Isaac Hawkins Browne, â??On a Fit of the Gout. An Odeâ?•

Description

ISAAC HAWKINS BROWNE

â??On a Fit of the Gout. An Odeâ?•

Wherefore was Man thus formâ??d with eye sublime,
With active joints to traverse hill or plain,
But to contemplate Nature in her prime,
Lord of this ample world, his fair domain?
Why on this various earth such beauty pourâ??d,
But for thy pleasure, Man, her sovereign lord?

Why does the mantling vine her juice afford
Nectareous, but to cheer with cordial taste?
Why are the earth and air and ocean storâ??d
With beast, fish, fowl; if not for Manâ??s repast?
Yet what avails to me, or taste, or sight,
Exilâ??d from every object of delight?

So much I feel of anguish, day and night
Torturâ??d, benumbâ??d; in vain the fields to range
Me vernal breezes, and mild suns invite,
In vain the banquet smokes with kindly change
Of delicacies, while on every plate
Pain lurks in ambush, and alluring fate.

Fool, not to know the friendly powers create
These maladies in pity to mankind:
These abdicated Reason reinstate
When lawless Appetite usurps the mind;
Heavenâ??s faithful centries at the door of bliss
Placâ??d to deter, or to chastise excess.

Weak is the aid of wisdom to repress
Passion perverse; philosophy how vain!
â??Gainst Circeâ??s cup, enchanting sorceress;
Or when the Syren sings her warbling strain.
Whateâ??er or sages teach, or bards reveal,
Men still are men, and learn but when they feel.

As in some free and well-poisâ??d common-weal
Sedition warns the rulers how to steer,
As storms and thunders ratling with loud peal,
From noxious dregs the dull horizon clear;
So when the mind imbrutes in sloth supine,
Sharp pangs awake her energy Divine.

Cease then, oh cease, fond mortal, to repine
At laws, which Nature wisely did ordain;
Pleasure, what is it? rightly to define,
â??Tis but a short-livâ??d interval from pain:
Or rather, each, alternately renewâ??d,
Give to our lives a sweet vicissitude.

NOTES:

7 *mantling* â??Spreading, covering; enveloping, surroundingâ?• (*OED*).

8 *Nectareous* â??Of the nature, consisting, or suggestive of nectar; sweetâ?• (*OED*).

10 *repast* â??A quantity of food and drink forming or intended for a meal or feastâ?• (*OED*).

27 *Circe* In Greek and Latin mythology, a sorceress who was able to turn those who drank from her cup into swine (*Britannica*).

28 *Syren* In Greek mythology, a feminine creature, often half bird and half woman, who â??lure[s] sailors to destruction by the sweetness of her songâ?• (*Britannica*).

31 *common-weal* â??Commonwealthâ?• (*OED*).

35 *imbrutes* â??To degrade to the level of a brute; to make bestial, brutalizeâ?• (*OED*).

37 *repine* â??To feel or express dissatisfaction; to grumble, complainâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: ***Poems Upon Various Subjects, Latin and English*** **(London, 1768), pp. 137-39. [ECCO]**

Edited by Sam Lim-Kimberg