Anonymous, â??All in Vanity!â?•

Description

Anonymous

â??*All is Vanity*!â?•

Whilst happy youths lead up the merry dance,
And musickâ??s charms invade the silent air,
Whilst sprightly nymphs spontaneously advance,
Lo! Here I sit, sad victim to despair.

But why should I complain? My day is oâ??er:
Iâ??ve bid adieu to pleasureâ??s flowâ??ry stream;
My steady heart shall be enslavâ??d no more;
Such transient joys are like an empty dream.

Forgive, ye fair, this rude, unpolishâ??d verse,
Dread destiny has deeply piercâ??d my heart;
Too certain truths unwilling I rehearse,
Ye, lovely maids, shall feel the vengeful dart.

Beauty and youth in which ye now delight,
Shall leave precipitate lifeâ??s giddy stage;
There charms shall sink in everlasting night,
And leave behind vexation and old age.

To day ye triumph with despotic power,
But Oh! to-morrow all your power is lost;
Like you to day appears the blushing flower,
Like you to-morrow nipt by deathâ??s cold frost.

O say, can dancing stop the hand of death,
Or musickâ??s charms extend lifeâ??s narrow page?
Can courtly balls recall the fleeting breath,
Or sooth the burning feverâ??s glowing rage?

If not, ye fair ones, listen to a friend,
Exalt each thought to pure and endless joys;
With caution due to *Damon*â??s muse attend,
None can be happy, but the good and wise.

NOTES:

3 *nymphs* A mythological spirit imagined as a beautiful maiden (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*).

23 *courtly balls* Political and social events attended by European nobility in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Later evolves into ballroom dancing. (DeMello, *Feet and Footwear: A Cultural Encyclopedia*, p. 89).

27 *Damon* Earliest reference to this name was found in a Greek story of Damon and Pythias. The myth exhibited the idea of a perfect friendship (Osborn, *Whatâ??s in a Name?*, p. 174).

Source: *The Gentlemanâ??s Magazine*, vol. 33 (London, 1763), p. 40.

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