

## THE CANONGATE PLAYHOUSE IN RUINS

### A BURLESQUE POEM

Ye few, whose feeling hearts are ne'er estranged  
From soft emotions ! ye who often wear  
The eye of pity, and oft vent her sighs.  
When sad Melpomene, in woe-fraught strains,  
Gains entrance to the breast ; or often smile  
When brisk Thalia gaily trips along  
Scenes of enlivening mirth — attend my song !  
And Fancy ! thou whose ever-flaming light  
Can penetrate into the dark abyss  
Of chaos and of hell — O ! with thy blazing torch  
The wasteful scene illumine, that the Muse  
With daring pinions may her flight pursue.  
Nor with timidity be known to soar  
O'er the theatric world, to chaos changed.  
Can I contemplate on those dreary scenes  
Of mouldering desolation, and forbid  
The voice elegiac and the falling tear !  
No more, from box to box, the basket piled  
With oranges as radiant as the spheres,  
Shall with their luscious virtues charm the sense  
Of taste and smell. No more the gaudy beau,  
With handkerchief in lavender well drench'd.  
Or bergamot, or rose-water pure,  
With flayoriferous sweets shall chase away  
The pestilential fumes of vulgar cits.  
Who, in impatience for the curtain's rise,  
Amused the lingering moments, and applied  
Thirst-quenching porter to their parched lips.

Alas ! how sadly alter'd is the scene !  
For lo ! those sacred walls, that late were brush'd  
By rustling silks and waving capuchins,  
Are now become the sport of wrinkled Time !  
Those walls, that late have echoed to the voice  
Of stern King Richard, to the seat transformed  
Of crawling spiders and detested moths,  
Who in the lonely crevices reside,  
Or gender in the beams that have upheld  
Gods, demi-gods, and all the joyous crew  
Of thunderers in the galleries above.

O, Shakespeare ! where are all thy tinsell'd kings,  
Thy fawning courtiers, and thy waggish clowns ?  
Where all thy fairies, spirits, witches, fiends,  
That here have gamboll'd in nocturnal sport  
Round the lone oak, or sunk in fear away  
From the shrill summons of the cock at morn ?  
Where now the temples, palaces, and towers?  
Where now the groves that ever verdant smiled?  
Where now the streams that never ceased to flow ?  
Where now the clouds, the rains, the hails, the winds,  
The thunders, lightnings, and the tempests strong ?

Here shepherds, lolling in their woven bowers,  
In dull recitativo often sung  
Their loves, accompanied with clangour strong  
From horns, from trumpets, clarinets, bassoons ;  
From violinos sharp, or droning bass,  
Or the brisk tinkling of a harpsichord.

Such is thy power, O music ! such thy fame.  
That it has fabled been, how foreign song  
Soft issuing from Tenducci's \* slender throat  
Has drawn a plaudit from the gods enthroned  
Round the empyreum of Jove himself,  
High seated on Olympus' airy top.  
Nay, that his feverous voice was known to soothe  
The shrill-toned prating of the females' tongues,  
Who, in obedience to the lifeless song,  
All prostrate fell, all fainting died away  
In silent ecstasies of passing joy.

Ye who oft wander by the silver light  
Of sister Luna, or to churchyard's gloom,  
Or cypress shades ; if chance should guide your steps  
To this sad mansion, think not that you tread  
Unconsecrated paths ; for on this ground  
Have holy streams been pour'd and flowrets strew'd ;  
While many a kingly diadem, I ween,  
Lies useless here entomb'd, with heaps of coin  
Stamp'd in theatric mint — offenceless gold !  
That carried not persuasion in its hue,  
To tutor mankind in their evil ways.  
After a lengthen'd series of years,  
When the unhallow'd spade shall discompose  
This mass of earth, then relics shall be found,  
Which, or for gems of worth, or Roman coins.  
Well may obtrude on antiquary's eye.

Ye spouting blades ! regard this ruin'd fane,  
And nightly come within those naked walls  
To shed the tragic tear. Full many a drop  
Of precious inspiration have you suck'd  
From its dramatic sources. O ! look here  
Upon this roofless and forsaken pile,  
And stalk in pensive sorrow o'er the ground  
Where you've beheld so many noble scenes.

Thus, when the mariner to foreign clime  
His bark conveys, where odoriferous gales,  
And orange groves, and love-inspiring wine,  
Have oft repaid his toil — if earthquake dire,  
With hollow groanings and convulsive pangs,  
The ground hath rent, and all those beauties soil'd,  
Will he refrain to shed the grateful drop  
A tribute justly due (though seldom paid)  
To the blest memory of happier times ?

*\* An operatic singer of repute. He often visited Edinburgh,  
where his mellifluous way of singing the Scottish melodies made  
him a great favourite.*