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## **Poems**

Poems and fables

**Gay, John**

**Edinburgh, 1773**

Fable XXIX

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Shall I nor vows, nor incense know?  
Where praise is due, the praise bestow.

With fervent zeal the Persian mov'd,  
Thus the proud calumny reprov'd.

It was that God, who claims my prayer,  
Who gave thee birth, and rais'd thee there.

When o'er his beams the veil is thrown,  
Thy substance is but plainer shown.

A passing gale, a puff of wind  
Dispells thy thickest troops combin'd.

The gale arose; the vapour tost  
(The sport of winds) in air was lost;

The glorious orb the day refines.  
Thus Envy breaks, thus Merit shines.

## F A B L E XXIX.

*The Fox at the point of death.*

**A** Fox, in life's extreme decay,  
Weak, sick, and faint, expiring lay;

All appetite hath left his maw,  
And age difarm'd his mumbling jaw.

His num'rous race around him stand  
To learn their dying sire's command;

He rais'd his head with whining moan,  
And thus was heard the feeble tone.

Ah sons! from evil ways depart;  
My crimes lie heavy on my heart.

See, see, the murder'd geese appear!  
Why are those bleeding turkeys there?  
Why all around this cackling train,  
Who haunt my ears for chicken slain?

The hungry foxes round them star'd,  
And for the promis'd feast prepar'd.

Where, Sir, is all this dainty cheer?  
Nor turkey, goose, nor hen is here.

These are the phantoms of your brain,  
And your sons lick their lips in vain.

O gluttons! says the drooping fire,  
Restrain inordinate desire.

Your liqu'rish taste you shall deplore,  
When peace of conscience is no more.

Does not the hound betray our pace,  
And gins and guns destroy our race?

Thieves dread the searching eye of power,  
And never feel the quiet hour.

Old age (which few of us shall know)  
Now puts a period to my woe.

Would you true happiness attain,  
Let honesty your passions rein;

So live in credit and esteem,  
And the good name you lost, redeem.

The counsel's good, a fox replies,  
Could we perform what you advise.

Think what our ancestors have done;  
A line of thieves from son to son;

To us descends the long disgrace,  
And infamy hath mark'd our race.

Though we, like harmless sheep, should feed,  
 Honest in thought, in word, and deed;  
 Whatever hen-roost is decreas'd,  
 We shall be thought to share the feast.  
 The change shall never be believ'd.  
 A lost good-name is ne'er retriev'd.  
 Nay, then, replies the feeble fox,  
 (But, hark! I hear a hen that clocks),  
 Go, but be mod'rate in your food;  
 A chicken too might do me good.

## F A B L E XXX.

*The SETTING-DOG and the PARTRIDGE.*

**T**HE ranging Dog the stubble tries,  
 And searches ev'ry breeze that flies;  
 The scent grows warm: with cautious fear  
 He creeps, and points the covey near.  
 The men, in silence, far behind,  
 Conscious of game, the net unbind.  
 A Partridge, with experience wise,  
 The fraudulent preparation spies:  
 She mocks their toils, alarms her brood;  
 The covey springs, and seeks the wood:  
 But ere her certain wing she tries,  
 Thus to the creeping spaniel cries.