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## **Poems**

Poems and fables

**Gay, John**

**Edinburgh, 1773**

Fable XLH

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To his ill-judging ears are fine;  
 And nightingales are all divine.  
 But the more knowing feather'd race  
 See wisdom stamp'd upon my face.  
 Whene'er to visit light I deign,  
 What flocks of fowl compose my train!  
 Like slaves, they croud my flight behind,  
 And own me of superior kind.

The Farmer laugh'd, and thus reply'd.  
 Thou dull important lump of pride,  
 Dar'st thou with that harsh grating tongue  
 Depretrate birds of warbling song?  
 Indulge thy spleen. Know, men and fowl  
 Regard thee, as thou art; an Owl.  
 Besides, prond blockhead, be not vain  
 Of what thou call'st thy slaves and train.  
 Few follow Wisdom, or her rules;  
 Fools in derision follow fools.

## F A B L E XLH.

### *The JUGGLERS.*

**A** Juggler long through all the town  
 Had rais'd his fortune and renown;  
 You'd think (so far his art transcends)  
 The devil at his fingers ends.  
 Vice heard his fame, she read his bill;  
 Convinc'd of his inferior skill,

She fought his booth, and from the croud  
Defy'd the man of art aloud.

Is this then he so fam'd for sleight?  
Can this slow bungler cheat your sight?

Dares he with me dispute the prize?

I leave it to impartial eyes.

Provok'd, the Juggler cry'd, 'Tis done.

In science I submit to none.

Thus said. The cups and balls he play'd;

By turns, this here, that there, convey'd.

The cards, obedient to his words,

Are by a fillip turn'd to birds.

His little boxes change the grain;

Trick after trick deludes the train.

He shakes his bag, he shows all fair;

His fingers spread, and nothing there;

Then bids it rain with showers of gold,

And now his iv'ry eggs are told.

But when from thence the hen he draws,

Amaz'd spectators hum applause.

Vice now stept forth, and took the place

With all the forms of his grimace.

This magic looking-glass, she cries,

(There, hand it round), will charm your eyes.

Each eager eye the sight desir'd,

And ev'ry man himself admir'd.

Next, to a senator addressing:

See this bank-note; observe the blessing.

Breathe on the bill. Heigh, pass! 'Tis gone.

Upon his lips a padlock shone.

A second puff the magic broke;

The padlock vanish'd, and he spoke.

Twelve bottles rang'd upon the board,  
 All full, with heady liquor stor'd,  
 By clean conveyance disappear,  
 And now two bloody swords are there.

A purse she to a thief expos'd;  
 At once his ready fingers clos'd.  
 He opes his fist, the treasure's fled;  
 He sees a halter in its stead.

She bids Ambition hold a wand;  
 He grasps a hatchet in his hand.

A box of charity she shows.  
 Blow here; and a church-warden blows:  
 'Tis vanish'd with conveyance neat,  
 And on the table smokes a treat.

She shakes the dice, the board she knocks,  
 And from all pockets fills her box.

She next a meagre rake address.  
 This picture see; her shape, her breast!  
 What youth, and what inviting eyes!  
 Hold her, and have her. With surprize,  
 His hand expos'd a box of pills;  
 And a loud laugh proclaim'd his ills.

A counter, in a miser's hand,  
 Grew twenty guineas at command.  
 She bids his heir the sum retain;  
 And 'tis a counter now again.

A guinea with her touch you see  
 Take ev'ry shape but Charity;  
 And not one thing you saw, or drew,  
 But chang'd from what was first in view.

The Juggler now, in grief of heart,  
 With this submission own'd her art.

Can I such matchless sleight withstand?  
 How practice hath improv'd your hand?  
 But now and then I cheat the throng;  
 You ev'ry day, and all day long.

## F A B L E XLIII.

*The council of HORSES.*

UPON a time a neighing-steed,  
 Who graz'd among a num'rous breed,  
 With mutiny had fir'd the train,  
 And spread dissension through the plain,  
 On matters that concern'd the state  
 The council met in grand debate:  
 A colt, whose eye-balls flam'd with ire,  
 Elate with strength and youthful fire,  
 In haste stept forth before the rest,  
 And thus the list'ning throng address'd.

Good gods! how abject is our race,  
 Condemn'd to slav'ry and disgrace!  
 Shall we our servitude retain,  
 Because our sires have borne the chain?  
 Consider, friends, your strength and might;  
 'Tis conquest to assert your right.  
 How cumb'rous is the gilded coach!  
 The pride of man is our reproach.  
 Were we design'd for daily toil,  
 To drag the plough-share through the soil,