

The Thieves and the Ass

Fables of La Fontaine > Book I > The Thieves and the Ass

Two thieves, pursuing their profession,
Had of a donkey got possession,
Whereon a strife arose,
Which went from words to blows.
The question was, to sell, or not to sell;
But while our sturdy champions fought it well,
Another thief, who chanced to pass,
With ready wit rode off the ass.
This ass is, by interpretation,
Some province poor, or prostrate nation.
The thieves are princes this and that,
On spoils and plunder prone to fat,
As those of Austria, Turkey, Hungary.
(Instead of two, I have quoted three
Enough of such commodity.)
These powers engaged in war all,
Some fourth thief stops the quarrel,
According all to one key,
By riding off the donkey.