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Poems

Poems and fables

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

Fable III

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

Preferment shall thy talents crown.

Believe me, friend ; I know the town.

Sir, says the sycophant, like you,

Of old, politer life I knew :

Like you, a courtier born and bred,

Kings lean'd their ear to what I said,

My whisper always met success ;

The ladies prais'd me for address,

I knew to hit each courtier's passion,

And flatter'd every vice in fashion.

But Jove, who hates the liar's ways,

At once cut short my prosp'rous days ;

And, sentenc'd to retain my nature,

Transform'd me to this crawling creature.

Doom'd to a life obscure and mean,

I wander in the sylvan scene.

For Jove the heart alone regards ;

He punishes what man rewards.

How diff'rent is thy case and mine !

With men at least you sup and dine ;

While I, condemn'd to thinnest fare,

Like those I flatter'd, feed on air.

F A B L E III.

The MOTHER, the NURSE, and the FAIRY.

GIVE me a son. The blessing sent,

Were ever parents more content ?

How partial are their doating eyes !

No child is half so fair and wise.

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Wak'd to the morning's pleasing care,
The Mother rose, and fought her hair.
She saw the Nurse, like one possess'd,
With wringing hands, and fobbing breath.

Sure some disaster has befall:
Speak, Nurse, I hope the boy is well.

Dear Madam, think not me to blame;
Invisible the Fairy came:

Your precious babe is hence convey'd,
And in the place a changeling laid
Where are the father's mouth and nose,
The mother's eyes as black as soes?
See here, a shocking aukward creature,
That speaks a fool in ev'ry feature.

The woman's blind, the Mother cries;
I see wit sparkle in his eyes.

Lord! Madam, what a squinting leer!
No doubt the Fairy hath been here.

Just as she spoke, a pigmy sprite
Pops through the key-hole, swift as light;
Perch'd on the cradle's top he stands,
And thus her folly reprimands.

Whence sprung the vain conceited lie,
That we the world with fools supply?

What! give our sprightly race away,
For the dull helpless sons of clay!

Besides, by partial fondness shown,
Like you we doat upon our own.

Where yet was ever found a mother,
Who'd give her booby for another?

And should we change with human breed,
Well might we pass for fools indeed.