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A Collection Of Poems In Six Volumes. By Several Hands

Dodsley, Robert

London, 1758

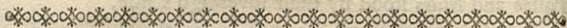
Virgill's Tomb. Naples 1741.

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So we, brave friend, suppose that thy great skill,
 Thy gentle mind, and fair example, will,
 At thy return, reclaim our frantic isle,
 Their spirits calm; and peace again shall smile.

EDM. WALLER, Anglus.

Patauii, typis Pauli Frambotti.



VIRGIL's Tomb. NAPLES 1741.

————— *Tenuis ignavo Pollio chordas
 Pulso; Maroneique redens in margine templi
 Suae animum, & magni tumulis adcauto magistri.* Stat.

I Came, great bard, to gaze upon thy shrine,
 And o'er thy relics wait th' inspiring Nine :
 For sure, I said, where Maro's ashes sleep,
 The weeping Muses must their vigils keep :
 Still o'er their fav'rite's monument they mourn,
 And with poetic trophies grace his urn :
 Have placed the shield and martial trumpet here ;
 The shepherd's pipe, and rural honours there :
 Fancy had deck'd the consecrated ground,
 And scatter'd never-fading roses round.
 And now my bold romantic thought aspires
 To hear the echo of celestial lyres ;
 Then catch some sound to bear delighted home,
 And boast I learnt the verse at Virgil's tomb :
 Or stretch'd beneath thy myrtle's fragrant shade,
 With dreams extatic hov'ring o'er my head,

See

See forms august, and laurel'd ghosts ascend,
And with thyself, perhaps, the long procession end.

I came—but soon the phantoms disappear'd ;
Far other scenes, than wanton Hope had rear'd ;
No faery rites, no funeral pomp I found ;
No trophied walls with wreaths of laurel round :
A mean unhonour'd ruin faintly show'd
The spot where once thy mausoleum stood :
Hardly the form remain'd ; a nodding dome
O'ergrown with moss is now all Virgil's tomb.
'Twas such a scene as gave a kind relief
To memory, in sweetly-pensive grief :
Gloomy, unpleasing images it wrought ;
No musing, soft complacency of thought :
For Time had canker'd all, and worn away
Ev'n the last, mournful graces of decay :
Oblivion, hateful goddess, fate before,
And cover'd with her dusky wings the door :
No silver harps I heard, no Muse's voice,
But birds obscene in horrid notes rejoice :
Fancy recoil'd, and with his tinsel train
Forsook the cheerless scene ; no more remain
The warm ambitious hopes of airy youth ;
Severe Reflection came, and frowning Truth :
Away each glitt'ring gay idea fled,
And bade a melancholy train succeed,
That form'd, or seem'd to form, a mournful call
In feeble echoes mutt'ring round the wall.

Seek



Seek not the Muses here! th' affrighted maids
 Have fled Parthenope's polluted shades :
 Her happy shores, the seats of joy and ease,
 Their fav'rite mansions once, no longer please :
 No longer, as of old, in transport lost,
 The sisters rove along th' enchanted coast ;
 They turn with horror from each much-lov'd stream,
 And loath the fields that were their darling theme :
 The tuneful names themselves once fondly gave
 To ev'ry swelling hill, and mossy cave,
 So pleasing then, are only heard with sighs ;
 And each sad echo bids their sorrow rise.

Yet Nature smiles, as when their Virgil sung,
 Nor 'midst a fairer scene his lyre was strung ;
 Still bloom the sweets of his elysium here,
 And the same charms in ev'ry grove appear.
 But ah ! in vain indulgent fons prevail ;
 Health and delight in ev'ry balmy gale
 Are wasted now in vain : small comfort bring
 To weeping eyes the beauties of the spring.
 To groaning slaves those fragrant meads belong,
 Where Tully dictated, and Maro sung.
 Long since, alas ! those golden days are flown,
 When here each Science wore its proper crown ;
 Pale Tyranny has laid their altars low,
 And rent the laurel from the Muse's brow :
 What wonder then 'midst such a scene to see
 The Arts expire with bleeding Liberty ?

Penfive and sad, each fair angelic form
 Droops, like the wearied dove beneath a storm :
 Far other views the poet's thought engage,
 Than the warm glories of th' Augustan age.
 Can mis'ry bid th' imagination glow ?
 Or genius brighten 'midst domestic woe ?
 To see desponding wretches round him pine,
 Horace had wept beneath the Alban vine.
 Sad sits the bard amidst his country's tears,
 And sighs, regardless of the wreath he wears.
 Did ever Want and Famine sweetly sing ?
 The fetter'd hand uncouthly strikes the string.
 Lo! stern Oppression lifts her iron rod,
 And Ruin waits th' imperious harpy's nod :
 Black Desolation, and destructive War,
 Rise at the signal, and attend her car.
 From the dire pomp th' affrighted shepherd flies,
 And leaves his flock the rav'nous foldier's prize.
 Where now are all the nymphs that blest the plains ?
 Where, the full chorus of contented swains ?
 The songs of love, of liberty and peace,
 Are heard no more ; the dance and tabor cease :
 To the soft oaten pipe, and past'ral reed,
 The din of arms, and clarion's blast succeed :
 Dire shapes appear in ev'ry op'ning glade ;
 And Furies howl where once the Muses stray'd ?
 Is this the queen of realms, for arts renown'd ?
 This captive maid, that weeps upon the ground !



Alas! how chang'd!—dejected and forlorn!
 The mistress of the world become the scorn!
 Around stand Rapine, Horror and Despair;
 And Ig'rance, dark ally of barb'rous War:
 She, at th' usurping Vandal's dread command,
 Displays her gloomy banner o'er the land:
 Beneath its chilling shade neglected lies
 Each sister Art; and unlamented dies.
 Lo! Sculpture lets her uselefs chissel fall;
 While on some ruin'd temple's broken wall
 Sad Architecture sits; and fees with shame
 Mis-shapen piles usurp her injur'd name:
 Music and Verse, unhappy twins! belong
 To antique Masque, and weak unmanly Song:
 The gath'ring deluge swells on ev'ry side,
 And monkish Superstition swells the tide.
 By the restless torrent overborn
 Floats ev'ry Virtue, from its basis torn:
 Fair Learning droops, the sick'ning Arts decay;
 And ev'ry laurel fades, and ev'ry bay.
 All is confus'd, no traces now are seen
 To shew what wretched Italy has been.

Thus once Vesuvius, crown'd with circling wood,
 Parthenope, thy beauteous neighbour stood:
 Perpetual Spring cloath'd the fair mountain's side;
 And what is now thy terror, was thy pride.
 Sudden th' imprison'd flames burst forth; and laid
 On smoaky heaps each shrieking Dryad's shade:

Now