Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe

Digitale Sammlung der Badischen Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe

# Poems

Poems on several occasions

**Gay, John**

**Edinburgh, 1773**

The birth of the squire. An eclogue

urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-263885

Visual Library

# THE

# BIRTH OF THE SQUIRE.

## AN ECLOGUE.

*In Imitation of the* POLLIO *of* VIRGIL.

YE ſylvan Muſes, loftier ſtrains recite,
Not all in ſhades, and humble cots delight.
Hark! the bells ring; along the diſtant grounds
The driving gales convey the ſwelling ſounds;
Th' attentive ſwain, forgetful of his work,
With gaping wonder, leans upon his fork.
What ſudden news alarms the waking morn?
To the glad Squire a hopeful heir is born.
Mourn, mourn, ye ſtags; and all ye beaſts of chaſe,
This hour deſtruction brings on all your race:
See, the pleas'd tenants duteous off'rings bear,
Turkeys, and geeſe, and grocer's ſweeteſt ware;
With the new health the pond'rous tankard flows,
And old October reddens ev'ry noſe.
Beagles and ſpaniels round his cradle ſtand,
Kiſs his moiſt lip, and gently lick his hand;
He joys to hear the ſhrill horn's echoing ſounds,
And learns to liſp the names of all the hounds.
With frothy ale to make his cup o'erflow,
Barley ſhall in paternal acres grow;

The bee ſhall ſip the fragrant dew from flow'rs,
To give metheglin for his morning hours;
For him the cluſt'ring hop ſhall climb the poles,
And his own orchard ſparkle in his bowls.
His ſire's exploits he now with wonder hears,
The monſtrous tales indulge his greedy ears;
How, when youth ſtrung his nerves, and warm'd his veins,
He rod the mighty Nimrod of the plains:
He leads the ſtaring infant through the hall,
Points out the horny ſpoils that grace the wall;
Tells how this ſtag thro' three whole counties fled,
What rivers ſwam, where bay'd, and where he bled.
Now he the wonders of the fox repeats,
Deſcribes the deſp'rate chaſe, and all his cheats;
How in one day beneath his furious ſpeed,
He tir'd ſev'n courſers of the fleeteſt breed;
How high the pale he leapt, how wide the ditch,
When the hound tore the haunches of the witch *!
Theſe ſtories which deſcend from ſon to ſon,
The forward boy ſhall one day make his own.
Ah, too fond mother, think the time draws nigh,
That calls the darling from thy tender eye;
How ſhall his ſpirit brook the rigid rules,
And the long tyranny of grammar ſchools?
Let younger brothers o'er dull authors plod,
Laſh'd into Latin by the tingling rod;
No, let him never feel that ſmart diſgrace:
Why ſhould he wiſer prove than all his race?

* The moſt common accident to ſportſmen, to hunt a witch in the ſhape of a hare.

When rip'ning youth with down o'erſhades his chin,
And ev'ry female eye incites to ſin;
The milk-maid (thoughtleſs of her future ſhame)
With ſmacking lip ſhall raiſe his guilty flame;
The dairy, barn, the hay-loft, and the grove,
Shall oft be conſcious of their ſtolen love.
But think, Priſcilla, on that dreadful time,
When pangs and wat'ry qualms ſhall own thy crime;
How wilt thou tremble when thy nipple's preſs'd,
To ſee the white drops bathe thy ſwelling breaſt!
Nine moons ſhall publicly divulge thy ſhame,
And the young Squire foreſtall a father's name.

When twice twelve times the reaper's ſweeping hand
With levell'd harveſts has beſtrown the land,
On fam'd St Hubert's feaſt, his winding horn
Shall cheer the joyful hound, and wake the morn:
This memorable day his eager ſpeed
Shall urge with bloody heel the riſing ſteed.
O check the foamy bit, nor tempt thy fate,
Think on the murders of a five-bar gate!
Yet prodigal of life, the leap he tries,
Low in the duſt his grov'ling honour lies,
Headlong he falls, and on the ragged ſtone
Diſtorts his neck, and cracks his collar-bone;
O vent'rous youth, thy thirſt of game allay,
May'ſt thou ſurvive the perils of this day!
He ſhall ſurvive, and in late years be ſent
To ſnore away debates in parliament.

The time ſhall come, when his more ſolid ſenſe
With nod important ſhall the laws diſpenſe;
A juſtice with grave juſtices ſhall ſit,
He praiſe their wiſdom, they admire his wit.

No greyhound ſhall attend the tenant's pace,
No ruſty gun the farmer's chimney grace;
Salmons ſhall leave their covers void of fear,
Nor dread the thieviſh net or triple ſpear;
Poachers ſhall tremble at his awful name,
Whom vengeance now o'ertakes for murder'd game.
Aſſiſt me, Bacchus, and ye drunken pow'rs,
To ſing his friendſhips and his midnight hours!
Why doſt thou glory in thy ſtrength of beer,
Firm-cork'd, and mellow'd till the twentieth year;
Brew'd or when Phoebus warms the fleecy ſign,
Or when his languid rays in Scorpio ſhine?
Think on the miſchiefs which from hence have ſprung!
It arms with curſes dire the wrathful tongue;
Foul ſcandal to the lying lip affords,
And prompts the mem'ry with injurious words.
O where is wiſdom, when by this o'erpower'd?
The ſtate is cenſur'd, and the maid deflower'd!
And wilt thou ſtill, O Squire, brew ale ſo ſtrong?
Hear then the dictates of prophetic ſong.
Methinks I ſee him in his hall appear,
Where the long table floats in clammy bear,
'Midſt mugs and glaſſes ſhatter'd o'er the floor,
Dead-drunk his ſervile crew ſupinely ſnore;
Triumphant, o'er the proſtrate brutes he ſtands,
The mighty bumper trembles in his hands;
Boldly he drinks, and, like his glorious ſires,
In copious gulps of potent ale expires.