James Beattie, â??The Hermitâ?•

Description

JAMES BEATTIE

â??The HERMITâ?•

At the close of the day, when the hamlet is still,
And mortals the sweets of forgetfulness prove,
When nought but the torrent is heard on the hill,
And nought but the nightingaleâ??s song in the grove:
â??Twas then, by the cave of the mountain afar,
A Hermit his song of the night thus began;
No more with himself or with nature at war,
He thought as a Sage, while he felt as a Man.

â??Ah, why thus abandonâ??d to darkness and woe,
Why thus, lonely Philomel, flows thy sad strain?
For Spring shall return, and a lover bestow,
And thy bosom no trace of misfortune retain.
Yet, if pity inspire thee, ah cease not thy lay!
Mourn, sweetest Complainer, Man calls thee to mourn:
O soothe him, whose pleasures like thine pass awayâ??
Full quickly they pass,â??but they never return.

Now gliding remote, on the verge of the sky,
The Moon half extinguishâ??d her crescent displays:
But lately I markâ??d, when majestie on high
She shone, and the planets were lost in her blaze.
Roll on, thou fair orb, and with gladness pursue
The path that conducts thee to splendour again.â??
But Manâ??s faded glory no change shall renew.
Ah fool! to exult in a glory so vain!

â??Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more;
I mourn, but, ye woodlands, I mourn not for you;
For morn is approaching, your charms to restore,
Perfumed with fresh fragrance, and glittering with dew.
Nor yet for the ravage of winter I mourn;
Kind Nature the embryo blossom will save.â??
But when shall Spring visit the mouldering urn!
O when shall it dawn on the night of the grave!â?•

â??â??Twas thus, by the glare of false Science betrayâ??d,
That leads, to bewilder; and dazzles, to blind,

My thoughts wont to roam, from shade onward to shade,
Destruction before me, and sorrow behind.â??
â??O pity, great Father of light,â?• then I cryâ??d,
â??Thy creature who fain would not wander from Thee!
Lo, humbled in dust, I relinquish my pride:
From doubt and from darkness thou only canst free.â?•

â??And darkness and doubt are now flying away.
No longer I roam in conjecture forlorn.
So breaks on the traveller, faint, and astray,
The bright and the balmy effulgence of morn.
See Truth, Love and Mercy, in triumph descending,
And Nature all glowing in Edenâ??s first bloom!
On the cold cheek of Death smiles and roses are blending,
And Beauty Immortal awakes from the tomb.â??

NOTES:

Title *Hermit* â??A solitary; an anchoret; one who retires from society to contemplation and devotionâ?• (*Johnson*).

8 *Sage* â??A philosopher; a man of gravity and wisdomâ?• (*Johnson*).

10 *Philomel* Also known as Philomela. Sister of Procne. She was raped by Procneâ??s husband Tereus. In his attempt to silence her Tereus cut out her tongue. She weaved the crime into a tapestry and sent it to her sister Procne who, as an act of revenge, killed her own son Itys and fed his remains to Tereus. Furious, Tereus chased the two women, but were turned into birds with Philomel becoming a nightingale (*OCD*).

31 *mouldering* â??To decay; to rust; to crumbleâ?• (*OED*); *urn* â??Earthenware or metal vessel used to preserve the ashes of the deadâ?• (*OED*).

33 *Science* â??Knowledgeâ?• (*Johnson*)

37 *Father of light* Referring to God â??Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to changeâ?• (*ESV Bible, James 1.17)*

38 *fain* â??Gladly, willingly, with pleasureâ?• (*OED*).

42 *conjecture* â??Guess; imperfect knowledge; preponderation of opinion without proofâ?• (*Johnson)*; *forlorn* â??Deserted; destitute; forsaken; wretched; helpless; solitaryâ?• (*Johnson*).

44 *effulgence* â??Lustre; brightness; clarity; splendorâ?• (*Johnson*).

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions,* 4th edition (London, 1780), pp. 77-78. [Google Books]

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