

## The Man and his Image

by Jean de La Fontaine

A man, who had no rivals in the love  
Which to himself he bore,  
Esteem'd his own dear beauty far above  
What earth had seen before.  
More than contented in his error,  
He lived the foe of every mirror.  
Officious fate, resolved our lover  
From such an illness should recover,  
Presented always to his eyes  
The mute advisers which the ladies prize;--  
Mirrors in parlours, inns, and shops,--  
Mirrors the pocket furniture of fops,--  
Mirrors on every lady's zone,  
From which his face reflected shone.  
What could our dear Narcissus do?  
From haunts of men he now withdrew,  
On purpose that his precious shape  
From every mirror might escape.  
But in his forest glen alone,  
Apart from human trace,  
A watercourse,  
Of purest source,  
While with unconscious gaze  
He pierced its waveless face,  
Reflected back his own.  
Incensed with mingled rage and fright,  
He seeks to shun the odious sight;  
But yet that mirror sheet, so clear and still,  
He cannot leave, do what he will.

*Ere this, my story's drift you plainly see.  
From such mistake there is no mortal free.  
That obstinate self-lover  
The human soul doth cover;  
The mirrors' follies are of others,  
In which, as all are genuine brothers,*

*Each soul may see to life depicted  
Itself with just such faults afflicted;  
And by that charming placid brook,  
Needless to say, I mean your Maxim Book.*