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Poems

Poems and fables

Gay, John

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Fable XLVI

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There, Phoenix like, beneath her eye,
Involv'd in fragrance, burn and die !

Know, hapless flower, that thou shalt find
More fragrant roses there ;
I see thy with'ring head reclin'd
With envy and despair !
One common fate we both must prove ;
You die with envy, I with love.

Spare your comparisons, reply'd
An angry Rose, who grew beside.
Of all mankind you should not flout us.
What can a poet do without us !
In ev'ry love-song roses bloom ;
We lend you colour and perfume.
Does it to Chloe's charms conduce,
To found her praise on our abuse ?
Must we, to flatter her, be made
To wither, envy, pine, and fade ?

F A B L E XLVI.

The COX, the HORSE, and the SHEPHERD'S DOG.

THE lad, of all-sufficient merit,
With modesty ne'er damps his spirit ;
Presuming on his own deserts,
On all alike his tongue exerts ;

His noisy jokes at random throws,
 And pertly spatters friends and foes;
 In wit and war the bully race
 Contribute to their own disgrace,
 Too late the forward youth shall find
 That jokes are sometimes paid in kind;
 Or if they canker in the breast,
 He makes a foe who makes a jest.

A village-cur, of snappish race,
 The pertest puppy of the place,
 Imagin'd that his treble throat
 Was blest with musick's sweetest note;
 In the mid road he basking lay,
 The yelping nuisance of the way;
 For not a creature past along
 But had a sample of his song.

Soon as the trotting steed he hears,
 He starts, he cocks his dapper ears;
 Away he scowrs, assaults his hoof;
 Now near him snarls, now barks aloof;
 With shrill impertinence attends;
 Nor leaves him 'till the village ends.

It chanc'd, upon his evil day,
 A Pad came pacing down the way;
 The Cur, with never-ceasing tongue,
 Upon the passing trav'ler sprung.
 The horse from scorn provok'd to ire,
 Flung backward; rolling in the mire,
 The puppy howl'd, and bleeding lay;
 The Pad in peace pursu'd his way.

A shepherd's Dog, who saw the deed,
 Detesting the vexatious breed,
 Bespoke him thus. When coxcombs prate,
 They kindle wrath, contempt, or hate.
 Thy teasing tongue had judgment ty'd,
 Thou hadst not, like a puppy, dy'd.

F A B L E XLVII.

The COURT of DEATH.

DEath, on a solemn night of state,
 In all his pomp of terrors fate:
 Th' attendants of his gloomy reign,
 Diseases dire, a ghastly train,
 Croud the vast court. With hollow tone
 A voice thus thunder'd from the throne.

This night our minister we name,
 Let ev'ry servant speak his claim;
 Merit shall bear this ebon wand.
 All, at the word, stretch'd forth their hand.

Fever, with burning heat possess'd,
 Advanc'd, and for the wand address'd.

I to the weekly bills appeal,
 Let those express my fervent zeal;
 On ev'ry slight occasion near,
 With violence I persevere.

Next Gout appears with limping pace,
 Pleads how he shifts from place to place;