

THE curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
 The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,  
 The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,  
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
 And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
 Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
 And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r  
 The moping owl does to the moon complain 10  
 Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,  
 Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,  
 Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,  
 Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,  
 The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,  
 The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,  
 The cock's shrill clarion or the echoing horn,  
 No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. 20

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
 Or busy housewife ply her evening care:  
 No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
 Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
 Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;  
 How jocund did they drive their team afield!  
 How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
 Their homely joys and destiny obscure; 30  
 Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,  
 The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,  
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
 Awaits alike the inevitable hour.  
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault,  
 If Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,  
 Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault  
 The pealing anthem swells the note of praise. 40

Can storied urn or animated bust  
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?  
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,  
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;  
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,  
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page  
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;  
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,  
And froze the genial current of the soul. 50

Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden that with dauntless breast  
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;  
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,  
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. 60

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,  
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,  
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,  
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone  
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;  
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,  
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,  
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,  
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride  
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame. 70

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife  
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;  
Along the cool sequestered vale of life  
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect  
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,  
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,  
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. 80

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unlettered muse,  
The place of fame and elegy supply:  
And many a holy text around she strews,  
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,  
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,  
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
Some pious drops the closing eye requires; 90  
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,  
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee who, mindful of th' unhonoured dead,  
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;  
If chance, by lonely Contemplation led,  
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,  
'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn  
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away  
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn. 100

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech  
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,  
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,  
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,  
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove,  
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,  
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

'One morn I missed him on the customed hill,  
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree; 110  
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,  
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

'The next with dirges due in sad array  
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne.  
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,  
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

#### THE EPITAPH

*Here rests his head upon the lap of earth  
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.  
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,*

*And Melancholy marked him for her own.*

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*Large was his bounty and his soul sincere,  
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:  
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,  
He gained from heav 'n ('twas all he wished) a friend.*

*No farther seek his merits to disclose,  
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode  
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),  
The bosom of his Father and his God.*

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