AESOP'S FABLES A NEW TRANSLATION BY V. S. VERNON JONES THE FOX AND THE GRAPES A hungry Fox saw some fine bunches of Grapes hanging from a vine that was trained along a high trellis, and did his best to reach them by jumping as high as he could into the air. But it was all in vain, for they were just out of reach: so he gave up trying, and walked away with an air of dignity and unconcern, remarking, "I thought those Grapes were ripe, but I see now that they are quite sour." THE GOOSE THAT LAID THE GOLDEN EGGS A Man and his Wife had the good fortune to possess a Goose which laid a Golden Egg every day. Lucky though they were, they soon began to get impatient because they thought she was not laying fast enough, and they fancied that she must have a large treasure inside her. They killed her in order to get at the treasure all at once, and found—nothing! Thus, they neither got rich all at once, as they had hoped, nor enjoyed any longer rich daily addition to their wealth. Much wants more and loses all. THE CAT AND THE MICE There was once a house that was overrun with Mice. A Cat heard of this, and said to herself, "That's the place for me," and off she went and took up her quarters in the house, and caught the Mice one by one and ate them. At last the Mice could stand it no longer, and they determined to take to their holes and stay there. "That's awkward," said the Cat to herself: "the only thing to do is to coax them out by a trick." So she considered a while, and then climbed down by her hind legs from a peg. By and by a Mouse peeped out and saw the Cat hanging there. "Ah!" it cried, "you're very clever, madam, no doubt: but you may turn yourself into a bag of meal hanging there, if you like, yet won't catch us coming anywhere near." If you are wise you won't pretend airs to those whom you have once found to be dangerous. THE MISCHIEVOUS DOG There was once a Dog who used to snap at people that came near his master's house. So his master fastened a bell round his neck to warn people of his presence. The Dog was very proud of the bell, and strutted about tinkling it with immense satisfaction. But an old dog came up to him and said, "Do not think, my friend, that your bell has given you a reward of merit? On the contrary, it is a badge of disgrace." Notoriety is often mistaken for fame. THE CHARCOAL-BURNER AND THE FULLER There was once a Charcoal-burner who lived and worked by himself. A Fuller, however, happened to come and settle in the same neighbourhood; and the Charcoal-burner, having made his acquaintance and finding he was an agreeable sort of fellow, asked him if he would come and share his house. "We shall get on much better that way," he said, "and, beside, our household expenses will be diminished." The Fuller thanked him, but replied, "I couldn't think of it, sir; why, everything I take soon gains to whiten would be blackened in no time by your charcoal." THE MICE IN COUNCIL Once upon a time all the Mice met together in Council, and discussed the best means of securing themselves against the attacks of the cat. After several suggestions had been debated, a Mouse of some standing arose and said, "I think I have hit upon a plan which will ensure our safety. It is that we should fasten a bell round the neck of our enemy the cat, which will by its tinkling warn us of her approach." This proposal was warmly applauded, and it had been already decided to adopt it, when an old Mouse got upon his feet and said, "I agree with you all that the plan before us is an admirable one: but may I ask who is going to bell the cat?" THE BOY AND THE WEASELS A Boy fell in the ground and was caught by a weasel, and was just going to be killed to let go. The Weasel said that he couldn't do that because he was an enemy to all birds of prey, and he let a bird at all: "I'm a mouse," said the Weasel, "now I come to look at you"; and he let it go. Some time after this the Bat was caught in just the same way by another Weasel, and, as before, begged for its life. "No," said the Weasel, "I never let a mouse go by any chance." "But I'm not a mouse," said the Bat; "I'm a bird." "Why, so you are," said the Weasel; and he let the Bat go. Look but see which way you commit yourself. THE DOG AND THE SOW A Dog and a Sow were arguing and each claimed that her own young ones were finer than those of any other animal. "Well," said the Sow at last, "mine can see, at any rate, when they come into the world." THE FOX AND THE CROW A Crow was sitting on a branch of a tree with a piece of cheese in her beak when a Fox observed her and set his wits to work to discover some way of getting the cheese. Coming and standing under the tree he looked up and said, "What a noble bird I see above me! Her beauty is without equal, the hue of her plumage exquisite. If only her voice is as sweet as her looks are fair, she ought without doubt to be Queen of the Birds." The Crow was highly flattered by this, and determined to show the Fox that she could sing and gave a loud caw. Down came the cheese, of course, and the Fox, snatching it up, said, "You have a voice, madam, I see: what you want is wits." TH E HORSE AND THE GROOM There was once a Groom who used to spend long hours clipping and combing his Horse in the hope that by such attentions he would win a large share in the oats which his master gave him. But finding that, in spite of all his care, the Horse grew leaner instead of fatter, he determined to find out the reason why. So he asked the Horse, "What has induced you to come in here? Aren't you aware of the risk you are running of being captured by the herdsmen?" To which the Horse replied, "Pray let me stay for the present. When night comes I shall easily escape under cover of the dark." In the course of the afternoon more than one of the farm-hands came in, to attend to the wants of the cattle, but none of them noticed the presence of the Stag, who accordingly began to congratulate himself on his escape and to express his gratitude to the Oxen. "We wish you well," said the one who had spoken before. "but you never know your friends, sir," said another, "you are not safe yet." Presently, sure enough, in he came, made a great to-do about the way the Oxen were kept. "The beasts are starving," he cried: "here, give them more hay, and put plenty of litter under them." As soon as their father was dead, the Sons took spade and fork and turned up the soil of the vineyard over and over again, in their search for the treasure which they supposed to be buried there. They found none, however: but the vines, in consequence of the loosening of the soil, repaid their labour a hundredfold. Industry is itself a treasure. THE FARMER AND HIS SONS A Farmer, being at death's door, sent for his Sons to tell them that there was a treasure hidden in his vineyard. So as soon as he was dead they dug up the whole ground from one end to the other, but found no treasure. However, the vines repaid their labour a hundredfold. Industry is itself a treasure. THE FARMER AND HIS SONS A Farmer, being at death's door, sent for his Sons to tell them that there was a treasure hidden in his vineyard. So as soon as he was dead they dug up the whole ground from one end to the other, but found no treasure. However, the vines repaid their labour a hundredfold. Industry is itself a treasure. THE WOLF AND THE LAMB A Wolf came upon a Lamb straying from the flock, and felt some compunction about taking the life of so helpless a creature without some excuse. "That is impossible, sir," bleated the Lamb, "that cannot be," replied the Wolf, "you feed in my pastures." "Well," retorted the Lamb, "I wasn't born then." "Then you have troubled the spring," said the Wolf, "and made the water unfit for me to drink." "How can I?" replied she; "there's not a drop but comes from you." "Then you must have sold my corn," said he, "and I'll be bound you have been stealing the grass in my meadows." "No," said the Lamb, "that cannot be," "Then you must be one of those who spoke evil of me behind my back," said the Wolf, "and that is enough for me." THE WOLF AND THE LAMB A Wolf came upon a Lamb straying from the flock, and felt some compunction about taking the life of so helpless a creature without some excuse. "That is impossible, sir," bleated the Lamb, "you feed in my pastures." "That cannot be," replied the Wolf, "and moreover: you troubled the spring if I was not born then." "Well," replied the Lamb, "I was not born then." "Then you have troubled the spring," said the Wolf, "and made the water unfit for me to drink." "How can I?" replied she; "there's not a drop but comes from you." 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THE BOY BATHING A Boy was bathing in a river when he got out of his depth, and was in great danger of being drowned. A man who was passing along a road heard his cries for help, and went to the riverside and began to scold him for being so careless as to get into deep water, but made no attempt to help him. "Oh, sir," cried the Boy, "please help me first and scold me afterwards." Give a helping hand rather than good advice. Among the wonders of the Lion was that he laughed aloud, and good-humouredly let it go. But the Mouse heard and recognised his roars of anger and ran to the spot. Without more ado it set to work to g nawed through the net, and thus set the Lion free. "There!" said the Mouse, "you laughed at me when I promised I would repay you: but now you see, even a Mouse can help a Lion." THE CROW AND THE PITCHER It seemed as though the Crow would die of thirst within sight of the remedy. At last she hit upon a clever plan. She began dr opping pebbles into the Pitcher with her beak. At first she could reach it with her beak, an d rested sufficiently and was about to fly away, "Do you mind if I go now?" The Bull merely raised his eyes and remarked, without t he slightest interest, "It's all one to me; I didn't notice when you came, and I shan't know when you go away." We may often be of more conse quence to others than we are aware of. THE OWL AND THE BIRDS The Owl is a very wis e bird; and once, long ago, when the first oak sprouted in the forest, she called all the other Birds together and said to them, "You see this tiny tree? if you make my advice, yo u will destroy it now when it is small: for when it grows big, the mistletoe will appear upon it, from which birdlime will be prep ared for your destruc tion." And the Birds, who were always ready to learn, took the hint and flew away. THE FROGS' COMPLAINT AGAINST THE SUN Once upon a time the Sun was about to take a wife. The Frogs, hearing their master was in, beliboured the silly Ass with sticks and cudgels, and drove him back to his stable half dead with his beating. "Alas!" he cried, "all this I have brought on myself. Why could I not be satisfi ed with my natural position, without wishing to imitate the ridiculous antics of that useless little Lap-dog?" THE FIR-TREE AND THE BRAMBLE A Fir-tree was boasting to a Bramble, and said, somewhat contemptuously, "You are a poor creature, now look at me: I am useful for all sorts of things, particularly when men build houses; they can't do without me then." But the Bramble replied, "Ah, that's all very well: but you wait till they come with axes and saws to cut you down, and then you'll wish you were a Bramble and not a Fir." Better poverty without a care than w ealth with anxiety. THE FARMER AND FORTUNE A Farmer was ploughing one day on his farm when he turned up a pot of golden coins with his plough. He was overjoyed at his discovery, and from that time forth made an offering daily at the shrine of the Goddess of Earth. Fortune was displeas ed at this, and came to him and said, "My man, why do you give Earth the credit for the gift which I bestowed upon you? You never thought of thanking me for your good luck; but should you be unlucky enough to lose what you have gained I know very well that I, Fortune, should be th e right. When they saw it, the gods all burst into peal on peal of laughter; but the Monkey hugged her little one to her, and said, "Jupiter may give the prize to whomsoever he likes: but I shall always stuffle my baby the most beautiful of them all." FATHER AND SONS A certain man had several Sons who w ere always quarrelling with one another, and try as he might, he could not get them to live together in harmony. So he determined to convince them of their folly by the following means. Bidding them fetch a bundle of sticks, he invited each in turn to break it across his knee. All tried and all failed: and t hen he undid the bundle, and handed them the sticks one by one, when they had no difficulty at all in breaking them. "There, boys," said he, "united they are a match for your enemies: but if you quarrel and separate, your weakness will put you at the mercy of those who attack you." Union is str ength. THE LAMP A Lamp, well filled with oil, burned with a clear and steady light, and began to swell with pride at the thought of its usefulness. "How many poor creatures there are in the world who are always stumbling over things in the dark, and wish they had a lamp to show them their way! I am sure I ought to be very proud of my self." Just then the Snuffers came in sight, and the Lamp, in a patronising manner, asked them if they did not think so too. "Certainly not," said the Snuffers, "for we are always having to find fault with you, and to put you right." Self-praise is no recommendation. THE ASS IN THE LION'S SKIN An Ass found a Lion's Skin, and put it on, and went about terrifying the silly animals who fled before him in all directions. "Why," said he to himself, "I find that I am just as terrible as my master." And he began to try to imitate his roar, which he succeeded in doing so naturally that the animals believed that the Lion was in their midst, and fled for their lives. Delighted with his success, he exclaimed aloud, "Henceforth I will bid farewell to the cowardice that I have displayed in my youth, and will roar with the best of them." But just at that moment a Fox, who had heard the Lion roaring, and thought that he was in danger, came running up to help him. Seeing a statue of Jupiter among the rest, he inquired the price of it. "A crown," said the Sculptor. "Is that all?" said the Fox, laughing, "and (pointing to one of Juno) how much is that one?" "That," was the reply, "is half a crown." "And how much might you be wanting for that one over there, now?" said the Fox, pointing to a statue of himself. "That one?" said the Sculptor; "Oh, I'll throw him in for nothing if you'll buy the other two." THE FAWN AND HIS MOTHER A Hind said to her Fawn, who was now nearly full grown and strong, "My son, Nature has given you a powerful body and a stout pair of horns, and I can't think why you are such a coward as to run away from the hounds," just then they both heard the sound of a pack in full cry, but at a considerable distance. "You stay where you are," said the Hind; "re