

1748

ON A FAVOURITE CAT, DROWNED IN A TUB OF GOLD FISHES

Thomas Gray

Gray, Thomas (1716-1771) - English poet and noted letter-writer who was a forerunner of the romantic movement in England. On a Favourite Cat Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes (1748) - One of Gray's well-known poems, written in neoclassical light verse. Opening lines: 'Twas on a lofty vases side, / Where China's gayest art had dyed ...

ON A FAVOURITE CAT

'Twas on a lofty vase's side, Where China's gayest art had dyed The azure flowers, that
blow, Demurest of the tabby kind The pensive Selima reclined, Gazed on the lake
below.

Her conscious tail her joy declared: The fair round face, the snowy beard, The velvet of
her paws, Her coat that with the tortoise vies, Her ears of jet, and emerald eyes She saw;
and purr'd applause.

Still had she gazed, but 'midst the tide Two angel forms were seen to glide, The Genii
of the stream: Their scaly armor's Tyrian hue, Through richest purple, to the view
Betray'd a golden gleam.

The hapless Nymph with wonder saw: A whisker first, and then a claw With many an
ardent wish.

She stretch'd, in vain, to reach the prize What female heart can gold despise? What Cat's
averse to fish?

Presumptuous maid! with looks intent Again she stretch'd, again she bent, Nor knew
the gulf between Malignant Fate sat by and smiled The slippery verge her feet beguiled;
She tumbled headlong in!

Eight times emerging from the flood She mew'd to every watery God Some speedy aid
to send.

No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirr'd: Nor cruel Tom nor Susan heard.

A favourite has no friend!

From hence, ye Beauties, undeceived, Know one false step is ne'er retrieved, And be
with caution bold.

Not all that tempts your wandering eyes And heedless hearts, is lawful prize; Nor all
that glisters, gold.

THE END