

Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe

Digitale Sammlung der Badischen Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe

Poems

Poems and fables

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

Fable XL

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

F A B L E XL.

The two MONKEYS.

THE learned, full of inward pride,
 The fops of outward show deride ;
 The fop, with learning at defiance,
 Scoffs at the pedant, and the science :
 The Don, a formal, solemn strutter,
 Despises Monsieur's airs and flutter ;
 While Monsieur mocks the formal fool,
 Who looks, and speaks, and walks by rule.
 Britain, a medly of the twain,
 As pert as France, as grave as Spain ;
 In fancy wiser than the rest,
 Laughs at them both, of both the jest.
 Is not the poet's chiming close
 Censured by all the sons of prose ?
 While bards of quick imagination
 Despise the sleepy prose narration.
 Men laugh at apes, they men contemn ;
 For what are we, but apes to them ?

Two monkeys went to Southwark fair,
 No critics had a sourer air :
 They forc'd their way through draggled folks,
 Who gap'd to catch Jack Pudding's jokes ;
 Then took their tickets for the show,
 And got by chance the foremost row.

To see their grave observing face,
 Provok'd a laugh through all the place.
 Brother, says Pug, and turn'd his head,
 The rabble's monstrously ill-bred.
 Now through the booth loud hisses ran,
 Nor ended till the show began.

The tumbler whirls the flip-flap round,
 With Sommerfets he shakes the ground;
 The cord beneath the dancer swings;
 Aloft in air the vaulter springs,
 Distorted now, now prone depends,
 Now through his twisted arms ascends:
 The croud, in wonder and delight,
 With clapping hands applaud the sight.

With smiles, quoth Pug, If pranks like these
 The giant apes of reason please,
 How would they wonder at our arts!
 They must adore us for our parts.
 High on the twig I've seen you cling;
 Play, twist, and turn in airy ring:
 How can those clumsy things, like me,
 Fly with a bound from tree to tree?
 But yet, by this applause, we find
 These emulators of our kind
 Discern our worth, our parts regard,
 Who our mean mimics thus reward.

Brother, the grinning mate replies,
 In this I grant that man is wise.
 While good example they pursue,
 We must allow some praise is due:
 But when they strain beyond their guide,
 I laugh to scorn the mimic pride.

For how fantastic is the sight,
To meet men always bolt upright,
Because we sometimes walk on two,
I hate the imitating crew.

F A B L E XII.

The OWL and the FARMER.

AN owl of grave deport and mien,
Who (like the Turk) was seldom seen,
Within a barn had chose his station,
As fit for prey and contemplation,
Upon a beam aloft he sits,
And nods, and seems to think, by fits.
So have I seen a man of news,
Or Post-boy, or gazette peruse;
Smoke, nod, and talk with voice profound,
And fix the fate of Europe round.
Sheaves pil'd on sheaves hid all the floor.
At dawn of morn, to view his store
The farmer came. The hooting guest
His self-importance thus exprest,
Reason in man is mere pretence:
How weak, how shallow is his sense!
To treat with scorn the bird of night,
Declares his folly, or his spite.
Then too, how partial is his praise!
The lark's, the linnet's chirping lays