

Edward Lovibond, "To a Young Lady, a Very Good Actress"

Description

EDWARD LOVIBOND

"To a Young Lady, a Very Good Actress"

Powerful is Beauty, when to mortal seats From Heaven descends the heaven-created good, When Fancy'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 summer's damask rose, her eyes Steal their quick lustre from the morning's beams,	5
Her airy neck the shining tresses shade; In every wanton curl a Cupid dwells: To these, distrusting in the Graces' aid, She joins the mighty charms of magic spells.	10
Man, hapless man in vain destruction flies, With wily arts the enchantress nymph pursues; To varying forms, as varying lovers rise, Shifts the bright IRIS of a thousand hues.	15
Behold the austere Divine, oppress by years, Colics, and bulk, and tithes ingendered care The sound of woman grates his aching ears, Of other woman than a scripture Fair.	20
Sudden she comes a DEBORAH bright in arms, Or wears the pastoral RACHEL'S ancient mien; And now, as glow gay-flushing eastern charms, He sighs like DAVID'S son for SHEBA'S Queen.	
To CHANGE the China trader speeds his pace, Nor heeds the chilly North's unripening dames; 'Tis her with twinkling eyes, and lengthen'd face, And pigmy foot, to wake forgotten flames.	25
She oft, in likeness of the EGYPTIAN Crone, Too well inform'd, relates to wondering swains	30

Their amorous complaints preferred to her alone:
Her own relentless breast too well explains.

See, at the manor's hospitable board
Enters a Sire, by infant age revered;
From shortened tube exhaling fumes afford 35
The incense bland that clouds his forked beard.

Conundrums quaint, and puns of jocund kind,
With rural ditties, warm than elated Squire,
Yet oft sensations quicken in his mind,
Other than ale and jocund puns inspire. 40

The forms where bloated Dropsy holds her seat
He views, unconscious of magicians' guiles,
Nor deems a jaundiced visage loved retreat
Of graces, young desires, and dimpled smiles.

Now open the portal of an antique hall 45
A Grecian form the raptured patriot awes,
The hoary bust and brow severe recall
LYCURGUS, founder of majestic laws.

Awhile entranced, he dreams of old Renown,
And Freedom's triumph in PLATEAN fields, 50
Then turns relaxing sees the furrowed frown,
To melting airs the softened marble yields.

I see the lips as breathing life, he cries,
On icy cheeks carnation blooms display'd,
The pensive orbs are pleasure-beaming eyes 55
And SPARTA'S lawgiver a blushing maid.

There, at the curtains of the shuddering youth,
Stiff, melancholy, pale, a spectre stands,
Some love-lorn virgin's shade O! injur'd truth,
Deserted phantom, and ye plighted hands, 60

He scarce had uttered from his frantic gaze
The vision fades succeeds a flood of light.
O friendly shadows, veil him, as the blaze
Of Beauty's sun emerging from the night.

Here end thy triumphs, nymphs of potent charms, 65
The laureled Bard is Heaven's immortal care;
Him nor Illusion'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: 70
 Its virtuous touch the midnight fairy fears,
 And shapes the wanton in AURORA'S ray.

I cease; the virgin came in native grace,
 With native smiles that strengthen Beauty's chain:
 O vain the confidence of mortal race! 75
 My laurel head and myrtle wand are vain.

Again wild raptures, kindling passions rise,
 As once in ANDOVER'S autumnal grove,
 When looks that spoke, and eloquence of sighs,
 Told the soft mandate of another's love. 80

NOTES:

4 *Nymph* - Any of a class of semi-divine spirits; imagined as taking the form of a maiden (OED); *Naiad of the flood* - a nymph of fresh water (OED).

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

10 *Cupid* - In Roman Mythology, the god of love (OED).

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

18 *Colics* - A name given to severe gripping pains in the belly (OED); *bulk* - A heap, cargo (OED); *tithes* - A favor (OED).

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

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

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

25 *Change* - A place where merchants or bankers conduct business (OED).

26 *unripening dames* Young women.

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

31 *amorous complaints* - Audible expressions of sorrow (OED).

37 *jocund* - Feeling, expressing, or communicating mirth or cheerfulness (OED).

43 *jaundic'd* - To affect with envy or jealousy (OED).

41 *Dropsy* - A morbid condition characterized by the accumulation of watery fluid, or an insatiable thirst or craving (OED).

45 *portal* An entrance.

48 *Lycurgus* A lawgiver of Sparta.

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

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

67 *philter* • A potion, drug, or (occasionally) charm supposed to be capable of exciting sexual attraction or love • (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