Anonymous, â??The Snailâ??s Apologist. An Heroi-Comic Ode from the Frenchâ?•

Description

ANONYMOUS

â??*The* SNAILâ??s APOLOGIST. *An Heroi-Comic* ODE *from the* French.â?•

What seas of blood! what heaps of dead!
What horrid scenes around are spread!
Murder and carnage rush to light,
Tumultuous from the realms of night;
One wide destruction covers all,
The virtuous with the vicious fall;
Amidst a throng of guilty ghosts
That crowd the *Styx* on *Plutoâ??s* coasts,
I see (or do my senses fail?)
Untimely slain, the gentle snail.
Say whence thy claim, presumptuous man!
To bound their lifeâ??s contracted span?
Have they from thee receivâ??d their breath?
Hast thou a right to give them death?
I know what vain pretence is made,
Thou sayst that rapine is their trade.
What rapineâ??? is not yonder tree
Their country? falsely claimâ??d by thee!
What if the foliage fade and fall,
Their own, that fragrant foliage all.
Born where yon peach nutrition draws,
The snail is ignâ??rant of thy laws;
Kind natureâ??s voice the peach bestows,
Kind natureâ??s voice alone he knows.
Contented with his humble lot,
He plunders none, he riots not;
Cease then an hasty fate to give,
And since he only eats to live,
Indulge him in the green retreat,
And let, ah! let him live to eat.
With martial ardour dost thou glow?
Up, seek and charge an equal foe;
Against the gnat the war declare,
And hunt him throâ?? the fields of air;
Let hostile wasps provoke thy rage,
And, foe to sloth, the drone engage;
The gorgeous moth, the *dragonâ??s* dread,

Destroy them, and bestride the dead;
Strike home, nor let thy vengeance fail,
â??Tis due to these, but spare the snail.
Alcides thus, in days of yore,
Bade monsters vex the world no more;
And by thy valourâ??s equal deed,
Be later times from monsters freed;
Throâ?? dangers press, pursue the fight,
The threatenâ??d wound, inflicted, slight.
As fairest flowâ??rs of sharpest thorn,
Of baffled danger, gloryâ??s born,
Hence demi-gods and heroes claim
Proud statues in the shrine of Fame.

NOTES:

8 *Styx on Plutoâ??s coasts* Pluto is another name for Hades, the Greek God of the Underworld. â??Plutoâ??s coastsâ?• refers here to the banks of the river Styx, the river of the Underworld (Oxford Reference).

16 *rapine* â??The act or practice of seizing and taking away by force the property of others; plunder, pillage, robberyâ?• (OED).

36 *drone* â??The male of the honey-bee. It is a non-worker, its function being to impregnante the queen-beeâ?• (OED).

37 *dragonâ??s* â??A fly so calledâ?• [Authorâ??s note].

41 *Alcides thusâ?¦no more* An alternative name for Heracles, a divine hero from Greek mythology known for battling against monsters of the Underworld.

Source: *The Gentlemanâ??s Magazine*, vol. 18 (August 1748), p. 375.

Edited by Daniel Bresnahan