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Poems

Poems on several occasions

Gay, John

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Work for a copper. A tale

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WORK FOR A COOPER.

A TALE.

A MAN may lead a happy life,
Without that needful thing a wife:
This long have lusty abbots known,
Who ne'er knew spouses——of their own.
What though your house be clean and neat,
With couches, chairs, and beds compleat;
Though you each day invite a friend,
Though he should ev'ry dish commend,
On Bagshot-heath your mutton fed,
Your fowls at Brentford born and bred;
Though purest wine your cellars boast,
Wine worthy of the fairest toast;
Yet there are other things requir'd:
Ring, and let's see the maid you hir'd—
Bless me! those hands might hold a broom,
Twirl round a mop, and wash a room:
A batchelor his maid should keep,
Not for that servile use to sweep;
Let her his humour understand,
And turn to ev'ry thing her hand.
Get you a lass that's young and tight,
Whose arms are, like her apron, white;
What though her shift be seldom seen?
Let that, though coarse, be always clean;

She might each morn your tea attend,
And on your wrist your ruffle mend;
Then if you break a roguish jest,
Or squeeze her hand, or pat her breast,
She cries, Oh dear Sir, don't be naught!
And blushes speak her last night's fault.
To her your houshold cares confide,
Let your keys gingle at her side;
A footman's blunders teaze and fret ye,
Ev'n while you chide, you smile on Betty.
Discharge him then, if he's too spruce,
For Betty's for his master's use.

Will you your am'rous fancy baulk,
For fear some prudish neighbour talk?
But you'll object, that you're afraid
Of the pert freedoms of a maid:
Besides, your wiser heads will say,
That she who turns her hand this way,
From one vice to another drawn,
Will lodge your silver spoons in pawn.
Has not the homely wrinkled jade
More need to learn the pilf'ring trade?
For love all Betty's wants supplies,
Laces her shoes, her mantua dyes;
All her stuff-suits she slings away,
And wears thread sattin ev'ry day.

Who then a dirty drab would hire,
Brown as the hearth of kitchen fire?
When all must own, were Betty put
To the black duties of the slut,
As well she scow'rs or scrubs a floor,
And still is good for something more.

Thus, to avoid the greater vice,
I knew a priest, of conscience nice,
To quell his lust for neighbour's spouse,
Kept fornication in his house.
But you're impatient all this time,
Fret at my counsel, curse my rhyme.
Be satisfy'd. I'll talk no more,
For thus my tale begins——Of yore
There dwelt at Blois a priest full fair,
With rolling eye and crisped hair,
His chin hung low, his brow was sleek,
Plenty lay basking on his cheek;
Whole days at cloyster grates he sat,
Ogled, and talk'd of this and that
So feelingly; the nuns lamented
That double bars were e'er invented.
If he the wanton wife confest
With downcast eye, and heaving breast;
He stroak'd her cheek, to still her fear,
And talk'd of sins *en cavalier*.
Each time enjoin'd her pennance mild,
And fondled on her like his child.
At ev'ry jovial gossip's feast
Pere Bernard was a welcome guest;
Mirth suffer'd not the least restraint,
He could at will shake off the saint:
Nor frown'd he when they freely spoke,
But shook his sides, and took the joke;
Nor fail'd he to promote the jest,
And shar'd the sins which they confest.
Yet, that he might not always roam,
He kept conveniencies at home.

His maid was in the bloom of beauty,
Well-limb'd for ev'ry ſocial duty;
He meddled with no houſhold cares,
To her conſign'd his whole affairs;
She of his ſtudy kept the keys,
For he was ſtudious——of his eaſe:
She had the power of all his locks,
Could rummage ev'ry cheſt and box;
Her honeſty ſuch credit gain'd,
Not ev'n the cellar was reſtrain'd.

In troth it was a goodly ſhow,
Lin'd with full hogſheads all a-row;
One veſſel, from the rank remov'd,
Far dearer than the reſt he lov'd.
Pour la bonne bouche 'twas ſet aſide,
To all but choiceſt friends denied.
He now and then would ſend a quart,
To warm ſome wife's retentive heart,
Againſt confeſſion's ſullen hour:
Wine has all ſecrets in its power.
At common feaſts it had been waſte,
Nor was it fit for layman's taſte.
If monk or friar were his gueſt,
They drank it, for they know the beſt.
Nay, he at length ſo fond was grown,
He always drank it when—alone.

Who ſhall recount his civil labours,
In pious viſits to his neighbours?
Whene'er weak huſbands went aſtray,
He gueſs'd their wives were in the way;
'Twas then his charity was ſhown,
He choſe to ſee them when alone.

Now was he bent on cuckoldom:
He knew friend Dennis was from home;
His wife (a poor neglected beauty,
Defrauded of a husband's duty)
Had often told him at confession,
How hard she struggled 'gainst transgression.
He now resolves, in heat of blood,
To try how firm her virtue stood.
He knew that wine (to love best aid)
Has oft made bold the shame-fac'd maid,
Taught her to romp, and take more freedoms,
Than nymphs train'd up at Smith's or Needham's.
A mighty bottle strait he chose,
Such as might give two friars their dose;
Nannette he call'd: The cellar door
She straight unlocks, descends before;
He follow'd close. But when he spies
His fav'rite cask; with lifted eyes
And lifted hands aloud he cries,
Heigh day! my darling wine astoop!
It must, alas! have sprung a hoop;
That there's a leak is past all doubt,
(Reply'd the maid)——I'll find it out.
She sets the candle down in haste,
Tucks her white apron round her waist,
The hogshead's mouldy side ascends,
She straddles wide, and downward bends;
So low she stoops to seek the flaw,
Her coats rose up, her master saw——
I see—he cries—(then clasp't her fast)
The leak through which my wine has past.

Then all in haſte the maid deſcended,
And in a trice the leak was mended.
He found in Nannette all he wanted,
So Dennis' brows remain'd unplanted.
Ere ſince this time all luſty friars
(Warm'd with predominant deſires,
Whene'er the fleſh with ſpirit quarrels)
Look on the ſex as leaky barrels.
Beware of theſe, ye jealous ſpouſes,
From ſuch like coopers guard your houſes;
For if they find not work at home,
For jobs through all the town they roam.