A Night-Piece on Death.

By the blue Tapers trembling Light,
No more I waste the wakeful Night;
Intent with endless view to pore
The Schoolmen and the Sages o'er:
Their Books from Wisdom widely stray,
Or point at best the longest Way.
I'll seek a readier Path, and go
Where Wisdom's surely taught below.

How deep yon Azure dies the Sky!
Where Orbs of Gold unnumber'd lye,

While
While thro' their Ranks in silver pride
The nether Crescent seems to glide.
The slumbering Breeze forgets to breathe,
The Lake is smooth and clear beneath,
Where once again the Spangled Show
Descends to meet our Eyes below.
The Grounds which on the right aspire,
In dimness from the View retire:
The Left presents a Place of Graves,
Whose Wall the silent Water laves.
That Steeple guides thy doubtful sight
Among the livid gleams of Night.
There pass with melancholy State,
By all the solemn Heaps of Fate,
And think, as softly-sad you tread
Above the venerable Dead,
*Time was, like thee they Life possesst,*
*And Time shall be, that thou shalt Rest.*

Thos
Those Graves, with bending Offer bound,
That nameless heave the crumbled Ground,
Quick to the glancing Thought disclose
Where Toil and Poverty repose.

The flat smooth Stones that bear a Name,
The Chiffels slender help to Fame,
(Which e'er our Sett of Friends decay
Their frequent Steps may wear away.)
A middle Race of Mortals own,
Men, half ambitious, all unknown.

The Marble Tombs that rise on high,
Whose Dead in vaulted Arches lye,
Whose Pillars swell with sculptur'd Stones,
Arms, Angels, Epitaphs and Bones,

These
These (all the poor Remains of State)
Adorn the Rich, or praise the Great;
Who while on Earth in Fame they live,
Are senseless of the Fame they give.

Ha! while I gaze, pale Cynthia fades,
The bursting Earth unveils the Shades!
All flow, and wan, and wrap'd with Shrouds,
They rise in visionary crowds,
And all with sober Accent cry,
Think, Mortal, what it is to dye,

Now from yon black and fun'ral Yew,
That bathes the Charnel House with Dew,
Methinks I hear a Voice begin;
(Ye Ravens, cease your croaking Din,
Ye tolling Clocks, no Time resound
O'er the long Lake and midnight Ground)
It sends a Peal of hollow Groans,
Thus speaking from among the Bones.

When Men my Scythe and Darts supply,
How great a King of Fears am I!
They view me like the last of Things:
They make, and then they dread, my Stings.
Fools! if you less provok'd your Fears,
No more my Spectre-Form appears.
Death's but a Path that must be trod,
If Man would ever pass to God:
A Port of Calms, a State of Ease
From the rough Rage of swelling Seas.

Why then thy flowing Table Stoles,
Deep pendent Cypress, mourning Poles,
Loose Scarfs to fall athwart thy Weeds,
Long Palls, drawn Heroes, cover'd Steeds,
And
And Plumes of black, that as they tread,
Nod o'er the Scutcheons of the Dead?

Nor can the parted Body know,
Nor wants the Soul, these Forms of Woe:
As Men who long in Prison dwell,
With Lamps that glimmer round the Cell,
When e'er their suffering Years are run,

Spring forth to greet the glittering Sun:
Such Joy, tho' far transcending Sense,
Have pious Souls at parting hence.
On Earth, and in the Body plac't,
A few, and evil Years, they wait:
But when their Chains are cast aside,
See the glad Scene unfolding wide,
Clap the glad Wing and tow'r away,
And mingle with the Blaze of Day.