

Eliza Daye, "Soliloquy"

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ELIZA DAYE

"Soliloquy"

NATURE! in all correct, thy hand we trace,
And o'er thy carpet hail a beauteous race;
Each have their station, each have their native home,
In adverse soils and climes they find a tomb:
Some in the open lawn, delighted seem
To look with vigour on the sun's full beam:
Whilst some retiring, hide the modest head,
And screen their beauties in the shelt'ring shade:
Some dare the summit of the mountain's brow,
And others humbly seek the vale below:
Some o'er the parched heath minutely spread,
Whilst some, best flourish in the wat'ry mead;
Deep in the soil others are firmly struck,
Some lightly flaunt upon the sedgy brook,
Others on rocks can independent thrive,
And in rich soil alone can others live.
The gard'ner marks the stations each demand:
Refin'd by cultivation's skilful hand,
Which marks their graces with a clearer line,
And draws each forth more pointedly to shine.

By Providence to different lots assign'd,
A bent so various takes the human mind,
And education marks the native worth,
And boldly calls the leading feature forth,
It fires the hero, or instructs the sage,
To save his country, or reform the age;
It leads th' ambitious to the public eye,
Or fits the humble for retirement's joy;
Refines the pleasures of the social scene,
Or teaches industry the art of gain;
Opens the depth of science unconfin'd,
Researches for the philosophic mind;

It gives the gay, more graceful to be seen,
Swim on the surface of each trifling scene;
It can its proper views to fancy give, 35
And by th' applause of ages bid it live.

Oh happy they! whose lot thro' life's design'd,
To suit what nature gave, and art refin'd,
Let glory's radiant form the soldier shield,
And courage lead him to the hostile field; 40
Give sensibility its social joy,
And for life's trials arm cold apathy.
Fortune and favouring friends may genius see,
All feel the native powers of fancy free;
Oh! were the human lot disposed so, 45
This were a world of joy, scarce mix'd with woe;
But ah! full oft we see the tortur'd mind,
Destin'd to trials of ungenial kind,
Where without arms t'oppose, stern foes invade,
And all its native virtues seem to fade; 50
The feeling shed not still the tear of joy,
Nor cold disdain meets careless apathy;
Bright genius roves not still without restraint,
Nor always free his favorite scenes to paint;
But evils check the wing he lightly spread, 55
Then warm imagination too must fade.
Reflection in this solitary scene,
Engraves for me the solemn truth within,
As on the moss-grown rock now seated here,
Pain'd memory finds the source of many a tear. 60

NOTES:

4 *climes* "A tract or region of the earth; now often considered in relation to its distinctive climate" (*OED*).

11 *heath* "Open uncultivated ground; a wilderness" (*OED*).

12 *wat'ry mead* A wet, "marshy" meadow (*OED*).

14 *sedgy* "Covered or bordered with sedge," that is, various "course grassy, rush-like plants" (*OED*).

25 *sage* "Of a person: wise, discreet, judicious" (*OED*).

41 *sensibility* "The quality of being readily and strongly affected by emotional or artistic influences and experiences" (*OED*).

43 *Fortune* “Chance, hap, or luck, regarded as a cause of events and changes in one’s affairs” (*OED*).

44 *fancy* Imagination.

SOURCE: *Poems on Various Subjects* (Liverpool, 1798), pp. 164-67. [Google Books]

Edited by Ruby Schneider

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