

QUOTATION

THALES ON INTRINSIC CONTINGENCIES AND ESCAPE RESPONDING

Among these early travellers was Thales, a rich merchant of Miletus, who lived from about 640 to 550 B.C. As a man of affairs he was highly successful: his duties as merchant took him to many countries, and his native wit enabled him to learn from the novelties which he saw. To his admiring fellow-countrymen of later generations, he was known as one of the Seven Sages of Greece, many legends and anecdotes clustering round his name. It is said that Thales was once in charge of some mules, which were burdened with sacks of salt. Whilst crossing a river one of the animals slipped; and the salt consequently dissolving in the water, its load became instantly lighter. Naturally the sagacious beast deliberately submerged itself at the next ford, and continued this trick until Thales hit upon the happy expedient of filling the sack with sponges! This proved an effectual cure.

From: Turnbull, H. W. (1993). *The great mathematicians* (p. 4). New York: Barnes & Noble Books.

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