Elizabeth Carter, â??To â??-.â?•

Description

ELIZABETH CARTER

â??To â??â??.â?•

Say, dear *Emilia*, what untryâ??d Delight
Has Earth, or Air, or Ocean to bestow,
That checks thy active Spiritâ??s nobler Flight,
And bounds its narrow View to Scenes below?

Is *Life* thy Passion? Let it not depend
On fluttâ??ring Pulses, and a fleeting Breath:
In sad Despair the fruitless Wish must end,
That seeks it in the gloomy Range of *Death*.

This World, deceitful Idol of thy Soul,
Is all devoted to his Tyrant Powâ??r:
To form his Prey the genial Planets roll,
To speed his Conquests flies the rapid Hour.

This verdant Earth, these fair surrounding Skies,
Are all the Triumphs of his wasteful Reign:
â??Tis but to set, the brightest Suns arise;
â??Tis but to wither, blooms the flowâ??ry Plain.

â??Tis but to die, Mortality was born;
Nor struggling Folly breaks the dread Decree:
Then cease the common Destiny to mourn,
Nor wish thy Natureâ??s Laws reversâ??d for thee.

The Sun that sets, again shall gild the Skies;
The faded Plain reviving Flowâ??rs shall grace:
But hopeless fall, no more on Earth to rise,
The transitory Forms of Human Race.

No more on Earth: but see, beyond the Gloom,
Where the short Reign of Time and Death expires,
Victorious oâ??er the Ravage of the Tomb,
Smiles the fair Object of thy fond Desires.

The seed of *Life*, below, imperfect lies,
To Virtueâ??s Hand its Cultivation givâ??n:
Formâ??d by her Care, the beauteous Plant shall rise,

And flourish with unfading Bloom in Heavâ??n.

NOTES:

Title â??Of this beautiful Poem Mrs. Carter never chose to say to whom it was addressed, as some degree of censure seems to be implied by it. It is one of the most highly finished of the collectionâ?• [Editorâ??s note]. (Montagu Pennington, ed., *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, with a New Edition of her Poems,* vol. II [London, 1808], p. 85).

11 *genial* â??Jovial; kindlyâ?• (*OED*).

18 *Folly â??*Weakness of intellectâ?• (Johnson).

23 *fall* â??Like *leavesâ??* a very ancient metaphor. See Isaiah xl. 6, &c. And Homer, Il[iad]. 6. V. 146â?• [Editorâ??s note] (Pennington, *Memoirs*, p. 86). An allusion to Homerâ??s *Iliad*: â??Like the generation of leaves, the lives of mortal men. Now the wind scatters the old leaves across the earth, now the living timber bursts with new buds and spring comes round again. And so with men: as one generation comes to life, another dies awayâ?• (*The Iliad*, Book 6, lines 171-175).

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions.* Second Edition (London, 1766), pp. 83-85. [Google Books]

Edited by Jizelle Gonzalez