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Poems

Poems on several occasions

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

The espousals. A sober eclogue, between two people called Quakers

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THE

ESPOUSALS.

A SOBER ECLOGUE.

Between two of the People called QUAKERS.

CALEB. TABITHA.

BENEATH the ſhadow of a beaver hat,
Meek Caleb at a ſilent meeting ſat:
His eye-balls oft forgot the holy trance,
While Tabitha demure return'd the glance.
The meeting ended, Caleb ſilence broke,
And Tabitha her inward yearnings ſpoke.

CALEB.

Beloved, ſee how all things follow love,
Lamb fondleth lamb, and dove diſports with dove;
Yet fondled lambs their innocence ſecure,
And none can call the turtle's bill impure;
O faireſt of our ſiſters, let me be
The billing dove, and fondling lamb to thee.

TABITHA.

But, Caleb, know that birds of gentle mind
Elect a mate among the ſober kind,

Not the mockaws, all deck'd in ſcarlet pride,
Entice their mild and modeſt hearts aſide;
But thou, vain man, beguil'd by Popiſh ſhows,
Doateſt on ribbands, flounces, furbelows.
If thy falſe heart be fond of tawdry dyes,
Go, wed the painted arch in ſummer ſkies;
Such love will like the rainbow's hue decay,
Strong at the firſt, but paſſeth ſoon away.

CALEB.

Name not the frailties of my youthful days,
When vice miſled me through the harlot's ways;
When I with wanton look the ſex beheld,
And nature with each wanton look rebell'd;
Then party-colour'd pride my heart might move
With lace; the net to catch unhallow'd love.
All ſuch-like love is fading as the flow'r,
Springs in a day, and withereth in an hour:
But now I feel the 'ſpouſal love within,
And 'ſpouſal love no ſiſter holds a ſin.

TABITHA.

I know thou longeſt for the flaunting maid;
Thy falſehood own, and ſay I am betray'd;
The tongue of man is bliſter'd o'er with lies,
But truth is ever read in woman's eyes;
O that my lip obey'd a tongue like thine!
Or that thine eye bewray'd a love like mine!

CALEB.

How bitter are thy words! forbear to teaze;
I too might blame——but love delights to pleaſe.
Why ſhould I tell thee, that when laſt the ſun
Painted the downy peach of Newington,

Josiah led thee through the garden's walk,
And mingled melting kisses with his talk?
Ah, jealousy! turn, turn thine eyes aside,
How can I see that watch adorn thy side?
For verily no gift the sisters take
For lust of gain, but for the giver's sake.

TABITHA.

I own, Josiah gave the golden toy,
Which did the righteous hand of Quare employ;
When Caleb hath assign'd some happy day,
I look on this, and chide the hours delay:
And when Josiah would his love pursue,
On this I look, and shun his wanton view.
Man but in vain with trinkets tries to move;
The only present love demands is love.

CALEB.

Ah, Tabitha, to hear these words of thine,
My pulse beats high, as if inflam'd with wine!
When to the brethren first with fervent zeal
The spirit mov'd thy yearnings to reveal,
How did I joy thy trembling lip to see
Red as the cherry from the Kentish tree;
When exstasy had warm'd thy look so meek,
Gardens of roses blushed on thy cheek.
With what sweet transport didst thou roll thine eyes,
How did thy words provoke the brethren's sighs!
Words that with holy sighs might others move;
But, Tabitha, my sighs were sighs of love.

TABITHA.

Is Tabitha beyond her wishes blest!
Does no proud worldly dame divide thy breast?

Then hear me, Caleb, witneſs what I ſpeak,
This ſolemn promiſe death alone can break;
Sooner I would bedeck my brow with lace,
And with immodeſt fav'rites ſhade my face;
Sooner like Babylon's lewd whore be dreſt
In flaring diamonds and a ſcarlet veſt,
Or make a curt'ſy in cathedral pew,
Than prove inconſtant, while my Caleb's true.

CALEB.

When I prove falſe, and Tabitha forſake,
Teachers ſhall dance a jig at country-wake;
Brethren unbeaver'd then ſhall bow their head,
And with profane mince-pies our babes be fed.

TABITHA.

If that Joſiah were with paſſion fir'd,
Warm as the zeal of youth, when firſt inſpir'd;
In ſteady love though he might perſevere,
Unchanging as the decent garb we wear,
And thou wert fickle as the wind that blows,
Light as the feather on the head of beaux;
Yet I for thee would all thy ſex reſign:
Siſters, take all the reſt——be Caleb mine.

CALEB.

Though I had all that ſinful love affords,
And all the concubines of all the lords,
Whoſe coaches creak with whoredom's ſinful ſhame,
Whoſe velvet chairs are with adult'ry lame;
Ev'n in the harlot's hall I would not ſip
The dew of lewdneſs from her lying lip;
I'd ſhun her paths, upon thy mouth to dwell,
More ſweet than powder which the merchants ſell;

O ſolace me with kiſſes pure like thine!
Enjoy, ye lords, the wanton concubine.
The ſpring now calls us forth; come, ſiſter, come,
To ſee the primroſe and the daiſy bloom.
Let ceremony bind the worldly pair,
Siſters eſteem the brethren's word ſincere.

TABITHA.

Eſpouſals are but forms. O lead me hence,
For ſecret love can never give offence.
Then hand in hand the loving mates withdraw;
True love is nature unreſtrain'd by law.
This tenet all the holy ſect allows;
So Tabitha took earneſt of a ſpouſe.

THE END OF VOLUME FIRST.