

The Man and the Wooden God

by Jean de La Fontaine

A pagan kept a god of wood,--
 A sort that never hears,
 Though furnish'd well with ears,--
From which he hoped for wondrous good.
The idol cost the board of three;
 So much enrich'd was he
 With vows and offerings vain,
With bullocks garlanded and slain:
 No idol ever had, as that,
 A kitchen quite so full and fat.
But all this worship at his shrine
Brought not from this same block divine
Inheritance, or hidden mine,
 Or luck at play, or any favour.
Nay, more, if any storm whatever
Brew'd trouble here or there,
The man was sure to have his share,
 And suffer in his purse,
Although the god fared none the worse.
At last, by sheer impatience bold,
 The man a crowbar seizes,
 His idol breaks in pieces,
And finds it richly stuff'd with gold.
"How's this? Have I devoutly treated,"
Says he, "your godship, to be cheated?
Now leave my house, and go your way,
And search for altars where you may."