



AESOP

***THE FABLES
OF ÆSOP,
AND OTHERS***

Aesop

The Fables of Æsop, and Others

With Designs on Wood

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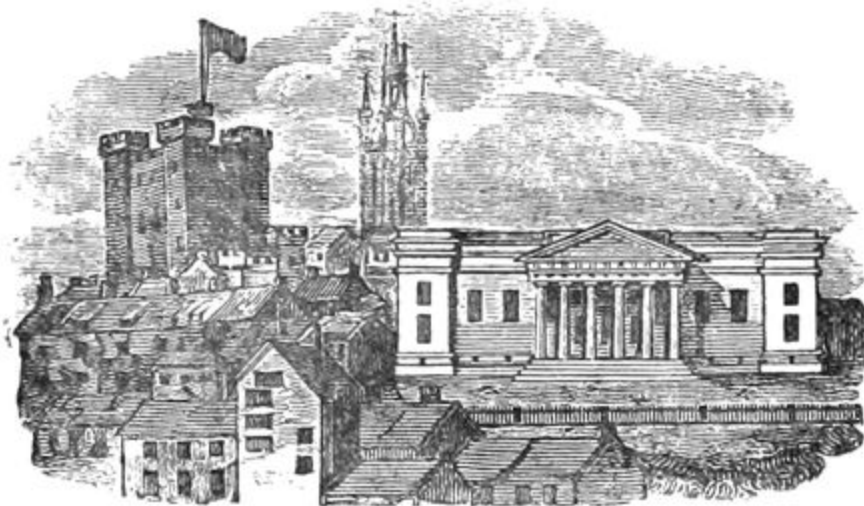
THE FABLES OF ÆSOP, AND OTHERS, WITH DESIGNS ON WOOD,

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BY

THOMAS BEWICK.

*"The wisest of the Ancients delivered their
Conceptions of the Deity, and
their Lessons of Morality, in Fables and Parables."*



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*Wise Men think
Good Men Grieve
Knaves invent
and Fools believe.*

THE PREFACE DEDICATORY.

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To the Youth of the British Isles.

In collecting together, for your use and benefit, some of the prudential maxims, and moral apothegms, of the ancient sages, the Publishers of this volume have been stimulated by an ardent desire to render this excellent mode of instruction as agreeable as possible; and, at the same time, to impress the precepts contained in the Fables more forcibly on your minds, they have endeavoured to make the embellishments worthy of your notice and examination.

If the seeds of morality and patriotism be early sown, they will spring up, and ripen to maturity, in a confirmed love of truth, integrity and honour; and without these for his guide, no man can do credit to himself or his country. This consideration is of vital importance; for our comfort and happiness through life, mainly depend upon a strict adherence to the rules of morality and religion. The youth who is early tutored in an invincible regard for his own character, will soon perceive the duties imposed upon him by society, and will have pleasure in fulfilling them, as much for his own satisfaction as for the sake of his fellow men: but when the latent powers of the mind are neglected, or not directed into the paths of rectitude, by good precepts and worthy examples, vice and folly enter the opening, and lead their victim into evils and errors, which render his life miserable, and sometimes hurry him into an ignominious grave.

To delineate the characters and passions of men, under the semblance of Lions, Tigers, Wolves, and Foxes, is not so extravagant a fiction as it may at first sight seem: for the innocent and inexperienced will find, when they engage in the busy scenes of the world, that they will have to deal with men of dispositions not unlike those animals; and that their utmost vigilance will be required to guard against their violence or machinations.

In attempting to form an estimate of the characters of mankind, many gradations and shades will be found between the two extremes of virtue and vice. The philanthropist views with feelings of benevolence the wavering balance, and adds those he finds on the confines,

to the number of the virtuous; while the misanthrope, with gloomy malignity, endeavours to include within the circle of vice, those who are standing upon the ill-defined line of division, and thus swells the number of the bad. Both observe with pain, that great numbers exist, whose whole lives seem to be spent in disfiguring the beautiful order which might otherwise reign in society, regardless of the misery which their wickedness scatters around them. They see men, who suffer their bad passions and gross appetites to be the sole rule of their conduct; and whether these shew themselves in an inordinate ambition, a thirst after false glory, or an insatiable avarice, their consequences are pernicious, and diffuse evil, distress, and ruin among mankind, in proportion to the extent to which their baneful influence reaches. The misanthrope, in contemplating the scene of mischief and disorder, is apt to arraign the wisdom and justice of Providence for permitting it to exist; but the philanthropist views it with a more extended range of vision; and while he laments the evil, he attributes the apparent want of human feelings in the actors, to an early perversion of intellect, or to a stifling of the reasoning power given by the Great Creator to man for his guide, and without which he is the worst animal in the creation, a mere two-legged Tiger. Upon the childhood and youth of such men, the great truth taught by the inspired and wisest writers of all ages, that "no life can be pleasing to God which is not useful to man," has not been sufficiently impressed, or probably the energy with which they pursue their wicked career might have been led into a different course, and instead of the

scourges, they would have been the benefactors of mankind.

When religion and morality are blended together in the mind, they impart their blessings to all who seek the aid of the one and obey the dictates of the other, and their joint effects are seen and felt in the perpetual cheerfulness they impart. They incite the innocent whistle of the ploughman at his plough, of the cobbler in his stall, and the song of the milk-maid at her pail: and it is a sign of their being perverted, when they engender melancholy notions; for these are the offspring of bigotry, fanaticism, and ignorance. The service of the Omnipotent is not of this gloomy cast; he has spread out the table of this beautiful world of wonders, for the use of his creatures, and has placed man at the head of it, that he might enjoy its bounties, as well as prepare himself for the approaching change to another, which inspiration has powerfully impressed on his soul as the *unknowable* region of his next advance. The materialist, in his dreary reveries, cannot comprehend this, neither will he acknowledge that his being placed here is equally as miraculous as that he should be placed in another world or worlds, progressively to improve, to all eternity: but to harbour doubts on this subject, is like disputing the wisdom, the justice, and the mercy of the Author of our being, who, according to the conceptions we form of his goodness, as exhibited in the design, the grandeur, and the immensity of creation, where every thing is systematic, regular, and in order, would never decree that man should be placed here instinctively to know his Maker—to take a short peep at the stupendous, the amazing whole—to view all these, and have

powers of mind given him only to know and repugantly to feel, that after a life mixed with turmoil, grief, and disease, he is to be annihilated! In our conception of things, and to the limited understanding which has been given us, all this would appear to be labour in vain.

The volume of the creation speaks alike to all, and cannot be defaced by man; but the ways of Providence are beyond his comprehension. Omnipotence has not been pleased to gratify his pride and vanity, nor to consult his understanding, in the government of the universe; but sufficient has been disclosed unto him to point out the moral duties he owes to society, and the religious worship due to his Maker, without groping after what is utterly beyond his reach: for our feeble reason is too weak to comprehend the divine essence; and our thoughts, on their utmost stretch, roll back on darkness. We reason, but we err: for how can we comprehend the immensity of endless space, of time and eternity, a beginning or an end; or what conceptions can we form of the Power which made the sun and worlds without number? Truly, this is far too much for a finite being, who does not know why he can move one of his own fingers, or cease to do so when he pleases! But all may know and fulfil their religious obligations, by reverencing and adoring their Creator, and walking humbly before him, and their moral duties, by being in their several stations, good sons, brothers, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, neighbours, and members of society.

Having, with humble diffidence, in this masquerade of life, attempted to point out to youth the exterior of the temple of virtue, and to lead them to its steps, the Editor

leaves them there, respectfully recommending them to explore the whole interior, under the guidance of men more eminent for their mental powers and attainments in learning, philosophy, and piety. Of these, an illustrious band have placed, at every avenue and turning, their inestimable works, as directions to guide us to usefulness and respectability here, and eternal happiness hereafter.

Thomas Bewick,

Newcastle, September, 1818.



THE INTRODUCTION.

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From time to time, in all ages, men inspired, or gifted with a superior degree of intellectual power, have appeared upon the stage of life, in order (by enlightening others) to fulfil the designs of Omnipotence, in uniting the world in a state of civilized society.

Patriarchs, or heads of families, at first directed or governed those who were immediately dependent upon them: these in time increased, and became *clans*; these again, by their quarrels, and their wars, were induced to elect chieftains or kings over a number of united clans,—from which were formed the various nations and kingdoms

of the earth. In this early stage of the world, when men were ignorant and uncivilized, the chase and war seem almost wholly to have occupied their time and attention. Their kings ruled over them with despotic sway, and the will of the prince was the only law: and thus the barbarism of the subject and the tyranny of the ruler went hand in hand together. That over-swollen pride, which seems the natural accompaniment of despotic power, blinds the understandings of its possessors, and renders them wholly regardless of the important trust reposed in them. The evils arising out of their bad government, are felt, more or less, by the whole people over whom they preside; and pride and arrogance prevent the approach of sincerity and truth. The sycophant and the slave then only find admission, and all other men are kept at a distance. While kings and governors were of this character, the voice of truth could only reach their ears through allegory and fable, which took their rise in the infancy of learning, and seem to have been the only safe mode of conveying admonition to tyrants. This pleasing method of instilling instruction into the mind, has been found by experience to be the shortest and best way of accomplishing that end, among all ranks and conditions of men.

The first Fable upon record, is that of Jotham and the Trees, in the Bible; and the next, that of The Poor Man and his Lamb, as related by Nathan to King David, and which carried with it a blaze of truth that flashed conviction on the mind of the royal transgressor. Lessons of reproof, religion, and morality, were, we find, continually delivered in this mode, by the sages of old, to the exalted among mankind.

It is asserted by authors, that Apologues and Fables had their origin in the Eastern world, and that the most ancient of them were the productions of Veesh-nou Sarma, commonly called Pilpay, whose beautiful collections of Apologues were esteemed as sacred books in India and Persia, whence they were spread abroad among other nations, and were by them celebrated and holden in much estimation. They were translated from the Persian and Arabian into Greek, by Simeon Seth, a man of great learning, who was an officer of the imperial household at Constantinople about the year 1070. Seth's Version was imitated in Latin by Piers Alfonse, a converted Jew, as early as the year 1107; and this is supposed to have been the first version of Pilpay's Apologues that made its way, and became familiarized in Europe. The time in which Pilpay lived, seems not to be certainly known to the learned; but some of them suppose that the Fables of Æsop and others were grounded upon his models. The time in which Æsop lived is better ascertained, and of all the Fabulists who have amused and instructed mankind by their writings, his name stands pre-eminent. Authors fix his birth-place at Cotieum, in Phrygia Major. But the history of this remarkable person, who lived about 572 years before Christ, and about 100 years before Herodotus, the Greek historian, has been so involved in mystery, traditionary stories, and absurd conjectures, that any attempt to give a detail from such materials, would only serve to bewilder youth, and lead them into a labyrinth of error; and it would be impertinent to trouble the learned reader with that which must be sufficiently familiar to him.^A The whole of the absurd fictions

concerning this wise and amiable man, were invented by Maximus Planudes, a Greek monk.^B Plutarch, and other authentic historians,^C have, however, given a very different account of the illustrious Fabulist. It would appear, according to some of these relations, that Æsop, originally a shepherd's boy, had risen from the condition of a slave, to great eminence, and that he lived in the service of Xanthus and Judman, or Idmon, in the island of Samos, and afterwards at Athens. Phædrus speaks of him as living the greater part of his life at the latter place, where, it appears, a handsome statue, executed by the hand of the famous statuary Lysippus, was erected to his memory, and placed before those of the seven sages of Greece.^D He also notices his living at Samos, and interesting himself in a public capacity, in the administration of the affairs of that place; where Aristotle also introduces him as a public speaker, and records the fact of his reciting the fable of the Fox and the Hedgehog,^E while pleading on behalf of a minister, upon the occasion of his being impeached for embezzling the public treasure. Æsop is also mentioned as speaking in a public capacity to the Athenians, at the time when Pisistratus seized upon their liberties.^F Upon each of these occasions he is represented as having introduced a Fable into his discourse, in a witty and pleasing manner. He was holden in the highest veneration and esteem in his day, by all men eminent for their wisdom and virtue. It appears there was scarcely an author among the ancient Greeks who mixed any thing of morality in his writings, that did not either quote or mention Æsop. Plato describes Socrates as turning some of Æsop's Fables into verse, during those awful hours

which he spent in prison, immediately before his death. Aristophanes not only takes hints from Æsop, but mentions him much to his honour, as one whose works were, or ought to be, read before any other. Ennius and Horace have embellished their poetry from his stores; and ancient sages and authors all concur in bearing the most ample testimony to his distinguished merits. Plutarch, in his imaginary banquet of the seven wise men, among several other illustrious persons of ancient times, celebrated for their wit and knowledge, introduces Æsop, and describes him as being very courtly and polite in his behaviour. Upon the authority of Plutarch also, we fix the life of Æsop in the time of Cræsus, king of Lydia, who invited him to the court of Sardis. By this prince, he was holden in such esteem, as to be sent as his envoy to Periander, king of Corinth, which was about three hundred and twenty years after the time in which Homer lived, and 550 before Christ. He was also deputed by Cræsus to consult the oracle of Delphi. While on this embassy, he was ordered to distribute to each of the citizens, four *minæ* of silver, but some disputes arising between them and Æsop, he reproached them for their indolence, in suffering their lands to lie uncultivated, and in depending on the gratuities of strangers for a precarious subsistence: the quarrel, which it would appear ran high between them, ended in Æsop's sending back the money to Sardis. This so exasperated the Delphians, that they resolved upon his destruction; and that they might have some colour of justice for what they intended, they concealed among his effects, when he was taking his departure from Delphi, a gold cup, consecrated to Apollo;

and afterwards pursuing him, easily found what they themselves had hidden. On the pretext that he had committed this sacrilegious theft, they carried him back to the city, and notwithstanding his imprecating upon them the vengeance of heaven, they immediately condemned him to be cast from the rock Hypania, as the punishment of the pretended crime. Ancient historians say, that for this wickedness, the Delphians were for a long time visited with pestilence and famine, until an expiation was made, and then the plague ceased.

A The curious enquirer is referred to the *Essay on the Æsopian Fable*, by Sir Brooke Boothby, bart. from which this sketch is extracted.

B Planudes lived at Constantinople in the 14th century. His Fables were printed at Milan, A.D. 1480.

C The first person who took great pains to detect and expose the follies and absurdities of Planudes's *Life of Æsop*, and collected what could be known, was Bachet de Mezeriac, a man of great learning, who flourished about the year 1632.

D These sages were Solon, Thales, Chilo, Cleobulus, Bias, Pittacus, and Periander, to whom Laertius adds Anacharsis, Maro, Pherecydes, Epimenides, and Pisistratus.

E "Ye men of Samos, let me entreat you to do as the Fox did; for this man, having got money enough, can have no further occasion to rob you; but if you put him to death, some needy person will fill his place, whose wants must be supplied out of your property."

The Fable of the Fox and the Hedgehog was applied by Themistocles to dissuade the Athenians from removing their magistrates.—*B. Boothby*.

F The Fable of the Frogs desiring a King.

G The mina of silver was 12 ounces, about £3 sterling.

It was not until many ages after the death of Æsop, that his most prominent successor, Phædrus, arose. He translated Æsop's Fables from the Greek into Latin, and added to them many of his own. Of Phædrus little is known, except from his works. He is said to have lived in the times of the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius, and to have died in

the reign of the latter. The first printed edition of his Fables, with cuts, was published at Gauda, in 1482. Caxton published some of them in 1484, and Bonus Accursius in 1489, to which he prefixed Planudes's Life of Æsop. But the most perfect edition of Phædrus's Works was published in five volumes, by Peter Pithou, at Troyes, in 1596, from manuscripts discovered by him in the cities of Rheims and Dijon. To these have succeeded in later times, a numerous list of fabulists,^H besides such of the poets as have occasionally interspersed Fables in their works. These, in their day, have had, and many of them still have, their several admirers; but Gay and Dodsley best maintain their ground in this country, as is proved by the regular demand for new editions. Croxall's Fables, which were first published in 1722, with cuts on metal, in the manner of wood, have also had a most extensive sale; and Sir Brooke Boothby's elegant little volumes, in verse, published in 1809, are now making their way into the public notice. The Editor of the present volume, in attempting to continue the same pleasing mode of conveying instruction, long since laid down as a guide to virtue, has quoted and compiled from other fabulists, whatever seemed best suited to his purpose. His sole object is utility, and he is not altogether without hope, that in attempting to embellish and perpetuate a fabric, which has its foundations laid in religion and morality, his efforts may not be wholly ineffectual to induce the young to keep steadily in view those great truths, which form the sure land-mark to the haven, where only they can attain peace and happiness.