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## **Poems**

Poems and fables

**Gay, John**

**Edinburgh, 1773**

Fable XXI

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And would she thus my search prevent?

I stand resolv'd, and dare th' event.

Thus said. He mounts the margin's round,

And pries into the depth profound.

He stretch'd his neck; and from below

With stretching neck advanc'd a foe:

With wrath his ruffled plumes he rears,

The foe with ruffled plumes appears:

Threat answer'd threat, his fury grew

Headlong to meet the war he flew.

But when the watry death he found,

He thus lamented, as he drown'd.

I ne'er had been in this condition,

But for my mother's prohibition.

## F A B L E XXI.

*The RAT-CATCHER and CATS.*

**T**HE rats by night such mischief did,

Betty was ev'ry morning chid.

They undermin'd whole sides of bacon,

Her cheefe was sapp'd, her tarts were taken;

Her pasties, fenc'd with thickest paste,

Were all demolish'd, and laid waste.

She curs'd the cat for want of duty,

Who left her foes a constant booty.

An Engineer of noted skill,  
Engag'd to stop the growing ill.

From room to room he now surveys  
Their haunts, their works, their secret ways;  
Finds where they 'scape an ambuscade,  
And whence the nightly sally's made.

An envious Cat, from place to place,  
Unseen, attends his silent pace.  
She saw, that, if his trade went on,  
The purring race must be undone;  
So, secretly removes his baits,  
And ev'ry stratagem defeats.

Again he sets the poison'd toils,  
And puffs again the labour foils.

What foe (to frustrate my designs)  
My schemes thus nightly countermines?  
Incens'd, he cries: This very hour  
The wretch shall bleed beneath my power.

So said. A pond'rous trap he brought,  
And in the fact poor puffs was caught.

Smuggler, says he, thou shalt be made  
A victim to our loss of trade.

The captive Cat with piteous mew  
For pardon, life, and freedom sue.  
A sister of the science spare;  
One int'rest is our common care.

What insolence! the man reply'd;  
Shall cats with us the game divide?  
Were all your interloping band  
Extinguish'd, or expell'd the land,  
We rat-catchers might raise our fees,  
Sole guardians of a nation's cheese!

A Cat, who saw the lifted knife,  
 Thus spoke, and sav'd her sister's life.  
 In ev'ry age and clime we see,  
 Two of a trade can ne'er agree.  
 Each hates his neighbour for incroaching ;  
 'Squire stigmatizes 'squire for poaching ;  
 Beauties with beauties are in arms,  
 And scandal pelts each other's charms ;  
 Kings too their neighbour kings dethrone,  
 In hope to make the world their own.  
 But let us limit our desires ;  
 Not war like beauties, kings, and 'squires ;  
 For though we both one prey pursue,  
 There's game enough for us and you.

## F A B L E XXII.

*The GOAT without a Beard.*

**T**IS certain, that the modish passions  
 Descend among the croud, like fashions,  
 Excuse me then ; if pride, conceit,  
 (The manners of the fair and great),  
 I give to monkeys, asses, dogs,  
 Fleas, owls, goats, butterflies, and hogs.  
 I say, that these are proud. What then ?  
 I never said, they equal men.