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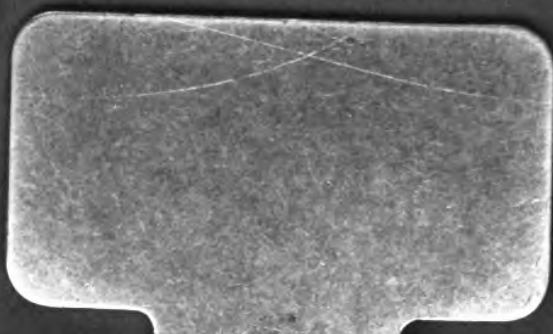


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GAY'S
FABLES

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London. 1838.

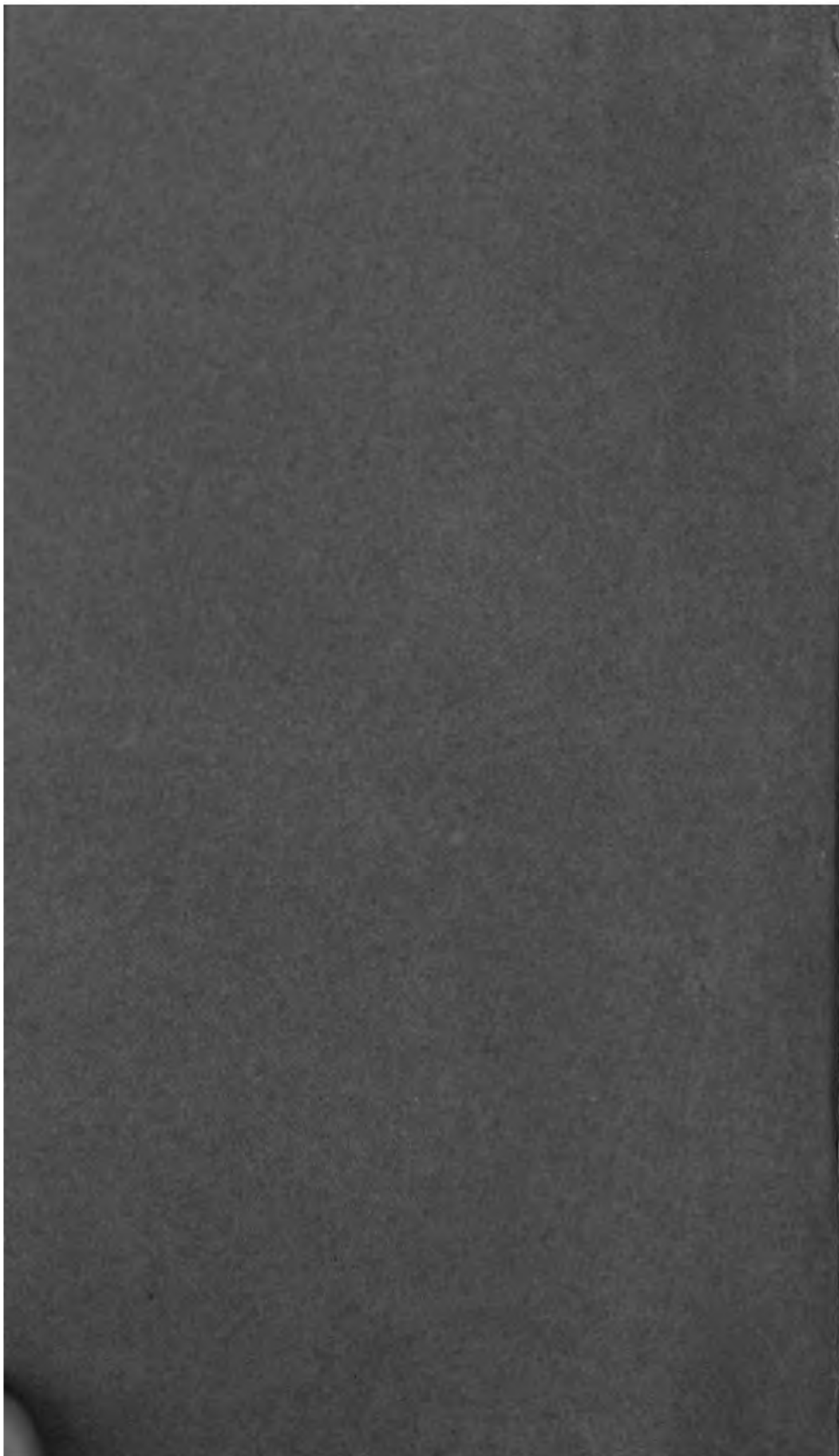
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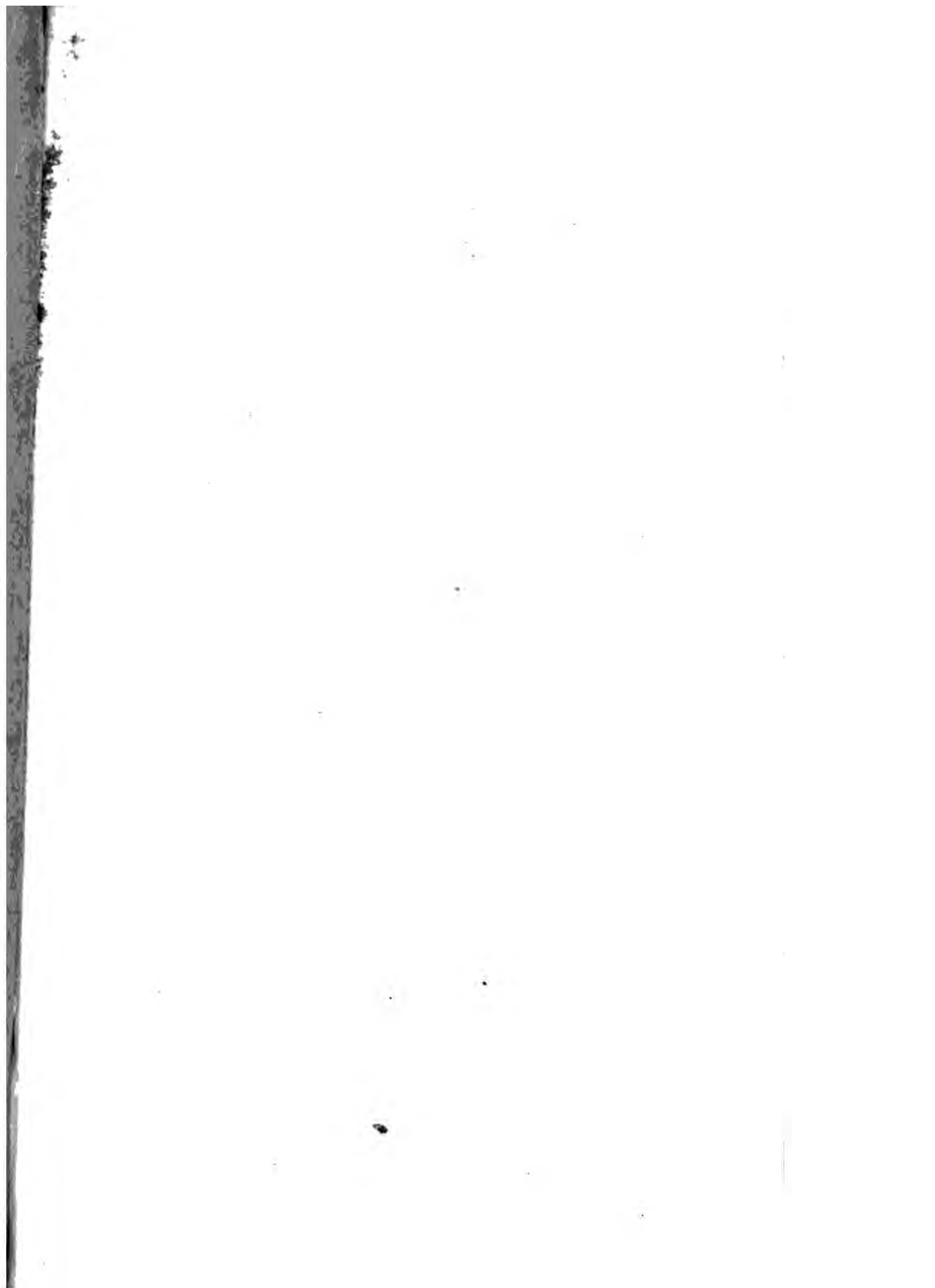
F. M. Fowler

Ingleham Village

No^o 5th

1847.







GAY'S FABLES.

WITH ELUCIDATIONS AND COMMENTS

BY THE VERY REVEREND

ARCHDEACON COXE, A.M. F.R.S.

Author of Life of Marlborough, Walpole, &c., &c.

WITH SIXTY-EIGHT WOOD CUTS.

THE SIXTH EDITION.

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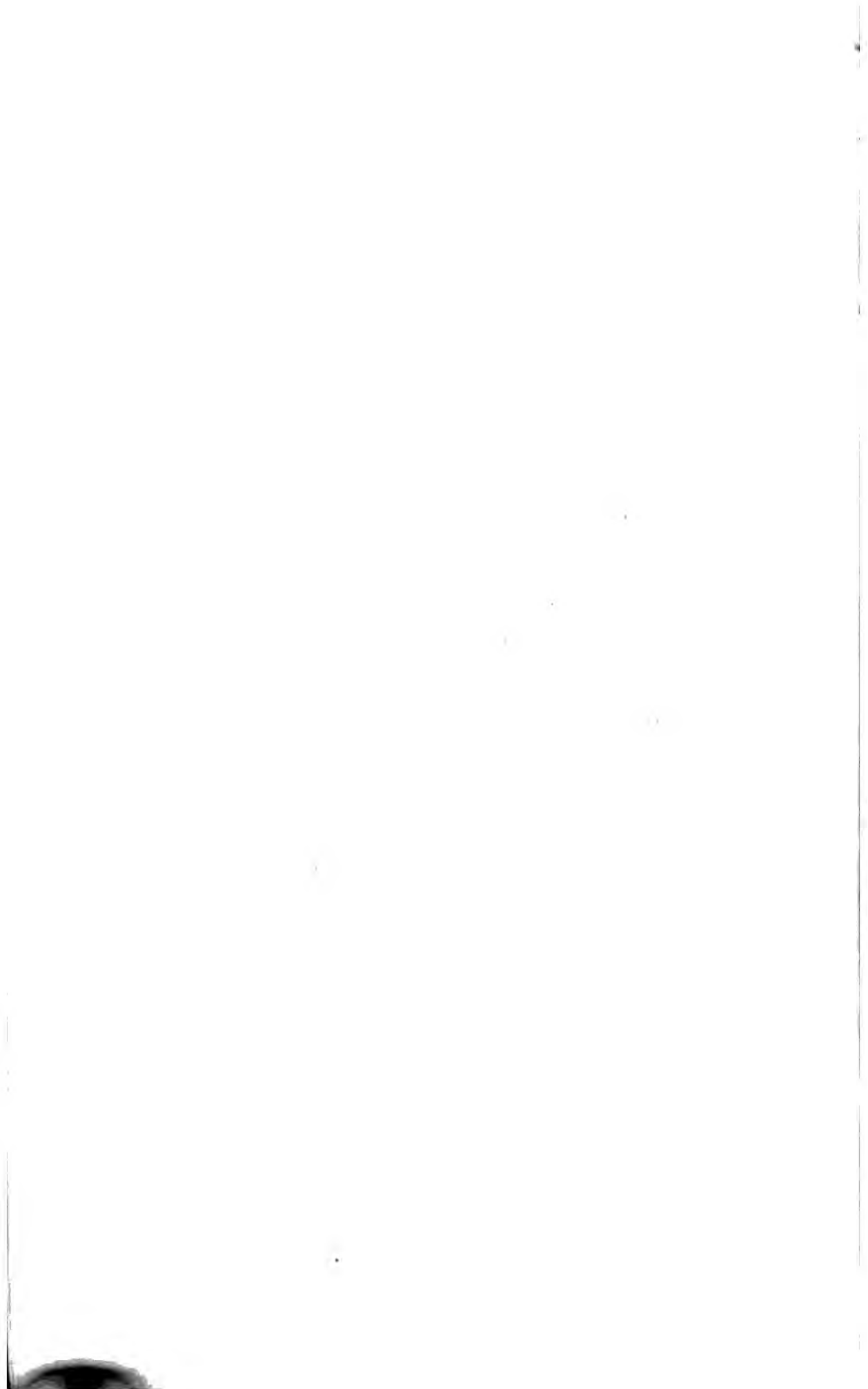
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GAY'S FABLES.



PART THE FIRST.



INTRODUCTION
TO
THE FABLES.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE PHILOSOPHER.



REMOTE 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 ;

☞ This Introduction to the Fables is exceedingly beautiful and appropriate, 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

In summer's heat, and winter's cold,	5
He fed his flock, and penn'd the fold.	
His hours in cheerful labour flew,	
Nor envy nor ambition knew.	
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 sought,	
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

can draw a love of virtue and hatred of vice from the most common objects of nature, particularly from the qualities which mark the different species of the brute creation.

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 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.

‘ 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 ?
 ‘ 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.

Plato, his scholar, was born at Athens, in the 88th Olympiad, or about 430 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 exercis’d in woes, O 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 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 trustiest 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.
 ' Can grave and formal pass for wise, 55
 ' 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 :
 ' Who listens to the chattering pye ? 60
 ' Nor would I, with felonious sleight,
 ' By stealth invade my neighbour's right.
 ' Rapacious animals we hate :
 ' Kites, hawks, and wolves deserve their fate. 65
 ' Do we not just abhorrence find
 ' 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.'

DUCTION.] GAY'S FABLES. 5

' 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

l. 77, 78.—Young also says, in his Night Thoughts,

“ Read *Nature* ; *Nature* is a friend to *truth*.”

And in another place :

“ *Nature* to man

“ Speaks wisdom ; is his oracle supreme ;

“ And he who most consults her is most wise.”

PART I.

TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

*WILLIAM, DUKE OF CUMBERLAND.**

FABLE I.

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.

* 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; warning him against the seductions of flattery, the common vice of courts; and inculcating, from the example of the Lion, compassion, mercy, and the love of justice; virtues congenial to noble and generous minds.

PART I.] GAY'S FABLES. 7

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.
Friendship by sweet reproof is shown ;
(A virtue never near a throne) ; 10
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, 15
And turn my morals to a jest ?
The muse disdains to steal from those,
Who thrive in courts by fulsome prose.
But shall I hide your real praise,
Or tell you what a nation says ? 20
They in your infant bosom trace
The virtues of your royal race ;
In the fair dawnings of your mind
Discern you gen'rous, mild, and kind ;
They see you grieve to hear distress, 25
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. 30
True courage shall your bosom fire,
And future actions own your sire.
Cowards are cruel ; but the brave
Love mercy, and delight to save.
A Tyger, roaming for his prey, 35
Sprung on a Trav'ler in the way ;

l. 34.—*Mercy sways the brave.*


POPE'S HOMER. *Odyssey*, book 18, p. 108.

The prostrate game a Lion spies,
 And on the greedy tyrant flies :
 With mingled roar resounds the wood,
 Their teeth, their claws distil with blood ; 40
 Till, vanquish'd by the Lion's strength,
 The spotted foe 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 power 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 ?

l. 40.—*Distil*. The author uses ' distil ' in its original and classical sense, signifying to fall drop by drop.

l. 42.—Alluding to the variegated or *spotted* skin of the tyger. He in the same manner describes the lion, by the epithet of *shaggy*, from the length and *shagginess* of his mane and hair.

' 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.	
' Pirates their power by murder gain,	
' Wise kings by love and mercy reign.	70
' To me your clemency hath shown	
' The virtue worthy of a throne.	
' Heav'n gives you pow'r above the rest,	
' Like Heav'n, to succour the distress.'	
' 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.'	

 We gladly present to our young readers the beautiful lines of Shakspeare, expressing the same sentiments as are inculcated in this Fable :

" The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
 " It droppeth as the gentle rain from heav'n
 " Upon the place beneath. It is twice bless'd ;
 " It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.
 " 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest ; it becomes
 " The throned monarch better than his crown :
 " His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
 " The attribute to awe and majesty,
 " Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings ;
 " But mercy is above this scepter'd sway,
 " It is enthroned in the hearts of kings ;
 " It is an attribute to God himself ;
 " And earthly power doth then shew likest God's
 " When mercy seasons justice."

Merchant of Venice.

FABLE II.

THE SPANIEL AND THE CHAMELEON.*



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 ;

* The *Chameleon* 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 blueish 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 the finger's end, some of a yellowish hue ; the grains, not illuminated at all resembled a cloth of divers

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 are his fawning ways ! 10
 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 Chameleon seen, 15
 Was scarce distinguish'd from the green.

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 Chameleon, 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. Others assure us, that the Chameleon, when placed in the sun, appears green, though near no green object ; that it appears black by the candle, though placed on white paper ; 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 Chameleon is represented so lean an animal, that the Italians call it a living skin. M. Perrault observes of one he dissected in the King's library, that one hour it appeared to be a mere skin, and which the next would appear plump. Hence we gather, that it must have a very

' 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 ; 20
 ' Preferment shall thy talents crown—
 ' Believe me, friend, I know the town.'
 ' Sir,' says the sycophant, ' like you,
 ' Of old, politer life I knew :
 ' Like you, a courtier born and bred, 25
 ' Kings lean'd an ear to what I said ;
 ' My whisper always met success ;
 ' The ladies prais'd me for address.
 ' I knew to hit each courtier's passion,
 ' And flatter'd every vice in fashion. 30
 ' But Jove, who hates the liar's ways,
 ' At once cut short my prosp'rous days ;
 ' And, sentenc'd to retain my nature,
 ' Transform'd me to this crawling creature :
 ' Doom'd to a life obscure and mean, 35
 ' 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 ; 40

great command over the skin, as to tension and laxity; that it can not 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 Chameleon'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 preventing others from doing so; hence that medley of colours.

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

l. 31. Jove, or Jupiter, the supreme God of the Heathens.

l. 42.—The common opinion, that the Chameleon lives 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. 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 it is tipped with a glutinous matter to which the flies stick. The Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris frequently observed the Chameleon which they had, to catch and swallow flies ; and, upon dissection, the stomach and intestines were found full of them.

☞ The baneful effects of flattery are emphatically described by Prior.

“ Parent of wicked, bane of honest deeds,
“ Pernicious flattery, thy malignant seeds,
“ In evil hour, and by a fatal hand
“ Sadly diffused o'er virtue's gleby land,
“ With rising pride amidst the corn appear,
“ And choak the hopes and harvest of the year.”

FABLE III.

THE MOTHER, THE NURSE, AND THE FAIRY.



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

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

' Sure some disaster has befel:
 ' 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 changeling laid.
 ' Where are the father's mouth and nose, 15
 ' The mother's eyes, as black as sloes?

- ' See here a shocking awkward 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, 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 ; insomuch, 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, when they no longer stand in need of 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 IV.

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 ;*

*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 none can tell what passes in another person's breast. To condemn and ridicule this species of discontent and envy, and to shew that no one would accept the offer of changing situations, is the purpose of this Fable.

Horace, before Gay, had said that an ox wished for the trappings of the war-horse, and the war-horse wished to plough like the ox : in his first Satire he has also exposed this foible in the same manner as our Poet has done in this

For ev'ry thing alive complain'd, 5
 That he the hardest life sustain'd.
 JovE calls his Eagle ; at the word
 Before him stands the royal bird.
 The bird, obedient, from heav'n's height,
 Downwards directs his happy flight ; 10
 Then cited ev'ry living thing,
 To hear the mandates of his king.
 ' Ungrateful creatures, whence arise
 ' These murmurs, which offend the skies ?

Fable ; with the 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, Sir, 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 with toils, with ponderous arms oppress,
 “ The soldier thinks the merchant solely blest.
 “ In opposite extremes, 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 ev'n 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 envy'd 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 ? ”

- ' Why this disorder ? say the cause ; 15
 ' For just are Jove's eternal laws.
 ' Let each his discontent reveal ;
 ' To you, sour Dog, I first appeal !
 ' Hard is my lot,' the hound replies—
 ' On what fleet nerves the Greyhound flies ! 20
 ' While I, with weary steps and slow,
 ' O'er plains and vales, and mountains go,
 ' The morning sees my chace 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 sight 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 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

' 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, 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 figuratively 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, and 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.

FABLE VI.
THE MISER AND PLUTUS.*



THE wind was high, the window shakes,
With sudden start the Miser wakes ;
Along the silent room he stalks,
Looks back, and trembles as he walks.
Each lock and ev'ry bolt he tries, 5
In ev'ry creek and corner prys ;
Then opes the chest, with treasure stor'd,
And stands in rapture o'er his hoard ;
But now, with sudden qualms possess'd,
He wrings his hands, he beats his breast. 10
By conscience stung, he wildly stares,
And thus his guilty soul declares :

* *Plutus*, the heathen God of Riches : he was represented lame, blind, and winged ; lame, because he was slow in distributing his favours ; blind, because he dispensed them at random ; and winged, because his gifts were speedily dissipated.

' Had the deep earth her stores confin'd,
 ' This heart had known sweet peace of mind.
 ' But virtue's sold. Good Gods! what price 15
 ' Can recompense the pangs of vice!
 ' O bane of good! seducing cheat!
 ' Can man, weak man, thy pow'r defeat?
 ' Gold banish'd honour from the mind,
 ' And only left the name behind; 20
 ' Gold sow'd the world with ev'ry ill;
 ' Gold taught the murd'rer's sword to kill:
 ' '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 address: 30
 ' Whence is this vile ungrateful rant?
 ' Each sordid 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:

l. 45—48.—Gay has here borrowed the beautiful expressions of Scripture to heighten the merits of mercy and

' Like heav'n, it hears the orphans' cries,
 ' And wipes the tears from widows' eyes.
 ' Their crimes on gold shall misers lay,
 ' Who pawn'd their sordid souls for pay? 50
 ' Let bravoes then (when blood is spilt)
 ' Upbraid the passive sword with guilt.'

charity. "Blessed is Joseph's land for the *dew*." Deut. 33, 13. "They cause *the cry* of the poor to come unto him; he heareth the *cry* of the afflicted." Job 34, 28. "The Lord shall wipe away the *tears* from all faces." Isaiah 25, 8. These feeling lines cannot be too often read by persons in affluent circumstances: they shew that although there is no gift under heaven, which may not be ill employed, yet its proper use by some, compensates for its abuse by others; and the fable strongly inculcates this valuable precept, that we ought not to argue from the abuse of any thing against its use.

A similar sentiment in favour of charity, is beautifully expressed by Broome, one of our minor poets.

" With riches blest, to heav'n those riches lend,
 " The poor man's guardian, and the rich man's friend;
 " Bid virtuous merit smile, scorn'd merit cheer,
 " And o'er affliction shed the generous tear.
 " To sanctify thy wealth, on worth employ
 " Thy gold, and to a blessing turn the toy."

BROOME'S *Poems in Johnson's poets*, v. 44, p. 224.

l. 51.—*Bravoës*. Men who murder for hire.

FABLE VII.

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 straight 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 addrest :

‘ 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 !
‘ Beneath his conduct and command,
‘ Rapine shall cease to waste the land ;
‘ His brain hath stratagem and art ; 25
‘ Prudence and mercy rule his heart.
‘ What blessings must attend the nation
‘ Under his good administration !’

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.
‘ Fcxes this government may prize, 35
‘ As gentle, plentiful, and wise ;
‘ If they enjoy the sweets, ’tis plain
‘ We Geese must feel a tyrant reign.
‘ What havoc now shall thin our race,
‘ When ev’ry petty clerk in place, 40
‘ To prove his taste, and seem polite,
‘ Will feed on Geese both noon and night.’

 This fable exemplifies the truth of a common saying, “the censurè of bad men is praise, and their praise censure.” It contains also a fine satire on the commendations of the interested, and particularly on pretended patriots, who conceal their ambition and avarice under declamations for the public good.

FABLE VIII.

THE LADY AND THE WASP.



WHAT whispers must the beauty bear !
 What hourly nonsense haunts her ear !
 Whene'er her eyes dispense their charms,
 Impertinence around her swarms.
 Did not the tender nonsense strike, 5
 Contempt and scorn might look dislike.
 Forbidding airs might thin the place,
 The slightest flap a fly can chase.
 But who can drive the num'rous breed ?
 Chase one, another will succeed. 10
 Who knows a fool, must know his brother ;
 One fop will recommend another :
 And with this plague she's rightly curst,
 Because she listen'd to the first.
 As DORIS, at her toilette's duty, 15
 Sat meditating on her beauty :

She now was pensive, now was gay,
And loll'd the sultry hours away.

As thus in indolence she lies,
A giddy Wasp around her flies ; 20
He now advances, now retires,
Now to her neck and cheek aspires.

Her fan in vain defends her charms ;
Swift he returns, again alarms ;
For by repulse he bolder grew, 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 ecstacies away he posts ;
Where'er he came, the favour boasts ;
Braggs 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 share the dainties of the day,
Round her with airy music play ; 50
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.

☞ We are all pleased with flattery ; but the female sex are, perhaps, most liable to this weakness. Women, who only value themselves on their personal charms, lay themselves open to this reproach, as every commendation of feature or complexion feeds their vanity : but if they held themselves in proper estimation, they would surely despise the sycophant, who, while he only commends a beautiful exterior, proves himself incompetent to appreciate the advantages of a good and cultivated mind.

FABLE IX.

THE BULL AND THE MASTIFF.



SEEK you to train your fav'rite boy,
 Each caution, ev'ry care, employ ;
 And ere you venture to confide,
 Let his preceptor's heart be tried :
 Weigh well his manners, life, and scope ; 5
 On these depend thy future hope.
 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, 10
 He foam'd, he rag'd, with thirst of blood ;
 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, 15
 ' 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.' 20
 The surly Mastiff thus returns :
 ' Within my bosom glory burns ;
 ' Like heroes of eternal name,
 ' Whom poets sing, I fight for fame.
 ' The butcher's spirit-stirring mind 25
 ' To daily war my youth inclin'd ;
 ' He train'd me to heroic deed ;
 ' Taught me to conquer or to bleed.'
 ' Curs'd dog,' the Bull reply'd, ' no more
 ' I wonder at thy thirst of gore ; 30
 ' 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, 35
 At once he lifts him from the ground ;
 Aloft the sprawling hero flies,
 Mangled he falls, he howls, and dies.

☞ The moral of this Fable may be explained in Pope's words :

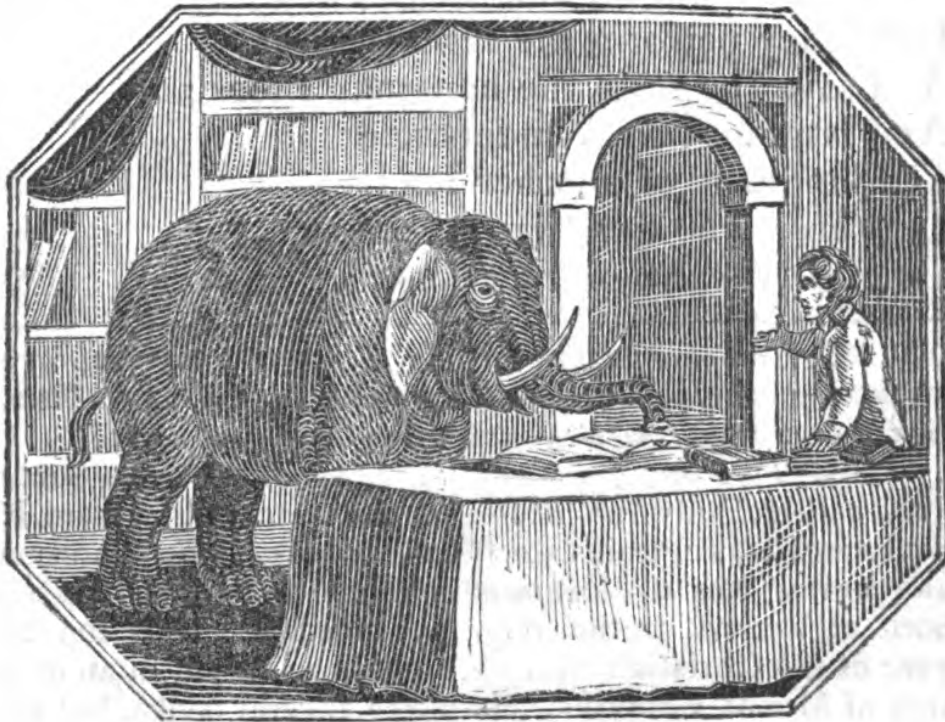
" 'Tis education forms the youthful mind,
 " And as the twig is bent the tree's inclin'd."

This example of the Mastiff, who, trained to war from his youth, delighted only in broils and quarrels, shews the force of education. The conduct of children in future life, depends principally on the example and instruction of those who are placed about them.

Whatever they see and hear is a lecture to them, for shewing is teaching. Parents cannot, therefore, be too careful in the choice of servants, and tutors, under whom they are placed : lest, like the Butcher in this Fable, they should train their pupils to vicious, instead of virtuous, practices.

FABLE X.

THE ELEPHANT AND THE BOOKSELLER.*



THE man who with undaunted toils
 Sails unknown seas to unknown soils ;
 With various wonders feasts his sight :
 What stranger wonder 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,
 I grant are strange ; yet may be true. 10

* It must be confessed, that it is a high breach of probability, to introduce an Elephant into a bookseller's shop ; but the author has prefaced his fable with so fine a satire on the exaggerated descriptions of travellers, and the singular opinions of naturalists, that we readily excuse the extravagance of the conceit.

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 ;
 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 perished in 79, in an eruption of 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 in 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, as a fabulist, 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 this 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? 50

' 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? 55

' Beasts kill for hunger, men for pay.'

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 65
 ' Something against the Trinity.'
 When wrinkling with a sneer his trunk,
 ' Friend,' quoth the Elephant, ' you're drunk ;
 ' E'en keep your money and be wise :
 ' 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.'

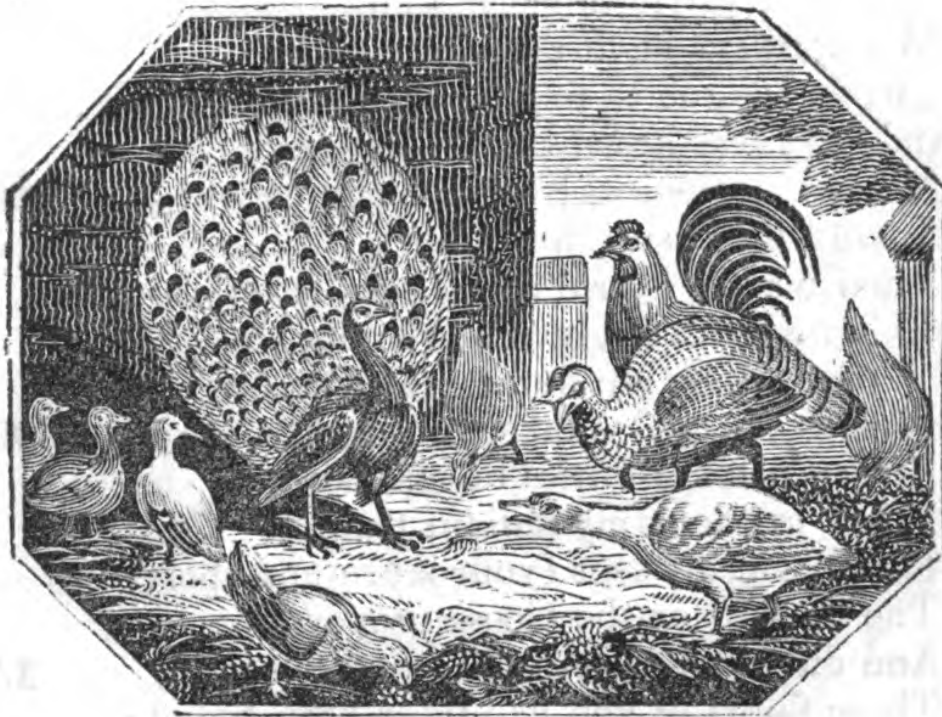
l. 63.—Elephants are very common in many parts of India ; but are supposed to abound most in Siam, a peninsula in the East Indies.

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, v. 6, p. 29.

☞ This well-written Fable concludes with the same spirit with which it commenced ; and contains a just censure on the extravagant and groundless dissensions which divide mankind.

FABLE XI.

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'n's 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 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 shanks, 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 fill the place.

☞ This Fable, in the beautiful allegory of the Peacock, envied by other birds for his fine plumage, condemns the mean passions of jealousy and malice, to which young persons are often inclined. We are too apt to consider the bad, rather than the good qualities of others ; to censure faults in persons of merit, and overlook their virtues. But goodness of heart, and greatness of mind, act otherwise ; they overlook small faults, and do not see *specks in snow*.

FABLE XII.

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

* Cupid, the God of Love, is always represented as a beautiful infant, with a quiver on his back, bow and arrow in his hand, and a veil over his eyes, to shew that he shoots at random.

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

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

Amidst their toil and various care,
 Thus HYMEN, with assuming air,
 Address'd the God: 'Thou purblind chit,
 ' Of awkward and ill-judging wit, 10
 ' If matches are not better made,
 ' At once I must forswear my trade.
 ' You send me such ill-coupled folks,
 ' That 'tis a shame to sell them yokes.

" 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 shaft 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 stores their quivers fill."

The Fan, b. 1, l. 93, 103, &c.

l. 8.—Hymen. The heathen God of Marriage. He was painted as a beautiful youth crowned with roses, and holding in his hand a torch, to represent the flame of pure love. His figure is well described by Cawthorne :

" This mild divinity, so sung
 " By half the poets old and young,
 " The patron of connubial truth,
 " Was now in all the bloom of youth.
 " Roses fresh gather'd from the bush,
 " Sweet emblems of the female blush,
 " Wove in a wreath supremely fair,
 " Sat graceful on his auburn hair.
 " One hand sustain'd a torch on fire,
 " Significant of soft desire ;
 " The other held, in mystic shew,
 " A broider'd veil of saffron hue :
 " Majestic flow'd his azure vest,
 " And rubies bled upon his breast."

CAWTHORNE'S *Temple of Hymen*.
Johnson's Poets, v. 65, p, 272.

'They squabble for a pin, a feather,
'And wonder how they came together. 15

'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. 25

'Nothing can save him but divorce ;
'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.'

PLUTUS appear'd, and said ' 'Tis true, 35
'In marriage, gold is all their view :
'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 XIII.

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,
 Whe he w as 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 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 sight ;
 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.

☞ The moral of this Fable is excellent, as it points out the extreme danger to which young women expose themselves, when they first shake off that modest reserve, which is so characteristic of the sex. To use the beautiful language of Scripture, "As a pearl in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman "without discretion."

" Vice is a monster of so foul a mien,
 " As to be hated needs but to be seen ;
 " Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
 " We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

POPE.

FABLE XIV.

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 : 5
 Misfortune serves to make us wise.
 At length the treach'rous snare was laid ;
 Poor Pug was caught, to town convey'd,
 There sold. How envy'd was his doom,
 Made captive in a lady's room ! 10
 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, 15
 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 ; 20
 Like ORPHEUS, burnt with public zeal,
 To civilize the public weal :
 So watch'd occasion, broke his chain,
 And sought his native woods again.
 The hairy sylvans round him press, 25
 Astonish'd at his strut and dress.
 Some praise his sleeve, and others glote
 Upon his rich embroider'd coat ;
 His dapper perriwig commending,
 With the black tail behind depending ; 30
 His powder'd back, above, below,
 Like hoary frost, or fleecy snow ;

l. 21.—*Orpheus*, an ancient Grecian poet and musician, according to Virgil the son of Apollo and the muse Polyhymnia. Apollo gave him a lyre, on which he played so divinely, that he is said to have moved even beasts and inanimate things. Others consider the account as a mere allegory ; and represent Orpheus as a King of Thrace, who travelled in order to civilize mankind, then in a state of barbarism ; and it is thus Horace explains his history :

“ The wood-born race of men, when Orpheus tam'd,
 “ From acorns and from mutual blood reclaim'd,
 “ This priest divine, is fabled to assuage
 “ The tyger's fierceness, and the lion's rage.”

FRANCIS.

“ *Sylvestres Homines*,” &c. *Ars Poet.* l. 391. And under this character Gay also considers Orpheus.

l. 27.—*Glote*, probably for *glout* ; and means, to look sullen with envy.—He uses the same word in another place :

“ With malice hiss, with envy *glote*.”

Fable 23, l. 29.

But all with envy and desire,
 His flutt'ring shoulder-knot admire.
 'Hear and improve,' he pertly cries; 35
 'I come to make a nation wise.
 'Weigh your own words; support your place,
 'The next in rank to human race.
 'In cities long I pass'd my days,
 'Convers'd with men, and learnt their ways, 40
 'Their dress, their courtly manners see;
 'Reform your state and copy me.
 'Seek ye to thrive? in flatt'ry deal;
 'Your scorn, your hate, with that conceal.
 'Seem only to regard your friends, 45
 'But use them for your private ends.
 'Stint not to truth the flow of wit;
 'Be prompt to lie whene'er 'tis fit.
 'Bend all your force to spatter merit:
 'Scandal is conversation's spirit. 50
 'Boldly to ev'ry thing pretend,
 'And men your talents shall commend.
 'I knew the great. Observe me right;
 'So shall you grow, like man, polite.'
 He spoke and bow'd; with mutt'ring jaws 55
 The wond'ring circle grinn'd applause.
 Now, warm with malice, envy, spite,
 Their most obliging friends they bite;
 And, fond to copy human ways,
 Practise new mischiefs all their days. 60
 Thus the dull lad, too tall for school,
 With travel finishes the fool;

☞ This Fable is not intended to decry travelling for real improvement; but to expose those frivolous characters who select as the objects of their pride and imitation the vices, follies, and defects of other nations.

Studious of ev'ry coxcomb's airs,
He drinks, games, dresses, lies, and swears ;
O'erlooks with scorn all virtuous arts,
For vice is fitted to his parts.

FABLE XV.

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 pass'd, 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 exprest :
 ' No dangers here shall circumvent,
 ' 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 dy'd,
 ' To guard his health, and serve his pride, 30
 ' 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 sold, 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

l. 39.—This sentiment is beautifully expressed by Pope :

" Heav'n first taught letters for some wretch's aid,
 " Some banish'd lover, or some captive maid ;
 " They live, they speak, they breathe what love inspires,
 " Warm to the soul, and faithful to its 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 sigh from Indus to the Pole."

POPE'S *Epistle from Eloisa to Abelard*, l. 51

- ' 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.'
-

 Gay, though naturally well tempered, seems to have caught from his friends, Swift and Pope, the contagion of spleen and discontent ; and too often, as in this Fable, places human nature in an unfavourable light.

FABLE XVI.

THE PIN AND THE NEEDLE.



A PIN, who long had serv'd a beauty,
 Proficient in the toilet's duty,
 And 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 tailor's arm,
 Now kept a beggar's infant warm ;
 Now, rang'd within a miser's coat,
 Contributes to his yearly groat ;

l. 14.—From the vulgar saying, that a pin a day, is worth a groat at the end of the year.

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.
 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 tailor'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 sempstress in her arts.
 ' But tell me how the friendship grew
 ' Between that paltry 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 all his talents I partake,
 ' Who then can such a friend forsake ? 40

l. 18.—Gresham Hall.—Originally the house of Sir Thomas Gresham, in Winchester-street, fronting to Bishopsgate-street, 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.

l. 29, 37.—The Needle, when touched with the *Loadstone*, and placed horizontally on a pivot in a case, 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

'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.'

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.

l. 44. Either India.—The East and West Indies.

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

PART I.] GAY'S FABLES. 53

‘ Those jaws should prey on nobler food,
‘ And drink the boar’s and lion’s blood :
‘ 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.’

☞ We are too apt to censure trifling faults in others which are inseparable from their habits and situation, while in ourselves we overlook greater defects of the same kind which ought to be eradicated.

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.
 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 ev'ry 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 1477, 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 in 1641, aged 67.

' 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 45
 ' As much as paint and art can do.'
 ' 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.'
 My Lord examin'd it anew ; 55
 No looking-glass seem'd half so true.
 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 ! 60

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 awhile : 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.

To ev'ry age some charms he lent ;
Ev'n beauties were almost content.

Through all the town his art they prais'd ;
His custom grew, his price was rais'd.

Had he the real likeness shown, 65
Would any man the picture own ?

But when thus happily he wrought,
Each found the likeness in his thought.

 The irony of this Fable is perhaps too delicate to be understood by young persons. It is necessary therefore to observe that the author did not mean to encourage flattery, by showing the success of the flattering painter ; but covertly to censure the self-love of mankind, who unwillingly hear of their faults, and as readily assume merit or good qualities which they do not possess.

FABLE XIX.

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. 5
 They love the cellar's vulgar joke,
 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 sit,
 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 sordid mind,
 Avoided all the lion kind ;
 Fond of applause, he sought the feasts 15
 Of vulgar and ignoble beasts ;

With asses all his time was spent,
 Their club's perpetual president.
 He caught their manners, looks, and airs ;
 An ass in every thing but ears ! 20
 If e'er 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 sire's retreat ;
 Forward and fond to shew his parts,
 His highness brays ; the Lion starts.
 ' Puppy, that curs'd vociferation
 Betrays thy life and conversation : 30
 ' 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 sire ; 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, in the example of the young Lion, an absurdity finely ridiculed by Pope, in his prologue to the *Satires* :

" To sit attentive to our own applause,
 " While Wits and Templars 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."

POPE'S *Homer*.

FABLE XX.

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
 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 yon 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 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.'

☞ 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 from 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.

FABLE XXI.

THE RATCATCHER AND CATS.



THE rats by night such mischief did,
 BETTY was ev'ry morning chid ;
 They undermin'd whole sides of bacon,
 Her cheese was sapp'd, her tarts were taken. 5
 Her pasties, fenc'd with thickest paste,
 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 sally'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 he sets the poison'd toils,
 And Puss again the labour foils.

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

So said. A pond'rous trap he brought,
 And in the fact poor Puss 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 sister of the science spare ;
 ' One int'rest is our common care.' 35

' 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 sister's life :

' In ev'ry age and clime we see,
 ' Two of a trade can ne'er agree. 45


' Each hates his neighbour for encroaching ;
 ' Squire stigmatizes 'squire for poaching ;

' 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. 50

' 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.’

 This is less a fable, than a satire on the ambition, avarice, and vanity, of the human species, put in the mouth of an animal.

FABLE XXII.

THE GOAT WITHOUT A BEARD.



'TIS certain that the modish passions
 Descend among the crowd 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

l. 11. Thymy bank.—A bank sowed with thyme.

' I hate my frowsy beard,' he cries, 15
 ' My youth is lost in this disguise;
 ' Did not the females know my vigour,
 ' Well might they loath this rev'rend figure,
 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 snug?'
 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 this 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?
 ' Ev'n Muscovites have mow'd their chins;
 ' Shall we, like formal Capuchins,

l. 28. *To breathe a vein.*—Means to let blood.

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.

' 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.'

☞ It is a proof of common sense, which, as Pope says, "is fairly worth the seven," to conform to the customs and habits of those with whom we live, in all matters which have not an immoral tendency. Those who affect singularity, or who dress or act differently from their neighbours in points of little consequence, deserve, like the Goat without a beard, to be ridiculed and shunned, for pretending to be wiser than the rest of their species.

FABLE XXIII.

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
 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.


5

10

A wrinkled Hag, of wicked fame,
 Beside a little smoaky flame,
 Sat hov'ring, pinch'd with age and frost,
 Her shrivel'd hands, with veins emboss'd,
 Upon her knees her weight sustains,
 While palsy shook her crazy brains :

15

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 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 crowds of boys
 ' Worry me with eternal noise;
 ' Straws laid across my pace retard,
 ' The horse-shoes 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 saint; 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

 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 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 his body. In consequence of this severe law, to the terror of old women, who were more particularly marked out as such, witches were discovered

'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.'

in such abundance, that scarcely a village was without one. In one particular place in Lancashire, their number was supposed to be greater than that of the houses ; and many innocent persons, distress'd 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.

BLACKSTONE'S *Commentaries*, b. 4, ch. 4.

Remarks on Macbeth, in STEVENS'S edition of *Shakespeare*.

FABLE XXIV.

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)

* 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 it's 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

Sat proudly perking on a rose ;	5
With pert conceit his bosom glows ;	
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	
Crawls o'er the grass ; whom when he spies,	
In wrath he to the gard'ner cries ;	
' What means yon peasant's daily toil,	15
' From choaking weeds to rid the soil ?	

produces a Butterfly, with all the lineaments of its parents ; only these are not disclosed at first, but for the greater part of the animal's life, they are covered with a sort of case or muscular coat, in which are legs for walking, suitable to it only in this state ; but its mouth takes in nourishment, which is conveyed to the included animal : 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 *chrysalis* 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. 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, frequently covering them from it in an artful manner. Some make a general coat of a hairy matter

- ' Why wake you to the morning's care?
 ' Why with new arts correct the year?
 ' Why glows the peach with crimson hue?
 ' And why the plumb's inviting blue? 20
 ' Were they to feast his taste designed,
 ' That vermin of voracious kind?
 ' Crush then the slow, the pilf'ring race;
 ' So purge thy garden from disgrace.'
 ' What arrogance!' the Snail reply'd; 25
 ' How insolent is upstart pride!
 ' Hadst thou not thus with insult vain,
 ' Provok'd my patience to complain,
 ' I had conceal'd thy meaner birth,
 ' Nor trac'd thee to the scum of earth. 30
 ' For scarce nine suns have wak'd the hours,
 ' To swell the fruit, and paint the flow'rs,
 ' Since I thy humbler life survey'd,
 ' In base, in sordid guise array'd;
 ' A hideous insect, vile, unclean, 35
 ' You dragg'd a slow and noisome train;
 ' And from your spider-bowels drew
 ' Foul film, and spun the dirty clue.
 ' I own my humble life, good friend;
 ' Snail was I born, and Snail shall end. 40
 ' And what's a Butterfly? at best,
 ' He's but a Caterpillar, drest;

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.

' 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 originally 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 XXV.

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 thunder's rage, 5
 ' Which spares not friend, nor sex, nor age !
 ' That vixen tongue of yours, my dear,
 ' Alarms our neighbours far and near.
 ' Good gods ! 'tis like a rolling river,
 ' That murmuring flows, and flows for ever ! 10
 ' Ne'er tir'd, perpetual discord sowing !
 ' Like fame, it gathers strength by growing.'

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

“ *Labitur et labetur, in omne volubilis ævum.* ”

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

‘ 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.
‘ Women of late are finely ridden !
‘ A parrot’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, hussy, drunkard, slattern, 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 ;
Puss 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.’

☞ “ From peace and social joy Medusa flies,
“ And loves to hear the storm of anger rise ;
“ Thus hags and witches hate the smiles of day,
“ Sport in loud thunder, and in tempests play.”

BROOME, *on a Mischievous Woman.*

FABLE XXVI.

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 supply'd 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.

The dog his humble suit preferr'd,
And begg'd in justice to be heard.
The master sat ; 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.

☞ Liars, like the Cur in this Fable, will always, sooner or later, be discovered and punished. " A false witness," says the wise Author of the book of Proverbs, " shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape." c. xix. v. 5.

FABLE XXVII.

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 signs 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 ;
 ' If I by writ, or bond, or deed,
 ' Reduc'd a family to need, 20
 ' My will hath made the world amends ;
 ' My hope on charity depends.
 ' When I am number'd with the dead,
 ' And all my pious gifts are read,
 ' By heav'n and earth 'twill then be known, 25
 ' My charities were amply shown.'
 An Angel came : ' Ah, friend !' he cry'd,
 ' No more in flatt'ring hope confide ;
 ' Can thy good deeds in former times
 ' Outweigh the balance of thy crimes? 30
 ' What widow or what orphan prays
 ' To crown thy life with length of days ?
 ' A pious action 's in thy pow'r,
 ' Embrace with joy the happy hour :
 ' Now, while you draw the vital air, 35
 ' Prove your intention is sincere ;
 ' This instant give a hundred pound ;
 ' Your neighbours want, and you abound.'
 ' But why such haste ?' the sick man whines :
 ' Who knows as yet what Heav'n designs ? 40
 ' Perhaps I may recover still :
 ' That sum and more are in my will.'
 ' Fool !' says the vision, ' now 'tis plain,
 ' Your life, your soul, your heav'n was gain ;
 ' From ev'ry side, with all your might, 45
 ' You scrap'd, and scrap'd beyond your right ;
 ' 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 dy'd.

☞ 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 attend the ashes of the dead ;
 “ It was her pleasure personally to diffuse,
 “ From a living hand,
 “ The means of happiness to rising generations.”

FABLE XXVIII.

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 nod 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, satirised 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

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 ‘ The various gifts of Providence, ‘ Accept our praise, our daily pray’r, ‘ Smile on our fields, and bless the year !’	15
A Cloud, who mock’d his grateful tongue, The day with sudden darkness hung ; With pride and envy swell’d aloud, A voice thus thunder’d from the Cloud :	20
‘ Weak is this gaudy god of thine, ‘ Whom I, at will, forbid to shine. ‘ Shall I nor vows, nor incense know ? ‘ Where praise is due, the praise bestow.’	25
With fervent zeal the Persian mov’d, Thus the proud calumny reprov’d : ‘ It was that god who claims my prayer, ‘ Who gave thee birth and rais’d thee there ;	30

“ 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 pre-
“ cious ore, some valuable relics, which future collectors
“ could no where else have found.” *Note in the Advertisement to the Works of Bp. AITERBURY.*

l. 12.—Many of the ancient 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.”

l. 30.—A cloud being a vapour, drawn from the earth by the Sun.

' 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 tost 35
(The sport of winds) in air was lost ;
The glorious orb the day refines,
Thus envy breaks, thus merit shines.

☞ 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 XXIX.

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 sire'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

PART I.] GAY'S FABLES. 87

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

'O gluttons!' says the drooping sire,
'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 reign;
'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 change shall never be believ'd, 45

'A lost good name is ne'er retriev'd.'
'Nay then,' replies the feeble Fox,
(But hark! I hear a hen that clucks)

' 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.

Gay has made a similar observation in his tragedy of *Dione*,

“ Is there, against *hypocrisy*, defence ;

“ Who clothes her words and looks with innocence ?”

FABLE XXX.

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, 5
 Conscious of game, the net unbind.

A Partridge, with experience wise,
 The fraudulent preparation spies ;
 She mocks their toils, alarms her brood ;
 The covey springs and seeks the wood ; 10
 But ere her certain wing she tries,
 Thus to the creeping Spaniel cries :

' Thou fawning slave to man's deceit,
 ' Thou pimp of lux'ry, sneaking cheat ;
 ' Of thy whole species thou disgrace, 15
 ' 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,' 20
 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 example 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, v. 68, p. 271.

FABLE XXXI.

THE UNIVERSAL APPARITION.



A RAKE, by ev'ry passion rul'd,
 With ev'ry vice his youth had cool'd ;
 Disease his tainted blood assails ;
 His spirits droop, his vigour fails ;
 With secret ills at home he pines, 5
 And, like infirm old age, declines.

As twing'd with pain, he pensive sits,
 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 cheerful hour,
 ' When health is lost. Be timely wise : 15
 ' With health all taste of pleasure flies.'

Thus said, the Phantom disappears.
 The wary counsel wak'd his fears :
 He now from all excess abstains,
 With physic purifies his veins ; 20
 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 ;
 Insinuates that beauty's frail, 25
 That perseverance must prevail ;
 With jealousies his brain inflames,
 And whispers all her lover's 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. 35
 But when possess'd of fortune's store,
 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 the 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.

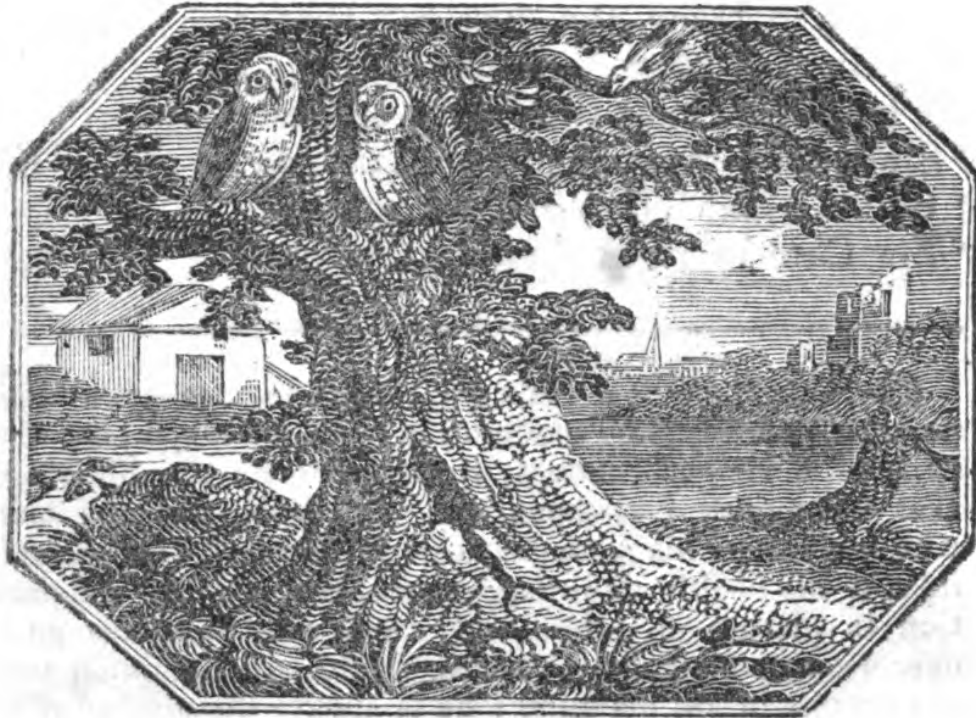
The court he quits to fly from Care,
 And seeks the peace of rural air : 50
 His groves, his fields, amus'd his hours ;
 He prun'd his trees, he rais'd his flowers.

But Care again his steps pursues ;
Warns him of blasts, of blighting dews,
Of plund'ring insects, snails, and rains, 55
And droughts that starve the labour'd plains.
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.'

☞ This Fable is a plain instructive lecture upon temperance, sobriety, and moderation ; and by displaying the evils of a vicious conduct, it recommends the blessings that accompany a virtuous life. It shews, that the man who has passed his younger days in vicious pursuits, and injur'd his health by intemperance, can have no satisfaction in private or public life ; cares and anxieties must ever accompany him ; pleasure, wealth, or dominion cannot occupy or fill his mind ; he is always dissatisfied with his present situation ; he is ever pining for something which he does not possess, and is always haunted by the *spectre* ; which is his evil conscience.

FABLE XXXII.

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 sires 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 the Athenian bird.’

l. 12. Athenian bird.—The Owl was much respected at Athens, as being the favourite bird of Pallas, or Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom, and protectress of that city.

PART I.]	GAY'S FABLES.	95
' 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.		
' Besides, on PALLAS' helm we sit,		
' 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 soothe 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,		25
' And on MINERVA's helm were placed :		
' 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 ;		30
' 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,		35
' Pursue the ways by Nature taught ;		
' So shall you find delicious fare,		
' And grateful farmers praise your care ;		
' So shall sleek mice your chase reward,		
' And no keen cat find more regard.'		40

l. 17.—The figure of an Owl was usually placed on the helmet of Pallas, or Minerva.

FABLE XXXIII.

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 5
 The plunder of another reign ;
 Like Philip's son would fain be doing,
 And sighs for other realms to ruin.

As one of these (without his wand)
 Pensive, along the winding strand 10

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

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

“ When Philip's son,” &c.

Employ'd the solitary hour,
 In projects to regain his pow'r ;
 The waves in spreading circles ran,
 PROTEUS arose, and thus began :

' 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,
 ' 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.'

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.

l. 14.—Proteus.—One of the Heathen Deities, the son of Neptune and Phænice : he 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 sullen.

See also *Fable 24, l. 27-*

' Had I ne'er liv'd at court, ' he cries,
 ' Such transformation might surprise ;
 ' But there, in quest of daily game,
 ' Each able Courtier acts the same. 40
 ' Wolves, lions, lynxes; 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, surprise, or what you will,
 ' The Courtier finds evasions still :
 ' Not to be bound by any ties, 55
 ' And never forced 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 that of the Setting Dog and the Partridge ; a proof of his spirit, at least, if not of his discretion.

FABLE XXXIV.

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,
He long'd to make the war his own ;
And often found (when two contend)
To interpose obtain'd his end.

5

He glory'd in his limping pace,
The scars of honour seam'd his face ;
In ev'ry limb a gash appears ;
And frequent fights retrench'd his ears.

10

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

15

Forth from his yard, a tanner flies,
 And to the bold intruder cries :
 ' 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 honour or the shame.'
 Thus said ; they swore, and rav'd like thunder ;
 Then dragg'd their fasten'd dogs asunder ;
 While clubs and kicks from ev'ry 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-baiting.

☞ Shakespeare justly observes,

“ Bloody instructions being taught, return
 “ To plague th'inventor ; and even-handed justice
 “ Commands the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
 “ To our own lips.”

FABLE XXXV.

THE BARLEY-MOW AND THE DUNGHILL.*



HOW many saucy airs we meet,
From Temple-bar to Aldgate-street !

* This Fable condemns ingratitude, which Johnson reprobates in the most severe terms :

“ No depravity of the mind has been more frequently or
“ justly censured than ingratitude. There is indeed suffi-
“ cient 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 they, who have once been clearly
“ detected in acts of injury to their benefactors, deserve
“ to be numbered among social beings ; they have endea-
“ voured to destroy confidence, to intercept sympathy, and
“ to turn every man’s attention wholly on himself.”

Proud rogues, who shar'd the South-Sea prey,
 And sprung like mushrooms in a day !
 They think it mean to condescend 5
 To know a brother or a friend ;
 They blush to hear a mother's name,
 And by their pride expose their shame.

As cross his yard, at early day,
 A careful Farmer took his way ; 10
 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, 15
 And multiplied the next year's corn.

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 ? 20
 ' 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, 25
 ' That filthy sight, that nauseous fume,
 ' Meet objects here ? Command it hence:
 ' A thing so mean must give offence.'

The humble Dunghill thus reply'd,
 ' Thy master hears, and mocks thy pride. 30

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.

' Insult 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

☞ No poet has more strikingly depicted the horrid nature of ingratitude, than our divine bard, in his tragedy of King Lear.

" Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
" Thou art not so unkind,
" As man's ingratitude,
" Thy tooth is not so keen,
" Because thou art not seen,
" Although thy breath is rude.

" Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
" That does not bite so nigh,
" As benefits forgot ;
" Though thou the waters warp,
" Thy sting is not so sharp
" As friend rememb'ring not."

FABLE XXXVI.

PYTHAGORAS AND THE COUNTRYMAN.



PYTHAG'RAS 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,
 His steps misled him to a farm,

5

l. 1. Pythagoras.—A Grecian philosopher. The place and exact time of his birth are 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 generally 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

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

The Clown with surly 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 sinner,
 ' Hadst pullets yesterday for dinner !' 30

' Hold,' cries 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.'

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.

‘ Thus tyrants boast,’ the Sage reply’d, 35
‘ Whose murders spring from pow’r 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 XXXVII.

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 apply’d’?
 ‘ Alas! you know the cause too well: 5
‘ The salt is spilt, to me it fell:
‘ Then to contribute to my loss,
‘ My knife and fork were laid across:
‘ 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;

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

' For had you laid this brittle ware
 ' On Dun, the old surefooted 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.

☞ 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 supernatural 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 appe-
 " tite 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 my-

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

“self the friendship and protection of that Being who dis-
“poses of events and governs futurity.—I 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 both, and that he will not fail to comfort and
“support me under them.”

FABLE XXXVIII.

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,
Forsook the barn, and sought the wood ;

5

1. 2.—Gay, in using the word *mote*, or small particle of matter, alludes to that passage in Scripture, *Matt. vii. 3, 4, 5.*

“And why beholdest thou the *mote* that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest 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.”

Behind her ran an infant train.
 Collecting here and there a grain.
 ' 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 bless'd, how envy'd were our life, 15
 ' Could we but 'scape the poult'rer's knife !
 ' But man, curs'd man, on Turkies 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 ;
 ' Control thy more voracious bill,
 ' Nor for a breakfast nations kill.' 30

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

☞ 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.

FABLE XXXIX.

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.

5

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.

10

' Once more,' he cries, ' accept my prayer ;
 ' Make my lov'd progeny thy care. 15
 ' Let my first hope, my fav'rite boy,
 ' All fortune's richest gifts enjoy.
 ' My next with strong ambition fire ;
 ' May favour teach him to aspire :
 ' Till he the step of power ascend,
 ' And courtiers to their idol bend. 20
 ' With ev'ry grace, with ev'ry charm,
 ' My daughter's perfect features arm.
 ' If Heav'n approve, a Father's bless'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 increase,
 He neither wakes nor sleeps in peace ; 30
 In fancy'd want (a wretch complete)
 He starves, and yet he dares not eat.

The next to sudden honours grew ;
 The thriving art of courts he knew ;
 He reach'd the height of pow'r 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 ignorance of good and ill
 ' Dare to direct th' eternal will ?

' Seek virtue ; and, of that possest,
' To Providence resign the rest.'

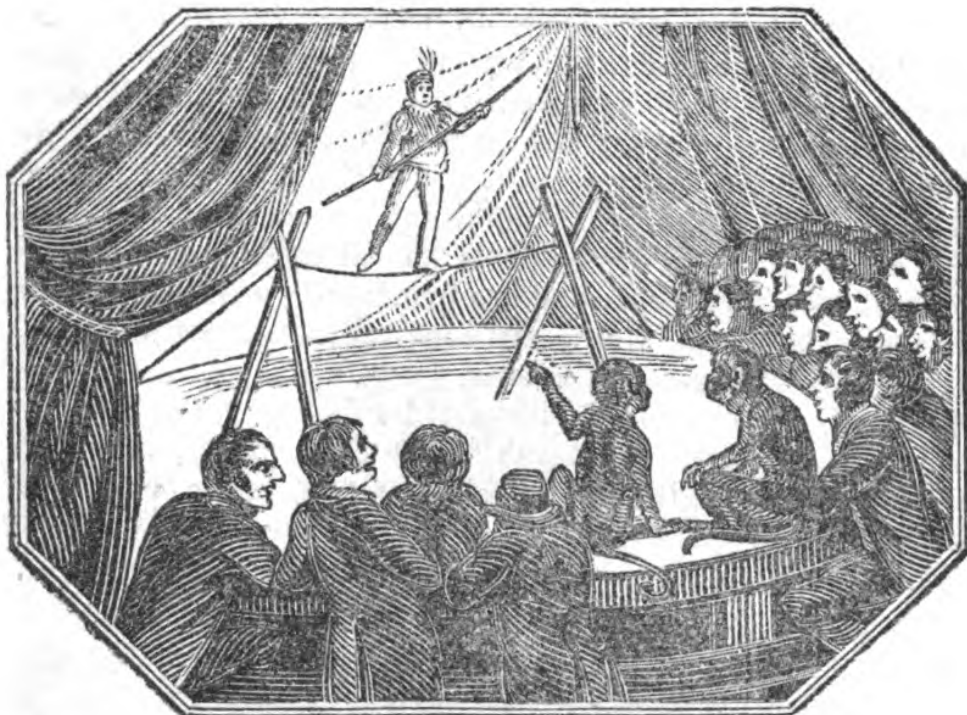
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☞ Providence has assigned to every creature its station, lot, make, and figure ; and it proves no less folly than wickedness not to be satisfied with his appointments, and to presume to correct the works of incomprehensible wisdom, and almighty power. We should well consider what we wish for, lest in obtaining it we repent. They who humbly resign themselves in all events to the good pleasure of Providence, and are principally anxious to obey his commands, and live a virtuous life, are most happy in themselves, and succeed best in the world.

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 XL.

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 strutter, 5
 Despises Monsieur's air 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.

l. 5. *The Don*.—A Spaniard, because Don is a common title in Spain applied to persons from the rank of gentlemen upwards.

l. 7. *Monsieur*.—The Frenchman.

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.
 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: 20
 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;
 The cord beneath the dancer springs;
 Aloft in air the vaulter swings;

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 vent'rous maiden swings,
 “*Jack-Pudding*, in his party-coloured jacket,
 “Tosses the glove, and jokes at ev'ry packet.”

l. 81. 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.”

Distorted now, now prone depends, 35
 Now through his twisted arms ascends :
 The crowd, in wonder and delight,
 With clapping hands applaud the sight.

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 sight,
 ' To meet men always bolt upright,
 ' Because we sometimes walk on two !
 ' I hate the imitating crew.' 60

FABLE XLI.

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 sits, 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

l. 8. *Post-Boy*.—Formerly the name of a newspaper.
 Gay, in his Ballad on Quadrille, couples the *Post-Boy*
 and the *Gazette* together ;

“ A party late at Cambray met,
 “ Which drew all Europe’s eyes,
 “ ’Twas called in *Post-Boy* and *Gazette*
 “ The Quadruple Allies.”

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-importance thus express'd :

‘ 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 crowd my flight behind,

‘ And own me of superior kind.’

The Farmer laugh'd, and thus reply'd,

‘ Thou dull important lump of pride ; 30

‘ Dar'st 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'st thy slaves and train.

‘ Few follow Wisdom or her rules ;

‘ Fools in derision follow fools.’

l. 17.—The Owl is called the *bird of night* because it seldom appears till dusk, its eyes being dazzled by the sun's rays. The purblindness of the Owl has furnished Akenside with an appropriate allusion in describing the effects of moral blindness :

“ I scorn'd th' ungenerous gloss of slavish minds,

“ The *owl-eyed* race, whom virtue's lustre blinds.”

FABLE XLII.

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's at his fingers' ends.

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

' Is this, then, he so fam'd for sleight ?
 ' Can this slow bungler cheat your sight ? 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.
 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 stept 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 ;
 ' Breathe on the bill. Heigh, pass ! 'Tis gone,'
 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 opes his fist, the treasure's fled ; 45
 He sees a halter in its stead.
 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, 50
 'Tis vanish'd with conveyance neat,
 And on the table smokes a treat.

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

She next a meagre rake address? 55

' This picture see ; her shape, her breast !

' What youth, and what inviting eyes !

' Hold her, and have her.' With surprise,

His hand expos'd a box of pills,

And a loud laugh proclaim'd his ills. 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 65

Take ev'ry shape, but charity ;

And not one thing you saw, or drew,

But chang'd from what was first in view.

The Juggler now in grief of heart,

With this submission own'd her art: 70

' Can I such matchless slight withstand !

' How practice hath improv'd your hand !

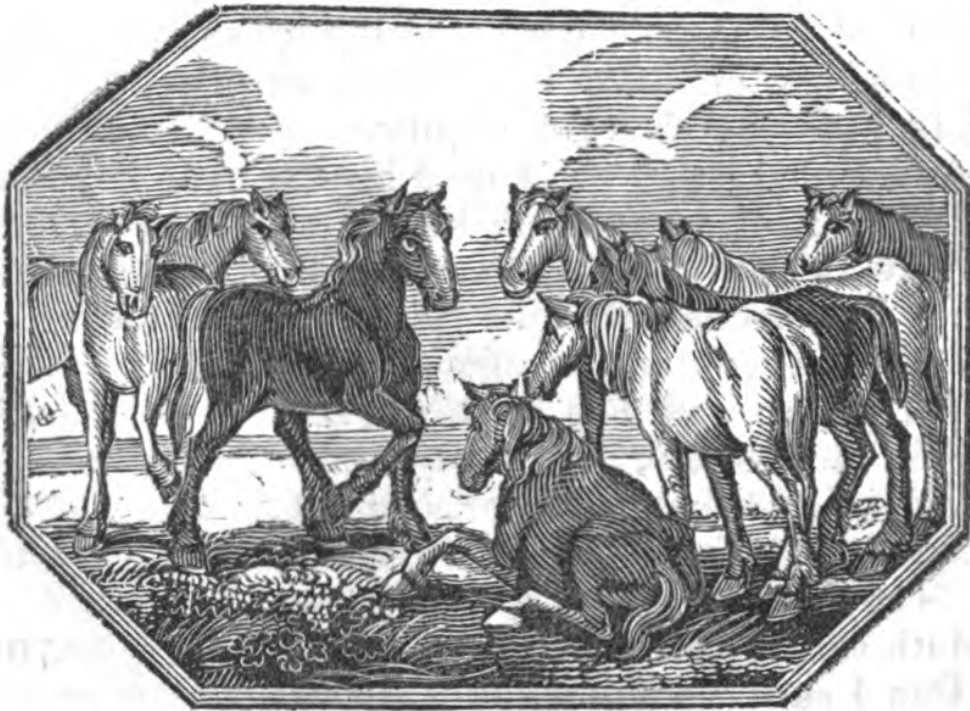
' But now and then I cheat the throng ;

' You ev'ry day, and all day long.'

☞ This Fable is both original and moral. It shows the fascinating power of vice to deceive mankind by false appearances of pleasure and happiness, which ultimately end in detection or misery. The corruption of the senator, and the fraud of the church-warden, are detected. The miser and spendthrift equally suffer want. The rake finds disease in the gratification of his licentious passion. The ambitious statesman, who aims at exorbitant power, terminates his life on the scaffold. The thief, instead of enjoying ill-gotten wealth, dies on the gallows ; and drunkenness not unfrequently leads to contentions and murder. Thus, all who are allured by the hopes of pleasure or profit to act wickedly, find misery instead of expected happiness, and receive punishment from the fatal consequences of their own vices.

FABLE XLIII.

THE COUNCIL OF HORSES.



UPON a time a neighing Steed,
 Who graz'd among a num'rous breed,
 With mutiny had fir'd the train,
 And spread dissension 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 sires have borne the chain ?
 ' Consider, friends ! your strength and might, 15
 'Tis conquest to assert your right.

- ' How cumb'rous 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 25
 ' 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. 30
 ' 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.'
 A general nod approv'd the cause, 35
 And all the circle neigh'd applause.
 When lo ! with grave and solemn pace,
 A Steed advanc'd before the race,
 With age and long experience wise ;
 Around he cast his thoughtful eyes, 40
 And, to the murmurs of the train,
 Thus spoke the Nestor of the plain :
 ' When I had health and strength, like you,
 ' The toils of servitude I knew ;
 ' Now grateful man rewards my pains,
 ' And gives me all these wide domains. 45

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 as dropping from his lips like honey.

' 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.

☞ This Fable 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 XLIV.

THE HOUND AND THE HUNTSMAN.



IMPERTINENCE at first is borne
 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 briar 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 Huntsman to the clamour flies ;
The smacking lash he smartly plies. 20

His ribs all welk'd, with howling tone
The puppy thus express'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 shew both ignorance and pride :
' Fools may our scorn, our 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.—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 different faculties.”

L'ESTRANGE'S *ÆSOP*, v. 1, p. 234.

And Prior has told us, in his *Alma* ;

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

FABLE XLV.

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 scribblers, covetous of praise,
Think slander can transplant the bays.

5

Beauties and bards have equal pride,
With both all rivals are decry'd.

Who praises LESBIA'S eyes and feature,
Must call her sister awkward creature ;

10

For the kind flattery's sure to charm,
When we some other nymph disarm.

As in the cool of early day

A Poet sought the sweets of May,
The garden's fragrant breath ascends,

15

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, 20
 ‘ Might I supply that envy’d place
 ‘ With never-fading love !
 ‘ There, phoenix-like, beneath her eye,
 ‘ Involv’d in fragrance, burn and die.
 ‘ Know, hapless flow’r, that thou shalt find 25
 ‘ More fragrant roses there ;
 ‘ I see thy with’ring head reclin’d
 ‘ With envy and despair !
 ‘ 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 ;

l. 23. *Phoenix-like*.—Gay alludes to the fabulous story of the Phoenix. 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 chrystal 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 those abodes,
 “ Contemns the pow’r of fate, and mates the gods.
 “ His fiery eyes shoot 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 Phoenix, from Claudian.*

- ‘ Of all mankind, you should not flout us ;
What can a Poet do without us ?
‘ In ev’ry love-song roses bloom ; 35
‘ We lend you colour and perfume.
‘ Does it to CHLOE’S charms conduce,
‘ To found her praise on our abuse ?
‘ Must we, to flatter her, be made
‘ To wither, envy, pine, and fade ?’ 40
-

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 fire it with 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 ;
“ 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 XLVI.

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 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

☞ A bully and a coward are synonymous terms ; and the man who wantonly provokes the wrath of another, will generally meet with a fate similar to the Puppy, and be crushed.

FABLE XLVII.

THE COURT OF DEATH.



DEATH, on a solemn night of state,
 In all his pomp of terror sate :
 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 head to foot how swift he flies,
 And ev'ry joint and sinew 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 pretensions 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
 When thus the Monarch from the throne :

' Merit was ever modest known.
 ' What, no Physician speak his right !
 ' None here ! but fees their toil requite.
 ' Let then Intemp'rance take the wand, 45
 ' Who fills with gold their zealous hand.

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

' You, Fever, Gout, and all the rest,
 ' (Whom wary men, as foes, detest)
 ' Forego your claims ; 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.'

☞ The dreadful effects of intemperance are painted in the most glowing colours by Prior :

" In vain I trusted that the flowing bowl
 " Would banish sorrow, and enlarge the soul,
 " To the late revel and protracted feast
 " Wild dreams succeeded, and disordered rest.
 " Unhappy man, whom sorrow and fierce rage,
 " To different ills alternately engage.
 " Who drinks alas ! but to forget ; nor sees
 " That melancholy sloth, severe disease,
 " Memory confused, and interrupted thought,
 " Death's harbingers, lie latent in the draught ;
 " And in the flowers that wreath the sparkling bowl
 " Fell adders hiss, and poisonous serpents roll."

FABLE XLVIII.

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,
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.

5

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 tulips are my garden's pride,
 ' What vast expense 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 soil,
 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 and threats he fell to blows,
 The stubborn brute the blows sustains, 45
 Assaults his leg, and tears the veins.
 Ah, foolish Swain ! too late you find
 That sties were for such friends design'd.
 Homeward he limps with painful pace,
 Reflecting thus on past disgrace : 50

' Who cherishes a brutal mate
' Shall mourn the folly soon or late.'

☞ This Fable warns the inexperienced not to form improper intimacies with ignorant and brutal characters, as ignorance will produce continual and dangerous errors even with a good intent, and brutality will burst forth, how long soever it may have lain dormant.

FABLE XLIX.

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,
Think men were born for slaves to kings ?

5

When the crab views the pearly strands,
Or TAGUS, bright with golden sands ;

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.”

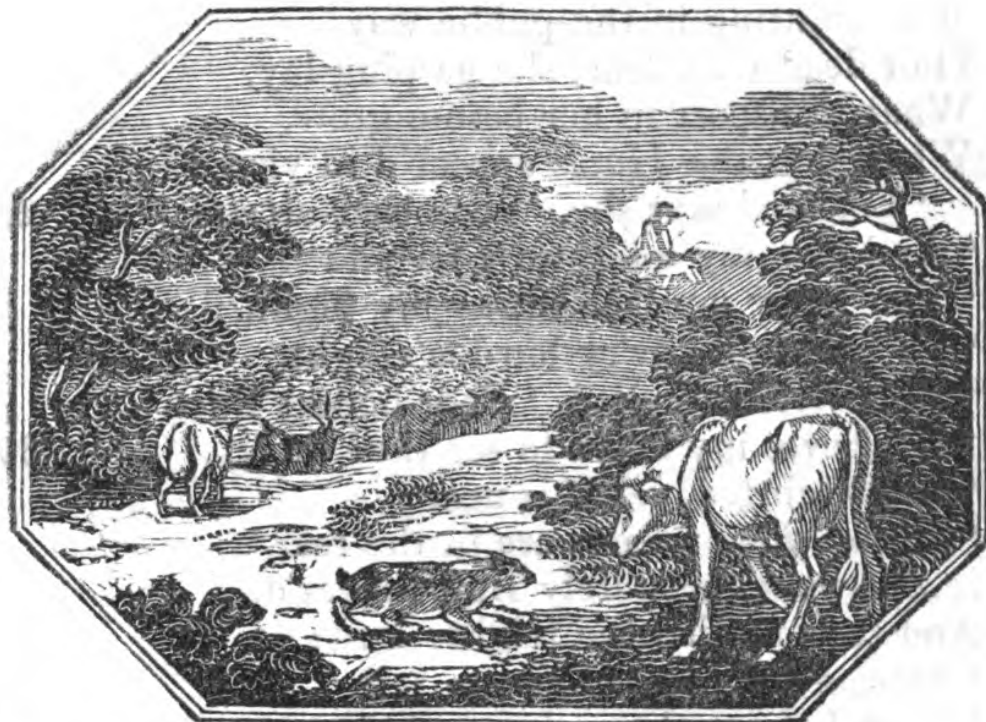
Or crawls beside the coral grove,
 And hears the ocean roll above ; 10
 ' Nature is too profuse,' says he,
 ' Who gave all these to pleasure me !'
 When bord'ring pinks and roses bloom,
 And ev'ry garden breathes perfume,
 When peaches glow with sunny dyes, 15
 Like LAURA'S cheek, when blushes rise ;
 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.'

☞ All the parts of creation are dependent on each other ; and man, by being endowed with reason, may be considered as the first of God's creatures. Yet even he can have no plea for pride, when he reflects, that he cannot protract his existence for a single moment, beyond the appointed hour, and that his body becomes a prey to worms.

FABLE L.

THE HARE AND MANY FRIENDS.



FRIENDSHIP, like love, is but a name,
 Unless to one you stint the flame :
 The child who 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
 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 Puss,
 ' 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, without offence, pretend
 ' To take the freedom of a friend.
 ' Love calls me hence ; a fav'rite cow
 ' Expects me near yon barley-mow ; 40
 ' 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.'
 The Goat remark'd her pulse was high, 45
 Her languid head, her heavy eye ;
 ' My back,' says he, ' may do you harm,
 ' The Sheep's at hand, and wool is warm.'
 The Sheep was feeble, and complain'd,
 His sides a load of wool sustain'd : 50
 Said he was slow, confess'd his fears ;
 For hounds eat sheep as well as hares.

She now the trotting Calf address'd,
 To save from death a friend distress'd.
 ' Shall I,' says he, ' of tender age, 55
 ' In this important care engage?
 ' Older and abler pass you by ;
 ' How strong are those ! how weak am I !
 ' Should I presume to bear you hence,
 ' Those friends of mine may take offence ! 60
 ' 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.'

☞ This Fable is the most natural and delightful of the whole set, and it 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 unpension'd with a *hundred friends*.”

And Swift, in allusion to this Fable,

“ Thus Gay, *the hare with many friends*,
 “ Twice seven long years the Court attends,
 “ Who under tales conveying truth,
 “ To virtue form'd a princely youth.”

This sentiment was ever uppermost in the mind of Gay. In his pastoral tragedy of *Dione*, he feelingly observes :

“ But search as far as earth's wide bounds extend,
 “ Where shall the wretched find one faithful friend ?”

END OF THE FIRST PART.

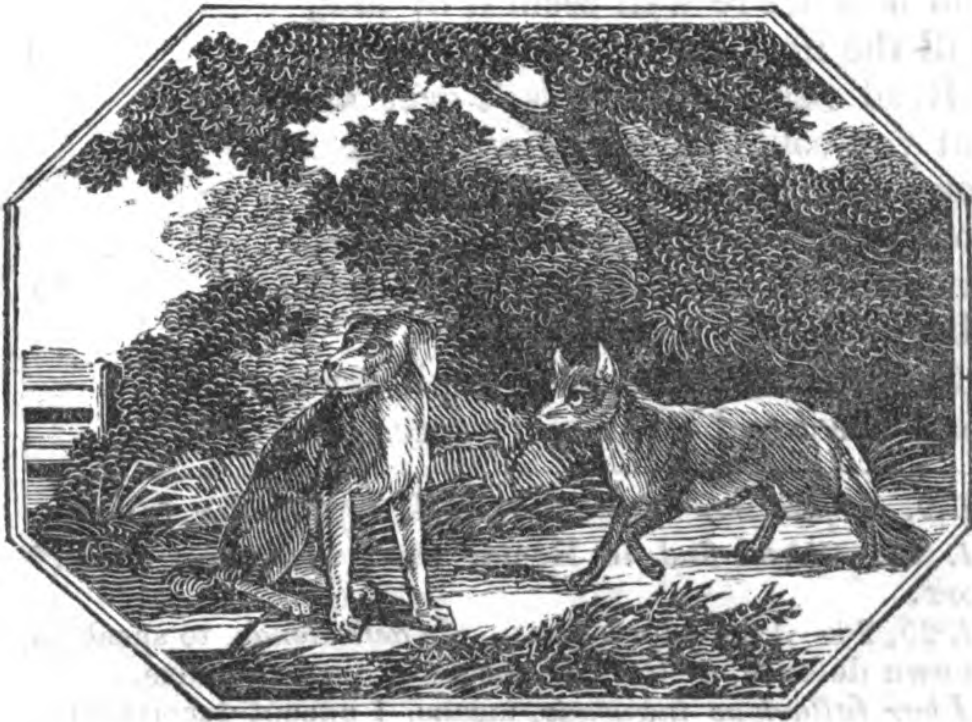
THE SECOND PART.

FABLES.

PART II.

FABLE I.

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 favour ev'ry client ;
That 'tis the fee directs the sense,
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
 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 *innuendo*.
 Sagacious PORTA's skill could trace
 Some beast or bird in ev'ry face.

l. 9. Scepticism.—From the Greek word *σκηπτικόν*, to doubt.

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 innuendo, 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 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.

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 show 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, Sir, 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 ?
 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 ? 50
 Brutes are my theme. Am I to blame,
 If men in morals are the same ?
 I no man call an ape or ass,
 'Tis his own conscience holds the glass ;
 Thus void of all offence I write ; 55
 Who claims the fable knows his right.

l. 45, 56.—Gay has introduced a similar sentiment in the *Beggar's Opera* :

" When you censure the age,
 " Be cautious and sage,
 " Lest 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."

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. 60

Says Reynard, 'Tis a cruel case,
 ' That man should stigmatise our race :
 ' No doubt, among us rogues you find,
 ' As among dogs and human kind :
 ' And, yet, unknown to me and you 65
 ' 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 : 70
 ' You know me free from all disguise :
 ' My honour as my life I prize.'

By talk like this, from all mistrust
 The Dog was cur'd, and thought him just. 75

As on a time the Fox held forth
 On conscience, honesty, and worth ;
 Sudden he stopp'd, he cock'd his ear ;
 Low droop'd his brushy tail with fear.

' Bless us ! the hunters are abroad,
 ' What's all that clatter on the road ? 80

' 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) 85
 ' Dame Dobbins, with her poultry-ware.'

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 ? 90
 ' 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, 95
 ' Could never give this provocation.
 ' No lamb, for ought I ever knew,
 ' May be more innocent than you.'
 At this gall'd Reynard winc'd and swore
 Such language ne'er was giv'n before. 100
 ' What's lamb to me? the saucy 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 105
 ' That I'm the thief: You Dog, you lie.'
 ' Thou knave, thou fool,' the Dog reply'd,
 ' The name is just, take either side ;
 ' Thy guilt these applications speak!
 ' Sirrah, 'tis conscience makes you squeak.' 110
 So saying, on the Fox he flies ;
 The self-convicted felon dies.

☞ This tale well exemplifies the captiousness of con-
 scious guilt ; and proves that even the means employed to
 escape detection generally lead to punishment.

FABLE II.

THE VULTURE, THE SPARROW, AND
OTHER BIRDERS.

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 sound :
To censure 'em I've no pretension ; 15
I own they're past my comprehension.
 You say, your brother wants a place,
('Tis many a younger brother's case)
And that he very soon intends
To ply the court, and teaze his friends. 20
If there his merits chance to find
A Patriot, of an open mind,
Whose constant actions prove him just
To both a king's and people's trust ;

l. 14. Machiavel.—Nicholas Machiavel, descended from a noble family, was born at Florence, in 1469. His first compositions were of a comic kind ; he wrote a Comedy called *Nicias*, on the model of Aristophanes, a composition in which he satirised several of his countrymen, under theatrical characters. This Play was acted with so much applause at Florence, that Pope Leo the 10th, the great patron of Literature, ordered it to be performed at Rome. But his comic writing would never have raised him to the eminence which he enjoyed. He was secretary and afterwards historiographer to the Republic of Florence ; and he distinguished himself principally as an historian and politician. He wrote the *History of Florence*, from 1215 to 1494 ; and a *Discourse on Livy the Roman Historian*, which is replete with excellent observations and political reflections. But the book to which Gay alludes, is his *Prince*, a treatise of politics, in which he describes, under the character of Cæsar Borgia, the arts of government, as they are too often practised by wicked princes and tyrants. Hence *Machiavelism*, or the art of governing tyrannically and deceitfully, are synonymous expressions : a *profound* and refined politician is called a *Machiavel*. He died in 1530.

See also *Fable 5, l. 45.* *The self-deem'd Machiavel.*
In his *Rural Sports*, Gay also uses *Machiavel* for a politician :

“ Each rival *Machiavel* with envy burns,
“ And honesty forsakes them all by turns.”

May he with gratitude attend, 25
 And owe his rise to such a friend.
 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, 35
 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. 40
 Then if his patron burn with lust,
 The first in favour's pimp the first.
 His doors are never clos'd to spies,
 Who cheer his heart with double lies :
 They flatter him, his foes defame, 45
 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 ; 50
 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, 55
 And fav'rites cannot always stand ;
 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 servile 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 !

Around him throug the feather'd rout ; 85
Friends must be serv'd, and some must out.
Each thinks his own the best pretension ;
This asks a place, and that a pension.

The nightingale was set aside,
A forward daw his room supply'd. 90
' This bird,' says he, ' for bus'ness fit,
' Hath both sagacity and wit.

* ———— " When impious men bear sway,
" The post of honour is a private station."

' With all his turns, and shifts, and tricks,
 ' He's docile, and at nothing sticks.
 ' Then with his neighbours one so free 95
 ' At all times will connive at me.'

The hawk had due distinction shown,
 For parts and talents like his own.

Thousands of hireling cocks attend him,
 As blust'ring bullies, to defend him. 100

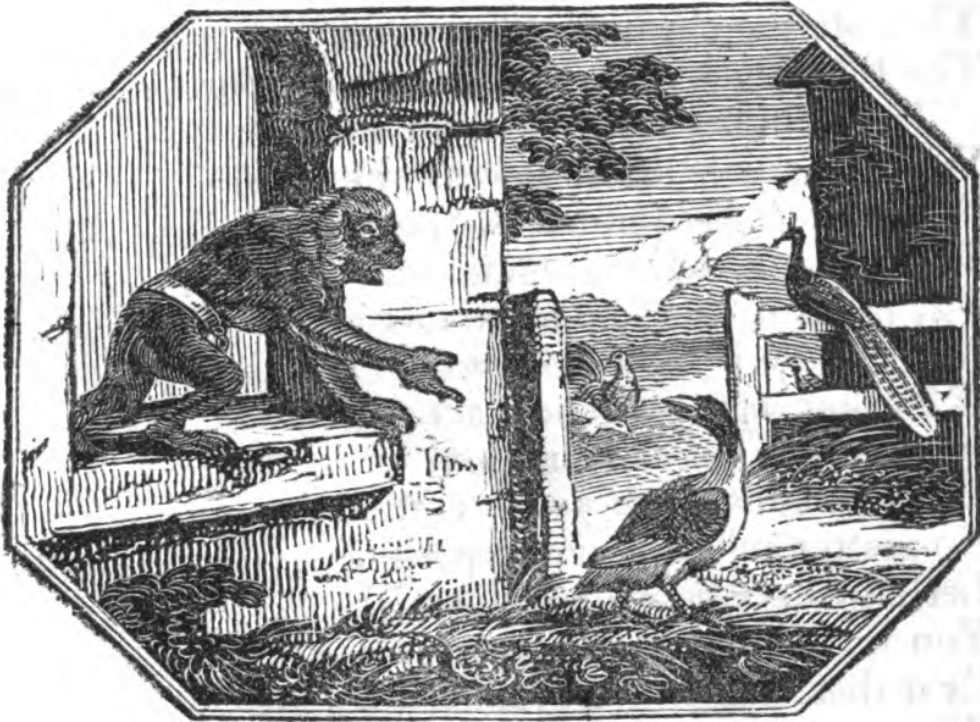
At once the ravens were discarded,
 And magpies with their posts rewarded.

' Those fowls of omen I detest,
 ' That pry into another's nest ;
 ' State lies must lose all good intent ; 105
 ' 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.'

' When rogues like these,' a Sparrow cries,
 ' To honours and employments rise, 110
 ' 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.'

FABLE III.

THE BABOON AND THE POULTRY,



TO A LEVEE 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 grandsire's merits ; 10
 For those we find upon record,
 But find him nothing but my lord.

When we with superficial view,
 Gaze on the rich, we're dazzled too.
 We know that wealth, when understood, 15
 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 crowd adore
 The thriving knaves that keep 'em poor. 20
 The cringing train of pow'r survey ;
 What creatures are so low as they !
 With what obsequiousness they bend !
 To what vile actions condescend !
 Their rise is on their meanness built, 25
 And flatt'ry is their smallest guilt.
 What homage, rev'rence, adoration,
 In ev'ry age, in ev'ry nation,
 Have sycophants to power address'd,
 No matter who the pow'r possess'd. 30
 Let ministers be what they will,
 You find their levees always fill.
 Ev'n those who have perplex'd a state,
 Whose actions claim contempt and hate,
 Had wretches to applaud their schemes, 35
 Though more absurd than madmen's dreams.
 When barb'rous MOLOCH was invok'd,
 The blood of infants only smok'd.

l. 37.—*Moloch*, the principal idol of the Ammonites. It was hollow, and a fire was kindled within to heat the image, that it might burn the offerings. Parents were accustomed to offer up their children as sacrifices, and while the *infant* was expiring, drums were beat to drown its cries.

To these horrid sacrifices, *smoking with the blood of infants*, Milton finely alludes :

“ First Moloch, horrid king, besmear'd with blood
 “ Of human sacrifice, and parent's tears,

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 worshipp'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 prosp'rous hour
Are as unstable as his pow'r. 50

Pow'r, by the breath of flatt'ry nurst,
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)

“ Though, for the noise of drums and timbrels loud,
“ Their children's cries unheard that pass'd through
fire
“ To his grim idol.”

Paradise Lost, b. 1. l. 392.

These horrid rites are frequently alluded to in Scripture, and forbidden by divine command under the severest penalties. “ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, who-soever giveth his seed unto Moloch, shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones.” Lev. c. 20. v. 2. “ Let no man make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Moloch.” Kings, b. 2, c. 23. v. 10.

He finger'd every 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 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 chicken,
 Fowls of all rank surround his hut,
 To worship his important strut.
 The minister appears. The crowd,
 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 othor folks in place) on gain.
 An apple-woman's stall was near,
 Well stock'd with fruits through all the year ;
 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 payments 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'ence shown ?
' How saucy 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 IV.

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.
 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.

10

If I must prostitute the muse,
The base conditions I refuse. 15

I neither flatter nor defame,
Yet own I would bring guilt to shame.
If I corruption's hand expose,
I make corrupted men my foes : 20

What then? I hate the paltry tribe,
Be virtue mine, be their's the bribe.
I no man's property invade,
Corruption's yet no lawful trade. 25

Nor would it mighty ills produce,
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 deny'd 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 aggrandise 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 e'en ministers confound, 45
And yet the state be safe and sound.

I care not though 'tis understood,
I only mean my country's good :
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, 55
 I'd vote a minister disgrac'd.

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.

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

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.

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 order'd (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 council met. 100
 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 expense, and where's th' account ?'

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' expense
 ' (Though vast) was for the swarms 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 !

' 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 th' expense

' (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 paltry, sneaking bribe,

' We cheat ourselves, and all the tribe ;

' For all the magazine contains

' Grows from our annual toil and pains.'

They vote th' account shall be inspected ; 155

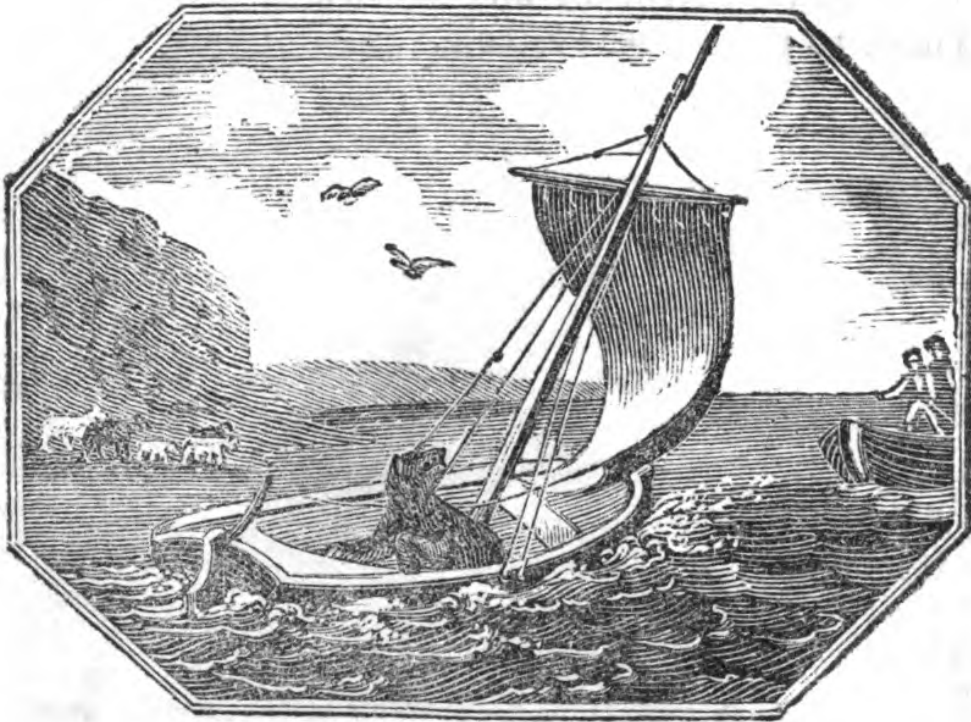
The cunning plund'rer is detected ;

The fraud is sentenc'd ; and his hoard,

As due, to public use restor'd.

FABLE V.

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,
 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 :
 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.

5

10

If, then, self-knowledge to pursue, Direct our life in ev'ry view, Of all the fools that pride can boast, A Coxcomb claims distinction most.	15
Coxcombs are of all ranks and kind ; They're not to sex or age confin'd, Or rich, or poor, or great, or small, And vanity besots 'em all.	20
By ignorance is pride increas'd : Those most assume who know the least ; Their own false balance gives 'em weight, But ev'ry other finds 'em light.	25
Not that all Coxcombs' follies strike, And draw our ridicule alike ; To diff'rent merits each pretends ; This in love-vanity transcends ; 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.	30
All these are fools of low condition, Compar'd with Coxcombs of ambition. For those, puff'd up with flatt'ry, dare Assume a nation's various care.	35
They ne'er the grossest praise mistrust, Their sycophants seem hardly just ; For these, in part alone, attest The flatt'ry their own thoughts suggest.	40
In this wide sphere a Coxcomb's shown In other realms besides his own ; The self-deem'd MACHIAVEL* at large By turns controls in ev'ry charge.	45

* *Machiavel*.—See note to l. 14. fable 2.]

l. 23.—The author of the Night Thoughts has also said :
“Pride is born of ignorance, which knows not man.”

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 55
 The current blunders to disguise.

When his crude schemes in air are lost,
 And millions scarce defray the cost,
 His arrogance (nought undismay'd)
 Trusting in self-sufficient aid, 60
 On other rocks misguides the realm,
 And thinks a pilot at the helm.

He ne'er suspects his want of skill,
 But blunders on from ill to ill ;
 And, when he fails of all intent, 65
 Blames only unforeseen event.
 Lest you mistake the application,
 The Fable calls me to relation.

A Bear of shag and manners rough,
 At climbing trees expert enough ; 70
 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.

This trick so swell'd him with conceit, 75
 He thought no enterprise too great.
 Alike in sciences and arts,
 He boasted universal parts ;
 Pragmatic, busy, bustling, bold,
 His arrogance was uncontrol'd : 80
 And thus he made his party good,
 And grew dictator of the wood.

The beasts with admiration stare,
 And think him a prodigious Bear.
 Were any common booty got, 85
 '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, 90
 And now his over-weening pride
 In ev'ry province will preside.
 No task too difficult was found :
 His blund'ring nose misleads the hound.
 In stratagem and subtle arts, 95
 He over-rules the fox's parts.

It chanc'd as on a certain day,
 Along the bank he took his way,
 A boat, with rudder, sail, and oar,
 At anchor floated near the shore, 100
 He stopt ; and, turning to his train,
 Thus pertly vents his vaunting strain :
 ' What blund'ring puppies are mankind !
 ' In ev'ry science always blind !
 ' I mock the pedantry of schools : 105
 ' What are their compasses and rules ?
 ' 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 untrimm'd admits the tide ;
 Borne 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,
Aground the shatter'd vessel stands. 120

To see the bungler thus distrest,
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.

☞ The old proverb of *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, "Let not the cobbler go beyond his last," is applicable to this Fable. The fate of the Bear in the boat, is a warning against presumption : and instructs us not to attempt things for which we are unfit, lest we meet with ridicule, where we expected applause.

FABLE VI.

THE 'SQUIRE AND HIS CUR.



TO A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

THE man of pure and simple heart
 Thro' life disdains a double part.
 He never needs the screen of lies
 His inward bosom to disguise.
 In vain malicious tongues assail ; 5
 Let envy snarl, let slander rail,
 From virtue's shield (secure from wound)
 Their blunted venom'd shafts rebound.
 So shines his light before mankind,
 His actions prove his honest mind. 10
 If in his country's cause he rise
 Debating senates to advise.
 Unbrib'd, unaw'd, he dares impart
 The honest dictates of his heart :
 No ministerial frown he fears, 15
 But in his virtue perseveres.

But would you play the politician,
Whose heart's averse to intuition,
Your lips at all times, nay your reason,
Must be controll'd by place and season. 20

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:

l. 37.—This anecdote is taken from the *Apothegms of Plutarch*, the celebrated biographer, who thus relates it:

“ Antiochus, the great King of Syria, having lost himself
“ when hunting in Parthia, went into a poor cottage, by the
“ inmates of which he was kindly received. At supper he
“ turned the discourse on his own conduct as king. The
“ cottagers observed, that he was a good prince, but left
“ too much to the management of his courtiers, and from
“ love of hunting often neglected his necessary affairs. At
“ break of day his guards arrived at the cottage with the
“ ensigns of royalty. His hosts were doubtless alarmed at
“ the discovery of their guest; but he dissipated their fears,
“ and declared to his train, ‘ From the day I first entertained
“ ‘ you, I never heard truth concerning myself till yester-

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,
 ' Could ope our gracious monarch's eyes.
 ' The king, (as all our neighbours say)
 ' Might he (God bless him) have his way ; 50
 ' Is sound 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 transferred 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 express'd.

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 and inform'd 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 ingross'd,
 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 soothes the royal breast. 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 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 caress'd,
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,
(As other great men's 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 :

125

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,
At once he snarled, bit, and fled.

130

Aloof he bays, with bristling hair,
And thus in secret growls his fear :

' 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 continu'd 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,
 Forsook 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 sought 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.'

' Turn off your Cur,' the farmer cries,
 Who feeds your ear with 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.

l. 154—Marcus Antonius, one of the Roman triumvirs with Augustus and Lepidus, who by his infatuated passion for Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, lost his government and life. Prior, speaking of beauty, says,

“ This through the East just vengeance hurl'd,
 “ And lost poor Antony the world.”

FABLE VII.

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 ever 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?
 If these are scruples, give her o'er ;
 Write, practice 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 might give avarice its swing,
 Defraud a nation, blind a king :
 Then, from the hirelings in your cause,
 Tho' 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, th' 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.

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 makes 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

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 Steele, 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 sighing 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.

' 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 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.

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 instill'd,
 " So deep the pow'r of these ingredients pierc'd,
 " Ev'n to the inmost seat of mental sight."

MILTON'S *Paradise Lost*, b. 11, l. 412.

PART I.] GAY'S FABLES. 183

' 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 !'
 ' 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 sight !
 ' 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 av'rice with insatiate jaws,
 ' Now rapine with her harpy claws,
 ' His bosom tears. His conscious breast
 ' Groans with a load of crimes oppress'd.
 ' I 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, confirmed 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 miseries of war he mourn'd ;
 Whole nations into deserts turn'd.

' By these have laws and rights been brav'd ;
 ' By these was free-born man enslav'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 thus the God : ' How mortals err !
 ' 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 ; 145
 ' Plant virtue, and content's the fruit.'

☞ This Fable shews, from the example of the discontented Countryman, 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 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.

So Jove, to gratify the clown,
Where first he found him, set him down.

“ In Reason’s eye no difference lies between
 “ Life’s noon-day lustre, 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 range from pole to pole.
 “ What boots it, then, when gath’ring storms behind
 “ Rise black in air, and howl in ev’ry 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 tornadoes bring,
 “ And kindly spare the yacht that holds a king ?”

It is the great art and philosophy of life, to make the best of the present, whether good or bad ; to bear the evil with resignation, and to enjoy the good with thankfulness and moderation.

The temper of a contented mind has never been portrayed with more feeling and simplicity than by COWLEY :

“ If ever I more riches did desire
 “ Than cleanliness and quiet do require :
 “ If e’er ambition did my fancy cheat,
 “ With any wish so mean as to be great ;
 “ Continue, Heaven, still from me to remove
 “ The humble blessings of the life I love.”

FABLE VIII.

THE MAN, THE CAT, THE DOG, AND THE FLY.



TO MY NATIVE COUNTRY.

HAIL, 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,
 May luxury ne'er thy sons invade!
 May never minister (intent
 His private treasures to augment)

5

l. 2.—*The liquid fence of Neptune bounds.*

“Sea^lgirt Britain,” in Waller;
 and called in Rowe,
 “The noblest of the ocean’s isles.”

Corrupt thy state ! If jealous foes
 Thy rights of commerce dare oppose, 10
 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.
 What is't who rules in other lands ? 15

On trade alone thy glory stands ;
 That benefit is unconfi'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.

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 observations 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,

Who's born for sloth? * To some we find 35
 The plough-share's annual toil assign'd.
 Some at the sounding 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.

* as the master builder? Are not the meanest Artisans of
 " the same institution with Ministers of Council and State ?
 " The head can no more 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
 " appointment, than the authority of commanding."

L'ESTRANGE'S ÆSOP, v. 1, p. 169.

* BARROW.


l. 35, 40.—Gay here elegantly points out different callings of mankind by enumerating the instruments of their respective occupations ; the ploughshare for the husbandman, the anvil for the smith, the shuttle for the weaver, and a knowledge of winds and tides for the sailor. In the following lines he contrasts the employments of the mechanic, and artist, with those of the scholar, orator, and man of science.

- 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.
'Tis he (his own and people's cause)
Protects their properties and laws. 60
Thus they their honest toil employ,
And with content the fruits enjoy.
In ev'ry rank, or great or small,
'Tis industry supports us all.
The animals, by want oppress'd, 65
To man their services address'd ;
While each pursu'd their selfish good,
They hunger'd for precarious food.
Their hours with anxious cares were vex'd ;
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 redress'd.
The Cat, half-famish'd, lean and weak, 75
Demands the privilege to speak.
' Well, Puss,' 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.'
' I grant,' says Man, ' to gen'ral use 85
' Your parts and talents may conduce ;

l. 71.—*Rife* means abundant.

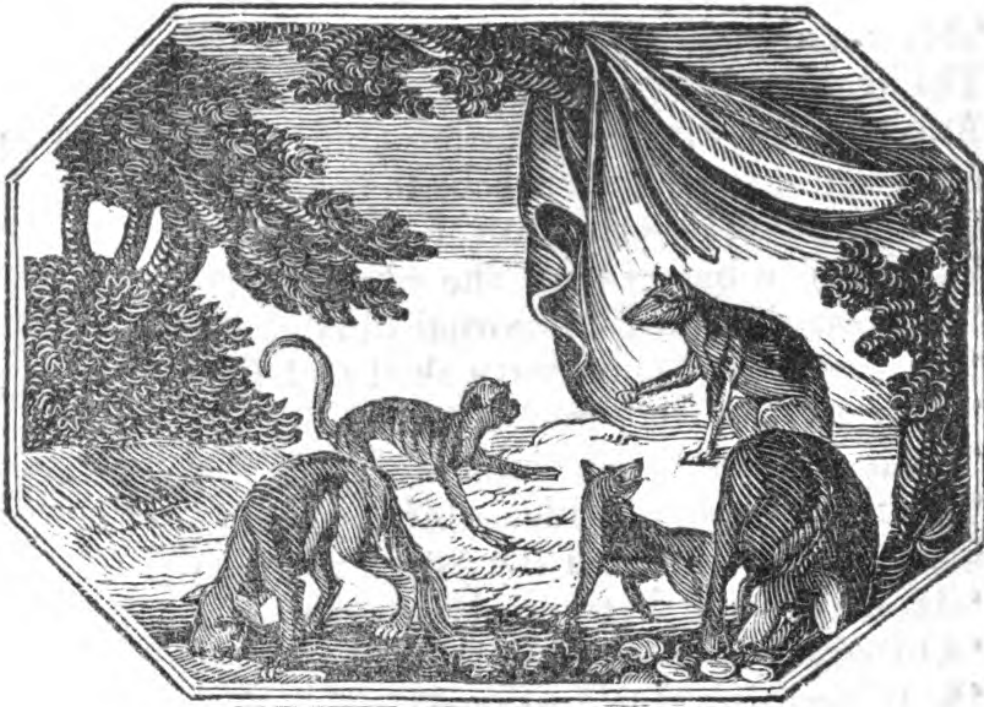
- ' For rats and mice purloin our grain,
 ' And threshers whirl the flail in vain :
 ' Thus shall the Cat, a foe to spoil,
 ' Protect the farmer's honest toil.' 90
 Then turning to the Dog, he cry'd :
 ' Well, Sir ; be next your merits try'd.'
 ' Sir,' says the Dog, ' by self-applause
 ' We seem to own a friendless cause. 95
 ' Ask those who know me, if distrust
 ' 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 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 seat;
 ' 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.
 ' 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.

 This Fable marks the difference between substantial merit, and empty ostentation. The Cat and the Dog claim and obtain support for their vigilance and fidelity; the Fly, on the contrary, prides itself on indolence and voluptuousness, and has no other motive to rule his conduct, than self-gratification.

FABLE IX.

THE JACKAL, 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
 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.
 Since then these arguments prevail,
 And itching palms are still so frail,
 Hence politicians, you suggest.
 Should drive the nail that goes the best :

5

10

That it shows parts and penetration, To ply men with the right temptation.	15
To this I humbly must dissent ; Premising, no reflection's meant.	
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 caress ?	
The guinea (as in other trades) From ev'ry hand alike persuades.	25
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, And impudently dar'd oppress ;	35
By these despotically they sway'd, And slaves extoll'd the hand that paid ;	
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 ev'n that very fawning train Which shar'd the gleanings of your gain,	50

Press 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 sycophants to get,
 Your bounty swell'd a nation's debt? 60
 You're bit: for these, like Swiss, 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 Jackals (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 Jackal oppress'd the wood;
 To cram his own insatiate jaws,
 Invaded property and laws.
 The forest groans with discontent, 75
 Fresh wrongs the gen'ral hate foment,
 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

* This alludes to the common practice among the Swiss, who hired themselves as mercenary soldiers to different nations. Hence the French Proverb.

“Point d'argent point de Suisse.” No money no Swiss.

' By friends,' says he, ' I'll guard my seat,
 ' 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, 85
 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 proselytes enlist. 90

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.

A tempting turnip's silver skin 95
 Drew a base Hog through thick and thin ;
 Bought with a Stag's delicious haunch,
 The mercenary Wolf was staunch ;
 The convert Fox was warm and hearty,
 A pullet gain'd him to the party ; 100
 The golden pippin in his fist,
 A chatt'ring Monkey join'd the list.

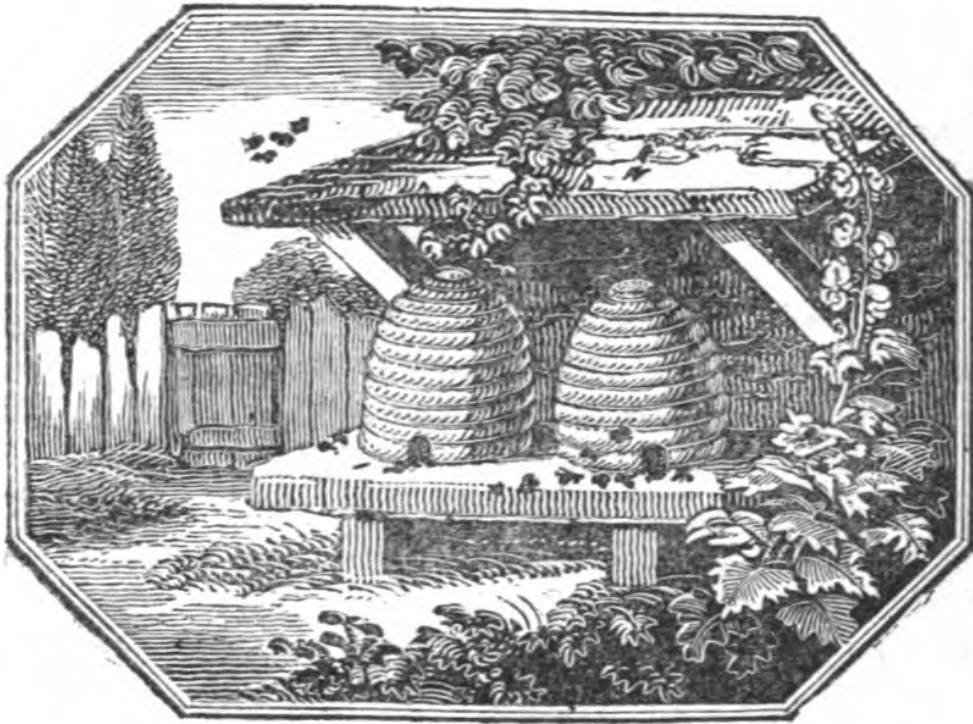
But soon expos'd to public hate,
 The fav'rite's fall redress'd the state.
 The Leopard, vindicating right, 105
 Had brought his secret frauds to light ;
 As rats, before the mansion falls,
 Desert late hospitable walls ;
 In shoals the servile creatures run,
 To bow before the rising sun. 110

The Hog with warmth express'd his zeal,
 And was for hanging those that steal ;
 But hop'd, tho' 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

FABLE X.

THE DEGENERATE BEES.



TO THE REVEREND DR. SWIFT, DEAN OF
ST. PATRICK'S.*

THOUGH courts the practice disallow,
A friend at all times I'll avow.
In politics I know 'tis wrong ;
A friendship may be kept too long ;

* Jonathan Swift, the author of *Gulliver's Travels*, the *Tale of a Tub*, and numerous other celebrated publications, to whom Gay addresses this Fable, is too well known to need any further account of him.

Swift was greatly attached to Gay, and strongly recommended him to Lord Oxford and Lord Bolingbroke, during their administration. Gay never forgot his obligations to those who had served him, and has in many parts of his works, as well as in this Fable, paid a tribute of gratitude to Swift.

And that they call the prudent part, 5
 Is to wear int'rest next the heart :
 As the times take a different face,
 Old friendships should to new give place.

I know too you have many foes,
 That owning you is sharing those ; 10
 That ev'ry knave, in ev'ry station,
 Of high and low denomination,
 For what you speak, and what you write,
 Dread you at once, and bear you spite.

Such freedoms in your works are shown, 15
 They can't enjoy what's not their own.

All dunces, too, in church and state,
 In frothy nonsense shew their hate ;
 With all the petty scribbling crew,
 (And those pert sots are not a few,) 20
 Gainst you and POPE their envy spurt,
 The booksellers alone are hurt.

Good gods ! by what a powerful race
 (For blockheads may have pow'r and place)
 Are scandals rais'd and libels writ, 25
 To prove your honesty and wit !

Think with yourself : those worthy men,
 You know, have suffer'd by your pen ;
 From them you've nothing but your due,
 From thence, 'tis plain your friends are few. 30
 Except myself, I know of none,
 Besides the wise and good alone.

To set the case in fairer light.
 My Fable shall the rest recite ;
 Which (tho' unlike our present state) 35
 I for the moral's sake relate :

A Bee of cunning, not of parts,
 Luxurious, negligent of arts,
 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 slight,
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 ?

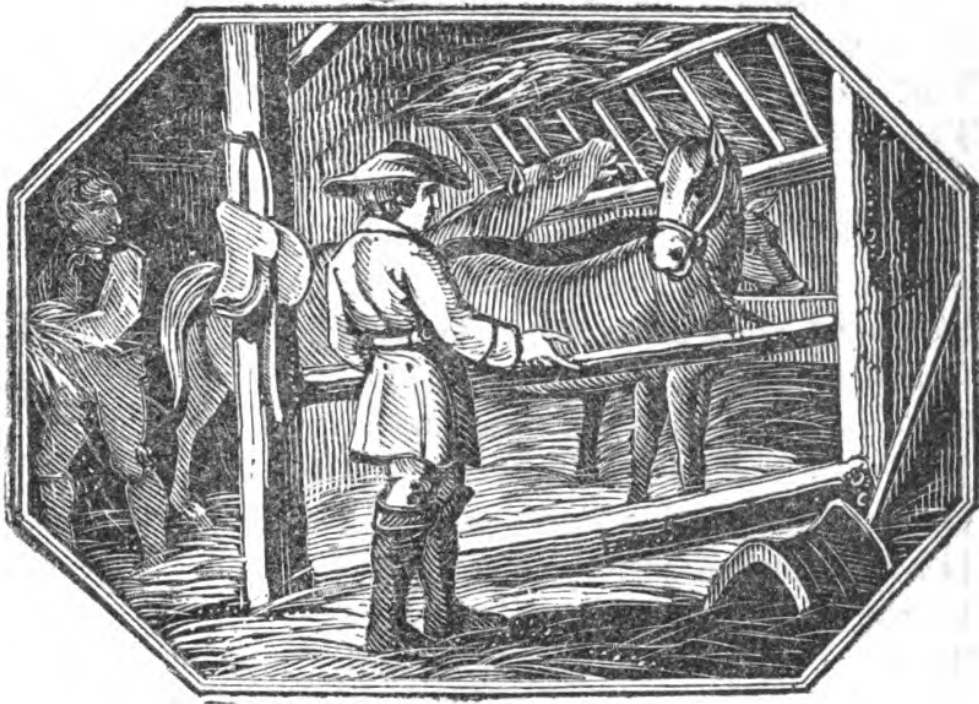
' Exert the honour of your race ; 75

' He builds his rise on your disgrace.

' 'Tis industry our state maintains :
 ' 'Twas honest toils and honest gains
 ' That rais'd our sires to pow'r and fame.
 ' Be virtuous : save yourselves 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 XI.

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 honour yearly pawn'd ;
 Their hands, by no corruption stain'd,
 The ministerial bribe disdain'd :
 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 sires 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 paltry 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 entail'd from son to son.
 Superior worth your rank requires ;
 For that mankind reveres your sires :
 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 sunk the hostler's vails, '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,
' (And 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 grandsire's fame ;
' All jockies still revere his name :

' There yearly are his triumphs told,
' There all his massy plates enroll'd,

' Whene'er led forth along the plain, 75
' You saw him with a liv'ry train ;

' Returning too with laurels crown'd,
' You heard the drums and trumpets sound.

' 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 head-strong 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 restiff, pert, conceited sot.	90
' Your sires 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.*”

FABLE XII.

PAN * AND FORTUNE.†



TO A YOUNG HEIR.

SOON as your father's death was known,
 (As if the estate had been their own)

* Pan, one of the heathen deities, who presided over the sports and occupations of the field. He was the god of Shepherds and Hunters. He was painted by the ancients with large horns, as half man and half goat. He had a shepherd's crook in one hand, and a pipe in the other, on which he played most divinely. The nymphs and swains are represented as dancing round him, to hear the charms of his pipe. Hence he is called by Fenton,

“The Poet of the plains;”

and, in allusion to his fondness for the country, Addison describes him as

———“The great Pan
 “Who lov'd the spreading oak.”

† Fortune, an allegorical divinity among the heathens, was

The gamesters outwardly express'd
 The decent joy within your breast.
 So lavish in your praise they grew,
 As spoke their certain hopes in you. 5

One counts your income of the year,
 How much in ready money clear.

'No house,' says he, 'is more complete ;
 'The garden's elegant and great. 10

'How fine the park around it lies !

'The timber's of a noble size !

'Then count his jewels and his plate.

'Besides 'tis no entailed estate.

'If cash run low, his lands in fee 15

'Are, or for sale, or mortgage free.'

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 exposed his wealth ?

Yet this you do, whene'er you play

Among the gentlemen of prey.

figured to preside over Good and Evil. She is usually represented as a young woman with her eyes veiled, and wings to her feet, standing with one foot on a globe, and the other in the air, scattering riches at random. She is sometimes figured as standing on a wheel, turning rapidly, to show the ups and downs which take place in life. Hence the wheel of fortune signifies the uncertainty of human possessions. In this situation, Fortune is well described by Garth ;

“ On high, where no hoarse winds, nor clouds resort,

“ The hoodwink'd Goddess keeps her partial court,

“ Upon a wheel of amethyst she sits,

“ Gives and resumes, and smiles and frowns by fits.”

Dispensary, Canto 4, l. 323.

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 tailor'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 tailor's bill defray'd?
 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 cen'try'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 the long wood loud axes sound,
 And echo groans withev'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 hand 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 havoc 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. 100
 ' Why, PAN,' says she, ' what's all this rant ?
 ' 'Tis every 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 power defy ?
 ' These trust alone their finger's 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 gross 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 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 show ?
 ' 'Tis Folly, Pan, that is thy foe. 125
 ' By me his late estate he won,
 ' But he by Folly was undone.'

☞ Young, in his Night Thoughts, justly calls also the
 " Love of gaming, worst of ills."

It is a vulgar but true proverb, " The Devil's in the
 dice on one side or the other."

Gaming is indeed the most destructive of all vices,
 because when it once possesses a man's mind it seldom
 leaves him ; and no one who is in the habit of playing
 deep can ever deem the smallest portion of his property
 his own.

So fatal a vice, which is always combined with folly, has
 been assailed in every shape, and sometimes with happy
 effect. Indeed gamesters themselves, in their cooler
 hours, exclaim with the author of Hudibras,

" What fool would trouble fortune more,
 " When she has been too kind before :
 " Or tempt her to take back again
 " What she had thrown away in vain,
 " By idly venturing her good graces
 " To be dispos'd of by ames-aces ;
 " Or settling it in trust to uses
 " Out of his power, on trays and deuces ;
 " To put it to the chance, and try,
 " I' th' ballot of a box and die,
 " Whether his money be his own,
 " And lose it if he be o'erthrown."

BUTLER.

FABLE XIII.

PLUTUS, CUPID, AND TIME.*



OF all the burdens man must bear,
Time seems most galling and severe :
Beneath this grievous load oppress'd
We daily meet some friend distress'd.

‘ What can one do? I rose at nine ;
‘ ’Tis full six hours before we dine ;

5

* Time, whom the heathens represented as a God, was always figured as an old man, with a scythe in his hand, as an emblem of destruction ; and with expanded wings, to shew that he is always in motion. His head bald, excepting a forelock : hence the proverb, “ To take Time by the forelock.” He was sometimes considered the same as Saturn, who is therefore figured to have devoured his own offspring.

' Six hours no earthly thing to do !
 ' Would I had dozed in bed till two !'
 A pamphlet is before him spread,
 And almost half a page is read ; 10
 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 ! 15
 ' Good gods ! " 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.' 20

l. 10. and seq.—In the Castle of Indolence, Thomson has introduced a no less spirited description of the languor attending idleness, and the burthen of time to those who want the spirit or talents to employ it usefully.

" Here languid beauty kept her pale-fac'd court :
 " Bevies of dainty dames, of high degree,
 " From every quarter hither made resort ;
 " Where from gross mortal care and business free,
 " They lay pour'd out in ease and luxury.
 " Or should they a vain shew of work assume,
 " Alas and well-a-day ! what can it be ?
 " To knot to twist, to range the vernal bloom ;
 " But far is cast the distaff, spinning wheel, and loom.
 " Their only labour was to kill the time ;
 " And labour dire it is, and weary woe.
 " They sit, they loll, turn o'er some idle rhyme ;
 " Then rising sudden, to the glass they go,
 " Or saunter forth with tottering step and slow ;
 " This soon too rude an exercise they find ;
 " Strait on the couch their limbs again they throw ;
 " Where hours on hours they sighing lie reclin'd,
 " And court the vapoury god soft breathing to the wind."

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 ?
 ' 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.

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.*”

' 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 or place, or view,
 ' I daily lose an hour or two; 50
 ' It fully answers my design,
 ' When I have picked 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 in 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 drowsy sleep retards the glass.'
 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 purse-proud fellows here.

' Let kings,' says he, ' let cobbler's 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, compliance may be sold :
 ' But love's beyond the price of gold ;
 ' Smugglers there 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 bliss 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 mis-spent.
 ' 'Tis I who measure vital space,
 ' And deal out years to human race.
 ' Though little priz'd, and seldom sought ; 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 attained.

' Who then would think (since such my pow'r)
 ' That e'er I knew an idle hour ?
 ' 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, mis-spent 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'd ; 170
 That Time, when truly understood,
 Is the most precious earthly good.

☞ The moral of this Fable, which is contained in the two concluding lines, is finely expressed by Young :

" Oh *Time*, than gold more sacred,
 " Part with it as with money, sparing ; pay
 " No moment but in purchase of its worth.
 " And what its worth ask death beds, they can tell.
 " Part with it as with life, reluctant ; big
 " With holy hope of nobler *time* to come."
 YOUNG'S *Night Thoughts*, Complaint, l. 28, 48.

FABLE XIV.

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, 5
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. 10

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 ; 15
 But how precarious is th' event !
 By talents misapply'd and cross'd
 Consider, all your sons are lost.

One day (the tale's by Martial penn'd)
 A father thus addressed his friend : 20

'To train my boy and call forth sense,
 'You know I've stuck at no expense ;
 'I've try'd 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 son.'

'Sir,' says the friend, 'I've weighed the matter ;
 'Excuse me, for I scorn to flatter :
 'Make him (nor think his genius check'd)
 'A herald or an architect.'

Perhaps (as commonly 'tis known)
 He heard the 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.

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 :

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.

Or from the pulpit, by the hour,
 He weekly floods of nonsense pour ;
 We find, th' intent of nature foil'd, 45
 A tailor 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 day's 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 matter ignorance and pride ?

The man was happily ally'd.
 Provided that his clerk was good,
 What, though he nothing understood ? 70

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.

Consider, patrons, that such elves 75
 Expose your folly with themselves.
 'Tis yours, 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. 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, 85
I've seen a pedant look as wise.

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 every station.
And destin'd each his occupation.
When XENOPHON, by numbers brav'd, 95
Retreated, and a people sav'd,

l. 95.—*Xenophon*, was an illustrious philosopher, general, and writer of Greece. He was born at Athens about the 82nd 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 despondency 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

That laurel was not all his own ;
 The plant by SOCRATES was sown :
 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 learn'd by heart, 105
 Trite sentences, hard terms of art,

“ 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 History and Geography*, 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.

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 Macedonia, as 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, hence he was called the Peripatetic, and his followers Peripatetics, from the Greek word, *περιπατεῖν* which signifies to walk.

ADAMS'S *Summary of History and Geography*, p. 294.

l. 101.—*Th' Athenian bird*. See *Fable 32*, l. 12.

To vulgar ears seemed so profound,
They fancy'd learning in the sound.

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 :
The Hen (though fond and loth to part)
Here lodg'd the darling of her heart ;
The Spider, of mechanic kind, 115
Aspir'd to science more refin'd ;
The Ass learnt metaphors and tropes,
But most on music fix'd his hopes.

The pupils now, advanc'd in age,
Were call'd to tread life's busy stage : 120
And to the master 'twas submitted,
That each might to his part be fitted.

' The Swan' (says he) ' in arms shall shine :
' The soldier's glorious toil be thine.
' The Cock shall mighty wealth attain : 125
' Go seek it on the stormy main.

' The court shall be the Spider's sphere :
' Pow'r, fortune, shall reward him there.

' In music's art the Ass's fame
' Shall emulate CORELLI's name. 130

l. 130.—*Corelli*. A famous musician ; was a native of Fusignano, near Bologna, in the Pope's territories. He was born in 1653, and died at Rome in 1713, aged sixty. 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.”

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 Gamecock for fighting, the Spider for spinning, and that some, like the Ass, are incapable of improvement, but are stamped blockheads from their cradle.

Each took the part that he advis'd,
 And all were equally despis'd.
 A farmer, at his folly mov'd,
 The dull preceptor thus reprov'd :

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.

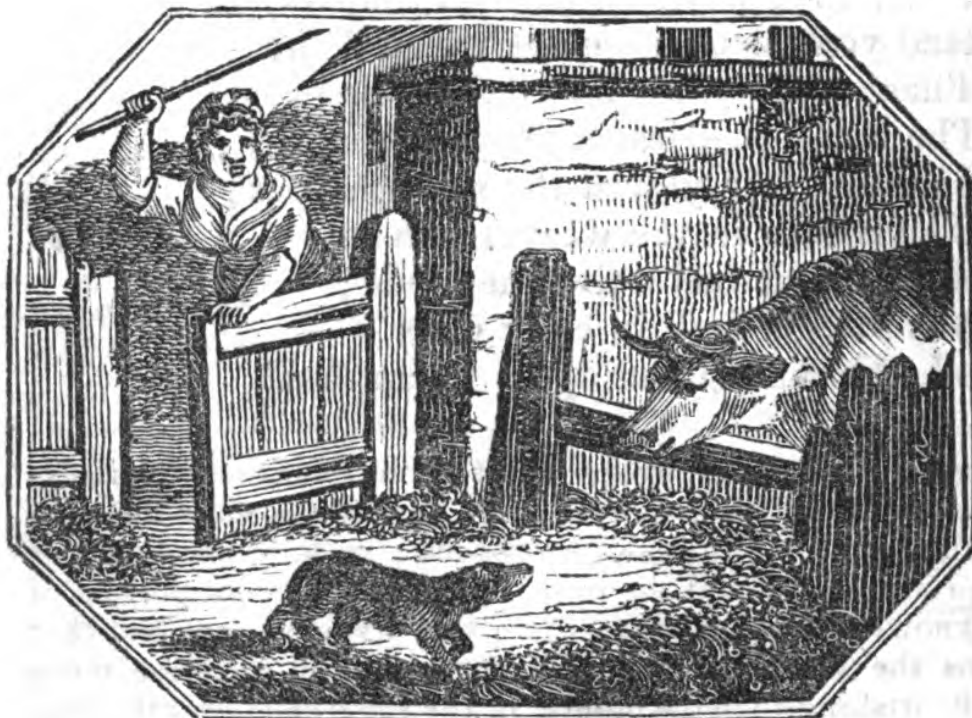
This opinion is beautifully exemplified in Perceval's *Moral Tale*, addressed to his son : " Two young beech trees
 " planted at the same time, and in the same soil, at a small
 " distance from each other, and equally healthy, were
 " made the subjects of a curious experiment. They were
 " accurately 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 sup-
 " posed 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 pro-
 " portion 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 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

'Blockhead' (says he) 'by what you've done,
 'One would have thought 'em each your son:
 '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 shall 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 played the soldier's part;
 'The Spider in the weaver's trade 145
 'With credit had a fortune made;
 'But for the fool, in ev'ry class
 'The blockhead had appeared an Ass."

"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."

FABLE XV.

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 sires ; 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 ;
 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 ev'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 engrost ?
 Canst thou discern another's mind ? 35
 What 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 sculking 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 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 curs'd' (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, caress'd,	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 sire ?	
' 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 him all creatures tribute pay,	
' And luxury 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 cumb'rous 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,' th' astonished Cur replies,
 ' I look'd on all with envious eyes. 100
 ' 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.

☞ 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 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 slow.

' Let envy then no more torment : 105

' Think on the Ox, and learn content.'

Thus said ; close following at her heel,
With cheerful heart he mounts the wheel.

“ Alike indulgent to the rich and poor,
“ Slides thro' the land, and knocks at ev'ry door.”

CAWTHORN 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.”

FABLE XVI.

THE RAVENS, THE SEXTON, AND THE
EARTH-WORM.

TO LAURA.

LAURA, methinks you're over nice.
True—flatt'ry is a shocking vice ;
Yet 'sure when'er the praise is just,
One may commend without disgust.

Am I a privilege deny'd,
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 ?

5

Since then I dare not speak my mind,
A truth conspicuous to mankind ;

10

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
 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 was 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 ?

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.

Those eyes of so divine a ray,
What are they? Mouldering mortal clay. 40
Those features, cast in heav'nly mould,
Shall, like my coarser earth, grow old :
Like common grass, the fairest flow'r
Must feel the hoary season's pow'r.
How weak, how vain is human pride ! 45
Dares man upon himself confide ?
The wretch who glories in his gain,
Amasses heaps on heaps in vain.
Why lose we life in anxious cares,
To lay in hoards for future years ? 50
Can those (when tortur'd by disease)
Chear our sick heart, or purchase ease ?
Can those 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 soon as blown.
What's man, in all his boast of sway ?
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 dust as frail as mine.
Can he pour health into his veins ;
Or cool the fever's restless pains ?
Can he, worn down in Nature's course, 65
New brace his feeble nerves with force ?
Can he (how vain is mortal pow'r !)
Stretch life beyond the destin'd hour ?
Consider, man, weigh well thy frame ;
The king, the beggar is the same. 70
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 savour strengthens with the blast ;	
' Snuff then, the promis'd feast inhale ;	
' I taste the carcass in the gale,	80
' 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 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 sound)	
' In carcasses (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 sav'ry words to eat,	110

They prais'd dead horse, luxurious food,
The ven'son of the prescient brood.

The Sexton's indignation moved,
The mean comparison reprov'd ;
Their undiscerning palate blam'd, 115
Which two-legg'd 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

' 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 carcasses 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 savour,
' By turns I chuse the fancy'd flavour.

l. 112.—The prescient brood. From *præscius*, a Latin word, which signifies *fore-knowing*, because the ravens were deemed by the ancients 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. II.

' 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 them 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 seated in th' 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 155
 ' Appears with such a dubious face,
 ' To neither I the cause determine,
 ' For diff'rent tastes please different vermin.'

☞ The moral of this concluding Fable impresses strongly upon 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 ! VIRTUE sole survives,
 “ Immortal, never failing friend of man,
 “ His guide to happiness on high.” —

THOMSON'S *Seasons*. Winter.

