

Elizabeth Carter, "To Miss Hall. 1746"

Description

ELIZABETH CARTER

"To Miss Hall. 1746"

WHILE soft thro' water, earth, and air,
The vernal spirits rove,
From noisy joys, and giddy crowds,
To rural scenes remove.

The mountain snows are all dissolv'd, 5
And hush'd the blustering gale:
While fragrant Zephyrs gently breathe,
Along the flow'ry vale.

The circling planets constant rounds
The wintry wastes repair: 10
And still, from temporary death,
Renew the verdant year.

But ah! when once our transient bloom,
The spring of life is o'er,
That rosy season takes its flight, 15
And must return no more.

Yet judge by Reason's sober rules,
From false opinion free,
And mark how little pilf'ring years 20
Can steal from you or me.

Each moral pleasure of the heart,
Each lasting charm of truth,
Depends not on the giddy aid
Of wild, inconstant youth.

The vain coquet, whose empty pride 25
A fading face supplies,
May justly dread the wintry gloom,
Where all its glory dies.

Leave such a ruin to deplore,
To fading forms confin'd: 30

Nor age, nor wrinkles discompose
One feature of the mind.

Amidst the universal change
Unconscious of decay,
It views, unmoved, the scythe of Time 35
Sweep all besides away.

Fixt on its own eternal frame,
Eternal are its joys:
While, borne on transitory wings,
Each mortal pleasure flies. 40

While ev'ry short-lived flower of sense
Destructive years consume,
Thro' Friendship's fair enchanting walks
Unfading myrtles bloom.

Nor with the narrow bounds of Time, 45
The beauteous prospect ends,
But lengthen'd thro' the vale of Death,
To Paradise extends.

NOTES:

Title Afterwards wife of the Rev. John Nairn, of Kingston, near Canterbury • [Author's Note].

2 vernal Of the springtime • (OED).

7 Zephyrs The west wind, frequently personified • (OED).

25 coquet A woman, who is a flirt for the gratification of vanity and has no intention on responding to the feelings provoked • (OED).

35 scythe of Time Typically a destructive force.

44 myrtles Evergreen shrubs or small trees with fragrant white flowers (OED).

Source: Montagu Pennington, ed., *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, with a New Edition of her Poems* (London, 1807), pp. 394-395. [Google Books]

Edited by Eileen Sosa