

Elizabeth Moody, “Written in the Autumn”

Description

ELIZABETH MOODY

“Written in the Autumn”

We all do fade as a leaf.—Isaiah

Ye Groves, ye lawns, ye summer’s bowers!
That woo’d my steps so late;
Where now your boasted fruits and flowers?
Alas! they bow to fate.

Ah Spring! but now thy beauties grew! 5
Thy daisy-sprinkled ground;
Thy violets bloom’d, thy zephyrs blew,
Thy songsters warbled round.

On every bush, on every thorn, 10
Progressive life was seen;
Thy infant leaves but newly born,
Disclos’d their tender green.

The sun-beams quiver’d thro’ the glade,
Prolific verdure sprung: 15
The op’ning foliage promis’d shade,
And Philomela sung.

Youth of the year, fond Nature’s pride,
How transient is thy date!
How soon thy buds expanding wide,
Declare maturer state. 20

Then Summer with her full blown sweets,
Confirms our promis’d joys;
And when our promis’d joys completes,
The bliss of hope destroys.

For now the mounting sun no more, 25
 Protracts the length'ning day;
 His height attain'd, his journey o'er,
 He backward speeds his way.

Fierce blow the Equinoctial gales,
 The raging billows foam, 30
 The wand'ring vessel fearful sails,
 Despairing of her home.

Congealing blasts succeed to these,
 Proclaiming Winter's power;
 The leaves desert their parent trees, 35
 And separate in a shower.

Alas! this leaf that wither'd lies,—
 This leaf deform'd and dead!
 These eyes beheld its beauties rise,—
 Beheld those beauties spread. 40

Admiring saw its rip'ning charms,
 Unfolding in the vales;
 Protected by parental arms,
 And woo'd by vernal gales.

Ah me, how chang'd! its colour flown! 45
 Its moisture dried by frost,
 Its fibres shrunk—its vigour gone!
 And all its graces lost.

Frail as this leaf our life appears,
 A passing gale our breath; 50
 Like fate involves our fleeting years,
 Age, languor, sickness, death.

NOTES:

Epigraph Isaiah 64:6 (*KJV*).

1 *bowers* “A vague poetic word for an idealized abode” (*OED*).

7 *zephyrs* “A gentle, mild wind or breeze” (*OED*).

14 *verdure* “The fresh green colour characteristic of flourishing vegetation” (*OED*).

16 *Philomela* “A poetic or literary name for: the nightingale (in allusion to the myth of the maiden Philomela's transformation into that bird)” (*OED*).

29 *Equinoctial gales* A reference to the winds “prevailing about the time of the autumnal equinox” (*OED*).

44 *vernal gales* Mild spring winds (*OED*).

52 *languor* “Mental suffering or distress; pining, longing, sorrow, grief” (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poetic Trifles* (London, 1798), pp. 35-37. [Google Books]

Edited by Clare Katko