Anne Finch, â??The Lyon and the Gnatâ?•

Description

ANNE FINCH

â??The Lyon and the Gnatâ?•

To the still Covert of a Wood,
About the prime of Day,
A *Lyon*, satiated with Food,
With stately Pace, and sullen Mood,
Now took his lazy way.

To Rest he there himself composâ??d,
And in his Mind revolvâ??d,
How Great a Person it enclosâ??d,
How free from Danger he reposâ??d,
Though now in Ease dissolvâ??d!

Who Guard, nor Centinel did need,
Despising as a Jest
All whom the Forest else did feed,
As Creatures of an abject Breed,
Who durst not him molest.

But in the Air a Sound he heard,
That gave him some dislike;
At which he shook his grisly Beard,
Enough to make the Woods affeard,
And stretchâ??d his Paw to strike.

When on his lifted Nose there fell
A Creature, slight of Wing,
Who neither fearâ??d his Grin, nor Yell,
Nor Strength, that in his Jaws did dwell,
But gores him with her Sting.

Transported with thâ?? Affront and Pain,
He terribly exclaims,
Protesting, if it comes again,
Its guilty Blood the Grass shall stain,
And to surprize it aims.

The scoffing *Gnat* now laughâ??d aloud,
And bids him upwards view
The *Jupiter* within the Cloud,
That humblâ??d him, who was so proud,
And his sharp Thunder threw.

That Taunt no *Lyonâ??s* Heart couâ??d bear;
And now much more he raves,
Whilst this new *Perseus* in the Air
Doâ??s War and Strife again declare,
And all his Terrour braves.

Upon his haughty Neck she rides,
Then on his lashing Tail;
(Which need not now provoke his Sides)
Where she her slender Weapon guides,
And makes all Patience fail.

A Truce at length he must propose,
The Terms to be her Own;
Who likewise Rest and Quiet chose,
Contented now her Life to close
When sheâ??d such Triumph known.

You mighty Men, who meaner ones despise,
Learn from this Fable to become more Wise;
You see the Lyon *may be vext with* Flies.

NOTES:

Title Originally an Aesopâ??s fable in which the moral is that no matter oneâ??s station in life, they can always be undone.

1 Covert â??A place which gives shelter to wild animals or gameâ?• (*OED*).

2 *prime of Day* â??The early morning; the period between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a. m.â?• (*OED*).

11 *Centinel* A guard similar to a soldier (*OED*).

15 *durst* â??Daredâ?• (*OED*).

19 *affeard* â??Afraidâ?• (OED).

33 *Jupiter* â??The supreme deity of the ancient Romansâ?¦whose weapon was the thunderboltâ?• (*OED*).

38 *Perseus* Greek demigod, slayer of the Gorgon Medusa and other monsters (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*).

53 *vext* Vexed: Irritated or afflicted (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1714), pp. 254-57. [Google Books]

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