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The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl Of Orford

In Five Volumes

Walpole, Horace

London, 1798

The Funeral of the Lioness, a Fable

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THE FUNERAL OF THE LIONESS:

A FABLE.

IMITATED FROM LA FONTAINE.



THE savage nation plung'd in crimes,
 (As write the doctors of the times,
 Who know exact what passions move
 The breast supreme of angry Jove),
 The Thund'rer dipp'd his lightnings keen
 In vials of small-pox and spleen,

And slew their gracious tawny queen.
 The widow'd monarch much was griev'd,
 Yet compliments in form receiv'd;
 And to acquit at once his duty
 To regal state and his dead beauty,

VOL. IV.

Ccc

A solemn

A solemn pomp of fun'ral rites
 He orders, and his peers invites,
 By found of trump and heralds grave,
 To meet at the cathedral-cave.

So, fond of pageantry and fights,
 As his historic grandson writes,
 Prussia's first monarch vented sorrow
 In fights to-day, in shows to-morrow.

Each shaggy baron with his dame
 From distant wood and highland came;
 And much they gossip of the queen,
 Of tickets, places, bombazeen;
 And much they press and crowd, to show
 At once their dignity and woe.

Well—Of the foresters alone
 The stag was never heard to groan;
 And he had reason, some folks say;
 His wife and son had fall'n a prey
 To her imperial highness' claws.
 His wife and son!—Was that a cause
 To stagger his allegiance? Then
 Were royal appetite in vain;
 And kings and queens of lion-blood
 Might hunger for delicious food,
 While subjects, calling life their own,
 To grass and herbs would flint the throne.

A flatterer (good Delawar,
 Such one has heard in courts there are)
 Dropp'd somewhere near the monarch's ears,
 That few had seen the stag in tears;
 Nay, that a smile, ill-stifled, own'd
 He joy'd for what the public groan'd.

Boh! What, not sorrow for the queen!
 Was ever such a traitor seen?

MISCELLANEOUS VERSES. 379

Call all my guards, my grenadiers,
 Call my own regiment of bears!
 He dies this hour, and, piece-meal torn,
 Shall teach rebellion how to mourn.

The stag, who heard the thunder roll,
 And death pronounc'd by royal growl,
 With artful tale for grace implor'd:
 Great fir, he added, prince ador'd,
 Vain is the mockery of woe,
 Nor what to faints and queens we owe,
 Who, far remov'd from earthly cares,
 Or know not, or deride our tears.
 'Twas thus to my enraptur'd sight,
 Her mane and whiskers streaming light,
 Like fainted Francis, late appear'd
 Your gracious spouse, our queen rever'd:
 Her flapping tail and purr sedate
 Bespoke her soul's Elysian state;
 When thus she said: My friend, beware,
 Lest what the king's connubial care
 Of pomp intends, betray thy eye
 To drop the tear, or breast to sigh;
 While my ecstatic soul, refin'd
 From grosser cares of mortal kind,
 Nor meditates the Libyan chace,
 Nor mourns to leave my orphan race;
 But, where Elysian waters glide,
 With Clarke and Newton by my side,
 Purrs o'er the metaphysic page,
 Or ponders the prophetic rage
 Of Merlin, who mysterious sings
 Of men and lions, beasts and kings.

The crowd with shouts the welkin rent;
 The monarch lion growl'd content,
 Stood on four tiptoes, grasp'd his sword,
 Strutted, prepar'd to be ador'd,

Ccc 2

And

And gave the stag to kifs, the paw
He fancied held the world in awe.

The moral of the fable faith,
Flatt'ry will please, where truth is death.

