William Kenrick, â??The Beau and Butterfly. A Fableâ?•

Description

[WILLIAM KENRICK]

â??*The* BEAU *and* BUTTERFLY. *A* FABLE.â?•

When summer deckt each sylvan scene,
And sunshine smilâ??d along the green,
When groves allurâ??d with noon tide shade,
And purling brooks refeshâ??d the glade;
An empty form of empty show,
A fluttâ??ring insect, callâ??d a beau,
In gaudy colours rich and gay,
A mere papilio of the day,
Was seen around the fields to rove,
And haunt by turns, the stream and grove:
A silver zone entwinâ??d his head,
His belly shone with lively red,
His wings were green, but studded oâ??er
With gold embroiderâ??d spots before.
Around him various insects came,
Of diffâ??rent colour, diffâ??rent name;
And tingâ??d with evâ??ry gorgeous die,
Among the rest a butterfly;
His wings are spread with wanton pride,
And beauty fades from all beside.
The beau beholds with envious eyes,
The living radiance as it flies,
â??And shall, said he, this worthless thing,
That lives but on a summerâ??s wing,
This flying worm more gaudy shine?
And wear a dress more gay than mine?
Is this wise natureâ??s equal care
To deck a butterfly so fair?
While man her worthiest, greatest part,
Must wear the homely rags of art!â?•
Thus reasonâ??d he, as reason beaux,
The subject of their logick cloaths,
And thus the butterfly replyâ??d,
With deeper tints by anger dyâ??d,
â??Vain, trifling mortal! couldâ??st thou boast,
To prize what nature prizes most
On man bestowâ??d, thou wouldâ??st not see

With envy ought she gives to me.
This painted vestment, all my store,
She gives, and I can claim no moreâ??
But man, for greater ends designâ??d,
Shouâ??d boast the beauties of the mind.
More bright than gold thy wisdom shine,
And virtueâ??s sacred charms be thine.
To rule the world by reason taught,
On dress disdain to waste a thought,
For he whom folly bends so low,
Ambitious to be thought a beau,
Is studious only to be gay,
In toilet-arts consumes the day;
And the long trifling labours oâ??er,
Takes wing, and bids the world adore,
Looks down with scorn on rival flies,
Himself less splendid and less wise,
With scorn, his scorn returnâ??d again
Proud insect! impotently vain!
The fool, who thus by self is prizâ??d,
By others justly is despisâ??d;â•
She said, and flutterâ??d round on high,
Nor staid to hear the beauâ??s reply.

NOTES:

1 *sylvan* â??One who (or something that) inhabits a wood or forest; a being of the woodsâ?• (*OED*).

6 *beau* â??A man who gives particular, or excessive, attention to dress, mein, and social etiquette; an exquisite, a fop, a dandyâ?• (*OED*).

8 *papilio* â??A butterfly or large mothâ?• (*OED*).

50 *toilet-arts* Historical usage of the word toilet, meaning â??the action or process of washing, dressing, or arranging the hairâ?• (*OED*).

Source: ***The Gentlemanâ??s Magazine,*** **vol. 18 (May 1748), p. 231.**

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