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Poems

Poems and fables

Gay, John

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A contemplation on night

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MISCELLANEA

A

CONTEMPLATION

O N

N I G H T.

W H E T H E R amid the gloom of night I stray,
Or my glad eyes enjoy revolving day,
Still Nature's various face inform my sense,
Of an all-wise, all-powerful Providence.

When the gay sun first breaks the shade of night,
And strikes the distant eastern hills with light,
Colour returns, the plains their liv'ry wear,
And a bright verdure clothes the smiling year ;
The blooming flow'rs with op'ning beauties glow,
And grazing flocks their milky fleeces show,
The barren cliffs with chalky fronts arise,
And a pure azure arches o'er the skies.
But when the gloomy reign of night returns,
Stript of her fading pride all Nature mourns :
The trees no more their wonted verdure boast,
But weep in dewy tears their beauty lost ;

No distant landscapes draw our curious eyes,
 Wrapt in Night's robe the whole creation lies.
 Yet still, even now, while darkness clothes the land,
 We view the traces of th' Almighty hand ;
 Millions of stars in heav'n's wide vault appear,
 And with new glories hang the boundless sphere :
 The silver moon her western couch forsakes,
 And o'er the skies her nightly circle makes,
 Her solid globe beats back the funny rays,
 And to the world her borrow'd light repays.

Whether those stars that twinkling lustre send,
 Are suns, and rolling worlds those suns attend,
 Man may conjecture, and new schemes declare,
 Yet all his systems but conjectures are ;
 But this we know, that Heaven's eternal King,
 Who bid this universe from nothing spring,
 Can at his word bid num'rous worlds appear,
 And rising worlds th' all-pow'rful word shall hear.

When to the western main the sun descends,
 To other lands a rising day he lends,
 The spreading dawn another shepherd spies,
 The wakeful flocks from their warm folds arise ;
 Refresh'd, the peasant seeks his early toil,
 And bids the plough correct the fallow soil.
 While we in sleep's embraces waste the night,
 The climes oppos'd enjoy meridian light :
 And when those lands the busy sun forsakes,
 With us again the rosy morning wakes ;
 In lazy sleep the night rolls swift away,
 And neither clime laments his absent ray.

When the pure soul is from the body flown,
 No more shall night's alternate reign be known :

The sun no more shall rolling light bestow,
 But from th' Almighty streams of glory flow.
 Oh, may some nobler thought my soul employ,
 Than empty, transient, sublunary joy!
 The stars shall drop, the sun shall lose his flame,
 But thou, O God; for ever shine the same.