

John Ogilvie, "Jupiter and the Clown. A Fable"

Description

JOHN OGILVIE

•Jupiter and the Clown. A Fable•

Envy! thou Fiend, whose venom'd sting
 Still points to Fame's aspiring wing;
 Whose breath, blue sulphur's blasting steam,
 Whose eye the basilisk's lightning-gleam;
 Say, through the dun ile's solemn round, Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 5
 Where Death's dread foot-step prints the ground,
 Lovest thou to haunt the yawning tomb,
 And crush fallen Grandeur's dusty plume?
 Or, where the wild Hyaena's yell
 Rings thro' the hermit's cavern'd cell, Â 10
 Moves thy black wing its devious flight?
 (The wing that bloats the cheek of Night)
 There oft beneath some hoary wall
 Thy stings are dipt in scorpion's gall;
 Thence whizzing springs the forky dart, Â 15
 And spreads its poison to the heart.

Hence all th' unnumber'd cares of life,
 Hence malice, fury, rapine, strife;
 Hence all exclaim on partial fate;
 Hence pale Revenge, and stern Debate; Â 20
 Hence man (to every passion prone)
 Sees much, loves all;—but hates his own.

Now, Delia, should the chance to know
 Some trifling fool, 'perhaps' a beau,
 The fair at once implores the skies, Â 25
 With glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes;
 O, hear your Votary's earnest prayer,
 Ye guardian angels of the fair!
 Make but this charming creature prove
 A victim to the power of love: Â 30
 'Tis this, Ye Gods, I would implore!

Shot thro' to thin night's ruffled veil;
Slow rose to sight the new-born day,
Slow crept the lingering shades away,
Till o'er the broad hill's summit dun
75
Obliquely glanced the mounting sun;
And all-illumed with rushing light,
The swelling landskip burst to sight.

As the fond Mother's panting breast
Throbs o'er her infant hushed to rest,
80
Warm in his little hut, the boy
Flutters elate with rising joy;
As by her gentle pressure sway'd,
Swings soft and slow the sleepy bed;
Wild Fancy whispers in her ear,
85
She whirls away the rolling year!
Youth, manhood comes! she marks afar
A robe, a mitre, or a r!
Her heart leaps quick! elate with pride!
Each prude's insulting dress outvied!
90
Each neighbour's booby son, unseen,
Gnaws the pale lip with fruitless spleen!
Sudden she starts! some rival dress'd,
Swims in the loosely-floating vest,
Her bosom heaves a sullen groan:—
95
Ah! was that charming suit *my own!*

Such joy (soon check'd with killing smart)
Shot thro' the swain's exulting heart;
He hears the reaper's sprightly song:
The rustling sickle sweeps along;
100
His barns with swelling sheaves are stored,
Gay Plenty crowns the festive board;
He cries in triumph, with a smile,
For hopes like these who would not toil,
That neither flatter, nor beguile?
105
Just as he spoke the word,—behold
A gaudy thing, o'erlaid with gold,
Came fluttering by!—so nicely clad,
With powder'd wig, and laced brocade;
So gay, so rich (though strange to tell!)
110
No butterfly look'd half so well.

Struck with the glittering vest he wore,
The clown's rude eye-ball stared him o'er;

Sly Envy markâ€™d the secret snare,
 The pickâ€™d a chosen dart with care; Â 115
 Of power to edge the quickest pain;—
 Then plunged it reeking in his brain.
 Inflamed with fury and surprize,
 Red Anger flashes from his eyes
 âœœMust I (he cryed and scratchâ€™d his head) Â 120
 Supply this prattling thing with bread?
 Must Farmers sweat, and wear their cloaths,
 To furnish equipage for beaux?
 We, Drudges doomâ€™d to ceaseless toil,
 For others tear the stubborn soil, Â 125
 Our thoughts suspense and fears inflame,
 Wretched and cursâ€™d beyond a name;
 While these amidâ€™ the balmy bower,
 Spend in soft ease the fleeting hour;—
 How fine they look! what charms they show, Â 130
 Ah! would to heavâ€™n I was a Beau!â€•

Soft Pity touchâ€™d thâ€™ Almighty Sire:
 Jove heard, and granted his desire.
 At once his furrowâ€™d brow was smooth,
 In all the blooming pride of youth; Â 135
 His hair in wavy ringlets flowâ€™d,
 His cheek with fine vermilion glowâ€™d;
 Not like our modern pigmy race,
 With witherâ€™d limbs, and meagre face,
 But plump and pruce heâ€™d matchâ€™d a score; Â 140
 Such were the Beaux in days of yore.
 Gay pleasure dancâ€™d in every limb,
 He skimmâ€™d along with airy swim;
 The God, propitious to his prayer,
 Gave the soft look, and graceful air; Â 145
 But wrapt in his dreams of bliss, the Fool
 Forgot his pocket, and his soul.

When thus transform'd, our glittering Beau
 Surveyed himself from top to toe,
 Stuck at the change with vast surprize, 150
 He stares, and scarce believed his eyes.
 But when he found that all was sure,
 He cock'd his hat, and frown'd, and swore;
 Applauded by the wondering throng,
 The sullen Heroe strode along: 155
 And while the swains in rude amaze
 Mark his high port with stupid gaze,
 Like Jove with solemn pace he trod,
 And deign'd, yet scarcely deign'd,—to nod.

But now to town he takes his way, 160
 And sees the court, the park, the play;
 Attends the Fair, admir'd by all,
 Leads the gay dance, and rules the ball.
 Heav'n! what a shape! fair Daphne cries,
 How fine his mien! how bright his eyes! 165
 Thus all admire the charms they see,
 His cane that dangled at his knee,
 His box and hat they view together,—
 Some prais'd the paint, and some the feather;
 No english taylor's clumsy fist 170
 E'er match'd the sleeve that graced his wrist;
 The lace,—from Brussels last;— by chance
 He pick'd the brilliant up in France.
 His coat so trim! so neat his shoe!
 His limbs so shaped to strut, or bow! 175
 Fashion, you'd swear, to show her power,
 Had left dear Paris half an hour.

But, ah! with grief the muse proceeds:
 What power can mend the vulgar's deeds!
 One night a coachman set him down, 180
 Then rudely ask'd him "half a crown.

He search'd his pocket;—what a curse?
 His pocket held—an empty purse!
 What should he do!—all aid withdrawn!
 Cane, box, and watch, were sent to pawn; 185
 His brilliant too (he had vex'd a saint)
 Gained a few crowns "and cent per cent!
 No friend his money can afford:
 He gam'd,—a sharper swept the board.

Then scornâ€™d by all,—in deep despair, 190
To Jove once more he made his prayer,
And beggâ€™d the God to ease his pain,
And give him back his plough again.

NOTES:

1 *Title* *Jupiter* *the supreme deity of the ancient Romans* (OED); *Clown* *a countryman, rustic* (OED).

4 *basilisk* *a fabulous reptile; ancient authors stated that its hissing drove away all other serpents, and that its breath, and even its look, was fatal* (OED).

5 *dun ile's* [Unable to trace.]

18 *rapine* *the act or practice of seizing and taking away by force the property of others; plunder* (OED).

27 *Votary* *a person who has dedicated himself or herself to religious service by taking vows; a monk or nun* (OED).

35 *beau* *Suitor of a lady, but also a man who gives particular, or excessive, attention to dress* (OED).

57 *Zephyr* *a gentle, mild wind or breeze* (OED).

58 *Aurora* *the (Roman) goddess of dawn, represented as rising with rosy fingers from the saffron-coloured bed of Tithonus* (OED).

64 *cinctured* *Girdled* (OED).

88 *mitre* *the headdress of a priest* (OED); *f-r* *Likely fur, worn as a mark of office or state* (OED).

123 *equipage for beaux* *Articles of dress and ornament for young men* (OED).

133 *Jove* *a poetical equivalent of Jupiter; the highest deity of the ancient Romans* (OED)

143 *swim* *The smooth gliding movement of the body* (OED).

147 *pocket* *Any small bag or pouch worn on the person* (OED).

173 *brilliant* *A diamond of the finest cut* (OED).

187 *cent per cent* *Profit* (OED).

189 *sharper* *A fraudulent gamester, a cheat* (OED).

SOURCE: *A Collection of Poems on Several Subjects* (London, 1762), pp. 120-28. [Google Books]

Edited by Jordan Young