Alexander Pennecuik, â??A Tale of a Muir-Cockâ?•

Description

ALEXANDER PENNECUIK

â??A Tale of a Muir-Cockâ?•

From antient nest did spring a droll muir-cock,
Who gravely preachâ??d to all the feathrâ??d flock;
Though he was known to be no bird of brains,
By lusty lungs he pickâ??d up wholesome grains.
The ideot birds did round their pastor throng,
And listenâ??d to his heather-blitter song.
Two nests he had, from whence heâ??d weekly preach,
By law securâ??d, and out of dangerâ??s reach.
Had not he said, that title to the crown
The eagle had, was just as badâ??s his own;
Which being joinâ??d with an excessive drouth,
The sanhedrim of birds shut up his mouth.
Such was his drouth, he could have drunk the sea,
Though birds of grace should always sober be.
He never preachâ??d save at a riverâ??s brink,
Daubâ??d in his beak, and guzled down the drink.
He lost his text when on a naked rock,
But liquor put fresh spirits in the cock.
So lost his stipends, almost lost his breath,
For he lay hungry on the naked heath:
But driving wedlock with a sly muir-hen,
Who cunning had amongst the most of men;
She was related to the birds of grandeur,
And beenshâ??d and peenshâ??d, to each bush did wander;
And cryâ??d and lyâ??d, till her rich friends did give
Fund for herself, and cock and pout to live:
Whilst he through want and infamy was crossâ??d,
Still thinking on the happy nests he lost;
Sending addresses to the sacred train,
That theyâ??d repone him to these nests again,
Which they rejected with a cold disdain.
At last he plots with resolution stout
A way to get rich a husband to the pout;
Inticâ??d a witless, young well featherâ??d bird,
With many a silken and a sugarâ??d word,

Till fuddlâ??d with intoxicated streams,
His headâ??s a-float with airy amâ??rous dreams;
Feeding and feasting on the poutâ??s fair face,
Said, reverend cock, pronounce the rights of grace;
Who, like a grave and venerable cock,
Did say the grace, and made them married folk;
Blest the young birds, and all the drunken gossips:
Fistula dulce canit, volucrem decipit auceps.

NOTES:

Title *Muir-Cock* â??The male of the red grouseâ?• (*Dictionaries of the Scots Language*).

1 *droll* â??Intentionally facetious, amusing, comicalâ?• (*OED*).

6 *heather-blitter* Heather-bleater; a kind of songbird (*OED*).

11 *drouth* â??The condition or quality of being dryâ?• (*OED*).

12 *sanhedrim* â??The name applied to the highest court of justice and supreme council at Jerusalem, and in a wider sense also to lower courts of justiceâ?• (*OED*).

16 *Daubâ??d* â??To peckâ?• (*Dictionaries of the Scots Language*).

19 *stipends* In this context, a reference to a ministerâ??s salary.

24 *beenshâ??d* Scots phonetic of â??banished;â?• *peenshâ??d* Scots phonetic of â??penalised.â?•

26 *pout* â??A young fowlâ?• (*Dictionaries of the Scots Language*).

30 *repone* â??To restore to office, or to rights formerly held, to reinstate (*Dictionary of the Scots Language*).

43 *Fistula dulce canit, volucrem decipit auceps* â??The fowlers flute sings sweetly to deceive the birdâ?• (*Distichs of Cato*, 1.27). Translation mine.

SOURCE: ***A Collection of Scots Poems on Several Occasions*** **(Edinburgh, 1769), pp. 47-48. [Google Books]**

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