John Pomfret, â??To his Friend under Afflictionâ?•

Description

REVEREND JOHN POMFRET

â??To his Friend under Afflictionâ?•

None lives in this tumultuous State of things,
Where evâ??ry Morning some new Trouble brings;
But bold Inquietudes will break his rest,
And gloomy Thoughts disturb his anxious Breast.
Angelick Forms, and happy Spirits are
Above the Malice of perplexing Care:
But thatâ??s a blessing too sublime, too high
For those who bend beneath Mortality.
If in the Body there was but one part
Subject to Pain, and sensible of Smart,
And but one Passion could torment the Mind,
That Part, that Passion busy Fate would find.
But since Infirmities in both abound,
Since Sorrow both so many ways can wound,
â??Tis not so great a wonder that we grieve
Sometimes, as â??tis a miracle we live.

The happiest Man that ever breathâ??d on Earth,
With all the Glories of Estate and Birth,
Had yet some anxious Care to make him know
No Grandeur was above the reach of Woe.
To be from all things that disquiet, free,
Is not consistent with Humanity.
Youth, Wit, and Beauty, are such charming things,
Oâ??er which, if Affluence spreads her gaudy Wings,
We think the Person, who enjoys so much,
No Care can move, and no Affliction touch.
Yet could we but some secret method find
To view the dark Recesses of the Mind,
We there might see the hidden Seeds of Strife,
And Woes in Embryo ripâ??ning into Life;
How some fierce Lust, or boistâ??rous Passion, fills
The labâ??ring Spirit with prolific Ills
Pride, Envy, or Revenge, distract his Soul,
And all Right-reasonâ??s God-like Powâ??rs controul.
But if she must not be allowâ??d to sway,
Thoâ??all without, appears serene and gay,

A cankâ??rous Venom on the Vitals preys,
And poisons all the Comforts of his Days.

External Pomp, and visible Success,
Sometimes contribute to our Happiness;
But that, which makes it genuine, refinâ??d,
Is a good Conscience, and a Soul resignâ??d:
Then, to whatever End Afflictionâ??s sent,
To try our Virtues, or for Punishment,
We bear it calmly, thoâ?? a pondâ??rous Woe,
And still adore the Hand that gives the blow.
For in Misfortunes this advantage lies,
They make us humble, and they make us wise.
And he that can acquire such Virtues, gains
An ample Recompence for all his pains.

Too soft Caresses of a prospâ??rous Fate
The pious Fervours of the Soul abate;
Tempt to luxurious Ease our careless Days,
And gloomy Vapours round the Spirits raise.
Thus lullâ??d into a sleep, we dosing lie,
And find our Ruin in Security;
Unless some Sorrow comes to our Relief,
And breaks thâ?? Inchantment by a timely Grief.
But as we are allowâ??d to chear our sight,
In blackest Days, some glimmerings of Light:
So in the most dejected Hours we may
The secret Pleasure have to weep and pray.
And those Requests, the speediest passage find
To Heaven, which flow from an afflicted Mind:
And while to him we open our Distress,
Our Pains grow lighter, and our Sorrows less.
The finest Musick of the Grove, we owe
To mourning *Philomel*â??s harmonious Woe;
And while her Griefâ??s in charming Notes express,
A Thorny Bramble pricks her tender Breast:
In warbling Melody she spends the Night,
And moves at once Compassion and Delight.

No Choice had eâ??er so happy an Event,
But he that made it, did that Choice repent.
So weakâ??s our Judgement, and so shortâ??s our sight,
We cannot level our own Wishes right:
And if sometimes we make a wise advance,
Tâ??our selves we little owe, but much to chance.
So that when Providence, for secret Ends,
Corroding Cares, or sharp Affliction sends
We must conclude it best it should be so,

And not desponding, or impatient grow.
For he that will his confidence remove,
From boundless Wisdom, and eternal Love,
To place it on himself, or human Aid,
Will meet those Woes he labours to evade.
But in the keenest Agonies of Grief,
Contentâ??s a Cordial that still gives Relief.
Heaven is not always angry when he strikes,
But most Chastises those, whom most he likes.
And if with humble Spirits they complain,
Relieves the Anguish, or rewards the Pain.

NOTES:

3 *Inquietudes* Restlessness, uneasiness.

29 *Seeds of Strife* An allusion to Proverbs 16:28 â??A perverse man spreads strife, /And a slanderer separates intimate friends.â?•

31-33 *Lustâ?¦ Pride, Envy, or Revenge* Four of the Seven Cardinal Sins; an allusion to them can be found in Proverbs 6:16-19.

38 *Comforts of his Days.* John 14:1-31, the belief in God as the Father and belief/faith in Christ.

39 *Pomp* Archaic: vain and boastful display (*OED*).

68 *Philomel* An allusion to the daughter of the ancient Athenian king, Pandion. She was raped by the husband (Tereus) of her sister (Procne). While Tereus pursued both Philomel and Procne, Philomel was turned into a swallow and Procne into a nightingale (in Latin versions, Philomel was turned into a nightingale and Procne into a swallow) (*Oxford Dictionaries* online). The nightingale is known for its unique song.

70 *Thorny Bramble* A prickly bush plant, also a biblical allusion to the â??the Burning bushâ?• in which God appeared before Moses. It is also a symbol of the purity of the Virgin Mary.

88 *Cordial* Stimulating medicine.

Source: *Poems Upon Several Occasions* (5th edition) (London, 1720), pp. 60-63. [Google Books]

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