John Jones, â??To the Unfortunate Miss Poynton, of Lichfieldâ?•

Description

JOHN JONES

â??To the Unfortunate Miss Poynton, of Lichfieldâ?•

No longer let my humble Muse complain,
Or deem severe my various chequerâ??d lot;
Priscilla, whilst I read thy melting strain,
And weigh thy griefs, be all my own forgot.

Me, though an orphan from my infant state,
And robbâ??d in childhood of my native right!
Comparâ??d to thy tenebrâ??ous, joyless fate,
My trifling ills must gratitude excite.

Not hapless *Blacklock*, the famâ??d Scottish bard,
Whose polishâ??d numbers oft with sighs I view,
Can claim, like thee, the tribute of regard;
His infant loss, thoâ?? great, he never knew.

But thou, indulgâ??d twelve childish years to see
Natureâ??s fair face, and wanton in her smiles,
Now wrappâ??d in endless night and misery,
Each lovely object thy fond wish beguiles.

Ah! direful change! on thy scald eyes no more
Yon orb refulgent darts his cheerful ray!
Guideless, methinks, I see thee now explore,
With trembling steps, thy dark and devious way.

Yet, sure it cannot be! what fell despite
Can let thee wander guideless and forlorn!
Or, unconcernâ??d, survey thy doleful plight!
Or mark thy anguish with an eye of scorn!

Ten thousand plagues torment his impious tongue,
Who dares, with sport infernal, mock thy pain;
Around his guilty haunt pale spectres throng,
Implore relief, and wish for death in vain.

The boon of heavâ??n, (nor greater heavâ??n can grant)
The sacred text, must thou in vain unfold?
And shall thy thirsty soul for knowledge pant,

Yet never wisdomâ??s sacred fane behold?

It must be soâ??yet GOD corrects in love;
Nor ought vain Man to let one murmur fall,
Lest he in wrath his arrogance reprove;
Soon the great teacher DEATH unravels all.

But who, with stoic fortitude, could bear
Thy pondâ??rous sorrow! thy acute distress!
What bosom but by sympathy must share
The poignant evils which thy life oppress!

Thou, with becoming sorrow, dost complain,
And warble forth thy complicated woe;
And who that hears thee can from tears refrain?
Ah! who but must his friendly mite bestow.

Yet think not Fate on thy devoted head
Pours forth lifeâ??s nauseous dregs with ill design;
By sacred heaven-born Contemplation led
From vice and folly, see thy soul refine.

Long may thy modest, meek, instructive Muse,
(For such I hope thy evâ??ry theme to find)
The balm of comfort oâ??er thy life diffuse,
And joys celestial cheer thy pensive mind.
KIDDERMINSTER, SEPT. 12, 1768.

NOTES:

Author In her response to this poem (which immediately follows in the volume), Poynton identifies the author as â??Mr. Jones of Kidderminster.â?• This is probably the same John Jones that published *An Elegy on Winter, and other poems* (Birmingham, 1779). Heâ??s described on the title page as â??school-master, in Kidderminster,â?• and â??the author of Poems on Several Subjects.â?• Poynton also mentions that Jones was the author of a volume of the same title (4), though no copies appear to have survived. Kidderminster is located approximately seventeen miles southwest of Birmingham.

Title *Miss Poynton* â??This Poem was occasioned by seeing Miss *Poynton*â??s advertisement, requesting a subscription for her poems, (see *Birmingham Gazette* for Sept. 12, 1768,) the Author till then not having the least knowledge even of her nameâ?• [Text note]. Priscilla Poynton (1750-1801) was known as â??the blind poetess of Lichfield,â?• a cathedral city located in Staffordshire.

7 *Tenebrâ??ous* â??Full of darknessâ?• (*OED*).

9 *Blacklock* Thomas Blacklock (1721-1791), a Scottish poet who contracted smallpox at six months old and was left completely blind.

14 *Wanton* â??Undisciplined, ungoverned, unmanageable, rebelliousâ?• (*OED*).

16 *Beguiles* â??Deceptionâ?• (*OED*).

18 *Refulgent* â??Shining with, or reflecting a brilliant lightâ?• (*OED*).

26 *Thy Pain* Refers to the pain and disability of being blind that Priscilla Poynton, the subject of the poem, constantly endured because disabilities in the 18th century were often ignored.

27 *Spectres* â??Ghost or other apparitionâ?• (*OED*). ; *Throng* â??Oppression, distress, trouble, woe, or afflictionâ?• (*OED*).

29 *Boon* â??A prayerâ?• (*OED*).

32 *Fane* â??Mode of proceeding, bearing, demeanor; appearance, aspectâ?• (*OED*).

42 *And warble forth thy complicated woe* â??Alluding to a few poetical lines inserted with her advertisementâ?• [Text note].

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (Birmingham, 1770), pp. 1-4. [Google Books]

Edited by Taylor Albert