



Aesop's Fables A New Revised Version From Original Sources : complete with 200 original Illustration and Writer Biography (Illustrated)

Aesop

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Aesop, or Æsop (from the Greek Aisopos), famous for his Fables, is supposed to have lived from about 620 to 560 B.C. Aesop's Fables are still taught as moral lessons and used as subjects for various entertainments especially children's plays and cartoons.

The place of his birth is uncertain--Thrace, Phrygia, Aethiopia, Samos, Athens and Sardis all claiming the honour. We possess little trustworthy information concerning his life, except that he was the slave of Iadmon of Samos and met with a violent death at the hands of the inhabitants of Delphi. A pestilence that ensued being attributed to this crime, the Delphians declared their willingness to make compensation, which, in default of a nearer connexion, was claimed and received by Iadmon, the grandson of his old master. Herodotus, who is our authority for this (ii. 134), does not state the cause of his death; various reasons are assigned by later writers--his insulting sarcasms, the embezzlement of money entrusted to him by Croesus for distribution at Delphi, the theft of a silver cup.

Aesop must have received his freedom from Iadmon, or he could not have conducted the public defence of a certain Samian demagogue (Aristotle, Rhetoric, ii. 20). According to the story, he subsequently lived at the court of Croesus, where he met Solon, and dined in the company of the Seven Sages of Greece with Periander at Corinth. During the reign of Peisistratus he is said to have visited Athens, on which occasion he related the fable of The Frogs asking for a King, to dissuade the citizens from attempting to exchange Peisistratus for another ruler.

The popular stories current regarding him are derived from a life, or rather romance, prefixed to a book of fables, purporting to be his, collected by Maximus Planudes, a monk of the 14th century. In this he is described as a monster of ugliness and deformity, as he is also represented in a well-known marble figure in the Villa Albani at Rome. That this life, however, was in existence a century before Planudes, appears from a 13th-century manuscript of it found at Florence. In Plutarch's Symposium of the Seven Sages, at which Aesop is a guest, there are many jests on his original servile condition, but nothing derogatory is said about his personal appearance. We are further told that the Athenians erected in his honour a noble statue by the famous sculptor Lysippus, which furnishes a strong argument against the fiction of his deformity. Lastly, the obscurity in which the history of Aesop is involved has induced some scholars to deny his existence altogether.

It is probable that Aesop did not commit his fables to writing; Aristophanes (Wasps, 1259) represents Philocleon as having learnt the "absurdities" of Aesop from conversation at banquets) and Socrates whiles away his time in prison by turning some of Aesop's fables "which he knew" into verse (Plato, Phaedo, 61 b). Demetrius of Phalerum (345-283 B.C.) made a collection in ten books, probably in prose (Lopson Aisopeion sunagogai) for the use of orators, which has been lost. Next appeared an edition in elegiac verse, often cited by Suidas, but the author's name is unknown. Babrius, according to Crusius, a Roman and tutor to the son of Alexander Severus, turned the fables into choliambics in the earlier part of the 3rd century A.D. The most celebrated of the Latin adapters is Phaedrus, a freedman of Augustus. Avianus (of uncertain date, perhaps the

4th century) translated 42 of the fables into Latin elegiacs.

The collections which we possess under the name of Aesop's Fables are late renderings of Babrius's Version or Progumnasmata, rhetorical exercises of varying age and merit. Syntipas translated Babrius into Syriac, and Andreopulos put the Syriac back again into Greek. Ignatius Diaconus, in the 9th century, made a version of 55 fables in choliambic tetrameters. Stories from Oriental sources were added, and from these collections Maximus Planudes made and edited the collection which has come

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