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Poems On Several Occasions

Gay, John

London, 1745

Act V.

urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-1716



ACT V. SCENE I.

A Wood.

DIONE. CLEANTHES, (*who lies wounded
in a distant part of the stage.*)

DIONE.



HE Moon serene now climbs th'aerial way ;
See, at her sight ten thousand stars decay :
With trembling gleam she tips the silent
grove,

While all beneath the chequer'd shadows move.

Turn back thy silver axles, downward roll,

Darkness best fits the horrors of my soul.

Rise, rise, ye clouds ; the face of heav'n deform,

Veil the bright Goddess in a fable storm :

O look not down upon a wretched maid !

Let thy bright torch the happy lover aid,

And light his wand'ring footsteps to the bower,
 Where the kind nymph attends th'appointed hour.
 Yet thou hast seen unhappy love, like mine ;
 Did not thy lamp in Heav'n's blue forehead shine,
 When *Thisbe* sought her Love along the glade ?
 Didst thou not then behold the gleaming blade,
 And gild the fatal point that stabb'd her breast ?
 Soon I, like her, shall seek the realms of rest.
 Let groves of mournful yew a wretch surround !
 O sooth my ear with melancholy sound !
 The village curs now stretch their yelling throat,
 And dogs from distant cots return the note ;
 The rav'nous wolf along the valley prowls,
 And with his famish'd cries the mountain howls,
 But hark ! what sudden noise advances near ?
 Repeated groans alarm my frighted ear !

C L E A N T H E S.

Shepherd, approach ; ah ! fly not through the glade,
 A wretch all dy'd with wounds invokes thy aid.

D I O N E.

Say then, unhappy stranger, how you bled ;
 Collect thy spirits, raise thy drooping head.

[*Cleanthes raises himself on his arm.*

O horrid fight! *Cleantes* gasping lies;
 And death's black shadows float before his eyes.
 Unknown in this disguise, I'll check my woe,
 And learn what bloody hand has struck the blow. [*Aside.*]
 Say, youth, ere Fate thy feeble voice confounds,
 What led thee hither? whence these purple wounds?

C L E A N T H E S.

Stay, fleeting life; may strength a-while prevail,
 Lest my clos'd lips confine th'imperfect tale.
 Ere the streak'd East grew warm with amber ray,
 I from the city took my doubtful way,
 Far o'er the plains I fought a beauteous maid,
 Who from the Court in these wide forests stray'd,
 Wanders unknown; as I, with weary pain,
 Try'd ev'ry path, and op'ning glade in vain;
 A band of thieves, forth rushing from the wood,
 Unsheath'd their daggers warm with daily blood;
 Deep in my breast the barb'rous steel is dy'd,
 And purple hands the golden prey divide.
 Hence are these mangling wounds. Say, gentle swain,
 If thou hast known among the sylvan train
 The vagrant nymph I seek?



D I O N E.

————— What mov'd thy care,
Thus, in these pathless wilds to search the fair?

C L E A N T H E S.

I charge you, O ye daughters of the grove,
Ye *Naiads*, who the mossy fountains love,
Ye happy swains, who range the pastures wide,
Ye tender nymphs, who feed your flocks beside;
If my last gasping breath can pity move,
If e'er ye knew the pangs of slighted love,
Show her I charge you, where *Cleanthes* dy'd,
The grass yet reeking with the sanguine tide.
A father's power to me the virgin gave,
But she disdain'd to live a nuptial slave;
So fled her native home.

D I O N E.

————— 'Tis then from thee
Springs the foul source of all her misery.
Could'st thou, thy selfish appetite to please,
Condemn to endless woes another's peace?

C L E.



CLEANTHES.

O spare me; nor my hapless love upbraid,
 While on my heart Death's frozen hand is laid!
 Go seek her, guide her where *Cleantes* bled;
 When she surveys her lover pale and dead,
 Tell her, that since she fled my hateful fight,
 Without remorse I fought the realms of night,
 Methinks I see her view these poor remains,
 And on her cheek indecent gladness reigns!
 Full in her presence cold *Cleantes* lies,
 And not one tear stands trembling in her eyes!
 ● let a sigh my hapless fate deplore!
Cleantes now controuls thy love no more.

DIONE.

How shall my lids confine these rising woes? [*Aside.*]

CLEANTHES.

O might I see her, ere Death's finger close
 These eyes for ever! might her soften'd breast
 Forgive my love with too much ardor prest!
 Then I with peace could yield my latest breath.

D I O N E.

Shall I not calm the fable hour of death,
 And show my self before him! — Hah! he dies.
 See from his trembling lip the spirit flies! [Aside.
 Stay yet a-while. *Dione* stands confest.
 He knows me not. He faints, he sinks to rest.

C L E A N T H E S.

Tell her, since all my hopes in her were lost,
 That death was welcome ——— [Dies.

D I O N E.

What sudden gusts of grief my bosom rend?
 A parent's curses o'er my head impend
 For disobedient vows; O wretched maid,
 Those very vows *Ewander* hath betray'd.
 See, at thy feet *Cleantes* bath'd in blood!
 For love of thee he trod this lonely wood;
 Thou art the cruel authress of his fate!
 He falls by thine, thou by *Ewander's* hate.
 When shall my soul know rest? *Cleantes* slain
 No longer sighs and weeps for thy disdain.

Thou

Thou still art curst with love. Bleed, virgin, bleed.
 How shall a wretch from anxious life be freed!
 My troubled brain with sudden frenzy burns,
 And shatter'd thought now this now that way turns.
 What do I see thus glitt'ring on the plains?
 Hah! the dread sword yet warm with crimson stains!

[Takes up the dagger.]



S C E N E II.

D I O N E. P A R T H E N I A.

P A R T H E N I A.

Sweet is the walk when night has cool'd the hour.
 This path directs me to my sylvan bower. [Aside.]

D I O N E.

Why is my soul with sudden fear dismay'd?
 Why drops my trembling hand the pointed blade?
 O string my arm with force! [Aside.]

P A R T H E N I A.

————— Methought a noise
 Broke through the silent air, like human voice. [Aside.]

M 3

D I.

D I O N E.

One well-aim'd blow shall all my pangs remove,
Grasp firm the fatal steel, and cease to love. [Aside.

P A R T H E N I A.

Sure 'twas *Alexis*, Hah! a sword display'd!
The streaming lustre darts a-cross the shade. [Aside.

D I O N E.

May Heav'n new vigour to my soul impart,
And guide the desp'rate weapon to my heart! [Aside.

P A R T H E N I A.

May I the meditated death arrest! [*Holds Dione's hand.*
Strike not rash shepherd; spare thy guiltless breast,
O give me strength to stay the threaten'd harm,
And wrench the dagger from his lifted arm!

D I O N E.

What cruel hand with-holds the welcome blow?
In giving life, you but prolong my woe.
O may not thus th'expected stroke impend!
Unloose thy grasp, and let swift Death descend.

But

But if yon murder thy red hands hath dy'd ;
Here. Pierce me deep ; let forth the vital tide.

[Dione quits the dagger.

P A R T H E N I A.

Wait not thy fate ; but this way turn thy eyes ?
My virgin hand no purple murder dies.
Turn then, *Alexis* ; and *Parthenia* know,
'Tis she protects thee from the fatal blow.

D I O N E.

Must the night-watches by my sighs be told ?
And must these eyes another morn behold
Through dazling floods of tears ? ungen'rous maid,
The friendly stroke is by thy hand delay'd ;
Call it not mercy to prolong my breath ;
'Tis but to torture me with lingring death.

P A R T H E N I A.

What moves thy hand to act this bloody part ?
Whence are these gnawing pangs that tear thy heart ?
Is that thy friend who lies before thee slain ?
Is it his wound that reeks upon the plain ?
Is't *Lycidas* ?

M 4

D I O N E.



D I O N E.

————— No. I the stranger found,
 Ere chilly death his frozen tongue had bound.
 He said ; as at the rosy dawn of day,
 He from the city took his vagrant way,
 A murd'ring band pour'd on him from the wood,
 First seiz'd his gold, then bath'd their swords in blood.

P A R T H E N I A.

You, whose ambition labours to be great,
 Think on the perils which on riches wait.
 Safe are the shepherd's paths ; when sober Even
 Streaks with pale light the bending arch of heaven,
 From danger free, through deserts wild he hies,
 The rising smoke far o'er the mountain spies,
 Which marks his distant cottage ; on he fares,
 For him no murd'ers lay their nightly snares ;
 They pass him by, they turn their steps away ;
 Safe Poverty was ne'er the villain's prey.
 At home he lies secure in easy sleep,
 No bars his ivy-mantled cottage keep ;
 No thieves in dreams the fancy'd dagger hold,
 And drag him to detect the buried gold ;

No

Nor starts he from his couch aghast and pale,
 When the door murmurs with the hollow gale.
 While he, whose iron coffers rust with wealth,
 Harbours beneath his roof Deceit and Stealth;
 Treach'ry with lurking pace frequents his walks,
 And close behind him horrid murder stalks.
 'Tis tempting lucre makes the villain bold,
 There lies a bleeding sacrifice to gold.

D I O N E.

To live is but to wake to daily cares,
 And journey through a tedious vale of tears.
 Had you not rush'd between, my life had flown;
 And I, like him, no more had sorrow known.

P A R T H E N I A.

When anguish in the gloomy bosom dwells,
 The counsel of a friend the cloud dispells.
 Give thy breast vent, the secret grief impart,
 And say what woe lies heavy at thy heart.
 To save thy life kind Heav'n has succour sent,
 The Gods by me thy threaten'd fate prevent.



D I O N E.

No. To prevent it, is beyond thy power ;
 Thou only canst defer the welcome hour.
 When you the lifted dagger turn'd aside,
 Only one road to death thy force deny'd ;
 Still fate is in my reach. From mountains high,
 Deep in whose shadow craggy ruins lie,
 Can I not headlong fling this weight of woe,
 And dash out life against the flints below ?
 Are there not streams, and lakes and rivers wide,
 Where my last breath may bubble on the tide ?
 No. Life shall never flatter me again,
 Nor shall to morrow bring new sighs and pain.

P A R T H E N I A.

Can I this burden of thy soul relieve,
 And calm thy grief ?

D I O N E.

————— If thou wilt comfort give ;
 Plight me thy word, and to that word be just ;
 When poor *Alexis* shall be laid in dust,

That

That pride no longer shall command thy mind,
 That thou wilt spare the friend I leave behind.
 I know his virtue worthy of thy breast.
 Long in thy love may *Lycidas* be blest!

P A R T H E N I A.

That swain (who would my liberty controul,
 To please some short-liv'd transport of his soul)
 Shows, while his importuning flame he moves,
 That 'tis not me, himself alone he loves.
 O live, nor leave him by misfortunes prest;
 'Tis shameful to desert a friend distressed.

D I O N E.

Alas! a wretch like me no loss would prove,
 Would kind *Parthenia* listen to his love.

P A R T H E N I A.

Why hides thy bosom this mysterious grief?
 Ease thy o'erburden'd heart, and hope relief.

D I O N E.

What profits it to touch thy tender breast,
 With wrongs, like mine, which ne'er can be redrest?

Let

Let in my heart the fatal secret dye,
Nor call up sorrow in another's eye!



S C E N E III.

D I O N E. P A R T H E N I A. L Y C I D A S.

L Y C I D A S.

If *Laura* right direct the darksome ways,
Along these paths the pensive shepherd strays. [*Aside.*]

D I O N E.

Let not a tear for me roll down thy cheek.
O would my throbbing sighs my heart-strings break!
Why was my breast the lifted Stroke deny'd?
Must then again the deathful deed be try'd?
Yes. 'Tis resolv'd. [*Snatches the dagger from Parthenia.*]

P A R T H E N I A.

————— Ah, hold; forbear, forbear!

L Y C I D A S.

Methought Distress with shrieks alarm'd my ear.

P A R T H E N I A.

Strike not. Ye Gods, defend him from the wound.

L Y C I D A S.

Yes. 'Tis *Parthenia's* voice, I know the found.
Some sylvan ravisher would force the maid,
And *Laura* sent me to her virtue's aid.
Die, villain, die; and seek the shades below.

[*Lycidas snatches the dagger from Dione,
and stabs her.*]

D I O N E.

Whoe'er thou art, I bless thee for the blow.

L Y C I D A S.

Since Heav'n ordain'd this arm thy life should guard,
O hear my vows! be love the just reward.

P A R T H E N I A.

Rather let vengeance, with her swiftest speed
O'ertake thy flight, and recompense the deed!
Why stays the thunder in the upper sky?
Gather, ye clouds; ye forked lightnings, fly;

On



On thee may all the wrath of Heav'n descend,
 Whose barb'rous hand hath slain a faithful friend.
 Behold *Alexis!*

L Y C I D A S.

————— Would that treach'rous boy
 Have forc'd thy virtue to his brutal joy?
 What rous'd his passion to this bold advance?
 Did e'er thy eyes confefs one willing glance?
 I know, the faithless youth his trust betray'd;
 And well the dagger hath my wrongs repay'd.

D I O N E. [*raising herself on her arm.*]

Breaks not *Evander's* voice along the glade?
 Hah! is it he who holds the reeking blade!
 There needed not or poison, sword or dart;
 Thy faithless vows, alas! had broke my heart. [*Aside.*]

P A R T H E N I A.

O tremble, shepherd, for thy rash offence,
 The sword is dy'd with murder'd innocence!
 His gentle soul no brutal passion seiz'd,
 Nor at my bosom was the dagger rais'd;

Self.

Self-murder was his aim ; the youth I found
Whelm'd in despair, and stay'd the falling wound.

D I O N E.

Into what mischiefs is the lover led,
Who calls down vengeance on his perjur'd head !
O may he ne'er bewail this desp'rate deed,
And may, unknown, unwept, *Dione* bleed ! [Aside.

L Y C I D A S.

What horrors on the guilty mind attend !
His conscience had reveng'd an injur'd friend,
Hadst thou not held the stroke. In death he fought
To lose the heart-consuming pain of thought.
Did not the smooth-tongu'd boy perfidious prove,
Plead his own passion, and betray my love ?

D I O N E.

O let him ne'er this bleeding victim know ;
Lest his rash transport, to revenge the blow,
Should in his dearer heart the dagger stain !
That wound would pierce my soul with double pain.
[Aside.

P A R-

P A R T H E N I A.

How did his faithful lips (now pale and cold)
With moving eloquence thy griefs unfold!

L Y C I D A S.

Was he thus faithful? thus, to friendship true?
Then I'm a wretch. All peace of mind, adieu!
If ebbing life yet beat within thy vein,
Alexis, speak; unclose those lids again.

[*Flings himself on the ground near Dione.*]

See at thy feet the barb'rous villain kneel!
'Tis *Lycidas* who grasps the bloody steel,
Thy once lov'd friend.—Yet ere I cease to live,
Canst thou a wretched penitent forgive?

D I O N E.

When low beneath the sable mold I rest,
May a sincerer friendship share thy breast!
Why are those heaving groans? (ah! cease to weep!)
May my lost name in dark oblivion sleep;
Let this sad tale no speaking stone declare,
From future eyes to draw a pitying tear.

Let

Let o'er my grave the lev'ling plough-share pass,
 Mark not the spot; forget that e'er I was.
 Then may'st thou with *Parthenia's* love be blest,
 And not one thought on me thy joys molest!
 My swimming eyes are overpower'd with light,
 And darkning shadows fleet before my sight,
 Mayst thou be happy? ah! my soul is free. [Dies,

L Y C I D A S.

O cruel shepherdes for love of thee [To *Parthenia*.
 This fatal deed was done.

S C E N E *the Last.*

L Y C I D A S. P A R T H E N I A.
 L A U R A.

L A U R A.

————— *Alexis slain!*

L Y C I D A S.

Yes: 'Twas I did it. See this crimson stain!

My

My hands with blood of innocence are dy'd.
 O may the Moon her silver beauty hide
 In rolling clouds! my soul abhors the light;
 Shade, shade the murd'rer in eternal night!

L A U R A.

No rival shepherd is before thee laid;
 There bled the chafteft, the fincereft maid
 That ever figh'd for love. On her pale face,
 Cannot thy weeping eyes the feature trace
 Of thy once dear *Dione*? with wan care
 Sunk are thofe eyes, and livid with defpair!

L Y C I D A S.

Dione!

L A U R A.

————— There pure confancy lies dead!

L Y C I D A S.

May Heav'n shower vengeance on this perjur'd head!
 As the dry branch that withers on the ground,
 So, blafed be the hand that gave the wound!

Off; hold me not. This heart deserves the stroke;
'Tis black with treach'ry. Yes: the Vows are broke

[*Stabs himself.*]

Which I so often swore. Vain world, adieu!
Though I was false in life, in death I'm true. [*Dies.*]

L A U R A.

To morrow shall the funeral rites be paid,
And these Love victims in one grave be laid.

P A R T H E N I A.

There shall the yew her sable branches spread,
And mournful cypress rear her fringed head.

L A U R A.

From thence shall thyme and myrtle send perfume,
And laurel ever-green o'erhade the tomb.

P A R T H E N I A.

Come, *Laura*; let us leave this horrid wood,
Where streams the purple grass with lovers blood;
Come to my bower. And as we forrowing go,
Let poor *Dione's* story feed my woe

With



With heart-relieving tears. —

L A U R A. [*Pointing to Dione.*

————— Unhappy maid,
Hadst thou a Parent's just command obey'd,
Thou yet hadst liv'd. — But who shall Love advise?
Love scorns command, and breaks all other tyes.
Henceforth, ye swains, be true to vows profess;
For certain vengeance strikes the perjur'd breast.

F I N I S.

