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Poems

Poems on several occasions

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

Prologue

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PROLOGUE.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE.

LO, I who erſt beneath a tree,
Sung Bumkinet and Bouzybee,
And Blouzelind and Marian bright,
In apron blue or apron white,
Now write my ſonnets in a book,
For my good Lord of Bolingbroke.
As lads and laſſes ſtood around
To hear my boxen hautboy ſound,
Our clerk came poſting o'er the green
With doleful tidings of the queen;
That queen, he ſaid, to whom we owe
Sweet "Peace that maketh riches flow;"
That queen who eas'd our tax of late,
Was dead, alas!—and lay in ſtate.
At this, in tears was Cic'ly ſeen,
Buxoma tore her pinners clean;
In doleful dumps ſtood ev'ry clown,
The parſon rent his band and gown.
For me, when as I heard that death
Had ſnatch'd Queen Anne to El'zabeth,

I broke my reed, and ſighing, ſwore
I'd weep for Blouzelind no more.
While thus we ſtood as in a ſtound,
And wet with tears, like dew, the ground,
Full ſoon by bonefire and by bell
We learnt our liege was paſſing well.
A ſkilful leech (ſo God him ſpeed)
They ſay had wrought this bleſſed deed;
This leech Arbuthnot was yclept,
Who many a night not once had ſlept;
But watch'd our gracious ſov'reign ſtill;
For who could reſt when ſhe was ill?
Oh, may'ſt thou henceforth ſweetly ſleep!
Sheer, ſwains, oh ſheer your ſofteſt ſheep
To ſwell his couch; for well I ween,
He ſav'd th' realm who ſav'd the queen.
Quoth I, Pleaſe God, I'll hie with glee
To court, this Arbuthnot to ſee.
I ſold my ſheep and lambkins too,
For ſilver loops and garment blue:
My boxen hautboy, ſweet of ſound,
For lace that edg'd mine hat around;
For Lightfoot and my ſcrip I got
A gorgeous ſword, and eke a knot.
So forth I far'd to court with ſpeed,
Of ſoldier's drum withouten dread;
For peace allays the ſhepherd's fear
Of wearing cap of granadier.
There ſaw I ladies all a-row
Before their queen in ſeemly ſhow.
No more I'll ſing Buxoma brown,
Like goldfinch in her Sunday gown;

Nor Clumſilis, nor Marian bright,
Nor damſel that Hobnelia hight.
But Lanſdown freſh as flower of May,
And Berkley Lady blithe and gay,
And Angleſey whoſe ſpeech exceeds
The voice of pipe, or oaten reeds;
And blooming Hyde, with eyes ſo rare,
And Montague beyond compare:
Such ladies fair would I depaint
In roundelay or ſonnet quaint.

There many a worthy wight I've ſeen
In ribbon blue and ribbon green.
As Oxford, who a wand doth bear,
Like Moſes, in our Bibles fair:
Who for our traffic forms deſigns,
And gives to Britain Indian mines.
Now, ſhepherds, clip your fleecy care,
Ye maids, your ſpinning-wheels prepare,
Ye weavers all your ſhuttles throw,
And bid broad-cloths and ſerges grow;
For trading free ſhall thrive again,
Nor leaſings leud affright the ſwain.

There ſaw I St John, ſweet of mien,
Full ſtedfaſt both to church and queen:
With whoſe fair name I'll deck my ſtrain,
St John, right courteous to the ſwain.

For thus he told me on a day,
Trim are thy ſonnets, gentle Gay,
And certes, mirth it were to ſee
Thy joyous madrigals twice three,
With preface meet, and notes profound,
Imprinted fair, and well y-bound.

All ſuddenly then home I ſped,
And did even as my Lord had ſaid.
Lo, here thou haſt mine eclogues fair,
But let not theſe detain thine ear.
Let not th' affairs of ſtates and kings
Wait, while our Bouzybeus ſings.
Rather than verſe of ſimple ſwain
Shou'd ſtay the trade of France or Spain,
Or for the plaint of parſon's maid,
Yon' Emp'ror's packets be delay'd;
In ſooth, I ſwear by holy Paul,
I'd burn book, preface, notes and all.