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Poems

Poems on several occasions

Gay, John

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The fan. Book II

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THE FAN.

BOOK II.

OLympus' gates unfold; in heav'n's high tow'rs
Appear in council all th' immortal pow'rs;
Great Jove above the reſt exalted ſate,
And in his mind revolv'd ſucceeding fate;
His awful eye with ray ſuperior ſhone,
The thunder-graſping eagle guards his throne;
On ſilver clouds the great aſſembly laid,
The whole creation at one view ſurvey'd.
But, ſee! fair Venus comes in all her ſtate,
The wanton Loves and Graces round her wait;
With her looſe robe officious Zephyrs play,
And ſtrow with odoriferous flowers the way;
In her right hand ſhe waves the flutt'ring fan,
And thus in melting ſounds her ſpeech began.
Aſſembled powers, who fickle mortals guide,
Who o'er the ſea, the ſkies, and earth preſide,
Ye fountains whence all human bleſſings flow;
Who pour your bounties on the world below;
Bacchus firſt rais'd and prun'd the climbing vine,
And taught the grape to ſtream with gen'rous wine;
Induſtrious Ceres tam'd the ſavage ground,
And pregnant fields with golden harveſts crown'd;

Flora with bloomy ſweets enrich'd the year,
And fruitful autumn is Pomona's care.
I firſt taught woman to ſubdue mankind,
And all her native charms with dreſs refin'd:
Celeſtial ſynod, this machine ſurvey,
That ſhades the face, or bids cool Zephyrs play;
If conſcious bluſhes on her cheek ariſe,
With this ſhe veils them from her lover's eyes;
No levell'd glance betrays her am'rous heart,
From the fan's ambuſh ſhe directs the dart.
The royal ſceptre ſhines in Juno's hand,
And twiſted thunder ſpeaks great Jove's command;
On Pallas' arm the Gorgon ſhield appears,
And Neptune's mighty graſp the trident bears:
Ceres is with the bending ſickle ſeen,
And the ſtrung bow points out the Cynthian queen;
Henceforth the waving fan my hands ſhall grace,
The waving fan ſupply the ſceptre's place.
Who ſhall, ye pow'rs, the forming pencil hold?
What ſtory ſhall the wide machine unfold?
Let Loves and Graces lead the dance around,
With myrtle wreathes and flow'ry chaplets crown'd;
Let Cupid's arrow ſtrow the ſmiling plains
With unreſiſting nymphs, and am'rous ſwains:
May glowing picture o'er the ſurface ſhine,
To melt ſlow virgins with the warm deſign.
Diana roſe; with ſilver creſcent crown'd,
And fix'd her modeſt eyes upon the ground:
Then with becoming mien ſhe rais'd her head,
And thus with graceful voice the virgin ſaid.
Has woman then forgot all former wiles,
The watchful ogle, and deluſive ſmiles?

Does man againſt her charms too pow'rful prove,
Or are the ſex grown novices in love?
Why then theſe arms? or why ſhould artful eyes,
From this ſlight ambuſh, conquer by ſurpriſe?
No guilty thought the ſpotleſs virgin knows,
And o'er her cheek no conſcious crimſon glows;
Since bluſhes then from ſhame alone ariſe,
Why ſhould we veil them from her lover's eyes?
Let Cupid rather give up his command,
And truſt his arrows in a female hand.
Have not the gods already cheriſh'd pride,
And woman with deſtructive arms ſupply'd?
Neptune on her beſtows his choiceſt ſtores,
For her the chambers of the deep explores;
The gaping ſhell its pearly charge reſigns,
And round her neck the lucid bracelet twines:
Plutus for her bids earth its wealth unfold,
Where the warm ore is ripen'd into gold;
Or where the ruby reddens in the ſoil,
Where the green em'rald pays the ſearcher's toil.
Does not the diamond ſparkle in her ear,
Glow on her hand, and tremble in her hair?
From the gay nymph the glancing luſtre flies,
And imitates the lightning of her eyes.
But yet if Venus' wiſhes muſt ſucceed,
And this fantaſtic engine be decreed,
May ſome chaſte ſtory from the pencil flow,
To ſpeak the virgin's joy, and Hymen's wo.
Here let the wretched Ariadne ſtand,
Seduc'd by Theſeus to ſome deſart land,
Her locks diſhevell'd waving in the wind,
The cryſtal tears confeſs her tortur'd mind;

The perjur'd youth unfurls his treach'rous ſails,
And their white boſoms catch the ſwelling gales.
Be ſtill, ye winds, ſhe cries, ſtay, Theſeus, ſtay;
But faithleſs Theſeus hears no more than they.
All deſp'rate, to ſome craggy cliff ſhe flies,
And ſpreads a well-known ſignal in the ſkies;
His leſs'ning veſſel plows the foamy main,
She ſighs, ſhe calls, ſhe waves the ſign in vain.
Paint Dido there amidſt her laſt diſtreſs,
Pale cheeks and blood-ſhot eyes her grief expreſs:
Deep in her breaſt the reeking ſword is drown'd,
And guſhing blood ſtreams purple from the wound:
Her ſiſter Anna hov'ring o'er her ſtands,
Accuſes heav'n with lifted eyes and hands,
Upbraids the Trojan with repeated cries,
And mixes curſes with her broken ſighs.
View this, ye maids; and then each ſwain believe,
They're Trojans all, and vow but to deceive.
Here draw Oenone in the lonely grove,
Where Paris firſt betray'd her into love:
Let wither'd garlands hang on ev'ry bough,
Which the falſe youth wove for Oenone's brow,
The garlands loſe their ſweets, their pride is ſhed;
And like their odours all his vows are fled;
On her fair arm her penſive head ſhe lays,
And Xanthus' waves with mournful look ſurveys;
That flood which witneſs'd his inconſtant flame,
When thus he ſwore, and won the yielding dame:
"Theſe ſtreams ſhall ſooner to their fountain move
"Than I forget my dear Oenone's love."
Roll back, ye ſtreams, back to your fountain run,
Paris is falſe, Oenone is undone.

Ah wretched maid! think how the moments flew,
Ere you the pangs of this curs'd paſſion knew,
When groves could pleaſe, and when you lov'd the plain,
Without the preſence of your perjur'd ſwain.
Thus may the nymph, whene'er ſhe ſpreads the fan,
In his true colours view perfidious man,
Pleas'd with her virgin ſtate in foreſts rove,
And never truſt the dang'rous hopes of love.
The goddeſs ended, merry Momus roſe,
With ſmiles and grins he waggiſh glances throws,
Then with a noiſy laugh foreſtalls his joke,
Mirth flaſhes from his eyes, while thus he ſpoke.
Rather let heav'nly deeds be painted there,
And by your own example teach the fair.
Let chaſte Diana on the piece be ſeen,
And the bright creſcent own the Cynthian Queen;
On Latmos' top ſee young Endymion lies,
Feign'd ſleep hath clos'd the bloomy lover's eyes:
See, to his ſoft embraces how ſhe ſteals,
And on his lips her warm careſſes ſeals;
No more her hand the glitt'ring jav'lin holds,
But round his neck her eager arm ſhe folds.
Why are our ſecrets by our bluſhes ſhown?
Virgins are virgins ſtill—while 'tis unknown.
Here let her on ſome flow'ry bank be laid,
Where meeting beeches weave a graceful ſhade,
Her naked boſom wanton treſſes grace,
And glowing expectation paints her face,
O'er her fair limbs a thin looſe veil is ſpread;
Stand off, ye ſhepherds; fear Actaeon's head;

Let vig'rous Pan th' unguarded minute ſeize,
And in a ſhaggy goat the virgin pleaſe.
Why are our ſecrets by our bluſhes ſhown?
Virgins are virgins ſtill—while 'tis unknown.
There with juſt warmth Aurora's paſſion trace,
Let ſpreading crimſon ſtain her virgin face;
See Cephalus her wanton airs deſpiſe,
While ſhe provokes him with deſiring eyes;
To raiſe his paſſion ſhe diſplays her charms,
His modeſt hand upon her boſom warms;
Nor looks, nor pray'rs, nor force his heart perſuade,
But with diſdain he quits the roſy maid.
Here let diſſolving Laeda grace the toy,
Warm cheeks and heaving breaſts reveal her joy;
Beneath the preſſing ſwan ſhe pants for air,
While with his flutt'ring wings he fans the fair.
There let all-conqu'ring gold exert its pow'r,
And ſoften Danae in a glitt'ring ſhow'r.
Would you warn beauty not to cheriſh pride,
Nor vainly in the treach'rous bloom confide,
On the machine the ſage Minerva place,
With lineaments of wiſdom mark her face;
See, where ſhe lies near ſome tranſparent flood,
And with her pipe chears the reſounding wood:
Her image in the floating glaſs ſhe ſpies,
Her bloted cheeks, worn lips, and ſhrivell'd eyes;
She breaks the guiltleſs pipe, and with diſdain
Its ſhatter'd ruins flings upon the plain.
With the loud reed no more her cheek ſhall ſwell,
What, ſpoil her face! no; warbling ſtrains farewel.
Shall arts—ſhall ſciences employ the fair?
Thoſe trifles are beneath Minerva's care.

From Venus let her learn the married life,
And all the virtuous duties of a wife.
Here on a couch extend the Cyprian dame,
Let her eye ſparkle with the glowing flame;
The god of war within her clinging arms,
Sinks on her lips, and kindles all her charms.
Paint limping Vulcan with a huſband's care,
And let his brow the cuckold's honours wear;
Beneath the net the captive lovers place,
Their limbs entangled in a cloſe embrace.
Let theſe amours adorn the new machine,
And female nature on the piece be ſeen;
So ſhall the fair, as long as fans ſhall laſt,
Learn from your bright examples to be chaſte.