Anna Seward, â??Written by Miss Anna Seward in the blank Leaves of her own Poems presented by her to William Newtonâ?¦â?•

Description

ANNA SEWARD

â??Written by Miss ANNA SEWARD in the blank Leaves of her own Poems, presented by her to WILLIAM NEWTON, Native of a Village upon Tideswell Moor, near Monsaldale in the Peakâ?•

Thou gentle Bard, on whose internal sight
Genius has pourâ??d her many â?? colourâ??d light;
With whom the loveliest of the Virtues dwell,
And wave their halcyon plumes around thy cell,
Thoâ?? wayward Fortune has not deignâ??d to throw
One gaudy trophy on thy pensive brow,
With conscious dignity thy tree-born soul
Disdains to court her insolent controul;
And thoâ?? proud Fame no sunny glance has shed
On the low roof that screens thy modest head,
The same exalted spirit scorns to wail
Her echoes silent in thy lonely vale.

Yet, while one votary of the Muses blames
Thâ?? unjust neglect of the capricious dames,
Still may she stimulate that noble pride,
Which rather seeks in humblest roof to hide
The shining gifts that lavish Genius gave,
Than, courting Fortuneâ??s smile, commence her slave;
Than climb Parnassusâ?? steep and thorny ways,
And drop the rose of Peace to grasp the bays.

Thy quiet haunts Reflection loves to trace
Throâ?? walks of savage, or of smiling, grace;
And pleasâ??d she finds the scenes, that gave thee birth,
Types of thy lot, thy talents, and thy worth.

As conscious Memory, with reverted glance,
Roves oâ??er the wild and mountainous expanse,
Her faithful traces to my sight restore
The long, long tracts of Tideswellâ??s naked Moor;
Strechâ??d on vast hills, that far and near prevail,
Bleak, stony, bare, monotonous, and pale.
Wide oâ??er the waste, in noon-tideâ??s sultry rays,

The frequent lime-kiln darts her umberâ??d blaze;
Her suffocating smoke incessant breathes,
And shrouds the sun in black convolving wreaths;
And here, with pallid ashes heapâ??d around,
Oft sinks the mine, and blots the dreary ground.
In vain warm Spring demands her robe of green,
No sheltering hedge-rows vivify the scene;
Oâ??er its grey breast no undulating trees
With lavish foliage court the lively breeze;
But from the Moor the rude stone walls disjoin,
With angle sharp, and long unvaried line,
The cheerless field, â?? where slowly wandering feed
The lonely cow, and melancholy steed,
Exposâ??d abide the summerâ??s ardent breath,
And wintry storm that yells along the heath.

At length benigner mountains meet the eyes;
Their shrubby heights in rounder grace arise;
And, from the first steep summit, pleasâ??d I throw
My eager glances on the depths below,
As sinks abrupt the sylvan Monsaldale
From the swart sun-beam and the howling gale.

Behold in front the lucid river spread
His bankless waters oâ??er the sunny mead;
As of his broad and sheety shallows proud,
Shine the clear mirror of the passing cloud;
Then to the left along the valley glide,
With smooth meander, and with narrower tide,
Throâ?? banks, where thick the spreading alders grow,
And deep calm waves reflect their pendent bough.
Refreshing sweets the breathing hay-cocks yield,
That richly tuft the long and narrow field,
As gently to the right it curves away
Round the green cliffs with scatterâ??d nut-trees gay;
Cliffs, whose smooth breast, above the silver stream,
Swells to the sun, and yellows in his beam,
While on thâ?? opposing shore dwarf foliage hides,
Sombrous, and soft, the mountainâ??s lofty sides,
And throws its latest fringe upon the flood,
That laves the concave of the pensile wood;
Till down the rocks, rude, broken, mossy, steep,
In parted tides the foaming waters leap;
Then throâ?? the mazes of the rambling dale
With silent lapse they flow, or rush with tuneful wail.

The self-taught Edwin, in his lowly state,
Feels this sweet glen an emblem of his fate;

For as it glows with beauty rich and rare,
Near healthy hills, unsightly, bleak, and bare,
So, â??midst unletterâ??d hinds as rude as those,
He, pensive minstrel of the mountains, rose;
Who, like devoted Chatterton, was born
In Natureâ??s triumph, and in Fortuneâ??s scorn;
With kindred talents, and in happier mind,
By prudence guarded, as by taste refinâ??d;
Whom industry preserves from woes fevere,
Which ill the noble spirit knows to bear;
Saves from those pains that Wealthâ??s mean sons deride,
Dependent hopes, and heart corroding pride,
When, for withâ??d amity, and owâ??d respect,
It meets the chilling air of base neglect;
The stingy Patronâ??s contumelious aid;
The taunt of Envy, studious to upbraid;
Those thousand ills, by which the Great are prone
To crush the talents that eclipse their own.

Be thine the blessings, Edwin, that reward
Evâ??n manual labour to thâ?? enlightenâ??d bard!
Energic health, and, in rare union joinâ??d
The melting heart, and philosophic mind;
Genius is thine â?? before her solar state,
O fly, ye mists of inauspicious fate!
Hers is the flood of cloudless day, that shows
The charms that Nature, and that Art bestows;
And she has given thee wealth, that shames the toys
Which Fortune grants, and Vanity enjoys;
The toys of groveling souls, empowerâ??d to seize
On the soft splendors of luxurious ease;
Whom yet with scorn discerning eyes behold
Pleasâ??d with lifeâ??s tinsel, reckless of her gold;
Gold richer far than Indiaâ??s mine affords,
Thâ?? internal wealth of intellectual hoards;
Which buy, disdaining Fortuneâ??s bounded plain,
Creative Mindâ??s illimitable reign.

O! if in that wide range my Museâ??s powers
May lure thy tarrience in her cypress bowers,
Shouldâ??st thou perceive that genuine sweets belong
To the pale flowrets of her pensive song,
The thought, that they have soothâ??d thy toils, shall dwell
Warm with the bosom joys that Fameâ??s bright meed excel.

NOTES:

Title *WILLIAM NEWTON, Native of a Village upon Tideswell Moor, near Monsaldale in the Peak* William Newton (1750â??1830), a laboring-class poet often referred to as â??the Peak Minstrelâ?? was a friend of Anna Seward, who encouraged him in his writing and corresponded with him until her death. He lived near the village of Tideswell in the valley of Monsal Dale in the Peak District of Derbyshire, England.

3 *the loveliest of the Virtues* The seven Christian virtues consisting of four cardinal virtues from ancient Greek philosophy which are prudence, justice, temperance (meaning restriction or restraint), and courage (or fortitude) and three theological virtues which are faith, hope, and charity (or love). We do not know which virtues Anna Seward considered â??the loveliest.â?•

4 *halcyon* Calm, tranquil, prosperous, joyful.

13 *Muses* In Greek Mythology, nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne who are the goddesses of the inspiration of literature, science, and the arts.

19 *Parnassus* The home of the Muses; a mountain in Greece that became known as the home of poetry, music, and learning.

28 *Moor* A tract of open uncultivated upland area characterized by low growing vegetation.

32 *lime-kiln* A furnace, used for making quicklime for making plaster and cement.

43 *convolving* Rolling or winding together.

61 *hay-cocks* Conical mounds of hay.

68 *Sombrous* Gloomily dark; shadowy; dimly lighted, somber.

70 *pensile* â??Situated on a steep downward slopeâ?• (*OED*).

75 *Edwin* Anna Sewardâ??s poetic epistolary name for William Newton.

81 *Chatterton* Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770), English poet who came from an underprivileged background, similar to William Newton. Chatterton, who was unable to find a patron for his art, lived in extreme poverty and took his life by drinking arsenic before his eighteenth birthday.

91 *contumelious* Scornful and insulting.

114 *tarrience* Delay, lingering.

Source: *The Gentlemanâ??s Magazine* (March, 1785), p. 213.

Edited by Irina Auerbuch