

OVID to his WIFE:

Imitated from different Parts of his  
TRISTIA.

*Jam mea cygneas imitantur tempora plumas,*

*Inficit & nigras alba senecta comas :*

TRIST. Lib. iv. Eleg. 8.

**M**Y aged head now stoops its honours low,  
Bow'd with the load of fifty winters' snow ;  
And for the raven's glossy black assumes  
The downy whiteness of the cygnet's plumes :  
Loose scatter'd hairs around my temples stray,  
And spread the mournful shade of sickly grey :

I bend



I bend beneath the weight of broken years,  
Averse to change, and chill'd with causeless fears.  
The season now invites me to retire  
To the dear lares of my household fire ;  
To homely scenes of calm domestic peace,  
A poet's leisure, and an old man's ease ;  
To wear the remnant of uncertain life  
In the fond bosom of a faithful wife ;  
In safe repose my last few hours to spend,  
Nor fearful nor impatient of their end.  
Thus a safe port the wave-worn vessels gain,  
Nor tempt again the dangers of the main ;  
Thus the proud steed, when youthful glory fades,  
And creeping age his stiffening limbs invades,  
Lies stretch'd at ease on the luxuriant plain,  
And dreams his morning triumphs o'er again.  
The hardy veteran from the camp retires,  
His joints unstrung, and feeds his household fires ;

Sate



Satiate with fame enjoys well-earn'd repose,  
And sees his stormy day serenely close.

Not such my lot ! Severer fates decree  
My shatter'd bark must plough an unknown sea.  
Forc'd from my native seats and sacred home,  
Friendless, alone, thro' Scythian wilds to roam ;  
With trembling knees o'er unknown hills I go,  
Stiff with blue ice and heap'd with drifted snow.  
Pale suns there strike their feeble rays in vain,  
Which faintly glance against the marble plain :  
Red Ister there, which madly lash'd the shore,  
His idle urn seal'd up, forgets to roar :  
Stern winter in eternal triumph reigns,  
Shuts up the bounteous year and starves the plains.  
My failing eyes the weary waste explore,  
The savage mountains and the dreary shore,  
And vainly look for scenes of old delight ;



No lov'd familiar objects meet my sight ;  
No long remember'd streams or conscious bowers,  
'Wake the gay memory of youthful hours.  
I fondly hop'd, content with learned ease,  
To walk amidst cotemporary trees ;  
In every scene some fav'rite spot to trace,  
And meet in all some kind domestic face ;  
To stretch my limbs upon my native soil,  
With long vacation from unquiet toil ;  
Resign my breath where first that breath I drew,  
And sink into the spot from whence I grew.  
But if my feeble age is doom'd to try  
Unusual seasons and a foreign sky,  
To some more genial clime let me repair,  
And taste the healing balm of milder air ;  
Near to the glowing sun's directer ray,  
And pitch my tent beneath the eye of day.  
Could not the winter in my veins suffice,



Without the added rage of Scythian skies?  
The snow of time my vital heat exhaust,  
And hoary age, without Sarmatian frost?

Yet storm and tempest are of ills the least  
Which this inhospitable land infest:  
Society than solitude is worse,  
And man to man is still the greatest curse.  
A savage race my fearful steps surround,  
Practis'd in blood and disciplin'd to wound;  
Unknown alike to pity as to fear,  
Hard as their foil, and as their skies severe.  
Skill'd in each mystery of direst art,  
They arm with double death the poison'd dart.  
Uncomb'd and horrid grows their spiky hair;  
Uncouth their vesture, terrible their air.  
The lurking dagger at their side hung low,  
Leaps in quick vengeance on the hapless foe.

No



No stedfast faith is here, no sure repose ;  
An armed truce is all this nation knows :  
The rage of battle works, when battles cease ;  
And wars are brooding in the lap of peace.  
Since CÆSAR wills, and I a wretch must be,  
Let me be safe at least in misery !  
To my sad grave in calm oblivion steal,  
Nor add the woes I fear to all I feel !  
Ye tuneful maids ! who once, in happier days,  
Beneath the myrtle grove inspir'd my lays,  
How shall I now your wonted aid implore ;  
Where seek your footsteps on this savage shore,  
Whose ruder echoes ne'er were taught to bear  
The poet's numbers or the lover's care ?

Yet here, forever here, your bard must dwell,  
Who sung of sports and tender loves so well.  
Here must he live : but when he yields his breath



O let him not be exil'd even in death !  
Left mix'd with Scythian shades, a Roman ghost  
Wander on this inhospitable coast.  
CÆSAR no more shall urge a wretch's doom ;  
The bolt of Jove pursues not in the tomb.  
To thee, dear wife, some friend with pious care  
All that of OVID then remains shall bear ;  
Then will thou weep to see me so return,  
And with fond passion clasp my silent urn.  
O check thy grief, that tender bosom spare,  
Hurt not thy cheeks, nor foil thy flowing hair.  
Press the pale marble with thy lips, and give  
One precious tear, and bid my memory live.  
The silent dust shall glow at thy command,  
And the warm ashes feel thy pious hand.