â??E. V.â?•, â??The Nightingaleâ??s Complaintâ?•

Description

â??E. V.â?•

â??The Nightingaleâ??s Complaintâ?•

Why, my mournful warbler, why
Dost waste the tedious day
With many a tear, and many a sigh,
And many a plaintive lay?

Dost thou the captive state bewail
In which thouâ??rt doomâ??d to dwell?
No more to visit hill or dale,
Or woods or shaded dell?

To which my bird, my favâ??rite bird,
With sweet persuasion sung;
Nor sweeter numbers eâ??er were heard
From Linleyâ??s tuneful tongue:

â??Is there not cause for tears and sighs,
â??For loss of sacred home?
â??For loss of freedom of the skies
â??Givâ??n us at large to roam?

â??Is there not cause for tears and sighs,
â??When, in some distant grove,
â??Perhaps my *Philomela* dies
â??In absence from her love?

â??Oft, after Vespers, would repair
â??The woods and groves among,
â??The matron, and her virgin care,
â??And listen to my song.

â??The hermit, too, would oft attend
â??Unseen by mortal eye;
â??Awhile his beads, his prayâ??rs suspend,
â??And praise my melody.

â??Oft wouâ??d some hapless shepherd swain
â??Beneath the shade recline;

â??Of loveâ??s vicissitudes complain,
â??And mingle woes with mine.

â??What is the fretted roof to me,
â??Or spacious splendid dome,
â??Comparâ??d to sweet simplicity,
â??Comparâ??d to humbler home?

â??Some other birds of brighter dyes,
â??Some bird of happier grace,
â??May boast, perhaps, might proudly prize
â??This gay, distinguishâ??d place.

â??Vain of his plumage, vain of dress,
â??Vain of his gaudy cage;
â??But sure the graces neâ??er will bless,
â??Nor will his note engage.

â??Neâ??er was the servile votive song
â??To harmony allyâ??d;
â??Nor eâ??er shall slavâ??ry guide my tongue;â?•
He said, he bowâ??d and dyâ??d.

NOTES:

Title *Nightingale* The nightingale is used frequently in poetry. Its song is emphasized and usually linked to the art involved in the creation of poetry.

7 *dale* A valley.

8 *dell* A deep natural hollow or vale of no great extent, the sides usually clothed with trees or foliage *(OED).*

12 *Linleyâ??s tuneful tongue* Elizabeth Ann Linley (1754-1792) was the daughter of the famous musician Thomas Linley and belonged to a musically-gifted family. Elizabeth Ann was known for her singing voice and her career was at its height during the mid 1770s.

19 *Philomela* A poetic term for nightingale.

21 *Vespers* The Evening Prayer or Evensong; this prayer was typically said around sunset.

29 *swain* A man, a youth, a boy (*OED).*

Source: *The Gentlemanâ??s Magazine*, vol. 45 (London, 1775), p. 492.

Edited by Shanna Cooper