



T H E  
P L E A S U R E S of M E L A N C H O L Y .

Written in the Year 1745.

By Mr. T H O M A S W A R T O N .

**M**OTHER of musings, Contemplation sage,  
 Whose grotto stands upon the topmost rock  
 Of Teneriff: 'mid the tempestuous night,  
 On which, in calmest meditation held,  
 Thou hear'st with howling winds the beating rain  
 And drifting hail descend; or if the skies  
 Unclouded shine, and thro' the blue serene  
 Pale Cynthia rolls her silver-axled car,  
 Whence gazing stedfast on the spangled vault  
 Raptur'd thou sit'st, while murmurs indistinct  
 Of distant billows sooth thy pensive ear  
 With hoarse and hollow sounds; secure, self-blest,  
 There oft thou listen'st to the wild uproar  
 Of fleets encount'ring, that in whispers low  
 Ascends the rocky summit, where thou dwell'st  
 Remote from man, conversing with the spheres!  
 O lead me, queen sublime, to solemn glooms  
 Congenial with my soul; to cheerless shades,

To



To ruin'd seats, or twilight cells and bow'rs,  
 Where thoughtful Melancholy loves to muse,  
 Her fav'rite midnight haunts. The laughing scenes  
 Of purple Spring, where all the wanton train  
 Of Smiles and Graces seem to lead the dance  
 In sportive round, while from their hands they show'r  
 Ambrosial blooms and flow'rs, no longer charm;  
 Tempe, no more I court thy balmy breeze,  
 Adieu green vales! ye broider'd meads, adieu!

Beneath yon ruin'd abbey's moss-grown piles  
 Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of eve,  
 Where thro' some western window the pale moon  
 Pours her long-levell'd rule of streaming light;  
 While fullen sacred silence reigns around,  
 Save the lone screech-owl's note, who builds his bow'r  
 Amid the mould'ring caverns dark and damp,  
 Or the calm breeze, that rustles in the leaves  
 Of flaunting ivy, that with mantle green  
 Invests some wasted tow'r. Or let me tread  
 In neighb'ring walk of pines, where mus'd of old  
 The cloyster'd brother: thro' the gloomy void  
 That far extends beneath their ample arch  
 As on I pace, religious horror wraps  
 My soul in dread repose. But when the world  
 Is clad in Midnight's raven-colour'd robe,  
 'Mid hollow charnels let me watch the flame  
 Of taper dim, shedding a livid glare  
 O'er the wan heaps; while airy voices talk



Along the glimm'ring walls : or ghostly shape  
 At distance seen, invites with beck'ning hand  
 My lonesome steps, thro' the far-winding vaults.  
 Nor undelightful is the solemn noon  
 Of night, when haply wakeful from my couch  
 I start : lo, all is motionless around !  
 Roars not the rushing wind ; the sons of men  
 And every beast in mute oblivion lie ;  
 All nature's hush'd in silence and in sleep.  
 O then how fearful is it to reflect,  
 That thro' the still globe's awful solitude,  
 No being wakes but me ! 'till stealing sleep  
 My drooping temples bathes in opiate dews.  
 Nor then let dreams, of wanton folly born,  
 My senses lead thro' flowery paths of joy ;  
 But let the sacred Genius of the night  
 Such mystic visions send, as Spenser saw,  
 When thro' bewild'ring Fancy's magic maze,  
 To the fell house of Busyrane, he led  
 Th' unshaken Britomart ; or Milton knew,  
 When in abstracted thought he first conceiv'd  
 All heav'n in tumult, and the Seraphim  
 Come tow'ring, arm'd in adamant and gold.

Let others love soft summer's ev'ning smiles,  
 As, list'ning to the distant water-fall,  
 They mark the blushes of the streaky west ;  
 I choose the pale December's foggy glooms.  
 Then, when the fullen shades of ev'ning close,



Where thro' the room a blindly-glimm'ring gleam  
 The dying embers scatter, far remote  
 From Mirth's mad shouts, that thro' th' illumin'd roof  
 Resound with festive echo, let me sit,  
 Blest with the lowly cricket's drowsy dirge.  
 Then let my thought contemplative explore  
 This fleeting state of things, the vain delights,  
 The fruitless toils, that still our search elude,  
 As thro' the wilderness of life we rove.  
 This sober hour of silence will unmask  
 False Folly's smiles, that like the dazzling spells  
 Of wily Comus cheat th' unweeting eye  
 With blar illusion, and persuade to drink  
 That charmed cup, which Reason's mintage fair  
 Unmoulds, and stamps the monster on the man.  
 Eager we taste, but in the luscious draught  
 Forget the pois'nous dregs that lurk beneath.

Few know that elegance of soul refin'd,  
 Whose soft sensation feels a quicker joy  
 From Melancholy's scenes, than the dull pride  
 Of tasteless splendor and magnificence  
 Can e'er afford. Thus Eloise, whose mind  
 Had languish'd to the pangs of melting love,  
 More genuine transport found, as on some tomb  
 Reclin'd, she watch'd the tapers of the dead;  
 Or thro' the pillar'd iles, amid pale shrines  
 Of imag'd faints, and intermingled graves,  
 Mus'd a veil'd votarefs: than Flavia feels,



As thro' the mazes of the festive ball,  
 Proud of her conquering charms, and beauty's blaze,  
 She floats amid the filken fons of drefs,  
 And fhines the faireft of th' affembled fair.

When azure noon-tide cheers the dædal globe,  
 And the bleft regent of the golden day  
 Rejoices in his bright meridian bow'r,  
 How oft my wifhes ask the night's return,  
 That beft befriends the melancholy mind!  
 Hail, facred Night! thou too fhalt share my fong!  
 Sifter of Ebon-scepter'd Hecat, hail!  
 Whether in congregated clouds thou wrap'ft  
 Thy viewlefs chariot, or with filver crown  
 Thy beaming head encircleft, ever hail!  
 What tho' beneath thy gloom the forcerefs-train,  
 Far in obscured haunt of Lapland-moors,  
 With rhymes uncouth the bloody cauldron blefs;  
 Tho' Murder wan, beneath thy fhrouding fhade  
 Summons her flow-ey'd vot'ries to devise  
 Of fecret flaughter, while by one blue lamp  
 In hideous conf'rence fits the liftening band,  
 And ftart at each low wind, or wakeful found:  
 What tho' thy ftay the pilgrim curfeth oft,  
 As all benighted in Arabian wafte  
 He hears the wildernefs around him howl  
 With roaming monfters, while on his hoar head  
 The black-defcending tempeft ceafelefs beats;  
 Yet more delightful to my pensive mind



Is thy return, than bloomy morn's approach,  
 Ev'n then, in youthful prime of opening May,  
 When from the portals of the saffron east  
 She sheds fresh roses, and ambrosial dews.  
 Yet not ungrateful is the morn's approach,  
 When dropping wet she comes, and clad in clouds,  
 While thro' the damp air scowls the louring south,  
 Blackening the landscape's face, that grove and hill  
 In formless vapours undistinguish'd swim :  
 Th' afflicted songsters of the fadden'd groves  
 Hail not the fullen gloom ; the waving elms  
 That hoar thro' time, and rang'd in thick array,  
 Enclose with stately row some rural hall,  
 Are mute, nor echo with the clamors hoarse  
 Of rooks rejoicing on their airy boughs ;  
 While to the shed the dripping poultry crowd,  
 A mournful train ; secure the village-hind  
 Hangs o'er the crackling blaze, nor tempts the storm ;  
 Fix'd in th' unfinish'd furrow rests the plough :  
 Rings not the high wood with enliv'ning shouts  
 Of early hunter : all is silence drear ;  
 And deepest sadness wraps the face of things.

Thro' POPE's soft song tho' all the Graces breathe,  
 And happiest art adorn his Attic page ;  
 Yet does my mind with sweeter transport glow,  
 As at the root of mossy trunk reclin'd,  
 In magic SPENSER's wildly-warbled song  
 I see deserted Una wander wide



Thro' wasteful solitudes, and lurid heaths  
 Weary, forlorn; than when the <sup>e</sup> fated fair,  
 Upon the bosom bright of silver Thames,  
 Launches in all the lustre of brocade,  
 Amid the splendors of the laughing Sun.  
 The gay description palls upon the sense,  
 And coldly strikes the mind with feeble blifs.

Ye Youths of Albion's beauty-blooming isle,  
 Whose brows have worn the wreath of luckless love,  
 Is there a pleasure like the pensive mood,  
 Whose magic wont to sooth your soften'd souls?  
 O tell how rapturous the joy, to melt  
 To Melody's assuasive voice; to bend  
 Th' uncertain step along the midnight mead,  
 And pour your sorrows to the pitying moon,  
 By many a flow trill from the bird of woe  
 Oft interrupted; in embowering woods  
 By darksome brook to muse, and there forget  
 The solemn dulness of the tedious world,  
 While Fancy grasps the visionary fair:  
 And now no more th' abstracted ear attends  
 The water's murm'ring lapse, th' entranced eye  
 Pierces no longer thro' th' extended rows  
 Of thick-rang'd trees; 'till haply from the depth  
 The woodman's stroke, or distant-tinkling team,  
 Or heifer rustling thro' the brake alarms  
 Th' illuded sense, and mars the golden dream.

<sup>e</sup> *Belinda.* See *Rape of the Lock.*

These



These are delights that absence drear has made  
 Familiar to my soul, e'er since the form  
 Of young Sapphira, beauteous as the Spring,  
 When from her vi'let-woven couch awak'd  
 By frolic Zephyr's hand, her tender cheek  
 Graceful she lifts, and blushing from her bow'r,  
 Issues to cloath in gladsome-glist'ring green  
 The genial globe, first met my dazzled sight:  
 These are delights unknown to minds profane,  
 And which alone the pensive soul can taste.

The taper'd choir, at the late hour of pray'r,  
 Oft let me tread, while to th' according voice  
 The many-sounding organ peals on high,  
 The clear flow-dittyed chaunt, or varied hymn,  
 'Till all my soul is bath'd in ecstasies,  
 And lap'd in Paradise. Or let me sit  
 Far in sequester'd iles of the deep dome,  
 There lonesome listen to the sacred sounds,  
 Which, as they lengthen thro' the Gothic vaults,  
 In hollow murmurs reach my ravish'd ear.  
 Nor when the lamps expiring yield to night,  
 And solitude returns, would I forsake  
 The solemn mansion, but attentive hear  
 The due clock swinging slow with sweepy sway,  
 Measuring Time's flight with momentary sound.

Nor let me fail to cultivate my mind  
 With the soft thrillings of the tragic Muse,  
 Divine Melpomene, sweet Pity's nurse,



Queen of the stately step, and flowing pall.  
 Now let Monimia mourn with streaming eyes  
 Her joys incestuous, and polluted love :  
 Now let soft Juliet in the gaping tomb  
 Print the last kiss on her true Romeo's lips,  
 His lips yet reeking from the dreadful draught.  
 Or Jaffeir kneel for one forgiving look.  
 Nor seldom let the Moor of Desdemone  
 Pour the misguided threats of jealous rage.  
 By soft degrees the manly torrent steals  
 From my swoln eyes ; and at a brother's woe  
 My big heart melts in sympathizing tears.

What are the splendors of the gaudy court,  
 Its tinsel trappings, and its pageant pomps ?  
 To me far happier seems the banish'd Lord  
 Amid Siberia's unrejoycing wilds  
 Who pines all lonesome, in the chambers hoar  
 Of some high castle shut, whose windows dim  
 In distant ken discover trackless plains,  
 Where Winter ever whirls his icy car ;  
 While still-repeated objects of his view,  
 The gloomy battlements, and ivied spires  
 That crown the solitary dome, arise ;  
 While from the topmost turret the slow clock,  
 Far heard along th' inhospitable wastes,  
 With sad-returning chime awakes new grief ;  
 Ev'n he far happier seems than is the proud,  
 The potent Satrap whom he left behind



'Mid Moscow's golden palaces, to drown  
In ease and luxury the laughing hours.

Illustrious objects strike the gazer's mind  
With feeble blifs, and but allure the sight,  
Nor rouse with impulse quick th' unfeeling heart.  
Thus seen by shepherd from Hymettus' brow,  
What dædal landscapes smile ! here balmy groves,  
Resounding once with Plato's voice, arise,  
Amid whose umbrage green her silver head  
Th' unfading olive lifts ; her vine-clad hills  
Lay forth their purple store, and sunny vales  
In prospect vast their level laps expand,  
Amid whose beauties glistening Athens tow'rs.  
Tho' thro' the blifsful scenes Ilissus roll  
His sage-inspiring flood, whose winding marge  
The thick-wove laurel shades ; tho' roseate Morn  
Pour all her splendors on th' empurpled scene ;  
Yet feels the hoary Hermit truer joys,  
As from the cliff that o'er his cavern hangs  
He views the piles of fall'n Persepolis  
In deep arrangement hide the darksome plain.  
Unbounded waste ! the mould'ring obelisc  
Here, like a blasted oak, ascends the clouds ;  
Here Parian domes their vaulted halls disclose  
Horrid with thorn, where lurks th' unpitying thief,  
Whence flits the twilight-loving bat at eve,  
And the deaf adder wreathes her spotted train,  
The dwellings once of elegance and art.

Here



Here temples rise, amid whose hallow'd bounds  
 Spires the black pine, while thro' the naked street,  
 Once haunt of tradeful merchants, springs the grafs :  
 Here columns heap'd on prostrate columns, torn  
 From their firm base, increase the mould'ring mass.  
 Far as the sight can pierce, appear the spoils  
 Of sunk magnificence ! a blended scene  
 Of moles, fanes, arches, domes, and palaces,  
 Where, with his brother Horror, Ruin sits.

O come then, Melancholy, queen of thought !  
 O come with faintly look, and stedfast step,  
 From forth thy cave embower'd with mournful yew,  
 Where to the distant curfeu's solemn sound  
 List'ning thou sitt'st, and with thy cypress bind  
 Thy votary's hair, and seal him for thy son.  
 But never let Euphrósyne beguile  
 With toys of wanton mirth my fixed mind,  
 Nor in my path her primrose-garland cast.  
 Tho' 'mid her train the dimpled Hebe bare  
 Her rosy bosom to th' enamour'd view ;  
 Tho' Venus, mother of the Smiles and Loves,  
 And Bacchus, ivy-crown'd, in citron-bow'r  
 With her on nectar-streaming fruitage feast :  
 What tho' 'tis her's to calm the low'ring skies,  
 And at her presence mild th' embattel'd clouds  
 Disperse in air, and o'er the face of heav'n  
 New day diffusive gleam at her approach ;  
 Yet are these joys that Melancholy gives,

Than



Than all her witlefs revels happier far ;  
 Thefe deep-felt joys, by Contemplation taught.

Then ever, beauteous Contemplation, hail !  
 From thee began, auspicious maid, my fong,  
 With thee fhall end : for thou art fairer far  
 Than are the nymphs of Cirrha's moffy grot ;  
 To loftier rapture thou canft wake the thought,  
 Than all the fabling Poet's boasted pow'rs.  
 Hail, queen divine ! whom, as tradition tells,  
 Once, in his ev'ning-walk a Druid found,  
 Far in a hollow glade of Mona's woods ;  
 And piteous bore with hofpitable hand  
 To the clofe fhelter of his oaken bow'r.  
 There foon the fage admiring mark'd the dawn  
 Of folemn mufing in your penfive thought ;  
 For when a fmiling babe, you lov'd to lie  
 Oft deeply lift'ning to the rapid roar  
 Of wood-hung Meinai, ftream of Druids old,  
 That lav'd his hallow'd haunt with dashing wave.

{\*\*\*\*\*}

A SONNET; written at W—————DE  
 in the Abfence of ———.

By the Same.

W————DE, thy beechen fopes with waving grain  
 Border'd, thine azure views of wood and lawn,  
 Whilom could charm, or when the joyous Dawn  
 'Gan Night's dun robe with flushing purple ftain,

Or