

William Kenrick, "The Beau and Butterfly. A Fable"

Description

[WILLIAM KENRICK]

"The BEAU and BUTTERFLY. A FABLE."

When summer deckt each sylvan scene,
And sunshine smil'd along the green,
When groves allur'd with noon tide shade,
And purling brooks refresh'd the glade;
An empty form of empty show, 5
A flutt'ring insect, call'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: 10
A silver zone entwin'd his head,
His belly shone with lively red,
His wings were green, but studded o'er
With gold embroider'd spots before.
Around him various insects came, 15
Of different colour, different name;
And ting'd with every gorgeous die,
Among the rest a butterfly;
His wings are spread with wanton pride,
And beauty fades from all beside. 20
The beau beholds with envious eyes,
The living radiance as it flies,
"And shall, said he, this worthless thing,
That lives but on a summer's wing,
This flying worm more gaudy shine? 25
And wear a dress more gay than mine?
Is this wise nature's equal care
To deck a butterfly so fair?
While man her worthiest, greatest part,
Must wear the homely rags of art!" 30
Thus reason'd he, as reason beaux,
The subject of their logick cloaths,
And thus the butterfly reply'd,
With deeper tints by anger dy'd,
"Vain, trifling mortal! could'st thou boast, 35
To prize what nature prizes most
On man bestow'd, thou would'st not see

With envy ought she gives to me.
 This painted vestment, all my store,
 She gives, and I can claim no more 40
 But man, for greater ends design'd,
 Shou'd boast the beauties of the mind.
 More bright than gold thy wisdom shine,
 And virtue's sacred charms be thine.
 To rule the world by reason taught, 45
 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; 50
 And the long trifling labours o'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 return'd again 55
 Proud insect! impotently vain!
 The fool, who thus by self is priz'd,
 By others justly is despis'd;•
 She said, and flutter'd round on high,
 Nor staid to hear the beau's reply. 60

NOTES:

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

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

8 *papilio* • A butterfly or large moth • (OED).

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

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

Edited by Sierra Moreno