Elizabeth Moody, â??A Dialogue between Beauty and Timeâ?•

Description

ELIZABETH MOODY

â??A Dialogue between Beauty and Timeâ?•

As BEAUTY somewhat in decay
Was loitâ??ring tedious hours away;
Reflecting on her faded charms
That now no Loverâ??s heart alarms;
On Time her pensive thought was bent,
Till rising spleen enforced a vent.

O TIME ! rapacious thief, she cryâ??d,
Why dost thou pillage thus our pride?
Encroaching still from day to day,
Some favâ??rite charm thou stealâ??st away;
O what a booty hast thou got!
Of hair, teeth, skin, and God knows what!
Detested plunderer ! â??could but we
Retaliate thefts and rifle thee!
What bands of females would arise
In quest of ringlets, lips and eyes!
But thou tenacious of thy store,
Willâ??t keep possession evermore;
Nor ever restitution make
Of any treasure thou dost take.
How artful thy insidious paces
Assailing by degrees our faces!
A tiny wrinkle first appears,
A sallower hue complexion wears;
A tooth perchance shall pass away,
An auburn lock be tingâ??d with grey;
A blotch displays a patch of red,
And here and there a pimpleâ??s head.
Thus by a progress dimly seen,
Thou makâ??st a wreck of Beautyâ??s mien.

â??TIME, who was mowing on his way,
Attentive to his daily prey,
Hearing his name aloud repeated,
And with respect so little treated,

Started and made a sudden stand,
His scythe suspended in his hand,
While thus he spoke,â??Thou silly fair!
Thy froward petulance forbear!
For know, that those who thus complain,
Who thus indulge the peevish strain,
Do but accelerate my power,
And uglier grow through every hour.
Go to thy glass, and that will show
From storms of rage that wrinkes flow.
Good-nature Beauty keeps alive,
Her dying charms it bids revive;
Still oâ??er herself a conquest gains,
And binds all others in her chains.
What though the skin be furrowâ??d oâ??er.
And hardness grows on every pore!
What though the eyes of beams bereft,
Have scarce a glimmering sparkle left;
Her sex its softness still retains
The angel temper still remains;
Still glows with every virtuous sense,
Its latest dreamâ??benevolence.

Have I not told thee I would make
Some recompense for what I take?
Have I not told thee thou shouldâ??st find
Amendment in thy better mind;
Have I not promisâ??d to dispense
Prudence, philosophy and sense?
And that when Beauty witherâ??d lies,
Virtue from her dead flowers shall rise;
Learn then submissionâ??be resignâ??d:
Meet me with smiles, and find me kind,
Yield to me calmly all I ask,â??
Resisting Timeâ??s a bootless task.

Submission? â??â??scornful BEAUTY cries,
Whatâ??give thee both my radiant eyes,
My hair, my neck, my arms, my skin,
And not one murmur pass within?
No wish indulgâ??d one charm to save
A little longer from thy grave?
Timeâ??s spoils his wisdom ill supplies,
Inadequate the compromise.

What canst thou give for Beautyâ??s face;
For Beautyâ??s freshness, vigour, grace?
What give in lieu of happy youth,

Her native innocence and truth?
Whatâ??for her open generous heart?
But cold reserve in folds of art?
Whatâ??for her unsuspecting trust?
But cautionâ??s fear, and doubt unjust.
What for the converse youth bestows?
Thought that reciprocally flows.
Gay intercourse that TIME derides,
â??With Laughter holding both her sides.â?•
When Mirthâ??s allowâ??d to be in season,
Nor stands controlâ??d by crabbed Reason.
For thisâ??say what dost thou engage?
The dull garrulity of Age.
The tedious half-rememberâ??d stories,
Of cocks and bulls, and Whigs and Tories.
Remnants of tales of ancient courts,
Of vicious Monarchs and their sports;
Of Statesmen and their various tricks,
And furious jars of Politicks.
With tribes of legendary themes,
Prophetic visions, ghosts and dreams.

That prudence too, experience, sense,
Which thou so boastest to dispense:
What form they, but a case of steel,
That aged bosoms may *not feel*?
And thy Philosophy, O say!
Will it drive racking Gout away?
Or for its pangs such ease prepare,
As flannel and an elbow chair?
Then wherefore barter Time, with thee,
On no Exchange shall we agree.

Time frownâ??d and scowling fierce replyâ??d,
Is this my profferâ??d grace denyâ??d?
Go thenâ??retain thy abject mind!
Such as thou viewâ??st me thou shalt find.
For thee no wisdom Iâ??ll prepare,
No solace for thy ageâ??s care,
No veil Iâ??ll spread thy faults to hide,
Replete with ignorance and pride,
Long as the glass my motion shows,
Through which lifeâ??s sandy current flows;
Thou slave of Folly shalt be seen,
The same at sixty, as sixteen.

NOTES:

6 *spleen* â??Excessive dejection or depression of spiritsâ?• (*OED*).

7 *rapacious* â??Inordiately given to grasping or takingâ?• (*OED*).

24 *sallower hue* â??Sickly; yellowâ?• (*Johnson*).

30 *mien* â??The look, bearing, manner, or conduct of a person, as showing character, moodâ?• (*OED*).

38 *froward* â??Ungovernable; angryâ?• (*Johnson*).

88 *With Laughter holding both her sides* A variation of line 32 from John Miltonâ??s *Lâ??Allegro* (1645), â??And Laughter holding both his sides.â?•

89 *Mirth* â??Joy, happinessâ?• (*OED*).

92 *garrulity* â??The quality of talking too much; talkativenessâ?• (*Johnson*).

94 *Whigs and Tories* The two main British political parties from the 1680s to the mid 1800s.

106 *Gout* â??A disease that causes painful swelling of the joints especially the toesâ?• (*Britannica*).

SOURCE: *Poetic Trifles* (London, 1798) pp. 13-18. [Google Books]

Edited by Luke Bushey