[Mrs. Letches], â??A Tributeâ?•

Description

[MRS. LETCHES]

â??A Tributeâ?•

What thoâ?? in quick succession Stars appear,
The glorious Sun is ever bright and clear!
Those lesser Orbs can neâ??er his radiance shade,
For with immortal splendor heâ??s arrayâ??d:
No more can humble merit throw a veil
On real worthâ??its lustre will prevail!

With tender sympathy my bosom glows!
To ease your wrongs, and to relieve your woes!
With Eagle-sight my Soul would scape her bounds,
To pour the balm of comfort oâ??er your wounds.

Angelic Liberty! thou source divine!
Shall mortals dare to manacle thy power?
Shall the best gift which Heavâ??n did deign assign
To guilty man when drave from Edenâ??s bowâ??r!
Be trampled on by *violaters base?*
And *Scourge,* and *Chains,* and *Food* to horses due,
Be long preparâ??d for that unhappy race,
Africâ??s sad sons! while they their direful task pursue!

Forbid it *justice, honesty,* and *love,*
Conspire ye heaven-born souls! and crush the throne
Of *avarice vile* â?? so shall the blest above
Resound your triumph to the Almighty One:
Who sweetly will approve the glorious deed
Which so *congenial* to his *Orders* are;
For smiling *mercy* came, mild Heavenâ??s meed,
When *justice* stern did call for doom severe.

NOTES:

Author *Mrs. Letches* This attribution is based on an inscription on the title page in what appears to be a contemporary hand (see ESTC T42632). She published anonymously as â??A Ladyâ?• in one of the centers of the Atlantic â??triangleâ?• trade and her personal history remains unknown. Throughout the eighteenth century, Bristolâ??s booming port not only transported goods but also enslaved African people to the Americas and West Indies. At this same time, Bristol was known to have a large abolitionist movement that Mrs. Letches clearly contributed to. She dedicated her volume to â??the Inhabitants of Bristolâ?• (iii).

13 *deign* â??To think it worthy of oneself (*to do* something); to think fit, vouchsafe, condescendâ?• (*OED*).

14 *drave* That is â??drivenâ?•; *bowâ??r* â??Sanctuary.â?•

16 *Scourge* â??To beat with a scourge; to whip severely, flogâ?• (*OED*).

18 *Africâ??s sad sons* â??A native or inhabitant of Africa, esp. a black Africanâ?• (*OED*).

22 *Resound* To sing the praises of; *Almighty One* God.

25 *meed* â??Something given in return for labour or service; recompenseâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (Bristol, 1792), pp. 18-19. [Google Books]

Edited by Sherry Portillo