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Poems

Poems and fables

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

Fable VIII

[urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-263877](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-263877)

His brain hath stratagem and art;
 Prudence and mercy rule his heart.
 What blessings must attend the nation
 Under this good administration!

He said. A goose, who distant stood,
 Harangu'd apart the cackling brood.

Whene'er I hear a knave commend,
 He bids me shun his worthy friend.
 What praise! what mighty commendation!
 But 'twas a fox who spoke th' oration.
 Foxes this government may prize,
 As gentle, plentiful, and wise.
 If they enjoy these sweets, 'tis plain
 We geese must feel a tyrant reign.
 What havock now shall thin our race,
 When ev'ry petty clerk in place,
 To prove his taste, and seem polite,
 Will feed on geese both noon and night!

F A B L E VIII.

The LADY and the WASP.

WHAT whispers must the beauty bear!
 What hourly nonsense haunts her ear!
 Where'er her eyes dispense their charms,
 Impertinence around her swarms.
 Did not the tender nonsense strike,
 Contempt and scorn might look dislike;

Forbidding airs might thin the place,
 The slightest flap a fly can chase,
 But who can drive the num'rous breed?
 Chase one, another will succeed.
 Who knows a fool, must know his brother;
 One fop will recommend another:
 And with this plague she's rightly curst,
 Because she listen'd to the first.

As Doris, at her toilette's duty,
 Sat meditating on her beauty,
 She now was pensive, now was gay,
 And loll'd the sultry hours away.

As thus in indolence she lies,
 A giddy wasp around her flies.
 He now advances, now retires,
 Now to her neck and cheek aspires.
 Her fan in vain defends her charms:
 Swift he returns, again alarms;
 For by repulse he bolder grew,
 Perch'd on her lip, and sipt the dew.

She frowns, she frets. Good gods! she cries,
 Protect me from these teasing flies!
 Of all the plagues that heav'n hath sent,
 A wasp is most impertinent,

The hov'ring insect thus complain'd.
 Am I then slighted, scorn'd, disdain'd?
 Can such offence your anger wake?
 'Twas beauty caus'd the bold mistake.
 Those cherry lips that breathe perfume,
 That cheek so ripe with youthful bloom,

Made me with strong desire pursue
The fairest peach that ever grew.

Strike him not, Jenny, Doris cries,
Nor murder wasps like vulgar flies;
For though he's free (to do him right)
The creature's civil and polite.

In extasies away he posts;
Where'er he came the favour boasts:
Braggs how her sweetest tea he sips,
And shews the sugar on his lips.

The hint alarm'd the forward crew;
Sure of success, away they flew.
They share the dainties of the day,
Round her with airy music play;
And now they flutter, now they rest,
Now soar again, and skim her breast.
Nor were they banish'd, till she found
That wasps have stings, and felt the wound.

F A B L E IX.

The BULL and the MASTIFF.

SEEK you to train your fav'rite boy?
Each caution, ev'ry care employ;
And ere you venture to confide,
Let his preceptor's heart be try'd;
Weigh well his manners, life, and scope;
On these depends thy future hope.