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### **Tales and Novels of J. de La Fontaine -- Volume 01 by Jean de La Fontaine**

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# Tales and Novels of J. de La Fontaine -- Volume 01

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[*Note*: There is a short list of bookmarks, or pointers, at the end of the file for those who may wish to sample the author's ideas before making an entire meal of them. D.W.]

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*of*

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*Life of*

*Jean de La Fontaine*

Jean de La Fontaine was born on the 8th of July, 1621, at Chateau-Thierry, and his family held a respectable position there.

His education was neglected, but he had received that genius which makes amends for all. While still young the tedium of society led him into retirement, from which a taste for independence afterwards withdrew him.

He had reached the age of twenty-two, when a few sounds from the lyre of Malherbe, heard by accident, awoke in him the muse which slept.

He soon became acquainted with the best models: Pheedrus, Virgil, Horace and Terence amongst the Latins; Plutarch, Homer and Plato, amongst the Greeks; Rabelais, Marot and d'Urfe, amongst the French; Tasso, Ariosto and Boccaccio, amongst the Italians.

He married, in compliance with the wishes of his family, a beautiful, witty and chaste woman, who drove him to despair.

He was sought after and cherished by all distinguished men of letters. But it was two Ladies who kept him from experiencing the pangs of poverty.

La Fontaine, if there remain anything of thee, and if it be permitted to thee for a moment to soar above all time; see the names of La Sabliere and of Hervard pass with thine to the ages to come!

The life of La Fontaine was, so to speak, only one of continual distraction. In the midst of society, he was absent from it. Regarded almost as an imbecile by the crowd, this clever author, this amiable man, only permitted himself to be seen at intervals and by friends.

He had few books and few friends.

Amongst a large number of works that he has left, everyone knows his fables and his tales, and the circumstances of his life are written in a hundred places.

He died on the 16th of March, 1695.

Let us keep silence about his last moments, for fear of irritating those who never forgive.

His fellow-citizens honour him in his posterity to this day.

Long after his death, foreigners went to visit the room which he had occupied.

Once a year, I shall go to visit his tomb.

On that day, I shall tear up a fable of La Mothe, a tale of Vergier, or several of the best pages of Grecourt.

He was buried in the cemetery of Saint-Joseph, by the side of Moliere.

That spot will always be held sacred by poets and people of taste.

*The author's preface*

*To the first volume of these tales*

I had resolved not to consent to the printing of these Tales, until after I had joined to them those of Boccaccio, which are those most to my taste; but several persons have advised me to produce at once what I have remaining of these trifles, in order to prevent from cooling the curiosity to see them, which is still in its first ardour. I gave way to this advice without much difficulty, and I have thought well to profit by the occasion. Not only is that permitted me, but it would be vanity on my part to despise such an advantage. It has sufficed me to wish that no one should be imposed upon in my favour, and to follow a road contrary to that of certain persons, who only make friends in order to gain voices in their favour by their means; creatures of the Cabal, very different from that Spaniard who prided himself on being the son of his own works. Although I may still be as much in want of these artifices as any other person, I cannot bring myself to resolve to employ them; however I shall accommodate myself if possible to the taste of the times, instructed as I am by my own experience, that there is nothing which is more necessary. Indeed one cannot say that all seasons are suitable for all classes of books. We have seen the Roundelays, the Metamorphoses, the Crambos, reign one after another. At present, these gallantries are out of date and nobody cares about them: so certain is it that what pleases at one time may not please at another! It only belongs to works of truly solid merit and sovereign beauty, to be well received by all minds and in all ages, without possessing any other passport than the sole merit with which they are filled. As mine are so far distant from such a high degree of perfection, prudence advises that I should keep them in my cabinet unless I choose well my own time for producing them. This is what I have done, or what I have tried to do in this edition, in which I have only added new Tales, because it seemed to me that people were prepared to take pleasure in them. There are some which I have extended, and others which I have abridged, only for the sake of diversifying them and making them less tedious. But I am occupying myself over matters about which perhaps people will take no notice, whilst I have reason to apprehend much more important objections. There are only two principal ones which can be made against me; the one that this book is licentious; the other that it does not sufficiently spare the fair sex. With regard to the first, I say boldly that the nature of what is understood as a tale decided that it should be so, it being an indispensable law according to Horace, or rather according to reason and common sense, that one must conform one's self to the nature of the things about which one writes. Now, that I should be permitted to write about these as so many others have done and with success I do not believe it can be doubted; and people cannot condemn me for so doing, without also condemning Ariosto before me and the Ancients before Ariosto. It may be said that I should have done better to have suppressed certain details, or at least to have disguised them. Nothing was more easy, but it would have weakened the tale and taken away some of its charm: So much circumspection is only necessary in works which promise great discretion from the beginning, either by their subject or by the manner in which they are treated. I confess that it is necessary to keep within certain limits, and that the narrowest are the best; also it must be allowed me that to be too scrupulous would spoil all. He who would wish to reduce Boccaccio to the same modesty as Virgil, would assuredly produce nothing worth having, and would sin against the laws of propriety by setting himself the task to observe them. For in order that one may not make a mistake in matters of verse and prose, extreme modesty and propriety are two very different things. Cicero makes the latter consist in saying what is appropriate one should say, considering the place, the time, and the persons to whom one is speaking. This principle once admitted, it is not a fault of judgment to entertain the people of to-day with Tales which are a little broad. Neither do I sin in that against morality. If there is anything in our writings which is

capable of making an impression on the mind, it is by no means the gaiety of these Tales; it passes off lightly; I should rather fear a tranquil melancholy, into which the most chaste and modest novels are very capable of plunging us, and which is a great preparation for love. As to the second objection, by which people reproach me that this book does wrong to womankind, they would be right if I were speaking seriously: but who does not see that this is all in jest, and consequently cannot injure? We must not be afraid on that account that marriages in the future will be less frequent, and husbands more on their guard. It may still be objected that these Tales are unfounded or that they have everywhere a foundation easy to destroy; in short that they are absurdities and have not the least tinge of probability. I reply in a few words that I have my authorities: and besides it is neither truth nor probability which makes the beauty and the charm of these Tales: it is only the manner of telling them. These are the principal points on which I have thought it necessary to defend myself. I abandon the rest to the censors; the more so as it would be an infinite undertaking to pretend to reply to all. Criticism never stops short nor ever wants for subjects on which to exercise itself: even if those I am able to foresee were taken from it, it would soon have discovered others.

*Tales and novels*  
*of*  
*J. De La Fontaine*  
.....

*Joconde*

*In Lombardy's fair land, in days of yore,  
Once dwelt a prince, of youthful charms, a store;  
Each fair, with anxious look, his favours sought,  
And ev'ry heart within his net was caught.  
Quite proud of beauteous form and smart address,  
In which the world was led to acquiesce,  
He cried one day, while all attention paid,  
I'll bet a million, Nature never made  
Beneath the sun, another man like me,  
Whose symmetry with mine can well agree.  
If such exist, and here will come, I swear  
I'll show him ev'ry lib'ral princely care.*

A noble Roman, who the challenge heard,  
This answer gave the king his soul preferr'd  
---Great prince, if you would see a handsome man,  
To have my brother here should be your plan;  
A frame more perfect Nature never gave;  
But this to prove, your courtly dames I crave;  
May judge the fact, when I'm convinc'd they'll find:  
Like you, the youth will please all womankind;  
And since so many sweets at once may cloy,  
'Twere well to have a partner in your joy.

*The king, surpris'd, expressed a wish to view  
This brother, form'd by lines so very true;  
We'll see, said he, if here his charms divine  
Attract the heart of ev'ry nymph, like mine;*

And should success attend our am'rous lord,  
To you, my friend, full credit we'll accord.

*Away* the Roman flew, Joconde to get,  
(So nam'd was he in whom these features met;)  
'Midst woods and lawns, retir'd from city strife,  
And lately wedded to a beauteous wife;  
If bless'd, I know not; but with such a fair,  
On him must rest the folly to despair.

*The* Roman courtier came, his business told  
The brilliant offers from the monarch bold;  
His mission had success, but still the youth  
Distraction felt, which 'gan to shake his truth;  
A pow'rful monarch's favour there he view'd;  
A partner here, with melting tears bedew'd;  
And while he wavered on the painful choice,  
She thus address'd her spouse with plaintive voice:

*Can* you, Joconde, so truly cruel prove,  
To quit my fervent love in courts to move?  
The promises of kings are airy dreams,  
And scarcely last beyond the day's extremes  
By watchful, anxious care alone retain'd,  
And lost, through mere caprice, as soon as gain'd.  
If weary of my charms, alas! you feel,  
Still think, my love, what joys these woods conceal;  
Here dwell around tranquillity and ease;  
The streams' soft murmurs, and the balmy breeze,  
Invite to sleep; these vales where breathe the doves,  
All, all, my dear Joconde, renew our loves;  
You laugh!--Ah! cruel, go, expose thy charms,  
Grim death will quickly spare me these alarms!

JOCONDE'S reply our records ne'er relate,  
Nor what he did, nor how he left his mate;  
And since contemp'raries decline the task;  
'Twere folly, such details of me to ask.  
We're told, howe'er, when ready to depart,  
With flowing tears she press'd him to her heart;  
And on his arm a brilliant bracelet plac'd,  
With hair around her picture nicely trac'd;  
This guard in full remembrance of my love,  
She cried;--then clasped her hands to pow'rs above.

*To* see such dire distress, and poignant grief,  
Might lead to think, soon death would bring relief;  
But I, who know full well the female mind,

At best oft doubt affliction of the kind.

*Jocondes*et out at length; but that same morn;  
As on he mov'd, his soul with anguish torn,  
He found the picture he had quite forgot,  
Then turn'd his steed, and back began to trot.  
While musing what excuse to make his mate,  
At home he soon arriv'd, and op'd the gate;  
Alighted unobserv'd, ran up the stairs;  
And ent'ring to the lady unawares,  
He found this darling rib, so full of charms;  
Intwin'd within a valet's brawny arms!

*'Midst*first emotions of the husband's ire;  
To stab them while asleep he felt desire;  
Howe'er, he nothing did; the courteous wight;  
In this dilemma, clearly acted right;  
The less of such misfortunes said is best;  
'Twere well the soul of feeling to divest;  
Their lives, through pity, or prudential care;  
With much reluctance, he was led to spare;  
Asleep he left the pair, for if awake,  
In honour, he a diff'rent step would take.--  
Had any smart gallant supplied my place,  
Said he, I might put up with this disgrace;  
But naught consoles the thought of such a beast;  
Dan Cupid wantons, or is blind at least;  
A bet, or some such whim, induc'd the god,  
To give his sanction to amours so odd.

*This*perfidy *Joconde* so much dismay'd;  
His spirits droop'd, his lilies 'gan to fade;  
No more he look'd the charmer he had been;  
And when the court's gay dames his face had seen;  
They cried, Is this the beauty, we were told,  
Would captivate each heart, or young or old?  
Why, he's the jaundice; ev'ry view displays  
The mien of one,---just fasted forty days!

*With*secret pleasure, this, *Astolphus* learn'd;  
The Roman, for his brother, risks discern'd,  
Whose secret griefs were carefully conceal'd,  
(And these *Joconde* could never wish reveal'd;)  
Yet, spite of gloomy looks and hollow eyes,  
His graceful features pierc'd the wan disguise,  
Which fail'd to please, alone through want of life,  
Destroy'd by thinking on a guilty wife.

*The*god of love, in pity to our swain,  
At last revok'd *Black CARE'S* corroding reign;  
For, doubtless, in his views he oft was cross'd,  
While such a lover to the world was lost.

*The*hero of our tale, at length, we find  
Was well rewarded: *Love* again proved kind;  
For, musing as he walk'd alone one day,  
And pass'd a gall'ry, (held a secret way,)  
A voice in plaintive accents caught his ear,  
And from the neighb'ring closet came, 'twas clear:  
My dear Curtade, my only hope below,  
In vain I love;---you colder, colder grow;  
While round no fair can boast so fine a face,  
And numbers wish they might supply thy place,  
Whilst thou with some gay page prefer'st a bet,  
Or game of dice with some low, vulgar set,  
To meeting me alone; and when just now  
To thee I sent, with rage thou knit'st thy brow,  
And Dorimene, with ev'ry curse abus'd  
Then played again, since better that amus'd,  
And left me here, as if not worth a thought,  
Or thou didst scorn what I so fondly sought.

*Astonishment*, at once, our Roman seiz'd;  
But who's the fair that thus her bosom eas'd?  
Or, who's the gay Adonis, form'd to bless?  
You'd try a day, and not the secret guess,  
The queen's the belle:---and, doubtless you will stare,  
The king's own dwarf the idol of her care!

*The*Roman saw a crevice in the wood,  
Through which he took a peep from where he stood;  
To Dorimene our lovers left the key,  
Which she had dropt when lately forc'd to flee,  
And this Joconde pick'd up, a lucky hit,  
Since he could use it when he best thought fit.  
It seems, said he, I'm not alone in name,  
And since a prince so handsome is the same,  
Although a valet has supplied my place,  
Yet see, the queen prefers a dwarf's embrace.

*This*thought consol'd so well,---his youthful rays  
Returned, and e'en excelled his former days;  
And those who lately ridicul'd his charms,  
Now anxious seem'd to revel in his arms  
'Twas who could have him,---even prudes grew kind;---  
By many belles Astolphus was resign'd;

Though still the king retain'd enough, 'twas seen;---  
But now let us resume the dwarf and queen.

*Our* Roman, having satisfied his eyes,  
At length withdrew, confounded by surprise.  
Who follows courts, must oft with care conceal,  
And scarcely know what sight and ears reveal.

*Yet*, by Joconde the king was lov'd so well,  
What now he'd seen he greatly wish'd to tell;  
But, since to princes full respect is due,  
And what concerns them, howsoever true,  
If thought displeasing, should not be dispos'd  
In terms direct, but obviously dispos'd,  
To catch the mind, Joconde at ease detail'd,  
From days of yore to those he now bewail'd,  
The names of emp'rors and of kings, whose brows,  
By wily wives, were crown'd with leafless boughs!  
And who, without repining, view'd their lot,  
Nor bad made worse, but thought things best forgot.  
E'en I, who now your majesty address,  
Continued he, am sorry to confess,  
The very day I left my native earth,

To wait upon a prince of royal birth,  
Was forced t'acknowledge cuckoldom among  
The gods who rule the matrimonial throng,  
And sacrifice thereto with aching heart  
Cornuted heads dire torments oft impart:

*The* tale he then detail'd, that rais'd his spleen;  
And what within the closet he had seen;  
The king replied, I will not be so rude,  
To question what so clearly you have view'd;  
Yet, since 'twere better full belief to gain,  
A glimpse of such a fact I should obtain,  
Pray bring me thither; instantly our wight;  
Astolphus led, where both his ears and sight  
Full proof receiv'd, which struck the prince with awe;  
Who stood amaz'd at what he heard and saw.  
But soon reflection's all-convincing pow'r  
Induced the king vexation to devour;  
True courtier-like, who dire misfortunes braves,  
Feels sprouting horns, yet smiles at fools and knaves:  
Our wives, said he, a pretty trick have play'd,  
And shamefully the marriage bed betray'd;  
Let us the compliment return, my friend,  
And round the country our amours extend;

But, in our plan the better to succeed,  
Our names we'll change; no servants we shall need;---  
For your relation I desire to pass,  
So you'll true freedom use; then with a lass  
We more at ease shall feel, more pleasure gain;  
Than if attended by my usual train.

*Jocond* with joy the king's proposal heard;  
On which the latter with his friend conferr'd;  
Said he, 'twere surely right to have a book,  
In which to place the names of those we hook,  
The whole arrang'd according to their rank,  
And I'll engage no page remains a blank,  
But ere we leave the range of our design,  
E'en scrup'lous dames shall to our wish incline,  
Our persons handsome, with engaging air,  
And sprightly, brilliant wit no trifling share,---  
'Twere strange, possessing such engaging charms,  
They should not tumble freely in our arms.

*The*, baggage ready, and the paper-book, our smart gallants the road together took, But 'twould be vain  
to number their amours; With beauties, Cupid favoured them by scores; Blessed, if only seen by either  
swain, And doubly bless'd who could attention gain: Nor wife of alderman, nor wife of mayor, Of  
justice, nor of governor was there, Who did not anxiously desire her name Might straight be entered in  
the book of fame! Hearts, which before were thought as cold as ice, Now warm'd at once and melted  
in a trice.

*Some* infidel, I fancy, in my ear  
Would whisper-probabilities, I fear,  
Are rather wanting to support the fact;  
However perfectly gallants may act,  
To gain a heart requires full many a day  
If more be requisite I cannot say;  
'Tis not my plan to dupe or young or old,  
But such to me, howe'er the tale is told,  
And Ariosto never truth forsakes;  
Yet, if at ev'ry step a writer takes,  
He's closely question'd as to time and place,  
He ne'er can end his work with easy grace.  
To those, from whom just credence I receive,  
Their tales I promise fully to believe.

*At* length, when our advent'urers round had play'd,  
And danc'd with ev'ry widow, wife, and maid,  
The full blown lily and the tender rose,  
Astolphus said, though clearly I suppose,  
We can as many hearts securely link,  
As e'er we like, yet better now, I think,

To stop a while in some delightful spot,  
And that before satiety we've got;  
For true it is, with love as with our meat;  
If we, variety of dishes eat,  
The doctors tell us inj'ry will ensue,  
And too much raking none can well pursue.  
Let us some pleasing fair-one then engage,  
To serve us both:---enough she'll prove I'll wage.

*Jocondeat* once replied, with all my heart,  
And I a lady know who'll take the part;  
She's beautiful; possesses store of wit;  
And is the wife of one above a cit.

*Withsuch* to meddle would be indiscreet,  
Replied the king, more charms we often meet,  
Beneath a chambermaid or laundress' dress,  
Than any rich coquette can well possess.  
Besides, with those, less form is oft requir'd,  
While dames of quality must be admir'd;  
Their whims complied with, though suspicions rise;  
And ev'ry hour produces fresh surprise,  
But this sweet charmer of inferior birth  
A treasure proves; a source of bliss on earth.  
No trouble she to carry here nor there;  
No balls she visits, and requires no care;  
The conquest easy, we may talk or not;  
The only difficulty we have got,  
Is how to find one, we may faithful view;  
So let us choose a girl, to love quite new.

*Sincethese*, replied the *youth*, your thoughts appear,  
What think you of our landlord's daughter here?  
That she's a perfect virgin I've no doubt,  
Nor can we find a chaster round about;  
Her very doll more innocent won't prove,  
Than this sweet nymph design'd with us to move.

*Thescheme* our prince's approbation met;  
The very girl, said he, I wish'd to get;  
This night be our attack; and if her heart  
Surrenders when our wishes we impart,  
But one perplexity will then remain;  
'Tis who her virgin favours shall obtain?  
The honour 's all a whim, and I, as king,  
At once assuredly should claim this thing:  
The rest 'tis very easy to arrange;  
As matters suit we presently can change.

*If* ceremony 'twere, Joconde replied,  
All cavil then we quickly could decide;  
Precedence would no doubt with you remain:  
But this is quite another case 'tis plain;  
And equity demands that we agree,  
By lot to settle which the man shall be.

*The* noble youths no arguments would spare,  
And each contended for the spoiler's care;  
Howe'er Joconde obtained the lucky hit,  
And first embrac'd this fancied dainty bit.

*The* girl who was the noble rival's aim,  
That ev'ning to the room for something came;  
Our heroes gave her instantly a chair,  
And lavished praises on her face and hair;  
A diamond ring soon sparkled in her eyes;  
Its pleasing pow'rs at sight obtain'd the prize.

*The* bargain made, she, in the dead of night,  
When silence reign'd and all was void of light,  
With careful steps their anxious wish obey'd,  
And 'tween them both, she presently was laid;  
'Twas Paradise they thought, where all is nice,  
And our young spark believ'd he broke the ice.

*The* folly I forgive him;---'tis in vain  
On this to reason---idle to complain;  
The *Wise* have oft been dup'd it is confest,  
And Solomon it seems among the rest.  
But gay Joconde felt nothing of the kind,  
A secret pleasure glow'd within his mind;  
He thought Astolphus wond'rous bliss had missed,  
And that himself alone the fair had kiss'd;  
A clod howe'er, who liv'd within the place,  
Had, prior to the Roman, her embrace.

*The* soft amour extended through the night,  
The girl was pleas'd, and all proceeded right;  
The foll'wing night, the next, 'twas still the same;  
Young Clod at length her coldness 'gan to blame;  
And as he felt suspicious of the act,  
He watch'd her steps and verified the fact:  
A quarrel instantly between them rose;  
Howe'er the fair, his anger to compose,  
And favour not to lose, on honour vow'd,  
That when the sparks were gone, and time allow'd,  
She would oblige his craving, fierce desire;---

To which the village lad replied with ire:---  
Pray what care I for any tavern guest,  
Of either sex; to you I now protest,  
If I be not indulg'd this very night,  
I'll publish your amours in mere despite.

*How* can we manage it, replied the belle,  
I'm quite distressed---indeed the truth to tell,  
I've promis'd them this night to come again,  
And if I fail, no doubt can then remain,  
But I shall lose the ring, their pledg'd reward,  
Which would, you know for me, be very hard.

*To* you I wish the ring, replied young Clod,  
But do they sleep in bed, or only nod?  
Tell me, pray; oh, said she, they sleep most sound;  
But then between them plac'd shall I be found,  
And while the one amidst Love's frolicks sports,  
The other quiet lies, or Morpheus courts.  
On hearing this the rustick lad proposed,  
To visit her when others' eyes were closed.  
Oh! never risk it, quickly she replied;  
'Twere folly to attempt it by their side.  
He answer'd, never fear, but only leave  
The door ajar, and me they'll not perceive.

*The* door she left exactly as he said;  
The spark arriv'd, and then approach'd the bed,  
('Twas near the foot,) then 'tween the sheets he slid,  
But God knows how he lay, or what he did.  
Astolphus and Joconde ne'er smelt a rat,  
Nor ever dreamt of what their girl was at,  
At length when each had turn'd and op'd his eyes,  
Continual movement fill'd him with surprise.  
The monarch softly said:---why how is this?  
My friend has eaten something, for in bliss,  
He revels on, and truly much I fear,  
His health will show, it may be bought too dear.

*This* very sentiment Joconde bethought;  
But Clod a breathing moment having caught,  
Resum'd his fun, and that so oft would seek:  
He gratified his wishes for a week;  
Then watching carefully, he found once more;  
Our noble heroes had begun to snore,  
On which he slyly took himself away,  
The road he came, and ere 'twas break of day;  
The girl soon follow'd, since she justly fear'd,

Still more fatigues:---so off she quickly steer'd,

At length when both the nobles were awake;  
Astolphus said, my friend you rest should take,  
'Twere better till to-morrow keep in bed,  
Since sleep, with such fatigues, of course has fled:  
You talk at random, cried the Roman youth;  
More rest I fancy you require in truth;  
You've led a pretty life throughout the night;  
I? said the king; why I was weary quite,  
So long I waited; you no respite gave,  
But wholly seem'd our little nymph t' enslave;  
At length to try if I from rage could keep,  
I turn'd my back once more, and went to sleep.  
If you had willingly the belle resign'd,  
I was, my friend, to take a turn inclin'd;  
That had sufficed for me, since I, like you,  
Perpetual motion never can pursue.

*Your*raillery, the Roman youth replied,  
Quite disconcerted, pray now lay aside,  
And talk of something else; you've fully shown,  
That I'm your vassal, and since you are grown  
So fond that you to keep the girl desire,  
E'en wholly to yourself, why I'll retire;  
Do with her what you please, and we shall see,  
How long this furor will with you agree.

*It*may, replied the king, for ever last,  
If ev'ry night like this, I'm doom'd to fast.

*Sire*, said Joconde, no longer let us thus,  
In terms of playful raillery discuss;  
Since such your pleasure, send me from your view;  
On this the youthful monarch angry grew,  
And many words between the friends arose;  
The presence of the nymph Astolphus chose;  
To her they said, between us judge, sweet fair,  
And every thing was stated then with care.

*The*girl with blushing cheeks before them kneel'd,  
And the mysterious tale at once reveal'd.  
Our heroes laugh'd; the treach'ry vile excus'd;  
And gave the ring, which much delight diffus'd;  
Together with a handsome sum of gold,  
Which soon a husband in her train enroll'd,  
Who, for a maid, the pretty fair-one took;  
And then our heroes wand'ring pranks forsook,

With laurels cover'd, which in future times,  
Will make them famous through the Western climes;  
More glorious since, they only cost, we find,  
Those sweet *attentions* pleasing to the *mind*.

So many conquests proud of having made,  
And over full the *book* of--those who'd play'd;  
Said gay Astolphus we will now, my friend,  
Return the shortest road and poaching end;  
If false our mates, yet we'll console ourselves,  
That many others have inconstant elves.  
Perhaps, in things a change will be one day,  
And only tender flames *love's* torch display;  
But now it seems some evil star presides,  
And Hymen's flock the devil surely rides.  
Besides, vile fiends the universe pervade,  
Whose constant aim is mortals to degrade,  
And cheat us to our noses if they can,  
(Hell's imps in human shape, disgrace to man!)  
Perhaps these wretches have bewitch'd our wives,  
And made us fancy errors in their lives.  
Then let us like good citizens, our days  
In future pass amidst domestick ways;  
Our absence may indeed restore their hearts,  
For jealousy oft virtuous truths imparts.

*In*this Astolphus certainly believ'd;  
The friends return'd, and kindly were receiv'd;  
A little scolding first assail'd the ear;  
But blissful kisses banish'd ev'ry fear.  
To balls and banquets *all* themselves resigned;  
Of dwarf or valet nothing more we find;  
Each with his wife contentedly remained:--  
'Tis thus alone true happiness is gained.

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Criticism never stops short nor ever wants for subjects  
In the midst of society, he was absent from it  
Regarded almost as an imbecile by the crowd  
The less of such misfortunes said is best  
The promises of kings are airy dreams  
Who only make friends in order to gain voices in their favour  
Who would wish to reduce Boccaccio to the same modesty as Virgil  
Wife beautiful, witty and chaste woman, who drove him to despair

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