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Poems

Poems and fables

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Fable XIII

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F A B L E XIII.

PLUTUS, CUPID, and TIME.

OF all the burthens man must bear,
 Time seems most galling and severe:
 Beneath this grievous load oppress'd,
 We daily meet some friend distress'd.

What can one-do? I rose at nine.
 'Tis full six hours before we dine:
 Six hours! no earthly thing to do!
 Would I had doz'd in bed till two.

A pamphlet is before him spread,
 And almost half a page is read;
 Tir'd with the study of the day,
 The flut'ring sheets are tost away.
 He opes his snuff-box, hums an air,
 Then yawns and stretches in his chair.

Not twenty, by the minute-hand!
 Good gods! says he, my watch must stand!
 How muddling 'tis on books to pore!
 I thought I'd read an hour or more.
 The morning, of all hours, I hate.
 One can't contrive to rise too late.

To make the minutes faster run,
 Then too his tiresome self to shun,
 To the next coffehouse he speeds,
 Takes up the news, some scraps he reads.

Saunt'ring, from chair to chair he trails ;
 Now drinks his tea, now bites his nails.
 He spies a partner of his woe ;
 By chat afflictions lighter grow ;
 Each other's grievances they share,
 And thus their dreadful hours compare.

Says Tom, since all men must confess
 That time lies heavy more or less ;
 Why should it be so hard to get,
 Till two, a party at Piquet ?
 Play might relieve the lagging morn :
 By cards long wintry nights are borne.
 Does not Quadrille amuse the fair,
 Night after night, throughout the year ?
 Vapours and spleen forgot, at play
 They cheat uncounted hours away.

My case, says Will, then must be hard,
 By want of skill from play debarr'd.
 Courtiers kill time by various ways ;
 Dependence wears out half their days.
 How happy these, whose time ne'er stands !
 Attendance takes it off their hands.
 Were it not for this cursed show'r,
 The park had whil'd away an hour.
 At court, without or place or view,
 I daily lose an hour or two.
 It fully answers my design,
 When I have pick'd up friends to dine.
 The tavern makes our burthen light ;
 Wine puts our time and care to flight.
 At six (hard case!) they call to pay.
 Where can one go ? I hate the play.

From six till ten! Unless I sleep,
One cannot spend the hours so cheap.
The comedy's no sooner done,
But some assembly is begun.
Loit'ring from room to room I stray;
Converse, but nothing hear or say:
Quite tir'd, from fair to fair I roam.
So soon! I dread the thoughts of home.
From thence, to quicken slow-pac'd night,
Again my tavern-friends invite:
Here too our early mornings pass,
Till drousy sleep retards the glass.

Thus they their wretched life bemoan,
And make each other's case their own.

Consider, friends, no hour rolls on,
But something of your grief is gone.
Were you to schemes of bus'ness bred,
Did you the paths of learning tread,
Your hours, your days would fly too fast;
You'd then regret the minute past,
Time's fugitive and light as wind;
'Tis indolence that clogs your mind:
That load from off your spirits shake;
You'll own, and grieve for your mistake.
A while your thoughtless spleen suspend,
Then read; and (if you can) attend.

As Plutus, to divert his care,
Walk'd forth one morn to take the air,
Cupid o'ertook his strutting pace.
Each star'd upon the stranger's face,

Till recollection set them right ;
 For each knew t'other but by sight.
 After some complimentary talk,
 Time met 'em, bow'd, and join'd their walk.
 Their chat on various subjects ran,
 But most, what each had done for man.
 Plutus assumes a haughty air,
 Just like our purse-proud fellows here.

Let kings (says he) let coblers tell,
 Whose gifts among mankind excel.
 Consider courts : What draws their train ?
 Think you 'tis loyalty-or gain ?
 That statesman hath the strongest hold,
 Whose tool of politics is gold.
 By that, in former reigns, 'tis said,
 The knave in pow'r hath senates led.
 By that alone he sway'd debates,
 Enrich'd himself, and beggar'd states.
 Forego your boast. You must conclude,
 That's most esteem'd that's most pursu'd.
 Think too, in what a woful plight
 That wretch must live whose pocket's light.
 Are not his hours by want deprest ?
 Penurious care corrodes his breast.
 Without respect, or love, or friends,
 His solitary day descends.

You might, says Cupid, doubt my parts,
 My knowledge too in human hearts,
 Should I the pow'r of gold dispute,
 Which great examples might confute.
 I know, when nothing else prevails,
 Persuasive money seldom fails ;

That beauty too, (like other wares),
 Its price, as well as conscience, bears.
 Then marriage (as of late profess)
 Is but a moncy-job at best.
 Consent, compliance may be sold:
 But love's beyond the price of gold.
 Smugglers there are, who, by retail,
 Expose what they call love to sale.
 Such bargains are an arrant cheat:
 You purchase flatt'ry and deceit.
 Those who true love have ever try'd,
 (The common cares of life supply'd),
 No wants endure, no wishes make,
 But ev'ry real joy partake.
 All comfort on themselves depends;
 They want nor pow'r, nor wealth, nor friends.
 Love then hath ev'ry blefs in store:
 'Tis friendship, and 'tis something more.
 Each other ev'ry wish they give.
 Not to know love, is not to live.

Or love, or money, (Time reply'd),
 Were men the question to decide,
 Would bear the prize: On both intent,
 My boon's neglected, or mis-spent.
 'Tis I who measure vital space,
 And deal out years to human race.
 Though little priz'd, and seldom sought,
 Without me, love and gold are nought.
 How does the miser time employ?
 Did I e'er see him life enjoy?
 By me forfook, the hoards he won,
 Are scatter'd by his lavish son.

By me all useful arts are gain'd;
 Wealth, learning, wisdom is attain'd.
 Who then would think, (since such my pow'r),
 That e'er I knew an idle hour?
 So subtle and so swift I fly,
 Love's not more fugitive than I.
 Who hath not heard coquettes complain
 Of days, months, years, mis-spent in vain?
 For time misused they pine and waste,
 And love's sweet pleasures never taste.
 Those who direct their time aright,
 If love or wealth their hopes excite,
 In each pursuit fit hours employ'd,
 And both by time have been enjoy'd.
 How heedless then are mortals grown!
 How little is their int'rest known?
 In ev'ry view they ought to mind me;
 For, when once lost, they never find me.

He spoke. The gods no more contest,
 And his superior gift confest;
 That time (when truly understood)
 Is the most precious earthly good,

F A B L E XIV.

*The OWL, the SWAN, the COCK, the SPIDER, the
 ASS, and the FARMER.*

To a MOTHER.

Conversing with your sprightly boys,
 Your eyes have spoke the mother's joys: