

To Gail  
The Fable  
of  
The Girls and the Snake  
Based Upon  
A Maxim  
of  
La Rochefoucauld  
by  
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Comment  
on  
The Metre

This was written, except for iambic quotes, as

xx'xxx'

It can be read equally well as

`x'x`x'

A, not quite so pleasing, possibility is the trochaic form

'x'x'x'

## THE GIRLS AND THE SNAKE

In the forest in the wood,  
Where the pine trees long have stood,  
Lived a mother gopher snake.  
In this grove around a lake  
She would daily search for food  
With her little snakelet brood.

On its shore there was a beach  
Which the urban folk could reach.  
Winding freely through the trees,  
Like a swath made for the breeze,  
Flowed a river to this shore.  
On its banks quite near the roar  
Rangers blazed a narrow trail  
For the visitors to scale.  
To the beach one day there came  
Two little girls of age the same.  
Up the stream their wish to go;  
Curiosity is want to know,  
And little girls are wont to pry  
Into all which passes by!

Near the path there hid a hole,  
Once the home where lived a mole,  
Where the tiny "gophers" played.  
In their hiking clothes arrayed  
On that day there came these girls;  
As they walked they danced in twirls  
As is custom for their kind.  
Small the nothings in each mind  
As they wandered through the green  
While partaking of the scene.  
But in one there came a shiver  
As a snake, she saw it slither,  
Sunshine sought in which to bask;  
Very quick she was to ask:

"Do you it see,  
What terrors me?  
Those devil fangs  
Which sting with pangs.  
Let's get a stick  
And kill it quick.  
Or better yet  
This rock I'll get;  
With this small rock  
I'll hard it knock."

Latent hate came to the fore,  
For it's life she wished no more.  
Stones she threw and grazed its side,  
Down they flew and scratched its hide.  
Her companion saw it too,  
Much in grief if there t'were slew.  
Such a reptile once she met;  
Such a snake she wished as pet:

"Oh, harm it not.  
I've not forgot  
How snakes do climb  
On arms they wind.  
No poison here,  
No need to fear.  
I love this snake;  
Put down your stake."

This, the calmer of the two,  
To the wriggler swiftly flew.  
At her fingers on the ground  
Came the snake to curl around.  
When the other saw this thing  
Cringing thoughts were of its sting;  
But reflecting on this sight  
Courage came as well as might.  
Still no love could there be brought,  
Although hard herself she fought.  
She attempted it to hold,  
But with her it acted bold.  
At this girl it made a hiss;  
Liked it not this hurtful miss.  
On the other it would run,  
O'er the friend with joy it spun.

As La Rochefoucauld has said,  
In his Maxims to be read,  
Number 70 in the book,\*  
For yourself there take a look:

"Where love does reign  
No guise can hide.  
Where none's inside  
It one can't feign."

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\* Maximes du duc de La Rochefoucauld, Libraire de Firmin-Didot, Paris, 1878.  
On page 26 is:

(LXX) Il n'y a point de déguisement qui puisse longtemps cacher l'amour  
où il ist, ni le feindre où il n'est pas.