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*The Fables
of Florian*

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Truth and Fable

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FLORIAN'S FABLES.

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FABLE I.

TRUTH AND FABLE.

At length among mankind to dwell,
TRUTH came, all naked, from her well.
By living there so long alone,
She had a little passée grown;
And old and young all fled surpris'd
The moment she was recogniz'd.
Poor TRUTH remain'd confounded quite
By such an unsuspected slight.
Just then she chanc'd to see
FABLE in all her finery,
Trick'd out in plumes and diamonds, too



(The most of these were false, 'tis true,
But yet were dazzling to the view),
Who, in familiar courtesy,
Exclaimed: "Oh, here you are, I see!
And quite alone, too, I observe.
Why are you here,
My sister dear?

What end do you propose to serve?
Pray tell me, if you please."

Says TRUTH: "I find I'm here *to freeze*;
For all I meet upon the road,
Deny me shelter or abode.
I'm shunn'd as if in fear or hate;
But that, alas! must be the fate
Of dames, like me, when out of date."
"Not so," says FABLE in reply,
"For you are younger still than I;
And yet, if I may be believ'd,
I'm ev'rywhere still well receiv'd.
But let me ask, why 'tis that you
Expose your nakedness to view?
That's not discreet. Now list to me,
Since well our int'rests do agree;
Let my broad mantle drape your form:
'Twill serve to shelter both from harm.
Among the wise, for your sake,
All will my foolish sayings take;
And with the fools, because of me,
You always well receiv'd will be."
Thus FABLE, side by side with TRUTH,
Like as two sisters, hand in hand,
Will teach and please both age and youth,
And welcom'd be in ev'ry land.

The Mirror of Truth

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FABLE II.

THE MIRROR OF TRUTH.

In that fam'd time, the age of gold,
When peace prevail'd in every land,
And simple TRUTH herself made bold
To rove at large with glass in hand,
Each in her mirror dar'd to trace,
Without a blush, his own true face.

But crimes and vices stole in fast,
And soon those happy days were past.
Then TRUTH, disgusted, to Heaven flew,
And back to earth her mirror threw.
Alas! 'twas broken in the fall,
And scatter'd wide and lost to all.

Long centuries after it was seen
How very great the loss had been;
And wise men then began with care
To seek out where the fragments were.
They sometimes find them, here and there,
But very small and very rare:
So that they prove of little worth.
The truest man of all the earth,
With strongest mind and purest heart,
Can see himself therein but part.

The Three Rivals

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FABLE III.

THE THREE RIVALS.

ONCE on a time rose fierce disputes
Between three very gentle brutes—
The ox, the horse, and ass.
Their overweening pride, alas!
As oft with men of seeming sense,
Led them to strive for precedence.
Perhaps, my friend, you may deride
The thought of asses having pride;

But are not others sometimes vain,
And aim at rank they can't attain?

The patient ox with humble mien,
Describ'd what worker he had been;
How great his strength;
And then at length
Dwelt on his great docility.

The courser boasted of his worth,
His noble carriage and his birth;
The ass of his utility.

"Let's leave the question to three men;
For here they come," exclaimed the horse;
"If two decide for one, why then
We'll yield the palm to him of course."

The ox, who bore an honest face,
Was charged to plainly state the case,
And ask for judgment thereupon.

One of the men a jockey was,
And therefore plead the horse's cause,
Because the horse could run.

"Nay, nay, my friend, it is not so,"
One of the men—a cartman—said,
"The horse is only fit for show;
I put the useful ass ahead."

"Oh, what great folly!" said the third,
"Whoever falser notions heard?
'Tis plain to farmers of good sense,
The ox should have the preference."

"What!" said the courser in a huff,
"Judgment like this is merest stuff!
'Tis interest that rules with you."
"Pooh!" said the jockey, "that is true;
But is it something strange or new?"

The Two Travelers

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FABLE IV.

THE TWO TRAVELERS.

Two friendly comrades, Tom and Bill,
Were on their way to Thionville,
When Thomas found
A purse of gold upon the ground.
"What a wind-fall for us!" said Bill.