Thomas George Ingall, â??The Negroeâ??s Complaintâ?•

Description

THOMAS GEORGE INGALL

â??The Negroeâ??s Complaintâ?•

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,
Contrivâ??d to escape from the hold,
And as he hung oâ??er the wild wave
He thus did his sorrows unfold.

â??With anguish my heart does now bleed,
Thus deprivâ??d of my liberty sweet,
To slavery now Iâ??m decreed,
Yet death with more pleasure Iâ??ll meet.

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

By the light of the moon still I view
That shore where with freedom I rovâ??d;
Ye hills and ye vallies adieu!
It was there I met Orra, and lovâ??d.

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.

Tâ??was for thee that the leopard I forcâ??d
To rise from the couch where he lay;
Tâ??was for thee that the tiger I coursâ??d,
That thou with their spoils mightâ??st be gay.

As I followâ??d the pard oâ??er the field,
The men who in ambush where laid,
Rushâ??d forth and compellâ??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.

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.

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