



IMMORTALITY: or, the Consolation of
HUMAN LIFE. A MONODY.

By THOMAS DENTON, M. A.

————— *Animi natura videtur*
Atque animæ claranda meis jam versibus esse:
Et metus ille foras præceps Acheruntis agendus
Funditus, humanam qui vitam turbat ab imo,
Omnia suffundus mortis nigrore. LUCR.

I.

WHEN black-brow'd Night her dusky mantle spread,
And wrapt in solemn gloom the sable sky;
When soothing Sleep her opiate dew had shed,
And seal'd in silken slumbers ev'ry eye:
My wakeful thoughts admit no balmy rest,
Nor the sweet bliss of soft oblivion share;
But watchful woe distracts my aching breast,
My heart the subject of corroding care:
From haunts of men with wand'ring steps and slow
I solitary steal, and sooth my pensive woe.

II.

Yet no fell passion's rough discordant rage
Untun'd the music of my tranquil mind;
Ambition's tinsell'd charms could ne'er engage,
No harbour there could sordid av'rice find:

From

From lust's foul spring my grief disdains to flow,
 No sighs of envy from my bosom break,
 But soft compassion melts my soul to woe,
 And social tears fast trickle down my cheek;
 Ah me! when nature gives one general groan,
 Each heart must beat with woe, each voice responsive moan.

III.

Where'er I cast my moist'ned eyes around,
 Or stretch my prospect o'er the distant land,
 There foul *Corruption's* tainted steps are found,
 And *Death* grim-visag'd waves his iron hand.
 Tho' now soft *Pleasure* gild the smiling scene,
 And sportive *Joy* call forth her festive train,
 Sinking in night each vital form is seen,
 Like air-blown bubbles on the wat'ry plain;
^a Fell *Death*, like brooding *Harpy*, the repast
 Will snatch with talons foul, or sour its grateful taste.

IV.

Ye smiling glories of the youthful year,
 That ope your fragrant bosoms to the day,
 That clad in all the pride of spring appear,
 And steep'd in dew your silken leaves display:
 In *Nature's* richest robes tho' thus bedight,
 Tho' her soft pencil trace your various dye,
 Tho' lures your roseate hue the charmed sight,
 Tho' odours sweet your nect'rous breath supply,
 Soon on your leaves *Time's* cank'rous tooth shall prey,
 Your dulcet dews exhale, your beauteous bloom decay.

^a Vid. VIRG. *Æn. lib. 3. ver. 210. & seq.*

V.

Ye hedge-row elms, beneath whose spreading shade
 The grazing herds defy the ratt'ling shower ;
 Ye lofty oaks, in whose wide arms display'd
 The clam'rous rook builds high his airy bower ;
 Stript by hoar Winter's rough inclement rage,
 In mournful heaps your leafy honours lie,
 Ev'n your hard ribs shall feel the force of age,
 And your bare trunks the friendly shade deny ;
 No more by cheerful vegetation green,
 Your sapless bolls shall sink, and quit th' evanid scene.

VI.

Ye feather'd warblers of the vernal year
 That careless sing, nor fear the frowns of fate,
 Tune your sad notes to death and winter drear !
 Ill suit these mirthful strains your transient state.
 No more with cheerful song nor sprightly air
 Salute the blushes of the rising day,
 With doleful ditties, drooping wings repair
 To the lone covert of the nightly spray :
 Where love-lorn *Philomela* strains her throat,
 Surround the budding thorn, and swell the mournful note.

VII.

Come, sighing *Elegy*, with sweetest airs
 Of melting music teach my grief to flow,
 I too must mix my sad complaint with theirs,
 Our fates are equal, equal be our woe.

Come,

Come, *Melancholy*, spread thy raven wing,
And in thy ebon car, by Fancy led,
To the dark charnel vault thy vot'ry bring,
The murky mansions of the mould'ring dead,
Where dank dews breathe, and taint the sickly skies,
Where in sad loathsome heaps all human glory lies.

VIII.

Wrapt in the gloom of uncreated night
Secure we slept in senseless matter's arms,
Nor pain could vex, nor pallid fear affright,
Our quiet fancy felt no dream's alarms.
Soon as to life our animated clay

Awakes, and conscious being opes our eyes,
Care's fretful family at once dismay,

With ghastly air a thousand phantoms rise,
Sad *Horror* hangs o'er all the deep'ning gloom,
Grief prompts the labour'd sigh, *Death* opes the marble tomb.

IX.

Yet life's strong love intoxicates the soul,
And thirst of bliss inflames the ferv'rous mind,
With eager draughts we drain the pois'nous bowl,
And in the dregs the cordial hope to find.

O heav'n! for this light end were mortals made,
And plac'd on earth, with happiness in view,

To catch with cheated grasp the flitting shade,

And with vain toil the fancied form pursue,
Then give their short-liv'd being to the wind,

As the wing'd arrow flies, and leaves no track behind!

X.

Thus lonely wand'ring thro' the nightly shade
 Against the stern decrees of stubborn Fate,
 To mockful Echo my complaints I made,
 Of life's short period, or its toilsome state.
 'Tis death-like silence all, no sound I hear,
 Save the hoarse raven croaking from the sky,
 Or scaly beetle murm'ring thro' the air,
 Or screech-owl screaming with ill-omen'd cry;
 Save when with brazen tongue from yon high tow'r
 The clock deep-founding speaks, and counts the passing hour.

XI.

Pale Cynthia mounted on her silver car
 O'er heav'n's blue concave drives her nightly round:
 See a torn abbey, wrapt in gloom, appear
 Scatter'd in wild confusion o'er the ground.
 Here rav'nous *Ruin* lifts her wasteful hands
 O'er bri'ar-grown grots and bramble-shaded graves;
 Safe from her wrath one weeping marble stands,
 O'er which the mournful yew its umbrage waves;
 Ope, ope thy pond'rous jaws, thou friendly tomb,
 Close the sad deathful scene, and shroud me in thy womb!

XII.

Forth issuing lovely from the gloomy shade,
 Which stately pines in phalanx deep compose,
 Fair above mortals comes a smiling maid
 To sooth my sighs, and cheer my heart-felt woes.

Here

Here nurs'd by *Contemplation*, matron sage,
 Where with mute *Solitude* she loves to dwell,
 In truth's fair lore she form'd her early age,
 And trim'd the midnight lamp in lonely cell,
 Here learn'd clear reason's heav'n-sprung light to raise
 O'er passion's low-born mists, or pleasure's spurious blaze.

XIII.

Her azure mantle flows with easy grace,
 Nor fashion's folds constrain, nor custom's tye;
 An optic tube she bears, each sphere to trace
 That rolls its rapid orbit round the sky:
 Yet not to heav'n alone her view's confin'd;
 A clear reflecting plane she holds, to show
 The various movements of the reas'ning mind,
 How strange ideas link, and habits grow,
 Passion's fierce impulse, will's free power to scan,
 To paint the featur'd soul, and mark th' internal man.

XIV.

Whence these sad strains, said she, of plaintive grief,
 Which pierce the sleep-clos'd ear of peaceful rest?
 Oft has the sick'ning mind here found relief,
 Here quell'd the throbbing tumults of the breast:
 Lift up thy loaden eyes to yon fair cloud,
 Where moon-sprung ^b *Iris* blends her beauteous dyes:
 I lift them soon, and as I gazing stood,
 The fleeting phantom in a moment flies;

^b *A rainbow form'd by the rays of the moon at night: an object often visible, tho' from its languid colours not often observed.*

Where beam'd the gilded arch of gaudy hue,
Frowns the dark lou'ring cloud all gloomy to the view.

XV.

Life's emblem fit, said I, that roscid bow!

The gay illusive pageant of an hour
To real semblance tricks her air shew,

Then sinks in night's dull arms, and is no more!

Ah! fool, said she, tho' now to fancy's fight

The violet pale, the blushing red decays,
Tho' now no painted cloud reflect the light,

Nor drops prismatic break the falling rays,
Yet still the colours live, tho' none appear,
Glow in the darting beam that gilds yon crystal sphere.

XVI.

Then let not *Fancy* with her vagrant blaze

Mislead in trackless paths of wild deceit;

On Reason's steady lamp still ardent gaze;

Led by her sober light to Truth's retreat.

Tho' wond'ring Ign'rance sees each form decay,

The breathless bird, bare trunk, and shrivel'd flow'r:

New forms successive catch the vital ray,

Sing their wild notes, or smile th' allotted hour,

And search creation's ample circuit round,

Tho' modes of being change, all life's immortal found.

XVII.

See the slow reptile grov'ling o'er the green,

That trails thro' slimy paths its cumbrous load,

Start in new beauty from the lowly scene,

And wing with flutt'ring pride th' ætherial road;

Burst

Burst their shell-prisons, see the feather'd kind,
 Where in dark durance pent awhile they lie,
 Dispread their painted plumage to the wind,
 Brush the brisk air, swift shooting thro' the sky,
 Hail with their choral hymns the new-born day,
 Distend their joy-swoln breasts, and carol the sweet lay.

XVIII.

See man by varied periods fixt by fate
 Ascend perfection's scale by slow degree;
 The plant-like foetus quits its senseless taste,
 And helpless hangs sweet-smiling on the knee;
 Soon outward objects steal into the brain,
 Next prattling childhood lisps with mimic air,
 Then mem'ry links her fleet ideal train,
 And sober reason rises to compare,
 The full-grown breast some manly passion warms,
 It pants for glory's meed, or beats to love's alarms.

XIX.

Then say, since nature's high behest appears
 That living forms should change of being prove,
 In which new joy the novel scene endears,
 New objects rise to please, new wings to move;
 Since man too, taught by sage experience, knows
 His frame revolving treads life's varying stage,
 That the man-plant first vegetating grows,
 Then sense directs, then reason rules in age;
 Say, is it strange, should death's all-dreaded hour
 Waft to some unknown scenes, or wake some untried pow'r?

XX. The

XX.

The wise Creator wrapt in fleshly veil
 The ray divine, the pure ætherial mate;
 Tho' worn by age the brittle fabric fail,
 The smiling soul survives the frowns of fate:
 Each circling year, each quick-revolving day
 Touches with mould'ring tooth thy flitting frame,
 With furtive flight repairs th' unseen decay;
 For ever changing, yet in change the same,
 Oft hast thou dropt unhurt thy mortal part,
 Dare the grim terror then, nor dread his guiltless dart.

XXI.

The twinkling eye, whose various-humour'd round
 Takes in soft net th' inverted form behind,
 The list'ning ears, that catch the waving sound,
 Are but mere organs of the feeling mind:
 External matter thus can lend its aid,
 And distant shapes with foreign pow'r supply;
 Thus the long tube by *Galilæo* made
 Brings home the wonders of the peopled sky:
 The pow'r percipient then feels no decay,
 Tho' blind the tube, and darkness blot the visual ray.

XXII.

When lock'd in short suspense by sleep's soft pow'r
 In temporary death the senses lie,
 When solemn silence reigns at midnight hour,
 Deaf the dull ear, and clos'd the curtain'd eye;

Objects of sense, each conscious sense asleep,
 With lively image strike the wakeful soul,
 Some frowning rock that threatens the foaming deep,
 Or wood-hung vale, where streams meand'ring roll,
 Some long-lost friend's returning voice you hear,
 Clasp the life-pictur'd shade, and drop the pleasing tear.

XXIII.

Each outward organ, as ideas rise,
 Gives easy entrance to the motley train;
Reflection calm, with retrospective eyes
 Surveys her treasures in the formful brain;
 Tho' Death relentless shed his baleful dew,
 In Lethe dip each form-conveying pow'r,
 Unhurt *Reflection* may her themes pursue,
 Smile at the ruin, safe amidst her store;
 Without one sense's aid in life's low vale,
 Fancy can furnish joys, and reason lift her scale.

XXIV.

Thus the lone lover in the pensive shade
 In day-dreams rapt of soft ecstatic bliss,
 Pursues in thought the visionary maid,
 Feasts on the fancy'd smile, and favour'd kiss:
 Thus the young poet at the close of day
 Led by the magic of some fairy song
 Thro' the dun umbrage winds his heedless way,
 Nor hears the babbling brook that brawls along:
 Thus deathless *Newton* deaf to nature's cries
 Would measure *Time* and *Space*, and travel 'round the skies.

XXV. When

When just expiring hangs life's trembling light,
 And fell disease strikes deep the deadly dart,
 Reason and mem'ry burn with ardour bright,
 And gen'rous passions warm the throbbing heart;
 Oft will the vig'rous soul in life's last stage
 With keenest relish taste pure mental joys:
 Since the fierce efforts of distemper's rage
 Nor 'bates her vigour, nor her pow'rs destroys,
 Say, shall her lustre death itself impair?
 When in high noon she rides, then sets in dark despair?

XXVI.

Tho' through the heart no purple tide should flow,
 No quiv'ring nerve should vibrate to the brain,
 The mental pow'rs no mean dependence know;
 Thought may survive, and each fair passion reign;
 As when *Lucina* ends the pangful strife,
 Lifts the young babe, and lights her lambent flame,
 Some pow'rs new-waking hail the dawning life,
 Some unsuspended live, unchang'd, the same;
 So from our dust fresh faculties may bloom,
 Some posthumous survive, and triumph o'er the tomb.

XXVII.

This fibrous frame by nature's kindly law,
 Which gives each joy to keen sensation here,
 O'er purer scenes of bliss the veil may draw,
 And cloud reflection's more exalted sphere.

When

When Death's cold hand with all-dissolving pow'r

Shall the close tie with friendly stroke unbind,
Alike our mortal as our natal hour

May to new being raise the waking mind :
On death's new genial day the soul may rise,
Born to some higher life, and hail some brighter skies.

XXVIII.

The moss-grown tree, that shrinks with rolling years,

The drooping flow'rs that die so soon away,
Let not thy heart alarm with boding fears,

Nor thy own ruin date from their decay :
The blushing rose that breathes the balmy dew,

No pleasing transports of perception knows,
The rev'rend oak, that circling springs renew,

Thinks not, nor by long age experienc'd grows ;
Thy fate and theirs confess no kindred tie :

Tho' their frail forms may fade, shall sense and reason die ?

XXIX.

Nor let life's ills, that in dire circle rage,

Steal from thy heaving breast those labour'd sighs ;
These, the kind tutors of thy infant age,

Train the young pupil for the future skies :
Unschool'd in early prime, in riper years

Wretched and scorn'd still struts the bearded boy ;
The tingling rod bedew'd with briny tears

Shoots forth in graceful fruits of manly joy :
The painful cares that vex the toilsome spring

Shall plenteous crops of bliss in life's last harvest bring.

XXX. She

XXX.

She ceas'd, and vanish'd into fightless wind —

O'er my torn breast alternate passions sway,

Now Doubt desponding damps the wav'ring mind,

Now Hope reviving sheds her cheerful ray.

Soon from the skies in heav'nly white array'd,

Faith to my sight reveal'd, fair Cherub ! stood,

With life replete the volume she display'd,

Seal'd with the ruddy stains of crimson blood ;

Each fear now starts away, as spectres fly

When the sun's orient beam first gilds the purple sky.

XXXI.

Mean while the faithful herald of the day

The village cock crows loud with trumpet shrill,

The warbling lark soars high, and morning grey

Lifts her glad forehead o'er the cloud-wrapt hill :

Nature's wild music fills the vocal vale ;

The bleating flocks that bite the dewy ground,

The lowing herds that graze the woodland dale,

And cavern'd echo, swell the cheerful sound ;

Homeward I bend with clear unclouded mind,

Mix with the busy world, and leave each care behind.