

Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe

Digitale Sammlung der Badischen Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe

Poems

Poems and fables

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

Fable L

[urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-263877](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-263877)

The sun was sunk beneath the main,
 The moon, and all the starry train,
 Hung the vast vault of heav'n. The man
 His contemplation thus began.

When I behold this glorious show,
 And the wide wat'ry world below,
 The scaly people of the main,
 The beasts that range the wood or plain,
 The wing'd inhabitants of air,
 The day, the night, the various year,
 And know all these by heav'n design'd
 As gifts to pleasure human kind;
 I cannot raise my worth too high;
 Of what vast consequence am I!

Not of th' importance you suppose,
 Replies a Flea upon his nose.
 Be humble, learn thyself to scan;
 Know, pride was never made for man.
 'Tis vanity that swells thy mind.
 What, heav'n and earth for thee design'd!
 For thee! made only for our need,
 That more important fleas might feed.

F A B L E L.

The HARE and many FRIENDS.

Friendship, like love, is but a name,
 Unless to one you stint the flame.

The child, whom many fathers share,
Hath seldom known a father's care.
'Tis thus in friendships; who depend
On many, rarely find a friend.

A Hare, who in a civil way,
Comply'd with ev'ry thing, like Gay,
Was known by all the bestial train,
Who haunt the wood, or graze the plain.
Her care was, never to offend,
And ev'ry creature was her friend.

As forth she went at early dawn
To taste the dew-besprinkled lawn,
Behind she hears the hunter's cries,
And from the deep-mouth'd thunder flies.
She starts, she stops, she pants for breath;
She hears the near advance of death;
She doubles to mislead the hound,
And measures back her mazy round;
Till, fainting in the public way,
Half-dead with fear she gasping lay.

What transport in her bosom grew,
When first the horse appear'd in view!

Let me, says she, your back ascend,
And owe my safety to a friend.
You know my feet betray my flight;
To friendship ev'ry burden's light.

The horse reply'd, Poor honest Puff,
It grieves my heart to see thee thus.
Be comforted, relief is near;
For all your friends are in the rear.

She next the stately Bull implor'd ;
 And thus reply'd the mighty lord.
 Since ev'ry beast alive can tell
 That I sincerely wish you well,
 I may, without offence, pretend
 To take the freedom of a friend.
 Love calls me hence : A fav'rite cow
 Expects me near yon barley-mow ;
 And when a lady's in the case,
 You know all other things give place.
 To leave you thus might seem unkind ;
 But see, the goat is just behind.

The goat remark'd her pulse was high,
 Her languid head, her heavy eye.
 My back, says he, may do you harm ;
 The sheep's at hand, and wool is warm.

The sheep was feeble, and complain'd
 His sides a load of wool sustain'd :
 Said he was slow, confess'd his fears ;
 For hounds eat sheep as well as hares.

She now the trotting calf address'd,
 To save from death a friend distress'd.

Shall I, says he, of tender age,
 In this important care engage ?
 Older and abler pass'd you by ;
 How strong are those ! how weak am I !
 Should I presume to bear you hence,
 Those friends of mine may take offence.
 Excuse me then. You know my heart :
 But dearest friends, alas ! must part.
 How shall we all lament. Adieu ;
 For see the hounds are just in view.

The End of the First Part.

The next the family Bull impudently
 And thus reply'd the mighty lord
 Thus to my dear wife can tell
 That I sincerely with you will
 I say without offence
 To cast the freedom of a lion
 I've call'd me hence: A for the cow
 I hope me near your pasture now
 And when a lady's in the case
 You know all other things give place
 To have you first might seem to hold
 But for the goat is just behind
 The goat remark'd her parts was right
 His tongue had but heavy eyes
 My back, his feet may be your horse
 The sheep's in hand, and wool is warm
 The sheep was fed, and complaint
 His head of wool, his feet
 He'd be was low, could be the least
 The hounds are kept as well as here
 So now the trotting call attend
 To save from death a head attend
 Shall I say he's of tender age
 In this important case engage
 Ours and other part's you say
 How strong are those! How weak am I!
 Should I presume to bear your hand
 Those friends of mine may take offence
 Break me then: You know my heart
 But dearest friends, alas! must part
 How shall we all lament
 For for the hounds are just in view

The End of the First Part