

# Elizabeth Moody, "A Dialogue between Beauty and Time"

## Description

ELIZABETH MOODY

### •A Dialogue between Beauty and Time•

As BEAUTY somewhat in decay  
Was loit'ring tedious hours away;  
Reflecting on her faded charms  
That now no Lover's heart alarms;  
On Time her pensive thought was bent,   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   5  
Till rising spleen enforced a vent.

O TIME ! rapacious thief, she cry'd,  
Why dost thou pillage thus our pride?  
Encroaching still from day to day,  
Some fav'rite charm thou steal'st away;   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   10  
O what a booty hast thou got!  
Of hair, teeth, skin, and God knows what!  
Detested plunderer ! "could but we  
Retaliate thefts and rifle thee!  
What bands of females would arise   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   15  
In quest of ringlets, lips and eyes!  
But thou tenacious of thy store,  
Will'st keep possession evermore;  
Nor ever restitution make  
Of any treasure thou dost take.   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   20  
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,   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   25  
An auburn lock be ting'd with grey;  
A blotch displays a patch of red,  
And here and there a pimple's head.  
Thus by a progress dimly seen,  
Thou mak'st a wreck of Beauty's mien.   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   Â   30

"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, Â 35  
 His scythe suspended in his hand,  
 While thus he spoke, "Thou silly fair!  
 Thy froward petulance forbear!  
 For know, that those who thus complain,  
 Who thus indulge the peevish strain, Â 40  
 Do but accelerate my power,  
 And uglier grow through every hour.  
 Go to thy glass, and that will show  
 From storms of rage that wrinkles flow.  
 Good-nature Beauty keeps alive, Â 45  
 Her dying charms it bids revive;  
 Still o'er herself a conquest gains,  
 And binds all others in her chains.  
 What though the skin be furrow'd o'er.  
 And hardness grows on every pore! Â 50  
 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, Â 55  
 Its latest dream "benevolence.

Have I not told thee I would make  
 Some recompense for what I take?  
 Have I not told thee thou should'st find  
 Amendment in thy better mind; Â 60  
 Have I not promis'd to dispense  
 Prudence, philosophy and sense?  
 And that when Beauty wither'd lies,  
 Virtue from her dead flowers shall rise;  
 Learn then submission "be resign'd: Â 65  
 Meet me with smiles, and find me kind,  
 Yield to me calmly all I ask,  
 Resisting Time's a bootless task.

Submission? "scornful BEAUTY cries,  
 What "give thee both my radiant eyes, Â 70  
 My hair, my neck, my arms, my skin,  
 And not one murmur pass within?  
 No wish indulg'd one charm to save  
 A little longer from thy grave?  
 Time's spoils his wisdom ill supplies, Â 75  
 Inadequate the compromise.

What canst thou give for Beauty's face;  
 For Beauty's freshness, vigour, grace?

What give in lieu of happy youth,  
Her native innocence and truth? Â 80  
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? Â 85  
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. Â 90  
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, Â 95  
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. Â 100

*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! Â 105  
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. Â 110

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, Â 115  
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; Â 120  
Thou slave of Folly shalt be seen,  
The same at sixty, as sixteen.

**NOTES:**

**6** *spleen* – Excessive dejection or depression of spirits (QED).

**7** *rapacious* – Inordinately given to grasping or taking (QED).

**24** *sallower hue* – Sickly; yellow (Johnson).

**30** *mien* – The look, bearing, manner, or conduct of a person, as showing character, mood (QED).

**38** *froward* – Ungovernable; angry (Johnson).

**88** *With Laughter holding both her sides* – A variation of line 32 from John Milton's *L'Allegro* (1645), "And Laughter holding both his sides."

**89** *Mirth* – Joy, happiness (QED).

**92** *garrulity* – The quality of talking too much; talkativeness (Johnson).

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

**106** *Gout* – A disease that causes painful swelling of the joints especially the toes (Britannica).

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

*Edited by Luke Bushey*