

The Lion Going to War

by Jean de La Fontaine

The lion had an enterprise in hand;
Held a war-council, sent his provost-marshal,
And gave the animals a call impartial--
Each, in his way, to serve his high command.
The elephant should carry on his back
The tools of war, the mighty public pack,
And fight in elephantine way and form;
The bear should hold himself prepared to storm;
The fox all secret stratagems should fix;
The monkey should amuse the foe by tricks.
"Dismiss," said one, "the blockhead asses,
And hares, too cowardly and fleet."
"No," said the king; "I use all classes;
Without their aid my force were incomplete.
The ass shall be our trumpeter, to scare
Our enemy. And then the nimble hare
Our royal bulletins shall homeward bear."

*A monarch provident and wise
Will hold his subjects all of consequence,
And know in each what talent lies.
There's nothing useless to a man of sense.*