Edward Lovibond, â??To a Young Lady, a Very Good Actressâ?•

Description

EDWARD LOVIBOND

â??**To a Young Lady, a Very Good Actress**â?•

Powerful is Beauty, when to mortal seats
From Heaven descends the heaven-created good,
When Fancyâ??s glance the fairy phantom meets,
Nymph of the shade, or Naiad of the flood.

So blooms CELENA, daughter of the skies,
Queen of the joys romantic rapture dreams,
Her cheeks are summerâ??s damask rose, her eyes
Steal their quick lustre from the morningâ??s beams,

Her airy neck the shining tresses shade;
In every wanton curl a Cupid dwells:
To these, distrusting in the Gracesâ?? aid,
She joins the mighty charms of magic spells.

Man, hapless man in vain destruction flies,
With wily arts thâ?? enchantress nymph pursues;
To varying forms, as varying lovers rise,
Shifts the bright IRIS of a thousand hues.

Behold theâ?? austere Divine, oppress by years,
Colics, and bulk, and tithes ingendâ??red care
The sound of woman grates his aching ears,
Of other woman than a scripture Fair.

Sudden she comes a DEBORAH bright in arms,
Or wears the pastoral RACHELâ??S ancient mien;
And now, as glow gay-flushing eastern charms,
He sighs like DAVIDâ??S son for SHEBAâ??S Queen.

To CHANGE the China trader speeds his pace,
Nor heeds the chilly Northâ??s unripening dames;
â??Tis herâ??s with twinkling eyes, and lengthenâ??d face,
And pigmy foot, to wake forgotten flames.

She oft, in likeness of thâ?? EGYPTIAN Crone,
Too well informâ??d, relates to wondâ??ring swains

Their amorous plaints preferrâ??d to her alone:
Her own relentless breast too well explains.

See, at the manorâ??s hospitable board
Enters a Sire, by infant age reverâ??d;
From shortenâ??d tube exhaling fumes afford
The incense bland that clouds his forky beard.

Conundrums quaint, and puns of jocund kind,
With rural ditties, warm thâ?? elated â??Squire,
Yet oft sensations quicken in his mind,
Other than ale and jocund puns inspire.

The forms where bloated Dropsy holds her seat
He views, unconscious of magiciansâ?? guiles,
Nor deems a jaundicâ??d visage lovâ??d retreat
Of graces, young desires, and dimpled smiles.

Now oâ??er the portal of an antique hall
A Grecian form the rapturâ??d patriot awes,
The hoary bust and brow severe recal
LYCURGUS, founder of majestic laws.

Awhile entrancâ??d, he dreams of old Renown,
And Freedomâ??s triumph in PLATEAN fields,
Then turns â?? relaxing sees the furrowâ??d frown,
To melting airs the softenâ??d marble yields.

I see the lips as breathing life, he cries,
On icy cheeks carnation blooms displayâ??d,
The pensive orbs are pleasure-beaming eyes
And SPARTAâ??S lawgiver a blushing maid.

There, at the curtains of the shuddâ??ring youth,
Stiff, melancholy, pale, a spectre stands,
Some love-lorn virginâ??s shade â?? O! injurâ??d truth,
Deserted phantom, and ye plighted hands,

He scarce had utterâ??d â?? from his frantic gaze
The vision fades â?? succeeds a flood of light.
O friendly shadows, veil him, as the blaze
Of Beautyâ??s sun emerging from the night.

Here end thy triumphs, nymphs of potent charms,
The laurelâ??d Bard is Heavenâ??s immortal care;
Him nor Illusionâ??s spell nor philter harms,
Nor music floating on the magic air.

The myrtle wand his arm imperial bears,
Reluctant ghosts and stubborn elves obey:
Its virtuous touch the midnight fairy fears,
And shapes the wanton in AURORAâ??S ray.

I ceasâ??d; the virgin came in native grace,
With native smiles that strengthen Beautyâ??s chain:
O vain the confidence of mortal race!
My laurelâ??d head and myrtle wand are vain.

Again wild raptures, kindling passions rise,
As once in ANDOVERâ??S autumnal grove,
When looks that spoke, and eloquence of sighs,
Told the soft mandate of anotherâ??s love.

NOTES:

4 *Nymph â??*Any of a class of semi-divine spirits; imagined as taking the form of a maidenâ?• (*OED*)*; Naiad of the flood â??*a nymph of fresh waterâ?• (*OED).*

5 *Celena* Or Selene, the Greek goddess of the moon.

10 *Cupid â??*In Roman Mythology, the god of loveâ?• (*OED).*

16 *Iris â??*The goddess who acted as the messenger of the gods, and was held to display as her sign, or appear as, the rainbowâ?• (*OED*).

18 *Colics â??*A name given to severeâ?¦gripping pains in the bellyâ?• (*OED*); *bulk* â??A heap, cargoâ?• (*OED*); *tithes â??*A favorâ?• (*OED*).

21 *Deborah* A prophet and only female judge from the Bible (Judges 4).

22 *Rachel* Figure from the Bible, the favorite of Jacobâ??s two wives (Genesis 30).

24 *Davidâ??s son for Shebaâ??s queen* An allusion to the enigmatic biblical story of King Davidâ??s son, Solomon, and the unnamed Queen of Sheba who visited Jerusalem to test his wisdom (1 Kings 10).

25 *Change* â??A place where merchants or bankers conduct businessâ?• (*OED*).

26 *unripening dames* Young women.

29 *Egyptian Crone* Nephthys, an Egyptian goddess of old age, death.

31 *amorous plaints â??*Audible expressions of sorrowâ?• (*OED*).

37 *jocund* â??Feeling, expressing, or communicating mirth or cheerfulnessâ?• (*OED*).

43 *jaundicâ??d* â??To affect with envy or jealousyâ?• (*OED).*

41 *Dropsy* â??A morbid condition characterized by the accumulation of watery fluid, or an insatiable thirst or cravingâ?• (*OED*).

45 *portal* An entrance.

48 *Lycurgus* A lawgiver of Sparta.

56 *Sparta* Prominent city-state in ancient Greece.

58 *spectre â??*An apparition, phantom, or ghost*â?• (OED).*

67 *philter â??*A potion, drug, or (occasionally) charm supposed to be capable of exciting sexual attraction or loveâ?• (*OED*).

69 *myrtle wand* A magic wand, as used by pagans.

72 *Aurora* A Roman goddess who personifies dawn.

78 *Andover* A market town in Hampshire, England.

Source: ***Poems on Several Occasions*** **(London, 1785), pp. 102-107. [*Google Books*]**

Edited by Rachel Rosenthal