master wants to sell you to a butcher because you can't work. If I were you I would stop looking ill and go back to my business.*

*These were the words the donkey said so that he could avoid hard work. Manuring was easier. The ox panicked and started eating his barley again that very night. The master of both, the ox and the donkey understood what had happened between them, which made him laugh. His wife wondered what he was laughing at but as he refused to tell her, she threatened to starve herself to death. The whole day and night the woman stuck to her threat. Her husband, who loved her a lot, promised to tell her. As this meant his death he started making his last will. While doing so the cock crew and a dog near him scolded him. How could he crow when their master wished to die in order that his wife could live? The cock disagreed, the man deserved death since he had failed to be lord of a woman. While talking he called his ten hens and ordered them to sit on a particular place to show he was able to manage them. All this stuff was meant to console the dog on the master's death. The cock succeeded in consoling the dog. "Mate", the dog said, "what would you do if you had such a stupid wife?" "I would take five sticks from a tree and strike her till the sticks were broken, and I'd also force her to eat and drink. If she refused, I would let her die."*

*The man understood these words, got up from bed and followed the cock's advice and his wife obeyed him ever since.*

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Could the man understand the animals? Why?
2. What happened between the ox and the donkey?
3. Why couldn't the man tell his wife?
4. Tell the story in five or six lines.
5. Separate the story into smaller parts.
6. Take out from the text all the conditional sentences and explain them.
7. Vocabulary. Explain the meaning of:

Succeed:

Deserve:

Mournfully:

Stuck:

Scold:

Orchard: