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A Collection Of Poems In Six Volumes. By Several Hands

Dodsley, Robert

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Flora to Pompey. By the Same.

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F L O R A to P O M P E Y .

By the Same.

Pompey, when he was very young, fell in love with Flora, a Roman courtesan, who was so very beautiful that the Romans had her painted to adorn the temple of Castor and Pollux. Geminius (Pompey's friend) afterwards fell in love with her too; but she, prepossessed with a passion for Pompey, would not listen to Geminius. Pompey, in compassion to his friend, yielded him his mistress, which Flora took so much to heart, that she fell dangerously ill upon it; and in that sickness is supposed to write the following letter to Pompey.

ERE death these closing eyes for ever shade,
 (That death thy cruelties have welcome made)
 Receive, thou yet lov'd man! this one adieu,
 This last farewell to happiness and you.
 My eyes o'erflow with tears, my trembling hand
 Can scarce the letters form, or pen command:
 The dancing paper swims before my sight,
 And scarce myself can read the words I write.
 Think you behold me in this lost estate,
 And think yourself the author of my fate:
 How vast the change! your Flora's now become
 The gen'ral pity, not the boast of Rome.
 This form, a pattern to the sculptor's art,
 This face, the idol once of Pompey's heart,

(Whose

(Whose pictur'd beauties Rome thought fit to place
 The sacred temples of her gods to grace)
 Are charming now no more; the bloom is fled,
 The lillies languid, and the roses dead.
 Soon shall some hand the glorious work deface,
 Where Grecian pencils tell what Flora was:
 No longer my resemblance they impart,
 They lost their likeness, when I lost thy heart.

Oh! that those hours could take their turn again,
 When Pompey, lab'ring with a jealous pain,
 His Flora thus bespoke: "Say, my dear love!
 " Shall all these rivals unsuccessful prove?
 " In vain, for ever, shall the Roman youth
 " Envy my happiness, and tempt thy truth?
 " Shall neither tears nor pray'rs thy pity move?
 " Ah! give not pity, 'tis akin to love.
 " Would Flora were not fair in such excess,
 " That I might fear, tho' not adore her less."

Fool that I was, I fought to ease that grief,
 Nor knew indiff'rence follow'd the relief:
 Experience taught the cruel truth too late,
 I never dreaded, till I found my fate.
 'Twas mine to ask if Pompey's self could hear,
 Unmov'd, his rival's unsuccessful pray'r;
 To make thee swear he'd not thy pity move;
 Alas! such pity is no kin to love.

'Twas thou thyself (ungrateful as thou art!)
 Bade me unbend the rigour of my heart:



You chid my faith, reproach'd my being true,
 (Unnat'ral thought!) and labour'd to subdue
 The constancy my soul maintain'd for you;
 To other arms your mistress you condemn'd,
 Too cool a lover, and too warm a friend.

How could'st thou thus my lavish heart abuse,
 To ask the only thing it could refuse?
 Nor yet upbraid me, Pompey, what I say,
 For 'tis my merit that I can't obey;
 Yet this alledg'd against me as a fault,
 Thy rage fomented, and my ruin wrought.
 Just gods! what tye, what conduct can prevail
 O'er fickle man, when truth like mine can fail?

Urge not, to gloss thy crime, the name of friend,
 We know how far those sacred laws extend;
 Since other heroes have not blush'd to prove
 How weak all passions when oppos'd to love:
 Nor boast the virtuous conflict of thy heart,
 When gen'rous pity took Geminius' part;
 'Tis all heroic fraud, and Roman art.
 Such flights of honour might amuse the crowd,
 But by a mistress ne'er can be allow'd;
 Keep for the senate, and the grave debate,
 That infamous hypocrisy of state:
 There words are virtue, and your trade deceit.
 No riddle is thy change, nor hard t' explain;
 Flora was fond, and Pompey was a man:

No longer then a specious tale pretend,
 Nor plead fictitious merit to your friend :
 By nature false, you follow'd her decree,
 Nor gen'rous are to him, but false to me.

You say you melted at Geminius' tears,
 You say you felt his agonizing cares :
 Grofs artifice, that this from him could move,
 And not from Flora, whom you say you love :
 You could not bear to hear your rival sigh,
 Yet bear unmov'd to see your mistress die.
 Inhuman hypocrite ! not thus can he
 My wrongs, and my distress, obdurate, see.

He, who receiv'd, condemns the gift you made,
 And joins with me the giver to upbraid,
 Forgetting he's oblig'd, and mourning I'm betray'd. }
 He loves too well that cruel gift to use,
 Which Pompey lov'd too little to refuse :
 Fain would he call my vagrant lord again,
 But I the kind embassador restrain ;
 I scorn to let another take my part,
 And to myself will owe or lose thy heart.

Can nothing e'er rekindle love in thee ?
 Can nothing e'er extinguish it in me ?
 That I could tear thee from this injur'd breast !
 And where you gave my person, give the rest,
 At once to grant and punish thy request. }
 That I could place thy worthy rival there !
 No second insult need my fondness fear ;

He

He views not Flora with her Pompey's eyes,
He loves like me, he doats, despairs, and dies.

Come to my arms, thou dear, deserving youth!
Thou prodigy of man! thou man with truth!
For him, I will redouble every care,
To please, for him, these faded charms repair;
To crown his vows, and sharpen thy despair.

Oh! 'tis illusion all! and idle rage!
No second passion can this heart engage;
And shortly, Pompey, shall thy Flora prove,
Death may dissolve, but nothing change her love,

