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A Collection Of Poems In Six Volumes. By Several Hands

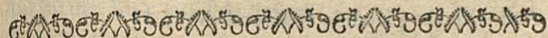
Dodsley, Robert

London, 1758

To the Same. From Hampton-Court, 1731. By the Same.

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I envy not the foremost of the great,
 Not Walpole's self directing Europe's fate ;
 Still let him load Ambition's thorny shrine,
 Fame be his portion, and contentment mine.
 But if the gods, sinister still, deny
 To live in Ickworth, let me there but die ;
 Thy hand to close my eyes in death's long night,
 Thy image to attract their latest fight :
 Then to the grave attend thy poet's hearse,
 And love his mem'ry as you lov'd his verse.



To the Same. From Hampton-Court, 1731.

By the Same.

Bono loco res humanæ sunt, quod nemo, nisi vitio suo, miser est.

SENECA in Epist.

WHILST in the fortunes of the gay and great,
 The glare of courts, and luxury of state :
 All that the meaner covet and deplore,
 The pomp of wealth, and insolence of pow'r :
 Whilst in these various scenes of gilded life,
 Of fraud, ambition, policy, and strife ;
 Where every word is dictated by art,
 And ev'ry face the mask of ev'ry heart ;

Whilst



Whilst with such diff'rent objects entertain'd,
 In all that's really felt, and all that's feign'd,
 I speculate on human joys and woes,
 Till from my pen the verse spontaneous flows ;
 To whom these artless off'rings should I bring,
 To whom these undigested numbers sing,
 But to a friend ?—and to what friend but you,
 Safe, just, sincere, indulgent, kind and true ?
 Disdain not then these trifles to attend,
 Nor fear to blame, nor study to commend.
 Say, where false notions erring I pursue,
 And with the plausible confound the true ;
 Correct with all the freedom that I write :
 And guide my darken'd reason with thy light.

Thee partial heav'n has blest'd, profusely kind,
 With wit, with judgment, and a taste refin'd.
 Thy fancy rich, and thy observance true,
 The last still wakeful, and the first still new.
 Rare blessings ! and to few divided known,
 But giv'n united to thyself alone.

Instruction are thy words, and lively truth,
 The school of age, and the delight of youth.

When men their various discontents relate,
 And tell how wretched this our mortal state ;
 That life is but diversify'd distress,
 The lot of all, and hardly more or less ;
 That kings and villagers have each their share,
 These pinch'd with mean, and those with splendid care ;

That

That seeming pleasure is intrinsic woe,
 And all call'd happiness, delusive show ;
 Food only for the snakes in Envy's breast,
 Who often grudges what is ne'er possess'd ;
 Say, for thou know'st the follies of mankind,
 Can'st tell how obstinate, perverse, and blind ;
 Say, are we thus oppress'd by Nature's laws,
 Or of our miseries, ourselves the cause ?

Sure oft, unjustly, we impute to Fate
 A thousand evils which ourselves create ;
 Complain that life affords but little joy,
 And yet that little foolishly destroy.
 We check the pleasures that too soon subside,
 And break the current of too weak a tide.
 Like Atalanta, golden trifles chase,
 And baulk that swiftness which might win the race ;
 For life has joys adapted to each stage,
 Love for our youth, ambition for our age.
 But wilful man inverting her decrees,
 When young would govern, and when old would please,
 Covets the fruits his autumn shou'd bestow,
 Nor tastes the fragrance whilst the blossoms blow.
 Then far-sled joys in vain he would restore,
 His appetite unanswer'd by his pow'r :
 Round beauty's neck he twists his wither'd arms,
 Receiv'd with loathing to her venal charms :
 He rakes the ashes, when the fire is spent,
 Nor gains fruition, tho' he gains consent.

But

But can we say 'tis Providence's fault,
 If thus untimely all her gifts are sought,
 If summer-crops which must decay we keep,
 And in the winter would the harvest reap ?

When brutes, with what they are allow'd content,
 Listen to Nature, and pursue her bent,
 And still their pow'r with their ambition weigh'd,
 Gain what they can, but never force a trade :
 A thousand joys, her happy followers prove,
 Health, plenty, rest, society, and love.
 To us alone, in fatal ign'rance proud,
 To deviate from her dictates 'tis allow'd :
 That boasted gift our reason to believe,
 Or let caprice, in reason's garb, deceive.
 To us the noble privilege is given
 Of wise refining on the will of heav'n.
 Our skill we trust, but lab'ring still to gain
 More than we can, lose what we might obtain.

Will the wise elephant desert the wood,
 To imitate the whale and range the flood ?
 Or will the mole her native earth forsake,
 In wanton madness to explore the lake ?
 Yet man, whom still ideal profit sways,
 Than those less prudent, and more blind than these, }
 Will quit his home, and vent'rous brave the seas.
 And when his rashness its desert has found,
 The fool surviving, weeps the fool that's drown'd.

Herds

Herds range the fields, the feather'd kind the grove, }
 Chuse, woo, carefs, and with promiscuous love, }
 As taste and nature prompt, adhere, or rove; }
 They meet with pleasure, and with ease they part,
 For beasts are only coupled by the heart.
 The body still accompanies the mind,
 And when this wanders, that is unconfin'd :
 The love that join'd the fated pair once fled,
 They change their haunts, their pasture, and their bed.
 No four-legg'd ideots drag, with mutual pain,
 The nat'ral cement pass'd, an artful chain :
 Th' effect of passion ceases with the cause,
 Clogg'd with no after-weight of forms or laws :
 To no dull rules of custom they submit,
 Like us they cool, but when they cool, they quit.
 Nor find we in the wood, the sea, or plain,
 One e'er elected o'er the rest to reign.
 If any rule, 'tis force that gives the law,
 What brutes are bound in voluntary awe ?
 Do they like us a pageant idol raise,
 Swoln with false pride, and flatter'd by false praise ?
 Do they their equal, sometimes less, revere ?
 At once detest and serve, despise and fear ?
 To strength inferior, do they bend the knee ?
 With ears and eyes of others, hear and see ?
 Or ever vest a mortal god with pow'r
 To do those wrongs they afterwards deplore ?

These institutions are of man alone,
 Marriage and monarchy are both our own.
 Publick oppression, and domestick strife,
 Are ills which we ourselves annex'd to life,
 God never made a husband, king, or wife. }
 Boast then, oh man! thy profitable gain,
 To folly polish'd, civiliz'd to pain.

Here would I launch into the various field
 Of all the cares our prejudices yield ;
 What multiply'd examples might be told,
 Of pains they give, and joys that they withhold ?
 When to credulity tradition preaches,
 And ignorance practises what error teaches !

Wou'd any feather'd maiden of the wood,
 Or scaly female of the peopled flood ;
 When lust and hunger call'd, its force resist ?
 In abstinence, or chastity persist ?
 And cry, ' If heav'n's intent was understood,
 ' These tastes were only giv'n to be withstood.
 Or wou'd they wisely both these gifts improve,
 And eat when hungry, and when am'rous love ?

Yet superstition in religion's name,
 With future punishment and present shame,
 Can fright weak woman from her lover's arms,
 Who weeps with mutual pain her uselefs charms ;
 Whilst she, poor wretch ! consum'd in secret fires,
 With pow'r to seize, foregoes what she desires,

'Till beauty fades and inclination dies,
And the fair tree, the fruit ungather'd, dies.

But are these ills, the ills which heav'n design'd ?

Are we unfortunate, or are we blind ?

If in possession of our wishes curs'd,

Bath'd in untasted springs we die with thirst ;

If we make miseries, what were blessings meant,

And benefits convert to punishment ?

When in the spring the wise industrious bees

Collect the various bloom from fragrant trees,

Extract the liquid sweet of ev'ry flow'r,

And cull the garden to enrich their store :

Should any pedant bee of all the hive,

From this or that perfume, the plund'rers drive,

And say, that he by inspiration knows,

The sacred, tempting, interdicting rose,

By heav'n's command, tho' sweetest, useles grows : }

Think you the fool would ever be obey'd,

And that the lyè wou'd grow into a trade ?

Ev'n Turks would answer, no—and yet, we see

The vine, that rose, and Mahomet, that bee.

To these, how many proofs I yet could add,

That man's superior sense is being mad ?

That none, refining, their true int'rest view,

But for the substance, still the shade pursue.

That oft perverse, and prodigal of life,

(Our pow'r and will at everlasting strife)



We waste the present for the future hour,
 And miser-like, by hoarding, still are poor.
 Or foolishly regretful of the past,
 The good which yet remains neglect to taste.

Nor need I any foreign proof to bring,
 Myself an instance of the truths I sing.
 Whilst in a court, repugnant to my taste,
 From my lov'd friend these precious hours I waste,
 Why do I vainly here thy absence mourn,
 And not anticipate thy wish'd return?
 Why stay my passage to those happy fields,
 Where fate in thee my ev'ry pleasure yields?
 Fortune allows the blessings I refuse,
 And ev'n this moment, were my heart to chuse,
 For thee I should forsake this joyless crowd,
 And not on paper think, but think aloud:
 With thy lov'd converse fill the shorten'd day,
 And glad my soul—Yet here unpleas'd I stay,
 And by mean, sanguine views of int'rest sway'd,
 By airy hopes, to real cares betray'd;
 Lament a grievance which I might redress,
 And wish that happiness I might possess.

