



A M O N O D Y

TO THE MEMORY OF

MRS. MARGARET WOFFINGTON*.

BY JOHN HOOLE.

Flebilis indignos elegia solve capillos,

Ab! nimis ex vero nunc tibi nomen erit. OVID.

THERE fled the fair, that all beholders charm'd,
Whose beauty fir'd us, and whose spirit warm'd!
In that sad sigh th' unwilling breath retir'd;
The grace, the glory of our scene expir'd!
And shall she die, the Muse's rites unpaid,
No grateful lays to deck her parting shade?
While on her bier the sister Graces mourn,
And weeping Tragedy bedews her urn?
While Comedy her chearful vein foregoes,
And learns to melt with unaccustom'd woes?
Accept (O once admir'd) these artless lays;
Accept this mite of tributary praise.
Oh! could I paint thee with a master's hand,
And give thee all thy merits could demand;
These lines should glow with true poetic flame,
Bright as thy eyes, and faultless as thy frame!

* She died the 28th of March, 1760.

We mourn'd thy absence, from our scene retir'd,
 Each longing heart again thy charms desir'd.
 Yet still, alas! we hop'd again to view
 Our wish, our pleasure, every joy in you!
 Again thy looks might grace the tragic rage;
 Again thy spirit fill the comic stage.
 But lo! Disease hangs hovering o'er thy head;
 Dire Danger stalks around thy frightened bed!
 Those stary eyes have lost each beamy ray,
 And ghastly Sickness makes the fair her prey!
 Death shuts the scene!—and all our hopes are o'er!
 Those beauties now must glad the sight no more!

Say ye, whose features youthful lustre bloom,
 Whose lips exhale Arabia's soft perfume,
 Must every gift in silent dust be lost,
 No more the wish of man, or female boast?
 Ah me! with time must every grace be fled!
 She once the pride of all our stage, is dead!
 Clos'd are those eyes that every bosom fir'd!
 Pale are those charms that every heart inspir'd!
 Where now the mien with majesty endu'd,
 Which oft surpriz'd a ravish'd audience view'd?
 What forms too oft the tragic scene disgrace?
 What tasteless airs the comic scene deface?
 Tho' tuneful Cibber still the Muse sustains,
 By nature fram'd to pour the moving strains,
 Tho' from her eye each heart-felt passion breaks,
 And more than music warbles when she speaks;

When

When shall we view again, like thine, conjoin'd,
 A form angelic, and a piercing mind?
 Alike in every mimic scene to steer,
 The gay, the grave, the lively, and severe.
 Thy judgment saw, thy taste each beauty caught,
 No senseless parrot of the poet's thought!
 Thy bosom well cou'd heave with fancy'd woe,
 And, from thy own, our tears were taught to flow.
 Whene'er we view'd the Roman's sullied fame,
 Thy beauty justify'd the hero's shame.
 What heart but then must Anthony approve,
 And own the world was nobly lost for love?
 What ears cou'd hear in vain thy cause implor'd,
 When soothing arts pleas'd thy angry lord?
 Each tender breast the rough Ventidius blam'd,
 And Egypt gain'd the sigh Octavia claim'd,
 Thy eloquence each hush'd attention drew,
 While Love usurp'd the tears to Virtue due.

See! Phædra rise majestic o'er the scene,
 What raging pangs distract the hapless Queen!
 How does thy sense the poet's thought refine,
 Beam thro' each word, and brighten every line!
 What nerve, what vigour glows in every part,
 While classic lays appear with classic art!

Who now can bid the proud Roxana rise,
 With love and anger sparkling in her eyes?
 Who now shall bid her breast in fury glow,
 With all the semblance of imperial woe?

While the big passion, raging in her veins,
 Would hold the master of the world in chains ;
 But Alexander now forsakes our coast :—
 And, ah ! Roxana is for ever lost !

Nor less thy power when rigid Virtue fir'd
 The chaster bard, and purer thoughts inspir'd :
 What kneeling form appears with stedfast eyes,
 Her bosom heaving with Devotion's sighs !
 'Tis she ! In thee we own the mournful scene,
 The fair resemblance of a martyr¹ queen !
 Here Guido's skill might mark thy speaking frame,
 And catch from thee the painter's magic flame !

Blest in each art ! by nature form'd to please,
 With beauty, sense, with elegance and ease !
 Whose piercing genius study'd all mankind,
 All Shakespear opening to thy vigorous mind.
 In every scene of comic humour known ;
 In sprightly sallies wit was all thy own.
 Whether you seem'd the cit's more humble wife ;
 Or shone in Townly's higher sphere of life ;
 Alike thy spirit knew each turn of wit ;
 And gave new force to all the poet writ.

Nor was thy worth to public scenes confin'd,
 Thou knew'st the noblest feelings of the mind.
 Thy ears were ever open to distress ;
 Thy ready hand was ever stretch'd to bless.

¹ Lady Jane Grey, Act V.

The breast humane for each unhappy felt ;
 Thy heart for other's sorrows prone to melt.
 In vain did Envy point her scorpion sting ;
 In vain did Malice shake her blasting wing :
 Each generous breast disdain'd th' unpleasing tale,
 And cast o'er every fault Oblivion's veil :
 Confess'd, thro' every cloud, thy deeds to shine,
 And own'd the virtues of Compassion thine !
 Saw mild Benevolence her wand disclose,
 And touch thy heart at every sufferer's woes :
 Saw meek-ey'd Charity thy steps attend,
 And guide thy hand the wretched to besfriend :
 Go, ask the breast that teems with mournful sighs,
 Who wip'd the sorrows from Affliction's eyes :
 Go, ask the wretch, in want and sickness laid,
 Whose goodness brighten'd once Misfortune's shade.

O ! snatch me hence to lone sequester'd scenes,
 To arching grottoes and embowering greens !
 Where scarce a ray can pierce the dusky shade,
 Where scarce a footstep marks the dewy glade :
 Where pale-hu'd Grief her secret dwelling keeps ;
 Where the chill blood with lazy horror creeps :
 Where awful Silence spreads her noiseless wing ;
 And Sorrow's harp may tune the dismal string. —
 Or rather lead my steps to distant plains,
 Where closing earth enfolds her last remains ;
 What time the moon displays her silver beam,
 And groves and floods reflect the milder gleam :

When

When Contemplation broods with thought profound,
And fairy visions haunt the sylvan ground.

Lo! Fancy now, on airy pinions spread,
With scenes ideal hovers o'er my head.

I see! I see! more pleasing themes arise:

What mystic shadows flit before my eyes!

Imagination paints the sacred grove,

The place devote to poesy and love.

Here grateful poets hail the actors' name,

And pay the rightful tribute to their fame:

Around their tomb in generous sorrow mourn,

And twine the laurels o'er the favour'd urn.

Methinks I view the last sepulchral frame,

That bears inscrib'd her much lamented name,

See! to my view the Drama's sons display'd:

What laurell'd phantoms croud the awful shade!

First of the choir immortal Shakespear stands,

Whose searching eye all Nature's scene commands:

Bright in his look celestial spirit blooms,

And Genius o'er him waves his eagle plumes!

Next tender Southern, skill'd the soul to move;

And gentle Rowe, who tunes the breast to love.

The witty Congreve near with sprightly mien;

And easy Farquhar with his lighter scene.

A numerous train of bards the shrine surround,

In tragic strains and comic lore renown'd.

See! on the tomb yon pensive form appear,

Heave the full sigh, and drop the frequent tear:

The garments loose her throbbing bosom show ;
 Dispers'd in air her careless tresses flow :
 Round her pale brows a myrtle wreath is spread,
 A gloomy cypress nods above her head.
 See ! while her hand a solemn lyre sustains,
 Her trembling fingers wake the languid strains :
 Soft to the touch the vocal strings reply,
 And tune the notes to answer every sigh.
 She, (child of Grief !) at human misery weeps ;
 At every death her dismal vigil keeps.
 But chief she mourns, when Fate's relentless doom
 Gives Wit and Beauty victims to the tomb,
 Her lays their merits and their loss proclaim,
 (A mournful task !) and Elegy her name !
 Now bending o'er the pile she vents her moan,
 And pours these sorrows o'er the senseless stone.

Ah ! lost, for ever lost ! the breath that warm'd,
 The wit that ravish'd, and the mien that charm'd !
 Here sleeps beneath, the fairest of the fair,
 The Graces' darling, and the Muses' care !
 Who once could fix a thousand gazers eyes,
 Now cold and lifeless unregarded lies !
 Who once the soul in bonds of love detain'd,
 Now lies, alas ! in stronger bonds restrain'd.
 Pale Death has rifled all her pleasing store,
 And Nature loaths a form so lov'd before !
 Is there a fair whose features point the dart,
 Charm the fix'd eye, and fascinate the heart ?

Behold

Behold what soon difarms the childish string,
 And plucks the wanton plume from Cupid's wing !
 Then boast no longer Wit's fallacious store ;
 The sweets of sprightly Converse boast no more :
 Those lips so fram'd to each persuasive art,
 No more shall touch the ear, and win the heart !
 Let Beauty here her transient blessing weigh,
 Let humbled Wit her pitying tribute pay :
 Let Female Grace vouchsafe the kindly tear :
 Wit, Grace, and Beauty, once were center'd here !
 Ye sacred Bards, who tun'd the drama's lays,
 Here pay your incense of distinguish'd praise !
 She gave your scenes with every grace to shine :
 She gave new feeling to the nervous line ;
 Her beauties well supply'd each tragic lore,
 And shew'd those charms your Muse but feign'd before !
 Here round her shrine your votive wreaths bestow,
 Around her shrine eternal greens shall grow.
 The listning groves shall learn her name to sing,
 And zephyrs waft it on their downy wing ;
 Till every shade these doleful sounds return,
 And every gale in sullen dirges mourn !

The mourner ends with sighs ; her hand she rears,
 And with her vesture dries the gushing tears.
 Behold each Bard the soft contagion feels ;
 From every eye the trickling sorrow steals.
 See ! Nature's son lament her hapless doom,
 See ! Shakespear bending o'er his favourite's tomb.

Each shadowy form declines his awful head,
And scatters roses on the funeral bed.
In slow procession round the shrine they move,
And chant her praises thro' the tuneful grove.

Farewel the glory of a wondering age,
The second Oldfield of a sinking stage!
Farewel the boast and envy of thy kind,
A female softness, and a manly mind!
Long as the Muses can record thy praise,
Thy fame shall last to far succeeding days:
While wit survives, thy name shall ever bloom,
And wreaths unfading flourish round thy tomb!

While thus I tune the plaintive notes in vain,
For her, whose worth demands a nobler strain;
Lo! to my thought some warning Genius cries:
Attempt not, swain, beyond thy flight to rise.
Shall thy weak skill attempt to raise our woes,
Or paint a loss that every bosom knows?
'Tis not thy lays can teach us tears to shed;
What eye refrains!—for Woffington is dead!