

BRITANNIA.

A

PROEM.

Written in the Year 1719.

— *Et tantas audetis tollere Moles ?*

Quos Ego — sed motos præstat componere fluctus.

Post mihi non simili Pena commissa luetis.

Maturate fugam, Regique hæc dicite vestro :

Non illi Imperium Pelagi, Sævumque Tridentem,

Sed mihi sorte datum. —

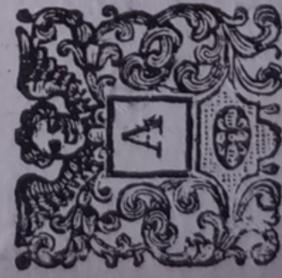
VIRG.



B R I T A N N I A.

A

P O E M.



S on the sea-beat shore *Britannia* sat,
 Of her degenerate sons the faded fame,
 Deep in her anxious heart, revolving sad:
 Bare was her throbbing bosom to the gale,
 That hoarse, and hollow, from the bleak surge blew;
 Loose flow'd her tresses; rent her azure robe. 6
 Hung o'er the deep from her majestic brow
 She tore the laurel, and she tore the bay.

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Nor ceas'd the copious grief to bathe her cheek;
 Nor ceas'd her sobs to murmur to the Main. 10
 Peace discontented nigh, departing, stretch'd
 Her dove-like wings. And War, tho' greatly rous'd,
 Yet mourn'd his fetter'd hands. While thus the Queen
 Of nations spokē; and what she said the Muse
 Recorded, faithful, in unbidden verse. 15

Even not yon sail, that, from the sky-mixt wave,
 Dawns on the sight, and wafts the *Royal Youth*,
 A freight of future glory to my shore;
 Even not the flattering view of golden days,
 And rising periods yet of bright renown, 20
 Beneath the *Parents*, and their endless line
 Thro' late revolving time, can sooth my rage;
 While, unchastis'd, the insulting *Spaniard* dares
 Infest the trading flood, full of vain War
 Despise my Navies, and my Merchants seize; 25
 As, trusting to false peace, they fearless roam
 The world of waters wild, made, by the toil,
 And liberal blood of glorious ages, mine:

E

Nor

Nor bursts my sleeping thunder on their head,
 Whence this un wonted patience? this weak doubt?
 This tame beseeching of rejected peace? 31
 This meek forbearance? this unnatural fear,
 To generous *Britons* never known before?
 And fail'd my Fleets for this; on *Indian* tides
 To float, unactive, with the veering winds? 35
 The mockery of war! while hot disease,
 And sloth distemper'd, swept off burning crowds,
 For action ardent; and amid the deep,
 Inglorious, sunk them in a watry grave.
 There now they lie beneath the rowling flood, 40
 Far from their friends, and country unaveng'd;
 And back the weeping war-ship comes again,
 Dispirited, and thin; her sons asham'd
 Thus idly to review their native shore;
 With not one glory sparkling in their eye, 45
 One triumph on their tongue. A passenger,
 The violated Merchant comes along;
 That far-fought wealth, for which the noxious gale
 He drew, and sweat beneath Equator suns,

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B R I T A N N I A .

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By lawless force detain'd; a force that soon 50
Would melt away, and every spoil resign,
Were once the *British* Lyon heard to roar.
Whence is it that the proud *Iberian* thus,
In their own well-asserted element,
Dares rouse to wrath the Masters of the Main? 55
Who told him, that the big incumbent war
Would not, ere this, have roll'd his trembling ports
In smoaky ruin? and his guilty stores,
Won by the ravage of a butcher'd world,
Yet unatton'd, sunk in the swallowing deep, 60
Or led the glittering prize into the *Tbames*?

There was a time (Oh let my languid sons
Resume their spirit at the rousing thought !)
When all the pride of *Spain*, in one dread fleet,
Swell'd o'er the lab'ring surge; like a whole heaven
Of clouds, wide-roll'd before the boundless breeze.
Gaily the splendid Armament along 67
Exultant plough'd, reflecting a red gleam,
As sunk the sun, o'er all the flaming vast;

E 2

Tall,

BRITANNIA.

Tall, gorgeous, and elate; drunk with the dream
 Of easy conquest; while their bloated war, 71
 Stretch'd out from sky to sky, the gather'd force
 Of ages held in its capacious womb.
 But soon, regardless of the cumbrous pomp,
 My dauntless *Britons* came, a gloomy few, 75
 With tempest black, the goodly scene deform'd,
 And laid their glory waste. The bolts of fate
 Resistless thunder'd thro' their yielding sides;
 Fierce o'er their beauty blaz'd the lurid flame;
 And seiz'd in horrid grasp, or shatter'd wide, 80
 Amid the mighty waters, deep they sunk.
 Then too from every promontory chill,
 Rank fen, and cavern where the wild wave works,
 I swept confederate winds, and swell'd a storm.
 Round the glad isle, snatch'd by the vengeful blast,
 The scatter'd remnants drove; on the blind shelve,
 And pointed rock, that marks the indented shore,
 Relentless dash'd, where loud the Northern Main
 Howls thro' the fractur'd *Caledonian* isles.

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Such were the dawns of my liquid reign; 90
 But since how vast it grew, how absolute,
 Even in those troubled times, when dreadful *Blake*
 Aw'd angry Nations with the *British* Name,
 Let every humbled state, let *Europe* say, 95
 Sustain'd, and ballanc'd, by my naval arm,
 Ah what must these immortal spirits think
 Of your poor shifts? These, for their country's good,
 Who fac'd the blackest danger, knew no fear,
 No mean submission, but commanded peace.
 Ah how with indignation must they burn? 100
 (If fought, but joy, can touch ethereal breaths)
 With shame? with grief? to see their feeble sons
 Shrink from that empire o'er the conquer'd seas,
 For which their wisdom plan'd, their councils glow'd,
 And their veins bled thro' many a toiling age. 105

Oh first of human blessings! and supreme!
 Fair *Peace!* how lovely, how delightful thou!
 By whose wide tie, the kindred sons of men,
 Like

Like brothers live, in amity combin'd,
 And unsuspecting faith; while honest toil 110
 Gives every joy, and to those joys a right,
 Which idle, barbarous Rapine but usurps.
 Pure is thy reign; when, unaccurs'd by blood,
 Nought, save the sweetness of indulgent showers,
 Trickling distils into the vernal glebe; 115
 Instead of mangled carcasses, sad-seen,
 When the blythe sheaves lie scatter'd o'er the field;
 When only shining shares, the crooked knife,
 And hooks imprint the vegetable wound;
 When the land blushes with the rose alone, 120
 The falling fruitage, and the bleeding vine.
 Oh, *Peace!* thou source, and soul of social life;
 Beneath whose calm, inspiring influence,
 Science his views enlarges, Art refines,
 And swelling Commerce opens all her ports; 125
 Blest be the Man divine, who gives us Thee!
 Who bids the trumpet hush his horrid clang,
 Nor blow the giddy nations into rage;
 Who sheaths the murderous blade; the deadly gun
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Into the well-pil'd armory returns ;

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And, every vigour from the work of death,

To grateful industry converting, makes

The country flourish, and the city smile.

Unviolated, him the virgin sings ;

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And him the smiling mother to her train.

Of him the shepherd, in the peaceful dale,

Chaunts ; and, the treasures of his labour sure,

The husbandman of him, as at the plough,

Or team, he toils. With him the sailor foother,

Beneath the trembling moon, the midnight wave ;

141

And the full city, warm, from street to street,

And shop to shop, responsive, rings of him.

Nor joys one land alone ; his praise extends

Far as the sun rolls the diffusive day ;

145

Far as the breeze can bare the gifts of peace,

Till all the happy nations catch the song.

What would not *Peace* ! the Patriot bear for thee ?

What painful patience ? What incessant care ?

What mixt anxiety ? What sleepless toil ?

Even

E. 4

Even from the rash protected what reproach? 150

For he thy value knows; thy friendship he

To human nature: but the better thou,

The richer of delight, sometimes the more

Inevitable *War*, when ruffian force

Awakes the fury of an injur'd state. 155

Then the good easy man, whom reason rules;

Who, while unhurt, knew nor offence, nor harm,

Rouz'd by bold insult, and injurious rage,

With sharp, and sudden check, th' astonish'd sons

Of violence confounds; firm as his cause, 160

His bolder heart; in awful justice clad;

His eyes effulging a peculiar fire:

And, as he charges thro' the prostrate war,

His keen arm teaches faithless men, no more

To dare the sacred vengeance of the just. 165

And what, my thoughtless sons, should fire you more,

'Than when your well-earn'd empire of the deep

The least beginning injury receives? 168

What better cause can call your lightning forth?

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Your thunder wake? Your dearest life demand?
 What better cause, than when your country sees
 The fly destruction at her vitals aim'd? 172
 For oh it much imports you, 'tis your all,
 To keep your Trade intire, intire the force,
 And honour of your Fleets; o'er that to watch, 176
 Even with a hand severe, and jealous eye.
 In intercourse be gentle, generous, just,
 By wisdom polish'd, and of manners fair;
 But on the sea be terrible, untam'd,
 Unconquerable still: let none escape, 180
 Who shall but aim to touch your glory there.
 Is there the man, into the Lyon's den
 Who dares intrude, to snatch his young away?
 And is a Briton seiz'd? and seiz'd beneath 185
 The slumbring terrors of a *British* Fleet?
 Then ardent rise! Oh great in vengeance rise;
 O'erturn the proud, teach rapine to restore:
 And as you ride sublimely round the world,
 Make every vessel stoop, make every state
 At once their welfare and their duty know, 190

This

This is your glory; this your wisdom; this
 The native power for which you were design'd
 By fate, when fate design'd the firmest state,
 That e'er was seated on the subject sea;
 A state, alone, where *Liberty* should live, 195
 In these late times, this evening of mankind,
 When *Athens*, *Rome*, and *Carthage* are no more,
 The world almost in slavish sloth dissolv'd.
 For this, these rocks around your coast were thrown;
 For this, your oaks, peculiar harden'd, shoot 200
 Strong into sturdy growth; for this, your hearts
 Swell with a fullen courage, growing still
 As danger grows; and strength, and toil for this
 Are liberal pour'd o'er all the fervent land.
 Then cherish this, this unexpensive power, 205
 Undangerous to the publick ever prompt,
 By lavish Nature thrust into your hand:
 And, unencumber'd with the bulk immense
 Of conquest, whence huge empires rose and fell,
 Self-crush'd, extend your reign from shore to shore,
 Where-e'er the wind your high behests can blow,
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And fix it deep on this eternal base. 212

For should the sliding fabrick once give way,

Soon slacken'd quite, and past recovery broke,

It gathers ruin as it rolls along, 215

Steep-rushing down to that devouring gulph,

Where many a mighty empire buried lies.

And should the big redundant flood of Trade,

In which ten thousand thousand Labours join

Their several currents, till the boundless tide 220

Rolls in a radiant deluge o'er the land,

Should this bright stream, the least inflected, point

Its course another way, o'er other lands

The various treasure would resistless pour,

Ne'er to be won again; its antient tract 225

Left a vile channel, desolate, and dead,

With all around a miserable waste.

Not *Egypt*, were, her better heaven, the *Nile*

Turn'd in the pride of flow; when o'er his rocks, 230

And roaring cataracts, beyond the reach

Of dizzy vision pil'd, in one wide flash

An *Ethiopian* deluge foams amain;

{ Whence

(Whence wond'ring fable trac'd him from the sky)
 Even not that prime of earth, where harvests crowd
 On untill'd harvests, all the teeming year, 235
 If of the fat o'erflowing culture robb'd,
 Were then a more uncomfortable wild,
 Steril, and void; than of her trade depriv'd,
Britons, your boasted isle: her Princes sunk;
 Her high-built honour moulder'd to the dust; 240
 Unnerv'd her force; her spirit vanish'd quite;
 With rapid wing her riches fled away;
 Her unfrequented ports alone the sign
 Of what she was; her Merchants scatter'd wide;
 Her hollow shops shut up; and in her streets, 245
 Her fields, woods, markets, villages, and roads,
 The cheerful voice of labour heard no more.

Oh let not then waste Luxury impair
 That manly soul of toil, which strings your nerves,
 And your own proper happiness creates! 250
 Oh let not the soft, penetrating plague

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Creep on the free-born mind! and working there,
With the sharp tooth of many a new-form'd want,
Endless, and idle all, eat out the heart
Of *Liberty*; the high conception blast; 255
The noble sentiment, the impatient scorn
Of base subjection, and the swelling wish
For general good, erazing from the mind:
While nought save narrow Selfishness succeeds,
And low design, the sneaking passions all 260
Let loose, and reigning in the rankled breast.
Induc'd at last, by scarce-perceiv'd degrees,
Sapping the very frame of government,
And life, a total dissolution comes;
Sloth, ignorance, dejection, flattery, fear, 265
Oppression raging o'er the waste he makes;
The human being almost quite extinct;
And the whole state in broad Corruption sinks,
Oh shun that gulph: that gaping ruin shun!
And countless ages roll it far away 270
From you, ye heaven-below'd! may *Liberty*,
The

The light of life! the sun of human kind!

Whence Heroes, Bards, and Patriots borrow flame,

Even where the keen depressive North descends,

Still spread, exalt, and actuate your powers! 275

While slavish Southern climates beam in vain.

And may a publick spirit from the *Tbrone*,

Where every Virtue fits, go copious forth

Live o'er the land! the finer Arts inspire; 279

Make thoughtful Science raise his pensive head,

Blow the fresh Bay, bid Industry rejoice,

And the rough Sons of lowest Labour smile.

As when, profuse of Spring, the loosen'd West

Lifts up the pining year, and balmy breathes 284

Youth, life, and love, and beauty o'er the world.

But haste we from these melancholly shores,

Nor to deaf winds, and waves, our fruitless plaint

Pour weak; the country claims our active aid;

That let us roam; and where we find a spark

Of publick virtue, blow it into flame. 290

And now my sons, the sons of freedom! meet

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In awful senate; thither let us fly;

Burn in the Patriot's thought, flow from his tongue

In fearless truth; myself, transform'd, preside,

And shed the spirit of *Britannia* round. 295

This said; her fleeting form, and airy train,

Sunk in the gale; and nought but ragged rocks

Rush'd on the broken eye; and nought was heard

But the rough cadence of the dashing wave. 299

The END.

