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Title: 151. Poma et Sterquilinium

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Poma et Sterquilinium

- 1 Cum pomis sterquilinium, superantibus undis,
- 2 Dum fluitat, magnum esse putans quod in amne vehatur
- 3 Velifero juxtaque adeo viridantia poma,
- 4 Continuo "Quam scite," inquit, "nos poma natamus!"
- 5 Sed non ista diu duravit gloria, nam, mox
- 6 Stercus it, in tenues resolutum evanuit auras.
- 7 *Jactabundus homo nihil est nisi stercus in undis.*

Notes

1. *superantibus undis*. An ablative absolute: the waves of water are flooding over the dung and carrying it away.

2. *putans*. The participle introduces an indirect statement: putans (se) esse magnum

3. *quod...vehatur*. The subjunctive with *quod* puts us into the mind of the lump of manure: this is the reason why he thinks he is so great.

2-3. *in amne...velifero*. Enjambment: the prepositional phrase wraps around its verb; the poetic adjective, *veli-fero*, suggests that the white caps of the waves are like sails

3. *juxta*. The word is being used as a preposition here: *juxta viridantia poma*.

4. *dixit*. This is the main verb of the sentence; lines 1-3 were a *dum* clause, which also included an ablative absolute, plus indirect speech and a *quod* clause with the participle *putans*.

5. *ista...gloria*. The subject noun phrase wraps around the verb phrase, *diu duravit*.

6. *in tenues...auras*. Compare the English idiom, "into thin air."

6. *resolutum evanuit*. When a participle is modifying the subject of a verb, as here, you can understand the participle as equivalent to a verb: *resolutus est et evanuit*.

Vocabulary

***adeo* (adv.).** moreover, besides; even, indeed

***continuo* (adv.).** immediately, without delay; without interruption, continuously

***fluito* (*fluitare*).** float, swim, bounce along in the water (iterative of *fluo*)

***mox* (adv.).** directly, soon, soon afterwards, after

***sterquilinium*.** a heap of dung or manure; here it is equivalent to *stercus*, a lump of dung (see line 6)

***velifer* (-a, -um).** with sails, sail-bearing

***viridans* (*viridantis*).** green, verdant, flourishing

Commentary

This is not a classical Aesop's fable, but it appears in Renaissance and later collections, such as Camerarius. The phrase "Nos poma natamus!" circulated independently as a saying, with the explanation being provided by the fable, much as the fable of the fox is needed to understand the saying "Sour grapes!"