Thoughtless Cruelty

By Charles Lamb

There, Robert, you have kill’d that fly — ,
    And should you thousand ages try
The life you’ve taken to supply,
    You could not do it.

You surely must have been devoid
    Of thought and sense, to have destroy’d
A thing which no way you annoy’d —
    You’ll one day rue it.

Twas but a fly perhaps you’ll say,
    That’s born in April, dies in May;
That does but just learn to display
    His wings one minute,

And in the next is vanish’d quite.
    A bird devours it in his flight —
Or come a cold blast in the night,
    There’s no breath in it.

The bird but seeks his proper food —
    And Providence, whose power endu’d
That fly with life, when it thinks good,
    May justly take it.

But you have no excuses for’t —
    A life by Nature made so short,
Less reason is that you for sport
    Should shorter make it.

A fly a little thing you rate —
    But, Robert do not estimate
A creature’s pain by small or great;
    The greatest being

Can have but fibres, nerves, and flesh,
    And these the smallest ones possess,
Although their frame and structure less
    Escape our seeing.