

Dione

John Gay

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Dione

John Gay

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Dione

DIONE, A Pastoral Tragedy.

Sunt Numina amanti.
Saevit et injusta lege relicta Venus.

Tibull. Eleg. 5. Lib.

Dramatis Personae.

MEN.

Evander under the name of Lycidas.

Cleanthes.

Shepherds.

WOMEN.

Dione under the name of Alexis.

Parthenia.

Laura.

SCENE, ARCADIA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A plain at the foot of a steep craggy mountain.

DIONE. LAURA.

Laura.

Why dost thou fly me? stay, unhappy fair,
Seek not these horrid caverns of despair;
To trace thy steps the midnight air I bore,
Trode the brown desert, and unshelter'd moor:
Three times the lark has sung his matin lay,
And rose on dewy wing to meet the day,
Since first I found thee, stretch'd in pensive mood,
Where laurels border Ladon's silver flood.

Dione.

O let my soul with grateful thanks o'erflow!
'Tis to thy hand my daily life I owe.

ACT I.

Like the weak lamb you rais'd me from the plain,
Too faint to bear bleak winds and beating rain;
Each day I share thy bowl and clean repast,
Each night thy roof defends the chilly blast.
But vain is all thy friendship, vain thy care:
Forget a wretch abandon'd to despair.

Laura.

Despair will fly thee, when thou shalt impart
The fatal secret that torments thy heart;
Disclose thy sorrows to my faithful ear,
Instruct those eyes to give thee tear for tear.
Love, love's the cause; our forests speak thy flame,
The rocks have learnt to sigh Evander's name.
If fault'ring shame thy bashful tongue restrain,
If thou hast look'd, and blush'd, and sigh'd in vain;
Say, in what grove thy lovely shepherd strays,
Tell me what mountains warble with his lays;
Thither I'll speed me, and with moving art
Draw soft confessions from his melting heart.

Dione.

Thy gen'rous care has touch'd my secret woe.
Love bids these scalding tears incessant flow,
Ill-fated love! O, say, ye sylvan maids,
Who range wide forests and sequester'd shades,
Say where Evander bled, point out the ground
That yet is purple with the savage wound.
Yonder he lies; I hear the bird of prey;
High o'er those cliffs the raven wings his way;
Hark how he croaks! he scents the murder near.
O may no greedy beak his visage tear!
Shield him, ye Cupids; strip the Paphian grove,
And strow unfading myrtle o'er my love!
Down, heaving heart.

Laura.

The mournful tale disclose.

Dione.

Let not my tears intrude on thy repose.

Yet if thy friendship still the cause request;
I'll speak; though sorrow rend my lab'ring breast.
Know then, fair shepherdess; no honest swain
Taught me the duties of the peaceful plain;
Unus'd to sweet content, no flocks I keep,
Nor browsing goats that overhang the steep.
Born where Orchomenos proud turrets shine,
I trace my birth from long illustrious line,

Why was I train'd amidst Arcadia's court?
Love ever revels in that gay resort.
Whene'er Evander past, my smitten heart
Heav'd frequent sighs, and felt unusual smart.
Ah! hadst thou seen with what sweet grace he mov'd!
Yet why that wish? for Laura then had lov'd.

Laura.

Distrust me not; thy secret wrongs impart.

Dione.

Forgive the sallies of a breaking heart.
Evander's sighs his mutual flame confest;
The growing passion labour'd in his breast;
To me he came; my heart with rapture sprung,
To see the blushes, when his falt'ring tongue
First said, I love. My eyes consent reveal,
And plighted vows our faithful passion seal.
Where's now the lovely youth? he's lost, he's slain,
And the pale corse lies breathless on the plain!

Laura.

Are thus the hopes of constant lovers paid?
If thus ye powers, from love defend the maid!

Dione.

Now have twelve mornings warm'd the purple east,
Since my dear hunter rouz'd the tusky beast;

Swift flew the foaming monster thro' the wood,
Swift as the wind, his eager steps pursu'd:
'Twas then the savage turn'd; then fell the youth,
And his dear blood distain'd the barb'rous tooth.

Laura.

Was there none near? no ready succour found?
Nor healing herb to staunch the spouting wound?

Dione.

In vain through pathless wood the hunters crost,
And sought with anxious eye their master lost;
In vain their frequent hollows echo'd shrill,
And his lov'd name was sent from hill to hill;
Evander hears you not, he's lost, he's slain,
And the pale corse lies breathless on the plain.

Laura.

Has yet no clown (who, wandering from the way,
Beats ev'ry bush to raise the lamb astray)
Observ'd the fatal spot?

Dione.

O, if ye pass
Where purple murder dyes the wither'd grass,
With pious finger gently close his eyes,
And let his grave with decent verdure rise.
[Weeps.

Laura.

Behold the turtle who has lost her mate:
Awhile with drooping wing she mourns his fate,
Sullen, awhile she seeks the darkest grove,
And cooing meditates the murder'd dove;
But time the rueful image wears away,
Again she's cheer'd, again she seeks the day.
Spare then thy beauty, and no longer pine.

Dione.

Yet sure some turtle's love has equall'd mine,
Who, when the hawk has snatch'd her mate away,
Hath never known the glad return of day.
When my fond father saw my faded eye,
And on my livid cheeks the roses die;
When catching sighs my wasted bosom mov'd,
My looks, my sighs confirm'd him that I lov'd.
He knew not that Evander was my flame,
Evander dead! my passion still the same!
He came, he threaten'd; with paternal sway
Cleanthes nam'd, and fix'd the nuptial day:
O cruel kindness! too severely prest!
I scorn his honours, and his wealth detest.

Laura.

How vain is force! love ne'er can be compell'd.

Dione.

Though bound by duty, yet my heart rebell'd.
One night, when sleep had hush'd all busy spies,
And the pale moon had journey'd half the skies;
Softly I rose and drest; with silent tread,
Unbarr'd the gates; and to these mountains fled.
Here let me sooth the melancholy hours!
Close me, ye woods, within your twilight bow'rs!
Where my calm soul may settled sorrow know,
And no Cleanthes interrupt my woe
[Melancholy music is heard at a distance.

With importuning love On yonder plain
Advances slow a melancholy train;
Black cypress boughs their drooping heads adorn.

Dione

Laura.

Alas! Menalcas to his grave is born.

Behold the victim of Parthenia's pride!
He saw, he sigh'd, he lov'd, was scorn'd and dy'd.

Dione.

Where dwells this beauteous tyrant of the plains?
Where may I see her?

Laura.

Ask the sighing swains.
They best can speak the conquests of her eyes,
Whoever sees her, loves; who loves her, dies.

Dione.

Perhaps untimely fate her flame hath crost,
And she, like me, hath her Evander lost.
How my soul pities her!

Laura.

If pity move
Your generous bosom, pity those who love.
There late arriv'd among our sylvan race
A stranger shepherd, who with lonely pace
Visits those mountain pines at dawn of day,
Where oft' Parthenia takes her early way
To rouse the chase; mad with his am'rous pain,
He stops and raves; then sullen walks again.
Parthenia's name is born by passing gales,
And talking hills repeat it to the dales.
Come, let us from this vale of sorrow go,
Nor let the mournful scene prolong thy woe.

[Exeunt.

SCENE II.

Shepherds and shepherdesses, (crown'd with garlands of cypress and yew) bearing the body of Menalcas.

1 Shepherd.

Here gently rest the corse with faltring breath
Thus spake Menalcas on the verge of death.
'Belov'd Palemon, hear a dying friend:
'See, where yon hills with craggy brows ascend,
'Low in the valley where the mountain grows,

SCENE II.

'There first I saw her, there began my woes.
'When I am cold, may there this clay be laid;
'There often strays the dear, the cruel maid,
'There as she walks, perhaps you'll hear her say,
'(While a kind gushing tear shall force its way)
'How could my stubborn heart relentless prove?
'Ah poor Menalcas all thy fault was love!

2 Shepherd.

When pitying lions o'er a carcass groan,
And hungry tygers bleeding kids bemoan;
When the lean wolf laments the mangled sheep;
Then shall Parthenia o'er Menacles weep.

1 Shepherd.

When famish'd panthers seek their morning food,
And monsters roar along the desert wood;

When hissing vipers rustle through the brake,
Or in the path-way rears the speckled snake;
The wary swain th'approaching peril spies,
And through some distant road securely flies,
Fly then, ye swains, from beauty's surer wound;
Such was the fate our poor Menalcas found!

2 Shepherd.

What shepherd does not mourn Menalcas slain?
Kill'd by a barbarous woman's proud disdain!
Whoe'er attempts to bend her scornful mind,
Cries to the deserts, and pursues the wind.

1 Shepherd.

With ev'ry grace Menacles was endow'd,
His merits dazled all the sylvan croud,
If you would know his pipe's melodious sound,
Ask all the echoes of those hills around,
For they have learn'd his strains; who shall rehearse
The strength, the cadence of his tuneful verse?
Go, read those lofty poplars; there you'll find
Some tender sonnet grow on ev'ry rind.

2 Shepherd.

Yet what avails his skill? Parthenia flies.
Can merit hope success in woman's eyes?

1 Shepherd.

Why was Parthenia form'd of softest mold?
Why does her heart such savage nature hold?
O ye kind gods! or all her charms efface,
Or tame her heart so spare the shepherd race.

2 Shepherd.

As fade the flowers which on the grave I cast;
So may Parthenia's transient beauty waste!

1 Shepherd.

What woman ever counts the fleeting years,
Or sees the wrinkle which her forehead wears?
Thinking her feature never shall decay,
This swain she scorns, from that she turns away.
But know, as when the rose her bud unfolds,
A while each breast the short-liv'd fragrance holds:
When the dry stalk lets drop her shrivell'd pride,
The lovely ruin's ever thrown aside.
So shall Parthenia be.

2 Shepherd.

See, she appears,
To boast her spoils, and triumph in our tears.

SCENE III.

Parthenia appears from the mountain.

PARTHENIA. SHEPHERDS.

1 Shepherd.

Why this way dost thou turn thy baneful eyes,
Pernicious basilisk? lo! there he lies,
There lies the youth thy cursed beauty slew;
See at thy presence, how he bleeds anew!
Look down, enjoy thy murder.

Parthenia.

Spare my fame;
I come to clear a virgin's injur'd name.
If I'm a basilisk, the danger fly,
Shun the swift glances of my venom'd eye:

If I'm a murd'rer, why approach ye near,
And to the dagger lay your bosom bare?

1 Shepherd.

What heart is proof against that face divine?
Love is not in our power.
Parthenia.

Is love in mine?

If e'er I trifled with a shepherd's pain,
Or with false hope his passion strove to gain;
Then might you justly curse my savage mind,
Then might you rank me with the serpent kind:
But I ne'er trifled with a shepherd's pain,
Nor with false hopes his passion strove to gain;
'Tis to his rash pursuit he owes his fate,
I was not cruel; he was obstinate.

1 Shepherd.

Hear this, ye sighing shepherds, and despair.
Unhappy Lycidas, thy hour is near!
Since the same barb'rous hand hath sign'd thy doom.
We'll lay thee in our lov'd Menalcas' tomb.

Parthenia.

Why will intruding man my peace destroy?
Let me content, and solitude enjoy;
Free was I born, my freedom to maintain,
Early I sought the unambitious plain.
Most women's weak resolves like reeds will ply,
Shake with each breath, and bend with ev'ry sigh;
Mine, like an oak, whose firm roots deep descend,
No breath of love can shake, no sigh can bend.
If ye unhappy Lycidas would save;
Go seek him, lead him to Menalcas' grave;

Forbid his eyes with flowing grief to rain,
Like him Menalcas wept, but wept in vain;
Bid him his heart-consuming groans give o'er:
Tell him, I heard such piercing groans before,
And heard unmov'd. O Lycidas be wise,
Prevent thy fate. Lo! there Menalcas lies.

1 Shepherd.

Now all the melancholy rites are paid,
And o'er his grave the weeping marble laid;
Let's seek our charge; the flocks dispersing wide,
Whiten with moving fleece the mountain's side.
Trust not, ye swains, the lightning of her eye,
Lest ye, like him, should love, despair, and dye,

[Exeunt Shepherds, &c. Parthenia remains in a melancholy posture looking on the grave of Menalcas.]

SCENE IV.

Enter Lycidas.

LYCIDAS. PARTHENIA.

Dione

Lycidas.

When shall my steps have rest? Through all the wood,
And by the winding banks of Ladon's flood
I sought my love. O say, ye skipping fawns,
(Who range entangled shades and daisy'd lawns)
If ye have seen her! say ye warbling race,
(Who measure on swift wing th'aerial space,
And view below hills, dales, and distant shores)
Where shall I find her whom my soul adores!

SCENE V.

LYCIDAS. PARTHENIA. DIONE. LAURA.

[Dione and Laura at a distance.

Lycidas.

What do I see? No. Fancy mocks my eyes,
And bids the dear deluding vision rise.
'Tis she. My springing heart her presence feels.
See, prostrate Lycidas before thee kneels.
[Kneeling to Parthenia.

Why will Parthenia turn her face away?
Parthenia.

Who calls Parthenia? hah!
[She starts from her melancholy; and seeing Lycidas, flies into the wood.

Lycidas.

Stay, virgin, stay,
O wing my feet, kind love. See, see, she bounds,
Fleet as the mountain roe, when prest by hounds.
[He pursues her. Dione faints in the arms of Laura.

Laura.

What means this trembling? all her colour flies,
And life is quite unstrung. Ah! lift thy eyes,
And answer me; speak speak, 'tis Laura calls.
Speech has forsook her lips. She faints, she falls,
Fan her, ye Zephyrs, with your balmy breath,
And bring her quickly from the shades of death:
Blow, ye cool gales. See, see, the forest shakes
With coming winds! she breathes, she moves, she wakes!

Dione.

Ah false Evander!

Laura.

Calm thy sobbing breast.

Say, what new sorrow has thy heart opprest.

Dione.

Didst thou not hear his sighs and suppliant tone?
Didst thou not hear the pitying mountain grone?
Didst thou not see him bend his suppliant knee?
Thus in my happy days he knelt to me,
And pour'd forth all his soul! see how he strains,
And lessens to the sight o'er yonder plains
To keep the fair in view! run, virgin, run,
Hear not his vows; I heard, and was undone!

Laura.

Let not imaginary terrors fright.
Some dark delusion swims before thy sight.
I saw Parthenia from the mountain's brow,
And Lycidas with prostrate duty bow;
Swift as on falcon's wing, I saw her fly,
And heard the cavern to his groans reply.
Why stream thy tears for sorrows not thy own?

Dione.

Oh! where are honour, faith, and justice flown?
Perjur'd Evander!

Laura.

Death has laid him low.

Touch not the mournful string that wakes thy woe.

Dione.

That am'rous swain, whom Lycidas you name,
(Whose faithless bosom feels another flame)

Is my once kind Evander yes 'twas he,
He lives. But lives, alas! no more for me.

Laura.

Let not thy frantic words confess despair.

Dione.

What, know I not his voice, his mien, his air?
Yes, I that treach'rous voice with joy believ'd,
That voice, that mien, that air my soul deceiv'd,
If my dear shepherd love the lawns and glades,
With him I'll range the lawns and seek the shades,

With him through solitary deserts rove.
But could he leave me for another love?
O base ingratitude!

Laura.

Suspend thy grief,
And let my friendly counsel bring relief
To thy desponding soul. Parthenia's ear
Is barr'd for ever to the lover's prayer;
Evander courts disdain, he follows scorn,
And in the passing winds his vows are born.
Soon will he find that all in vain he strove
To tame her bosom; then his former love
Shall wake his soul, then will he sighing blame
His heart inconstant, and his perjur'd flame:
Then shall he at Dione's feet implore,
Lament his broken faith, and change no more.

Dione.

Perhaps this cruel nymph well knows to feign
Forbidding speech, coy looks, and cold disdain,
To raise his passion. Such are female arts,
To hold in safer snares inconstant hearts!

Laura.

Parthenia's breast is steel'd with real scorn.

Dione.

And dost thou think Evander will return?

Laura.

Forgo thy sex, lay all thy robes aside,
Strip off these ornaments of female pride;
The shepherd's vest must hide thy graceful air,
With the bold manly step a swain appear;
Then with Evander may'st thou rove unknown,
Then let thy tender eloquence be shown;
Then the new fury of his heart controul,
And with Dione's sufferings touch his soul.

Dione.

Sweet as refreshing dews, or summer showers
To the long parching thirst of drooping flowers;
Grateful as fanning gales to fainting swains,
And soft as trickling balm to bleeding pains,
Such are thy words. The sex shall be resign'd,
No more shall breaded gold these tresses bind;
The shepherd's garb the woman shall disguise.
If he has lost all love, may friendship's ties
Unite me to his heart!

Dione

Laura.

Go, prosp'rous maid,
May smiling love thy faithful wishes aid.
Be now Alexis call'd. With thee I'll rove,
And watch thy wand'rer thro' the mazy grove;
Let me be honour'd with a sister's name;
For thee, I feel a more than sister's flame.

Dione.

Perhaps my shepherd has outstript her haste.
Think'st thou, when out of sight, she flew so fast?
One sudden glance might turn her savage mind;
May she like Daphne fly, nor look behind,
Maintain her scorn, his eager flame despise,
Nor view Evander with Dione's eyes!

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Lycidas lying on the grave of Menalcas.

Lycidas.

When shall these scalding fountains cease to flow?
How long will life sustain this load of woe:
Why glows the morn? roll back, thou source of light,
And feed my sorrows with eternal night.
Come, sable death! give, give the welcome stroke;
The raven calls thee from yon blasted oak.
What pious care my ghastful lid shall close?
What decent hand my frozen limbs compose?
O happy shepherd, free from anxious pains,
Who now art wandring in the sighing plains
Of blest Elysium; where in myrtle groves
Enamour'd ghosts bemoan their former loves.
Open, thou silent grave; for lo! I come
To meet Menalcas in the fragrant gloom;
There shall my bosom burn with friendship's flame,
The same our passion, and our fate the same;
There, like two nightingales on neighb'ring boughs,
Alternate strains shall mourn our frustrate vows.
But if cold death should close Parthenia's eye,
And should her beauteous form come gliding by:
Friendship would soon in jealous fear be lost,
And kindling hate pursue thy rival ghost.

Dione

SCENE II.

LYCIDAS. DIONE in a shepherd's habit.

Lycidas.

Hah! who comes here? turn hence, be timely wise;
Trust not thy safety to Parthenia's eyes.
As from the bearing falcon flies the dove,
So, wing'd with fear, Parthenia flies from love.

Dione.

If in these vales the fatal beauty stray,
From the cold marble rise; let's haste away,
Why ly you panting, like the smitten deer?
Trust not the dangers which you bid me fear.

Lycidas.

Bid the lur'd lark, whom tangling nets surprize,
On soaring pinion rove the spacious skies;
Bid the cag'd linnet range the leafy grove;
Then bid my captive heart get loose from love.
The snares of death are o'er me. Hence; beware;
Lest you should see her, and like me despair.

Dione.

No. Let her come; and seek this vale's recess;
In all the beauteous negligence of dress;
Though Cupid send a shaft in ev'ry glance,
Though all the graces in her step advance,
My heart can stand it all. Be firm, my breast;
Th'ensnaring oath, the broken vow detest:
That flame, which other charms have pow'r to move,
O give it not the sacred name of love!

'Tis perjury, fraud, and meditated lies.
Love's seated in the soul, and never dies.
What then avail her charms? my constant heart
Shall gaze secure and mock a second dart.

Lycidas.

But you perhaps a happier fate have found,
And the same hand that gave, now heals the wound;
Or art thou left abandon'd and forlorn,
A wretch, like me, the sport of pride and scorn?

Dione.

O tell me, shepherd, hath thy faithless maid
False to her vow thy flatter'd hope betray'd?

SCENE II.

Dione

Did her smooth speech engage thee to believe?
Did she protest and swear, and then deceive?
Such are the pangs I feel!

Lycidas.

The haughty fair
Contemns my suff'rings, and disdains to hear.
Let meaner beauties learn'd in female snares
Entice the swain with half-consenting airs;
Such vulgar arts ne'er aid her conqu'ring eyes,
And yet, where-e'er she turns, a lover sighs.
Vain is the steady constancy you boast;
All other love at sight of her is lost.

Dione.

True constancy no time, no power can move.
He that hath known to change, ne'er knew to love.
Though the dear author of my hapless flame
Pursue another; still my heart's the same.
Am I for ever left? (excuse these tears)
May your kind friendship soften all my cares!

Lycidas.

What comfort can a wretch, like me, bestow?

Dione.

He best can pity who hath felt the woe.

Lycidas.

Since different objects have our souls possest,
No rival fears our friendship shall molest.

Dione.

Come let us leave the shade of these brown hills,
And drive our flocks beside the steaming rills,
Should the fair tyrant to these vales return,
How would thy breast with double fury burn!
Go hence, and seek thy peace.

SCENE III.

LYCIDAS. DIONE. LAURA.

Laura.

Fly, fly this place;
Beware of love; the proudest of her race
This way approaches: from among the pines,

SCENE III.

Dione

Where from the steep the winding path declines,
I saw the nymph descend.

Lycidas.

She comes, she comes;
From her the passing zephyrs steal perfumes,
As from the vi'let's bank; with odours sweet
Breathes ev'ry gale: spring blooms beneath her feet.
Yes, 'tis my fairest; here she's wont to rove.

Laura.

Say, by what signs I might have known thy love?

Lycidas.

My love is fairer than the snowy breast
Of the tall swan, whose proudly–swelling chest
Divides the wave; her traces loose behind,
Play on her neck, and wanton in the wind;
The rising blushes, which her cheek o'er–spread,
Are op'ning roses in the lily's bed.
Know'st thou Parthenia?

Laura.

Wretched is the slave
Who serves such pride! behold Menalcas' grave!
Yet if Alexis and this sighing swain
Wish to behold the tyrant of the plain,
Let us behind these myrtles twining arms
Retire unseen; from thence survey her charms,
Wild as the chanting thrush upon the spray,
At man's approach she swiftly flies, away.
Like the young hare, I've seen the panting maid
Stop, listen, run; of ev'ry wind afraid.

Lycidas.

And wilt thou never from thy vows depart?
Shepherd, beware now fortify thy heart.

[To Dione.

[Lycidas, Dione, and Laura retire behind the boughs.

SCENE IV.

PARTHENIA. LYCIDAS. DIONE. LAURA.

Parthenia.

This melancholy scene demands a grone.
 Hah! what inscription marks this weeping stone?
 'O pow'r of beauty! here Menalcas lies.
 'Gaze not, ye shepherds, on Parthenia's eyes.
 Why did Heav'n form me with such polish'd care?
 Why cast my features in a mold so fair?
 If blooming beauty was a blessing meant,
 Why are my sighing hours deny'd content?
 The downy peach, that glows with sunny dyes,
 Feeds the black snail, and lures voracious flies;
 The juicy pear invites the feather'd kind,
 And pecking finches scoop the golden rind;
 But beauty suffers more pernicious wrongs,
 Blasted by envy, and censorious tongues.
 How happy lives the nymph, whose comely face
 And pleasing glances boast sufficient grace
 To wound the swain she loves! no jealous fears
 Shall vex her nuptial state with nightly tears,
 Nor am'rous youths, to push their foul pretence,
 Infest her days with dull impertinence.
 But why talk I of love? my guarded heart
 Disowns his pow'r, and turns aside the dart.

Hark! from his hollow tomb Menalcas cries,
 'Gaze not, ye shepherds, on Parthenia's eyes.'
 Come, Lycidas, the mournful lay peruse,
 Lest thou, like him Parthenia's eyes accuse.

[She stands in a melancholy posture looking on the tomb.]

Lycidas.

Call'd she not Lycidas? I come, my fair;
 See gen'rous pity melts into a tear,
 And her heart softens. Now's the tender hour,
 Assist me, love, exert thy sov'reign power
 To tame the scornful maid;

Dione.

Rash swain, be wise:
 'Tis not from thee or him, from love she flies.
 Leave her, forget her.

[They hold Lycidas.]

Luara.

Why this furious haste?
 Lycidas.

Unhand me; loose me.

Dione.

Sister, hold him fast.
To follow her, is, to prolong despair.
Shepherd, you must not go.
Lycidas.

Bold youth forbear.
Hear me, Parthenia.
Parthenia.

From behind the shade
Methought a voice some list'ning spy betray'd.
Yes, I'm observ'd.
[She runs out.

Lycidas.

Stay, nymph; thy flight suspend:
She hears me not when will my sorrows end!
As over-spent with toil, my heaving breast
Beats quick. 'Tis death alone can give me rest.
[He remains in a fixt melancholy.

SCENE V.

LYCIDAS. DIONE. LAURA.

Laura.

Recall thy scatter'd sense, bid reason wake,
Subdue thy passion.
Lycidas.

Shall I never speak?
She's gone, she's gone kind shepherd, let me rest
My troubled head upon thy friendly breast.
The forest seems to move, O cursed state!
I doom'd to love, and she condemn'd to hate!
Tell me, Alexis, art thou still the same?
Did not her brighter eyes put out the flame
Of thy first love? did not thy flutt'ring heart,
Whene'er she rais'd her look, confess the dart?
Dione.

I own the nymph is fairest of her race,
Yet I unmov'd can on this beauty gaze,
Mindful of former promise; all that's dear,
My thoughts, my dreams; my ev'ry wish is there.
Since then our hopes are lost; let friendship's tye

Calm our distress, and slighted love supply;
Let us together drive our fleecy store,
And of ungrateful woman think no more.

Lycidas.

'Tis death alone can raze her from my breast.

Laura.

Why shines thy love so far above the rest?
Nature, 'tis true, in ev'ry outward grace,
Her nicest hand employ'd; her lovely face
With beauteous feature stamp'd; with rosy dyes
Warm'd her fair cheek; with lightning arm'd her eyes:
But if thou search the secrets of her mind,
Where shall thy cheated soul a virtue find?
Sure hell with cruelty her breast supply'd.
How did she glory when Menalcas dy'd!
Pride in her bosom reigns; she's false, she's vain;
She first entices, then insults the swain;
Shall female cunning lead thy heart astray?
Shepherd, be free; and scorn for scorn repay.

Lycidas.

How woman talks of woman!

Dione.

Hence depart;

Let a long absence cure thy love-sick heart.
To some far grove retire, her sight disclaim,
Nor with her charms awake the dying flame.
Let not an hour thy happy flight suspend;
But go not, Lycidas, without thy friend.
Together let us seek the chearful plains,
And lead the dance among the sportive swains,
Devoid of care.

Laura.

Or else the groves disdain,
Nor with the sylvan walk indulge thy pain.

Haste to the town; there (I have been oft' told)
The courtly nymph her tresses binds with gold;
To captivate the youths; the youths appear
In fine array; in ringlets waves their hair
Rich with ambrosial scents, the fair to move,
And all the business of the day is love.
There from the gaudy train select a dame,
Her willing glance shall catch an equal flame.

Lycidas.

Name not the court. The thought my soul confounds,
And with Dione's wrongs my bosom wounds.
Heav'n justly vindicates the faithful maid;
And now are all my broken vows repaid.
Perhaps she now laments my fancy'd death
With tears unfeign'd; and thinks my gasping breath
Sigh'd forth her name. O guilt, no more upbraid!
Yes. I fond innocence and truth betray'd.

[Aside.

[Dione and Laura apart.

Dione.

Hark! how reflection wakes his conscious heart.
From my pale lids the trickling sorrows start;
How shall my breast the swelling sighs confine!

Laura.

O smooth thy brow, conceal our just design:
Be yet a while unknown. If grief arise,
And force a passage through thy gushing eyes.
Quickly retire, thy sorrows to compose
Or with a look serene disguise thy woes.

[Dione is going out. Laura walks at a distance.

Lycidas.

Canst thou, Alexis, leave me thus distrest?
Where's now the boasted friendship of thy breast?

Hast thou not oft' survey'd the dappled deer
In social herds o'er-spread the pastures fair,
When op'ning hounds the warmer scent pursue,
And force the destin'd victim from the crew,
Oft' he returns, and fain would join the band,
While all their horns the panting wretch withstand?
Such is thy friendship; thus might I confide.

Dione.

Why wilt thou censure what thou ne'er hast try'd?
Sooner shall swallows leave their callow brood,
Who with their plaintive chirpings cry for food;
Sooner shall hens expose their infant care,
When the spread kite sails wheeling in the air,
Than I forsake thee when by danger prest;
Wrong not by jealous fears a faithful breast.

Lycidas.

If thy fair-spoken tongue thy bosom shows,
There let the secrets of my soul repose.

Dione.

Far be suspicion; in my truth confide,
O let my heart thy load of cares divide!

Lycidas.

Know then, Alexis, that in vain I strove
To break her chain, and free my soul from love;
On the lim'd twig thus finches beat their wings,
Still more entangled in the clammy strings.
The slow-pac'd days have witness'd my despair,
Upon my weary couch sits wakeful care
Down my flush'd cheek the flowing sorrows run,
As dews descend to weep the absent sun.
O lost Parthenia!

Dione.

These wild thoughts suspend;
And in thy kind commands instruct thy friend.

Lycidas.

Whene'er my faltring tongue would urge my cause,
Deaf is her ear, and sullen she withdraws.
Go then, Alexis, seek the scornful maid,
In tender eloquence my suff'rings plead;
Of slighted passion you the pangs have known;
O judge my secret anguish by your own!

Dione.

Had I the skill inconstant hearts to move,
My longing soul had never lost my love.
My feeble tongue, in these soft arts untry'd,
Can ill support the thunder of her pride;
When she shall bid me to thy bower repair,
How shall my trembling lips her threats declare!
How shall I tell thee, that she could behold,
With brow serene, thy corse all pale and cold
Beat on the dashing billow! shouldst thou go
Where the tall hill o'er-hangs the rocks below,
Near thee thy tyrant could unpitying stand,
Nor call thee back, nor stretch a saving hand.
Wilt thou then still persist to tempt thy fate,
To feed her pride and gratify her hate?

Lycidas.

Know, unexperienc'd youth, that woman's mind
Oft' shifts her passions, like the inconstant wind;
Sudden she rages, like the troubled main,
Now sinks the storm, and all is calm again.
Watch the kind moment, then my wrongs impart,

Dione

And the soft tale shall glide into her heart.

Dione.

No. Let her wander in the lonely grove,
And never hear the tender voice of love.
Let her a while, neglected by the swain,
Pass by, nor sighs molest the chearful plain;
Thus shall the fury of her pride be laid;
Thus humble into love the haughty maid.

Lycidas.

Vain are attempts my passion to controul.
Is this the balm to cure my fainting soul?

Dione.

Deep then among the green wood shades I'll rove,
And seek with weary'd pace thy wander'd love;
Prostrate I'll fall, and with incessant prayers
Hang on her knees, and bathe her feet with tears;
If sighs of pity can her ear incline,
(O Lycidas, my life is wrapt in thine!)

[Aside.

I'll charge her from thy voice to hear the tale,
Thy voice more sweet than notes along the vale
Breath'd from the warbling pipe: the moving strain
Shall stay her flight, and conquer her disdain.
Yet if she hear; should love the message speed,
Then dies all hope; then must Dione bleed.

[Aside.

Lycidas.

Haste then, dear faithful swain. Beneath those yews
Whose sable arms the brownest shade diffuse,
Where all around, to shun the fervent sky,
The panting flocks in ferny thickets lie;
There with impatience shall I wait my friend,
O'er the wide prospect frequent glances send

To spy thy wish'd return. As thou shalt find
A tender welcome, may thy love be kind!

[Ex. Lycidas.

SCENE VI.

DIONE. LAURA.

Dione.

Methinks I'm now surrounded by despair,
And all my with'ring hopes are lost in air.
Thus the young linnet on the rocking bough
Hears through long woods autumnal tempests blow,
With hollow blasts the clashing branches bend,
And yellow show'rs of rustling leaves descend:
She sees the friendly shelter from her fly,
Nor dare her little pinions trust the sky;
But on the naked spray and wintry air,
All shiv'ring, hopeless, mourns the dying year,
What have I promis'd? rash, unthinking maid!
By thy own tongue thy wishes are betray'd!

[Laura advances.

Laura.

Why walk'st thou thus disturb'd with fantic air?
Why roll thy eyes with madness and despair?

Dione.

[Musing.

How wilt thou bear to see her pride give way?
When thus the yielding nymph shall bid thee say,
'Let not the shepherd seek the silent grave,
'Say, that I bid him live. If hope can save.

Laura.

Hath he discern'd thee through the swain's disguise,
And now alike thy love and friendship flies?

Dione.

Yes. Firm and faithful to the promise made,
I'll range each sunny hill, each lawn and glade.

Laura.

'Tis Laura speaks. O calm your troubled mind.

Dione.

Where shall my search this envy'd beauty find?
I'll go, my faithless shepherd's cause to plead,
And with my tears accuse the rival maid.
Yet, should her soften'd heart to love incline!

Laura.

If those are all thy fears; Evander's thine.

Dione.

Dione

Why should we both in sorrow waste our days?
If love unfeign'd my constant bosom sways,
His happiness alone is all I prize,
And that is center'd in Parthenia's eyes.
Haste then, with earnest zeal her love implore,
To bless his hours; when thou shalt breathe no more.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Dione lying on the ground by the side of a fountain.

Dione.

Here let me rest, and in the liquid glass
View with impartial look my fading face.
Why are Parthenia's striking beauties priz'd?
And why Dione's weaker glance despis'd?
Nature in various molds has beauty cast,
And form'd the feature for each different taste;
This sighs for golden locks and azure eyes;
That, for the gloss of sable tresses, dies.
Let all mankind these locks, these eyes detest,
So I were lovely in Evander's breast!
When o'er the garden's knot we cast our view,
While summer paints the ground with various hue;
Some praise the gaudy tulip's streaky red,
And some the silver lily's bending head;
Some the junquil in shining yellow drest,
And some the fring'd carnation's varied vest;
Some love the sober vi'let's purple dyes.
Thus beauty fares in different lovers eyes.
But bright Parthenia like the rose appears,
She in all eyes superior lustre bears.

SCENE II.

DIONE. LAURA.

Laura.

Why thus beneath the silver willow laid,
Weeps fair Dione in the pensive shade?
Hast thou yet found the over-arching bower,
Which guards Parthenia from the sultry hour?
Dione.

Dione

With weary step in paths unknown I stray'd,
And sought in vain the solitary maid.

Laura.

Seest thou the waving tops of yonder woods,
Whose aged arms imbrown the cooling floods?
The cooling floods o'er breaking pebbles flow,
And wash the soil from the big roots below
From the tall rock the dashing waters bound.
Hark, o'er the fields the rushing billows sound!
There, lost in thought, and leaning on her crook,
Stood the sad nymph, nor rais'd her pensive look;
With settled eye the bubbling waves survey'd,
And watch'd the whirling eddies, as they play'd.

Dione.

Thither to know my certain doom I speed,
For by this sentence life or death's decreed.

[Exit.

SCENE III.

LAURA. CLEANTHES.

Laura.

But see! some hasty stranger bends this way;
His broider'd vest reflects the sunny ray:
Now through the thinner boughs I mark his mien,
Now veil'd, in thicker shades he moves unseen.
Hither he turns: I hear a muttering sound;
Behind this rev'rend oak with ivy bound
Quick I'll retire; with busy thought possesset,
His tongue betrays the secrets of his breast.

[She hides herself.

Cleanthes.

The skilful hunter with experienc'd care
Traces the doublings of the circling hare;
The subtle fox, (who breathes the weary hound
O'er hills and plains) in distant brakes is found;
With ease we tract swift hinds and skipping toes,
But who th'inconstant ways of woman knows?
They say, she wanders with the sylvan train,
And courts the native freedoms of the plain;
Shepherds explain their wish without offence,
Nor blush the nymphs; for love is innocence.

SCENE III.

O lead me where the rural youth retreat,
Where the slope hills the warbling voice repeat.
Perhaps on daisy'd turf reclines the maid,
And near her side some rival clown is laid,

Yet, yet I love her. O lost nymph return,
Let not thy sire with tears incessant mourn;
Return, lost nymph; bid sorrow cease to flow,
And let Dione glad the house of woe.

Laura.

Call'd he not lost Dione? hence I'll start,
Cross his slow steps, and sift his op'ning heart.

[Aside.

Cleanthes.

Tell me, fair nymph, direct my wand'ring way;
Where, in close bowers, to shun the sultry ray,
Repose the swains; whose flocks with bleating fill
The bord'ring forest, and the thymy hill.
But if thou frequent join those sylvan bands,
Thyself can answer what my soul demands.

Laura.

Seven years I trod these fields, these bowers and glades,
And by the less'ning and the length'ning shades,
Have mark'd the hours; what time my flock to lead
To sunny mountains, or the watry mead:
Train'd in the labours of the sylvan crew,
Their sports, retreats, their cares and loves I knew.

Cleanthes.

Instruct me then, if late among your race,
A stranger nymph is found, of noble grace,
To rural arts unskill'd, no charge she tends:
Nor when the morn and ev'ning dew descends
Milks the big-udder'd ewe. Her mien and dress
The polish'd manners of the court confess.

Laura.

Each day arrive the neighb'ring nymphs and swains
To share the pastime of our jovial plains;

How can I there thy roving beauty trace,
Where not one nymph is bred of vulgar race?

Cleanthes.

If yet she breathe, what tortures must she find!
The curse of disobedience tears her mind.
If e'er your breast with filial duty burn'd,

If e'er you sorrow'd when a parent mourn'd;
Tell her, I charge you, with incessant groans
Her drooping sire his absent child bemoans.

Laura.

Unhappy man!

Cleanthes.

With storms of passion tost,
When first he learnt his vagrant child was lost,
On the cold floor his trembling limbs he flung,
And with thick blows his hollow bosom rung;
Then up he started, and with fixt surprise,
Upon her picture threw his frantic eyes,
While thus he cry'd. 'In her my life was bound,
'Warm in each feature is her mother found!
'Perhaps despair has been her fatal guide,
'And now she floats upon the weeping tide;
'Or on the willow hung, with head reclin'd,
'All pale and cold she wavers in the wind.
'Did not I force her hence by harsh commands?
'Did not her soul abhor the nuptial bands?

Laura.

Teach not, ye sires, your daughters to rebel,
By counsel rein their wills, but ne'er compel.

Cleanthes.

Ye duteous daughters, trust these tender guides;
Nor think a parent's breast the tyrant hides.

Laura.

From either lid the scalding sorrows roll;
The moving tale runs thrilling to my soul.

Cleanthes.

Perhaps she wanders in the lonely woods,
Or on the sedgy borders of the floods;
Thou know'st each cottage, forest, hill and vale,
And pebbled brook that winds along the dale.
Search each sequester'd dell to find the fair;
And just reward shall gratify thy care.

Laura.

O ye kind boughs protect the virgin's flight,
And guard Dione from his prying sight!

[Exit.

Cleanthes.

Dione

Mean while I'll seek the shepherds cool abodes,
Point me, fair nymph, along these doubtful roads.

Laura.

Seest thou yon mountain rear his shaggy brow?
In the green valley graze the flocks below:
There ev'ry gale with warbling music floats,
Shade answers shade, and breathes alternate notes.

[Exit Cleanthes.

He's gone; and to the distant vales is sent,
Nor shall his force Dione's love prevent.
But see, she comes again with hasty pace,
And conscious pleasure dimples on her face.

SCENE IV.

LAURA. DIONE.

Dione.

I found her laid beside the crystal brook,
Nor rais'd she from the stream her settled look,
Till near side I stood; her head she rears,
Starts sudden, and her shrieks confess her fears.

Laura.

Did not thy words her thoughtful soul surprize,
And kindle sparkling anger in her eyes?

Dione.

Thus she reply'd, with rage and scorn possest.
'Will importuning love ne'er give me rest?
'Why am I thus in desarts wild pursued,
'Like guilty consciences when stain'd with blood?
'Sure boding ravens from the blasted oak,
'Shall learn the name of Lycidas to croak,
'To sound it in my ears! as swains pass by,
'With look askance, they shake their heads and cry,
'Lo! this is she for whom the shepherd dy'd!
'Soon Lycidas, a victim to her pride,
'Shall seek the grave; and in the glimm'ring glade,
'With look all pale, shall glide the restless shade
'Of the poor swain; while we with haggard eye
'And bristed hair the fleeting phantom fly.
Still let their curses innocence upbraid:
Heav'n never will forsake the virtuous maid.

Laura.

SCENE IV.

Didst thou persist to touch her haughty breast!
Dione.

She still the more disdain'd, the more I prest.

Laura.

When you were gone, these walks a stranger crost,
He turn'd through ev'ry path, and wander'd lost;
To me he came; with courteous speech demands
Beneath what bowers repos'd the shepherd bands;
Then further asks me, if among that race
A shepherdess was found of courtly grace;
With profer'd bribes my faithful tongue essays;
But for no bribe the faithful tongue betrays.
In me Dione's safe. Far hence he speeds,
Where other hills resound with other reeds.

Dione.

Should he come back; suspicion's jealous eyes
Might trace my feature through the swain's disguise.
Now ev'ry noise and whistling wind I dread,
And in each sound approaches human tread.

Laura.

He said, he left your house involv'd in cares,
Sighs swell'd each breast, each eye o'erflow'd with tears;
For his lost child thy pensive father mourns,
And sunk in sorrow to the dust returns.
Go back, obedient daughter; hence depart,
And still the sighs that tear his anxious heart.
Soon shall Evander, wearied with disdain,
Forego these fields, and seek the town again.

Dione.

Think, Laura, what thy hasty thoughts persuade,
If I return, to love a victim made,
My wrathful sire will force his harsh command,
And with Cleanthes join my trembling hand.

Laura.

Trust a fond father; raise him from despair.

Dione.

I fly not him; I fly a life of care.
On the high nuptials of the court look round;
Where shall, alas, one happy pair be found!
There marriage is for servile int'rest sought:
Is love for wealth or power or title bought?
'Tis hence domestic jars their peace destroy,

Dione

And loose adult'ry steals the shameful joy.
But search we wide o'er all the blissful plains,
Where love alone, devoid of int'rest, reigns.
What concord in each happy pair appears!
How fondness strengthens with the rolling years!
Superior power ne'er thwarts their soft delights,
Nor jealous accusations wake their nights.

Laura.

May all those blessings on Dione fall.

Dione.

Grant me Evander, and I share them all.
Shall a fond parent give perpetual strife,
And doom his child to be a wretch for life?
Though he bequeath'd me all these woods and plains,
And all the flocks the russet down contains;
With all the golden harvests of the year,
Far as where yonder purple mountains rear;
Can these the broils of nuptial life prevent?
Can these, without Evander, give content?
But see he comes.

Laura.

I'll to the vales repair,
Where wanders by the stream my fleecy care.
May'st thou the rage of this pew flame controul,
And wake Dione in his tender soul!

[Ex. Laura.]

SCENE V.

DIONE. LYCIDAS.

Lycidas.

Say, my Alexis, can thy words impart
Kind rays of hope to chear a doubtful heart?
How didst thou first my pangs of love disclose?
Did her disdainful brow confirm my woes?
Or did soft pity in her bosom rise,
Heave on her breast, and languish in her eyes?

Dione.

How shall my tongue the falt'ring tale explain!
My heart drops blood to give the shepherd pain.

Lycidas.

SCENE V.

Pronounce her utmost scorn; I come prepar'd
To meet my doom. Say, is my death declar'd?
Dione.

Why should thy fate depend on woman's will?
Forget this tyrant, and be happy still.
Lycidas.

Didst thou beseech her not to speed her flight,
Nor shun with wrathful glance my hated sight?
Will she consent my sighing plaint to hear,
Nor let my piercing cries be lost in air!
Dione.

Can mariners appease the tossing storm,
When foaming waves the yawning deep deform?
When o'er the sable cloud the thunder flies,
Say, who shall calm the terror of the skies?

Who shall the lion's famish'd roar assuage;
And can we still proud woman's stronger rage?
Soon as my faithful tongue pronounc'd thy name,
Sudden her glances shot resentful flame:
Be dumb, she cries, this whining love give o'er,
And vex me with the teasing theme no more.
Lycidas.

'Tis pride alone that keeps alive her scorn,
On the mean swain in humble cottage born,
Can poverty that haughty heart obtain
Where avarice and strong ambition reign?
If poverty pass by in tatter'd coat,
Curs vex his heels and stretch their barking throat;
If chance he mingle in the female croud,
Pride tosses high her head, scorn laughs aloud;
Each nymph turns from him to her gay gallant,
And wonders at the impudence of want.
'Tis vanity that rules all woman-kind,
Love is the weakest passion of their mind.
Dione.

Though one is by those servile views possest,
O Lycidas, condemn not all the rest.
Lycidas.

Though I were bent beneath a load of years,
And seventy winters thin'd my hoary hairs;
Yet if my olive branches dropt with oil,
And crook'd shares were brighten'd in my soil,
If lowing herds my fat'ning meads possest,
And my white fleece the tawny mountain drest;

Then would she lure me with love—darting glance,
Then with fond mercenary smiles advance.

Though hell with ev'ry vice my soul had stain'd,
And froward anger in my bosom reign'd,
Though avarice my coffers cloath'd in rust,
And my joints trembled with enfeebled lust;
Yet were my antient name with titles great,
How would she languish for the gaudy bait!
If to her love all—tempting wealth pretend,
What virtuous woman can her heart defend?

Dione.

Conquests, thus meanly bought, men soon despise,
And justly slight the mercenary prize.

Lycidas.

I know these frailties in her breast reside,
Direct her glance and ev'ry action guide,
Still let Alexis' faithful friendship aid,
Once more attempt to bend the stubborn maid.
Tell her, no base—born swain provokes her scorn,
No clown, beneath the sedgy cottage born;
Tell her, for her this sylvan dress I took,
For her my name and pomp of courts forsook;
My lofty roofs with golden sculpture shine,
And my high birth descends from antient line.

Dione.

Love is a sacred voluntary fire,
Gold never bought that pure, that chaste desire.
Who thinks true love for lucre to possess,
Shall grasp false flatt'ry and the feign'd caress;
Can we believe that mean, that servile wife,
Who vilely sells her dear—bought love for life,
Would not her virtue for an hour resign,
If in her sight the profer'd treasure shine?

Lycidas.

Can reason (when by winds swift fires are born
O'er waving harvests of autumnal corn)
The driving fury of the flame reprove?
Who then shall reason with a heart in love?

Dione.

Yet let me speak; O may my words persuade
The noble youth, to quit this sylvan maid!
Resign thy crook, no more to plains resort,
Look round on all the beauties of the court;
There shall thy merit find a worthy flame,

Some nymph of equal wealth and equal name.
 Think, if these offers should thy wish obtain,
 And should the rustic beauty stoop to gain;
 Thy heart could ne'er prolong th' unequal fire,
 The sudden blaze would in one year expire;
 Then thy rash folly thou too late shall chide,
 To poverty and base born blood allay'd;
 Her vulgar tongue shall animate the strife,
 And hourly discord vex thy future life.

Lycidas.

Such is the force thy faithful hours impart,
 That like the galling goad they pierce my heart.
 You think fair virtue in my breast resides,
 That honest truth my lips and actions guides,
 Deluded shepherd, could you view my soul,
 You'd see it with deceit and treach'ry foul?
 I'm base, perfidious. Ere from court I came,
 Love singled from the train a beauteous dame:
 The tender maid my fervent vows believ'd,
 My fervent vows the tender maid deceiv'd.

Why dost thou tremble? why thus heave thy sighs?
 Why steal the silent sorrows from thy eyes?

Dione.

Sure the soft lamb hides rage within his breast,
 And cooing turtles are with hate possest;
 When from so sweet a tongue flow fraud and lies,
 And those meek looks a perjurd heart disguise.
 Ah! who shall now on faithless man depend?
 The treach'rous lover proves as false a friend.

Lycidas.

When with Dione's love my bosom glow'd,
 Firm constancy and truth sincere I vow'd;
 But since Parthenia's brighter charms were known,
 My love, my constancy and truth are flown.

Dione.

Are not thy hours with conscious anguish slung?
 Swift vengeance must o'ertake the perjurd tongue.
 The gods the cause of injurd love assert,
 And arm with stubborn pride Parthenia's heart.

Lycidas.

Go, try her; tempt her with my birth and state,
 Stronger ambition will subdue her hate.

Dione.

O rather turn thy thoughts on that lost maid,

Whose hourly sighs thy faithless oath upbraid!
Think you behold her at the dead of night,
Plac'd by the glimm'ring taper's paly light,
With all your letters spread before her view,
While trickling tears, the tender lines bedew;
Sobbing she reads the perj'ries o'er and o'er,
And her long nights know peaceful sleep no more.

Lycidas.

Let me forget her.
Dione.

O false youth, relent;
Think should Parthenia to thy hopes consent;
When Hymen joins your hands, and music's voice
Makes the glad echoes of thy domes rejoice,
Then shall Dione force the croud'd hall,
Kneel at thy feet and loud for justice call;
Could you behold her weltring on the ground,
The purple dagger reeking from the wound?
Could you unmov'd this dreadful sight survey?
Such fatal scenes shall stain thy bridal day.

Lycidas.

The horrid thought sinks deep into my soul,
And down my cheek unwilling sorrows roll.
Dione.

From this new flame you may as yet recede,
Or have you doom'd that guiltless maid shall bleed?
Lycidas.

Name her no more. Haste, seek the sylvan fair.
Dione.

Should the rich profer tempt her list'ning ear,
Bid all your peace adieu. O barb'rous youth,
Can you forego your honour, love and truth?
Yet should Parthenia wealth and title slight,
Would justice then restore Dione's right?
Would you then dry her ever falling tears;
And bless with honest love your future years.
Lycidas.

I'll in yon shade thy wish'd return attend;
Come, quickly come, and cheer thy sighing friend.
[Exit Lycidas.]

Dione.

Should her proud soul resist the tempting bait,
Should she condemn his profer'd wealth and state,
Then I once more his perjur'd heart may move,
And in his bosom wake the dying love.
As the pale wretch involv'd in doubts and fears,
All trembling in the judgment-hall appears;
So shall I stand before Parthenia's eyes,
For as she dooms, Dione lives or dies.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

LYCIDAS. PARTHENIA asleep in a bower.

Lycidas.

May no rude wind the rustling branches move;
Breathe soft, ye silent gales, nor wake my love.
Ye shepherds, piping homeward on the way,
Let not the distant echoes learn your lay;
Strain not, ye nightingales, your warbling throat,
May no loud shake prolong the shriller note,
Lest she awake; O sleep, secure her eyes,
That I may gaze; for if she wake, she flies.
While easy dreams compose her peaceful soul,
What anxious cares within my bosom roll!
If tir'd with sighs beneath the beech I lye,
And languid slumber close my weeping eye,
Her lovely vision rises to my view,
Swift flies the nymph, and swift would I pursue;
I strive to call; my tongue has lost the sound;
Like rooted oaks, my feet benumb'd are bound;
Struggling I wake. Again my sorrows flow,
And not one flatt'ring dream deludes my woe.
What innocence! how meek is ev'ry grace!
How sweet the smile that dimples on her face,
Calm as the sleeping seas! but should my sighs
Too rudely breathe, what angry storms would rise!
Though the fair rose with beauteous blush is crown'd,
Beneath her fragrant leaves the thorn is found;

The peach, that with inviting crimson blooms,
Deep at the heart the cank'ring worm consumes;
'Tis thus, alas! those lovely features hide
Disdain and anger and resentful pride.

Dione

SCENE II.

LYCIDAS. DIONE. PARTHENIA.

Lycidas.

Hath profer'd greatness yet o'ercome her hate?
And does she languish for the glitt'ring bait?
Against the swain she might her pride support.
Can she subdue her sex, and scorn a court?
Perhaps in dreams the shining vision charms,
And the rich bracelet sparkles on her arms;
In fancy'd heaps the golden treasure glows:
Parthenia, wake, all this thy swain bestows.

Dione.

Sleeps she in these close bowers?

Lycidas.

Lo! there she lies.

Dione.

O may no startling sound unseal her eyes,
And drive her hence away. 'Till now, in vain
I trod the winding wood and weary plain.
Hence, Lycidas; beyond those shades repose,
While I thy fortune and thy birth disclose.

Lycidas.

May I Parthenia to thy friendship owe!

Dione.

O rather think on lost Dione's woe!

Must she thy broken faith for ever mourn,
And will that juster passion ne'er return?

Lycidas.

Upbraid me not; but go. Her slumbers chase;
And in her view the bright temptation place.

[Exit Lycidas.]

SCENE III.

DIONE. PARTHENIA.

Dione.

Now flames the western sky with golden beams,
 And the ray kindles on the quiv'ring streams;
 Long flights of crows, high croaking from their food,
 Now seek the nightly covert of the wood;
 The tender grass with dewy crystal bends,
 And gath'ring vapour from the heath ascends.
 Shake off this downy rest; wake, gentle maid,
 Trust not thy charms beneath the noxious shade.
 Parthenia, rise.

Parthenia.

What voice alarms my ear?
 Away. Approach not. Hah! Alexis there!
 Let us together to the vales descend,
 And to the folds our bleating charge attend:
 But let me hear no more that shepherd's name,
 Vex not my quiet with his hateful flame.

Dione.

Can I behold him gasping on the ground,
 And seek no healing herb to staunch the wound?

For thee continual sighs consume his heart,
 'Tis you alone can cure the bleeding smart.
 Once more I come the moving cause to plead,
 If still his suff'rings cannot intercede,
 Yet let my friendship do his passion right,
 And show thy lover in his native light.

Parthenia.

Why in dark myst'ry are thy words involv'd?
 If Lycidas you mean; know, I'm resolv'd.

Dione.

Let not thy kindling rage my words restrain.
 Know then; Parthenia slights no vulgar swain.
 For thee he bears the scrip and sylvan crook,
 For thee the glories of a court forsook.
 May not thy heart the wealthy flame decline!
 His honours, his possessions, all are thine.

Parthenia.

If he's a courtier, O ye nymphs, beware;
 Those who most promise are the least sincere.
 The quick-ey'd hawk shoots headlong from above,
 And in his pounces bears the trembling dove;
 The pilf'ring wolf o'er-leaps the fold's defence,
 But the false courtier preys on innocence.
 If he's a courtier, O ye nymphs, beware;
 Those who most promise are the least sincere.

Dione.

Alas! thou ne'er hast prov'd the sweets of state,
 Nor known that female pleasure, to be great.
 'Tis for the town ripe clusters load the poles,
 And all our autumn crowns the courtier's bowls;
 For him our woods the red-ey'd pheasant breed,
 And annual coveys in our harvest seed;

For him with fruit the bending branch is stor'd,
 Plenty pours all her blessings on his board,
 If (when the market to the city calls)
 We chance to pass beside his palace walls,
 Does not his hall with music's voice resound,
 And the floor tremble with the dancer's bound?
 Such are the pleasures Lycidas shall give,
 When thy relenting bosom bids him live.

Parthenia.

See yon gay goldfinch hop from spray to spray,
 Who sings a farewell to the parting day;
 At large he flies o'er hill and dale and down:
 Is not each bush, each spreading tree his own?
 And canst thou think he'll quit his native brier,
 For the bright cage o'er-arch'd with golden wire?
 What then are honours, pomp and gold to me?
 Are those a price to purchase liberty!

Dione.

Think, when the Hymeneal torch shall blaze,
 And on the solemn rites the virgins gaze;
 When thy fair locks with glitt'ring gems are grac'd,
 And the bright zone shall sparkle round thy waste,
 How will their hearts with envious sorrow pine,
 When Lycidas shall join his hand to thine!

Parthenia.

And yet, Alexis, all that pomp and show
 Are oft' the varnish of internal woe.
 When the chaste lamb is from her sisters led,
 And interwoven garlands paint her head;
 The gazing, flock all envious of her pride,
 Behold her skipping by the priestess' side;

Each hopes the flow'ry wreath with longing eyes;
 While she, alas! is led to sacrifice!
 Thus walks the bride in all her state array'd,
 The gaze and envy of each thoughtless maid.

Dione.

As yet her tongue resists the tempting snare,
 And guards my panting bosom from despair.

[Aside.

Can thy strong soul this noble flame forego?
Must such a lover waste his life in woe?

Parthenia.

Tell him, his gifts I scorn; not all his art,
Not all his flattery shall seduce my heart.
Courtiers, I know, are disciplin'd to cheat,
Their infant-lips are taught to lisp deceit;
To prey on easy nymphs they range the shade,
And vainly boast of innocence betray'd;
Chaste hearts, unlearn'd in falshood, they assail,
And think our ear will drink the grateful tale:
No. Lycidas shall ne'er my peace destroy,
I'll guard my virtue, and content enjoy.

Dione.

So strong a passion in my bosom burns,
Whene'er his soul is griev'd, Alexis mourns!
Canst thou this importuning ardour blame?
Would not thy tongue for friendship urge the same?

Parthenia.

Yes, blooming swain. You show an honest mind;
I see it, with the purest flame refin'd.
Who shall compare love's mean and gross desire
To the chaste zeal of friendship's sacred fire?
By whining love our weakness is confest;
But stronger friendship shows a virtuous breast.

In folly's heart the short-liv'd blaze may glow,
Wisdom alone can purer friendship know.
Love is a sudden blaze which soon decays,
Friendship is like the sun's eternal rays;
Not daily benefits exhaust the flame,
It still is giving, and still burns the same;
And could Alexis from his soul remove
All the low images of grosser love;
Such mild, such gentle looks thy heart declare,
Fain would my breast thy faithful friendship share.

Dione.

How dare you in the different sex confide?
And seek a friendship which you ne'er have try'd?

Parthenia.

Yes, I to thee could give up all my heart.
From thy chaste eye no wanton glances dart;
Thy modest lips convey no thought impure,
With thee may strictest virtue walk secure,

SCENE II.

Dione

Dione.

Yet can I safely on the nymph depend,
Whose unrelenting scorn can kill my friend?

Parthenia.

Accuse me not, who act a gen'rous part;
Had I, like city maids, a fraudulent heart,
Then had his proffers taught my soul to feign,
Then had I vilely stooped to sordid gain,
Then had I sigh'd for honours, pomp and gold,
And for unhappy chains my freedom sold.
If you would save him, bid him leave the plain,
And to his native city turn again;
There, shall his passion find a ready cure,
There, not one dame resists the glitt'ring lure.

Dione.

All this I frequent urg'd, but urg'd in vain.
Alas! thou only canst assuage his pain!

SCENE IV.

DIONE. PARTHENIA. LYCIDAS,

[listening.

Lycidas.

Why stays Alexis? can my bosom bear
Thus long alternate storms of hope and fear?
Yonder they walk; no frowns her brow disguise,
But love consenting sparkles in her eyes;
Here will I listen, here, impatient wait.
Spare me, Parthenia, and resign thy hate.

[Aside.

Parthenia.

When Lycidas shall to the court repair,
Still let Alexis love his fleecy care;
Still let him choose cool grots and sylvan bowers,
And let Parthenia share his peaceful hours.

Lycidas.

What do I hear? my friendship is betray'd!
The treach'rous rival has seduc'd the maid.

[Aside.

SCENE IV.

Dione

Parthenia.

With thee, where bearded goats descend the steep,
Or where, like winter's snow, the nibbling sheep
Clothe the slope hills: I'll pass the cheerful day,
And from thy reed my voice shall catch the lay.

But see, still ev'ning spreads her dusky wings,
The flocks, slow moving from the misty springs,
Now seek their fold. Come, shepherd, let's away,
To close the latest labours of the day.

[Exeunt hand in hand.]

SCENE V.

Lycidas.

My troubled heart what dire disasters rend?
A scornful mistress, and a treach'rous friend!
Would ye be cozen'd, more than woman can;
Unlock your bosom to perfidious man.
One faithful woman have these eyes beheld,
And against her this perjur'd heart rebell'd:
But search as far as earth's wide bounds extend,
Where shall the wretched find one faithful friend?

SCENE VI.

LYCIDAS. DIONE.

Lycidas.

Why starts the swain? why turn his eyes away,
As if amidst his path the viper lay?
Did I not to thy charge my heart confide?
Did I not trust thee near Parthenia's side,
As here she slept?

Dione.

She straight my call obey'd,
And downy slumber left the lovely maid!

As in the morn awakes the folded rose,
And all around her breathing colour throws;
So wak'd Parthenia.

Lycidas.

SCENE V.

Could thy guarded heart,
When her full beauty glow'd, put by the dart?
Yet on Alexis let my soul depend.
'Tis most ungen'rous to suspect a friend;
And thou, I hope, hast well that name profest.
Dione.

O could thy piercing eye discern my breast!
Could'st thou the secrets of my bosom see,
There ev'ry thought is fill'd with cares for thee!
Lycidas.

Is there, against hypocrisy, defence,
Who clothes her words and looks with innocence!
[Aside.

Say, shepherd, when you profer'd wealth and state,
Did not her scorn and suppl'd pride abate?
Dione.

As sparkling di'monds to the feather'd train,
Who scrape the winnow'd chaff in search of grain;
Such to the shepherdess the court appears:
Content she seeks, and spurns those glitt'ring cares.
Lycidas.

'Tis not in woman grandeur to despise,
'Tis not from courts, from me alone she flies.
Did not my passion suffer like disgrace,
While she believ'd me born of sylvan race?
Dost thou not think, this proudest of her kind
Has to some rival swain her heart resign'd?

Dione.

No rival shepherd her disdain can move;
Her frozen bosom is averse to love.
Lycidas.

Say, art thou sure, that this ungrateful fair
Scorns all alike, bids all alike despair?
Dione.

How can I know the secrets of her heart?
Lycidas.

Answer sincere, nor from the question start.
Say in her glance was never love confest,
And is no swain distinguish'd from the rest?
Dione.

O Lycidas, bid all thy troubles cease;
Let not a thought on her disturb thy peace.
May justice bid thy former passion wake;
Think how Dione suffers for thy sake:
Let not a broken oath thy honour stain,
Recall thy vows, and seek the town again.

Lycidas.

What means Alexis? where's thy friendship flown?
Why am I banish'd to the hateful town?
Hath some new shepherd warm'd Parthenia's breast?
And does my love his am'rous hours molest?
Is it for this thou bidst me quit the plain?
Yes, yes, thou fondly lov'st this rival swain.
When first my cheated soul thy friendship woo'd,
To my warm heart I took the vip'rous brood.
O false Alexis!

Dione.

Why am I accus'd?
Thy jealous mind is by weak fears abus'd.

Lycidas.

Was not thy bosom fraught with false design?
Didst thou not plead his cause, and give up mine?
Let not thy tongue evasive answer seek;
The conscious crimson rises on thy cheek:
Thy coward conscience, by thy guilt dismay'd,
Shakes in each joint, and owns that I'm betray'd.

Dione.

How my poor heart is wrong'd! O spare thy friend!

Lycidas.

Seek not detected falshood to defend.

Dione.

Beware; lest blind suspicion rashly blame.

Lycidas.

Own thyself then the rival of my flame.
If this be she for whom Alexis pin'd,
She now no more is to thy vows unkind,
Behind the thicket's twisted verdure laid,
I witness'd every tender thing she said;
I saw bright pleasure kindle in her eyes,
Love warm'd each feature at thy soft replies.

Dione.

Yet hear me speak.

SCENE V.

Dione

Lycidas.

In vain is all defence.
Did not thy treach'rous hand conduct her hence?
Haste, from my sight, rage burns in ev'ry vein;
Never approach my just revenge again.

Dione.

O search my heart; there injur'd truth thou'lt find.
Lycidas.

Talk not of truth; long since she left mankind.

So smooth a tongue! and yet so false a heart!
Sure courts first taught the fawning friendship's art.
No. Thou art false by nature.

Dione.

Let me clear
This heavy charge, and prove my trust sincere.
Lycidas.

Boast then her favours; say, what happy hour
Next calls to meet her in th'appointed bower;
Say when and where you meet.

Dione.

Be rage suppress.
In stabbing mine, you wound Parthenia's breast,
She said, she still defy'd love's keenest dart;
Yet purer friendship might divide her heart,
Friendship's sincerer bands she wish'd to prove.
Lycidas.

A woman's friendship ever ends in love.
Think not these foolish tales my faith command;
Did not I see thee press her snowy hand?
O may her passion like thy friendship last!
May she betray thee ere the day be past!
Hence then. Away. Thou'rt hateful to my sight,
And thus I spurn the fawning hypocrite.

[Ex. Lycid.

SCENE VII.

Dione.

Was ever grief like mine! O wretched maid!
My friendship wrong'd! my constant love betray'd!

SCENE VII.

Misfortune haunts my steps where e'er I go,
And all my days are over-cast with woe.
Long have I strove th'increasing load to bear,
Now faints my soul, and sinks into despair.
O lead me to the hanging mountain's cell,
In whose brown cliffs the fowls of darkness dwell:
Where waters, trickling down the rifted wall,
Shall lull my sorrows with the tinkling fall.
There, seek thy grave. How canst thou bear the light.
When banish'd ever from Evander's sight!

SCENE VIII.

DIONE. LAURA.

Laura.

Why hangs a cloud of grief upon thy brows?
Does the proud nymph accept Evander's vows?
Dione.

Can I bear life with these new pangs opprest!
Again he tears me from his faithless breast:
A perjur'd lover first he sought those plains,
And now my friendship like my love disdains.
As I new offers to Parthenia made,
Conceal'd he stood behind the woodbine shade.
He says, my treach'rous tongue his heart betray'd,
That my false speeches have misled the maid;
With groundless fear he thus his soul deceives;
What frenzy dictates, jealousy believes.
Laura.

Resign thy crook, put off this manly vest,
And let the wrong'd Dione stand confest;

When he shall learn what sorrows thou hast born,
And finds that naught relents Parthenia's scorn,
Sure he will pity thee.
Dione.

No, Laura, no.
Should I, alas! the sylvan dress forego,
Then might he think that I her pride foment,
That injur'd love instructs me to resent;
Our secret enterprize might fatal prove:
Man flies the plague of persecuting love.
Laura.

Dione

Avoid Parthenia; lest his rage grow warm,
And jealousy resolve some fatal harm.

Dione.

O Laura, if thou chance the youth to find,
Tell him what torments vex my anxious mind;
Should I once more his awful presence seek,
The silent tears would bath my glowing cheek;
By rising sighs my falt'ring voice be stay'd,
And trembling fear too soon confess the maid.
Haste, Laura, then; his vengeful soul assuage,
Tell him, I'm guiltless; cool his blinded rage;
Tell him that truth sincere my friendship brought.
Let him not cherish one suspicious thought.
Then to convince him, his distrust was vain,
I'll never, never see that nymph again.
This way he went.

Laura.

See at the call of night,
The star of ev'ning sheds his silver light
High o'er yon western hill: the cooling gales
Fresh odours breathe along the winding dales;

Far from their home as yet our shepherds stray,
To close with cheerful walk the sultry day.
Methinks from far I hear the piping swain;
Hark, in the breeze now swells, now sinks the strain;
Thither I'll seek him.

Dione.

While this length of glade
Shall lead me pensive through the sable shade;
Where on the branches murmur rushing winds,
Grateful as falling floods to love-sick minds.
O may this path to death's dark vale descend!
There only can the wretched hope a friend.

[Exeunt severally.]

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A WOOD.

DIONE. CLEANTHES, (who lies wounded in a distant part of the stage.)

Dione.

The moon serene now climbs th'aerial way;
 See, at her sight ten thousand stars decay:
 With trembling gleam she tips the silent grove,
 While all beneath the chequer'd shadows move.
 Turn back thy silver axles, downward roll,
 Darkness best fits the horrors of my soul.
 Rise, rise, ye clouds; the face of heav'n deform,
 Veil the bright goddess in a sable storm:
 O look not down upon a wretched maid!
 Let thy bright torch the happy lover aid,
 And light his wand'ring footsteps to the bow'r,
 Where the kind nymph attends th'appointed hour.
 Yet thou hast seen unhappy love, like mine;
 Did not thy lamp in heav'n's blue forehead shine,
 When Thisbe sought her love along the glade?
 Didst thou not then behold the gleaming blade,
 And gild the fatal point that stabb'd her breast?
 Soon I, like her, shall seek the realms of rest.
 Let groves of mournful yew a wretch surround!
 O sooth my ear with melancholy sound!
 The village curs now stretch their yelling throat,
 And dogs from distant cots return the note;

The rav'nous wolf along the valley prowls,
 And with his famish'd cries the mountain howls.
 But hark! what sudden noise advances near?
 Repeated groans alarm my frightened ear!

Cleanthes.

Shepherd, approach; ah! fly not through the glade,
 A wretch all dy'd with wounds invokes thy aid.

Dione.

Say then, unhappy stranger, how you bled;
 Collect thy spirits, raise thy drooping head.
 [Cleanthes raises himself on his arm.

O horrid sight! Cleanthes gasping lies;
 And death's black shadows float before his eyes.
 Unknown in this disguise, I'll check my woe,
 And learn what bloody hand has struck the blow.

[Aside.

Say, youth, ere fate thy feeble voice confounds,
 What led thee hither? whence these purple wounds?

Cleanthes.

Stay, fleeting life; may strength a while prevail,
 Lest my clos'd lips confine th'imperfect tale.

ACT V.

Ere the streak'd east grew warm with amber ray,
I from the city took my doubtful way,
Far o'er the plains I sought a beauteous maid,
Who from the court in those wide forests stray'd,
Wanders unknown; as I, with weary pain,
Try'd ev'ry path, and op'ning glade in vain;
A band of thieves, forth rushing from the wood,
Unsheath'd their daggers warm with daily blood;
Deep in my breast the barb'rous steel is dy'd,
And purple hands the golden prey divide.

Hence are the mangling wounds. Say, gentle swain,
If thou hast known among the sylvan train
The vagrant nymph I seek?

Dione.

What mov'd thy care,
Thus, in these pathless wilds to search the fair?
Cleanthes.

I charge you, O ye daughters of the grove,
Ye Naiads, who the mossy fountains love,
Ye happy swains, who range the pastures wide,
Ye tender nymphs, who feed your flocks beside;
If my last gasping breath can pity move,
If e'er you knew the pangs of slighted love,
Show her, I charge you, where Cleanthes dy'd,
The grass yet reeking with the sanguine tide,
A father's power to me the virgin gave,
But she disdain'd to live a nuptial slave;
So fled her native home.

Dione.

'Tis then from thee
Springs the foul source of all her misery.
Could'st thou, thy selfish appetite to please,
Condemn to endless woes another's peace?
Cleanthes.

O spare me; nor my hapless love upbraid,
While on my heart death's frozen hand is laid!
Go seek her, guide her where Cleanthes bled;
When she surveys her lover pale and dead,
Tell her, that since she fled my hateful sight,
Without remorse I sought the realms of night.
Methinks I see her view these poor remains,
And on her cheek indecent gladness reigns!

Full in her presence cold Cleanthes lies,
And not one tear stands trembling in her eyes!
O let a sigh my hapless fate deplore!

Cleanthes now controuls thy love no more.

Dione.

How shall my lids confine these rising woes?

[Aside.

Cleanthes.

O might I see her, ere death's finger close
These eyes for ever! might her soften'd breast
Forgive my love with too much ardour prest!
Then I with peace could yield my latest breath.

Dione.

Shall I not calm the sable hour of death,
And show myself before him! hah! he dies.
See from his trembling lip the spirit flies!

[Aside.

Stay yet a-while. Dione stands confest.
He knows me not. He faints, he sinks to rest.

Cleanthes.

Tell her, since all my hopes in her were lost,
That death was welcome

[Dies.

Dione.

What sudden gusts of grief my bosom rend?
A parent's curses o'er my head impend
For disobedient vows; O wretched maid,
Those very vows Evander hath betray'd.
See, at thy feet Cleanthes bath'd in blood!
For love of thee he trod this lonely wood;
Thou art the cruel authress of his fate!
He falls by thine, thou by Evander's hate.
When shall my soul know rest? Cleanthes slain
No longer sighs and weeps for thy disdain.

Thou still art curst with love. Bleed, virgin, bleed.
How shall a wretch from anxious life be freed!
My troubled brain with sudden frenzy burns,
And shatter'd thought now this now that way turns.
What do I see thus glitt'ring on the plains?
Hah! the dread sword yet warm with crimson stains!

[Takes up the dagger.

Dione

SCENE II.

DIONE. PARTHENIA.

Parthenia.

Sweet is the walk when night has cool'd the hour.
This path directs me to my sylvan bower.

[Aside.

Dione.

Why is my soul with sudden fear dismay'd?
Why drops my trembling hand the pointed blade?
O string my arm with force!

[Aside.

Parthenia.

Methought a noise
Broke through the silent air, like human voice.

[Aside.

Dione.

One well-aim'd blow shall all my pangs remove,
Grasp firm the fatal steel, and cease to love.

[Aside.

Parthenia.

Sure 'twas Alexis, hah! a sword display'd.
The streaming lustre darts a-cross the shade.

[Aside.

Dione.

May heav'n new vigour to my soul impart,
And guide the desp'rate weapon to my heart!

[Aside.

Parthenia.

May I the meditated death arrest!

[Holds Dione's hand.

Strike not rash shepherd; spare thy guiltless breast.
O give me strength to stay the threaten'd harm,

SCENE II.

And wrench the dagger from his lifted arm!

Dione.

What cruel hand withholds the welcome blow?

In giving life, you but prolong my woe.

O may not thus th'expected stroke impend!

Unloose thy grasp, and let swift death descend.

But if yon murder thy red hands hath dy'd;

Here. Pierce me deep; let forth the vital tide.

[Dione quits the dagger.

Parthenia.

Wait not thy fate; but this way turn thy eyes;

My virgin hand no purple murder dies.

Turn then, Alexis; and Parthenia know,

'Tis she protects thee from the fatal blow.

Dione.

Must the night-watches by my sighs be told?

And must these eyes another morn behold

Though dazzling floods of tears? ungen'rous maid,

The friendly stroke is by thy hand delay'd;

Call it not mercy to prolong my breath;

'Tis but to torture me with lingring death.

Parthenia.

What moves thy hand to act this bloody part?

Whence are these gnawing pangs that tear thy heart;

Is that thy friend who lies before thee slain?

Is it his wound that reeks upon the plain?

Is't Lycidas?

Dione.

No. I the stranger found,

Ere chilly death his frozen tongue had bound.

He said; as at the rosy dawn of day,

He from the city took his vagrant way,

A murd'ring band pour'd on him from the wood,

First seiz'd his gold, than bath'd their swords in blood.

Parthenia.

You, whose ambition labours to be great,

Think on the perils which on riches wait.

Safe are the shepherd's paths; when sober even

Streaks with pale light the bending arch of heaven,

From danger free, thro' desarts wild he hies,

The rising smoke far o'er the mountain spies,

Which marks his distant cottage; on he fares,

For him no murd'ers lay their nightly snares;

They pass him by, they turn their steps away;
 Safe poverty was ne'er the villain's prey.
 At home he lies secure in easy sleep,
 No bars his ivy-mantled cottage keep;
 No thieves in dreams the fancy'd dagger hold,
 And drag him to detect the buried gold;
 Nor starts he from his couch aghast and pale,
 When the door murmurs with the hollow gale.
 While he, whose iron coffers rust with wealth,
 Harbours beneath his roof deceit and stealth;
 Treach'ry with lurking pace frequents his walks,
 And close behind him horrid murder stalks.
 'Tis tempting lucre makes the villain bold,
 There lies a bleeding sacrifice to gold.

Dione.

To live is but to wake to daily cares,
 And journey through a tedious vale of tears.
 Had you not rash'd between, my life had flown;
 And I, like him, no more had sorrow known.

Parthenia.

When anguish in the gloomy bosom dwells,
 The counsel of a friend the cloud dispells.
 Give thy breast vent, the secret grief impart,
 And say what woe lies heavy at thy heart.
 To save thy life kind heaven has succour sent,
 The gods by me thy threaten'd fate prevent.

Dione.

No. To prevent it, is beyond thy power;
 Thou only canst defer the welcome hour.
 When you the lifted dagger turn'd aside,
 Only one road to death thy force deny'd;
 Still fate is in my reach. From mountains high,
 Deep in whose shadow craggy ruins lie,
 Can I not headlong fling this weight of woe,
 And dash out life against the flints below?
 Are there not streams, and lakes and rivers wide,
 Where my last breath may bubble on the tide?
 No. Life shall never flatter me again,
 Nor shall to-morrow bring new sighs and pain.

Parthenia.

Can I this burden of thy soul relieve,
 And calm thy grief?

Dione.

If thou wilt comfort give;
 Plight me thy word, and to that word be just;

Dione

When poor Alexis shall be laid in dust,
That pride no longer shall command thy mind,
That thou wilt spare the friend I leave behind.
I know his virtue worthy of thy breast.
Long in thy love may Lycidas be blest!

Parthenia.

That swain (who would my liberty controul,
To please some short-liv'd transport of his soul)
Shows, while his importuning flame he moves,
That 'tis not me, himself alone he loves.
O live, nor leave him by misfortunes prest;
'Tis shameful to desert a friend distrest.

Dione.

Alas! a wretch like me no loss would prove,
Would kind Parthenia listen to his love.

Parthenia.

Why hides thy bosom this mysterious grief?
Ease thy o'erburden'd heart, and hope relief.

Dione.

What profits it to touch thy tender breast.
With wrongs, like mine, which ne'er can be redrest?
Let in my heart the fatal secret die,
Nor call up sorrow in another's eye!

SCENE III.

DIONE. PARTHENIA. LYCIDAS.

Lycidas.

If Laura right direct the darksome ways,
Along these paths the pensive shepherd strays.
[Aside.

Dione.

Let not a tear for me roll down thy cheek.
O would my throbbing sighs my heart-strings break!

Why was my breast the lifted stroke deny'd?
Must then again the deathful deed be try'd?
Yes. 'Tis resolv'd.

[Snatches the dagger from Parthenia.

Parthenia.

Ah, hold, forbear, forbear!
Lycidas.

Methought distress with shrieks alarm'd mine ear.
Parthenia.

Strike not. Ye gods, defend him from the wound.
Lycidas.

Yes. 'Tis Parthenia's voice, I know the sound.
Some sylvan ravisher would force the maid,
And Laura sent me to her virtue's aid.
Die, villain, die; and seek the shades below.
[Lycidas snatches the dagger from Dione, and stabs her.

Dione.

Whoe'er thou art, I bless thee for the blow.
Lycidas.

Since heav'n ordain'd this arm thy life to guard,
O hear my vows! be love the just reward.
Parthenia.

Rather let vengeance, with her swiftest speed
O'ertake thy flight, and recompense the deed!
Why stays the thunder in the upper sky?
Gather, ye clouds; ye forky lightnings, fly;
On thee may all the wrath of heav'n descend,
Whose barb'rous hand hath slain a faithful friend.
Behold Alexis!
Lycidas.

Would that treach'rous boy
Have forc'd thy virtue to his brutal joy?

What rous'd his passion to this bold advance?
Did e'er thy eyes confess one willing glance?
I know, the faithless youth his trust betray'd;
And well the dagger hath my wrongs repay'd.
Dione.

[Raising herself on her arm.

Breaks not Evander's voice along the glade?
Hah! is it he who holds the reeking blade!
There needed not nor poison, sword or dart;
Thy faithless vows, alas! had broke my heart.
[Aside.

Parthenia.

O tremble, shepherd, for thy rash offence,
The sword is dy'd with murder'd innocence!
His gentle soul no brutal passion seiz'd.
Nor at my bosom was the dagger rais'd;
Self-murder was his aim; the youth I found
Whelm'd in despair, and stay'd the falling wound.

Dione.

Into what mischiefs is the lover led,
Who calls down vengeance on his perjurd head!
O may he ne'er bewail this desp'rate deed,
And may, unknown, unwept, Dione bleed!

[Aside.

Lycidas.

What horrors on the guilty mind attend!
His conscience had reveng'd an injurd friend,
Hadst thou not held the stroke. In death he sought
To lose the heart-consuming pain of thought.
Did not the smooth-tongu'd boy perfidious prove,
Plead his own passion, and betray my love?

Dione.

O let him ne'er this bleeding victim know;
Lest his rash transport, to revenge the blow,

Should in his dearer heart the dagger stain!
That wound would pierce my soul with double pain.

[Aside.

Parthenia.

How did his faithful lips (now pale and cold)
With moving eloquence thy griefs unfold!

Lycidas.

Was he thus faithful? thus, to friendship true?
Then I'm a wretch. All peace of mind, adieu!
If ebbing life yet beat within thy vein,
Alexis, speak; unclosethose lids again.
[Flings himself on the ground near Dione.

See at thy feet the barb'rous villain kneel!
'Tis Lycidas who grasps the bloody steel,
Thy once lov'd friend. Yet e'er I cease to live,
Canst thou a wretched penitent forgive?

Dione.

When low beneath the sable mold I rest,
May a sincerer friendship share thy breast!
Why are those heaving groans? (ah cease to weep!)
May my lost name in dark oblivion sleep;
Let this sad tale no speaking stone declare,
From future eyes to draw a pitying tear.
Let o'er my grave the lev'ling plough—share pass,
Mark not the spot; forget that e'er I was.
Then may'st thou with Parthenia's love be blest,
And not one thought on me thy joys molest!
My swimming eyes are overpower'd with light,
And darkning shadows fleet before thy sight,
May'st thou be happy: ah! my soul is free.

[Dies.

Lycidas.

O cruel shepherdess, for love of thee
[To Parthenia.

This fatal deed was done.

SCENE the last.

LYCIDAS. PARTHENIA. LAURA.

Laura.

Alexis slain!
Lycidas.

Yes. 'Twas I did it. See this crimson stain!
My hands with blood of innocence are dy'd.
O may the moon her silver beauty hide
In rolling clouds! my soul abhors the light;
Shade, shade the murd'rer in eternal night.

Laura.

No rival shepherd is before thee laid;
There bled the chastest, the sincerest maid
That ever sigh'd for love. One her pale face,
Cannot thy weeping eyes the feature trace
Of thy once dear Dione? with wan care
Sunk are those eyes, and livid with despair.

Lycidas.

Dione!

SCENE the last.

Laura.

There pure constancy lies dead!
Lycidas.

May heav'n shower vengeance on this perjur'd head!
As the dry branch that withers on the ground,
So, blasted be the hand that gave the wound!

Off; hold me not. This heart deserves the stroke;
'Tis black with treach'ry. Yes: the vows are broke
[Stabs himself.

Which I so often swore. Vain world, adieu!
Though I was false in life, in death I'm true.
[Dies.

Laura.

To-morrow shall the funeral rites be paid,
And these love-victims in one grave be laid.
Parthenia.

There shall the yew her sable branches spread,
And mournful cypress rear her fringed head.
Laura.

From thence shall thyme and myrtle send perfume,
And laurel ever-green o'ershade the tomb.
Parthenia.

Come, Laura; let us leave this horrid wood,
Where streams the purple grass with lovers blood;
Come to my bower. And as we sorrowing go,
Let poor Dione's story feed my woe
With heart-relieving tears.
Laura.

[Pointing to Dione.

Unhappy maid,
Hadst thou a parent's just command obey'd,
Thou yet hadst liv'd. But who shall love advise?
Love scorns command, and breaks all other ties.
Henceforth, ye swains, be true to vows profest;
For certain vengeance strikes the perjur'd breast.
FINIS.