Soame Jenyns, â??The Modern Fine Gentlemanâ?•

Description

SOAME JENYNS

â??The Modern Fine Gentlemanâ?•

Written in the Year 1746

Quale Portentum neque militaris
Daunia in latis alit esculetis,
Ned Jube tellus generat, leonum
Arida nutrix.

JUST broke from school, pert, impudent, and raw,
Expert in Latin, more expert in taw,
His Honour posts oâ??er *Italy* and *France*,
Measures St. *Peterâ??s* dome, and learns to dance.
Thence, having quick throâ?? various countries flown,
Gleanâ??d all their follies and exposâ??d his own,
He back returns, a thing so strange all oâ??er,
As never ages past producâ??d before:
A monster of such complicated worth,
As no one single clime could eâ??er bring forth;
Half atheist, papist, gamester, bubble, rook,
Half fidler, coachman, dancer, groom and cook.
Next, because busâ??ness is now all the vogue,
And whoâ??d be quite polite must be a rogue,
In parliament he purchases a seat,
To make thâ?? accomplishâ??d gentleman compleat.
There safe in self-sufficient impudence,
Without experience, honesty, or sense,
Unknowing in her intâ??rest, trade, or laws,
He vainly undertakes his countryâ??s cause:
Forth from his lips, preparâ??d at all to rail,
Torrents of nonsense burst, like bottled ale,
Thoâ?? shallow, muddy; brisk, thoâ?? mighty dull;
Fierce without strength; oâ??erflowing, thoâ?? not full.
Now quite a Frenchman in his garb and air,
His neck yokâ??d down with bag and solitaire,
The liberties of *Britain* he supports,
And storms at place-men, ministers, and courts;
Now in cropt greasy hair, and leather breeches,

He loudly bellows out his patriot speeches;
Kings, lords, and commons ventures to abuse,
Yet dares to shew those ears, he ought to lose.
From hence to *Whiteâ??s* our virtuous *Cato* flies
There sits with countenance erect and wise,
And talks of games of whist, and pig-tail pies;
Plays all the night, nor doubts each law to break,
Himself unknowingly has helpâ??d to make;
Trembling and anxious, stakes his utmost groat,
Peeps oâ??er his cards and looks as if he thought:
Next morn disowns the losses of the night,
Because the fool would fain be thought a bite.
Devoted thus to politics, and cards,
Nor mirth, nor wine, nor women he regards,
So far is evâ??ry virtue from his heart,
That not a genâ??rous vice can claim a part;
Nay, lest one human passion eâ??er should move
His soul to friendship, tenderness, or love,
To *Figg* and *Broughton* he commits his breast,
To steel it to the fashionable test.
Thus poor in wealth, he labours to no end,
Wretched alone, in crowds without a friend;
Insensible to all thatâ??s good and kind,
Deaf to all merit, to all beauty blind;
For love too busy, and for wit too grave,
A hardenâ??d, sober, proud, luxurious knave;
By little actions striving to be great,
And proud to be, and to be thought a cheat.
And yet in this so bad is his success,
That as his fame improves, his rents grow less;
On parchment wings his acres take their flight,
And his unpeopled groves admit the light;
With his estate his intâ??rest too is gone,
His honest borough seeks a warmer sun;
For him now, cash and liquor flows no more,
His independent voters cease to roar:
And *Britain* soon must want the great defence
Of all his honesty, and eloquence,
But that his genâ??rous youth, more anxious grown
For public liberty than for his own,
Marries some jointurâ??d antiquated crone:
And boldly, when his country is at stake,
Braves deep yawning gulph, like *Curtius*, for its sake.
Quickly again distressâ??d for want of coin,
He digs no longer in thâ?? exhausted mine,
But seeks preferment, as the last resort,
Cringes each morn at levÃ©es, bows at court,
And, from the hand he hates, implores support:

The minister, well pleasâ??d at small expence
To silence so much rude impertinence,
With squeeze and whisper yields to his demands,
And on the venal list enrollâ??d he stands;
A ribband and a pension buy the slave,
This bribes the fool about him, that the knave.
And now arrived at his meridian glory,
He sinks apace, despisâ??d by Whig and Tory;
Of independence now he talks no more,
Nor shakes the senate with his patriot roar,
But silent votes, and, with court-trappings hung,
Eyes his own glittâ??ring star, and holds his tongue.
In craft a political a bankrupt made,
He sticks to gaming, as the surer trade;
Turns downright sharper, lives by sucking blood,
And grows, in short, the very thing he wouâ??d:
Hunts out young heirs, who have their fortunes spent,
And lends them ready cash at cent per cent,
Lays wagers on his own, and others lives,
Fights uncles, fathers, grandmothers, and wives,
Till death at length, indignant to be made
The daily subject of his sport and trade,
Veils with his sable hand the wretchâ??s eyes,
And, groaning for the betts he loses byâ??t, he dies.

NOTES:

Epigraph â??Dire monster! in her broad oak woods/Fierce Daunia fosters none such other,/Nor Jubaâ??s land, of lion broods/The thirsty motherâ?• (Horace, *Odes*, Book 1.22, ll. 13-16).

1 *pert* â??Sharp; clever; quick-wittedâ?• (*OED*).

2 *expert in taw* In this context, a reference to playing marbles.

4 *St. Peterâ??s dome* Church located in the Vatican City, named after St. Peter the Apostle (*Britannica*).

11 *papist â??*A Roman Catholicâ?• (*OED*).

23-24 â??Parody on the lines by Sir John Denham: â??Thoâ?? deep, yet clear, thoâ?? gentle yet not dull,/Strong without rage, without oâ??erflowing fullâ??â?• [Authorâ??s note]. These are lines 191-192 of Denhamâ??s poem â??Cooperâ??s Hill,â?• second version, first published in 1655.

25 *garb* â??Fashion of dressâ?• (*OED*).

28 *place-men* â??A person who is appointed (or aspires) to a position, esp. in government service, for personal profit and as a reward for political supportâ?• (*OED*).

33 *Whiteâ??s* Originally founded in 1693 as a chocolate house, it was later transformed into a notorious gambling house and gentlemenâ??s club. Frequent visitors were known as â??the gamesters of Whiteâ??sâ?• (Grivetti and

Shapiro, *Chocolate: History, Culture, and Heritage*, p. 584); *Cato* Marcus Porcius Cato or â??Cato the Censorâ?• (234-149 BCE) was a dominant political and cultural figure in Rome (*OCD*).

43 *mirth* â??Merriment, hilarityâ?• (*OED*).

48 *Figg and Broughton* James Figg (c. 1695-1734) and his protÃ©gÃ© Jack Broughton (c. 1704-1789) were famous English bare-knuckle boxers in the eighteenth century (*Britannica*).

70 *crone* â??A withered old womanâ?• (*OED*).

72 *Braves deep yawning gulph, like Curtius* According to Roman myth, Marcus Curtius saved Rome by throwing himself into a deep chasm that opened in the Forum because of an earthquake (*Britannica*).

76 *levÃ©es* â??A morning assembly held by a prince or person of distinctionâ?• (*OED*).

82 *ribband* â??To award or honour (a person) with a ribbonâ?• (*OED*).

85 *Whig and Tory* â??Two opposing political parties or factions in England, particularly during the eighteenth centuryâ?• (*Britannica*).

91 *gaming* Gambling.

92 *sharper* â??A fraudulent gamesterâ?• (*OED*).

Source: Charles Nalson Cole, ed., ***The Works of Soame Jenyns, esq. â?¦including several pieces never before published. To which are prefixed, short sketches of the history of the authorâ??s family, and also of his life*** **(Dublin, 1791), vol. 1, pp. 53-56. [Hathi Trust]**

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