William Hamilton, A Day Labourer, â??Address to Humanityâ?•

Description

WILLIAM HAMILTON, A DAY LABOURER

â??Address to Humanityâ?•

What discordant strains I hear,
Rudely bursting on my ear!
Sure they speak the God of War,
Rolling in his iron car.
Thrills the sound in every vein;
Language pregnant, big with pain.
All the grief that mortals know,
All the anguish, all the woe,
Each deluded subject feels,
Echoes to his thundering wheels.
Fairest daughter of the sky,
Dove-eyâ??d, soft HUMANITY!
Sweetest of celestial race,
Tears shall veil thy beauteous face;
Grief shall heave thy snowy breast,
Grief that cannot be exprest:
Vain thy soft, persuasive power
In the passion-clouded hour.

Hear, ah hear the clarionâ??s note,
Louder through expansion float;
This declares the coming God;
Desolation marks his road;
Fury drives his foaming steeds,
Where the glowing battle bleeds,
Panting with disorderâ??d breath,
Breathing anguish, breathing death.

See the din and clank of arms
Wide diffuse the dread alarms;
Now they rally, now they fly;
Here they languish, there they die.
Wider still the victorâ??s hand
Spreads destruction oâ??er the land.
Driven from their long-lovâ??d home,
See the wretched wanderers roam,

Despairing, oâ??er the ravagâ??d plains;
Gleams the town behind in flames.
Night increasing horrors sheds,
Tempests rattle oâ??er their heads.
Now forlorn, exposâ??d they lie
Spent, in vain they wish to die.
Orphans importune for bread;
Rousâ??d at this, the waste they tread;
Long in vain till friendly Death
Seals their gladly-yielded breath.
Lo! the wretches that remain,
Still reservâ??d for future pain;
Mangled limbs and fracturâ??d bones
Waste the tedious hours in groans.
Drop the veilâ??enoughâ??no moreâ??
Pity bleeds at every pore.

Goddess of the melting eye,
Cease the deep, heart-rending sigh;
See, Reflection lends her aid,
Wingâ??d with thought, in white arrayâ??d:
From her lily hand behold
Waves the sacred key of gold.
Truth proclaims, â??tis only this
Mortals bring to lasting bliss.

Oh, improve the happy hour,
Discord then shall feel thy power,
And with thunderâ??s mimic sound
Cease to shake the vaulted ground;
Cease the wild alarm to keep,
Cease to feed the yawning deep;
Cease to stain with human gore
Where the roses blushâ??d before.
All shall own thy blissful sway,
And evâ??n Bellona thy behests obey.

NOTES:

3 *God of warâ?¦iron car* A reference to the Roman god Mars, often depicted as riding in a chariot.

19 *clarion* â??A shrill-sounding trumpet with a narrow tube, formerly much used as a signal in warâ?• (*OED*).

27 *din* â??A loud noise; particularly a continued confused or resonant sound, which stuns or distresses the earâ?• (*OED*).

38 *tempest* â??A violent storm of wind, usually accompanied by a downfall of rain, hail, or snow, or by thunderâ?• (*OED*).

41 *importune â??*To ask or request something of (a person) persistently or pressingly; to accost with questions or requests; to beg, beseechâ?• (*OED*).

51 *Goddess of the melting eye* That is, â??Humanityâ?•; see lines 9-15 above.

55 *Lily hand* White hand.

69 *Bellona â??*Bellona, original name Duellona, in Roman religion, goddess of warâ?¦Sometimes known as the sister or wife of Mars, she has also been identified with his female cult partner Nerio. Her temple at Rome stood in the Campus Martius, outside the cityâ??s gates near the Circus Flaminius and the temple of Apollo. There the Senate met to discuss generalsâ?? claims to triumphs and to receive foreign ambassadors. In front of it was the *columna bellica*, where the ceremony of declaring war by the *fetiales* (a group of priestly officials) took place*â?•* (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

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Edited by Juliet Paulson