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## **Poems**

Poems and fables

**Gay, John**

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Fable VI

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## F A B L E VI.

*The SQUIRE and his CUR.**To a COUNTRY-GENTLEMAN.*

**T**HE man of pure and simple heart  
 Through life disdains a double part.  
 He never needs the screen of lies  
 His inward bosom to disguise.  
 In vain malicious tongues assail.  
 Let Envy snarl, let Slander rail,  
 From Virtue's shield (secure from wound)  
 Their blunted venom'd shafts rebound.  
 So shines his light before mankind,  
 His actions prove his honest mind.  
 If in his country's cause he rise,  
 Debating senates to advise,  
 Unbrib'd, unaw'd, he dares impart  
 The honest dictates of his heart.  
 No ministerial frown he fears,  
 But in his virtue perseveres.

But would you play the politician,  
 Whose heart's averse to intuition,  
 Your lips at all times, nay, your reason  
 Must be controul'd by place and season.  
 What statesman could his pow'r support,  
 Were lying tongues forbid the court?

Di princely ears to truth attend,  
 What minister could gain his end?  
 How could he raise his tools to place,  
 And how his honest foes disgrace?

That politician tops his part,  
 Who readily can lie with art.  
 The man's proficient in his trade;  
 His power is strong, his fortune's made.  
 By that the int'rest of the throne  
 Is made subservient to his own:  
 By that have kings of old deluded,  
 All their own friends for his excluded.  
 By that, his selfish schemes pursuing,  
 He thrives upon the public ruin.

† Antiochus, with hardy pace,  
 Provok'd the dangers of the chace;  
 And, lost from all the menial train,  
 Travers'd the wood and pathless plain.  
 A cottage lodg'd the royal guest;  
 The Parthian clown brought forth his best.  
 The king unknown his feast enjoy'd,  
 And various chat the hours employ'd.  
 From wine what sudden friendship springs!  
 Frankly they talk'd of courts and kings.

We country-folk (the clown replies)  
 Could ope our gracious monarch's eyes.  
 The king (as all our neighbours say)  
 Might he (God blefs him!) have his way,  
 Is found at heart, and means our good,  
 And he would do it, if he cou'd.

† Plutarch.

If truth in courts were not forbid,  
Nor kings nor subjects would be rid.  
Were he in pow'r, we need not doubt him :  
But that transferr'd to those about him,  
On them he throws the regal cares :  
And what mind they ? their own affairs.  
If such rapacious hands he trust,  
The best of men may seem unjust.  
From kings to coblers 'tis the same :  
Bad servants wound their master's fame.  
In this our neighbours all agree :  
Would the king knew as much as we.  
Here he stopt short. Repose they sought.  
The peasant slept, the monarch thought.

The courtiers learn'd, at early dawn,  
Where their lost sov'reign was withdrawn.  
The guards approach our host alarms,  
With gaudy coats the cottage swarms.  
The crown and purple robes they bring,  
And prostrate fall before the king.  
The clown was call'd ; the royal guest  
By due reward his thanks express'd.  
The king then, turning to the croud,  
Who fawningly before him bow'd,  
Thus spoke. Since, bent on private gain,  
Your counsels first misled my reign,  
Taught and inform'd by you alone,  
No truth the royal ear hath known  
Till here conversing. Hence, ye crew,  
For now I know myself, and you.

Whene'er the royal ear's ingross'd,  
State-lies but little genius cost.

The fav'rite then securely robs,  
 And gleans a nation by his jobs.  
 Franker and bolder grown in ill,  
 He daily poisons dares instil ;  
 And, as his present views suggest,  
 Inflames or sooths the royal breast.  
 Thus wicked ministers oppress,  
 When oft the monarch means redress.

Would kings their private subjects hear,  
 A minister must talk with fear,  
 If honestly oppos'd his views,  
 He dar'd not innocence accuse.  
 'T would keep him in such narrow bound,  
 He could not right and wrong confound.  
 Happy were kings, could they disclose  
 Their real friends and real foes !  
 Were both themselves and subjects known,  
 A monarch's will might be his own.  
 Had he the use of ears and eyes,  
 Knaves would no more be counted wise.  
 But then a minister might lose  
 (Hard case !) his own ambitious views.  
 When such as these have vex'd a state,  
 Pursu'd by universal hate,  
 Their false support at once hath fail'd,  
 And persevering truth prevail'd.  
 Expos'd, their train of fraud is seen :  
 Truth will at last remove the screen.

A country Squire, by whim directed,  
 The true, stanch dogs of chace neglected.

Beneath his board no hound was fed;  
 His hand ne'er stroak'd the spaniel's head.  
 A snappish Cur, alone carest,  
 By lies had banish'd all the rest.  
 Yap had his ear; and defamation  
 Gave him full scope of conversation.  
 His sycophants must be preferr'd;  
 Room must be made for all his herd:  
 Wherefore, to bring his schemes about,  
 Old faithful servants all must out.

The Cur on ev'ry creature flew,  
 (As other great mens puppies do),  
 Unless due court to him were shown,  
 And both their face and bus'ness known.  
 No honest tongue an audience found:  
 He worried all the tenants round:  
 For why, he liv'd in constant fear,  
 Lest truth by chance should interfere.  
 If any stranger dar'd intrude,  
 The noisy Cur his heels pursu'd.  
 Now fierce with rage, now struck with dread,  
 At once he snarled, bit, and fled.  
 Aloof he bays, with bristling hair,  
 And thus in secret growls his fear.  
 Who knows but Truth, in this disguise,  
 May frustrate my best guarded lies?  
 Should she (thus mask'd) admittance find,  
 That very hour my ruin's sign'd.

Now in his howl's continu'd sound,  
 Their words were lost, the voice was drown'd.  
 Ever in awe of honest tongues,  
 Thus ev'ry day he strain'd his lungs.

It happen'd, in ill-omen'd hour,  
 That Yap, unmindful of his pow'r,  
 Forfook his post, to love inclin'd.  
 A fav'rite bitch was in the wind.  
 By her seduc'd, in am'rous play,  
 They frisk'd the joyous hours away.  
 Thus, by untimely love pursuing,  
 Like Antony, he fought his ruin.

For now the Squire, unvex'd with noise,  
 An honest neighbour's chat enjoys.  
 Be free (says he) your mind impart;  
 I love a friendly open heart.  
 Methinks my tenants shun my gate.  
 Why such a stranger grown of late?  
 Pray tell me what offence they find:  
 'Tis plain they're not so well inclin'd.

Turn off your Cur, (the farmer cries),  
 Who feeds your ear with daily lies.  
 His snarling insolence offends.  
 'Tis he that keeps you from your friends.  
 Were but that saucy puppy checkt,  
 You'd find again the same respect.  
 Hear only him, he'll swear it too,  
 That all our hatred is to you.  
 But learn from us your true estate;  
 'Tis that curs'd Cur alone we hate.

The Squire heard truth. Now Yap rush'd in;  
 The wide hall echoes with his din:  
 Yet truth prevail'd; and with disgrace,  
 The dog was cudgell'd out of place.