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TO ———

The flowers that flourish at your feet
Vie with the stars that beam above you,
The tale attempting to repeat
To listening angels that they love you.

But when we meet among the bowers,
Where many a leaf your light form covers,
My blush betrays the truth, that flowers
And stars are not your only lovers.

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WILLIAM COLLINS.

Of the great English odes, one was composed by John Milton, one by John Dryden, one by William Wordsworth, two by Thomas Gray, two by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and three by William Collins. The ode on *The Nativity*, which was looked upon with contempt by the critics of Queen Anne's time, is now acknowledged to be superior, not only to the ode on *Alexander's Feast*, but even to the odes of Pindar. In the "Progress of Poesy," which is always musical, and in the "Bard," which is sometimes sublime, Gray attempted to introduce into English literature the strophe, the antistrophe and the epode of the Greek Theatre. Though the New Year's ode, which the *Morning Post* published for Coleridge on the last day of December, 1796, is probably surpassed by all the rest, his grand apostrophe to France has never, we believe, received its proper meed of praise. In the "Intimations of Immortality from the Recollections of early Childhood," Wordsworth describes the soul as roaming over the ocean of time, disembarking at birth on the shores of mortality, and re-embarking at death on eternity's sea. It was from the Greek philosophers that he got this grand idea, round which he has clustered such a gallery of gorgeous pictures. We come now to Collins, and we intend to linger longer with him than with any of the rest, not because we consider him a greater poet than Milton, Dryden, Gray or Coleridge, but because he was so long neglected, and is still so little known. His fame has not shared the fate of his grave, for though the latter has long been lost, the former gathers brightness as the globe gathers years. In 1746 he published a volume of poems, which contained his allegorical odes and his oriental eclogues, and to which he afterwards

added his ode on the popular superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland, and the sweet little lyric on the death of James Thompson. The "Passions," though the most popular, and perhaps the most musical, is by no means the best of his poems. Our literature has no finer lines than those in which Collins commemorates the death of the brave.

"How sleep the brave who sink to rest,
By all their country's wishes blest?
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.
By fairy hands their knell is rung;
By forms unseen their dirge is sung;
Their Honor comes, a pilgrim grey,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair
To dwell a weeping hermit there."

His ode to Evening, composed in a stanza which, Milton alone excepted, no modern poet has successfully used, reminds us of Milton's "Il Penseroso;" but the tone is more melancholy, and the pictures, appearing through a cloudy haze of tenderness, are, if not more imaginative, at least more pathetic. In his ode to "Liberty" he dwells with delight on the "wild, wide storm, even Nature's self confounding," by which

"This pillared earth so firm and wide,
By winds and inward labors torn,
In thunders dread was pushed aside
And down the shouldering billows borne,"

because it was in consequence of that "blest divorce" that England became liberty's "loved and last abode." Shelley is said to have been so fond of this admirable ode that some of his own poems unconsciously caught its spirit. Liberty's celestial temple is described in the second epode in lines in which Collins is almost superior to himself, and which he has nowhere surpassed except in his ode on "The Poetical Character." "The Fairie Queen" exercised over the mind of Collins an influence which is nowhere more apparent than in this imaginative ode. Let us leave him at the foot of the cloud-covered throne, whose thunders so often reverberated in his ears, whose music was so familiar to his mind, whose sublimity was so feelingly infused into his songs, and whose terrrors were never more tenderly painted than by him to whom God gave a glimpse of his glory, but whom fortune refused to favor with her smile.