

The Lion and the Ass Hunting

by Jean de La Fontaine

The king of animals, with royal grace,
 Would celebrate his birthday in the chase.
 'Twas not with bow and arrows,
 To slay some wretched sparrows;
The lion hunts the wild boar of the wood,
The antlered deer and stags, the fat and good.
 This time, the king, t' insure success,
 Took for his aide-de-camp an ass,
 A creature of stentorian voice,
 That felt much honour'd by the choice.
The lion hid him in a proper station,
And order'd him to bray, for his vocation,
 Assured that his tempestuous cry
 The boldest beasts would terrify,
 And cause them from their lairs to fly.
And, sooth, the horrid noise the creature made
Did strike the tenants of the wood with dread;
 And, as they headlong fled,
All fell within the lion's ambushade.
 "Has not my service glorious
 Made both of us victorious?"
 Cried out the much-elated ass.
"Yes," said the lion; "bravely bray'd!
 Had I not known yourself and race,
I should have been myself afraid!"
 The donkey, had he dared,
 With anger would have flared
At this retort, though justly made;
 For who could suffer boasts to pass
 So ill-befitting to an ass?