Samuel Johnson, â??Autumn. An Odeâ?•

Description

SAMUEL JOHNSON

â??Autumn. An Odeâ?•

Alas! with swift and silent pace,
Impatient time rolls on the year;
The seasons change, and natureâ??s face
Now sweetly smiles, now frowns severe.

â??Twas Spring, â??twas Summer, all was gay,
Now Autumn bends a cloudy brow;
The flowers of Spring are swept away,
And Summer fruits desert the bough.

The verdant leaves that playâ??d on high,
And wantonâ??d on the western breeze,
Now trod in dust neglected lie,
As Boreas strips the bending trees.

The fields that wavâ??d with golden grain,
As russet heaths are wild and bare;
Not moist with dew, but drenchâ??d in rain,
Nor health, nor pleasure wanders there.

No more while thro the midnight shade,
Beneath the moonâ??s pale orb I stray,
Soft pleasing woes my heart invade,
As Progne pours the melting lay.

From this capricious clime she soars,
O! would some god but wings supply!
To where each morn the Spring restores,
Companion of her flight Iâ??d fly.

Vain wish! me fate compels to bear
The downward seasonâ??s iron reign,
Compels to breathe polluted air,
And shiver on a blasted plain.

What bliss to life can Autumn yield,
If glooms, and showers, and storms prevail;

And Ceres flies the naked field,
And flowers, and fruits, and Phoebus fail?

Oh! what remains, what lingers yet,
To cheer me in the darkening hour?
The grape remains! the friend of wit,
In love, and mirth, of mighty power.

Haste â?? press the clusters, fill the bowl;
Apollo! shoot thy parting ray:
This gives the sunshine of the soul,
This god of health, and verse, and day.

Still â?? still the jocund strain shall flow,
The pulse with vigorous rapture beat;
My Stella with new charms shall glow,
And every bliss in wine shall meet.

NOTES:

8 *bough* â??One of the larger limbs or offshoots of a tree, a main branch; but also applied to a smaller branchâ?• *(OED)*.

10 *wantonâ??d* â??To move nimbly, and irregularlyâ?• (Johnson*)*.

11 *trod* â??Tread, footprint, track, traceâ?• *(OED)*.

12 *Boreas* â??The north-windâ?• *(OED)*.

14 *russett* â??A subdued reddish-brown colour; a shade of thisâ?• *(OED).*

20 *Progne â??* (A name for) the swallow (frequently treated poetically as a variety of songbird)â?• *(OED).*

31 *Ceres* In Roman religion, goddess of agriculture and goddess of the growth of food plants (*EncyclopÃ¦dia Britannica*).

32 *Phoebus* â??Apollo as the god of light or of the sun; the sun personifiedâ?• *(OED).*

36 *mirth* â??Often used of religious joy and heavenly blissâ?• *(OED).*

38 *Apollo* Olympian god of prophecy and oracles, music, song and poetry, archery, healing, plague and disease, and the protection of the young.

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

Source: *The Poetical Works Of Samuel Johnson* (London, 1789), pp. 158-160. [*Google Books*]

Edited by Robert Mezian