

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Lines on a Friend Who Died of a Frenzy Fever Induced by Calumnious Reports"

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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

"Lines on a Friend Who Died of a Frenzy Fever Induced by Calumnious Reports"

EDMUND! thy grave with aking eye I scan,
And inly groan for Heaven's poor outcast, Man!
'Tis tempest all or gloom: in early youth
If gifted with the Ithuriel lance of Truth
He force to start amid her feign'd caress 5
VICE, siren-hag! in native ugliness,
A Brother's fate will haply rouse the tear,
And on he goes in heaviness and fear!
But if his fond heart call to PLEASURE'S bower
Some pigmy FOLLY in a careless hour, 10
The faithless guest shall stamp th' enchanted ground
And mingled forms of Mis'ry rise around:
Heart-fretting FEAR, with pallid look aghast,
That courts the future woe to hide the past;
REMORSE, the poison'd arrow in his side; 15
And loud lewd MIRTH, to Anguish close allied:
Till FRENZY, fierce-ey'd child of moping pain,
Darts her hot lightning flash athwart the brain.

Rest, injur'd shade! Shall SLANDER squatting near
Spit her cold venom in a DEAD MAN'S ear? 20
'Twas thine to feel the sympathetic glow
In Merit's joy, and Poverty's meek woe;
Thine all, that cheer the moment as it flies,
The *zoneless* CARES, and smiling COURTESIES.
Nurs'd in thy heart the firmer Virtues grew, 25
And in thy heart they wither'd! Such chill dew
Wan INDOLENCE on each young blossom shed;
And VANITY her filmy net-work spread,
With eye that roll'd around in asking gaze,
And tongue that traffick'd in the trade of praise. 30
Thy follies such! the hard world mark'd them well—

Were they more wise, the PROUD who never fell?
Rest, injur'd shade! the poor man's prayer of praise
On heaven-ward wing thy wounded soul shall raise.

As oft at twilight gloom thy grave I pass, 35
And sit me down upon its recent grass,
With introverted eye I contemplate
Similitude of soul, perhaps of — Fate!
To me hath Heaven with bounteous hand assign'd
Energic Reason and a shaping mind, 40
The daring ken of Truth, the Patriot's part,
And Pity's sigh, that breathes the gentle heart—
Sloth-jaundic'd all! and from my graspless hand
Drop Friendship's precious pearls, like hour glass sand.
I weep, yet stoop not! the faint anguish flows, 45
A dreamy pang in Morning's fev'rish doze.

Is this pil'd Earth our Being's passless mound?
Tell me, cold grave! is Death with poppies crown'd?
Tir'd Centinel! mid fitful starts I nod,
And fain would sleep, though pillow'd on a clod! 50

NOTES:

Title *Frenzy* "Mental derangement; delirium" (*OED*); *Calumnious* "Slandorous, defamatory" (*OED*).

1 *aking* Aching.

2 *inly* Inwardly.

4 *Ithuriel* Angel from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667); associated with truth.

9 *bower* "A vague poetic word for an idealized abode" (*OED*).

13 *pallid* "Pale, esp. from illness, shock, etc." (*OED*).

18 *athwart* "Across in various directions" (*OED*).

27 *Wan* "Faded, sickly... unhealthily pale" (*OED*); *INDOLENCE* "Love of ease... slothfulness" (*OED*).

41 *ken* "Mental perception, recognition" (*OED*).

49 *Centinel* "Sentinel; one who or something which keeps guard" (*OED*).

50 *clod* "A lump of earth or clay adhering together" (*OED*).

Source: *Poems on Various Subjects* (London, 1796), pp. 32-35. [Google Books]

Edited by M. Seydel

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