Rev. Anthony Freston, â??The Poetâ??s Farewell to his Museâ?•

Description

REV. ANTHONY FRESTON

â??**The Poetâ??s Farewell to his Muse**â?•

FAREWELL sweet Muse, that oft in slipshod guise
Hast led astray my song-enrapturâ??d soul;
Oft callâ??d me forth beneath the Moonâ??s pale rise,
Or turnâ??d my wrapt eye to the starry pole.

IN giddy youth by partial friends misled,
I trod (adventurous wight) poetic ground;
But soon the green bay witherâ??d on my head,
I got five shillings, and I lost five pound.

NO longer can the Bard a patron find,
Poor Merit, now neglected, droops, I cried;
False-flattering Fancy fillâ??d my feeble mind,
And what I took for merit was but pride.

PRIDE led me on to snatch poetic fame,
To crop with daring hand Parnassian bays;
Tâ??intrude with Drydenâ??s and with Popeâ??s my name,
And live to future times in living lays.

TO climb the summit of cold Haemusâ?? hill,
â??Of antique Bards the arduous steps to try;â?•
And largely quaffing the Pierian rill,
Meet the keen glances of the public eye.

BUT sober Reason now resumes her reign,
Tells me â??tis better far to *read* than *write*;
One may reap pleasure, tâ??other must bear pain,
The worldâ??s neglect, the criticâ??s rancâ??rous spite:

ENVY that pines at merit not her own,
Low purse-proud Ignoranceâ?? consequential sneer;
Exalted Meanness frowning into stone,
The grin of Folly, and the gibe severe.

FAREWELL sweet Muse, henceforth beguile no more,
No Critic â??hangs me on his turnâ??d-up nose;â?•

No flattering gale shall tempt me from the shore,
Or lure me from the land of humble prose.

NOTES:

1 *slipshod* â??Untidyâ?• (*OED*).

4 *starry pole* â??The polestar [â?¦] a guiding lightâ?• (*OED*).

6 *wight* An archaic term for a human being (*OED*).

7 *green bay* The bay laurel. In classical antiquity, its leaves were â??woven into a wreath or garland to reward a conqueror or poetâ?• (*OED*).

11 *Fancy* â??The process, and the faculty, of forming mental representations of things not present to the senses; fancy and imagination [â?¦] are commonly distinguished: fancy being used to express aptitude for the invention of illustrative or decorative imagery, while imagination is the power of giving to ideal creations the inner consistency of realitiesâ?• (*OED*).

14 *Parnassian bays* Symbolic of poetic excellence. In ancient Greece, Mount Parnassus was â??the source of literary, esp. poetic, inspirationâ?• as well the home of the Muses (*OED*).

15 *Dryden* John Dryden (1631-1700), English poet, dramatist, and essayist; *Pope* Alexander Pope (1688-1744), English poet and critic (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

16 *living lays* That is, his published poetry.

17 *Haemusâ?? hill* The Balkan Mountains, known during the classical period by the Latin name, Haemus Mons (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

18 *try* â??Contracta sequi vestigia vatum. The word *contracta* has singular force and beauty: it brings to our view the shortened and careful steps of those who walk in dangerous, narrow, and slippery pathsâ?• [Authorâ??s note]. Possibly also an allusion to lines in Popeâ??s *Essay on Criticism* (1711): â??Hear how learnâ??d Greece her useful rules indites, / When to repress, and when indulge our flights: / High on Parnassusâ?? top her sons she showâ??d, / And pointed out those arduous paths they trod; / Held from afar, aloft, thâ?? immortal prize, / And urgâ??d the rest by equal steps to riseâ?• (ll. 91-95).

19 *Pierian rill* Variation of â??Pierian spring,â?• a metaphorical source of knowledge sacred to the Greek Muses.

28 *gibe* Alternate spelling of â??jibe,â?• a taunt, flout, or jeer (*OED*).

30 *â??hangs me on his turnâ??d up noseâ?•* Unable to trace this as a quotation; to turn oneâ??s nose up at something is to be disdainful or scornful of it.

SOURCE: ***Poems on Several Subjects*** **(London, 1787), pp. 80-82. [Google Books]**

Edited by Michael Shufro