

## The Ass and his Masters

by Jean de La Fontaine

A gardener's ass complain'd to Destiny  
Of being made to rise before the dawn.  
"The cocks their matins have not sung," said he,  
"Ere I am up and gone.  
And all for what? To market herbs, it seems.  
Fine cause, indeed, to interrupt my dreams!"  
Fate, moved by such a prayer,  
Sent him a currier's load to bear,  
Whose hides so heavy and ill-scented were,  
They almost choked the foolish beast.  
"I wish me with my former lord," he said:  
"For then, whene'er he turn'd his head,  
If on the watch, I caught  
A cabbage-leaf, which cost me nought.  
But, in this horrid place, I find  
No chance or windfall of the kind;--  
Or if, indeed, I do,  
The cruel blows I rue."  
Anon it came to pass  
He was a collier's ass.  
Still more complaint. "What now?" said Fate,  
Quite out of patience.  
"If on this jackass I must wait,  
What will become of kings and nations?  
Has none but he aught here to tease him?  
Have I no business but to please him?"  
And Fate had cause;--for all are so  
Unsatisfied while here below.  
Our present lot is aye the worst.  
Our foolish prayers the skies infest.  
Were Jove to grant all we request,  
The din renew'd, his head would burst.