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Aesop's Fables

ILLUSTRATED BY
Pat Stewart

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DOVER CHILDREN'S THRIFT CLASSICS

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Bibliographical Note

Aesop's Fables is a new selection of fables traditionally attributed to Aesop. The text has been adapted from *Aesop's Fables*, Cassell & Company, Limited, London, n.d., and other standard editions. The illustrations and the note have been specially prepared for this edition.

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Note

The name Aesop has been associated with the fable for at least 2,000 years. Even though it is uncertain whether such a person even existed, he has traditionally been hailed as the creator of the genre. While this claim has been contradicted by historical and scholarly research, popular tradition attributes most fables, regardless of their origins, to Aesop.

The story of Aesop's life has often taken on the same legendary proportions as his literary reputation. According to Herodotus, the fifth-century Greek historian, Aesop—the “maker of stories”—lived in the mid-sixth century. Herodotus also tells us that Aesop was a slave, and that he was killed by the people of Delphi, perhaps for seditious or sacrilegious beliefs. From these bare facts, Aesop's legend grew, and by the time that Sir Roger L'Estrange published his collection of *Fables* in 1692, Aesop had acquired the rather grotesque physical

appearance that served as a marked contrast to his wit and wisdom. In fact, according to L'Estrange, Aesop, with his flat nose, humped back and misshapen head, was the "most scandalous figure of a man that ever was heard of."

Whatever Aesop's physical appearance, the fables attributed to him have remained popular for centuries. Most of the fables in this edition feature the animals that seem so human in their wit, vanity and benevolence: the clever Fox, the presumptuous Ass and the valiant Mouse. The morals, too, have become as familiar as the animals, and they hold as much wisdom today as ever.

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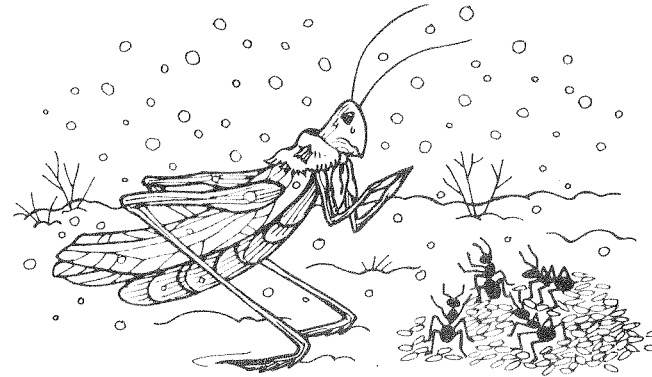
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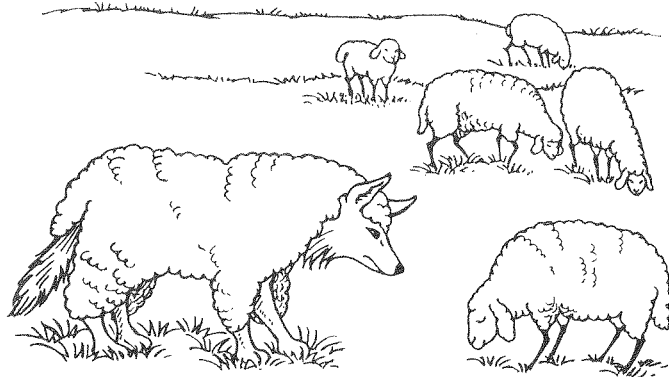
Aesop's Fables



The Ants and the Grasshopper

A Grasshopper that had merrily sung all summer long, was almost perishing with hunger in the winter. So she went to some Ants that lived nearby, and asked them to lend her a little of the food they had stored. "You shall certainly be paid before this time of year comes again," she said. "What did you do all the summer?" they asked. "Why, all day long, and all night long too, I sang, if you please," answered the Grasshopper. "Oh, you sang, did you?" said the Ants. "Well, now you can dance too."

MORAL: Don't neglect the future in times of plenty, for tomorrow you may need what you wasted today.



The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

A Wolf, wrapping himself in the skin of a Sheep, was able to sneak into a sheepfold, where he devoured several young Lambs. The Shepherd, however, soon discovered him and killed him and hung him up to a tree, still in his disguise. Some other Shepherds passing that way, thought it was a Sheep hanging there, and cried to their friend, "Is that the way you treat Sheep in this part of the country?" "No, friends," he cried swinging the carcass around so that they might see what it was, "but it is the way to treat Wolves, even if they are dressed in Sheep's clothing."

MORAL: A person's true nature will reveal itself despite disguise.

The Jackdaw and the Pigeons

A Jackdaw, seeing how well some Pigeons in a certain dovecote ate, and how happily they lived together, wished very much to join them. So, he whitened his feathers and slipped in among the Pigeons one evening just as it was getting dark. As long as he kept quiet he escaped notice, but soon he grew bolder, and feeling very jolly in his new home, he burst into a hearty laugh. His voice betrayed him. The Pigeons set upon him and drove him out. Afterwards when he tried to join the Jackdaws again, his discolored and battered feathers drew their attention to him. When his old friends found out what he had been up to, they would have nothing more to do with him.

MORAL: Be true to yourself, or run the risk of losing the respect of others.

The Belly and the Members

In olden days, when all a man's limbs did not work together as peacefully as they do now, but when each had a will and way of its own, the Members began to criticize the Belly for enjoy-

ing a life of idleness and luxury, while they spent all their time working to feed it. So they entered into a conspiracy to cut off the Belly's supplies in the future. The Hands were no longer to carry food to the Mouth, nor would the Mouth receive the food, nor the Teeth chew it. They had not long followed this plan of starving the Belly, when they all began, one by one, to fail and flag, and the whole body began to pine away. Then the Members realized that the Belly, too, cumbersome and useless as it seemed, had an important function of its own; that they could no more do without it than it could do without them; and that if they wanted to keep the body in a healthy state, they must work together, each in his proper sphere, for the common good of all.

MORAL: Only by working together can the greatest good for all be achieved.

The Lion and the Four Bulls

Four Bulls were such great friends that they always ate together. A Lion watched them for many days with longing eyes, but since they

were never far apart from each other, he was afraid to attack them. At length he succeeded in making them jealous of one another, and their jealousy eventually turned into a mutual aversion. When they strayed far away from each other, the Lion fell upon them singly, and killed them all.

MORAL: The quarrels of friends are the opportunities of enemies.

The Goatherd and the She-Goat

One evening, a Boy, whose job it was to look after some Goats, gathered them together to lead them home. One of them, a She-Goat, refused to obey his call, and stood on a ledge of a rock, nibbling the grass that grew there. The Boy lost all patience, and picking up a great stone, threw it at the Goat with all his might. The stone struck one of the Goat's horns and broke it off at the middle. The Boy, terrified at what he had done and afraid of his master's anger, threw himself on his knees before the Goat and begged her to say nothing about the