William Dingley, â??Upon a Bee Entombâ??d in Amberâ?•

Description

[WILLIAM DINGLEY]

â??*Upon a* BEE *Entombâ??d in* Amber.â?•

Behold this happy Insectâ??s Tomb,
Not sweet, but precious Honey-comb:
Youâ??d think the Bee had brought it forth,
Alike in Colour, and in Worth.
Which to the view does represent,
A Murderer, and Monument.
I thought â??twas *Niobe* alone,
Whom Moisture hardenâ??d into Stone:
But now the weeping Gem I see,
Transforms at once it self and Bee:
Since to Beholders each does seem,
The Gem a Bee, the Bee a Gem.
The Pyramids in *Egyptâ??s* Land,
Astonishment from all command:
Yet, happy insect, happy thou,
A lesser, but a better Show;
The Pyramids would envy me,
Should I be thus Entombâ??d like thee.
Thou with *Medusa* mayâ??st compare,
Whose Viperous enchanted Hair,
Turnâ??d all Spectators into Stone,
Conquest and Trophy both in one;
But thou excellest her in this,
Thy self at once *Medusa* is,
Thy self the Metamorphosis.
Nature has changâ??d her usual course,
But for the Better not the Worse;
While Jewels sprout from Poplar-Trees,
These bring forth Jewels, Jewels Bees.
Thus whilst the Bee through Amber shone,
With borrowâ??d Lustre, not her own,
The Sight so dazling did appear,
Youâ??d think both Bees, both Jewels were.
The Golden Beast, like *Bacchus* Crown,
Translated to thâ??Ethereal Throne,

Does, as it were, refinâ??d appear,
Transformâ??d from Gold into a Star:
Congealâ??d it lies in sparkling Gem,
Youâ??d swear â??twas froze to Death in Flame.
Entangled there it self does shew,
A Labyrinth, and Monster too.
What Freeman would not pay that Fee
Which Prisoners give for Liberty,
To share in this Captivity.
The little Debtor (she, you know,
To Amber does this Yellow owe)
Thither as to her Prison came,
Her Debt and Prison both the same.
A worthy, honourable Cheat!
Whose very Fetters made her Great:
For while she mute in Thraldome lies,
Her buzzing Fame much swifter flies.
Thoâ?? she confinâ??d, to us may seem,
Within the Limits of a Gem,
Sheâ??s in effect, by being thus,
Extended through the Universe:
And by her forcâ??d, yet willing stay,
Debarâ??d from Flying, flies away.
Whose Hive, not long since, Thatcht we saw,
Like *Romeâ??s* old Capitol, with Straw;
She now in nobler Structure dwells,
Which *Romeâ??s* new Capitol excells.
Thou worthy Nurse of mighty *Jove*,
Supreme oâ??re all the Gods above;
Tell me, thou Insect, tell me why,
When Harlots mounted to the Sky,
He did not thus thy Pains repay,
Deserving Heaven more than they?
But lo! I see thy proud Disdain
Has rendred Deifying vain.
So rich, so glorious they Attire,
A radiant, not a burning Fire;
That all those Lamps which grace the Sky,
Are seen Unenvyâ??d by thy Eye.
â??Twere Injury to fix thee there,
A brighter Constellation here.
Such is the dazling Garb she wears,
Such Honour from the Garb she bears,
That thoâ?? her *Jove* be cloathâ??d with Rays
Immortal, and immortal Praise;
â??Tis doubtful which does most confer,
The Bee on *Jove*, or *Jove* on her:
While she her self does represent,

As if to give the God, she meant,
Honour, instead of Nutriment.
Proud Animal! â??tis mere Self-love,
Which makes thee like *Narcissus* prove;
Who viewâ??d, himself in Chrystal Streams,
And, as he viewâ??d, thence gatherâ??d Flames:
In liquid Gum you clearer shine,
Others to Envy you incline,
Whilst you your self for Love repine.
True Looking-glass, wherein we view,
Not only Form, but Matter too.
The Eyes, which view this glorious Bee,
Are held almost as fast as she:
For while they gaze, in one, they view
Artificer, and Image too.
â??Twas heedlessness this Artist taught,
Exact the Figure, yet not wrought;
Whom like *Sejanus* here we see,
Too truly slain in Effigy.
Fair Phaethusa (Stories shew)
A Poplar-tree by Weeping grew;
Weeping (Oh! had it sooner came)
Enough to quench her Brotherâ??s Flame.
Hence first distillâ??d the precious Juice,
And Trees the Amber did produce;
From whence a three-fold Change we see,
From humane Shape sproughts up a Tree,
Thence came forth Gum, and thence a Bee.
A Bee, which thus you may divide,
Object of Pity, and of Pride:
It Sister does, and Brother seem,
It Weeps like her, it Shines like him;
In both their Fates does Sympathize,
At once bewails the Dead, and Dies.
Virgin, too like the *Crocodile!*
Whose treachâ??rous Tears to Snares beguile,
Thy Weepingâ??s, by Experience known,
More Envious now than Pitteous grown.
Thy Tears, which first made thee a Tree,
And now again transform the Bee,
Harden themselves, and that, like Thee.
See how from Good, ariseth Ill!
While they bewail the Slain, they Kill.
But why, against thâ?? industrious Bee,
Do Trees exert such Cruelty?
She little thinking eâ??re to yield,
Securely Plunderâ??d all the Field;
For which she now in Chains must stay,

Chains richer than her former Prey.
Flowers, too weak to captive Bees,
Assistance crave from neighbour Trees;
Till they that were opprest before,
Retort the Dammage once they bore:
But Oh! tis thus, they add the more,
And, to deprive, increase the Store.
The cruel *Nero*, who (says Fame)
Rome doubly Dyâ??d in Blood and Flame,
Erected no such noble Throne;
No, thoâ?? he built a Golden One,
As that wherein this Tyrant shone.
Most radiant, most illustrious Bee,
Iâ??ll to the *Phoenix* liken thee,
In Death as rare, as bright as She;
Thoâ?? She to *Phoebus* owe his Night,
Extinguishâ??d by the Beams of Light;
Thoâ?? thou a distant Fate dost bear,
Drownâ??d in the Deluge of a Tear.
Thy waxen Wings the Fate has fought,
Which those of *Icarus* once brought;
The cause whereby (as Stories tell)
So High he soarâ??d, so Deep he fell.
Yet thee much Happier I esteem,
Not over-whelmâ??d, thoâ?? drownâ??d like him:
Thou more conspicuous dost appear
Than others above Water are,
Thy very Covâ??ring makes thee clear.
Thou needâ??st not signalize thy Grave,
With any specious Epitaph,
Thy Corps is so transparent seen
In Golden Characters within.
Thus Death, which never grants Reprieve,
Is here made Lifeâ??s Preservative.
The dark Recesses of the Tomb,
Become a pleasant, lightsome Room.
Thâ??unnatural, but honest Grave,
From a Devourer, changâ??d to save;
In Justice does its Debt repay,
And give the Life it takes away.
Thy Dipping *Thetis* has out-done,
Who strove to Eternize her Son;
Bathing him in the *Stygian* Lake,
That he might neâ??re of *Styx* partake.
Thou that effectually dost gain,
For which she Dipt, but dipt in vain.
The Bee with *Hercules* compare,
Her lustre may with *Aetaâ??*s share;

But not consume, not wasted be,
And so gain Immortality.
Eternal Insect! who would grieve
To Dye like thee, like thee to Live?
Jove is a Mortal thought by some,
â??Cause ancient *Creet* can shew his Tomb;
Oh! were he Buryâ??d there like thee,
His Tomb would prove him Deity.

NOTES:

Title *Amber* â??A yellowish translucent fossil resin. It is used for ornaments; burns with an agreeable odor; often entombs the bodies of insectsâ?• (*OED*).

7 *Niobe* In Greek mythology, her children were killed by Apollo and Artemis. She was so overwhelmed with grief that the gods turned her weeping form into a rock on Mount Sipylus (*EncyclopÃ¦dia Britannica*).

11 *Beholder* â??One who beholds, a watcher, looker on, spectatorâ?• (*OED*).

13 *Pyramids in Egyptâ??s Land* â??Focal points of enormous funerary complexes constructed for the burials of Egyptian kings. In the classical tradition, pyramids have been constructed primarily as tombs, often in conscious emulation of Egyptian Precedentâ?• (*The Classical Tradition*).

19 *Medusa* In Greek mythology, was changed by Athena to have snakes for hair and turn anyone who looked at her into stone (*The Columbia Encyclopedia).*

25 *Metamorphosis* â??The action of process of changing in form, shape, or substance; transformation by supernatural meansâ?• (*OED*).

28 *Jewels sprout from Poplar-Trees* When Phaethon died, his sisters, the Heliades, wept and were turned into poplar trees and their tears into amber (*Dictionary of Classical Mythology*).

34 *The Golden Beast* The bee, but also an allusion to Midas, who was granted a wish from Bacchus to have everything he touches turn to gold (*The Classical Tradition); Bacchus* Also known as Dionysus in Greek mythology. The god of wine, mystic ecstasy, and the theater (*The Classical Tradition).*

35 *Ethereal* â??Of or relating to heave, God, or the gods; heavenly, celestialâ?• (*OED).*

41 *Labyrinth, and Monster* In Greek mythology, the monster is that of the Minotaur, composed of a manâ??s body and bullâ??s head, birthed from Pasiphae. The Labyrinth is the Cretan Labyrinth created by Daedalus to store the Minotaur in (*Dictionary of Classical Mythology*).

45 *little Debtor* The bee.

47 *Thither* â??To or towards that placeâ?• (*OED).*

50 *Fetters* â??A chain or shackle for the feet; a bond, shackleâ?• (*OED).*

51 *Thraldome* â??The state or condition of being a thrall; bondage, servitude; captivityâ?• (*OED*).

59 *Thatcht â??*Covered or roofed with thatch;â?• that is â??straw, reeds, palm-leaves, etc., laid so as to protect from the weatherâ?• (*OED).*

62 *new Capitol* Possible reference to the reconstruction of the Capital building done by Michelangelo in the 16th century (*The Columbia Encyclopedia*).

63 *Nurse* In Greek mythology, Amaltheia was a she-goat who nursed an infant Zeus (*Dictionary of Classical Mythology*); *Jove* Another name for the supreme god of Roman mythology, Jupiter; also known as Zeus in Greek mythology. Determined course of human affairs and made known the future through signs in the heavens, flight of birds, and other means; lord of heaven and bringer of light (*Brewerâ??s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*).

66 *Harlots* Likely a reference to Harpies; in Greek myth made of feathers, bronze, and flesh and had womenâ??s faces, vultureâ??s bodies, and bronze talons (*Bloomsbury Dictionary of Myth*).

87 *Narcissus* In Greek mythology, famously beautiful boy who fell in love with his own reflection in the water and thus died of his infatuation (*The Classical Tradition*).

92 *repine* â??To feel or express discontent or dissatisfaction; to grumble, complainâ?• (*OED*).

101 *Sejanus* Lucius Aelius Sejanus (20 BC-AD31), Roman soldier and statesman; according to Juvenal, after Sejanusâ??s fall from power and execution his statuary was destroyed (*Satire* 10). Possibly also a reference to *Senjanus His Fall* (1603), a satirical tragedy by Ben Jonson. In the play, Sejanus is driven by extreme ambition and attempts to occupy the Roman throne, exploiting the emperor Tiberius, but is eventually torn to pieces by the Roman mob (*The Bloomsbury Dictionary of English Literature*).

102 *slain in Effigy* â??A likeness, portrait, or image; to inflict upon an image the semblance of the punishment which the original is considered to have deservedâ?• (*OED).*

103 *Phaethusa* In Greek mythology, one of Helioâ??s daughters born from his mistress Neaera (*Dictionary of Classical Mythology*). See note 28.

118 *Crocodile* The phrase â??crocodile tearsâ?• is meant as false or hypocritical tears (*A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*). â??Was said to weep, either to allure a man for the purpose of devouring him, or while devouring himâ?• (*OED*).

139 *Nero* (37AD-86AD), Roman emperor who turned to debauchery, extravagance, and tyranny. During his reign, two-thirds of Rome was destroyed by fire (*Chambers Biographical Dictionary*).

142 *Golden One* Palace, also known as Domus Aurea, built by Nero after the fire. The palace was notoriously grand and novel (*The Classical Tradition*).

145 *Phoenix* â??In classical mythology: a bird resembling an eagle but with sumptuous red and gold plumage, which was said to live for five or six hundred years before burning itself to ashes on a funeral pyre ignited by the sun and fanned by its own wings, only to rise from its ashes with renewed youth to live through another such cycleâ?• (*OED).*

147 *Phoebus* â??Apollo as the god of light or of the sun; the sun personifiedâ?• (*OED*).

152 *Icarus* In Greek myth, was the son of Daedalus who invented wings made out of wax and feathers. Icarus flew with these wings towards the sun and the heat loosened the wax and caused him to fall and drown in the

ocean (*Bloomsbury Dictionary of Myth*).

161 *specious* â??Fair or pleasing to the eye or sight; beautiful, handsome, lovelyâ?• (*OED*); *Epitaph* â??An inscription upon a tomb; a brief composition characterizing a deceased personâ?• (*OED*).

162 *Corps* Corpse.

172 *Thetis* Daughter of Nereus in Greek myth, was a beautiful sea-nymph who the Fates said would bear a son greater than his father (*Bloomsbury Dictionary of Myth*).

173 *her Son* The Greek hero, Achilles born from the sea-nymph Thetis and was half human from his father Peleus. Thetis tried to make him immortal by dipping him into the River Styx (*Dictionary of Classical Mythology*).

174 *Stygian Lake* â??Pertaining to the river Styxâ?• (*OED*).

175 *Styx* â??A river of the lower world or Hades, over which the shades of the departed were ferried by Charon, and by which the gods swore their most solemn oathsâ?• (*OED*).

180 *Hercules* â??A celebrated hero of Greek and Roman mythology, who after death was ranked among the gods and received divine honors. He is represented as possessed of prodigious strengthâ?• (*OED*).

181 *Aeta* Archaic spelling of â??Oetaâ?• referring to Mt. Oeta in central Greece, the location of the funeral pyre for Heracles in Greek myth (also known as Hercules) (*Dictionary of Classical Mythology*).

185 *Creet* The Greek island, Crete.

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions. Originals, and Translations* ([London?], 1694), pp. 9-17. [Google Books]

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