

## WOODSTOCK. AN ELEGY.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR MDCCLIX.

AH me ! what is this mortal life ? (I cry'd)  
 What changes croud the page of flitting Time !  
 What dire reverse of Fate have numbers try'd !  
 What youth, what beauty, wither'd in the prime !

Inexorable Destiny pursues,  
 And levels in the chace with rapid wing :  
 Pity in vain, or Mirth, or Merit sues,  
 Equally vain the beggar and the king !

Ah ! what is Fame, the idol of the great ?  
 No solid Pleasure can she e'er bestow ;  
 If just to Worth, that justice comes too late :  
 Prompt is her malice, but her mercy slow !—

Thus on the winding Isis' willowed bank,  
 The varying scenes of Fortune I deplore ;  
 Wasting in fruitless sighs the evening dank,  
 Tears adding water to the river's store.



A gloomy mansion open to the view,  
 Disclosing horror heighten'd by the shade;  
 Where round the nodding walls the mournful yew  
 Points to the vault where Rosamond was laid :

Where with her birds of night, haggard and foul,  
 In fullen fellowship together dwell,  
 The bat ambiguous, and ill-omen'd owl,  
 Screaming to nighted swains a dreadful knell !

Intent I gaz'd, till Terror, ruling sight,  
 Rear'd a pale spectre from the yawning tomb,  
 A faint delusion of the murky night,  
 Begot and bred in Fancy's fruitful womb !

Semblance of virgin elegance and grace,  
 The mimic shape in every part adorn'd;  
 But wan and languid seem'd the beauteous face,  
 Which Elen envy'd, and which Henry mourn'd,

Now gently gliding o'er the hallow'd ground,  
 Close by my side the phantom made a stand,  
 Piercing the night-still'd air. An awful sound !  
 And claim'd attention with uplifted hand.

" I once was blest with Love's deluding joy,

" I also felt the worst extreme of hate !

" And can no length of time (she cry'd) destroy

" Remembrance of my love, and of my fate ?

" O had



" O had Oblivion in her peaceful cell,  
" Shrouded from every eye my mouldering dust !  
" That on the chissel'd stone no verse might tell,  
" My crime how great ! my punishment how just !

" But Woodstock's blooming bowers still remain,  
" The scenes, to me, of pleasure and of woe ;  
" And Godstow's walls perpetuate the stain  
" My name reproaching, whilst my grave they shew,

" O Woodstock, fated long to be the seat  
" Of all the charms that Wit and Beauty boast,  
" The hero's guerdon, and his soft retreat,  
" Yielding content, in fields and senates lost.

" Thy glories now are levell'd low in earth ;  
" No longer Beauty doth thy bowers adorn ;  
" No more thy woods resound the voice of Mirth ;  
" The laurel from thy victor brow is torn !

" But thou whose bosom foreign sorrow heaves,  
" Whose eyes can stream for anguish not thine own ;  
" Whose heart the white-rob'd fugitive receives,  
" When forc'd by awful Rigour from her throne ;

" The scourge of vice, the good man's destiny,  
" The wreck of fortune, and the waste of years ;  
" The miseries thou mournest thou shalt see,  
" Sad consolation granted to thy tears."

Now



Now on the summit of a cloud-built height  
 Methought I stood: and from an opening glade  
 With faltering ray gleam'd forth a magic light,  
 And round the plain in lambent circles play'd.

Sudden the ground with inbred motion shook,  
 A solemn murmur rustled thro' the trees;  
 And on the pebbled shore the surging brook  
 Dash'd angry waves, unconscious of a breeze!

Dædalian mystery † from the parted soil,  
 A labyrinth 'rose to sounds of melting note;  
 A moment's labour mocking all the toil  
 Of nations old, and monarchs long forgot.

High over-arch'd in Summer's gayest weed,  
 Meandering alleys form the wonderous maze,  
 And puzzle most when best they seem to lead  
 The untaught foot, that in their precincts strays.

Deep in a vale impervious to all tread,  
 Save by a flower-hid path, a grotto stood!  
 And ancient oaks their foliage round it spread,  
 O'er shading with their tops the neighbouring wood

And Nature sporting, with a lavish hand  
 This little spot in gay profusion grac'd,  
 With every wanton variation plann'd,  
 Luxuriant Fancy yielding but to Taste.

Here



Here on the brink of a pellucid stream,  
 Circling in eddies o'er its moss-grown bed,  
 Where ever and anon a quivering beam,  
 Piercing the covert, on the surface play'd ;

A Beauty lay, surpassing all the train  
 Of virgin Delia, or Idalia's queen ;  
 Or what of dryads poets sweetly feign,  
 On Ida, or Thessalian Oeta seen.

And by her side a form imperial lay,  
 With roses, and with myrtle garlands crown'd ;  
 The wither'd laurel cast in scorn away,  
 The pomp of war in Lydian measures drown'd.

The little Loves that flutter'd on the boughs,  
 In grateful bondage did their limbs entwine,  
 And strove to join them closer than their vows,  
 With woodbine sweet, and twisted eglantine,

But weak all bonds when those of Beauty fail ;  
 The monarch sated left the flowery bed,  
 Nor griev'd to see the maid his loss bewail,  
 Nor mingled parting tears with those she shed.

Now swift advancing to the guilty bower,  
 With frantic step the injur'd queen drew nigh ;  
 And arm'd for vengeance seiz'd the fatal hour,  
 When all things slept but rage and jealousy.

Each



Each eager hand a deadly weapon fill'd,  
 A pointed dagger, and a poison'd bowl;  
 My ebbing blood her mad demeanor chill'd,  
 And anguish unallay'd possess'd my soul.

Ah stop, inhuman! with a faltering tongue  
 And inarticulate voice, as in a dream,  
 I cry'd; and strait the rattling thunder rung,  
 And livid lightnings in the welkin gleam!

No more the mazy grove, or bower appear'd,  
 But all around a waste and barren plain;  
 The scatter'd trees of leaves and branches bar'd,  
 And blanch'd by frowning winds and beating rain.

And Murder shrieking hideous wander'd there:  
 And ruthless Envy, and relentless Hate,  
 With snaky locks, and shrivell'd bosoms bare,  
 Whilst lurking felons on their motions wait.

And soon the landscape shifting like a cloud,  
 To less'ning distance bore the hellish crew;  
 Now twang in fainter sounds their yellings loud;  
 Now vanish'd quite; a milder scene I view.

Of chequer'd light and shade, a sober dawn,  
 Faint thro' a lingering vapour did disclose,  
 A hamlet seated on an open lawn,  
 And from each roof the pillar'd smoke arose.



For now with frequent challenge, had the cock  
His rivals menacing, awak'd the swain ;  
Now in the pen impatient bleats the flock,  
And ruddy streaks the horizon distain.

The crouching dog the moon no longer bays,  
But stretch'd supine upon the social hearth  
He lies, rejoicing in the crackling blaze,  
Whilst flaunting sun-beams dry the moisten'd earth.

Whilst to the strain of rural minstrelsy,  
A band forth issuing to a neighbouring hill  
Welcom'd the morn with decent jollity,  
And all the air their youthful carols fill.

With unskill'd hands a simple crown they wove  
Of vervain, and the never-fading bay ;  
And rais'd a throne within a rude alcove ;  
To grace the parent of the British lay :

Old Chaucer, who in rough, unequal verse,  
Sung quaint allusion and facetious tale ;  
And ever as his jests he would rehearse,  
Loud peals of laughter echo'd thro' the vale :

And eager gap'd the rustic listening throng,  
And still their joy and laughter they renew ;  
And warlike barons, soften'd by the song,  
From loud alarms to mute attention drew.

But



But short-liv'd pleasure soon to sorrow chang'd,  
 For melody a sigh, for mirth a tear ;  
 And now the swains in solemn order rang'd,  
 Surround the bard extended on his bier.

What tho' succeeding poets, as their fire,  
 Revere his memory, and approve his wit ;  
 Tho' Spenser's elegance and Dryden's fire  
 His name to ages far remote transmit ;

His tuneless numbers hardly now survive,  
 As ruins of a dark and Gothic age ;  
 And all his blithsome tales their praise derive  
 From Pope's immortal song, and Prior's page !

Again, quick rising thro' the tufted green,  
 Turrets and lofty battlements ascend ;  
 Trees half obscuring columns, intervene,  
 And real boughs with sculptur'd fruitage blend.

And arched windows shine with torches clear,  
 Soothing the wanderer. A delusive home !  
 And busy crowds of ministers appear,  
 Decking with jocund haste a festive room.

And now of sprightly youths and damsels gay,  
 A wanton bevy at the board was set,  
 And all intent they seem'd on amorous play,  
 For kindling glances, kindling glances met.

Their



Their volant fingers o'er the chorded lyre,  
 With modulating touch the artists ply;  
 Pursuing still to animate desire,  
 Strains that in thrilling undulations die.

And every cheek with deep suffusion glow'd,  
 Denoting thought inflam'd, and troubled breast,  
 And passion in seducing sighs avow'd  
 Mutual, yet still by decency repress.

But soon excess to madding riot led,  
 Ensuing meaning jest, and licence bold;  
 Till comely Order from the banquet fled,  
 Asham'd the lustful orgies to behold.

A youth exalted high above the rest,  
 In bad pre-eminence conspicuous shone!  
 And blind submission to his lewd behest,  
 Unrivall'd lewdness from them all had won.

And deeply was he skill'd in wanton lore,  
 With fertile thought suggesting every art,  
 To make impurer, fires impure before,  
 Tainting at once the manners and the heart.

Pleasing proportion, youthful Beauty's aid,  
 And bland complacency and winning smile,  
 And wit diffusive tempting to persuade,  
 Maintain'd his power, and held him in the toil.



Ah! why should Nature in an angel dress,  
 To lure with seeming worth unwary eyes,  
 Conceal rank thoughts and gross voluptuousness,  
 Too apt to poison without Virtue's guise?

Pride of thy country, Wilmot, and her shame!  
 By every grace adorn'd, and Muse inspir'd!  
 Thy early fall how pitied! and thy name,  
 How much detested, and how much admir'd!

Yet must unbiass'd posterity admit,  
 For all thou wrot'st and acted'st to atone,  
 Thy failings were the age's, but thy wit,  
 Thy parts and dying penitence, thine own.

But now prevailing o'er the hubbub wild,  
 'The clanging trumpet kindles great acclaim;  
 And all around are warlike trophies pil'd,  
 And crouds triumphant echo Churchill's fame.

And thronging senates in the glorious cause,  
 Repell'd oppression, liberty maintain'd,  
 Accord with gratulant vote the loud applause;  
 The fairest prize by British valour gain'd.

Who erst implor'd, and soon obtain'd relief,  
 High-fated monarchs grateful homage pay,  
 And fulgent honours crown the matchless chief,  
 And verse harmonious, never to decay:

And



And humbled Gallia kneels with distant awe,  
 Her generals baffled, and her warriors slain;  
 No more to dictate but receive the law,  
 No longer to impose but wear the chain.

But venom'd Faction spreading o'er the land,  
 Too soon forgets the mighty debt to owe;  
 And Envy stretches out her lurid hand,  
 The victor's meed to blast and overthrow.

And yet unfinish'd stands the votive dome,  
 By all his toil and all his danger bought:  
 When just resentment calls him far from home,  
 Revisting the fields where late he fought.

In vain auspicious Brunswick's happy reign,  
 Blunting the rancorous point of party strife,  
 Restores the hero to his friends again;  
 Too late to chear the dregs of lengthen'd life!

The lofty column and the voice of praise  
 In vain proclaim him great, and just, and brave;  
 Tardy repentance merit ill repays,  
 Unheard, unheeded, in the silent grave!

In conquest equal, and alike in fate,  
 Rome's mounting genius, godlike Scipio stood;  
 And propp'd by worth and dignity innate,  
 Contemn'd the venal censure of the crowd.



Yet once again the visionary scene,  
 Ductile, for sorrow social beauty yields;  
 A temperate sunshine and an air serene,  
 Fostering the upland downs and level fields.

And tepid showers bedew the frolic herd,  
 Bounding in gamefome measure o'er the lea,  
 With daisies crimson-tipt, and green parterr'd,  
 And shadowing fragrance drops from every tree.

The wide expanded prospect gently clos'd,  
 On vistor'd walks leading to high arcades;  
 Each waving copse in fymmetry dispos'd,  
 Points to the terras capt with colonnades.

And more remote the cloister'd wings confine,  
 In architecture elegant and just,  
 A portall'd front where niches deep inshrine  
 The marble statue, and the gilded bust.

Unfolding wide the hospitable port  
 On ready hinges, to the searching eye  
 Reveals unblemish'd Childhood's harmless sport,  
 And placid parents stand delighted by.

For here unmindful of the call of State,  
 The smile of Favour, or the voice of Power;  
 In tranquil pleasure, even and sedate,  
 Great Churchill's heir enjoy'd the wasting hour.

And



And beaming rapture glitten'd on his brow,  
 And glad dependants share their patron's joy,  
 No frowns their heart-bred transports disallow,  
 Debasing worth in Servitude's alloy.

Such charms hath Innocence ! such virtues Pride !  
 From starry height her sacred powers descend,  
 The garish pomp of Grandeur to deride,  
 And giddy Fortune's rash decrees amend.

A day he flourish'd in the peaceful soil,  
 Another saw him on the hostile strand,  
 Guiding the thunders of the white-cliff'd isle,  
 Ambition's wasteful rapine to withstand.

To match his great progenitor in war,  
 Elate with hope his generous bosom burns ;  
 But inauspicious twinkled every star,  
 And heaven averted all his wishes spurns.

Too high request in every sphere to shine,  
 In peace a pattern, and a chief in blood ;  
 The gods to each a separate path assign,  
 But he alone is great who's truly good.