

# AESOP'S FABLES

BY AESOP



# THE COCK AND THE PEARL

A cock was once strutting up and down the farmyard among the hens when suddenly he espied something shining amid the straw. 'Ho! ho!' quoth he, 'that's for me,' and soon rooted it out from beneath the straw. What did it turn out to be but a Pearl that by some chance had been lost in the yard? 'You may be a treasure,' quoth Master Cock, 'to men that prize you, but for me I would rather have a single barley-corn than a peck of pearls.'

Precious things are for those that can prize them.

# THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

Once upon a time a Wolf was lapping at a spring on a hillside, when, looking up, what should he see but a Lamb just beginning to drink a little lower down. ‘There’s my supper,’ thought he, ‘if only I can find some excuse to seize it.’ Then he called out to the Lamb, ‘How dare you muddle the water from which I am drinking?’

‘Nay, master, nay,’ said Lambikin; ‘if the water be muddy up there, I cannot be the cause of it, for it runs down from you to me.’

‘Well, then,’ said the Wolf, ‘why did you call me bad names this time last year?’

‘That cannot be,’ said the Lamb; ‘I am only six months old.’

‘I don’t care,’ snarled the Wolf; ‘if it was not you it was your father;’ and with that he rushed upon the poor little Lamb and ate her all up. But before she died she gasped out ‘Any excuse will serve a tyrant.’

# THE DOG AND THE SHADOW

It happened that a Dog had got a piece of meat and was carrying it home in his mouth to eat it in peace. Now on his way home he had to cross a plank lying across a running brook. As he crossed, he looked down and saw his own shadow reflected in the water beneath. Thinking it was another dog with another piece of meat, he made up his mind to have that also. So he made a snap at the shadow in the water, but as he opened his mouth the piece of meat fell out, dropped into the water and was never seen more.

Beware lest you lose the substance by grasping at the shadow.

# THE LION'S SHARE

The Lion went once a-hunting along with the Fox, the Jackal, and the Wolf. They hunted and they hunted till at last they surprised a Stag, and soon took its life. Then came the question how the spoil should be divided. 'Quarter me this Stag,' roared the Lion; so the other animals skinned it and cut it into four parts. Then the Lion took his stand in front of the carcass and pronounced judgment: The first quarter is for me in my capacity as King of Beasts; the second is mine as arbiter; another share comes to me for my part in the chase; and as for the fourth quarter, well, as for that, I should like to see which of you will dare to lay a paw upon it.'

'Humph,' grumbled the Fox as he walked away with his tail between his legs; but he spoke in a low growl. 'You may share the labours of the great, but you will not share the spoil.'

# THE WOLF AND THE CRANE

A Wolf had been gorging on an animal he had killed, when suddenly a small bone in the meat stuck in his throat and he could not swallow it. He soon felt terrible pain in his throat, and ran up and down groaning and groaning and seeking for something to relieve the pain. He tried to induce every one he met to remove the bone. 'I would give anything,' said he, 'if you would take it out.' At last the Crane agreed to try, and told the Wolf to lie on his side and open his jaws as wide as he could. Then the Crane put its long neck down the Wolf's throat, and with its beak loosened the bone, till at last it got it out.

'Will you kindly give me the reward you promised?' said the Crane.

The Wolf grinned and showed his teeth and said: 'Be content. You have put your head inside a Wolf's mouth and taken it out again in safety; that ought to be reward enough for you.'

Gratitude and greed go not together.

# THE MAN AND THE SERPENT

A Countryman's son by accident trod upon a Serpent's tail, which turned and bit him so that he died. The father in a rage got his axe, and pursuing the Serpent, cut off part of its tail. So the Serpent in revenge began stinging several of the Farmer's cattle and caused him severe loss. Well, the Farmer thought it best to make it up with the Serpent, and brought food and honey to the mouth of its lair, and said to it: 'Let's forget and forgive; perhaps you were right to punish my son, and take vengeance on my cattle, but surely I was right in trying to revenge him; now that we are both satisfied why should not we be friends again?'

'No, no,' said the Serpent; 'take away your gifts; you can never forget the death of your son, nor I the loss of my tail.'

Injuries may be forgiven, but not forgotten.

# THE TOWN MOUSE AND THE COUNTRY MOUSE

Now you must know that a Town Mouse once upon a time went on a visit to his cousin in the country. He was rough and ready, this cousin, but he loved his town friend and made him heartily welcome. Beans and bacon, cheese and bread, were all he had to offer, but he offered them freely. The Town Mouse rather turned up his long nose at this country fare, and said: 'I cannot understand, Cousin, how you can put up with such poor food as this, but of course you cannot expect anything better in the country; come you with me and I will show you how to live. When you have been in town a week you will wonder how you could ever have stood a country life.' No sooner said than done: the two mice set off for the town and arrived at the Town Mouse's residence late at night. 'You will want some refreshment after our long journey,' said the polite Town Mouse, and took his friend into the grand dining-room. There they found the remains of a fine feast, and soon the two mice were eating up jellies and cakes and all that was nice. Suddenly they heard growling and barking. 'What is that?' said the Country Mouse. 'It is only the dogs of the house,' answered the other. 'Only!' said the Country Mouse. 'I do not like that music at my dinner.' Just at that moment the door

flew open, in came two huge mastiffs, and the two mice had to scamper down and run off. 'Good-bye, Cousin,' said the Country Mouse, 'What! going so soon?' said the other. 'Yes,' he replied;

'Better beans and bacon in peace than cakes and ale in fear.'

# THE FOX AND THE CROW

A Fox once saw a Crow fly off with a piece of cheese in its beak and settle on a branch of a tree. 'That's for me, as I am a Fox,' said Master Reynard, and he walked up to the foot of the tree. 'Good-day, Mistress Crow,' he cried. 'How well you are looking to-day: how glossy your feathers; how bright your eye. I feel sure your voice must surpass that of other birds, just as your figure does; let me hear but one song from you that I may greet you as the Queen of Birds.' The Crow lifted up her head and began to caw her best, but the moment she opened her mouth the piece of cheese fell to the ground, only to be snapped up by Master Fox. 'That will do,' said he. 'That was all I wanted. In exchange for your cheese I will give you a piece of advice for the future. 'Do not trust flatterers.'

# THE SICK LION

A Lion had come to the end of his days and lay sick unto death at the mouth of his cave, gasping for breath. The animals, his subjects, came round him and drew nearer as he grew more and more helpless. When they saw him on the point of death they thought to themselves: 'Now is the time to pay off old grudges.' So the Boar came up and drove at him with his tusks; then a Bull gored him with his horns; still the Lion lay helpless before them: so the Ass, feeling quite safe from danger, came up, and turning his tail to the Lion kicked up his heels into his face. 'This is a double death,' growled the Lion.

Only cowards insult dying majesty.

## THE ASS AND THE LAPDOG

A Farmer one day came to the stables to see to his beasts of burden: among them was his favourite Ass, that was always well fed and often carried his master. With the Farmer came his Lapdog, who danced about and licked his hand and frisked about as happy as could be. The Farmer felt in his pocket, gave the Lapdog some dainty food, and sat down while he gave his orders to his servants. The Lapdog jumped into his master's lap, and lay there blinking while the Farmer stroked his ears. The Ass, seeing this, broke loose from his halter and commenced prancing about in imitation of the Lapdog. The Farmer could not hold his sides with laughter, so the Ass went up to him, and putting his feet upon the Farmer's shoulder attempted to climb into his lap. The Farmer's servants rushed up with sticks and pitchforks and soon taught the Ass that clumsy jesting is no joke.

# THE LION AND THE MOUSE

Once when a Lion was asleep a little Mouse began running up and down upon him; this soon wakened the Lion, who placed his huge paw upon him, and opened his big jaws to swallow him. 'Pardon, O King,' cried the little Mouse: 'forgive me this time, I shall never forget it: who knows but what I may be able to do you a turn some of these days?' The Lion was so tickled at the idea of the Mouse being able to help him, that he lifted up his paw and let him go. Some time after the Lion was caught in a trap, and the hunters who desired to carry him alive to the King, tied him to a tree while they went in search of a waggon to carry him on. Just then the little Mouse happened to pass by, and seeing the sad plight in which the Lion was, went up to him and soon gnawed away the ropes that bound the King of the Beasts. 'Was I not right?' said the little Mouse.

Little friends may prove great friends.

# THE SWALLOW AND THE OTHER BIRDS

It happened that a Countryman was sowing some hemp seeds in a field where a Swallow and some other birds were hopping about picking up their food. 'Beware of that man,' quoth the Swallow. 'Why, what is he doing?' said the others. 'That is hemp seed he is sowing; be careful to pick up every one of the seeds, or else you will repent it.' The birds paid no heed to the Swallow's words, and by and by the hemp grew up and was made into cord, and of the cords nets were made, and many a bird that had despised the Swallow's advice was caught in nets made out of that very hemp. 'What did I tell you?' said the Swallow.

Destroy the seed of evil, or it will grow up to your ruin.

# THE FROGS DESIRING A KING

The Frogs were living as happy as could be in a marshy swamp that just suited them; they went splashing about caring for nobody and nobody troubling with them. But some of them thought that this was not right, that they should have a king and a proper constitution, so they determined to send up a petition to Jove to give them what they wanted. 'Mighty Jove,' they cried, 'send unto us a king that will rule over us and keep us in order.' Jove laughed at their croaking, and threw down into the swamp a huge Log, which came downrplashto the swamp. The Frogs were frightened out of their lives by the commotion made in their midst, and all rushed to the bank to look at the horrible monster; but after a time, seeing that it did not move, one or two of the boldest of them ventured out towards the Log, and even dared to touch it; still it did not move. Then the greatest hero of the Frogs jumped upon the Log and commenced dancing up and down upon it, thereupon all the Frogs came and did the same; and for some time the Frogs went about their business every day without taking the slightest notice of their new King Log lying in their midst. But this did not suit them, so they sent another petition to Jove, and said to him, 'We want a real king; one that will really rule over us.' Now this made Jove angry, so he sent among them a big Stork that soon set to work gobbling them all up. Then the

Frogs repented when too late.  
Better no rule than cruel rule.

# THE MOUNTAINS IN LABOUR

One day the Countrymen noticed that the Mountains were in labour; smoke came out of their summits, the earth was quaking at their feet, trees were crashing, and huge rocks were tumbling. They felt sure that something horrible was going to happen. They all gathered together in one place to see what terrible thing this could be. They waited and they waited, but nothing came. At last there was a still more violent earthquake, and a huge gap appeared in the side of the Mountains. They all fell down upon their knees and waited. At last, and at last, a teeny, tiny mouse poked its little head and bristles out of the gap and came running down towards them, and ever after they used to say:

‘Much outcry, little outcome.’

# THE HARES AND THE FROGS

The Hares were so persecuted by the other beasts, they did not know where to go. As soon as they saw a single animal approach them, off they used to run. One day they saw a troop of wild Horses stampeding about, and in quite a panic all the Hares scuttled off to a lake hard by, determined to drown themselves rather than live in such a continual state of fear. But just as they got near the bank of the lake, a troop of Frogs, frightened in their turn by the approach of the Hares scuttled off, and jumped into the water. 'Truly,' said one of the Hares, 'things are not so bad as they seem:

‘There is always someone worse off than yourself.’

# THE WOLF AND THE KID

A Kid was perched up on the top of a house, and looking down saw a Wolf passing under him. Immediately he began to revile and attack his enemy. 'Murderer and thief,' he cried, 'what do you here near honest folks' houses? How dare you make an appearance where your vile deeds are known?'

'Curse away, my young friend,' said the Wolf.

'It is easy to be brave from a safe distance.'

# THE WOODMAN AND THE SERPENT

One wintry day a Woodman was tramping home from his work when he saw something black lying on the snow. When he came closer he saw it was a Serpent to all appearance dead. But he took it up and put it in his bosom to warm while he hurried home. As soon as he got indoors he put the Serpent down on the hearth before the fire. The children watched it and saw it slowly come to life again. Then one of them stooped down to stroke it, but the Serpent raised its head and put out its fangs and was about to sting the child to death. So the Woodman seized his axe, and with one stroke cut the Serpent in two. 'Ah,' said he, 'No gratitude from the wicked.'

# THE BALD MAN AND THE FLY

There was once a Bald Man who sat down after work on a hot summer's day. A Fly came up and kept buzzing about his bald pate, and stinging him from time to time. The Man aimed a blow at his little enemy, but his palm came on his head instead; again the Fly tormented him, but this time the Man was wiser and said:

‘You will only injure yourself if you take notice of despicable enemies.’

# THE FOX AND THE STORK

At one time the Fox and the Stork were on visiting terms and seemed very good friends. So the Fox invited the Stork to dinner, and for a joke put nothing before her but some soup in a very shallow dish. This the Fox could easily lap up, but the Stork could only wet the end of her long bill in it, and left the meal as hungry as when she began. 'I am sorry,' said the Fox, 'the soup is not to your liking.'

'Pray do not apologise,' said the Stork. 'I hope you will return this visit, and come and dine with me soon.' So a day was appointed when the Fox should visit the Stork; but when they were seated at table all that was for their dinner was contained in a very long-necked jar with a narrow mouth, in which the Fox could not insert his snout, so all he could manage to do was to lick the outside of the jar.

'I will not apologise for the dinner,' said the Stork: 'One bad turn deserves another.'

# THE FOX AND THE MASK

A Fox had by some means got into the store-room of a theatre. Suddenly he observed a face glaring down on him and began to be very frightened; but looking more closely he found it was only a Mask such as actors use to put over their face. 'Ah,' said the Fox, 'you look very fine; it is a pity you have not got any brains.'

Outside show is a poor substitute for inner worth.

# THE JAY AND THE PEACOCK

A Jay venturing into a yard where Peacocks used to walk, found there a number of feathers which had fallen from the Peacocks when they were moulting. He tied them all to his tail and strutted down towards the Peacocks. When he came near them they soon discovered the cheat, and striding up to him pecked at him and plucked away his borrowed plumes. So the Jay could do no better than go back to the other Jays, who had watched his behaviour from a distance; but they were equally annoyed with him, and told him:

‘It is not only fine feathers that make fine birds.’

# THE FROG AND THE OX

‘Oh Father,’ said a little Frog to the big one sitting by the side of a pool, ‘I have seen such a terrible monster! It was as big as a mountain, with horns on its head, and a long tail, and it had hoofs divided in two.’

‘Tush, child, tush,’ said the old Frog, ‘that was only Farmer White’s Ox. It isn’t so big either; he may be a little bit taller than I, but I could easily make myself quite as broad; just you see.’ So he blew himself out, and blew himself out, and blew himself out. ‘Was he as big as that?’ asked he.

‘Oh, much bigger than that,’ said the young Frog.

Again the old one blew himself out, and asked the young one if the Ox was as big as that.

‘Bigger, father, bigger,’ was the reply.

So the Frog took a deep breath, and blew and blew and blew, and swelled and swelled and swelled. And then he said: ‘I’m sure the Ox is not as big asBut at this moment he burst.

Self-conceit may lead to self-destruction.

# ANDROCLES

A slave named Androcles once escaped from his master and fled to the forest. As he was wandering about there he came upon a Lion lying down moaning and groaning. At first he turned to flee, but finding that the Lion did not pursue him, he turned back and went up to him. As he came near, the Lion put out his paw, which was all swollen and bleeding, and Androcles found that a huge thorn had got into it, and was causing all the pain. He pulled out the thorn and bound up the paw of the Lion, who was soon able to rise and lick the hand of Androcles like a dog. Then the Lion took Androcles to his cave, and every day used to bring him meat from which to live. But shortly afterwards both Androcles and the Lion were captured, and the slave was sentenced to be thrown to the Lion, after the latter had been kept without food for several days. The Emperor and all his Court came to see the spectacle, and Androcles was led out into the middle of the arena. Soon the Lion was let loose from his den, and rushed bounding and roaring towards his victim. But as soon as he came near to Androcles he recognised his friend, and fawned upon him, and licked his hands like a friendly dog. The Emperor, surprised at this, summoned Androcles to him, who told him the whole story. Whereupon the slave was pardoned and freed, and the Lion let loose to his native forest.

Gratitude is the sign of noble souls.

# THE BAT, THE BIRDS, AND THE BEASTS

A great conflict was about to come off between the Birds and the Beasts. When the two armies were collected together the Bat hesitated which to join. The Birds that passed his perch said: 'Come with us'; but he said: 'I am a Beast.' Later on, some Beasts who were passing underneath him looked up and said: 'Come with us'; but he said: 'I am a Bird.' Luckily at the last moment peace was made, and no battle took place, so the Bat came to the Birds and wished to join in the rejoicings, but they all turned against him and he had to fly away. He then went to the Beasts, but soon had to beat a retreat, or else they would have torn him to pieces. 'Ah,' said the Bat, 'I see now,

'He that is neither one thing nor the other has no friends.'

# THE HART AND THE HUNTER

The Hart was once drinking from a pool and admiring the noble figure he made there. 'Ah,' said he, 'where can you see such noble horns as these, with such antlers! I wish I had legs more worthy to bear such a noble crown; it is a pity they are so slim and slight.' At that moment a Hunter approached and sent an arrow whistling after him. Away bounded the Hart, and soon, by the aid of his nimble legs, was nearly out of sight of the Hunter; but not noticing where he was going, he passed under some trees with branches growing low down in which his antlers were caught, so that the Hunter had time to come up. 'Alas! alas!' cried the Hart:

'We often despise what is most useful to us.'

# THE SERPENT AND THE FILE

A Serpent in the course of its wanderings came into an armourer's shop. As he glided over the floor he felt his skin pricked by a file lying there. In a rage he turned round upon it and tried to dart his fangs into it; but he could do no harm to heavy iron and had soon to give over his wrath.

It is useless attacking the insensible.

# THE MAN AND THE WOOD

A Man came into a Wood one day with an axe in his hand, and begged all the Trees to give him a small branch which he wanted for a particular purpose. The Trees were good-natured and gave him one of their branches. What did the Man do but fix it into the axe head, and soon set to work cutting down tree after tree. Then the Trees saw how foolish they had been in giving their enemy the means of destroying themselves.

# THE DOG AND THE WOLF

A gaunt Wolf was almost dead with hunger when he happened to meet a House-dog who was passing by. 'Ah, Cousin,' said the Dog. 'I knew how it would be; your irregular life will soon be the ruin of you. Why do you not work steadily as I do, and get your food regularly given to you?'

'I would have no objection,' said the Wolf, 'if I could only get a place.'

'I will easily arrange that for you,' said the Dog; 'come with me to my master and you shall share my work.'

So the Wolf and the Dog went towards the town together. On the way there the Wolf noticed that the hair on a certain part of the Dog's neck was very much worn away, so he asked him how that had come about.

'Oh, it is nothing,' said the Dog. 'That is only the place where the collar is put on at night to keep me chained up; it chafes a bit, but one soon gets used to it.'

'Is that all?' said the Wolf. 'Then good-bye to you, Master Dog.'

Better starve free than be a fat slave.

# THE BELLY AND THE MEMBERS

One fine day it occurred to the Members of the Body that they were doing all the work and the Belly was having all the food. So they held a meeting, and after a long discussion, decided to strike work till the Belly consented to take its proper share of the work. So for a day or two, the Hands refused to take the food, the Mouth refused to receive it, and the Teeth had no work to do. But after a day or two the Members began to find that they themselves were not in a very active condition: the Hands could hardly move, and the Mouth was all parched and dry, while the Legs were unable to support the rest. So thus they found that even the Belly in its dull quiet way was doing necessary work for the Body, and that all must work together or the Body will go to pieces.

## THE HART IN THE OX-STALL

A Hart hotly pursued by the hounds fled for refuge into an ox-stall, and buried itself in a truss of hay, leaving nothing to be seen but the tips of his horns. Soon after the Hunters came up and asked if any one had seen the Hart. The stable boys, who had been resting after their dinner, looked round, but could see nothing, and the Hunters went away. Shortly afterwards the master came in, and looking round, saw that something unusual had taken place. He pointed to the truss of hay and said: 'What are those two curious things sticking out of the hay?' And when the stable boys came to look they discovered the Hart, and soon made an end of him. He thus learnt that Nothing escapes the master's eye.

# THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

One hot summer's day a Fox was strolling through an orchard till he came to a bunch of Grapes just ripening on a vine which had been trained over a lofty branch. 'Just the thing to quench my thirst,' quoth he. Drawing back a few paces, he took a run and a jump, and just missed the bunch. Turning round again with a One, Two, Three, he jumped up, but with no greater success. Again and again he tried after the tempting morsel, but at last had to give it up, and walked away with his nose in the air, saying: 'I am sure they are sour.'

It is easy to despise what you cannot get.

# THE HORSE, HUNTER, AND STAG

A quarrel had arisen between the Horse and the Stag, so the Horse came to a Hunter to ask his help to take revenge on the Stag. The Hunter agreed, but said: 'If you desire to conquer the Stag, you must permit me to place this piece of iron between your jaws, so that I may guide you with these reins, and allow this saddle to be placed upon your back so that I may keep steady upon you as we follow after the enemy.' The Horse agreed to the conditions, and the Hunter soon saddled and bridled him. Then with the aid of the Hunter the Horse soon overcame the Stag, and said to the Hunter: 'Now, get off, and remove those things from my mouth and back.'

'Not so fast, friend,' said the Hunter. 'I have now got you under bit and spur, and prefer to keep you as you are at present.'

If you allow men to use you for your own purposes, they will use you for theirs.

# THE PEACOCK AND JUNO

A Peacock once placed a petition before Juno desiring to have the voice of a nightingale in addition to his other attractions; but Juno refused his request. When he persisted, and pointed out that he was her favourite bird, she said:

‘Be content with your lot; one cannot be first in everything.’

# THE FOX AND THE LION

When first the Fox saw the Lion he was terribly frightened, and ran away and hid himself in the wood. Next time however he came near the King of Beasts he stopped at a safe distance and watched him pass by. The third time they came near one another the Fox went straight up to the Lion and passed the time of day with him, asking him how his family were, and when he should have the pleasure of seeing him again; then turning his tail, he parted from the Lion without much ceremony.

Familiarity breeds contempt.

# THE LION AND THE STATUE

A Man and a Lion were discussing the relative strength of men and lions in general. The Man contended that he and his fellows were stronger than lions by reason of their greater intelligence. 'Come now with me,' he cried, 'and I will soon prove that I am right.' So he took him into the public gardens and showed him a statue of Hercules overcoming the Lion and tearing his mouth in two.

'That is all very well,' said the Lion, 'but proves nothing, for it was a man who made the statue.'

We can easily represent things as we wish them to be.