

**THE FABLES  
OF JOHN GAY**

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The Fables of John Gay by Octavius Freire Owen

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**OCTAVIUS FREIRE OWEN**

**THE FABLES  
OF JOHN GAY**



THE  
FABLES OF JOHN GAY  
ILLUSTRATED.

WITH AN ORIGINAL MEMOIR, INTRODUCTION,  
AND ANNOTATIONS,  
BY  
OCTAVIUS FREIRE OWEN, M.A. F.S.A.  
OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD;  
RECTOR OF BURSTOW, SURREY; TRANSLATOR OF THE ORGANO OF ARISTOTLE,  
ETC. ETC.

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WITH  
ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIX DRAWINGS BY WILLIAM HARVEY,  
ENGRAVED BY THE BROTHERS DALZIEL.

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## LIFE OF JOHN GAY.

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THE Author of the following Fables is an example of the fickleness of fortune, and the independence of talent and position: descended from an old family, he inherited no ancestral wealth, and was a confirmed poet, though placed apprentice to a silk-mercier.

The manor of Goldworthy, in Devonshire, had long been in possession of his family, but its name does not appear in the Villare. The poet was however of Norman origin; his ancestor, Gilbert le Gay, gave name to a place called Hampton-Gay in Northamptonshire, and by marriage with the family of Curtoyse obtained possession of Goldworthy. The place of his birth was at Barnstaple;<sup>1</sup> the date of it 1688. His first instructor, Mr. Luck, probably fostered, though he could not create, a talent for the Muses in his pupil, ("poeta nascitur non fit,") by a volume of Latin and English verses, which he published shortly before he retired from the superintendence of the school

(1) Since the publication of Johnson's biography of Gay, a singular discovery of a mass of MSS., concealed in a secret drawer in an easy-chair belonging to the poet, has led to the accurate knowledge of his birthplace having been Barnstaple. The reader will find a full account of this discovery, and of the papers, in a small volume in the British Museum, called Gay's Chair, with poems never before printed, from the MSS. of the Rev. Joseph Baller, his nephew, edited by Henry Lee, author of "Caleb Quotem." Hence, upon Baller's authority, I have stated him to have been born at Barnstaple: Goldworthy is near Bideford.