

**ÆSOP'S FABLES: A NEW
VERSION, CHIEFLY FROM
ORIGINAL SOURCES**

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Æsop's fables: a new version, chiefly from original sources by Thomas James

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THOMAS JAMES

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AESOP'S FABLES



AESOPUM INGENTEM STATUAM POSUERE ATTICI,
SERVUMQUE COLLOCARUNT AETERNA IN BASE:
PATERE HONORI SCIRENT UT CUNCTI VIAM,
NEC GENERI TRIBUI SED VIRTUTI GLORIAM.



ÆSOP'S FABLES:

A NEW VERSION,

CHIEFLY FROM ORIGINAL SOURCES,

BY

THE REV. THOMAS JAMES, M.A.,

VICAR OF SIBBERTOFT AND TREDDINGWORTH, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF
BATH AND WELLS.

WITH MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS

DESIGNED BY

JOHN TENNIEL.

*" Equidem omni curâ morem servabo SENIS;
Sed si libuerit aliquid interponere
Dictorum sensus ut delectet varietas,
Bonas in partes, lector, accipias velim."*—*PLEDRUS.*

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Introduction

TO

THE LIFE AND FABLES OF ÆSOP.

IN the days of Cræsus, King of Lydia, when Amasis was Pharaoh of Egypt, and Peisistratus lorded it over the Athenians—between five and six hundred years before the Christian era—lived Æsopus, no inapt representative of the great social and intellectual movement of the age which he adorned.

Born a slave, with no outward circumstances of fortune to recommend him to the notice of the great, he forced his way by his mother-wit into the courts of princes, and laid the foundation of a fame, more universal, and perhaps more lasting in its influence, than that of all the Seven Wise Men of Greece, his worthy cotemporaries.

Up to this time, whatever wisdom from without had guided

the councils of princes, had been derived from the traditional lore of courts, or from the verses of bards, hallowed by time, or impromptued for the occasion. Writing was as yet only known in the inscription on the public marble, or on the private tablet. Religion and History were handed down from mouth to mouth, and, the better to be remembered, were committed to metre. With the sixth century before Christ commences the era of Written Classic Literature. The great convulsion of the Eastern nations, and the first direct and sustained intercourse of the Oriental with the Grecian mind, tended to call forth all the latent energies of either people. New combinations of governments, and strange commixtures of races, required new systems of politics, and more stringent and definite laws. Hence this is the age of Wise Men and of Prose. Even wealthy Cræsus discovered that knowledge was power, and assembled around him from every nation all who had gained a reputation for superior wisdom.

The flights of imagination began to give way to the serious business of life. It was an age of grave talkers, and inquisitive travellers,—of gathering the works of the great Poets to preserve the wisdom of antiquity, and of collecting facts for the use of the new order of things. Distinctions of birth and country were less heeded, and Wit was listened to even from the lips of a foreign slave. It was even able to eman-

cipate itself, not only from the bondage of custom, but from actual bodily slavery, and Æsop came to the court of Cræsus, from his old master Iadmon, a free man—working his way to fame by a more honourable road than that of his fellow-servant “Rhodopis the Fair,” the celebrity of whose beauty and wealth at such a time, tells in a word how she had abused the one, and acquired the other.¹ Æsop’s fame had probably preceded him, but less as a Sage than as a Wit. He seems a stepping-stone between the poetry which had gone before, and the prose that followed, making the politics and morals of the day his study, but clothing his lectures in the garb of Imagination and Fancy. There is no doubt that he quickly grew in favour with Cræsus by the mode in which he imparted his knowledge. While Solon held the school-master’s rod over the philosophical monarch, Æsop conciliated alike his will and his reason by timely drollery and subtly-conveyed advice.² To this freedom from avowed dictation, was added a little well-directed flattery. He knew, that to be tolerated in courts, he must speak to please, or not speak at all;³ and when all the Seven Sages had given judgment, the Phrygian was sometimes set down as the best man of them all.⁴

¹ Herod. II. 134, 135.

² Παίρων ἐν σπουδῇ.—Agathie Epigr. ap. Brunk.

³ ὡς ἤκιστα ἢ ὡς ἥδιστα.—Plutar. vit. Sol. p. 94.

⁴ μᾶλλον ὁ Φρύξ. Suid. in voc.—Apostolius Cent. XII. adag.