Phillis Wheatley, â??On Recollectionâ?•

Description

PHILLIS WHEATLEY

â??On Recollectionâ?•

MNEME begin. Inspire, ye sacred nine,
Your ventâ??rous *Afric* in her great design.
Mneme, immortal powâ??r, I trace thy spring:
Assist my strains, while I thy glories sing:
The acts of long departed years, by thee
Recoverâ??d, in due order rangâ??d we see:
Thy powâ??r the long-forgotten calls from night,
That sweetly plays before the *fancyâ??s* sight.

Mneme in our nocturnal visions pours
The ample treasure of her secret stores;
Swift from above she wings her silent flight
Through *Phoebeâ??s* realms, fair regent of the night;
And, in her pomp of images displayâ??d,
To the high-rapturâ??d poet gives her aid,
Through the unbounded regions of the mind,
Diffusing light celestial and refinâ??d.
The heavâ??nly *phantom* paints the actions done
By evâ??ry tribe beneath the rolling sun.

Mneme, enthronâ??d within the human breast,
Has vice condemnâ??d, and evâ??ry virtue blest.
How sweet the sound when we her plaudit hear?
Sweeter than music to the ravishâ??d ear,
Sweeter than *Maroâ??s* entertaining strains
Resounding through his groves, and hills, and plains.
But how is *Mneme* dreaded by the race,
Who scorn her warnings, and despise her grace?
By her unveilâ??d each horrid crime appears,
Her awful hand a cup of wormwood bears.
Days, years, misspent, O what a hell of woe!
Hers the worst tortures that our souls can know.

Now eighteen years their destinâ??d course have run,
In fast succession round the central sun.
How did the follies of that period pass

Unnoticâ??d, but behold them writ in brass!
In Recollection see them fresh return,
And sure â??tis mine to be ashamâ??d, and mourn.

O *Virtue*, smiling in immortal green,
Do thou exert thy powâ??r, and change the scene;
Be thine employ to guide my future days,
And mine to pay the tribute of my praise.

Of *Recollection* such the powâ??r enthronâ??d
In evâ??ry breast, and thus her powâ??r is ownâ??d.
The wretch, who darâ??d the vengeance of the skies,
At last awakes in horror and surprize,
By her alarmâ??d, he sees impending fate,
He howls in anguish, and repents too late.
But O! what peace, what joys are hers tâ?? impart
To evâ??ry holy, evâ??ry upright heart!
Thrice blest the man, who, in her sacred shrine,
Feels himself shelterâ??d from the wrath of divine!

NOTES:

1 *Mneme* The muse of memory; *sacred nine* The nine muses of Greek mythology.

8 *fancy* Poetic imagination.

12 *Phoebe* In Greek mythology, â??she was identified with the moonâ?• (*Britannica*).

21 *plaudit* â??An expression of praise or approvalâ?• (*OED*).

23 *Maro* Publius Vergilius Maro, or Virgil (70 BCE-19 BCE), â??Roman poet best known for his national epic, *The Aenied*â?• (*Britannica*).

28 *wormwood* â??An emblem or type of what is bitter and grievous to the soulâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: ***Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*** **(London, 1773), pp. 62-64.**
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