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Poems On Several Occasions

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Trivia. Book III. Of walking the Streets by Night.

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TRIVIA.

BOOK III.

Of walking the Streets by Night.



TRIVIA Goddess, leave these low abodes,
And traverse o'er the wide ethereal road;
Celestial Queen, put on thy robes of light,
Now *Cynthia* nam'd, fair regent of the
Night.

At sight of thee the villain sheaths his sword, 5
Nor scales the wall, to steal the wealthy hoard.
O may thy silver lamp from heaven's high bow'r
Direct my footsteps in the midnight hour!

When

When night first bids the twinkling stars appear,
 Or with her cloudy vest inwraps the air, 10
 Then swarms the busy street; with caution tread,
 Where the shop-windows falling threat thy head;
 Now lab'ers home return, and join their strength
 To bear the tottering plank, or ladder's length;
 Still fix thy eyes intent upon the throng, 15
 And as the paffes open, wind along.

Where the fair columns of *St. Clement* stand,
 Whose straiten'd bounds encroach upon the *Strand*;
 Where the low penthouse bows the walker's head, 20
 And the rough pavement wounds the yielding tread;
 Where not a post protects the narrow space,
 And strung in twines, combs dangle in thy face;
 Summon at once thy courage, rouse thy care,
 Stand firm, look back, be resolute, beware,
 Forth issuing from sleep lanes, the collier's steeds 25
 Drag the black load; another cart succeeds,
 Team follows team, crouds heap'd on crouds appear,
 And wait impatient, 'till the road grow clear.
 Now all the pavement sounds with trampling feet,
 And the mixt hurry barricades the street, 30



Entangled here, the waggon's lengthen'd team
 Cracks the tough harness; here a pond'rous beam
 Lies over-turn'd athwart; for slaughter fed
 Here lowing bullocks raise their horned head.
 Now oaths grow loud, with coaches coaches jar, 35
 And the smart blow provokes the sturdy war;
 From the high box they whirl the thong around,
 And with the twining lash their shins rebound:
 Their rage ferments, more dang'rous wounds they try,
 And the blood gushes down their painful eye, 40
 And now on foot the frowning warriors light,
 And with their pond'rous fists renew the fight;
 Blow answers blow, their cheeks are smear'd with blood,
 'Till down they fall, and grappling roll in mud.
 So when two boars, in wild † *Ytene* bred, 45
 Or on *Westphalia's* fatt'ning chestnuts fed,
 Gnash their sharp tusks, and rous'd with equal fire,
 Dispute the reign of some luxurious mire;
 In the black flood they wallow o'er and o'er,
 'Till their arm'd jaws distil with foam and gore. 50

Where the mob gathers, swiftly shoot along,
 Nor idly mingle in the noisy throng.

† *New-Forest in Hampshire, antiently so called.*

Lur'd.

Lur'd by the silver hilt, amid the swarm,
 The subtil artift will thy fide difarm.
 Nor is the flaxen wig with fafety worn; 55
 High on the foulder, in a basket born,
 Lurks the fly boy; whofe hand to rapine bred,
 Plucks off the curling honours of thy head.
 Here dives the skulking thief, with practis'd flight,
 And unfelt fingers make thy pocket light. 60
 Where's now thy watch, with all its trinkets, flown;
 And thy late fnuff-box is no more thy own.
 But lo! his bolder thefts fome tradesman spies,
 Swift from his prey the fcedding lurcher flies;
 Dext'rous he 'fcapes the coach with nimble bounds,
 Whilst ev'ry honeft tongue *stop thief* refounds. 66
 So fpeeds the wily fox, alarm'd by fear,
 Who lately filch'd the turkey's callow care;
 Hounds following hounds, grow louder as he flies,
 And injur'd tenants join the hunter's cries. 70
 Breathlefs he ftumbling falls: Ill fated boy!
 Why did not honeft work thy youth employ?
 Seiz'd by rough hands, he's drag'd amid the rout,
 And ftretch'd beneath the pump's inceffant fpout:
 Or plung'd in miry ponds, he gasping lies, 75
 Mud choaks his mouth, and plaifters o'er his eyes.
 Let

Let not the ballad-finger's shrilling strain
 Amid the swarm thy list'ning ear detain:
 Guard well thy pocket; for these *Sirens* stand,
 To aid the labours of the diving hand; 80
 Confed'rate in the cheat, they draw the throng,
 And cambrick handkerchiefs reward the song.
 But soon as coach or cart drives rattling on,
 The rabble part, in shoals they backward run.
 So *Jove's* loud bolts the mingled war divide, 85
 And *Greece* and *Troy* retreat on either side.

If the rude throng pour on with furious pace,
 And hap to break thee from a friend's embrace,
 Stop short; nor struggle through the croud in vain,
 But watch with careful eye the passing train. 90
 Yet I (perhaps too fond) if chance the tide
 'Tumultuous, bear my partner from my side,
 Impatient venture back; despising harm,
 I force my passage where the thickest swarm.
 Thus his lost bride the *Trojan* fought in vain 95
 Through night, and arms, and flames, and hills of slain,
 Thus *Nisus* wander'd o'er the pathless grove,
 To find the brave companion of his love,

The

The pathless grove in vain he wanders o'er:
Euryalus, alas! is now no more.

100

That walker, who regardless of his pace,
 Turns oft to pore upon the damsel's face,
 From side to side by thrusting elbows tost,
 Shall strike his aking breast against the post;
 Or water dash'd from fishy stalls shall stain
 His hapless coat with spirts of scaly rain. 105
 But if unwarily he chance to stray,
 Where twirling turnstiles intercept the way,
 The thwarting passenger shall force them round,
 And beat the wretch half breathless to the ground. 110

Let constant vigilance thy footsteps guide,
 And wary circumspection guard thy side;
 Then shalt thou walk unharm'd the dang'rous night,
 Nor need th' officious link-boy's smoaky light.
 Thou never wilt attempt to cross the road, 115
 Where alehouse benches rest the porter's load,
 Grievous to heedless shins; no barrow's wheel,
 That bruises oft the truant school-boy's heel.
 Behind thee rolling, with insidious pace,
 Shall mark thy stocking with a miry trace. 120

Let

Let not thy vent'rous steps approach too nigh,
 Where gaping wide, low steepy cellars lie;
 Should thy shoe wrench aside, down, down you fall,
 And overturn the scolding huckster's stall,
 The scolding huckster shall not o'er thee moan, 125
 But pence exact for nuts and pears o'erthrown.

Though you through cleaner allies wind by day,
 To shun the hurries of the publick way,
 Yet ne'er to these dark paths by night retire;
 Mind only safety and condemn the mire, 130
 Then no impervious courts thy haste detain,
 Nor sneering alewives bid thee turn again.

Where *Lincoln's-Inn*, wide space is rail'd around,
 Cross not with vent'rous steps, there oft is found
 The lurking thief, who while the day-light shone, 135
 Made the walls echo with his begging tone;
 That crutch which late compassion mov'd, shall wound
 Thy bleeding head, and fell thee to the ground.
 Though thou art tempted by the link-man's call,
 Yet trust him not along the lonely wall; 140
 In the midway he'll quench the flaming brand,
 And share the booty with the pilf'ring band.

Still

Still keep the publick streets, where oily rays
Shot from the crystal lamp, o'erspread the ways.

Happy *Augusta*! law-defended town! 145
Here no dark lanthorns shade the villain's frown;
No *Spanish* jealousies thy lanes infest,
Nor *Roman* vengeance stabs the unwary breast;
Here tyranny ne'er lifts her purple hand,
But liberty and justice guard the land; 150
No bravos here profess the bloody trade,
Nor is the church the murd'rer's refuge made.

Let not the chairman with assuming stride,
Press near the wall, and rudely thrust thy side;
The laws have set him bounds; his servile feet 155
Should ne'er encroach where posts defend the street.
Yet who the footman's arrogance can quell,
Whose flambeau gilds the shades of *Pell-mell*,
When in long rank a train of torches flame,
To light the midnight visits of the dame? 160
Other, perhaps, by happier guidance led,
May where the chairman rests with safety tread;
Whene'er I pass, their poles unseen below,
Make my knee tremble with the jarring blow.

If wheels bar up the road where streets are crost, 165
 With gentle words the coachman's ear accost:
 He ne'er the threat, or harsh command obeys,
 But with contempt the spatter'd shoe surveys.
 Now man with utmost fortitude thy foul,
 To crost the way where carts and coaches roll; 170
 Yet do not in thy hardy skill confide,
 Nor rashly risque the kennel's spacious stride;
 Stay till afar the distant wheel you hear,
 Like dying thunder in the breaking air;
 Thy foot will slide upon the miry stone, 175
 And passing coaches crush thy tortur'd bone,
 Or wheels inclose the road; on either hand
 Pent round with perils, in the midst you stand,
 And call for aid in vain; the coachman swears,
 And car-man drive, unmindful of thy prayers. 180
 Where wilt thou turn? ah! whither wilt thou fly?
 On ev'ry side the pressing spokes are nigh.
 So sailors, while *Charybdis*' gulph they shun,
 Amaz'd, on *Scylla*'s craggy dangers run.

Be sure observe where brown *Ostrea* stands, 185
 Who boasts her shelly ware from *Wallfleet* sands;

There

There may'st thou pass, with safe unmiry feet,
 Where the rais'd pavement leads athwart the street.
 If where *Fleet-ditch* with muddy current flows,
 You chance to roam; where oyster-tubs in rows 190
 Are rang'd beside the posts; there stay thy haste,
 And with the sav'ry fish indulge thy taste:
 The damsel's knife the gaping shell commands,
 While the salt liquor streams between her hands.

The man had sure a palate cover'd o'er 195
 With brass or steel, that on the rocky shore
 First broke the oozy oyster's pearly coat,
 And risk'd the living morsel down his throat.
 What will not lux'ry taste? Earth, sea, and air
 Are daily ransack'd for the bill of fare. 200
 Blood stuff'd in skins is *British* christian's food,
 And *France* robs marshes of the croaking brood;
 Spungy morells in strong ragouffs are found,
 And in the soupe the slimy snail is drown'd.

When from high spouts the dashing torrents fall, 205
 Ever be watchful to maintain the wall;
 For should'st thou quit thy ground, the rushing throng
 Will with impetuous fury drive along;

All

All prefs to gain those honours thou hast lost,
 And rudely shove thee far without the post. 210
 Then to retrieve the shed you strive in vain,
 Draggled all o'er, and soak'd in floods of rain,
 Yet rather bear the show'r, and toils of mud,
 Than in the doubtful quarrel risque thy blood.
 O think on *OEdipus*' detested state, 215
 And by his woes be warn'd to shun thy fate.

Where three roads join'd, he met his fire unknown;
 (Unhappy fire, but more unhappy son!)
 Each claim'd the way, their swords the strife decide,
 The hoary monarch fell, he groan'd and dy'd! 220
 Hence sprung the fatal plague that thin'd thy reign,
 Thy curst incest! and thy children slain!
 Hence wert thou doom'd in endless night to stray
 Through *Theban* streets, and cheerless grope thy way.

Contemplate, mortal, on thy fleeting years; 225
 See, with black train the funeral pomp appears!
 Whether some heir attends in sable state,
 And mourns with outward grief a parent's fate;
 Or the fair virgin, nipt in beauty's bloom,
 A croud of lovers follow to her tomb. 230

Why

Why is the herse with 'scutcheons blazon'd round,
 And with the nodding plume of Ostrich crown'd ?
 No : The dead know it not, nor profit gain ;
 It only serves to prove the living vain. .
 How short is life ? how frail is human trust ? 235
 Is all this pomp for laying dust to dust !

Where the nail'd hoop defends the painted stall,
 Brush not thy sweeping skirt too near the wall ;
 Thy heedless sleeve will drink the colour'd oil,
 And spot indelible thy pocket soil. 240
 Has not wise nature strung the legs and feet
 With firmest nerves, design'd to walk the street ?
 Has she not given us hands to grope aright,
 Amidst the frequent dangers of the night ?
 And think'st thou not the double nostril meant, 245
 To warn from oily woes by previous scent ?

* Who can the various city frauds recite,
 With all the petty rapines of the night ?
 Who now the Guinea-dropper's bait regards,
 Trick'd by the sharper's dice, or juggler's cards ! 250

* *Various cheats formerly in practice.*

Why

Why should I warn thee ne'er to join the fray,
 Where the sham-quarrel interrupts the way?
 Lives there in these our days so soft a clown,
 Brav'd by the bully's oaths or threatening frown;
 I need not strict enjoin the pocket's care, 255
 When from the crowded play thou lead'st the fair;
 Who has not here, or watch, or snuff-box lost,
 Or handkerchiefs that *India's* shuttle boast?

O! may thy virtue guard thee through the roads
 Of *Drury's* mazy courts, and dark abodes. 260
 The harlot's guileful paths, who nightly stand,
 Where *Katharine street* descends into the *Strand*.
 Say, vagrant Muse, their wiles and subtil arts,
 To lure the stranger's unsuspecting hearts:
 So shall our youth on healthful sinews tread, 265
 And city cheeks grow warm with rural red.

'Tis she who nightly strowls with faunt'ring pace,
 No stubborn stays her yielding shape embrace;
 Beneath the lamp her tawdry ribbons glare,
 The new-scower'd manteau, and the flattern air; 270
 High-draggled petticoats her travels show,
 And hollow cheeks with artful blushes glow;

With

With flatt'ring sounds she sooths the cred'lous ear,
 My noble captain! charmer! love! my dear!
 In riding-hood near tavern-doors she plies, 275
 Or muffled pinner's hide her livid eyes.

With empty banbox she delights to range,
 And feigns a distant errand from the *Change*;
 Nay, she will oft the Quaker's hood prophane,
 And trudge demure the rounds of *Drury-lane*. 280
 She darts from sarinet ambush wily leers,
 Twitches thy sleeve; or with familiar airs
 Her fan will pat the cheek; these snares disdain,
 Nor gaze behind thee when she turns again.

I knew a yeoman, who for thirst of gain 285
 To the great city drove from *Devon's* plain
 His num'rous lowing herd; his herds he sold,
 And his deep leathern pocket bagg'd with gold;
 Drawn by a fraudulent nymph, he gaz'd, he sigh'd;
 Unmindful of his home, and distant bride, 290
 She leads the willing victim to his doom,
 Through winding alleys to her cobweb room.
 Thence through the street he reels, from post to post,
 Valiant with wine, nor knows his treasure lost.

The



The vagrant wretch the assembled watchmen spies, 295
 He waves his hanger, and their poles defies;
 Deep in the Round-house pent, all night he snores,
 And the next morn in vain his fate deplorès.

Ah hapless swain, unus'd to pains and ills!
 Canst thou forgo roast-beef for nauseous pills? 300
 How wilt thou list to Heav'n thy eyes and hands,
 When the long scroll the surgeon's fees demands!
 Or else (ye Gods avert that worst disgrace)
 Thy ruin'd nose falls level with thy face,
 Then shall thy wife thy loathsome kifs disdain, 305
 And wholsom neighbours from thy mug refrain.

Yet there are watchmen who with friendly light
 Will teach thy reeling steps to tread aright;
 For sixpence will support thy helpless arm,
 And home conduct thee, safe from nightly harm; 310
 But if they shake their lanthorns, from afar
 To call their breth'ren to confed'rate war
 When rakes resist their pow'r; if hapless you
 Should chance to wander with the scow'ring crew;
 Though fortune yield thee captive, ne'er despair, 215
 But seek the constable's confid'rate ear;

He

He will reverse the watchman's harsh decree,
 Mov'd by the rhet'rick of a silver fee.
 Thus would you gain some fav'rite courtier's word :
 Fee not the petty clerks, but bribe my Lord. 320

Now is the time that rakes their revels keep :
 Kindlers of riot, enemies of sleep.
 His scatter'd pence the flying * *Nicker* flings,
 And with the copper show'r the casement rings.
 Who has not heard the *Scowrer's* midnight fame? 325
 Who has not trembled at the *Mobock's* name?
 Was there a watchman took his hourly rounds,
 Safe from their blows, or new-invented wounds?
 I pass their desp'rate deeds, and mischiefs done
 Where from *Snow-hill* black sleepy torrents run ; 330
 How matrons, hoop'd within the hog'shead's womb,
 Were tumbled furious thence, the rolling tomb
 O'er the stones thunders, bounds from side to side,
 So *Regulus* to save his country dy'd.

Where a dim gleam the paly lanthorn throws 335
 O'er the mid pavement, heapy rubbish grows ;

* *Gentlemen who delighted to break windows with half-pence.*

Or

Or arched vaults their gaping jaws extend,
 Or the dark caves to common-shores descend.
 Oft by the winds extinct the signal lies,
 Or smothered in the glimmering socket dies, 340
 Ere night has half roll'd round her ebon throne;
 In the wide gulph the shatter'd coach o'erthrown
 Sinks with the snorting steeds; the reins are broke,
 And from the crackling axle flies the spoke,
 So when fam'd *Eddystone's* far-shooting ray, 345
 That led the sailor through the stormy way,
 Was from its rocky roots by billows torn,
 And the high turret in the whirlwind born,
 Fleets bulg'd their sides against the craggy land,
 And pitchy ruins blacken'd all the strand. 350

Who then through night would hire the harness'd steed,
 And who would chuse the rattling wheel for speed?

But hark! distress with screaming voice draws nigh'r,
 And wakes the slumb'ring street with cries of fire.
 At first a glowing red enwraps the skies, 355
 And born by winds the scatt'ring sparks arise;
 From beam to beam the fierce contagion spreads;
 The spiry flames now lift aloft their heads,
 Through

Through the burst fash a blazing deluge pours,
 And splitting tiles descend in rattling show'rs. 360
 Now with thick crowds th' enlighten'd pavement swarms,
 The fireman sweats beneath his crooked arms,
 A leathern casque his vent'rous head defends,
 Boldly he climbs where thickest smoke ascends ;
 Mov'd by the mother's streaming eyes and pray'rs,
 The helpless infant through the flame he bears, 365
 With no less virtue, than through hostile fire
 The *Dardan* hero bore his aged fire.
 See forceful engines spout their levell'd streams,
 To quench the blaze that runs along the beams ;
 The grappling hook plucks rafters from the walls, 370
 And heaps on heaps the smoaky ruine falls.
 Blown by strong winds the fiery tempest roars,
 Bears down new walls, and pours along the floors ;
 The Heav'ns are all a-blaze, the face of night
 Is cover'd with a sanguine dreadful light : 375
 'Twas such a light involv'd thy tow'rs, O *Rome*,
 The dire presage of mighty *Cæsar's* doom,
 When the sun veil'd in rust his mourning head,
 And frightful prodigies the skies o'erspread.
 Hark ! the drum thunders ! far, ye crouds, retire : 380
 Behold ! the ready match is tipt with fire,

The nitrous store is laid, the smutty train
 With running blaze awakes the barrell'd grain ;
 Flames sudden wrap the walls ; with sudden sound 385
 The shatter'd pile sinks on the smoaky ground.
 So when the years shall have revolv'd the date,
 Th' inevitable hour of *Naples'* fate,
 Her sapp'd foundations shall with thunders shake,
 And heave and tofs upon the sulph'rous lake ; 390
 Earth's womb at once the fiery flood shall rend,
 And in th' abyfs her plunging towr's descend.

Consider, reader, what fatigues I've known,
 The toils, the perils of the wintry town ;
 What riots seen, what bustling crouds I bor'd, 395
 How oft I cross'd where carts and coaches roar'd ;
 Yet shall I blefs my labours, if mankind
 Their future safety from my dangers find.
 Thus the bold traveller, (inur'd to toil,
 Whose steps have printed *Asia's* desert soil, 400
 The barb'rous *Arabs* haunt ; or shiv'ring crost
 Dark *Greenland's* mountains of eternal frost :
 Whom providence in length of years restores
 To the wish'd harbour of his native shores ;)

Sets

Sets forth his journals to the publick view, 405
 To caution, by his woes, the wandring crew.

And now compleat my gen'rous labours lie,
 Finish'd, and ripe for immortality.
 Death shall entomb in dust this mould'ring frame,
 But never reach th' eternal part, my fame. 410
 When *W** and *G***, mighty names, are dead;
 Or but at *Chelsea* under custards read;
 When Criticks crazy bandboxes repair,
 And Tragedies, turn'd rockets, bounce in air: 414
 High-rai'd on *Fleet-street* posts, consign'd to fame,
 This work shall shine, and walkers bless my name.



The fourth is joined to the public...
To caution by his was the wandering...
A and now coupling the...
Kind of...
Death...
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