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Poems

Poems and fables

Gay, John

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Fable XV

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In music's art the *Afs's* fame
 Shall emulate *Corelli's* name.
 Each took the part that he advis'd,
 And all were equally despis'd.
 A Farmer, at his folly mov'd,
 The dull preceptor thus reprov'd.
 Blockhead (says he) by what you've done,
 One would have thought 'em each your son:
 For parents, to their offspring blind,
 Consult nor parts nor turn of mind;
 But ev'n in infancy decree
 What this, what t'other son shall be.
 Had you with judgment weigh'd the case,
 Their genius thus had fix'd their place.
 The Swan had learnt the sailor's art;
 The Cock had play'd the soldier's part;
 The Spider in the weaver's trade
 With credit had a fortune made:
 But for the foal, in ev'ry class
 The blockhead had appear'd an *Afs*.

F A B L E XV.

The COOK-MAID, the TURNSPIT, and the OX.

To a POOR MAN.

Consider man in ev'ry sphere,
 Then tell me, is your lot severe?

VOL. II.

O

'Tis murmur, discontent, distrust,
That makes you wretched. God is just.

I grant, that hunger must be fed,
That toil too earns thy daily bread.
What then? Thy wants are seen and known.
But ev'ry mortal feels his own.
We're born a restless needy crew:
Show me the happier man than you.

Adam, though blest'd above his kind,
For want of social woman pin'd.
Eve's wants the subtle serpent saw.
Her fickle taste transgress'd the law:
Thus fell our fire; and their disgrace
The curse entail'd on human race.

When Philip's son, by glory led,
Had o'er the globe his empire spread;
When altars to his name were dress'd,
That he was man, his tears confess'd.

The hopes of avarice are checkt:
The proud man always wants respect.
What various wants on pow'r attend?
Ambition never gains its end.
Who hath not heard the rich complain
Of surfeits and corporeal pain?
He, barr'd from ev'ry use of wealth,
Envies the plowman's strength and health.
Another in a beauteous wife
Finds all the miseries of life:
Domestic jars and jealous fear
Imbitter all his days with care.
This wants an heir; the line is lost:
Why was that vain entail ingross't?

Canst thou discern another's mind?
 Why is't you envy? Envy's blind.
 Tell Envy, when she would annoy,
 That thousands want what you enjoy.

The dinner must be dish'd at one.

Where's this vexatious Turnspit gone?
 Unless the skulking Cur is caught,
 The sir-loin's spoil'd, and I'm in fault.
 Thus said; (for sure you'll think it fit
 That I the Cook-maid's oaths omit),
 With all the fury of a cook,
 Her cooler kitchen Nan forsook.

The broomstick o'er her head she waves;
 She sweats, she stamps, she puffs, she raves.
 The sneaking Cur before her flies:
 She whistles, calls; fair speech she tries.
 These nought avail. Her cholera burns;
 The fist and cudgel threat by turns.
 With hasty stride she presses near;
 He flinks aloof, and howls with fear.

Was ever Cur so curs'd? (he cry'd).
 What star did at my birth preside!
 Am I for life by compact bound
 To tread the wheel's eternal round?
 Inglorious task! Of all our race
 No slave is half so mean and base.
 Had Fate a kinder lot assign'd,
 And form'd me of the lap-dog kind,
 I then, in higher life employ'd,
 Had indolence and ease enjoy'd;

And, like a gentleman carest,
 Had been the lady's fav'rite guest.
 Or were I sprung from spaniel line,
 Was his sagacious nostril mine,
 By me, their never-erring guide,
 From wood and plain their feasts supply'd,
 Knights, 'Squires attendant on my pace,
 Had shar'd the pleasures of the chace.
 Endu'd with native strength and fire,
 Why call'd I not the lion fire?
 A lion! such mean views I scorn.
 Why was I not of woman born?
 Who dares with Reason's pow'r contend?
 On man we brutal slaves depend;
 To him all creatures tribute pay,
 And luxury employs his day.

An Ox by chance o'erheard his moan,
 And thus rebuk'd the lazy dronc.

Dare you at partial Fate repine?
 How kind's your lot compar'd with mine!
 Decreed to toil, the barb'rous knife
 Hath sever'd me from social life;
 Urg'd by the stimulating goad,
 I drag the cumbrous waggon's load:
 'Tis mine to tame the stubborn plain,
 Break the stiff soil and house the grain;
 Yet I without a murmur bear
 The various labours of the year.
 But then consider, that one day,
 (Perhaps the hour's not far away),
 You, by the duties of your post,
 Shall turn the spit when I'm the roast;

And for reward shall share the feast,
 I mean shall pick my bones at least.
 Till now, th' astonish'd Cur replies,
 I look'd on all with envious eyes.
 How false we judge by what appears!
 All creatures feel their sev'ral cares.
 If thus you mighty beast complains,
 Perhaps man knows superior pains.
 Let envy then no more torment.
 Think on the Ox, and learn content.
 Thus said; close following at her heel,
 With chearful heart he mounts the wheel.

F A B L E XVI.

*The RAVENS, the SEXTON, and the EARTH-
 WORM.*

To LAURA.

LAURA, methinks your over-nice.
 True. Flatt'ry is a shocking vice;
 Yet sure, whene'er the praise is just,
 One may commend without disgust.
 Am I a privilege deny'd,
 Indulg'd by ev'ry tongue beside?
 How singular are all your ways!
 A woman, and averse to praise!
 If 'tis offence such truths to tell,
 Why do your merits thus excel?