John Pomfret, â??A Pastoral Essay on the Death of Queen Mary, Anno, 1694â?•

Description

JOHN POMFRET

â??A Pastoral Essay on the Death of Queen Mary, Anno, 1694â?•

As gentle STREPHON to his Fold conveyâ??d
A wandâ??ring Lamb, which from the Flocks had strayâ??d
Beneath a mournful *Cypress* Shade, he found
COSMELIA weeping on the dewy Ground.
Amazâ??d with eager Haste, he ran to know
The fatal Cause of her intempâ??rate Woe;
And clasping her to his impatient Breast,
In these soft Words his tender Care exprest

STREPHON.

Why mourns my dear COSMELIA, why appears
My Life, my Soul, dissolvâ??d in briny Tears?
Has some fierce Tyger thy lovâ??d Heifer slain,
While I was wandâ??ring on the neighbâ??ring Plain?
Or has some greedy Wolf devourâ??d thy Sheep?
What sad Misfortune makes COSMELIA weep?
Speak, that I may prevent thy Griefâ??s Increase;
Partake thy Sorrows, or restore thy Peace.

COSMELIA.

Do you not hear from far that mournful Bell?
â??Tis for â??â?? I cannot the sad Tydings tell.
O, whither are my fainting Spirits fled!
â??Tis for CAELESTIAâ??STREPHON, O, â??sheâ??s dead!
The brightest Nymph, the Princess of the Plain,
By an untimely Dart, untimely slain.

STREPHON.

Dead! â??tis impossible. She cannot die,
Sheâ??s too Divine, too much a Deity:
â??Tis a false Rumour some ill Swains have spread,
Who wish perhaps the good CAELESTIA dead.

COSMELIA.

Ah! No, the Truth in evâ??ry Face appears,
For evâ??ry Face you meetâ??s oâ??erflowâ??d with Tears.
Trembling, and pale, I ran throâ?? all the Plain,
From Flock to Flock, and askâ??d of evâ??ry Swain;
But each, scarce lifting his dejected Head,
Cryâ??d O, COSMELIA! O, CAELESTIA dead!

STREPHON.

Something was meant by that ill-boading Croak
Of the prophetick Raven from the Oak,
Which strait by Lightning was in Shivers broke:
But we our Mischief feel, before we see,
Seizâ??d and oâ??erwhelmâ??d at once with Misery.

COSMELIA.

Since then we have no Trophies to bestow,
No pompous Things to make a glorious Show,
(For all the Tribute a poor Swain can bring,
In Rural Numbers, is to mourn and sing;)
Let us beneath the gloomy Shade rehearse
CAELESTIAâ??s sacred Praise in no less sacred Verse.

STREPHON.

CAELESTIA dead! then â??tis in vain to live:
Whatâ??s all the Comfort that these Plains can give
Since she, by whose bright Influence alone
Our Flocks increasâ??d, and we rejoicâ??d, is gone.
Since she, who round such Beams of Goodness spread
As gave new Life to evâ??ry Swain, is dead.

COSMELIA.

In vain we wish for the delightful Spring.
What Joys can flowâ??ry *May*, or *April* bring,
When she, for whom spacious Plains were spread
With early Flowâ??rs, and cheerful Greens, is dead?
In vain did courtly DAMON warm the Earth,
To give to Summer Fruits a Winter Birth.
In vain we Autumn wait, which crowns the Fields
With wealthy Crops, and various Plenty yields:
Since that fair Nymph, for whom the boundless Store
Of Nature was preservâ??d, is now no more.

STREPHON.

Farewel for ever then to all thatâ??s gay:
You will forget to sing, and I to play.
No more with cheerful Songs in cooling Bowâ??rs
Shall we consume the pleasurable Hours.
All Joys are banishâ??d, all Delights are fled,
Neâ??er to return, now fair CAELESTIAâ??s dead.

COSMELIA.

If eâ??er I sing, they shall be mournful Lays
Of great CAELESTIAâ??s Name, CAELESTIAâ??s Praise:
How good she was, how generous, how wise!
How beautiful her Shape, how bright her Eyes!
How charming all, how she was adorâ??d,
Alive; when dead, how much her loss deplorâ??d!
A noble Theme, and able to inspire
The humblest Muse with the sublimest Fire.
And since we do of such a Princess sing,
Let ours ascend upon a stronger Wing;
And while we do the lofty Numbers join,
Her Name will make their Harmony Divine.
Raise then thy tuneful Voice, and be the Song
Sweet as her Temper, as her Virtue strong.

STREPHON.

When her great Lord to foreign Wars was gone,
And left CAELESTIA here to rule alone,
With how serene a Brow, how void of Fear
When Storms arose, did she the Vessel steer?
And, when the Raging of the Waves did cease,
How gentle was her Sway in times of Peace?
Justice and Mercy did their Beams unite,
And round her Temples spread a glorious Light.
So quick she easâ??d the Wrongs of evâ??ry Swain,
She hardly gave them Leisure to complain.
Impatient to reward, but slow to draw
Thâ?? avenging Sword of necessary Law:
Like Heavâ??n, she took no pleasure to destroy:
With Grief she punishâ??d, and she savâ??d with Joy.

COSMELIA.

When God-like BELLEGER from Warâ??s Alarms
Returnâ??d in Triumph to CAELESTIAâ??s Arms,
She met her Hero with a full Desire,
But chaste as Light, and vigorous as Fire:
Such mutual Flames, so equally Divine,
Did in each Breast with such a Lustre shine,

His could not seem the greater, herâ??s the less:
Both were immense, for both were in Excess.

STREPHON.

O, God-like Princess! O, thrice-happy Swains!
While she presided oâ??er the fruitful Plains;
While she for ever ravishâ??d from our Eyes,
To mingle with her Kindred of the skies,
Did for your Peace her constant Thoughts employ;
The Nymphâ??s good Angel, and the Shepherdâ??s Joy.

COSMELIA.

All that was Noble beautifyâ??d her Mind;
There Wisdom sat, with solid Reason joinâ??d;
There too did Piety, and Greatness wait,
Meekness on Grandeur, Modesty on State:
Humble amidst the Splendors of a Throne;
Placâ??d above all, and yet despising none.
And when a Crown was forcâ??d on her by Fate,
She with some pain submitted to be Great.

STREPHON.

Her pious Soul with Emulation strove
To gain the mighty PANâ??s important Love:
To whose mysterious Rites she always came,
With such an active, so intense a Flame,
The Duties of Religion seemâ??d to be
Not more her Care, than her Felicity.

COSMELIA.

Virtue unmixt, without the least Allay,
Pure as the Light of a Celestial Ray,
Commanded all the Motions of the Soul,
With such a soft, but absolute Controul,
That as she knew what best great PAN would please,
She still performâ??d it with the greatest Ease.
Him for her high Exemplar she designâ??d,
Like him, benevolent to all Mankind.
Her Foes she pityâ??d, not desirâ??d their Blood,
And to revenge their Crimes, she did them good:
Nay, all Affronts, so unconcernâ??d she bore,
(Maugre that violent Temptation, Powâ??r,)
As if she thought it vulgar to resent,
Or wishâ??d Forgiveness their worst Punishment.

STREPHON.

Next mighty PAN, was her illustrious Lord,
His high Vicegerent, sacredly adorâ??d:
Him with such Piety and Zeal she lovâ??d,
The noble Passion evâ??ry Hour improvâ??d.
Till it ascended to that glorious Height,
â??Twas next, (if only next) to infinite.
This made her so entire a Duty pay,
She grew at last impatient to obey,
And met his Wishes with as prompt a Zeal,
As an Archangel his Creatorâ??s Will.

COSMELIA.

Mature for Heavâ??n, the fatal Mandate came,
With it, a Chariot of Etherial Flame,
In which, Elijah like, she passâ??d the Spheres;
Brought Joy to Heavâ??n, but left the World in Tears.

STREPHON.

Methinks I see her on the Plains of Light,
All Glorious, all incomparably Bright!
While the immortal Minds around her gaze
On the excessive Splendour of her Rays,
And scarce believe a human Soul could be
Endowâ??d with such a stupendous Majesty.

COSMELIA.

Who can lament too much? O, who can mourn
Enough oâ??er beautiful CAELESTIAâ??s Urn!
So great a Loss as this deserves Excess
Of Sorrow; allâ??s too little, that is less.
But to supply the Universal Woe,
Tears from all Eyes, without Cessation flow:
All that have powâ??r to weep, or voice to groan,
With throbbing Breast CAELESTIAâ??s fate bemoan:
While Marble Rocks the common Griefs partake,
And eccho back those Cries they cannot make.

STREPHON.

Weep then (once fruitful) Vales, and spring with Yew;
Ye thirsty barren Mountains, weep with Dew.
Let evâ??ry Flowâ??r on this extended Plain
Not droop, but shrink into its Womb again,
Neâ??er to receive anew its yearly Birth;

Let evâ??ry thing thatâ??s grateful, leave the Earth:
Let mournful Cypress, with each noxious Weed,
And baneful Venoms in their place succeed.
Ye purling querâ??lous Brooks, oâ??erchargâ??d with Grief
Haste swiftly to the Sea for more Relief;
Then tiding back, each to his sacred Head,
Tell your astonishâ??d Springs, CAELESTIAâ??s dead:

COSMELIA.

Well have you sung, in an exalted Strain,
The fairest Nymph eâ??er gracâ??d the *British* Plain.
Who knows but some officious Angel may
Your grateful Numbers to her Ears convey:
That she may smile upon us, from above,
And bless our mournful Plains with Peace and Love.

STREPHON.

But see, our Flocks do to their Folds repair,
For Night with sable Clouds obscures the Air,
Cold Damps descend from the unwholesome Sky,
And Safety bids us to our Cottage fly.
Thoâ?? with each Morn our Sorrows will return,
Each Evâ??n, like Nightingales, weâ??ll sing and mourn,
Till Death conveys Us to the peaceful Urn.

NOTES:

1 *Strephon* Stock pastoral name for a shepherd; *Fold* â??A pen or enclosure for domestic animals, esp. sheepâ?• (*OED*).

3 Cypress â??A well-known coniferous treeâ?¦often regarded as symbolic of mourningâ?• (*OED*).

4 *Cosmelia* Pastoral name for a woman.

20 *Caelestia* Pomfretâ??s poetical name for Queen Mary II, from â??Caelestisâ?• which means sky or heavenly (*A Latin Dictionary*).

20-22 *â??sheâ??s dead!â?¦untimely slainâ?•* Queen Mary II died on 28 December 1694 from smallpox.

25 *Swains* â??Countrymenâ?• (*OED*).

41 *Rural Numbers* That is, rural poetry.

54 *Damon* Stock pastoral name.

80 *to foreign Wars was gone* William III, Maryâ??s husband, was often gone handling affairs on the continent and left Mary to rule alone (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

94 *Belleger* Pomfretâ??s poetical name for William III; in modern Dutch the word translates as â??investor;â?• *from Warâ??s Alarms* William III fought and squashed a Jacobite rebellion on the continent, and participated in the Nine Yearsâ?? War (1688-1697) against Louis XIV of France (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

114-15 *when a Crown was forced on herâ?¦submitted to be Great* The Glorious Revolution of 1688 deposed James II, Maryâ??s father. As a result of her supporting her husband William invading England, Mary and her father were estranged (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

117 *Pan* The god of nature.

121 *Felicity* Happiness (*OED*).

133 *Maugre* â??To defy, opposeâ?• (*OED*).

137 *Vicegerent* â??A person appointed by a king or other ruler to act in his place or exercise certain of his administrative functionsâ?• (*OED*).

145 *Archangel* â??An angel of the highest rankâ?• (*OED*).

148 *Elijah* A prophet who defended the worship of the Jewish God; in 2 Kings 2:1-11, Elijah is transported to heaven by a whirlwind.

166 *Yew* An ancient tree common in England; often planted in churchyards and symbolic of funerary and death.

Source: *Poems upon Several Occasions*, 7th edition (London, 1727), p. 48. [Hathi Trust]

Edited by Ceneca Jackson