THE

PLEASURES of MELANCHOLY.

Written in the Year 1745.

By Mr. THOMAS WARTON.

MOTHER 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 steadfast 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-blessed,
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 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 fallen 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 ruffles in the leaves
Of flaunting ivy, that with mantle green
Invests some waisted 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’n’ning smiles,
As, lift’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 fallen shades of ev’n’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
Refound with festive echo, let me fit,
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' unweaving eye
With blear 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'rous drags 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 saints, and intermingled graves,
Mus'd a veil'd votaries: than Flavia feels,
As thro' the mazes of the festive ball,
Proud of her conquering charms, and beauty's blaze,
She floats amid the silken sons of dres,
And shines the fairest of th' assembled fair.

When azure noon-tide cheers the dædal globe,
And the blest regent of the golden day
Rejoices in his bright meridian bow'r,
How oft my wishes ask the night's return,
That best befriends the melancholy mind!
Hail, sacred Night! thou too shalt share my song!
Sister of Ebon-scepter'd Hecat, hail!
Whether in congregated clouds thou wrap'st
Thy viewless chariot, or with silver crown
Thy beaming head encircled, ever hail!
What tho' beneath thy gloom the sorceress-train,
Far in obscure haunt of Lapland-moors,
With rhymes uncouth the bloody cauldron bless;
Tho' Murder wan, beneath thy shrouding shade
Summons her slow-ey'd vot'ries to devise
Of secret slaughter, while by one blue lamp
In hideous conf'rence sits the listening band,
And start at each low wind, or wakeful sound:
What tho' thy stay the pilgrim curseth oft,
As all benighted in Arabian wastes
He hears the wilderness around him howl
With roaming monsters, while on his hoar head
The black-defending tempest ceaseless 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 sullen gloom; the waving elms
That hoar thro' time, and rang'd in thick array,
Enclose with flately 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 Spencer's wildly-warbled song
I see desertyd Una wander wide

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Thro'
Thro' wasteful solitudes, and lurid heaths
Weary, forlorn; than when the e 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 bliss.

Ye Youths of Albion's beauty-blooming isle,
Whose brows have worn the wreath of luckless love,
Is there a pleasure like the penive mood,
Whose magic wont to soothe 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 slow 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' abstractive ear attends
The water's murmur'ing 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 ruffling thro' the brake alarms
Th' illuded sense, and mars the golden dream.

* 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 violet-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 penitent 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-founding organ peals on high,
The clear slow-dittyed chant, 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 isles 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 forfake
The solemn mansion, but attentive hear
The due clock swinging slow with sweepy sway,
Measuring Time's flight with momentary found.

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 kis on her true Romeo's lips,
His lips yet reeking from the dreadly 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
Mid Moscow's golden palaces, to drown
In ease and luxury the laughing hours.

Illustrious objects strike the gazer's mind
With feeble bliss, and but allure the sight,
Nor rouse with impulse quick th' unfeeling heart.
Thus seen by shepherd from Hymettus' brow,
What daedal landscapes smile! here balmy groves,
Refounding 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 flore, and funny vales
In prospect vast their level laps expand,
Amid whose beauties glittering Athens tow'rs.
Tho' thro' the blissful scenes Ilius roll
His fage-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 waft! the mould'ring obelisk
Here, like a blasted oak, ascends the clouds;
Here Parian domes their vaulted halls disclose
Horrid with thorn, where lurks th' unpitying thief,
Whence flies 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
Lis'tning thou sitt'st, and with thy cypres 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 neñrar-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 witsels revels happier far;  
These deep-felt joys, by Contemplation taught.  
Then ever, beauteous Contemplation, hail!  
From thee began, auspicious maid, my song,  
With thee shall end: for thou art fairer far  
Than are the nymphs of Cirrha's mossy grot;  
To loftier rapture thou canst wake the thought,  
Than all the fabling Poet's boast'd pow'r's.  
Hail, queen divine! whom, as tradition tells,  
Once, in his ev'n'ing-walk a Druid found,  
Far in a hollow glade of Mona's woods;  
And piteous bore with hospitable hand  
To the close shelter of his oaken bow'r.  
There soon the sage admiring mark'd the dawn  
Of solemn musing in your pensive thought;  
For when a smiling babe, you lov'd to lie  
Oft deeply lift'ning to the rapid roar  
Of wood-hung Meinai, stream of Druids old,  
That lav'd his hallow'd haunt with dash'ning wave.

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

By the Same.

W——DE, thy beechen slopes 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 flush'ing purple stain,  

Or