Anonymous, â??Scattered Thoughts, by a Ladyâ?•

Description

ANONYMOUS

â??Scattered Thoughts, by a Ladyâ?•

Written in a long and painful Illness, after a disturbed and restless night.

While, child of sorrow, on my couch I lie,
And court sweet Sleep to seal my wakeful eye,
Still keenest anguish rankles at my heart,
And pains unceasing pierce each vital part.
I hear the joyless bird of omen sing,
And at my casement flap his blackenâ??d wing;
While nightly spirits hover round my head,
Haunting with horrid thoughts my widowâ??d bed.
Oh, come, thou kindest nurse! come, gentle Sleep!
Seal with thy wings *those eyes* which wake *to weep*.
Distill thy poppies on my unclosâ??d lid,
And on my pillow thy mild opiates shed.
Through nightâ??s dark gloom I count the measurâ??d time,
And hear the knell of Death incessant chime:
The spider, spinning in some lonely notch,
Echoes the knell, and keeps thâ?? ill-omenâ??d watch.
My pensive pillow views my early life,
When in *youthâ??s bloom* I took the name of wife;
Scarce sixteen suns had dawnâ??d upon my years,
When I awoke to all a *motherâ??s* cares;
While, at my breast, the tender blossom hung,
Ere the soft accent loosâ??d the lisping tongue,
Griefâ??s sharpest arrows piercâ??d my gentle heart,
And wounded Nature felt her festering dart;
No love congenial to *my own* I found,
But joyless passâ??d nightâ??s solitary round.
If lost in momentary sleep I lie,
What hideous forms appear to fancyâ??s eye!
With phantoms of a woe-worn feverish brain
I trembling start,â??and wake to keener pain;
The spectres of delusion still in view,
And the *night bag*, my waking sense pursue.
My shortenâ??d sighs quick breathe around my room,
Where horrid darkness sheds a total gloom ;
Save one *pale taper* of a glimmering light,
Which dimly twinkles through the shades of night,

Like a *true friend*, such silent sorrow shows,
And â??waxeth paleâ?•â??through sympathy of woes.
Sweet Sympathy! in whateâ??er form you dwell,
Welcome! thrice welcome! to my tear-washâ??d cell.
Evâ??n when I hear the nightly shrill owl scream,
Some *friend* I think is nearâ??some *hope* unseen.
Hope! did I say? thou joyful, blessed sound!
Where beams thy ray? where art thou to be found?
Long have I sought thy visionary hand;
Lead me, dear phantom! to that *blissful* land!
That heaven of *sure* rest! that promisâ??d shore!
Where Peace shall dwellâ??and *I* shall weep no more!
Then strike, grim spectre! strike this *yielding heart*!
Strike down my sorrows with thy *welcome dart*.
And, when this â??mortal coilâ?• is laid in earth,
Then may my soul awake to Heavenâ??s new birth!
Then, like a pilgrim, view this rocky shore,
And *restâ??*where *thorns* shall *pierce my soul* NO MORE!

NOTES:

14 *knell* â??To ring (a bell); to ring slowly and solemnly, as for a death or at a funeral, to tollâ?• (*OED*) ; *chime* **â??**Living near the churchâ?• [Authorâ??s note].

32 *night bag* â??A travelling bag used to carry things needed for the nightâ?• (*OED*).

35 *pale taper* **â??**A wax candle, in early times used chiefly for devotional or penitential purposesâ?• (*OED*).

51 *mortal coil* **â??**The bustle or turmoil of this mortal lifeâ?• (*OED*).

Source: *The Gentlemanâ??s Magazine* (October 1787), pp. 914-15.

Edited by Arianna Ordonez