



# RURAL ELEGANCE:

An ODE to the late Duchess of SOMERSET.

Written 1750.

By WILLIAM SHENSTONE, Esq;

I.

**W**HILE orient skies restore the day,  
And dew-drops catch the lucid ray;  
Amid the sprightly scenes of morn,  
Will aught the Muse inspire?  
Oh! peace to yonder clamorous horn  
That drowns the sacred lyre!

VOL. V.

A

II. Ye



## II.

Ye rural *Thanes* that o'er the mossy down  
 Some panting, timorous hare pursue;  
 Does nature mean your joys alone to crown?  
 Say, does she smoothe her lawns for you?  
 For you does Echo bid the rocks reply,  
 And urg'd by rude constraint resound the jovial cry?

## III.

See from the neighbouring hill, forlorn  
 The wretched swain your sport survey;  
 He finds his faithful fences torn,  
 He finds his labour'd crops a prey;  
 He sees his flock—no more in circles feed;  
 Haply beneath your ravage bleed,  
 And with no random curses loads the deed.

## IV.

Nor yet, ye *swains*, conclude  
 That Nature smiles for you alone;  
 Your bounded souls, and your conceptions crude,  
 The proud, the selfish boast disown:  
 Yours be the produce of the soil;  
 O may it still reward your toil!  
 Nor ever the defenceless train  
 Of clinging infants, ask support in vain!

## V.

But tho' the various harvest gild your plains,  
 Does the mere landschape feast your eye?  
 Or the warm hope of distant gains  
 Far other cause of glee supply?



Is not the red-streak's future juice  
 The source of your delight profound,  
 Where Ariconium pours her gems profuse,  
 Purpling a whole horizon round?  
 Athirst ye praise the limpid stream, 'tis true:  
 But tho', the pebbled shores among,  
 It mimick no unpleasing song,  
 The limpid fountain *murmurs* not for you.

## VI.

Unpleas'd ye see the thickets bloom,  
 Unpleas'd the Spring her *flowery* robe resume;  
 Unmov'd the mountain's airy pile,  
 The dappled mead without a smile.  
 O let a rural conscious Muse,  
 For well she knows, your froward sense accuse:  
 Forth to the solemn oak you bring the square,  
 And span the massy trunk, before you cry, 'tis fair.

## VII.

Nor yet ye *learn'd*, not yet ye *courtly* train,  
 If haply from your haunts ye stray  
 To waste with us a summer's day,  
 Exclude the taste of *every* swain,  
 Nor our untutor'd sense disdain:  
 'Tis Nature only gives exclusive right  
 To relish her supreme delight;  
 She, where she pleases kind or coy,  
 Who furnishes the scene, and forms us to enjoy.



## VIII.

Then higher bring the fair ingenuous mind,  
 By her auspicious aid refin'd;  
 Lo ! not an hedge-row hawthorn blows,  
 Or humble hare-bell paints the plain,  
 Or valley winds, or fountain flows,  
 Or purple heath is ting'd in vain :  
 For such the rivers dash their foaming tides,  
 The mountain swells, the dale subsides ;  
 Ev'n thriftless furze detains their wandering fight,  
 And the rough barren rock grows pregnant with delight.

## IX.

With what suspicious fearful care  
 The fordid wretch secures his claim,  
 If haply some luxurious heir  
 Should alienate the fields that wear his name !  
 What scruples left some future birth  
 Should litigate a span of earth !  
 Bonds, contracts, feoffments, names unmeet for prose,  
 The towering Muse endures not to disclose ;  
 Alas ! *her* unrevers'd decree,  
 More comprehensive and more free,  
 Her lavish charter, Taste, appropriates all we see.

## X.

Let gondolas their painted flags unfold,  
 And be the solemn day enroll'd,

When,



When, to confirm his lofty plea,  
 In nuptial sort, with bridal gold,  
 The grave Venetian weds the sea :  
 Each laughing Muse derides the vow ;  
 Ev'n Adria scorns the mock embrace,  
 To some lone *hermit* on the mountain's brow,  
 Allotted, from his natal hour,  
 With all her myrtle shores in dow'r.  
 His breast to admiration prone  
 Enjoys the smile upon her face,  
 Enjoys triumphant every grace,  
 And finds her more his own.

## XI.

Fatigu'd with form's oppressive laws,  
 When SOMERSET avoids the Great ;  
 When cloy'd with merited applause,  
 She seeks the rural calm retreat ;  
 Does she not praise each mossy cell,  
 And feel the truth my numbers tell ?  
 When deafen'd by the loud acclaim,  
 Which genius grac'd with rank obtains,  
 Could she not more delighted hear  
 Yon throstle chaunt the rising year ?  
 Could she not spurn the wreaths of fame,  
 To crop the primrose of the plains ?  
 Does she not sweets in each fair valley find,  
 Lost to the sons of pow'r, unknown to half mankind ?



## XII.

Ah can she covet there to see  
 The splendid slaves, the reptile race,  
 That oil the tongue, and bow the knee,  
 That flight her merit, but adore her place?  
 Far happier, if aright I deem,  
 When from gay throngs, and gilded spires,  
 To where the *lonely* halcyons play,  
 Her philosophick step retires:  
 While studious of the moral theme,  
 She, to some smooth sequester'd stream  
 Likens the swain's inglorious day;  
 Pleas'd from the flowery margin to survey,  
 How cool, serene, and clear the current glides away.

## XIII.

O blind to truth, to virtue blind,  
 Who flight the sweetly-pensive mind!  
 On whose fair birth the Graces mild,  
 And every Muse prophetick smil'd.  
 Not that the poet's boasted fire  
 Should Fame's wide-echoing trumpet swell;  
 Or, on the musick of his lyre  
 Each future age with rapture dwell;  
 The vaunted sweet of praise remove,  
 Yet shall *such* bosoms claim a part  
 In all that glads the human heart;  
 Yet these the spirits, form'd to judge and prove  
 All nature's charms immense, and Heav'n's unbounded love.



## XIV.

And oh! the transport, most ally'd to song,  
 In some fair villa's peaceful bound,  
 To catch soft hints from Nature's tongue,  
 And bid Arcadia bloom around:  
 Whether we fringe the sloping hill,  
 Or smoothe below the verdant mead;  
 Whether we break the falling rill,  
 Or thro' meandering mazes lead;  
 Or in the horrid bramble's room  
 Bid careless groups of roses bloom;  
 Or let some shelter'd lake serene  
 Reflect flow'rs, woods and spires, and brighten all the scene.

## XV.

O sweet disposal of the rural hour!  
 O beauties never known to cloy!  
 While worth and genius haunt the favour'd bow'r,  
 And every *gentle* breast partakes the joy!  
 While *Charity* at eve surveys the swain,  
 Enabled by these toils to cheer  
 A train of helpless infants dear,  
 Speed whistling home across the plain;  
 Sees vagrant *Luxury*, her hand-maid grown,  
 For half her graceless deeds atone,  
 And hails the bounteous work, and ranks it with her own.



## XVI.

Why brand these pleasures with the name  
 Of soft, unfocial toils, of indolence and shame?  
 Search but the garden, or the wood,  
 Let yon admir'd carnation own,  
 Not *all* was meant for raiment, or for food,  
 Not *all* for needful use alone;  
 There while the seed of future blossoms dwell,  
 'Tis colour'd for the sight, perfum'd to please the smell.

## XVII.

Why knows the nightingale to sing?  
 Why flows the pine's nectareous juice?  
 Why shines with paint the linnet's wing?  
 For sustenance alone? for use?  
 For preservation? Every sphere  
 Shall bid fair *Pleasure's* rightful claim appear.  
 And sure there seem, of *human* kind,  
 Some born to shun the solemn strife;  
 Some for *amusive* tasks design'd,  
 To soothe the certain ills of life;  
 Grace it's lone vales with many a budding rose,  
 New founts of bliss disclose,  
 Call forth refreshing shades, and decorate repose.

## XVIII.

From plains and woodlands; from the view  
 Of rural Nature's blooming face,  
 Smit with the glare of rank and place,  
 To courts the sons of Fancy flew;



*There* long had Art ordain'd a rival feat;  
 There had she lavish'd all her care  
 To form a scene more dazling fair,  
 And call'd them from their green retreat  
 To share her proud controul;  
 Had giv'n the robe with grace to flow,  
 Had taught exotick gems to flow;  
 And emulous of nature's pow'r,  
 Mimick'd the plume, the leaf, the flow'r;  
 Chang'd the complexion's native hue,  
 Moulded each rustick limb anew,  
 And warp'd the very soul!

## XIX.

Awhile her magick strikes the novel eye,  
 Awhile the faery forms delight;  
 And now aloof we seem to fly  
 On purple pinions thro' a purer sky,  
 Where all is wonderous, all is bright:  
 Now landed on some spangled shore  
 Awhile each dazled maniac roves  
 By saphire lakes, thro' em'rald groves,  
 Paternal acres please no more;  
 Adieu the simple, the sincere delight —  
 Th' habitual scene of hill and dale,  
 The rural herds, the vernal gale,  
 The tangled vetch's purple bloom,  
 The fragrance of the bean's perfume,  
 Be theirs alone who cultivate the soil,  
 And drink the cup of thirst, and eat the bread of toil,

XX. But



## XX.

But soon the pageant fades away !  
 'Tis *Nature* only bears perpetual sway.  
 We pierce the counterfeit delight,  
 Fatigu'd with splendour's irksome beams,  
 Fancy again demands the fight  
 Of native groves, and wonted streams,  
 Pants for the scenes that charm'd her youthful eyes,  
 Where Truth maintains her court, and banishes disguise.

## XXI.

Then hither oft ye senators retire,  
 With *Nature* here high converse hold ;  
 For who like STAMFORD her delights admire,  
 Like STAMFORD shall with scorn behold  
 Th' unequal bribes of pageantry and gold ;  
 Beneath the British oak's majestick shade,  
 Shall see fair Truth, immortal maid,  
 Friendship in artless guise array'd,  
 Honour, and moral Beauty shine  
 With more attractive charms, with radiance more divine.

## XXII.

Yes, here alone did highest Heav'n ordain  
 The lasting magazine of charms,  
 Whatever wins, whatever warms,  
 Whatever fancy seeks to share,  
 The *great*, the *various*, and the *fair*,  
 For ever should remain !

XXIII. Her



## XXIII.

Her impulse nothing may restrain—  
 Or whence the joy 'mid columns, tow'rs,  
 'Midst all the city's artful trim,  
 To rear some breathless vapid flow'rs,  
 Or shrubs fuliginously grim :  
 From rooms of filken foliage vain,  
 To trace the dun far distant grove,  
 Where smit with undissembled pain,  
 The wood-lark mourns her absent love,  
 Borne to the dusty town from native air,  
 To mimick rural life, and soothe some vapour'd fair.

## XXIV.

But how must faithless *Art* prevail,  
 Should all who taste our joy sincere,  
 To virtue, truth or science dear,  
 Forego a court's alluring pale,  
 For dimpled brook and leafy grove,  
 For that rich luxury of thought they love !  
 Ah no, from these the publick sphere requires  
 Example for it's giddy bands ;  
 From these impartial Heav'n demands  
 To spread the flame itself inspires ;  
 To sift Opinion's mingled mass,  
 Impress a nation's taste, and bid the sterling pass.

## XXV.

Happy, thrice happy they,  
 Whose graceful deeds have exemplary shone  
 Round the gay precincts of a throne,

With



With mild effective beams !  
 Who bands of fair ideas bring,  
 By solemn grott, or shady spring,  
 To join their pleasing dreams !  
 Theirs is the rural bliss without alloy,  
 They only that deserve, enjoy.  
 What tho' nor fabled Dryad haunt their grove,  
 Nor Naiad near their fountains rove,  
 Yet all embody'd to the mental fight,  
 A train of smiling Virtues bright  
 Shall there the wise retreat allow,  
 Shall twine triumphant palms to deck the wanderer's brow.

## XXVI.

And though by faithless friends alarm'd,  
 Art have with Nature wag'd presumptuous war ;  
 By SEYMOUR's winning influence charm'd,  
 In whom their gifts united shine,  
 No longer shall their counsels jar.  
 'Tis hers to mediate the peace :  
 Near Percy-lodge, with awe-struck mien,  
 The rebel seeks her lawful Queen,  
 And havock and contention cease.  
 I see the rival pow'rs combine,  
 And aid each other's fair design ;  
 Nature exalt the mound where Art shall build ;  
 Art shape the gay alcove, while Nature paints the field.

XXVII. Begin,



Begin, ye songsters of the grove!  
 O warble forth your noblest lay;  
 Where SOMERSET vouchsafes to rove  
 Ye leverets freely sport and play.

—Peace to the strepent horn!

Let no harsh dissonance disturb the morn,  
 No sounds inelegant and rude  
 Her sacred solitudes profane!  
 Unless her candour not exclude  
 The lowly shepherd's votive strain,  
 Who tunes his reed amidst his rural cheer,  
 Fearful, yet not averse, that SOMERSET should hear.



Inscription near a Sheep-cote. 1745.

By the Same.

**S**hepherd, would'st thou here obtain  
 Pleasure unalloy'd with pain?  
 Joy that suits the rural sphere?  
 Gentle shepherd! lend an ear.

Learn to relish calm delight,  
 Verdant vales, and fountains bright;  
 Trees that nod on sloping hills,  
 Caves that echo tinkling rills.

If