

“Verses to the Memory of an unfortunate Lady.”¹

[John Wesley]

In tender strains, by nature taught to flow,
Where no false art pollutes the genuine woe.
For Celia mourns my heart; and long must mourn,
Ere the once pleasing scene knows to return,
Why roll ye fast, my tears? Long must ye roll
Ere healing peace shall dawn on Celia’s soul:
Ere joy once banish’d shall succeed again
To biting care and strength, consuming pain;
Ere the fond maid by sad experience prove,
The utmost ills that wait on hapless love.

Say, lovely mourner, what avails thee now
The laughing bloom that wanton’d on thy brow,
Thy cheek, whose crimson sham’d the blushing rose,
Thy bosom fairer than descending snows,
That thy small waist in just proportion shone,
That all thy sexes’ charms were join’d in one?
Ah! what avails thy elegance of thought,
Thy fruitful mind, with early counsel fraught,
Thy piercing judgment, ever sound and clear,
Thy more than female’s heart, untaught to fear,
Thy wit, still studious, not in vain, to please;
Oft, inly sighing, wilt thou wish them less?
For every charm a pang thou shalt receive,
And grief increas’d be all the boon they give.

Can’st thou, tender of heart, whose spotless name,
Defied the keenest shafts of babbling fame;
Endure the bitter scoff, the pointed wrong,
And the loud Insults of th’ opprobrious² tongue?
Must that fair pile that kissed its kindred sky,
And tower’d beyond the wond’ring gazer’s eye,
Sink, overwhelm’d, to dust? In one short hour
The triumph of the abandon’d scorner’s power!
Should thy corporeal part, that beauteous frame,
Shrivel beneath the fever’s scorching flame?
Still might the vital streams their course renew,
And thy pale lip glow fresh with purpled hue.

¹This poem was written by 1728, appearing in Wesley’s MS Poetry Miscellany, 39–43. He later published it in *Arminian Magazine* 1 (1778): 380–83. While Wesley did not sign the published poem, it is clearly his, as evidenced when Charles quotes it, “turning your own words upon you,” in a letter to John (January 20, 1728).

²Orig., “And loud insults of the opprobrious”; JW corrected in his personal copy of *AM*.

But when from withering fame the bloom is fled,
Ne'er can the sickly flower revive its faded head.

Can that soft bosom, which so oft has rose
At visionary tales of painted woes;
Those eyes that never view'd the sufferer's care,
But mixt with them that wept a pitying tear,
When fancy paints the real scene, sustain
Thy parents smit with agonizing pain:
Thy sisters, brother, friends, whose joyous smiles
Doubled thy pleasures, and deceiv'd thy toils.
Whose honied words with healing counsel join'd,
Oft smother'd the tumult of thy ruffled mind,
In bitterness of anguish can'st thou see
Afflicted, comfortless,— and all for thee!
How will that breast with eager pantings beat,
And heave and labour to discharge its weight;
How will those eyes from their full sluices pour
Big drops, now first an unavailing shower!
Till their exhausted springs at length deny
To lend the lamp of life that small supply;
Till of all utterance barr'd the raging smart,
Drink deep thy gushing blood, and tear thy aching heart.

Who now, where E— — spreads his fruitful vale,
Shall bid new glories o'er the landscape swell,
Still steer my doubtful eyes their steady way,
In sportive strife where numerous beauties play;
Still guide my wand'ring feet, joyous to rove
Thro' blissful scenes, sit seats of peace and love:
Where the gay meadow glows with spotted pride,
Where the fair hill rears high his tufted side,
Where, or the sight in neighbouring shades is lost,
Or the extended prospect widens most.

O vale, now the sad seat of those that mourn!
O scene, for ever clos'd to joy's return;
Now boast thy circling hills, thy wide spread plain:
I ne'er must view thee more, or view with pain.
May night eternal, her dire influence shed,
And pour her blackest horrors on thy head,
Contain, ye fleecy clouds, your liquid store;
Ye dews, refresh the guilty soil no more;
For there did guardian saints their charge betray,
There was fair honour vilely cast away;
As though but common glories e'er had grac'd
Her form: as though high heaven had ne'er imprest,
Its stamp peculiar on her favorite breast.

Nor yet from my dim eyes thy form retires,
Fain would they mix with thine their soften'd fires.
My bounding heart with equal pantings own
Thy sway, and spring to seat thee on thy throne:
Still should its inmost chambers open be,
Its inmost chambers ne'er were hid from thee;
Still would my trembling hand, should language fail,
Press thine, assistant to the tender tale.

Ah no! No more on Horrel's airy van
With thee must I admire the subject plain;
Drink in the vernal sweets that float around,
Or listen to the soul-enchanting sound,
While on the sprightly poets' tuneful song,
Or truths divine flow easy from thy tongue.

Proud hill, once far above thy fellows blest,
Which³ Celia with her presence frequent grac'd,
Why shines thy brow in summer's gaudy pride?
Why with enamell'd verdure laughs thy side?
While she that lov'd thee, droops and pines away:
Expos'd to stormy grief an helpless prey!
Enjoy thy crime, ungrateful, happy hill;
How chang'd is Celia! Thou how beauteous still!

Yet when on time's slow wings arrives the day,
That sinks that goodly fabric in decay,
Then once more shalt thou rear thy drooping head,
Then shalt thou bloom in charms that never fade!
And when that long expected hour I see,
That breaks my cumbrous chains, and sets me free;
Surely our disembodied souls shall join;
Surely my friendly shade shall mix with thine!
To earth-born pain superior, light shall rise
Thro' the wide waves of unopposing skies;
Together view the shining spheres that stray
In beauteous order their appointed way:
Together swift ascend heaven's high abode,
Converse with angels, and rejoice in God!

[John Wesley⁴]

³Orig., "Whom"; JW corrected in his personal copy of *AM*.

⁴JW added his initials in his personal copy of *AM*.