

The Ass and the Dog

by Jean de La Fontaine

Along the road an ass and dog
One master following, did jog.
Their master slept: meanwhile, the ass
Applied his nippers to the grass,
Much pleased in such a place to stop,
Though there no thistle he could crop.
He would not be too delicate,
Nor spoil a dinner for a plate,
Which, but for that, his favourite dish,
Were all that any ass could wish.
"My dear companion," Towser said,--
"Tis as a starving dog I ask it,--
Pray lower down your loaded basket,
And let me get a piece of bread."
No answer--not a word!--indeed,
The truth was, our Arcadian steed
Fear'd lest, for every moment's flight,
His nimble teeth should lose a bite.
At last, "I counsel you," said he, "to wait
Till master is himself awake,
Who then, unless I much mistake,
Will give his dog the usual bait."
Meanwhile, there issued from the wood
A creature of the wolfish brood,
Himself by famine sorely pinch'd.
At sight of him the donkey flinch'd,
And begg'd the dog to give him aid.
The dog budged not, but answer made,--
"I counsel thee, my friend, to run,
Till master's nap is fairly done;
There can, indeed, be no mistake,
That he will very soon awake;
Till then, scud off with all your might;
And should he snap you in your flight,
This ugly wolf,--why, let him feel
The greeting of your well-shod heel.

I do not doubt, at all, but that
Will be enough to lay him flat."
But ere he ceased it was too late;
The ass had met his cruel fate.