

# “Ode on Melancholy” by William Mason

**Text:** taken from *Miscellanies and Collections* (1763).

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## I.

**Ah!** cease this kind persuasive strain,  
Which, when it flows from friendship's tongue,  
However weak, however vain,  
O'erpowers beyond the Siren's song:  
Leave me, my friend, indulgent go,  
And let me muse upon my woe.  
Why lure me from these pale retreats?  
Why rob me of these pensive sweets?  
Can Music's voice, can Beauty's eye,  
Can Painting's glowing hand, supply  
A charm so suited to my mind,  
    As blows this hollow gust of wind,  
    As drops this little weeping rill  
    Soft-tinkling down the moss-grown hill,  
Whilst thro' the west, where sinks the crimson Day,  
Meek Twilight slowly sails, and waves her banners grey?

## II.

Say, from Affliction's various source  
Do none but turbid waters flow?  
And cannot Fancy clear their course?  
For Fancy is the friend of Woe.  
Say, 'mid that grove, in love-lorn state,  
When yon poor Ringdove mourns her mate,  
Is all, that meets the shepherd's ear,

Inspir'd by anguish, and despair?  
Ah no, fair Fancy rules the Song:  
She swells her throat; she guides her tongue;  
She bids the waving Aspin-spray  
Quiver in Cadence to her lay;  
She bids the fringed Osiers bow,  
And rustle round the lake below,  
To suit the tenor of her gurgling sighs,  
And sooth her throbbing breast with solemn sympathies.

### III.

To thee, whose young and polish'd brow  
The wrinkling hand of Sorrow spares;  
Whose cheeks, bestrew'd with roses, know  
No channel for the tide of tears;  
To thee yon Abbey dank, and lone,  
Where Ivy chains each mould'ring stone  
That nods o'er many a Martyr's tomb,  
May cast a formidable gloom.  
Yet some there are, who, free from fear,  
Could wander thro' the cloysters drear,  
Could rove each desolated Isle,  
Tho' midnight thunders shook the pile;  
And dauntless view, or seem to view,  
(As faintly flash the lightnings blue)  
Thin shiv'ring Ghosts from yawning charnels throng,  
And glance with silent sweep the shaggy vaults along.

### IV.

But such terrific charms as these,  
I ask not yet: My sober mind  
The fainter forms of Sadness please;  
My sorrows are of softer kind.  
Thro' this still valley let me stray,

Wrapt in some strain of pensive Gray:  
Whose lofty Genius bears along  
The conscious dignity of Song;  
And, scorning from the sacred store  
To waste a note on Pride, or Power,  
Roves, when the glimmering twilight glooms,  
And warbles 'mid the rustic tombs:  
He too perchance (for well I know,  
His heart would melt with friendly woe)  
He too perchance, when these poor limbs are laid,  
Will heave one tuneful sigh, and sooth my hov'ring Shade.

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