

Now a fierce lynx, with fiery glare, 35
A wolf, an ass, a fox, a bear!
Had I neâ€™er livâ€™d at court, he cries,
Such transformation might surprise;
But there, in quest of daily game,
Each able courtier acts the same. 40
Wolves, lions, lynxes, while in place,
Their friends and fellows are their chase;
They play the bearâ€™s and foxâ€™s part;
Now rob by force, now steal with art;
They sometimes in the senate bray; 45
Or, changâ€™d again to beasts of prey,
Down from the lion to the ape,
Practise the frauds of evâ€™ry shape.
So said, upon the god he flies;
In cords the struggling captive ties. 50
Now, Proteus, now (to truth compellâ€™d)
Speak, and confess, or what you will,
Use strength, surprise, or what you will,
The courtier finds evasion still;
Not to be bound by any ties, 55
And never forcâ€™d to leave his lies.

NOTES:

1 *Courtier* – An attendant at court (OED).

7 *Philip’s son* – Alexander the Great (356BC-323BC), son of Philip II of Macedon, known for his military exploits; *fain* – Gladly, willingly, with pleasure (OED).

9 *wand* – Straight slender stick made from young tree bark (OED).

14 *Proteus* – Sea god, son of Oceanus and Tethys;” capable of changing shape (OED).

15 *mein* – The look, bearing, manner, or conduct of a person (OED).

24 *mail* – The snake’s skin, figured as armor.

32 *Dunghill* – Heap or pile of dung (OED).

â€ˆ SOURCE: *Fables* (London 1727), pp. 147-150. [J. Paul Leonard Library]

Edited by Sarah Aubin