

On Seeing the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Girl Sitting for her Portrait (circa 1835)

By Lydia Sigourney

Heaven guide thee, artist! Though thy skill  
Can make the enthusiast's passion tear,  
And catch expression's faintest thrill,  
What power shall prompt thy pencil here?

She hath no eye,—God quenched its beam;  
No ear,—though thunder's trump be blown;  
No speech,—her spirit's voiceless stream  
Flows dark, unfathomed and unknown.

Yet hath she joys, though none may know  
Their germ, their impulse, or their power;  
And oft her kindling features glow  
In meditation's lonely hour,

Or when unfolding blossoms breathe  
Their fragrance 'neath a vernal sky  
Or feeling weaves its wildflower wreath  
As some remembered friend draws nigh,

Then does the heart its love reveal  
Though lip and eye are sealed the while,  
And then do wildering graces steal  
To paint their language on her smile.

For still the undying soul may teach  
Without a glance, a tone, a sigh,  
And well canst thou its mirrored speech  
Interpret to the wondering eye.

What though her locked and guarded mind  
Doth foil philosophy divine,  
Till even reason fails to find,  
A clue to that untravelled shrine,

Yet may thine art with victor sway  
Win laurels from this desert wild  
And to a future age portray  
Mysterious nature's hermit child.