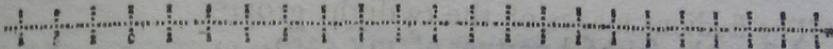


“ Gods, heroes, sages, an illustrious train,
“ Court you to Holkham’s consecrated plain.
“ Haste then, ye sacred sisters ! haste, and bring
“ The laurel steep’d in the Castalian spring ;
“ On the choice bough a purer fragrance breathe,
“ And twine for Leicester’s brow th’ unfading wreath.”
She ceas’d the raptur’d strain ; and dear to fame,
Flows the proud verse inscrib’d with Leicester’s name.



THE POOR MAN’S PRAYER.

WRITTEN 1766. ADDRESSED TO THE EARL OF CHATHAM.

A M I D S T the more important toils of state,
The counsels labouring in thy patriot soul,]
Tho’ Europe from thy voice expect her fate,
And thy keen glance extend from pole to pole ;

O Chatham, nurs’d in ancient Virtue’s lore,
To these sad strains incline a favouring ear ;
Think on the God, whom thou, and I adore,
Nor turn un pitying from the poor man’s prayer.

Ah me ! how blest was once a peasant’s life !
No lawless passion swell’d my even breast ;
Far from the stormy waves of civil strife,
Sound were my slumbers, and my heart at rest.

I ne’er

I ne'er for guilty, painful pleasures rov'd,
But taught by Nature, and by choice to wed,
From all the hamlet cull'd whom best I lov'd,
With her I staid my heart, with her my bed.

To gild her worth I ask'd no wealthy power,
My toil could feed her, and my arm defend ;
In youth, or age, in pain, or pleasure's hour,
The same fond husband, father, brother, friend.

And she, the faithful partner of my care,
When ruddy evening streak'd the western sky,
Look'd towards the uplands, if her mate was there,
Or thro' the beech-wood cast an anxious eye.

Then, careful matron, heap'd the maple board
With favoury herbs, and pick'd the nicer part
From such plain food as Nature could afford,
Ere simple Nature was debauch'd by Art.

While I, contented with my homely cheer,
Saw round my knees my prattling children play ;
And oft with pleas'd attention sat to hear
The little history of their idle day.

But ah ! how chang'd the scene ! On the cold stones,
Where wont at night to blaze the chearful fire,
Pale Famine sits and counts her naked bones,
Still sighs for food, still pines with vain desire.

My

My faithful wife with ever-streaming eyes
Hangs on my bosom her dejected head ;
My helpless infants raise their feeble cries,
And from their father claim their daily bread.

Dear tender pledges of my honest love,
On that bare bed behold your brother lie ;
Three tedious days with pinching want he strove,
The fourth, I saw the helpless cherub die.

Nor long shall ye remain. With visage sour
Our tyrant lord commands us from our home ;
And arm'd with cruel Law's coercive power,
Bids me and mine o'er barren mountains roam,

Yet never, Chatham, have I pass'd a day
In Riot's orgies, or in idle ease ;
Ne'er have I sacrific'd to sport and play,
Or wish'd a pamper'd appetite to please.

Hard was my fare, and constant was my toil,
Still with the morning's orient light I rose,
Fell'd the stout oak, or rais'd the lofty pile,
Parch'd in the sun, in dark December froze.

Is it that Nature with a niggard hand
Witholds her gifts from these once favour'd plains ?
Has God, in vengeance to a guilty land,
Sent Dearth and Famine to her labouring swains ?

Ah

Ah no; yon hill, where daily sweats my brow,
 A thousand flocks, a thousand herds adorn;
 Yon field, where late I drove the painful plow,
 Feels all her acres crown'd with wavy corn.

But what avails that o'er the furrow'd foil
 In Autumn's heat the yellow harvests rise,
 If artificial want elude my toil,
 Untasted plenty wound my craving eyes?

What profits, that at distance I behold
 My wealthy neighbour's fragrant smoke ascend,
 If still the griping cormorants withhold
 The fruits which rain and genial seasons fend?

If those fell vipers of the public weal
 Yet unrelenting on our bowels prey;
 If still the curse of penury we feel,
 And in the midst of plenty pine away?

In every port the vessel rides secure,
 That wafts our harvest to a foreign shore;
 While we the pangs of pressing want endure,
 The sons of strangers riot on our store.

O generous Chatham, stop those fatal sails,
 Once more with out-stretch'd arm thy Britons save;
 The unheeding crew but wait for favouring gales,
 O stop them, ere they stem Italia's wave.

From

From thee alone I hope for instant aid,
'Tis thou alone canst save my childrens breath;
O deem not little of our cruel meed,
O haste to help us, for delay is death.

So may nor Spleen, nor Envy blast thy name,
Nor voice profane thy patriot acts deride;
Still may'st thou stand the first in honest fame,
Unstung by Folly, Vanity, or Pride.

So may thy languid limbs with strength be brac'd,
And glowing Health support thy active soul;
With fair renown thy public virtue grac'd,
Far as thou bad'st Britannia's thunder roll.

Then joy to thee, and to thy children peace,
The grateful hind shall drink from Plenty's horn:
And while they share the cultur'd land's increase,
The poor shall bless the day when Pitt was born.