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D'ORVILLE IN

FRANÇOIS DEL

ARQUIERE SCULP

FABLES
OF
LA FONTAINE.

ILLUSTRATED

BY

J. J. GRANDVILLE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY ELIZUR WRIGHT, JR.

VOL. I.

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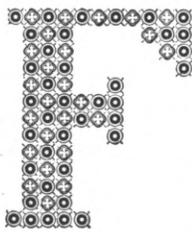
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AT THE

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OUR years ago, I dropped into Charles de Behr's repository of foreign books, in Broadway, New York, and there, for the first time, saw La Fontaine's Fables. It was a cheap copy, adorned with some two hundred wood cuts, which, by their worn appearance, betokened an extensive manufacture. I became a purchaser, and gave the book to my little boy, then just beginning to feel the intellectual magnetism of pictures. In the course of the next year, he frequently tasked my imperfect knowledge of French for the story which belonged to some favorite vignette. This led me to inquire whether any English version existed; and, not finding any, I resolved, though quite unused to literary exercises of the sort, to cheat sleep of an hour every morning till there should be one. The result is before you. If in this I have wronged La Fontaine, I hope

that best-natured of poets, as well as yourselves, will forgive me, and lay the blame on the better qualified, who have so long neglected the task. Cowper should have done it. The author of "John Gilpin" and the "Retired Cat" would have put La Fontaine into every chimney corner which resounds with the Anglo-Saxon tongue. To make amends, however, for the imperfections of my translation, I am happy to send you, along with it, the illustrations by J. J. Grandville. They are replete with the very spirit of La Fontaine: the painter, with the same inspiration, has trodden in the footsteps of the poet. The latter conferred upon creatures, animate and inanimate, the gift of speech, and the former has put them in attitudes and garbs appropriate to its use. He is truly a master of ceremonies and of scenery, and succeeds in teaching the stupidest of animals to observe the proprieties of the drama.

For the sake of giving more perfect impressions of the engravings, I have procured some that were taken for the French edition of H. Fournier, in 1839, which accounts for the titles being in French.

To you, who have so generously enabled me to publish this work with so great advantages, and without selling the copy-right for the *promise* of a song, I return my heartfelt thanks. A hatchet-faced, spectacled, threadbare stranger knocked at your doors, with a prospectus, unbacked

by "the trade," soliciting your subscription to a costly edition of a mere translation. It is a most inglorious, unsatisfactory species of literature. The slightest preponderance of that worldly wisdom which never buys a pig in a poke, would have sent him and his translation packing. But a kind faith in your species got the better in your case. You not only gave the hungry-looking translator your good wishes, but your good names. A list of those names it would delight me to insert; and I should certainly do it if I felt authorized. As it is, I hope to be pardoned for mentioning some of the individuals, who have not only given their names, but expressed an interest in my enterprise which has assisted me in its accomplishment. Rev. John Pierpont, Prof. George Ticknor, Prof. Henry W. Longfellow, William H. Prescott, Esq., Hon. Theodore Lyman, Prof. Silliman, Prof. Denison Olmsted, Chancellor Kent, William C. Bryant, Esq., Dr. J. W. Francis, Hon. Peter A. Jay, Hon. Luther Bradish, and Prof. J. Molinard, have special claims to my gratitude.

It gives me pleasure, also, to acknowledge the skill and faithfulness of those who have been employed in committing my translation to type and paper. At the Boston Type and Stereotype Foundry, the whole passed under the eye of Mr. S. Phelps, of that establishment, whose criticisms have materially lessened the number of my outrages upon the English language, besides leading to

the correction of some of my blunders in the French. The typographical ornaments at the heads of the fables were set up by Mr. I. R. Butts, and must have tasked his well-known ingenuity.

The work — as it is, not as it ought to be — I commit to your kindness. I do not claim to have succeeded in translating “the inimitable La Fontaine;” — perhaps I have not even a right to say, in his own language,

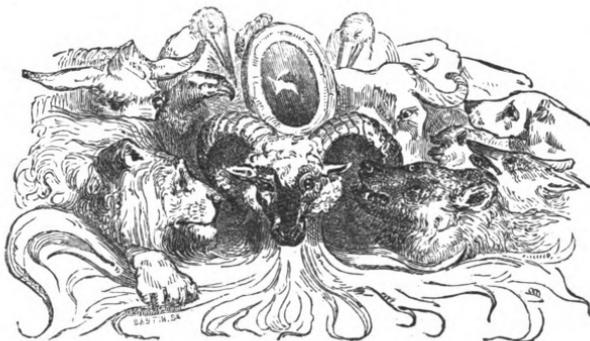
“J’ai du moins ouvert le chemin.”

However this may be, I am, gratefully,

Your obedient servant,

ELIZUR WRIGHT, JR.

DORCHESTER, *September*, 1841.



P R E F A C E .

HUMAN nature, when fresh from the hand of God, was full of poetry. Its sociality could not be pent within the bounds of the actual. To the lower inhabitants of air, earth, and water, — and even to those elements themselves, in all their parts and forms, — it gave speech and reason. The skies it peopled with beings, on the noblest model of which it could have any conception — to wit, its own. The intercourse of these beings, thus created and endowed, — from the deity kindled into immortality by the imagination, to the clod personified for the moment, — gratified one of its strongest propensities; for man may well enough be defined as the historical animal. The faculty which, in after ages, was to chronicle

the realities developed by time, had at first no employment but to place on record the productions of the imagination. Hence, fable blossomed and ripened in the remotest antiquity. We see it mingling itself with the primeval history of all nations. It is not improbable that many of the narratives which have been preserved for us, by the bark or parchment of the first rude histories, as serious matters of fact, were originally apologues, or parables, invented to give power and wings to moral lessons, and afterwards modified, in their passage from mouth to mouth, by the well-known magic of credulity. The most ancient poets graced their productions with apologues. Hesiod's fable of the Hawk and the Nightingale is an instance. The fable or parable was anciently, as it is even now, a favorite weapon of the most successful orators. When Jotham would show the Shechemites the folly of their ingratitude, he uttered the fable of the Fig-Tree, the Olive, the Vine, and the Bramble. When the prophet Nathan would oblige David to pass a sentence of condemnation upon himself in the matter of Uriah, he brought before him the apologue of the rich man who, having many sheep, took away that of the poor man who had but one. When Joash, the king of Israel, would rebuke the vanity of Amaziah, the king of Judah, he referred him to the fable of the Thistle and the Cedar. Our blessed Savior, the best of all teachers, was remarkable for his constant use of parables, which are but fables — we speak it with reverence — adapted to the gravity of the subjects on which he discoursed. And, in profane history, we read that Stesichorus put the Himerians on their guard against the tyranny of Phalaris by the fable of the Horse and the Stag. Cyrus, for the instruction of kings, told the story

of the fisher obliged to use his nets to take the fish that turned a deaf ear to the sound of his flute. Menenius Agrippa, wishing to bring back the mutinous Roman people from Mount Sacer, ended his harangue with the fable of the Belly and the Members. A Ligurian, in order to dissuade King Comanus from yielding to the Phocians a portion of his territory as the site of Marseilles, introduced into his discourse the story of the bitch that borrowed a kennel in which to bring forth her young, but, when they were sufficiently grown, refused to give it up.

In all these instances, we see that fable was a mere auxiliary of discourse — an implement of the orator. Such, probably, was the origin of the apologues which now form the bulk of the most popular collections. Æsop, who lived about six hundred years before Christ, so far as we can reach the reality of his life, was an orator who wielded the apologue with remarkable skill. From a servile condition, he rose, by the force of his genius, to be the counsellor of kings and states. His wisdom was in demand far and wide, and on the most important occasions. The pithy apologues which fell from his lips, which, like the rules of arithmetic, solved the difficult problems of human conduct constantly presented to him, were remembered when the speeches that contained them were forgotten. He seems to have written nothing himself; but it was not long before the gems which he scattered began to be gathered up in collections, as a distinct species of literature. The great and good Socrates employed himself, while in prison, in turning the fables of Æsop into verse. Though but a few fragments of his composition have come down to us, he may, perhaps, be regarded as the father of fable, considered as a distinct art. Induced by his example,

many Greek poets and philosophers tried their hands in it. Archilocus, Alcaeus, Aristotle, Plato, Diodorus, Plutarch, and Lucian, have left us specimens. Collections of fables bearing the name of Æsop became current in the Greek language. It was not, however, till the year 1447, that the large collection which now bears his name was put forth in Greek prose by Planudes, a monk of Constantinople. This man turned the life of Æsop itself into a fable; and La Fontaine did it the honor to translate it as a preface to his own collection. Though burdened with insufferable puerilities, it is not without the moral that a rude and deformed exterior may conceal both wit and worth.

The collection of fables in Greek verse by Babrias was exceedingly popular among the Romans. It was the favorite book of the Emperor Julian. Only six of these fables, and a few fragments, remain; but they are sufficient to show that their author possessed all the graces of style which befit the apologue. Some critics place him in the Augustan age; others make him contemporary with Moschus. His work was versified in Latin, at the instance of Seneca; and Quintilian refers to it as a reading-book for boys. Thus, at all times, these playful fictions have been considered fit lessons for children, as well as for men, who are often but grown-up children. So popular were the fables of Babrias and their Latin translation, during the Roman empire, that the work of Phædrus was hardly noticed. The latter was a freedman of Augustus, and wrote in the reign of Tiberius. His verse stands almost unrivalled for its exquisite elegance and compactness; and posterity has abundantly avenged him for the neglect of contemporaries. La Fontaine is perhaps more indebted to Phædrus than to any other of his predecessors; and, especially in

the first six books, his style has much of the same curious condensation. When the seat of the empire was transferred to Byzantium, the Greek language took precedence of the Latin; and the rhetorician Aphtonius wrote forty fables in Greek prose, which became popular. Besides these collections among the Romans, we find apologues scattered through the writings of their best poets and historians, and embalmed in those specimens of their oratory which have come down to us.

The apologues of the Greeks and Romans were brief, pithy, and epigrammatic, and their collections were without any principle of connection. But, at the same time, though probably unknown to them, the same species of literature was flourishing elsewhere under a somewhat different form. It is made a question, whether Æsop, through the Assyrians, with whom the Phrygians had commercial relations, did not either borrow his art from the Orientals, or lend it to them. This disputed subject must be left to those who have a taste for such inquiries. Certain it is, however, that fable flourished very anciently with the people whose faith embraces the doctrine of metempsychosis. Among the Hindoos, there are two very ancient collections of fables, which differ from those which we have already mentioned, in having a principle of connection throughout. They are, in fact, extended romances, or dramas, in which all sorts of creatures are introduced as actors, and in which there is a development of sentiment and passion as well as of moral truth, the whole being wrought into a system of morals particularly adapted to the use of those called to govern. One of these works is called the *Pantcha Tantra*, which signifies "Five Books," or Pentateuch. It is written in prose. The other is called the *Hitopadesa*,

or "Friendly Instruction," and is written in verse. Both are in the ancient Sanscrit language, and bear the name of a Bramin, Vishnoo Sarmah, as the author. Sir William Jones, who is inclined to make this author the true Æsop of the world, and to doubt the existence of the Phrygian, gives him the preference to all other fabulists, both in regard to matter and manner. He has left a prose translation of the *Hitopadesa*, which, though it may not fully sustain his enthusiastic preference, shows it not to be entirely groundless. We give a sample of it, and select a fable which La Fontaine has served up as the twenty-seventh of his eighth book. It should be understood that the fable, with the moral reflections which accompany it, is taken from the speech of one animal to another.

"Frugality should ever be practised, but not excessive parsimony; for see how a miser was killed by a bow drawn by himself!"

"How was that?" said Hiranyaca.

"In the country of Calyanacataca," said Menthara, "lived a mighty hunter, named Bhairaza, or Terrible. One day he went, in search of game, into a forest on the mountains Vindhya; when, having slain a fawn, and taken it up, he perceived a boar of tremendous size; he therefore threw the fawn on the ground, and wounded the boar with an arrow; the beast, horribly roaring, rushed upon him, and wounded him desperately, so that he fell, like a tree stricken with an axe.

* * * * *

"In the mean while, a jackal, named Lougery, was roving in search of food; and, having perceived the fawn, the hunter, and the boar, all three dead, he said to himself, 'What a noble provision is here made for me!'

"As the pains of men assail them unexpectedly, so their pleasures come in the same manner; a divine power strongly operates in both.

“Be it so; the flesh of these three animals will sustain me a whole month, or longer.

“A man suffices for one month; a fawn and a boar, for two; a snake, for a whole day; and then I will devour the bowstring.’ When the first impulse of his hunger was allayed, he said, ‘This flesh is not yet tender; let me taste the twisted string, with which the horns of this bow are joined.’ So saying, he began to gnaw it; but, in the instant when he had cut the string, the severed bow leaped forcibly up, and wounded him in the breast, so that he departed in the agonies of death. This I meant, when I cited the verse, Frugality should ever be practised, &c.”

* * * * *

“What thou givest to distinguished men, and what thou eatest every day—that, in my opinion, is thine own wealth: whose is the remainder, which thou hoardest?”

Works of Sir William Jones, Vol. VI., p. 36.

It was one of these books which Chosroës, the king of Persia, caused to be translated from the Sanscrit into the ancient language of his country, in the sixth century of the Christian era, sending an embassy into Hindostan expressly for that purpose. Of the Persian book a translation was made, in the time of the Calif Mansour, in the eighth century, into Arabic. This Arabic translation it is which became famous under the title of “The Book of Calila and Dimna, or the Fables of Bidpai.” Calila and Dimna are the names of two jackals that figure in the history, and Bidpai is one of the principal human interlocutors, who came to be mistaken for the author. This remarkable book was turned into verse by several of the Arabic poets, was translated into Greek, Hebrew, Latin, modern Persian, and, in the course of a few centuries, either directly or indirectly, into most of the languages of modern Europe.

Forty-one of the unadorned and disconnected fables of Æsop were also translated into Arabic at a period somewhat more recent than the Hegira, and passed by the name of the "Fables of Lokman." Their want of poetical ornament prevented them from acquiring much popularity with the Arabians; but they became well known in Europe, as furnishing a convenient text-book in the study of Arabic.

The *Hitopadesa*, the fountain of poetic fables, with its innumerable translations and modifications, seems to have had the greatest charms for the Orientals. As it passed down the stream of time, version after version, the ornament and machinery outgrew the moral instruction, till it gave birth, at last, to such works of mere amusement as the "Thousand and One Nights."

Fable slept, with other things, in the dark ages of Europe. Abridgments took the place of the large collections, and probably occasioned the entire loss of some of them. As literature revived, fable was resuscitated. The crusades had brought European mind in contact with the Indian works which we have already described, in their Arabic dress. Translations and imitations in the European tongues were speedily multiplied. The "Romance of the Fox," the work of Perrot de Saint Cloud, one of the most successful of these imitations, dates back to the thirteenth century. It found its way into most of the northern languages, and became a household book. It undoubtedly had great influence over the taste of succeeding ages, shedding upon the severe and satirical wit of the Greek and Roman literature the rich, mellow light of Asiatic poetry. The poets of that age were not confined, however, to fables from the Hindoo source. Marie de France, also,

in the thirteenth century, versified one hundred of the fables of Æsop, translating from an English collection, which does not now appear to be extant. Her work is entitled the *Ysopet*, or "Little Æsop." Other versions, with the same title, were subsequently written. It was in 1447 that Planudes, already referred to, wrote in Greek prose a collection of fables, prefacing it with a life of Æsop, which, for a long time, passed for the veritable work of that ancient. In the next century, Abstemius wrote two hundred fables in Latin prose, partly of modern, but chiefly of ancient invention. At this time, the vulgar languages had undergone so great changes, that works in them of two or three centuries old could not be understood, and, consequently, the Latin became the favorite language of authors. Many collections of fables were written in it, both in prose and verse. By the art of printing, these works were greatly multiplied; and again the poets undertook the task of translating them into the language of the people. The French led the way in this species of literature, their language seeming to present some great advantages for it. One hundred years before La Fontaine, Corrozet, Guillaume Gueroult, and Philibert Hegemon, had written beautiful fables in verse, which it is supposed La Fontaine must have read and profited by, although they had become nearly obsolete in his time. It is a remarkable fact, that these poetical fables should so soon have been forgotten. It was soon after their appearance that the languages of Europe attained their full development; and, at this epoch, prose seems to have been universally preferred to poetry. So strong was this preference, that Ogilby, the Scotch fabulist, who had written a collection of fables in English verse, reduced them to prose on the

occasion of publishing a more splendid edition in 1668. It seems to have been the settled opinion of the critics of that age, as it has, indeed, been stoutly maintained since, that the ornaments of poetry only impair the force of the fable — that the Muses, by becoming the handmaids of old Æsop, part with their own dignity without conferring any on him. La Fontaine has made such an opinion almost heretical. In his manner there is a perfect originality, and an immortality every way equal to that of the matter which he gathered up from all parts of the great storehouse of human experience. His fables are like pure gold enveloped in solid rock-crystal. In English, a few of the fables of Gay, of Moore, and of Cowper, may be compared with them in some respects, but we have nothing resembling them as a whole. Gay, who has done more than any other, though he has displayed great power of invention, and has given his verse a flow worthy of his master, Pope, has yet fallen far behind La Fontaine in the general management of his materials. His fables are all beautiful poems, but few of them are beautiful fables. His animal speakers do not sufficiently preserve their animal characters. It is quite otherwise with La Fontaine. His beasts are made most nicely to observe all the proprieties not only of the scene in which they are called to speak, but of the great drama into which they are from time to time introduced. His work constitutes a harmonious whole. To those who read it in the original, it is one of the few which never cloy the appetite. As in the poetry of Burns, you are apt to think the last verse you read of him the best.

But the main object of this Preface was to give a few traces of the life and literary career of our poet. A re-

markable poet cannot but have been a remarkable man. Suppose we take a man with native benevolence amounting almost to folly; but little cunning, caution, or veneration; good perceptive, but better reflective faculties; and a dominant love of the beautiful;—and toss him into the focus of civilization in the age of Louis XIV. It is an interesting problem to find out what will become of him. Such is the problem worked out in the life of JEAN DE LA FONTAINE, born on the eighth of July, 1621, at Château-Thierry. His father, a man of some substance and station, committed two blunders in disposing of his son. First, he encouraged him to seek an education for ecclesiastical life, which was evidently unsuited to his dispositions. Second, he brought about his marriage with a woman who was unfitted to secure his affections, or to manage his domestic affairs. In one other point, he was not so much mistaken: he labored unremittingly to make his son a poet. Jean was a backward boy, and showed not the least spark of poetical genius till his twenty-second year. His poetical faculties did not ripen till long after that time. But his father lived to see him all, and more than all, that he had ever hoped.

But we will first, in few words, despatch the worst—for there is a very bad part—of his life. It was not specially *his* life; it was the life of the age in which he lived. The man of strong amorous propensities, in that age and country, who was, nevertheless, faithful to vows of either marriage or celibacy,—the latter vows then proved sadly dangerous to the former,—may be regarded as a miracle. La Fontaine, without any agency of his own affections, found himself married at the age of twenty-six, while yet as immature as most men are at sixteen.

The upshot is, that his patrimony dwindled; and, though he lived many years with his wife, and had a son, he neglected her more and more, till at last he forgot that he had been married, though he unfortunately did not forget that there were other women in the world besides his wife. His genius and benevolence gained him friends every where with both sexes, who never suffered him to want, and who had never cause to complain of his ingratitude. But he was always the special favorite of the Aspasia who ruled France and her kings. To please them, he wrote a great deal of fine poetry, much of which deserves to be everlastingly forgotten. It must be said for him, that his vice became conspicuous only in the light of one of his virtues. His frankness would never allow concealment. He scandalized his friends Boileau and Racine; still, it is matter of doubt whether they did not excel him rather in prudence than in purity. But, whatever may be said in palliation, it is lamentable to think that a heaven-lighted genius should have been made in any way to minister to a hell-venomed vice, which has caused unutterable woes to France and the world. Some time before he died, he repented bitterly of this part of his course, and labored, no doubt sincerely, to repair the mischiefs he had done.

As we have already said, Jean was a backward boy. But, under a dull exterior, the mental machinery was working splendidly within. He lacked all that outside care and prudence,—that constant looking out for breakers,—which obstruct the growth and ripening of the reflective faculties. The vulgar, by a queer mistake, call a man *absent-minded*, when his mind shuts the door, pulls in the latch-string, and is wholly at home. La Fontaine's

mind was exceedingly domestic. It was nowhere but at home when, riding from Paris to Château-Thierry, a bundle of papers fell from his saddle-bow without his perceiving it. The mail-carrier, coming behind him, picked it up, and, overtaking La Fontaine, asked him if he had lost any thing. "Certainly not," he replied, looking about him with great surprise. "Well, I have just picked up these papers," rejoined the other. "Ah! they are mine," cried La Fontaine; "they involve my whole estate." And he eagerly reached to take them. On another occasion, he was equally at home. Stopping on a journey, he ordered dinner at a hotel, and then took a ramble about the town. On his return, he entered another hotel, and, passing through into the garden, took from his pocket a copy of Livy, in which he quietly set himself to read till his dinner should be ready. The book made him forget his appetite, till a servant informed him of his mistake, and he returned to his hotel just in time to pay his bill and proceed on his journey.

It will be perceived that he took the world quietly, and his doing so undoubtedly had important bearings on the style in which he wrote. But we will give another anecdote, which is still more characteristic of his peculiar mental structure. Not long after his marriage, with all his indifference to his wife, he was persuaded into a fit of singular jealousy. He was intimate with an ex-captain of dragoons, by the name of Poignant, who had retired to Château-Thierry; a frank, open-hearted man, but of extremely little gallantry. Whenever Poignant was not at his inn, he was at La Fontaine's, and consequently with his wife, when he himself was not at home. Some person took it in his head to ask La Fontaine why he suffered these constant visits. "And

why," said La Fontaine, "should I not? He is my best friend." "The public think otherwise," was the reply; "they say that he comes for the sake of Madam La Fontaine." "The public is mistaken; but what must I do in the case?" said the poet. "You must demand satisfaction, sword in hand, of one who has dishonored you." "Very well," said La Fontaine, "I will demand it." The next day he called on Poignant, at four o'clock in the morning, and found him in bed. "Rise," said he, "and come out with me!" His friend asked him what was the matter, and what pressing business had brought him so early in the morning. "I shall let you know," replied La Fontaine, "when we get abroad." Poignant, in great astonishment, rose, followed him out, and asked whither he was leading. "You shall know by and by," replied La Fontaine; and at last, when they had reached a retired place, he said, "My friend, we must fight." Poignant, still more surprised, sought to know in what he had offended him, and, moreover, represented to him that they were not on equal terms. "I am a man of war," said he, "while, as for you, you have never drawn a sword." "No matter," said La Fontaine; "the public requires that I should fight you." Poignant, after having resisted in vain, at last drew his sword, and, having easily made himself master of La Fontaine's, demanded the cause of the quarrel. "The public maintains," said La Fontaine, "that you come to my house daily, not for my sake, but my wife's." "Ah, my friend," replied the other, "I should never have suspected that was the cause of your displeasure, and I protest I will never again put a foot within your doors." "On the contrary," replied La Fontaine, seizing him by the hand, "I have satisfied the public, and now you must come to my house

every day, or I will fight you again." The two antagonists returned, and breakfasted together in good humor.

It was not, as we have said, till his twenty-second year, that La Fontaine showed any taste for poetry. The occasion was this : — An officer, in winter-quarters at Château-Thierry, one day read to him, with great spirit, an ode of Malherbe, beginning thus —

Que direz-vous, races futures,
Si quelquefois un vrai discours
Vous récite les aventures
De nos abominables jours ?

Or, as we might paraphrase it, —

What will ye say, ye future days,
If I, for once, in honest rhymes,
Recount to you the deeds and ways
Of our abominable times ?

La Fontaine listened with mechanical transports of joy, admiration, and astonishment, as if a man born with a genius for music, but brought up in a desert, had for the first time heard a well-played instrument. He set himself immediately to reading Malherbe, passed his nights in learning his verses by heart, and his days in declaiming them in solitary places. He also read Voiture, and began to write verses in imitation. Happily, at this period, a relative, named Pintrel, directed his attention to ancient literature, and advised him to make himself familiar with Horace, Homer, Virgil, Terence, and Quintilian. He accepted this counsel. M. de Maucroix, another of his friends, who cultivated poetry with success, also contributed to confirm his taste for the ancient models. His great

delight, however, was to read Plato and Plutarch, which he did only through translations. The copies which he used are said to bear his manuscript notes on almost every page, and these notes are the maxims which are to be found in his fables. Returning from this study of the ancients, he read the moderns with more discrimination. His favorites, besides Malherbe, were Corneille, Rabelais, and Marot. In Italian, he read Ariosto, Boccaccio, and Machiavel. In 1654, he published his first work, a translation of the *Eunuch* of Terence. It met with no success. But this does not seem at all to have disturbed its author. He cultivated verse-making with as much ardor and good-humor as ever; and his verses soon began to be admired in the circle of his friends. No man had ever more devoted friends. Verses that have cost thought are not relished without thought. When a genius appears, it takes some little time for the world to educate itself to a knowledge of the fact. By one of his friends, La Fontaine was introduced to Fouquet, the minister of finance, a man of great power, and who rivalled his sovereign in wealth and luxury. It was his pride to be the patron of literary men, and he was pleased to make La Fontaine his poet, settling upon him a pension of one thousand francs per annum, on condition that he should produce a piece in verse each quarter, — a condition which was exactly complied with till the fall of the minister.

Fouquet was a most splendid villain, and positively, though perhaps not comparatively, deserved to fall. But it was enough for La Fontaine that Fouquet had done him a kindness. He took the part of the disgraced minister, without counting the cost. His "Elegy to the Nymphs of Vaux" was a shield to the fallen man, and turned popular hatred into sympathy. The good-hearted

poet rejoiced exceedingly in its success. *Bon-homme* was the appellation which his friends pleasantly gave him, and by which he became known every where;—and never did a man better deserve it in its best sense. He was good by nature—not by the calculation of consequences. Indeed, it does not seem ever to have occurred to him that kindness, gratitude, and truth, could have any other than good consequences. He was truly a Frenchman without guile, and possessed to perfection that comfortable trait,—in which French character is commonly allowed to excel the English,—*good-humor* with the whole world.

La Fontaine was the intimate friend of Molière, Boileau, and Racine. Molière had already established a reputation; but the others became known to the world at the same time. Boileau hired a small chamber in the Faubourg Saint Germain, where they all met several times a week; for La Fontaine, at the age of forty-four, had left Château-Thierry, and become a citizen of Paris. Here they discussed all sorts of topics, admitting to their society Chapelle, a man of less genius, but of greater conversational powers, than either of them—a sort of connecting link between them and the world. Four poets, or four men, could hardly have been more unlike. Boileau was blustering, blunt, peremptory, but honest and frank; Racine, of a pleasant and tranquil gayety, but mischievous and sarcastic; Molière was naturally considerate, pensive, and melancholy; La Fontaine was often absent-minded, but sometimes exceedingly jovial, delighting with his sallies, his witty *naïvetés*, and his arch simplicity. These meetings, which no doubt had a great influence upon French literature, La Fontaine, in one of his prefaces, thus describes:—“Four friends,

whose acquaintance had begun at the foot of Parnassus, held a sort of society, which I should call an Academy, if their number had been sufficiently great, and if they had had as much regard for the Muses as for pleasure. The first thing which they did was to banish from among them all rules of conversation, and every thing which savors of the academic conference. When they met, and had sufficiently discussed their amusements, if chance threw them upon any point of science or belles-lettres, they profited by the occasion; it was, however, without dwelling too long on the same subject, flitting from one thing to another like the bees that meet divers sorts of flowers on their way. Neither envy, malice, nor cabal had any voice among them. They adored the works of the ancients, never refused due praise to those of the moderns, spoke modestly of their own, and gave each other sincere counsel, when any one of them — which rarely happened — fell into the malady of the age, and published a book.”

The absent-mindedness of our fabulist not unfrequently created much amusement on these occasions, and made him the object of mirthful conspiracies. So keenly was the game pursued by Boileau and Racine, that the more considerate Molière felt obliged sometimes to expose and rebuke them. Once, after having done so, he privately told a stranger, who was present with them, the wits would have worried themselves in vain; they could not have obliterated the *bon-homme*.

La Fontaine, as we have said, was an admirer of Rabelais; — to what a pitch, the following anecdote may show. At one of the meetings at Boileau's were present Racine, Valincourt, and a brother of Boileau's, a doctor of the Sorbonne. The latter took it upon him to set

forth the merits of St. Augustin in a pompous eulogium. La Fontaine, plunged in one of his habitual reveries, listened without hearing. At last, rousing himself as if from a profound sleep, to prove that the conversation had not been lost upon him, he asked the doctor, with a very serious air, whether he thought St. Augustin had as much wit as Rabelais. The divine, surprised, looked at him from head to foot, and only replied, "Take care, Monsieur La Fontaine; you have put one of your stockings on wrong side outwards" — which was the fact.

It was in 1668 that La Fontaine published his first collection of fables, under the modest title, *Fables Choisies, mises en Vers*, in a quarto volume, with figures designed and engraved by Chauveau. It contained six books, and was dedicated to the Dauphin. Many of the fables had already been published in a separate form. The success of this collection was so great, that it was reprinted the same year in a smaller size. Fables had come to be regarded as beneath poetry; La Fontaine established them at once on the top of Parnassus. The ablest poets of his age did not think it beneath them to enter the lists with him; and it is needless to say they came off second best.

One of the fables of the first book is addressed to the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, and was the consequence of a friendship between La Fontaine and the author of the celebrated "Maxims." Connected with the duke was Madam La Fayette, one of the most learned and ingenious women of her age, who consequently became the admirer and friend of the fabulist. To her he wrote verses abundantly, as he did to all who made him the object of their kind regard. Indeed, notwithstanding his avowed indolence, or rather passion for quiet and sleep, his pen was

very productive. In 1669, he published "Psyché," a romance in prose and verse, which he dedicated to the Duchess de Bouillon, in gratitude for many kindnesses. The prose is said to be better than the verse; but this can hardly be true in respect to the following lines, in which the poet, under the apt name of Polyphile, in a hymn addressed to Pleasure, undoubtedly sketches himself:—

Volupté, Volupté, qui fus jadis maitresse
 Du plus bel esprit de la Grèce,
 Ne me dédaigne pas; viens-t'en loger chez moi;
 Tu n'y seras pas sans emploi:
 J'aime le jeu, l'amour, les livres, la musique,
 La ville et la campagne, enfin tout; il n'est rien
 Qui ne me soit souverain bien,
 Jusqu'au sombre plaisir d'un cœur mélancholique.
 Viens donc

The characteristic grace and playfulness of this seem to defy translation. To the mere English reader, the sense may be roughly given thus:—

Delight, Delight, who didst as mistress hold
 The finest wit of Grecian mould,
 Disdain not me; but come,
 And make my house thy home.
 Thou shalt not be without employ:
 In play, love, music, books, I joy,
 In town and country; and, indeed, there's nought,
 E'en to the luxury of sober thought,—
 The sombre, melancholy mood,—
 But brings to me the sovereign good.
 Come, then, &c.

The same Polyphile, in recounting his adventures on a visit to the infernal regions, tells us that he saw, in the hands of the cruel Eumenides,

————— Les auteurs de maint hymen forcé,
L'amant chiche, et la dame au cœur intéressé ;
La troupe des censeurs, peuple à l'Amour rebelle ;
Ceux enfin dont les vers ont noirci quelque belle.

————— Artificers of many a loveless match,
And lovers who but sought the pence to catch ;
The crew censorious, rebels against Love ;
And those whose verses soiled the fair above.

To be “rebels against Love” was quite unpardonable with La Fontaine ; and to bring about a “*hymen forcé*” was a crime, of which he probably spoke with some personal feeling. The great popularity of “*Psyché*” encouraged the author to publish two volumes of poems and tales in 1671, in which were contained several new fables. The celebrated Madam de Sévigné thus speaks of these fables, in one of her letters to her daughter :—“But have you not admired the beauty of the five or six fables of La Fontaine contained in one of the volumes which I sent you ? We were charmed with them the other day at M. de la Rochefoucauld's : we got by heart that of the Monkey and the Cat.” Then, quoting some lines, she adds, —“This is painting ! And the Pumpkin — and the Nightingale — they are worthy of the first volume !” It was in his stories that La Fontaine excelled ; and Madam de Sévigné expresses a wish to invent a fable which would impress upon him the folly of leaving his peculiar province. He seemed himself not insensible where his strength lay,

and seldom ventured upon any other ground, except at the instance of his friends. With all his lightness, he felt a deep veneration for religion — the most spiritual and rigid which came within the circle of his immediate acquaintance. He admired Jansenius and the Port Royalists, and heartily loved Racine, who was of their faith. Count Henri-Louis de Loménie, of Brienne, — who, after being secretary of state, had retired to the Oratoire, — was engaged in bringing out a better collection of Christian lyrics. To this work he pressed La Fontaine, whom he called his particular friend, to lend his name and contributions. Thus the author of “Psyché,” “Adonis,” and “Joconde,” was led to the composition of pious hymns, and versifications of the Psalms of David. Gifted by nature with the utmost frankness of disposition, he sympathized fully with Arnauld and Pascal in the war against the Jesuits; and it would seem, from his *Ballade sur Escobar*, that he had read and relished the “Provincial Letters.” This ballad, as it may be a curiosity to many, shall be given entire: —

BALLADE

SUR ESCOBAR.

C'EST à bon droit que l'on condamne à Rome
 L'évêque d'Ypré,* auteur de vains débats;
 Ses sectateurs nous défendent en somme
 Tous les plaisirs que l'on goûte ici-bas.
 En paradis allant au petit pas,
 On y parvient, quoi qu'ARNAULD nous en die :

* Corneille Jansenius.

La volupté sans cause il a bannie.
 Veut-on monter sur les célestes tours,
 Chemin pierreux est grande rêverie.
 ESCOBAR sait un chemin de velours.

Il ne dit pas qu'on peut tuer un homme
 Qui sans raison nous tient en altercas
 Pour un fêtu ou bien pour un pomme ;
 Mais qu'on le peut pour quatre ou cinq ducats.
 Même il soutient qu'on peut en certains cas
 Faire un serment plein de supercherie,
 S'abandonner aux douceurs de la vie,
 S'il est besoin conserver ses amours.
 Ne faut-il pas après cela qu'on crie :
 ESCOBAR sait un chemin de velours ?

Au nom de Dieu, lisez-moi quelque somme
 De ces écrits dont chez lui l'on fait cas.
 Qu'est-il besoin qu'à présent je les nomme ?
 Il en est tant qu'on ne les connoit pas.
 De leurs avis servez-vous pour compas.
 N'admettez qu'eux en votre librairie ;
 Brûlez ARNAULD avec sa coterie,
 Près d'ESCOBAR ce ne sont qu'esprits lourds.
 Je vous le dis : ce n'est point raillerie,
 ESCOBAR sait un chemin de velours.

E N V O I .

Toi, que l'orgueil poussa dans la voirie,
 Qui tiens là-bas noire conciergerie,
 Lucifer, chef des infernal cours,
 Pour éviter les traits de ta furie,
 ESCOBAR sait un chemin de velours.

Thus does the *Bon-homme* treat the subtle Escobar, the prince and prototype of the moralists of *expediency*. To

translate his artless and delicate irony is hardly possible. The writer of this hasty Preface offers the following only as an attempted imitation:—

BALLAD

UPON ESCOBAR.

Good cause has Rome to reprobate
 The bishop who disputes her so;
 His followers reject and hate
 All pleasures that we taste below.
 To heaven an easy pace may go,
 Whatever crazy ARNAULD saith,
 Who aims at pleasure causeless wrath.
 Seek we the better world afar?
 We're fools to choose the rugged path:
 A velvet road hath ESCOBAR.

Although he does not say you can,
 Should one with you for nothing strive,
 Or for a trifle, kill the man—
 You can for ducats four or five.
 Indeed, if circumstances drive,
 Defraud, or take false oaths you may,
 Or to the charms of life give way,
 When Love must needs the door unbar.
 Henceforth must not the pilgrim say,
 A velvet road hath ESCOBAR?

Now, would to God that one would state
 The pith of all his works to me.
 What boots it to enumerate?
 As well attempt to drain the sea!—
 Your chart and compass let them be;

All other books put under ban;
 Burn ARNAULD and his rigid clan—
 They're blockheads if we but compare;—
 It is no joke,—I tell you, man,
 A velvet road hath ESCOBAR.

ADDRESS.

Thou warden of the prison black,
 Who didst on heaven turn thy back,
 The chieftain of th' infernal war!
 To shun thy arrows and thy rack,
 A velvet road hath ESCOBAR.

The verses of La Fontaine did more for his reputation than for his purse. His paternal estate wasted away under his carelessness; for, when the ends of the year refused to meet, he sold a piece of land sufficient to make them do so. His wife, no better qualified to manage worldly gear than himself, probably lived on her family friends, who were able to support her, and who seem to have done so without blaming him. She had lived with him in Paris for some time after that city became his abode; but, tiring at length of the city life, she had returned to Château-Thierry, and occupied the family mansion. At the earnest expostulation of Boileau and Racine, who wished to make him a better husband, he returned to Château-Thierry himself, in 1666, for the purpose of becoming reconciled to his wife. But his purpose strangely vanished. He called at his own house, learned from the domestic, who did not know him, that Madam La Fontaine was in good health, and passed on to the house of a friend, where he tarried two days, and

then returned to Paris without having seen his wife. When his friends inquired of him his success, with some confusion he replied, "I have been to see her, but I did not find her: she was well." Twenty years after that, Racine prevailed on him to visit his patrimonial estate, to take some care of what remained. Racine, not hearing from him, sent to know what he was about, when La Fontaine wrote as follows:—"Poignant, on his return from Paris, told me that you took my silence in very bad part; the worse, because you had been told that I have been incessantly at work since my arrival at Château-Thierry; and that, instead of applying myself to my affairs, I have had nothing in my head but verses. All this is no more than half true: my affairs occupy me as much as they deserve to—that is to say, not at all; but the leisure which they leave me—it is not poetry, but idleness, which makes away with it." On a certain occasion, in the earlier part of his life, when pressed in regard to his improvidence, he gayly produced the following epigram, which has commonly been appended to his fables as "The Epitaph of La Fontaine, written by Himself":—

JEAN s'en alla comme il étoit venu,

Mangea le fonds avec le revenu,

Tint les trésors chose peu nécessaire.

Quant à son temps, bien sut le dispenser :

Deux parts en fit, dont il souloit passer

L'une à dormir, et l'autre à ne rien faire.

This confession, the immortality of which was so little foreseen by its author, liberally rendered, amounts to the following:—

JOHN went as he came — ate his farm with its fruits,
Held treasure to be but the cause of disputes,
And, as to his time, be it frankly confessed,
Divided it daily as suited him best, —
Gave a part to his sleep, and to nothing the rest.

It is clear that a man who provided so little for himself needed good friends to do it; and Heaven kindly furnished them. When his affairs began to be straitened, he was invited by the celebrated Madam de la Sablière to make her house his home; and there, in fact, he was thoroughly domiciliated for twenty years. "I have sent away all my domestics," said that lady, one day; "I have kept only my dog, my cat, and La Fontaine." She was, perhaps, the best-educated woman in France, was the mistress of several languages, knew Horace and Virgil by heart, and had been thoroughly indoctrinated in all the sciences by the ablest masters. Her husband, M. Rambouillet de la Sablière, was secretary to the king, and register of domains, and to immense wealth united considerable poetical talents, with a thorough knowledge of the world. It was the will of Madam de la Sablière, that her favorite poet should have no further care for his external wants; and never was a mortal more perfectly resigned. He did all honor to the sincerity of his amiable hostess; and, if he ever showed a want of independence, he certainly did not of gratitude. Compliments of more touching tenderness we nowhere meet than those which La Fontaine has paid to his benefactress. He published nothing which was not first submitted to her eye, and entered into her affairs and friendships with all his heart. Her unbounded confidence in his integrity she expressed by saying, "La Fontaine never

lies in prose." By her death, in 1693, our fabulist was left without a home; but his many friends vied with each other which should next furnish one. He was then seventy-two years of age, had turned his attention to personal religion, and received the seal of conversion at the hands of the Roman Catholic church. In his conversion, as in the rest of his life, his frankness left no room to doubt his sincerity. The writings which had justly given offence to the good were made the subject of a public confession, and every thing in his power was done to prevent their circulation. The death of one who had done so much for him, and whose last days, devoted with the most self-denying benevolence to the welfare of her species, had taught him a most salutary lesson, could not but be deeply felt. He had just left the house of his deceased benefactress, never again to enter it, when he met M. d'Hervart in the street, who eagerly said to him, "My dear La Fontaine, I was looking for you, to beg you to come and take lodgings in my house." "I was going thither," replied La Fontaine. A reply could not have been more characteristic. The fabulist had not in him sufficient hypocrisy of which to manufacture the commonplace politeness of society. His was the politeness of a warm and unsuspecting heart. He never concealed his confidence in the fear that it might turn out to be misplaced.

His second collection of fables, containing five books, La Fontaine published in 1678-9, with a dedication to Madam de Montespan; the previous six books were republished at the same time, revised and enlarged. The twelfth book was not added till many years after, and proved, in fact, the song of the dying swan. It was written for the special use of the young Duke de Bourgogne,

the royal pupil of Fenelon, to whom it contains frequent allusions. The eleven books now published sealed the reputation of La Fontaine, and were received with distinguished regard by the king, who appended to the ordinary protocol or imprimatur for publication the following reasons: "in order to testify to the author the esteem we have for his person and his merit, and because youth have received great advantage in their education from the fables selected and put in verse, which he has heretofore published." The author was, moreover, permitted to present his book in person to the sovereign. For this purpose he repaired to Versailles, and, after having well delivered himself of his compliment to royalty, perceived that he had forgotten to bring the book which he was to present; he was, nevertheless, favorably received, and loaded with presents. But it is added, that, on his return, he also lost, by his absence of mind, the purse full of gold which the king had given him, which was happily found under a cushion of the carriage in which he rode.

In his advertisement to the second part of his Fables, La Fontaine informs the reader that he had treated his subjects in a somewhat different style. In fact, in his first collection, he had timidly confined himself to the brevity of Æsop and Phædrus; but, having observed that those fables were most popular in which he had given most scope to his own genius, he threw off the trammels in the second collection, and, in the opinion of the writer, much for the better. His subjects, too, in the second part, are frequently derived from the Indian fabulists, and bring with them the richness and dramatic interest of the *Hitopadesa*.

Of all his fables, the Oak and the Reed is said to have been the favorite of La Fontaine. But his critics have

almost unanimously given the palm of excellence to the *Animals sick of the Plague*, the first of the seventh book. Its exquisite poetry, the perfection of its dialogue, and the weight of its moral, well entitle it to the place. That must have been a soul replete with honesty, which could read such a lesson in the ears of a proud and oppressive court. Indeed, we may look in vain, through this encyclopædia of fable, for a sentiment which goes to justify the strong in their oppression of the weak. Even in the midst of the fulsome compliments which it was the fashion of his age to pay to royalty, La Fontaine maintains a reserve and decency peculiar to himself. By an examination of his fables, we think, we might fairly establish for him the character of an honest and disinterested lover and respecter of his species. In his fable entitled *Death and the Dying*, he unites the genius of Pascal and Molière; in that of the *Two Doves* is a tenderness quite peculiar to himself, and an insight into the heart worthy of Shakspeare. In his *Mogul's Dream* are sentiments worthy of the very high priest of nature, and expressed in his own native tongue with a felicity which makes the translator feel that all his labors are but vanity and vexation of spirit. But it is not the purpose of this brief Preface to criticise the Fables. It is sufficient to say, that the work occupies a position in French literature, which, after all has been said that can be for Gay, Moore, and others, — English versifiers of fables, — is left quite vacant in ours.

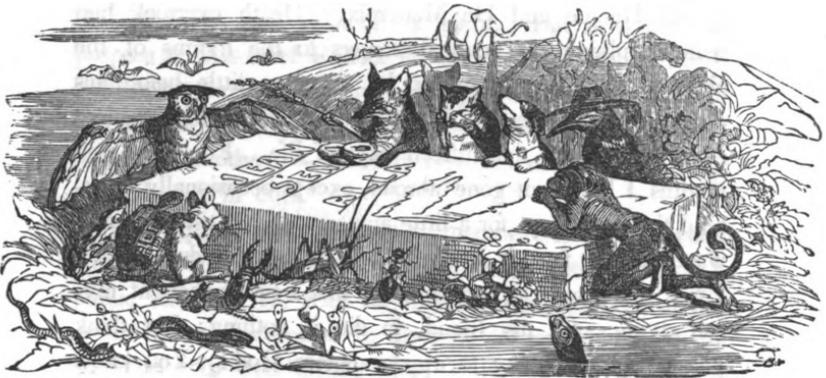
Our author was elected a member of the French Academy in 1684, and received with the honor of a public session. He read on this occasion a poem of exquisite beauty, addressed to his benefactress, Madam de la Sablière. In that distinguished body of men he was a

universal favorite; and none, perhaps, did more to promote its prime object — the improvement of the French language. We have already seen how he was regarded by some of the greatest minds of his age. Voltaire, who never did more than justice to merit other than his own, said of the Fables, “I hardly know a book which more abounds with charms adapted to the people, and at the same time to persons of refined taste. I believe that, of all authors, La Fontaine is the most universally read. He is for all minds and all ages.” La Bruyère, when admitted to the Academy, in 1693, was warmly applauded for his *éloge* upon La Fontaine, which contained the following words: — “More equal than Marot, and more poetical than Voiture, La Fontaine has the playfulness, felicity, and artlessness of both. He instructs while he sports, persuades men to virtue by means of beasts, and exalts trifling subjects to the sublime; a man unique in his species of composition, always original, whether he invents or translates, — who has gone beyond his models, himself a model hard to imitate.”

La Fontaine, as we have said, devoted his latter days to religion. In this he was sustained and cheered by his old friends Racine and De Maucroix. Death overtook him while applying his poetical powers to the hymns of the church. To De Maucroix he wrote, a little before his death, — “I assure you that the best of your friends cannot count upon more than fifteen days of life. For these two months I have not gone abroad, except occasionally to attend the Academy, for a little amusement. Yesterday, as I was returning from it, in the middle of the Rue du Chantre, I was taken with such a faintness that I really thought myself dying. O, my friend, to die is nothing; but think you how I am going to appear before God! You know

how I have lived. Before you receive this billet, the gates of eternity will perhaps have been opened upon me!" To this, a few days after, his friend replied,—"If God, in his kindness, restores you to health, I hope you will come and spend the rest of your life with me, and we shall often talk together of the mercies of God. If, however, you have not strength to write, beg M. Racine to do me that kindness, the greatest he can ever do for me. Adieu, my good, my old, and my true friend. May God, in his infinite goodness, take care of the health of your body, and that of your soul." He died the 13th of April, 1695, at the age of seventy-three, and was buried in the cemetery of the Saints-Innocents.

When Fenelon heard of his death, he wrote a Latin eulogium, which he gave to his royal pupil to translate. "La Fontaine is no more!" said Fenelon, in this composition; "he is no more! and with him have gone the playful jokes, the merry laugh, the artless graces, and the sweet Muses."





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TO MONSEIGNEUR

THE DAUPHIN.



SING the heroes of old Æsop's line,
Whose tale, though false when
strictly we define,
Containeth truths it were not ill
to teach.

With me all natures use the gift of speech ;
Yea, in my work, the very fishes preach,
And to our human selves their sermons suit.
'Tis thus to come at man I use the brute.

SON OF A PRINCE the favorite of the skies,
On whom the world entire hath fixed its eyes,
Who hence shall count his conquests by his days,
And gather from the proudest lips his praise,
A louder voice than mine must tell in song
What virtues to thy kingly line belong.
I seek thine ear to gain by lighter themes,
Slight pictures, decked in magic nature's beams ;
And if to please thee shall not be my pride,
I'll gain at least the praise of having tried.





A

MONSEIGNEUR LE DAUPHIN.

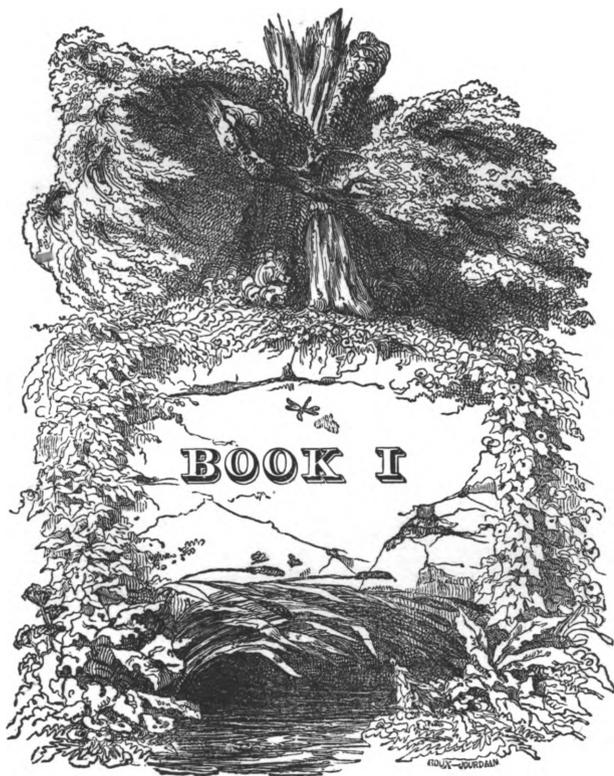


E chante les héros dont Ésope est le père ;
Troupe de qui l'histoire, encor que mensongère,
Contient des vérités qui servent de leçons.
Tout parle en mon ouvrage, et même les poissons :
Ce qu'ils disent s'adresse à tous tant que nous sommes ,

4 A MONSEIGNEUR LE DAUPHIN.

Je me sers d'animaux pour instruire les hommes.
Illustre rejeton d'un prince aimé des cieux ,
Sur qui le monde entier a maintenant les yeux ,
Et qui , faisant fléchir les plus superbes têtes ,
Comptera désormais ses jours par ses conquêtes ,
Quelque autre te dira , d'une plus forte voix ,
Les faits de tes aïeux , et les vertus des rois ;
Je vais t'entretenir de moindres aventures ,
Te tracer en ces vers de légères peintures ;
Et si de t'agrèer je n'emporte le prix ,
J'aurai du moins l'honneur de l'avoir entrepris.





BOOK I



LA CIGALE ET LA FOURMI

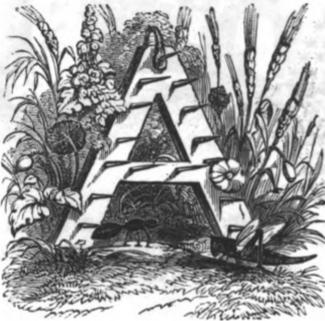


On an animal's tail,
Double weight in the pound
For the harvest be bound.
The rat is a friend
(And how she might mend)
Little given to lend,
How spend you the summer?
(Noble she, looking shame)

FABLE FIRST.

Night and day to each corner
I sang, if you please,
You sang! I'm at ease;
For the pain at a glance,
Now, my son, you must dance.

THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE ANT.



GRASSHOPPER gay
Sang the summer away,
And found herself poor
By the winter's first roar.
Of meat or of bread,
Not a morsel she had;
So a begging she went,
To her neighbor the ant,

For the loan of some wheat,
Which would serve her to eat
Till the season came round.

I will pay you, she saith,
On an animal's faith,
Double weight in the pound
Ere the harvest be bound.

The ant is a friend
(And here she might mend)
Little given to lend.

How spent you the summer ?

Quoth she, looking shame
At the borrowing dame.

Night and day to each comer
I sang, if you please.

You sang ! I'm at ease ;
For 'tis plain at a glance,
Now, ma'am, you must dance.





FABLE PREMIÈRE.

La Cigale et la Fourmi.*

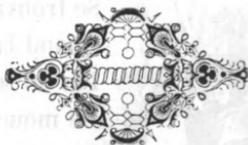


A cigale ayant chanté,
Tout l'été,
Se trouva fort dépourvue
Quand la bise fut venue :
Pas un seul petit morceau
De mouche ou de vermisseau.
Elle alla crier famine
Chez la fourmi sa voisine
La priant de lui prêter

* *Fabulæ Æsopicæ*, édit. Furia Lipsiæ, 1810, in-8°, fab. 198 : *Formicæ et Cicada*. — *Fabulæ variorum auctorum* Neveleti; Francof., 1660, in-12. — *Æsopi fabulæ*, 154 : *Cicada et Formicæ*.

Quelque grain pour subsister
Jusqu'à la saison nouvelle:
Je vous païrai , lui dit-elle ,
Avant l'oût ,* foi d'animal ,
Intérêt et principal.
La fourmi n'est pas prêteuse ;
C'est là son moindre défaut :
Que faisiez-vous au temps chaud ?
Dit-elle à cette emprunteuse. —
Nuit et jour à tout venant
Je chantois , ne vous déplaïse. —
Vous chantiez ! j'en suis fort aïse.
Hé bien ! dansez maintenant.

* *L'oût*, par contraction d'*août*, se disait alors pour *la moisson*, qui se fait dans ce mois. On disait même un *aousteron* pour un *moissonneur*.



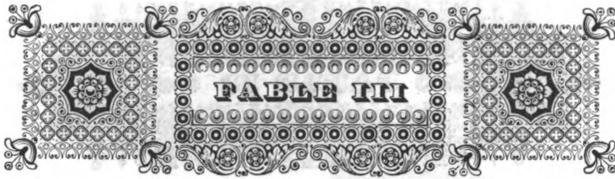


LE CORBEAU ET LE RENARD



THE RAVEN AND THE FOX.

PERCHED on a lofty oak,
Sir Raven held a lunch of cheese ;
Sir Fox, who smelt it in the breeze,
Thus to the holder spoke :—
Ha ! how do you do, Sir Raven ?
Well, your coat, sir, is a brave one !
So black and glossy, on my word, sir,
With voice to match, you were a bird, sir,
Well fit to be the Phoenix of these days.
Sir Raven, overset with praise,
Must show how musical his croak.
Down fell the luncheon from the oak ;
Which snatching up, Sir Fox thus spoke . —
The flatterer, my good sir,
Aye liveth on his listener ;
Which lesson, if you please,
Is doubtless worth the cheese.
A bit too late, Sir Raven swore
The roge should never cheat him more.



THE FROG THAT WISHED TO BE AS BIG
AS THE OX.

THE tenant of a bog,
An envious little frog,
Not bigger than an egg,
A stately bullock spies,
And, smitten with his size,
Attempts to be as big.
With earnestness and pains,
She stretches, swells, and strains,
And says, Sis Frog, look here ! see me !
Is this enough ? No, no.
Well, then, is this ? Poh ! poh !
Enough ! you don't begin to be.
And thus the reptile sits,
Enlarging till she splits.
The world is full of folks
Of just such wisdom ; —
The lordly dome provokes
The cit to build his dome ;
And, really, there is no telling
How much great men set little ones a swelling.



Le Corbeau et le Renard.

Maitre corbeau, sur un arbre perché,
Tenoit en son bec un fromage.
Maitre renard, par l'odeur alléché,
Lui tint à peu près ce langage :
Hé ! bonjour, monsieur du corbeau.
Que vous êtes joli ! que vous me semblez beau !
Sans mentir, si votre ramage
Se rapporte à votre plumage,
Vous êtes le phénix des hôtes de ces bois.
A ces mots le corbeau ne se sent pas de joie ;
Et, pour montrer sa belle voix,
Il ouvre un large bec, laisse tomber sa proie.
Le renard s'en saisit, et dit : Mon bon monsieur,
Apprenez que tout flatteur
Vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute :
Cette leçon vaut bien un fromage, sans doute.
Le corbeau, honteux et confus,
Jura, mais un peu tard, qu'on ne l'y prendroit plus.

* Phædri *fabulæ* *Æsopicæ*, 1, 13: *Vulpes et Corvus*.— *Æsop.*, 216, 208 ;
Corvus et Vulpes.



La Grenouille qui veut se faire aussi grosse que le Bœuf. *

Une grenouille vit un bœuf
Qui lui sembla de belle taille.

Elle, qui n'étoit pas grosse en tout comme un œuf,
Envieuse, s'étend, et s'enfle, et se travaille

Pour égaler l'animal en grosseur ;

Disant : Regardez bien, ma sœur ;

Est-ce assez ? dites-moi ; n'y suis-je point encore ? —

Nenni. — M'y voici donc ? — Point du tout. — M'y voilà ? —

Vous n'en approchez point. La chétive pécore

S'enfla si bien qu'elle creva.

Le monde est plein de gens qui ne sont pas plus sages :

Tout bourgeois veut bâtir comme les grands seigneurs.

Tout petit prince a des ambassadeurs,

Tout marquis veut avoir des pages.

* Phædr., I, 24; *Rana rupta et Bos.* — Horat., lib. II, sat. III. — Corrozet, fab. 21.



LA GRENOUILLE
QUI SE VEUT FAIRE AUSSI GROSSE QUE LE BŒUF



LES DEUX MULETS



THE TWO MULES.

Two mules were bearing on their backs,
One, oats ; the other, silver of the tax.

The latter, glorying in his load,
Marched proudly forward on the road ;
And, from the jingle of his bell,
'Twas plain he liked his burden well.

But in a wild-wood glen

A band of robber men
Rushed forth upon the twain.

Well with the silver pleased,

They by the bridle seized

The treasure-mule so vain.

Poor mule ! in struggling to repel

His ruthless foes, he fell

Stabbed through ; and, with a bitter sighing,

He cried, Is this the lot they promised me ?

My humble friend from danger free,

While, weltering in my gore, I'm dying ?

My friend, his fellow-mule replied,

It is not well to have one's work too high.

If thou hadst been a miller's drudge, as I,

Thou wouldst not thus have died.



THE WOLF AND THE DOG.

A PROWLING wolf, whose shaggy skin
(So strict the watch of dogs had been)
Hid little but his bones,
Once met a mastiff dog astray.
A prouder, fatter, sleeker Tray,
No human mortal owns.
Sir Wolf, in famished plight,
Would fain have made a ration
Upon his fat relation ;
But then he first must fight ;
And well the dog seemed able
To save from wolfish table
His carcass snug and tight.
So, then, in civil conversation
The wolf expressed his admiration
Of Tray's fine case. Said Tray, politely,
Yourself, good sir, may be as sightly,
Quit but the woods, advised by me.
For all your fellows here, I see,
Are shabby wretches, lean and gaunt,
Belike to die of haggard want.
With such a pack, of course it follows,
One fights for every bit he swallows.



Les deux Mulets. *

Deux mulets cheminoient, l'un d'avoine chargé,

L'autre portant l'argent de la gabelle.

Celui-ci, glorieux d'une charge si belle,

N'eût voulu pour beaucoup en être soulagé.

Il marchoit d'un pas relevé,

Et faisoit sonner sa sonnette ;

Quand l'ennemi se présentant,

Comme il en vouloit à l'argent,

Sur le mulet du fisc une troupe se jette,

Le saisit au frein, et l'arrête.

Le mulet, en se défendant,

Se sent percé de coups ; il gémit, il soupire.

Est-ce donc là, dit-il, ce qu'on m'avoit promis ?

Ce mulet qui me suit du danger se retire ;

Et moi, j'y tombe, et je péris !

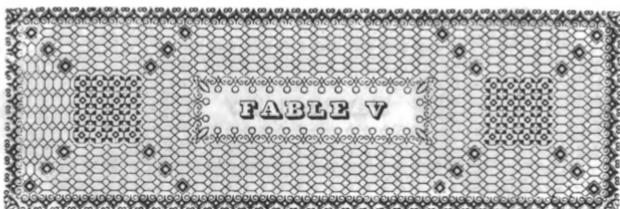
Ami, lui dit son camarade,

Il n'est pas toujours bon d'avoir un haut emploi ;

Si tu n'avois servi qu'un meunier, comme moi,

Tu ne serois pas si malade.

* Phædr., II, 7: *Muli duo et Latrones*



Le Loup et le Chien. *

Un loup n'avoit que les os et la peau,
Tant les chiens faisoient bonne garde ;
Ce loup rencontre un dogue aussi puissant que beau,
Gras, poli, ** qui s'étoit fourvoyé par mégarde.
L'attaquer, le mettre en quartiers,
Sire loup l'eût fait volontiers :
Mais il falloit livrer bataille ;
Et le matin étoit de taille
A se défendre hardiment.
Le loup donc l'aborde humblement,
Entre en propos, et lui fait compliment
Sur son embonpoint qu'il admire.
Il ne tiendra qu'à vous, beau sire,
D'être aussi gras que moi, lui repartit le chien.
Quittez les bois, vous ferez bien :

* Phædr., III, 7: *Canis et Lupus*.

** *Polé* pour luisant, état du poil chez les chiens bien portants.



LE LOUP ET LE CHIEN

Come, then, with me, and share
On equal terms our princely fare.

But what with you
Has one to do?

Inquires the wolf. Light work indeed,

Replies the dog; you only need

To bark a little now and then,

To chase off duns and beggar men,

To fawn on friends that come or go forth,

Your master please, and so forth;

For which you have to eat

All sorts of well-cooked meat —

Cold pullets, pigeons, savory messes —

Besides unnumbered fond caresses.

The wolf, by force of appetite,

Accepts the terms outright,

Tears glistening in his eyes.

But, faring on, he spies

A galled spot on the mastiff's neck.

What's that? he cries. O, nothing but a speck.

A speck? Ay, ay; 'tis not enough to pain me;

Perhaps the collar's mark by which they chain me.

Chain! chain you! What! run you not, then,

Just where you please, and when?

Not always, sir; but what of that?

Enough for me, to spoil your fat!

It ought to be a precious price

Which could to servile chains entice;

For me, I'll shun them while I've wit.

So ran Sir Wolf, and runneth yet.



TABLE VI

THE HEIFER, THE GOAT, AND THE SHEEP, IN
COMPANY WITH THE LION.

THE heifer, the goat, and their sister the sheep,
Compacted their earnings in common to keep,
'Tis said, in time past, with a lion, who swayed
Full lordship o'er neighbors, of whatever grade.
The goat, as it happened, a stag having snared,
Sent off to the rest, that the beast might be shared.
All gathered; the lion first counts on his claws,
And says, We'll proceed to divide with our paws
The stag into pieces, as fixed by our laws.

This done, he announces part first as his own;

'Tis mine, he says, truly, as lion alone.

To such a decision there's nought to be said,

As he who has made it is doubtless the head.

Well, also, the second to me should belong;

'Tis mine, be it known, by the right of the strong.

Again, as the bravest, the third must be mine.

To touch but the fourth whoso maketh a sign,

I'll choke him to death

In the space of a breath!

Vos pareils y sont misérables,
 Cancres, hères, et pauvres diables,
 Dont la condition est de mourir de faim.
 Car, quoi ! rien d'assuré ! point de franche lipée !

Tout à la pointe de l'épée !
 Suivez-moi, vous aurez un bien meilleur destin.

Le loup reprit : Que me faudra-t-il faire ?
 Presque rien, dit le chien : donner la chasse aux gens
 Portant bâtons, et mendiants ;

Flatter ceux du logis, à son maître complaire :
 Moyennant quoi votre salaire
 Sera force reliefs * de toutes les façons,
 Os de poulets, os de pigeons ;
 Sans parler de mainte caresse.

Le loup déjà se forge une félicité
 Qui le fait pleurer de tendresse.

Chemin faisant, il vit le cou du chien pelé.
 Qu'est-ce là ? lui dit-il. — Rien. — Quoi ! rien ? — Peu de chose. —
 Mais encor ? — Le collier dont je suis attaché
 De ce que vous voyez est peut-être la cause.

Attaché ! dit le loup : vous ne courez donc pas
 Où vous voulez ? — Pas toujours ; mais qu'importe ? —
 Il importe si bien, que de tous vos repas

Je ne veux en aucune sorte,
 Et ne voudrais pas même à ce prix un trésor.
 Cela dit, maître loup s'enfuit, et court encor.

* Restes de repas.





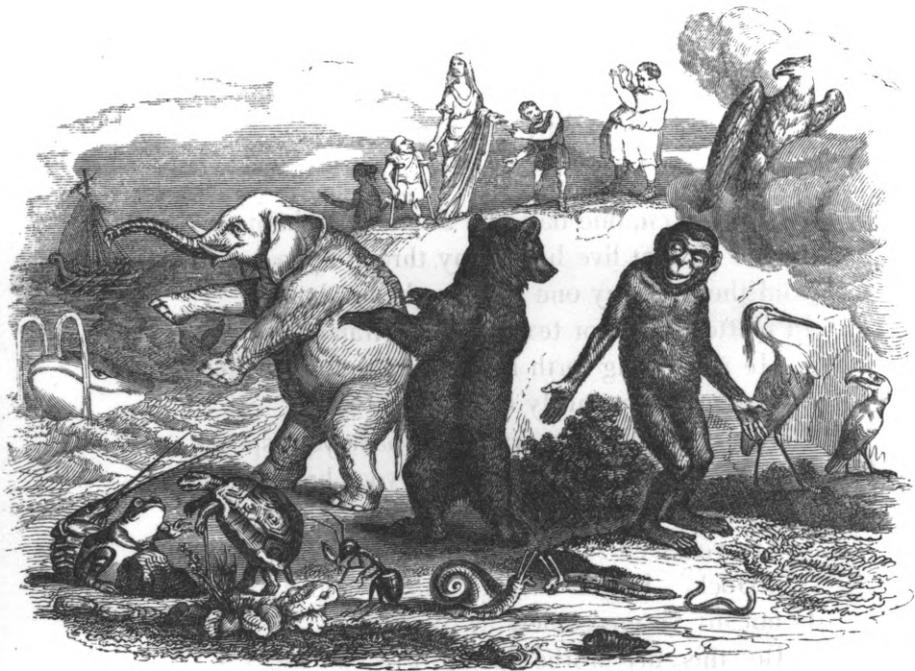
La Génisse, la Chèvre et la Brebis en société avec le Lion. *

La génisse, la chèvre, et leur sœur la brebis,
Avec un fier lion, seigneur du voisinage,
Firent société, dit-on, au temps jadis,
Et mirent en commun le gain et le dommage.
Dans les lacs de la chèvre un cerf se trouva pris.
Vers ses associés aussitôt elle envoie.
Eux venus, le lion par ses ongles compta ;
Et dit : Nous sommes quatre à partager la proie.
Puis en autant de parts le cerf il dépeça ;
Prit pour lui la première en qualité de sire.
Elle doit être à moi, dit-il ; et la raison,
C'est que je m'appelle lion : —
A cela l'on n'a rien à dire.
La seconde, par droit, me doit échoir encor ;
Ce droit, vous le savez, c'est le droit du plus fort.
Comme le plus vaillant, je prétends la troisième.
Si quelqu'une de vous touche à la quatrième,
Je l'étranglerai tout d'abord.

Phædr., I, 5: *Vacca, Capella, Ovis et Leo.*



LA GÉNISSE, LA CHÈVRE ET LA BREBIS
EN SOCIÉTÉ AVEC LE LION



LA BESACE



THE WALLET.

FROM heaven, one day, did Jupiter proclaim,
Let all that live before my throne appear,
And there, if any one hath aught to blame,
In matter, form, or texture of his frame,
He may bring forth his grievance without fear.
Redress shall instantly be given to each.
Come, monkey, now, first let us have your speech.
You see these quadrupeds, your brothers ;
Comparing, then, yourself with others,
Are you well satisfied ? And wherefore not ?
Said Jock. Haven't I four trotters with the rest ?
Is not my visage comely as the best ?
But this, my brother Bruin, is a blot
On thy creation fair.
And sooner than be painted, I'd be shot,
Were I, great sire, a bear.
The bear approaching, doth he make complaint ?
Not he ; — himself he lauds without restraint.
The elephant he needs must criticise ;
To crop his ears and stretch his tail were wise ;
A creature he of huge, misshapen size.

The elephant, though famed as beast judicious,
While on his own account he had no wishes,
Pronounced dame whale too big to suit his taste ;
Of flesh and fat she was a perfect waste.
The little ant, again, pronounced the gnat too wee ;
To such a speck, a vast colossus she.
Each censured by the rest, himself content,
Back to their homes all living things were sent.
Such folly liveth yet with human fools.
For others lynxes, for ourselves but moles,
Great blemishes in other men we spy,
Which in ourselves we pass most kindly by.
As in this world we're but way-farers,
Kind Heaven has made us wallet-bearers.
The pouch behind our own defects must store,
The faults of others lodge in that before.





La Besace. *

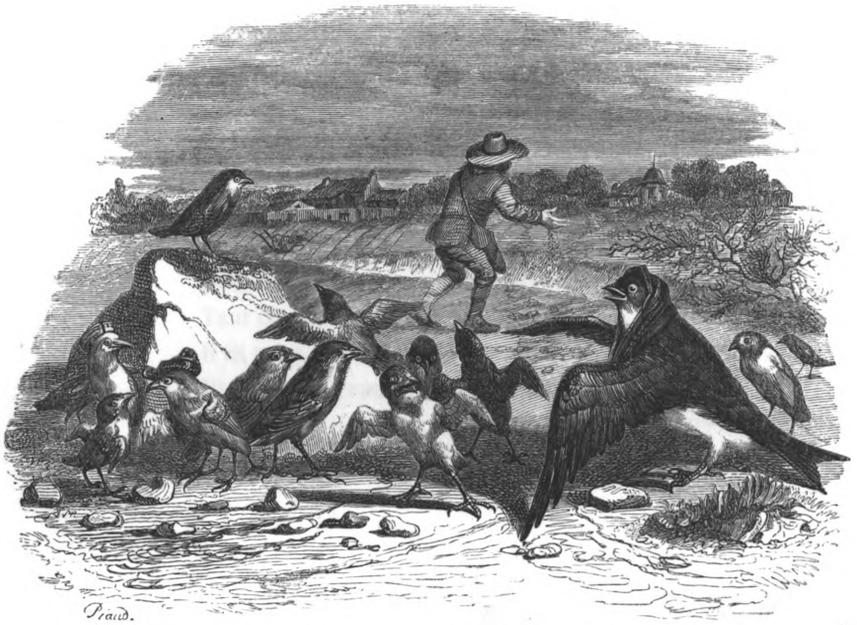
Jupiter dit un jour : Que tout ce qui respire
S'en vienne comparoître aux pieds de ma grandeur :
Si dans son composé quelqu'un trouve à redire,
Il peut le déclarer sans peur ;
Je mettrai remède à la chose.
Venez, singe ; parlez le premier, et pour cause :
Voyez ces animaux, faites comparaison
De leurs beautés avec les vôtres.
Êtes-vous satisfait ? Moi, dit-il ; pourquoi non ?
N'ai-je pas quatre pieds aussi bien que les autres ?
Mon portrait jusqu'ici ne m'a rien reproché :
Mais pour mon frère l'ours, on ne l'a qu'ébauché ;
Jamais, s'il me veut croire, il ne se fera peindre.
L'ours venant là-dessus, on crut qu'il s'alloit plaindre.
Tant s'en faut : de sa forme il se loua très-fort ;
Glosa sur l'éléphant, dit qu'on pourroit encor
Ajouter à sa queue, ôter à ses oreilles ;
Que c'étoit une masse informe et sans beauté.

* Avienus, 44, *Simia et Jupiter*.— Phædr., IV, 10 sive 9, *Peræ Jovis, sive de Vitiis hominum*.

L'éléphant étant écouté,
 Tout sage qu'il étoit, dit des choses pareilles :
 Il jugea qu'à son appétit
 Dame baleine étoit trop grosse.
 Dame fourmi trouva le ciron trop petit,
 Se croyant, pour elle, un colosse.
 Jupin les renvoya s'étant censurés tous,
 Du reste, contents d'eux. Mais parmi les plus fous
 Notre espèce excella ; car tout ce que nous sommes,
 Lynx envers nos pareils, et taupes envers nous,
 Nous nous pardonnons tout, et rien aux autres hommes :
 On se voit d'un autre œil qu'on ne voit son prochain.
 Le fabricant souverain
 Nous créa besaciers * tous de même manière,
 Tant ceux du temps passé que du temps d'aujourd'hui :
 Il fit pour nos défauts la poche de derrière,
 Et celle de devant pour les défauts d'autrui.

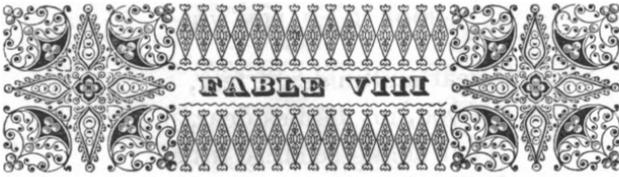
* Portant besace.





Paud.

LEHIRONDELLE ET LES PETITS OISEAUX



THE SWALLOW AND THE LITTLE BIRDS.

By voyages in air,
With constant thought and care,
Much knowledge had a swallow gained,
Which she for public use retained.
The slightest storms she well foreknew,
And told the sailors, ere they blew.
A farmer sowing hemp once having found,
She gathered all the little birds around,
And said, My friends, the freedom let me take
To prophesy a little, for your sake,
Against this dangerous seed.
Though such a bird as I
Knows how to hide or fly,
You birds a caution need.
See you that waving hand?
It scatters on the land
What well may cause alarm.
'Twill grow to nets and snares,
To catch you unawares,
And work you fatal harm!

Great multitudes, I fear,
 Of you, my birdies dear,
 That falling seed, so little,
 Will bring to cage or kettle !
 But though so perilous the plot,
 You now may easily defeat it ;
 All lighting on the seeded spot,
 Just scratch up every seed and eat it.
 The little birds took little heed,
 So fed were they with other seed.
 Anon the field was seen
 Bedecked in tender green.
 The swallow's warning voice was heard again :
 My friends, the product of that deadly grain,
 Seize now, and pull it root by root,
 Or surely you'll repent its fruit.
 False, babbling prophetess, says one,
 You'd set us at some pretty fun ;
 To pull this field a thousand birds are needed,
 While thousands more with hemp are seeded.
 The crop now quite mature,
 The swallow adds, Thus far I've failed of cure ;
 I've prophesied in vain
 Against this fatal grain : —
 It's grown. And now, my bonny birds,
 Though you have disbelieved my words
 Thus far, take heed, at last, —
 When you shall see the seed time past,
 And men, no crops to labor for,
 On birds shall wage their cruel war,



L'Hirondelle et les petits Oiseaux. *

Une hirondelle en ses voyages
A vait beaucoup appris. Quiconque a beaucoup vu
Peut avoir beaucoup retenu.
Celle-ci prévoyoit jusqu'aux moindres orages,
Et devant qu'ils fussent éclos,
Les annonçoit aux matelots.
Il arriva qu'au temps que la chanvre se sème,
Elle vit un manant** en couvrir maints sillons.
Ceci ne me plaît pas, dit-elle aux oisillons;
Je vous plains; car, pour moi, dans ce péril extrême,
Je saurai m'éloigner, ou vivre en quelque coin.
Voyez-vous cette main qui par les airs chemine?
Un jour viendra, qui n'est pas loin,
Que ce qu'elle répand sera votre ruine.
De là naîtront engins à vous envelopper,

* Anonymi Neveleti, 20: de *Hirundine et Avibus*.— Fab. *Æsop*, 327, 290
Hirundo et Aves.

** Ce mot, qui ne se prend plus qu'en mauvaise part, se disait alors pour
désigner un habitant de la campagne.

Et lacets pour vous attraper ;
Enfin mainte et mainte machine
Qui causera dans la saison
Votre mort ou votre prison :
Gare la cage ou le chaudron !
C'est pourquoi, leur dit l'hirondelle ,
Mangez ce grain ; et croyez-moi.
Les oiseaux se moquèrent d'elle :
Ils trouvoient aux champs trop de quoi.
Quand la chenevière fut verte ,
L'hirondelle leur dit : Arrachez brin à brin
Ce qu'a produit ce maudit grain
Ou soyez sûrs de votre perte.
Prophète de malheur ! babillarde ! dit-on ,
Le bel emploi que tu nous donnes !
Il nous faudroit mille personnes
Pour éplucher tout ce canton.
La chanvre étant tout-à-fait crüe ,
L'hirondelle ajouta : Ceci ne va pas bien ;
Mauvaise graine est tôt venue.
Mais , puisque jusqu'ici l'on ne m'a crue en rien ,
Dès que vous verrez que la terre
Sera couverte , et qu'à leurs blés
Les gens n'étant plus occupés
Feront aux oisillons la guerre ;
Quand reginglettes et réseaux
Attraperont petits oiseaux ,
Ne volez plus de place en place ,
Demeurez au logis , ou changez de climat :
Imitez le canard , la grue , et la bécasse.

With deadly net and noose ;
Of flying then beware,
Unless you take the air,
Like woodcock, crane, or goose.
But stop ; you're not in plight
For such adventurous flight,
O'er desert waves and sands,
In search of other lands.
Hence, then, to save your precious souls,
Remaineth but to say,
'Twill be the safest way
To chuck yourselves in holes.
Before she had thus far gone,
The birdlings, tired of hearing,
And laughing more than fearing,
Set up a greater jargon
Than did, before the Trojan slaughter,
The Trojans round old Priam's daughter.
And many a bird, in prison grate,
Lamented soon a Trojan fate.

'Tis thus we heed no instincts but our own ;
Believe no evil, till the evil's done.





FABLE IX

THE CITY RAT AND THE COUNTRY RAT.

A CITY rat, one night,
Did with a civil stoop
A country rat invite
To end a turtle soup.

Upon a Turkey carpet
They found the table spread,
And sure I need not harp it
How well the fellows fed.

The entertainment was
A truly noble one ;
But some unlucky cause
Disturbed it when begun.

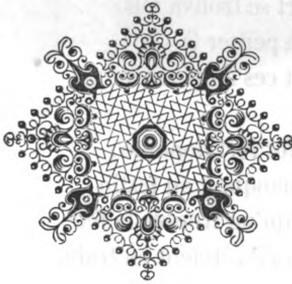
It was a slight rat-tat,
That put their joys to rout ;
Out ran the city rat ;
His guest, too, scampered out.

Mais vous n'êtes pas en état
De passer, comme nous, les déserts et les ondes,
Ni d'aller chercher d'autres mondes :
C'est pourquoi vous n'avez qu'un parti qui soit sûr ;
C'est de vous renfermer au trou de quelque mur.

Les oisillons, loin de l'entendre,
Se mirent à jaser aussi confusément
Que faisoient les Troyens quand la pauvre Cassandre
Ouvroit la bouche seulement.

Il en prit aux uns comme aux autres :
Maint oisillon se vit esclave retenu.

Nous n'écoutons d'instincts que ceux qui sont les nôtres,
Et ne croyons le mal que quand il est venu.





Le Rat de ville et le Rat des champs. *

Autrefois le rat de ville
Invita le rat des champs,
D'une façon fort civile,
A des reliefs d'ortolans.

Sur un tapis de Turquie
Le couvert se trouva mis.
Je laisse à penser la vie
Que firent ces deux amis.

Le régal fut fort honnête ;
Rien ne manquoit au festin :
Mais quelqu'un troubla la fête
Pendant qu'ils étoient en train.

* Horat. lib. II, sat. vi, v. 80.— Apton., 26, *fabula Murium*, *admoneus diligendam esse mediocritatem.*— Anonymi Neveleti, 12, *de Mure urbano et rustico.*— Æsop., 421. *Mus rusticus et Mus domesticus.*



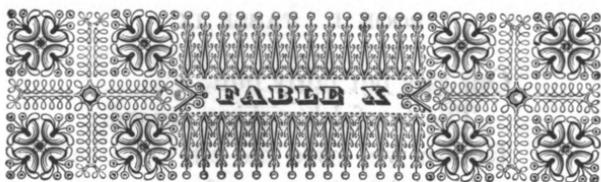
LE RAT DE VILLE ET LE RAT DES CHAMPS

Our rats but fairly quit,
The fearful knocking ceased.
Return we, cried the cit,
To finish there our feast.

No, said the rustic rat ;
To-morrow dine with me.
I'm not offended at
Your feast so grand and free,—

For I've no fare resembling ;
But then I eat at leisure,
And would not swap for pleasure
So mixed with fear and trembling.





THE WOLF AND THE LAMB.

THAT innocence is not a shield,
A story teaches, not the longest.
The strongest reasons always yield
To reasons of the strongest.

A lamb her thirst was slaking
Once at a mountain rill.
A hungry wolf was taking
His hunt for sheep to kill,
When, spying on the streamlet's brink
This sheep of tender age,
He howled in tones of rage,
How dare you roil my drink?
Your impudence I shall chastise!
Let not your majesty, the lamb replies,
Decide in haste or passion;
For, sure, 'tis difficult to think
In what respect or fashion
My drinking here could roil your drink,

A la porte de la salle
Ils entendirent du bruit :
Le rat de ville détail ;
Son camarade le suit.

Le bruit cesse , on se retire.
Rats en campagne aussitôt ;
Et le citadin de dire :
Achevons tout notre rôl.

C'est assez , dit le rustique ;
Demain vous viendrez chez moi.
Ce n'est pas que je me pique
De tous vos festins de rois :

Mais rien ne vient m'interrompre ,
Je mange tout à loisir.
Adieu donc. Fi du plaisir
Que la crainte peut corrompre !





Le Loup et l'Agneau. *

La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure ;
Nous l'allons montrer tout-à-l'heure.

Un agneau se désaltérait
Dans le courant d'une onde pure.

Un loup survient à jeun, qui cherchoit aventure,
Et que la faim en ces lieux attirait.

Qui te rend si hardi de troubler mon breuvage ?

Dit cet animal plein de rage :
Tu seras châtié de ta témérité.

Sire, répond l'agneau, que votre majesté
Ne se mette pas en colère ;
Mais plutôt qu'elle considère
Que je me vas désaltérant

Dans le courant,
Plus de vingt pas au-dessous d'elle ;
Et que par conséquent, en aucune façon ,

* Phædr., I, 4, *Lupus et Agnus*.— Anonymi Neveleti, fab. 2; de *Lupo et Agno*.— Æsop., 101, *Lupus et Agnus*.



LE LOUP ET L'AGNEAU

Since on the stream your majesty now faces
I'm lower down, full twenty paces.

You roil it, said the wolf ; and, more, I know
You cursed and slandered me, a year ago.

O no ! how could I such a thing have done ! —

A lamb that has not seen a year,

A suckling of its mother dear ?

Your brother then. But brother I have none.

Well, well, what's all the same,

'Twas some one of your name.

Sheep, men, and dogs, of every nation,

Are wont to stab my reputation,

As I have truly heard.

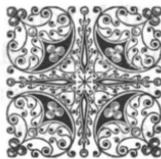
Without another word,

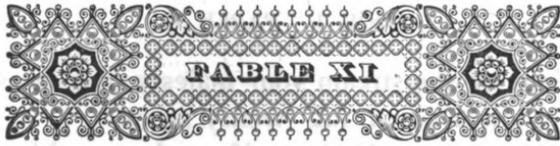
He made his vengeance good, —

Bore off the lambkin to the wood,

And there, without a jury,

Judged, slew, and ate her in his fury.



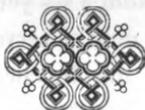


THE MAN AND HIS IMAGE.

TO M. THE DUKE DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

A MAN, who had no rivals in the love
Which to himself he bore,
Esteemed his own dear beauty far above
What earth had seen before.
More than contented in his error,
He lived the foe of every mirror.
Officious fate, resolved our lover
From such an illness should recover,
Presented always to his eyes
The mute advisers which the ladies prize ; —
Mirrors in parlors, inns, and shops, —
Mirrors the pocket furniture of fops, —
Mirrors on every lady's zone,
From which his face reflected shone.
What could our dear Narcissus do ?
From haunts of men he now withdrew,
On purpose that his precious shape
From every mirror might escape.
But in his forest glen alone,
Apart from human trace,

Je ne puis troubler sa boisson.
Tu la troubles ! reprit cette bête cruelle ;
Et je sais que de moi tu médis l'an passé.
Comment l'aurois-je fait si je n'étois pas né ?
Reprit l'agneau ; je tette encor ma mère. —
Si ce n'est toi , c'est donc ton frère. —
Je n'en ai point. — C'est donc quelqu'un des tiens ;
Car vous ne m'épargnez guère ,
Vous, vos bergers, et vos chiens.
On me l'a dit : il faut que je me venge.
Là-dessus, au fond des forêts
Le loup l'emporte, et puis le mange,
Sans autre forme de procès.





L'Homme et son Image.

POUR M. LE DUC DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.*

Un homme qui s'aimoit sans avoir de rivaux
Passoit dans son esprit pour le plus beau du monde :
Il accusoit toujours les miroirs d'être faux ,
Vivant plus que content dans son erreur profonde.
Afin de le guérir , le sort officieux
 Présentoit partout à ses yeux
Les conseillers muets dont se servent nos dames :
Miroirs dans les logis , miroirs chez les marchands ,
 Miroirs aux poches des galants ,
 Miroirs aux ceintures des femmes.
Que fait notre Narcisse ? Il se va confiner
Aux lieux les plus cachés qu'il peut imaginer ,
N'osant plus des miroirs éprouver l'aventure.
Mais un canal , formé par une source pure ,

* L'auteur des *Maximes* , qui avaient été publiées en 1665 , et avaient , dès leur apparition , obtenu beaucoup de succès



L'HOMME ET SON IMAGE

A watercourse,
Of purest source,
While with unconscious gaze
He pierced its waveless face,
Reflected back his own.
Incensed with mingled rage and fright,
He seeks to shun the odious sight ;
But yet that mirror sheet, so clear and still,
He cannot leave, do what he will.

Ere this, my story's drift you plainly see.
From such mistake there is no mortal free.

That obstinate self-lover
The human soul doth cover ;
The mirrors follies are of others,
In which, as all are genuine brothers,
Each soul may see to life depicted
Itself with just such faults afflicted ;
And by that charming, placid brook,
Needless to say, I mean your Maxim Book.



FABLE XII

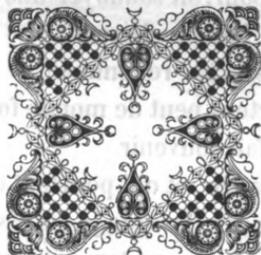
THE DRAGON WITH MANY HEADS, AND THE
DRAGON WITH MANY TAILS.

AN envoy of the Porte Sublime,
As history says, once on a time,
Before th' imperial German court
Did rather boastfully report
The troops commanded by his master's firman,
As being a stronger army than the German :
To which replied a Dutch attendant,
Our prince has more than one dependant
Who keeps an army at his own expense.
The Turk, a man of sense,
Rejoined, I am aware
What power your emperor's servants share.
It brings to mind a tale both strange and true,
A thing which once, myself, I chanced to view.
I saw come darting through a hedge,
Which fortified a rocky ledge,
A hydra's hundred heads ; and in a trice
My blood was turning into ice.
But less the harm than terror, —
The body came no nearer ;

Se trouve en ces lieux écartés :
Il s'y voit, il se fâche ; et ses yeux irrités
Pensent apercevoir une chimère vaine.
Il fait tout ce qu'il peut pour éviter cette eau :
Mais quoi ! le canal est si beau ,
Qu'il ne le quitte qu'avec peine.

On voit bien où je veux venir.

Je parle à tous ; et cette erreur extrême
Est un mal que chacun se plaît d'entretenir.
Notre ame, c'est cet homme amoureux de lui-même,
Tant de miroirs, ce sont les sottises d'autrui ,
Miroirs de nos défauts les peintres légitimes ;
Et quant au canal, c'est celui
Que chacun sait, le livre des Maximes.





Le Dragon à plusieurs têtes, et le Dragon à plusieurs queues.

Un envoyé du grand seigneur
Préféroit, dit l'histoire, un jour, chez l'empereur,
Les forces de son maître à celles de l'empire.

Un Allemand se mit à dire :
Notre prince a des dépendants
Qui, de leur chef, sont si puissants
Que chacun d'eux pourroit soudoyer une armée.

Le chiaoux, homme de sens,
Lui dit : Je sais par renommée
Ce que chaque électeur peut de monde fournir ;
Et cela me fait souvenir
D'une aventure étrange, et qui pourtant est vraie.
J'étois dans un lieu sûr, lorsque je vis passer
Les cent têtes d'une hydre au travers d'une haie.

Mon sang commence à se glacer,
Et je crois qu'à moins on s'effraie.
Je n'en eus toutefois que la peur sans le mal :
Jamais le corps de l'animal



LE DRAGON A PLUSIEURS TÊTES
ET LE DRAGON A PLUSIEURS QUEUES

Nor could, unless it had been sundered
 To parts at least a hundred.
 While deeply musing on this sight,
 Another dragon came to light,
 Whose single head avails
 To lead a hundred tails;
 And, seized with juster fright,
 I saw him pass the hedge, —
 Head, body, tails, — a wedge
 Of living and resistless powers. —
 The other was your emperor's force ; this ours.





THE THIEVES AND THE ASS.

Two thieves, pursuing their profession,
Had of a donkey got possession,
Whereon a strife arose,
Which went from words to blows.
The question was, to sell or not to sell;
But while our sturdy champions fought it well,
Another thief, who chanced to pass,
With ready wit, rode off the ass.

This ass is, by interpretation,
Some province poor, or prostrate nation.
The thieves are princes this and that,
On spoils and plunder prone to fat, —
As those of Austria, Turkey, Hungary.
(Instead of two, I've quoted three —
Enough of such commodity.)
These powers engaged in war all,
Some fourth thief stops the quarrel,
According all to one key
By riding off the donkey.

Ne put venir vers moi, ni trouver d'ouverture.

Je rêvois à cette aventure

Quand un autre dragon, qui n'avoit qu'un seul chef,
Et bien plus d'une queue, à passer se présente.

Me voilà saisi derechef

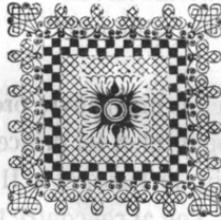
D'étonnement et d'épouvante.

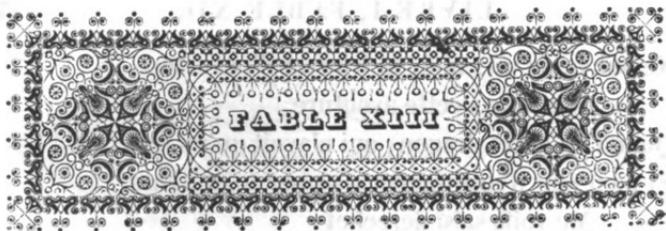
Ce chef passe, et le corps, et chaque queue aussi :

Rien ne les empêcha ; l'un fit chemin à l'autre.

Je soutiens qu'il en est ainsi

De votre empereur et du nôtre.





Les Voleurs et l'Âne. *

Pour un âne enlevé deux voleurs se battoient :
L'un vouloit le garder, l'autre le vouloit vendre.
Tandis que coups de poing trottoient,
Et que nos champions songeoient à se défendre,
Arrive un troisième larron
Qui saisit maître Aliboron **.

L'âne, c'est quelquefois une pauvre province :
Les voleurs sont tel et tel prince,
Comme le Transilvain, le Turc, et le Hongrois.
Au lieu de deux, j'en ai rencontré trois :
Il est assez de cette marchandise.
De nul d'eux n'est souvent la province conquise :
Un quart *** voleur survient, qui les accorde net
En se saisissant du baudet.

* *Æsop.*, 96, *Leo, Ursus, et Vulpes*; 59, *Leo et Ursus*.

** *Maître Aliboron*, expression usitée autrefois pour désigner un âne, ou un ignorant. *Rabelais*, liv. III, chap. XX, appelle un avocat *maître Aliborum*.

*** Pour un quatrième voleur.



LES VOLEURS ET L'ANE



SIMONIDE PRÉSERVÉ PAR LES DIEUX.



SIMONIDES PRESERVED BY THE GODS.

THREE sorts there are, as Malherbe says,
Which one can never overpraise —
The gods, the ladies, and the king ;
And I, for one, endorse the thing.
The heart, praise tickles and entices ;
Of fair one's smile, it oft the price is.
See how the gods sometimes repay it.
Simonides — the ancients say it —
Once undertook, in poem lyric,
To write a wrestler's panegyric ;
Which ere he had proceeded far in,
He found his subject somewhat barren.
No ancestors of great renown,
His sire of some unnoted town,
Himself as little known to fame,
The wrestler's praise was rather tame.
The poet, having made the most of
Whate'er his hero had to boast of,
Digressed, by choice that was not all luck's,
To Castor and his brother Pollux ;
Whose bright career was subject ample,
For wrestlers, sure, a good example.
Our poet fattened on their story,
Gave every fight its place and glory,

Till of his panegyric words
These deities had got two thirds.
All done, the poet's fee
A talent was to be.
But when he comes his bill to settle,
The wrestler, with a spice of mettle,
Pays down a third, and tells the poet,
The balance they may pay who owe it.
The gods than I are rather debtors
To such a pious man of letters.
But still I shall be greatly pleased
To have your presence at my feast,
Among a knot of guests select,
My kin, and friends I most respect.
More fond of character than coffer,
Simonides accepts the offer.
While at the feast the party sit,
And wine provokes the flow of wit,
It is announced that at the gate
Two men, in haste that cannot wait,
Would see the bard. He leaves the table,
No loss at all to'ts noisy gabble.
The men were Leda's twins, who knew
What to a poet's praise was due,
And, thanking, paid him by foretelling
The downfall of the wrestler's dwelling.
From which ill-fated pile, indeed,
No sooner was the poet freed,
Than, props and pillars failing,
Which held aloft the ceiling



Simonide préservé par les Dieux. *

On ne peut trop louer trois sortes de personnes :

Les dieux, sa maîtresse, et son roi.

Malherbe le disoit : j'y souscris, quant à moi ;

Ce sont maximes toujours bonnes.

La louange chatouille et gagne les esprits :

Les faveurs d'une belle en sont souvent le prix.

Voyons comment les dieux l'ont quelquefois payée.

Simonide avoit entrepris

L'éloge d'un athlète ; et, la chose essayée,

Il trouva son sujet plein de récits tout nus.

Les parents de l'athlète étoient gens inconnus ;

Son père, un bon bourgeois ; lui, sans autre mérite :

Matière infertile et petite.

Le poëte d'abord parla de son héros.

Après en avoir dit ce qu'il en pouvoit dire,

Il se jette à côté, se met sur le propos

De Castor et Pollux ; ne manque pas d'écrire

* Phadr , IV, 25 sive 24, *Simonides a Diis servatus.*

Que leur exemple étoit aux lutteurs glorieux ;
 Élève leurs combats , spécifiant les lieux
 Où ces frères s'étoient signalés davantage :
 Enfin l'éloge de ces dieux
 Faisoit les deux tiers de l'ouvrage.
 L'athlète avoit promis d'en payer un talent :
 Mais , quand il le vit , le galant
 N'en donna que le tiers ; et dit , fort franchement ,
 Que Castor et Pollux acquittassent le reste.
 Faites-vous contenter par ce couple céleste.
 Je vous veux traiter cependant :
 Venez souper chez moi ; nous ferons bonne vie :
 Les conviés sont gens choisis ,
 Mes parents , mes meilleurs amis ;
 Soyez donc de la compagnie.
 Simonide promit. Peut-être qu'il eut peur
 De perdre , outre son dû , le gré de sa louange.
 Il vient : l'on festine , l'on mange.
 Chacun étant en belle humeur ,
 Un domestique accourt , l'avertit qu'à la porte
 Deux hommes demandoient à le voir promptement.
 Il sort de table ; et la cohorte
 N'en perd pas un seul coup de dent.
 Ces deux hommes étoient les gémeaux de l'éloge.
 Tous deux lui rendent grace ; et , pour prix de ses vers ,
 Ils l'avertissent qu'il déloge ,
 Et que cette maison va tomber à l'envers.
 La prédiction en fut vraie.
 Un pilier manque ; et le plafonds ,
 Ne trouvant plus rien qui l'étaie ,

So splendid o'er them,
It downward loudly crashed,
The plates and flagons dashed,
And men who bore them ;
And, what was worse,
Full vengeance for the man of verse,
A timber broke the wrestler's thighs,
And wounded many otherwise.

The gossip Fame, of course, took care
Abroad to publish this affair.

A miracle! the public cried, delighted,
No more could god-beloved bard be slighted.
His verse now brought him more than double,
With neither duns, nor care, nor trouble.

Whoe'er laid claim to noble birth
Must buy his ancestors a slice,
Resolved no nobleman on earth
Should overgo him in the price.

From which these serious lessons flow :—

Fail not your praises to bestow

On gods and godlike men. Again,

To sell the product of her pain

Is not degrading to the muse.

Indeed, her art they do abuse,

Who think her wares to use,

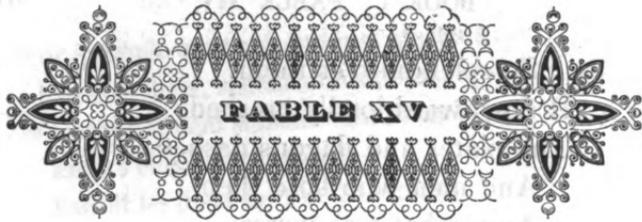
And yet a liberal pay refuse.

Whate'er the great confer upon her,

They're honored by it while they honor.

Of old, Olympus and Parnassus

In friendship heaved their sky-crowned masses.



DEATH AND THE UNFORTUNATE.

A POOR unfortunate, from day to day,
Called Death to take him from this world away.
O Death, he said, to me how fair thy form !
Come quick, and end for me life's cruel storm.
Death heard, and, with a ghastly grin,
Knocked at his door, and entered in.
With horror shivering, and affright,
Take out this object from my sight,
The poor man loudly cried ;
Its dreadful looks I can't abide ;
O stay him, stay him ; let him come no nigher ;
O Death ! O Death ! I pray thee to retire.

A gentleman of note
In Rome, Mæcenas, somewhere wrote : —
Make me the poorest wretch that begs,
Sore, hungry, crippled, clothed in rags,
In hopeless impotence of arms and legs ;
Provided, after all, you give
The one sweet liberty to live,
I'll ask of Death no greater favor
Than just to stay away forever.

Tombe sur le festin , brise plats et flacons ,
N'en fait pas moins aux échantons.
Ce ne fut pas le pis : car, pour rendre complète
La vengeance due au poëte ,
Une poutre cassa les jambes à l'athlète ,
Et renvoya les conviés
Pour la plupart estropiés.

La renommée eut soin de publier l'affaire :
Chacun cria , Miracle ! On doubla le salaire
Que méritoient les vers d'un homme aimé des dieux.

Il n'étoit fils de bonne mère
Qui , les payant à qui mieux mieux ,
Pour ses ancêtres n'en fit faire.

Je reviens à mon texte : et dis premièrement
Qu'on ne sauroit manquer de louer largement
Les dieux et leurs pareils ; de plus , que Melpomène
Souvent , sans déroger , trafique de sa peine ;
Enfin , qu'on doit tenir notre art en quelque prix .
Les grands se font honneur dès-lors qu'ils nous font grace :
Jadis l'Olympe et le Parnasse
Étoient frères et bons amis.





La Mort et le Malheureux. *

Un malheureux appeloit tous les jours

La Mort à son secours.

O Mort ! lui disoit-il, que tu me sembles belle !

Viens vite, viens finir ma fortune cruelle !

La Mort crut, en venant, l'obliger en effet.

Elle frappe à sa porte, elle entre, elle se montre.

Que vois-je ? cria-t-il : ôtez-moi cet objet !

Qu'il est hideux ! que sa rencontre

Me cause d'horreur et d'effroi !

N'approche pas, ô Mort ! ô Mort, retire-toi !

Mécénas fut un galant homme ;

Il a dit quelque part ** : Qu'on me rende impotent,

Cul-de-jatte, goutteux, manchot, pourvu qu'en somme

Je vive, c'est assez, je suis plus que content.

Ne viens jamais, ô Mort, on t'en dit tout autant.

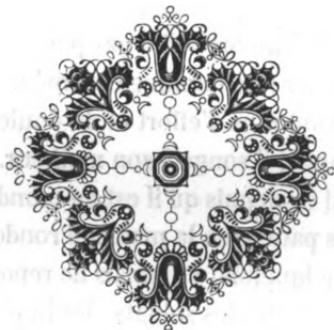
* *Æsop.*, 50, 20, 146, *Senex et Mors*.

** *MÆCENAS* apud *Ann. Senec.* Epistol. c1, *Opera*, t. XI, p. 801, in-8, edit.



LA MORT ET LE MALHEUREUX

Ce sujet a été traité d'une autre façon par Ésope, comme la fable suivante le fera voir. Je composai celle-ci pour une raison qui me contraignoit de rendre la chose ainsi générale. Mais quelqu'un me fit connoître que j'eusse beaucoup mieux fait de suivre mon original, et que je laissois passer un des plus beaux traits qui fût dans Ésope. Cela m'obligea d'y avoir recours. Nous ne saurions aller plus avant que les anciens : ils ne nous ont laissé pour notre part que la gloire de les bien suivre. Je joins toutefois ma fable à celle d'Ésope, non que la mienne le mérite, mais à cause du mot de Mécéas que j'y fais entrer, et qui est si beau, et si à propos, que je n'ai pas cru le devoir omettre.

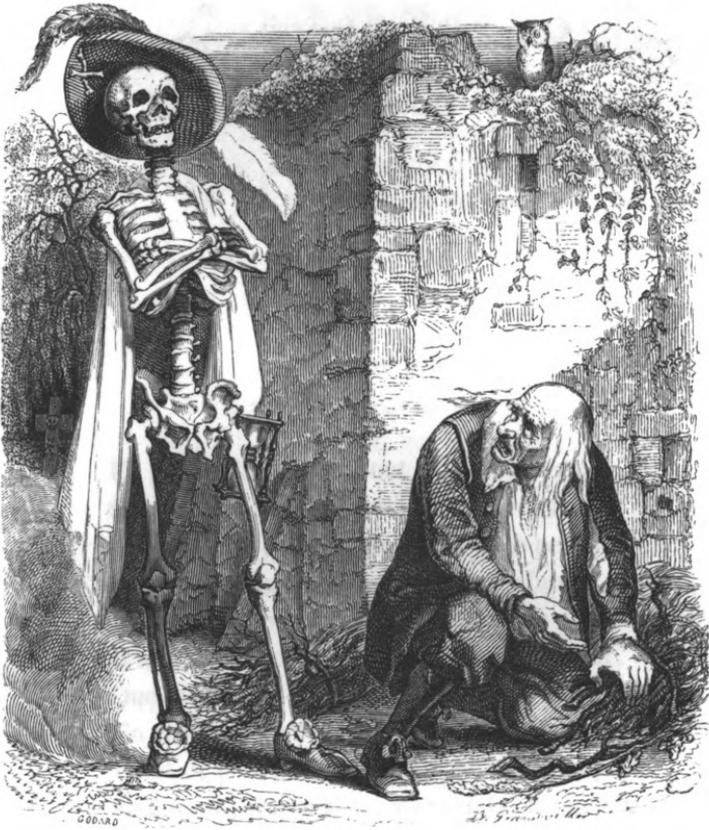




La Mort et le Bûcheron. *

Un pauvre bûcheron, tout couvert de ramée,
Sous le faix du fagot aussi bien que des ans
Gémissant et courbé, marchoit à pas pesants,
Et tâchoit de gagner sa chaumine enfumée.
Enfin, n'en pouvant plus d'effort et de douleur,
Il met bas son fagot, il songe à son malheur.
Quel plaisir a-t-il eu depuis qu'il est au monde ?
En est-il un plus pauvre en la machine ronde ?
Point de pain quelquefois, et jamais de repos :
Sa femme, ses enfants, les soldats, les impôts,
Le créancier, et la corvée,
Lui font d'un malheureux la peinture achevée.
Il appelle la Mort. Elle vient sans tarder,
Lui demande ce qu'il faut faire.

Æsop., 50, 20, 146, *Senex et Mors.*— Corrozet, fabl. 80 *Un Vieillard appelant la mort.*— Guichardin, *Heures de récréations*, trad. de Belleforest, 1605. Anvers, in-12, p. 190.



LA MORT ET LE BUCHERON



FABLE XVI

DEATH AND THE WOODMAN.

A POOR wood-chopper, with his fagot load,
Whom weight of years, as well as load, oppressed,
Sore groaning in his smoky hut to rest,
Trudged wearily along his homeward road.
At last his wood upon the ground he throws,
And sits him down to think o'er all his woes.
To joy a stranger, since his hapless birth,
What poorer wretch upon this rolling earth?
No bread sometimes, and ne'er a moment's rest ;
Wife, children, soldiers, landlords, public tax,
All wait the swinging of his old, worn axe,
And paint the veriest picture of a man unblest.
On Death he calls. Forthwith that monarch grim
Appears, and asks what he should do for him.
Not much, indeed ; a little help I lack
To put these fagots on my back.

Death ready stands all ills to cure,
But let us not his cure invite.
Than die, 'tis better to endure, —
Is both a manly maxim and a right.



THE MAN BETWEEN TWO AGES, AND HIS TWO
MISTRESSES.

A MAN of middle age, whose hair
Was bordering on the gray,
Began to turn his thoughts and care
The matrimonial way.
By virtue of his ready,
A store of choices had he
Of ladies bent to suit his taste ;
On which account he made no haste.
To court well was no trifling art.
Two widows chiefly gained his heart ;
The one yet green, the other more mature,
Who found for nature's wane in art a cure.
These dames, amidst their joking and caressing
The man they longed to wed,
Would sometimes set themselves to dressing
His party-colored head.
Each aiming to assimilate
Her lover to her own estate,
The older piecemeal stole
The black hair from his poll,

C'est, dit-il, afin de m'aider
A recharger ce bois ; tu ne tarderas guère.

Le trépas vient tout guérir ;
Mais ne bougeons d'où nous sommes :
Plutôt souffrir que mourir,
C'est la devise des hommes.





L'Homme entre deux âges, et ses deux Maitresses. *

Un homme de moyen âge,
Et tirant sur le grison,
Jugea qu'il étoit saison
De songer au mariage.
Il avoit du comptant,
Et partant
De quoi choisir ; toutes vouloient lui plaire :
En quoi notre amoureux ne se pressoit pas tant :
Bien adresser n'est pas petite affaire.
Deux veuves sur son cœur eurent le plus de part :
L'une encor verte ; et l'autre un peu bien mûre,
Mais qui réparoit par son art
Ce qu'avoit détruit la nature.
Ces deux veuves, en badinant,
En riant, en lui faisant fête,
L'alloient quelquefois têtonnant,

* Phædr., II, 2, *Anus, Puella et Vir.* — Æsop, 199, 165, *Homo semicanus et Amasice etus.* — Saint Vincent Ferrier. Sermon 3, de *Luxuria*, cité dans Guillaume, *Recherches, etc.*, p. 9-12.



L'HOMME ENTRE DEUX AGES
ET SES DEUX MAÎTRESSES

While eke, with fingers light,
The young one stole the white.
Between them both, as if by scald,
His head was changed from gray to bald.
For these, he said, your gentle pranks,
I owe you, ladies, many thanks.
By being thus well shaved,
I less have lost than saved.
Of Hymen, yet, no news at hand,
I do assure ye.
By what I've lost, I understand
It is in your way,
Not mine, that I must pass on.
Thanks, ladies, for the lesson.





THE FOX AND THE STORK.

OLD Mister Fox was at expense, one day,
To dine old Mistress Stork.
The fare was light, was nothing, sooth to say,
Requiring knife and fork.
That sly old gentleman, the dinner-giver,
Was, you must understand, a frugal liver.
This once, at least, the total matter
Was thinnish soup served on a platter,
For madam's slender beak a fruitless puzzle,
Till all had passed the fox's lapping muzzle.
But little relishing his laughter,
Old gossip Stork, some few days after,
Returned his Foxship's invitation.
Without a moment's hesitation,
He said he'd go, for he must own he
Ne'er stood with friends for ceremony.
And so, precisely at the hour,
He hied him to the lady's bower,
Where, praising her politeness,
He finds her dinner right nice.

C'est-à-dire ajustant sa tête.

La vieille, à tous moments, de sa part emportoit

Un peu du poil noir qui restoit,

Afin que son amant en fût plus à sa guise.

La jeune saccageoit les poils blancs à son tour.

Toutes deux firent tant, que notre tête grise

Demeura sans cheveux, et se douta du tour.

Je vous rends, leur dit-il, mille graces, les belles,

Qui m'avez si bien tondu.

J'ai plus gagné que perdu ;

Car d'hymen point de nouvelles.

Celle que je prendrois voudroit qu'à sa façon

Je vécusse, et non à la mienne.

Il n'est tête chauve qui tienne :

Je vous suis obligé, belles, de la leçon.





Le Renard et la Cigogne. *

Compère le renard se mit un jour en frais,
Et retint à dîner commère la cigogne.

Le régal fut petit, et sans beaucoup d'appêts :

Le galant, pour toute besogne,
Avoit un brouet clair ; il vivoit chichement.

Ce brouet fut par lui servi sur une assiette :
La cigogne au long bec n'en put attraper miette ;
Et le drôle eut lapé le tout en un moment.

Pour se venger de cette tromperie
A quelque temps de là, la cigogne le prie.
Volontiers, lui dit-il ; car avec mes amis

Je ne fais point cérémonie.

A l'heure dite, il courut au logis

De la cigogne son hôtesse ;

Loua très fort sa politesse ;

Trouva le dîner cuit à point :

* Phadr., I, 26, *Vulpes et Ciconia*.



LE RENARD ET LA CIGOGNE

Its punctuality and plenty,
Its viands, cut in mouthfuls dainty,
Its fragrant smell, were powerful to excite,
Had there been need, his foxish appetite.
But now the dame, to torture him,

Such wit was in her,
Served up her dinner
In vases made so tall and slim,
They let their owner's beak pass in and out,
But not, by any means, the fox's snout!

All arts without avail,
With drooping head and tail,
As ought a fox a fowl had cheated,
The hungry guest at last retreated.

Ye knaves, for you is this recital,
You'll often meet Dame Stork's requital.





THE BOY AND THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Wise counsel is not always wise,
As this my tale exemplifies.
A boy, that frolicked on the banks of Seine,
Fell in, and would have found a watery grave,
Had not that hand that planteth ne'er in vain
A willow planted there, his life to save.
While hanging by its branches as he might,
A certain sage preceptor came in sight ;
To whom the urchin cried, Save, or I'm drowned.
The master, turning gravely at the sound,
Thought proper for a while to stand aloof,
And give the boy some seasonable reproof.
You little wretch! this comes of foolish playing,
Commands and precepts disobeying.
A naughty rogue, no doubt, you are,
Who thus requite your parents' care.
Alas! their lot I pity much,
Whom fate condemns to watch o'er such.
This having coolly said, and more,
He pulled the drowning lad ashore.

Bon appétit surtout ; renards n'en manquent point.

Il se réjouissoit à l'odeur de la viande

Mise en menus morceaux , et qu'il croyoit friande.

On servit , pour l'embarrasser ,

En un vase à long col et d'étroite embouchure.

Le bec de la cigogne y pouvoit bien passer ;

Mais le museau du sire étoit d'autre mesure.

Il lui fallut à jeun retourner au logis

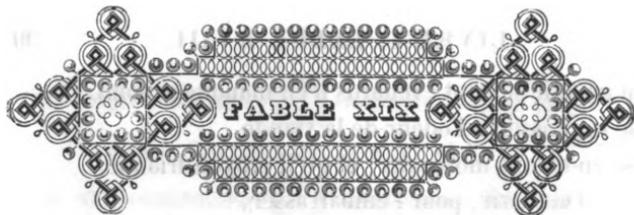
Honteux comme un renard qu'une poule auroit pris ,

Serrant la queue , et portant bas l'oreille.

Trompeurs , c'est pour vous que j'écris :

Attendez-vous à la pareille.





L'Enfant et le Maître d'école *

Dans ce récit je prétends faire voir
D'un certain sot la remontrance vaine.

Un jeune enfant dans l'eau se laissa choir,
En badinant sur les bords de la Seine.
Le ciel permit qu'un saule se trouva,
Dont le branchage, après Dieu, le sauva.
S'étant pris, dis-je, aux branches de ce saule,
Par cet endroit passe un maître d'école ;
L'enfant lui crie : Au secours ! je péris.
Le magister, se tournant à ses cris,
D'un ton fort grave à contre-temps s'avise
De le tancer : Ah ! le petit babouin !
Voyez, dit-il, où l'a mis sa sottise !
Et puis prenez de tels fripons le soin !
Que les parents sont malheureux, qu'il faille
Toujours veiller à semblable canaille !

* Lokman, 25, *l'Enfant* — Rabelais, liv. I. 42.



L'ENFANT ET LE MAITRE D'ÉCOLE

This story hits more marks than you suppose.
All critics, pedants, men of endless prose, —
Three sorts so richly blessed with progeny,
The house is blessed that doth not lodge any, —
May in it see themselves from head to toes.
No matter what the task,
Their precious tongues must teach ;
Their help in need you ask,
You first must hear them preach.

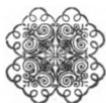




THE COCK AND THE PEARL.

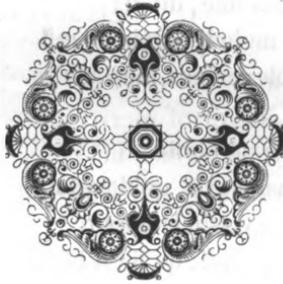
A cock scratched up, one day,
A pearl of purest ray,
Which to a jeweller he bore.
I think it fine, he said,
But yet a crumb of bread
To me were worth a great deal more.

So did a dunce inherit
A manuscript of merit,
Which to a publisher he bore.
'Tis good, said he, I'm told,
Yet any coin of gold
To me were worth a great deal more.



Qu'ils ont de maux ! et que je plains leur sort !
Ayant tout dit, il mit l'enfant à bord.

Je blâme ici plus de gens qu'on ne pense.
Tout babillard, tout censeur, tout pédant,
Se peut connoître au discours que j'avance.
Chacun des trois fait un peuple fort grand :
Le Créateur en a béni l'engeance.
En toute affaire, ils ne font que songer
 Au moyen d'exercer leur langue.
' Eh ! mon ami, tire-moi de danger ;
 Tu feras après ta harangue.





Le Coq et la Perle. *

Un jour un coq détourna
Une perle, qu'il donna
Au beau premier lapidaire
Je la crois fine, dit-il ;
Mais le moindre grain de mil
Seroit bien mieux mon affaire.

Un ignorant hérita
D'un manuscrit, qu'il porta
Chez son voisin le libraire.
Je crois, dit-il, qu'il est bon ;
Mais le moindre ducaton
Seroit bien mieux mon affaire.

* Phædr., III. 12, *Pullus ad Margaritam*. — Anonymi Neveleti, I, *de Gallis et Jaspide*.



LE COQ ET LA PERLE



LES FRELONS ET LES MOUCHES A MIEL



THE HORNETS AND THE BEES.

THE artist by his work is known.

A piece of honey-comb, one day,
Discovered as a waif and stray,
The hornets treated as their own.
Their title did the bees dispute,
And brought before a wasp the suit.
The judge was puzzled to decide,
For nothing could be testified,
Save that around this honey-comb
There had been seen, as if at home,
Some longish, brownish, buzzing creatures,
Much like the bees in wings and features.
But what of that? for marks the same,
The hornets, too, could truly claim.

Between assertion and denial,
The wasp, in doubt, proclaimed new trial;
And, hearing what an ant-hill swore,
Could see no clearer than before.
What use, I pray, of this expense?
At last exclaimed a bee of sense.

We've labored months in this affair,
And now are only where we were.

Meanwhile the honey runs to waste :
'Tis time the judge should show some haste.
The parties, sure, have had sufficient bleeding,
Without more fuss of scrawls and pleading.
Let's set ourselves at work, these drones and we,
And then all eyes the truth may plainly see,
Whose art it is that can produce
The magic cells, the nectar juice.

The hornets, flinching on their part,
Show that the work transcends their art.
The wasp at length their title sees,
And gives the honey to the bees.

Would God that suits at law with us
Might all be managed thus !
That we might, in the Turkish mode,
Have simple common sense for code !
They then were short and cheap affairs,
Instead of stretching on like ditches,
Ingulfing in their course all riches, —
The parties leaving, for their shares,
The shells (and shells there might be moister)
From which the court has sucked the oyster !





Les Frelons et les Mouches à miel. * *Vespa judice.*

A l'œuvre on connoît l'artisan.

Quelques rayons de miel sans maître se trouvèrent :

Des frelons les réclamèrent ;

Des abeilles s'opposant,

Devant certain guêpe on traduisit la cause.

Il étoit malaisé de décider la chose :

Les témoins déposoient qu'autour de ces rayons

Des animaux ailés, bourdonnants, un peu longs,

De couleur fort tannée, et tels que les abeilles,

Avoient long-temps paru. Mais quoi ! dans les frelons

Ces enseignes étoient pareilles.

La guêpe, ne sachant que dire à ces raisons,

Fit enquête nouvelle, et pour plus de lumière,

Entendit une fourmilière.

Le point n'en put être éclairci.

De grâce, à quoi bon tout ceci ?

* Phædr. III, 13, *Apes et Fuci, Vespa judice.*

Dit une abeille fort prudente.
 Depuis tantôt six mois que la cause est pendante,
 Nous voici comme aux premiers jours.
 Pendant cela le miel se gâte.
 Il est temps désormais que le juge se hâte :
 N'a-t-il point assez léché l'ours ?
 Sans tant de contredits et d'interlocutoires,
 Et de fatras et de grimoires,
 Travaillons, les frelons et nous :
 On verra qui sait faire, avec un suc si doux,
 Des cellules si bien bâties.
 Le refus des frelons fit voir
 Que cet art passoit leur savoir ;
 Et la guêpe adjugea le miel à leurs parties.

Plût à Dieu qu'on réglât ainsi tous les procès !
 Que des Turcs en cela l'on suivît la méthode !
 Le simple sens commun nous tiendrait lieu de code :
 Il ne faudroit point tant de frais ;
 Au lieu qu'on nous mange, on nous gruge ;
 On nous mine par des longueurs ;
 On fait tant, à la fin, que l'huître est pour le juge,
 Les écailles pour les plaideurs. *

* Voyez ci-après, livre IX, fable ix.





LE GÉANT ET LE ROSEAU



THE OAK AND THE REED.

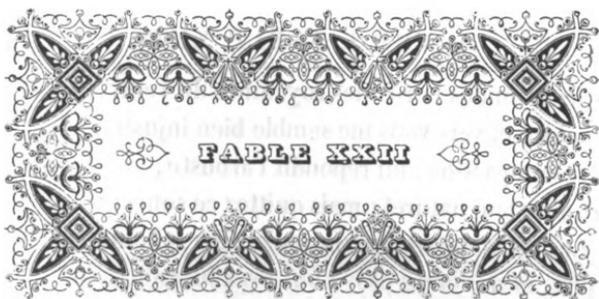
THE oak, one day, addressed the reed : —
To you ungenerous indeed
Has nature been, my humble friend,
With weakness aye obliged to bend.
The smallest bird that flits in air
Is quite too much for you to bear ;
The slightest wind that wreaths the lake
Your ever-trembling head doth shake.

The while, my towering form
Dares with the mountain top
The solar blaze to stop,
And wrestle with the storm.

What seems to you the blast of death,
To me is but a zephyr's breath.
Beneath my branches had you grown,
That spread far round their friendly bower,
Less suffering would your life have known,
Defended from the tempest's power.
Unhappily, you oftenest show
In open air your slender form,
Along the marshes, wet and low,
That fringe the kingdom of the storm.

To you, declare I must,
Dame Nature seems unjust.
Then modestly replied the reed,
Your pity, sir, is kind indeed,
But wholly needless for my sake.
The wildest wind that ever blew
Is safe to me, compared with you.
I bend, indeed, but never break.
Thus far, I own, the hurricane
Has beat your sturdy back in vain ;
But wait the end. Just at the word,
The tempest's hollow voice was heard.
The North sent forth her fiercest child,
Dark, jagged, pitiless, and wild.
The oak, erect, endured the blow ;
The reed bowed gracefully and low.
But, gathering up its strength once more,
In greater fury than before,
The savage blast
O'erthrew, at last,
That proud, old, sky-encircled head,
Whose feet entwined the empire of the dead !





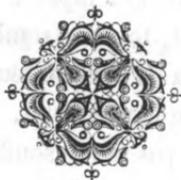
Le Chêne et le Roseau. *

Le chêne un jour dit au roseau :
Vous avez bien sujet d'accuser la nature ;
Un roitelet pour vous est un pesant fardeau ;
Le moindre vent qui d'aventure
Fait rider la face de l'eau
Vous oblige à baisser la tête ;
Cependant que mon front , au Caucase pareil ,
Non content d'arrêter les rayons du soleil ,
Brave l'effort de la tempête.
Tout vous est aquilon , tout me semble zéphyr.
Encor si vous naissiez à l'abri du feuillage
Dont je couvre le voisinage ,
Vous n'auriez pas tant à souffrir ;
Je vous défendrais de l'orage :
Mais vous naissez le plus souvent

* Avienus, fab. 16, *Quercus et Arundo*.—Æsop., 54, 145, *Arundo et Oliva*.

Sur les humides bords des royaumes du vent.
La nature envers vous me semble bien injuste.
Votre compassion, lui répondit l'arbuste,
Part d'un bon naturel : mais quittez ce souci ;
Les vents me sont moins qu'à vous redoutables ;
Je plie, et ne romps pas. Vous avez jusqu'ici
Contre leurs coups épouvantables
Résisté sans courber le dos ;
Mais attendons la fin. Comme il disoit ces mots ,
Du bout de l'horizon accourt avec furie
Le plus terrible des enfants
Que le nord eût portés jusque-là dans ses flancs.
L'arbre tient bon ; le roseau plie.
Le vent redouble ses efforts ,
Et fait si bien qu'il déracine
Celui de qui la tête au ciel étoit voisine ,
Et dont les pieds touchoient à l'empire des morts.

FIN DU LIVRE PREMIER.







CONTRE CEUX QUI ONT LE GOUT DIFFICILE



FABLE FIRST.

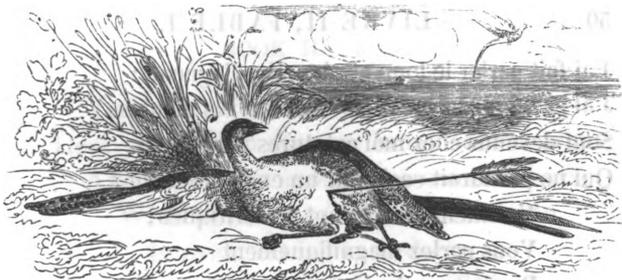
AGAINST THE HARD TO SUIT.

HERE I a pet of fair Calliope,
 I would devote the gifts conferred on me
 To dress in verse old Æsop's lies divine ;
 For verse, and they, and truth, do well combine.
 But, not a favorite on the Muses' hill,
 I dare not arrogate the magic skill
 To ornament these charming stories.
 A bard might brighten up their glories,



No doubt. I try—what one more wise must do.
Thus much I have accomplished hitherto ;—
 By help of my translation,
 The beasts hold conversation
In French, as ne'er they did before.
Indeed, to claim a little more,
The plants and trees, with smiling features,
Are turned by me to talking creatures.
Who says that this is not enchanting ?
Ah, say the critics, hear what vaunting
From one whose work, all told, no more is
Than half a dozen baby-stories.

Would you a theme more credible, my censors,
In graver tone, and style which now and then soars ?
Then list ! For ten long years the men of Troy,
By means that only heroes can employ,
Had held the allied hosts of Greece at bay, —
Their minings, batterings, stormings, day by day,
Their hundred battles on the crimson plain,
Their blood of thousand heroes, all in vain, —
When, by Minerva's art, a horse of wood,
Of lofty size, before their city stood,
Whose flanks immense the sage Ulysses hold,
Brave Diomed, and Ajax fierce and bold,
Whom, with their myrmidons, the huge machine
Would bear within the fated town unseen,
To wreak upon its very gods their rage —
Unheard-of stratagem, in any age,
Which well its crafty authors did repay
 Enough, enough, our critic folks will say ;

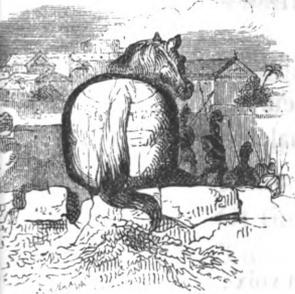


FABLE PREMIÈRE.

Contre ceux qui ont le goût difficile. *

QUAND j'aurois en naissant reçu de Calliope
Les dons qu'à ses amants cette muse a promis,
Je les consacrerois aux mensonges d'Ésope :
Le mensonge et les vers de tout temps sont amis.
Mais je ne me crois pas si chéri du Parnasse
Que de savoir orner toutes ces fictions.
On peut donner du lustre à leurs inventions :
On le peut, je l'essaie ; un plus savant le fasse.
Cependant jusqu'ici d'un langage nouveau

* Phædr., IV, 7, Phædrus.



J'ai fait parler le loup et répondre l'agneau :
J'ai passé plus avant ; les arbres et les plantes
Sont devenus chez moi créatures parlantes.
Qui ne prendrait ceci pour un enchantement ?

Vraiment, me diront nos critiques,

Vous parlez magnifiquement

De cinq ou six contes d'enfant.

Censeurs, en voulez-vous qui soient plus authentiques,
Et d'un style plus haut ? En voici. Les Troyens,
Après dix ans de guerre autour de leurs murailles,
Avoient lassé les Grecs, qui, par mille moyens,

Par mille assauts, par cent batailles,

N'avoient pu mettre à bout cette fière cité :

Quand un cheval de bois par Minerve inventé,

D'un rare et nouvel artifice,

Dans ses énormes flancs reçut le sage Ulysse,

Le vaillant Diomède, Ajax l'impétueux,

Que ce colosse monstrueux

Avec leurs escadrons devoit porter dans Troie,

Livrant à leur fureur ses dieux mêmes en proie :

Stratagème inouï, qui des fabricateurs

Paya la constance et la peine...

C'est assez, me dira quelqu'un de nos auteurs :

La période est longue, il faut reprendre haleine ;

Et puis votre cheval de bois,

Vos héros avec leurs phalanges,

Ce sont des contes plus étranges

Qu'un renard qui cajole un corbeau sur sa voix :

De plus, il vous sied mal d'écrire en si haut style.

Eh bien ! baissions d'un ton. La jalouse Amarylle

Your period excites alarm,
 Lest you should do your lungs some harm ;
 And then your monstrous wooden horse,
 With squadrons in it, at their ease,
 Is even harder to endorse
 Than Renard cheating Raven of his cheese.
 And, more than that, it fits you ill
 To wield the old heroic quill.

Well, then, a humbler tone, if such your will is.
 Long sighed and pined the jealous Amaryllis
 For her Alcippus, in the sad belief,
 None, save her sheep and dog, would know her grief.
 Thyrsis, who knows, among the willows slips,
 And hears the gentle shepherdess's lips
 Beseech the kind and gentle zephyr
 To bear these accents to her lover

Stop, says my censor :
 To laws of rhyme quite irreducible,
 That couplet needs again the crucible ;
 Poetic men, sir,
 Must nicely shun the shocks
 Of rhymes unorthodox.

A curse on critics ! hold your tongue !
 Know I not how to end my song ?
 Of time and strength what greater waste
 Than my attempt to suit your taste ?

Some men, more nice than wise,
 There's nought that satisfies.



THE COUNCIL HELD BY THE RATS.

OLD Rodilard, a certain cat,
Such havoc of the rats had made,
'Twas difficult to find a rat
With nature's debt unpaid.
The few that did remain,
To leave their holes afraid,
From usual food abstain,
Not eating half their fill.
And wonder no one will,
That one who made on rats his revel,
With rats passed not for cat, but devil.
Now, on a day, this dread rat-eater,
Who had a wife, went out to meet her ;
And while he held his caterwauling,
The unkilld rats, their chapter calling,
Discussed the point, in grave debate,
How they might shun impending fate.
Their dean, a prudent rat,
Thought best, and better soon than late,
To bell the fatal cat ;

Songeoit à son Alcippe, et croyoit de ses soins
 N'avoir que ses moutons et son chien pour témoins.
 Tircis, qui l'aperçut, se glisse entre des saules ;
 Il entend la bergère adressant ces paroles

Au doux zéphyr, et le priant

De les porter à son amant...

Je vous arrête à cette rime,

Dira mon censeur à l'instant ;

Je ne la tiens pas légitime,

Ni d'une assez grande vertu :

Remettez, pour le mieux, ces deux vers à la fonte...

Maudit censeur ! te tairas-tu ?

Ne saurois-je achever mon conte ?

C'est un dessein très dangereux

Que d'entreprendre de te plaire.

Les délicats sont malheureux :

Rien ne sauroit le satisfaire.





Conseil tenu par les Rats. *

Un chat, nommé Rodilardus, **
Faisoit de rats telle déconfiture,
Que l'on n'en voyoit presque plus,
Tant il en avait mis dedaus la sépulture.
Le peu qu'il en restoit, n'osant quitter son trou,
Ne trouvoit à manger que le quart de son souël ;
Et Rodilard passoit, chez la gent misérable,
Non pour un chat, mais pour un diable.
Or, un jour qu'au haut et au loïn
Le galant alla chercher femme,
Pendant tout le sabbat qu'il fit avec sa dame,
Le demeurant des rats tint chapitre en un coin
Sur la nécessité présente.
Dès l'abord, leur doyen, personne fort prudente,
Opina qu'il falloit, et plus tôt que plus tard,
Attacher un grelot au cou de Rodilard ;

* Abstemijs, 195, de *Muribus tintinnabulum Feli appendere volentibus*. —
Faerni *Fabulæ*, 1697, in-12, lib. IV, fab. 4. *Mures*.

** Dans le *Pantagruel* de Rabelais, le célèbre chat Rodilard ou rongeur de
lard joue aussi un rôle (liv. IV, chap. 6 et 7)



CONSEIL TENU PAR LES RATS

That, when he took his hunting round,
The rats, well cautioned by the sound,
Might hide in safety under ground ;
Indeed he knew no other means.

And all the rest

At once confessed

Their minds were with the dean's.
No better plan, they all believed,
Could possibly have been conceived.
No doubt the thing would work right well,
If any one would hang the bell.

But, one by one, said every rat,

I'm not so big a fool as that.

The plan, knocked up in this respect,
The council closed without effect.

And many a council I have seen,
Or reverend chapter with its dean,

That, thus resolving wisely,

Fell through like this precisely.

To argue or refute

Wise counsellors abound ;

The man to execute

Is harder to be found.





THE WOLF ACCUSING THE FOX BEFORE
THE MONKEY.

A WOLF, affirming his belief,
That he had suffered by a thief,
Brought up his neighbor fox —
Of whom it was by all confessed,
His character was not the best —
To fill the prisoner's box.
As judge between these vermin,
A monkey graced the ermine ;
And truly other gifts of Themis
Did scarcely seem his ;
For while each party plead his cause,
Appealing boldly to the laws,
And much the question vexed,
Our monkey sat perplexed.

Their words and wrath expended,
Their strife at length was ended ;
When, by their malice taught,
The judge this judgment brought : —
Your characters, my friends, I long have known,
As on this trial clearly shown ;

Qu'ainsi, quand il iroit en guerre,
De sa marche avertis, ils s'enfuirent sous terre ;
Qu'il n'y savoit que ce moyen.
Chacun fut de l'avis de monsieur le doyen ;
Chose ne leur parut à tous plus salutaire.
La difficulté fut d'attacher le grelot.
L'un dit : Je n'y vas point, je ne suis pas si sot ;
L'autre : Je ne saurois. Si bien que sans rien faire
On se quitta. J'ai maints chapitres vus,
Qui pour néant se sont ainsi tenus ;
Chapitres, non de rats, mais chapitres de moines,
Voire chapitres de chanoines.

Ne faut-il que délibérer ?
La cour en conseillers foisonne :
Est-il besoin d'exécuter ?
L'on ne rencontre plus personne.





FABLE III

Le Loup plaidant contre le Renard par-devant le Singe. *

Un loup disoit que l'on l'avoit volé :
Un renard, son voisin, d'assez mauvaise vie,
Pour ce prétendu vol par lui fut appelé.
Devant le singe il fut plaidé,
Non point par avocats, mais par chaque partie.
Thémis n'avoit point travaillé,
De mémoire de singe, à fait plus embrouillé.
Le magistrat suoit en son lit de justice.
Après qu'on eut bien contesté,
Répliqué, crié, tempêté,
Le juge, instruit de leur malice,
Leur dit : Je vous connois de long-temps, mes amis ;
Et tous deux vous paierez l'amende :
Car toi, loup, tu te plains, quoiqu'on ne t'ait rien pris ;
Et toi, renard, as pris ce que l'on te demande.

* Phædr., 1, 10, *Lupus et Vulpes, judice Simlo.*

And hence I fine you both — the grounds at large
To state, would little profit —
You wolf, in short, as bringing groundless charge,
You fox, as guilty of it.

Come at it right or wrong, the judge opined
No other than a villain could be fined.





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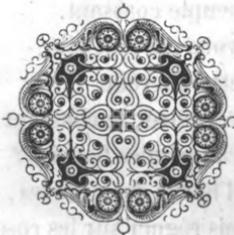


THE TWO BULLS AND THE FROG.

Two bulls engaged in shocking battle,
Both for a certain heifer's sake,
And lordship over certain cattle ;
A frog began to groan and quake.
But what is this to you ?
Inquired another of the croaking crew.
Why, sister, don't you see,
The end of this will be,
That one of these big brutes will yield,
And then be exiled from the field ?
No more permitted on the grass to feed,
He'll forage, through our marsh, on rush and reed ;
And, while he eats or chews the cud,
Will trample on us in the mud.
Alas ! to think how frogs must suffer
By means of this proud lady heifer !
This fear was not without good sense.
One bull was beat, and much to their expense ;

Le juge prétendoit qu'à tort et à travers
On ne sauroit manquer, condamnant un pervers.

Quelques personnes de bon sens ont cru que l'impossibilité et la contradiction qui est dans le jugement de ce singe étoient une chose à censurer : mais je ne m'en suis servi qu'après Phèdre ; et c'est en cela que consiste le bon mot, selon mon avis.

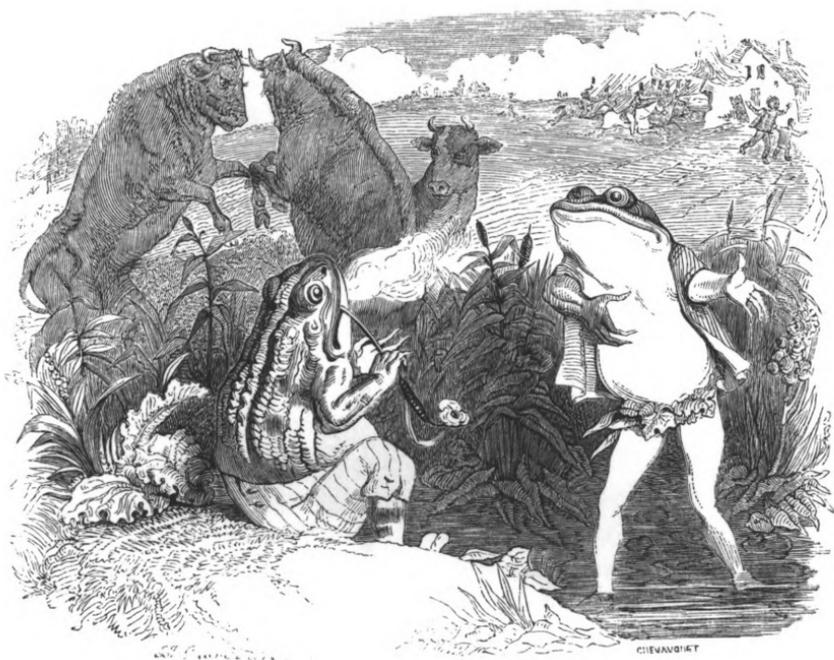




Les deux Taureaux et une Grenouille. *

Deux taureaux combattoient à qui posséderoit
Une génisse avec l'empire.
Une grenouille en soupiroit.
Qu'avez-vous? se mit à lui dire
Quelqu'un du peuple coassant.
Eh! ne voyez-vous pas, dit-elle,
Que la fin de cette querelle
Sera l'exil de l'un; que l'autre, le chassant,
Le fera renoncer aux campagnes fleuries?
Il ne régnera plus sur l'herbe des prairies,
Viendra dans nos marais régner sur les roseaux;
Et, nous foulant aux pieds jusques au fond des eaux,
Tantôt l'une, et puis l'autre, il faudra qu'on pâtisse
Du combat qu'a causé madame la génisse.
Cette crainte étoit de bon sens.
L'un des taureaux en leur demeure
S'alla cacher à leurs dépens :

* Phædr., I, 50, *Ranæ et Tauri*.



LES DEUX TAUREAUX ET LA GRENOUILLE

For, quick retreating to their reedy bower,
He trod on twenty of them in an hour.

Of little folks it oft has been the fate
To suffer for the follies of the great.

THE BAT AND THE TWO WEASELS





THE BAT AND THE TWO WEASELS.

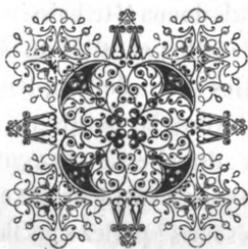
A BLUNDERING bat once stuck her head
Into a wakeful weasel's bed ;
Whereat the mistress of the house,
A deadly foe of rats and mice,
Was making ready in a trice
To eat the stranger as a mouse.

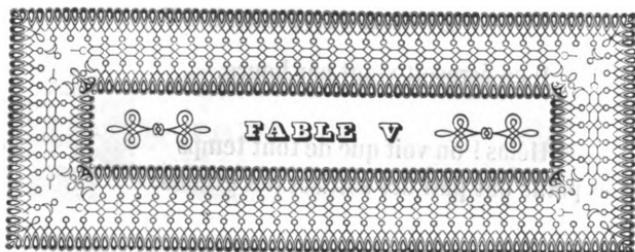
What ! do you dare, she said, to creep in
The very bed I sometimes sleep in,
Now, after all the provocation
I've suffered from your thievish nation ?
Are you not really a mouse,
That gnawing pest of every house,
Your special aim to do the cheese ill ?
Ay, that you are, or I'm no weasel.

I beg your pardon, said the bat ;
My kind is very far from that.
What ! I a mouse ! Who told you such a lie ?
Why, ma'am, I am a bird ;
And, if you doubt my word,
Just see the wings with which I fly.
Long live the mice that cleave the sky !

Il en écrasoit vingt par heure.

Hélas ! on voit que de tout temps
Les petits ont pâti des sottises des grands.





La Chauve-Souris et les deux Belettes. *

Une chauve-souris donna tête baissée
Dans un nid de belette ; et , sitôt qu'elle y fut ,
L'autre , envers les souris de long-temps courroucée ,
Pour la dévorer accourut.
Quoi ! vous osez , dit-elle , à mes yeux vous produire ,
Après que votre race a tâché de me nuire !
N'êtes-vous pas souris ? parlez sans fiction.
Oui , vous l'êtes ; ou bien je ne suis pas belette.
Pardonnez-moi , dit la pauvrete ,
Ce n'est pas ma profession.
Moi , souris ! des méchants vous ont dit ces nouvelles.
Grace à l'auteur de l'univers ,
Je suis oiseau ; voyez mes ailes :
Vive la gent qui fend les airs !
Sa raison plut , et sembla bonne.
Elle fait si bien qu'on lui donne
Liberté de se retirer.

* *Æsop.*, 123, 109, *Vespertilio et Mustela*.



LA CHAUVIE-SOURIS ET LES DEUX BELETTES

These reasons had so fair a show,
The weasel let the creature go.
By some strange fancy led,
The same wise blunderhead,
But two or three days later,
Had chosen for her rest
Another weasel's nest,
This last, of birds a special hater.
New peril brought this step absurd.
Without a moment's thought or puzzle,
Dame weasel oped her peaked muzzle
To eat th' intruder as a bird.
Hold! do not wrong me, cried the bat;
I'm truly no such thing as that.
Your eyesight strange conclusions gathers.
What makes a bird, I pray? Its feathers.
I'm cousin of the mice and rats.
Great Jupiter confound the cats!
The bat, by such adroit replying,
Twice saved herself from dying.
And many a human stranger
Thus turns his coat in danger;
And sings, as suits where'er he goes,
God save the king! — or, save his foes!





THE BIRD WOUNDED BY AN ARROW.

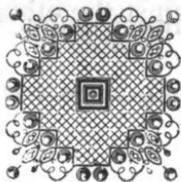
A BIRD, with pluméd arrow shot,
In dying case deplored her lot :
Alas ! she cried, the anguish of the thought !
This ruin partly by myself was brought !
Hard-hearted men ! from us to borrow
What wings to us the fatal arrow !
But mock us not, ye cruel race,
For you must often take our place.

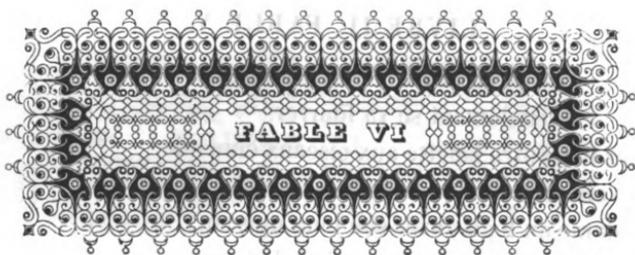
The work of half the human brothers
Is making arms against the others.



Deux jours après, notre étourdie
Aveuglément se va fourrer
Chez une autre belette aux oiseaux ennemie.
La voilà derechef en danger de sa vie.
La dame du logis, avec son long museau,
S'en alloit la croquer en qualité d'oiseau,
Quand elle protesta qu'on lui faisoit outrage.
Moi, pour telle passer ! Vous n'y regardez pas.
Qui fait l'oiseau ? c'est le plumage.
Je suis souris, vivent les rats !
Jupiter confonde les chats !
Par cette adroite répartie
Elle sauva deux fois sa vie.

Plusieurs se sont trouvés qui, d'écharpe changeants,
Aux dangers, ainsi qu'elle, ont souvent fait la figue.
Le sage dit, selon les gens :
Vive le roi ! vive la ligue !





L'Oiseau blessé d'une flèche. *

Mortellement atteint d'une flèche empennée,
Un oiseau déplorait sa triste destinée,
Et disoit, en souffrant un surcroît de douleur :
Faut-il contribuer à son propre malheur ?
 Cruels humains ! vous tirez de nos ailes
De quoi faire voler ces machines mortelles !
Mais ne vous moquez point, engeance sans pitié :
Souvent il vous arrive un sort comme le nôtre.
Des enfants de Japet toujours une moitié
 Fournira des armes à l'autre.

* *Æsop.*, 218, *Sagittarius et Aquila*; 135, *Aquila*.



L'OISEAU BLESSÉ D'UNE FLÈCHE



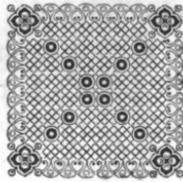
LA LIGIE ET SA COMPAGNIE



THE BITCH AND HER FRIEND.

A BITCH, that felt her time approaching,
And had no place for parturition,
Went to a female friend, and, broaching
Her delicate condition,
Got leave herself to shut
Within the other's hut.
At proper time the lender came
Her little premises to claim.
The bitch crawled meekly to the door,
And humbly begged a fortnight more.
Her little pups, she said, could hardly walk.
In short, the lender yielded to her talk.
The second term expired, the friend had come
To take possession of her house and home.
The bitch, this time, as if she would have bit her,
Replied, I'm ready, madam, with my litter,
To go when you can turn me out.
Her pups, you see, were fierce and stout.

The creditor, from whom a villain borrows,
Will fewer shillings get again than sorrows.
If you have trusted people of this sort,
You'll have to plead, and dun, and fight; in short,
If in your house you let one step a foot,
He'll surely step the other in to boot.





La Lice et sa Compagne. *

Une lice étant sur son terme,
Et ne sachant où mettre un fardeau si pressant,
Fait si bien qu'à la fin sa compagne consent
De lui prêter sa hutte, où la lice s'enferme.
Au bout de quelque temps sa compagne revient.
La lice lui demande encore une quinzaine ;
Ses petits ne marchaient, disoit-elle, qu'à peine.

 Pour faire court, elle l'obtient.

Ce second terme échu, l'autre lui redemande
 Sa maison, sa chambre, son lit.
La lice cette fois montre les dents, et dit :
Je suis prête à sortir avec toute ma bande,
 Si vous pouvez nous mettre hors.
 Ses enfants étoient déjà forts.

Ce qu'on donne aux méchants, toujours on le regrette :
 Pour tirer d'eux ce qu'on leur prête

* Phæd., I, 19, *Canis parturiens*.

Il faut que l'on en vienne aux coups ;
Il faut plaider , il faut combattre.
Laissez-leur prendre un pied chez vous ,
Ils en auront bientôt pris quatre.





L'EAIGLE ET L'ESCARBOT



FABLE VIII

THE EAGLE AND THE BEETLE.

JOHN RABBIT, by Dame Eagle chased,
Was making for his hole in haste,
When, on his way, he met a beetle's burrow.
I leave you all to think
If such a little chink
Could to a rabbit give protection thorough.
But, since no better could be got,
John Rabbit there was fain to squat.
Of course, in an asylum so absurd,
John felt ere long the talons of the bird.
But first, the beetle, interceding, cried,
Great queen of birds, it cannot be denied,
That, maugre my protection, you can bear
My trembling guest, John Rabbit, through the air.
But do not give me such affront, I pray;
And since he craves your grace,
In pity of his case,
Grant him his life, or take us both away;

For he's my gossip, friend, and neighbor.
In vain the beetle's friendly labor ;
The eagle clutched her prey without reply,
And as she flapped her vasty wings to fly,
Struck down our orator and stilled him ;
The wonder is she hadn't killed him.
The beetle soon, of sweet revenge in quest,
Flew to the old, gnarled mountain oak
Which proudly bore that haughty eagle's nest.
And while the bird was gone,
Her eggs, her cherished eggs, he broke,
Not sparing one.
Returning from her flight, the eagle's cry,
Of rage and bitter anguish, filled the sky.
But, by excess of passion blind,
Her enemy she failed to find.
Her wrath in vain, that year it was her fate
To live a mourning mother, desolate.
The next, she built a loftier nest ; 'twas vain ;
The beetle found and dashed her eggs again.
John Rabbit's death was thus revenged anew.
The second mourning for her murdered brood
Was such, that through the giant mountain wood,
For six long months, the sleepless echo flew.
The bird, once Ganymede, now made
Her prayer to Jupiter for aid ;
And, laying them within his godship's lap,
She thought her eggs now safe from all mishap ;
The god his own could not but make them —
No wretch would venture there to break them.



FABLE VIII

L'Aigle et l'Escarbot, *

L'aigle donnoit la chasse à maître Jean lapin,
Qui droit à son terrier s'enfuyoit au plus vite.
Le trou de l'escarbot se rencontre en chemin.

Je laisse à penser si ce gîte
Étoit sûr : mais où mieux ? Jean lapin s'y blottit.
L'aigle fondant sur lui nonobstant cet asile,

L'escarbot intercède, et dit :
Princesse des oiseaux, il vous est fort facile
D'enlever malgré moi ce pauvre malheureux :
Mais ne me faites pas cet affront, je vous prie ;
Et puisque Jean lapin vous demande la vie,
Donnez-la-lui, de grâce, ou l'ôtez à tous deux :

C'est mon voisin, c'est mon compère.
L'oiseau de Jupiter, sans répondre un seul mot,
Choque de l'aile l'escarbot,
L'étourdit, l'oblige à se taire,

* *Vie d'Esop*, p. 79 de l'édition de Nevelet ; et *Æsop.*, fab 223, 2, *Aquila et Scarabeus*

Enlève Jean lapin. L'escarbot indigné
Vole au nid de l'oiseau, fracasse, en son absence,
Ses œufs, ses tendres œufs, sa plus douce espérance :

Pas un seul ne fut épargné.

L'aigle étant de retour, et voyant ce ménage,
Remplit le ciel de cris ; et, pour comble de rage,
Ne sait sur qui venger le tort qu'elle a souffert.
Elle gémit en vain ; sa plainte au vent se perd.
Il fallut pour cet an vivre en mère affligée.

L'an suivant, elle mit son nid en lieu plus haut.
L'escarbot prend son temps, fait faire aux œufs le saut :
La mort de Jean lapin derechef est vengée.

Ce second deuil fut tel, que l'écho de ces bois

N'en dort de plus de six mois.

L'oiseau qui porte Ganymède

Du monarque des dieux enfin implore l'aide,
Dépose en son giron ses œufs, et croit qu'en paix
Ils seront dans ce lieu ; que, pour ses intérêts,
Jupiter se verra contraint de les défendre :

Hardi qui les iroit là pendre.

Aussi ne les y prit-on pas.

Leur ennemi changea de note,

Sur la robe du dieu fit tomber une crotte :

Le dieu la secouant jeta les œufs à bas.

Quand l'aigle sut l'inadvertance

Elle menaça Jupiter

D'abandonner sa cour, d'aller vivre au désert ;

Avec mainte autre extravagance.

Le pauvre Jupiter se tut :

Devant son tribunal l'escarbot comparut,

And no one did. Their enemy, this time,
Upsoaring to a place sublime,
Let fall upon his royal robes some dirt,
Which Jove just shaking, with a sudden flirt,
Threw out the eggs, no one knows whither.
When Jupiter informed her how th' event
Occurred by purest accident,
The eagle raved ; there was no reasoning with her ;
She gave out threats of leaving court,
To make the desert her resort,
And other braveries of this sort.
Poor Jupiter in silence heard
The uproar of his favorite bird.
Before his throne the beetle now appeared,
And by a clear complaint the mystery cleared.
The god pronounced the eagle in the wrong.
But still, their hatred was so old and strong,
These enemies could not be reconciled ;
And, that the general peace might not be spoiled, —
The best that he could do, — the god arranged,
That thence the eagle's pairing should be changed,
To come when beetle folks are only found
Concealed and dormant under ground.





THE LION AND THE GNAT.

Go, paltry insect, nature's meanest brat !
Thus said the royal lion to the gnat.
The gnat declared immediate war.
Think you, said he, your royal name
To me worth caring for ?
Think you I tremble at your power or fame ?
The ox is bigger far than you ;
Yet him I drive, and all his crew.
This said, as one that did no fear owe,
Himself he blew the battle charge,
Himself both trumpeter and hero.
At first he played about at large,
Then on the lion's neck, at leisure, settled,
And there the royal beast full sorely nettled.
With foaming mouth, and flashing eye,
He roars. All creatures hide or fly,—
Such mortal terror at
The work of one poor gnat !
With constant change of his attack,
The snout now stinging, now the back,

Fit sa plainte , et conta l'affaire.

On fit entendre à l'aigle , enfin , qu'elle avoit tort.
Mais les deux ennemis ne voulant point d'accord ,
Le monarque des dieux s'avisa , pour bien faire ,
De transporter le temps où l'aigle fait l'amour
En une autre saison , quand la race escarbote
Est en quartier d'hiver , et , comme la marmotte ,
Se cache , et ne voit point le jour.

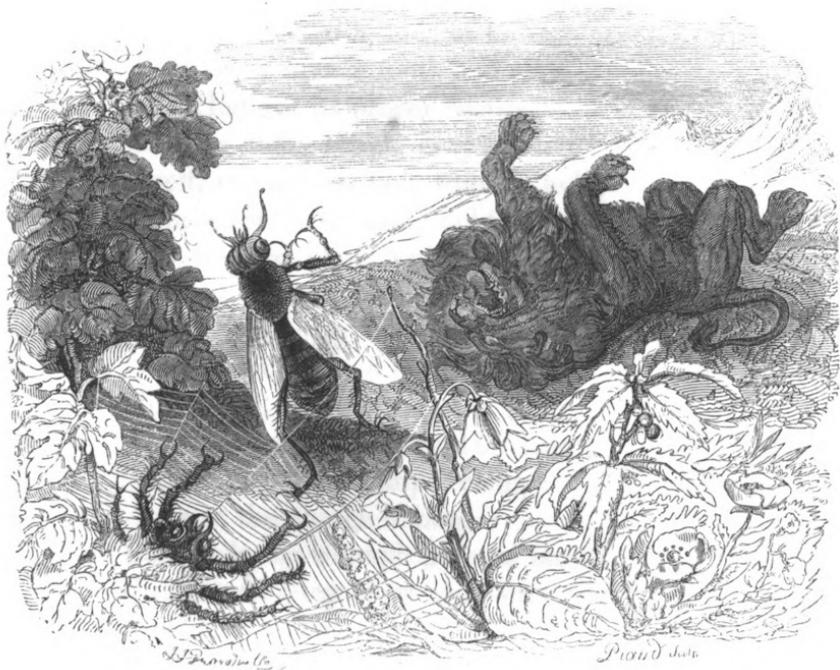




Le Lion et le Moucheron.*

Va-t'en, chétif insecte, excrément de la terre !
C'est en ces mots que le lion
Parloit un jour au moucheron.
L'autre lui déclara la guerre :
Penses-tu, lui dit-il, que ton titre de roi
Me fasse peur ni me soucie ?
Un bœuf est plus puissant que toi ;
Je le mène à ma fantaisie.
A peine il achevoit ces mots
Que lui-même il sonna la charge,
Fut le trompette et le héros.
Dans l'abord il se met au large ;
Puis prend son temps, fond sur le cou
Du lion, qu'il rend presque fou.
Le quadrupède écume, et son œil étincelle ;
Il rugit. On se cache, on tremble à l'environ,
Et cette alarme universelle
Est l'ouvrage d'un moucheron.

* *Æsop.*, 239-149, *Culex et Leo*.



LE LION ET LE MOUCHIERON

And now the chambers of the nose ;
The pygmy fly no mercy shows.
The lion's rage was at its height ;
His viewless foe now laughed outright,
When on his battle-ground he saw,
That every savage tooth and claw
Had got its proper beauty
By doing bloody duty ;
Himself, the hapless lion, tore his hide,
And lashed with sounding tail from side to side.
Ah! bootless blow, and bite, and curse !
He beat the harmless air, and worse ;
For, though so fierce and stout,
By effort wearied out,
He fainted, fell, gave up the quarrel.
The gnat retires with verdant laurel.
Now rings his trumpet clang
As at the charge it rang.
But while his triumph note he blows,
Straight on our valiant conqueror goes
A spider's ambuscade to meet,
And make its web his winding-sheet.

We often have the most to fear
From those we most despise ;
Again, great risks a man may clear,
Who by the smallest dies.





THE ASS LOADED WITH SPONGES, AND THE ASS
LOADED WITH SALT.

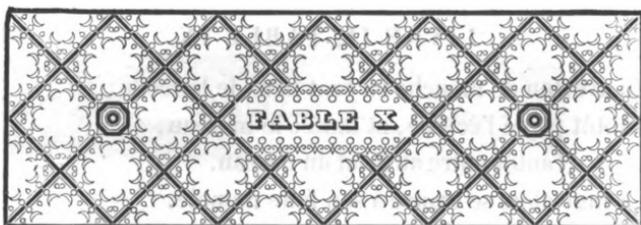
A MAN, whom I shall call an ass-eteer,
His sceptre like some Roman emperor bearing,
Drove on two coursers of protracted ear,
The one, with sponges laden, briskly faring ;
 The other lifting legs
 As if he trod on eggs,
 With constant need of goading,
 And bags of salt for loading.
O'er hill and dale our merry pilgrims passed,
Till, coming to a river's ford at last,
They stopped quite puzzled on the shore.
Our asseteer had crossed the stream before ;
 So, on the lighter beast astride,
 He drives the other, spite of dread,
 Which, loath indeed to go ahead,
 Into a deep hole turns aside,
 And, facing right about,
 Where he went in, comes out ;
 For duckings two or three
 Had power the salt to melt,
 So that the creature felt

Un avorton de mouche en cent lieux le harcelle ;
Tantôt pique l'échine, et tantôt le museau,
Tantôt entre au fond du naseau.

La rage alors se trouve à son faite montée.
L'invisible ennemi triomphe, et rit de voir
Qu'il n'est griffe ni dent en la bête irritée
Qui de la mettre en sang ne fasse son devoir.
Le malheureux lion se déchire lui-même,
Fait résonner sa queue à l'entour de ses flancs,
Bat l'air, qui n'en peut mais ; et sa fureur extrême
Le fatigue, l'abat : le voilà sur les dents.
L'insecte du combat se retire avec gloire :
Comme il sonna la charge, il sonne la victoire,
Va partout l'annoncer, et rencontre en chemin
L'embuscade d'une araignée ;
Il y rencontre aussi sa fin.

Quelle chose par-là nous peut être enseignée ?
J'en vois deux, dont l'une est qu'entre nos ennemis
Les plus à craindre sont souvent les plus petits ;
L'autre, qu'aux grands périls tel a pu se soustraire,
Qui périt pour la moindre affaire.



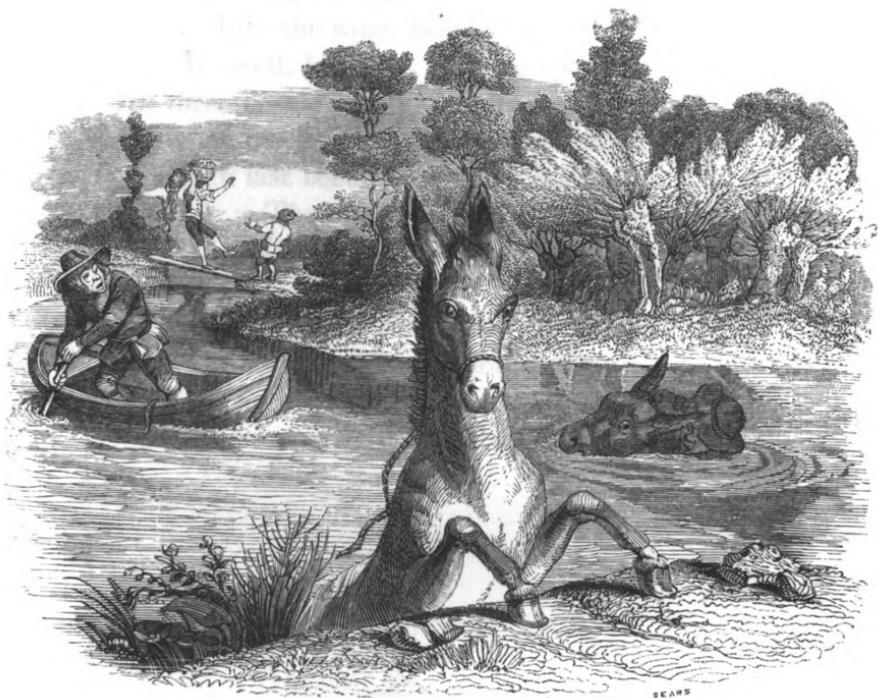


L'Ane chargé d'éponges, et l'Ane chargé de sel. *

Un ânier, son sceptre à la main,
Menoit, en empereur romain,
Deux coursiers à longues oreilles.
L'un, d'éponges chargé, marchoit comme un courrier ;
Et l'autre, se faisant prier,
Portoit, comme on dit, les bouteilles : **
Sa charge étoit de sel. Nos gaillards pélerins,
Par monts, par vaux, et par chemins,
Au gué d'une rivière à la fin arrivèrent,
Et fort empêchés se trouvèrent.
L'ânier, qui tous les jours traversoit ce gué-là,
Sur l'âne à l'éponge monta,
Chassant devant lui l'autre bête,
Qui, voulant en faire à sa tête,
Dans un trou se précipita,
Revint sur l'eau, puis échappa :

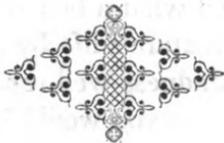
* Æsop., édit. Nevelet, 258, *Asinus sale onustus*. Gabr., *Fabulæ*, édit. Nevelet, fab. 35, de *Asino et sale et spongiis*.

** Pour dire : *marchoit lentement*.



L'ANE CHARGÉ D'ÉPONGES, ET L'ANE CHARGÉ DE SEL

His burdened shoulders free.
The sponger, like a sequent sheep,
Pursuing through the water deep,
Into the same hole plunges
Himself, his rider, and the sponges.
All three drank deeply: asseteer and ass
For boon companions of their load might pass;
Which last became so sore a weight,
The ass fell down,
Belike to drown,
His rider risking equal fate.
A helper came, no matter who.
The moral needs no more ado —
That all can't act alike, —
The point I wished to strike.





FABLE XI

THE LION AND THE RAT.

To show to all your kindness, it behoves :
There's none so small but you his aid may need.
I quote two fables for this weighty creed,
Which either of them fully proves.
From underneath the sward
A rat, quite off his guard,
Popped out between a lion's paws.
The beast of royal bearing
Showed what a lion was
The creature's life by sparing—
A kindness well repaid ;
For, little as you would have thought
His majesty would ever need his aid,
It proved full soon
A precious boon.
Forth issuing from his forest glen,
T' explore the haunts of men,
In lion net his majesty was caught,

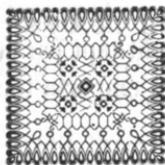
Car, au bout de quelques nagées,
Tout son sel se fondit si bien
Que le baudet ne sentit rien
Sur ses épaules soulagées.

Camarade épongie prit exemple sur lui,
Comme un mouton qui va dessus la foi d'autrui.
Voilà mon âne à l'eau ; jusqu'au col il se plonge,
Lui, le conducteur, et l'éponge.

Tous trois burent d'autant : l'ânier et le grison
Firent à l'éponge raison.
Celle-ci devint si pesante,
Et de tant d'eau s'emplit d'abord,

Que l'âne succombant ne put gagner le bord.
L'ânier l'embrassoit, dans l'attente
D'une prompte et certaine mort.

Quelqu'un vint au secours : qui ce fut, il n'importe ;
C'est assez qu'on ait vu par-là qu'il ne faut point
Agir chacun de même sorte.
J'en voulois venir à ce point.





Le Lion et le Rat. *

Il faut, autant qu'on peut, obliger tout le monde :
On a souvent besoin d'un plus petit que soi.
De cette vérité deux fables feront foi ;
Tant la chose en preuves abonde.

Entre les pattes d'un lion
Un rat sortit de terre assez à l'étourdie.
Le roi des animaux, en cette occasion,
Montra ce qu'il étoit, et lui donna la vie.
Ce bienfait ne fut pas perdu.
Quelqu'un auroit-il jamais cru
Qu'un lion d'un rat eût affaire ?
Cependant il avint qu'au sortir des forêts
Ce lion fut pris dans des rets,
Dont ses rugissemets ne le purent défaire.
Sire rat accourut, et fit tant par ses dents
Qu'une maille rongée emporta tout l'ouvrage.

Patience et longueur de temps
Font plus que force ni que rage.

* *Æsop.*, 98, 221, *Leo et Mus.*—Marot, *Épître XI*, t. II, p. 42



LE LION ET LE RAT

From which his strength and rage
Served not to disengage.

The rat ran up, with grateful glee,
Gnawed off a rope, and set him free.

By time and toil we sever
What strength and rage could never.





FABLE XII

THE DOVE AND THE ANT.

THE same instruction we may get
From another couple, smaller yet.

A dove came to a brook to drink,
When, leaning o'er its crumbling brink,
An ant fell in, and vainly tried,
In this to her an ocean tide,
To reach the land ; whereat the dove,
With every living thing in love,
Was prompt a spire of grass to throw her,
By which the ant regained the shore.

A barefoot scamp, both mean and sly,
Soon after chanced this dove to spy ;
And, being armed with bow and arrow,
The hungry codger doubted not
The bird of Venus, in his pot,
Would make a soup before the morrow.
Just as his deadly bow he drew,
Our pismire stung his heel.
Roused by the villain's squeal,
The dove took timely hint, and flew
Far from the rascal's coop ; —
And with her flew his soup.



LA COLOMBE ET LA FOURMI
LE LION ET LE RAT



La Colombe et la Fourmi. *

L'autre exemple est tiré d'animaux plus petits.

Le long d'un clair ruisseau buvoit une colombe,
Quand sur l'eau se penchant une fourmis y tombe ;
Et dans cet océan l'on eût vu la fourmis
S'efforcer, mais en vain, de regagner la rive.
La colombe aussitôt usa de charité :

Un brin d'herbe dans l'eau par elle étant jeté,
Ce fut un promontoire où la fourmis arrive.

Elle se sauve. Et là-dessus

Passe un certain croquant qui marchoit les pieds nus :
Ce croquant, par hasard, avoit une arbalète.

Dès qu'il voit l'oiseau de Vénus,
Il le croit en son pot, et déjà lui fait fête.
Tandis qu'à le tuer mon villageois s'apprête,

La fourmi le pique au talon.

Le vilain retourne la tête :

La colombe l'entend, part, et tire de long.

Le soupé du croquant avec elle s'envole :

Point de pigeon pour une obole.

*Æsop. 418, 41, *Formica et Columba*



L'Astrologue qui se laisse tomber dans un puits. *

Un astrologue un jour se laissa choir
Au fonds d'un puits. On lui dit : Pauvre bête,
Tandis qu'à peine à tes pieds tu peux voir,
Penses-tu lire au-dessus de ta tête ?

Cette aventure en soi, sans aller plus avant,
Peut servir de leçon à la plupart des hommes.
Parmi ce que de gens sur la terre nous sommes,
Il en est peu qui fort souvent
Ne se plaisent d'entendre dire
Qu'au livre du Destin les mortels peuvent lire.
Mais ce livre qu'Homère et les siens ont chanté,
Qu'est-ce que le Hasard parmi l'antiquité,
Et parmi nous la Providence ?
Or, du hasard il n'est point de science :
S'il en étoit, on auroit tort
De l'appeler hasard, ni fortune, ni sort ;
Toutes choses très incertaines.
Quant aux volontés souveraines
De celui qui fait tout, et rien qu'avec dessein,

* Æsop., 49, 169. *Astrologus*.



L'ASTROLOGUE
QUI SE LAISSE TOMBER DANS UN PUIT



THE ASTROLOGER WHO STUMBLED INTO A WELL.

To an astrologer who fell
Plump to the bottom of a well,
Poor blockhead ! cried a passer by,
Not see your feet, and read the sky ?

This upshot of a story will suffice
To give a useful hint to most ;
For few there are in this our world so wise
As not to trust in star or ghost,
Or cherish secretly the creed
That men the book of destiny may read.
This book, by Homer and his pupils sung,
What is it, in plain common sense,
But what was chance those ancient folks among,
And with ourselves, God's providence ?
Now, chance doth bid defiance
To every thing like science ;
'Twere wrong, if not,
To call it hazard, fortune, lot —
Things palpably uncertain.
But from the purposes divine,
The deep of infinite design,
Who boasts to lift the curtain ?
Whom but himself doth God allow

To read his bosom thoughts, and how ?
 Would he imprint upon the stars sublime
 The shrouded secrets of the night of time ?
 And all for what ? To exercise the wit
 Of those who on astrology have writ ?
 To help us shun inevitable ills ?
 To poison for us even pleasure's rills ?
 The choicest blessings to destroy,
 Exhausting, ere they come, their joy ?
 Such faith is worse than error — 'tis a crime.
 The sky-host moves and marks the course of time ;
 The sun sheds on our nicely-measured days
 The glory of his night-dispelling rays ;
 And all from this we can divine
 Is, that they need to rise and shine, —
 To roll the seasons, ripen fruits,
 And cheer the hearts of men and brutes.
 How tallies this revolving universe
 With human things, eternally diverse ?
 Ye horoscopers, waning quacks,
 Please turn on Europe's courts your backs,
 And, taking on your travelling lists
 The bellows-blowing alchemists,
 Budge off together to the land of mists.
 But I've digressed. Return we now, bethinking
 Of our poor star-man, whom we left a drinking.
 Besides the folly of his lying trade,
 This man the type may well be made
 Of those who at chimeras stare
 When they should mind the things that are.

Qui les sait, que lui seul ? Comment lire en son sein ?

Auroit-il imprimé sur le front des étoiles

Ce que la nuit des temps enferme dans ses voiles ?

A quelle utilité ? Pour exercer l'esprit

De ceux qui de la sphère et du globe ont écrit ?

Pour nous faire éviter des maux inévitables ?

Nous rendre, dans les biens, de plaisirs incapables ?

Et, causant du dégoût pour ces biens prévenus,

Les convertir en maux devant qu'ils soient venus ?

C'est erreur, ou plutôt c'est crime de le croire.

Le firmament se meut, les astres font leurs cours,

Le soleil nous luit tous les jours,

Tous les jours sa clarté succède à l'ombre noire,

Sans que nous en puissions autre chose inférer

Que la nécessité de luire et d'éclairer,

D'amener les saisons, de mûrir les semences,

De verser sur les corps certaines influences.

Du reste, en quoi répond au sort toujours divers

Ce train toujours égal dont marche l'univers ?

Charlatans, faiseurs d'horoscope,

Quittez les cours des princes de l'Europe :

Emmenez avec vous les souffleurs * tout d'un temps ;

Vous ne méritez pas plus de foi que ces gens.

Je m'emporte un peu trop, revenons à l'histoire

De ce spéculateur qui fut contraint de boire.

Outre la vanité de son art mensonger,

C'est l'image de ceux qui bâillent aux chimères,

Cependant qu'ils sont en danger,

Soit pour eux, soit pour leurs affaires.

* Les alchimistes



FABLE XIV

Le Lièvre et les Grenouilles. *

Un lièvre en son gîte songeoit,
(Car que faire en un gîte à moins que l'on ne songe?)
Dans un profond ennui ce lièvre se plongeoit :
Cet animal est triste, et la crainte le rongé.

Les gens de naturel peureux
Sont, disoit-il, bien malheureux !
Ils ne sauroient manger morceau qui leur profite :
Jamais un plaisir pur ; toujours assauts divers.
Voilà comme je vis : cette crainte maudite
M'empêche de dormir sinon les yeux ouverts.
Corrigez-vous, dira quelque sage cervelle.

Eh ! la peur se corrige-t-elle ?
Je crois même qu'en bonne foi
Les hommes ont peur comme moi.
Ainsi raisonnoit notre lièvre,
Et cependant faisoit le guet.
Il étoit douteux, inquiet :

* *Æsop.*, 150, 89 et 57 *Lepores et Ranæ*



LE LIÈVRE ET LES GRENOUILLES



FABLE XIV

THE HARE AND THE FROGS.

ONCE in his bed deep mused the hare,
(What else but muse could he do there?)
And soon by gloom was much afflicted ; —
To gloom the creature's much addicted.

Alas! these constitutions nervous,
He cried, how wretchedly they serve us!
We timid people, by their action,
Can't eat nor sleep with satisfaction ;
We can't enjoy a pleasure single,
But with some misery it must mingle.
Myself, for one, am forced by cursed fear
To sleep with open eye as well as ear.
Correct yourself, says some adviser.
Grows fear, by such advice, the wiser ?
Indeed, I well enough descry
That men have fear, as well as I.
With such revolving thoughts our hare
Kept watch in soul-consuming care.
A passing shade, or leaflet's quiver
Would give his blood a boiling fever.

Full soon, his melancholy soul
Aroused from dreaming doze
By noise too slight for foes,
He scuds in haste to reach his hole.
He passed a pond ; and from its border bogs,
Plunge after plunge, in leaped the timid frogs.
Aha ! I do to them, I see,
He cried, what others do to me.
The sight of even me, a hare,
Sufficeth some, I find, to scare.
And here, the terror of my tramp
Hath put to rout, it seems, a camp.
The trembling fools ! they take me for
The very thunderbolt of war !
I see, the coward never skulked a foe
That might not scare a coward still below.



Un souffle, une ombre, un rien, tout lui donnoit la fièvre.

Le mélancolique animal,

En rêvant à cette matière,

Entend un léger bruit : ce lui fut un signal

Pour s'enfuir devers sa tanière.

Il s'en alla passer sur le bord d'un étang.

Grenouilles aussitôt de sauter dans les ondes ;

Grenouilles de rentrer en leurs grottes profondes.

Oh ! dit-il, j'en fais faire autant

Qu'on m'en fait faire ! Ma présence

Effraie aussi les gens ! je mets l'alarme au camp !

Et d'où me vient cette vaillance ?

Comment ! des animaux qui tremblent devant moi !

Je suis donc un foudre de guerre !

Il n'est, je le vois bien, si poltron sur la terre,

Qui ne puisse trouver un plus poltron que soi.





Le Coq et le Renard. *

Sur la branche d'un arbre étoit en sentinelle
Un vieux coq adroit et matois.
Frère, dit un renard, adoucissant sa voix,
Nous ne sommes plus en querelle :
Paix générale cette fois.
Je viens te l'annoncer ; descends, que je t'embrasse :
Ne me retarde point, de grace ;
Je dois faire aujourd'hui vingt postes sans manquer.
Les tiens et toi pouvez vaquer,
Sans nulle crainte, à vos affaires ;
Nous vous y servirons en frères.
Faites-en les feux ** dès ce soir,
Et cependant viens recevoir
Le baiser d'amour fraternelle.
Ami, reprit le coq, je ne pouvois jamais
Apprendre une plus douce et meilleure nouvelle

* *Æsop.*, 88, *Canis, Gallus et Vulpes* ; 56, *Canis et Gallus*. — Philibert Hégemon, fable 14, dans *La Colombière*, 1585, in-42, p. 54 verso. — Pulci *Morgante maggiore*, c. 1x, st. 20.

** Les feux de joie.



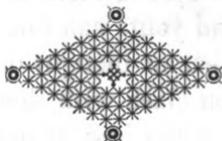
LE COQ ET LE RENARD



THE COCK AND THE FOX.

UPON a tree there mounted guard
A veteran cock, adroit and cunning,
When to the roots a fox up running,
Spoke thus, in tones of kind regard:—
Our quarrel, brother, 's at an end;
Henceforth I hope to live your friend;
For peace now reigns
Throughout the animal domains.
I bear the news:— come down, I pray,
And give me the embrace fraternal;
And please, my brother, don't delay.
So much the tidings do concern all,
That I must spread them far to-day.
Now you and yours can take your walks
Without a fear or thought of hawks.
And should you clash with them or others,
In us you'll find the best of brothers;—
For which you may, this joyful night,
Your merry bonfires light.
But, first, let's seal the bliss
With one fraternal kiss.

Good friend, the cock replied, upon my word,
A better thing I never heard ;
 And doubly I rejoice
 To hear it from your voice ;
And, really, there must be something in it,
For yonder come two greyhounds, which, I flatter
Myself, are couriers on this very matter.
They come so fast, they'll be here in a minute.
I'll down, and all of us will seal the blessing
With general kissing and caressing.
Adieu, said fox ; my errand's pressing ;
 I'll hurry on my way,
 And we'll rejoice some other day.
So off the fellow scampered, quick and light,
To gain the fox-holes of a neighboring height,
Less happy in his stratagem than flight.
The cock laughed sweetly in his sleeve ; —
'Tis doubly sweet deceiver to deceive.



Que celle

De cette paix ;

Et ce m'est une double joie

De la tenir de toi. Je vois deux lévriers,

Qui, je m'assure, sont courriers

Que pour ce sujet on envoie :

Ils vont vite, et seront dans un moment à nous.

Je descends : nous pourrons nous entre-baiser tous.

Adieu, dit le renard, ma traite est longue à faire :

Nous nous réjouirons du succès de l'affaire

Une autre fois. Le galant aussitôt

Tire ses grègues *, gagne au haut,

Mal content de son stratagème.

Et notre vieux coq en soi-même

Se mit à rire de sa peur ;

Car c'est double plaisir de tromper le trompeur.

* Ses chausses.





Le Corbeau voulant imiter l'Aigle. *

L'oiseau de Jupiter enlevant un mouton ,
Un corbeau , témoin de l'affaire ,
Et plus foible de reins , mais non pas moins glouton ,
En voulut sur l'heure autant faire .
Il tourne à l'entour du troupeau ,
Marque entre cent moutons le plus gras , le plus beau ,
Un vrai mouton de sacrifice :
On l'avoit réservé pour la bouche des dieux .
Gaillard corbeau disoit , en le couvant des yeux :
Je ne sais qui fut ta nourrice ;
Mais ton corps me paroît en merveilleux état :
Tu me serviras de pâture .
Sur l'animal bêlant à ces mots il s'abat .
La moutonnière créature
Pesoit plus qu'un fromage ; outre que sa toison
Étoit d'une épaisseur extrême ,
Et mêlée à peu près de la même façon

* Verdizotti , *Cento favole bellissime* , 1661 , in-8 , p. 165 ; fab. 67 , *l'Aquila e'l Corvo* . — Corrozet , 69 — *Æsop.* 3 , *Aquila et Graculus* : 207 , *Graculus et Pastor* .



LE CORBEAU VOULANT IMITER L'AIGLE

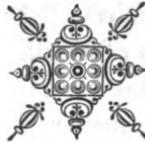


THE RAVEN WISHING TO IMITATE THE EAGLE.

THE bird of Jove bore off a mutton,
A raven being witness.
That weaker bird, but equal glutton,
Not doubting of his fitness
To do the same with ease,
And bent his taste to please,
Took round the flock his sweep,
And marked among the sheep,
The one of fairest flesh and size,
A real sheep of sacrifice —
A dainty titbit bestial,
Reserved for mouth celestial.
Our gormand, gloating round,
Cried, Sheep, I wonder much
Who could have made you such.
You're far the fattest I have found ;
I'll take you for my eating.
And on the creature bleating

He settled down. Now, sooth to say,
This sheep would weigh
More than a cheese ;
And had a fleece
Much like that matting famous
Which graced the chin of Polyphemus ;
So fast it clung to every claw,
It was not easy to withdraw.
The shepherd came, caught, caged, and, to their joy,
Gave croaker to his children for a toy.

Ill plays the pilferer, the bigger thief ;
One's self one ought to know ; — in brief,
Example is a dangerous lure ;
Death strikes the gnat, where flies the wasp secure.



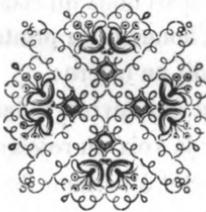
Que la barbe de Polyphème.

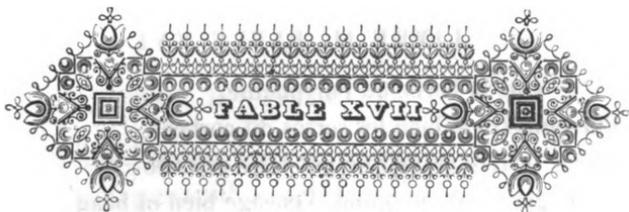
Elle empêtra si bien les serres du corbeau,
Que le pauvre animal ne put faire retraite :
Le berger vient, le prend, l'encage bien et beau,
Le donne à ses enfants pour servir d'amulette.

Il faut se mesurer ; la conséquence est nette :
Mal prend aux volereaux de faire les voleurs.

L'exemple est un dangereux leurre :

Tous les mangeurs de gens ne sont pas grands seigneurs ;
Où la guêpe a passé, le moucheron demeure.





Le Paon se plaignant à Junon. *

Le paon se plaignoit à Junon.
Déesse, disoit-il, ce n'est pas sans raison
Que je me plains, que je murmure
Le chant dont vous m'avez fait don
Déplaît à toute la nature ;
Au lieu qu'un rossignol, chétive créature,
Forme des sons aussi doux qu'éclatants,
Est lui seul l'honneur du printemps.
Junon répondit en colère :
Oiseau jaloux, et qui devoit te taire,
Est-ce à toi d'envier la voix du rossignol,
Toi que l'on voit porter à l'entour de ton col
Un arc-en-ciel nué de cent sortes de soies ;
Qui te panades, qui déploies
Une si riche queue, et qui semble à nos yeux
La boutique d'un lapidaire ?
Est-il quelque oiseau sous les cieux
Plus que toi capable de plaire ?

* Phœdr., III, 48, *Pavo ad Junonem.*



LE PAON SE PLAIGNANT A JUNON



FABLE XVII

THE PEACOCK COMPLAINING TO JUNO.

THE peacock to the queen of heaven
Complained in some such words: —
Great goddess, you have given
To me, the laughing-stock of birds,
A voice which fills, by taste quite just,
All nature with disgust ;
Whereas that little paltry thing,
The nightingale, pours from her throat
So sweet and ravishing a note,
She bears alone the honors of the spring.

In anger Juno heard,
And cried, Shame on you, jealous bird !
Grudge you the nightingale her voice,
Who in the rainbow neck rejoice,
Than costliest silks more richly tinted,
In charms of grace and form unstinted, —
Who strut in kingly pride,
Your glorious tail spread wide
With brilliants which in sheen do
Outshine the jeweller's bow-window ?

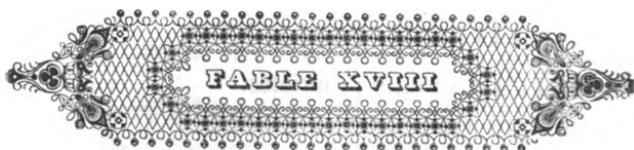
Is there a bird beneath the blue
That has more charms than you ?
No animal in every thing can shine.
By just partition of our gifts divine,
Each has its full and proper share ;
Among the birds that cleave the air,
The hawk 's a swift, the eagle is a brave one,
For omens serves the hoarse old raven,
The rook 's of coming ills the prophet ;
And if there's any discontent,
I've heard not of it.

Cease, then, your envious complaint ;
Or I, instead of making up your lack,
Will take your boasted plumage from your back.



Tout animal n'a pas toutes propriétés.
Nous vous avons donné diverses qualités :
Les uns ont la grandeur et la force en partage ;
Le faucon est léger, l'aigle plein de courage,
Le corbeau sert pour le présage ;
La corneille avertit des malheurs à venir ;
Tous sont contents de leur ramage.
Cesse donc de te plaindre ; ou bien pour te punir,
Je t'ôterai ton plumage.





La Chatte métamorphosée en Femme. *

Un homme chérissait éperdument sa chatte ;
Il la trouvoit mignonne , et belle , et délicate ,
 Qui miauloit d'un ton fort doux ;
 Il étoit plus fou que les fous.
Cet homme donc , par prières , par larmes ,
 Par sortilèges et par charmes ,
Fait tant qu'il obtient du destin
 Que sa chatte , en un beau matin ,
 Devient femme ; et , le matin même ,
 Maître sot en fait sa moitié.
Le voilà fou d'amour extrême ,
 De fou qu'il étoit d'amitié.
Jamais la dame la plus belle
 Ne charma tant son favori
 Que fait cette épouse nouvelle
 Son hypocondre de mari.
Il l'amadoué ; elle le flatte :
Il n'y trouve plus rien de chatte ;

* *Æsop.*, 48, 172. *Felis et Venus.*



LA CHATTE MÉTAMORPHOSÉE EN FEMME



THE CAT METAMORPHOSED INTO A WOMAN.

A BACHELOR caressed his cat,
A darling fair and delicate ;
So deep in love, he thought her mew
The sweetest voice he ever knew.
By prayers, and tears, and magic art,
The man got Fate to take his part ;
And, lo ! one morning at his side
His cat, transformed, became his bride.
In wedded state our man was seen
The fool in courtship he had been.
No lover e'er was so bewitched

By any maiden's charms
As was this husband, so enriched

By hers within his arms.
He praised her beauties, this and that,
And saw there nothing of the cat.

In short, by passion's aid, he
Thought her a perfect lady.

'Twas night : some carpet-gnawing mice
Disturbed the nuptial joys.

Excited by the noise,
The bride sprang at them in a trice.
The mice were scared and fled.
The bride, scarce in her bed,
The gnawing heard, and sprang again,—
And this time not in vain,
For, in this novel form arrayed,
Of her the mice were less afraid.
Through life she loved this mousing course,
So great is stubborn nature's force.

In mockery of change, the old
Will keep their youthful bent.
When once the cloth has got its fold,
The smelling pot its scent,
In vain your efforts and your care
To make them other than they are.
To work reform, do what you will,
Old habit will be habit still.
Nor fork * nor strap can mend its manners,
Nor cudgel-blows beat down its banners.
Secure the doors against the renter,
And through the windows it will enter.

* *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.* — Hor.



Et, poussant l'erreur jusqu'au bout,
 La croit femme en tout et partout :
 Lorsque quelques souris qui rongeoient de la natte
 Troublèrent le plaisir des nouveaux mariés.

Aussitôt la femme est sur pieds.

Elle manqua son aventure.

Souris de revenir, femme d'être en posture :

Pour cette fois elle accourut à point ;

Car, ayant changé de figure,

Les souris ne la craignoient point.

Ce lui fut toujours une amorce :

Tant le naturel a de force !

Il se moque de tout : certain âge accompli,

Le vase est imbibé, l'étoffe a pris son pli.

En vain de son train ordinaire

On le veut désaccoutumer :

Quelque chose qu'on puisse faire,

On ne sauroit le réformer.

Coups de fourche ni d'étrivières

Ne lui font changer de manières ;

Et, fussiez-vous embâtonnés,*

Jamais vous n'en serez les maîtres ;

Qu'on lui ferme la porte au nez,

Il reviendra par les fenêtres.

* Armés de bâtons.





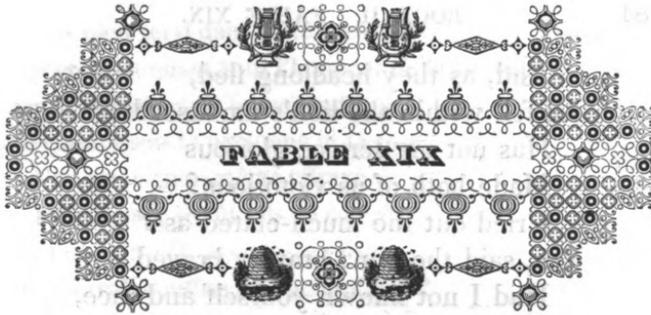
Le Lion et l'Ane chassants. *

Le roi des animaux se mit un jour en tête
De giboyer : il célébroit sa fête.
Le gibier du lion ce ne sont pas moineaux ,
Mais beaux et bons sangliers, daims et cerfs bons et beaux.
 Pour réussir dans cette affaire ,
 Il se sert du ministère
 De l'âne à la voix de Stentor.
L'âne à messer lion fit office de cor.
Le lion le posta, le couvrit de ramée ,
Lui commanda de braire, assuré qu'à ce son ,
Les moins intimidés fuïroient de leur maison.
Leur troupe n'étoit pas encore accoutumée
 A la tempête de sa voix ;
L'air en retentissoit d'un bruit épouvantable :
La frayeur saisissoit les hôtes de ces bois ;
Tous fuyoyent, tous tomboyent au piège inévitable
 Où les attendoit le lion.

* Phæd., II, 1 (sive 2), *Juvenus*.—Æsop., 99, 150, *Leo et Prædator*.



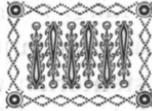
LE LION ET L'ÂNE CHASSANT



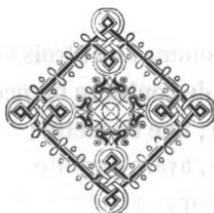
THE LION AND THE ASS HUNTING.

THE king of animals, with royal grace,
Would celebrate his birthday in the chase.
'Twas not with bow and arrows
To slay some wretched sparrows ;
The lion hunts the wild boar of the wood,
The antlered deer and stags, the fat and good.
This time, the king, t' insure success,
Took for his aid-de-camp an ass,
A creature of stentorian voice,
That felt much honored by the choice.
The lion hid him in a proper station,
And ordered him to bray, for his vocation,
Assured that his tempestuous cry
The boldest beasts would terrify,
And cause them from their lairs to fly.
And, sooth, the horrid noise the creature made
Did strike the tenants of the wood with dread ;

And, as they headlong fled,
All fell within the lion's ambushade.
Has not my service glorious
Made both of us victorious ?
Cried out the much-elated ass.
Yes, said the lion ; bravely brayed !
Had I not known yourself and race,
I should have been myself afraid !
If he had dared, the donkey
Had shown himself right spunky
At this retort, though justly made ;
For who could suffer boasts to pass
So ill-befitting to an ass ?



N'ai-je pas bien servi dans cette occasion !
Dit l'âne en se donnant tout l'honneur de la chasse.
Oui, reprit le lion, c'est bravement crié :
Si je ne connoissois ta personne et ta race,
J'en serois moi-même effrayé.
L'âne, s'il eût osé, se fût mis en colère,
Encor qu'on le raillât avec juste raison.
Car qui pourroit souffrir un âne fanfaron ?
Ce n'est pas là leur caractère.





Testament expliqué par Ésope. *

Si ce qu'on dit d'Ésope est vrai,
C'étoit l'oracle de la Grèce :
Lui seul avoit plus de sagesse
Que tout l'aréopage. En voici pour essai
Une histoire des plus gentilles,
Et qui pourra plaire au lecteur.

Un certain homme avoit trois filles,
Toutes trois de contraire humeur :
Une buveuse ; une coquette ;
La troisième, avare parfaite.
Cet homme par son testament,
Selon les lois municipales,
Leur laissa tout son bien par portions égales,
En donnant à leur mère tant,
Payable quand chacune d'elles
Ne posséderoit plus sa contingente part.
Le père mort, les trois femelles
Coururent au testament sans attendre plus tard.

* Phædr., IV, 8. Poeta.



TESTAMENT EXPLIQUÉ PAR ISOPH

FABLE XX

THE WILL EXPLAINED BY ÆSOP.

IF what old story says of Æsop's true,
The oracle of Greece he was,
And more than Areopagus he knew,
With all its wisdom in the laws.
The following tale gives but a sample
Of what has made his fame so ample.
Three daughters shared a father's purse,
Of habits totally diverse.
The first, bewitched with drinks delicious;
The next, coquettish and capricious;
The third, supremely avaricious.
The sire, expectant of his fate,
Bequeathed his whole estate,
In equal shares, to them,
And to their mother just the same, —
To her then payable, and not before,
Each daughter should possess her part no more.
The father died. The females three
Were much in haste the will to see.
They read and read, but still
Saw not the willer's will.

For could it well be understood
That each of this sweet sisterhood,
When she possessed her part no more,
Should to her mother pay it o'er ?
'Twas surely not so easy saying
How lack of means would help the paying.
What meant their honored father, then ?
Th' affair was brought to legal men,
Who, after turning o'er the case
Some hundred thousand different ways,
Threw down the learned bonnet,
Unable to decide upon it ;
And then advised the heirs,
Without more thought, t' adjust affairs.
As to the widow's share, the counsel say,
We hold it just the daughters each should pay
One third to her upon demand,
Should she not choose to have it stand
Commutated as a life annuity,
Paid from her husband's death, with due congruity.
The thing thus ordered, the estate
Is duly cut in portions three.
And in the first they all agree
To put the feasting-lodges, plate,
Luxurious cooling mugs,
Enormous liquor jugs,
Rich cupboards,—built beneath the trellised vine,—
The stores of ancient, sweet Malvoisian wine,
The slaves to serve it at a sign ;
In short, whatever, in a great house,
There is of feasting apparatus.

On le lit ; on tâche d'entendre
 La volonté du testateur ;
 Mais en vain : car comment comprendre
 Qu'aussitôt que chacune sœur
 Ne possédera plus sa part héréditaire
 Il lui faudra payer sa mère ?
 Ce n'est pas un fort bon moyen
 Pour payer, que d'être sans bien.
 Que vouloit donc dire le père ?
 L'affaire est consultée ; et tous les avocats.
 Après avoir tourné le cas
 En cent et cent mille manières,
 Y jettent leur bonnet, se confessent vaincus,
 Et conseillent aux héritières
 De partager le bien sans songer au surplus.
 Quant à la somme de la veuve,
 Voici, leur dirent-ils, ce que le conseil treuve :
 Il faut que chaque sœur se charge par traité
 Du tiers, payable à volonté ;
 Si mieux n'aime la mère en créer une rente,
 Dès le décès du mort courante.
 La chose ainsi réglée, on composa trois lots :
 En l'un, les maisons de bouteille,
 Les buffets dressés sous la treille,
 La vaisselle d'argent, les cuvettes, les brocs,
 Les magasins de Malvoisie,
 Les esclaves de bouche, et, pour dire en deux mots,

* *Treuve* pour *trouve*, était avant La Fontaine très généralement employé
 On le trouve dans *le Misanthrope*.

L'attirail de la goinfrerie :
Dans un autre, celui de la coquetterie,
La maison de la ville, et les meubles exquis,
Les eunuques et les coiffeuses,
Et les brodeuses,
Les bijoux, les robes de prix :
Dans le troisième lot, les fermes, le ménage,
Les troupeaux et le pâturage,
Valets et bêtes de labour.
Ces lots faits, on jugea que le sort pourroit faire
Que peut-être pas une sœur
N'auroit ce qui lui pourroit plaire.
Ainsi chacune prit son inclination ;
Le tout à l'estimation.
Ce fut dans la ville d'Athènes
Que cette rencontre arriva.
Petits et grands, tout approuva
Le partage et le choix. Ésope seul trouva
Qu'après bien du temps et des peines
Les gens avoient pris justement
Le contre-pied du testament.
Si le défunt vivoit, disoit-il, que l'Attique
Auroit de reproches de lui !
Comment ! ce peuple qui se pique
D'être le plus subtil des peuples d'aujourd'hui,
A si mal entendu la volonté suprême
D'un testateur ! Ayant ainsi parlé,
Il fait le partage lui-même,
Et donne à chaque sœur un lot contre son gré ;
Rien qui pût être convenable,

The second part is made
 Of what might help the jilting trade —
 The city house and furniture,
 Exquisite and genteel, be sure,
 The eunuchs, milliners, and laces,
 The jewels, shawls, and costly dresses.
 The third is made of household stuff,
 More vulgar, rude, and rough —
 Farms, fences, flocks, and fodder,
 And men and beasts to turn the sod o'er.
 This done, since it was thought
 To give the parts by lot
 Might suit, or it might not,
 Each paid her share of fees dear,
 And took the part that pleased her.
 'Twas in great Athens town,
 Such judgment gave the gown.
 And there the public voice
 Applauded both the judgment and the choice.
 But Æsop well was satisfied
 The learned men had set aside,
 In judging thus the testament,
 The very gist of its intent.
 The dead, quoth he, could he but know of it,
 Would heap reproaches on such Attic wit.
 What! men who proudly take their place
 As sages of the human race,
 Lack they the simple skill
 To settle such a will?
 This said, he undertook himself
 The task of portioning the pelf;

And straightway gave each maid the part
The least according to her heart —
The prim coquette, the drinking stuff,
The drinker, then, the farms and cattle ;
And on the miser, rude and rough,
The robes and lace did Æsop settle ;
For thus, he said, an early date
Would see the sisters alienate
Their several shares of the estate.
No motive now in maidenhood to tarry,
They all would seek, post haste, to marry ;
And, having each a splendid bait,
Each soon would find a well-bred mate ;
And, leaving thus their father's goods intact,
Would to their mother pay them all, in fact, —
Which of the testament
Was plainly the intent.
The people, who had thought a slave an ass,
Much wondered how it came to pass
That one alone should have more sense
Than all their men of most pretense.



Partant rien aux sœurs d'agréable :
A la coquette , l'attirail
Qui suit les personnes buveuses ;
La biberonne eut le bétail ;
La ménagère eut les coiffeuses.
Tel fut l'avis du Phrygien ;
Alléguant qu'il n'étoit moyen
Plus sûr pour obliger ces filles
A se défaire de leur bien ;
Qu'elles se marieroient dans les bonnes familles
Quand on leur verroit de l'argent ;
Paieroient leur mère tout comptant ;
Ne possédroient plus les effets de leur père :
Ce que disoit le testament.
Le peuple s'étonna comme il se pouvoit faire
Qu'un homme seul eût plus de sens
Qu'une multitude de gens.

FIN DU LIVRE SECOND.







LE MEUNIER, SON FILS ET L'ÂNE



FABLE FIRST.

THE MILLER, HIS SON, AND THE ASS.

TO M. DE MAUCROIX.

BECAUSE the arts are plainly birthright matters,
For fables we to ancient Greece are debtors ;
But still this field could not be reaped so clean
As not to let us, later comers, glean.
The fiction-world hath deserts yet to dare,
And, daily, authors make discoveries there.
I'd fain repeat one which our man of song,
Old Malherbe, told one day to young Racan.



Of Horace they the rivals and the heirs,
 Apollo's pets, — my masters, I should say, —
 Sole by themselves were met, I'm told, one day,
 Confiding each to each their thoughts and cares.
 Racan begins : — Pray end my inward strife,
 For well you know, my friend, what's what in life,
 Who through its varied course, from stage to stage,
 Have stored the full experience of age ;
 What shall I do ? 'Tis time I chose profession.
 You know my fortune, birth, and disposition.
 Ought I to make the country my resort,
 Or seek the army, or to rise at court ?
 There's nought but mixeth bitterness with charms ;
 War hath its pleasures ; hymen, its alarms.
 'Twere nothing hard to take my natural bent, —
 But I've a world of people to content.
 Content a world ! old Malherbe cries ; who can, sir ?
 Why, let me tell a story ere I answer.

A miller and his son, I've somewhere read,
 The first in years, the other but a lad, —
 A fine, smart boy, however, I should say, —
 To sell their ass went to a fair one day.
 In order there to get the highest price,
 They needs must keep their donkey fresh and nice ;
 So, tying fast his feet, they swung him clear,
 And bore him hanging like a chandelier.
 Alas ! poor, simple-minded country fellows !
 The first that sees their load, loud laughing, bellows,



FABLE PREMIÈRE.

Le Meunier, son Fils, et l'Ane. *

A. M. D. M.**



'INVENTION des arts étant un droit d'aïnesse,
Nous devons l'apologue à l'ancienne Grèce :
Mais ce champ ne se peut tellement moissonner,
Que les derniers venus n'y trouvent à glaner.
La feinte est un pays plein de terres désertes :
Tous les jours nos auteurs y font des découvertes,
Je t'en veux dire un trait assez bien inventé :

* Faërn., fab. 100, vel. lib. V, fab. 20, *Pater, Filius et Asinus*. — Verdzotti, *del Padre, et del Figliuolo, che menavan l'Asino*. — Voyez encore Poggii *Facetiae*, édition de 1797, in-18, t. I, p. 101, et t. II, p. 98-117.

** A MONSIEUR DE MAUCROIX.

Autrefois à Racan Malherbe l'a conté.
Ces deux rivaux d'Horace, héritiers de sa lyre,
Disciples d'Apollon, nos maîtres, pour mieux dire,
Se rencontrant un jour tout seuls et sans témoins
(Comme ils se confioient leurs pensers et leurs soins),
Racan commence ainsi : Dites-moi, je vous prie,
Vous qui devez savoir les choses de la vie,
Qui par tous ses degrés avez déjà passé,
Et que rien ne doit fuir en cet âge avancé ;
A quoi me résoudrai-je ? Il est temps que j'y pense.
Vous connoissez mon bien, mon talent, ma naissance :
Dois-je dans la province établir mon séjour ?
Prendre emploi dans l'armée, ou bien charge à la cour ?
Tout au monde est mêlé d'amertume et de charmes :
La guerre a ses douceurs, l'hymen a ses alarmes.
Si je suivois mon goût, je saurois où buter ;
Mais j'ai les miens, la cour, le peuple à contenter.
Malherbe là-dessus : Contenter tout le monde !
Écoutez ce récit avant que je réponde.

J'ai lu dans quelque endroit qu'un meunier et son fils,
L'un vieillard, l'autre enfant, non pas des plus petits,
Mais garçon de quinze ans, si j'ai bonne mémoire,
Alloient vendre leur âne, un certain jour de foire.
Afin qu'il fût plus frais et de meilleur débit,
On lui lia les pieds, on vous le suspendit :
Puis cet homme et son fils le portent comme un lustre.
Pauvres gens ! idiots ! couple ignorant et rustre !
Le premier qui les vit de rire s'éclata :
Quelle farce, dit-il, vont jouer ces gens-là ?

What farce is this to split good people's sides?
The most an ass is not the one that rides!
The miller, much enlightened by this talk,
Untied his precious beast, and made him walk.
The ass, who liked the other mode of travel,
Brayed some complaint at trudging on the gravel;
Whereat, not understanding well the beast,
The miller caused his hopeful son to ride,
And walked behind, without a spark of pride.
Three merchants passed, and, mightily displeas'd,
The eldest of these gentlemen cried out,
Ho there! dismount, for shame, you lubber lout,
Nor make a foot-boy of your gray-beard sire;
Change places, as the rights of age require.
To please you, sirs, the miller said, I ought.
So down the young and up the old man got.
Three girls next passing, What a shame, says one,
That boy should be oblig'd on foot to run,
While that old chap, upon his ass astride,
Should play the calf, and like a bishop ride!
Please save your wit, the miller made reply,
Tough veal, my girls, the calf as old as I.
But joke on joke repeated changed his mind;
So up he took, at last, his son behind.
Not thirty yards ahead, another set
Found fault. The biggest fools I ever met,
Says one of them, such burdens to impose.
The ass is faint and dying with their blows.
Is this, indeed, the mercy which these rustics
Show to their honest, faithful, old domestics?

If to the fair these lazy fellows ride,
'Twill be to sell thereat the donkey's hide !
Zounds ! cried the miller, precious little brains
Hath he who takes, to please the world, such pains ;
But since we're in, we'll try what can be done.
So off the ass they jumped, himself and son,
And, like a prelate, donkey marched alone.
Another man they met. These folks, said he,
Enslave themselves to let their ass go free —
The darling brute ! If I might be so bold,
I'd counsel them to have him set in gold.
Not so went Nicholas his Jane to woo,
Who rode, we sing, his ass to save his shoe.
Ass ! ass ! our man replied ; we're asses three !
I do avow myself an ass to be ;
But since my sage advisers can't agree,
Their words henceforth shall not be heeded ;
I'll suit myself. And he succeeded.

For you, choose army, love, or court ;
In town, or country, make resort ;
Take wife, or cowl ; ride you, or walk ;
Doubt not but tongues will have their talk.



Le plus âne des trois n'est pas celui qu'on pense.
Le meunier, à ces mots, connoît son ignorance :
Il met sur pieds sa bête, et la fait détalier.
L'âne, qui goûtoit fort l'autre façon d'aller,
Se plaint en son patois. Le meunier n'en a cure ;
Il fait monter son fils, il suit : et, d'aventure,
Passent trois bons marchands. Cet objet leur déplut.
Le plus vieux au garçon s'écria tant qu'il put :
Oh là ! oh ! descendez, que l'on ne vous le dise,
Jeune homme, qui menez laquais à barbe grise !
C'étoit à vous de suivre, au vieillard de monter.
Messieurs, dit le meunier, il vous faut contenter.
L'enfant met pied à terre, et puis le vieillard monte ;
Quand trois filles passant, l'une dit : C'est grand'honte
Qu'il faille voir ainsi clocher ce jeune fils,
Tandis que ce nigaud, comme un évêque assis,
Fait le veau sur son âne, et pense être bien sage.
Il n'est, dit le meunier, plus de veaux à mon âge :
Passez votre chemin, la fille, et m'en croyez.
Après maints quolibets, coup sur coup renvoyés,
L'homme crut avoir tort, et mit son fils en croupe.
Au bout de trente pas, une troisième troupe
Trouve encore à gloser. L'un dit : Ces gens sont fous !
Le baudet n'en peut plus, il mourra sous leurs coups.
Hé quoi ! charger ainsi cette pauvre bourrique !
N'ont-ils point de pitié de leur vieux domestique ?
Sans doute qu'à la foire ils vont vendre sa peau.
Parbleu ! dit le meunier, est bien fou du cerveau
Qui prétend contenter tout le monde et son père.
Essayons toutefois si par quelque manière

Nous en viendrons à bout. Ils descendent tous deux :
L'âne, se prélassant, marche seul devant eux.
Un quidam les rencontre, et dit : Est-ce la mode
Que baudet aille à l'aise, et meûnier s'incommode ?
Qui de l'âne ou du maître est fait pour se lasser ?
Je conseille à ces gens de le faire enchâsser.
Ils usent leurs souliers, et conservent leur âne !
Nicolas, au rebours : car, quand il va voir Jeanne,
Il monte sur sa bête ; et la chanson le dit.
Beau trio de baudets ! Le meûnier repartit :
Je suis âne, il est vrai, j'en conviens, je l'avoue ;
Mais que dorénavant on me blâme, on me loue,
Qu'on dise quelque chose, ou qu'on ne dise rien,
J'en veux faire à ma tête. Il le fit, et fit bien.

Quant à vous, suivez Mars, ou l'Amour, ou le prince,
Allez, venez, courez ; demeurez en province ;
Prenez femme, abbaye, emploi, gouvernement ;
Les gens en parleront, n'en doutez nullement.





LES MEMBRES ET L'ESTOMAC



THE MEMBERS AND THE BELLY.

PERHAPS, had I but shown due loyalty,
This book would have begun with royalty,
Of which, in certain points of view,
Boss* Belly is the image true,
In whose bereavements all the members share ;
Of whom the latter once so weary were,
As all due service to forbear,
On what they called his idle plan
Resolved to play the gentleman,
And let his lordship live on air.
Like burden-beasts, said they,
We sweat from day to day ;
And all for whom, and what ?
Ourselves we profit not.
Our labor has no object but one,
That is, to feed this lazy glutton.
We'll learn the resting trade
By his example's aid.

* A word probably more familiar to hod-carriers than to lexicographers ; qu. derived from the French *bosseman*, or the English *boatswain*, pronounced *bos'n* ? It denotes a "master" of some practical "art." Master Belly, says Rabelais, was the first Master of Arts in the world.

So said, so done ; all labor ceased ;
 The hands refused to grasp, the arms to strike ;
 All other members did the like.
 Their boss might labor if he pleased !
 It was an error which they soon repented,
 With pain of languid poverty acquainted.
 The heart no more the blood renewed,
 And hence repair no more accrued
 To ever-wasting strength ;
 Whereby the mutineers, at length,
 Saw that the idle belly, in its way,
 Did more for common benefit than they.

For royalty our fable makes,
 A thing that gives as well as takes.
 Its power all labor to sustain,
 Nor for themselves turns out their labor vain.
 It gives the artist bread, the merchant riches ;
 Maintains the diggers in their ditches ;
 Pays man of war and magistrate ;
 Supports the swarms in place,
 That live on sovereign grace ;
 In short, is caterer for the state.

Menenius told the story well,
 When Rome, of old, in pieces fell,
 The commons parting from the senate.
 The ills, said they, that we complain at
 Are, that the honors, treasures, power, and dignity,
 Belong to them alone ; while we



Les Membres et l'Estomac. *

Je devois par la royauté
Avoir commencé mon ouvrage :
A la voir d'un certain côté,
Messer Gaster ** en est l'image ;
S'il a quelque besoin , tout le corps s'en ressent .

De travailler pour lui les membres se lassant ,
Chacun d'eux résolut de vivre en gentilhomme ,
Sans rien faire , alléguant l'exemple de Gaster .
Il faudroit , disoient-ils , sans nous qu'il vécût d'air .
Nous suons , nous peinons comme bêtes de somme ;
Et pour qui ? pour lui seul : nous n'en profitons pas ;
Notre soin n'aboutit qu'à fournir ses repas .
Chômions , c'est un métier qu'il veut nous faire apprendre :
Ainsi dit , ainsi fait . Les mains cessent de prendre ,

Les bras d'agir , les jambes de marcher :
Tous dirent à Gaster qu'il en allât chercher .
Ce leur fut une erreur dont ils se repentirent :
Bientôt les pauvres gens tombèrent en langueur :

* *Æsop.*, 286, 206, *Venter et Pedes.*—Rabelais, liv. III, ch. III.

** L'estomac. (*Note de La Fontaine.*) *Messer Gaster* se lit dans Rabelais liv. IV, ch. LVII.

Il ne se forma plus de nouveau sang au cœur ;
Chaque membre en souffrit ; les forces se perdirent.

Par ce moyen, les mutins virent
Que celui qu'ils croyoient oisif et paresseux
A l'intérêt commun contribuoit plus qu'eux.
Ceci peut s'appliquer à la grandeur royale.
Elle reçoit et donne, et la chose est égale.
Tout travaille pour elle, et réciproquement
Tout tire d'elle l'aliment.

Elle fait subsister l'artisan de ses peines,
Enrichit le marchand, gage le magistrat,
Maintient le laboureur, donne paye au soldat,
Distribue en cent lieux ses graces souveraines,

Entretient seule tout l'état.

Ménénius * le sut bien dire.

La commune s'alloit séparer du sénat.
Les mécontents disoient qu'il avoit tout l'empire,
Le pouvoir, les trésors, l'honneur, la dignité ;
Au lieu que tout le mal étoit de leur côté,
Les tributs, les impôts, les fatigues de guerre.
Le peuple hors des murs étoit déjà posté,
La plupart s'en alloient chercher une autre terre,

Quand Ménénius leur fit voir

Qu'ils étoient aux membres semblables,

Et par cet apologue, insigne entre les fables,

Les ramena dans leur devoir.

* Ménénius Agrippa. Voir Denys d'Halicarnasse, l. VI, 86, t. I, p. 392 de l'édition d'Oxford, 1704, in-folio ;—Tite-Live, l. II, ch. XXXII, t. I, p. 381, édit. de Drakenborch ;—Florus, l. I, ch. XXIII, édit. de Ducker, 1722, in-8, p. 215.

Get nought our labor for
But tributes, taxes, and fatigues of war.
Without the walls the people had their stand
Prepared to march in search of other land,
When by this noted fable
Menenius was able
To draw them, hungry, home
To duty and to Rome.*

* According to our republican notions of government, these people were somewhat imposed upon. Perhaps the fable finds a more appropriate application in the relation of employer to employed. I leave the fabulists and the political economists to settle the question between them. — ED.





THE WOLF TURNED SHEPHERD.

A WOLF, whose gettings from the flocks
Began to be but few,
Bethought himself to play the fox
In character quite new.
A shepherd's hat and coat he took,
A cudgel for a crook,
Nor e'en the pipe forgot ;
And more, to seem what he was not,
Himself upon his hat he wrote,
I'm Willie, shepherd of these sheep.
His person thus complete,
His crook in upraised feet,
The impostor Willie stole upon the keep.
The real Willie, on the grass asleep,
Slept there, indeed, profoundly,
His dog and pipe slept, also, soundly ;
His drowsy sheep around lay,
As for the greatest number.
Much blessed the hypocrite their slumber,



LE LOUP DEVIENU BERGIER



Le Loup devenu Berger. *

Un loup, qui commençoit d'avoir petite part
Aux brebis de son voisinage,
Crut qu'il falloit s'aider de la peau du renard,
Et faire un nouveau personnage.
Il s'habille en berger, endosse un hoqueton,
Fait sa houlette d'un bâton,
Sans oublier la cornemuse.
Pour pousser jusqu'au bout la ruse,
Il auroit volontiers écrit sur son chapeau :
« C'est moi qui suis Guillot, berger de ce troupeau. »
Sa personne étant ainsi faite,
Et ses pieds de devant posés sur sa houlette,
Guillot le sycophante ** approche doucement.
Guillot, le vrai Guillot, étendu sur l'herbette,
Dormoit alors profondément ;
Son chien dormoit aussi, comme aussi sa musette.

* Verdizotti, 43, p. 111, édit. 1661, *il Lupo e le Pecore*.

** Trompeur. (Note de La Fontaine.)

La plupart des brebis dormoient pareillement.

L'hypocrite les laissa faire ;

Et, pour pouvoir mener vers son fort les brebis,

Il voulut ajouter la parole aux habits ,

Chose qu'il croyoit nécessaire.

Mais cela gâta son affaire :

Il ne put du pasteur contrefaire la voix ;

Le ton dont il parla fit retentir les bois ,

Et découvrit tout le mystère.

Chacun se réveille à ce son ,

Les brebis, le chien, le garçon.

Le pauvre loup, dans cet esclandre,

Empêché par son hoqueton ,

Ne put ni fuir, ni se défendre.

Toujours par quelque endroit fourbes se laissent prendre .

Quiconque est loup agisse en loup ;

C'est le plus certain de beaucoup.



And hoped to drive away the flock,
Could he the shepherd's voice but mock.
He thought undoubtedly he could.
He tried; the tone in which he spoke,
Loud echoing from the wood,
The plot and slumber broke;
Sheep, dog, and man awoke.
The wolf, in sorry plight,
In hampering coat bedight,
Could neither run nor fight.

There's always leakage of deceit,
Which makes it never safe to cheat.
Whoever is a wolf had better
Keep clear of hypocritic fetter.



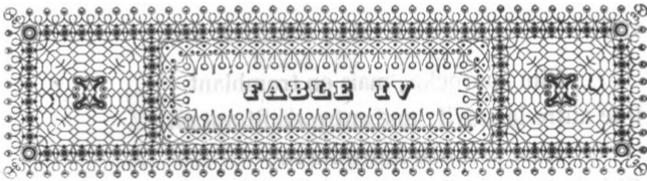


THE FROGS ASKING A KING.

A CERTAIN commonwealth aquatic,
Grown tired of order democratic,
By clamoring in the ears of Jove, effected
Its being to a monarch's power subjected.
Jove flung it down, at first, a king pacific,
Who nathless fell with such a splash terrific,
The marshy folks, a foolish race and timid,
Made breathless haste to get from him hid.
They dived into the mud beneath the water,
Or found among the reeds and rushes quarter.
And long it was they dared not see
The dreadful face of majesty,
Supposing that some monstrous frog
Had been sent down to rule the bog.
The king was really a log,
Whose gravity inspired with awe
The first that, from his hiding-place
Forth venturing, astonished, saw
The royal blockhead's face.



LES GRENOUILLES QUI DEMANDENT UN ROI

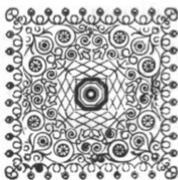


Les Grenouilles qui demandent un Roi *

Les grenouilles se lassant
De l'état démocratique,
Par leurs clameurs firent tant
Que Jupin les soumit au pouvoir monarchique.
Il leur tomba du ciel un roi tout pacifique :
Ce roi fit toutefois un tel bruit en tombant,
Que la gent marécageuse,
Gent fort sotte et fort peureuse,
S'alla cacher sous les eaux,
Dans les joncs, dans les roseaux,
Dans les trous du marécage,
Sans oser de long-temps regarder au visage
Celui qu'elles croyoient être un géant nouveau.
Or c'étoit un soliveau,
De qui la gravité fit peur à la première
Qui, de le voir s'aventurant,
Osa bien quitter sa tanière.

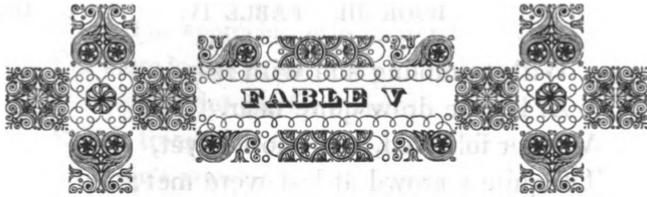
* Phædr., I, 2, *Ranæ Regem petentes*. — Æsop., 37, 170, *Ranæ Regem petentes*.

Elle approcha, mais en tremblant.
Une autre la suivit, une autre en fit autant :
Il en vint une fourmilière ;
Et leur troupe à la fin se rendit familière
Jusqu'à sauter sur l'épaule du roi.
Le bon sire le souffre, et se tient toujours coi.
Jupin en a bientôt la cervelle rompue :
Donnez-nous, dit ce peuple, un roi qui se remue !
Le monarque des dieux leur envoie une grue ,
Qui les croque, qui les tue,
Qui les gobe à son plaisir ;
Et grenouilles de se plaindre ,
Et Jupin de leur dire : Eh quoi ! votre désir
A ses lois croit-il nous astreindre ?
Vous avez dû premièrement
Garder votre gouvernement ;
Mais ne l'ayant pas fait, il vous devoit suffire
Que votre premier roi fût débonnaire et doux :
De celui-ci contentez-vous ,
De peur d'en rencontrer un pire.



With trembling and with fear,
At last he drew quite near.
Another followed, and another yet,
Till quite a crowd at last were met ;
Who, growing fast and strangely bolder,
Perched soon upon the royal shoulder.
His gracious majesty kept still,
And let his people work their will.
Clack, clack ! what din beset the ears of Jove !
We want a king, the people said, to move !
The god straight sent them down a crane,
Who caught and slew them without measure,
And gulped their carcasses at pleasure ;
Whereat the frogs more wofully complain.
What ! what ! great Jupiter replied ;
By your desires must I be tied ?
Think you such government is bad ?
You should have kept what first you had ;
Which having blindly failed to do,
It had been prudent still for you
To let that former king suffice,
More meek and mild, if not so wise.
With this now make yourselves content,
Lest for your sins a worse be sent.





THE FOX AND THE GOAT.

A fox once journeyed, and for company
A certain bearded, horned goat had he ;
Which goat no further than his nose could see.
The fox was deeply versed in trickery.

These travellers did thirst compel
To seek the bottom of a well.

There, having drank enough for two,
Says fox, My friend, what shall we do ?

'Tis time that we were thinking
Of something else than drinking.

Raise you your feet upon the wall,
And stick your horns up straight and tall ;
Then up your back I'll climb with ease,
And draw you after, if you please.

Yes, by my beard, the other said,
'Tis just the thing. I like a head
Well stocked with sense, like thine.

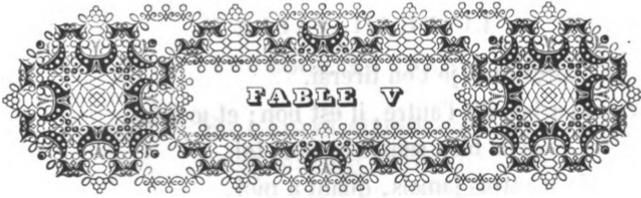
Had it been left to mine,

I do confess,

I never should have thought of this.



LE RENARD ET LE BOUC



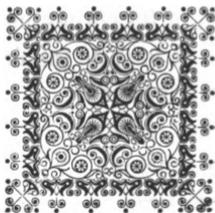
Le Renard et le Bouc. *

Capitaine renard alloit de compagnie
Avec son ami bouc des plus haut encornés :
Celui-ci ne voyoit pas plus loin que son nez ;
L'autre étoit passé maître en fait de tromperie.
La soif les obligea de descendre en un puits :
Là , chacun d'eux se désaltère.
Après qu'abondamment tous deux en eurent pris ,
Le renard dit au bouc : Que ferons-nous , compère ?
Ce n'est pas tout de boire , il faut sortir d'ici.
Lève tes pieds en haut , et tes cornes aussi ;
Mets-les contre le mur : le long de ton échine
Je grimperai premièrement ;
Puis sur tes cornes m'élevant ,
A l'aide de cette machine ,
De ce lieu-ci je sortirai.

* Æsop., 4, *Vulpes et Hircus* ; 284, *Hircus et Vulpes*.—Phædr., IV, 9, *Vulpes et Hircus*. Voyez encore Pulci, *Morgante maggiore*, c. IX, st. 75.

Après quoi je t'en tirerai.
Par ma barbe, dit l'autre, il est bon ; et je loue
Les gens bien sensés comme toi.
Je n'aurois jamais, quant à moi,
Trouvé ce secret, je l'avoue.
Le renard sort du puits, laisse son compagnon,
Et vous lui fait un beau sermon
Pour l'exhorter à patience.
Si le ciel t'eût, dit-il, donné par excellence
Autant de jugement que de barbe au menton,
Tu n'aurois pas, à la légère,
Descendu dans ce puits. Or, adieu ; j'en suis hors :
Tâche de t'en tirer, et fais tous tes efforts ;
Car, pour moi, j'ai certaine affaire
Qui ne me permet pas d'arrêter en chemin.

En toute chose il faut considérer la fin.



So Renard clambered out,
And, leaving there the goat,
Discharged his obligations
By preaching thus on patience :—
Had Heaven put sense thy head within,
To match the beard upon thy chin,
Thou wouldst have thought a bit,
Before descending such a pit.

I'm out of it ; good by :
With prudent effort try
Yourself to extricate.
For me, affairs of state
Permit me not to wait.

Whatever way you wend,
Consider well the end.



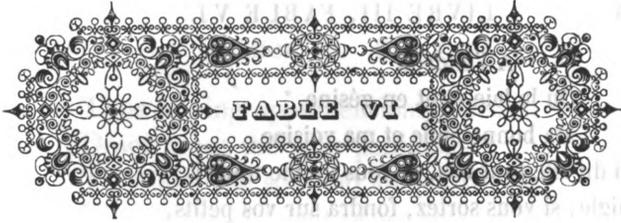


THE EAGLE, THE WILD SOW, AND THE CAT.

A CERTAIN hollow tree
Was tenanted by three.
An eagle held a lofty bough,
The hollow root a wild wood sow,
A female cat between the two.
All busy with maternal labors,
They lived awhile obliging neighbors.
At last the cat's deceitful tongue
Broke up the peace of old and young.
Up climbing to the eagle's nest,
She said, with whiskered lips compressed,
Our death, or, what as much we mothers fear,
That of our helpless offspring dear,
Is surely drawing near.
Beneath our feet, see you not how
Destruction's plotted by the sow?
Her constant digging, soon or late,
Our proud old castle will uproot.
And then — O, sad and shocking fate! —
She'll eat our young ones as the fruit!
Were there but hope of saving one,
'Twould soothe somewhat my bitter moan.



L'AIKLE, LA LAKE, ET LA CHASSE



L'Aigle, la Laie et la Chatte. * *Phædr., II, 4, Aquila, Feles, et Aper.*

L'aigle avoit ses petits au haut d'un arbre creux,

La laie au pied, la chatte entre les deux :

Et sans s'incommoder, moyennant ce partage,

Mères et nourrissons faisoient leur tripotage.

La chatte détruisit par sa fourbe l'accord ;

Elle grimpa chez l'aigle, et lui dit : Notre mort

(Au moins de nos enfants, car c'est tout un aux mères)

Ne tardera possible guères.

Voyez-vous à nos pieds fouir incessamment

Cette maudite laie, et creuser une mine ?

C'est pour déraciner le chêne assurément,

Et de nos nourrissons attirer la ruine :

L'arbre tombant, ils seront dévorés ;

Qu'ils s'en tiennent pour assurés.

S'il m'en restoit un seul j'adoucirois ma plainte.

Au partir de ce lieu, qu'elle remplit de crainte

La perfide descend tout droit

* *Phædr., II, 4, Aquila, Feles, et Aper.*

A l'endroit

Où la laie étoit en gésine. *

Ma bonne amie et ma voisine ,

Lui dit-elle tout bas, je vous donne un avis ;

L'aigle, si vous sortez, fondra sur vos petits.

Obligez-moi de n'en rien dire ;

Son courroux tomberoit sur moi.

Dans cette autre famille ayant semé l'effroi ,

La chatte en son trou se retire.

L'aigle n'ose sortir, ni pourvoir aux besoins

De ses petits ; la laie encore moins :

Sottes de ne pas voir que le plus grand des soins

Ce doit être celui d'éviter la famine.

A demeurer chez soi l'une et l'autre s'obstine ,

Pour secourir les siens dedans l'occasion :

L'oiseau royal en cas de mine ;

La laie, en cas d'irruption.

La faim détruisit tout ; il ne resta personne

De la gent marcassine et de la gent aiglonne

Qui n'allât de vie à trépas :

Grand renfort pour messieurs les chats.

Que ne sait point ourdir une langue traîtresse

Par sa pernicieuse adresse !

Des malheurs qui sont sortis

De la boîte de Pandore ,

Celui qu'à meilleur droit tout l'univers abhorre ,

C'est la fourbe à mon avis.

* En couche.

Thus leaving apprehensions hideous,
 Down went the puss perfidious
 To where the sow, no longer digging,
 Was in the very act of pigging.

Good friend and neighbor, whispered she,
 I warn you on your guard to be.
 Your pigs should you but leave a minute,
 This eagle here will seize them in it.

Speak not of this, I beg, at all,
 Lest on my head her wrath should fall.
 Another breast with fear inspired,
 With fiendish joy the cat retired.

The eagle ventured no egress
 To feed her young, the sow still less.
 Fools they, to think that any curse
 Than ghastly famine could be worse!

Both staid at home, resolved and obstinate,
 To save their young ones from impending fate, —

The royal bird for fear of mine,
 For fear of royal claws the swine:

All died; at length, with hunger,
 The older and the younger;

There staid, of eagle race or boar,
 Not one this side of death's dread door; —

A sad misfortune, which
 The wicked cats made rich:

O, what is there of hellish plot

The treacherous tongue dares not!

Of all the ills Pandora's box outpoured,
 Deceit, I think, is most to be abhorred.



FABLE VII

THE DRUNKARD AND HIS WIFE.

EACH has his fault, to which he clings
In spite of shame or fear.
This apophthegm a story brings,
To make its truth more clear.
A sot had lost health, mind, and purse ;
And, truly, for that matter,
Sots mostly lose the latter
Ere running half their course.
When wine, one day, of wit had filled the room,
His wife enclosed him in a spacious tomb.
There did the fumes evaporate
At leisure from his drowsy pate.
When he awoke, he found
His body wrapped around
With grave-clothes, chill and damp,
Beneath a dim, sepulchral lamp.
How 's this ? My wife a widow sad ?
He cried, and I a ghost ? Dead ? dead ?



L'IVROGNE ET SA FEMME



L'Ivrogne et sa Femme.*

Chacun a son défaut, où toujours il revient :
Honte ni peur n'y remédie.
Sur ce propos, d'un conte il me souvient :
Je ne dis rien que je n'appuie
De quelque exemple. Un suppôt de Bacchus
Altéroit sa santé, son esprit, et sa bourse :
Telles gens n'ont pas fait la moitié de leur course,
Qu'ils sont au bout de leurs écus.
Un jour que celui-ci, plein du jus de la treille,
Avoit laissé ses sens au fond d'une bouteille,
Sa femme l'enferma dans un certain tombeau.
Là, les vapeurs du vin nouveau
Cuvèrent à loisir. A son réveil il treuve
L'attirail de la mort à l'entour de son corps,
Un luminaire, un drap des morts.
Oh ! dit-il, qu'est ceci ? Ma femme est-elle veuve ?

* *Æsop.*, 234, *Mulier et Vir ebrius* ; 73, *Mulier*.

Là-dessus son épouse, en habit d'Alecton
Masquée, et de sa voix contrefaisant le ton,
Vient au prétendu mort, approche de sa bière,
Lui présente un chaudeau * propre pour Lucifer.
L'époux alors ne doute en aucune manière
Qu'il ne soit citoyen d'enfer.

Quelle personne es-tu ? dit-il à ce fantôme.

La cellière du royaume

De Satan, reprit-elle ; et je porte à manger

A ceux qu'enclôt la tombe noire.

Le mari repart, sans songer :

Tu ne leur portes point à boire ?

* Bouillon chaud



Thereat his spouse, with snaky hair,
And robes like those the Furies wear,
With voice to fit the realms below,
Brought boiling caudle to his bier —
For Lucifer the proper cheer ;
By which her husband came to know —
For he had heard of those three ladies —
Himself a citizen of Hades.

What may your office be ?

The phantom questioned he.

I'm server up of Pluto's meat,

And bring his guests the same to eat.

Well, says the sot, not taking time to think,
And don't you bring us any thing to drink ?





THE GOUT AND THE SPIDER.

WHEN Nature angrily turned out
Those plagues, the spider and the gout,—
See you, said she, those huts so meanly built,
These palaces so grand and richly gilt?

By mutual agreement fix
Your choice of dwellings; or if not,
To end th' affair by lot,

Draw out these little sticks.

The huts are not for me, the spider cried;
And not for me the palace, cried the gout;
For there a sort of men she spied

Called doctors, going in and out,
From whom she could not hope for ease.

So hied her to the huts the fell disease,

And, fastening on a poor man's toe,

Hoped there to fatten on his woe,

And torture him, fit after fit,

Without a summons e'er to quit,

From old Hippocrates.

The spider, on the lofty ceiling,

As if she had a life-lease feeling,

Wove wide her cunning toils,

Soon rich with insect spoils.



LA GOUTTE ET L'ARAIGNÉE



La Goutte et l'Araignée. *

Quand l'enfer eut produit la goutte et l'araignée,
Mes filles, leur dit-il, vous pouvez vous vanter
D'être pour l'humaine lignée
Également à redouter.

Or, avisons aux lieux qu'il vous faut habiter.

Voyez-vous ces cases étroites, **

Et ces palais si grands, si beaux, si bien dorés ?

Je me suis proposé d'en faire vos retraites.

Tenez donc, voici deux bûchettes ;

Accommodez-vous, ou tirez.

Il n'est rien, dit l'aragne, *** aux cases qui me plaise.

L'autre, tout au rebours, voyant les palais pleins

De ces gens nommés médecins,

Ne crut pas y pouvoir demeurer à son aise.

Elle prend l'autre lot, y plante le piquet,

S'étend à son plaisir sur l'orteil d'un pauvre homme,

Disant : je ne crois pas qu'en ce poste je chôme,

* Gerbel, dans *Camerarii fabulæ*, 1570, p. 458.

** *Etraites pour étroites.*

*** Ancien mot, pour *araignée*.

Ni que d'en déloger et faire mon paquet
Jamais Hippocrate me somme.
L'aragne cependant se campe en un lambris,
Comme si de ces lieux elle eût fait bail à vie,
Travaille à demeurer : voilà sa toile ourdie,
Voilà des moucherons de pris.
Une servante vient balayer tout l'ouvrage.
Autre toile tissue, autre coup de balai.
Le pauvre bestion tous les jours déménage.
Enfin, après un vain essai,
Il va trouver la goutte. Elle étoit en campagne,
Plus malheureuse mille fois
Que la plus malheureuse aragne.
Son hôte la menoit tantôt fendre du bois,
Tantôt fourir, houer : goutte bien tracassée
Est, dit-on, à demi pensée.
Oh ! je ne saurois plus, dit-elle, y résister.
Changeons, ma sœur l'aragne. Et l'autre d'écouter :
Elle la prend au mot, se glisse en la cabane :
Point de coup de balai qui l'oblige à changer.
La goutte, d'autre part, va tout droit se loger
Chez un prélat, qu'elle condamne
A jamais du lit ne bouger.
Cataplasmes, Dieu sait ! les gens n'ont point de honte
De faire aller le mal toujours de pis en pis.
L'une et l'autre trouva de la sorte son compte,
Et fit très sagement de changer de logis.

A maid destroyed them as she swept the room:
Repaired, again they felt the fatal broom.

The wretched creature, every day,
From house and home must pack away.

At last, her courage giving out,
She went to seek her sister gout,

And in the field descried her,
Quite starved: more evils did betide her
Than e'er befell the poorest spider—

Her toiling host enslaved her so,
And made her chop, and dig, and hoe!

(Says one, Kept brisk and busy,
The gout is made half easy.)

O, when, exclaimed the sad disease,
Will this my misery stop?

O, sister spider, if you please,
Our places let us swop.

The spider gladly heard,
And took her at her word,—

And flourished in the cabin-lodge,
Not forced the tidy broom to dodge.

The gout, selecting her abode
With an ecclesiastic judge,

Turned judge herself, and, by her code,
He from his couch no more could budge.

The salves and cataplasms Heaven knows,
That mocked the misery of his toes;

While aye, without a blush, the curse
Kept driving onward, worse and worse.

Needless to say, the sisterhood
Thought their exchange both wise and good.



THE WOLF AND THE STORK.

THE wolves are prone to play the glutton.

One, at a certain feast, 'tis said,
So stuffed himself with lamb and mutton,
He seemed but little short of dead.

Deep in his throat a bone stuck fast.

Well for this wolf, who could not speak,
That soon a stork quite near him passed.

By signs invited, with her beak

The bone she drew

With slight ado,

And for this skilful surgery

Demanded, modestly, her fee.

Your fee! replied the wolf,

In accents rather gruff;

And is it not enough

Your neck is safe from such a gulf?

Go, for a wretch ingrate,

Nor tempt again your fate!





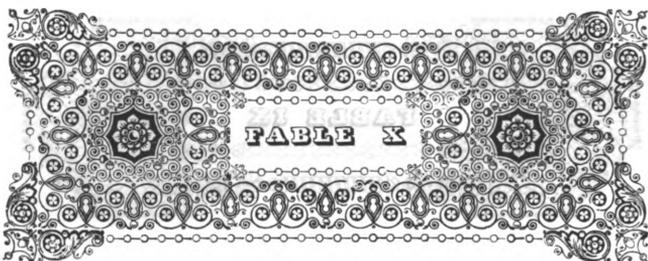
LE LOUP ET LA CIGOGNE



Le Loup et la Cigogne. *

Les loups mangent gloutonnement.
Un loup donc étant de frairie
Se pressa, dit-on, tellement,
Qu'il en pensa perdre la vie :
Un os lui demeura bien avant au gosier.
De bonheur pour ce loup, qui ne pouvoit crier,
Près de là passe une cigogne.
Il lui fait signe ; elle accourt.
Voilà l'opératrice aussitôt en besogne.
Elle retira l'os : puis, pour un si bon tour,
Elle demanda son salaire.
Votre salaire, dit le loup :
Vous riez, ma bonne commère !
Quoi ! ce n'est pas encor beaucoup
D'avoir de mon gosier retiré votre cou ?
Allez, vous êtes une ingrata :
Ne tombez jamais sous ma patte.

* Phædr., I, 8, *Lupus et Grus*. — Æsop., 94, 144, *Lupus et Grus*.



Le Lion abattu par l'Homme. *

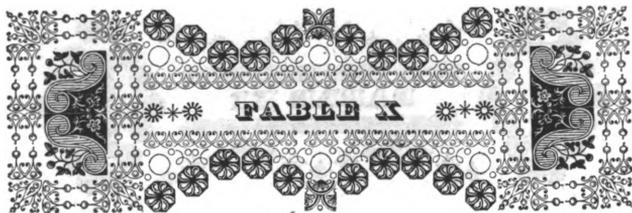
On exposoit une peinture
Où l'artisan avoit tracé
Un lion d'immense stature
Par un seul homme terrassé.
Les regardants en tiroient gloire.
Un lion, en passant, rabattit leur caquet :
Je vois bien, dit-il, qu'en effet
On vous donne ici la victoire :
Mais l'ouvrier vous a déçus ;
Il avoit liberté de feindre.
Avec plus de raison nous aurions le dessus,
Si mes confrères savoient peindre.

* *Æsop.*, 169, *Leo et Homo iter habentes*; 223, *Leo et Homo*.



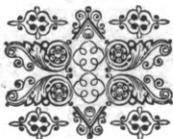


LE LION ARRÊTÉ PAR L'HOMME



THE LION BEATEN BY THE MAN.

A PICTURE once was shown,
In which one man, alone,
Upon the ground had thrown
A lion fully grown.
Much gloried at the sight the rabble.
A lion thus rebuked their babble : —
That you have got the victory there,
There is no contradiction.
But, gentles, possibly you are
The dupes of easy fiction.
Had we the art of making pictures,
Perhaps our champion had beat yours !





THE FOX AND THE GRAPES.

A fox, almost with hunger dying,
Some grapes upon a trellis spying,
To all appearance ripe, clad in
 Their tempting russet skin,
Most gladly would have eat them ;
But since he could not get them,
 So far above his reach the vine, —
They're sour, he said ; such grapes as these,
The dogs may eat them if they please !

Did he not better than to whine ?





LE RENARD ET LES RAISINS

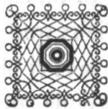


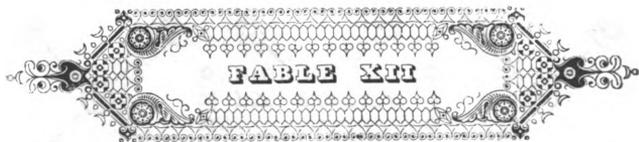
Le Renard et les Raisins. *

Certain renard gascon, d'autres disent normand,
Mourant presque de faim, vit au haut d'une treille
Des raisins mûrs apparemment,
Et couverts d'une peau vermeille.
Le galant en eût fait volontiers un repas ;
Mais comme il n'y pouvoit atteindre :
Ils sont trop verts, dit-il, et bon pour des goujats.

Fit-il pas mieux que de se plaindre ?

* Æsop., 170, *Vulpes et Uva* ; 159, *Vulpes et Uvæ*.— Phædr., IV, 3, *Vulpes et Uva*.





Le Cygne et le Cuisinier. *

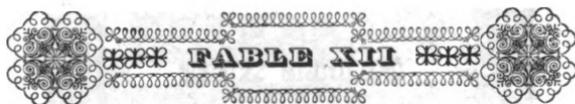
Dans une ménagerie
De volatiles remplie
Vivoient le cygne et l'oison :

Celui-là destiné pour les regards du maître ;
Celui-ci pour son goût : l'un qui se piquoit d'être
Commensal du jardin ; l'autre, de la maison.
Des fossés du château faisant leurs galeries,
Tantôt on les eût vus côte à côte nager,
Tantôt courir sur l'onde, et tantôt se plonger,
Sans pouvoir satisfaire à leurs vaines envies.
Un jour le cuisinier, ayant trop bu d'un coup,
Prit pour oison le cygne ; et, le tenant au cou,
Il alloit l'égorger, puis le mettre en potage.
L'oiseau, près de mourir, se plaint en son ramage,
Le cuisinier fut fort surpris,
Et vit bien qu'il s'étoit mépris.
Quoi ! je mettrois, dit-il, un tel chanteur en soupe !
Non, non, ne plaise aux dieux que jamais ma main coupe
La gorge à qui s'en sert si bien !
Ainsi dans les dangers qui nous suivent en croupe
Le doux parler ne nuit de rien.

* *Æsop.*, 288, 74, *Cygnus*.



LE CYGNE ET LE CUISINIER



THE SWAN AND THE COOK.

THE pleasures of a poultry yard
Were by a swan and gosling shared.
The swan was kept there for his looks,
The thrifty gosling for the cooks, —
The first the garden's pride, the latter
A greater favorite on the platter.
They swam the ditches, side by side,
And oft in sports aquatic vied,
Plunging, splashing far and wide,
With rivalry ne'er satisfied.

One day the cook, named Thirsty John,
Sent for the gosling, took the swan,
In haste his throat to cut,
And put him in the pot.

The bird's complaint resounded
In glorious melody ;
Whereat the cook, astounded
His sad mistake to see,

Cried, What ! make soup of a musician !
Please God, I'll never set such dish on.
No, no ; I'll never cut a throat
That sings so sweet a note.

'Tis thus, whatever peril may alarm us,
Sweet words will never harm us.

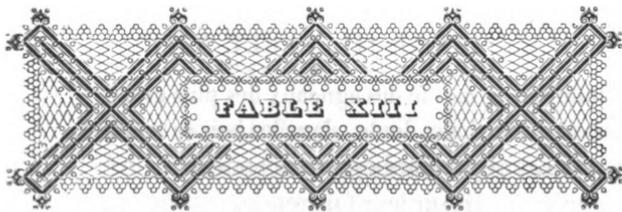


THE WOLVES AND THE SHEEP.

BY-GONE a thousand years of war,
The wearers of the fleece
And wolves at last made peace ;
Which both appeared the better for ;
For if the wolves had now and then
Eat up a straggling ewe or wether,
As often had the shepherd men
Turned wolf-skins into leather.
Fear always spoiled the verdant herbage,
And so it did the bloody carnage.
Hence peace was sweet ; and, lest it should be riven,
On both sides hostages were given.
The sheep, as by the terms arranged,
For pups of wolves their dogs exchanged ;
Which being done above suspicion,
Confirmed and sealed by high commission,
What time the pups were fully grown,
And felt an appetite for prey,
And saw the sheepfold left alone,
The shepherds all away,



LES LOUPS ET LES BREBIS



Les Loups et les Brebis. *

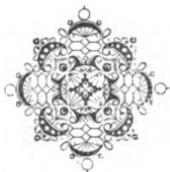
Après mille ans et plus de guerre déclarée,
Les loups firent la paix avecque les brebis.
C'étoit apparemment le bien des deux partis :
Car si les loups mangeoient mainte bête égarée,
Les bergers de leurs peaux se faisoient maints habits.
Jamais de liberté, ni pour les pâturages,
Ni d'autre part pour les carnages ;
Ils ne pouvoient jouir, qu'en tremblant, de leurs biens.
La paix se conclut donc ; on donne des ôtages ;
Les loups, leurs louveteaux ; et les brebis, leurs chiens.
L'échange en étant fait aux formes ordinaires,
Et réglé par des commissaires,
Au bout de quelque temps que messieurs les louvats **
Se virent loups parfaits, et friands de tuerie,
Ils vous prennent le temps que dans la bergerie
Messieurs les bergers n'étoient pas

* Æsop., 211, 241, *Lupi et Oves.*

** J une loup, louveteau.

Étranglent la moitié des agneaux des plus gras ,
Les emportent aux dents , dans les bois se retirent .
Ils avoient averti leurs gens secrètement .
Les chiens , qui , sur leur foi , reposoient sûrement ,
Furent étranglés en dormant :
Cela fut si tôt fait qu'à peine ils le sentirent .
Tout fut mis en morceaux , un seul n'en échappa .

Nous pouvons conclure de là
Qu'il faut faire aux méchants guerre continuelle .
La paix est fort bonne de soi ;
J'en conviens : mais de quoi sert-elle
Avec des ennemis sans foi ?



They seized the fattest lambs they could,
And, choking, dragged them to the wood ;
Of which by secret means apprized,
 Their sires, as is surmised,
Fell on the hostage guardians of the sheep,
 And slew them all asleep.
So quick the deed of perfidy was done,
 There fled to tell the tale not one !

From which we may conclude
That peace with villains will be rued.
 Peace in itself, 'tis true,
 May be a good for you ;
 But 'tis an evil, nathless,
 When enemies are faithless.





FABLE XIV

THE LION GROWN OLD.

A LION, mourning, in his age, the wane
Of might once dreaded through his wild domain,
Was mocked, at last, upon his throne,
By subjects of his own,
Strong through his weakness grown.
The horse his head saluted with a kick ;
The wolf snapped at his royal hide ;
The ox, too, gored him in the side ;
The unhappy lion, sad and sick,
Could hardly growl, he was so weak.
In uncomplaining, stoic pride,
He waited for the hour of fate,
Until the ass approached his gate ;
Whereat, This is too much, he saith ;
I willingly would yield my breath ;
But, ah ! thy kick is double death !





LE LION DEVENU VIEUX.



Le Lion devenu Vieux. *

Le lion, terreur des forêts,
Chargé d'ans, et pleurant son antique prouesse,
Fut enfin attaqué par ses propres sujets,
Devenus forts par sa foiblesse.
Le cheval s'approchant lui donne un coup de pied,
Le loup un coup de dent, le bœuf un coup de corne.
Le malheureux lion, languissant, triste et morne,
Peut à peine rugir, par l'âge estropié.
Il attend son destin sans faire aucunes plaintes ;
Quand voyant l'âne même à son antre accourir :
Ah ! c'est trop, lui dit-il : je voulois bien mourir ;
Mais c'est mourir deux fois que souffrir tes atteintes.

* Phædr., I, 21, *Leo senex. Aper, Taurus et Asinus.*

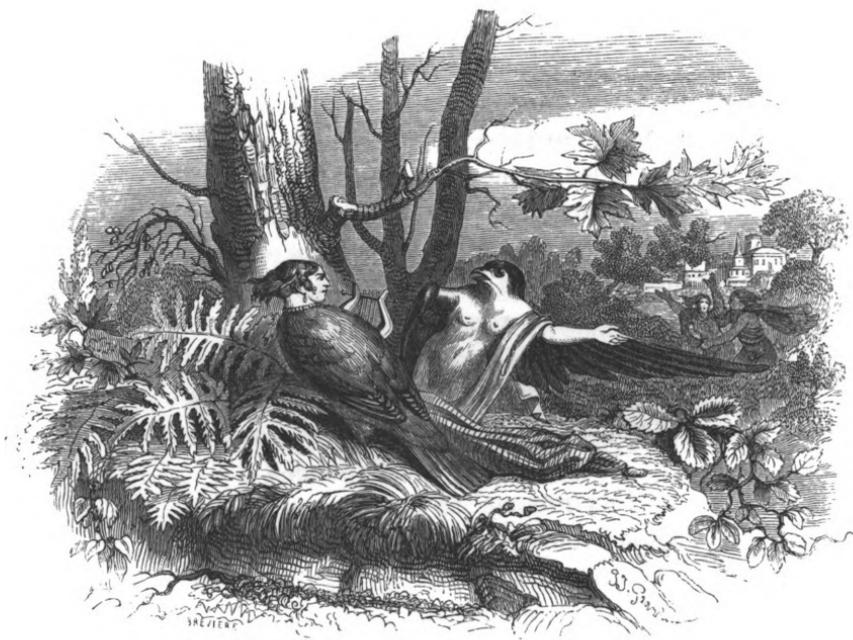




Philomèle et Progné. *

Autrefois Progné l'hirondelle
De sa demeure s'écarta,
Et loin des villes s'emporta
Dans un bois où chantoit la pauvre Philomèle.
Ma sœur, lui dit Progné, comment vous portez-vous ?
Voici tantôt mille ans que l'on ne vous a vue :
Je ne me souviens point que vous soyez venue,
Depuis le temps de Thrace, habiter parmi nous.
Dites-moi, que pensez-vous faire ?
Ne quitterez-vous point ce séjour solitaire ?
Ah ! reprit Philomèle, en est-il de plus doux ?
Progné lui repartiit : Eh quoi ! cette musique,
Pour ne chanter qu'aux animaux,
Tout au plus à quelque rustique !
Le désert est-il fait pour des talents si beaux ?
Venez faire aux cités éclater leurs merveilles :
Aussi bien, en voyant les bois,
Sans cesse il vous souvient que Térée autrefois,
Parmi des demeures pareilles,
Exerça sa fureur sur vos divins appas.
Et c'est le souvenir d'un si cruel outrage
Qui fait, reprit sa sœur, que je ne vous suis pas :
En voyant les hommes, hélas !
Il m'en souvient bien davantage.

* Æsop., 260, 152, *Luscinia et Hirundo*.



PHILOMÈLE ET PROGNÉ



PHILOMEL AND PROGNE.

FROM home and city spires, one day,
The swallow Progne flew away,
And sought the bosky dell
Where sang poor Philomel.
My sister, Progne said, how do you do?
'Tis now a thousand years since you
Have been concealed from human view.
I'm sure I have not seen your face
Once since the times of Thrace.
Pray, will you never quit this dull retreat?
Where could I find, said Philomel, so sweet?
What! sweet! cried Progne — sweet to waste
Such tones on beasts devoid of taste,
Or on some rustic, at the most!
Should you by deserts be engrossed?
Come, be the city's pride and boast.
Besides, the woods remind of harms!
That Tereus, in them, did your charms.
Alas! replied the bird of song,
The thought of that so cruel wrong
Makes me, from age to age,
Prefer this hermitage;
For nothing like the sight of men
Can call up what I suffered then.



THE WOMAN DROWNED.

I HATE that saying, old and savage,
“’Tis nothing but a woman drowning.”
That’s much, I say. What grief more keen should
 have edge
Than loss of her, of all our joys the crowning?
Thus much suggests the fable I am borrowing.
 A woman perished in the water,
 Where, anxiously and sorrowing,
 Her husband sought her,
To ease the grief he could not cure,
By honored rites of sepulture.
It chanced that near the fatal spot,
 Along the stream which had
 Produced a death so sad,
There walked some men that knew it not.
The husband asked if they had seen
His wife, or aught that hers had been.
 One promptly answered, No ;
 But search the stream below :
It must have borne her in its flow.



LA FEMME NOYEE

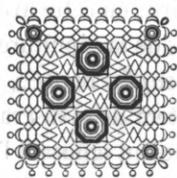


La Femme noyée. *

Je ne suis pas de ceux qui disent : Ce n'est rien ,
C'est une femme qui se noie.
Je dis que c'est beaucoup : et ce sexe vaut bien
Que nous le regrettions , puisqu'il fait notre joie.
Ce que j'avance ici n'est point hors de propos ;
Puisqu'il s'agit , en cette fable ,
D'une femme qui dans les flots
Avait fini ses jours par un sort déplorable.
Son époux en cherchoit le corps ,
Pour lui rendre , en cette aventure ,
Les honneurs de la sépulture.
Il arriva que sur les bords
Du fleuve auteur de sa disgrace
Des gens se promenoient ignorant l'accident.
Ce mari donc leur demandant
S'ils n'avoient de sa femme aperçu nulle trace :
Nulle , reprit l'un d'eux ; mais cherchez-la plus bas ,
Suivez le fil de la rivière.

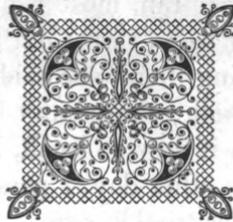
Un autre repartit : Non , ne le suivez pas ,
Rebroussez plutôt en arrière :
Quelle que soit la pente et l'inclination
Dont l'eau par sa course l'emporte ,
L'esprit de contradiction
L'aura fait flotter d'autre sorte.

Cet homme se railloit assez hors de saison.
Quant à l'humeur contredisante ,
Je ne sais s'il avoit raison :
Mais que cette humeur soit ou non
Le défaut du sexe et sa pente ,
Quiconque avec elle naîtra
Sans faute avec elle mourra ,
Et jusqu'au bout contredira ,
Et , s'il peut , encor par-delà.



No, said another ; search above.
In that direction
She would have floated, by the love
Of contradiction.

This joke was truly out of season ; —
I don't propose to weigh its reason.
But whether such propensity
The sex's fault may be,
Or not, one thing is very sure,
Its own propensities endure.
Up to the end they'll have their will,
And, if it could be, further still.





THE WEASEL IN THE GRANARY.

A WEASEL through a hole contrived to squeeze,
(She was recovering from disease,)
Which led her to a farmer's board.
There lodged, her wasted form she cherished ;
Heaven knows the lard and victuals stored
That by her gnawing perished !
Of which the consequence
Was sudden corpulence.
A week or so was past,
When, having fully broken fast,
A noise she heard, and hurried
To find the hole by which she came,
And seemed to find it not the same ;
So round she ran, most sadly flurried ;
And, coming back, thrust out her head,
Which sticking there, she said,
This is the hole ; there can't be blunder :
What makes it now so small, I wonder,
Where, but the other day, I passed with ease ?
A rat her trouble sees,
And cries, But with an emptier belly ;
You entered lean, and lean must sally.
What I have said to you
Has eke been said to not a few,
Who, in a vast variety of cases,
Have ventured into such like places.



LA PELETTE ENTREE DANS UN GRENIER.

FABLE XVII

La Belette entrée dans un grenier.*

Damoiselle belette, au corps long et fluet,
Entra dans un grenier par un trou fort étroit,
Elle sortoit de maladie.
Là, vivant à discrétion,
La galande fit chère lie,**
Mangea, rongea : Dieu sait la vie,
Et le lard qui périt en cette occasion !
La voilà, pour conclusion,
Grasse, maflue et rebondie.
Au bout de la semaine, ayant dîné son soûl,
Elle entend quelque bruit, veut sortir par le trou,
Ne peut plus repasser, et croit s'être méprise.
Après avoir fait quelques tours,
C'est, dit-elle, l'endroit : me voilà bien surprise,
J'ai passé par ici depuis cinq ou six jours.
Un rat, qui la voyoit en peine,
Lui dit : Vous aviez lors la panse un peu moins pleine.
Vous êtes maigre entrée, il faut maigre sortir.
Ce que je vous dis là, l'on le dit à bien d'autres :
Mais ne confondons point, par trop approfondir,
Leurs affaires avec les vôtres.

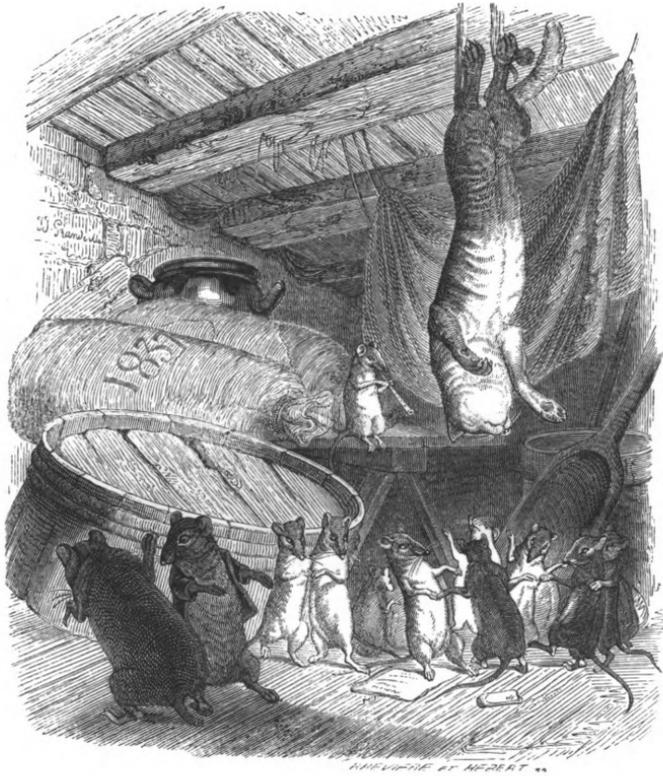
* *Æsop.*, 12, *Vulpes ventre tumefacto*; 161, *Vulpes esuriens*.—*Horat.*, *Ep.*, lib. 1, 7.—** Chère joyeuse, bonne chère.



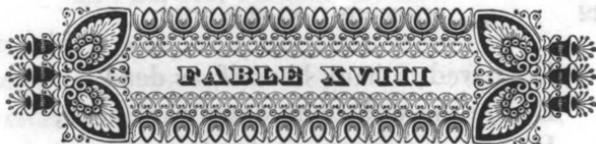
Le Chat et le vieux Rat. *

J'ai lu, chez un conteur de fables,
Qu'un second Rodilard, l'Alexandre des chats,
L'Attila, le fléau des rats,
Rendoit ces derniers misérables :
J'ai lu, dis-je, en certain auteur,
Que ce chat exterminateur,
Vrai Cerbère, étoit craint une lieue à la ronde :
Il vouloit de souris dépeupler tout le monde.
Les planches qu'on suspend sur un léger appui,
La mort-aux-rats, les souricières,
N'étoient que jeux au prix de lui.
Comme il voit que dans leurs tanières
Les souris étoient prisonnières,
Qu'elles n'osoient sortir, qu'il avoit beau chercher,

* *Æsop.*, 67, 28, *Fellis et Mures* — *Phædr.*, IV, 2, *Mustela et Mures* — *Færn.*, III, 14, *Mures et Feles*.



LE CHAT ET LE VIEUX RAT



THE CAT AND THE OLD RAT.

A STORY-WRITER of our sort
Historifies, in short,
Of one that may be reckoned
A Rodilard the Second, —
The Alexander of the cats,
The Attila, the scourge of rats,
Whose fierce and whiskered head
Among the latter spread,
A league around, its dread;
Who seemed, indeed, determined
The world should be unvermined.
The planks with props more false than slim,
The tempting heaps of poisoned meal,
The traps of wire and traps of steel,
Were only play compared with him.
At length, so sadly were they scared,
The rats and mice no longer dared
To show their thievish faces
Outside their hiding-places,
Thus shunning all pursuit; whereat
Our crafty General Cat

Contrived to hang himself, as dead,
Beside the wall, with downward head,
Resisting gravitation's laws
By clinging with his hinder claws
 To some small bit of string.
 The rats esteemed the thing
A judgment for some naughty deed,
 Some thievish snatch,
 Or ugly scratch ;
And thought their foe had got his meed
 By being hung indeed.
 With hope elated all
 Of laughing at his funeral,
They thrust their noses out in air ;
And now to show their heads they dare,
Now dodging back, now venturing more ;
 At last, upon the larder's store
 They fall to filching, as of yore.
A scanty feast enjoyed these shallows ;
Down dropped the hung one from his gallows,
 And of the hindmost caught.
Some other tricks to me are known,
Said he, while tearing bone from bone,
 By long experience taught ;
The point is settled, free from doubt,
That from your holes you shall come out.
His threat as good as prophecy
Was proved by Mr. Mildandsly ;
For, putting on a mealy robe,
He squatted in an open tub,

Le galant fait le mort, et du haut d'un plancher
 Se pend la tête en bas : la bête scélérate
 A de certains cordons se tenoit par la patte.
 Le peuple des souris croit que c'est châtement,
 Qu'il a fait un larcin de rôl ou de fromage,
 Égratigné quelqu'un, causé quelque dommage ;
 Enfin, qu'on a pendu le mauvais garnement.

Toutes, dis-je, unanimement

Se promettent de rire à son enterrement,
 Mettent le nez à l'air, montrent un peu la tête,
 Puis rentrent dans leurs nids à rats,
 Puis ressortant font quatre pas,
 Puis enfin se mettent en quête.
 Mais voici bien une autre fête :

Le pendu ressuscite, et, sur ses pieds tombant,
 Attrape les plus paresseuses.

Nous en savons plus d'un, dit-il en les gobant :
 C'est tour de vieille guerre ; et vos cavernes creuses
 Ne vous sauveront pas, je vous en avertis :

Vous viendrez toutes au logis.

Il prophétisoit vrai : notre maître Mitis,*
 Pour la seconde fois les trompe et les affine,
 Blanchit sa robe et s'enfarine ;
 Et de la sorte déguisé,

Se niche et se blottit dans une huche ouverte.

Ce fut à lui bien avisé :

La gent trotte-menu s'en vient chercher sa perte.
 Un rat, sans plus, s'abstient d'aller flairer autour

* *Mitis* en latin signifie doux.

C'étoit un vieux routier, il savoit plus d'un tour ;
Même il avoit perdu sa queue à la bataille.
Ce bloc enfariné ne me dit rien qui vaille,
S'écria-t-il de loin au général des chats :
Je soupçonne dessous encor quelque machine.
Rien ne te sert d'être farine ;
Car, quand tu serois sac, je n'approcherois pas.
C'étoit bien dit à lui ; j'approuve sa prudence :
Il étoit expérimenté,
Et savoit que la méfiance
Est mère de la sûreté.

FIN DU LIVRE TROISIÈME.



And held his purring and his breath ; —
Out came the vermin to their death.
On this occasion one old stager,
A rat as gray as any badger,
Who had in battle lost his tail,
Abstained from smelling at the meal ;
And cried, far off, Ah ! General Cat,
I much suspect a heap like that ;
Your meal is not the thing, perhaps,
For one who knows somewhat of traps ;
Should you a sack of meal become,
I'd let you be, and stay at home.

Well said, I think, and prudently,
By one who knew distrust to be
The parent of security.



