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Poems

Poems on several occasions

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

The toilette. A town eclouge

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THE

TOILETTE.

A TOWN ECLOGUE.

LYDIA.

NOW twenty ſprings had cloth'd the park with green,
Since Lydia knew the bloſſom of fifteen:
No lovers now her morning hours moleſt,
And catch her at her toilette half undreſt;
The thund'ring knocker wakes the ſtreet no more.
No chairs, no coaches croud her ſilent door;
Her midnights once at cards and hazard fled,
Which now, alas! ſhe dreams away in bed.
Around her wait ſhocks, monkeys, and mockaws,
To fill the place of fops, and perjur'd beaux;
In theſe ſhe views the mimicry of man,
And ſmiles when grinning Pug gallants her fan;
When Poll repeats, the ſounds deceive her ear,
For ſounds, like his, once told her Damon's care.
With theſe alone her tedious mornings paſs;
Or at the dumb devotion of her glaſs,
She ſmooths her brow, and frizles forth her hairs,
And fancies youthful dreſs gives youthful airs;

With crimſon wool ſhe fixes ev'ry grace,
That not a bluſh can diſcompoſe her face.
Reclin'd upon her arm ſhe penſive ſat,
And curs'd th' inconſtancy of youth too late.
O youth! O ſpring of life! for ever loſt!
No more my name ſhall reign the fav'rite toaſt,
On glaſs no more the diamond grave my name,
And rhymes miſ-ſpell'd record a lover's flame:
Nor ſhall ſide-boxes watch my reſtleſs eyes,
And as they catch the glance, in rows ariſe
With humble bows; nor white-glov'd beaux encroach
In crouds behind, to guard me to my coach.
Ah, hapleſs nymph! ſuch conqueſts are no more,
For Chloe's now what Lydia was before!
'Tis true, this Chloe boaſts the peach's bloom;
But does her nearer whiſper breathe perfume?
I own her taper ſhape is form'd to pleaſe.
Yet if you ſaw her unconfin'd by ſtays!
She doubly to fifteen may make pretence;
Alike we read it in her face and ſenſe.
Her reputation! but that never yet
Could check the freedoms of a young coquette.
Why will ye then, vain ſops, her eyes believe?
Her eyes can, like your perjur'd tongues, deceive.
What ſhall I do? how ſpend the hateful day?
At chapel ſhall I wear the morn away?
Who there frequents at theſe unmodiſh hours,
But ancient matrons with their frizled tow'rs,
And gray religious maids? my preſence there,
Amid that ſober train, would own deſpair:
Nor am I yet ſo old; nor is my glance
As yet fix'd wholly to devotion's trance.

Straight then I'll dreſs, and take my wonted range
Through ev'ry Indian ſhop, through all the Change;
Where the tall jar erects his coſtly pride,
With antique ſhapes in China's azure dy'd;
There careleſs lies the rich brocade unroll'd,
Here ſhines a cabinet with burniſh'd gold:
But then remembrance will my grief renew,
'Twas there the raffling dice falſe Damon threw;
The raffling dice to him decides the prize:
'Twas there he firſt convers'd with Chloe's eyes;
Hence ſprung th' ill-fated cauſe of all my ſmart,
To me the toy he gave, to her his heart.
But ſoon the perj'ry in the gift was found,
The ſhiver'd China dropt upon the ground;
Sure omen that thy vows would faithleſs prove;
Frail was thy preſent, frailer is thy love.
O happy Poll! in wiry priſon pent;
Thou ne'er haſt known what love or rivals meant;
And Pug with pleaſure can his features bear,
Who ne'er believ'd the vows that lovers ſwear!
How am I curs'd! (unhappy and forlorn)
With perjury, with love, and rival's ſcorn!
Falſe are the looſe coquette's inveigling airs,
Falſe is the pompous grief of youthful heirs;
Falſe is the cringing courtier's plighted word,
Falſe are the dice, when gameſters ſtamp the board;
Falſe is the ſprightly widow's public tear;
Yet theſe to damon's oaths are all ſincere.
Fly from perfidious man, the ſex diſdain;
Let ſervile Chloe wear the nuptial chain.
Damon is practis'd in the modiſh life,
Can hate, and yet be civil to a wife.

He games; he ſwears; he drinks; he fights; he roves;
Yet Chloe can believe he fondly loves.
Miſtreſs and wife can well ſupply his need,
A miſs for pleaſure, and a wife for breed.
But Chloe's air is unconfin'd and gay,
And can perhaps an injur'd bed repay;
Perhaps her patient temper can behold
The rival of her love adorn'd with gold.
Powder'd with diamonds; free from thought and care,
A huſband's ſullen humours ſhe can bear.
Why are theſe ſobs? and why theſe ſtreaming eyes?
Is love the cauſe? no, I the ſex deſpiſe;
I hate, I loathe his baſe perfidious name.
Yet if he ſhould but feign a rival flame?
But Chloe boaſts and triumphs in my pains,
To her he's faithful, 'tis to me he feigns.
Thus love-ſick Lydia rav'd. Her maid appears;
A band-box in her ſteady hand ſhe bears.
How well this ribband's gloſs becomes your face!
She cries, in raptures; then, ſo ſweet a lace!
How charmingly you look! ſo bright! ſo fair!
'Tis to your eyes the head-dreſs owes its air.
Straight Lydia ſmil'd; the comb adjuſts her locks,
And at the play-houſe Harry keeps her box.