

James Woodhouse, “Benevolence, An Ode”

Description

JAMES WOODHOUSE

“BENEVOLENCE, An ODE”

Inscribed to my Friends

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|--|----|
| Let others boast Palladian skill The sculptur'd dome to raise; To scoop the vale, to swell the hill, Or lead the smooth, meand'ring rill In ever-varying maze; | 5 |
| To strike the lyre With Homer's fire, Or Sappho's tender art; Or Handel's notes with sweeter strains inspire, O'er Phidia's chissel to preside, | 10 |
| Or Titian's glowing pencil guide Through ev'ry living part. | |
| Ah! what avails it thus to shine, By ev'ry art refin'd; Except BENEVOLENCE combine To humanize the mind! | 15 |
| The Parian floor, Or vivid cieling, fresco'd o'er, With glaring charms the gazing eye may fire; Yet may their lords, like statues cold, | 20 |
| Devoid of sympathy, behold Fair worth with want repine, Or indigence, expire; Nor ever know the noblest use of gold. | |
| 'Tis yours, with sympathetic breast, To stop the rising sigh, And wipe the tearful eye, Nor let repining merit sue unblest; This is a more applausive taste | 25 |
| Than spending wealth In gorgeous waste, | 30 |
| Or | |

with dire luxury destroying health;

It sweetens life with ev'ry virtuous joy,
And wings the conscious hours with gladness as they fly.

NOTES:

Subtitle “His first two elegies being seen by some gentlemen and ladies in London in manuscript, they made a small subscription for him; and these were the friends he speaks of” [Author’s Note].

1 Palladian A reference to the neoclassical architectural movement inspired by the Italian Renaissance architect, Andrea Palladio (1508-1580). Palladian style was strongly based on symmetry and clarity and remained popular through the mid eighteenth century (*Britannica*).

7 Homer Greek poet, famously known for his epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

8 Sappho “Greek lyric poet (c. 610-570 BCE) greatly admired in all ages for the beauty of her writing style” (*Britannica*).

9 Handel George Frideric Handel (1685-1759), “German-born English composer of the late Baroque era. He wrote the most famous of all oratorios, *Messiah* (1741)” (*Britannica*).

10 Phidia Greek sculptor (fl. c. 490-430 BCE), “artistic director of the Parthenon” and renowned for his colossal statues of Athena and Zeus (*Britannica*).

11 Titian Tiziano Vecellio (or Vecelli) (1488/90-1576) “The greatest Italian Renaissance painter of the Venetian school” (*Britannica*).

17 Parian floor The Greek island of Paros was known for its “fine white marble, prized in antiquity by sculptors” (*OED*).

18 cieling Alternate spelling of “ceiling,” noted in Johnson’s *Dictionary*; *fresco’d* “A kind of painting executed in water-colour on a wall, ceiling, etc. of which the mortar or plaster is not quite dry, so that the colours sink in and become more durable” (*OED*).

28 sue “To make one’s petition or appeal” (*OED*).

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions*, second edition (London, 1766), pp. 24-26. [Google Books]

Edited by Natalie Nunez