

“Elegy VI: Written in a Church-yard in South Wales, 1787” by William Mason

Text: taken from *The Works of William Mason* (1811), Vol I, pp. 112-116.

A LITERARY GOTHIC etext.

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From southern Cambria's richly-varied clime,
Where grace and grandeur share an equal reign;
Where cliffs o'erhung with shade, and hills sublime
Of mountain lineage sweep into the main; 5
From bays, where Commerce furls her wearied sails,
Proud to have dar'd the dangers of the deep,
And floats at anchor'd ease inclos'd by vales,
To Ocean's verge where stray the vent'rous sheep:
From brilliant scenes like these I turn my eye;
And, lo! a solemn circle meets its view, 10
Wall'd to protect inhum'd mortality,
And shaded close with poplar and with yew.
Deep in that dell the humble fane appears,
Whence prayers if humble best to Heaven aspire;
No tower embattled, no proud spire it rears, 15
A moss-grown croset decks its lowly choir.
And round that fane the sons of toil repose,
Who drove the plough-share, or the sail who spread;
With wives, with children, all in measur'd rows,
Two whiten'd flint stones mark the feet and head. 20
While these between full many a simple flow'r,
Pansy, and pink, with languid beauty smile;
The primrose opening at the twilight hour,
And velvet tufts of fragrant chamomile.
For, more intent the smell than sight to please, 25
Surviving love selects its vernal race;
Plants that with early perfume feed the breeze
May best each dank and noxious vapour chase.

Has mix'd with dear maternal dust his own; 70
 Ev'n now the pang, which parting Friendship gave,
 Thrills at my heart, and tells me he is gone.
 Take then from me the pensive strain that flows
 Congenial to this consecrated gloom;
 Where all that meets my eye some symbol shows 75
 Of grief, like mine, that lives beyond the tomb.
 Shows me that you, though doom'd the livelong year
 For scanty food the toiling arm to ply,
 Can smite your breasts, and find an inmate there
 To heave, when Mem'ry bids, the ready sigh. 80
 Still nurse that best of inmates, gentle swains!
 Still act as heartfelt sympathy inspires;
 The taste, which birth from Education gains,
 Serves but to chill Affection's native fires.
 To you more knowledge than what shields from vice 85
 Were but a gift would multiply your cares;
 Of matter and of mind let reasoners nice
 Dispute; be Patience, yours, Presumption theirs.
 You know (what more can earthly Science know?)
 That all must die; by Revelation's ray 90
 Illum'd, you trust the ashes placed below
 These flow'ry tufts, shall rise again to day.
 What if you deem, by hoar tradition led,
 To you perchance devolv'd from Druids old,
 That parted souls at solemn seasons tread 95
 The circles that their shrines of clay enfold?
 What if you deem they some sad pleasure take
 These poor memorials of your love to view,
 And scent the perfume for the planter's sake,
 That breathes from vulgar rosemary and rue? 100
 Unfeeling Wit may scorn, and Pride may frown;
 Yet Fancy, empress of the realms of song,
 Shall bless the decent mode, and Reason own
 It may be right---for who can prove it wrong?