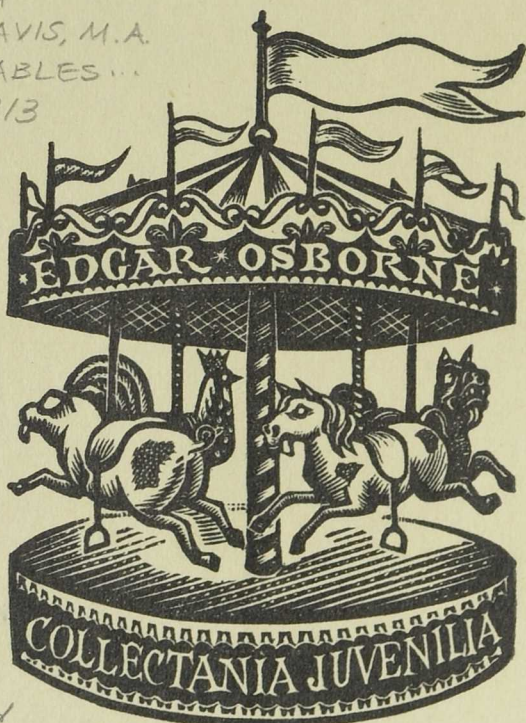


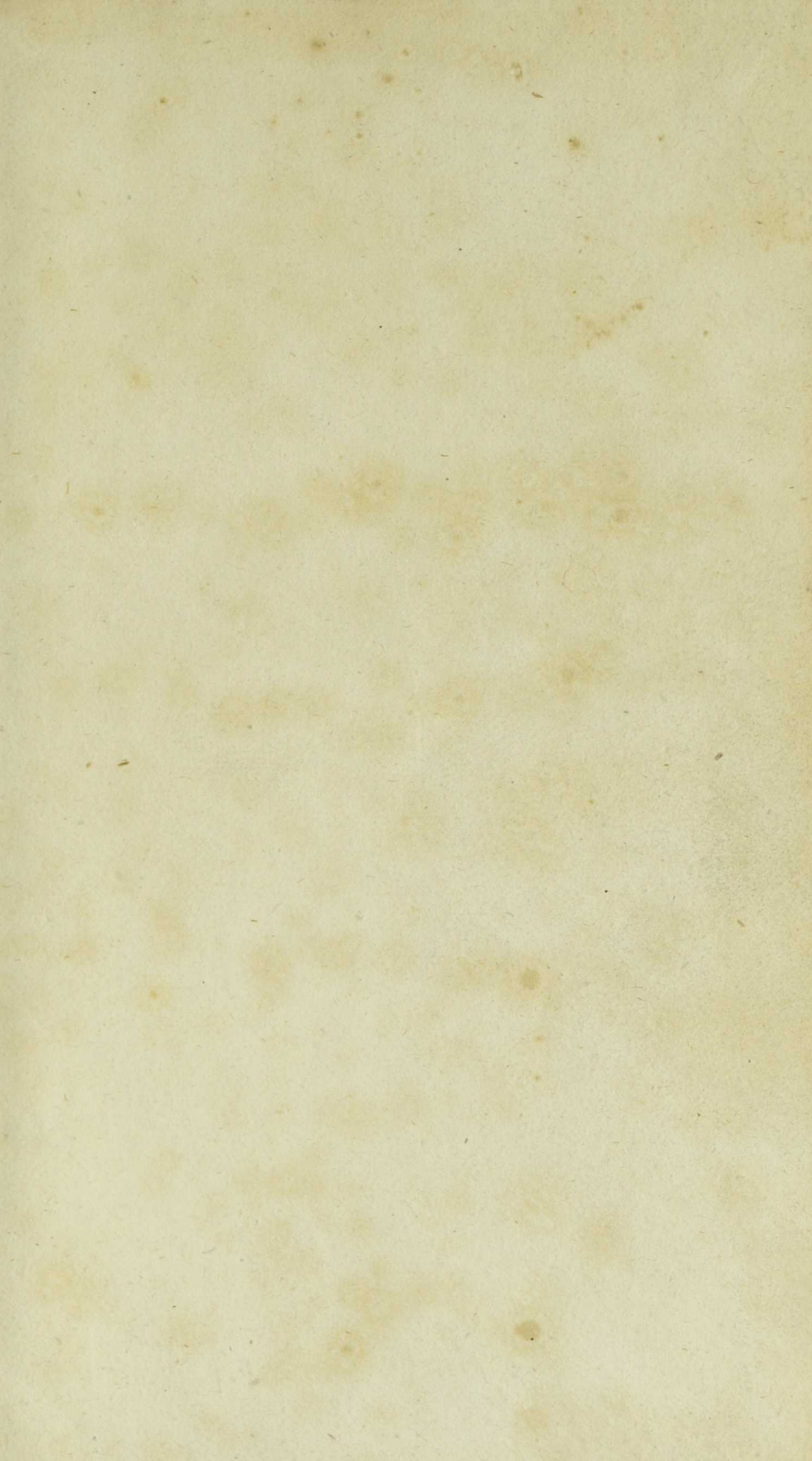
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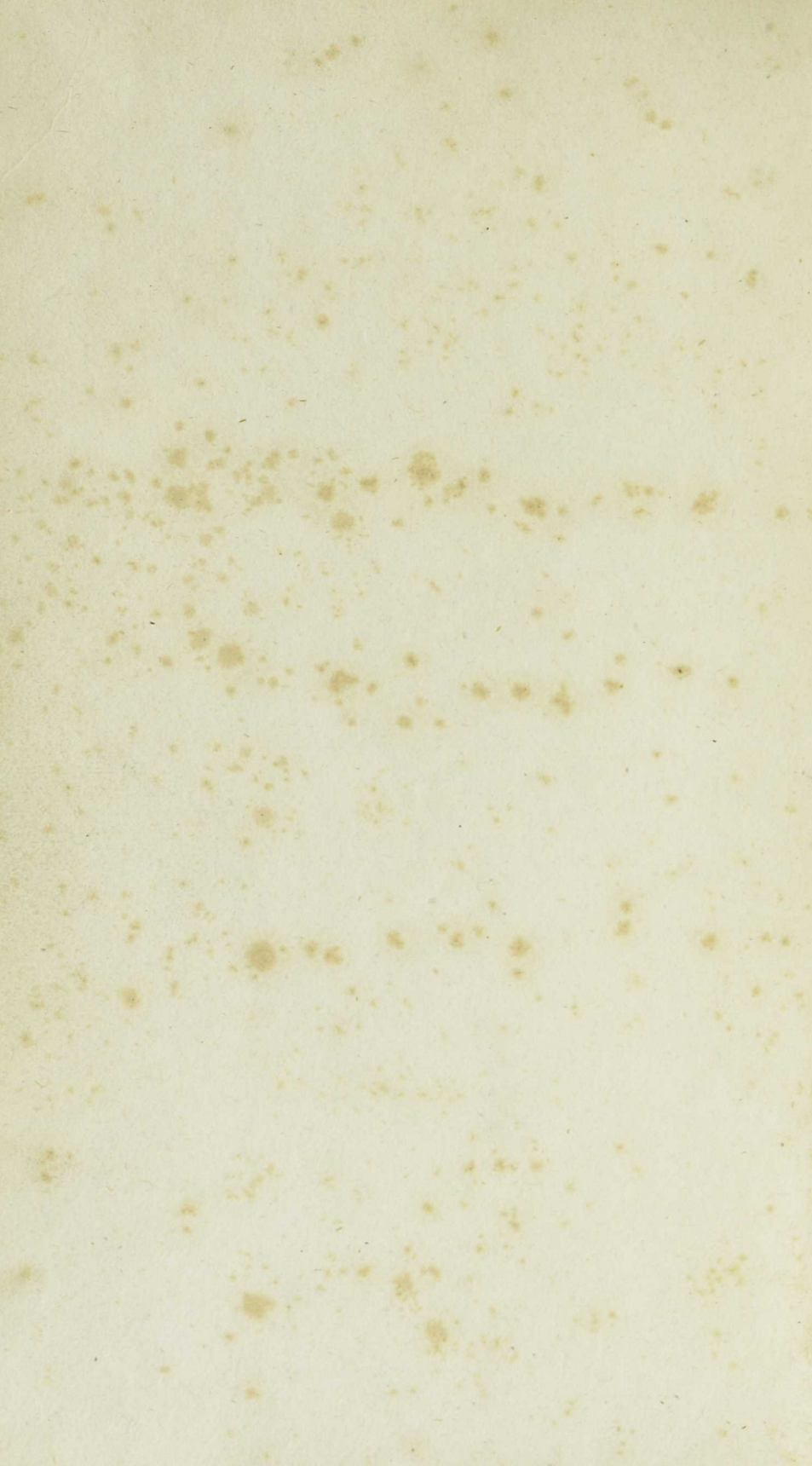
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FABLES IN VERSE.

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2th March 1872

With Auntie's God's
kind love

FABLES IN VERSE:

FROM

ÆSOP, LA FONTAINE,

AND

OTHERS.

BY MARY ANNE DAVIS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. HARRIS, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-
YARD.

1813.

ADVERTISEMENT.

TO THE CHILDREN

OF THE MOST HONOURABLE

THE MARQUESS AND MARCHIONESS OF BATH,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME,


BY PERMISSION OF THEIR NOBLE MOTHER,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR HUMBLE AND DEVOTED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.



IN publishing these Fables, the author lays no claim to what has been styled the heavenly gift of Poesy. They were written at the request of a beloved relative and friend, whose advice it has always been her pride to follow ; and who suggested, that by versifying and giving a new turn to a few of the Fables of Æsop, she might render herself useful in some degree to the juvenile class of society. The work, as she proceeded in it, became a source of amusement, and occasionally of considerable interest, as the subjects were frequently selected from their coincidence with passing circumstances. If in no other way she has succeeded, the partiality of affection

has, at least, been gratified. She, however, flatters herself, as their style is simple, and their moral pure, that parents in general will not deem them too insignificant to be placed in the hands of their children; and that her young friends in particular, will derive from them amusement, not wholly inseparable from profit, during their hours of relaxation from study.

Frome, January, 1813.

CONTENTS.



Page

FABLE I. Introductory.	
<i>The Power of Fables</i>	1
FABLE II. The Old Mouse and the Young Mouse.	
<i>The necessity in Youth of attending to Parental Advice</i>	4
FABLE III. The Crow and the Pitcher.	
<i>Difficulties conquered by Perseverance</i>	12
FABLE IV. The Sun and the Wind.	
<i>More to be gained by mild, than harsh Treatment</i>	19
FABLE V. The Fox and the Stork.	
<i>On the incautious Use of Wit</i>	26
FABLE VI. The Lion, and other Beasts, Hunting.	
<i>On the Choice of Associates</i>	34

	Page
FABLE VII. The Frog and the Ox.	
<i>The Folly of imitating our Superiors . . .</i>	40
FABLE VIII. The Dog in the Manger.	
<i>Against Envy and Ill-nature</i>	46
FABLE IX. The Wolf and the Lamb.	
<i>Tyranny defeated: or, The Pleasures of</i> <i>Virtue</i>	50
FABLE X. The Fox and the Raven.	
<i>The Mischief of listening to Flattery . . .</i>	58
FABLE XI. The Dog and the Shadow.	
<i>Against Selfishness and Avarice</i>	64
FABLE XII. The vain Jackdaw.	
<i>Borrowed Honours not worth the Wearing</i>	69
FABLE XIII. The Stag drinking.	
<i>Useful Qualities preferable to personal</i> <i>Charms</i>	75
FABLE XIV. The Shepherd's Boy and the Wolf.	
<i>Against Lying</i>	80
FABLE XV. The Frogs desiring a King.	
<i>Against Discontent</i>	88

	Page
FABLE XVI. The Grashopper and the Ant. <i>Against an Improvident Life</i>	94
FABLE XVII. The Lamb brought up by a Goat. <i>The Importance to Parents of educating their Offspring</i>	101
FABLE XVIII. The Cock and the Fox. <i>Artifice foiled by its own Weapon</i>	109
FABLE XIX. The Fox and the Grapes. <i>The Folly of aiming at Things beyond our Reach</i>	116
FABLE XX. The Belly and the Members. <i>The different Ranks in Society mutually useful</i>	123
FABLE XXI. The Hermit and the Bear. <i>On the Caution necessary in the Choice of Inmates</i>	130
FABLE XXII. The Horse and the Stag. <i>A revengeful Disposition always punished</i>	138

	Page
FABLE XXIII. The Cock and the Diamond.	
<i>Useful Things more valuable than costly</i>	
<i>ones</i>	147
FABLE XXIV. The Old Man and the	
Bundle of Sticks.	
<i>On Brotherly Union</i>	153
FABLE XXV. The Lion and the Gnat.	
<i>Conveying a two-fold Moral</i>	158
FABLE XXVI. The Wallets: or, The Ani-	
mals assembled before Jupiter.	
<i>On Blindness to our own Defects</i>	162
FABLE XXVII. Modesty and Impudence.	167
FABLE XXVIII. The Fowler and the Lit-	
tle Birds.	
<i>Actions the best Rule of Judgment</i>	172
FABLE XXIX. The Eagle, the Cat, and the	
Sow.	
<i>The Odiousness of Treachery</i>	177
FABLE XXX. The Spider and the Bee.	
<i>In praise of the Mathematics</i>	184

FABLES.

FABLE I.

INTRODUCTORY.

The Power of Fables.

FABLES were held in days of yore
A vehicle for moral lore,
And still maintain their ancient right
To mix instruction with delight:
Truth is their theme, in fiction dress'd,
Morality their aim profess'd;
And though brute beasts the scene engage,
Men are the object of their page.

In Athens once their pow'r was felt—
Athens, where Wit and Learning dwelt.

The great Demosthenes, whose name
Stands foremost in the lists of Fame,
Seeing at stake his country's weal,
Mounted the rostrum, full of zeal,
His fellow citizens to warm,
And all their slumb'ring pride alarm.
Great were the dangers of the state!
Philip, their foe, was at the gate!—

In vain his eloquence was spent;
The people were on pleasure bent;
Engag'd in idle sport, his fire
Rous'd in their breasts no warlike ire:
As well might he, as oft before,
Harangue old ocean from the shore.

Observing this, he chang'd his own,
And caught from them a playful tone.

“Once on a time,” continu'd he,
(Then first he touch'd the magic key)

“ A Swallow, Ceres, and an Eel,
A journey took with right good will.
At length, a river stopp'd their course—
The Swallow had an apt resource,
Her wings convey'd her swiftly o'er:
The Eel by swimming gain'd the shore.”

“ And what did Ceres?” cried aloud
The curious and impatient crowd.

Indignant, thus resum'd the sage :

“ Ceres would glow with shame and rage,
That, when I to her people plead
Their freedom's cause, not one will heed;
Yet, while they scorn a theme of glory,
Can idly listen to a story.”

A fable thus attention caught,
Which eloquence in vain had sought.
He fix'd their minds; his aim pursu'd;
They heard—and Philip was subdu'd.

FABLE II.

THE OLD MOUSE AND THE YOUNG MOUSE.

The necessity in Youth of attending to Parental Advice.

LET not the young, in folly bold,
 Contemn the counsels of the old,
 Or dare, with self-sufficient pride,
 Parental caution to deride.

'Tis not for those of tender age
 To boast the wisdom of the sage;
 'Tis not for youth, whose bent is play,
 To walk in none but Wisdom's way;
 Nor, when with mirth and frolic crown'd,
 To be for judgment most renown'd.
 The want of these is no disgrace,
 If modesty supply the place,

And lead the duteous child to prize
Their counsel, who can best advise.

Shall he, o'er whose respected head
So many summer suns have fled ;
Whose eye, with mild expression fraught,
Beams with intelligence and thought ;
Whose language is the voice of Truth,—
Shall he be deem'd the foe of youth ?
O view in him your worthiest friend ;
To his instructions meekly bend ;
When dangers threaten, ills betide,
Let his experience be your guide :
So shall your footsteps 'scape the snare
That Arrogance and Folly share.

A pert young Mouse, just come from
school,
A flippant consequential fool,—

Who thought all wisdom was compris'd
In music, which she idoliz'd ;
In murd'ring French, and daubing paper ;
In minuet step, and sprightly caper,—
One day besought her doting mother,
To let her see this place, and t'other :
She wish'd, for once, to have her will ;
For, treated like a baby still,
She ne'er should venture forth alone,
Till she were quite a woman grown.

At first, the Dame her suit refus'd,
Said, To the world she was unus'd ;
That Vice too frequently was seen
Array'd in Virtue's garb and mien ;
And it requir'd a skilful eye,
The vile deception to descry :
That Wisdom's self was oft rejected,
Where Ignorance went unsuspected :

How could so young, untaught a creature,
Detect the mask, expose the feature,
When e'en the wisest were deceiv'd,
When Folly laugh'd, and Merit griev'd?

“ Fear not for me,” the daughter cried :
“ Have I not sense myself to guide?
Since first my eyes beheld the day,
Has not discernment mark'd my way?
At school, did any girl, like me,
So quickly learn her A, B, C?
Practise her steps with such a grace?
Keep time so well, or patterns trace?
And shall I spoil my eyes with reading,
And set with work my fingers bleeding,
When I may future ages brighten,
And with my wit my sex enlighten?
Too long secluded have I been ;
I want to see, and to be seen.”

“Go, then,” th’ indulgent mother said:
“But, pray, with caution look and tread;
And, ere your friendship you bestow,
Learn to distinguish friend from foe.”

Away the Mouse delighted flew,
Without a guide, the world to view;
Wond’ring that any could dispute
Her judgment clear, and wit acute.

But scarcely had the fleeting sand,
Or dial’s sure revolving hand,
Another hour unerring trac’d,
Than back she came in breathless haste.

“O, tell me,” said th’ affrighted dame,
“What you have seen, and whence you came?
What makes you look so pale, and wild?
Speak, I conjure you, speak, my child!”

Soon as the youthful Mouse regain’d
Her breath and speech, she thus explain’d:

“O! I have seen the strangest creature,
That e'er existed, sure, in nature!
With such a fierce and savage look,
As scarce the stoutest heart could brook!
Upon two legs the monster stood,
While on his head, deep ting'd, like blood,
A scallop'd piece of flesh there grew,
Beneath his throat another too.
His arms he flapp'd against his side,
And, op'ning then his mouth so wide,
I thought he meant, detested sinner,
Straight to devour me for his dinner.
Forth from his pointed beak there came
A hideous roar, that shook my frame,
And made me haste, with might and main,
Back to your peaceful cot again.

“ Before this monster came in view,
Near me a lovely creature drew:

Her coat was deck'd with many a streak
Of black and gray, her aspect meek ;
And, as her graceful tail she wav'd,
What heart could fail to be enslav'd?
On me at length her eyes she bent,
And crouch'd, as if with kind intent
My friendship humbly to implore :
But, ere I could discover more,
My ears were by the monster greeted,
And all her gentle views defeated."

" My child," the trembling parent said,
" You fill my inmost heart with dread !
Great is the danger you have pass'd ;
Thank Heav'n, that you are safe at last !
Yet he who caus'd you such alarm,
Was a poor bird, who meant no harm ;
And she, who lur'd you with her grace,
The bitter foe of all our race—

A Cat; who, 'neath those specious airs,
To Mice a deadly hatred bears,
Subsists entirely on our breed,
And ev'ry year makes thousands bleed."

This fable, penn'd in ancient days,
Another moral truth conveys:
That, wiser if we wish to grow,
We ne'er must judge by outward show.

FABLE III.

THE CROW AND THE PITCHER.



Difficulties conquered by Perseverance.

How oft we hear the young complain,
“ My task is hard, my study vain !
No lesson, that I ever saw,
Could make amends for kite, or taw.
To drive the hoop, or shuttlecock,
Is easier far, than *hic, hæc, hoc.*
No charms in Virgil can I see ;
And what’s old Homer, pray, to me,
That I should thus perplex my brains,
And lose my pastime for my pains ?
I cannot learn ; ’tis time misspent ;
I ne’er was for a scholar meant.”

Unthinking boy! your words recall;
An instant check your bounding ball;
Your trundling hoop awhile suspend,
And listen to your zealous friend.

Though hard, at first, your Latin seem,
And harder still your Greek, or theme,
Be not dismay'd; the willing mind,
Like virtue, its reward will find:
No difficulty can accrue,
But patient study may subdue;
And, as you till her classic soil,
Fair Science will repay your toil.

Nor yet in Learning's path alone
Be steady perseverance shown:
In ev'ry thing you undertake,
Bright eminence your object make;
Be highest excellence your aim;
Rest not content with mod'rate fame.

When obstacles your way impede,
Think well, nor easily recede :
Should one means fail, another try ;
With ceaseless energy apply :—
Then, like the bird of whom you read,
As you deserve, you'll gain the meed.

'Twas summer ; not a cloud was seen,
And Nature's robe, of lovely green,
Chang'd to a sun-burnt, russet hue,
Proclaim'd the want of fresh'ning dew :
It seem'd as though the scorching rays
Would set creation in a blaze.
The silver brook, and purling stream,
Had wasted in the solar beam ;
The cattle, anxiously dispers'd,
Sought to allay their raging thirst,
Or, gasping, through the livelong day
Beneath the shade desponding lay.

Too weak to soar with rapid wing,
And seek afar some genial spring,
A Crow the common evil shar'd,
And like her earth-born neighbours far'd.
But not desponding, for she knew
Despair would make one evil two ;
She cast her anxious eyes around :—
“ Succour, perchance, may yet be found,”
She said : and, as she spoke, espied
A Pitcher, near the path-way side.
How it came there, or why 'twas left,
Whether by negligence, or theft,
To us it matters not to know,
And little car'd the thirsty Crow.
Suffice it, that she straight descended,
Thinking her troubles now were ended.
But, ah ! what anguish did she feel,
Scarce equall'd by the tort'ring wheel,

When, as she reach'd the circling rim,
She found no water kiss the brim !
The vase was deep, the water low,
Beyond the reach of Goody Crow,
Who stretch'd her glossy neck in vain,
The crystal bev'rage to obtain.

She was a bird, above her kind,
Of active and reflecting mind :
When difficulties cross'd her way,
She scorn'd, with vulgar birds, to say,
“ It *can't* be done :” but ponder'd o'er
Each likely means ; call'd in her store
Of mental and corporeal aid,
Of pain or labour not afraid.
She did not, like the silly clown,
When in the mire his cart was thrown,
Exclaim, “ God help me !” bend a leg,
And ne'er attempt to stir a peg ;

But set her shoulder to the wheel,
Trusting to industry and zeal :
And, if she found her labour lost,
Her mind was but the more engross'd :
Necessity, Invention's dame,
Led her a new device to frame,
On surer means her hopes to found,
Till just success her efforts crown'd.

Close to the road, to mend the way,
In little heaps some pebbles lay :
These in her beak the Crow convey'd,
(Arduous the task she thus essay'd !)
And, with unwearied pains, at last,
Into the half-fill'd Pitcher cast.
As one by one the pebbles fell,
(Who can her heart-felt rapture tell ?)
The water rose, by slow degrees,
Till the poor Crow could drink with ease.

Pleasure is sweeter after pain :—
O how she drinks, and drinks again !
Her thirst allay'd, a sprightly wing
She lifts, and seems to say, or sing :
“ The mind's resources are not known,
Till on their best exertions thrown ;
Necessity must call them forth,
And Perseverance stamps their worth.”

FABLE IV.

THE SUN AND THE WIND.



More to be gained by mild than harsh Treatment.

THEIR maxims I could ne'er endure,
 Who think harsh measures will procure
 The mind's obedience and esteem,
 Preserve affection, or redeem.

Kindness, and this alone, can bind
 Affection, fugitive as wind;
 Can make the stubborn soul relent,
 By ev'ry soft'ning impulse bent.

Thus wax resists the polish'd gem,
 Till melted by a genial flame.
 What beauteous figures then we trace!
 A Tully's head! Apollo's grace!

While elegant devices prove
Emblems of friendship, truth, or love.

"Twixt Sun and Wind, in ancient days,
A contest rose,—so Æsop says.
High ran the subject of debate,
As if provok'd by deadly hate:
But, no; the question of the hour
Was simply, which had greatest pow'r.

"Do you," the blust'ring Wind ex-
claim'd,
"Pretend to vie with one so fam'd?
Do I not make the forest bend,
And by the roots its pride up-rend?
Does not my pow'r, which you revile,
Level in dust the stately pile?
Drag Ocean from his coral cell?
Make billows into mountains swell?"

And send, while help in vain they crave,
Whole navies to a wat'ry grave?"

" True," said the Sun, " the pow'rs you
wield
Are vast, but still to mine must yield.
My influence bids the seasons roll,
And guides and animates the whole :
With light and heat I crown the year ;
Both man and beast alike I cheer :
I bid the op'ning flow'rs expand ;
I scatter plenty o'er the land ;
And ev'ry various good dispense,
That glads the heart, or charms the sense.
Without my life-inspiring aid,
Whole worlds would sicken, Nature fade ;
And Earth, th' abode of man, become
A ghastly scene, a living tomb."

While thus each disputant contends,
And sturdily his claim defends,

It chanc'd, a trav'ler pass'd that way,
Whose road across the desert lay.
Shelter, or refuge, there was none ;
A cloak was o'er his shoulders thrown,
And this his sole defence, we're told,
From storms by day, and nightly cold.

Soon as this trav'ler they espied,
“ Let him,” said they, “ the point decide :
Words nothing prove ; we still contest ;
Each thinks his own opinion best :
On him alternately we'll try
Our sep'rate strength ; facts cannot lie ;
And be his claim without revoke,
Who from the trav'ler wrests his cloak.”

The Wind commenc'd th' attack, and
blew
As fierce a blast as man e'er knew.
It took the trav'ler unprepar'd,
One of his arms its fury bar'd ;

But he again resum'd the vest,
And clasp'd it firmly to his breast.

At this, the Wind infuriate rag'd,
And all his forces straight engag'd
From ev'ry point. Each blast that blows,
To win the prize, its aid bestows.
Scarcely could now the trav'ler stand ;
Soon darkness overspreads the land,
While thunder, lightning, hail, and rain,
Sever the clouds, and drench the plain.

The Wind his utmost strength had tried ;
The trav'ler still his pow'r defied ;
His cloak, amid the deaf'ning roar,
He hugg'd far closer than before.

The Wind retir'd. To prove his worth,
The Sun his gentle rays sent forth.
The clouds disperse ; the sky anew
Puts on a robe of azure blue.

Beauteous alike the scene below :
All nature feels a vivid glow ;
By more than magical effect,
The bushes are with pearls bedeck'd ;
The plain is dress'd in livelier green ;
The beasts in grateful sport are seen ;
The flow'rs emit a rich perfume ;
Their cheerful notes the birds resume :
The trav'ler hails the friendly ray,
And jocundly pursues his way.
Phœbus now darts his hottest beams :
The trav'ler pants, his visage streams ;
His loosen'd cloak he throws aside,
Which but promotes the copious tide.
At length, unable to proceed,
So much the heat his steps impede,
Looking in vain for umbrage round,
He spreads his cloak upon the ground,

On it his weary limbs extends,—

And thus th' important contest ends.

“Learn hence,” the victor Phœbus cried,
(To men the moral be applied)

“That gentle means will oft obtain
What force and fury ne'er can gain.”

FABLE V.

THE FOX AND THE STORK.



On the incautious Use of Wit.

A DANG'ROUS talent oft is wit,
Unless with sense to govern it.
How many (thoughtless fools at best!)
Had rather lose their friend, than jest ;
And find, for want of proper guard,
Humiliation their reward !

Do you possess a sportive vein ?
Seek not to give another pain.
On fun and frolic are you bent ?
Still let your mirth be innocent.
This object ever keep in view,
That others laugh as well as you,

And let good-humour be the zest,
That serves to heighten ev'ry jest.
A teasing turn of mind is hated,
And all its ridicule ill-fated.

A Fox, who rang'd the forest round,
For wisdom less than wit renown'd,
Who deem'd himself a knowing blade,
And oft on animals had play'd
Some roguery, in which his aim
Was the low sport of making game,
Once, in his turn, a trick was shown,
That sadly chang'd his waggish tone.

A Stork, good-humour'd, harmless bird,
Who solid sense to wit preferr'd,
Who ne'er was known to be obtrusive,
Pert in reply, much less abusive,

Reynard esteem'd an object fit
On whom to exercise his wit;
And, as he did not *flash* and *bounce*,
Vainly mistook him for a dunce.

To dinner he this Stork invited,
The invitation was not slighted,
True to th' appointed hour he came;
(And ev'ry guest should do the same.)

The well-bred salutation pass'd,
How each had far'd since they met last;
The weather and the news discuss'd,
How the late rain had laid the dust;
Of their acquaintance who was dead,
Who had been sick, or who had wed:
Dinner was serv'd; they both drew near;
The Stork astonish'd at the cheer.

One simple dish the table grac'd,
Which in the midst was duly plac'd:

It was a wide, but shallow plate,
(Apt emblem of the master's pate,)
In which the Fox (unworthy joke!)
Had bid a hasty-pudding smoke.

“Come, my good friend, begin,” he cried:
“Set ceremony quite aside.
This seems to be delicious food;
I hope your appetite is good?”

Thus saying, he began to eat,
And speedily lapp'd up the meat,
While the poor Stork's long slender bill
Kept him from having half his fill,
And all he could obtain at most,
Was the condolence of his host.

“I fear you've very badly din'd!
And yet,” said Reynard, “to my mind,
I never made a better meal:
I hope, my friend, you are not ill?”

Perhaps you did not like the hour
Of six, so took a lunch at four?"

The Stork himself, kind-hearted creature,
Was vex'd to see so much ill-nature;
But kept his temper with a grace
Would honour e'en the human race.
His dinner was a trifling loss,
And scarcely did a thought engross;
He felt his own intrinsic worth,
And would not be a coxcomb's mirth;
The Fox, too, soon should own his merit,
And find he had a proper spirit.

Before they parted, "Well," said he,
"When will you come and dine with me?
What say you, shall it be to-morrow?"
"I've an engagement, to my sorrow,"
The Fox replied: "Will next day do?
I'll eat my mutton then with you."

'Twas fix'd: for Reynard ne'er sus-
pected,
Back on himself would be reflected
The trick, which he so much enjoy'd,
And which so late his wit employ'd.

He went: the Stork receiv'd him well:
"Here," thought the Fox, "no fraud can
dwell.

How I shall feast! some dainty pullet,
Or sav'ry lamb, will fill my gullet!"
But soon he found the painful cost,
Of reck'ning thus without his host.

Instead of pullet, or of lamb,
A long-neck'd jar of minc'd-meat came;
Which seem'd (could Reynard take it ill?)
Just fitted to the Stork's thin bill.

"This minc'd-meat has a sav'ry smell;
I hope," said he, "you'll like it well.

Fall to, nor fear to give offence;
With ceremony friends dispense.”

He then began, prais'd loud the meat,
Ask'd Reynard why he did not eat:
While he, though serv'd as well befitted,
Was piqu'd to find himself outwitted;
For all the feast on which he built
Was a few bits the stork had spilt.

“ You've had, I fear, too long a
roam,

Or left your appetite at home !

Did you observe ?” resum'd the Stork—

“ I play'd a charming knife and fork !”

This was too much ; the Fox was
wroth,

He lost his temper with his broth,

And then began, (so says the Muse,)

Upon the Stork to heap abuse.

“ Hold !” cried the Stork ; “ I’ve reason
ample ;

Think who it was that set th’ example !

When next you are to wit inclin’d,

Take care it leave no sting behind ;

Or you will find, or soon or late,

The gentle can retaliate.”

FABLE VI.

THE LION, AND OTHER BEASTS, HUNTING.

—◆—
On the Choice of Associates.

SEEK not alliance with the great,
Unless on equal terms you meet;
Nor to mean actions condescend,
To call a titled youth your friend.
At school, or college, should *My Lord*
Forfeit his honour, break his word,
Respect him not: true to yourself,
Be virtue yours, be his the pelf.
Or if, of title vain, he dares,
Because a coronet he wears,
Insult your name, or humbler birth,
Let merit prove your greater worth.

'Tis not a title, or estate,
That makes a man or good or great :
Be candid, gen'rous, kind, and just ;
True to your word, firm to your trust :
Choose your associates from the best,
Merit, not wealth or pow'r, the test.

A Lion, for his prowess fam'd,
The terror of the wood was nam'd.
Some beasts, who held their lives at
stake,
His friendship sought, for int'rest's sake,
And to this king of beasts display'd
Their talents in the murd'ring trade.
The meagre Wolf triumphant told
His num'rous plunders from the fold.
The shaggy Bear said, he, with ease,
Could climb the tops of loftiest trees.

The crafty Fox, for knav'ry fit,
Boasted his cunning and his wit.

Such aids, no doubt, of some amount,
The Lion turn'd to good account ;
And straight a treaty was concluded,
That none might fear to be deluded ;
For such the terms of this alliance,
To fraud they seem'd to bid defiance.

None was a partner to betray,
Or touch a morsel of the prey,
Though he himself had borne the toil,
Till all had gather'd round the spoil.
'Twas then, as Honour's dictates guided,
In four just parts to be divided.

It happen'd, that the first made prize,
A Deer, of no mean worth or size,
Was taken, on the Fox's part,
By some insidious, crafty art.

To his confed'rates quick he hied ;
Told his success with obvious pride ;
And all, with gladness undissembled,
To share the booty, straight assembled.

They begg'd the Lion, royal beast,
To do the honours of the feast :
And, with a condescending air,
As they desir'd, he took the chair.

The Deer was carv'd with nicest skill,
In ev'ry part each saw his fill ;
And, as his appetite was keen,
Long'd with impatience to begin ;
Not thinking, that ofttimes a slip
Takes place between the cup and lip.

“ Friends,” said the Lion, “ have I cast
In equal portions the repast ?”
They bow'd assent. “ Well, now,” said he,
“ The distribution you shall see.”

Then laying his majestic paw,
Arm'd with a most terrific claw,
On piece the first, he thus exclaim'd :
“ As king of beasts, and justly nam'd,
I claim this portion from the rest :
Will any here the claim contest ? ”

The Lion serv'd, the rest now panted
With hope of having what they wanted :
Guess their surprise, their wants unheeded,
When thus his majesty proceeded :

“ A quarter is no royal fare,
I therefore take a second share ;
And as a third will scarce suffice,
Dear, gentle friends, 'tis my advice,
The fourth politely you resign,
For though you starve, your chief must dine. ”

Th' astonish'd disappointed brutes,
(Of misplac'd friendship such the fruits)

Would have appeal'd to Honour's laws,
And urg'd the justice of their cause :
But suddenly a hideous roar,
Which made them sweat at ev'ry pore,
And all the echoing forest ring,
Told them the temper of their king.

In haste they leave the wish'd repast,
Glad to escape with life at last ;
This maxim mutt'ring as they fly,—
A despot is a bad ally.

FABLE VII.

THE FROG AND THE OX.



The Folly of imitating our Superiors.

How prone are men, in ev'ry station,
To proud, yet servile, imitation ;
Aping the manners, and the airs,
Of those who move in higher spheres !
Forgetful, that such modes pursuing
Must on themselves heap certain ruin.

The farmer, bred behind the plough,
Scraping his foot to make a bow,
Copies the squire ; sends Miss to school,
(Who learns to dress, and play the fool ;)
Invites the quality to dine,
Who praise his viands, quaff his wine :

At length his payments, in arrear,
Accumulate from year to year,
Till, his tir'd landlord's patience o'er,
His stock is seiz'd, to quit the score ;
And he, though once unknown to fail,
Consumes his future life in jail.

The squire must with my lord compare ;
He takes a house in Grosv'nor-square ;
Dines late ; plays deep ; Madam gives routs ;
(Better they liv'd with country louts !)
His sideboard groans with massy plate ;
But where the deeds of his estate ?
In some vile us'rer's hands, and doom'd
Never, perhaps, to be resum'd.

A Frog, of a conceited mind,
(For brutes will copy human kind ;

While men the compliment discern,
 And copy brutes again in turn)
 Beheld an Ox, who peaceful graz'd
 In the same mead. He, wond'ring, gaz'd.
 "What bulk! What a prodigious size!"
 Envy succeeded to surprise;
 He strove (what will not folly do?)
 To be an Ox in stature too;
 So held his breath, with valour stout;
 Of his success too vain to doubt.

A friend of his, who pass'd that way,
 (For it was done in open day)
 Seeing his body's hideous swell,
 Kindly enquir'd, if he were well.

"Well! did you ask?" the Frog exclaim'd,
 (His eyes with indignation flam'd)
 "Is not my size almost increas'd
 To that of yonder noble beast?"

At this, his friend look'd round to spy
The beast, with whom he wish'd to vie.
None but an Ox appear'd in view :
Could it be that? He found 'twas true :
So kindly warn'd him to forbear,
Nor seek to quit his proper sphere ;
And show'd, that such prepost'rous aim
Could only terminate in shame.

But youth, to rashness ever prone,
Follows no counsel but its own.

“ Shall I,” says he, “ waste all my time
In this dull marsh and swampy clime ?
Follow the humdrum beaten road,
That all my ancestors have trod ?
No : enterprise now fires my brain !
I long to quit my native plain,
To gain myself a glorious name,
And emulate the Ox's fame !

One effort more, I'm sure, will do,
And, great like him, I'll bellow too!"

This said, his breath once more he held;
His cheeks inflated, body swell'd,
And skin, where black and yellow blended,
Almost to bursting were distended.

Then, turning, with triumphant air,
Said to his friend, who still was there,

"Do I not now the Ox surpass?"

"As much as yonder blade of grass
Exceeds the oak," replied his friend.

"Vain-glorious fool! the contest end:

Is it for thee, a reptile weak,

(What does the vain attempt bespeak?)

To cope with beasts of noble blood,

Thou, who wert born, and rear'd, in mud?

One step from such, full well I know,

Would lay thy boasted glories low.

Ambition, rightly understood,
Ambition to be wise and good,
A noble virtue is, and brings
Wealth to the poor, and joy to kings :
But what thou dar'st ambition call,
Is madness and presumption all.
Adieu, be timely warn'd ; I go :
For yonder comes a pow'rful foe."

The Ox advanc'd with pond'rous gait,
On which destruction seem'd to wait :
Humbled, and dwindled to a Frog,
Our hero scamper'd to a bog.

FABLE VIII.

THE DOG IN THE MANGER.

—◆—
Against Envy and Ill-nature.

OF all the passions, sure, the worst
Is envy, and the most accurs'd !
He, in whose breast the monster reigns,
A wretched load of life sustains :
He sickens at another's bliss ;
Takes ev'ry prosp'rous scene amiss ;
Poison from ev'ry sweet distils,
And triumphs in another's ills.

—

A gentle Ox, o'erspent with toil,
Who all day long had till'd the soil,

Had patiently endur'd the thong,
By wanton ploughboy driv'n along,
Beheld with joy the setting ray,
That clos'd his labour, and the day.

Now to his master's stable led,
The tempting rack uprears its head :
He sees it amply stor'd with food,
Whose wafted fragrance speaks it good,
And, snuffing up the sav'ry blast,
Anticipates a rich repast.

But, ah ! upon a bed of hay,
Unseen within the manger lay
A wicked brute, whose only joy
Was ev'ry creature to annoy ;
A Cur, whose ever-noisy tongue
From morn to night incessant rung ;
Worried the harmless fleecy crew,
And at each passing trav'ler flew.

When now the Ox advanc'd to eat,
The snarling Cur denied the treat;
Bristling, set up his spotted back,
And kept him from the loaded rack.

The farmer, passing, heard the din,
And judg'd some mischief lurk'd within.
He knew the puppy's evil bent,
And, unperceiv'd, observ'd th' event.

Have you not seen a truant boy,
Wrest from a younger child his toy,
Or snap his trundling hoop in twain,
And beat him, if he dare complain?
Then, when a lad of gen'rous heart
Appears, to take his junior's part,
The tyrant to a coward shrink,
And from th' unequal combat slink?—
So when the Cur his master spied,
He knew his guilt, and strove to hide.

In vain he strove : dragg'd forth to view,
He met the boon to envy due.

“Thou selfish wretch!” the farmer said,
“Art thou not daily hous'd and fed
With all that plenty can afford,
Beneath my own luxuriant board?
And dost thou grudge this honest beast
His hardly earn'd, and homely feast?
What's hay to thee? Is hay thy food?
This scourge perhaps may do thee good.
Take thy desert.”—No more he spoke,
The puppy howl'd beneath the stroke;
At length releas'd, away he speeds,
And the tir'd Ox in quiet feeds.

FABLE IX.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB.



Tyranny defeated; or, the Pleasures of Virtue.

IN summer, on a sultry day,
When 'twas too hot for active play,
Two brothers, of a sober mood,
Sought the cool shelter of a wood.
Their dog was with them, Tray by name,
Known, in the rolls of village fame,
To be a true and trusty creature,
Of valour stout, and much good nature.

It chanc'd, at length, their way they took
Close by a clear and silver brook;
Which, rolling down a mountain's side,
The thirsty flocks with drink supplied.

Here they repos'd beneath a tree,
Reading old tales of chivalry.

Not long had they been thus employ'd,
No thought of ill their minds annoy'd,
When George look'd up, and saw a lean
And shaggy beast, of hideous mien;
And ask'd his elder brother Frank,
What beast it was, so grim and lank.

“ Ah! 'tis a Wolf! and see a Lamb,
Without a shepherd, or a dam!
Wolves are sad beasts, and live on plunder,
And he's so lean, I should not wonder,
If he had mark'd the lamb for prey.
To drink, no doubt, they come this way.
How glad I am that we are here!
The Lamb shall have no cause to fear!
We'll be the shepherd, and, as right,
His frailty shield from dastard might:

For so the laws of valour speak:—

‘ Against the strong defend the weak.’ ”

The Wolf now stopp’d upon the mound,

The Lamb upon the lower ground :

And, as my youthful readers know,

Water can never up-hill flow,

I need not tell them, that the stream

Ran downward from the Wolf to him.

The Wolf, however, horrid brute !

Lov’d Lamb, as much as boys love fruit ;

And, pleas’d to see him come alone,

Thought to devour him, flesh and bone.

But still he wanted an excuse :

Lies were familiar to his use ;

So, growling with ferocious look,

He ceas’d to drink, and thus he spoke :

“ How now, insulting wretch ! ” he cried,

“ How dare you thus, with upstart pride,

Presume to taste of the same stream
With me, your better? Sure you dream!
The water too, before so clear,
I dare not touch it, far or near,
For you have stirr'd up all the mud;
Where is your breeding, sir, and blood?"

Alarm'd at this, the timid Lamb
Look'd round in vain to find his dam.
Alas! no dam was to be seen!
She, in the distant meadow green,
Slept underneath the willow's shade,
Unconscious that her son had stray'd.

As none appear'd to take his part,
The Lamb, at last, with stouter heart,
For truth, he knew, was on his side,
Began to speak, and thus replied:

“ I'm sorry to offend your grace,
But you have quite revers'd the case.

For, condescend to look around,
Yours is, my lord, the higher ground;
So that the stream, where'er it ends,
From you to me, of course, descends.

“This,” said the Wolf, “is past endurance!
I wonder at your bold assurance,
To contradict me! paltry wretch!
For this your neck deserves to stretch!
But let it pass.—Another charge
I’ll bring against you, sir, at large.
I’m told, deny it if you dare,
You spoke against me, you know where;
And call’d me names behind my back:
To punish you I’ve been too slack;
For ’tis at least a year ago,
You wickedly abus’d me so.”

“This is indeed a charge I scorn,
Since at that time I was not born,”

Replied the Lamb; "for at my birth
The snow and ice hid all the earth.
I could not see a blade of grass,
And bitter was the cold, alas!
Then came the spring, the fields look'd green,
This summer is the first I've seen."

"The last," resum'd the Wolf, "say rather;
For if not you, it was your father;
And you, to end all farther strife,
Shall pay the forfeit with your life."

Thus saying, he advanc'd to seize
The trembling victim. Through the trees
The boys and trusty Tray appear.
'Twas then his turn to quake with fear.
Tray seiz'd him fiercely, and would soon
Have laid in death the vile poltroon,
Had not our heroes interfer'd,
And begg'd he might for once be spar'd,

He having promis'd on his word,
After a pardon first implor'd,
Never again (O base intent!)
To sacrifice the innocent,
Or tell in wantonness the lies
Which they had heard his fraud devise:
“For soon or late,” says Frank, “no doubt,
Such falsehoods must be all found out.”

Then leading back the truant Lamb,
They brought him safely to his dam;
Who, just awake, had miss'd her son,
And wonder'd where he could have run:
And though she was prepar'd to scold,
Yet, when she heard the story told,
She scarcely could resign her fears,
And lost her anger in her tears.

O happy parent, happy son!
O happy party, ev'ry one!

The Lamb forgot his recent fright ;
The mother bleated her delight ;
E'en Tray of pleasure had a notion,
He wagg'd his tail with quicker motion ;
The boys too, as they homeward went,
Cried, " What a happy day we've spent !"

'Tis always thus with virtuous deeds,
Whose pleasure that of wealth exceeds,
Or that of pow'r, or that of birth ;
For virtue is a heav'n on earth.

FABLE X.

THE FOX AND THE RAVEN.



The Mischief of listening to Flattery.

FLATT'RY with studied phrase and show,
What subtle poison does it sow !
How does its too delusive art
Ensnare th' unwary victim's heart !
The grave and gay, the old and young,
Are captives to its siren tongue.
Wisdom, as if depriv'd of sense,
Becomes its dupe, like Ignorance.
Conceal'd beneath a rose's bloom,
Giving fresh sweets to its perfume,
A cherish'd, but unworthy guest,—
E'en Virtue clasps it to her breast ;

The rankling thorn it plants the while,
And hides its venom in a smile.

Would you be arm'd against this foe,
Learn properly yourselves to know ;
Your claims in Truth's fair glass survey,
In Justice' scale your merits weigh :
The foe may then, with all his art,
Assail, he'll never reach the heart ;
Nor you, like Æsop's bird of yore,
Become the dupe of Cunning's lore.

A Raven, seeking where to eat,
Chanc'd on a most delicious treat ;
A piece of cheese, enrich'd with age,
Like Stilton, Parmesan, or Sage.
A Fox too had beheld the prize
With open mouth and longing eyes ;

But, ere he could secure the prey,
The bird had borne it clean away;
Perch'd on a tree, she sat elate,
Exulting in her happier fate.

Reynard, though foil'd, had wit at will:
The cheese might be his portion still.
But how obtain what was so high?
A Fox can neither climb nor fly.
'Twere vain he found to have recourse
To hostile means: his grand resource
Lay in his ever fertile brain,
In crafty plot, and wily train;
So Flatt'ry's aid he here preferr'd,
And thus address'd the thoughtless bird:

“ O lovely Raven!” soft he cries,
“ Oft has thy beauty struck my eyes,
But never did it meet my gaze
In such a full, transcendent blaze!

Thy glossy plumes not jet outvies!
What are to thine the peacock's dyes!
The landrail's shape, though deem'd so fine,
Is ugliness compar'd to thine!
And, as thou lightly skimm'st the plain,
Or soar'st amidst the clouds' domain,
Contrasted with thy matchless grace,
The swallow moves with tardy pace!
The eagle, bird of heav'n's dread king,
To thee must yield for strength of wing!
Venus must banish straight her dove,
And thou be hail'd the bird of Love!

“While thus unrivall'd thou art seen,
Of beauty, grace, and love, the queen,
Ah, surely, from that well-turn'd throat,
Music must pour her softest note!
And should (how love my bosom warms!)
Thy voice be equal to thy charms,

The linnet must the palm resign,
The nightingale neglected pine,
The thrush and blackbird's cheerful strain
No more would charm the list'ning swain;
All would be silent, though in spring,
And hush their notes, to hear thee sing!

“ O let me pay thee homage due,
And own thee queen of music too!
Indulge me with one little strain,
Nor let thy vot'ry sue in vain!”

He ceas'd: the Raven was all ear;
His accents still she seem'd to hear;
And (sure her senses must have fled!)
Believ'd each flatt'ring word he said.

Till now, the cheese was tightly held,
But when, by vanity impell'd,
She op'd her beak, to croak a tune,
Down, down it fell, sly Reynard's boon!

“ Adieu !” said Reynard, with a sneer,
“ A cold has made you hoarse, I fear ;
And, as I’m hungry, if you please,
I’ll leave you now, to eat my cheese.
Sing on, sweet bird ! to praise your skill,
In crows you’ll find an audience still,
Who’ll not discover by your note,
The murrain, that afflicts your throat !”

FABLE XI.

THE DOG AND THE SHADOW.



Against Selfishness and Avarice.

DOES Fortune, with illib'ral hand,
Withhold the riches you'd command?
Let industry the want supply,
Still keep the path of honesty;
Nor seek, by means unjust, to boast
Of wealth, obtain'd at others' cost.



A Dog—no matter what his name,
Pompey, or Jowler, Sneak, or Fame,
And whether pointer, spaniel, hound,
Remains a mystery profound—

Was by his fellow brutes despis'd,
Nor even by his master priz'd.
A grievous failing he possess'd,
Which banish'd love from ev'ry breast :
For selfishness his fame was known ;
No dog could meet him with a bone,
But he would grudge the homely fare,
And rob him of it—if he dare.

Once, at some distance from his home,
(He was addicted much to roam,)
He chanc'd to pass a butcher's shop ;
No one was there, so he must stop,
Though he had amply din'd before,
And try to gorge a morsel more.

What dainties met his ravish'd sight !
On ev'ry side some new delight !
Beef, mutton, lamb, and pork, and veal !
Which should he choose? which should
he steal?

'Twas soon debated, and, 'tis said,
He seiz'd upon a prime calf's head.

Quick with his booty off he runs ;
Both man and beast alike he shuns ;
Taking the most retir'd direction,
In hope t' escape without detection.

It happen'd, that this private way
Across a river's current lay ;
Bridge there was none, but he could swim,
And boldly had approach'd the stream,
When he another dog espied,
Just like himself, within the tide ;
And, strange to say, like him he bore
As fine a head as calf e'er wore.

We've said, he was a selfish beast,
Who grudg'd to others ev'ry feast.
No sooner therefore he beheld
This second prize, than straight, impell'd

By greediness, which makes one loath
The monster, he would have them both.

The covetous are justly foil'd ;
The robbery he meant was spoil'd.
He growls and snaps, and thus obtains
A draught of water for his pains !
The dainty morsel, which he stole,
Fell from his avaricious jowl,
And (poor, unlucky, ill-starr'd wight !)
Sunk to the bottom, out of sight.

The painful truth began to gleam :
Reflected in the limpid stream,
His shadow he had simply view'd,
And eagerly himself pursu'd ;
So in the end had nothing left,
Neither his fancied prize, nor theft.

Thus he who grasps at others' wealth,
Whether by gaming, or by stealth,

And, like this weak and sordid brute,
Ventures his own in the pursuit,
Oft loses both: too late he grieves;
Too late his folly he perceives;
He falls an easy prey to vice,
The victim of his avarice.

FABLE XII.

THE VAIN JACKDAW.



Borrowed Honours not worth the Wearing.

A TRUANT boy, who broke from school,
 His thoughts of play and mischief full,
 Once stole a nest of unfledg'd Daws,
 To rear them, spite of nature's laws,
 Spite of the parents' discontent,
 Who hover'd round, with loud lament.
 But he was punish'd for the theft,
 Disgrac'd at school, of play bereft ;
 And the stol'n brood, when they could fly,
 Escap'd, to gain their native sky.

One longer than the rest remain'd :
 He too, at length, his freedom gain'd ;

But not till he had learn'd by rote,
A phrase or two, of little note.

This Daw, with vanity elate,
Whose talk was only empty prate,—
For almost ev'ry word he knew
Was "What's o'clock?" "Poor Jack!"

"How do?"—
Prided himself upon his learning,
And thought no bird was so discerning.

Arriv'd among his native groves,
With arrogance and pride he roves.
He treats his fellows with contempt;
None from derision are exempt:
The old want wisdom, and the young
Are fools, like those from whom they
sprung!

But still, with all this stock of pride,
He was not fully satisfied.

Daws were a gloomy, ill-shap'd race !
Who but preferr'd the Peacock's grace ?
What beauteous colours deck'd his train !
Where would you see such hues again ?
Not e'en the rainbow's gaudy zone
With such resplendent lustre shone.
O could he boast such radiant plumes !
Thus he with envy frets and fumes.

Not far remote some Peacocks dwelt :
What sudden joy his bosom felt,
When, as their moulting time came round,
Their plumes lay scatter'd on the ground !
On them he fix'd an eager view,
Selecting those of finest hue,
Which, when he found himself alone,
He proudly stuck among his own.
A pond, which luckily was near,
Whose water was both still and clear,

(How oft did he contrive to pass!)
Serv'd him instead of looking-glass.

Equipp'd at length, he sallies forth,
His plumage equal to his worth.

No longer would he herd with Daws ;

Peacocks would yield him just applause :

For could a bird of taste refin'd

Associate with a vulgar mind ?

His talents lost, or underrated,

He thus must pass his life unmated !

Behold him now, with strutting pace,

With nodding head, and vain grimace,

Arriv'd among the Peacock's crew,

Himself, in thought, a Peacock too.

But, ah ! how soon is folly humbled !

At the first word, almost, he stumbled.

“Caw !” came spontaneous from his tongue ;

And more than hinted whence he sprung.

This made the Peacocks nearer look :
Soon ev'ry side with laughter shook.

“ A Daw in Peacock's feathers dress'd !”

How did they all admire the jest !

“ Friend,” said a shrewd one, “ spread
your tail.”

The vain attempt, of course, must fail ;

One feather dropp'd, and then another :—

“ You've lost your crest too, my good
brother !

Perhaps you've lately been in wars,

And, soldier like, have brought home scars ?”

Now indignation each assumes ;

They strip him of his borrow'd plumes.

Sharp were their bills, he felt their claws,

They drove him to his kindred Daws.

Experience teaches more than books.

Abash'd and humbled were his looks ;

His sweet conceits were turn'd to gall ;
Such pride was sure to have a fall.

At first the Daws would not receive him :
How could he hope they would relieve him ?
Had he not prov'd himself, in grain,
Foolish, impertinent, and vain ?
But when they saw his deep contrition,
And found him cur'd of his ambition,
No longer would they keep aloof,
Admitting him with this reproof :—

“ Henceforth, be solid worth your aim ;
Our just respect you then may claim ;
For former follies thus atone,
And rise on merits all your own.”

FABLE XIII.

THE STAG DRINKING.



Useful Qualities preferable to personal Charms.

FORTH from a wood's embow'ring shade,
A silver stream meand'ring play'd,
Till, tir'd this devious course to take,
It sought repose, and form'd a lake.
No wave upon its surface mov'd;
Loth to disturb the peace it lov'd;
The zephyr o'er it lightly stray'd,
And scarcely whisper'd in the glade.

Thither, his parching thirst t' allay,
A youthful Stag once bent his way;
And then, like fam'd Narcissus, stood,
To view his beauty in the flood.

With ravish'd eyes intent he gaz'd ;
His beauty e'en himself amaz'd ;
Till he at length the silence broke,
And thus in vaunting language spoke :—

“ I look, it must be own'd, quite spruce !
Nature to me has been profuse.
What brilliant, piercing eyes are here !
Lovely my features all appear !
These spreading antlers, how they grace
My forehead, and my slender face !
My form, so elegant and neat,
With other legs, would be complete ;
And, but for these vile spindle shanks,
For which dame Nature has no thanks,
I might be styl'd, *sans* hesitation,
Adonis of the brute creation.”

While thus, in rapt'rous musing lost,
His thoughts were by his charms engross'd,

Upborne upon a rising gale,
Terrific sounds his ears assail,
Which, though before he ne'er had heard,
Instinctively a foe declar'd.

It was a loud and clam'rous din
Of hounds, and horns, and hunting-men.

Nearer and nearer still it drew :

His heart beat high : away he flew,
O'er hill and valley, mead and plain.

He stopp'd : the sound return'd again ;

But fainter, than at first, it seem'd,

And hope reviv'd, when safety beam'd.

Short was the pause : a moment pass'd,

Louder it echoed in the blast.

Again he flew : again pursu'd,

He made for shelter to a wood,

Which seem'd concealment to imply,

Because impervious to the eye.

Rash fear too oft is our undoing,
And flies for aid to swifter ruin.

The Stag, whose life appear'd at stake,
Thus sought the woodland's thickest brake,
Through which he strove to urge his course,
Using his antlers' branching force,
Till, fatal error! fix'd he stood,
Entangled in the bri'ry wood.

Ah! who can tell what now he feels,
The hounds and hunters at his heels?
A moment longer, he had been
The feast of dogs, the sport of men.

Let me a happier fate unfold:
Some hearts are cast in Pity's mould:
So his, who own'd the noisy pack;
He gives the word to call them back.
The dogs obey. The Stag, releas'd,
Who was in truth a handsome beast,

Is reconducted to his park,
Blithsome once more as morning lark.
And as again he musing stood,
His form beholding in the flood,
He thus was wisely heard to say:—

“No more to charms I’ll homage pay;
Unless with usefulness combin’d,
They but seduce the thoughtless mind.
For I have learn’d, in Wisdom’s school,
Who prizes beauty is a fool.
These branching horns, so late my boast,
My life how nearly had they cost!
While these thin legs, I dar’d despise,
Had sav’d me from the hunter’s cries.
Far better then, Experience warns,
Are nimble legs, than stately horns.”

FABLE XIV.

THE SHEPHERD'S BOY AND THE WOLF.



Against Lying.

How rare a thing it is to find
Truth and simplicity of mind !
But, ah ! by no means rare to meet
The arts of falsehood and deceit !
From men we turn with just contempt,
If from such faults they're not exempt ;
But when their influence we trace
In youth's pure mind and blooming face,
Pity and grief our hearts engage,
While future ruin we presage.

My child, in all you say, or do,
Keep truth and honour full in view :

Make it your pride, by virtue spurr'd,
 Never to falsify your word :
 So strong be love of truth impress'd,
 As to avoid a lie in jest.

Should you (all err) a fault commit,
 Show your regret by owning it ;
 And you will find such conduct tend
 To aid your int'rest in the end.

But if, to screen yourself from blame,
 Untruths your quick invention frame,
 Expect (what's sure to be the case)
 Speedy detection, long disgrace :
 And know (a maxim well maintain'd)
 Lost confidence is ne'er regain'd.

Ere Edgar held the sov'reign helm,
 Fierce wolves abounded in our realm ;

But when the sceptre grac'd his hand,
He brought destruction on their band.
The Welsh, who were by conquest gain'd,
Not many years before he reign'd,
In token of the victor's sway,
A yearly tribute were to pay.
Instead of gems, and precious ore,
To aggrandize his private store,
He, mindful of his subjects' weal,
(Would monarchs all had equal zeal!)
A wiser, better off'ring chose,
Heads of the sanguinary foes,
And by this measure, well pursu'd,
At length extirpated the brood.

'Twas in those times, a shepherd's heir
Was sent to tend his fleecy care :
The father, in a neighb'ring mead,
Secur'd his hay 'gainst future need,

And bade him, should the Wolf appear,
Sound an alarm ; which he should hear :
Straight with his neighbours he would hie,
Straight should the grisly monster die ;
And then his forfeit head, as meet,
Should be dispos'd at Edgar's feet.

Murm'ring he went, (a wicked boy,)
Once his fond parents' pride and joy,
Till, leaving wide the path of Truth,
In which they led his early youth,
He follow'd Falsehood's mazy road,
And pierc'd their hearts with sorrow's
goad.

In idleness, or useless play,
He had resolv'd to spend the day ;
So, in revenge for pleasure lost,
When o'er the field the hay was toss'd,
The alarm of Wolf, he loudly blew,
Although no Wolf appear'd in view.

The hay was left! the father ran,
And all the neighbours, to a man.

“Where, where’s the Wolf?” at once they
cry—

A laugh was all the boy’s reply.

To check his sport, reproof was vain,
Why at a joke should they complain?

Next day—Can you conceive it true,
He would the self-same trick pursue?—
When heavy clouds began to low’r,
Threat’ning a fast-approaching show’r,
When the fierce lightning’s vivid flash
Was follow’d by the thunder’s crash,
And all, intent upon their work,
Plied eagerly the rake and fork,
“The Wolf! the Wolf!” again he cried;
“The sheep are scar’d on ev’ry side!”

His father, who, like you, believ’d
He could not be again deceiv’d,

Flew to his aid with brandish'd staff;
(This but produc'd a louder laugh)
And all his neighbours, as before,
To slay the Wolf, their work gave o'er.

The Shepherd now, with harsh reproof,
Bade him his presence keep aloof.

“Sirrah! is this well done,” he cries,
“Indulging thus your mirth in lies?—

Nor is it here the mischief ends:

See how the pelting rain descends!

My hay is spoil'd, which might ere now
Have all been gather'd in a mow.”

Alas, I grieve the rest to tell!

How in the sequel it befell,

One morn, (the skies were streak'd with gold)

When he had just unpenn'd the fold,

When too his dog had disappear'd,

Lur'd by the scent of hare, or bird,

He saw, and shriek'd with wild affright,
Two monstrous Wolves appear in sight.

“ Help, father! help!” aloud he cried,

“ The Wolves approach with rapid stride!

They seize the flock! Help, help, O help!”

“ Still at thy tricks, thou graceless whelp!”

The Shepherd to himself bethought;

“ But think not thus again I'm caught.

Pursue thy sport, 'twill now be dull;

Thou shalt not thrice thy father gull!

One fool, I've often heard, makes many,

But the old fool is worse than any.”

In vain were now his piercing cries;

No aid was giv'n: his former lies

Around the country spread his fame;

Though many heard, yet no one came.

In vain he strives the Wolves to bay;

Heeding him not, they feast away;


Murder in wantonness the lambs,
And then destroy the choicest dams.

His hay laid waste, his flocks imbru'd,
Grief now the Shepherd's heart subdu'd;
He leaves his cot, his once-lov'd home,
Reduc'd in beggary to roam.

The son, when grown to man's estate,
Lamented his poor father's fate.
Remorse and grief his bosom rent;
He knew not joy, nor felt content:
And though, with more than common heed,
Falsehood he shunn'd, in word and deed,
Though never in a lie detected,
His truth was all his life suspected.

FABLE XV.

THE FROGS DESIRING A KING.



Against Discontent.

THE world's a scene of discontent ;
Our present lot we all lament ;
Yet when the wish'd-for change arrives,
The fond desire of half our lives,
Its charms are vanish'd, and, too late,
We would recall our former state.

In childhood's early, happy day,
Our lessons keep us from our play ;
Our themes are hard, our masters cross,
And ev'ry school-hour 's deem'd a loss ;
We pant for manhood, and would be,
Like those who rule us, great and free.

Ask Henry what he most desires,
What most his young ambition fires?
And doubt his answer if you can,
“ To come from school, and be a man.”

Alas, dear boy! you little know
The hardships you may undergo.
The storms of passion may destroy
The fairy scene of promis'd joy.
The lures of Vice are thickly set!
How many fall in Pleasure's net!
And should you guard from these your youth,
Yet rankling Care, with venom'd tooth,
And Poverty, and pale Disease,
May blast your prospects, kill your ease;
And you may wish (alas! in vain)
You were a boy at school again.

But though each station has its ills,
Some comfort ev'ry bosom fills:

Learn then content, whate'er your fate,
Nor envy others their estate.

The Frogs once led a happy life,
Devoid of care, and free from strife.
No toil supplied their daily bread;
Their wants were few, their hunger fed;
And nought had they to do all day,
But eat and drink, and sleep and play.
Yet, not content with their condition,
To Jupiter they made petition
To have a king—And for what cause?
To guard their morals! give them laws!
This strange request surpris'd the god;
Yet he vouchsaf'd a gracious nod,
And, throwing down a log of wood,
Bade them be happy, and be good.

His quick descent alarm'd them all,
And some were wounded by his fall;
Nor did they dare approach their king,
He was so huge and grave a thing.

At length they ventur'd, (arduous task!)
Trembling, his dread commands to ask.
But, as he made them no reply,
And seem'd quite motionless to lie,
They bolder grew, met no offence,
And fear gave way to insolence.

To Jupiter again they went,
Begg'd he'd depose the king he sent,
He was so motionless and dull!
Should Frogs be govern'd by a fool?
A king they wish'd of active merit,
Not one without a grain of spirit!

The god, at these their murmurs new,
Deem'd them an undeserving crew.

A Stork he sent them :—discontent
Brings with it certain punishment.

A Stork's a bird that lives on Frogs :
Better to them were senseless logs.
Their king was hungry, and his dinner
Made their assembly much the thinner ;
And when his supper-time drew near,
How was each Frog oppress'd with fear !

Once more to Jove their pray'r ascends,
But no success their pray'r attends :
“ O grant us, Jove, another king !
Let not Oppression have its swing !
See how this tyrant seeks our lives !
He spares nor children, friends, nor wives !”

“ Fools !” says the god, “ in vain you plead :
'Tis your own folly makes you bleed.
Why were you not at first content
With your old form of government ?

And when, attentive to your pray'r,
I made your happiness my care,
And sent a king, indulg'd your whim,
Why were you not content with him?
Was he not gentle, quiet, good?
Did he deprive you of your food?
Yet him you treated with neglect,
With insolence, and disrespect.
Another king you then implor'd,
One with some spirit, for your lord!
You have him, with your wishes curst;
And he, perhaps, is not the worst.
Submit; your murmurs I despise;
And let experience make you wise."

FABLE XVI.

THE GRASHOPPER AND THE ANT.

Against an Improvident Life.

A GRASHOPPER, as blythe as May,
Carol'd and danc'd his time away :
Freely he drank the ev'ning dew,
The merriest of the insect crew.
It chanc'd, upon a sunny morn,
Tugging a monstrous grain of corn,
And panting with the heavy load,
An honest Pismire cross'd the road.
Mutual civilities exchange'd,
Together o'er the fields they rang'd.
The Grashopper had nought to do ;
Pleasure and mirth were all his view ;

So thought an idle hour he'd spend,
In chatting with his sober friend.

“ Why toil you thus, and waste your
health,

Amassing hoards of useless wealth?

Learn,” said the Grasshopper, “ of me;

Be gay, and frolicsome, and free.

No care have I, or toil, or sorrow:

I never dream about the morrow.

The present freely I enjoy;

My cup of bliss has no alloy.

When morning's balmy sweets exhale,

I quaff their fragrance in the gale;

When sunbeams in the zenith play,

I revel in the noontide ray;

And when the star of ev'ning glows,

I in a buttercup repose.

This, this is life! then learn of me,
Be gay, and frolicsome, and free!”

“Friend,” said the Ant, “I thank your
zeal,

Which shows such int’reſt in my weal;
But, though we diff’rent modes pursue,
Like yours, is happiness my view.

Whose plan is wiſeſt, time muſt prove;
Time, that with rapid wing doth move.

Did ſummer laſt throughout the year,

Your maxim might the beſt appear;

But winter will, alas! ſucceed,

Season of ſcarcity and need:

No balmy ſweets will then exhale,

Or fragrance ſcent the ſouthern gale:

Should ſunbeams in the zenith play,

Sickly and faint will be their ray;

And, when the star of ev'ning glows,
No buttercup will yield repose.
What then, my friend, becomes of you?
Famine and death must straight ensue.
'Tis to avert these dreadful ills,
That from my brow the sweat distils.
I never idly spend the day,
But while the sun shines make my hay.
Then, when the tempest howls around,
And desolation sweeps the ground,
Within my snug and well-stor'd cell,
In plenty and in peace I dwell.—
Be you advis'd, secure your grain,
Nor waste your precious hours in vain."

The Grasshopper, too gay to mend,
Laugh'd at his moralizing friend;
Call'd him a dull and solemn preacher:—
" Adieu," said he, " most rev'rend teacher!

Pleasure 's the goddess I'll pursue,
Be labour yours : Once more, adieu !"
So saying, with a skip he bounds ;
The meadow with his note resounds.

And now, the summer at an end,
Chilling autumnal dews descend :
Soon frost and snow o'erspread the plains ;
Stern winter prematurely reigns :
And the poor insect, pinch'd with cold,
Feels the sad truth the Ant foretold.

In this distress, his friend he meets,
And piteously his aid entreats.
The Ant, with grief, but not surprise,
View'd his pale cheek and hollow eyes.
" Is this," he cried, " the gallant youth,
That spurn'd so late the voice of Truth ?
But, come with me : experience bought
Is higher priz'd than wisdom taught.

Hereafter you will not despise
The labour that your want supplies,
But to your own exertions owe
The comforts, that from prudence flow ;
And may with lib'ral hand dispense
The blessings of beneficence."

'Tis thus with life, which, like the year,
Its summer boasts, and winter drear.
Youth is the spring-time of delight,
Painting each prospect fair and bright :
Its bloom outvies the op'ning flow'r ;
Its griefs are but an April show'r.
Youth is the spring-time too of toil,
In which to till the mental soil :
For if this genial season pass,
The mind untill'd, can we amass
Stores for the winter of old age,
To aid its wants, its ills assuage ?

Improve we then this early time,
And lay up treasures in our prime;
Rich funds of knowledge; that the hour
Of desolation lose its pow'r;
While in the garner of the mind
A lasting, sure resource we find.

FABLE XVII.

THE LAMB BROUGHT UP BY A GOAT.



The Importance to Parents of educating their Offspring.

PARENTS, for you this tale is penn'd;
 Nor let its simple lay offend.
 E'en you may err. To you is giv'n,
 By the wise providence of Heav'n,
 The sacred and important trust,
 (How seldom weigh'd in balance just!)
 With care th' ethereal spark to fan,
 And rear the infant pow'rs to man.
 The supple frame, and ductile mind,
 To usefulness may be inclin'd,
 As you direct. Yours is the art,
 By goodly culture to impart

Both strength and wisdom: yours to bend,
To virtuous purposes and end,
The op'ning passions: yours to move,
By the sweet impulses of love,
The heart to duty; and so "bind
In willing chains the captiv'd mind."
If great indulgence often spoils,
From means severe the heart recoils.
Extremes are bad: 'tis yours to blend
The parent's name with that of friend.
Unfriended youth will ever veer;
'Tis you their little bark should steer,
And show the quicksands and the shelves,
Till they can safely guide themselves.

Such is your task, the sweetest, best;
Since, thus by blessing, you are blest.

Can there exist, in human race,
Of human form, a wretch so base,

As that our fable holds to view?
Forbid it Heav'n, and Nature too!
If such there be, O let him learn,
Children resent, where parents spurn;
That love is duty's best support,
And tenderness its strongest fort;
That, void of these, a parent's claim
Is nothing but an empty name.
Injustice breaks the firmest tie;
No rev'rence then, or amity.

Here let the Muse a tribute pay
(Affection filial prompts the lay,
While Gratitude attunes the lyre)
To him, her much-lov'd, honour'd sire,
Who joins to all the tend'rest care
Which parents for their offspring share,
The gen'rous feelings that arise
From Friendship's confidential ties:

To him, whose anxious care has been
To make her life a cloudless scene;
Her mind with ev'ry good to store,
That can be taught by virtuous lore :
Who, when with heavy grief subdu'd,
(For sorrows ev'ry where intrude)
Or e'en a tear bedimm'd her eye,
Bade both the tear and sorrow fly,
Charm'd her dull hours with converse sweet,
And joy'd her praises to repeat :
Who led her devious steps aright,
And far dispers'd the treach'rous light,
When Error shed her meteor ray,
To dazzle and perplex her way ;
The prompt excuse with kindness fram'd,
And gently warn'd, not harshly blam'd.

Long could my heart indulge the theme,
(Grateful as ev'ning's placid beam,

That plays upon the glassy fount)
A father's goodness to recount !
But, ah ! too tame my numbers flow !
To tell the filial debt I owe,
Of verse, or words, in vain the strife ;
The truest language is—my life.
Dear Sire, the sacred pledge approve,—
For love receiv'd, a life of love !

It chanc'd, that from a fold remote,
A Wolf once met a Lamb and Goat.
They seem'd a most delighted pair.
The matron Goat, with gen'rous care,
The infant Lamb with food supplied,
Drawn from her own maternal side ;
And gratefully the Lamb repaid
The fond affection thus display'd,

By ev'ry duty that we know
A child should for a parent show.

The wicked Wolf, on blood intent,
View'd with regret this strange event.
So well protected as she lay,
How could he make the Lamb his prey?
Fearing to cope with both, he strove,
By artful means, to shake their love:
A separation once obtain'd,
His purpose was securely gain'd:—
So thus he fram'd the vile pretence,
To leave the Lamb without defence.

“Fie! fie!” he cried, “ungrateful Lamb!
Is this the way you treat your dam?
To yonder sheep your love belongs:
Haste to repair your mother's wrongs;
Haste to remove her just alarms—
And I'll conduct you to her arms.”

“ Softly, good sir,” the Lamb replied,
“ Nor quite so hastily decide :
My story hear; no pains I grudge;
And be a more impartial judge.

“ A sheep, indeed, first gave me birth,
But left me outcast on the earth :
No nourishment my want supplied;
No pity sooth'd me when I cried ;
No kindly warmth my limbs could boast,
Expos'd to hunger, cold, and frost :
Deserted, friendless, did I lie,
Till this good, gentle goat pass'd by :
She took compassion on my fate ;
She nurs'd me in my helpless state ;
My frozen limbs with heat endu'd,
And fed me with her kidling's food.
'Tis to her fost'ring care I owe
That through my veins life's juices flow.

For this disinterested zeal,
A more than daughter's love I feel;
And, on my future destiny,
A more than mother's claim has she.
The life she sav'd, dear, gen'rous goat!
To her I cheerfully devote;
And had my dam such care bestow'd,
With equal love my breast had glow'd.
Adieu, and, if you please, impart
The steady purpose of my heart."

Confus'd, abash'd, the Wolf withdrew,
Foil'd in his craft, and dinner too.

FABLE XVIII.

THE COCK AND THE FOX.



Artifice foiled by its own Weapon.

WHENE'ER a well-known, crafty knave
Attempts your reason to enslave,
Depicting, to mislead your sight,
In colours gay, some new delight ;
Let not his sophistry prevail,
No credence give the specious tale :
If suddenly he seem your friend,
Be sure 'tis for some private end :
Beneath the hypocritic garb,
He basely hides a venom'd barb,
To use, whene'er occasions fit :
But knaves sometimes themselves outwit :

Let but sage caution interpose,
Themselves the weapon will disclose.
Then seize your time, their project spoil,
With their own shaft their cunning foil.

Upon a lofty spreading elm,
As if sole monarch of the realm,
Sat an old Cock : a shrilly note
Oft issued from his burnish'd throat ;
And, as from time to time he sung,
His voice to distant valleys rung.
Prowling around, in quest of food,
Reynard the accents understood.
A Cock was not such dainty picking,
As a young pullet, or a chicken :
But hungry folks must not be nice,
Though tough, for once it might suffice.

So on he press'd, with eager speed,
To where the dulcet notes proceed.
But who can his vexation paint,
As thus he mutter'd his complaint?

“What an unlucky fate is mine!
Against me all the stars combine!
I thought my prize secure; and now,
Behold it on the topmost bough!
This stroke can any patience bear?
I vow 'twould make a parson swear!
Some quick invention I must frame,
To lull Suspicion, wary dame;
Some wily tale must stand my friend,
To make proud Chanticleer descend.”

This to himself; and then aloud—

“Good morrow, friend!” and smil'd, and
bow'd.

“ But wherefore, quickly tell, I pray,
Are you alone this joyous day?
One might suspect, from what one views,
You had not heard the glorious news.”

“ What news?” sir Chanticleer en-
quir’d :

“ I live of late so much retir’d,
That little of the world I know,
And seldom learn how matters go.”

“ I’ll tell you, then,” the Fox replied ;
“ The news has spread both far and wide :
A gen’ral peace has taken place
Between the whole of brutal race :
Scaly, and plum’d, and quadruped,
On earth, in air, or ocean bred,
Have all to-day a treaty sign’d,
To live henceforth like brothers kind.

No more the lion will devour
The tender lambkin ; from this hour,
The wondrous sighted bird of Jove
Will spare the meek-ey'd, timid dove ;
The dove will in her turn reform,
Nor even hurt a fly or worm.
For joy the feather'd choirs are singing,
And village bells are gaily ringing.
At night a bonfire will be made ;
And I, who understand the trade,
A lighted brand am to provide ;
The glow-worm has the lamps supplied.
I hope, my dearest friend, you'll come ?
Will-o'-the-wisp shall light you home.
But first descend, and, free from care,
Eternal friendship let us swear ;
And, as an earnest of our grace,
Join in a mutual, strict embrace."

The Cock, whose penetrating eyes
Saw through the pitiful disguise,
Cried, "This indeed is glorious news!
Your suit, dear coz, I can't refuse."
Then standing tiptoe, stretching wide
His neck, as if he something spied—
"What do you see?" said Reynard,
"Haste,
Nor thus the precious moments waste."—
"Only two hounds," said Chanticleer;
"A moment wait, they'll soon be here,
When, like so many birds of feather,
We may all four embrace together."
Said Reynard, in a hurried tone,
"If that's the case, I must be gone."—
"Gone!" said the Cock, "And where-
fore? pray:
They are two couriers on their way,

And bring perhaps the proclamation,
To give your story confirmation."

"A doubt," says Reynard, "has occur'd,
Whether they yet the news have heard :
Excuse me, I would gladly stay,
But Prudence bids me haste away."

FABLE XIX.

THE FOX AND THE GRAPES.



The Folly of aiming at Things beyond our Reach.

METHINKS I hear the critic say,
 (Reading the title of my lay,)
 "A Fox again! How flat the theme!
 Surely the poet's in a dream!
 Four times we've had this blade before,
 Which might be deem'd an ample store.
 In tales, variety is sweet,
 Like *brevity, the soul of wit.*"

I know it, sir, and introduce
 Reynard so often to the Muse,
 For that, and for no other cause,
 Though I may fail of your applause.

Of animals, not one in ten
Affords such various hints to men.
So Æsop thought, my guide in this ;
And, scoffing me, at him you hiss.

But hold ; a critic is my dread ;
In parleying, I may lose my head.
A keen-edg'd instrument is he,
With which we must not make too free ;
'Twere better quit such ticklish ground,
And tell my tale while safe and sound.

A Fox, who, roaming, lost his way,
Within a vineyard chanc'd to stray.
The vines, with nicest care maintain'd,
On lofty trellis-work were train'd ;
And as to this their tendrils clung,
The grapes in tempting clusters hung.

Sweet-water, Black, and White combine,
With Frontin'ac and Muscadine,
Like drops of amber, jet, and gold,
To charm the taste of young and old.

The famish'd Fox (so Æsop wrote,
From whose authority we quote,
For foxes now are never known
To feed on fruit, such times are flown)
View'd with delight the rich repast,
And thought himself in luck at last.

“ Rare fruit ! ” said he, “ and no one
near,
With sullen tone to cry, Forbear !
I'll pick and cull, I'll feast at ease,
Nor ask the owner, if he please ! ”

Though Reynard be a knowing elf,
He does not always know himself.

What will his craft or cunning do?

He has not now a bird to woo* ;

But seems as hopeless of the boon,

As children longing for the moon,

Or thinking to secure a rail,

By putting salt upon its tail.

First he would climb; unapt at that,

A Fox is found, though not a cat ;

And Nature won't reverse her plan,

For brute presumptuous, or for man.

Then he would jump. That nought

avail'd ;

The more he jump'd, the more he fail'd ;

High o'er his head the cluster'd fruit

Seem'd but to mock his keen pursuit.

Thus tir'd and foil'd, his purpose cross'd,

He found his time and patience lost ;

* Allusion to the Raven with the cheese.

And, vex'd to see his arts defied,
Sought in these words his spleen to hide :

“Poor, paltry trash ! let those who will,
Fond of such dainties, eat their fill ;
While fools with eagerness devour,
I pass you by, as green and sour !”

Alas, how many may we trace,
Just like the Fox, in human race !

Let but their wishes be denied,
Straight is the object vilified.

The Lover, when his suit 's refus'd,
Though pray'rs, and tears, and oaths he
us'd,

Who vow'd his mistress was more fair,
Than Venus or the Graces were,—

Ask him, when banish'd from her door,
If e'er he saw such charms before ?

He with unblushing falsehood cries,
“ That roseate hue her paint supplies.”
But while his lips disclaim her pow’r,
To him, we know, *the grapes are sour*.

The Spinster, doom’d to single life,
Cries, “ Wedlock is a scene of strife,
And husbands are a stern, harsh brood !”
Alas, poor nymph, she ne’er was woo’d !
And while we see her scowl and low’r,
We smile, and say, *the grapes are sour* !

For place the Politician sighs,
Some sinecure the tempting prize ;
Promotion’s ladder seeks to scale ;
The rounds give way, the work is frail :
Then hear him bless his happy fate,
To live unvex’d with cares of state !
On other heads let pensions show’r,
He scorns them ! Why ? *the grapes are sour* !

Thousand examples may be brought,
 A thousand useful lessons taught.
 Let this suffice:—Seek not to gain
 What lies beyond you to attain.

FABLE XX.

THE BELLY AND THE MEMBERS.



The different Ranks in Society mutually useful.

A ROMAN, for his wisdom fam'd,—
 Menenius Agrippa nam'd,
 Who held the consular degree,
 And sway'd with right and equity,—
 When wild sedition stirr'd the land,
 And ruin wav'd its fatal brand,
 To quell its pow'r, and break its yoke,
 The following fable aptly spoke.

The Members of the human frame
 Accus'd the Belly once of blame,

And vow'd no more to lend their aid,
In nourishing a lazy jade.
“She found,” they said, “employ for all,
Made each subservient to her call,
While she herself inactive lay,
And spent in indolence the day.”

Against her one and all conspir'd.
The Legs no longer would be tir'd
In fetching food for her; the Eyes
Refus'd to seek the fit supplies;
The Hands to raise them to the lip;
The Mouth refus'd to eat, or sip;
The Tongue to taste, the Teeth to chew:
“Reform,” said they, “will thus ensue;
The Belly, when to reason brought,
Will toil like us, as well she ought;
Will learn her proper pow'rs to use,
Nor evermore her aid refuse.”

'Twas said, and done: the Belly pin'd;
She neither breakfasted, nor din'd;
No more her servants at command,
Fulfill'd her wish, her comforts plann'd;
And she, unable to provide
For her own wants, had nearly died.

But mark the end: the Limbs, you'll see,
Were suff'ers in the same degree.
Surpris'd they found, from day to day,
As she grew feeble, so did they.
The Legs, that had refus'd to walk,
Were weakly as the slender stalk
That bends beneath the panoply,
E'en of the drone, or humble-bee:
The Fingers cold and stiff became;
Glaz'd were the Eyes, extinct their flame;
Mute was the Tongue; the Jaws were clos'd,
And tranquil all who had oppos'd.

“Fools, that you are,” at length she said,
“What can you do without my aid?
Think you the Tongue could ever roll
The eloquence that charms the soul ;
Think you the Hands could ever wield
The magic pen, or till the field ;
Or that the Head could ever frame
Those arts, which raise the human name
So far above the brutal crew,—
Did I not lend assistance due?
In indolence and sluggish ease,
Or only bent myself to please,
You think I live:—Mistaken thought!
With mischief, as with folly fraught.
Within my well-rang’d, peaceful cell,
Does Nature’s friend, Digestion, dwell.
Our mutual pow’rs and wondrous art,
Vigour and health to you impart,

And you must perish in the snare
You lay for me. In time, beware!
Let us still live, as we have done,
On terms, as if we all were one.
It is not yet perhaps too late,
To ward the blow of angry fate.
Feet, that were wont so far to rove,
You yet a pace or two can move
In quest of nourishment: and Hands,
May still (self-int'rest now commands)
Have strength enough to grasp the food,
And guide it to the Mouth, so rude,
Whence late the voice of tumult broke,
Which vile sedition loudly spoke.
Your office, Teeth, resume again,
Your efforts may not be in vain:
But let a sparing meal suffice.”
Gladly they took their friend's advice,

Their fault most penitently own'd,
And by their future zeal aton'd :
This dang'rous lesson ne'er forgot,
And liv'd contented with their lot.

The application holds as true
In moral, as in civil view.
"All are but parts of one great whole,
Nature the body, God the soul."
All in creation have their place,
Whether of high degree, or base ;
Each has his part allotted here,
His proper station, proper sphere ;
Creatures of want, each man depends
Less on himself than on his friends.
The prince, who owns the sov'reign sway,
Whom nations serve, and lords obey,
Owes to the hind his daily bread,
Who tills the soil by which he's fed ;

And to the prince the ploughman owes
The wealth, that to his coffer flows.

Despise not then the low estate
Of those who're useful, though not great :
The rich, the poor, the free, the thrall,
One common Father owns us all :
Let all the kindred tie approve,
And vie in offices of love.

FABLE XXI.

THE HERMIT AND THE BEAR.



On the Caution necessary in the Choice of Inmates.

NOT all that our compassion move
Should share our intercourse and love,
Or be in friendship's ardour press'd
Without distinction to our breast.
No: let us grieve with those who grieve;
The needy let our purse relieve;
The vicious our advice reclaim;
Be, good to all, our constant aim.
But let us for our bosom friend
Choose one, whose taste with ours may blend;
Whose manners, habits, rank in life,
Suit with our own: then, void of strife,

Friendship its choicest gifts may shed,
In sweet profusion o'er our head.

An aged Man, with grief oppress'd,
Perpetual inmate of his breast,
Lone in the world—for, sad to tell!
Two blooming youths in battle fell;
While at the news his faithful wife
Sunk in his arms, devoid of life—
Wish'd to escape from ev'ry eye,
Unseen to weep, unseen to die;
And far from men a refuge sought,
Where none might interrupt his thought,
Where unrestrain'd his tears might flow
In all the luxury of woe.

A cavern, in a lonely wood,
Yielded this peaceful solitude.

Around its walls the ivy clung,
And from the vault luxuriant hung;
By night it form'd a curtain'd shade,
By day a canopy display'd.

The verdant turf, with rushes spread,
Serv'd him for carpet and for bed.

His table was a massy stone,
Hewn from the rock, with moss o'ergrown;
While one, of smaller size, for seat,
Made up his little stock complete.

Salads and fruits his meals supplied;
His bev'rage pour'd the crystal tide.

A Hermit's title thus he claim'd:
A hermitage his cave was nam'd.

One, who the human heart well knew,
Has said, (experience proves it true)
That those, who suffer most, in grief
Can best administer relief.

Though deep his wounds, too deep to close,
He keenly felt for others' woes,
And in the bleeding bosom he
Pour'd the rich balm of sympathy ;
Or did the weary trav'ler stray
Far from the track and beaten way,
The good old Man, with honest pride,
Became his host, and then his guide.

Once, in his lonely calm retreat,
Shelter'd from Sol's meridian heat,
When all was still, and not a breeze
Rippled the stream, or shook the trees,
And he, absorb'd in musing, cast
A wistful look on pleasures past,
Deep, hollow groans the silence broke :—
Starting, he from his day-dream woke,
And instant, on compassion's wing,
That haply he might succour bring,

Flew to the spot from whence proceeds
The plaintive sound, nor danger heeds.

There, without pow'r to move, he found
A Bear extended on the ground.
A thorn had deeply pierc'd his foot,
With anguish torturing the brute,
While ev'ry step he strove to gain,
Increas'd the swelling and the pain.
At length, with fruitless efforts spent,
He rais'd the dolorous lament
That brought the Hermit from his cave,
Who readily assistance gave.

The thorn extracted, soon the beast
Was from his misery releas'd,
And by his gestures he express'd
The thankfulness that fill'd his breast;
For, ere he could completely stand,
He crawl'd to lick the Hermit's hand;

Who, pleas'd his gratitude to note,
Smooth'd in return his shaggy coat.

The Hermit feebly now retrac'd
The way he had so quickly pac'd.
Following, with limping gait and slow,
Along with him the Bear would go;
And, though for man no inmate fit,
His benefactor would not quit.
All night, the station pleas'd him well,
He kept the entrance of the cell,
And with the Hermit forth would roam,
If he were tempted far from home;
Would dext'rously ascend the trees,
To cull the labour of the bees,
Or, from their topmost heights would show'r
Choice fruits, to grace the Hermit's bow'r.
It happen'd on a certain day,
When Sol shed forth his brightest ray,

Oppress'd with heat, beneath the shade
His weary limbs the Hermit laid.
Sleep clos'd his eyes, and, as he slept,
Bruin his station near him kept,
Whose eager zeal employment found
To chase the flies that buzz'd around.
Spite of his care, a fly, confess'd
Impertinent above the rest,
As if determin'd to oppose,
Settled upon the Hermit's nose.

Soon as th' indignant Bruin saw
The vile offence, he rais'd his paw,
And with a sweep, a pond'rous blow,
He laid the vile offender low.
But ah! that blow, unlucky case!
Bruis'd the poor Hermit's grief-worn face.
Bleeding and smarting with the wound,
The Hermit woke, and when he found

To Bruin's ill-judg'd zeal he ow'd
The pain he felt, and blood which flow'd—
“ Bruin,” said he, “ depart in peace ;
Henceforth our intercourse must cease ;
At distance still we friends may be ;
Nearer our manners ill agree.
This lesson I will bear in mind,
(For brutes may edify mankind)—
He who an ill-match'd friend admits,
Of awkward and misjudging wits,
Will oft have reason to lament
Much mischief done with good intent.”

FABLE XXII.

THE HORSE AND THE STAG.

◆

A revengeful Disposition always punished.

FROM earliest times, what strange disputes
 Have rag'd alike 'mongst men and brutes!
 What trifles oft the source of quarrels!
 While more reap death than gather laurels.
 One treads upon his neighbour's toe:
 "How dare you, sir, insult me so?"—
 "Your pardon, sir, no harm was meant.
 A mere mistake."—But not content
 With this apology, Sir Gruff
 Demands (and soon he gains enough)
 Due satisfaction for the crime;
 With, "Here's my card, sir; name your time."

Away they speed: at the first fire,
Sir Gruff and all his feuds expire.

If such effects as these befall,
Better not quarrel, sirs, at all;
Better forgive a slight offence,
Than trespass against common sense.
Better—but lest my precepts fail,
Better to read at once my tale.

When savage man, in days of yore,
The skin of beasts for vestment wore,
Painted himself of various dyes,
And fed on Nature's wild supplies;
On grains, on acorns, berries, fruits,
Uncultivated herbs and roots.
The Horse was then, traditions tell,
A free-born, noble animal:

Proudly he shook his flowing mane,
And neigh'd and gallop'd o'er the plain :
No lash resounded in his ear,
No spur impell'd his swift career,
Or bridle check'd : their use unknown,
Bright, unsubdu'd, his spirit shone.

Whence the sad change ? I see him now
Compell'd to drag the cumbrous plough ;
Sinking beneath the panniers' load ;
Expiring on the public road !—
Revenge he cherish'd, deadliest foe,
That brute, or human breast, can know.

A youthful Stag, of merry vein,
Inhabited the self-same plain.
Between them an acquaintance grew :
The Horse would now the Stag pursue ;
And now the Stag, of nimbler course,
Would in his turn pursue the Horse.

While thus engag'd in eager play,
It happen'd, on a luckless day,
Tossing their heads, in sportive scorn,
The Stag struck hard his branching horn
Along his playmate's fine-turn'd neck,
Who had no horn his brow to deck.
The flesh was pierc'd; the blood ran
down;
The Horse assum'd a hideous frown;
And, as he view'd the crimson flood,
“Blood,” he exclaim'd, “shall pay for
blood!”

From day to day his thoughts were bent
How to effect his fell intent.
The Stag, he knew, in point of speed,
Could far his swiftest pace exceed,
And even were pursuit not vain,
What 'vantage could he hope to gain,

The Stag, with armour being dight,
For active or defensive fight,
And he no means to make him feel,
No weapon but his awkward heel?

At length he form'd the dastard plan,
To supplicate the aid of man.
Man, he had often seen, or heard,
Would take a lion by the beard.
If beasts of prey, inspir'd by fear,
Had sunk beneath his potent spear,
How could the Stag escape the force,
When thus conjoin'd, of Man and Horse?

Full of his scheme to Man he went;
Told him his cause of discontent.
"Swiftness and skill," said he, "combin'd,
May doubtless some expedient find
To rid me of this scornful foe,
And lay his vaunted antlers low."

Revolving o'er this strange petition,
Said Man, at length, "On one condition,—
That you implicitly obey
My orders, be they what they may,—
My services I'll freely lend,
And zealously your cause befriend."

Blinded by rage, the Horse consented,
"Kill me the Stag, and I'm contented."

A bit and bridle Man procur'd,
Bridle and bit the Steed endur'd;
The Hunter then his back bestrode,
Nor did his pride refuse the load.

O'er hill and dale they sped their way,
Through forest drear, and meadow gay.
Too soon the hapless Stag they found,
Too soon they gave the mortal wound:
Though he, at first, more fleet than wind,
Left his pursuers far behind;

Yet, wearied by the tedious chase,
His limbs, at length, refus'd to trace
Another step; he gasp'd for breath,
And, as he view'd th' approach of death,
In copious streams the "big round tear"
Gush'd from his eye; the foe drew near,
And, reckless of his bitter smart,
Transfix'd the jav'lin in his heart.

Loud neigh'd the Horse with savage joy:
The Stag could now no more annoy!
Then thus to Man: "The mighty debt
I owe for this I'll ne'er forget.
Your fare has hitherto been rude;
Ven'son is most delicious food:
Accept the prize; I seek again
Without delay my native plain."

"Hold, sir," said Man, "that time is past;
We part not thus, I have you fast:

Your usefulness too well I know,
My slave henceforth, with me you go,
Constant associate of my toil,
To cultivate the stubborn soil;
To carry me from place to place,
Or, as to-day, pursue the chase.
Close to my hut a shed I'll build,
With straw and fodder amply fill'd,
Where, when your daily work is done,
You may repose till rising sun,
Painting the sky of orient hue,
Call you these labours to renew."

The Horse now mourn'd his folly past,
But ah, too late! the die was cast.
For years he dragg'd his heavy chain,
(Useless to murmur or complain)
Till worn with age, and toil, and wounds,
His carcass fed his master's hounds.

Revenge too eagerly pursued,
 Brings mis'ry worse than servitude:
 Short-liv'd the pleasure it bestows,
 While never-ending are its woes.

FABLE XXIII.

THE COCK AND THE DIAMOND.

Useful Things more valuable than costly ones.

WHAT strange mistakes from pride arise !
How things, if rare, seduce our eyes !
While such as are of sterling use,
Because they 're common, meet abuse !

Look at that Frenchman, Monsieur Flirt,
With Mecklin ruffles, and no shirt.
“ Shall I,” says he, “ though poor, alack !
Wear filthy dowlas on my back ?
Let John Bull wear it, if he will ;
I'll have my ruffles, and my frill.”

Look at that Fop, with tinsel vain,
Whose dress will fence nor wind nor rain ;

What all may wear, he spurns as low,
And struts about, a raree-show !
Of human sense, if such the fruit,
Take a short lesson from a brute.

A sprightly Cock, whose matin strain
To labour rous'd th' industrious swain,
Invited all, who call'd him friend,
To dine with him at harvest-end.
The day arriv'd. With anxious care
Each plum'd his feathers neat and fair.
Dame Partlet cluck'd her lord to come ;
She us'd her beak instead of comb,
And strove, by ev'ry honest art,
Above the rest to make him smart.
Her children, by example taught,
Less of themselves than others thought ;

And though they could not boast, 'tis true,
The gift of speech, as men can do,
They had a language of their own,
To make their wants and wishes known.
Sister help'd sister, brother, brother,
And none refus'd to aid another.

Young Chanticleer advanc'd to meet
His visitors with friendly greet,
And "Cluck, cluck, cluck!" and "Cock-a-
doo!"
Pass'd on all sides for "How are you?"

Large was the party; all his cousins
On this occasion came by dozens;
But Partlet had the highest seat,
Her age and merit were so great:
For though some *richer* guests were there,
She was *the best* beyond compare.

As soon as each had tak'n his place,
Sharpen'd his beak, and crow'd a grace;
Chanticleer scrap'd; and soon he cries,
"See here, my friends, A prize! a prize!
So large a grain I ne'er did see!
It is not corn; what can it be?
My beak can pierce e'en wood, or bone;
But this resists it, like a stone;
And though I've liv'd two years or more,
I never saw its like before."

A Guinea fowl, who, tir'd of home,
From Afric's coast had lately come,
Who knew the world, and much had
seen it,
Explain'd the wonder in a minute.

"A Diamond 'tis, dear sir," said she:
"What! did you ne'er a Diamond see?"

It is a gem of high renown,
And sparkles in the royal crown ;
'Tis worn, beside, by ladies fair,
Adorns their neck, their arms, their hair :
A jeweller, or man of trade,
With this would deem his fortune made."

The Cock replied, "Then I must say,
On me its value 's thrown away :
My parents taught me, long ago,
Use to prefer to empty show ;
And rather would I call my own,
A grain of barley, than this stone :
Therefore, my friends, we'll leave it here,
And seek a humbler, better cheer ;
For we should grow, I fear, much thinner,
If diamonds only were our dinner."

Each clapp'd assent, with ready wing,
That barley was a better thing.

We'll leave them, therefore, to regale,
 And glean this moral from the tale :—
 That things are best which serve us most,
 Not such as are of greatest cost.

FABLE XXIV.

THE

OLD MAN AND THE BUNDLE OF STICKS.

—◆—

On Brotherly Union.

OF all the odious sights we see,
 Most odious is a family,
 In which dissension holds her reign,
 And nought is heard save discord's strain.
 The ties of nature fast should bind
 Near relatives in union kind;
 Mutual forbearance should repress
 Churlish reply and rude address.

Children, of self-same parents born,
 Treat not affection's claims with scorn:
 Let not relentless tempers part
 Those who should join in hand and heart;

Nor kill the bloom of early life
With envy, jealousy, and strife.

Three Brothers (as our tale relates)
Were oft engag'd in fierce debates ;
Perpetual quarrels, brawls, and noise,
Mix'd in their sports, and marr'd their joys.
The Father griev'd, as well he might,
At these their feuds from morn till night ;
And, with a parent's tender skill,
Sought to correct the growing ill.
Alas ! each measure he pursued
Fail'd to allure them to their good :
His precepts, though replete with force,
Unheeded pass'd, as words of course ;
And keen reproof, and mark'd disgrace,
Wrought no amendment in their case.

One eve, while mourning failures past,
An apt expedient came at last.—
It chanc'd, that in contentious chat,
When round the fire the Brothers sat,
And to the crackling faggot's blaze
Succeeded the pale embers' rays:
“Cease, cease your wrangling,” quoth the
Sire,

“And bring some wood to rouse the fire.”

Close to the door a faggot pile
Was rear'd, which promis'd to beguile
Chill Winter of his cruel rage,
And comfort yield to hoary age.
From this a faggot forth they drew,
And on the floor plac'd full in view:
“Break it, my sons,” the father cried.
Each in his turn his strength applied;

Then own'd in vain his efforts spent,
The faggot neither broke nor bent.

“ Now be the osier band untied,
And try each stick apart,” he cried.

The task was easy, and the sage
(Charm'd their attention to engage)

Resum'd: “ In this, dear boys ! you see
The good of UNANIMITY :

You are the faggot ; and the bond,

More pow'rful than a magic wand,

Which keeps you safe from ev'ry ill,

Is faithful love and free good-will.

Ah ! if this precious tie should burst,

Of evils you may dread the worst !

In ev'ry petty villain's hand

Your virtues snap at his command,

Till some insidious, fell assault

Expose too late your fatal fault.”

Conviction touch'd each youthful breast,
Reason was heard, and truth confess'd;
And they, who late in malice strove,
Became a family of love.

FABLE XXV.

THE LION AND THE GNAT.



Conveying a two-fold Moral.

“MEAN insect, scum of earth, away!”—

In these contemptuous terms one day

The Lion proud the Gnat address’d,

Whose buzz disturb’d the monarch’s rest.

Scarce from his lips the words were heard,

Than open war the Gnat declar’d;

Sounded the charge without ado,

Both trumpeter and warrior too.

“Think’st thou,” said she, “thy kingly

name

Inspires my fear? I scorn thy fame:

Around the Ox my sport is free,
As stately as your majesty!"

So saying, she commenc'd th' attack,
Besieging first the Lion's back;
Then chang'd her plan, more furious smote,
And fix'd upon his ample throat.

The piercing sting, so keen the smart,
Inflam'd with rage the Lion's heart;
But to his nostrils when she flew,
His wrath to madd'ning phrensy grew;
He foam'd; his eyes flash'd fire; his roar
Echoed from forest to the shore;
The beasts all trembled with dismay,
And to close covert sped their way.

Meanwhile this universal dread
Is by a tiny Gnat o'erspread,
The "scum of earth," who dar'd assail
Huge Majesty from snout to tail,

And laugh'd exultingly to find,
While tooth-and-nail their forces join'd,
Himself alone the Lion wounds :
Against his sides his tail resounds ;
He fights with air : but, ah ! at length
His fury overcame his strength ;
Subdued he fell. With glory fir'd,
The insect from the field retir'd ;
And, crown'd with laurel, full of glee,
Sounded aloud the victory.

Short-liv'd her triumph and her fame !
Which too impatient to proclaim,
Incautiously she flew to where
A busy Spider spread his snare ;
Around the Gnat his web he curl'd,
And slew the conqu'ror of the world.

Two lessons, excellent in turn,
The moralist may here discern :—

First, from whatever source it spring,
Let insult rouse the meanest thing ;
The scorn'd the scorner may confound,
Each reptile has a way to wound.
Next, that it ever be our care,
With sober minds success to bear :
He who evades a monster's jaw,
May live to perish by a straw.

FABLE XXVI.

THE WALLETS: OR, THE ANIMALS ASSEMBLED BEFORE JUPITER.

On Blindness to our own Defects.

As Jove one day, in royal state,
Upon his throne of audience sat,
And with benignant eye survey'd
The creatures by his bounty made,
He thus proclaim'd: "Let all that breathe
The vital air on earth beneath,
Before my footstool straight appear."—
The mandate sounds from sphere to sphere:
Obedient to their sov'reign's will,
The brutes surround Olympus' hill.

Then thus the God: "If any find
Defect of e'en the slightest kind,

Or deem himself a hideous creature
In form, in figure, or in feature,
Let him to me the blemish name,
Without reserve, or fear, or shame,
And I (so boundless is my love)
Will the deformity remove.

“Approach,” said he, “you, Monsieur Ape,
Say if you like your face and shape :
Look at these animals ; declare
If with their beauties yours compare :
Are you content ?”—“ Why not ?” said he,
“ None has more legs, that I can see ;
My portrait, drawn by artist true,
Has not reproach’d me hitherto :—
But for my rough-hewn brother there,
That shapeless block, old Goodman Bear,
If he will profit by my wit,
He’ll never for his picture sit.”

Bruin on this advanc'd :—'twas thought
With discontent his mind was fraught.
Quite the reverse ; to own the truth,
He deem'd himself a comely youth :
A finer form he ne'er had seen ;
He wonder'd what the Ape could mean !
The Elephant might well complain,
That hideous burthen to sustain,
That mass of flesh, unform'd and rude,
With not a single charm endued !
Too long his snout, his tail too short—
He surely must be Nature's sport !

The Elephant, for wisdom fam'd,
His vanity alike proclaim'd,
And prov'd (a maxim of the schools)
That the most learn'd are greatest fools ;
For common sense is often found
The best, if not the most profound.

He did not scruple to reveal
He thought his figure quite genteel :
But to his mind (his taste was known)
The Whale, indeed, was overgrown.

Dame Pismire thought the Mite too small,
Deeming herself Colossus tall.

Thus each could faults in others find,
And only to his own was blind.
So Jove dismiss'd the happy crowd,
At their brute folly laughing loud.

Weak man, like these conceited brutes,
His neighbour's failings ne'er disputes :
Never at speck or blemish winks :
And while the piercing eye of lynx
Is on another's errors thrown,
He closes it against his own.

The Sov'reign Artist of our frame
Created ev'ry man the same,

Of ev'ry nation, ev'ry clime,
Whether of past or present time.
On each two Wallets he bestow'd,
To either bag assign'd its load:
The one, appointed to contain
Our neighbour's faults, we heap amain,
And wear before; while that design'd
To bear our own, we place behind.

FABLE XXVII.

MODESTY AND IMPUDENCE*.

THE Dog-star's pestilential sway
More sultry made the sultry day;
When, stealing through the shady glen,
With silent step, and fearful ken,
Close veil'd, a nymph, of form as fair
As e'en Diana's self could wear,
Approach'd the river's gentle wave,
Her limbs in its cool stream to lave.
Her name was Modesty. In haste
She laid aside her garments chaste,

* The prose of this fable may be seen in the Female Mentor, Vol. I. where it is said to be taken from an old book.

And plung'd within the sparkling tide,
E'en from herself, herself to hide.

While bathing, as she thought, unseen,
A female of a diff'rent mien,
Foul Impudence, with settled stare,
Unblushing front, and bosom bare,
Passing, by chance, the river's side,
The robes of Modesty espied ;
And stripping off her own vile dress,
Made up of scraps and tawdriness,
Put on the virgin's pure array,
And, thus accoutred, stalk'd away.

From bathing when the nymph withdrew,
She sought her spotless vest anew ;
But found instead (disastr'ous theft !)
The rags which Impudence had left.

These rather than assume, she fled
Quite naked to a neighb'ring shed,

Where Innocence had fix'd her home,—
Refuge more safe than costlier dome.

Here Modesty conceal'd remain'd,
Till Impudence, who ill sustain'd
A character on trial shown
So little suited to her own,
Threw off the mask with free accord,
And Modesty's fair robes restor'd.

To you, dear girls*, whose state forlorn,
Calls for a voice from ills to warn,
Permit me, lest the story fail,
To point the moral of my tale.

Lost are to you the tender cares
That fondly watch'd your infant years :
Lost is to you the converse kind,
That form'd unknown your growing mind :

* Nieces of the author, who had recently lost
their mother.

For ever lost the sage advice,
(No jewel of so rich a price!)
Which, on life's rough or slipp'ry stage,
Had been your guide in riper age;
Had warn'd you 'gainst the treach'rous wiles
Of Flatt'ry's too seducing smiles,
And all the evils that perplex,
When beauty decorates your sex.

Death has dissolv'd the sacred tie!
Who shall a mother's place supply?
Whose but a mother's breast can feel
Such ardent int'rest, constant zeal?
None, none, alas!—The feeble aid
A friend can give, by *me* be paid;
Nor deem me, though confin'd my sphere,
Among your friends the least sincere.

My moral then. The highest grace
That can adorn the female face

Is Modesty. 'Tis this imparts
A lustre, that attracts all hearts.
Plainness, possessing this, is priz'd ;
Beauty, without it, oft despis'd.
Let Modesty your thoughts express ;
Let Modesty control your dress ;
For oft though Impudence may wear
A modest garb, or modest air,
Yet Modesty, on no pretence,
Will dress, or look, like Impudence.

FABLE XXVIII.

THE FOWLER AND THE LITTLE BIRDS*.



Actions the best Rule of Judgment.

THE stream had lost its silver sound ;
The lake in chains of ice was bound ;
Keen blew the blast ; the sun arose
In crimson pomp o'er drifted snows ;
With icicles each tree was dress'd,
Like jewels in a birth-day vest.
From his bleak mansion in the North,
Winter thus spread his glories forth.
Dazzling the scene, yet desolate,
Yielding to few a happy fate.

* The outline of this Fable is taken from Bishop Taylor.

The milkmaid underneath the hill
Can scarce her tepid task fulfil :
The shepherd-boy beside her stands,
Blowing his breath to thaw his hands :
To circulate the purple tide,
The sturdier shepherd beats his side :
The flocks and herds, whose wonted treat
Issued spontaneous at their feet,
No herbage find ; the spiry blade
Is buried in the frozen glade :
The feather'd songsters of the grove,
No more attune their notes to love ;
But mope, dejected on the spray,
Chirping their joy's funereal lay.

Poor birds ! their lot seems most severe !
Famine assails them ; Fraud is near !
For, leaving home at peep of dawn,
A Fowler trod the white-rob'd lawn,

For them the deadly snare to set,
Entangling lime, and whelming net,
With treach'rous hand the tempting corn
Scatt'ring, to lure them from the thorn.

His prey, unconscious of the guile,
Look on with hope, and seem to smile;
Impell'd by want their wings they ply,
And to the fatal banquet hie.

Enough secur'd, the snares were rais'd,
His morning's work the Fowler prais'd;
Then seiz'd the victims one by one,
And ev'ry neck remorseless wrung.

While thus employ'd, a youthful Thrush
Observ'd him from a neighb'ring bush;
Adown his cheeks the tear-drops roll'd,
Extorted by the piercing cold.
She mark'd the fact, mistook the cause,
(No code she knew but Nature's laws,)

And to her mother thus express'd
The artless feelings of her breast.

“How merciful that man must be,
Who weeps so fast and bitterly!
No doubt his friendly soul is griev'd
That the poor birds of life are reav'd!”

“His friendly soul!” the mother said,
“How easily is youth misled!
Would you man's character descry,
Look to his hands, and not his eye:
Weigh actions; and if these impart
The cruel blow that rends the heart,
Though tears in copious torrents flow,
They spring from an insidious foe:
Be not deceiv'd by sighs or tears,
The subtle mask which Treach'ry wears.
Thus, by the far-fam'd river Nile,
The dreadful monster Crocodile

Weeps o'er his prey. Man oft the same,
 A monster with a milder name.
 Friendship is open and sincere ;
 If in his eye you view the tear,
 His hand, exerted for your weal,
 Will prove it shed in honest zeal."

FABLE XXIX.

THE EAGLE, THE CAT, AND THE SOW.

*The Odiousness of Treachery.*

THERE are, who at detraction rail,
Yet ne'er suppress a sland'rous tale ;
Or scruple idly to repeat
The calumny to all they meet.

There are, who eagerly proclaim
Each blemish in a neighbour's fame,
And cry his reputation down,
In the weak hope to raise their own.

Vile are these characters : but worse
(Pandora held no greater curse,)
Is he, who, for malignant ends,
Seeks to dissever kindest friends ;

Who to the ear of each conveys
Some specious tale, distrust to raise;
In either breast fell discord sows,
Then battens on their mutual woes.

An Oak, which had for ages stood,
Endur'd the blast, and stemm'd the flood,
Shelter'd within its kind embrace
Three families of diff'rent race.
Upon its proud, o'ertow'ring crest,
An Eagle built her airy nest;
While in its bosom's thickest shade
A Wild Cat had her kittens laid;
And in the hollow at its foot,
(For time had bar'd its sturdy root)
A Sow, with all her infant train,
Had settled her maternal reign.

In sweet content their moments flew ;
None but parental cares they knew ;
The rising sun beheld their peace,
Nor saw at eve their concord cease ;
And had not Treach'ry interpos'd,
In harmony their lives had clos'd.

Th' insidious Cat, of faith devoid,
This scene of golden bliss destroy'd.
She mark'd the Eagle's callow brood,
For Cat, and kittens, dainty food !
And straight bethought her of a way
To gain them for their common prey.

Assuming a most piteous look,
Her course she to the Eagle took.
" Good neighbour, do not think me rude
Thus uninvited to intrude ;
To make so free I should be loth,
Did not destruction wait us both.

Yon Sow (I hate the swinish race!)
Fast undermines our dwelling-place.
Already are its roots laid bare,
E'en now it totters in the air,
And soon this hospitable tree
Will fall to earth, and with it we!
The Sow will then her purpose gain;
Eaglets and kittens will be slain;
Our darling little ones will feast
This hideous tribe, this hateful beast.

“ I know not what you mean to do,
But I this method shall pursue.
Whate'er betide, within I'll stay,
Nor quit my threshold night or day:
There I can witness all below,
And watch each movement of the foe:
For though disasters threat at home,
'Tis still more dangerous to roam.

Be on your guard :—Adieu !” she said ;
Then to the Sow a visit paid.

“ Good morrow, dame : I love to see
A mother with her family ;
And yours are all such pretty creatures,
So mild and docile in their natures ;
'Twould grieve me more than I can tell,
Were any to do worse than well.
But, ah ! excuse my heart's misgiving,
An evil age I fear we live in !
When Mischief's crew will mock defence,
Nor spare this lovely innocence !
As lately as this very day,
I overheard the Eagle say,
That the next time you went abroad,
(Who could suspect such savage fraud ?)
She'd seize on one of your sweet pigs,
To feast her own conceited prigs.

Shudd'ring at this, away I ran,
To tell you of her wicked plan.
For my own babes I tremble too ;
Perhaps the monster may embrue
Her beak rapacious in their blood,
And shed around the crimson flood.
But, hark ! I hear my darlings cry :
Excuse me now, dear friend, good b'ye !”

Thus having, by calumnious art,
Alarm'd each tender mother's heart,
And sown suspicion in her breast,
Return'd Grimalkin to her nest ;
Where she so well the trick maintain'd,
Her tale implicit credit gain'd.
The whole day long she peeping stood,
And ne'er stole out till night for food :
So that the Sow kept close at home,
Lest the devouring bird should come ;

Nor durst the Eagle quit her hall,
For fear, meanwhile, the tree should fall.

The consequence I scarce need tell :
Parents and children victims fell ;
Starving for want of food they lay,
To the vile Cat an easy prey.

FABLE XXX.

THE SPIDER AND THE BEE.



In Praise of the Mathematics.

A CONTEST (but not one of swords,
Nor one of pistols, but of words)
Took place (nor can I tell you where,
Or who to light first brought th' affair ;
For neither Æsop nor Fontaine
Have such a fable in their train)
Between a Spider and a Bee,
On points of art and industry.

The Spider urg'd, in bold defiance,
His skill in mathematic science :
Said, that no creature like himself,
Nor insect wight, nor human elf,

Knew half so much of such affairs,
Of lines and angles, rounds and squares:
His curious web must e'er impart
A specimen of matchless art:
And from himself alone it sprung;
No foreign aid the texture hung;
No foreign aid the means supplied
By which he wrought his darling pride:
Whereas the honey of the Bee
Was stol'n from ev'ry flow'r and tree,
That blossom yields, or fragrant scent,
And even weeds their succour lent.

To this the Bee with warmth replied,
(For anger reign'd on either side)
That what the Spider urg'd as blame
Was her best praise, her highest fame:
Though thus of theft she was accus'd,
Had she, e'en once, her pow'r abus'd?

No flow'r or herb, she dar'd maintain,
Had ever reason to complain
Of lustre dimm'd, or fragrance lost,
Or that she flourish'd at their cost.
As to the Spider's vaunted lore
In lines and angles, and what more,
She might with safer title rest
Her merits on a nobler test;
The order of her cells alone,
In which her art conspicuous shone.
But she had other things to name :
Who could, like her, so justly frame
The perfect hexagon? And, then,
How useful were her works to men?
In lowly cot, or lofty dome,
The sweetness of her honeycomb
Alike was priz'd ; her wax beside
Was to the wants of man applied.

Thus in comparison of skill,
The Bee must rise superior still
To him, or art was at its ebb,—
The weaver of a flimsy web.

The Spider then, with wrathful look,
That flash'd displeasure ere he spoke,
Resum'd: “How prone are stubborn fools
To scorn the wisdom of the schools!
Conceited insect, check thy pride!
Know'st thou the pow'r thou wouldst de-
ride?”

“I know it well,” replied the Bee,
“And, knowing, I would teach it thee:
But thou canst scan but little part
Of this profound and magic art.
To show its various ends and use,
My grandsire once descanted thus.—

“ ‘Blest Mathematics! noblest name
Recorded in the lists of Fame!

Thy art the faculties improves,
Strengthens the judgment, and removes
The murky veil that clouds the sense,
And chases doubts and dulness thence.
Scarce can thy wondrous pow'rs be told!
By thee the Miser counts his gold.
By thee the Hind, that reaps and sows,
The diff'rent times and seasons knows.
Thou giv'st the cannon aim in war;
Thou form'st, in peace, the ploughman's
share.

How many noble engines too
Dost thou exhibit to the view!
By one, the rude and fickle wind
Is made to labour for mankind.
Another turns, where bogs abound,
The land to firm and fertile ground.
A third, to vapour gives the force
Of fifty or a hundred horse,

Thy learn'd disciple can effect
More than the poet, fancy-deckt,
Has yet conceiv'd. Observe his plan,
To narrow kingdoms to a span !
Then see him show to human sight,
The limbs and features of a mite !
Or give to weak and purblind age,
Like youth, to read th' instructive page.
He, by thy lore, a thousand years
Forward can set the starry spheres ;
Call by its name each lamp divine,
That in the azure vault doth shine ;
Can gauge the depth of ev'ry sea,
Measure the Sun, and Saturn weigh.
He farthest through the boundless space,
The great Creator's hand can trace,
And best reveal to feeble sense,
The wonders of Omnipotence.'

“Such are the pow’rs of this vast art!
But what’s the little flimsy part
You proudly boast? Does it conduce
To moral end, or gen’ral use?
Do you to aught your skill apply,
Except to lure th’ unwary fly?
With craft the treach’rous snare you weave,
And ne’er with life your victim leave.
In this consists my worthier skill:—
For good I labour; you, for ill:
To ruin is your art confin’d;
But mine, to benefit mankind.”

THE END.

