Mary Leapor, “The Power of Beauty”

Description

MARY LEAPOR

â€œThe Power of Beautyâ€•

O Goddess of eternal Smiles,
Bright *Cythera* the fair,
Who taught *Sabinaâ€™s* pleasing Wiles,
By which she won *Bellair*.

Bellair, the witty and the vain, Â 5
Who laughâ€™d at Beautyâ€™s Powâ€™r;
But now the conquerâ€™d humble Swain
Adores a painted Flowâ€™r.

With *Deliaâ€™s* Art my Song inspire,
Whose Lips of rosy Hue Â 10
Can neâ€™er the partial Audience tire,
Tho’ wiser *Claudiaâ€™s* do.

Thoâ€™ *Claudiaâ€™s* Wit and Sense refinâ€™d,
Flows easy from her Tongue;
Her Soul but coarsely is enshrinâ€™d, Â 15
So *Claudiaâ€™s* in the wrong.

Hark, *Delia* speaksâ€”that blooming Fair,
See Crowds are gathering round
With open Mouths: and wildly stare
To catch the empty Sound. Â 20

See *Lelia* with a Judgement clear,
With manly Wisdom blest;
Wit, Learning, Prudence, all appear
In that unruffled Breast.

But yet no Beau for *Lelia* dies, Â 25
No Sonnets pave her way;
Say, Muse, from whence these Evils rise,
Why *Leliaâ€™s* Teeth decay.

Then, why do revâ€™rend Sages rail
At Womanâ€™s wanton Pride? Â 30

If Wisdom, Wit, and Prudence fail,
Let meaner Arts be tryâ€™d.

Those Arts to please are only meant;
But with an angry Frown,
The Queen of Wisdom lately sent Â 35
This Proclamation down:

Minerva, with the azure Eyes,
And thus the Statute runs,
If you wouâ€™d have your Daughters wise,
Take care to mend your Sons. Â 40

NOTES:

2 *Cythera* Venus, the goddess of love (*OED*).

3 *Sabinaâ€™s* This and subsequent names at lines 9, 12, and 21 were common womenâ€™s names in pastoral poetry.

7 *Swain* A shepherd in pastoral poetry.

29 *Sages* Men of â€œprofound wisdomâ€• (*OED*).

30 *wanton* â€œRecklessâ€• (*OED*).

35 *Queen of Wisdom* Minerva, the goddess of wisdom (*OED*).

Source: Â *Poems upon Several Occasions* (London, 1748), pp. 229-231. [Google Books]

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