

Anonymous, "Scattered Thoughts, by a Lady"

Description

ANONYMOUS

"Scattered Thoughts, by a Lady"

Written in a long and painful Illness, after a disturbed and restless night.

While, child of sorrow, on my couch I lie,
And court sweet Sleep to seal my wakeful eye,
Still keenest anguish rankles at my heart,
And pains unceasing pierce each vital part.
I hear the joyless bird of omen sing, 5
And at my casement flap his blacken'd wing;
While nightly spirits hover round my head,
Haunting with horrid thoughts my widow'd bed.
Oh, come, thou kindest nurse! come, gentle Sleep!
Seal with thy wings *those eyes which wake to weep.* 10
Distill thy poppies on my unclos'd lid,
And on my pillow thy mild opiates shed.
Through night's dark gloom I count the measur'd time,
And hear the knell of Death incessant chime:
The spider, spinning in some lonely notch, 15
Echoes the knell, and keeps th' ill-omen'd watch.
My pensive pillow views my early life,
When in *youth's bloom* I took the name of wife;
Scarce sixteen suns had dawn'd upon my years,
When I awoke to all a *mother's* cares; 20
While, at my breast, the tender blossom hung,
Ere the soft accent loos'd the lisping tongue,
Grief's sharpest arrows pierc'd my gentle heart,
And wounded Nature felt her festering dart;
No love congenial to *my own* I found, 25
But joyless pass'd night's solitary round.
If lost in momentary sleep I lie,
What hideous forms appear to fancy's eye!
With phantoms of a woe-worn feverish brain
I trembling start, and wake to keener pain; 30
The spectres of delusion still in view,
And the *night hag*, my waking sense pursue.
My shorten'd sighs quick breathe around my room,
Where horrid darkness sheds a total gloom ;
Save one *pale taper* of a glimmering light, 35
Which dimly twinkles through the shades of night,

Like a *true friend*, such silent sorrow shows,
 And waxeth pale through sympathy of woes.
 Sweet Sympathy! in whatever form you dwell,
 Welcome! thrice welcome! to my tear-washed cell. 40
 Even when I hear the nightly shrill owl scream,
 Some *friend* I think is near some *hope* unseen.
Hope! did I say? thou joyful, blessed sound!
 Where beams thy ray? where art thou to be found?
 Long have I sought thy visionary hand; 45
Lead me, dear phantom! to that *blissful* land!
 That heaven of *sure* rest! that promised shore!
 Where Peace shall dwell and I shall weep no more!
 Then strike, grim spectre! strike this *yielding heart*!
 Strike down my sorrows with thy *welcome dart*. 50
 And, when this mortal coil is laid in earth,
 Then may my soul awake to Heaven's new birth!
 Then, like a pilgrim, view this rocky shore,
 And rest where *thorns* shall *pierce my soul* NO MORE!

NOTES:

14 *knell* To ring (a bell); to ring slowly and solemnly, as for a death or at a funeral, to toll (OED) ; *chime* Living near the church [Author's note].

32 *night bag* A travelling bag used to carry things needed for the night (OED).

35 *pale taper* A wax candle, in early times used chiefly for devotional or penitential purposes (OED).

51 *mortal coil* The bustle or turmoil of this mortal life (OED).

Source: *The Gentleman's Magazine* (October 1787), pp. 914-15.

Edited by Arianna Ordonez