

Anne Finch, "The Lyon and the Gnat"

Description

ANNE FINCH

•The Lyon and the Gnat•

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. 5

To Rest he there himself compos'd,  
And in his Mind revolv'd,  
How Great a Person it enclos'd,  
How free from Danger he repos'd,  
Though now in Ease dissolv'd! 10

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. 15

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 stretch'd his Paw to strike. 20

When on his lifted Nose there fell  
A Creature, slight of Wing,  
Who neither fear'd his Grin, nor Yell,  
Nor Strength, that in his Jaws did dwell,  
But gores him with her Sting. 25

Transported with th' Affront and Pain,  
He terribly exclaims,  
Protesting, if it comes again,

Its guilty Blood the Grass shall stain,  
And to surprize it aims. 30

The scoffing *Gnat* now laugh'd aloud,  
And bids him upwards view  
The *Jupiter* within the Cloud,  
That humbl'd him, who was so proud,  
And his sharp Thunder threw. 35

That Taunt no *Lyon's* Heart cou'd bear;  
And now much more he raves,  
Whilst this new *Perseus* in the Air  
Do's War and Strife again declare,  
And all his Terror braves. 40

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. 45

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 she's such Triumph known. 50

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

**NOTES:**

**Title** Originally an Aesop's fable in which the moral is that no matter one's station in life, they can always be undone.

**1** *Covert* a place which gives shelter to wild animals or game (OED).

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

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

**15** *durst* Dared (OED).

**19** *affear'd* Afraid (OED).

**33** *Jupiter* – The supreme deity of the ancient Romans whose weapon was the thunderbolt (*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]

*Edited by Lily Kratzer*