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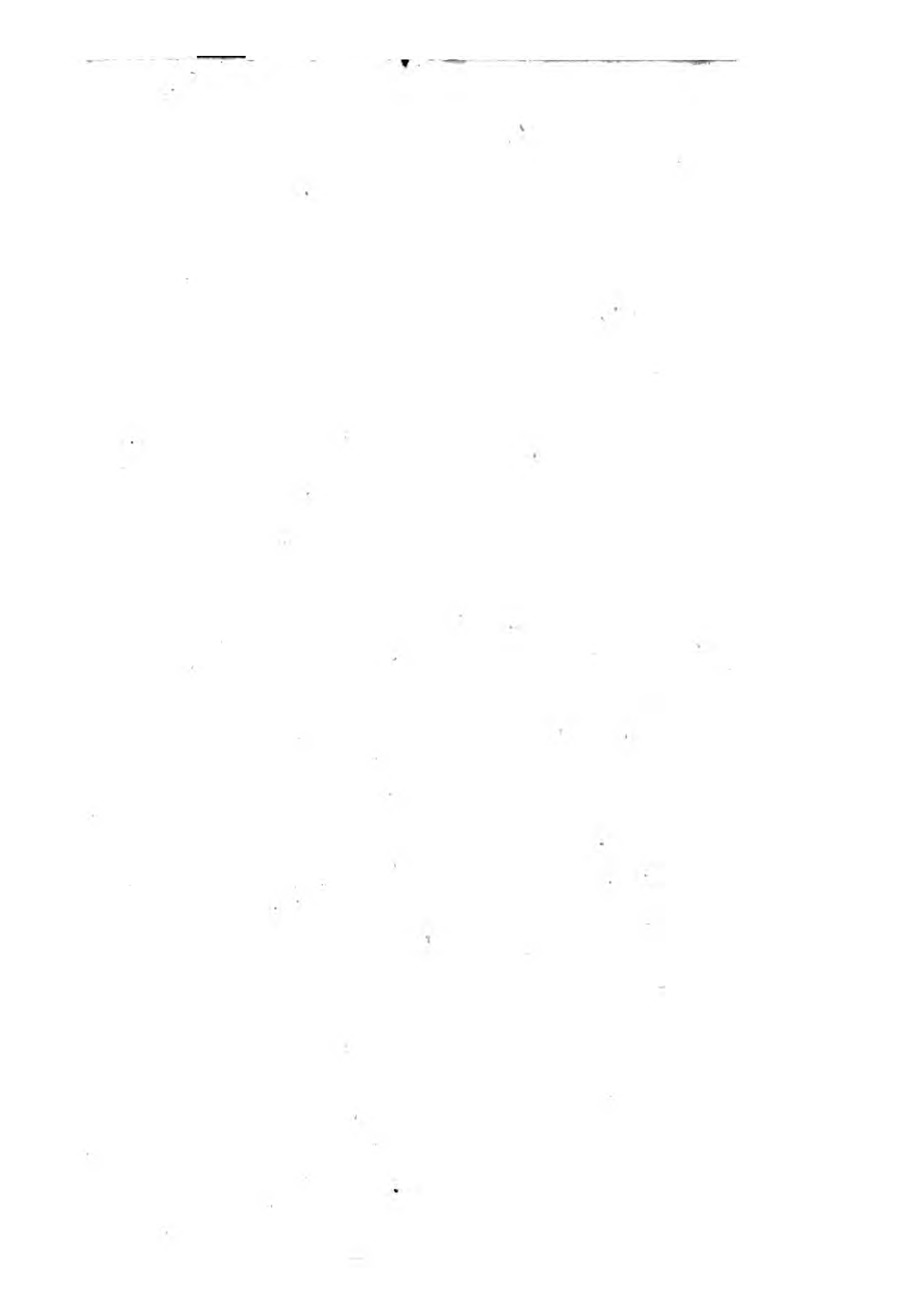
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FABLES

BY

JOHN GAY,

ILLUSTRATED WITH

NOTES

AND

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

BY WILLIAM COXE,

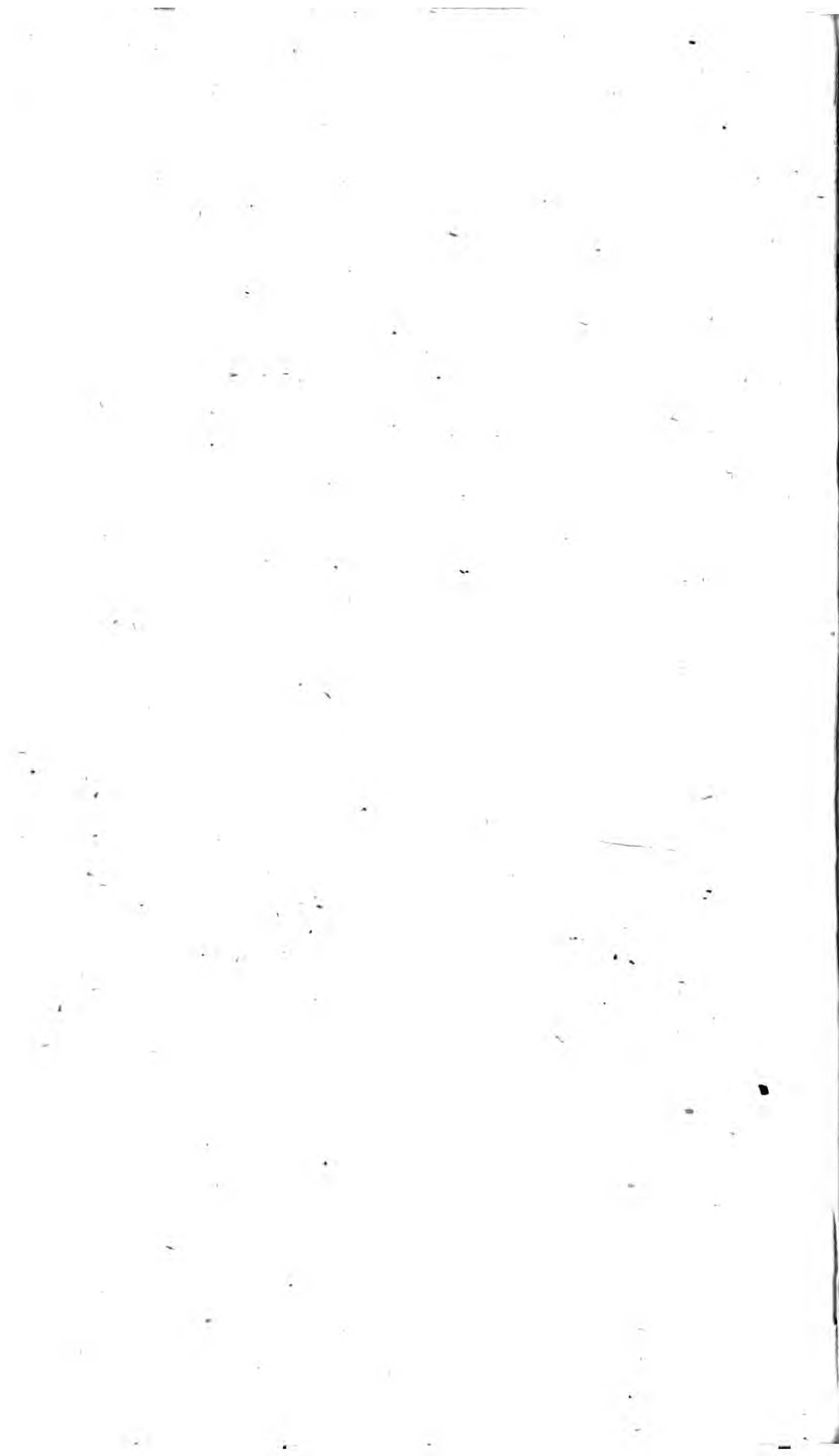
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1798.



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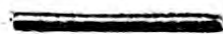
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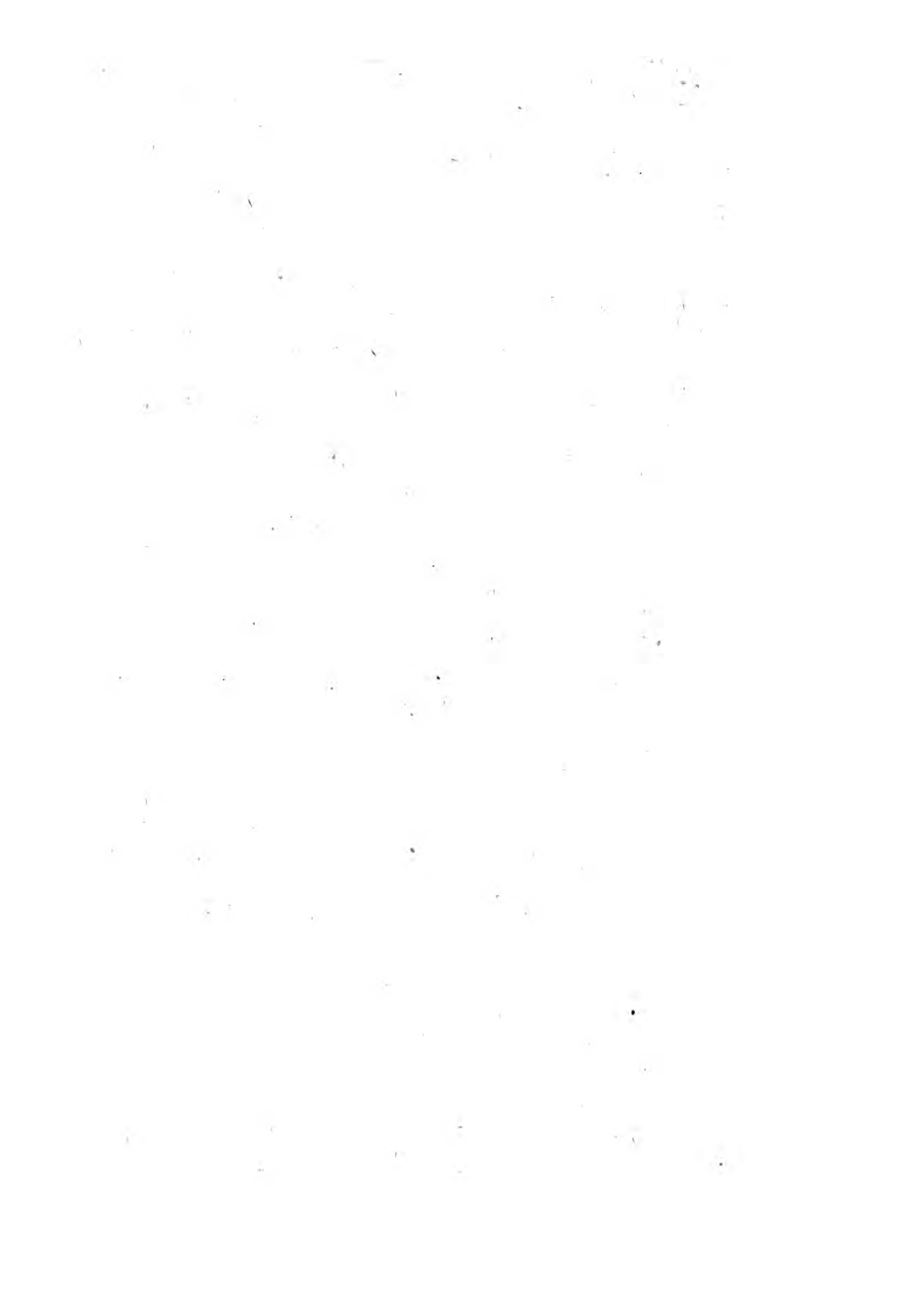
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ADVERTISEMENT.

As many parts of Gay's Fables, however plain and intelligible to persons of age and learning, want explanation for the comprehension of Youth, the Editor presents to the Public this New Edition, accompanied with Notes and Illustrations. In order to render the Work more complete and interesting, he has added the *Life of Gay*.

Bemerton,
March 18, 1796.



“ In myſtic tales, and parables of old
Grave eastern ſeers instructive leſſons told ;
Wiſe Greece from them receiv'd the happy plan,
And taught the brute to pedagogue the man.
The matron truth appears with better grace,
When well-wrought Fables veil her reverend face:
Dry precept may inſtruct, but can't delight,
While pleaſing fictions all our powers excite.
Our buſy minds each faculty employ,
And range around, and ſtart their game with joy ;
Pleas'd with the chafe, make the rich prey their own,
And glory in the conqueſt they have won.”

Somerville's Epistle to the Earl of Halifax, with
the Fable of Two Springs.



TO
ELIZABETH,
COUNTESS OF HARDWICKE,

THIS
ILLUSTRATION OF GAY'S FABLES
IS INSCRIBED

AS A
TESTIMONY OF RESPECT

BY

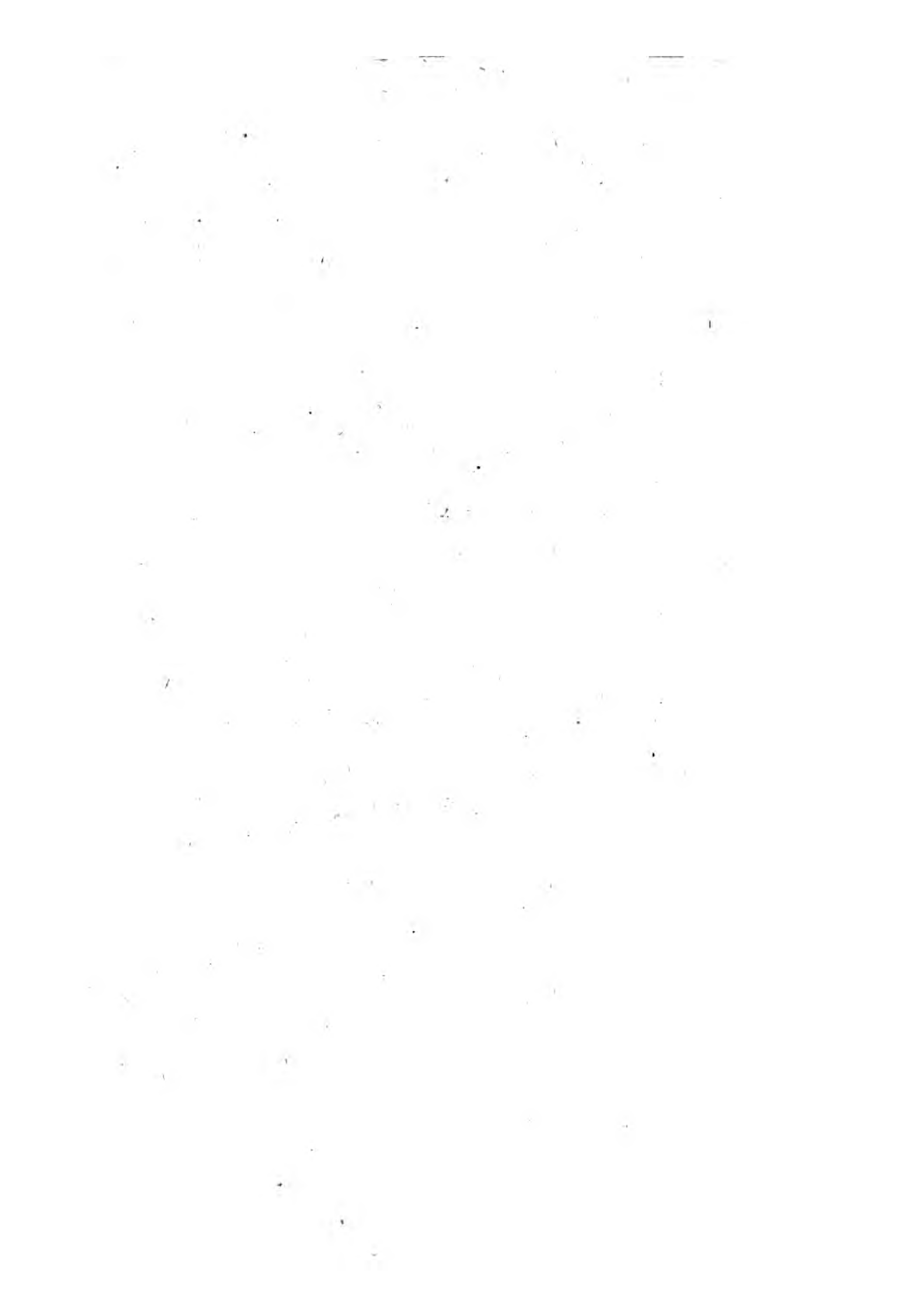
WILLIAM COXE.






LIFE OF GAY.





L I F E
OF
JOHN GAY.*

CHAPTER THE FIRST.



FAMILY, birth, and education of Gay.—Bound apprentice to a mercer.—Quits that employment, and devotes himself to the Muses.—Publishes his Rural Sports.—Commences an acquaintance with Pope and Swift.—His indigence.—Is appointed

* The materials of this biographical sketch are principally taken from the Lives of Gay, in the *General Dictionary*, in the fourth volume of Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*, in the second volume of the *Historical Account of Dramatic Writers*, in the *Biographia Britannica*, from his *Life by Johnson*, from his own Works, and from the Correspondence between Gay, Swift, and Pope. In order to prevent frequent interruptions in the body of the Text, I have not in every extract referred to his own Works and to the volumes of Swift and Pope, because the Passages quoted may be easily found in the Poems from which they are selected; and the letters may be traced, according to the order of their dates, in the fifth and sixth volumes of Warburton's edition of Pope; and in the six volumes of Swift's Letters, published by Hawkesworth.

Secretary to the Duchess of Monmouth.—Publishes Trivia and The Fan, and his Shepherd's Week, which he dedicates to Lord Bolingbroke.—Quits the Duchess of Monmouth's service.—Appointed Secretary to the Earl of Clarendon, on his embassy to Hanover.—Returns to England in great poverty.—His Epistle to the Princess of Wales.—Commences Courtier; his hopes and disappointments.—Obtains a considerable sum by a subscription to his Poems.—Loses his money in the South-Sea scheme.—Appointed a Commissioner in the Lottery.—Turned out again.—Disappointed in his expectations on the accession of George the Second.—Rejects the offer of being Gentleman Usher to Princess Louisa.—His chagrin and illness at this disappointment.

JOHAN GAY, the author of these delightful Fables, was descended from a poor but ancient family in Devonshire. To the indigent state of his immediate ancestors, he alludes in his Rural Sports :

“ But I who ne'er was blest by fortune's hand,
Nor brighten'd ploughshares in paternal land.”

He was born in 1688, at or near Barnstaple,* and brought up at the free school of that town,
under

* Some of his biographers assert that Gay was born at Exeter,

under William Rayner,* who had been educated at Westminster school, and who published a volume of Latin and English verses. Upon leaving school, Gay was bound apprentice to a mercer, but, as his biographer Jacob observes, “having a genius for high excellencies, he considered such employment as a degradation, and relinquished that occupation to reap the laurels of poetry.”

Emancipated from a situation not congenial to his temper, he indulged himself freely in the course of life, to which his genius and studies inclined. Poetry became at once his delight and his employment. Being introduced to Swift and Pope, he improved his talents in their society, and rendered himself highly agreeable to them from the liveliness of his disposi-

ter, and his own lines in his Epistle to the Earl of Burlington, seem to confirm their opinion :

“ But now the driving gales suspend the rain,
We mount our steeds, and *Devon's* city gain.
Hail! happy *native* land—but I forbear,
What other counties must with envy hear.”

But the author of *Gay's Life*, in the *General Dictionary*, has the authority of Pope, to whom the *Life* was submitted, for saying that he was born at or near Barnstaple.

* Johnson, in contradiction to the earliest biographer of Gay, and to the authority of Pope, says that his master's name was Luck.

tion, the sportive playfulness of his temper, and the simplicity of his character. The *Rural Sports*, or *Georgics*, which he published in 1711, were inscribed to Pope, who was then rising in reputation. Although there is not in this Poem, either much invention or imagery, although the lines are in some places too prosaic, and the rhymes not always as strictly pure as those in his later works ; yet, if we consider his age, which was only two and twenty, we must allow that it has great merit.

It contains one humane passage which announces a feeling mind. Speaking of fishing, he reprobates the cruel method too commonly used of angling with worms :

“ Around the steel no tortur'd worm shall twine
 No blood of living insect stain my line :
 Let me, less cruel, cast the feather'd hook,
 With pliant rod athwart the pebled brook ;
 Silent along the mazy margin stray,
 And with the fur-wrought fly delude the prey.”

As this Poem is the first, so it is, except the Fables, the most moral of all his works ; and while I pay this tribute of approbation, I cannot but regret that an author who possessed such great abilities, and consequently such a power of doing good, did not uniformly promote the
 cause

cause of virtue; for the warmest admirers of Gay must confess, that in general he cannot be esteemed a moral writer; and that ~~some~~ of his works may justly be censured for licentiousness.

It is with pleasure that I quote from Rural Sports his sublime address to Providence :

“ Sweet contemplation elevates my sense,
While I survey the works of Providence.
O could the muse in loftier strains rehearse
The glorious Author of the universe,
Who reins the winds, gives the vast ocean bounds,
And circumscribes the floating worlds their rounds;
My soul should over-flow in songs of praise,
And my Creator’s name inspire my lays!”

The portrait of the Happy Village Maid, and the concluding lines regretting a country life, are replete with feeling:

“ What happiness the Rural Maid attends,
In chearful labour while each day she spends;
She gratefully receives what heaven has sent,
And, rich in poverty, enjoys content.
If love’s soft passion in her bosom reign,
An equal passion warms her happy swain;
No homebred jars her quiet state controul,
Nor watchful jealousies torment her soul;
With secret joy she sees her little race
Hang on her breast, and her small cottage grace;

The fleecy ball their busy fingers cull,
 Or from the spindle draw the lengthening wool.
 Thus flow her hours with constant peace of mind,
 Till age the latest thread of life unwind.
 Ye happy fields, unknown to noise and strife,
 The kind-rewarders of industrious life ;
 Ye shady woods, where once I us'd to rove,
 Alike indulgent to the muse and love ;
 Ye murmuring streams that in meanders roll,
 The sweet composers of the pensive soul ;
 Farewell ! The city calls me from your bow'rs :
 Farewell, amusing thoughts and peaceful hours."

Pope was pleased with the dedication ; and on farther acquaintance with Gay, found such attractions in his manners and conversation, that he seems to have received him into his utmost confidence ; and a friendship was formed between them which lasted till their separation by death, without any known abatement on either side.

In this period of life Gay was very indigent, and was so extremely careless and improvident, that whenever he obtained a sum of money by his writings, he dissipated it without the least consideration. To this extreme facility and indifference about the morrow, Swift alludes in a letter to Pope. " I suppose Mr. Gay will return from Bath with twenty pounds more
 flesh,

ness, and two hundred less in money. Providence never designed him to be above two and twenty, by his thoughtlessness and cullibility. He has as little foresight of age, sickness, poverty, or loss of admirers, as a girl of fifteen, &c. But God bless you, whose great genius has not so transported you as to leave you to the courtesy of mankind; for wealth is liberty, and liberty is a blessing fittest for a philosopher; and Gay is a slave just by two thousand pounds too little.—
July 16, 1726.

In 1712, he was relieved from his embarrassed situation, by being appointed Secretary to the Duchess of Monmouth,* with a handsome salary. During his residence in her family, he published *Trivia, or the Art of Walking in the Streets of London*, in three books, in which he acknowledges to have received several hints from Swift. *Trivia*, as Johnson remarks, is sprightly, various, and pleasant; the subject is of that kind which Gay was by nature qualified to adorn, yet some of the decorations are far fetched and unnatural. According to the observation of a judicious critic, “*Trivia* abounds, also, with many strokes of genuine humour and pictures of London-life, which are now become curious, because our

* Lady Mary Scot, daughter and heiress of the Duke of Buckingham, widow of the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth, natural son of Charles the second, who was beheaded in the reign of James the second.

manners, as well as our dresses, have been so much altered within a few years.”*

One of the best productions of Gay, owed its origin to a peculiar circumstance, thus related by Johnson: “Next year, 1713, he published *The Shepherd’s Week*, six English Pastorals, in which the images are from real life, such as appears among the rusticks in parts of England, remote from London. Steele, in some papers of the *Guardian*, had praised Ambrose Philips, as the pastoral writer that yielded only to Theocritus, Virgil, and Spencer. Pope who had also published Pastorals, not pleased to be over looked, drew up a comparison of his own compositions with those of Philips, in which he covertly gave himself the preference, while he seemed to disown it. Not content with this, he is supposed to have incited Gay to write the *Shepherd’s Week*, to shew, that if it be necessary for Shepherds to copy nature with minuteness, rural life must be exhibited such as grossness and ignorance have made it.”

“But the effect of reality and truth became conspicuous, even when the intention was to shew them groveling and degraded. These Pas-

* *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, vol. 2, p. 251.

torals became popular, and were read with delight, as representations of rural manners and occupations, by those who had no interest in the rivalry of the poets, nor knowledge of the critical dispute."

In this year, or in the beginning of 1713, Gay probably published *The Fan*, a Poem in three books; for Pope, in a letter, dated August 23, 1713, says, "I am very much recreated and refreshed with the news of the advancement of *The Fan*, which I doubt not will delight the eye and sense of the fair, so long as that agreeable machine shall play in the hands of posterity. I am glad your Fan is mounted so soon, but I would have you varnish and glaze it at your leisure, and polish the sticks as much as you can. You may then cause it to be borne in the hands of both sexes, no less in England than in China, where it is ordinary for a Mandarin to fan himself cool after a debate, and a statesman to hide his face with it while he tells a grave lie."

Gay did not long agree with the Duchess of Monmouth. In a letter to Swift, he says, "I am quite off with the Duchess of Monmouth," and Arbuthnot writes to Swift, "The Duchess has turned him off, which I am afraid will make the poor man's condition worse instead of better." June 8 1714.

But he was amply recompenced for the loss of this domestic situation by the notice of Oxford and Bolingbroke, those great patrons of letters, who, at the recommendation of Swift and Arbuthnot, distinguished him with many marks of regard. Having shewn his Pastorals in manuscript to Lord Bolingbroke, he was desired to print them, as he himself has recorded in the dedication :

“ Lo I, who erst beneath a tree
 Sung Bumkinet and Bowzybee,
 And Blouzelind and Marian hight,
 In apron blue or apron white,
 Now write my sonnets in a book,
 For my good Lord of Bolingbroke, &c.
 With whose fair name I'll deck my strain;
 St. John right courteous to the swain.
 For thus he told me on a day,
 Trim are thy Sonnets, gentle Gay !
 And, certes, mirth it were to see
 Thy joyous madrigals twice three,
 With preface meet and notes profound,
 Imprinted fair, and well ybound.
 All suddenly then home I sped,
 And did ev'n as my Lord had said.

Lo here thou hast mine Eclogues fair,
 But let not these detain thine ear ;
 Let not th' affairs of states and kings
 Wait while our Bowzybeus sings.
 Rather than verse of simple swain
 Shou'd stay the trade of France or Spain,

Or

Or for the plaint of parson's maid,
 Yon' Emp'ror's packets be delay'd,
 In sooth I swear by holy Paul,
 I'd burn book, preface, notes and all."

The Ministers did not solely feed him with promises, for he obtained the place of Secretary to the Earl of Clarendon, who was appointed Envoy-plenipotentiary to the court of Hanover.

Gay was so extremely poor that he could not supply himself with the necessaries requisite for his situation. In this dilemma he sent a humorous petition to Lord Oxford, of which he gives an account in a letter to Swift. Dated London, *June 8, 1714*:

"I am every day attending my Lord Treasurer for his bounty, in order to set me out; which he hath promised me upon the following petition, which I sent him by Dr. Arbuthnot."

The Epigrammatical Petition of
JOHN GAY.

"I'm no more to converse with the swains,
 But go where fine people resort:
 One can live without money on plains,
 But never without it at court.

If, when with the swains I did gambol,
 I array'd me in silver and blue;
 When abroad, and in courts I shall ramble,
 Pray my lord, how much money will do?"

Arbuthnot also thus expresses himself in a letter to Swift on the same subject:

"You know that Gay goes to Hanover, and my Lord Treasurer has promised to equip him. Monday is the day of departure; and he is now dancing attendance for money to buy him shoes, stockings, and linen."

In consequence of this petition, Gay received a £1000 from the treasury, with which Arbuthnot says he went away a happy man.

At Hanover he was noticed by the Electoral Princess, afterwards Queen Caroline, who asked for a copy of his Poems which had been lately published, and on which Arbuthnot remarks, "Is he not a true Poet, who had not one of his books to give to the Princess, who asked for one?"

Gay seemed now to enjoy a bright prospect; he mentions in a letter to Arbuthnot that Lord Clarendon was very much approved of at court,
 and

and was not dissatisfied with his reception : but when he wrote this letter, the hopes of Clarendon and his Secretary were already blasted by the death of Queen Anne. The Embassy of Clarendon lasted only fifteen days ; being a Tory, he was recalled in disgrace, and Gay returned to England in a worse condition than when he left it.

Pope welcomed Gay on his return to England, with all the warmth of true friendship:

September 23, 1714.

“ Welcome to your native soil. Welcome to your friends. Thrice welcome to me. Whether returned blest with court-interest, the love and familiarity of the great, and filled with agreeable hopes ; or melancholy with dejection, contemplative of the changes of fortune, and doubtful for the future. Whether returned a triumphant Whig or a desponding Tory ; equally all hail ! equally beloved and welcome to me. If happy, I am to partake of your elevation ; if unhappy, you have still a warm corner in my heart, and a retreat at Binfield in the worst of times at your service. If you are a Tory, or thought so by any man, I know it can proceed from nothing but your gratitude to a few people, who endeavoured to serve you, and whose politics were never

ver your concern. If you are a Whig, as I rather hope, and as I think, your principles and mine (as brother poets) had ever a bias to the side of liberty. I know you are an honest man, and an inoffensive one. Upon the whole I know you are incapable of being so much of either party as to be good for nothing. Therefore once more, whatever you are, or in whatever state you are, all hail."

Gay was now reduced to great distress of circumstances. "Poor Gay," Arbuthnot observes in a letter to Swift, dated October 19, 1714, "is much where he was, only out of the Dutches of Monmouth's family and service. He has some confidence in the Princess, and Countess of Pickburgh; I wish it may be significant to him. I advised him to make a Poem upon the Princess before she came over, describing her to the English ladies, for it seems the Princess does not dislike that. She is really a person, that I believe will give great content to every body. But Gay was in such a groveling condition as to the affairs of the world, that his Muse would not stoop to visit him."

This despondency however did not continue long; he adopted the hint suggested by Arbuthnot, and wrote an *Epistle to a Lady, occasioned by*
the

the arrival of her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales. After drawing a highly coloured portrait of the Princess, he artfully alludes to his own disappointment and to his hopes of promotion by her patronage :

Since all my schemes were baulk'd (my last resort)
 I left the muses to frequent the court :
 Pensive each night from room to room I walk'd,
 To one I bow'd, and to another talk'd ;
 Inquir'd what news, or such a lady's name,
 And did the next day, and the next, the same.
 Places I found, were daily given away,
 And yet no friendly Gazette mention'd Gay.
 I ask'd a friend what method to pursue ;
 He cry'd I want a place as well as well as you.
 Another ask'd me, why I had not writ ;
 A poet owes his fortune to his wit :
 Strait I reply'd, with what a courtly grace
 Flows easy verse from him that has a place ?
 Had Virgil ne'er at court improv'd his strains,
 He still had sung of flocks and homely swains ;
 And had not Horace sweet preferment found,
 The Roman lyre had never learn'd to sound.

After paying a high tribute of applause to the Princess for having refused to marry the Arch-Duke Charles, afterwards Emperor,

“ The pomp of titles easy faith might shake,
 She scorn'd an empire for religion's sake :

For

For this on earth the British crown was giv'n,
And an immortal crown decreed in heav'n."

He thus concludes :

" Here paus'd the fullen muse ; in haste I dress'd
And through the crowd of needy courtiers press'd,
Though unsuccessful, happy whilst I see
Those eyes, that glad a nation, shine on me."

In fact this Epistle was a poetical address for a place, and his petition seems not to have passed unnoticed. Gay now commenced courtier, and paid regular attendance in hopes of preferment. Being much noticed by the Prince and Princess of Wales, he expected great favours, and was continually disappointed ; a circumstance which his friend Pope predicted in a letter to Swift : " The Doctor goes to cards, Gay to court ; the one loses money, the other time."

Bolingbroke also observes to Swift, *June, 1727*, " I wish John Gay success in his pursuit ; yet I think he has some qualities, which will keep him down in the world. Good God ! what is man ? polished, civilized, learned man ! a liberal education fits him for slavery ; and the pains he has taken gives him the noble pretension of dangling away life in an anti-chamber,

or of employing real talents to serve those, who have none ; or, which is worse than all the rest, of making his knowledge serve the purposes of other men's follies and vices."

With the hopes of supplying his necessity by writing for the stage, Gay composed a Comedy called *The Wife of Bath*, which was acted in 1715, but was damned. He had, however, more success in a burlesque Farce, *The What D'ye Call it*, which the Prince and Princess honoured with their presence. It was a new species of composition, and is called by the author a tragi-comic pastoral farce ; and it was sometime before the spectators understood the drift of the scenes. Gay gave Pope a ludicrous account of the first performance in a letter dated *March 19, 1715*:

"The farce of *The What D'ye Call It*, has occasioned many different speculations in the town, some looking upon it as a mere jest upon the tragic poets, others as a satire upon the late war. Mr. Cromwell* hearing none of the words, and seeing the action to be tragical, was much astonished to see the audience laugh, and says the Prince and Princess must doubtless be under no small amazement on the same account. Se-

* Mr. Cromwell was deaf.

veral templars, and others of the more vociferous kind of critics, went with a resolution to hiss, and confessed they were forced to laugh so much, that they forgot the design they came with. The court in general has in a very particular manner come into the jest, and the three nights, (notwithstanding two of them were court-nights) were distinguished by very full audiences of the first quality. The common people of the pit and gallery received it at first with great gravity and sedateness, some few with tears; but after the third day, they also took the hint, and have ever since been very loud in their claps. There are still sober men, who cannot be of the general opinion; but the laughers are so much the majority, that one or two critics seem determined to undeceive the town at their proper cost, by writing dissertations against it. To encourage them in this laudable design, it is resolved, a preface shall be prefixed to the farce, in vindication of the nature and dignity of this new way of writing."

Gay being of a sanguine disposition, was easily raised, and as easily depressed. He mistook the usual civilities of persons of distinction for offers of assistance, and augured from the common promises of a court, certain preferment. He was accordingly subject to repeated mortifications,

eations, and Pope in allusion to this circumstance, gives him joy of the birth of a young Prince; "because he is the only Prince with whom you have had no expectation and disappointment."

This constant succession of hopes and disappointments, however, in addition to his want of œconomy and desire of independence, made a deep impresson upon his irritable mind, and affected his health. To divert this melancholy he took a journey to his native county, at the recommendation of the Earl of Burlington, who defrayed the expences.

Gay was always extremely fond of rambling, and was humoured in this propensity by several of his rich friends, some of whom were happy to have so agreeable a companion, and others, like Lord Burlington, paid the expence of his journey. In his second Epistle he repaid the Earl of Burlington, by a humourous account of his tour in imitation of Horace. In his third Epistle he pays a tribute of gratitude to Mr. Pulteney afterwards Earl of Bath, who carried him to Aix, in the South of France. In this short Poem, Gay draws a beautiful picture of Fenelon's Telemachus, and concludes with a panegyric on England :

“ Let

"Let Cambray's name be sung above the rest,
 Whose maxims, Pult'ney, warm thy patriot breast;
 In Mentor's precepts, wisdom strong and clear,
 Dictates sublime, and distant nations hear.
 Hear all ye princes, who the world controul,
 What cares, what terrors haunt the tyrant's soul;
 His constant train are anger, fear, distrust;
 To be a king, is to be good and just;
 His people he protects, their rights he saves,
 And scorns to rule a wretched race of slaves.

Happy, thrice happy shall the monarch reign,
 Where guardian laws despotic pow'r restrain!
 There shall the plough-share break the stubborn
 land,
 And bending harvest tire the peasant's hand:
 There liberty her settled mansion boasts,
 There commerce plenty brings from foreign coasts.
 O Britain! guard thy laws, thy rights defend;
 So shall these blessings to thy sons descend!"

Swift agreeably rallies Gay for his propensity to rambling:

"If your ramble was on horseback, I am glad of it, upon account of your health; but I know your arts of patching up a journey between stage coaches and friends' coaches: for you are as arrant a cockney as any hofier in cheapside. One clean shirt, with two cravats, and as many handkerchiefs, make up your equipage;

page; and as for your night gown, it is clear from Homer, that Agamemnon rose without one. I have often had it in my head to put it into yours, that you ought to have some great work in scheme, which may take up seven years to finish, besides two or three under ones, that may add another thousand pound to your stock; and then I shall be in less pain about you. I know you can find dinners, but then you love twelve-penny coaches too well, without considering that the interest of a whole thousand pounds brings you but half-a-crown a day."

Prospects however of better times seemed at last to open upon him. He was induced to publish his Poems by subscription, and obtained very liberal encouragement. The Prince and Princess of Wales, accompanied their names with a very ample present; and amongst the most munificent subscribers, were the Duke of Chandos and the Earl of Burlington, for fifty copies: and Mr. Pulteney, for twenty-five. To this bountiful encouragement Gay alludes in his *Epistle to Paul Methuen, Esq.*

" Yet let me not of grievances complain,
Who (though the meanest of the muse's train)
Can boast subscriptions to my humble lays,
And mingle profit with my little praise."

A thou-

A thousand pounds which he had gained by this subscription to his Poems, together with a sum of money which Secretary Craggs had given him in the South-Sea stock, raised his expectations so high that he supposed himself master of twenty thousand pounds. His friends persuaded him to sell his share, which at one time would have produced that sum ; but he dreamed of dignity and splendour, and could not bear to obstruct his own fortune. He was then importuned to sell as much as would purchase an hundred a year for life, “ which ” says Fenton, “ will make you sure of a clean shirt and a shoulder of mutton every day.” But Gay not only rejected this counsel, but his sanguine disposition anticipating future riches, he lived suitably to the prospect, and when the bubble burst, found himself reduced to his original indigence. Gay sunk under this calamity, so that his life became in danger.

Although poor Gay suffered so severely from this wreck of his little fortune, yet in his *Epistle to Mr. Thomas Snow*, he has happily ridiculed his own folly in trusting to such visionary schemes, and in being hurried away by the general infatuation in favour of the South-Sea Company :

“ O thou

"O thou whose penetrative wisdom found
 The South-Sea rocks and shelves, where thou-
 sands drown'd ;
 When credit sunk, and commerce gasping lay,
 Thou stood'st, nor sent'st one bill unpaid away.
 When not a guinea chink'd on Martin's boards,
 And Atwell's self was drain'd of all his hoards,
 Thou stoodst an Indian King in size and hue ;
 Thy unexhausted shop was our Peru.
 Why did Change-Alley waste thy precious hours
 Among the fools who gap'd for golden showers ?
 No wonder if we found some poets there,
 Who live on fancy, and can feed on air ;
 No wonder they were caught by South-sea schemes,
 Who ne'er enjoy'd a guinea but in dreams ;
 No wonder, that their third subscriptions fold,
 For millions of imaginary gold ;
 No wonder that their fancies wild can frame
 Strange reasons, that a thing is still the same,
 Though chang'd throughout in substance and in
 name."

By the care of his friends, among whom Pope appears to have shewn particular tenderness, his health was at length restored.

Returning to his studies, Gay wrote a Tragedy called *The Captives*. The play was acted seven nights, and the author's third night, being by command of the Princess, it is probable that he gained a considerable sum by her patronage.

He

He had formed at this period a great intimacy with the Earl of Burlington, who gave him apartments at Burlington house in London. But Gay did not seem to trust too much to the civilities and promises of great persons, whom Pope calls his fair-weather friends :

“ I lodge at present in Burlington House, and have received many civilities from many great men, but few real benefits. They wonder at each other for not providing for me, and I wonder at them all. Experience has also given me some knowledge of them ; so that I can say, that it is not in their power to disappoint me.”

He formed a right judgment in regard to Lord Burlington, for in a subsequent letter he complains of being neglected by him.

“ Pope left me to try to find Lord Burlington, within whose walls I have not been admitted this year and a half.”

In 1723, he was appointed Commissioner of the Lottery, as he himself informs Swift :

“ I shall this year be a Commissioner of the State Lottery, which will be worth to me an hundred and fifty pounds. And I am not without hopes, that I have friends that will think of some better and more certain provision for me.”

But

But he enjoyed this place only two years. On account of his intimacy with Bolingbroke, Swift, and Pultney, and perhaps from some indiscreet expressions, Sir Robert Walpole had conceived a prejudice against him, and believed that he wrote a violent party pamphlet in opposition to the measures of government. He accordingly, in 1726, lost his place.

His favour however with the Princess of Wales still continued, and at her desire, he wrote his Fables for the use of her son William, Duke of Cumberland.

On the accession of George the Second, Gay flattered himself that his hope of promotion would be gratified; and his expectations were still further increased when the Queen told Mrs. Howard, in allusion to the Fable of the Hare and many Friends, that she would take up the Hare; and ordered her to put her in mind, on settling the family, to find some employment for Mr. Gay. But poor Gay was doomed to greater disappointments; for these promises were so magnified by his sanguine temper, that the offer of being Gentleman Usher to the Princess Louisa, a girl of two years old, though a place worth two hundred a year, was considered as an
b insult,

insult, and rejected; of which he gives an account in a letter to Swift:

“ But why should I tell you what you know already? The Queen’s family is at last settled; and in the list I was appointed Gentleman Usher to the Princess Louisa, the youngest Princess; which, upon account that I am so far advanced in life, I have declined accepting; and I have endeavoured in the best manner I could, to make my excuses by a letter to her Majesty. So now all my expectations are vanished; and I have no prospect but in depending wholly upon myself and my own conduct. As I am used to disappointments I can bear them; but as I can have no more hopes, I can no more be disappointed; so that I am in a blessed condition.”

To his rejection of this place, Swift alludes, in his libel on Dr. Delany and Lord Carteret:

“ Thus Gay, the Hare with many Friends,
Twice sev’n long years the *Court* attends,
Who under tales conveying truth,
To virtue form’d a princely youth:
Who paid his courtship with the croud,
As far as *modest pride* allow’d;
Rejects a servile Usher’s place,
And leaves St. James’s in disgrace.”

And again in some verses addressed to Gay,

“ How

“ How could you Gay disgrace the muse’s strain,
 To serve a tasteless court twelve years in vain !
 Fain would I think our female * friend sincere,
 Till Bob, the poet’s foe, possess her ear ;
 Did female virtue e’er so high ascend,
 To lose an inch of favour for a friend ?
 Say, had the court no better place to chuse
 For thee, than make a dry nurse of thy muse ?
 How cheaply had thy liberty been sold,
 To squire a royal girl of two years old,
 In leading strings her infant steps to guide,
 Or with her go-cart amble side by side !”

Swift, in these lines, accuses Sir Robert Walpole, whom he calls “ *Bob, the poet’s foe,*” of having occasioned the disappointment of Gay, and in some other parts of his work he repeats the same accusation.

In a letter to Lady Betty Germaine, dated *January, 1733*, he says, “ Gay had written a very ingenious book of Fables for the use of her younger son, and she often promised to provide for him. But some time before there came out a libel against Mr. Walpole, who was informed it was written by Mr. Gay ; and although Mr. Walpole owned he was convinced it was not written by Gay, yet he never would pardon him,

* Mrs. Howard.

and did him an hundred ill offices with the Prince and Princesses.”

It is but a justice due to the memory of that great Minister to observe that Swift was so highly prejudiced against him, that his testimony in this instance, cannot be taken without great caution. Nor is there the least reason to believe that Walpole set the Princesses against Gay.

One part of Swift's assertion is evidently false: Sir Robert Walpole was at the time that Gay published his Fables out of favour with the Prince and Princess of Wales, and it was generally supposed, that, on the accession of George the second, he would have been dismissed. For this reason at that time (even if he had been ever so much inclined) he could not do Gay any ill offices with the Princesses; nor is it probable that he had any share in the arrangement of the Queen's household.

It is most likely that Queen Caroline offered the place to Gay of her own accord; she never intended it as an offence, and could not imagine, that the offer of a place worth two hundred pounds a year as a recompence for writing his Fables, would offend an author, who was always complaining of his poverty.

The

The sanguine disposition of Gay had exaggerated his own services, and he confided too much in the promises of a court; not chusing to offend the Queen, he with Swift laid the *whole* blame on Sir Robert Walpole, and made him the object of his satire; and his friends readily believed and adopted any charge levelled against the Minister, whom they detested.

But whatever was the cause of his disappointment, Gay did not bear it like a philosopher. In vain his friend Pope endeavoured to console him :

October 6, 1727.

“ I have many years ago magnified, in my own mind, and repeated to you, a ninth beatitude, added to the eight in the scripture: ‘ Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.’ I could find in my heart to congratulate you on this happy dismissal from all court-dependance; I dare say I shall find you the better and the honestest man for it, many years hence; very probably the healthfuller, and the chearfuller into the bargain. You are happily rid of many cursed ceremonies, as well as of many ill, and vicious habits, of which few or no men escape the infection, who are hackneyed and trammelled in the ways of a court. Princes indeed, and Peers (the lackies of Princes) and

Ladies (the fools of Peers) will smile on you the less; but men of worth and real friends will look on you the better. There is a thing, the only thing which Kings and Queens cannot give you, (for they have it not to give) liberty, and which is worth all they have; which as I now thank God, Englishmen need not ask from their hands. You will enjoy that, and your own integrity, and the satisfactory consciousness of having *not* merited such graces from courts as are bestowed only on the mean, servile, flattering, interested, and undeserving. The only steps to the favour of the Great are such complacences, such compliances, such distant decorums, as delude them in their vanities, or engage them in their passions. He is their greatest favourite, who is the falsest: and when a man, by such vile gradations, arrives at the height of grandeur and power, he is then at best but in a circumstance to be hated, and in a condition to be hanged for serving their ends: so many a Minister has found it!



 CHAPTER THE SECOND.

Success of the Beggar's Opera.—Remarks on that performance.—Gay prepares a second part called Polly for the stage, but is prevented from bringing it on by the Lord Chamberlain.—His fortune promoted by that event—Obtains large subscriptions.—Acquires the protection and friendship of the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry.—His fortune increases.—His resolutions and plans of œconomy.—His sudden illness and death.—Regret of his friends.

THE chagrin which Gay suffered from this failure of his expectations, was in some measure alleviated by the success of the *Beggar's Opera*, which was first performed in the beginning of 1728.

“ This piece was received with greater applause than ever was known. Besides being

acted in London sixty-three days without interruption, and renewed the next season with equal applause; it spread into all the great towns of England; was played in many places to the thirtieth and fortieth time; at Bath and Bristol fifty, &c. It made its progress into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, where it was performed twenty-four days successively. The ladies carried about with them the favourite songs of it in fans, and houses were furnished with it in screens. The fame of it was not confined to the author only. Miss Fenton, who acted Polly, till then obscure, became all at once the favourite of the town; her pictures were engraved and sold in great numbers; her life written, books of letters and verses to her published, and pamphlets made even of her sayings and jests. Furthermore, it drove out of England, (for that season) the Italian Opera, which had carried all before it for ten years.”*

It is generally supposed that Gay wrote his *Beggar's Opera* after his disappointment at Court, and that he used it as a vehicle of his spleen and satyr, but it appears from the letter to Swift, in which he announces his refusal of the place of Gentleman Usher, that he had al-

* Notes on the *Dunciad*.

ready almost finished that musical drama. But it is probable that he added several satirical allusions which would not have appeared if he had not been dissatisfied with the court :

“ You remember that you were advising me to go to Newgate, to finish my scenes the more correctly. I now think I shall, for I have no attendance to hinder me ; but my Opera is already finished.”

Nothing proves more the partiality of friendship, than that Swift should commend the Beggar's Opera for the excellence of its morality, and represent it as a piece that placed all kinds of vice in the strongest and most odious light, and that he should abuse Herring, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, as a court chaplain, for having censured it, as giving encouragement to vice, by making a highwayman the hero, and dismissing him at last unpunished. Nor is it less an object of wonder, that even the moral Johnson should, in commenting on these two opposite opinions observe, “ both these decisions are surely exaggerated. The play, like many others, was plainly written only to divert, without any moral purpose, and is therefore not likely to do good; nor can it be conceived, without more speculation than life requires or admits, to be productive of much evil. High-

way-men and house-breakers seldom frequent the play-house, or mingle in any elegant diversion; nor is it possible for any one to imagine that he may rob with safety, because he sees Macheath reprieved on the stage."

Surely Johnson could not seriously be of opinion, that a play which introduces such licentious scenes, which abounds with so many indecent ballads; which renders vice amusing instead of disgusting, and exhibits the inside of a prison as a scene of jollity and thoughtlessness, rather than of distress and repentance; cannot be productive of much evil; or that highway-men and house-breakers seldom frequent the play-houses? It does not require much knowledge of human nature, to be convinced of the contrary. Pick-pockets are well known to frequent theatres, and experience has proved, that the representation of the Beggar's Opera has had the worst effect: as Sir John Fielding, whose judgment in this instance, must be allowed to be superior to that of Johnson, was frequently heard to declare, that many robbers had confessed that they had been seduced by the Beggar's Opera to begin the commission of those crimes which finally brought them to the gallows.

In fact, if the Beggar's Opera has any moral, it consists in this, that rogues are made 'to impeach
peach

peach each other: but even this moral looses its effect, from the ludicrous manner in which it is constantly conveyed; in a strain of irony, which the common people do not comprehend.

The shouts of applause which burst from the gallery when Macheath is reprieved, fully prove that no permanent impression has been made by the awful truth affected to be inculcated in some of the scenes, that justice, sooner or later, overtakes the guilty; and that the people are so interested in the character of the hero, as to rejoice in his escape from the gallows, and retire with the conviction that crimes may be sometimes committed with impunity.

Emboldened by the success of the *Beggar's Opera*, Gay wrote *Polly*, a second part; in which, according to a hint given in the last scene, *Polly*, *Macheath*, and some of the other characters are transported to America.

Polly, or the sequel of the *Beggar's Opera*, is far from possessing the spirit and vivacity of the first part. The scenes, though not to be commended for their purity, are not so licentious as those in the *Beggar's Opera*, and the moral, which at this time inflicts punishment on *Macheath*, under the disguised character of *Morano*, a Negro, for cruelty and piracy, was

intended as a contrast for "having," as the Poet himself says in the Introduction, "given up his moral for a joke, like a fine gentleman in conversation."

As the new piece was going to be rehearsed, a prohibition came from the Lord Chamberlain.

"What could be the reason of such a prohibition," says the author of an Historical Account of the Dramatic Writers, "it is not very easy to discover, unless we imagine it to have been by way of revenge for the numerous strokes of satire upon the court, &c. which shone forth in the first part; or from some private pique to the author himself; for the Opera before us is so totally innocent of either satire, wit, plot, or execution, that had not Mr. Gay declaredly published it as his, it would, I think, have been difficult to have persuaded the world that their favorite, Polly, could ever have so greatly degenerated from those charms which first brought them in love with her, or that the author of the Beggar's Opera was capable of so poor a performance as the piece before us.—But this is frequently the case with second parts, undertaken by their authors, in consequence of some extraordinary success of the first, wherein the writer having before exhausted the whole of his intended plan, hazards, and often loses in a
second

second attempt, for the sake of the profit, all the reputation he had justly acquired by the first."

In the Preface to Polly, Gay gives an account of the whole affair: "On Thursday, December 12, I received this answer from the Chamberlain, that it could not be allowed to be acted, but suppressed. This was told me in general, without any reason assigned, or any charge against me, of my having given any particular offence. Since this prohibition, I have been told that I am accused, in general terms, of having written many disaffected libels and seditious pamphlets. As it hath ever been my utmost ambition (if that word may be used on this occasion) to lead a quiet and inoffensive life, I thought my innocence in this particular would never have needed a justification; and as this kind of writing is what I ever detested, and never practised, I am persuaded so groundless a calumny can never be believed but by those who do not know me. But when general aspersions of this sort have been cast upon me, I think myself called upon to declare my principles; and I do, with the strictest truth, affirm, that I am as loyal a subject, and as firmly attached to the present happy establishment, as any of those who have the greatest places or pensions. I have been informed too, that in the following play I have been charged with writing immoralities; that

that it is filled with slander and calumny against particular great persons, and that Majesty itself is endeavoured to be brought into ridicule and contempt."

"As I knew that every one of these charges was in every point absolutely false, and without the least grounds, at first I was not at all affected by them; but when I found they were still insisted upon, and that particular passages which were not in the play were quoted, and propagated to support what had been suggested, I could no longer bear to lie under those false accusations; so by printing it I have submitted, and given up all present views of profit, which might accrue from the stage; which will, undoubtedly be some satisfaction to the worthy gentlemen who have treated me with so much candour and humanity, and represented me in such favourable colours. But as I am conscious to myself, that my only intention was to lash in general, the reigning and fashionable vices, and to recommend and set virtue in as amiable a light as I could; to justify and vindicate my own character, I thought myself obliged to print the Opera without delay, in the manner I have done."

The prohibition of the performance of Polly, by the Lord Chamberlain, proved a most fortunate

tunate occurrence. Gay was held up as a man persecuted by the Minister; his play was printed by subscription: the patronage of the Poet, who had been neglected by the Court, was warmly promoted by the party in opposition; his popularity was augmented, his fortune increased, as he himself said, by oppression; and he was indemnified for all his disappointments, by acquiring the protection of the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, of whose kindness and attention he dwells with gratitude in a letter to Swift, dated March 18, 1728.

“ I am now in the Duke of Queensberry's house, where I was carried at a time that it was thought I could not live a day. I must acquaint you, (because I know it will please you) that during my sickness, I had many of the kindest proofs of friendship, particularly from the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, who, if I had been their nearest relation, and nearest friend, could not have treated me with more constant attendance then, and they continue the same to me now. You must undoubtedly have heard, that the Duchess took up my defence with the King and Queen, in the cause of my play, and that she has been forbid the court, for interesting herself to increase my fortune, by the publication of it, without being acted. The Duke too, hath
given

given up his employments, (which he would have done if the Duchefs had not met with this treatment) upon account of the ill-usage from the ministers; but this hastened him in what he had determined."

Arbuthnot also gives a humourous account of the impressions which had been formed against him at court, of his influence over many great persons, and of his extreme popularity. "I may say, without vanity, Gay's life, under God, is due to the unwearied endeavours and care of your humble servant; for a physician, who had not been passionately his friend, could not have saved him. I had, besides my personal concern for him, other motives for my care. He is now become a public person, a little Sacheverell, and I took the same pleasure in saving him, as Radcliffe did in preserving my Lord Chief Justice Holt's wife, whom he attended out of spite to her husband, who wished her dead."

"The inoffensive John Gay is now become one of the obstructions to the peace of Europe, the terror of the ministry, the chief author of the *Craftsman*,* and all the seditious pamphlets,

* An opposition paper chiefly under the direction of Bolingbroke and Pulteney.

which

which have been published against government. He has got several turned out of their places; the greatest ornament* of the court banished from it for his sake; another great lady † in danger of being changed likewise; about seven or eight Duchesses pushing forward, like the ancient circumceliones in the church, who shall suffer martyrdom on his account first. He is the darling of the city; if he should travel about the country, he would have hecatombs of roasted oxen sacrificed to him; since he became so conspicuous, Will. Pulteney hangs his head to see himself so much out-done in the career of glory. I hope he will get a good deal of money by printing his play; but I really believe, he would get more money by shewing his person: and I can assure you, this is the very identical John Gay whom you formerly knew, and lodged with in Whitehall, two years ago."

Gay was now worth three thousand pounds, and seems to have formed strong resolutions no longer to dissipate his fortune, but to correct his natural thoughtlessness and extravagance; for which Swift was accustomed to rally him.

* Duchefs of Queensberry.

† Mrs. Howard, afterwards Countefs of Suffolk.

In his letters to Swift, written in 1729, 1730, or 1731, he dwells with peculiar pleasure on these resolutions, and on the prospect which he entertains of becoming independent :

“The fortune of the person you interest yourself in, amounts to at present (all debts paid) above three thousand four hundred pounds; so that, whatever other people may think, I look upon him, as to fortune, to be happy, that is to say an independent creature. I am now got to my residence at Amesbury, getting health, and saving money.”

“I am grown so saving of late, that I very often reproach myself for being covetous ; and I am very often afraid that I shall have the trouble of having money, and never have the pleasure of making use of it.”

“I am grown so much a man of business, that is to say, so covetous, that I cannot bear to let a sum of money lie idle.”—*July 18, 1731.*

“You used to blame me for over sollicitude about myself. I am now grown so rich, that I don't think myself worth thinking on.”

“You have often twitted me in the act for hankering after the court. In that you mistook me ;

me ; for I know by experience, that there is no dependance that can be sure, but a dependance upon one's self. I will take care of the little fortune I have got. I know you will take this resolution kindly."

December 1, 1731.

"I have nothing to take me off from my friendship with you : I seek no new acquaintance, and court no favour ; I spend no shillings in coaches and chairs, to levees or great visits ; and as I don't want the assistance of some that I formerly conversed with, I will not so much as seem to seek to be a dependant. As to my studies, I have not been entirely idle, though I cannot say that I have yet perfected any thing ; what I have done is something in the way of those Fables I have already published. All the money I get is by saving, so that by habit there may be some hopes, if I grow richer, of my becoming a miser. All misers have their excuses ; the motive to parsimony is independance. If I were to be represented by the Duchefs, (she is a downright niggard for me) this character might not be allowed me ; but I really think I am covetous enough for any one who lives at the court end of the town, and who is as poor as myself."

"I am ordered by the Duchefs to grow rich in the manner of Sir John Cutler. I have nothing

thing at this present writing, but my frock that was made at Salisbury, and a bob perriwig. I persuade myself that it is shilling weather as seldom as possible; and have found out, that there are few court visits worth a shilling. In short, I am very happy in my present independency. I envy no man; but have the due contempt of voluntary slaves of birth and fortune."

But Gay's friends did not trust to his own resolutions. The Duke and Duchess of Queensberry knowing his want of œconomy, undertook the management of his money, and only entrusted him with as much as his immediate wants required. To this distribution of his finances Gay humourously alludes, in a letter to Swift:

"The Duchess is a more severe check upon my finances than ever you were; and I submit as I did to you, to comply to my own good. I was a long time before I could prevail upon her to let me allow myself a pair of shoes with two heels; for I had lost one, and the shoes were so decayed that they were not worth mending. You see by this, that those who are the most generous of their own, can be the most covetous for others. I hope you will be so good to me, as to use your interest with her, (for, whatever she

she says, you seem to have some) to indulge me with the extravagance suitable to my present fortune."—*December 6, 1730.*

His situation in the family of the Duke of Queensberry, although he was treated with assiduousness and attention, must have been irksome to a feeling and irritable mind.

The old Proverb—"Home is home though never so homely" occurred frequently to his recollection.

"I am not thinking," he writes to Swift, "of a court, or preferment; for I think the lady I live with is my friend, so that I am at the height of my ambition. You have often told me there is a time of life that every one wishes for some settlement of his own. I have frequently that feeling about me, but I fancy it will hardly ever be my lot; so that I will endeavour to pass away life as agreeably as I can, the way I am."—*Amesbury, July 4, 1730.*

His friends were also continually representing to him the comforts of an independent situation.

"I hope

“ I hope,” writes Swift, “ when you are rich enough, you will have some little œconomy of your own in town or country, and be able to give your friend a pint of Port, for the domestic season will come on.”

“ I writ lately to Pope. I wish you had a little situation in his neighbourhood, for you are yet too volatile; and any lady with a coach and six horses would carry you to Pekin.”

Gay seemed, however, now on the point of realizing his wishes: had he lived, he would have greatly increased his fortune by writing for the stage; and might have enjoyed the comfort of a home of his own, so much coveted by him and his friends.

“ My ambition,” he writes in a letter to Swift, March 31, 1730, “ is at present levelled to the same point that you direct me to; for I am every day building villakins, and have given over that of castles. If I were to undertake it in my present circumstances, I should in the most thrifty scheme soon be straitened; and I hate to be in debt, for I can't bear to pawn five pounds worth of my liberty to a taylor or a butcher.”

After

After the publication of the Beggar's Opera, Gay could not expect any countenance from the Court; for if even he did not intend it as a satire against the Minister, yet the author of the Craftsman, a political paper on the side of opposition, drew, with all the virulence of party and great keenness of wit, a ludicrous comparison between the Minister and Locket, whom he called the keeper or prime minister of Newgate, and quoted several of the ballads, as applicable to statesmen and courtiers.

In allusion to Sir Robert Walpole, who was extremely corpulent, the Craftsman observes, "There are some persons who esteem Locket the keeper or prime minister of Newgate, to be the hero of the piece; to justify which opinion, they take notice that he is set forth on the stage in the person of Mr. Hall, as a very corpulent bulky man."*

Gay vainly thought that by writing against the court and satyrising the minister, he should compel them to purchase his silence; but in this opinion he was no less grievously disappointed than in his former expectations. The melancholy state of mind which was occasioned by

* The Craftsman, N^o. 85.

these repeated disappointments, is best described by himself in a letter to Pope :

“ My melancholy,” says he, “ increases, and every hour threatens me with some return of my distemper ; nay, I may rather say I have it on me. Not the divine looks, the kind favors and expressions of the divine Duchess, (who hereafter shall be in place of a Queen to me, nay, she shall be my Queen) nor the inexpressible goodness of the Duke, can in the least cheer me. The drawing room no more receives light from these two stars. There is now (what Milton says in Hell) darkness visible. O that I had never known what a court was. Dear Pope ! what a barren soil (to me so) have I been striving to produce something out of ! Why did I not take your advice before my writing Fables for the Duke, not to write them, or rather to write them for some young nobleman ? It is my hard fate : I must get nothing, write for them or against them.”

This letter conveys a striking and pathetic description of that sad dejection of spirits under which he laboured. To some this despondency may appear the proof of a weak mind, incapable of supporting the common and unavoidable accidents of life ; to others it may with no less propriety rather be attributed to the irritability
of

of disease. But from whatever cause it originated, it is a melancholy reflection, that the chagrin occasioned by his disappointments, always embittered his reflections, and preying upon a weak constitution, prematurely hastened his death.

Gay had some time felt his health declining. In a letter to Pope, October 7, 1732, he says,

“ I am at last returned from my Somersetshire expedition, but since my return I cannot boast of my health as before I went, for I am frequently out of order with my colical complaint, so as to make me uneasy and dispirited, tho’ not to any violent degree.

“ All this journey I performed on horseback, and am very much disappointed that at present I feel myself so little the better for it. I have indeed followed riding and exercise for three months successively, and really think I was as well without it ; so that I begin to fear the illness I have so long and so often complained of, is inherent in my constitution, and that I have nothing for it but patience.”

In another letter he expresses himself in the following terms :

“ I find myself in such a strange confusion and dejection of spirits, that I have not strength
 c enough

enough to make my will, though I perceive, by many warnings, I have no continuing city here. I begin to look upon myself as one already dead, and desire my dear Mr. Pope, whom I love as my own soul, if you survive me, as you certainly will, if a stone should mark the place of my grave, see these words put upon it :

“ Life is a jest, and all things show it,
I thought so once, but now I know it.”

With what you may think proper. If any body should ask, how I could communicate this after death ? let it be known it is not meant so, but my present sentiments in life. What the bearer brings beside this letter, should I die without a will, which I am the likelier to do, as the law will settle my little estate much as I should myself, let it remain with you as it has long done with me,—a remembrance of a dead friend. But there is none like you, living or dead.”

In this uncertain state of health, he came to town, for the purpose of preparing the Opera of *Achilles* for the stage ; he caught a fever which fell into his bowels, and carried him off in less than three days.

Pope thus feelingly expresses himself on that event, in a letter to Swift :

“ It

December 8, 1732.

“ It is not a time to complain that you have not answered my two letters. It is now indeed a time to think of myself, when one of the nearest and longest ties I ever had, is broken of a sudden, by the unexpected death of poor Mr. Gay. An inflammatory fever hurried him out of life in less than three days; he died last night at nine o'clock, not deprived of his senses entirely at last, and possessing them perfectly till within five hours. He asked of you a few hours before, when in acute torment, by an inflammation in his bowels and breast.

“ Good God ! how often are we to die before we quit this stage. In every friend we lose a part of ourselves, and the best part. God keep those we have left.”

This letter was received by Swift on the fifteenth of December, but he did not open it till the twentieth, from an impulse foreboding some misfortune; and he thus laments his loss, in a letter to the Duchess of Queensberry :

March 20, 1732.

“ The greatest unhappiness of my life is grown a comfort under the death of my friend, I mean my banishment in this miserable coun-

try; for the distance I am at, and the despair I have of ever seeing my friends, further than by a summer visit; and this, so late in my life, so uncertain in my health, and so embroiled in my little affairs, may probably never happen, so that my loss is not so great as that of his other friends, who had it in their power to converse with him. But I chiefly lament your Grace's misfortune, because I greatly fear, with all the perfections which can possibly acquire veneration to a mortal creature from the worthiest of human kind, you will never be able to procure another so useful, so sincere, so virtuous, so disinterested, so entertaining, so easy, and so humble a friend, as that person whose death all good men lament."

No man was ever more regretted by his friends than Gay.

Arbuthnot to Swift.

London, January 13, 1732.

"We have all had another loss of our worthy and dear friend, Mr. Gay. It was some alleviation of my grief to see him so universally lamented by almost every body, even by those who knew him only by reputation. He was interred at Westminster Abbey as if he had been a peer of the realm, and the good Duke of Queens-

Queensberry, who lamented him as a brother, will set up a handsome monument upon him."

Pope to Swift.

"It is indeed impossible to speak on such a subject as the loss of Mr. Gay,—to me an irreparable one.

"You say truly that death is only terrible as it separates us from those we love, but I really think those have the worst of it who are left by us, if we are true friends. I have felt more, I fancy, in the loss of Mr. Gay, than I shall suffer in the thought of going away myself into a state that can feel none of its losses.

"I wished vehemently to have seen him in a condition of living independent, and to have lived in perfect indolence the rest of our days together, the two most idle, most innocent, undesigning poets of our age."

The Duchess of Queensberry to Swift.

"Soon after the death of our friend Mr. Gay, I found myself more inclined to write to you than to allow myself any other entertainment.

"If I have any good in me, I certainly learned it insensibly of our poor friend, as children do any strange language. It is not possible

ble to imagine the loss his death is to me ; but as long as I have any memory, the happiness of ever having had such a friend can never be lost to me.

April 12, 1733.

“ Whilst I had that very sincere good friend, I could sometimes lay open all my rambling thoughts, and he and I would often view and dissect them ; but now they come and go, and I seldom find out whether they be right or wrong, or if there be any thing in them. Poor man ! he was most truly every thing you could say of him.”

Lord Bathurst to Swift.

“ Poor John Gay ! we shall see him no more ; but he will always be remembered by those who knew him with a tender concern.”

Pope paid a beautiful tribute of regret to the memory of his departed friend :

“ Blest be the *great* ! for those they take away,
And those they left me, for they left me Gay ;
Left me to see neglected genius bloom,
Neglected die, and tell it on his tomb :
Of all thy blameless life the sole return,
My verse, and Queensb'ry weeping o'er thy urn.”

Pope's Prologue to the Satires.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

*SOCIAL Character, Person, and Manners of Gay.
—Remarks on his Poetical Character—and particularly as a Writer of Fables.—His eminent Merit in that Line.*

THE social Character of Gay is delineated in such strong and natural colours by his friends Pope and Swift, and by himself in his own letters, that we almost think we see the man: we love the playfulness of his temper, we are interested in all his pursuits; we almost think him more amiable for his very failings, we cherish his foibles, we pity his despondency, we feel for his disappointments, and we are pleased at his successes.

Pope, who knew him best, has delineated the principal trait of his character, in one line of his Epitaph:

“ In wit, a man ;—simplicity, a child.”

And in prose, he said of him, " He was a natural man without design who spoke what he thought, and just as he thought it; and he was of a timid temper, fearful of giving offence to the great."*

In fact the temper and manners of Gay were exactly the temper and manners of a child, as he retained in an advanced age all the feelings and sentiments peculiar to that early period. He was by turns thoughtless and over solicitous; careless and provident; playful and serious; timid before strangers, but volatile in the company of his acquaintance; suddenly dejected, and suddenly depressed; without guile himself and suspecting none in others; confiding in promises, fearful of giving offence, yet frank and indiscreet in uttering his thoughts.

His physiognomy does not appear to have been remarkable for strong lines or expressive features; it rather denoted benignity and meekness.

Gay must surely have possessed wonderful sweetness of temper, who never displeased the humourful and misanthropic Swift, the ner-

* Johnson's Life of Gay, from Spence.

vous and irritable Pope, the courtly Lady Suffolk, and the eccentric, though benevolent, Duchess of Queensberry.

In his person, Gay was inclined to corpulency; a circumstance which he humourously alludes to, in his Epistle to Lord Burlington :

———“ You knew *fat* bards might tire,
And mounted sent me forth your trusty 'squire.”

His natural corpulency was increased by extreme indolence, for which his friends often rallied him. Swift, in a letter to the Duchess of Queensberry, thus expresses himself on this subject : “ You need not be in pain about Mr. Gay's stock of health, I promise you he will spend it all upon laziness, and run deep in debt by a winter's repose in town ; therefore, I entreat your Grace will order him to move his chaps less, and his legs more, the six cold months, else he will spend all his money in physic and coach-hire.”—*October 3, 1731.*

Pope also thus writes to him : “ Fenton died at Easthamstead, of indolence and inactivity ; let it not be your fate, but use exercise. I hope the Duchess will take care of you in this respect, and either make you gallop after her, or teize you enough at home to serve for exercise abroad.”

Swift, writing to him, says, " Pray consult with Dr. Arbuthnot and Dr. Cheney, to what exact pitch your belly may be suffered to swell, and to outgrow their's, who are as yet your betters."

In another letter, Swift also observes, " I find by the whole cast of your letter, that you are as giddy and volatile as ever, just the reverse of Mr. Pope, who hath always loved domestic life from his youth. I was going to wish you had some little place that you could call your own ; but I profess, I do not know you well enough to contrive any one system of life that would suit you. You pretend to preach up walking and riding to the Duchesse, yet from my knowledge of you for twenty years, you have always joined a violent desire of perpetually shifting places and company, with a rooted laziness, and an utter impatience of fatigue. A coach and six horses is the utmost exertion you can bear, and this only when you can fill it with such company as is best suited to your taste ; and how glad would you be if it could waft you in the air to avoid jolting ; while I, who am so much later in life, can, or at least could ride five hundred miles on a trotting horse. You mortally hate writing, only because it is the thing you chiefly ought to do ; as well to keep up the vogue you have in the world, as to make you easy in your fortune.

tune. You are merciful to every thing but money, your best friend, whom you treat with inhumanity."

With his intimate friends, Gay was lively and entertaining, when not dejected in spirits from reflecting on his own dependent situation. But his feeling mind was seldom free from this anxiety, to which Swift alludes :

November 16, 1730.

" I hope you have now one advantage that you always wanted before, and the want of which made your friends as uneasy as it did yourself; I mean the removal of that solicitude about your own affairs which perpetually filled your thoughts, and disturbed your imagination."

He seems indeed to have been always conscious of his dependent situation, and therefore not capable of making great exertions either of body or mind.

This dejection of spirits increased at times to that height as to check his natural and almost infantine vivacity, and render him absent and inattentive; for which Swift rallies him in his sportive way :

“ Your colic is owing to intemperance of the philosophical kind ; you eat without care, and if you drink less than I, you drink too little. But your inattention I cannot pardon, because I imagined the cause was removed, for I thought it lay in your forty millions of court hopes and court fears. Yet Mr. Pope has the same defect, and it is, of all others, the most mortal to conversation ; neither is my Lord Bolingbroke untinged with it ;—all for want of my rule—*Vive la bagatelle !* but the Doctor is the King of inattention. What a vexatious life should I lead among you ? If the Duchefs be a *revenue*, I will never come to Amesbury ; or if I do, I will run away from you both, to one of her women, and the steward and chaplain.”

And in a letter to the Duchefs of Queensberry, Swift says, “ I never knew any man cured of inattention, although the pretended cause were removed. When I was with Mr. Gay last in London, talking to him on some poetical subjects, he would answer, “ Well I am determined not to accept the place of Gentleman Usher ;” and of the same disposition were all my poetical friends, and if you cannot cure him, I shall utterly despair.

“ Mr. Gay is not discreet enough to live alone, but he is too discreet to live alone ; and yet,

yet, unless you mend him, he will live alone even in your Grace's company."

In the early part of his life, Gay was extremely fond of dress; a foible which he has ridiculed in his Prologue to the Shepherd's Week:

" I fold my sheep and lambkins too,
For silver loops and garments blue;
My boxen hautboy, sweet of sound,
For lace that edged mine hat around;
For Lightfoot and my scrip, I got,
A gorgeous sword and eke a knot."

Pope also touches upon this weakness, in a letter to Swift:

December 18, 1713.

" One Mr. Gay, an unhappy youth, who writes pastorals during the time of divine service; whose case is the more deplorable, as he hath miserably lavished away all that silver he should have reserved for his soul's health in buttons and loops for his coat."

He also wanted discretion, but his indiscretion was a proof of his spirit, and of his aversion to meanness. He wished to rise by courts, and expected favours from the minister, yet he did not either flatter courts or praise ministers.

" I have

“ I have been considering,” writes Swift to Gay, “ why poets have such ill success at making their court, since they are allowed to be the greatest and best of all flatterers : the defect is, that they flatter only in print or in writing : they will give things under their hand, which they make a conscience of speaking. Besides, they are too liberal to haunt anti-chambers, too poor to bribe porters and footmen, and too proud to cringe to second hand favorites in a great family. Tell me, are you not under original sin by the dedication of your Eclogues to Lord Bolingbroke ?—I am an ill judge at this distance.”

Gay cannot be said to fall under the description of those poets, who, according to Swift, “ flatter only in print and writing ;” for no one flattered less in print than he did. He wrote his Fables by the desire of Queen Caroline, and yet he paid no compliment to her in any of them ; and instead of praising courts, he ridicules courts and censures ministers. In his Epistle to Paul Methuen, he thus speaks with all the dignity of independence, and the spirit of a mind which would not debase itself :

“ Why flourish’d verse in great Augustus’ reign ?
 He and Mæcenæus lov’d the muse’s strain.
 But now that wight in poverty must mourn,
 Who was (O cruel stars !) a poet born.

Yet

Yet there are ways for authors to be great ;
 Write ranc'rous libels to reform the state :
 Or, if you chuse more sure and steady ways,
 Spatter a minister with fulsome praise ;
 Launch out with freedom, flatter him enough,
 Fear not,—all men are dedication proof.
 Be bolder yet, you must go farther still,
 Dip deep in gall thy mercenary quill.
 He who his pen in party-quarrels draws,
 Lifts an hir'd bravo to support the cause ;
 He must indulge his patron's hate and spleen,
 And stab the fame of those he ne'er had seen.
 Why then should authors mourn their desp'rate
 case ?
 Be brave, do this, and then demand a place :
 Why art thou poor ? Exert the gifts to rise.
 And banish tim'rous virtue from thy eyes."

It is greatly to be lamented that a mind thus dignified could not brook disappointment ; and that a loss of favour which he so much affected to despise, should prey upon his constitution, and embitter the comforts of life which still remained in his power. Such is the inconsistency of human nature : Gay sighed for independence, yet would not brook that dependence necessary to gain his favourite object ; he could inculcate the necessity of content in the strongest terms and most beautiful manner :

" Think Gay, (what ne'er may be the case)
 Should Fortune take you into grace,

Would

Would that your happiness augment;
 What can she give beyond content? &c.
 Is happiness your point in view?
 (I mean th' intrinsic and the true)
 She nor in camps or courts resides,
 Nor in the humble cottage hides;
 Yet found alike in ev'ry sphere;
 Who finds content will find her there."

Fable 7, l. 26, &c.

Yet, like many a good divine, he did not-
 practise what he preached.

But among many strong marks of a firm and
 feeling mind, he never forgot his obligations to
 those who had assisted him when he was in indi-
 gent circumstances; and he pays particularly
 the warmest tribute of grateful applause to Bo-
 lingbroke, Swift, and Pope, when his eulogium
 of Swift and Bolingbroke must do him differ-
 vice at court.

Of Swift and Bolingbroke he says in his
 Epistle to Pope—

" Ah why, sweet St. John, cannot I thee find?
 St. John for every social virtue priz'd;
 Alas! to foreign climates he's confin'd,
 Or else to see thee here I well surmis'd."

" Thou too, my Swift, dost breath Bœotian air,
 When wilt thou bring back wit and humour here?"

Of

Of Pope, in his Epistle to Bernard Lintott, he says still more :

“ When Pope’s harmonious muse with pleasure roves
Amidst the plains, the murmuring streams and groves,
Attentive Echo, pleas’d to hear his songs,
Through the glad shade each warbling note prolongs ;
His various numbers charm our ravish’d ears,
His steady judgment far outshoots his years,
And early in the youth the god appears.” }

Pope, in a letter to Swift, dated October 15, 1725, observes of him :—

“ Our friend Gay is used as the friends of Tories are by Whigs, and generally by Tories too. Because he had humour he was supposed to have dealt with Dr. Swift, in like manner as when any one had learning formerly, he was supposed to have dealt with the devil.”

Gay suffered greatly on account of his friendship with Swift, for he was principally on that account suspected of writing several political papers in opposition to government.

Johnson certainly did not sufficiently estimate the poetical works of Gay, when he says, “ As a poet, he cannot be rated very high. He was, as I heard a female critic say, of a lower order.

He

He had in no degree the *mens divinior*, or dignity of genius."

Though Gay cannot be classed among the highest ranks in the Temple of Fame, yet he certainly does not deserve to be placed in the lower order.

Although he did not attempt to excel in the higher flights of poetry, yet many passages in his Poems prove, that he was capable of uniting elevation of sentiment with corresponding dignity of language.

His chief aim was to please, rather than to surprise; and it may be justly remarked, that few poets ever wrote with more success on a greater variety of subjects than Gay;—Tragedy, Comedy, Operas, Fables, Ballads, Moral, Epic, Rustic, Town Eclogues, Pastorals, and Poetical Epistles. To this variety he alludes in the motto prefixed to his Poems:

*Hic jocamus, ludimus, amamus, dolemus, querimur, irascimur, describimus aliquid, modo pressius modo elatius; atque ipsa varietate tentamus efficere, ut alia aliis, quædam fortasse omnibus placeant.**

Plin. Epist.

Next

* We jest, sport, love, weep, complain, are angry; we sometimes compress, at other times dilate the subject; and by means
of

Next to Pope, perhaps, he is the English poet who most excelled in smoothness of versification, correctness, felicity of diction, and in the purity of the rhymes; and none ever surpassed him in expressing simple thoughts in an appropriate manner.

That he was a most excellent classical scholar, is proved from his works; for no poet ever more frequently or more happily imitated the classics. He was no less conversant with the Italian poets, whom he imitated with equal felicity.*

As a pastoral writer, he stands unrivalled among the English poets; and may be considered as having, next to Theocritus, adopted the characteristic simplicity of rural manners. He is not, like Tasso, under the necessity of apologies for making his shepherds speak the language of courts;

of this variety we attempt to effect that different parts may please different persons, and that some things may, perhaps, please all.

* One instance of this imitation of the Italian poets, I shall here mention, because I never remember to have seen it observed.

In his *What d'ye Call it*, he makes Kitty Carrot say—

“ Ah why does Nature give us so much cause,
To make kind-hearted damsels break the laws?”

Why

courts ; nor does he follow the example of Ambrose Philips, who almost makes his shepherds

“ As silly as their sheep.”

But in thus paying a tribute of applause to Gay, as a pastoral poet, I allude to his Shepherd's Week, for neither the Town Eclogues nor Dione merit such a preference.

As a dramatic writer, Gay principally excelled in low and characteristic humour. But he may claim at least the merit of originality, which few writers are entitled to. He invented the Tragi-comic Pastoral Farce, in the *What d'ye Call it*; and in the *Beggar's Opera*, the *Ballad Opera*, which has so long continued to delight the Public :

Why should hard laws kind-hearted lasses bind,
When too soft nature draws us after kind.”

Which is evidently a burlesque imitation of a refined, though much admired sentiment in the *Pastor Fido* of Guarini:

“ Se'l peccar è sì dolce
E'l non peccar sì necessario, o troppo
Imperfetta natura,
Che repugna a la legge ;
O troppo dura legge
Che la natura offendi.”

Atto Tertzo, Scena Quarta.

As

As a ballad writer, Gay has scarcely his equal ; as well in the ludicrous as in the pathetic.

The Ballad of *Sweet William's Farewell to Black-eyed Susan*, in the *What d'ye call it*, is scarcely excelled in the English language :

“ 'Twas when the seas were roaring,
With hollow blasts of wind,
A damfel lay deploring,
All on a rock reclin'd.

Wide o'er the foaming billows
She cast a wistful look ;
Her head was crown'd with willows,
That trembled o'er the brook,” &c.*

That he possessed a happy talent for musical dramas, is in no instance so fully exempli-

* This ballad was burlesqued, and formed into a state ballad on the Pretender's flight, and sorrowful lamentation for his late disappointment in Scotland. In imitation of a new Song, sung at the Play-house, in the comic-tragic Farce, or *What d'ye Call it* :

“ 'Twas when the seas were roaring,
With blasts of Northern wind,
Young Perkin lay deploring,
On warming-pan reclin'd.

Wide o'er the foaming billows
He cast a dismal look ;
And shiver'd like the willows
That tremble o'er the brook.”

fied as in the *Serenata of Acis and Galatea*. As Handel fortunately composed the music for this poem, the sister arts are united in an eminent degree; and we may perhaps never again meet with so beautiful a pastoral drama, set to music by so great a master.

But as a writer of Fables, Gay stands in a pre-eminent situation: the difficulty of this species of composition is sufficiently evident from the small number of writers who have excelled in Fables.

Since the æra of letters to the time of Gay, scarcely five authors can be mentioned, who deserve peculiar notice: Æsop, Phædrus, Pilpay, and Fontaine; and of these only Phædrus and Fontaine, wrote in verse.

The extreme difficulty is attested by Gay himself, in a letter to Swift:

London, May 6, 1732.

“ You seemed not to approve of my writing more Fables. Those I am now writing have a prefatory discourse before each of them, by way of epistle, and the morals of them most are of the political kind, which makes them run into a greater length than those I have already published. Though this is a kind of writing that
appears

appears very easy, I find it the most difficult of any that I ever undertook ; after I have invented one Fable and finished it, I despair of finding out another, but I have a moral or two which I wish to write upon."

And again—

Amesbury, July 24, 1731.

" I have almost done every thing I proposed in the way of Fables ; I have not set the last hand to them. Though they will not amount to half the number, I believe they will make much such another volume as the last. I find it the most difficult task I ever undertook, but have determined to go through with it ; and after this, I believe I shall never have courage enough to think any more in this way."

Swift himself also, whose versatility of talents is sufficiently appreciated, vainly attempted this species of composition : as he confesses to Gay :

Dublin, July 10, 1732.

" I am glad you determine upon something ; there is no writing I esteem more than Fables, nor any thing so difficult to succeed in ; which, however, you have done excellently well, and I have often admired your happiness in such performances, which I have frequently endeavoured at in vain. I remember I acted as you
seem

seem to hint; I found a Moral first and studied for a Fable, but could do nothing that pleased me, and so left off that scheme for ever. I remember one, which was to represent what scoundrels rise in armies by a long war; wherein I supposed the Lion engaged, and having lost all his animals of worth, at last Sergeant Hog came to be a Brigadier, and Corporal Ass a Colonel, &c."

Gay did not undoubtedly possess either the elegant brevity of Phædrus, or the captivating *naïveté* of La Fontaine; yet he displays more originality of invention than even Phædrus or La Fontaine. Their stories were mostly taken from preceding authors; his, with a few exceptions, are entirely his own.

His language is a model for this species of composition; seldom above or below the subject: it is poetical without being too elevated; and familiar without being low.

Of his Fables may be said, what Gay observes of Gulliver's Travels: "From the highest to the lowest this book is universally read, from the cabinet council to the nursery." And to him may be applied what La Harpe said of Fontaine; that "he was at the same time the poet of children, and the poet of philosophers."



FABLES

BY

JOHN GAY.



Errata.

Page 2, last line of Note, for *The* read *He*,
72, line 4, for *The* read *In*.
83, line 9, in Note, for *attends* read *attend*.

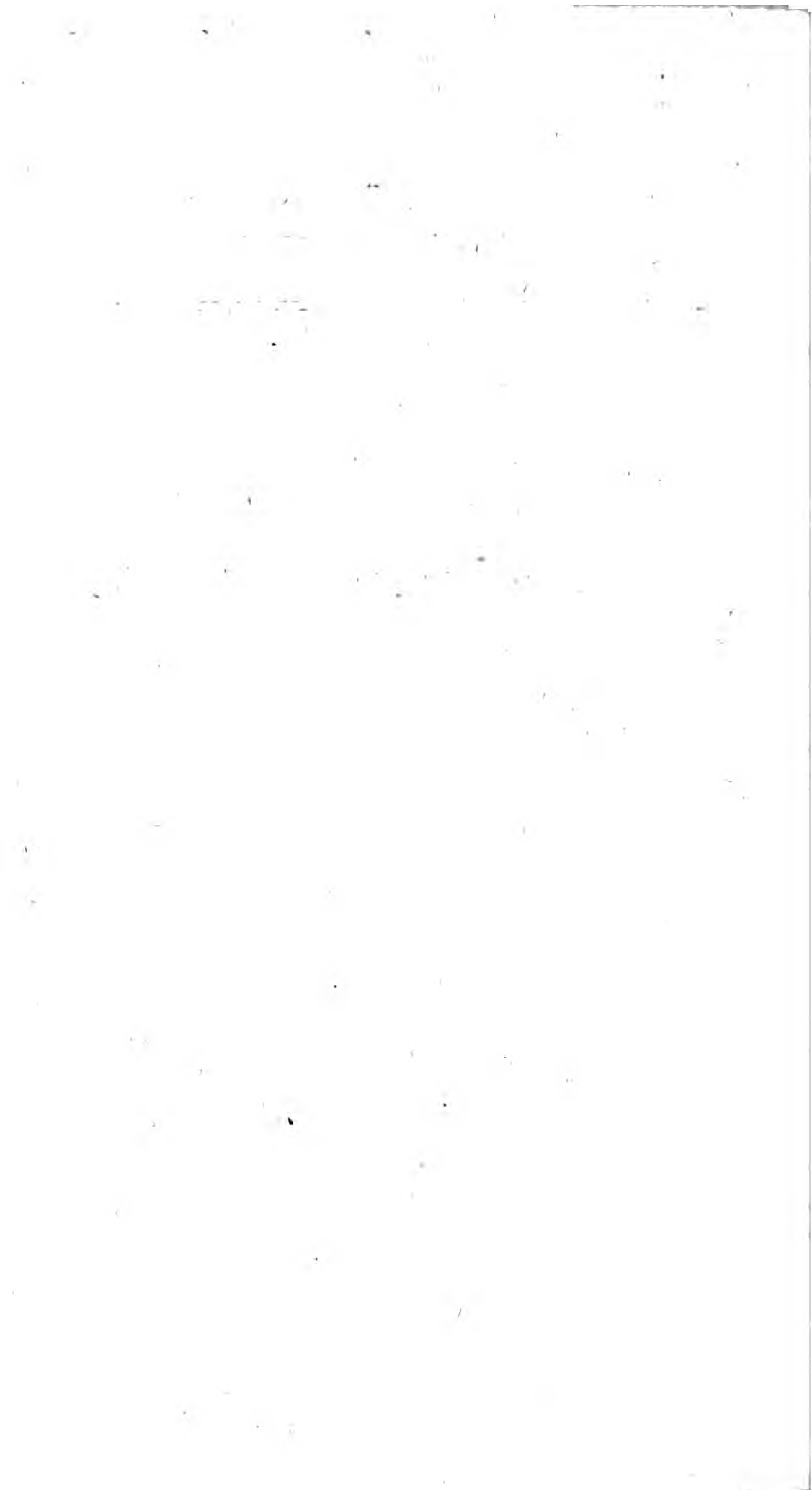
ORIGINAL DEDICATION.

TO
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS,
WILLIAM,
DUKE OF CUMBERLAND,

THESE
NEW FABLES,
INVENTED FOR HIS AMUSEMENT,
ARE HUMBLY DEDICATED

BY
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S
MOST FAITHFUL, AND
MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT,

JOHN GAY.



INTRODUCTION*

TO THE
FABLES.

PART THE FIRST.

The Shepherd and the Philosopher.

REMO TE from cities liv'd a swain,
Unvex'd with all the cares of gain;
His head was silver'd o'er with age,
And long experience made him sage;
In summer's heat, and winter's cold,
He fed his flock and penn'd the fold.
His hours in chearful labour flew,
Nor envy nor ambition knew:

5

* This Introduction to the Fables is exceedingly beautiful and proper; and contains a very useful moral;—that man in the plainest and most humble state, may improve himself by due reflection and observation, even without the assistance of learning; and that a good and virtuous mind can draw a love of virtue and hatred to vice from the most common objects of nature.

B

His

His wisdom and his honest fame
Through all the country rais'd his name. 10

A deep Philosopher (whose rules
Of moral life were drawn from schools)
The Shepherd's homely cottage fought,
And thus explor'd his reach of thought :

Whence is thy learning? Hath thy toil 15
O'er books consum'd the midnight oil?
Hast thou old Greece and Rome survey'd
And the vast sense of PLATO weigh'd?
Has SOCRATES thy soul refin'd?
And Hast thou fathom'd TULLY's mind? 20
Or,

Line 6. *To pen the fold*, means to shut up the sheep in the fold, or the ground in which the shepherds confine them with hurdles during the night.

L. 16. *Consum'd the midnight oil*. The ancients always used lamps, filled with oil, instead of candles; and hence, *to consume the midnight oil*, means to study as late as midnight.

Gay, in another work, also uses the same expression :

“ Walkers at leisure learning's flow'rs may spoil,
“ Nor watch the *wasting of the midnight oil*.

TRIVIA, book 2, l. 557, 558.

L. 18, 19. *Plato and Socrates* were both natives of Attica, in Greece.

Socrates, the greatest of the ancient philosophers, and called the wisest of mankind, was born at a small village, near Athens, in the 4th year of the 77th Olympiad, or about 467 years before Christ. After teaching wisdom to his countrymen for many years, he was cruelly put to death, in the 71st year of his age.

Plato,

Or, like the wise ULYSSES thrown
 By various fates, on realms unknown ;
 Hast thou through many cities stray'd,
 Their customs, laws, and manners weigh'd ?

The Shepherd modestly replied, 25
 I ne'er the paths of learning tried ;
 Nor have I roam'd in foreign parts,
 To read mankind, their laws and arts ;
 For man is practis'd in disguise,
 He cheats the most discerning eyes. 30
 Who by that search shall wiser grow,
 When we ourselves can never know ?

Plato, his scholar, was born at Athens, in the 88th olympiad, or about 340 years before Christ. He was the founder of the Academy, where he publicly gave lectures on philosophy, and died aged 81.

L. 20. *Tully*. Marcus *Tullius* Cicero, a celebrated orator, statesman, and philosopher, was born at Arpinum, a city in the southern part of Italy, in the 647th year of Rome, about 170 years before Christ, and was assassinated in the 64th year of his age by order of Anthony.

L. 21. *Ulysses*, King of Ithaca, who was at the siege of Troy, and whose travels and adventures on his return to his native country, to which Gay refers, are related in Homer's *Odyssey* :

“ The man for wisdom's various arts renown'd,
 “ Long exercised in woes, Oh, muse ! resound ;
 “ Who, when his arms had wrought the destin'd fall
 “ Of sacred Troy, and raz'd her heav'n-built wall,
 “ Wand'ring from clime to clime observant stray'd,
 “ Their manners noted, and their states survey'd.”

POPE'S ODYSSEY, book 1.

The little knowledge I have gain'd,
 Was all from simple nature drain'd ;
 Hence my life's maxims took their rise, 35
 Hence grew my settled hate to vice.

The daily labours of the bee
 Awake my soul to industry ;
 Who can observe the careful ant,
 And not provide for future want ? 40

My Dog (the truest of his kind)
 With gratitude inflames my mind.
 I mark his true, his faithful way,
 And in my service copy Tray.
 In constancy and nuptial love, 45
 I learn my duty from the dove.

The hen, who from the chilly air,
 With pious wing protects her care ;
 And every fowl that flies at large,
 Instructs me in a parent's charge. 50

From nature too I take my rule,
 To shun contempt and ridicule.
 I never, with important air,
 In conversation overbear. 55

Can grave and formal pass for wise,
 When men the solemn owl despise ?
 My tongue within my lips I rein ;
 For who talks much must talk in vain.
 We from the wordy torrent fly : 60

Who listens to the chatt'ring pye ?
 Nor would I, with felonious flight,
 By stealth invade my neighbour's right.

Rapacious animals we hate :
Kites, hawks, and wolves deserve their fate.
Do not we just abhorrence find 65
Against the toad and serpent kind ?
But envy, calumny, and spite,
Bear stronger venom in their bite.
Thus ev'ry object of creation
Can furnish hints to contemplation ; 70
And from the most minute and mean,
A virtuous mind can morals glean.

Thy fame is just, the Sage replies ;
Thy virtue proves thee truly wise.
Pride often guides the author's pen, 75
Books as affected are as men ;
But he who studies nature's laws,
From certain truth his maxims draws ;
And those, without our schools, suffice
To make men moral, good, and wise. 80



TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

WILLIAM,

DUKE OF CUMBERLAND.*

FABLE 1.

The Lion, the Tyger, and the Traveller.

ACCEPT, young PRINCE, the moral lay,
 And in these tales mankind survey;
 With early virtues plant your breast,
 The specious arts of vice detest.

Princes, like beauties, from their youth 5
 Are strangers to the voice of truth.
 Learn to contemn all praise betimes;
 For flattery's the nurse of crimes.

* As Gay wrote these Fables for the use of William Duke of Cumberland, second son of the Prince of Wales, afterwards George the Second, by desire of Queen Caroline, he very properly inscribes them to the young Prince; and warns him against the seductions of flattery, the common vice of courts, and inculcates, from the example of the lion, compassion, mercy, and the love of justice;—virtues congenial to noble and generous minds.

Friend-

PART THE FIRST.

7

Friendship by sweet reproof is shewn ;
(A virtue never near a throne) ;
In courts such freedom must offend,
There none presumes to be a friend.
To those of your exalted station
Each courtier is a dedication.
Must I too flatter like the rest,
And turn my morals to a jest ?
The muse disdains to steal from those,
Who thrive in courts by fulsome prose.

10

15

But shall I hide your real praise,
Or tell you what a nation says ?
They in your infant bosom trace
The virtues of your royal race ;
In the fair dawning of your mind
Discern you gen'rous, mild, and kind ;
They see you grieve to hear distress,
And pant already to redress.
Go on, the height of good attain,
Nor let a nation hope in vain :
For hence we justly may presage
The virtues of a riper age.
True courage shall your bosom fire,
And future actions own your fire.
Cowards are cruel ; but the brave
Love mercy, and delight to save.

20

25

30

A Tyger, roaming for his prey,
Sprung on a Trav'ler in the way ;
The prostrate game a Lion spies,
And on the greedy tyrant flies ;

35

With mingled roar resounds the wood,
 Their teeth, their claws distil with blood ; 40
 'Till, vanquish'd by the Lion's strength,
 The spotted fbe extends his length.
 The man besought the shaggy lord,
 And on his knees for life implor'd ;
 His life the gen'rous hero gave ; 45
 Together walking to his cave,
 The Lion thus bespoke his guest :

What hardy beast shall dare contest
 My matchless strength ? you saw the fight,
 And must attest my pow'r and right. 50
 Forc'd to forego their native home,
 My starving slaves at distance roam ;
 Within these woods I reign alone,
 The boundless forest is my own.
 Bears, wolves, and all the savage brood, 55
 Have dy'd the regal den with blood ;
 These carcasses on either hand,
 Those bones that whiten all the land,
 My former deeds and triumphs tell,
 Beneath these jaws what numbers fell. 60

True, says the man, the strength I saw
 Might well the brutal nation awe ;
 But shall a monarch, brave like you,
 Place glory in so false a view ?
 Robbers invade their neighbour's right. 65
 Be lov'd ; let justice bound your might.
 Mean are ambitious heroes' boasts,
 Of wasted lands and slaughter'd hosts.

PART THE FIRST.

9

Pirates their pow'r by murders gain,
Wise kings by love and mercy reign.

70

To me your clemency hath shewn
The virtue worthy of a throne.
Heav'n gives you pow'r above the rest,
Like Heav'n, to succour the distrest.

The case is plain, the monarch said ;

75

False glory hath my youth misled ;
For beasts of prey, a servile train,
Have been the flatt'ers of my reign.

You reason well ; yet tell me friend,
Did ever you in courts attend ?

80

For all my fawning rogues agree,
That human heroes rule like me.



FABLE 2.

*The Spaniel and the Camelion.**

A SPANIEL, bred with all the care
 That waits upon a fav'rite heir,
 Ne'er felt correction's rigid hand;
 Indulg'd to disobey command;

In

* The *Camelion* is a species of lizard, from six to nine inches in length, and has been supposed, by both the ancients and moderns, to have a faculty of changing its colour, and assuming that of the objects near it. Its colour, when at rest and in the shade, is somewhat various; one which was seen at Paris was a bluish grey;—but, when exposed to the sun, became a darker grey, and its less illuminated part changed into divers colours; forming spots half as big as one's finger's end, some of a yellowish hue; the grains, not illuminated at all, resembled a cloth of divers colours. That described by Dr. Goddard, in the *Philosophical Transactions*, was of several colours, a green, a sandy yellow, and a deeper yellow, or liver colour; but one might easily imagine some mixture of all colours. He adds, that upon rubbing or warming, it suddenly became full of black spots, as big as a large pin's head, equally dispersed on the sides, all which would afterwards vanish. M. Perrault observes something like this of the Paris *Camelion*, that upon handling or stirring, it would appear stained with dark spots, bordering on green; and that, wrapping it up in a linen cloth for a few minutes, it would come out whitish, though not always so; but would not take the colour of any other stuff it was wrapped in. So that what Theophrastus and Plutarch write of its assuming all the colours

it

In pamper'd ease his hours were spent; 5
 He never knew what learning meant.
 Such forward airs, so pert, so smart,
 Were sure to win his lady's heart;
 Each little mischief gain'd him praise;
 How pretty were his fawning ways! 10

it comes near, is contrary to experience. Others assure us, that the *Camelion*, when placed in the sun, appears green though near no green object; that it appears black by the candle, though placed on white paper; and that, when shut up in a box, it becomes yellow and green; and say that it never assumes any other colours than these.

Naturalists are very little agreed, as to the reason of this change of colour; and therefore we shall not repeat their several hypotheses, the following being sufficient for our purpose:

The *Camelion* is represented as an exceeding lean animal, insomuch that the Italians call it a living skin. M. Perrault observes of that he dissected in the King's library, that one hour it appeared to be a mere skin, and yet the next it would appear plump. Hence we gather that it must have a very great command over the skin, as to tension and laxity. Now, the animal having it in its power to fill the skin more or less, cannot only alter the texture of the fibres, upon which their reflexive quality greatly depends; but also can bring parts into sight which before lay concealed, or conceal such as before lay open; and it is more than probable, that the parts commonly covered are of a somewhat different colour from those always open to the air. On these principles, probably, all the phænomena in the *Camelion's* colour may be solved. The animal, it is plain, has a power of reflecting different coloured rays from the same parts; and likewise making certain parts reflect, and prevent others from doing so; and hence that medley of colours.

DICTIONARY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES.

The wind was south, the morning fair,
 He ventures forth to take the air.
 He ranges all the meadow round,
 And rolls upon the softest ground ;
 When near him a Camelion seen,
 Was scarce distinguished from the green.

15

Dear emblem of the flatt'ring host,
 What, live with clowns ! a genius lost !
 To cities and the court repair ;
 A fortune cannot fail thee there ;
 Preferment shall thy talents crown,
 Believe me, friend ; I know the town.

20

Sir, says the sycophant, like you,
 Of old, politer life I knew :
 Like you, a courtier born and bred ;
 Kings lean'd an ear to what I said.
 My whisper always met success ;
 The ladies praised me for address.
 I knew to hit each courtier's passion,
 And flatter'd ev'ry vice in fashion.
 But Jove, who hates the liar's ways,
 At once cut short my prosp'rous days ;

25

30

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 different is thy case and mine !
 With men at least you sup and dine ;

35

40

While

While I, condemn'd to thinnest fare,
Like those I flatter'd, feed on air.

L. 42. The common tradition of the Camelion's living upon air is contrary to experience. The tongue is half as long as the animal; it consists of a white flesh, round as far as the tip, which is hollow, like an elephant's trunk, whence some call it a trunk. This it can dart out very nimbly, and draw in again, over a bone that reaches from the root half its length. The great use of the tongue is to catch flies; some say the tongue is tipped with a glutinous matter which the flies stick to. The Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris frequently observed the Camelion which they had to catch and swallow flies; and, upon dissection, the stomach and intestines were found full of them.



FABLE 3.

The Mother, the Nurse, and the Fairy.

GIVE me a son. The blessing sent,
 Were ever parents more content ?
 How partial are their doting eyes !
 No child is half so fair and wise.

Wak'd to the morning's pleasing care, 5
 The Mother rose and fought her heir :
 She saw the Nurse, like one possess'd,
 With wringing hands and sobbing breast.

Sure some disaster has befall :
 Speak, Nurse ! I hope the boy is well ? 10

Dear Madam, think not me to blame ;
 Invisible the Fairy came :
 Your precious babe is hence convey'd,
 And in the place a changling laid.
 Where are the father's mouth and nose, 15
 The mother's eyes, as black as sloes ?
 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. 20

Lord,

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, 25
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 ! 30
Besides, by partial fondness shown,
Like you we dote upon our own.
Where yet was ever found a mother,
Who'd give her booby for another !
And should we change with human breed, 35
Well might we pass for fools indeed.

L. 33, 34. For the purpose of preserving every species from destruction, Providence has wisely and benevolently endowed all creatures with an instinct in favour of their own offspring, which operates more powerfully than almost every other passion ; inso-much, that the most timid animal will defend her young, even at the certain hazard of her own life. There is this difference between the instinct of the human species and the instinct of animals : animals forget and neglect their offspring, whenever they no longer stand in need of their care and protection ; but mankind continue to love and superintend their children to the latest period of their existence : among animals, instinct is lost when it is no longer useful ; in mankind the place of instinct is supplied by reason, religion, and habit.

FABLE 4.

The Eagle and the Assembly of Animals.

As JUPITER'S all-seeing eye
 Survey'd the worlds beneath the sky,
 From this small speck of earth were sent,
 Murmurs and sounds of discontent;*
 For ev'ry thing alive complain'd,
 That he the hardest life sustain'd.

5

JOVE

* Nothing is more common than to be discontented with our own lot, and to envy the situation of others, though nothing can be more unjust.

We are too apt to judge of the happiness of others from outward appearances; and yet no man can tell what passes in another person's breast. To condemn and ridicule this species of discontent and envy is the purpose of this Fable, and to shew that no one would accept the offer of changing situations.

Horace, before Gay, had said that an ox wished for the happiness of the war-horse, and the war-horse wished to plough like the ox; and in his first Satire has also exposed this foible in a similar manner, as our poet has done in this fable; only with this difference, that Horace introduces Jupiter offering to men the power of changing situations with others: Gay has expressed the same sentiment under the emblem of animals:

“ Whence is it, fir, that none contented lives
 “ With the fair lot which prudent reason gives,
 “ Or chance presents, yet all with envy view
 “ The schemes that others variously pursue?

“ Broken

JOVE calls his Eagle ; at the word
 Before him stands the royal bird.
 The bird, obedient, from heav'n's height,
 Downward directs his rapid flight ;
 Then cited ev'ry living thing,
 To hear the mandates of his king.

10

Ungrateful creatures, whence arise
 These murmurs which offend the skies ?
 Why this disorder ? say the cause ;
 For just are JOVE's eternal laws.

15

“ Broken with toils, with ponderous arms oppress,
 “ The soldier thinks the merchant solely blest.
 “ In opposite extreme, when tempests rise,
 “ War is a better choice, the merchant cries ;
 “ The battle joins, and in a moment's flight,
 “ Death, or a joyful conquest ends the fight.

“ When early clients thunder at his gate,
 “ The barrister applauds the rustic's fate ;
 “ While by subpœnas dragg'd from home, the clown
 “ Thinks the supremely happy dwell in town.

“ But every various instance to repeat
 “ Would tire even FABIVS, of incessant prate.
 “ Not to be tedious, mark the moral aim
 “ Of these examples. Should some god proclaim,
 “ Your prayers are heard : you soldier to your seas ;
 “ You lawyer, take that envied rustic's ease ;
 “ Each to his several part. What ! ha ! not move
 “ Even to the bliss you wish'd ! and shall not JOVE,
 “ With cheeks inflam'd, and angry brow, forbear
 “ His weak indulgence to their future prayer ?

FRANCIS'S HORACE, vol. 3. p. 3.

Let

Let each his discontent reveal;
To yon four Dog I first appeal.

Hard is my lot, the Hound replies,
On what fleet nerves the Greyhound flies. 20
While I, with weary step and flow,
O'er plains and vales, and mountains go.
The morning sees my chase begun,
Nor ends it till the setting sun.

When (says the Greyhound) I pursue, 25
My game is lost, or caught in view;
Beyond my fight the prey's secure:
The Hound is slow, but always sure.
And had I his sagacious scent,
Jove ne'er had heard my discontent. 30

The Lion crav'd the Fox's art;
The Fox, the Lion's force and heart
The Cock implor'd the Pigeon's flight,
Whose wings were rapid, strong, and light;
The Pigeon strength of wing despis'd, 35
And the Cock's matchless valour priz'd;
The Fishes wish'd to graze the plain;
The beasts to skim beneath the main.
Thus, envious of another's state,
Each blam'd the partial hand of Fate. 40

The bird of heav'n then cry'd aloud,
Jove bids disperse the murm'ring crowd;

The

PART THE FIRST.

19

The God rejects your idle prayers.

Would ye, rebellious mutineers,

Entirely change your name and nature,

45

And be the very envy'd creature ?

What, silent all, and none consent !

Be happy then, and learn content :

Nor imitate the restless mind,

And proud ambition of mankind.

50



FABLE 5.

The Wild Boar and the Ram.

Against 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 fight.
 A savage Boar, who near them stood, 5
 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 : 10
 Your quarter'd fires, 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, 15
 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. 20

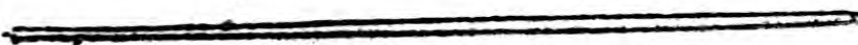
Know

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, 25
It wakes their slumb'ring sons to war;
And well revenge may rest contented,
Since drums and parchment were invented.

L. 28. *Parchment*, which is so much used by lawyers, whom Gay calls *the wrangling bar*, is made from sheep-skin; but drums are usually covered with vellum, which is only parchment made of the skins of calves. It has a much finer grain. Gay observes, in another work :

“ Here rows of drummers stand in martial file,
“ And with their *vellum* thunder shake the pile.”

TRIVIA, book 2, p. 17, 18.



'Twas gold instructed coward hearts,
In treach'ry's more pernicious arts.

Who can recount the mischiefs o'er? 25

Virtue resides on earth no more!

He spoke and sigh'd. In angry mood,
Plutus, his god, before him stood.

The Miser trembling, lock'd his chest;
The vision frown'd, and thus addrest: 30

Whence is this vile ungrateful rant?
Each fordid rascal's daily cant.

Did I, base wretch, corrupt mankind?

The fault's in thy rapacious mind.

Because my blessings are abus'd, 35

Must I be censur'd, curs'd, accus'd?

Ev'n virtue's self by knaves is made

A cloak to carry on the trade;

And pow'r (when lodg'd in their possession)
Grows tyranny, and rank oppression. 40

Thus, when the villain crams his chest,

Gold is the canker of his breast;

'Tis avarice, insolence, and pride,

And every shocking vice beside.

But when to virtuous hands 'tis given, 45

It blesses, like the dews of heav'n:

Like heav'n, it hears the orphans cries,

And wipes the tears from widows eyes.

Their

L. 45 to 48. These beautiful and feeling lines cannot be too often read and followed by persons in affluent circumstances: they shew that, although there is no gift of heaven which may not be ill employed, yet that its proper use by some amply compensates

Their crimes on gold shall misers lay,
Who pawn'd their fordid souls for pay? 50
Let bravoës then (when blood is spilt)
Upbraid the passive sword with gilt.

penfates for its abuse by others; and the Fable strongly inculcates this useful moral, that we are not to argue from the abuse of any thing againft its use.

L. 51. *Bravoës.* Men who murder for hire.



FABLE 7.

The Lion, the Fox, and the Geese.

A LION, tir'd with state affairs,
Quite sick of pomp, and worn with cares,
Resolv'd (remote from noise and strife)
In peace to pass his latter life.

It was proclaim'd ; the day was set ; 5
Behold the gen'ral council met ;
The Fox was viceroy nam'd. The crowd
To the new regent humbly bow'd ;
Wolves, bears, and mighty tygers bend,
And strive who most shall condescend. 10
He strait assumes a solemn grace,
Collects his wisdom in his face.
The crowd admire his wit, his sense :
Each word hath weight and consequence.
The flatt'rer all his art displays : 15
He who hath power, is sure of praise.
A Fox stept forth before the rest,
And thus the servile throng address :

How vast his talents, born to rule,
And train'd in virtue's honest school ! 20
What clemency his temper sways !
How uncorrupt are all his ways !

C

Beneath

Beneath his conduct and command,
 Rapine shall cease to waste the land ;
 His brain hath stratagem and art ;
 Prudence and mercy rule his heart,
 What blessings must attend the nation
 Under this good administration !

25

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

30

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 the 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.

35

40



Her fan in vain defends her charms ;
 Swift he returns, again alarms ;
 For by repulse he bolder grew, 25
 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 has sent,
 A Wasp is most impertinent. 30

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, 35
 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 ; 40
 For though he's free (to do him right)
 The creature's civil and polite.

In ecstasies away he posts ;
 Where'er he came, the favour boasts ;
 Brags how her sweetest tea he sips, 45
 And shews the sugar on his lips.

The hint alarm'd the forward crew,
 Sure of success, away they flew.
They

PART THE FIRST.

29

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 had stings, and felt the wound.

50



FABLE 9.

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 tried ;
 Weigh well his manners, life, and scope ;
 On these depends thy future hope.

5

As on a time, in peaceful reign,
 A Bull enjoy'd the flow'ry plain,
 A Mastiff pass'd ; inflam'd with ire,
 His eye-balls shot indignant fire ;
 He foam'd, he rag'd with thirst of blood.

10

Spurning the ground the monarch stood,
 And roar'd aloud ; suspend the fight ;
 In a whole skin go sleep to night ;
 Or tell me, ere the battle rage,
 What wrongs provoke thee to engage ?
 Is it ambition fires thy breast,
 Or avarice that ne'er can rest ?
 From these alone unjustly springs
 The world-destroying wrath of kings.

15

20
The

The surly Mastiff thus returns :
Within my bosom glory burns ;
Like heroes of eternal name,
Whom poet's sing, I fight for fame.
The butcher's spirit-stirring mind
To daily war my youth inclin'd ;
He train'd me to heroic deed ;
Taught me to conquer or to bleed.

25

Curs'd Dog, the Bull reply'd, no more
I wonder at thy thirst of gore ;
For thou (beneath a butcher train'd,
Whose hands with cruelty are stain'd,
His daily murders in thy view)
Must, like thy tutor, blood pursue.
Take then thy fate : with goring wound,
At once he lifts him from the ground ;
Aloft the sprawling hero flies,
Mangled he falls, he howls, and dies.

30

35



FABLE 10.

*The Elephant and the Bookseller.**

THE man who with undaunted toils
 Sails unknown seas to unknown foils;
 With various wonders feast his sight:
 What stranger wonders does he write!
 We read, and in description view 5
 Creatures which ADAM never knew:
 For, when we risk no contradiction
 It prompts the tongue to deal in fiction.
 Those things that startle me or you, 10
 I grant are strange; yet may be true.
 Who doubts that Elephants are found
 For science and for sense renown'd?
 BORRI records their strength of parts,
 Extent of thought, and skill in arts;

* It must be confessed, that it is a high breach of probability, to introduce an Elephant into a Bookseller's shop; the Author felt the objection, and has endeavoured, in some measure, to apologize for it, by observing, that travellers often see and describe wonderful objects, which are not the less true because they are uncommon. Birds and beasts, in the language of fable, may be supposed to talk, but an Elephant in a Bookseller's shop must be acknowledged to be too forced and unnatural a conceit.

How they perform the law's decrees, 15
 And save the state the hangman's fees;
 And how by travel understand
 The language of another land.
 Let those, who question this report,
 To PLINY's ancient page resort, 20

L. 16. In some parts of India, Elephants are employed in putting criminals to death, by trampling on them. Hence Gay says: *and save the state the hangman's fees.*

L. 20. *To Pliny's ancient page.* Caius Plinius Secundus, called Pliny the elder, to distinguish him from his nephew, Caius Plinius Cecilius Secundus, the statesman and orator, was a celebrated natural historian. He was born at Verona, in the reign of Tiberius; about the 23d year of the christian æra. He was killed in 79, by an eruption from Mount Vesuvius. He wrote several books, but that to which Gay alludes, was upon Natural History; a work, according to his nephew, of great compass and learning, and almost as full of variety, as Nature herself. Yet it must be confessed, that it abounds also in fabulous stories, among which must be classed part of the account which he gives of the Elephant. He ascribes to that animal great powers of understanding, and moral virtues. The Elephant he says, is an animal next in sagacity to the human species. For they understand the language spoken in their native country, obey commands, follow what they are taught, remember acts of kindness, and take pleasure in love and glory. They have a natural innate religion, adore the sun, moon, and stars. When the moon is full, they go in troops to the banks of a river, solemnly purify themselves with water, and then, saluting the moon, return to the woods. They assist each other at the approach of death; bedew the deceased with tears, cover them with branches, and bury them. When such assertions are gravely advanced by a learned author of antiquity, Gay is almost justified in bringing the Elephant into a Bookseller's shop.

How learn'd was that sagacious breed!
Who now (like them) the Greek can read?

As one of these in days of yore,
Rummag'd a shop of learning o'er;
Not, like our modern dealers, minding 25
Only the margin's breadth and binding;
A book his curious eye detains,
Where, with exactest care and pains,
Were ev'ry beast and bird portray'd,
That e'er the search of man survey'd; 30
Their natures and their powers were writ,
With all the pride of human wit.
The page he with attention spread,
And thus remark'd on what he read:

Man with strong reason is endow'd; 35
A beast scarce instinct is allow'd.
But let this author's worth be try'd,
'Tis plain that neither was his guide.
Can he discern the diff'rent natures,
And weigh the power of other creatures, 40
Who by the partial work hath shown
He knows so little of his own?
How falsely is the spaniel drawn!
Did man from him first learn to fawn?
A dog proficient in the trade! 45
He, the chief flatt'rer nature made?
Go, man, the ways of courts discern,
You'll find a spaniel still might learn.
How can the fox's theft and plunder
Provoke his censure or his wonder;

From courtiers' tricks, and lawyers' arts,
 The fox might well improve his parts.
 The lion, wolf, and tiger's brood,
 He curses, for their thirst of blood:
 But is not man to man a prey?
 Beasts kill for hunger, men for pay.

55

The Bookseller, who heard him speak,
 And saw him turn a page of Greek,
 Thought, what a genius have I found!
 Then thus address'd with bow profound:

60

Learn'd Sir, if you'd employ your pen
 Against the senseless sons of men,
 Or write the History of Siam,
 No man is better pay than I am;
 Or, since you're learn'd in Greek, let's see,
 Something against the Trinity.

65

When wrinkling with a sneer his trunk,
 Friend, quoth the Elephant, you're drunk;

L. 63. Elephants are very common in many parts of India; but are supposed to abound most in Siam, a peninsula in the East Indies.

It is related by a traveller, that the King of Siam had 20,000 Elephants in his dominions, without reckoning those that are wild, and live in the woods and mountains, of which fifty, sixty, or even eighty, are sometimes taken in a single hunting match.

BUFFON, vol. 6. p. 29.

E'en keep your money and be wife:

Leave man on man to criticise;

70

For that you ne'er can want a pen

Among the senseless sons of men.

They unprovok'd will court the fray:

Envy's a sharper spur than pay.

No author ever spar'd a brother;

75

Wits are game-cocks to one another.



FABLE 11.

The Peacock, the Turkey, and the Goose.

IN beauty faults conspicuous grow:
The smallest speck is seen on snow.

As near a barn, by hunger led,
A Peacock with the Poultry fed;
All view'd him with an envious eye, 5
And mock'd his gaudy pageantry.
He, conscious of superior merit,
Contemns their base reviling spirit;
His state and dignity assumes,
And to the sun displays his plumes; 10
Which, like the heav'ns o'er arching skies,
Are spangled with a thousand eyes.
The circling rays, and varied light,
At once confound their dazzled sight:
On ev'ry tongue detraction burns, 15
And malice prompts their spleen by turns.

Mark, with what insolence and pride,
The creature takes his haughty stride,
The Turkey cries. Can spleen contain?
Sure never bird was half so vain! 20
But

38 FABLE THE ELEVENTH.

But were intrinsic merit seen,
We Turkeys have the whiter skin.

From tongue to tongue they caught abuse;
And next was heard the hissing Goose;
What hideous legs, what filthy claws! 25
I scorn to censure little flaws.
Then what a horrid squalling throat!
Ev'n owls are frightened at the note.

True. Those are faults, the Peacock cries;
My scream, my thanks you may despise: 30
But such blind critics rail in vain;
What, overlook my radiant train!
Know, did my legs (your scorn and sport)
The Turkey or the Goose support,
And did you scream with harsher sound, 35
Those faults in you had ne'er been found?
To all apparent beauties blind,
Each blemish strikes an envious mind.

Thus in assemblies have I seen
A nymph of brightest charms and mien, 40
Wake envy in each ugly face;
And buzzing scandal fills the place.



FABLE 12.

Cupid, Hymen, and Plutus.

As Cupid in Cythera's grove
 Employ'd the lesser powers of love;
 Some shape the bow, or fit the string;
 Some give the taper shaft its wing,
 Or turn the polish'd quiver's mould,
 Or head the darts with temper'd gold.

5

L. 1. *Cythera*, an island not far from Crete, in the Archipelago, sacred to Venus, from whence she was called *Cytherea*.

The Reader, perhaps, will not be displeas'd to compare a similar passage in another work of Gay :

“ Far in Cythera stands a spacious grove,
 “ Sacred to Venus and the God of Love ;
 “ Here busy Cupids, with pernicious art,
 “ Form the stiff bow and forge the fatal dart.
 “ All share the toil : while some the bellows ply,
 “ Others with feathers teach the shafts to fly :
 “ Some with joint force whirl round the stony wheel,
 “ Where streams the sparkling fire from temper'd steel ;
 “ Some point their arrows with the nicest skill,
 “ And with the warlike store their quivers fill.”

The FAN, book 1. l. 93, 103, &c.

Amidst

Amidst their toil and various care,
 Thus Hymen, with assuming air,
 Address'd the God: Thou purblind chit,
 Of aukward and ill-judging wit, 10
 If matches are not better made,
 At once I must for-swear my trade.
 You send me such ill-coupled folks,
 That 'tis a shame to sell them yokes.
 They squabble for a pin, a feather, 15
 And wonder how they came together.
 The husband's sullen, dogged, shy,
 The wife grows flippant in reply;
 He loves command and due restriction,
 And she as well likes contradiction: 20
 She never slavishly submits;
 She'll have her will, or have her fits.
 He this way tugs, she t'other draws:
 The man grows jealous, and with cause.
 Nothing can save him but divorce; 25
 And here the wife complies of course.

When, says the Boy, had I to do
 With either your affairs or you?
 I never idly spend my darts;
 You trade in mercenary hearts. 30
 For settlements the lawyer's fee'd;
 Is my hand witness to the deed?
 If they like cat and dog agree,
 Go rail at Plutus, not at me.

L. 8. *Hymen*. The God of Marriage.

Plutus

PART THE FIRST.

41

Plutus appear'd, and said 'tis true,
In marriage gold is all their view:

35

They seek not beauty, wit, or sense;
And love is seldom the pretence.

All offer incense at my shrine,

And I alone the bargain sign.

40

How can BELINDA blame her fate?

She only ask'd a great estate.

DORIS was rich enough, 'tis true:

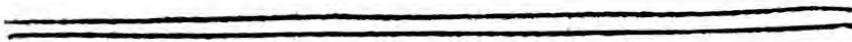
Her lord must give her title too:

And ev'ry man, or rich or poor,

45

A fortune asks, and asks no more.

Av'rice, whatever shape it bears,
Must still be coupled with its cares.



FABLE 13.

The Tame Stag.

As a young Stag the thicket past,
 The branches held his antlers fast;
 A clown, who saw the captive hung,
 Across the horns his halter flung.

Now safely hamper'd in the cord, 5
 He bore the present to his lord;
 His lord was pleas'd; as was the clown,
 When he was tipt with half-a-crown.
 The Stag was brought before his wife;
 The tender lady begg'd his life. 10
 How sleek's the skin! how speck'd like ermine!
 Sure never creature was so charming!

At first within the yard confin'd,
 He flies and hides from all mankind;
 Now bolder grown, with fix'd amaze, 15
 And distant awe, presumes to gaze;
 Munches the linen on the lines,
 And on a hood or apron dines:
 He steals my little master's bread,
 Follows the servants to be fed: 20

Nearer

Nearer and nearer now he stands,
To feel the praise of patting hands;
Examines ev'ry fist for meat,
And though repuls'd, disdains retreat;
Attacks again with level'd horns; 25
And man, that was his terror, scorns.

Such is the country maiden's fright,
When first a red-coat is in fight;
Behind the door she hides her face;
Next time at distance eyes the lace: 30
She now can all his terrors stand,
Nor from his squeeze withdraws her hand.
She plays familiar'in his arms,
And ev'ry soldier hath her charms.
From tent to tent she spreads her flame; 35
For custom conquers fear and shame.



FABLE 14.

The Monkey who had seen the World.

A MONKEY, to reform the times,
 Resolv'd to visit foreign climes :
 For men in distant regions roam
 To bring politer manners home.
 So forth he fares, all toil defies :
 Misfortune serves to make us wise.

5

At length the treach'rous snare was laid ;
 Poor Pug was caught, to town convey'd,
 There fold. How envy'd was his doom,
 Made captive in a lady's room !
 Proud as a lover of his chains,
 He day by day her favour gains.
 Whene'er the duty of the day
 The toilet calls ; with mimic play
 He twirls her knots, he cracks her fan,
 Like any other gentleman.
 In visits too his parts and wit,
 When jests grew dull, were sure to hit.
 Proud with applause, he thought his mind
 In ev'ry courtly art refin'd ;

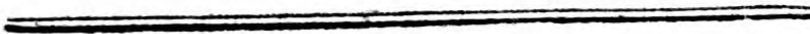
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15

20

Like

Thus the dull lad, too tall for school,
With travel finishes the fool ;
Studious of ev'ry coxcomb's airs,
He drinks, games, drestes, whores, and swears ;
O'erlooks with scorn all virtuous arts, 65
For vice is fitted to his parts.



FABLE 15.

The Philosopher and the Pheasants.

THE Sage awak'd at early day,
 Through the deep forest took his way ;
 Drawn by the music of the groves,
 Along the winding gloom he roves ;
 From tree to tree, the warbling throats 5
 Prolong the sweet alternate notes.
 But where he past, he terror threw,
 The song broke short, the warblers flew ;
 The thrushes chatter'd with affright,
 And nightingales abhorr'd his sight ; 10
 All animals before him ran,
 To shun the hateful sight of man.

Whence is this dread of ev'ry creature ?
 Fly they our figure, or our nature ?

As thus he walk'd in musing thought, 15
 His ear imperfect accents caught ;
 With cautious step he nearer drew,
 By the thick shade conceal'd from view.
 High on the branch a pheasant stood,
 Around her all her list'ning brood ; 20
 Proud of the blessings of her nest,
 She thus a mother's care express'd :

No

PART THE FIRST.

No dangers here shall circumvent, 49
Within the woods enjoy content;
Sooner the hawk or vulture trust, 25
Than man, of animals the worst;
In him ingratitude you find
A vice peculiar to the kind.
The sheep whose annual fleece is dyed, 30
To guard his health, and serve his pride,
Forc'd from his fold and native plain,
Is in the cruel shambles slain:
The swarms, who, with industrious skill,
His hives with wax and honey fill,
In vain whole summer days employ'd, 35
'Their stores are fold, their race destroy'd.
What tribute from the goose is paid?
Does not her wing all science aid?
Does it not lovers' hearts explain,
And drudge to raise the merchant's gain? 40
What now rewards this general use?
He takes the quills, and eats the goose.
Man then avoid, detest his ways;
So safety shall prolong your days.
When services are thus acquitted, 45
Be sure we pheasants must be spitted.

L. 39. This sentiment is beautifully expressed by Pope:

"Heav'n first taught letters for some wretch's aid,
"Some banished lover, or some captive maid;
"They live, they speak, they breathe what love inspires,
"Warm to the soul, and faithful to it's fires,
"The virgin's wish without her fears impart,
"Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart;
"Spread the soft influence from soul to soul,
"And waft a light from Indos to the Pole."

POPE'S EPISTLE FROM ELOISA TO ABELARD. l. 51.

FABLE 16.

The Pin and the Needle.

A PIN, who long had serv'd a beauty,
 Proficient in the toilet's duty,
 Had form'd her sleeve, confin'd her hair,
 Or giv'n her knot a smarter air;
 Now nearest to her heart was plac'd, 5
 Now in her mantua's tail disgrac'd;
 But could she partial fortune blame,
 Who saw her lovers serv'd the same?

At length, from all her honours cast,
 Through various turns of life she past; 10
 Now glitter'd on a taylor's arm,
 Now kept a beggar's infant warm;
 Now rang'd within a miser's coat,
 Contributes to his yearly groat;
 Now, rais'd again from low approach, 15
 She visits in the doctor's coach;
 Here, there, by various fortune tost,
 At last in Gresham-hall was lost.

L. 14. It is a vulgar saying, that a pin a day, is worth a *great* at the end of the year.

L. 18. *Gresham Hall*. Originally the house of Sir Thomas Gresham, in Winchester-street, fronting to Bishopsgate-street, and converted, by his testament, into a college, and provided with a curious museum. No remains of this College now subsist.

PENNANT'S LONDON, p. 470.

Charm'd

Charm'd with the wonders of the show,
 On ev'ry side, above, below, 20
 She now of this or that enquires,
 What least was understood admires;
 Tis plain, each thing so struck her mind,
 Her head's of virtuoso kind.

And pray, what's this, and this, dear sir? 25
 A Needle, says th' Interpreter.
 She knew the name; and thus the fool
 Address'd her as a taylor's tool:

A Needle with that filthy stone,
 Quite idle, all with rust o'ergrown! 30
 You better might employ your parts,
 And aid the sempstrefs in her arts.
 But tell me how the friendship grew
 Between that pauntry flint and you?

Friend, says the Needle, cease to blame; 35
 I follow real worth and fame.
 Know'st thou the loadstone's pow'r and art,
 That virtue virtues can impart?

Of

L. 29, 37. The *Needle*, when touched with the *Loadstone*, and placed perpendicularly on a pivot in an instrument, is called the mariner's compass; it always points to the North Pole, on this side of the Equator; and to the South Pole on the other side; by which means the course of the vessel is determined. The Compass was invented in the fourteenth century; and its invention was soon followed by the discovery of America, and of the passage to the East-Indies, by the Cape of Good Hope.

52 FABLE THE SIXTEENTH.

Of all his talents I partake,
Who then can such a friend forsake? 40
'Tis I direct the pilot's hand
To shun the rocks and treach'rous sand ;
By me the distant world is known,
And either India is our own.
Had I with milliners been bred, 45
What had I been ? the guide of thread,
And drudg'd as vulgar needles do,
Of no more consequence than you.

L. 44. *Either India.* The West and East Indies.

The moral of this Fable is excellent ; as it implies that the meanest and lowest persons may by associating with persons of virtue, merit and talents, rise to great eminence.



FABLE 17.

The Shepherd's Dog and the Wolf.

A WOLF, with hunger fierce and bold,
 Ravag'd the plains and thinn'd the fold:
 Deep in the wood secure he lay,
 The thefts of night regal'd the day.
 In vain the shepherd's wakeful care
 Had spread the toils, and watch'd the snare:
 In vain the Dog pursu'd his pace,
 The fleet robber mock'd the chace.

5

As Lightfoot rang'd the forest round,
 By chance his foe's retreat he found:

10

Let us a while the war suspend,
 And reason as from friend to friend.

A truce? replies the Wolf. 'Tis done.
 The Dog the parley thus begun:

How can that strong intrepid mind
 Attack a weak defenceless kind?
 Those jaws should prey on nobler food,
 And drink the boar's and lion's blood:

15

54 FABLE THE SEVENTEENTH.

Great souls with gen'rous pity melt,
Which coward tyrants never felt. 20
How harmless is our fleecy care!
Be brave, and let thy mercy spare.

Friend, says the Wolf, the matter weigh;
Nature design'd us beasts of prey;
As such when hunger finds a treat, 25
'Tis necessary Wolves should eat.
If, mindful of the bleating weal,
Thy bosom burn with real zeal;
Hence, and thy tyrant lord beseech:
To him repeat the moving speech; 30
A Wolf eats sheep but now and then,
Ten thousands are devour'd by men.
An open foe may prove a curse,
But a pretended friend is worse.



FABLE 18.

A Painter who pleased Nobody and Every Body.

LEST men suspect your tale untrue,
 Keep probability in view.
 The trav'ler leaping o'er those bounds,
 The credit of his book confounds.
 Who with his tongue hath armies routed, 5
 Makes ev'n his real courage doubted :
 But flatt'ry never seems absurd ;
 The flatter'd always take your word :
 Impossibilities seem just ;
 They take the strongest praise on trust. 10
 Hyperboles, tho' ne'er so great,
 Will still come short of self-conceit.

So very like a Painter drew,
 That ev'ry eye the picture knew ;
 He hit complexion, feature, air, 15
 So just, the life itself was there.

L. 11. *Hyperbole.* From the Greek word, *ὑπερβολή*, a throw beyond the mark, means an exaggeration beyond the truth.

56 FABLE THE EIGHTEENTH.

No flatt'ry with his colours laid,
To bloom restor'd the faded maid ;
He gave each muscle all its strength ;
The mouth, the chin, the nose's length. 20
His honest pencil touch'd with truth,
And mark'd the date of age and youth.
He lost his friends, his practice fail'd ;
Truth should not always be reveal'd ;
In dusty piles his pictures lay, 25
For no one sent the second pay.
Two bustos, fraught with every grace,
A VENUS' and APOLLO's face,
He plac'd in view ; resolv'd to please,
Whoever sat, he drew from these, 30
From these corrected ev'ry feature,
And spirited each aukward creature.

All things were set ; the hour was come,
His pallet ready o'er his thumb.
My Lord appear'd ; and seated right, 35
In proper attitude and light :
The Painter look'd, he sketch'd the piece,
Then dipt his pencil, talk'd of Greece,
Of TITIAN's tints, of GUIDO's air ;
Those eyes, my Lord, the spirit there 40

L. 39. *Titian*. A famous Painter of the Venetian school, remarkable for the liveliness of his *tints* or colours; born in 1077, at Cadore, in Venetian Friuli, died in 1576, aged 99.

Guido. A famous Painter of the Bolognese school, remarkable for the graceful *air* of his heads, born at Bologna in 1575, died 1641, aged 67.

Might

Might well a RAPHAEL's hand require,
 To give them all the native fire;
 The features fraught with sense and wit,
 You'll grant are very hard to hit;
 But yet with patience you shall view
 As much as paint and art can do.

45

Observe the work. My Lord reply'd,
 'Till now I thought my mouth was wide;
 Besides, my nose is somewhat long;
 Dear sir, for me, 'tis far too young.

50

Oh! pardon me, the Artist cry'd,
 In this we Painters must decide.
 The piece e'en common eyes must strike,
 I warrant it extremely like.

L. 41. *Raphael*. Esteemed the greatest of all Painters, born at Urbino in 1483, died at Rome in 1520, in the 38th year of his age.

These three Painters seem to have been the favourites of Gay, and in his Epistle to Paul Methuen, Esq. he again singles them out.

“ Why didst thou, Kent, forego thy native land,
 “ To emulate in picture RAPHAEL's hand.
 “ Think'st thou for this to raise thy name at home?
 “ Go back, adorn the palaces of Rome;
 “ There on the walls let thy just labours shine,
 “ And Raphael live again in thy design.
 “ Yet stay a while; call all thy genius forth,
 “ For Burlington unbiass'd knows thy worth;
 “ His judgment in thy master-strokes can trace,
 “ TITIAN's strong fire, and GUIDO's softer grace.”

GAY'S POEMS in JOHNSON'S POETS, v. 36. p. 184.

My Lord examin'd it a-new;
No looking-glass seem'd half so true.

55

A Lady came, with borrow'd grace;
He from his VENUS form'd her face.
Her lover prais'd the Painter's art;
So like the picture in his heart!
To ev'ry age some charm he lent;
Ev'n beauties were almost content.

60

Through all the town his art they prais'd;
His custom grew, his price was rais'd.
Had he the real likeness shown,
Would any man the picture own?
But when thus happily he wrought,
Each found the likeness in his thought.

65

The moral of this Fable is extremely faulty. For it seems to imply, that because flattery was attended with success in the instance of the Painter, therefore this example is commendable and worthy of being followed: whereas, nothing can be more erroneous, both in moral and practice. A Painter who followed this conduct, would be sure of gaining no practice; for portrait painting implies, to take likenesses; and if no likeness is taken, even should the Limner paint Apollos and Venuses, it is impossible he should succeed. It is far more likely, that a Painter like Sir Godfrey Kneller, should obtain practice, than such a flatterer. Sir Godfrey being applied to by a person who had no expression of countenance, refused to draw his portrait, because he said *he had no face*. Gay acted very injudiciously in this instance. In the address to the Duke of Cumberland, he mentions flattery as a vice, and here he describes it, as a means of success; ironically, perhaps, but the irony is difficult to be understood by young persons.

FABLE 19.

The Lion and the Cub.

How fond are men of rule and place,
 Who court it from the mean and base !
 These cannot bear an equal nigh,
 But from superior merit fly.
 They love the cellar's vulgar joke, 5
 And lose their hours in ale and smoke ;
 There o'er some petty club preside :
 So poor, so paltry is their pride !
 Nay, ev'n with fools whole nights will fit,
 In hopes to be supreme in wit. 10
 If these can read, to these I write,
 To set their worth in truest light.

A Lion-cub, of fordid mind,
 Avoided all the lion kind ;
 Fond of applause, he sought the feasts 15
 Of vulgar and ignoble beasts ;
 With asses all his time he spent,
 Their club's perpetual president.
 He caught their manners, looks, and airs ;
 An ass in every thing, but ears ! 20
 If e're his highness meant a joke ;
 They grinn'd applause before he spoke !

But at each word what shouts of praise !
 Good gods! how natural he brays!

Elate with flatt'ry and conceit, 25
 He seeks his royal fire's retreat ;
 Forward and fond to show his parts,
 His highness brays; the Lion starts.

Puppy, that curs'd vociferation 30
 Betrays thy life and conversation :
 Coxcombs, an ever-noisy race,
 Are trumpets of their own disgrace.

Why so severe? the Cub replies;
 Our senate always held me wise.

How weak is pride! returns the fire ; 35
 All fools are vain, when fools admire!
 But know what stupid asses prize,
 Lions and noble beasts despise.

The folly of seeking applause from persons of inferior situation and abilities, is justly reprobated in this beautiful Fable from the example of the young Lion, an absurdity finely ridiculed by Pope in his Prologue to the Satyrs :

“ To sit attentive to our own applause,
 “ While Wits and Templar's every sentence raise,
 “ And wonder with a foolish face of praise.”

On the contrary, there is no stronger proof of good sense, than to profit by the advantages of that situation in which we are placed by Providence, by associating with persons of superior wisdom and virtue.

“ The wise, new wisdom from the wise acquire,
 “ And each brave hero fans another's fire.”

FABLE 20.

The Old Hen and the Cock.

RESTRAIN* your child; you'll soon believe
The text which says, we sprung from Eve.

As an old Hen led forth her train,
And seem'd to peck to shew the grain;
She rak'd the chaff, she scratch'd the ground, 5
And glean'd the spacious yard around.
A giddy chick, to try her wings,
On the well's narrow margin springs,
And prone she drops. The Mother's breast
All day with sorrow was possess'd. 10

* The moral of this Fable is very defective, and inculcates a false principle; for according to the doctrine here laid down, parents ought not to instruct their children, or prohibit them from doing wrong, because, as we are descended from Adam and Eve, that original frailty, which we are supposed to derive from them, may possibly lead us to disobey, for the sake of disobedience, and merely out of contradiction. The moral might have been easily improved. The Cock might have observed, that he was deservedly punished for his disobedience, and was drowned for acting contrary to his Mother's good advice, which his duty obliged him to follow.

A Cock

62 FABLE THE TWENTIETH.

A Cock she met; her son she knew;
And in her heart affection grew.

My son, says she, I grant your years
Have reach'd beyond a Mother's cares;
I see you vig'rous, strong, and bold; 15
I hear with joy your triumphs told.
'Tis not from Cocks thy fate I dread;
But let thy ever-wary tread
Avoid you well; that fatal place
Is sure perdition to our race. 20
Print this my counsel on thy breast;
To the just gods I leave the rest.

He thank'd her care; yet day by day
His bosom burn'd to disobey;
And ev'ry time the well he saw, 25
Scorn'd in his heart the foolish law;
Near and more near each day he drew,
And long'd to try the dang'rous view.

Why was this idle charge? he cries:
Let courage female fears despise! 30
Or did she doubt my heart was brave,
And therefore this injunction gave?
Or does her harvest store the place,
A treasure for her younger race?
And would she thus my search prevent? 35
I stand resolv'd, and dare th' event.

Thus said. He mounts the margin's round,
And pries into the depth profound.

He

PART THE FIRST.

63

He stretch'd his neck; and from below

With stretching neck advanc'd a foe:

40

With wrath his ruffled plumes he rears,

The foe with ruffled plumes appears;

Threat answer'd threat, his fury grew,

Headlong to meet the war he flew;

But when the wat'ry death he found,

45

He thus lamented as he drown'd:

I ne'er had been in this condition,
But for my mother's prohibition.



FABLE 21.

The Rat-catcher and Cats.

THE rats by night such mischief did,
 BETTY was ev'ry morning chid :
 They undermin'd whole sides of bacon,
 Her cheefe was sapp'd, her tarts were taken.
 Her pasties, fenc'd with thickest paste, 5
 Were all demolish'd, and laid waste.
 She curs'd the cat for want of duty,
 Who left her foes a constant booty.
 An Engineer of noted skill,
 Engag'd to stop the growing ill. 10
 From room to room he now surveys
 Their haunts, their works, their secret ways ;
 Finds where they 'scape an ambuscade,
 And whence the nightly fally's made.

An envious Cat, from place to place, 15
 Unseen, attends his silent pace.
 She saw that, if his trade went on,
 The purring race must be undone ;
 So, secretly removes his baits,
 And ev'ry stratagem defeats. 20

Again

Again he sets the poison'd toils,
And Pufs again the labour foils.

What foe (to frustrate my designs)
My schemes thus nightly countermines?
Incens'd he cries: this very hour
The wretch shall bleed beneath my power. 25

So said. A pond'rous trap he brought,
And in the fact poor Pufs was caught.

Smuggler, says he, thou shalt be made
A victim to our loss of trade. 30

The captive Cat, with piteous mews,
For pardon, life, and freedom sues:
A sifter of the science spare;
One int'rest is our common care.

What insolence! the man reply'd;
Shall Cats with us the game divide?
Were all your interloping band
Extinguish'd, or expell'd the land,
We Rat-catchers might raise our fees,
Sole guardians of a nation's cheese! 40

A Cat, who saw the lifted knife,
Thus spoke, and sav'd her sifter's life:

In ev'ry age and clime we see,
Two of a trade can ne'er agree.
Each hates his neighbour for encroaching;
'Squire stigmatizes 'squire for poaching; 45

66 FABLE THE TWENTY-FIRST.

Beauties with beauties are in arms,
And scandal pelts each other's charms;
Kings too their neighbour kings dethrone,
In hopes to make the world their own.
But let us limit our desires;
Not war like beauties, kings, and 'squires!
For though we both one prey pursue,
There's game enough for us and you.

50



FABLE 22.

The Goat without a Beard.

'T IS certain that the modish passions
 Descend among the croud like fashions.
 Excuse me, then, if pride, conceit,
 (The manners of the fair and great)
 I give to monkeys, asses, dogs;
 Fleas, owls, goats, butterflies, and hogs:
 I say that these are proud;—what then?
 I never said they equal men.

5

A Goat (as vain as Goat can be)
 Affected singularity:
 Whene'er a thymy bank he found,
 He roll'd upon the fragrant ground;
 And then, with fond attention, stood
 Fix'd o'er his image in the flood.

10

I hate my frowzy beard, he cries,
 My youth is lost in this disguise;
 Did not the females know my vigour,
 Well might they loath this rev'rend figure.

15

L. 11. *Thymy bank.* A bank sowed with thyme.

Resolv'd

68 FABLE THE TWENTY-SECOND.

Resolv'd to smooth his shaggy face,
He sought the barber of the place. 20
A flippant monkey, spruce and smart,
Hard by profess'd the dapper art:
His pole with pewter basons hung,
Black rotten teeth in order strung,
Rang'd cups that in the window stood, 25
Lin'd with red rags, to look like blood,
Did well his threefold trade explain,
Who shav'd, drew teeth, and breath'd a vein.

The Goat he welcomes with an air,
And seats him in his wooden chair; 30
Mouth, nose, and cheek, the lather hides;
Light, smooth, and swift the razor glides.

I hope your custom, sir, says Pug;
Sure never face was half so smug!

The Goat, impatient of applause, 35
Swift to the neighb'ring hill withdraws;
The shaggy people grinn'd and star'd:

Heighday! what's here? without a beard!
Say, Brother, whence the dire disgrace?
What envious hand hath robb'd your face? 40

When thus the fop, with smiles of scorn:
Are beards by civil nations worn?

L. 28. *To breathe a vein.* Means to let blood.

Ev'n

Ev'n Muscovites have mow'd their chins ;
 Shall we, like formal Capuchins,
 Stubborn in pride, retain the mode 45
 And bear about the hairy load ?
 Whene'er we through the village stray,
 Are we not mock'd along the way ;
 Insulted with loud shouts of scorn,
 By boys our beards disgrac'd and torn ? 50

Were you no more with goats to dwell,
 Brother, I grant you reason well,
 Replies a bearded chief; beside,
 If boys can mortify thy pride,
 How wilt thou stand the ridicule 55
 Of our whole flock ? Affected fool
 Coxcombs distinguish'd from the rest,
 To all but coxcombs are a jest.

L. 43. *Muscovites*, or Russians, whom Peter the Great compelled to shave their beards.

L. 44. *Capuchins*. An order of friars, who shave their heads and suffer their beards to grow.



FABLE 23.

The Old Woman and her Cats.

WHO friendship with a knave hath made,
 Is judg'd a partner in the trade :
 The matron who conducts abroad
 A willing nymph, is thought a bawd ;
 And if a modest girl is seen 5
 With one who cures a lover's spleen,
 We guess her, not extremely nice,
 And only wish to know her price.
 'Tis thus, that on the choice of friends
 Our good or evil name depends. 10

A wrinkled Hag, of wicked fame,
 Beside a little smoaky flame,
 Sat hov'ring, pinch'd with age and frost ;
 Her shrivell'd hands, with veins emboss'd,
 Upon her knees her weight sustains, 15
 While palsy shook her crazy brains :
 She mumbles forth her backward pray'rs,
 An untam'd scold of fourscore years.
 About her swarm'd a num'rous brood
 Of Cats, who lank with hunger mew'd. 20

Teaz'd

Teaz'd with their cries, her choler grew,
 And thus she sputter'd : Hence, ye crew.
 Fool that I was, to entertain
 Such imps, such fiends, a hellish train !
 Had ye been never hous'd and nurs'd, 25
 I, for a witch had ne'er been curs'd.
 To you I owe, that crouds of boys
 Worry me with eternal noise ;
 Straws laid across, my pace retard,
 The horse-shoe's nail'd (each threshold's guard) 30
 The stunted broom the wenches hide,
 For fear that I should up and ride ;
 They stick with pins my bleeding seat,
 And bid me show my secret teat.

To hear you prate would vex a faint ; 35
 Who hath more reason of complaint ?
 Replies a Cat ; Let's come to proof.
 Had we ne'er starv'd beneath your roof,
 We had, like others of our race,
 In credit liv'd as beasts of chace. 40
 'Tis infamy to serve a hag ;
 Cats are thought imps, her broom a nag ;
 And boys against our lives combine,
 Because, 'tis said, your cats have nine.

However ridiculous the reality of witchcraft, or the power of performing magic arts, by entering into a compact with an evil spirit may appear to us, it was not long ago, almost generally believed. King James the First explained the practices of evil spirits, the compacts of witches, their ceremonies, the manner of detecting them, and the justice of punishing them,
 and

72 FABLE THE TWENTY-THIRD.

and in the first year of his reign, the Parliament passed a law, inflicting death on all persons invoking, employing, feeding or rewarding any evil spirit, whereby any person should be destroyed, consumed, pined or wasted, in any part of the body. The consequence of this severe law, to the terror of old women, who were more particularly marked out as such, witches were discovered in such abundance that scarcely a village was without one; and in one particular place in Lancashire, their number was supposed to be greater than that of the houses, and many innocent persons, distressed with poverty and age, were condemned to death, by legal conviction in the Courts of Justice, and as many more suffered from the credulous fury of the populace.

When Gay wrote his Fables, the belief of witchcraft, though much diminished, still prevailed, and it was not till the year 1735, that the absurd and inhuman laws against witchcraft were repealed. At present, the influence of witches is fortunately confined to Fables and Fairy Tales, and it is in Poetry alone that we hear of

“ The night hag, when call’d
“ In secret, riding through the air she comes,
“ Lur’d with the smell of infant blood, to dance
“ With Lapland Witches, while the lab’ring moon
“ Eclipses at their charms.”

MILTON’S PARADISE LOST, b. 2. l. 662.

See BLACKSTONE’S COMMENTARIES, b. 4. ch. 4.
And Remarks on MACBETH, in STEVENS’S Edition of
SHAKESPEAR.



FABLE 24.

The Butterfly and the Snail.

ALL upstarts, insolent in place,
Remind us of their vulgar race.

As in the sun-shine of the morn,
A Butterfly* (but newly born)
Sate proudly perking on a rose;
With pert conceit his bosom glows;

5

His

* No subject in Natural History, is more curious than the metamorphosis, or transformation of animals, from one state to another. There are few children who have not experienced this circumstance, in the rearing of Silkworms; the egg produces a worm; the worm, which supplies the silk, is changed into a grub or chrysalis; the grub into a moth, and the moth, soon after laying its eggs, which perpetuate the species, dies.

The Caterpillar state, is that through which every Butterfly must pass, before it arrives at its perfection and beauty. The change from Caterpillar to Butterfly, was long esteemed a sort of metamorphosis; a real change of one animal into another; but this is by no means the case. The egg of a Butterfly produces a Butterfly, with all the lineaments of its parents; only these are not disclosed at first, but for the greater part of the ani-

74 FABLE THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

His wings (all-glorious to behold)
Bedropt with azure, jet and gold,
Wide he displays; the spangled dew
Reflects his eyes, and various hue.

10

His now forgotten friend, a Snail,
Beneath his house, with slimy trail

mal's life, they are covered with a sort of case or muscular coat, in which are legs for walking, which only suit it in this state; but its mouth takes in nourishment, which is conveyed to the included animal; and after a proper time, this covering is thrown off, and the Butterfly, which all the while might be discovered in it, by an accurate observer, with the help of a microscope, appears in its proper form. Before it passes into this change, however, there requires a state of rest for the wings to harden, and the several other parts acquire their proper firmness; this is transacted when the animal lies in what is called the *nymph*, or *crysalis* state, in appearance only a lump of inanimate matter.

The care of all the Butterfly tribe, to lodge their eggs in safety, is surprising. Those whose eggs are to be hatched in a few weeks, and who are to live in the Caterpillar state, during part of the remaining summer, always lay them on the leaves of such plants as will afford a proper nourishment; but, on the contrary, those whose eggs are to remain unhatched till the following spring, always lay them on the branches of trees and shrubs, and usually are careful to select such places as are least exposed to the rigour of the ensuing season, and frequently cover them from it in an artful manner. Some make a general coat of a hairy matter over them, taking the hairs from their own bodies for that purpose; others hide themselves in hollow places in trees, and in other sheltered cells; and there live in a kind of torpid state during the whole winter, that they may deposit their eggs in the succeeding spring, at a time when there will be no severity of weather for them to combat.

Crawls

Crawls o'er the grafs; whom when he spies,
In wrath he to the gard'ner cries :

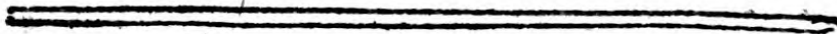
What means yon peafant's daily toil, 15
From choaking weeds to rid the foil?
Why wake you to the morning's care?
Why with news arts correct the year?
Why glows the peach with crimfon hue?
And why the plumb's inviting blue? 20
Were they to feaft his tafte defign'd,
That vermin of voracious kind?
Crush then the frow, the pilf'ring race;
So purge thy garden from difgrace.

What arrogance! the Snail reply'd; 25
How infolent is upftart pride!
Had'ft thou not thus with infult vain,
Provok'd my patience to complain,
I had conceal'd thy meaner birth,
Nor trac'd thee to the fcum of earth. 30
For fcarce nine funs have wak'd the hours,
To fwell the fruit, and paint the flow'rs,
Since I thy humbler life furvey'd,
In bafe, in fordid guife array'd;
A hideous infect, vile, unclean, 35
You dragg'd a frow and noifome train;
And from your fpider-bowels drew
Foul film, and fpun the dirty clue:
I own my humble life, good friend;
Snail was I born, and Snail fhall end. 40

76 FABLE THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

And what's a Butterfly? at best,
He's but a Caterpillar, drest;
And all thy race (a numerous seed)
Shall prove of Caterpillar breed.

This Fable exposes, from the example of the Butterfly, a failing, which is the mark of a *narrow* contracted mind; an *upstart pride*, which is puffed up with elevation, forgets its low situation, and disdainfully looks down upon former associates. It at the same time commends, from the example of the Snail, that *humility*, which is not ashamed of its own inferiority.



FABLE 25.

The Scold and the Parrot.

THE husband thus reprov'd his wife :
 Who deals in slander, lives in strife.
 Art thou the herald of disgrace,
 Denouncing war to all thy race ?
 Can nothing quell thy thunders rage, 5
 Which spares nor friend, nor sex, nor age ?
 That vixen tongue of your's, my dear,
 Alarms our neighbours far and near.
 Good Gods ! 'tis like a rolling river,
 That murm'ring flows, and flows for ever ! 10
 Ne'er tir'd, perpetual discord sowing !
 Like fame, it gathers strength by growing.

Heighday ! the flippant tongue replies,
 How solemn is the fool ! how wise !
 Is nature's choicest gift debarr'd ! 15
 Nay, frown not ; for I will be heard.

L. 10. COWLEY, speaking of a River, says, in imitation of a line in Horace,

“ Labitur et labetur, in omne volubilis ævum.

“ Which runs, and as it runs *for ever*, shall run on.”

78 FABLE THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

Women of late are finely ridden,
A parrots's privilege forbidden!
You praise his talk, his squalling song;
But wives are always in the wrong. 20
Now reputations flew in pieces
Of mothers, daughters, aunts, and nieces:
She ran the Parrot's language o'er,
Bawd, huffy, drunkard, flattern, whore;
On all the sex she vents her fury, 25
Tries and condemns without a jury.

At once the torrent of her words
Alarm'd cat, monkey, dogs and birds;
All join their forces to confound her;
Pufs spits, the monkey chatters round her; 30
The yelping cur her heels assaults;
The magpye blabs out all her faults;
Poll, in the uproar, from his cage,
With this rebuke out scream'd her rage:

A Parrot is for talking priz'd, 35
But prattling women are despis'd.
She who attacks another's honour,
Draws every living thing upon her.
Think, Madam, when you stretch your lungs,
That all your neighbours too have tongues. 40
One slander must ten thousand get,
The world with int'rest pays the debt.

FABLE 26.

The Cur and the Mastiff.

A SNEAKING Cur, the master's spy,
 Rewarded for his daily lie,
 With secret jealousies and fears,
 Set all together by the ears ;
 Poor puss to-day was in disgrace, 5
 Another cat supplied her place ;
 The hound was beat, the mastiff chid,
 The monkey was the room forbid ;
 Each to his dearest friend grew shy,
 And none could tell the reason why. 10

A plan to rob the house was laid,
 The thief with love seduc'd the maid ;
 Cajol'd the Cur and strok'd his head,
 And bought his secrecy with bread.
 He next the Mastiff's honour try'd, 15
 Whose honest jaws the bribe defy'd.
 He stretch'd his hand to proffer more,
 The surly dog his fingers tore ;

Swift ran the Cur ; with indignation,
 The master took his information ; 20
 Hang him, the villain's curs'd, he cries ;
 And round his neck the halter ties.

80 FABLE THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

The Dog his humble suit preferr'd,
And begg'd in justice to be heard.
The master fat; on either hand 25
The cited dogs confronting stand;
The Cur the bloody tale relates,
And, like a lawyer, aggravates.

Judge not unheard, the Mastiff cry'd,
But weigh the cause of either side : 30
Think not that treach'ry can be just,
Take not informers' words on trust;
They ope' their hands to ev'ry pay,
And you and me, by turns betray.

He spoke, and all the truth appear'd, 35
The Cur was hang'd, the Mastiff clear'd.

Retailers of scandal may in vain hope to escape detection; for like the Cur in this Fable, liars will always, sooner or later, be discovered and punished.



FABLE 27.

The Sick Man and the Angel.

Is there no hope? the sick Man said;
 The silent doctor shook his head,
 And took his leave, with sighs of sorrow,
 Despairing of his fee to-morrow.

When thus the man, with gasping breath: 5
 I feel the chilling wound of death;
 Since I must bid the world adieu,
 Let me my former life review:
 I grant my bargains well were made,
 But all men over-reach in trade; 10
 'Tis self-defence in each profession,
 Sure self-defence is no transgression.
 The little portion in my hands,
 By good security on lands,
 Is well increas'd. If unawares, 15
 My justice to myself and heirs,
 Hath let my debtor rot in jail,
 For want of good sufficient bail;

And after death would fain atone,
By giving what is not your own.

While there is life, there's hope, he cry'd ;
Then why such haste ? so groan'd and died. 50

The folly of posthumous charities

“ By dying misers given,
“ To bribe the rage of ill-requited Heaven.”

Pope's Eloisa to Abelard.

Is finely contrasted in an Epitaph in Swindon Church, on Mrs.
Millicent Neate :

The claims to merit from the disposal
Of transitory wealth,
Usually attends the ashes of the dead ;
It was her pleasure personally to diffuse
From a living hand
The means of happiness, to rising generations.



FABLE 28.

The Persian, the Sun, and the Cloud.

Is there a bard whom genius fires,
 Whose ev'ry thought the God inspires?
 When Envy reads the nervous lines,
 She frets, she rails, she raves, she pines;
 Her hissing snakes with venom swell;
 She calls her venal train from hell;
 The servile fiends her nods obey,
 And all CURL's authors are in pay;

5

L. 8. *Edmund Curl.* A noted bookseller, much ridiculed by Pope and Swift, and often alluded to in the *Dunciad*; he died in 1747, aged 72.

Gay has in another part of his works satirized poor Curl.

“Were Prior, Congreve, Swift and Pope unknown,
 “Poor *slander selling* CURL would be undone.”

Yet the memory of Edmund Curl, justly observes the Editor of Bishop Atterbury's Works, has been transmitted to posterity, with an obloquy he ill deserved. Whatever were his demerits, they were amply atoned for, by his indefatigable industry in preserving our national remains: nor did he publish a single volume, but what, amidst a profusion of baser metal contained some precious ore, some valuable reliques, which future collectors could no where else have found.

Note in the Advertisement to the Works of Bishop Atterbury.

Fame

Fame calls up calumny and spite,
Thus shadow owes its birth to light. 10

As prostrate to the God of day,
With heart devout, a Persian lay;
His invocation thus begun :

Parent of light, all-seeing sun,
Prolific beam, whose rays dispense 15
The various gifts of providence,
Accept our praise, our daily pray'r,
Smile on our fields, and blefs the year.
A Cloud who mock'd his grateful tongue,
The day with sudden darknefs hung ; 20
With pride and envy swell'd aloud,
A voice thus thunder'd from the Cloud:

Weak is this gaudy god of thine,
Whom I, at will, forbid to shine.
Shall I nor vows, nor incense know ? 25
Where praise is due, the praise bestow.

With fervent zeal the Persian mov'd,
Thus the proud calumny reprov'd :

L. 12. Many of the antient nations worshipped the sun as the Supreme Being, but the Persians particularly.

L. 15. *Prolific beam.* Fruitful.

Prior also applies the word in the same sense to the sun :

“ From the middle of the world
“ The sun's *prolific* rays are hurl'd.”

It

86 FABLE. THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.

It was that God who claims my prayer,
Who gave thee birth and rais'd thee there ; 30
When o'er his beams the veil is thrown,
Thy substance is but plainer shown.
A passing gale, a puff of wind
Dispels thy thickest troops combin'd.

The gale arose ; the vapour toft 35
(The sport of winds) in air was loft ;
The glorious orb the day refines.
Thus envy breaks, thus merit shines.

L. 30. A cloud is nothing more than a vapour, drawn from
the earth by the sun.

L. 38. The moral of this Fable is as just, as the description
is sublime: it shews that true greatness will always shine forth
in the midst of the storms of life, and will finally overcome
that *base envy*, which according to the expression of the Poet of
Nature,

—————" Withereth at another's joy,
" And hates that excellence it cannot reach."

Thomson's Seasons.



FABLE 29.

The Fox at the Point of Death.

A fox, in life's extreme decay,
 Weak, sick and faint, expiring lay;
 All appetite had left his maw,
 And age disarm'd his mumbling jaw.
 His num'rous race around him stand
 To learn their dying fire's command:
 He rais'd his head with whining moan,
 And thus was heard the feeble tone:

5

Ah, sons! from evil ways depart:
 My crimes lie heavy on my heart.
 See, see, the murder'd geese appear!
 Why are those bleeding turkeys there?
 Why all around this cackling train,
 Who haunt my ears for chickens slain?

10

The hungry Foxes round them star'd,
 And for the promis'd feast prepar'd.

15

Where, Sir, is all this dainty cheer?
 Nor turkey, goose, nor hen is here.

These

88 FABLE THE TWENTY-NINTH.

These are the phantoms of your brain,
And your sons lick their lips in vain. 20

O gluttons ! says the drooping fire,
Restrain inordinate desire.
Your liqu'rish taste you shall deplore,
When peace of conscience is no more.
Does not the hound betray our pace ? 25
And gins and guns destroy our race ?
Thieves dread the searching eye of pow'r,
And never feel the quiet hour.
Old age (which few of us shall know)
Now puts a period to my woe. 30
Would you true happiness attain,
Let honesty your passions rein;
So live in credit and esteem,
And the good name you lost, redeem.

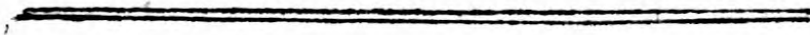
The counsel's good, a Fox replies, 35
Could we perform what you advise.
Think what our ancestors have done ;
A line of thieves from son to son :
To us descends the long disgrace,
And infamy hath mark'd our race. 40
Though we, like harmless sheep, should feed,
Honest in thought, in word, and deed ;
Whatever hen-roost is decreas'd,
We shall be thought to share the feast.
The charge shall never be believ'd, 45
A lost good name is ne'er retriev'd.

Nay

Nay, then replies the feeble Fox,
(But hark! I hear a hen that clocks)
Go, but be mod'rate in your food;
A chicken too might do me good.

50

This Fable exposes the fatal consequences of inveterate habit. Whenever any darling sin has taken full possession of our minds, it generally becomes a ruling passion, and accompanies us to the grave. Hypocrisy may, on a death bed, affect to condemn; yet a long indulged habit will gain the victory, and lay bare the heart without disguise.



FABLE 30.

The Setting Dog and the Partridge.

THE ranging Dog the stubble tries,
 And searches ev'ry breeze that flies;
 The scent grows warm; with cautious fear
 He creeps, and points the covey near;
 The men, in silence far behind,
 Conscious of game the net unbind.

5

A Partridge, with experience wise,
 The fraudulent preparation spies;
 She mocks their toils, alarms her brood;
 The covey springs, and seeks the wood;
 But ere her certain wing she tries,
 Thus to the creeping spaniel cries:

10

Thou fawning slave to man's deceit,
 Thou pimp of luxury, sneaking cheat,
 Of thy whole species thou disgrace,
 Dogs should disown thee of their race!
 For if I judge their native parts,
 They're born with honest open hearts;
 And, ere they serv'd man's wicked ends,
 Were gen'rous foes, or real friends.

15

20

When

When thus the Dog with scornful smile :
 Secure of wing, thou dar'st revile,
 Clowns are to polish'd manners blind,
 How ign'rant is the rustic mind !
 My worth, sagacious courtiers see, 25
 And to preferment rise, like me.
 The thriving pimp, who beauty sets,
 Hath oft' enhanc'd a nation's debts :
 Friend sets his friend, without regard ;
 And ministers his skill reward. 30
 Thus train'd by man, I learnt his ways,
 And growing favour feasts my days.

I might have guess'd, the Partridge said,
 The place where you were train'd and fed ;
 Servants are apt, and in a trice 35
 Ape to a hair their master's vice.
 You came from court, you say. Adieu,
 She said, and to the covey flew.

L. 35. As inferiors are always too apt to copy their superiors, it is incumbent on persons of exalted stations, to be cautious, lest their examples should encourage those below them in acts of folly or wickedness.

—————" From folks, whose situation
 " Makes them the mark of observation,
 " Example oft gives folly rise ;
 " And imitation clings to vice."

Lloyd's Familiar Epistle: Johnson's Poets, vol. 68, p. 271.

FABLE 31.

The Universal Apparition.

A RAKE, by ev'ry passion rul'd
With evry vice his youth had cool'd:
Disease his tainted blood assails;
His spirits droop, his vigour fails:
With secret ills at home he pines,
And, like infirm old age, declines.

5

As, twing'd with pain, he penfive fits,
And raves, and prays, and swears by fits;
A ghastly Phantom, lean and wan,
Before him rose, and thus began:

10

My name, perhaps, hath reach'd your ear;
Attend, and be advis'd by Care.
Nor love, nor honour, wealth, nor pow'r,
Can give the heart a chearful hour,
When health is lost. Be timely wise:
With health all taste of pleasure flies.

15

Thus said, the phantom disappears,
The wary counsel wak'd his fears:
He now from all excess abstains,
With physick purifies his veins;

20
And

And, to procure a sober life,
Resolves to venture on a wife.

But now again the Sprite ascends,
Where'er he walks his ear attends;
Infinuates that beauty's frail, 25
That perseverance must prevail;
With jealousies his brain inflames,
And whispers all her lovers names.
In other hours he represents
His household charge, his annual rents, 30
Increasing debts, perplexing duns,
And nothing for his younger sons.

Strait all his thought to gain he turns,
And with the thirst of lucre burns.
But when possess'd of fortune's store, 35
The Spectre haunts him more and more,
Sets want and misery in view,
Bold thieves, and all the murd'ring crew:
Alarms him with eternal frights,
Infests his dream, or wakes his nights. 40
How shall he chase this hideous guest?
Pow'r may perhaps protect his rest.
To pow'r he rose. Again the Sprite
Besets him morning, noon and night?
Talks of ambition's tott'ring seat 45
How Envy persecutes the great;
Of rival hate, of treach'rous friends
And what disgrace his fall attends.

94 FABLE THE THIRTY-SECOND.

The court he quits to fly from care,
And seeks the peace of rural air : 50
His groves, his fields, amus'd his hours :
He prun'd his trees, he rais'd his flowers.
But Care again his steps pursues ;
Warns him of blasts, of blighting dews,
Of plund'ring insects, snails and rains, 55
And droughts that starv'd the labour'd pains.
Abroad, at home, the Spectre's there ;
In vain we seek to fly from Care.
At length he thus the Ghost address :
Since thou must be my constant guest, 60
Be kind and follow me no more ;
For Care by right should go before.



F A B L E 32.

The two Owls and the Sparrow.

Two formal Owls together sat,
 Conferring thus in solemn chat :
 How is the modern taste decay'd!
 Where's the respect to wisdom paid ?
 Our worth the Grecian sages knew ; 5
 They gave our fires the honour due ;
 They weigh'd the dignity of fowls,
 And pry'd into the depth of owls.
 Athens, the seat of learned fame,
 With gen'ral voice rever'd our name ; 10
 On merit, title was conferr'd ;
 And all ador'd th' Athenian bird.

Brother, you reason well, replies
 The solemn mate, with half-shut eyes ;
 Right. Athens was the seat of learning, 15
 And truly wisdom is discerning.

L. 12. *Athenian bird.* The Owl was much respected at Athens, as being the favourite bird of Pallas or Minerva, the protectress of the city.

Besides,

Besides, on Pallas' helm we fit,
 The type and ornament of wit ;
 But now, alas ! we're quite neglected,
 And a pert Sparrow's more respected.

20

A Sparrow, who was lodg'd beside,
 O'erhears them footh each other's pride,
 And thus he nimbly vents his heat :

Who meets a fool must find conceit.
 I grant, you were at Athens grac'd,
 And on Minerva's helm were plac'd :
 But ev'ry bird that wings the sky,
 Except an Owl, can tell you why.
 From hence they taught their schools to know
 How false we judge by outward show ;
 That we should never looks esteem,
 Since fools as wise as you might seem.
 Would ye contempt and scorn avoid,
 Let your vain-glory be destroy'd :
 Humble your arrogance of thought,
 Pursue the ways by Nature taught ;
 So shalt you find delicious fare,
 And grateful farmers praise your care ;
 So shall sleek mice your chase reward,
 And no keen cat find more regard.

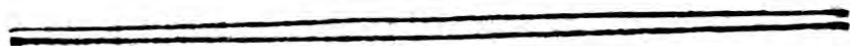
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L. 17. The figure of an Owl was usually placed on the helmet of Pallas or Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom.



FABLE 33.

The Courtier and Proteus.

WHENE'ER a Courtier's out of place,
 The country shelters his disgrace;
 Where, doom'd to exercise and health,
 His house and gardens own his wealth;
 He builds new schemes in hope to gain
 The plunder of another reign;
 Like Philip's son, would fain be doing,
 And fights for other realms to ruin.

5

As one of these (without his wand)
 Pensive, along the winding strand
 Employ'd the solitary hour,
 In projects to regain his pow'r;
 The waves in spreading circles ran,
 Proteus arose, and thus began:

10

L. 7. *Philip's son, &c.* Alexander, the son of Philip, King of Macedon, who is said to have *fighed* and shed tears because he had no more *realms* or worlds to conquer.

See also Fable 15, l. 17 to 20, in part 2.

"When Philip's son," &c.

F

Came

98 FABLE THE THIRTY-THIRD.

Came you from court? For in your mien 15
A self-important air is seen.

He frankly own'd his friends had trick'd him,
And how he fell his party's victim.

Know, says the God, by matchless skill,
I change to ev'ry shape at will; 20
But yet I'm told at court you see
Those who presume to rival me.

Thus said; a snake with hideous trail,
Proteus extends his scaly mail.

Know, says the man, though proud in place, 25
All Courtiers are of reptile race.
Like you, they take that dreadful form,
Bask in the sun, and fly the storm;
With malice hiss, with envy glote,
And, for convenience, change their coat; 30
With new-got lustre rear their head,
Though on a dunghill born and bred.

L. 14. *Proteus*. One of the Heathen Deities, the son of Neptune and Phænice; and was endowed with the power of foretelling future events, and could transform himself into any shape. Homer has given an account of his various transformations, in the fourth book of the *Odyssey*; and Virgil, in the fourth book of the *Georgics*.

L. 29. *Glote*, or *glout*, means to look fullen.

See Fable 14, l. 27.

Sudden

Sudden the God a lion stands ;
 He shakes his mane, he spurns the sands ;
 Now a fierce lynx, with fiery glare, 35
 A wolf, an ass, a fox, a bear.

Had I ne'er liv'd at court, he cries,
 Such transformation might surprize ;
 But there, in quest of daily game,
 Each able Courtier acts the same. 40
 Wolves, lions, linxes, while in place,
 Their friends and fellows are their chace.
 They play the bear's and fox's part ;
 Now rob by force, now steal with art.
 They sometimes in the senate bray ; 45
 Or, chang'd again to beasts of prey,
 Down from the lion to the ape,
 Practise the frauds of ev'ry shape.

So said ; upon the God he flies,
 In cords the struggling captive ties. 50

Now, Proteus, now, (to truth compell'd)
 Speak, and confess thy art excell'd.
 Use strength, surprize, or what you will,
 The Courtier finds evasions still :
 Not to be bound by any ties, 55
 And never forc'd to leave his lies.

When it is considered that Gay wrote his Fables by desire of Queen Caroline, and for the instruction of the Duke of Cumberland, it must be confessed that he cannot be accused of flattery to Courts or Courtiers. On the contrary he takes every occasion to censure courts and rail at courtiers; an example of which occurs in this Fable, as well as in that of the Setting Dog and the Partridge; a proof of his spirit at least, if not of his discretion.

FABLE 34.

The Mastiffs.

THOSE who in quarrels interpose,
Must often wipe a bloody nose.

A Mastiff of true English blood,
Lov'd fighting better than his food.
When dogs were snarling for a bone, 5
He long'd to make the war his own;
And often found (when two contend)
To interpose obtain'd his end.
He glory'd in his limping pace,
The scars of honor seam'd his face; 10
In v'ry limb a gash appears;
And frequent fights retrench'd his ears.

As, on a time, he heard from far,
Two dogs engag'd in noisy war;
Away he scours and lays about him, 15
Resolv'd no fray should be without him.

Forth from his yard a tanner flies,
And to the bold intruder cries:

A cudgel

A cudgel shall correct your manners ;
 Whence sprung this cursed hate to tanners ? 20
 While on my dog you vent your spite,
 Sirrah ! 'tis me you dare not bite.
 To see the battle thus perplex'd,
 With equal rage a butcher vex'd,
 Hoarse-screaming from the circled crowd, 25
 To the curs'd Mastiff cries aloud.

Both Hockley-hole and Marybone
 The combats of my dog have known.
 He ne'er, like bullies, coward-hearted,
 Attacks in public, to be parted ; 30
 Think not, rash fool, to share his fame :
 Be his the honor or the shame.

Thus said, they swore, and rav'd like thunder ;
 Then dragg'd their fasten'd dogs afunder ;
 While clubs and kicks from every side 35
 Rebounded from the Mastiff's hide.

All reeking now with sweat and blood,
 Awhile the parted warriors stood ;
 Then pour'd upon the meddling foe,
 Who worried, howl'd, and sprawl'd below. 40
 He rose, and limping from the fray,
 By both sides mangled, sneak'd away.

L. 27. *Hockley-Hole and Marybone*, were formerly celebrated places for bull-baitings.

FABLE 35.

*The Barley-mow and the Dungbill.**

How many faucy airs we meet
From Temple-bar to Aldgate-street ?
Proud rogues, who shar'd the South-Sea prey,
And sprung, like mushrooms in a day !

* This Fable condemns ingratitude, which Shakespear, in *Lear*, justly calls a hideous monster, and which Johnson reprobates in no less severe terms :

“ No depravity of the mind has been more frequently or justly censured than ingratitude. There is indeed sufficient reason for looking on those that can return evil for good, and repay kindness and assistance with hatred or neglect, as corrupted beyond the common degrees of wickedness; nor will he, who has once been clearly detected in acts of injury to his benefactor, deserve to be numbered among social beings; he has endeavoured to destroy confidence, to intercept sympathy, and to turn every man's attention wholly on himself.

L. 3. *Who shar'd the South-Sea prey.* Gay alludes in this line to the South Sea Company first established in 1711. The Stock was in such estimation, that it sold in 1720 for more than 1000 per cent, that is, a hundred pounds in stock sold for a thousand pounds in money. But the bubble soon burst, and the Stock fell again below par. Many persons gained, and others lost large fortunes.—Poor Gay himself was a great sufferer.

They

They think it mean, to condescend
 To know a brother or a friend ;
 They blush to hear a mother's name,
 And by their pride expose their shame.

5

As cros his yard, at early day,
 A careful farmer took his way ;
 He stopp'd, and leaning on his fork,
 Observ'd the flail's incessant work.
 In thought he measur'd all his store,
 His geese, his hogs, he number'd o'er ;
 In fancy weigh'd the fleeces shorn,
 And multiplied the next year's corn.

10

15

A Barley-mow, which stood beside,
 Thus to its musing master cried :

Say, good Sir, is it fit or right
 To treat me with neglect and slight ?
 Me, who contribute to your cheer,
 And raise your mirth with ale and beer ;
 Why thus insulted, thus disgrac'd,
 And that vile dunghill near me plac'd ?
 Are those poor sweepings of a groom,
 That filthy fight, that nauseous fume,
 Meet objects here ? Command it hence :
 A thing so mean must give offence.

20

25

The humble Dunghill thus replied,
 Thy master hears, and mocks thy pride :

30

Insult

104 FABLE THE THIRTY-FIFTH.

Infult not thus the meek and low ;
In me thy benefactor know ;
My warm assistance gave thee birth
Or thou hadst perish'd low in earth ;
But upstarts to support their station,
Cancel at once all obligation.

35



FABLE 36.

Pythagoras and the Countryman.

PYTHAGORAS rose at early dawn,
 By soaring meditation drawn,
 To breathe the fragrance of the day,
 Through flow'ry fields he took his way.
 In musing contemplation warm, 5
 His steps misled him to a farm,

L. 1. *Pythagoras*. A Grecian philosopher. The place and exact time of his birth is uncertain. He is usually supposed to have been born about the 47th Olympiad or 590 years before Christ; and having settled in Samos, an island in the Archipelago, he is usually esteemed a native of that place. He travelled in quest of knowledge through Phenicia, Chaldea, and India, but particularly settled for several years in Egypt, where he learned his principal doctrines. Meeting with small encouragement on his return to Samos, he passed over into Italy about the time of Tarquin the Proud, the last King of Rome, and opened a school at a city in the Gulf of Tarentum, in the present kingdom of Naples. He taught the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, or that the souls of men after their decease pass into the bodies of men or animals, and therefore forbade the slaying of animals and the eating of flesh, to which Gay alludes in this Fable.

F. 5.

Where,

106 FABLE THE THIRTY-SIXTH.

Where, on the ladder's topmost round,
A Peasant stood; the hammer's found
Shook the weak barn. Say, friend, what care
Calls for thy honest labour there ? 10

The Clown, with furly voice replies,
Vengeance aloud for justice cries,
This Kite, by daily rapine fed,
My hens annoy, my turkeys dread :
At length his forfeit life hath paid ; 15
See on the wall his wings display'd ;
Here nail'd, a terror to his kind,
My fowls shall future safety find ;
My yard the thriving poultry feed,
And my barn's refuse fat the breed. 20

Friend, says the Sage, thy doom is wise ;
For public good the murd'rer dies.
But if these tyrants of the air
Demand a sentence so severe,
Think how the glutton man devours ; 25
What bloody feasts regale his hours !
O! impudence of pow'r and might,
Thus to condemn a hawk or kite ;
When thou, perhaps, carniv'rous finner,
Hadst pullets yesterday for dinner ! 30

Hold, cried the Clown, with passion heated,
Shall kites and men alike be treated ?
When heaven the world with creatures stor'd,
Man was ordain'd their sov'reign lord.

Thus

Thus tyrants boast, the Sage replied, 35
Whose murders spring from power and pride.
Own then this manlike kite is slain
Thy greater lux'ry to sustain;
For * " Petty rogues submit to fate,
" That great ones may enjoy their state." 40

* Garth's Dispensary.



FABLE 37.

The Farmer's Wife and the Raven.

WHY are those tears? Why droops your head?
 Is then your other husband dead?
 Or does a worse disgrace betide?
 Hath no one since his death applied?

Alas! you know the cause too well: 5
 The falt is spilt, to me it fell:
 Then, to contribute to my loss,
 My knife and fork were laid acrofs;
 On Friday too! the day I dread;
 Would I were safe at home in bed! 10
 Last night (I vow to heav'n 'tis true)
 Bounce from the fire a coffin flew;
 Next post some fatal news shall tell,
 God send my Cornish friends be well!

Unhappy widow, cease thy tears, 15
 Nor feel affliction in thy fears,
 Let not thy stomach be suspended;
 Eat now, and weep when dinner's ended;

L. 12. *A coffin flew.* It is a vulgar superstition that when a coal bounces from a fire, and seems to bear the shape of a coffin, that it predicts the death of some relation or friend.

And

And when the butler clears the table,
For thy desert, I'll read my fable. 20

Betwixt her swagg'ring pannier's load,
A Farmer's Wife to market rode ;
And jogging on, with thoughtful care,
Summ'd up the profits of her ware ;
When starting from her silver dream, 25
Thus far and wide was heard her scream :

That Raven on yon left hand oak,
(Curse on his ill-betiding croak)
Bodes me no good. No more she said,
When poor blind Ball, with stumbling tread, 30
Fell prone ; o'erturn'd the pannier lay,
And her mash'd eggs bestrow'd the way.
She, sprawling in the yellow road,
Rail'd, swore, and curs'd : Thou croaking toad,
A murrain take thy whoreson throat ! 35
I knew misfortune in the note.

Dame, quoth the Raven, spare your oaths,
Unclench your fist, and wipe your cloaths.
But why on me those curses thrown ?
Goody, the fault was all your own ; 40
For had you laid this brittle ware
On Dun, the old sure-footed mare,
Though all the Ravens of the hundred,
With croaking had your tongue out-thunder'd,

L 43. *Of the hundred.* Cantons, or districts, into which several of the counties of England are divided

Sure-

110 FABLE THE THIRTY-SEVENTH.

Sure-footed Dun had kept his legs, 45
And you, good woman, fav'd your eggs.

This Fable ridicules those idle notions which predict sinister events from common occurrences, and that absurd superstition called second-sight. Nothing is more common or unjust than for people to impute their disasters to super-natural causes, which are solely occasioned by their own faults. Thus the Old Woman in the Fable, accuses the Raven of having portended the loss of her *brittle ware* by his croaking, whereas it was owing entirely to her own negligence.

Addison has, in the seventh Paper of the Spectator, ridiculed these superstitious notions with great humour :

“ I have known the shooting of a star spoil a night's rest; and have seen a man in love grow pale and lose his appetite at the plucking of a merry-thought. A screech-owl at midnight has alarmed a family more than a band of robbers; nay, the voice of a cricket has struck more terror than the roaring of a lion. There is nothing so inconsiderable, which may not appear dreadful to an imagination that is filled with omens and prognostics. A rusty nail, or a crooked pin, shoot up into prodigies.”

He closes the paper with some beautiful Moral Reflections,

“ It is the chief concern of wise men to retrench the evils of life by the reasonings of philosophy; so it is the employment of fools to multiply them by the sentiments of superstition.

“ For my own part, I should be very much troubled were I endowed with this divining quality, though it should inform me truly of every thing that should befall me. I would not anticipate the relish of any happiness, nor feel the weight of any misery, before it actually arrives.

“ I know but one way of fortifying my soul against these gloomy presages of mind; and that is, by securing to myself the friendship and protection of that Being who disposes of events, and governs futurity.—Though I know neither the time, nor the nature of the death I am to die, I am not at all solicitous about it, because I am sure that he knows them both, and that he will not fail to comfort and support me under them.”

FABLE 38.

The Turkey and the Ant.

IN other men we faults can spy,
 And blame the mote that dims their eye:
 Each little speck and blemish find,
 To our own stronger errors blind.

A Turkey tir'd of common food, 5
 Porfook the barn, and fought the wood;
 Behind her ran her infant train,
 Collecting here and there a grain.

L. 2. The moral of this Fable is most excellent. It is founded on the first principles of reason and morality, not to be severe in condemning others for faults which we ourselves commit.

Gay in using the word *mote*, or small particle of matter, certainly alludes to that passage in the Scripture, *Matt. 7. v. 3, 4.*

“ And why beholdest thou the *mote* that is in thy brother's eye,
 “ but confidereft not the beam that is in thine own eye.

“ Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the
 “ mote out of thine eye; and behold a beam is in thine own
 “ eye?

“ Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own
 “ eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out
 “ of thy brother's eye.”

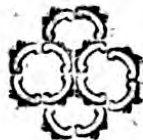
Draw

112 FABLE THE THIRTY-EIGHTH.

Draw near, my birds, the mother cries,
This hill delicious fare supplies ; 10
Behold the busy negro race,
See millions blacken all the place:
Fear not. Like me with freedom eat ;
An Ant is most delightful meat.
How blefs'd, how envy'd were our life, 15
Could we but 'scape the poult'rer's knife!
But man, curs'd man, on Turkey preys,
And Christmas shortens all our days :
Sometimes with oysters we combine,
Sometimes assist the sav'ry chine ; 20
From the low peasant to the lord,
The Turkey smokes on ev'ry board ;
Sure men for gluttony are curs'd,
Of the sev'n deadly sins the worst.

An Ant who climb'd beyond her reach, 25
Thus answer'd from the neighb'ring beech:
Ere you remark another's sin,
Bid thy own conscience look within ;
Controul thy more voracious bill,
Nor for a breakfast nations kill. 30

L. 11. *Negro race*, The Ants so called from their dark colour.



FABLE 39.

The Father and Jupiter.

THE Man to Jove his suit preferr'd ;
 He begg'd a wife ; his prayer was heard.
 Jove wonder'd at his bold addressing :
 For how precarious is the blessing.

A wife he takes ; and now for heirs
 Again he worries heaven with prayers.
 Jove nods assent. Two hopeful boys
 And a fine girl reward his joys.

Now more solicitous he grew,
 And set their future lives in view ;
 He saw that all respect and duty
 Were paid to wealth, to power, and beauty.

Once more, he cries, accept my prayer ;
 Make my lov'd progeny thy care.
 Let my first hope, my fav'rite boy,
 All fortune's richest gifts enjoy.
 My next with strong ambition fire ;
 May favor teach him to aspire ;
 Till he the step of power ascend,
 And courtiers to their idol bend.

20
 With

114 FABLE THE THIRTY-NINTH.

With every grace, with every charm,
My daughter's perfect features arm.
If Heav'n approve, a Father's blest'd:
Jove smiles, and grants his full request.

The first, a miser at the heart, 25
Studious of ev'ry griping art,
Heaps hoards on hoards, with anxious pain;
And all his life devotes to gain.
He feels no joy, his cares encrease,
He neither wakes nor sleeps in peace; 30
In fancied want (a wretch compleat)
He starves, and yet he dares not eat.

The next to sudden honors grew:
The thriving art of courts he knew:
He reach'd the height of power and place; 35
Then fell, the victim of disgrace..

Beauty with early bloom supplies
His daughter's cheek, and points her eyes.
The vain coquette each suit disdains,
And glories in her lover's pains. 40
With age she fades, each lover flies,
Contemn'd, forlorn, she pines and dies.

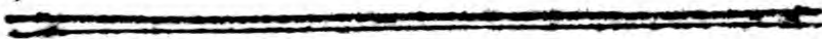
When Jove the Father's grief survey'd,
And heard him Heav'n and fate upbraid,
Thus spoke the God: By outward show, 45
Men judge of happiness and woe:

Shall

Shall ignorance of good and ill
Dare to direct th' eternal will ?
Seek virtue ; and, of that possest,
To Providence resign the rest.*

50

* The vanity of human wishes ridiculed in this Fable, is finely displayed in the tenth satire of Juvenal, of which Dr. Johnson has given so excellent a translation, or rather imitation.



FABLE 40.

The Two Monkeys.

THE learned, full of inward pride,
 The fops of outward show deride ;
 The Fop, with learning at defiance,
 Scoffs at the pedant and the science :
 The Don, a formal solemn strutler, 5
 Despises Monsieur's airs and flutter ;
 While Monsieur mocks the formal fool,
 Who looks, and speaks, and walks by rule.
 Britain, a medley of the twain,
 As pert as France, as grave as Spain ; 10
 In fancy wiser than the rest,
 Laughs at them both, of both the jest.
 Is not the poet's chiming close
 Censur'd by all the sons of prose ?
 While bards of quick imagination 15
 Despise the sleepy prose narration.

L. 5. *The Don.* A Spaniard, because Don is a common title in Spain, prefixed to the names of persons of great family ; as Lord is in England.

L. 7. *Monsieur.* The Frenchman.

Men

Men laugh at apes, they men contemn :
For what are we but apes to them ?

Two Monkeys went to Southwark fair,
No critics had a sourer air : 30
They forc'd their way through draggled folks,
Who gap'd to catch Jack-Pudding's jokes ;
Then took their tickets for the show,
And got by chance, the foremost row.
To see their grave, observing face, 25
Provok'd a laugh through all the place.

Brother, says Pug, and turn'd his head,
The rabble's monstrously ill-bred.

Now through the booth loud hisses ran ;
Nor ended till the show began. 30
The tumbler whirls the flip-flap round,
With somersets he shakes the ground ;

L. 22. *Jack Pudding*. Or the Merry Andrew, who usually attends a Mountebank at fairs and wakes, and who is also mentioned by Gay in his sixth Pastoral, l. 83.

“ The mountebank now treads the stage, and sells
“ His pills, his balsams, and his ague spells :
“ Now o'er and o'er the nimble tumbler springs ;
“ And on the rope the ventrous maiden swings,
“ *Jack Pudding* in his party-coloured jacket
“ Tosses the glove, and jokes at ev'ry packet.

L. 31. *Flip-flap*. A kind of rattle.

L. 32. *Somersets*. Thus explained in Johnson, “ A leap by
“ which a jumper throws himself from a height, and turns over
“ his head.”

The

The cord beneath the dancer springs;
 Aloft in air the vaulter swings;
 Distorted now, now prone depends, 35
 Now through his twisted arms ascends;
 The crowd, in wonder and delight,
 With clapping hands applaud the fight.

With smiles, quoth Pug, if pranks like these
 The giant apes of reason please, 40
 How would they wonder at our arts;
 They must adore us for our parts.
 High on the twig I've seen you cling;
 Play, twist and turn in airy ring:
 How can those clumsy things like me, 45
 Fly with a bound from tree to tree?
 But yet, by this applause, we find
 These emulators of our kind
 Discern our worth, our parts regard,
 Who our mean mimics thus reward. 50

Brother, the grinning Mate replies,
 In this I grant that man is wise.
 While good example they pursue,
 We must allow some praise is due;
 But when they strain beyond their guide, 55
 I laugh to scorn the mimic pride.
 For how fantastic is the fight,
 To meet men always bolt upright,
 Because we sometimes walk on two!
 I hate the imitating crew. 60

FABLE 41.

The Owl and the Farmer.

AN Owl of grave deport and mien,
 Who (like the Turk) was seldom seen,
 Within a barn had chose his station,
 As fit for prey and contemplation.
 Upon a beam aloft he fits, 5
 And nods, and seems to think by fits.
 So have I seen a man of news,
 Or Post-boy, or Gazette peruse ;
 Smoke, nod, and talk, with voice profound,
 And fix the fate of Europe round; 10
 Sheaves pil'd on sheaves, hid all the floor.
 At dawn of morn, to view his store
 The Farmer came. The hooting guest
 His self-important thus exprest:

L. 8. *Post-Boy*. Formerly the name of a newspaper.

Gay in another work couples the *Post-boy* and the *Gazette* together:

A party late at Cambray met,
 Which drew all Europe's eyes,
 'Twas call'd in *Post-boy* and *Gazette*
 The Quadruple allies.

Ballad on Quadrille, Johnson's Poets, v. 36, p. 275.

Reason

Reason in man is mere pretence : 15
 How weak, how shallow is his sense ?
 To treat with scorn the Bird of Night,
 Declares his folly, or his spite.
 Then too, how partial is his praise !
 The lark's, the Linnet's chirping lays 20
 To his ill-judging ears are fine ;
 And nightingales are all divine.
 But the more knowing feather'd race
 See wisdom stamp'd upon my face.
 Whene'er to visit light I deign, 25
 What flocks of fowl compose my train !
 Like slaves they croud my flight behind,
 And own me of superior kind

The Farmer laugh'd and thus replied :
 Thou dull important lump of pride, 30
 Dar'ft thou with that harsh grating tongue,
 Depreciate birds of warbling song ?
 Indulge thy spleen. Know men and fowl
 Regard thee, as thou art—an Owl.
 Besides, proud Blockhead, be not vain 35
 Of what thou call'ft thy slaves and train.
 Few follow wisdom or her rules ;
 Fools in derision follow fools.



FABLE 42.

The Jugglers.

A JUGGLER long through all the town,
 Had rais'd his fortune and renown ;
 You'd think (so far his art transcends)
 The devil at his fingers ends.

Vice heard his fame, she read his bill ;
 Convinc'd of his inferior skill, 5
 She fought his booth, and from the crowd
 Defied the man of art aloud.

Is this then he so fam'd for flight ?
 Can this slow bungler cheat your fight ? 10
 Dares he with me dispute the prize ?
 I leave it to impartial eyes.

Provok'd, the Juggler cried, 'Tis done.
 In science I submit to none.

Thus said. The cups and balls he play'd ; 15
 By turns, this here, that there, convey'd.
 The cards obedient to his words,
 Are by a fillip turn'd to birds.

G

His

122 FABLE THE FORTY-SECOND.

His little boxes change the grain :
Trick after trick deludes the train. 20
He shakes his bag, he shews all fair ;
His fingers spread, and nothing there ;
Then bids it rain with showers of gold,
And now his iv'ry eggs are told.
But when from thence the hen he draws, 25
Amaz'd spectators hum applause.

Vice now step'd forth, and took the place
With all the forms of his grimace.

This magic looking-glass, she cries,
(There hand it round) will charm your eyes. 30
Each eager eye the sight desir'd,
And ev'ry man himself admir'd.

Next, to a senator addressing ;
See this bank-note ; observe the blessing ;
Breath on the Bill. Heigh, pass ! 'Tis gone, 35
Upon his lips a padlock shone.
A second puff the magic broke ;
The padlock vanish'd, and he spoke.

Twelve bottles rang'd upon the board,
All full, with heady liquor stor'd, 40
By clean conveyance disappear,
And now two bloody swords are there.

A purse she to a thief expos'd ;
At once his ready fingers clos'd.

He

He opes his fist, the treasure's fled ;
He sees an halter in its stead.

45

She bids ambition hold a wand ;
He grasps a hatchet in his hand.

A box of charity she shows ;
Blow here ; and a church-warden blows,
'Tis vanish'd with conveyance neat,
And on the table smokes a treat.

50

She shakes the dice, the board she knocks,
And from all pockets fills her box.

She next a meagre rake address.
This Picture see ; her shape, her breast !
What youth, and what inviting eyes !
Hold her, and have her. With surprize,
His hand expos'd a box of pills,
And a loud laugh proclaim'd his ills.

55

60

A counter, in a miser's hand,
Grew twenty guineas at command.
She bids his heir the sum retain,
And 'tis a counter now again.
A guinea with her touch you see
Take ev'ry shape, but Charity ;
And not one thing you saw, or drew,
But chang'd from what was first in view.

65

124 FABLE THE FORTY-SECOND.

The Juggler now in grief of heart,
With this submission own'd her art :

70

Can I such matchless flight withstand !
How practice hath improved your hand !
But now and then I cheat the throng ;
You ev'ry day, and all day long.



FABLE 43.

The Council of Horses.

UPON a time a Neighing Steed,
 Who graz'd among a numerous breed,
 With mutiny had fir'd the train,
 And spread diffention through the plain.
 On matters that concern'd the state. 5
 The council met in grand debate.
 A Colt, whose eye-balls flam'd with ire,
 Elate with strength and youthful fire,
 In haste stept forth before the rest,
 And thus the list'ning throng address: 10

Good gods! how abject is our race,
 Condemn'd to slav'ry and disgrace!
 Shall we our servitude retain
 Because our fires have borne the chain?
 Consider, friends, your strength and might, 15
 'Tis conquest to assert your right.
 How cumbrous is the gilded coach!
 The pride of man is our reproach.
 Were we design'd for daily toil,
 To drag the plough-share through the soil? 20

To sweat in harness through the road ?
 To groan beneath the carrier's load ?
 How feeble are the two legg'd kind !
 What force is in our nerves combin'd !
 Shall then our nobler jaws submit
 To foam and champ the galling bit.
 Shall haughty man my back bestride ?
 Shall the sharp spur provoke my side ?
 Forbid it, heav'ns ! Reject the rein ;
 Your shame, your infamy disdain.
 Let him the Lion first controul,
 And still the Tyger's famish'd growl !
 Let us, like them, our freedom claim !
 And make him tremble at our name.

25

30

A general nod approv'd the cause,
 And all the circle neigh'd applause.

35

When lo ! with grave and solemn pace,
 A Steed advanc'd before the race,
 With age and long experience wise ;
 Around he casts his thoughtful eyes,
 And, to the murmurs of the train,
 Thus spoke the Nestor of the plain :

40

When I had health and strength, like you,
 The toils of servitude I knew.

L. 42. *The Nestor of the plain.* The oldest horse, from *Nestor*, King of Pylos, a Grecian hero, and the oldest warrior at the siege of Troy. He is said to have lived three ages; and his eloquence was so great, that Homer describes his words, dropping from his lips like honey.

Now

Now grateful man rewards my pains,
And gives me all these wide domains.

45

At will I crop the year's increase;
My latter life is rest and peace.

I grant to man we lend our pains,
And aid him to correct the plains.

50

But doth not he divide the care,
Through all the labours of the year?

How many thousand structures rise,
To fence us from inclement skies!

For us he bears the sultry day,

55

And stores up all our winter's hay.

He sows, he reaps the harvest's gain;

We share the toil, and share the grain.

Since ev'ry creature was decreed

To aid each other's mutual need;

60

Appease your discontented mind,

And act the part by heav'n assign'd.

The tumult ceas'd. The Colt submitted.
And, like his ancestors, was bitted.

The moral of this Fable is conveyed in these beautiful lines:

“It enjoins us not to repine at the dispensations of Providence, but to be contented in our respective situations; to act in the best manner we are able, the part *assigned to us by Heaven*, and not to give way to discontent, which the Author of the Night Thoughts justly calls

“Incurable consumption of our peace.”

Night 7. l. 30.

FABLE 44.

The Hound and the Huntsman.

IMPERTINENCE at first is born
 With heedless slight, or smiles of scorn;
 Teaz'd into wrath, what patience bears
 The noisy fool who perseveres?

The morning wakes, the Huntsman sounds, 5
 At once rush forth the joyful hounds:
 They seek the wood with eager pace,
 Through bush, through brier explore the chace.
 Now scatter'd wide, they try the plain,
 And snuff the dewy turf in vain. 10
 What care, what industry, what pains!
 What universal silence reigns.

Ringwood, a Dog of little fame,
 Young, pert, and ignorant of game,
 At once displays his babbling throat; 15
 The pack, regardless of the note,
 Pursue the scent; with louder strain
 He still persists to vex the train.

The

The Huntsman to the clamour flies;
 The smacking lash he smartly plies. 20
 His ribs all welk'd, with howling tone
 The puppy thus exprefs'd his moan : .

I know the music of my tongue
 Long since the pack with envy stung.
 What will not spite? These bitter smarts. 25
 I owe to my superior parts.

When puppies prate, the Huntsman cry'd,
 They show both ignorance and pride:
 Fools may our scorn, not envy raise,
 For envy is a kind of praise. 30
 Had not thy forward noisy tongue
 Proclaim'd thee always in the wrong,
 Thou might'st have mingled with the rest,
 And ne'er thy foolish nose confest.
 But fools to talking ever prone, 35
 Are sure to make their follies known.

L. 21. *Welks*. Means those lumps or wales, which the application of a whip leaves upon the skin; it is still used in that sense in some of the northern counties.

It is observed by a Commentator on Æsop's Fables, that
 "much tongue and much judgment seldom go together, for
 "talking and thinking are two quite differing faculties."

L'Estrange's Æsop, v. I. p. 234.

And Prior has told us in his *Alma*,

"And 'tis remarkable, that they
 "Talk most, who have the least to say."

FABLE 45.

The Poet and the Rose.

I HATE the man who builds his name
On ruins of another's fame.

Thus prudes, by characters o'erthrown,
Imagine that they raise their own.

Thus Scriblers, covetous of praise,

Think slander can transplant the bays.

Beauties and bards have equal pride,

With both all rivals are decry'd.

Who praises LESBIA'S eyes and feature,

Must call her sister, aukward creature ;

For the kind flatt'ry's sure to charm,

When we some other nymph difarm.

As in the cool of early day

A Poet sought the sweets of May,

The garden's fragrant breath ascends,

And ev'ry stalk with odour bends.

A rose he pluck'd, he gaz'd, admir'd,

Thus singing as the Muse inspir'd :

Go, Rose, my CHLOE'S bosom grace ;

How happy should I prove,

Might I supply that envy'd place

With never fading love !

There,

There, Phœnix like, beneath her eye,
Involv'd in fragrance, burn and die!

Know hapless flower, that thou shalt find 25
More fragrant roses there;
I see thy with'ring head reclin'd
With envy and despair!

One

L. 23. *Phœnix like.* Gay alludes to the fabulous story of the Phœnix. The ancients spoke of this bird as single, or the only one of its kind; they described it as

“ A god like bird ! whose endless round of years
“ Out-lasts the stars and tires the circling spheres ;
“ Not us'd, like vulgar birds, to eat its fill,
“ Or drink the chrysal of the murmuring rill ;
“ But fed with warmth from Titan's purer ray,
“ And slak'd by streams which eastern seas convey ;
“ Still he renews his life in these abodes,
“ Contemns the pow'r of fate, and mates the gods.
“ His fiery eyes shot forth a glitt'ring ray,
“ And round his head ten thousand glories play ;
“ High on his head a star celestial bright,
“ Divides the darkness with its piercing light ;
“ His legs are stain'd with purple's lively dye,
“ His azure wings the fleeting winds outfly,
“ Soft plumes of cheerful blue his limbs infold,
“ Enrich'd with spangles, and bedropt with gold.”

Tickell's Description of the Phœnix, from Claudian.

This Bird, at the conclusion of a long term of years, was supposed to burn itself on a pile of sweet wood and aromatic gums, and to rise from the wafting of its wings; and from its ashes was said to arise a young Phœnix. The new birth of the young bird is thus described by the same poet:

“ Th' enliv'ning dust its head begins to rear,
“ And on the ashes sprouting plumes appear ;

132 FABLE THE FORTY-FIFTH.

One common fate we both must prove;
You die with envy, I with love.

30

Spare your comparisons, reply'd
An angry Rose, who grew beside;
Of all mankind, you should not flout us;
What can a Poet do without us!
In ev'ry love-song roses bloom;
We lend you colour and perfume.

35

Does it to CHLOE'S charms conduce,
To sound her praise on our abuse?
Must we, to flatter her, be made
To wither, envy, pine and fade?

40

“ In the dead bird reviving vigour reigns,
“ And life returning revels in its veins :
“ A new-born Phœnix starting from the flame,
“ Obtains at once a son's and father's name ;
“ And the great change of double life displays,
“ In the short moment of one transient blaze.”



FABLE 46.

The Cur, the Horse, and the Shepherd's Dog.

THE lad, of all sufficient merit,
 With modesty ne'er damps his spirit;
 Presuming on his own deserts,
 On all alike his tongue exerts;
 His noisy jokes at random throws, 5
 And pertly spatters friends and foes.
 In wit and war the bully race
 Contribute to their own disgrace;
 Too late the forward youth shall find
 That jokes are sometimes paid in kind; 10
 Or if they canker in the breast,
 He makes a foe who makes a jest.

A Village Cur, of snappish race,
 The pertest Puppy in the place,
 Imagin'd that his treble throat 15
 Was blest with music's sweetest note;
 In the mid road he basking lay,
 The yelping nuisance of the way;
 For not a creature pass'd along,
 But had a sample of his song. 20

Soon

134 FABLE THE FORTY-SIXTH.

Soon as the trotting steed he hears,
He starts, he cocks his dapper ears;
Away he scow'rs, assaults his hoof;
Now near him snarls, now barks aloof;
With shrill impertinence attends; 25
Nor leaves him till the village ends.

It chanc'd, upon his evil day,
A Pad came pacing down the way:
The Cur, with never-ceasing tongue
Upon the passing trav'ler sprung. 30
The Horse, from scorn provok'd to ire,
Flung backward; rolling in the mire,
The Puppy howl'd, and bleeding lay;
The Pad in peace pursu'd his way.

A Shepherd's Dog, who saw the deed, 35
Detesting the vexatious breed,
Bespoke him thus: When coxcombs prate,
They kindle wrath, contempt, or hate;
Thy teasing tongue had judgment ty'd;
Thou hadst not, like a Puppy, dy'd. 40



FABLE 47.

The Court of Death.

DEATH, on a solemn night of state,
 In all his pomp of terror fate:
 Th' attendants of his gloomy reign,
 Diseases dire, a ghastly train!
 Crowd the vast Court. With hollow tone, 5
 A voice thus thunder'd from the throne:

This night our Minister we name,
 Let ev'ry servant speak his claim;
 Merit shall bear this ebon wand,
 All, at the word, stretch'd forth their hand. 10

Fever, with burning heat possess'd,
 Advanc'd, and for the wand address'd:

I to the weekly bills appeal,
 Let those express my fervent zeal;
 On ev'ry slight occasion near, 15
 With violence I persevere.

Next Gout appears with limping pace,
 Pleads how he shifts from place to place;

From

136 FABLE THE FORTY-SEVENTH.

From head to foot how swift he flies,
And ev'ry joint and finew plies; 20
Still working when he seems supprest,
A most tenacious stubborn guest.

A haggard Spectre from the crew
Crawls forth, and thus asserts his due :
'Tis I who taint the sweetest joy, 25
And in the shape of love destroy :
My shanks, sunk eyes, and noseless face,
Prove my pretension to the place.

Stone urg'd his ever-growing force.
And, next, Consumption's meagre corse, 30
With feeble voice, that scarce was heard,
Broke with short coughs, his suit preferr'd.
Let none object my ling'ring way,
I gain, like FABIVS, by delay ;
Fatigue and weaken ev'ry foe 35
By long attack, secure, though slow.

Plague represents his rapid pow'r,
Who thinn'd a nation in an hour.

All spoke their claim, and hop'd the wand.
Now expectation hush'd the band ; 40

L. 34. *Like Fabius, by delay.* Quintus FABIVS Maximus, a celebrated Roman General, who saved the Roman Republic by his prudent and cautious conduct, in not giving battle to Hannibal, the Carthagenian General, who having led his forces over the Alps into Italy, had defeated the Romans in three engagements.

When

When thus the Monarch from the throne:

Merit was ever modest known.
What, no Physician speak his right!
None here! but fees their toils requite.
Let then Intemp'rance take the wand, 45
Who fills with gold their zealous hand.
You, Fever, Gout, and all the rest,
(Whom wary men, as foes, detest)
Forego your claim; no more pretend:
Intemp'rance is esteem'd a friend; 50
He shares their mirth, their social joys,
And, as a courted guest, destroys.
The charge on him must justly fall,
Who finds employment for you all.



FABLE 48.

The Gardener and the Hog.

A GARD'NER, of peculiar taste,
 On a young hog his favour plac'd ;
 Who fed not with the common herd ;
 His tray was to the hall preferr'd ;
 He wallow'd underneath the board, 5
 Or in his master's chamber snor'd ;
 Who fondly strok'd him ev'ry day,
 And taught him all the puppy's play.
 Where'er he went, the grunting friend
 Ne'er fail'd his pleasure to attend. 10

As on a time, the loving pair
 Walk'd forth to tend the garden's care,
 The Master thus address'd the Swine :

My house, my garden, all is thine.
 On turnips feast whene'er you please, 15
 And riot in my beans and pease ;
 If the potatoe's taste delights,
 Or the red carrot's sweet invites,
 Indulge thy morn and evening hours,
 But let due care regard my flow'rs :

20
My

My tulips are my garden's pride,
What vast expence those beds supply'd!

The Hog by chance one morning roam'd,
Where with new ale the vessels foam'd,
He munches now the steaming grains, 25
Now with full swill the liquor drains.
Intoxicating fumes arise ;
He reels, he rolls his winking eyes ;
Then stagg'ring through the garden scours,
And treads down painted ranks of flowers. 30
With delving snout he turns the foil,
And cools his palate with the spoil.

The Master came, the ruin spy'd,
Villain, suspend thy rage, he cry'd.
Hast thou, thou most ungrateful sot, 35
My charge, my only charge forgot?
What, all my flowers ! No more he said,
But gaz'd, and sigh'd, and hung his head.

The Hog with stutt'ring speech returns :
Explain, Sir, why your anger burns. 40
See there, untouch'd your tulips strown,
For I devour'd the roots alone.

At this the gard'ner's passion grows ;
From oaths to threats he fell to blows.
The stubborn brute the blows sustains ; 45
Assaults his leg, and tears the veins.

Ah !

140 FABLE THE FORTY-EIGHTH.

Ah! foolish swain, too late you find
That ties were for such friends design'd?

Homeward he limps with painful pace,
Reflecting thus on past disgrace:
Who cherishes a brutal mate
Shall mourn the folly soon or late.

50



FABLE 49.

The Man and the Flea.

WHETHER on earth, in air, or main,
Sure ev'ry thing alive is vain!

Does not the hawk all fowls survey,
As destin'd only for his prey;
And do not tyrants, prouder things, 5
Think men were born for slaves to kings?
When the crab views the pearly strands,
Or TAGUS, bright with golden sands;
Or crawls beside the coral grove,
And hears the ocean roll above; 10
Nature is too profuse, says he,
Who gave all these to pleasure me!
When bord'ring pinks and roses bloom,
And ev'ry garden breathes perfume,
When peaches glow with sunny dyes, 15
Like LAURA's cheek, when blushes rise;

L. 7. *Pearly strands.* The beds of oysters in the Eastern seas, in which the *pearls* are contained and fished for.

L. 8. *Tagus bright with golden sands.* A river in ancient Lusitania, now called the Tayo, on whose banks Lisbon is situated, supposed to abound in gold dust.

Rowe, in his Ode on the King's birth-day, 1718, had said before Gay,

“And Tagus bright in sands of gold.”

When

When with huge figs the branches bend,
 When clusters from the vine depend;
 The snail looks round on flow'r and tree,
 And cries, All these were made for me ! 20

What dignity's in human nature?
 Says Man, the most conceited creature,
 As from a cliff he cast his eye,
 And view'd the sea and arched sky:
 The sun was sunk beneath the main; 25
 The moon and all the starry train,
 Hung the vast vault of heav'n. The Man
 His contemplation thus began:

When I behold this glorious show,
 And the wide wat'ry world below, 30
 The scaly people of the main,
 The beasts that range the wood or plain,
 The wing'd inhabitants of air,
 The day, the night, the various year ;
 And know all these by heav'n design'd 35
 As gifts to pleasure human kind ;
 I cannot raise my worth too high ;
 Of what vast consequence am I !

Not of th' importance you suppose,
 Replies a Flea upon his nose. 40
 Be humble, learn thyself to scan ;
 Know, pride was never made for Man.
 'Tis vanity that swells thy mind.
 What, heav'n and earth for thee design'd !
 For thee, made only for our need 45
 That more important Fleas might feed.

FABLE 50.

*The Hare and many Friends.**

FRIENDSHIP, like love, is but a name,
 Unless to one you stint the flame :
 The child whom many fathers share,
 Hath seldom known a father's care.
 'Tis thus in friendships; who depend
 On many, rarely find a friend.

5

A Hare, who, in a civil way,
 Comply'd with every thing, like Gay,
 Was known by all the bestial train
 Who haunt the wood or graze the plain.

10

* This Fable is the most natural and delightful of the whole set, and is the most interesting, because Gay designed himself under the character of the *Hare*. For no man was ever more beloved, no man had more friends, and yet no man ever gained less by them than poor Gay :—Hence Pope says of him,

“ Gay dies unpensioned with a *hundred friends*.”

Her

Her care was never to offend,
And ev'ry creature was her friend.

As forth she went at early dawn,
To taste the dew-besprinkled lawn,
Behind she hears the hunter's cries, 15
And from the deep-mouth'd thunder flies.
She starts, she stops, she pants for breath ;
She hears the near advance of death ;
She doubles to mislead the hound,
And measures back her mazy round ; 20
'Till fainting in the public way,
Half dead with fear, she gasping lay.
What transport in her bosom grew,
When first the Horse appear'd in view !

Let me, says she, your back ascend, 25
And owe my safety to a friend ;
You know my feet betray my flight,
To friendship ev'ry burden's light.

The Horse replied, Poor honest Pufs,
It grieves my heart to see thee thus. 30
Be comforted, relief is near ;
For all your friends are in the rear.

She next the stately Bull implor'd,
And thus replied the mighty lord :
Since ev'ry beast alive can tell, 35
That I sincerely wish you well,

I may

PART THE FIRST.

145

I may, without offence, pretend
To take the freedom of a friend.
Love calls me hence ; a fav'rite cow
Expects me 'hear yon barley-mow ;
And when a lady's in the case,
You know all other things give place.
To leave you thus might seem unkind ;
But see, the Goat is just behind.

40

The Goat remark'd her pulse was high,
Her languid head, her heavy eye ;
My back, says he, may do you harm,
The Sheep's at hand, and wool is warm.

45

The Sheep was feeble, and complain'd
His fides a load of wool sustain'd :
Said he was slow, confess'd his fears ;
For hounds eat Sheep as well as Hares.

50

She now the trotting Calf address'd,
To save from death a friend distress'd.

Shall I, says he, of tender age,
In this important care engage ?
Older and abler pass'd you by ;
How strong are those ! How weak am I !
Should I presume to bear you hence,
Those friends of mine may take offence.

55

60

H

Excuse

Excuse me then, you know my heart :
But dearest friends, alas ! must part.
How shall we all lament ! Adieu,
For see the hounds are just in view.

End of the First Part.



FABLES,

BY

JOHN GAY.

PART THE SECOND.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

FIRST EDITION.

THESE Fables were finished by Mr. GAY, and intended for the press, a short time before his death; when they were left with his other papers to the care of his noble friend and patron the Duke of QUEENSBERRY. His Grace has accordingly permitted them to the press, and they are here printed from the originals in the author's own hand-writing. We hope they will please equally with his former Fables, though mostly on subjects of a graver and more political turn. They will certainly shew him to have been (what he esteemed the best character) a man of a truly honest heart, and a sincere lover of his country.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

NEW EDITION.

November 10, 1795.

THE Fables of the Second Part, which were not printed till after his death, are far inferior in simplicity and beauty to the Fables of the First Part. They were written when his mind was soured with disappointment against the Court and Sir Robert Walpole, and are principally political, with long introductions.

Hence there is less variety in these Fables; they principally treat on corruption, fraud, extortion, ambition, jobs, insincerity, flattery, bad management of public affairs, neglect of good men, and the patronage of bad men; the common topics of abuse heaped upon Sir Robert Walpole, though without naming him, whom he considered, perhaps unjustly, as the author of his disappointment.

H. 3,

Thus.

Thus the Vulture who was Minister of State to the Lion, and who maintained that place by corruption; the Baboon who defrauded the Poultry of their corn; the Ant in office, who plundered the public hoard; the Jackall who gained partisans by bribes; and the Degenerate Bee; the Bear in the Boat; and the 'Squire and his Cur; are all but a repetition of the same abuse.

Of the sixteen which form the Second Part, only five or six Fables can be excepted from this general reflection; of these the Countryman and Jupiter; the Cook-Maid, the Ox, and the Turnspit; the Pack-horse and the Carrier; the Ravens, the Sexton, and the Earth-Worm; are not inferior to any of the First Part, and convey a most excellent moral.



FABLES,

PART THE SECOND.

FABLE 1.

The Dog and the Fox.

TO A LAWYER.

I KNOW you Lawyers can, with ease,
Twist words and meanings as you please ;
That language, by your skill made pliant,
Will bend to favor ev'ry client ;
That 'tis the fee directs the sense, 5
To make out either side's pretence.
When you peruse the clearest case,
You see it with a double face.
For scepticism's your profession ;
You hold there's doubt in all expression. 10

L. 9. *Scepticism.* From the Greek word *σκηπτικισμ*, to doubt.

Hence is the bar with fees supplied.
 Hence eloquence takes either side.
 Your hand would have but paltry gleaning,
 Could ev'ry man express his meaning.
 Who dares presume to pen a deed, 15
 Unless you previously are fee'd?
 'Tis drawn; and, to augment the cost,
 In dull prolixity engross'd.
 And now we're well secur'd by law,
 'Till the next brother finds a flaw. 20
 Read o'er a will: Was't ever known,
 But you could make the will your own;
 For when you read, 'tis with intent
 To find out meanings never meant.
 Since things are thus, *se defendendo*, 25
 I bar fallacious inuendo.

Sagacious PORTA's skill could trace
 Some beast or bird in ev'ry face.

The

L. 24. "And find in Homer what was never there."

Pope.

L. 25, 26. Law expressions. *Se defendendo*, to speak in his own defence, or to be advocate in his own cause.

I bar fallacious inuendo, means, I except deceitful insinuations.

L. 27. *Sagacious Porta*. John Baptista Porta, a native of Naples, was born in 1546, and rendered himself famous by his researches and discoveries in mathematics and medicine, and particularly for his knowledge of the occult sciences. He wrote many books on magic and astrology; but the work to which Gay alludes, was on physiognomy, in which he affected to trace in the features of the human face a resemblance to animals, and

to

The head the eye, the nose's shape,
 Prov'd this an owl, and that an ape. 30
 When in the sketches thus design'd,
 Resemblance brings some friend to mind.
 You shew the piece and give the hint,
 And find each feature in the print;
 So monstrous like the portrait's found, 35
 All know it, and the laugh goes round.
 Like him I draw from gen'ral nature ;
 Is't I or you then fix the satire ?

So fir, I beg you spare your pains
 In making comments on my strains. 40
 All private slander I detest,
 I judge not of my neighbour's breast :
 Party and prejudice I hate,
 And write no libels on the state.

Shall not my fable censure vice, 45
 Because a knave is over nice ?

to delineate from such whimsical resemblance, corresponding qualities of the mind. He died at Naples, in 1615 ; in his 70th year.

Niceron's Hommes Illustres, v. 43.

L. 45, 46. Gay has introduced a similar sentiment in the Beggar's Opera :

When you censure the age,
 Be cautious and sage,
 Left the courtiers offended should be :
 If you mention vice or bribe,
 'Tis so pat to all the tribe ;
 Each cries,—That was levell'd at me.

And lest the guilty hear and dread,
 Shall not the decalogue be read ?
 If I lash vice in gen'ral fiction,
 Is't I apply, or self conviction ? 40
 Brutes are my theme. Am I to blame,
 If men in morals are the same ?
 I no man call an ape or afs,
 'Tis his own conscience holds the glafs.
 Thus void of all offence I write ; 45
 Who claims the fable knows his right.

A shepherd's Dog, unskill'd in sports,
 Pick'd up acquaintance of all sorts.
 Among the rest, a Fox he knew,
 By frequent chat their friendship grew. 50

Says Reynard, 'Tis a cruel case,
 That man should stigmatize our race ;
 No doubt, among us rogues you find,
 As among dogs and human kind ;
 And yet, unknown to me and you, 55
 There may be honest men and true.
 Thus slander tries whate'er it can,
 To put us on the foot with man.
 Let my own actions recommend ;
 No prejudice can blind a friend : 60
 You know me free from all disguise ;
 My honor as my life I prize.

By talk like this, from all mistrust
 The Dog was cur'd, and thought him just.

As on a time the Fox held forth,
 On conscience, honesty, and worth ;
 Sudden he stopp'd, he cock'd his ear ;
 Low dropp'd his brushy tail with fear.

65

Bless us ! the hunters are abroad,
 What's all that clatter on the road ?

70

Hold, says the Dog, we're safe from harm ;
 'Twas nothing but a false alarm.
 At yonder town 'tis market day,
 Some farmer's wife is on the way ;
 'Tis so, (I know her pye-bald mare)
 Dame Dobbins, with her poultry ware.

75

Reynard grew huff. Says he, This sneer
 From you I little thought to hear.
 Your meaning in your looks I see,
 Pray what's Dame Dobbins, friend, to me ?
 Did I e'er make her poultry thinner ?
 Prove that I owe the Dame a dinner.

Friend, quoth the Cur, I meant no harm ;
 Then why so captious ? why so warm ?
 My words in common acceptation,
 Could never give this provocation.
 No lamb, for ought I ever knew,
 May be more innocent than you.

85

At this gall'd Reynard winch'd and swore
 Such language ne'er was giv'n before.

90

What's lamb to me ? the faucy hint
 Shews me, base knave, which way you squint.
 If t'other night your master lost
 Three lambs, am I to pay the cost ?
 Your vile reflections would imply
 That I'm the thief : You Dog, you lie.

95

Thou knave, thou fool (the Dog replied)
 The name is just, take either side ;
 Thy guilt these applications speak ;
 Sirrah, 'tis conscience makes you squeak.

100

So faying, on the Fox he flies ;
 The self-convicted felon dies.



FABLE 2.

The Vulture, the Sparrow, and other Birds.

TO A FRIEND IN THE COUNTRY.

ERE I begin, I must premise,
 Our ministers are good and wise ;
 So, though malicious tongues apply,
 Pray what care they, or what care I ?

If I am free with courts, be't known, 5
 I ne'er presume to mean our own.
 If general morals seem to joke
 On ministers and such-like folk,
 A captious fool may take offence;
 What then? he knows his own pretence. 10
 I meddle with no state-affairs,
 But spare my jest to save my ears.
 Our present schemes are too profound,
 For MACHIAVEL himself to found :

To

L. 14. *Machiavel*. Nicholas Machiavel, a native of Florence, descended from a noble family, was born at Florence, in 1469. His first compositions were of the comic kind; he wrote a Comedy called *Nicias*, on the model of Aristophanes, a composition in which he satyriized several of his countrymen, under theatrical characters. This play was acted with so much applause at Florence,

You praise his parts, for bus'ness fit,
 His learning, probity, and wit;
 But those alone will never do,
 Unless his patron have 'em too.

30

I've heard of times (pray God defend us,
 We're not so good but he can mend us)
 When wicked ministers have trod
 On kings and people, law and God;
 With arrogance they girt the throne,
 And knew no int'rest but their own.
 Then virtue, from preferment barr'd,
 Gets nothing but its own reward.
 A gang of petty knaves attend 'em,
 With proper parts to recommend 'em.
 Then if his patron burn with lust,
 The first in favour's pimp the first.
 His doors are never clos'd to spies,
 Who chear his heart with double lies:
 They flatter him, his foes defame,
 So lull the pangs of guilt and shame.
 If schemes of lucre haunt his brain,
 Projectors swell his greedy train;
 Vile brokers ply his private ear
 With jobs of plunder for the year;
 All consciences must bend and ply;
 You must vote on, and not know why:
 Through thick and thin you must go on;
 One scruple, and your place is gone.
 Since plagues like these have curst a land,
 And fav'rites cannot always stand;

35

40

45

50

55

Good

Good courtiers should for change be ready,
 And not have principles too steady :
 For should a knave engross the pow'r.
 (God shield the realm from that sad hour) 60
 He must have rogues, or slavish fools :
 For what's a knave without his tools ?
 Wherever those a people drain,
 And strut with infamy and gain ;
 I envy not their guilt and state, 65
 And scorn to share the public hate.
 Let their own fervile creatures rise
 By screening fraud, and venting lies ;
 Give me, kind heav'n, a private station,*
 A mind serene for contemplation : 70
 Title and profit I resign ;
 The post of honour shall be mine.
 My fable read, their merits view,
 Then herd who will with such a crew.

 In days of yore (my cautious rhymes 75
 Always except the present times)
 A greedy Vulture skill'd in game,
 Inur'd to guilt, unaw'd by shame,
 Approach'd the throne in evil hour,
 And step by step intrudes to pow'r : 80
 When at the royal eagle's ear,
 He longs to ease the monarch's care.
 The monarch grants. With pride elate,
 Behold him minister of state !

*———When impious men bear sway,
 The post of honor is a private station.

Addison.

Around him throng the feather'd rout ;
 Friends must be serv'd, and some must out.
 Each thinks his own the best pretension ;
 This asks a place, and that a pension.

85

The nightingale was set aside,
 A forward daw his room suply'd.
 This bird (says he) for bus'ness fit,
 Hath both sagacity and wit.
 With all his turns, and shifts and tricks,
 He's docile, and at nothing sticks.
 Then with his neighbours, one so free
 At all times will connive at me.
 The hawk had due distinction shown,
 For parts and talents like his own.

90

95

Thousands of hireling cocks attend him,
 As blust'ring bullies to defend him.

100

At once the ravens were discarded,
 And magpies with their posts rewarded.

Those fowls of omen I detest,
 That pry into another's nest,
 State lies must lose all good intent ;
 For they foresee and croak th' event.
 My friends ne'er think but talk by rote,
 Speak what they're taught, and so to vote.

105

When rogues like these (a sparrow cries)
 To honours and employments rise,
 I court no favour, ask no place ;
 For such preferment is disgrace.
 Within my thatch'd retreat I find
 What these ne'er feel, true peace of mind.

110

FABLE 3.

The Baboon and the Poultry.

TO A LEVÉE HUNTER.

WE frequently misplace esteem,
 By judging men by what they seem.
 To birth, wealth, pow'r we should allow
 Precedence, and our lowest bow.
 In that is due distinction shown,
 Esteem is virtue's right alone.

5

With partial eye we're apt to see
 The man of noble pedigree.
 We're prepossess'd, my lord inherits,
 In some degree his grandfire's merits,
 For those we find upon record :
 But find him nothing but my lord.

10

When we with superficial view,
 Gaze on the rich, we're dazzled too.
 We know that wealth well understood;
 Hath frequent pow'r of doing good :
 Then fancy that the thing is done,
 As if the pow'r and will were one.
 Thus oft the cheated croud adore
 The thriving knaves that keep 'em poor.

15

20

The

But here (unless all hist'ry lies)
 Whole realms have been a sacrifice. 40
 Look through all courts. 'Tis pow'r we find,
 The gen'ral idol of mankind;
 There worship'd under ev'ry shape;
 Alike the lion, fox, and ape,
 Are follow'd by time-serving slaves 45
 Rich prostitutes and needy knaves.

Who, then, shall glory in his post?
 How frail his pride, how vain his boast!
 The followers of his prosperous hour
 Are as unstable as his pow'r. 50
 Pow'r by the breath of flatt'ry nurs'd,
 The more it swells, is nearer burst.
 The bubble breaks, the gewgaw ends,
 And in a dirty tear descends.

Once on a time, an ancient maid, 55
 By wishes and by time decay'd,
 To cure the pangs of restless thought,
 In birds and beasts amusement sought:
 Dogs, parrots, apes, her hours employ'd;
 With these alone she talk'd and toy'd. 60

A huge Baboon her fancy took,
 (Almost a man in size and look)
 He finger'd ev'ry thing he found,
 And mimick'd all the servants round.
 Then, too, his parts and ready wit 65
 Shew'd him for ev'ry business fit.

With

With all these talents 'twas but just
 That Pug should hold a place of trust :
 So to her fav'rite was assign'd
 The charge of all her feather'd kind. 70
 'Twas his to tend 'em eve and morn,
 And portion out their daily corn.

Behold him now with haughty stride,
 Assume a ministerial pride.
 The morning rose. In hope of picking, 75
 Swans, turkeys, peacocks, ducks and chickens,
 Fowls of all ranks surround his hut,
 To worship his important strut.
 The minister appears. The croud,
 Now here, now there, obsequious bow'd. 80
 'This prais'd his parts, and that his face,
 'T'other his dignity in place.
 From bill to bill the flatt'ry ran ;
 He hears and bears it like a man :
 For, when we flatter self-conceit, 85
 We but his sentiments repeat.

If we're too scrupulously just,
 What profit's in a place of trust ?
 The common practice of the great,
 Is, to secure a snug retreat. 90
 So Pug began to turn his brain
 (Like other folks in place) on gain.
 An apple woman's stall was near,
 Well stock'd with fruits through all the year ;

Here

Here ev'ry day he cramm'd his guts, 95
 Hence were his hoards of pears and nuts ;
 For 'twas agreed (in way of trade)
 His paymeuts should in corn be made.
 The stock of grain was quickly spent,
 And no account which way it went. 100
 Then, too, the poultry's starv'd condition
 Caus'd speculations of suspicion.
 The facts were prov'd beyond dispute ;
 Pug must refund his hoards of fruit :
 And, though then minister in chief, 105
 Was branded as a public thief,
 Disgrac'd, despis'd, confin'd to chains,
 He nothing but his pride retains.

A Goose pass'd by ; he knew the face,
 Seen ev'ry levee while in place. 110

What, no respect ! no rev'rence shown ;
 How faucy are these creatures grown ?
 Not two days since (says he) you bow'd
 The lowest of my fawning crowd.
 Proud fool, (replies the Goose) 'tis true, 115
 Thy corn a flutt'ring levee drew !
 For that I join'd the hungry train,
 And sold thee flatt'ry for thy grain.
 But then, as now, conceited Ape,
 We saw thee in thy proper shape. 120

FABLE 4.

The Ant in Office.

TO A FRIEND.

You tell me that you apprehend,
 My verse may touchy folks offend.
 In prudence too you think my rhimes
 Should never squint at courtiers' crimes :
 For though nor this, nor that it meant, 5
 Can we another's thoughts prevent ?

You ask me if I ever knew
 Court chaplains thus the lawn pursue ?
 I meddle not with gown or lawn ;
 Poets, I grant, to rise must fawn. 10
 They know great ears are over-nice,
 And never shock their patron's vice.
 But I this hackney path despise ;
 'Tis my ambition not to rise.
 If I must prostitute the muse, 15
 The base conditions I refuse.

I neither flatter nor defame,
 Yet own I would bring guilt to shame. If

If I corruption's hand expose,
 I make corrupted men my foes : 20
 What then ? I hate the paltry tribe,
 Be virtue mine, be theirs the bribe.
 I no man's property invade,
 Corruption's yet no lawful trade.
 Nor would it mighty ills produce, 25
 Could I shame brib'ry out of use :
 I know 'twould cramp most politicians,
 Were they ty'd down to these conditions.
 'Twould stint their pow'r, their riches bound,
 And make their parts seem less profound. 30
 Were they denied their proper tools,
 How could they lead their knaves and fools ?
 Were this the case let's take a view,
 What dreadful mischiefs would ensue ;
 Though it might aggrandize the state, 35
 Could private luxury dine on plate ?
 Kings might indeed their friends reward,
 But ministers find less regard.
 Informers, sycophants, and spies,
 Would not augment the year's supplies. 40
 Perhaps too, take away this prop,
 An annual job or two might drop.
 Besides, if pensions were deny'd,
 Could avarice support its pride ?
 It might even ministers confound, 45
 And yet the state be safe and found.

I care not though 'tis understood
 I only mean my country's good :

And

And (let who will my freedom blame)
 I wish all courtiers did the same. 50
 Nay, though some folks the less might get,
 I wish the nation out of debt.
 I put no private man's ambition
 With public good in competition :
 Rather than have our law defac'd,
 I'd vote a minister disgrac'd. 55

I strike at vice, be't where it will ;
 And what if great folks take it ill ?
 I hope, corruption, brib'ry, pension,
 One may with detestation mention ? 60
 Think you the law (let who will take it)
 Can *scandalum magnatum* make it ?
 I vent no slander, owe no grudge,
 Nor of another's conscience judge :
 At him or him I take no aim, 65
 Yet dare against all vice declaim.
 Shall I not censure breach of trust,
 Because knaves know themselves unjust ?
 That steward, whose account is clear,
 Demands his honour may appear : 70
 His actions never shun the light,
 He is, and would be prov'd upright.

L. 62. *Scandalum magnatum*, means a slander on peers or other great men of the realm ; words spoken in derogation of a peer, judge, or other great officers of the realm, being held to be more heinous than if spoken against other men, and subject to peculiar punishments, by divers ancient statutes.

See Blackstone's Commentaries, book 1. chap. 12. book 3. chap. 8.

170 FABLE THE FOURTH.

But then you think my Fable bears
Allusion too, to state affairs.

I grant it does: And who's so great, 75
That has the privilege to cheat;
If, then, in any future reign
(For ministers may thirst for gain)
Corrupted hands defraud the nation;
I bar no reader's application. 80

An Ant there was, whose forward prate
Controul'd all matters in debate;
Whether he knew the thing or no,
His tongue eternally would go;
For he had impudence at will, 85
And boasted universal skill.
Ambition was his point in view;
Thus, by degrees, to pow'r he grew.
Behold him now his drift attain:
He's made chief treas'rer of the grain. 90

But as their ancient laws are just,
And punish breach of public trust,
'Tis ordered (lest wrong application
Should starve that wise industrious nation)
That all accounts be stated clear, 95
Their stock, and what defray'd the year:
That auditors should these inspect,
And public rapine thus be check'd.
For this the solemn day was set,
The auditors in counsel met. 100

The

The gran'ry keeper must explain,
 And balance his account of grain.
 He brought (since he could not refuse 'em)
 Some scraps of paper to amuse 'em.

An honest pismire, warm with zeal, 105
 In justice to the public weal,
 Thus spoke : The nation's hoard is low,
 From whence does this profusion flow ?
 I know our annual funds' amount.
 Why such expence, and where's th' account ? 110

With wonted arrogance and pride,
 The Ant in office thus reply'd :
 Consider, Sirs, were secrets told,
 How could the best schem'd projects hold ?
 Should we state-mysteries disclose, 115
 'Twould lay us open to our foes.
 My duty and my well-known zeal,
 Bid me our present schemes conceal.
 But, on my honour all th' expence
 (Though vast) was for the swarm's defence. 120

They pass'd the account as fair and just,
 And voted him implicit trust.

Next year again the gran'ry drain'd,
 He thus his innocence maintain'd :

Think how our present matters stand, 125
 What dangers threat from ev'ry hand ;

172 FABLE THE FOURTH.

What hosts of turkeys stroll for food,
No farmer's wife but hath her brood.
Consider, when invasion's near,
Intelligence must cost us dear: 130
And, in this ticklish situation,
A secret told betrays the nation.
But, on my honour, all the expence
(Though vast) was for the swarm's defence.

Again, without examination, 135
They thank'd his sage administration.

The year revolves. The treasure spent.
Again in secret service went.
His honour too again was pledg'd,
To satisfy the charge alledg'd. 140

When thus, with panic shame possess'd,
An auditor his friends address'd.

What are we? Ministerial tools.
We little knaves are greater fools.
At last this secret is explor'd; 145
'Tis our corruption thins the hoard.
For ev'ry grain we touch'd, at least
A thousand his own heaps increas'd;
Then, for his kin and fav'rite spies,
A hundred hardly could suffice. 150
Thus, for a poultry sneaking bribe,
We cheat ourselves, and all the tribe;

For

For all the magazine contains,
Grows from our annual toil and pains.

They vote th' account shall be inspected ; 155
The cunning plund'rer is detected ;
The fraud is sentenc'd ; and his hoard,
As due, to public use restor'd.



FABLE 5.

The Bear in a Boat.

TO A COXCOMB.

THAT man must daily wiser grow,
 Whose search is bent himself to know;
 Impartially he weighs his scope,
 And on firm reason founds his hope.
 He tries his strength before the race, 5
 And never seeks his own disgrace;
 He knows the compass, sail, and oar,
 Or never launches from the shore;
 Before he builds, computes the cost;
 And in no proud pursuit is lost: 10
 He learns the bounds of human sense,
 And safely walks within the fence.
 Thus, conscious of his own defect,
 Are pride and self importance check'd.

If, then, self-knowledge to pursue, 15
 Direct our life in ev'ry view,
 Of all the fools that pride can boast,
 A Coxcomb claims distinction most.

Coxcomb

Coxcombs are of all ranks and kind;
 They're not to sex or age confin'd, 20
 Or rich, or poor, or great, or small;
 And vanity besets 'em all.
 By ignorance is pride increas'd:
 Those most assume who know the least;
 Their own false balance gives 'em weight, 25
 But ev'ry other finds 'em light.

Not that all Coxcombs follies strike,
 And draw our ridicule alike;
 To diff'rent merits each pretends,
 This in love-vanity transcends; 30
 That smitten with his face and shape,
 By dress distinguishes the ape;
 T'other with learning crams his shelf,
 Knows books, and all things but himself.

All these are fools of low condition, 35
 Compar'd with Coxcombs of ambition.
 For those, puff'd up with flatt'ry, dare
 Assume a nation's various care.
 They ne'er the grossest praise mistrust,
 Their sycophants seem hardly just; 40
 For these, in part alone, attest
 The flatt'ry their own thoughts suggest.
 In this wide sphere a Coxcomb's shown
 In other realms beside his own;
 The self-deem'd MACHIAVEL at large 45
 By turns controuls in ev'ry charge.
 Does commerce suffer in her rights?
 'Tis he directs the naval flights.

What sailor dares dispute his skill?
He'll be an adm'ral when he will.

50

Now meddling in the soldier's trade,
Troops must be hir'd, and levies made.
He gives ambassadors their cue,
His cobbled treaties to renew :
And annual taxes must suffice
The current blunders to disguise.

55

When his crude schemes in air are lost,
And millions scarce defray the cost,
His arrogance (nought undismay'd)
Trusting in self-sufficient aid,
On other rocks misguides the realm,
And thinks a pilot at the helm.

60

He ne'er suspects his want of skill,
But blunders on from ill to ill ;
And, when he fails of all intent,
Blames only unforeseen event.
Left you mistake the application,
The fable calls me to relation.

65

A Bear of shag and manners rough,
At climbing trees expert enough ;
For dext'rously, and safe from harm,
Year after year he robb'd the swarm,
'Thus thriving on industrious toil,
He glory'd in his pilfer'd spoil.

70

This trick so swell'd him with conceit,
He thought no enterprize too great.

75

Alike

Alike in sciences and arts,
 He boasted univerfal parts ;
 Pragmatic, bufy, bufiling, bold,
 His arrogance was uncontroul'd :
 And thus he made his party good,
 And grew dictator of the wood.

80

The beafts with admiration ftare,
 And think him a prodigious Bear.
 Were any common booty got,
 'Twas his each portion to allot :
 For why, he found there might be picking,
 Ev'n in the carving of a chicken.
 Intruding thus, he by degrees
 Claim'd too the butcher's larger fees.
 And now his over-weaning pride
 In ev'ry province will prefide.
 No task too difficult was found :
 His blund'ring nofe misleads the hound.
 In stratagem and fubtle arts,
 He over-rules the fox's parts.

85

90

95

It chanc'd, as, on a certain day,
 Along the bank he took his way,
 A Boat, with rudder, fail, and oar,
 At anchor floated near the fhore.
 He ftopt, and turning to his train,
 Thus pertly vents his vaunting ftain:

100

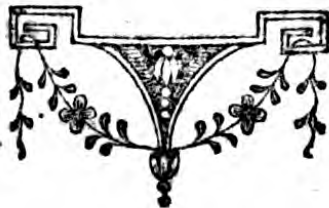
What blund'ring puppies are mankind,
 In every fcience always blind !
 I mock the pedantry of fchools.
 What are their compaffes and rules ?

105

From me that helm shall conduct learn,
And man his ignorance discern.

So saying, with audacious pride,
He gains the boat, and climbs the side. 110
The beasts astonish'd, lin'd the strand,
The anchor's weigh'd, he drives from land :
The slack sail shifts from side to side ;
The boat untrim'd admits the tide ;
Born down, adrift, at random tost, 115
His oar breaks short, the rudder's lost.
The Bear presuming in his skill,
Is here and there officious still ;
Till, striking on the dang'rous sands,
A-ground the shatter'd vessel stands. 120

To see the bungler thus distress,
The very fishes sneer and jest.
Ev'n gudgeons join in ridicule,
To mortify the meddling fool.
The clam'rous watermen appear ; 125
Threats, curses, oaths, insult his ear :
Seiz'd, thrash'd and chain'd, he's dragg'd to land ;
Derision shouts along the strand.



What statesman could his pow'r support,
 Were lying tongues forbid the court?
 Did princely ears to truth attend,
 What minister could gain his end?
 How could he raise his tools to place, 25
 And how his honest foes disgrace?

That politician tops his part,
 Who readily can lie with art:
 The man's proficient in his trade;
 His pow'r is strong, his fortune's made; 30
 By that the int'rest of the throne
 Is made subservient to his own:
 By that have kings of old, deluded,
 All their own friends for his excluded.
 By that, his selfish schemes pursuing, 35
 He thrives upon the public ruin.

ANTIOCHUS, with hardy pace,
 Provok'd the dangers of the chace:
 And, lost, from all his menial train,
 Travers'd the wood and pathless plain. 40
 A cottage lodg'd the royal guest!
 The PARTHIAN clown brought forth his best.
 The king, unknown, his feast enjoy'd,
 And various chat the hours employ'd.
 From wine what sudden friendship springs! 45
 Frankly they talk'd of courts and kings.

We country-folks (the clown replies)
 Cou'd ope our gracious monarch's eyes.

L. 37. *Antiochus*. The Story is related by Plutarch, the
 celebrated Greek Biographer.

The king, (as all our neighbours say)
 Might he (God bless him) have his way; 50
 Is found at heart, and means our good,
 And he would do it, if he cou'd.
 If truth in courts were not forbid,
 Nor kings nor subjects would be rid.
 Were he in power we need not doubt him: 55
 But that transferr'd to those about him,
 On them he throws the regal cares:
 And what mind they? Their own affairs.
 If such rapacious hands he trust,
 The best of men may seem unjust. 60
 From kings to coblers 'tis the same:
 Bad servants wound their master's fame.
 In this our neighbours all agree:
 Would the king knew as much as we.
 Here he stopt short. Repose they sought, 65
 The peasant slept, the monarch thought.

The courtiers learn'd, at early dawn,
 Where their lost sov'reign was withdrawn.
 The guards approach, our host alarms,
 With gaudy coats the cottage swarms. 70
 The crown and purple robes they bring,
 And prostrate fall before the king.
 The clown was call'd, the royal guest
 By due reward his thanks exprest.
 The king then, turning to the crowd, 75
 Who fawningly before him bow'd,
 Thus spoke: Since, bent on private gain,
 Your counsels first misled my reign,

Taught

Taught and informed by you alone,
 No truth the royal ear hath known, 80
 Till here converſing. Hence, ye crew,
 For now I know myſelf and you.

Whene'er the royal ear's ingroſt,
 State-lies but little genius coſt.
 The fav'rite then ſecurely robs, 85
 And gleans a nation by his jobs.
 Franker and bolder grown in ill,
 He daily poisons dares inſtil;
 And, as his preſent views ſuggeſt,
 Inflames or ſooths the royal breath. 90
 Thus wicked miniſters oppreſs,
 When oft the monarch means redreſs.

Would kings their private ſubjects hear,
 A miniſter muſt talk with fear.
 If honeſty oppos'd his views, 95
 He dare not innocence accuſe.
 'Twould keep him in ſuch narrow bound,
 He could not right and wrong confound.
 Happy were kings, could they diſcloſe
 Their real friends and real foes! 100
 Were both themſelves and ſubjects known,
 A monarch's will might be his own.
 Had he the uſe of ears and eyes,
 Knaves would no more be counted wiſe.
 But then a miniſter might loſe 105
 (Hard caſe!) his own ambitious views.
 When ſuch as theſe have vex'd a ſtate,
 Purſu'd by univerſal hate,

Their

Their false support at once hath fail'd,
 And persevering truth prevail'd. 110
 Expos'd, their train of fraud is seen;
 Truth will at last remove the screen.

A country 'Squire, by whim directed,
 The true staunch dogs of chace neglected.
 Beneath his board no hound was fed; 115
 His hand ne'er strok'd the spaniel's head.
 A snappish Cur, alone carest,
 By lies had banish'd all the rest.
 YAP had his ear; and defamation
 Gave him full scope of conversation. 120
 His sycophants must be preferr'd,
 Room must be made for all his herd:
 Wherefore, to bring his schemes about,
 Old faithful servants all must out.

The Cur on ev'ry creature flew, 125
 (As other great mens' puppies do),
 Unless due court to him were shown,
 And both their face and bus'ness known;
 No honest tongue an audience found:
 He worried all the tenants round; 130
 For why, he liv'd in constant fear,
 Lest truth, by chance, should interfere.
 If any stranger dare intrude,
 The noisy Cur his heels pursu'd.
 Now fierce with rage, now struck with dread, 135
 At once he snarled, bit, and fled.
 Aloof he bays, with bristling hair,
 And thus in secret growls his fear:

Who

Who knows but truth, in this disguise,
 May frustrate my best guarded lies? 140
 Should she (thus mask'd) admittance find,
 That very hour my ruin's sign'd.

Now in his howl's continued sound,
 Their words were lost, their voice was drown'd.
 Ever in awe of honest tongues, 145
 Thus ev'ry day he strain'd his lungs.

It happen'd, in ill-omen'd hour,
 That YAP, unmindful of his pow'r,
 Forfook his post, to love inclin'd;
 A fav'rite bitch was in the wind. 150
 By her seduc'd, in am'rous play,
 They frisk'd the joyous hours away.
 Thus, by untimely love pursuing,
 Like ANTHONY, he fought his ruin.

For now the 'Squire, unvex'd with noise, 155
 An honest neighbour's chat enjoys.
 Be free (says he,) your mind impart;
 I love a friendly open heart.
 Methinks my tenants shun my gate;
 Why such a stranger grown of late? 160
 Pray tell me what offence they find:
 'Tis plain they're not so well inclin'd.

L. 154. Prior speaking of beauty, says

“ This through the East, just vengeance hurl'd,

“ And lost poor *Anthony* the world.”

Turn off your Cur (the farmer cries)
Who feeds your ear wth daily lies.
His snarling insolence offends: 165
'Tis he that keeps you from your friends.
Were but that saucy puppy check'd,
You'd find again the same respect.
Hear only him, he'll swear it too,
That all our hatred is to you. 170
But learn from us your true estate;
'Tis that curs'd Cur alone we hate.

The 'Squire heard truth. Now YAP rush'd in;
The wide hall echoes with his din:
Yet truth prevail'd; and, with disgrace, 175
The Dog was cudgell'd out of place.



FABLE 7.

The Countryman and Jupiter.

TO MYSELF.

HAVE you a friend (look round and spy)
 So fond, so prepossess'd as I?
 Your faults so obvious to mankind,
 My partial eyes could never find.
 When, by the breath of fortune blown, 5
 Your airy castles were o'erthrown;
 Have I been over-prone to blame,
 Or mortify'd your hours with shame?
 Was I e'er known to damp your spirit,
 Or twit you with the want of merit? 10

'Tis not so strange, that fortune's frown
 Still perseveres to keep you down.
 Look round, and see what others do,
 Would you be rich and honest too?
 Have you (like those she rais'd to place) 15
 Been opportunely mean and base?
 Have you (as times requir'd) resign'd
 Truth, honour, virtue, peace of mind? 16

If these are scruples, give her o'er ;
Write, practise morals, and be poor. 20

The gifts of fortune truly rate ;
Then tell me what would mend your state.
If happiness on wealth were built,
Rich rogues might comfort find in guilt ;
As grows the miser's hoarded store, 25
His fears, his wants, increase the more.

Think, GAY, (what ne'er may be the case)
Should fortune take you into grace,
Would that your happiness augment ?
What can she give beyond content ? 30

Suppose yourself a wealthy heir,
With a vast annual income clear !
In all the affluence you possess,
You might not feel one care the less.
Might you not then (like others) find 35
With change of fortune, change of mind ?
Perhaps, profuse beyond all rule,
You might start out a glaring fool ;
Your luxury might break all bounds :
Plate, table, horses, stewards, hounds, 40
Might swell your debts : then, lust of play
No regal income can defray.
Sunk is all credit, writs assail,
And doom your future life to jail.

Or were you dignify'd with pow'r, 45
Would that avert one pensive hour ?
You

You might give avarice its fwing,
 Defraud a nation, blind a king :
 Then, from the hirelings in your cause,
 Though daily fed with falſe applauſe, 50
 Could it a real joy impart?
 Great guilt knew never joy at heart.

Is happineſs your point in view?
 (I mean the intrinsic and the true)
 She nor in camps or courts reſides, 55
 Nor in the humble cottage hides;
 Yet found alike in ev'ry ſphere;
 Who finds content, will find her there.

L. 58. It has been juſtly remarked, that a writer often beſt deſcribes the excellence of that virtue in which he is moſt deficient; and can moſt feelingly paint the miſeries of that ſtate which he himſelf has experienced.

Thus Steel, who ſuffered ſo much from want of œconomy, wrote admirably upon œconomy; and Gay, whoſe ſanguine diſpoſition was continually forming hopes which were continually diſappointed, who was ever fighting for what he had not, and not enjoying what he had, has in many parts of his Fables, but particularly in this beautiful Introduction, diſplayed in juſt colours, the bleſſedneſs of a contented mind.

The old proverb of *Phyſician cure thyſelf*, might have been applied to Gay. He could not follow the doctrines which he preached; he did not poſſeſs that content which he deſcribes as ſo eſſential to human happineſs. Diſcontent took poſſeſſion of his mind, and preying upon a weak conſtitution, prematurely hurried him to the grave.

See the Life of Gay, prefixed to this Work.

O'erſpent

O'erspent with toil, beneath the shade,
A peasant rested on his spade. 60

Good gods! he cries, 'tis hard to bear
This load of life from year to year.
Soon as the morning streaks the skies,
Industrious labour bids me rise;
With sweat I earn my homely fare, 65
And ev'ry day renews my care.

Jove heard the discontented strain,
And thus rebuk'd the murm'ring swain:

Speak out your wants then, honest friend:
Unjust complaints the gods offend. 70
If you repine at partial fate,
Instruct me what could mend your state.
Mankind in ev'ry station see.
What wish you? Tell me what you'd be.

So said, upborne upon a cloud, 75
The clown survey'd the anxious crowd.

Yon face of care, says Jove, behold,
His bulky bags are fill'd with gold.
See with what joy he counts it o'er!
That sum to day hath swell'd his store. 80
Were I that man, (the Peasant cry'd)
What blessing could I ask beside?

Hold, says the God: first learn to know
True happiness from outward show.

This

This optic glass of intuition— 85
Here, take it, view his true condition.

He look'd, and saw the miser's breast,
A troubled ocean, ne'er at rest;
Want ever stares him in the face,
And fear anticipates disgrace: 90
With conscious guilt he saw him start;
Extortion gnaws his throbbing heart;
And never, or in thought or dream,
His breast admits one happy gleam.

May Jove, he cries, reject my pray'r, 95
And guard my life from guilt and care.
My soul abhors that wretch's fate,
O keep me in my humble state!
But see, amidst a gaudy crowd,
Yon minister, so gay and proud, 100
On him what happiness attends,
Who thus rewards his grateful friends!

L. 85. *This optic glass of intuition*, which enabled the Countryman to see *intuitively* things as they really were, had a similar effect to that which the Angel produced on the eyes of Adam.

“ Michael from Adam's eyes the film remov'd,
“ Which that false fruit, that promis'd clearer sight
“ Had bred; then purg'd with euphrasy and rue
“ The visual nerve, for he had much to see;
“ And from the well of life three drops infill'd,
“ So deep the pow'r of these ingredients pierc'd,
“ Ev'n th' inmost seat of mental sight.”

Milton's Paradise Lost, b. II, l. 412.

First take the glass, the God replies :
Man views the world with partial eyes.

Good gods ! exclaims the startled wight, 105
Defend me from this hideous fight !

Corruption, with corrosive smart,
Lies cank'ring on his guilty heart :
I see him, with polluted hand,

Spread the contagion o'er the land. 110

Now avarice with insatiate jaws,
Now rapine with her harpy claws,
His bosom tears. His conscious breast
Groans, with a load of crimes oppress'd.

See him, mad and drunk with power, 115

Stand tott'ring on ambition's tower.
Sometimes, in speeches vain and proud,

His boasts insult the nether crowd ;

Now, seiz'd with giddiness and fear,

He trembles lest his fall is near. 120

Was ever wretch like this, he cries !
Such misery in such disguise !
The change, O Jove, I disavow ;
Still be my lot the spade and plough.

He next, confirm'd by speculation, 125
Rejects the lawyer's occupation :

For he the statesman seem'd in part,

And bore similitude of heart.

Nor did the soldier's trade inflame

His hopes with thirst of spoil and fame ; 130

The

The mis'ries of war he mourn'd ;
Whole nations into desarts turn'd.

By these have laws and rights been brav'd ;
By these was free-born man inflav'd :
When battles and invasions cease, 135
Why swarm they in a land of peace ?
Such change (says he) may I decline ;
'The scythe and civil arms be mine !
Thus, weighing life in each condition,
The clown withdrew his rash petition. 140

When

This Fable shews, from the example of the discontented Country Man, who found by experience, that his own situation was preferable to those which he envied, what a false estimate they make of life, who are silly enough, as Gay says in another place,

———“ *by outward show*
“ *To judge of happiness below.*”

Fable 49.

In fact the situation which Providence has allotted for us is best; and it is a proof of great folly not to be contented and grateful for the comforts which we enjoy. The sentiment in the Introduction, that happiness

“ *Is found alike in every sphere,*
“ *Who finds content, will find her there ;*”

And repeated in the concluding lines, that happiness

“ *Is to no rank of life confin'd ;*”

is well expressed by Cawthorn in a Poetical Dialogue, on the Equality of Human Conditions :

“ All lots are equal, and all states the same,
“ Alike in merit, tho' unlike in name.

“ In

When thus the God : How mortals err ? 145
 If you true happiness prefer,
 'Tis to no rank of life confin'd,
 But dwells in ev'ry honest mind.
 Be justice then your sole pursuit :
 Plant virtue, and content's the fruit. 150

So Jove, to gratify the Clown,
 Where first he found him fet him down.

" In Reason's eye no difference lies between
 " Life's noon-day lustres or her milder scene.
 " 'Tis not the plate that dignifies the board,
 " Not all the titles blazing round a lord ;
 " 'Tis not the splendid plume, th' embroider'd vest,
 " The gorgeous sword-knot, or the martial crest,
 " That lends to life the smile, the jest, the glee,
 " Or makes his honour happier than me." &c.

" CONTENT's the port all mortals wish to hail :
 " She points the compass, and she guides the sail,
 " To her alone our leaky vessels roll
 " Thro' all the seas that rage from pole to pole.
 " What boots it then, when gath'ring storms behind
 " Rise black in air, and howl in every wind ;
 " That thy rich ship a pomp of pride display'd,
 " Her masts all cedar, and her sails brocade !
 " Say, canst thou think the tempest will discern
 " A silken cable, or a painted stern ;
 " Hush the wild tumult that tornados bring,
 " And kindly spare the yacht that holds a king."

See Johnson's Poets, v. 65. p. 199.

FABLE 8.

The Man, the Cat, the Dog, and the Fly.

TO MY NATIVE COUNTRY.

HAILED, happy land, whose fertile grounds
 The liquid fence of NEPTUNE bounds;
 By bounteous Nature set apart,
 The seat of industry and art!
O BRITAIN, chosen Port of trade, 5
 May luxury ne'er thy sons invade;
 May never minister (intent
 His private treasures to augment)
 Corrupt thy state. If jealous foes 10
 Thy rights of commerce dare oppose,
 Shall not thy fleets their rapine awe?
 Who is't prescribes the ocean law?

Whenever neighb'ring states contend,
 'Tis thine to be the gen'ral friend.

L. 2. *The liquid fence of Neptune bounds:*

“Sea-girt Britain,” in Waller;

And called in Rowe,

“The noblest of the ocean's isles.”

What is't, who rules in other lands? 15
 On trade alone thy glory stands;
 That benefit is unconfin'd,
 Diffusing good among mankind;
 That first gave lustre to thy reigns,
 And scatter'd plenty o'er thy plains: 20
 'Tis that alone thy wealth supplies,
 And draws all EUROPE's envious eyes.
 Be commerce then thy sole design;
 Keep that, and all the world is thine.
 When naval traffic ploughs the main, 25
 Who shares not in the merchant's gain?
 'Tis that supports the regal state,
 And makes the farmer's heart elate:
 The num'rous flocks, that clothe the land,
 Can scarce supply the loom's demand; 30
 Prolific culture glads the fields,
 And the bare heath a harvest yields.

Nature expects mankind should share
 The duties of the public care.

Who's

L. 33 to 64. These beautiful lines inculcate the necessity of industry; and the reciprocal advantages drawn from the inequality of conditions, according to the observation on the forty-third Fable:

" Since ev'ry creature was decreed,
 " To aid each other's mutual need."

" If we confound," says the commentator on *Æsop's Fables*, " higher and lower, the world is a *Chaos* again, and a level. Is not a labourer as much a tool of Providence as the master builder? Are not the meanest Artisans of the same institution with Ministers of Counsel and State? The head can no more

Who's born for sloth?* To some we find 35
 The plough-share's annual toil assign'd.
 Some at the founding anvil glow ;
 Some the swift-gliding shuttle throw,
 Some, studious of the wind and tide,
 From pole to pole our commerce guide : 40
 Some (taught by industry) impart
 With hands and feet the works of art :
 While some of genius more refin'd,
 With head and tongue assist mankind ;
 Each, aiming at one common end, 45
 Proves to the whole a needful friend.
 Thus, born each other's useful aid,
 By turns are obligations paid.

The monarch, when his table's spread,
 Is to the clown oblig'd for bread ; 50
 And when in all his glory drest,
 Owes to the loom his royal vest.
 Do not the mason's toil and care
 Protect him from th' inclement air !
 Does not the cutler's art supply 55
 The ornament that guards his thigh ?
 All these, in duty to the throne,
 Their common obligations own.

be without the body, than the body without the head; and
 neither of them without hands and feet to defend, and provide,
 both for the one, and for the other. Government can no more
 subsist without subjection, than the multitude can agree without
 government; and the duty of obeying, is no less of Divine ap-
 pointment, than the authority of commanding."

L'Estrange's *Æsop*, v. 1. p. 169.

'Tis he (his own and people's cause)
 Protects their properties and laws. 60
 Thus they their honest toil employ,
 And with content their fruits enjoy.
 In ev'ry rank, or great or small,
 'Tis industry supports us all.

The animals, by want oppres'd, 65
 To man their services address'd ;
 While each pursued their selfish good,
 They hunger'd for precarious food,
 Their hours with anxious cares were vex't ;
 One day they fed, and starv'd the next. 70
 They saw that plenty, sure and rife,
 Was found alone in social life ;
 That mutual industry profess'd,
 The various wants of man redrefs'd.

The Cat, half-famish'd, lean and weak, 75
 Demands the privilege to speak.

Well, Pufs, (says Man) and what can you
 To benefit the public do ?

The Cat replies: these teeth, these claws,
 With vigilance shall serve the cause. 80
 The mouse, destroy'd by my pursuit,
 No longer shall your feasts pollute ;
 Nor rats, from nightly ambuscade,
 With wasteful teeth your stores invade.

L. 71. *Rife.* Means abundant.

198 FABLE THE EIGHTH.

I grant, says Man, to gen'ral use 85
Your parts and talents may conduce ;
For rats and mice purloin our grain,
And threshers whirl the flail in vain:
Thus shall the Cat, a foe to spoil,
Protect the farmer's honest toil. 90

Then turning to the Dog, he cry'd :
Well, Sir; be next your merits try'd.

Sir, says the Dog, by self-applause
We seem to own a friendless cause.
'Ask those who know me, if distrust 95
E'er found me treach'rous or unjust ?
Did I e'er faith or friendship break ?
Ask all those creatures ; let them speak.
My vigilance and trusty zeal
Perhaps might suit the public weal. 100
Might not your flocks in safety feed,
Were I to guard the fleecy breed !
Did I the nightly watches keep,
Could thieves invade you while you sleep ?

The man replies. 'Tis just and right ; 105
Rewards such service should requite.
So rare, in property, we find
Trust uncorrupt among mankind,
That, taken in a public view,
The first distinction is your due. 110
Such merits all reward transcend :
Be then my comrade and my friend.

Addressing

Addressing now the Fly : From you
 What public service can accrue ?
 From me ! (the flutt'ring insect said) 115
 I thought you knew me better bred.
 Sir, I'm a gentleman. Is't fit
 That I to industry submit ?
 Let mean mechanics, to be fed
 By bus'ness earn ignoble bread. 120
 Lost in excess of daily joys,
 No thought, no care my life annoys,
 At noon (the lady's matin hour)
 I sip the tea's delicious flow'r.
 On cates luxuriously I dine, 125
 And drink the fragrance of the vine.
 Studious of elegance and ease,
 Myself alone I seek to please.

The man his pert conceit derides,
 And thus the useless coxcomb chides : 130

Hence, from that peach, that downy feat;
 No idle fool deserves to eat.
 Could you have sapp'd the blushing rind,
 And on that pulp ambrosial din'd,
 Had not some hand with skill and toil, 135
 To raise the tree, prepar'd the soil ?
 Consider, sot, what would ensue,
 Were all such worthless things as you.
 You'd soon be forc'd (by hunger stung)
 To make your dirty meals on dung; 140
 On which such despicable need,
 Unpitied, is reduc'd to feed ;

200 FABLE THE EIGHTH.

Besides, vain selfish insect, learn,
(If you can right and wrong discern)
That he who, with industrious zeal, 145
Contributes to the public weal,
By adding to the common good,
His own hath rightly understood.

So saying, with a sudden blow,
He laid the noxious vagrant low. 150
Crush'd in his luxury and pride,
The spunger on the public dy'd.



FABLE 9.

The Jackall, Leopard, and other Beasts.

TO A MODERN POLITICIAN.

I GRANT corruption sways mankind,
 'That int'rest too perverts the mind.
 That bribes have blinded common sense,
 Foil'd reason, truth, and eloquence :
 I grant you too, our present crimes 5
 Can equal those of former times.
 Against plain facts shall I engage,
 To vindicate our righteous age?
 I know, that in a modern fist,
 Bribes in full energy subsist. 10
 Since then these arguments prevail,
 And itching palms are still so frail,
 Hence politicians you suggest,
 Should drive the nail that goes the best ;
 That it shows parts and penetration, 15
 To ply men with the right temptation.

To this I humbly must dissent ;
 Premising no reflection's meant.

K 5

Does

Does justice or the client's sense
 Teach lawyers either side's defence? 20
 The fee gives eloquence its spirit;
 That only is the client's merit.
 Does art, wit, wisdom, or address,
 Obtain the prostitute's care?
 The guinea (as in other trades) 25
 From ev'ry hand alike persuades.
 Man, Scripture says, is prone to evil,
 But does that vindicate the devil?
 Besides, the more mankind are prone,
 The less the devil's parts are shown, 30
 Corruption's not of modern date;
 It hath been try'd in ev'ry state.
 Great knaves of old their power have fenc'd,
 By places, pensions, bribes, dispens'd;
 By these they glory'd in success, 35
 And impudently dar'd oppress;
 By these despotically they sway'd,
 And slaves extoll'd the hand that pay'd;
 Nor parts, nor genius were employ'd,
 By these alone were realms destroy'd. 40

Now see these wretches in disgrace,
 Stript of their treasures, pow'r, and place;
 View 'em abandon'd and forlorn,
 Expos'd to just reproach and scorn.
 What now is all your pride, and boast? 45
 Where are your slaves, your flatt'ring host?
 What tongues now feed you with applause?
 Where are the champions of your cause?

Now

Now ev'n that very fawning train
 Which shar'd the gleanings of your gain, 50
 Prefs foremost who shall first accuse
 Your selfish jobs, your paltry views,
 Your narrow schemes, your breach of trust,
 And want of talents to be just.

What fools were these amidst their pow'r? 55
 How thoughtless of their adverse hour!
 What friends were made! A hireling herd,
 For temporary votes preferr'd.
 Was it, these fycophants to get,
 Your bounty swell'd a nation's debt? 60
 You're bit. For these, like Swifs, attend;
 No longer pay, no longer friend.

The Lion is (beyond dispute)
 Allow'd the most majestic brute:
 His valour and his gen'rous mind, 65
 Prove him superior of his kind.
 Yet to Jackalls (as 'tis averr'd)
 Some Lions have their pow'r transferr'd;
 As if the parts of pimps and spies
 To govern forests could suffice. 70

Once, studious of his private good,
 A proud Jackall oppress'd the wood;
 To cram his own infatiate jaws,
 Invaded property and laws.
 The forest groans with discontent, 75
 Fresh wrongs the gen'ral hate soment,

The spreading murmurs reach'd his ear ;
 His secret hours were vex'd with fear.
 Night after night he weighs the case,
 And feels the terrors of disgrace.

80

By friends (says he) I'll guard my feat,
 By those, malicious tongues defeat :
 I'll strengthen pow'r by new allies,
 And all my clam'rous foes despise.

To make the gen'rous beasts his friends,
 He cringes, fawns, and condescends ;
 But those repuls'd his abject court,
 And scorn'd oppression to support.
 Friends must be had. He can't subsist.
 Bribes shall new profelytes enlist.
 But these nought weigh'd in honest paws ;
 For bribes confess'd a wicked cause :
 Yet think not ev'ry paw withstands
 What hath prevail'd in human hands.

85

90

A tempting turnip's silver skin
 Drew a base Hog through thick and thin :
 Bought with a Stag's delicious haunch,
 The mercenary Wolf was staunch :
 The convert Fox grew warm and hearty,
 A Pullet gain'd him to the party ;
 The golden pippin in his fist,
 A chatt'ring Monkey join'd the list ;

95

100

But soon expos'd to public hate,
 The fav'rites' fall redress'd the state.

The

PART THE SECOND.

205

The Leopard vindicating right,
Had brought his secret frauds to light ;
As rats, before the mansion falls,
Desert late hospitable walls ;
In shoals the servile creatures run,
To bow before the rising sun. 110

The Hog with warmth express'd his zeal,
And was for hanging those that steal ;
But hop'd, though low, the public hoard,
Might half a turnip still afford.
Since saving measures were profess'd, 115
A lamb's head was the wolf's request.

The Fox submitted, if to touch
A gosling would be deem'd too much.
The Monkey thought his grin and chatter,
Might ask a nut or some such matter. 120

Ye hirelings, (hence the Leopard cries ;)
Your venal conscience I despise.
He who the public good intends,
By bribes need never purchase friends.
Who acts this just, this open part, 125
Is propt by ev'ry honest heart.
Corruption now too late hath show'd,
That bribes are always ill-bestow'd,
By you your bubbled master's taught,
Time-serving tools, not friends, are bought. 130

Rapacious, arrogant, and vain,
 Greedy of pow'r, but more of gain, 40
 Corruption sow'd throughout the hive;
 By petty rogues the great ones thrive.

As pow'r and wealth his views supply'd,
 'Twas seen in over-bearing pride.
 With him loud impudence had merit; 45
 The Bee of conscience wanted spirit;
 And those who follow'd honour's rules,
 Were laugh'd to scorn for squeamish fools.
 Wealth claim'd distinction, favour, grace;
 And poverty alone was base. 50
 He treated industry with flight,
 Unless he found some profit by't.
 Rights, laws, and liberties gave way,
 To bring his selfish schemes in play.
 The swarm forgot the common toil, 55
 To share the gleanings of his spoil.

While vulgar souls, of narrow parts,
 Waste life in low mechanic arts,
 Let us (says he) to genius born,
 The drudg'ry of our fathers scorn 60
 The Wasp and Drone, you must agree,
 Live with more elegance than we.
 Like gentlemen they sport and play:
 No bus'ness interrupts the day:
 Their hours to luxury they give, 65
 And nobly on their neighbours live.

A stubborn Bee, among the swarm,
 With honest indignation warm,
 Thus from his cell with zeal reply'd:

I slight thy frowns and hate thy pride. 70
 The laws our native rights protect.
 Offending thee, I those respect.
 Shall luxury corrupt the hive,
 And none against the torrent strive?
 Exert the honour of your race; 75
 He builds his rise on your disgrace.
 'Tis industry our state maintains:
 'Twas honest toils and honest gain
 That rais'd our fires to pow'r and fame.
 Be virtuous: save yourself from shame. 80
 Know, that in selfish ends pursuing,
 You scramble for the public ruin.

He spoke; and from his cell dismiss'd,
 Was insolently scoff'd and hiss'd.
 With him a friend or two resign'd, 85
 Disdaining the degen'rate kind.

These drones, (says he) these insects vile,
 (I treat them in their proper style)
 May for a time oppress the state,
 They own our virtue by their hate; 90
 By that our merit they reveal,
 And recommend our public zeal;
 Disgrac'd by this corrupted crew,
 We're honour'd by the virtuous few.

FABLE 11.

The Pack Horse and the Carrier.

TO A YOUNG NOBLEMAN.

BEGIN, my Lord, in early youth,
 To suffer, nay, encourage truth:
 And blame me not for disrespect,
 If I the flatt'rer's style reject,
 With that, by menial tongue supply'd, 5
 You're daily cocker'd up in pride.

The tree's distinguish'd by the fruit,
 Be virtue then your first pursuit;
 Set your great ancestors in view,
 Like them deserve the title too; 10
 Like them ignoble actions scorn:
 Let virtue prove you greatly born.

Though with less plate their side-board shone,
 Their conscience always was their own;
 They ne'er at levees meanly fawn'd, 15
 Nor was their honor yearly pawn'd;
 Their hands, by no corruption stain'd,
 The ministerial bribe disdain'd;

They

They serv'd the crown with loyal zeal ;
 Yet, jealous of the public weal, 20
 They stood the bulwark of our laws,
 And wore at heart their country's cause ;
 By neither place or pension bought,
 They spoke and voted as they thought.
 Thus did your fires adorn their seat ; 25
 And such alone are truly great.

If you the paths of learning slight,
 You're but a dunce in stronger light ;
 In foremost rank the coward plac'd,
 Is more conspicuously disgrac'd. 30
 If you, to serve a poultry end,
 To knavish jobs shall condescend,
 We pay you the contempt that's due ;
 In that you have precedence too.
 Whence had you this illustrious name ? 35
 From virtue and unblemish'd fame.
 By birth the name alone descends ;
 Your honour on yourself depends :
 Think not your coronet can hide
 Assuming ignorance and pride. 40
 Learning by study must be won,
 'Twas ne'er entailed from son to son.
 Superior worth your rank requires ;
 For that mankind reveres your fires :
 If you degen'rate from your race, 45
 Their merits heighten your disgrace.

A carrier, ev'ry night and morn,
 Would see his horses eat their corn :

This

This funk the hostler's veils, tis true :
 But then his horses had their due. 50
 Were we so cautious in all cases,
 Small gain would rise from greater places.

The manger now had all its measure ;
 He heard the grinding teeth with pleasure ;
 When all at once confusion rung ; 55
 They snorted, jostled, bit, and flung.
 A Pack-horse turn'd his head aside,
 Foaming his eye-balls swell'd with pride.

Good gods ! (says he) how hard's my lot !
 Is then my high descent forgot ? 60
 Reduc'd to drudg'ry and disgrace,
 (A life unworthy of my race)
 Must I too bear the vile attacks
 Of ragged scrubs, and vulgar hacks ?
 See scurvy ROAN, that brute ill-bred, 65
 Dares from the manger thrust my head !
 Shall I, who boast a noble line,
 On offals of these creatures dine ?
 Kick'd by old BALL ! so mean a foe !
 My honour suffers by the blow. 70
 NEWMARKET speaks my grandfire's fame,
 All jockeys still revere his name :
 There yearly are his triumphs told,
 There all his massy plates inroll'd.
 Whene'er led forth upon the plain, 75
 You saw him with a liv'ry train ;
 Returning too with laurels crown'd,
 You heard the drums and trumpets found.

Let

Let it then, Sir, be understood,
Respect's my due; for I have blood. 80

Vain-glorious fool! (the Carrier cry'd)
Respect was never made for pride.
Know, 'twas thy giddy wilful heart
Reduc'd thee to this slavish part.
Did not thy headstrong youth disdain 85
To learn the conduct of the rein?
Thus coxcombs, blind to real merit,
In vicious frolics fancy spirit.
What is't to me by whom begot?
Thou restive, pert, conceited sot. 90
Your fires I reverence; 'tis their due:
But, worthless fool, what's that to you?
Ask all the Carriers on the road,
They'll say thy keeping's ill bestow'd.
Then vaunt no more thy noble race, 95
That neither mends thy strength or pace.
What profits me thy boast of blood?
An ass hath more intrinsic good.
By outward shew let's not be cheated;
An ass should like an ass be treated. 100

This Fable strongly inculcates the truth, that learning and virtue are not, like honours, hereditary; and that high birth and elevated stations, where misapplied and degenerated, only serve to render bad conduct more conspicuous, and vice more hideous.

As Gay justly observes,

*“ In foremost ranks the coward plac'd,
Is more conspicuously disgrac'd.”*

Thus they, before you threw the main,
Seem to anticipate their gain.

Would you, when thieves were known abroad?
Bring forth your treasures in the road? 20
Would not the fool abet the stealth,
Who rashly thus expos'd his wealth?
Yet this you do, whene'er you play
Among the gentlemen of prey.

Could fools to keep their own contrive, 25
On what, on whom could gamesters thrive?
Is it in charity you game,
To save your worthy gang from shame?
Unless you furnish'd daily bread,
Which way could idleness be fed? 30
Could these professors of deceit
Within the law no longer cheat,
They must run bolder risks for prey,
And strip the trav'ler on the way.
Thus in your annual rents they share, 35
And 'scape the noose from year to year.
Consider, 'ere you make the bet
That sum, might cross your taylor's debt;
When you the pilf'ring rattle shake,
Is not your honour too at stake? 40
Must you not by mean lies evade
To-morrow's duns from ev'ry trade?
By promises so often paid,
Is yet your taylor's bill defray'd?

Must

Must you not pitifully fawn, 45
 To have your butcher's writ withdrawn ?
 This must be done. In debts of play
 Your honour suffers no delay :
 And not this year's and next year's rent
 The sons of rapine can content. 50

Look round. The wrecks of play behold,
 Estates dismember'd, mortgag'd, sold !
 Their owners, not to jails confin'd,
 Shew equal poverty of mind.
 Some, who the spoil of knaves were made, 55
 Too late attempt to learn their trade.
 Some, for the folly of one hour,
 Become the dirty tools of pow'r,
 And, with the mercenary list,
 Upon court charity subsist. 60

You'll find at last this maxim true,
 Fools are the game which knaves pursue.

The forest (a whole cent'ry's shade)
 Must be one wasteful ruin made.
 No mercy's shewn to age or kind ; 65
 The general massacre is sign'd.
 The park too shares the dreadful fate,
 For duns grow louder at the gate ;
 Stern clowns obedient to the 'Squire,
 (What will not barb'rous hands for hire ?) 70
 With brawny arms repeat the stroke.
 Fall'n are the elm and rev'rend oak.

Through .

Through the long wood loud axes found,
And echo groans with ev'ry wound.

To see the desolation spread, 75
PAN drops a tear, and hangs his head :
His bosom now with fury burns;
Beneath his hoof the dice he spurns.
Cards too, in peevish passion torn
The sport of whirling winds are borne. 80

To snails invet'rate hate I bear,
Who spoil the verdure of the year ;
The caterpillar I detest,
The blooming spring's voracious pest ;
The locust too, whose rav'nous band 85
Spreads sudden famine o'er the land.
But what are these? The dice's throw
At once hath laid a forest low.
The cards are dealt, the bet is made,
And the wide park hath lost its shade. 90
Thus is my kingdom's pride defac'd,
And all its ancient glories waste;
All this (he cries) is FORTUNE's doing ;
'Tis thus she meditates my ruin.
By FORTUNE, that false fickle jade, 95
More havock in one hour is made,
Than all the hungry insect race,
Combin'd, can in an age deface.

FORTUNE, by chance, who near him past,
O'erheard the vile asperſion caſt.

L

100
Why

218 FABLE THE TWELFTH.

Why, PAN, (says she) what's all this rant?
 'Tis ev'ry country-bubble's cant;
 Am I the patroness of vice?
 Is't I who cog or palm the dice?
 Did I the shuffling art reveal, 105
 To mark the cards, or range the deal?
 In all th' employments men pursue,
 I mind the least what gamesters do.
 There may (if computation's just)
 One now and then my conduct trust: 110
 I blame the fool, for what can I
 When ninety-nine my pow'r defy?
 These trust alone their fingers ends,
 And not one stake on me depends.
 Whene'er the gaming board is set, 115
 Two classes of mankind are met:
 But if we count the greedy race,
 The knaves fill up the greater space.
 'Tis a cross error, held in schools,
 That FORTUNE always favours fools. 120

L. 104. To *cog the dice*, means to load them with a small bit of lead, by which means one particular number is oftener thrown.

To *palm the dice*, means to convey them under the *palm* of the hand, and substitute others in their stead.—As Prior says,

“ They *palm'd* the trick that lost the game.”

Gay also says in his *Newgate's Garland*,

“ Ye gallants of Newgate, whose fingers are nice,
 “ In diving in pockets, and *cogging of dice*.”

In play it never bears dispute ;
That doctrine these fell'd oaks confute.
Then why to me such rancour shew?
'Tis Folly, PAN, that is thy foe.
By me his late estate he won,
But he by Folly was undone.

125



FABLE 13.

Plutus, Cupid, and Time.

OF all the burdens man must bear,
 Time seems most galling and severe :
 Beneath this grievous load opprest'd,
 We daily meet some friend distress'd.

What can one do? I rose at nine ;
 'Tis full six hours before we dine :
 Six hours no earthly thing to do !
 Would I had doz'd in bed till two.

A pamphlet is before him spread,
 And almost half a page is read ;
 Tir'd with the study of the day,
 The flutt'ring sheets are tost away.
 He opes his snuff-box, hums an air,
 Then yawns, and stretches in his chair.

Not twenty, by the minute hand !
 Good goods ! says he, my watch must stand !
 How muddling 'tis on books to pore !
 I thought I'd read an hour or more.
 The morning, of all hours I hate,
 One can't contrive to rise too late.

5

10

15

20

To

To make the minutes faster run,
 Then too his tiresome self to shun,
 To the next coffee-house he speeds,
 Takes up the News, some scraps he reads.
 Saunt'ring, from chair to chair he trails; 25
 Now drinks his tea, now bites his nails.
 He spies a partner of his woe;
 By chat afflictions lighter grow;
 Each other's grievances they share,
 And thus their dreadful hours compare. 30

Says Tom, since all men must confess,
 That Time lies heavy more or less;
 Why should it be so hard to get
 Till two a party at piquet?
 Play might relieve the lagging morn: 35
 By cards long wintry nights are borne.
 Does not quadrille amuse the fair,
 Night after night, throughout the year?

L. 37. *Does not Quadrille amuse the fair?*

When Gay wrote his Fables, Quadrille was the most fashionable game.

He has written a Ballad on Quadrille, which thus begins:

“ When as corruption hence did go,
 “ And left the nation free;
 “ When ay said ay, and no said no,
 “ Without or place or fee;
 “ Then Satan, thinking things went ill,
 “ Sent forth his spirit, call'd *Quadrille*.
 “ *Quadrille, Quadrille, Quadrille.*”

222 FABLE THE THIRTEENTH.

Vapours and spleen forgot, at play
They cheat uncounted hours away. 40

My case, says WILL, then must be hard
By want of skill from play debarr'd.
Courtiers kill Time by various ways;
Dependance wears out half their days.
How happy these, whose time ne'er stands; 45
Attendance takes it off their hands.

Were it not for this cursed show'r,
The park had whil'd away an hour.
At court, without of place or view,
I daily lose an hour or two; 50
It fully answers my design,

When I have pick'd up friends to dine;
The tavern makes our burden light;
Wine puts our Time and care to flight.
At six (hard case!) they call to pay. 55

Where can one go; I hate the play.
From six till ten! unless I sleep,
One cannot spend the hours so cheap.
The comedy's no sooner done,
But some assembly is begun; 60

Loit'ring from room to room I stray;
Converse, but nothing hear or say:
Quite tir'd, from fair to fair I roam.
So soon; I dread the thoughts of home.
From thence, to quicken slow-pac'd night, 65

Again my tavern-friends invite:
Here too our early mornings pass,
Till drousy sleep retards the glafs.

Thus

Thus they their wretched life bemoan,
And make each other's case their own. 70

Consider, friends, no hour rolls on,
But something of your grief is gone.
Were you to schemes of bus'ness bred,
Did you the paths of learning tread,
Your hours, your days, would fly too fast; 75
You'd then regret the minute past.
Time's fugitive and light as wind !
'Tis indolence that clogs your mind !
That load from off your spirits shake;
You'll own and grieve for your mistake; 80
A while your thoughtless spleen suspend,
Then read, and (if you can) attend.

As PLUTUS, to divert his care,
Walk'd forth one morn to take the air,
CUPID o'ertook his strutting pace, 85
Each star'd upon the stranger's face;
Till recollection set 'em right;
For each knew t'other but by sight.
After some complimentary talk,
TIME met 'em, bow'd, and join'd their walk. 90
Their chat on various subjects ran,
But most what each had done for man.
PLUTUS assumes a haughty air,
Just like our parse-proud fellows here.

224 FABLE THE THIRTEENTH.

Let kings (says he) let coblers tell, 95
Whose gifts among mankind excel.
Consider courts: What draws their train?
Think you 'tis loyalty, or gain?
That statesman hath the strongest hold,
Whose tool of politics is gold. 100
By that, in former reigns, 'tis said,
The knave in power hath senates led.
By that alone he sway'd debates,
Enrich'd himself and beggar'd states.
Forego your boast. You must conclude, 105
That's most esteem'd that's most pursu'd.
Think too, in what a woeful plight
That wretch must live whose pocket's light.
Are not his hours by want deprest?
Penurious care corrodes his breast. 110
Without respect, or love, or friends,
His solitary day descends.

You might, says CUPID, doubt my parts,
My knowledge too in human hearts,
Should I the pow'r of gold dispute, 115
Which great examples might confute,
I know, when nothing else prevails,
Persuasive money seldom fails;
That beauty too (like other wares)
Its price, as well as conscience, bears. 120
Then marriage (as of late profess'd)
Is but a money-job at best.

Consent

Consent, compliance may be sold :
 But love's beyond the price of gold ;
 Smugglers their are, who by retail, 125
 Expose what they call love, to sale ;
 Such bargains are an arrant cheat :
 You purchase flatt'ry and deceit.
 Those who true love have ever try'd,
 (The common cares of life supply'd) 130
 No wants endure, no wishes make,
 But ev'ry real joy partake.
 All comfort on themselves depends ;
 They want nor power, nor wealth nor friends.
 Love then hath ev'ry blifs in store : 135
 'Tis friendship, and 'tis something more.
 Each other ev'ry wish they give,
 Not to know love, is not to live.
 Or love or money (TIME reply'd)
 Were men the question to decide, 140
 Would bear the prize : on both intent,
 My boon's neglected or mispent.
 'Tis I who measure vital space,
 And deal out years to human race.
 Though little priz'd, and seldom fought ; 145
 Without me love and gold are nought.
 How does the miser time employ ?
 Did I e'er see him life enjoy ?
 By me forsook, the hoards he won,
 Are scatter'd by his lavish son. 150
 By me all useful arts are gain'd ;
 Wealth, learning, wisdom is attain'd.
 Who then would think (since such my pow'r)
 That e'er I knew an idle hour ?

226 FABLE THE THIRTEENTH.

So subtle and so swift I fly, 155
Love's not more fugitive than I.

Who hath not heard coquettes complain
Of days, months, years, mispent in vain ?
For time misus'd they pine and waste,
And love's sweet pleasures never taste. 160

Those who direct their time aright,
If love or wealth their hopes excite,
In each pursuit fit hours employ'd,
And both by time have been enjoy'd.
How heedless then are mortals grown ! 165
How little is their int'rest known ?
In ev'ry view they ought to mind me ;
For when once lost they never find me.

He spoke. The gods no more contest,
And his superior gift confess ; 170
That Time (when truly understood)
Is the most precious earthly good.



FABLE 14.

*The Owl, the Swan, the Cock, the Spider, the Ass,
and the Farmer.*

TO A MOTHER.

CONVERSING with your sprightly boys,
Your eyes have spoke the Mother's joys.
With what delight I've heard you quote
Their sayings in imperfect note!

I grant, in body and in mind,
Nature appears profusely kind.
Trust not to that: act you your part;
Imprint just morals on their heart;
Impartially their talents scan:
Just education forms the man.

Perhaps (their genius yet unknown)
Each lot of life's already thrown;
That this shall plead, the next shall fight
The last assert the church's right.
I censure not the fond intent;
But how precarious is th' event!

L. 6.

55

10

15

Byy

By talents misapply'd and croft,
 Confider, all your fons are loft.

One day (the tale's by MARTIAL penn'd)
 A father thus address'd his friend : 20
 To train my boy, and call forth sense,
 You know I've stuck at no expence ;
 I've tried him in the sev'ral arts,
 (The lad no doubt hath latent parts)
 Yet trying all, he nothing knows ; 25
 But, crab-like, rather backward goes.
 Teach me what yet remains undone ;
 'Tis your advice shall fix my fon.

Sir, says the friend, I've weigh'd the matter ;
 Excuse me, for I scorn to flatter : 30
 Make him' (nor think his genius checkt)
 A herald or an architect.

Perhaps (as commonly 'tis known)
 He heard th' advice, and took his own.

The boy wants wit; he's sent to school, 35
 Where learning but improves the fool.
 The college next must give him parts,
 And cram him with the lib'ral arts.

L. 19. Marcus Valerius *Martialis*. A Roman Poet, principally a writer of Epigrams; was born at Bibilis, a town of ancient Celtiberia, or Spain, in the reign of the Emperor Claudius.

Whether

Whether he blunders at the bar,
 Or owes his infamy to war ; 40
 Or if by licence or degree
 The sexton shares the doctor's fee :
 Or from the pulpit by the hour
 He weekly floods of nonsense pour ;
 We find (th' intent of nature foil'd) 45
 A taylor or a butcher spoil'd.

Thus ministers have royal boons
 Conferr'd on blockheads and buffoons :
 In spite of nature, merit, wit,
 Their friends for ev'ry post were fit. 50

But now let ev'ry muse confess
 That merit finds its due success.
 Th' examples of our days regard ;
 Where's virtue seen without reward ?
 Distinguish'd and in place you find, 55
 Desert and worth of ev'ry kind.
 Survey the rev'rend bench, and see,
 Religion, learning, piety :
 The patron, ere he recommends,
 Sees his own image in his friend's. 60
 Is honesty disgrac'd and poor ?
 What is't to us what was before ?

We all of times corrupt have heard,
 When paltry minions were preferr'd ;
 When all great offices, by dozens, 65
 Were fill'd by brothers, sons, and cousins.

What

230 FABLE THE FOURTEENTH.

What matter ignorance and pride ?
The man was happily ally'd.
Provided that his clerk was good,
What though he nothing understood ?
In church and state, the sorry race
Grew more conspicuous fools in place.
Such heads, as then a treaty made,
Had bungled in the cobbler's trade.

70

Consider, patrons, that such elves,
Expose your folly with themselves.
'Tis your's, as 'tis the parent's care,
To fix each genius in its sphere.
Your partial hand can wealth dispense,
But never give a blockhead sense.

75

80

An Owl of magisterial air,
Of solemn voice, of brow austere,
Assum'd the pride of human race,
And bore his wisdom in his face ;
Not to depreciate learned eyes,
I've seen a pedant look as wise.

85

Within a barn, from noise retir'd,
He scorn'd the world, himself admir'd ;
And, like an ancient sage, conceal'd
The follies public life reveal'd.

90

Philosophers of old, he read,
Their country's youth to science bred ;
Their manners form'd for ev'ry station,
And destin'd each his occupation.

When

When XENOPHON, by numbers brav'd,
Retreated, and a people fav'd.
That laurel was not all his own;
The plant by SOCRATES was sown,

L. 95. *Xenophon*, was an illustrious philosopher, general, and writer of Greece. He was born at Athens about the 82d olympiad, and was the favourite scholar of Socrates, to which Gay alludes:

“ *The plant by Socrates was sown.*”

And the preceding lines allude to his famous retreat from Persia, by which he immortalised his name as a great General. He went with a large body of Greeks, to the assistance of Cyrus, who was engaged in a war against his brother Artaxerxes, King of Persia.—“ By their assistance the army of Artaxerxes was defeated, and Cyrus being slain, in the moment of victory, and the remainder of his troops joining the King, the Greeks were left alone. Their commanders, Clearchus, Menon, Proximus, Agias, and Socrates, with several inferior officers, being induced to go to the Persian camp, under the pretence of a conference, were all treacherously put to death. The Greeks giving up all for lost, were roused from their dependency by Xenophon, then a volunteer in the army. By his advice, they chose new commanders, and himself among the rest; under whose conduct they forced their way through the enemy's country for upwards of two thousand miles, and after surmounting incredible difficulties and dangers, at last arrived safe at the Euxine Sea. This is called the *Retreat of the ten thousand*, one of the most memorable transactions in History.” Adams's Summary of Geography and History, p. 468. A book which cannot be too strongly recommended.

Xenophon wrote an account of this expedition, which happened in the fourth year of the 94th Olympiad. He composed several other works; of which the most remarkable is the *Cyropædia*, or the Education of Cyrus; and the *Apology for Socrates*. He died at a very advanced age,

To

232 FABLE THE FOURTEENTH.

TO ARISTOTLE'S greater name
The MACEDONIAN OW'D his fame. 100

Th' ATHENIAN bird, with pride replete,
Their talents equall'd in conceit ;
And, copying the SOCRATIC rule,
Set up for master of a school.
Dogmatic jargon learnt by heart, 105
Trite sentences, hard terms of art,
To vulgar ears seem'd so profound,
They fancy'd learning in the found.

'The school had fame : the crowded place
With pupils swarm'd of ev'ry race. 110
With these the Swan's maternal care,
Had sent her scarce-fledg'd cygnet heir ;

L. 99. *Aristotle*, a celebrated Grecian Philosopher, born at Stagyræ, a town of Macedonia, from which place he is called the Stagyræite, in the 99th Olympiad, or 384 years before the Christian æra. He was the scholar of Plato, and so highly renowned for the profoundness and variety of his knowledge, that he was selected by Philip, King of Macedon, for a preceptor to his son Alexander the Great ; whence Gay says,

“To Aristotle's greater name
“The Macedonian ow'd his fame.”

On his return to Athens, from the tuition of Alexander, he opened a school in the Lyceum ; and because he taught those who attended him walking, in the Greek language, (*περιπατῶν*) hence he was called the Peripatetic, and his followers Peripatetics.

Adams's Summary of History and Geography, p. 294.

L. 101. *The Athenian bird*. See Fable 32, l. 12.

The

The Hen (though fond and loth to part)
 Here lodg'd the darling of her heart;
 The Spider, of mechanic kind,
 Aspir'd to science more refin'd ;
 The Afs learnt metaphors and tropes,
 But most on music fix'd his hopes.

115

The pupils now, advanc'd in age,
 Were call'd to tread life's busy stage :
 And to the master 'twas submitted,
 That each might to his part be fitted.

120

The Swan (says he) in arms shall shine :
 The soldier's glorious toil be thine.

The Cock shall mighty wealth attain :
 Go, seek it on the stormy main.

125

The Court shall be the Spider's sphere :
 Pow'r, fortune, shall reward him there.

In music's art the Afs's fame
 Shall emulate CORELLI's name.

130

Each took the part that he advised,
 And all were equally despis'd.

L. 130. *Corelli*. A famous musician, was a native of Fufignano, near Bologna, in the Pope's territories. He was born in 1663, and died at Rome in 1713, aged 60. Gay seems to have been very fond of this celebrated Musician, and in his Epistle to William Pulteney, Esq. again

"Mentions the force of learn'd Corelli's notes."

A Farmer

A Farmer, at his folly mov'd,
The dull preceptor thus reprov'd:

Blockhead (says he) by what you've done, 135
One would have thought 'em each your son:
For

The moral of this Fable is founded upon the supposition, that children are born with a *genius* for some particular pursuit, as the Swan is calculated for the water, the Game-cock for fighting, the Spider for spinning, and that some, like the Ass, are incapable of improvement, but are stamped blockheads from their cradle.

Though in a very *few* instances it may *appear*, that children *seem* born to excel in some particular art or science, yet in general the position is by no means true; it is also productive of this bad effect, that it is too often an excuse for idleness, and may lead boys to the irretrievable error of supposing, that nature never intended them to be scholars. But we may rest assured, that the success in all acquirements depends more upon education and habit, than on any *innate* talents or *heaven-born* genius; nor can it be too strongly inculcated, that labour and industry are the great sources of improvement, and that a blockhead is oftener the creature of indolence, than the production of nature.

This opinion is beautifully exemplified in Percival's Moral Tale, addressed to his son: "Two young Beech Trees, planted at the same time, and in the same soil, at a small distance from each other, and equally healthy, were made the subjects of a curious experiment. They were accurately measured, and as soon as the body began to swell, in the spring, the whole trunk of one of them was cleared of its moss and dirt, by means of a brush and soft water; afterwards it was washed with a wet flannel, twice or thrice every week, till about the middle of summer. In autumn, when the annual growth was supposed to be completed, the Beeches were again measured; and the increase of the Tree which had been washed, was found to exceed that of the other, nearly in the proportion of two to one. Had you seen the commencement of this experiment, Alexis, you would probably have smiled at the nicety of the gardener,
and

For parents, to their offspring blind,
 Consult nor parts nor turn of mind;
 But ev'n in infancy decree
 What this, what t'other son should be. 140
 Had you with judgment weigh'd the case,
 Their genius thus had fix'd their place ;
 The Swan had learnt the sailor's art ;
 The Cock had play'd the soldier's part ;
 The

and thought his labour misapplied. But the conclusion of it will give you different ideas, and perhaps convince you, by the obvious analogy, that cleanliness promotes the health, vigour, and growth of the body. It may satisfy you also, that various minute attentions, on the conduct of your education, which at present may seem to be superfluous and irksome, are of real importance, by removing those causes which would retard your progress towards manly strength, and mental excellence. For every habit of awkwardness, impairs some useful power of action ; and as the moss impedes the nutritious juices of the Beech ; so false opinions and principles, despoil the mind of a correspondent portion of knowledge and virtue. You will likewise recollect, that as the labour of the gardener rendered one Tree more flourishing than the other ; in the same manner, attention will sharpen abilities, and render the mind of one boy, superior to that of another."

Cawthorn has no less beautifully illustrated this sentiment in a Tale on the Birth and Education of Genius :

" Yes Harriet ! say whate'er you can,
 'Tis education makes the man :
 Whate'er of genius we inherit,
 Exalted sense, and lively spirit,
 Must all be disciplin'd by rules,
 And take their colour from the schools.

'Tis so with man—His talents rest
 Mismatched embryos in his breast ;

The Spider in the weavers' trade
 With credit had a fortune made ;
 But for the fool, in ev'ry class
 The blockhead had appear'd an Ass.

145

Till education's eye explores,
 The sleeping intellectual pow'rs,
 Awakes the dawn of wit and sense,
 And lights them into excellence.
 On this depends the patriot fame,
 The fine ingenuous feel of shame,
 The manly spirit brave and bold,
 Superior to the taint of gold.
 The dread of infamy, the zeal
 Of honour, and the public weal,
 And all those virtues which presage,
 The glories of a rising age."

Johnson's Poets, v. 65. p. 208



FABLE 15.

The Cook-maid, the Turnspit, and the Ox.

TO A POOR MAN.

CONSIDER man in ev'ry sphere,
 Then tell me, is your lot severe ;
 'Tis murmur, discontent, distrust,
 That makes you wretched : God is just.

I grant, that hunger must be fed, 5
 That toil too earns thy daily bread.
 What then ? Thy wants are seen and known,
 But ev'ry mortal feels his own.
 We're born a restless needy crew :
 Shew me the happier man than you. 10

ADAM, though blest above his kind,
 For want of social woman pin'd ;
 EVE's wants the subtle serpent saw,
 Her fickle taste transgress'd the law :
 Thus fell our fires ; and their disgrace 15
 The curse entail'd on human race.

When PHILIP's son, by glory led,
 Had o'er the globe his empire spread ;

L. 17. *Philip's son.* Alexander the son of Philip, King of
 Macedon.

See Fable 33, part 1.

When

When altars to his name were dress'd,
That he was man, his tears confess'd. 20

The hopes of avarice are check'd :
The proud man always wants respect.
What various wants on pow'r attend ?
Ambition never gains its end.
Who hath not heard the rich complain 25
Of surfeits and corporeal pain ?
He, barr'd from ey'ry use of wealth,
Envies the plowman's strength and health :
Another in a beauteous wife
Finds all the miseries of life ; 30
Domestic jars and jealous fear
Imbitter all his days with care.
This wants an heir, the line is lost :
Why was that vain entail ingross ?
Canst thou discern another's mind ? 35
Why is't you envy ? Envy's blind.
Tell Envy, when she would annoy,
That thousands want what you enjoy.

The dinner must be dish'd at one,
Where's this vexatious Turnspit gone ? 40
Unless the skulking Cur is caught,
The surloin's spoil'd, and I'm in fault.
Thus said ; (for sure you'll think it fit
That I the Cook-maid's oaths omit)
With all the fury of a Cook, 45
Her cooler kitchen NAN forsook.

The

The broomstick o'er her head she waves;
 She sweats, she stamps, she puffs, she raves.
 The sneaking Cur before her flies:
 She whistles, calls; fair speech she tries. 50
 These nought avail: her choler burns;
 The fist and cudgel threat by turns;
 With hasty stride she presses near;
 He slinks aloof, and howls with fear.
 Was ever Cur so curst (he cry'd) 55
 What star did at my birth preside?
 Am I for life by compact bound
 To tread the wheel's eternal round?
 Inglorious task! Of all our race
 No slave is half so mean and base. 60
 Had fate a kinder lot assign'd,
 And form'd me of the lap-dog kind,
 I then, in higher life employ'd,
 Had indolence and ease enjoy'd;
 And, like a gentleman, carest, 65
 Had been the lady's fav'rite guest.
 Or were I sprung from spaniel line,
 Was his sagacious nostril mine,
 By me, their never-erring guide,
 From wood and plain their feasts supply'd, 70
 Knights, squires, attendant on my pace,
 Had shar'd the pleasures of the chace.
 Endu'd with native strength and fire,
 Why call'd I not the lion fire?
 A lion! such mean views I scorn. 75
 Why was I not of woman born?
 Who dares with reason's pow'r contend?
 On man we brutal slaves depend:

To

To him all creatures tribute pay,
And lux'ry employs his day. 80

An Ox by chance o'erheard his moan,
And thus rebuk'd the lazy drone :
Dare you at partial fate repine ?
How kind's your lot compar'd with mine !
Decreed to toil, the barb'rous knife 85
Hath sever'd me from social life ;
Urg'd by the stimulating goad,
I drag the cumbrous waggon's load :
'Tis mine to tame the stubborn plain,
Break the stiff soil, and house the grain ; 90
Yet I without a murmur bear
The various labours of the year.
But then consider, that one day,
(Perhaps the hour's not far away)
You, by the duties of your post, 95
Shall turn the spit when I'm the roast :
And for reward shall share the feast,
I mean, shall pick my bones at least.

'Till now, the astonish'd Cur replies,
I look'd on all with envious eyes. 100
How

The moral of this Fable is most excellent and instructive. It exhorts us to bear the necessary evils of life with patience and resignation, and to be contented with that situation in which we are placed by Providence; from the consideration that all happiness and misery are comparative. For no man is so miserable, as not to be occasionally happy, nor so happy as not to be occasionally miserable.

“ Confess we then, that all the ills of life,
“ Diseases, grief, vexations, follies, strife,

“ Without

How false we judge by what appears !
 All creatures feel their sev'ral cares.
 If thus yon mighty beast complains,
 Perhaps man knows superior pains.

Let.

“ Without distinction every soul perplex,
 “ Haunt every scene, and prey on all the sex.
 “ Yet let us own that every pleasure too,
 “ That glads the active, and that wings the flow,
 “ Alike indulgent to the rich and poor,
 “ Slides thro' the land, and knocks at ev'ry door.”

Cawthorne on the Equality of Human Conditions.

We are too apt to look above us, rather than below us; and for that reason are subject to envy and discontent; we are too apt to envy our neighbours the possession of those advantages which we do not enjoy, without being grateful for the advantages which they want, and which we enjoy.

But in fact, there is scarcely any one, however wretched he may be, who cannot find out or fancy others more wretched than himself. It is not however recommended in the Fable, to rejoice at the calamities of persons more wretched than ourselves, from a malicious satisfaction, that we are exempted from those evils to which they are exposed, but rather to draw comfort from the reflection, that we suffer only the lot of human nature, and that as we are happy or miserable, compared with others, so others are happy or miserable compared with us; Hence Dryden calls

“ Content of mind the poor man's wealth.”

Gay in another Fable exhorts us,

“ *Appease your discontented mind,*
 “ *And act the part by Heaven assign'd.*”

M

And

242 FABLE THE FIFTEENTH.

Let envy then no more torment :
Think on the Ox, and learn content.

105

Thus said ; close following at her heel,
With chearful heart he mounts the wheel.

And Young dwells in a high strain of christian piety, even on the joy which is derived from bearing calamities with resignation :

“ Content is joy, and joy in pain,
“ Is joy and virtue too ;
“ Thus whilst good present we possess,
“ More precious we pursue : &c.”

“ But how to smile, to stem the tide
“ Of nature in our veins ;
“ Is it not hard to weep in joy ?
“ What then to smile in pains ?”

“ Victorious joy ! which breaks the cloud,
“ And struggles through a storm ;
“ Proclaims the mind as great as good ;
“ And bids it doubly charm.”

Young's Poem on Resignation, part 1.



FABLE 16.

The Ravens, the Sexton, and the Earth-worms.

TO LAURA.

LAURA, methinks you're over nice.
 True—flatt'ry is a shocking vice ;
 Yet sure, whene'er the praise is just,
 One may commend without disgust.
 Am I a privilege deny'd, 5
 Indulg'd by ev'ry tongue beside ?
 How singular, are all your ways !
 A woman, and averse to praise !
 If 'tis offence such truths to tell,
 Why do your merits thus excel ? 10

Since then I dare not speak my mind,
 A truth conspicuous to mankind ;
 Though in full lustre ev'ry grace
 Distinguish your celestial face :
 Though beauties of inferior ray 15
 (Like stars before the orb of day)
 Turn pale and fade : I check my lays,
 Admiring what I dare not praise.

If you the tribute due disdain,
 The Muse's mortifying strain 20
 M 2 Shall,

244 FABLE THE SIXTEENTH.

Shall, like a woman, in mere spite,
Set beauty in a moral light.

Though such revenge might shock the ear
Of many a celebrated fair ;
I mean that superficial race 25
Whose thoughts ne'er reach beyond their face ;
What's that to you ? I but displease
Such ever-girlish ears as these.
Virtue can brook the thoughts of age ;
That lasts the same through ev'ry stage. 30
Though you by time must suffer more
Than ever woman lost before ;
To age is such indiff'rence shown,
As if your face were not your own.

Were you by ANTONINUS taught ? 35
Or is it native strength of thought ?
That thus, without concern or fright,
You view yourself by reason's light ?
Those eyes of so divine a ray,
What are they ? Mould'ring, mortal clay. 40
Those features, cast in heavenly mould,
Shall, like my courser earth grow old ;

L. 35. Marcus Aurelius *Antoninus*. A Roman Emperor, born in the 121st year of the Christian æra. He was adopted by Antoninus Pius, and succeeded him on the throne. The name of Marcus Aurelius is synonymous with justice, clemency, and learning. When Gay says,

“ *Were you by Antoninus taught ?* ”

he alludes to his Book of Meditations, which is much admired for the excellence of its precepts.

Like

Like common grafs, the faireft flow'r
 Muft feel the hoary feafon's pow'r.

How weak, how vain is human pride? . . . 45
 Dares man upon himfelf confide?
 The wretch who glories in his gain,
 Amaffes heaps on heaps in vain.
 Why lofe we life in anxious cares,
 To lay in hoards for future years? . . . 50
 Can thofe (when tortur'd by difeafe)
 Chear our fick heart, or purchafe eafe?
 Can thofe prolong one gasp of breath,
 Or calm the troubled hour of death?

What's beauty? Call ye that your own? . . . 55
 A flow'r that fades as foon as blown.
 What's man in all his boaft of fway?
 Perhaps the tyrant of a day.

Alike the laws of life take place
 Through ev'ry branch of human race. . . . 60
 The monarch of long regal line
 Was rais'd from duft as frail as mine.
 Can he pour health into his veins;
 Or cool the fever's reftlefs pains?
 Can he (worn down in Nature's courfe) . . . 65
 New-brace his feeble nerves with force?
 Can he (how vain is mortal pow'r!)
 Stretch life beyond the deftin'd hour?

Confider, man; weigh well thy frame;
 The king, the beggar is the fame. . . . 70

246 FABLE THE SIXTEENTH.

Dust form'd us all. Each breathes his day,
Then sinks into his native clay.

Beneath a venerable yew,
That in the lonely church-yard grew,
Two Ravens sat. In solemn croak 75
Thus one his hungry friend bespoke :

Methinks I scent some rich repast;
The favour strengthens with the blast;
Snuff then, the promis'd feast inhale ; 80
I taste the carcase in the gale,
Near yonder trees, the farmer's steed,
From toil and daily drudg'ry freed,
Hath groan'd his last. A dainty treat!
To birds of taste delicious meat.

A Sexton busy at his trade, 85
To hear their chat suspends his spade.
Death struck him with no farther thought,
Than merely as the fees he brought.
Were ever two such blund'ring fowls,
In brains and manners less than owls? 90
Blockheads, says he, learn more respect,
Know ye on whom you thus reflect?
In this same grave (who does me right,
Must own the work is strong and tight)
The 'Squire that yon fair hall possess'd, 95
To night shall lay his bones at rest.
Whence could the gross mistake proceed?
The 'Squire was somewhat fat indeed.

What

What then? The meanest bird of prey
 Such want of sense could ne'er betray ; 100
 For sure some difference must be found
 (Suppose the smelling organ found)
 In carcases (say what we can)
 Or where's the dignity of man ?

With due respect to human race, 105
 The Ravens undertook the case.
 In such similitude of scent,
 Man ne'er could think reflections meant.
 As epicures extol a treat,
 And seem their fav'ry words to eat, 110
 They prais'd dead horse, luxurious food,
 The ven'son of the prescient brood.

The Sexton's indignation mov'd,
 The mean comparison reprov'd ;
 Their undiscerning palate blam'd, 115
 Which two-legged carrion thus defam'd :

Reproachful speech from either side
 The want of argument supply'd :
 They rail, revile : as often ends
 The contest of disputing friends. 120

L. 112. *The prescient brood.* From *præscius*, a Latin word, which signifies *foreknowing*, because the Ravens were deemed by the antients, birds of omen, and portending future events, in allusion to which Gay calls them in another Fable,

“ *Fowls of omen, who foresee and croak the event.*”

Fable 2, part 2.

Hold,

248 FABLE THE SIXTEENTH.

Hold, says the Fowl; since human pride
With confutation ne'er comply'd,
Let's state the case, and then refer
The knotty point: for taste may err.

As thus he spoke, from out the mould 125
An Earth-worm, huge of size, unroll'd
His monstrous length. They strait agree
To chuse him as their referee.
So to th' experience of his jaws,
Each states the merits of his cause. 130

He paus'd, and with a solemn tone,
Thus made his sage opinion known:

On carcases of ev'ry kind
This maw hath elegantly din'd;
Provok'd by luxury or need; 135
On beast, or fowl, or man, I feed;
Such small distinction's in the favour,
By turns I chuse the fancy'd flavour.
Yet I must own, that human beast,
A glutton is the rankest feast. 140
Man, cease this boast; for human pride
Hath various tracts to range beside.
The prince who kept the world in awe,
The judge whose dictate fix'd the law,
The rich, the poor, the great, the small, 145
Are levell'd. Death confounds 'em all.
Then think not that we reptiles share
Such cates, such elegance of fare:
The only true and real good
Of man was never vermin's food. 150

'Tis.

'Tis seated in the immortal mind ;
 Virtue distinguishes mankind ;
 And that (as yet ne'er harbour'd here) !
 Mounts with the soul we know not where.
 So, good man Sexton, since the case
 Appears with such a dubious face,
 To neither I the cause determine,
 For diff'rent tastes please diff'rent vermin.

155

The moral of this concluding Fable impresses strongly on our minds that there is no distinction beyond the grave, but that which

*“ Is seated in the immortal mind ;
 “ Virtue distinguishes mankind.”*

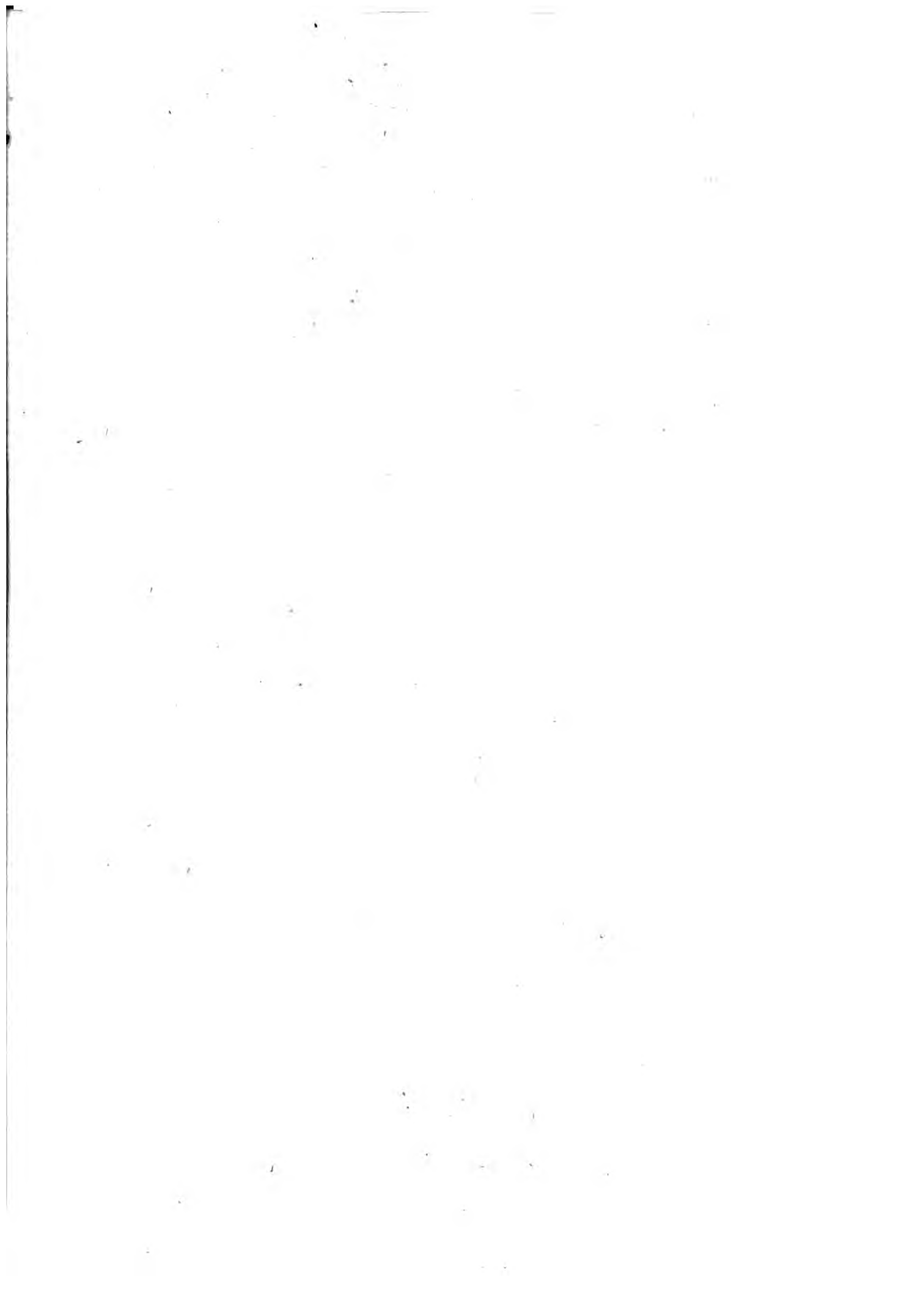
and persuades us to labour to attain that great distinction.

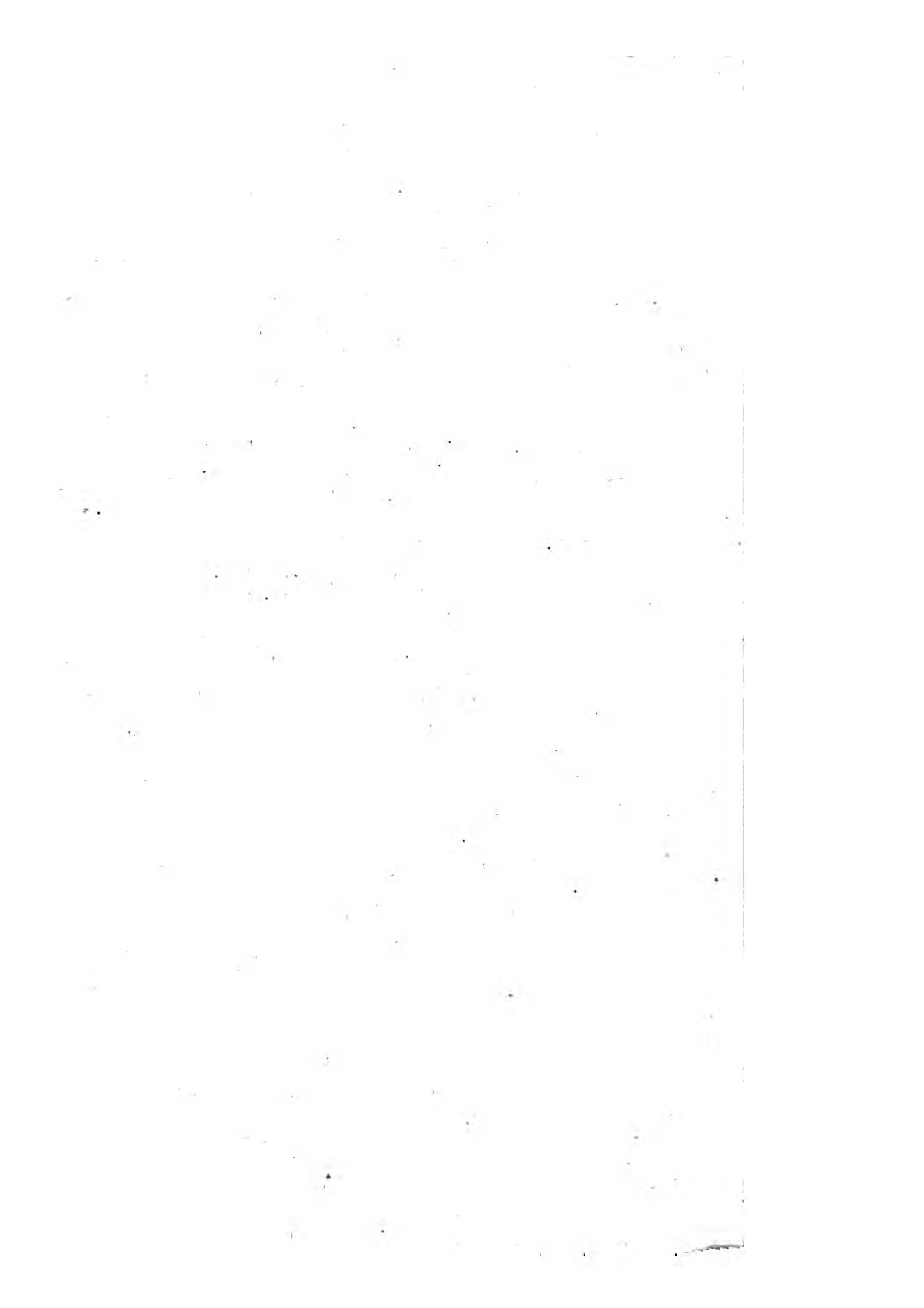
—————“ Ah ! whither now are fled,
 “ Those dreams of greatness ? those unsolid hopes
 “ Of happiness ? those longings after fame ?
 “ Those restless cares ? those busy bustling days ?
 “ Those gay spent, festive nights ? those vexing thoughts ?
 “ Lost between good and ill, that shar'd thy life ?
 “ All now are vanish'd ! V I R T U E sole survives,
 “ Immortal never-failing friend of man,
 “ His guide to happiness on high.”——

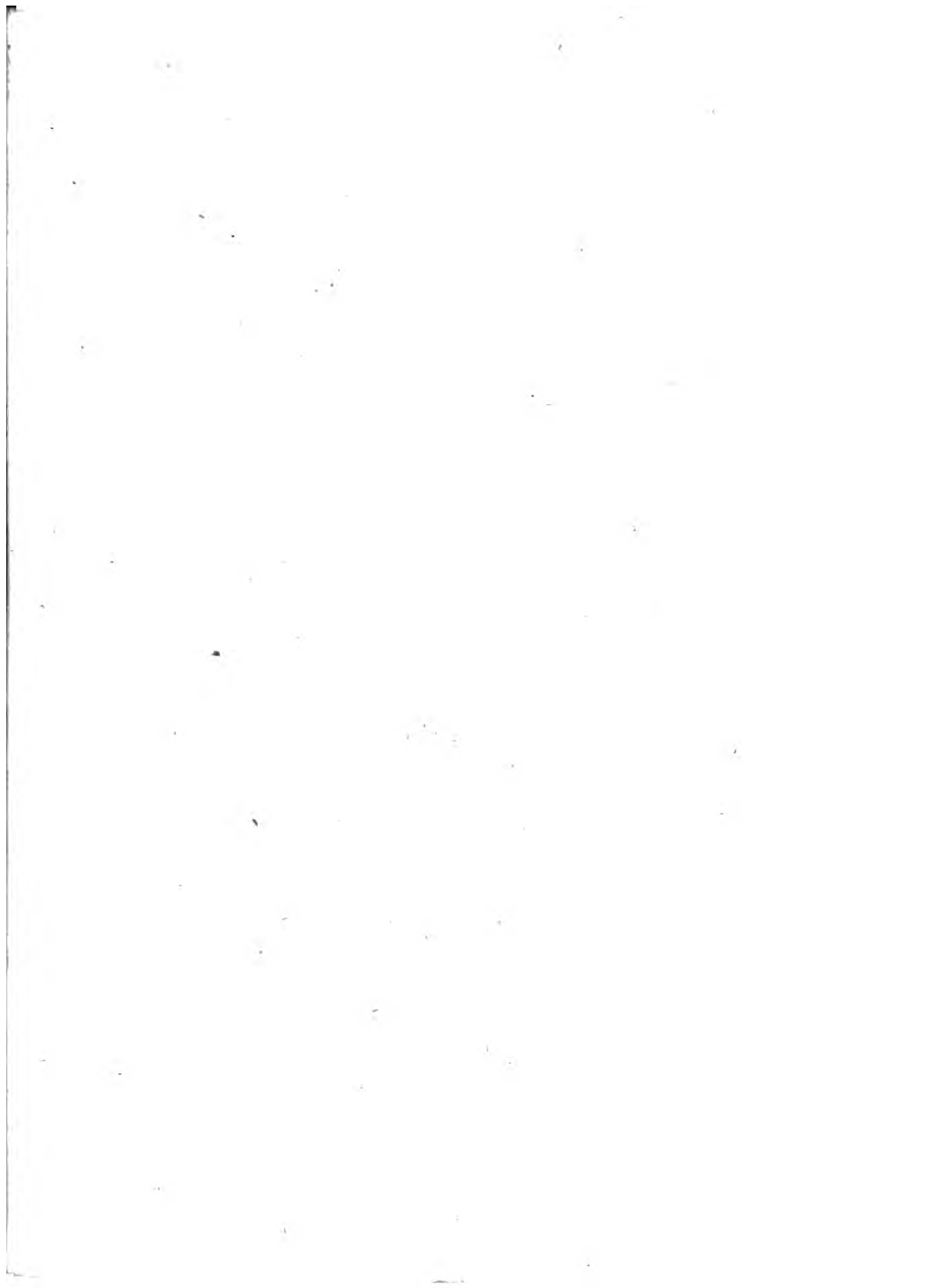
Thomson's Seasons. Winter.

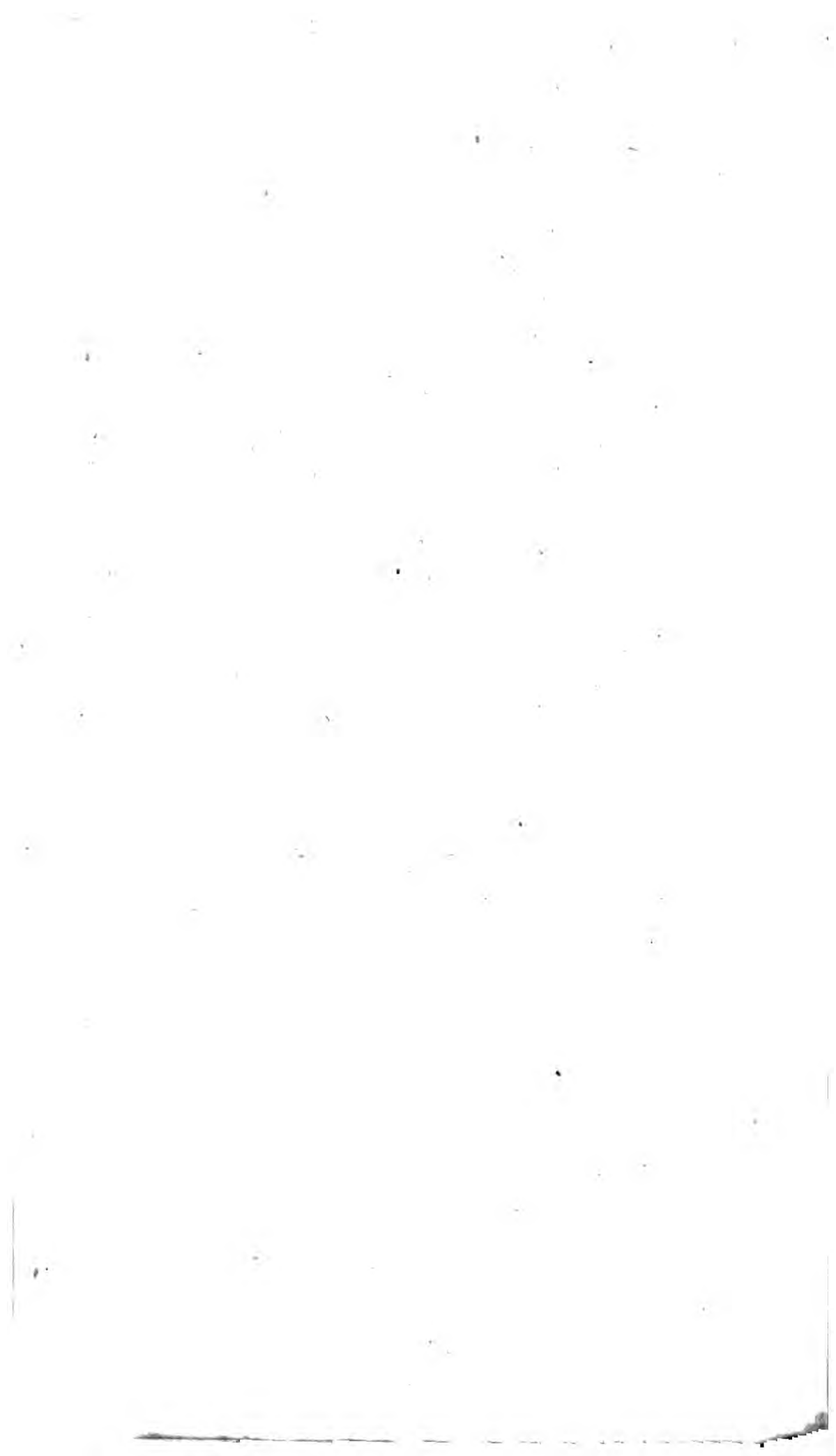


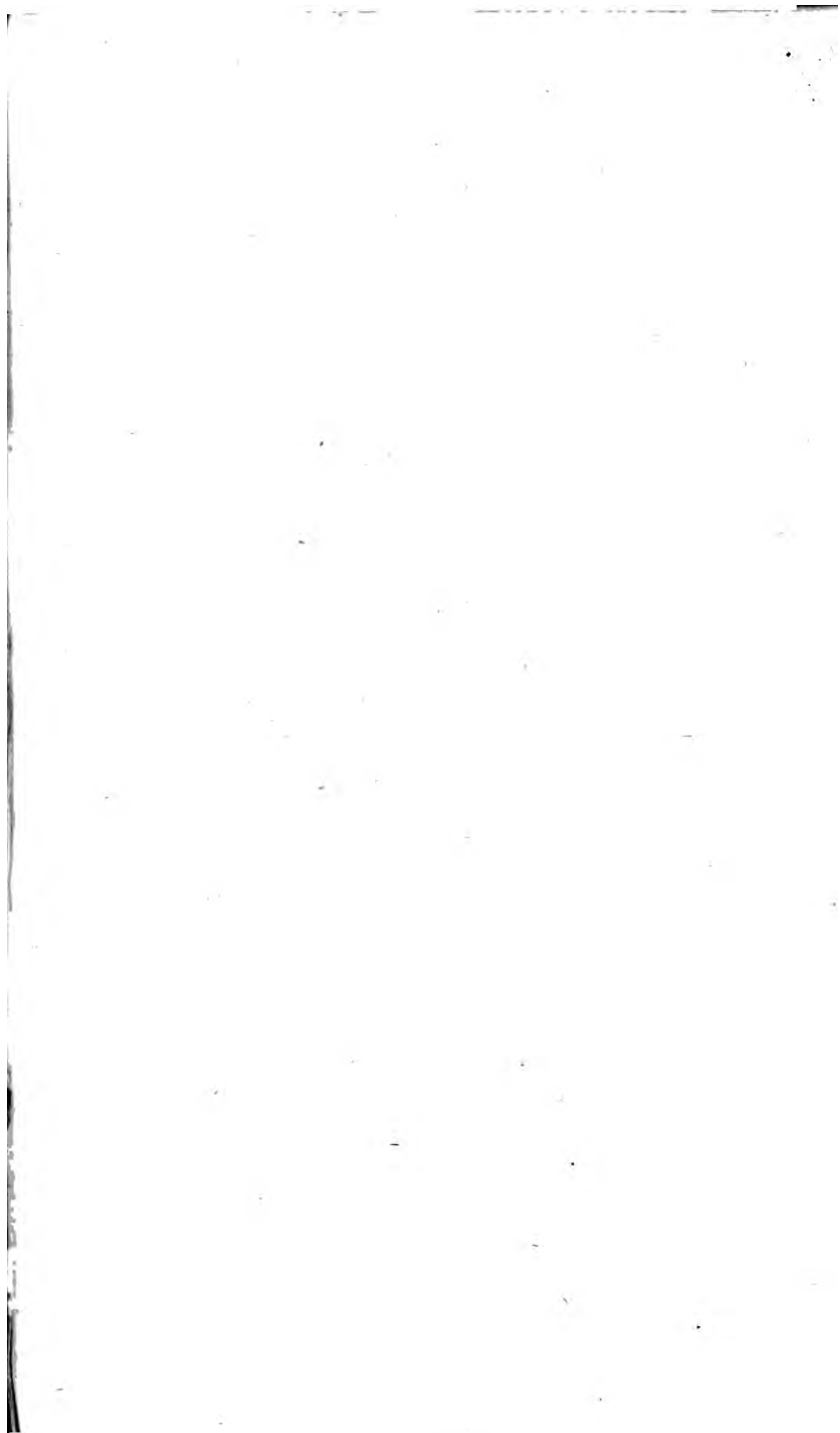












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