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Poems

Poems and fables

Gay, John

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Fable V

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F A B L E V.

The WILD-BOAR and the RAM.

A GAINST an elm a sheep was ty'd,
The butcher's knife in blood was dy'd :
The patient flock, in silent fright,
From far beheld the horrid sight.
A savage Boar, who near them stood,
Thus mock'd to scorn the fleecy brood.

All cowards should be serv'd like you.
See, see, your murd'rer is in view :
With purple hands, and reeking knife,
He strips the skin yet warm with life.
Your quarter'd sires, your bleeding dams,
The dying bleat of harmless lambs,
Call for revenge. O stupid race!
The heart that wants revenge, is base.

I grant, an ancient Ram replies,
We bear no terror in our eyes :
Yet think us not of soul so tame,
Which no repeated wrongs inflame ;
Insensible of ev'ry ill,
Because we want thy tusks to kill.
Know, those who violence pursue,
Give to themselves the vengeance due ;
For in these massacres they find
The two chief plagues that waste mankind.

Our skin supplies the wrangling bar,
 It wakes their slumb'ring sons to war;
 And well revenge may rest contented,
 Since drums and parchment were invented.

F A B L E VI.

The MISER and PLUTUS.

THE wind was high, the window shakes;
 With sudden start the Miser wakes.
 Along the silent room he stalks;
 Looks back, and trembles as he walks:
 Each lock and ev'ry bolt he tries,
 In every creck and corner pries;
 Then opes the chest with treasure stor'd,
 And stands in rapture o'er his hoard.
 But now, with sudden qualms possess'd,
 He wrings his hands, he beats his breast.
 By conscience stung, he wildly stares;
 And thus his guilty soul declares.

Had the deep earth her stores confin'd,
 This heart had known sweet peace of mind.
 But virtue's fold. Good gods! what price
 Can recompense the pangs of vice!
 O bane of good! seducing cheat!
 Can man, weak man, thy power defeat?
 Gold banish'd honour from the mind,
 And only left the name behind;