

Michael Bruce, Anacreontic: To a Wasp

Description

MICHAEL BRUCE

Anacreontic: To a Wasp

The following is a ludicrous imitation of the usual Anacreontics; the spirit of composing which was raging, a few years ago, among all the sweet singers of GREAT BRITAIN.

WINGED wanderer of the sky!
Inhabitant of heaven high!
Dreadful with thy dragon tail,
Hydra-head, and coat of mail!
Why dost thou my peace molest? 5
Why dost thou disturb my rest?
When in May the meads are seen,
Sweet enamel! white and green;
And the gardens, and the bowers,
And the forests, and the flows, 10
Don their robes of curious dye,
Fine confusion to the eye!
Did I Anacreon chase thee in thy flight?
Did I Anacreon put thee in a fright?
Did I Anacreon spoil thy treasure hid? 15
Never Anacreon never did.
Envious nothing! pray beware;
Tempt mine anger, if you dare.
Trust not in thy strength of wing;
Trust not in thy length of sting. 20
Heaven nor earth shall thee defend;
I thy buzzing soon will end.
Take my counsel, while you may;
Devil take you, if you stay.
Wilt thou dare my face to wound? 25
Thus, I fell thee to the ground.
Down amongst the dead men, now
Thou shalt forget thou ere wast thou.
Anacreontic Bards beneath,
Thus shall wail thee after death. 30

CHORUS OF ELYSIAN BARDS.

A Wasp, for a wonder,
 To paradise under
 Descends: see! he wanders
 By STYX'S meanders! 35
 Behold, how he glows,
 Amidst RHODOPE'S snows!
 He sweats, in a trice,
 In the regions of ice!
 Lo! he cools, by GOD'S ire, 40
 Amidst brimstone and fire!
 He goes to our king,
 And he shows him his sting.
 (God PLUTO loves satire,
 As women love attire;) 45
 Our king sets him free,
 Like famed EURIDICE.
 Thus a Wasp could prevail
 O'er the Devil and hell,
 A conquest both hard and laborious! 50
 Though hell had fast bound him,
 And the Devil did confound him,
 Yet his sting and his wing were victorious.

NOTES:

Title: *Anacreontic* A poem written in the metre or style of the ancient Greek poet Anacreon (c. 570-c. 495 B.C.), esp. one on the theme of love or wine (OED).

3 dragon tail A stinger.

4 Hydra-head In Greek legend, a gigantic water-snake-like monster with nine heads (Britannica); mail Armor.

7 meads Meadows.

8 enamel Applied to any smooth and lustrous surface-colouring, esp. to verdure or flowers on the ground (OED).

9 bowers A shady place.

31 ELYSIAN BARDS Alluding to the supposed state or abode of the blessed after death in Greek mythology (OED).

35 STYX In Greek mythology, the River Styx flows through the underworld.

37 RHODOPE A mountain range in Southeastern Europe that extends into Greece.

38 in a trice A very brief period (OED).

40 ire Wrath (OED).

41 *brimstone and fire* A biblical description of Hell.

44 *PLUTO* Roman God of the dead.

47 *EURIDICE* The wife of Orpheus; a mythical figure who nearly made it out of the underworld.

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (Edinburgh, 1782), pp. 63-66. [HathiTrust]

Edited by Louis Denson