

The Heron

by Jean de La Fontaine

One day,--no matter when or where,--
A long-legg'd heron chanced to fare
By a certain river's brink,
With his long, sharp beak
Helved on his slender neck;
'Twas a fish-spear, you might think.
The water was clear and still,
The carp and the pike there at will
Pursued their silent fun,
Turning up, ever and anon,
A golden side to the sun.
With ease might the heron have made
Great profits in his fishing trade.
So near came the scaly fry,
They might be caught by the passer-by.
But he thought he better might
Wait for a better appetite--
For he lived by rule, and could not eat,
Except at his hours, the best of meat.
Anon his appetite return'd once more;
So, approaching again the shore,
He saw some tench taking their leaps,
Now and then, from their lowest deeps.
With as dainty a taste as Horace's rat,
He turn'd away from such food as that.
"What, tench for a heron! poh!
I scorn the thought, and let them go."
The tench refused, there came a gudgeon;
"For all that," said the bird, "I budge on.
I'll ne'er open my beak, if the gods please,
For such mean little fishes as these."
He did it for less; | For it came to pass,
That not another fish could he see;
And, at last, so hungry was he,
That he thought it of some avail
To find on the bank a single snail.

*Such is the sure result
Of being too difficult.*

*Would you be strong and great
Learn to accommodate.*