

Aesop's Fables

in rhymed verse
translation
by W. J. Linton

**edited and annotated
by P. D. Smith, Ph.D.**

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Williston Highlands, FL

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The Deer and the Lion

From the hounds the swift Deer sped away,
To his cave, where in past times he lay
Well concealed; unaware
Of a Lion couched there,
For a spring that soon made him his prey.

*

Fate can meet as well as follow.

The Oak and the Reeds

Giant Oak, in his strength and his scorn
Of the winds, by the roots was upturn:
But slim Reeds at his side,
The fierce gale did outride,
Since, by bending the burden was borne.

*

Bend, not break.



THE WIND & THE SUN

THE WIND and the Sun had a bet,
 The wayfarers' cloak which should get:
 Blew the Wind - the cloak clung;
 Shone the Sun - the cloak flung,
 Showed the Sun had the best of it yet.

TRUE STRENGTH IS NOT BLUSTER.



THE LION & THE STATUE:

ON a Statue - King Lion
 dethroned,
 Showing conqueror Man -
 Lion frowned.
 "If a Lion, you know,
 Had been sculptor, he'd show
 Lion rampant, and Man on the
 ground."

THE STORY DEPENDS ON THE TELLER.

The Wind and the Sun

The Wind and the Sun had a bet,
The wayfarers' cloak which should get:
Blew the Wind -- the cloak clung:
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On a Statue -- king Lion dethroned,
Showing conqueror Man, -- Lion frowned.

"If a Lion, you know,
Had been sculptor, he'd show
Lion rampant, and Man on the ground."

*

The story depends on the teller

The Ass and the Lap Dog

"How Master that little Dog pets!"
Thinks the Ass; and with jealousy frets,
So he climbs Master's knees,
Hoping dog-like to please,
And a drubbing is all that he gets.

*

Asses must not expect to be fondled.

The Crow and the Pitcher

How the cunning old Crow got his drink
When 'twas low in the pitcher, just think!
Don't say that he spilled it!
With pebbles he filled it,
Till the water rose up to the brink.

*

Use your wits.

The Ass and the Enemy

"Get up! let us flee from the Foe,"
Said the Man: but the Ass said, "Why so?"

"Will they double my load,
Or my blows? Then, by goad,
And by stirrup, I've no cause to go."

*

Your reasons are not mine.

The Mouse and the Lion

A poor thing the Mouse was, and yet,
When the Lion got caught in a net,
All his strength was no use
'Twas the poor little Mouse
Who nibbled him out of the net.

*

Small causes may produce great results.



The Fox and the Grapes

This Fox has a longing for grapes,
He jumps, but the bunch still escapes.

So he goes away sour;
And, 'tis said, to this hour
Declares that he's no taste for grapes.

*

The grapes of disappointment are always sour.

The Trumpeter Taken Prisoner

A Trumpeter, prisoner made,
Hoped his life would be spared when he said
He'd no part in the fight,
But they answered him--"Right,
But what of the music you made?"

*

Songs may serve a cause as well as swords.

The Miser and his Gold

He buried his Gold in a hole.
One saw, and the treasure he stole.
Said another, "What matter?
Don't raise such a clatter,
You can still go and sit by the hole."

*

Use alone gives value.

The Hen and the Fox

The Hen roosted high on her perch;
Hungry Fox down below, on the search,
Coaxed her hard to descend
She replied, "Most dear friend!
I feel more secure on my perch."

*

Beware of interested friendships.

Mice in Council

Against Cat sat a Council of Mice.
Every Mouse came out prompt with advice;
And a bell on Cat's throat
Would have met a round vote,
Had the bell-hanger not been so nice.

*

The best policy often turns on an if.

The Two Jars

"Never fear!" said the Brass to the Clay
Of two Jars that the flood bore away:
"Keep you close to my side!"
But the porcelain replied,
"I'll be smashed if beside you I stay."

*

Our freind is our enemy.



50



51

The Bundle of Sticks

To his sons, who fell out, father spake:
"This bundle of sticks you can't break;
Take them singly, with ease,
You may break as you please,
So, dissension your strength will unmake."

*

Strength is in unity.

The Farmer's Treasure

"Dig deeply, my Sons! through this field!
There's a Treasure"--he died: unrevealed
The spot where 'twas laid,
They dug as he bade;
And the Treasure was found in the yield.

*

Productive labor is the only source of wealth.

The Two Crabs

"So awkward, so shambling a gait!"
Mrs Crab did her daughter berate,
Who rejoined, "It is true
I am backward; but you
Needed lessons in walking quite late."

*

Look at home.

The Cock and the Pearl

A rooster, while scratching for grain,
Found a Pearl. He just paused to explain
That a jewel's no good
To a fowl wanting food,
And then kicked it aside with disdain.

*

If he ask for bread will ye give him a stone?

The Fox and the Crow

Said sly Fox to the Crow with the cheese,
"Let me hear your sweet voice, now do please!"
And this Crow, being weak,
Cawed the bit from her beak --
'Music charms,' said the Fox, "and here's cheese!"

*

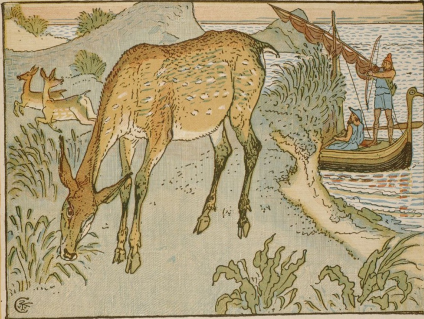
Beware of flatterers.

Horse and Man

When the Horse first took Man on his back,
To help him the Stag to attack;
How little his dread,
As the enemy fled,
Man would make him his slave and his hack.

*

Advantages can be dearly bought.



THE BLIND DOE

A poor half-blind Doe her one eye
 kept shore ward, all danger to spy,
 As she fed by the sea,
 Poor innocent! she
 Was shot from a boat passing by.

WATCH ON ALL SIDES



THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

T WAS a race between Tortoise and Hare,
 Puss was sure she'd so much time to spare,
 That she lay down to sleep,
 And let old Thick-shell creep
 To the winning post first! You may stare.

PERSISTENCE BEATS IMPULSE

THE HARES AND THE FROGS

TIMID Hares, from the trumpeting wind,
 Fleed as swift as the fear in their mind;
 Till in fright from their fear,
 From the green sedges near,
 Leaping Frogs left their terror behind.

OUR OWN ARE NOT THE ONLY TROUBLES



The Blind Doe

A poor half-blind Doe her one eye
Kept shoreward, all danger to spy,
As she fed by the sea,
Poor innocent! she
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Watch on all sides.

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Puss was sure she'd so much time to spare,
That she lay down to sleep,
And let old Thick-shell creep
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Persistence beats impulse.

The Hares and the Frogs

Timid Hares, from the trumpeting wind,
Fled as swift as the fear in their mind;
 Till in fright from their fear,
 From the green sedges near,
Leaping Frogs left their terror behind.

*

Our own are not the only troubles.

The Fox and the Mosquitoes

Being plagued with Mosquitoes one day,
Said old Fox, "pray don't send them away,
For a hungrier swarm would work me more harm;
I had rather the full ones should stay."

*

There were politicians in Aesop's time.

The Golden Eggs

A golden Egg, one every day,
That simpleton's Goose used to lay;
So he killed the poor thing,
Swifter fortune to bring,
And dined off his fortune that day.

*

Greed overreaches itself.

The Fisherman and the Fish

Prayed the Fish, as the Fisherman took
Him, a poor little mite, from his hook,
"Let me go! I'm so small."
He replied, "Not at all!
You're the biggest, perhaps in the brook."

*

A little certainty is better than a greater chance.



The Frightened Lion

A Bull Frog, according to rule,
Sat a-croak in his usual pool:
And he laughed in his heart
As a Lion did start
In a fright from the brink like a fool.

*

Imaginary fears are the worst.

King Log and King Stork

The Frogs prayed to Jove for a king:
"Not a log, but a livelier thing."
Jove sent them a Stork,
Who did royal work,
For he gobbled them up, did their king.

*

Don't have kings.

The Dog in the Manger

A Cow sought a mouthful of hay;
But a Dog in the manger there lay,
And he snapped out "how now?"

When most mildly, the Cow
Adventured a morsel to pray.

*

Don't be selfish.

The Fir and the Bramble

The Fir-tree looked down on the Bramble.

"Poor thing, only able to scramble
About on the ground."

Just then an axe' sound
Made the Fir wish himself but a Bramble.

*

Pride of place has its disadvantages

The Man that Pleased None

Through the town this good Man & his Son
Strove to ride as to please everyone:
Self, Son, or both tried,
Then the Ass had a ride;
While the world, at their efforts, poked fun.

*

You cannot hope to please all -- Don't try.

The Ungrateful Wolf

To the Wolf, from whose throat Dr Crane
Drew the bone, his long bill made it plain
He expected his fee:
Snarled Wolf -- "Fiddle de dee,
Be thankful your head's out again."

*

Some characters have no sense of obligation.



The DOG & the shadow

IS image the Dog did not know,
 Or his bone's, in the pond's painted show:
 "Y'other dog," so he thought,
 "Has got more than he ought";
 So he snapped, & his dinner
 saw God!

'GREED IS SOMETIMES'
 CAUGHT BY ITS
 OWN BAIT



BROTHER & SISTER

TWIN children: the Girl,
 she was plain;
 The Brother was handsome &
 vain;
 "Let him brag of his looks,"
 Father said; mind your books!
 The best beauty is bred in the brain.

HANDSOME IS AS HANDSOME DOES :

The Dog and the Shadow

His image the Dog did not know,
Or his bone's, in the pond's painted show:

"T'other dog," so he thought

"Has got more than he ought,"

So he snapped, & his dinner saw go!

*

Greed is sometimes caught by its own bait.

Brother and Sister

Twin children: the Girl, she was plain;

The Brother was handsome & vain;

"Let him brag of his looks,"

Father said; "mind your books!

The best beauty is bred in the brain."

*

Handsome is as handsome does.

Neither Beast Nor Bird

A Beast he would be, or a bird,
As might suit, thought the Bat: but he erred.
When the battle was done,
He found that no one
Would take him for friend at his word.

*

Between two stools you may come to the ground.

The Stag in the Ox Stall

Safe enough lay the poor hunted Deer
In the ox-stall, with nothing to fear
From the careless-eyed men:
Till the Master came; then
There was no hiding-place for the Deer.

*

An eye is keen in its own interest.

The Wolf and the Lamb

A wolf, wanting lamb for his dinner,
Growled out -- "Lamb you wronged me, you sinner."

Bleated Lamb -- "Nay, not true!"

Answered Wolf -- "Then 'twas Ewe --
Ewe or lamb, you will serve for my dinner."

*

Fraud and violence have no scruples.

The Snake and the File

A Snake, in a fix, tried a file
For a dinner. "'Tis not worth your while,"

Said the steel, "don't mistake;

I'm accustomed to take,
To give's not the way of a file."

*

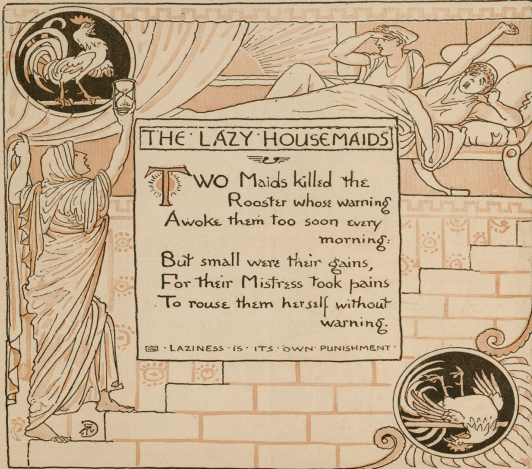
We may meet our match.



HERCULES & THE WAGGONER

WHEN the God saw the
Waggoner kneel,
Crying, "Hercules! Lift me
my wheel"
From the mud, where'tis stuck!
He laughed - "No such luck;
Set your shoulder yourself
To the wheel."

THE GODS HELP THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES.



THE LAZY HOUSEMAIDS

TWO Maids killed the
Rooster whose warning
Awoke them too soon every
morning.
But small were their gains,
For their Mistress took pains
To rouse them herself without
warning.

LAZINESS IS ITS OWN PUNISHMENT.

Hercules and the Waggoner

When the god saw the waggoner kneel,
Crying, "Hercules! Lift me my wheel
From the mud, where 'tis stuck!"
He laughed--"No such luck;
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The gods help those who help themselves.

The Lazy Housemaids

Two Maids killed the Rooster whose warning
Awoke them too soon every morning:
But small were their gains,
For their Mistress took pains
To rouse them herself without warning.

*

Laziness is its own punishment.

The Frog and the Bull

Said the Frog, quite puffed up to the eyes,

"Was this Bull about me as to size?"

"Rather bigger, frog-brother."

"Puff, puff," said the other,

"A Frog is a Bull if he tries!"

*

Brag is not always belief.

The Fox and the Crane

You have heard how Sir Fox treated Crane:

With soup in a plate. When again

They dined, a long bottle

Just suited Crane's throttle;

And Sir Fox licked the outside in vain.

*

There are games that two can play at.

The Fox and the Mask

A Fox with his foot on a Mask,
Thus took the fair semblance to task;
"You're a real handsome face;
But what part of your case
Are your brains in, good Sir! let me ask?"

*

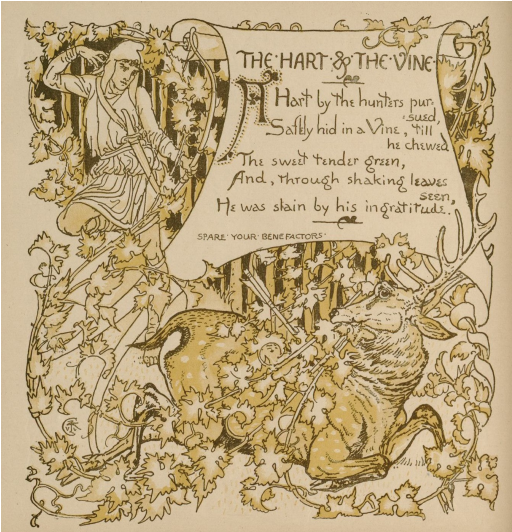
Masks are the faces of shams.

The Eagle and the Crow

The Eagle flew off with a lamb;
Then the Crow thought to lift an old ram,
In his eaglish conceit,
The wool tangled his feet,
And the shepherd laid hold of the sham.

*

Beware of overrating your own powers.



The Hart and the Vine

A Hart by the hunters pursued,
Safely hid in a Vine, till he chewed
The sweet tender green,
And, through shaking leaves seen,
He was slain by his ingratitude.

*

Spare your benefactors.

The Man and the Snake

In pity he brought the poor Snake
To be warmed at his fire. A mistake!
For the ungrateful thing
Wife & children would sting.
I have known some as bad as the Snake.

*

Beware how you entertain traitors.

The Geese and the Cranes

The Geese joined the Cranes in some wheat;
All was well, till, disturbed at their treat,
 Light-winged, the Cranes fled,
 But the slow Geese, well fed,
Couldn't rise, and were caught in retreat.

*

Beware of enterprises where the risks are not equal

The Cat and Venus

"Might his Cat be a woman," he said:
Venus changed her: the couple were wed:
 But a mouse in her sight
 Metamorphosed her quite,
And for bride, a cat found he instead.

*

Nature will out.

The Cat and the Fox

The Fox said "I can play, when it fits,
Many wiles that with man make me quits."

"But my trick's up a tree!"

Said the Cat, safe to see
Clever Fox hunted out of his wits.

*

Trust to skill rather than wit.

The Bear and the Bees

"Their honey I'll have when I please;
Who cares for such small things as Bees?"

Said the Bear; but the stings
Of these very small things
Left him not very much at his ease.

*

The weakest united may be strong to avenge.

: HOT AND COLD :

WHEN to warm his cold fingers
 man blew,
 And again, but to cool the hot stew;
 Simple Satyr, unused
 To man's ways, felt confus'd,
 When the same mouth blew hot & cold too!

: ASOP AIMED AT DOUBLE DEALING :



Hot and Cold

When to warm his cold fingers man blew,
And again, but to cool the hot stew;
Simple Satyr, unused
To man's ways, felt confused,
When the same mouth blew hot & cold too!

*

Aesop aimed at double dealing.

The Trees and the Woodsman

The Trees ask of Man what he lacks;
"One bit, just to handle my axe?"
All he asks--well and good:
But he cuts down the wood,
So well does he handle his axe!

*

"Give me an inch I'll take an ell."

The Ass in the Lion's Skin

"What pranks I shall play!" thought the Ass,
"In this skin for a Lion to pass;"
But he left one ear out,
And a hiding, no doubt,
"Lion" had--on the skin of an Ass!

*

Imposters generally forget something.

The Boaster

In the house, in the market, the streets,
Everywhere he was boasting his feats;
Till one said, with a sneer,
"Let us see it done here!"
What's so oft done with ease, one repeats."

*

Deeds not words.

The Vain Jackdaw

"Fine feathers," Jack thought, "make fine fowls;
I'll be envied of bats & of owls:"

But the peacocks' proud eyes
Saw through his disguise,
And Jack fled the assembly of fowls.

*

Borrowed plumes are soon discovered.

The Peacock's Complaint

The Peacock considered it wrong
That he had not the nightingale's song;
So to Juno he went,
She replied, "Be content
With thy having, & hold thy fool's tongue!"

*

Do not quarrel with nature.



45



The Lion in Love

Though the Lion in love let them draw
All his teeth, and pare down every claw,
 He'd no bride for his pains,
 For they beat out his brains
Ere he set on his maiden a paw.

*

Our very means may defeat our ends.

Fortune and the Boy

A Boy heedless slept by the well
By Dame Fortune awaked, truth to tell,
 Said she, "Hadst been drowned,
 'Twould have surely been found
This by Fortune, not Folly befel."

*

Fortune is not answerable for our want of foresight.

Fox Without a Tail

Said Fox, minus tail in a trap,
"My friends! here's a lucky mishap:
Give your tails a short lease!"
But the foxes weren't geese,
And none followed the fashion of trap.

*

Yet some fashions have no better reason.

Porcupine, Snake, and Company

Going shares with the Snakes, Porcupine
Said--"the best of the bargain is mine:"
Nor would he back down,
When the snake would disown
The agreement his quills made them sign.

*

Hasty partnerships may be repented of.

The Cock, the Ass, and the Lion

The Ass gave a horrible bray,
Cock crowed; Lion scampered away;
Ass judged he was scared
By the bray, and so dared
To pursue; Lion ate him they say.

*

Don't take all the credit to yourself.

The Married Mouse

So the Mouse had Miss Lion for bride;
Very great was his joy and his pride:
But it chanced that she put
On her husband her foot,
And the weight was too much, so he died.

*

One may be too ambitious.

The Herdsman's Vows

A Kid vowed to Jove, so might he
Find his herd, and his herd did he see
 Soon, of lions the prey:
Then 'twas--"Get me away,
And a goat of the best take for fee."

*

How often would we mend our wishes!

The Horse and the Ass

Overladen the Ass was. The Horse
Wouldn't help; but had time for remorse
 When the Ass lay dead there;
 For he then had to bear
Both the load of the Ass & his corse.

*

Grudge not help!

The Ass and the Sick Lion

Crafty Lion,--perhaps with the gout,
Kept his cave; where, to solve any doubt,
Many visitors go:
But the Ass, he said "No!
They go in, but I've seen none come out."

*

Reason from results.



50

Editor's Postscript:

Any knowledge we might claim about the author of these fables can be only conjectural at best. What we do know, is that from the earliest stirrings of Ancient Greek civilization until now, these stories have been widely recognized for their unique power to influence the wisdom and virtue of readers.

English-speaking generations before our own time understood the word fabulous much differently than we do today. It can only be truly defined through its relationship to fables, and fables can only be truly defined through their relationship to Aesop.

So welcome to a fabulous world of dreams, where donkeys speak, gods visit, and lessons are learned. Whoever the writer of these delightful pearls may have been, we're thankful that they still speak to us across the ages.

P. D. Smith