

Mary Leapor, â??Nature undone by Artâ?•

Description

MARY LEAPOR

â??NATURE undone by ARTâ?•

WHEN first *Alexis* blessâ??d our wondâ??ring Eyes,
Like some young Deâ??ty of the pregnant Skies;
His blooming Form by Nature richly dressâ??d;
Nor purple Crime had stainâ??d his ivâ??ry Breast: 5
His pleasing Voice diffusâ??d a genâ??ral Joy,
And listâ??ning Virgins blessâ??d the charming Boy.
His just Reflections, while they taught, allurâ??d;
His Smiles were harmless, and his Language pure:
He learnâ??d with Pleasure, and he taught with Ease:
Whateâ??er *Alexis* did, was sure to please. 10
Gorgonian Malice found a soothing Charm;
No envious Tongue could wish *Alexis* Harm:
For thrifty Nature, like a partial Mother,
To form one lovely Image, strips another; 15
And makes the beauteous Darling of her Breast
Perfection only, while she starves the rest.
On this gay Youth she lavishâ??d all her Pride,
Till he, ingrateful, wanderâ??d from her Side:
Then polishâ??d Art, with her affected Train
Of glittâ??ring Shadows, won the cheated Swain; 20
Dissimulation rollâ??d her leering Eyes,
With courteous Knavery, and well-bred Lyes;
Affectation, Pride; a motly Throng;
And smiling Flattâ??ry, with her silver Tongue:
These taught those once engaging Eyes to roll, 25
And cast Pollution on his tainted Soul.
In his dark Breast tumultuous Passions rise,
Where guilty Flame and smotherâ??d Hatred lies.
Now the changâ??d Idiot can his Rhetâ??ric spend
To praise a Coxcomb, or deceive his Friend. 30
His Heart, whence Truths eternal usâ??d to spring,
Where Honour reignâ??d as undisputed King,
Is now a Dungeon for the Dregs of Sin.
Deceit, Ingratitude, and Avâ??rice, now
Have stainâ??d the Whiteness of his alterâ??d Brow: 35
Not worth our Pity, and below Disdain;

We look with Loathing, and we hear with Pain.

NOTES:

4 *purple* â??Of the colour of blood; bloodyâ?• (OED).

11 *Gorgonian Malice* â??Of or pertaining to the malevolence of the three mythical female personages, with snakes for hair, whose look turned the beholder into stoneâ?• (OED).

21 *Dissimulation* â??Concealment of what really is, under a feigned semblance of something different; feigning, hypocrisyâ?• (OED).

24 *silver Tongue* â??A tendency to be eloquent and persuasive in speakingâ?• (OED).

30 *Coxcomb* â??A vain, conceited, or pretentious man; a man of ostentatiously affected mannerisms or appearance; a fopâ?• (OED).

33 *Dregs* â??Residueâ?• (OED).

Source: *Poems Upon Several Occasions* (London, 1751), pp. 98-100. [Hathi Trust]

Edited by Beck Serna