

THE LAUREL.

Ah scenes below'd in vain,  
I feel the gales that from you blow.

A momentary bliss bestow,  
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,  
My weary soul they seem to sooth,  
And redolent of joy and youth,  
To breathe a second spring.

GRAY.

THAT fortune's fickle, beauty frail,  
Has been the theme of many a tale,  
And solemn bards, with soaring eye,  
Have traced our passage to the sky.  
That earthly honours quickly pass,  
That life's a dream, and flesh is grass,  
Are truths the preacher would impart,  
In melting lessons to the heart,  
And, if on beauty, wealth, or fame,  
You dare to build a haughty claim,  
The moralist again would try,  
To wean your hearts from vanity.

Attend, ye beauties of a day,  
 For you I dress my moral lay,  
 You, who to wealth or fame aspire,  
 For you I tune my willing lyre.

There lived a maid, Eliza named,  
 Who was for nothing very famed,  
 With beauty she was never blest,  
 And this her sex can well attest,  
 To fortune she as little owed,  
 A circumstance well understood,  
 All her pretensions, all her aim,  
 Was to deserve an honest name;  
 With modesty to live retired,  
 And leave the gay to be admired,  
 A shepherd, skill'd in flattery's lore,  
 However, sent some verses to her,  
 He prais'd her for ideal graces,  
 And wrong he was in many places,  
 Tho' wrong, she knew he meant no evil,  
 And thought he was exceeding civil,  
 She told him, as in duty bound,  
 She wish'd he were with laurel crown'd;  
 A nymph there was of lovely mien,  
 Who lived at that time on the green,  
 No fitter subject for his muse,  
 The poet sure could ever chuse;

And ready for his similies,  
 The earth and sky before him lies;  
 To him the garden yields its pride,  
 The mine its treasures cannot hide,  
 And little brooks, and mighty seas,  
 He pilfers with the greatest ease,  
 Oh! for the magic of his art,  
 To sooth the weakness of the heart;  
 And on the sunbeam of an eye,  
 To rise to immortality;  
 My humbler muse, alone must tell,  
 I knew the nymph and lov'd her well,  
 Much merit she might justly claim,  
 And Hannah was the fair one's name;  
 As cheerfully they pass'd the day,  
 Together oft these nymphs would stray,  
 And once a laurel they espy'd,  
 Which rais'd its head with conscious pride;  
 The tree a little garden graced,  
 And by a lowly cot was placed,  
 They pitied that Apollo's care,  
 Should waste its classic honours there,  
 The thought to flattering Colin led,  
 How much its leaves would grace his head,  
 Equally pleas'd with the intent,  
 They instant to the cottage went,  
 The dame, for whom the laurel grew,  
 No Daphne or Apollo knew,

The ladies spoke her very fair,  
 Told her they saw a laurel there,  
 If she could such a favor grant,  
 Some of it's leaves they soon should want;  
 The dame replied, they were too good,  
 On such a trifle to have stood,  
 But near the road, and low the wall,  
 They might, for her, have ta'en them all;  
 It was a tree she had no good in,  
 Except indeed to mend a pudding,  
 And then in winter it was green,  
 A time one valued such a thing,  
 But they were welcome to a part,  
 Of her tree's leaves, with all her heart.  
 With skilful hands, fair Hannah weaves,  
 Apollo's consecrated leaves,  
 Nor e'er before or since was seen,  
 So gay a garland on that green,  
 Its waving circles gaily play'd,  
 To crown the favour'd poet's head.  
 A sylph, who trod the rural scene,  
 In haste convey'd it o'er the green;  
 The yielding doors soon open flew,  
 And full she shone on Colin's view;  
 He hail'd her as a nymph divine,  
 She him a favourite of the Nine,  
 The prize of wit she then display'd,  
 Wishing to see it on his head.

His head—his dinner scarce begun,  
 On honour—less than eating run,  
 It is a truth the shepherd owns,  
 He thought of salads more than crowns :  
 But such a slight soon to repair,  
 He view'd it with attentive care,  
 And on its leaves he found a note,  
 Which simply thus the ladies wrote.

‘ Let gold and gems, a pond’rous weight,  
 ‘ Surround the care-worn brow of state,  
 ‘ And may the mournful yew be spread,  
 ‘ O’er the cold ashes of the dead.  
 ‘ While the gay rose and myrtle twin’d,  
 ‘ The happy lover’s temples bind.  
 ‘ But may the head of sad despair,  
 ‘ A wreath of drooping willow wear.  
 ‘ While still at friendship’s sacred shrine,  
 ‘ The vine should round the elm entwine.  
 ‘ But when a poet we have found,  
 ‘ With laurel shall the bard be crown’d.’

’Twas with surprize the damsels learn’d,  
 The shepherd had the crown return’d.  
 He said Eliza ought to wear it,  
 Nor would he e’en pretend to share it.  
 Well pleas’d she kept the gilded crown,  
 By flattery more beauteous grown.

A vision now I introduce,  
 Is aught denied the poet's use?  
 But ladies, that it need not fright,  
 It is no imp that shuns the light,  
 Or haunts the mansions of the dead,  
 From them it is for ever fled,  
 Its being rose when earth began,  
 And ends but with the race of man;  
 Its silent path was swiftly trod,  
 And many victims strew'd its road,  
 Its hands a scythe and hourglass bore,  
 To mark its progress and its pow'r,  
 It touch'd the crown, which own'd its stroke,  
 While thus to reason's ear it spoke.—  
 ' A boundless conqueror am I,  
 ' Nor boast of partial victory;  
 ' I take this trifling toy from you,  
 ' And mighty empires I subdue.  
 Her faded crown Eliza view'd,  
 And thus the moral thought pursued—  
 Faded trifle, passing jest,  
 Mimic pageant of a day,  
 No more for laurels we'll contest,  
 Prizes which time shall bear away.