

Anonymous, "The Snail's Apologist. An Heroi-Comic Ode from the French."

Description

ANONYMOUS

"The SNAIL's APOLOGIST. An Heroi-Comic ODE from the French."

What seas of blood! what heaps of dead!
What horrid scenes around are spread!
Murder and carnage rush to light,
Tumultuous from the realms of night;
One wide destruction covers all, 5
The virtuous with the vicious fall;
Amidst a throng of guilty ghosts
That crowd the *Styx* on *Pluto's* coasts,
I see (or do my senses fail?)
Untimely slain, the gentle snail. 10
 Say whence thy claim, presumptuous man!
To bound their life's contracted span?
Have they from thee receiv'd their breath?
Hast thou a right to give them death?
I know what vain pretence is made, 15
Thou sayst that rapine is their trade.
What rapine is not yonder tree
Their country? falsely claim'd by thee!
What if the foliage fade and fall,
Their own, that fragrant foliage all. 20
 Born where yon peach nutrition draws,
The snail is ignorant of thy laws;
Kind nature's voice the peach bestows,
Kind nature's voice alone he knows.
Contented with his humble lot, 25
He plunders none, he riots not;
Cease then an hasty fate to give,
And since he only eats to live,
Indulge him in the green retreat,
And let, ah! let him live to eat. 30
With martial ardour dost thou glow?
Up, seek and charge an equal foe;
Against the gnat the war declare,
And hunt him thro' the fields of air;
Let hostile wasps provoke thy rage, 35
And, foe to sloth, the drone engage;
The gorgeous moth, the *dragon's* dread,

Destroy them, and bestride the dead;
 Strike home, nor let thy vengeance fail,
 'Tis due to these, but spare the snail. 40
Alcides thus, in days of yore,
 Bade monsters vex the world no more;
 And by thy valour's equal deed,
 Be later times from monsters freed;
 Through dangers press, pursue the fight, 45
 The threaten'd wound, inflicted, slight.
 As fairest flowers of sharpest thorn,
 Of baffled danger, glory's born,
 Hence demi-gods and heroes claim
 Proud statues in the shrine of Fame. 50

NOTES:

8 *Styx on Pluto's coasts* Pluto is another name for Hades, the Greek God of the Underworld. 'Pluto's coasts' refers here to the banks of the river Styx, the river of the Underworld (Oxford Reference).

16 *rapine* 'The act or practice of seizing and taking away by force the property of others; plunder, pillage, robbery' (OED).

36 *drone* 'The male of the honey-bee. It is a non-worker, its function being to impregnate the queen-bee' (OED).

37 *dragon's* 'A fly so called' [Author's note].

41 *Alcides thus, 'no more* An alternative name for Heracles, a divine hero from Greek mythology known for battling against monsters of the Underworld.

Source: *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 18 (August 1748), p. 375.

Edited by Daniel Bresnahan