

Thomas George Ingall, "The Negroe's Complaint"

Description

THOMAS GEORGE INGALL

"The Negroe's Complaint"

The sun had long sunk in the west,
The moon in her splendor shone bright,
The crew had retired to rest,
In their hammocks to pass the long night;

When Oran, but late made a slave, 5
Contrived to escape from the hold,
And as he hung o'er the wild wave
He thus did his sorrows unfold.

"With anguish my heart does now bleed,
Thus deprived of my liberty sweet, 10
To slavery now I'm decreed,
Yet death with more pleasure I'll meet.

The white man who, thirsting for gold,
Hopes to barter my freedom for gain,
My loss with regret shall be told, 15
And seek me, but seek me in vain.

By the light of the moon still I view
That shore where with freedom I roved;
Ye hills and ye vallies adieu!
It was there I met Oran, and loved. 20

Sweet maid to be from thee thus torn;
My grief is more than I can bear,
My fate is too hard to be born;
I give myself up to despair.

Twas for thee that the leopard I forced 25
To rise from the couch where he lay;
Twas for thee that the tiger I coursed,
That thou with their spoils mightst be gay.

As I followed the pard o'er the field,
The men who in ambush were laid, 30
Rushed forth and compell'd me to yield

And in chains to their vessel conveyâ??d.

But sooner than suffer their chain
To death I will chearfully fly,
And free me from sorrow and pain:
For Orra alone now I sigh.

35

To Pâ??Shaphon my god I return,
That spirit which to me he gave;
For freedom and death now I burn:â?•
So saying, he plungâ??d in the wave.

40

NOTES:

5 Oran This name likely alludes to a city in present day Algeria, located in North Africa (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

20 Orra This name possibly alludes to a female â??Indianâ?• (i.e. black, non-slave) character in Charles Dibdinâ??s comic opera *The Islanders* (1780). Her lover Yanko, also an â??Indian,â?• is forcibly separated from her. It may also be a play on the word â??orraâ?• which refers to â??a person, esp. a servant or laborerâ?• (*OED*).

23 born â??To suffer (pain, hardship, or adversity) without being overcome or overwhelmedâ?• (*OED*).

26 couch â??The lair or den of a wild beastâ?• (*OED*).

27 coursâ??d A variant spelling of â??coursedâ?• which means â??to chase, pursue, run afterâ?• (*OED*).

29 pard â??A panther, a leopardâ?• (*OED*).

37 Pâ??Shaphon â??An Indian idolâ?• [Authorâ??s Note].

SOURCE: *The Ladyâ??s Magazine*, vol. 23 (February, 1792), p. 101. [Google Books]

Edited by Teresa Diviacchi