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## **Poems**

Poems and fables

**Gay, John**

**Edinburgh, 1773**

Fable XXXI

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## F A B L E XXXI.

*The Universal APPARITION.*

A Rake, by ev'ry passion rul'd,  
With ev'ry vice his youth had cool'd;

Disease his tainted blood assails;

His spirits droop, his vigour fails :

With secret ills at home he pines,

And, like infirm old-age, declines.

As, twing'd with pain, he pensive sits,

And raves, and prays, and swears by fits ;

A ghastly phantom, lean and wan,

Before him rose, and thus began.

My name perhaps hath reach'd your ear ;

Attend, and be advis'd by Care.

Nor love, nor honour, wealth, nor power,

Can give the heart a chearful hour,

When health is lost. Be timely wise ;

With health all taste of pleasure flies.

Thus said, the phantom disappears.

The wary counsel wak'd his fears :

He now from all excess abstains,

With physick purifies his veins ;

And, to procure a sober life,

Resolves to venture on a wife.

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But now again the sp'rit ascends,  
 Where'er he walks his ear attends ;  
 Insinuates that beauty's frail,  
 That perseverance must prevail ;  
 With jealousies his brain inflames,  
 And whispers all her lover's names.  
 In other hours she represents  
 His household-charge, his annual rents,  
 Increasing debts, perplexing duns,  
 And nothing for his younger sons.

Strait all his thought to gain he turns,  
 And with the thirst of lucre burns.  
 But when possess'd of Fortune's store,  
 The spectre haunts him more and more ;  
 Sets want and misery in view,  
 Bold thieves, and all the murd'ring crew ;  
 Alarms him with eternal frights,  
 Infests his dream, or wakes his nights.

How shall he chase this hideous guest ?  
 Power may perhaps protect his rest.  
 To pow'r he rose. Again the sp'rit  
 Befets him morning, noon, and night ;  
 Talks of Ambition's tott'ring seat,  
 How Envy persecutes the great,  
 Of rival hate, of treach'rous friends,  
 And what disgrace his fall attends.

The court he quits, to fly from Care,  
 And seeks the peace of rural air :  
 His groves, his fields amus'd his hours ;  
 He prun'd his trees, he rais'd his flowers.  
 But Care again his steps pursues ;  
 Warns him of blasts, of blighting dews,

Of plund'ring insects, snails, and rains,  
 And droughts that starve the labour'd plains.  
 Abroad, at home, the spectre's there:  
 In vain we seek to fly from Care.

At length he thus the ghost address'd.  
 Since thou must be my constant guest,  
 Be kind, and follow me no more;  
 For Care by right should go before.

## F A B L E XXXII.

*The two OWLS and the SPARROW.*

**T**WO formal Owls together sat,  
 Conferring thus in solemn chat.  
 How is the modern taste decay'd!  
 Where's the respect to wisdom paid?  
 Our worth the Grecian sages knew;  
 They gave our fires the honour due;  
 They weigh'd the dignity of fowls,  
 And pry'd into the depth of owls.  
 Athens, the seat of learned fame,  
 With gen'ral voice rever'd our name;  
 On merit title was conferr'd,  
 And all ador'd th' Athenian bird.  
 Brother, you reason well, replies  
 The solemn mate, with half-shut eyes;