Mary Barber, â??A True Taleâ?•

Description

MARY BARBER

â??A True TALEâ?•

A Mother, who vast Pleasure finds
In modelling her Childrens Minds;
With whom, in exquisite Delight,
She passes many a Winter Night;
Mingles in evâ??ry Play, to find
What Byas Nature gave the Mind;
Resolving thence to take her Aim,
To guide them to the Realms of Fame;
And wisely make those Realms their Way
To Regions of eternal Day;
Each boistâ??rous Passion to controul,
And early humanize the Soul;
In simple Tales, beside the Fire,
The noblest Notions would inspire:
Her Children, conscious of her Care,
Transported, hung around her Chair.

OF Scripture-Heroes she would tell,
Whose Names they lispâ??d, ere they could spell:
The Mother then, delighted, smiles;
And shews the Story on the Tiles.

AT other Times, her Themes would be
The Sages of Antiquity;
Who left immortal Names behind,
By proving Blessings to their Kind.
Again, she takes another Scope,
And tells of Aâ??DDISON,â?? and Pâ??OPE.

STUDIOUS to let her Children know
The various Turns of Things below; â??-
How Virtue here was oft oppresâ??d,
To shine more glorious with the Blessâ??d;
Told Tâ??ULLYâ??â??sâ?? â??and the Gâ??RACCHIâ??â??sâ?? Dâ??oom,
The Patriots, and the Pride of â??*Rome*.
Then blessâ??d the â??*Drapier*â??â??s happier Fate,
Who â??*savâ??d*, aâ??nd lives to *â??guardâ??* the State.

SOME Comedies gave great Delight,
And entertainâ??d them many a Night:
Others could no Admittance find,
Forbid, as Poison to the Mind:
Those Authors Wit and Sense, said she,
But heighten their Impiety.

THIS â??happy Mother met, one Day,
The Book of Fables, writ by GAY;
And told her Children, Hereâ??s a Treasure,
A Fund of Wisdom, and of Pleasure!
Such Morals, and so finely writ;
Such Decency, good Sense, and Wit!
Well has the Poet found the Art,
To raise the Mind, and mend the Heart.

HER favâ??rite Son the Volume seizâ??d;
And, as he read, seemâ??d highly pleasâ??d;
Made such Reflections evâ??ry Page;
The Mother thought above his Age;
Delighted read, but scarce was able
To finish the concluding Fable.

WHAT â??ails my Child? the Mother cries:
Whose Sorrows now have fillâ??d your Eyes?
O dear Mamma, can he want Friends,
Who writes for such exalted Ends?
Oh base, degenâ??rate human Kind!
Had I a Fortune to my Mind,
Should Gâ??AY â??complain? But now, alas!
Throâ?? what a World am I to pass?
Where Friendship is an empty Name,
And Merit scarcely paid in Fame?

RESOLVâ??D â??to lull his Woes to Rest,
She tells him, He should hope the best:
This has been yet Gâ??AYâ??â??s Case, I own;
But now his Meritâ??s amply known.
Content that tender Heart of thine:
Heâ??ll be the Care of Câ??AROLINE.
Who thus instructs the royal Race,
Must have a Pension, or a Place.

MAMMA, â??if you were Qâ??UEEN, â??says he,
And such a Book were writ for me,
I find â??tis so much to your Taste,
That Gâ??AYâ?? would keep his Coach at least.

MY â??Son, what you suppose, is true:
I see its Excellence in you.
Poets who write to mend the Mind,
A royal Recompence should find.
But I am barrâ??d by Fortuneâ??s Frowns,
From the best Privilege of Crowns;
The glorious, godlike Powâ??r to bless,
And raise up Merit in Distress.

BUT, dear Mamma, I long to know,
Were you the Qâ??UEENâ??, what youâ??d bestow.

WHAT Iâ??d bestow, says she, my Dear?
At least, â??*a thousand Pounds a Year*.

NOTES:

â??26â?? â??*ADDISON* Joseph Addison (â??1672-1719â??), popular periodical essayist, poet, and dramatist; â?? *POPE* Alexander Pope (1688-1744), poet, satirist, and translator of Homer (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

31 â??*TULLY* Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC-43 BC)â??, a Roman orator who was executed by his political enemies; *the GRACCHIâ??s Doom* Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, (169-164? BC-133 BC), â??Roman tribune who sponsored agrarian reforms to restore the class of independent farmers and who was assassinated in a riot sparked by his senatorial opponentsâ?•, and his brother, Gaius Sempronius Gracchus â??(160-153 BC?-121BC), â??Roman tribune who reenacted the agrarian reforms of his brotherâ?• and who committed suicide before his political enemies could execute him (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

33 â??â??*the Drapierâ??s happy fate* A reference to Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), who published a series of seven pamphlets known as *Drapierâ??s Letters* (1724-1725) that was â??part of a successful campaign to prevent the imposition of a new, and debased, coinage on Irelandâ?• (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

42 â??*The Book of Fables writ by GAY* John Gay (â??1685-1735)â??, English poet and dramatist, whose â?? *Fablesâ??* was published in 1727 and dedicated to William, Duke of Cumberland, the six-year-old son of the newly-crowned King George II (1683-1760) and Queen Caroline.

54â?? *the concluding Fable* â??Fable L: The Hare and many Friendsâ?• was the last of the 50 poems that make up Gayâ??s *Fables*.

70 *Heâ??ll be the care of CAROLINE* â??In dedicating *Fables* to Prince William, Gay was hoping to court favor with the Princeâ??s mother, Queen Caroline (1683-1737), known to be a patron of the arts. In the end, he was offered the post of Gentleman Usher to Princess Louisa, then two years old. Feeling snubbed, Gay declined the position.

Source: *Poems on Several Occasionsâ??* (London, 1735), pp. 7-12. [Google Books]

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