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Poems

Poems and fables

Gay, John

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Fable XVI

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Sooner the hawk or vulture trust
 Than man; of animals the worst,
 In him ingratitude you find,
 A vice peculiar to the kind.
 The sheep, whose annual fleece is dy'd,
 To guard his health, and serve his pride,
 Forc'd from his fold and native plain,
 Is in the cruel shambles slain.
 The swarms, who, with industrious skill,
 His hives with wax and honey fill,
 In vain whole summer days employ'd,
 Their stores are sold, the race destroy'd.
 What tribute from the goose is paid!
 Does not her wing all science aid?
 Does it not lovers hearts explain,
 And drudge to raise the merchant's gain?
 What now rewards this general use?
 He takes the quills, and eats the goose.
 Man then avoid, detest his ways;
 So safety shall prolong your days.
 When services are thus acquitted,
 Be sure we pheasants must be spitted,

F A B L E XVI.

The PIN and the NEEDLE.

A Pin who long had serv'd a Beauty,
 Proficient in the toilette's duty,

Had form'd her sleeve, confin'd her hair,
 Or giv'n her knot a smarter air,
 Now nearest to her heart was plac'd,
 Now in her manteau's tail disgrac'd :
 But could she partial Fortune blame,
 Who saw her lovers serv'd the same ?

At length from all her honours cast,
 Through various turns of life she past ;
 Now glitter'd on a taylor's arm ;
 Now kept a beggar's infant warm ;
 Now, rang'd within a miser's coat,
 Contributes to his yearly groat ;
 Now, rais'd again from low approach,
 She visits in the doctor's coach ;
 Here, there, by various fortune tost,
 At last in Gresham hall was lost.

Charm'd with the wonders of the show,
 On ev'ry side, above, below,
 She now of this or that inquires,
 What least was understood admires.
 'Tis plain, each thing so struck her mind,
 Her head's of virtuoso kind.

And pray what's this, and this, dear Sir ?
 A needle, says th' interpreter,
 She knew the name. And thus the fool
 Address'd her as a taylor's tool
 A needle with that filthy stone,
 Quite idle, all with rust o'ergrown !
 You better might employ your parts,
 And aid the sempstres in her arts.
 But tell me how the friendship grew
 Between that paulty flint and you ?

Friend, says the Needle, cease to blame ;
 I follow real worth and fame.
 Know'st thou the loadstone's power and art,
 That virtue virtues can impart ?
 Of all his talents I partake.
 Who then can such a friend forsake ?
 'Tis I direct the pilot's hand
 To shun the rocks and treach'rous sand :
 By me the distant world is known,
 And either India is our own.
 Had I with milleners been bred,
 What had I been ? the guide of thread,
 And drudg'd as vulgar needles do,
 Of no more consequence than you.

F A B L E XVII.

The shepherd's DOG and the WOLF.

A Wolf, with hunger fierce and bold,
 Ravag'd the plains, and thinn'd the fold :
 Deep in the wood secure he lay,
 The thefts of night regal'd the day.
 In vain the shepherd's wakeful care
 Had spread the toils and watch'd the snare ;
 In vain the Dog pursu'd his pace,
 The fleetest robber mock'd the chase.
 As Lightfoot rang'd the forest round,
 By chance his foe's retreat he found.