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Poems

Poems and fables

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Fable XI

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F A B L E XI.

*The PACK-HORSE and the CARRIER.**To a YOUNG NOBLEMAN.*

Begin, my Lord, in early youth,
 To suffer, nay, encourage truth :
 And blame me not for disrespect,
 If I the flatt'rer's style reject ;
 With that, by menial tongues supply'd,
 You're daily cocker'd up in pride.

The tree's distinguish'd by the fruit.
 Be virtue then your first pursuit :
 Set your great ancestors in view,
 Like them deserve the title too ;
 Like them ignoble actions scorn :
 Let virtue prove you greatly born.

Though with less plate their side-board shone,
 Their conscience always was their own ;
 They ne'er at levees meanly fawn'd,
 Nor was their honour yearly pawn'd ;
 Their hands, by no corruption stain'd,
 The ministerial bribe disdain'd ;
 They serv'd the crown with loyal zeal,
 Yet jealous of the public weal ;
 They stood the bulwark of our laws,
 And wore at heart their country's cause ;

By neither place or pension bought,
They spoke and voted as they thought.
Thus did your fires adorn their seat;
And such alone are truly great.

If you the paths of learning slight,
You're but a dunce in stronger light:
In foremost rank, the coward, plac'd,
Is more conspicuously disgrac'd.
If you, to serve a paltry end,
To knavish jobs can condescend,
We pay you the contempt that's due;
In that you have precedence too.

Whence had you this illustrious name?
From virtue and unblemish'd fame.
By birth the name alone descends;
Your honour on yourself depends.
Think not your coronet can hide
Assuming ignorance and pride.
Learning by study must be won,
'Twas ne'er entail'd from son to son.
Superior worth your rank requires;
For that mankind reveres your fires:
If you degen'rate from your race,
Their merits heighten your disgrace.

A Carrier ev'ry night and morn,
Would see his horses eat their corn.
This sunk the hostler's vails, 'tis true;
But then his horses had their due.
Were we so cautious in all cases,
Small gain would rise from greater places.

The manger now had all its measure ;
 He heard the grinding teeth with pleasure :
 When all at once confusion rung ;
 They snorted, jostled, bit, and stung.
 A Pack-horse turn'd his head aside,
 Foaming, his eye-balls swell'd with pride.

Good gods! (says he), how hard's my lot?

Is then my high descent forgot?
 Reduc'd to drudg'ry and disgrace,
 (A life unworthy of my race),
 Must I too bear the vile attacks
 Of ragged scrubs, and vulgar hacks?
 See scurvy Roan, that brute ill-bred,
 Dares from the manger thrust my head!
 Shall I, who boast a noble line,
 On offals of these creatures dine?
 Kick'd by old Ball! so mean a foe!

My honour suffers by the blow.

Newmarket speaks my grandfire's fame,

All jockeys still revere his name :

There yearly are his triumphs told,

There all his massy plates enroll'd.

Whene'er led forth upon the plain,

You saw him with a liv'ry train ;

Returning too, with laurels crown'd,

You heard the drums and trumpets sound.

Let it then, Sir, be understood,

Respect's my due ; for I have blood.

Vain-glorious fool, (the Carrier cry'd),

Respect was never paid to pride.

Know, 'twas thy giddy wilful heart

Reduc'd thee to this slavish part.

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Did not thy headstrong youth disdain
 To learn the conduct of the rein ?
 Thus coxcombs, blind to real merit,
 In vitious frolics fancy spirit.
 What is't to me by whom begot,
 Thou restif, pert, conceited sot ?
 Your sires I rev'rence; 'tis their due :
 But, worthless fool, what's that to you ?
 Ask all the carriers on the road,
 They'll say thy keeping's ill bestow'd.
 Then vaunt no more thy noble race,
 That neither mends thy strength nor pace.
 What profits me thy boast of blood ?
 An afs hath more intrinsic good.
 By outward show let's not be cheated :
 An afs should like an afs be treated.

F A B L E XII.

PAN and FORTUNE.

To a YOUNG HEIR.

Soon as your father's death was known,
 (As if th' estate had been their own),
 The gamesters outwardly exprest
 The decent joy within your breast.
 So lavish in your praise they grew,
 As spoke their certain hopes in you.