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An Heroic Epistle to Sir William
Chambers

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A N
H E R O I C E P I S T L E

T O

SIR WILLIAM CHAMBERS, Knight,
COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF HIS MAJESTY'S WORKS,

And Author of a late Differtation on

O R I E N T A L G A R D E N I N G .

Enriched with explanatory Notes, chiefly extracted from that elaborate
Performance.

Non omnes arbuta juvant, humilisque myricæ. VIRGIL.

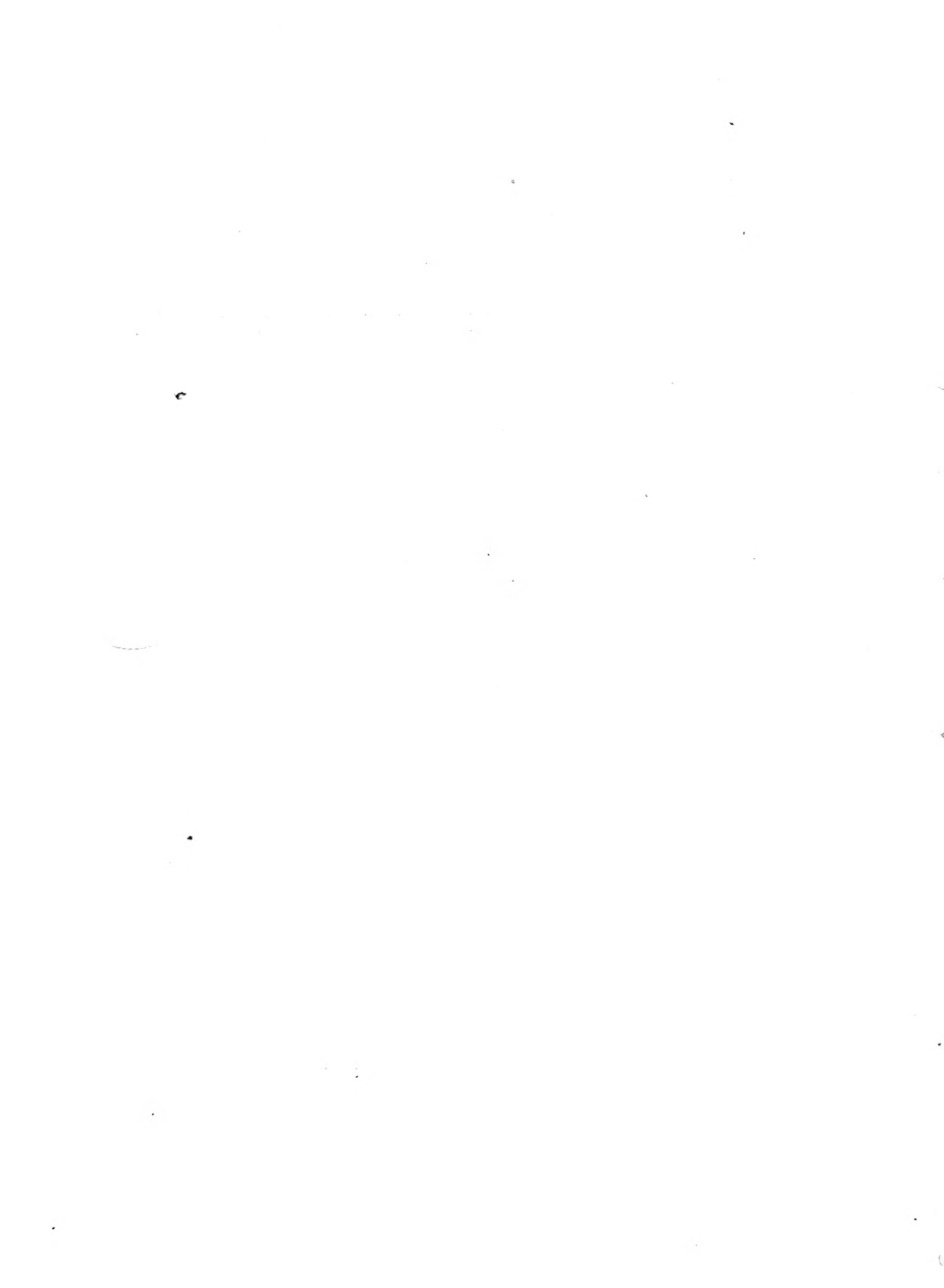
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1773

P R E F A C E.

THIS Poem was written last summer, immediately after the publication of Sir William Chambers's Dissertation; but the bookseller, to whom it was offered, declined publishing it, till the town was full. His reason for this is obvious; yet it would hardly have weigh'd with the author, had he not thought, that his hero's fame would increase in proportion to his publisher's profit. However he foresaw, that, by this delay, one inconvenience might arise, which this preface is written to remove. Readers of the present generation are so very inattentive to what they read, that it is probable, one half of Sir William's may have forgotten the principles which his book inculcates. Let these, then, be reminded, that it is the author's profest aim in extolling the taste of the Chinese, to condemn that mean and paltry manner which Kent introduced, which Southcote, Hamilton, and Brown followed, and which, to our national disgrace, is called the English style of gardening. He shews the poverty of this taste, by aptly comparing it to a dinner, which consisted of three gross pieces, three times repeated; and proves to a demonstration, that Nature herself is incapable of pleasing, without the assistance of Art, and that too of the most luxuriant kind. In short, such art as is displayed in the Emperor's garden of Yven-Ming-

Ming-Yven, near Pekin; where fine lizards, and fine women, human giants, and giant baboons, make but a small part of the superb scenery. He teaches us, that a perfect garden must contain within itself all the amusements of a great city; that *Urbs in rure*, not *Rus in urbe*, is the thing, which an improver of true taste ought to aim at. He says ---but it is impossible to abridge all that he says:---Let this therefore suffice, to tempt the reader again to peruse his invaluable Dissertation, since without it, he will never relish half the beauties of the following epistle; for (if her Majesty's Zebra, and the powder-mills at Hounslow be excepted) there is scarce a single image in it, which is not taken from that work.

But though the images be borrowed, the author claims some small merit from his application of them. Sir William says too modestly, "that European artists must not hope to rival Oriental splendor." The poet shews, that European artists may easily rival it; and, that Richmond gardens, with only the addition of a new bridge to join them to Brentford, may be new modelled, perfectly *à la Chinois*. He exhorts his Knight to undertake the glorious task, and leaves no cause to doubt, but that, under the auspicious patronage he now so justly enjoys, added to the ready vote of those, who furnish ways and means, the royal work will speedily be completed.

Knightbridge, Jan. 20th, 1773.

AN HEROIC EPISTLE

T O

SIR WILLIAM CHAMBERS, Knight, &c. &c.

K NIGHT of the Polar Star! by Fortune plac'd
To shine the Cynosure of British taste;
Whose orb collects, in one refulgent view,
The scatter'd glories of Chinese Virtù;

C

And

N O T E.

Verse 2. [Cynosure of British taste]. Cynosure, an affected phrase. Cynosura is the constellation of Ursa Minor, or the Lesser Bear, the next star to the Pole. Dr. Newton, on the word in Milton.

And spread their lustre in so broad a blaze, 5
 That Kings themselves are dazzled while they gaze.
 O let the Muse attend thy march sublime,
 And, with thy prose, caparison her rhyme;
 Teach her, like thee, to gild her splendid song,
 With scenes of Yven-Ming, and sayings of Li-T'fong; 10
 Like thee to scorn Dame Nature's simple fence;
 Leap each Ha Ha of truth and common sense;
 And proudly rising in her bold career,
 Demand attention from the gracious ear
 Of Him, whom we and all the world admit, 15
 Patron supreme of science, taste, and wit.

Does

N O T E.

Verse 10. [With scenes of Yven-Ming.] One of the Imperial gardens at Peking. [Sayings of Li-T'fong.] "Many trees, shrubs, and flowers," sayeth Li-T'fong, a Chinese author of great antiquity, "thrive best in low, moist situations; many on hills and mountains; some require a rich soil; but others will grow on clay, in sand, or even upon rocks, and in the water: to some a sunny exposition is necessary; but for others the shade is preferable. There are plants which thrive best in exposed situations, but in general, shelter is requisite. The skilful gardener, to whom study and experience have taught these qualities, carefully attends to them in his operations; knowing that thereon depend the health and growth of his plants; and consequently the beauty of his plantations." Vide *Diß.* p. 77. The reader, I presume, will readily allow, that he never met with so much recendite truth, as this ancient Chinese here exhibits.

Does Envy doubt? Witnefs ye chofen train!
 Who breathe the fweets of his Saturnian reign;
 Witnefs ye H*lls, ye J*ns*ns, Sc*ts, S*bb*s,
 Hark to my call, for fome of you have ears. 20
 Let D**d H*c, from the remoteft North,
 In fee-faw feptic feruples hint his worth;
 D**d, who there fupinely deigns to lye
 The fatteft Hog of Epicuru's fty;
 Tho' drunk with Gallic wine, and Gallic praitè, 25
 D**d fhall blefs Old England's halcyon days;
 The mighty Home bemir'd in profe fo long,
 Again fhall stalk upon the filts of fong;
 While bold Mac-Offian, wont in ghofts to deal,
 Bids candid Smollet from his coffin steal; 30
 Bids Mallock quit his fweet Elyfian reft,
 Sunk in his St. John's philofophic breaft,
 And, like old Orpheus, make fome ftrong effort
 To come from Hell, and warble *truth at Court*.

There

N O T E.

Verfe 34. [Truth at Court. Vide (if it be extant) a poem under this title, for which (or for the publication of Lord Bolingbroke's philofophical writings) the perfon here mentioned, received a confiderable penfion in the time of Lord B—te's adminiftration.

There was a time, “ in Efher’s peaceful grove, 35
 “ When Kent and Nature vy’d for Pelham’s love,”
 That Pope beheld them with auspicious fmile,
 And own’d that Beauty blest their mutual toil.
 Mistaken Bard! could fuch a pair defign
 Scenes fit to live in thy immortal line? 40
 Hadit though been born in this enlighten’d day,
 Felt, as we feel, Taffe’s oriental ray,
 Thy fatire fure had given them both a ftab,
 Called Kent a Driveller, and the Nymph a Drab.
 For what is Nature? Ring her changes round, 45
 Her three flat notes are water, plants, and ground;

Prolong

N O T E.

Verse 45. [For what is Nature?] This is the great and fundamental axiom, on which oriental taste is founded. It is therefore expreffed here with the greateft precision, and in the identical phrafe of the great original. The figurative terms, and even the explanatory fmile, are entirely borrowed from Sir William’s Differtation. “ *Nature* (fays the Chinefe, or Sir William for them) affords us but few materials to work with. *Plants, ground, and water,* are her only productions; and, though both the forms and arrangements of thefe may be varied to an incredible degree, yet have they but few ftiking varieties, the reft being of the nature of *changes rung upon bells,* which, though in reality different, ftill produce the fame uniform kind of *gingling;* the variation being too minute to be eafily perceived.” “ *Art* muft therefore fupply *the fcarcinefs of Nature,*” &c. &c. page 14.

And

Prolong the peal, yet spite of all your clatter,
 The tedious chime is still ground, plants, and water.
 So, when some John his dull invention racks,
 To rival Boodle's dinners, or Almack's, 50
 Three uncouth legs of mutton shock our eyes,
 Three roasted geese, three butter'd apple-pies.

Come then, prolific Art, and with thee bring
 The charms that rise from thy exhaustless spring;
 To Richmond come, for see, untutor'd Brown 55
 Destroys those wonders which were once thy own.
 Lo, from his melon-ground the peasant slave
 Has rudely rush'd, and levell'd Merlin's Cave;
 Knock'd down the waxen Wizzard, seiz'd his wand,
 Transform'd to lawn what late was Fairy land; 60
 And marr'd, with impious hand, each sweet design
 Of Stephen Duck, and good Queen Caroline.

D

Haste

N O T E.

And again, "Our larger works are only a repetition of the small ones, like the honest Bachelor's feast, which consisted in nothing but a multiplication of his own dinner; three legs of mutton and turneps, three roasted geese, and three buttered apple-pies." Preface, page 7.

Haste, bid yon livelong Terras re-ascend,
 Replace each vista, straighten every bend;
 Shut out the Thames; shall that ignoble thing
 Approach the presence of great Ocean's King?
 No! let Barbaric glories feast his eyes,
 August Pagodas round his palace rise,
 And finish'd Richmond open to his view,
 " A work to wonder at, perhaps a" Kew.
 Nor rest we here, but, at our magic call,
 Monkeys shall climb our trees, and lizards crawl;

65

70

Huge

N O T E S.

Verse 67. [No! let Barbaric glories.] So Milton.

" Where the gorgeous East with richest hand
 Showers on her Kings *Barbaric* pearl and gold."

Verse 72. [Monkeys shall climb our trees.] " In their lofty woods *serpents* and *lizards* of many beautiful sorts crawl upon the ground. Innumerable *monkeys*, *cats*, and *parrots* clamber upon the trees." Page 40. " In their lakes are many *islands*, some small, some large, amongst which are often seen stalking along, *the elephant*, the rhinoceros, the dromedary, ostrich, and the giant baboon." Page 66. " They keep in their enchanted scenes, a surprizing variety of monstrous birds, reptiles and animals, which are tamed by art, and guarded by enormous *dogs of Tibet* and *African giants*, in the habits of magicians." Page 42. " Sometimes in this romantic excursion, the passenger finds himself in extensive recesses, surrounded with arbours of jessamine, vine, and roses; where beautiful *Tartarcan damisels*, in loose transparent robes that flutter in the air, present him with rich

Huge dogs of Tibet bark in yonder grove,
 Here parrots prate, there cats make cruel love ;
 In some fair island will we turn to grafs 75
 (With the Queen's leave) her elephant and afs,
 Giants from Africa shall guard the glades,
 Where hiss our snakes, where sport our Tartar maids ;
 Or, wanting these, from Charlotte Hayes we bring,
 Damsels alike adroit to sport and sting. 80

Now to our lawns of dalliance and delight,
 Join we the groves of horror and affright ; -
 This to atchieve no foreign aids we try,
 Thy gibbets, Bagshot ! shall our wants supply ;
 Hounslow, whose heath sublimer terror fills, 85
 Shall with her gibbets lend her powder mills.

Here

N O T E S.

rich wines, &c. and invite him to taste the sweets of retirement, on Persian carpets, and beds of Camusathkin down." Page 40.

Verse 84. [Thy gibbets, Bagshot !] " Their scenes of terror are composed of gloomy woods, &c. *gibbets*, crosses, wheels, and the whole apparatus of torture are seen from the roads. Here too they conceal in cavities, on the summits of the highest mountains, founderies, lime-kilns, and glass works, which send forth large volumes of flame, and continued columns of thick smoke, that give to these mountains the appearance of Volcans."

Here too, O King of Vengeance, in thy fane,
 Tremendous Wilkes shall rattle his gold chain;
 And round that fane on many a Tyburn tree,
 Hang fragments dire of Newgate-history;
 On this shall H*ll*d's dying speech be read,
 Here B—te's confession, and his wooden head;
 While all the minor-plunderers of the age
 (Too numerous far for this contracted page)
 The R*g*ys, Mungos, B*ds*ws there,
 In straw-stufft effigy, shall kick the air.

90

95

But

N O T E S.

"Volcanos." Page 37. "Here the passenger from time to time, is surprized with repeated shocks of electrical impulse; the earth trembles under him by the power of confined air," &c. Page 39. Now to produce both these effects, viz. the appearance of volcanos and earthquakes, we have here substituted the occasional explosion of a *powder-mill*, which (if there be not too much simplicity in the contrivance) it is apprehended will at once answer all the purposes of *lime-kilns*, and *electrical machines*, and imitate *thunder*, and the *explosion of cannon* into the bargain. Vide page 40.

Verse 87. [Here too, O King of Vengeance, &c.] "In the most dismal recesses of the woods, are temples dedicated to the *King of Vengeance*, near which are placed pillars of stone, with *pathetic descriptions of tragical events*; and many acts of cruelty perpetrated there by *outlaws* and *robbers*." Page 37.

Verse 88. [Tremendous Wilkes.] This was written while Mr. Wilkes was Sheriff of London, and when it was to be feared he would rattle his chain a year longer as Lord Mayor.

But say, ye powers, who come when Fancy calls,
 Where shall our mimic London rear her walls ?
 That Eastern feature, Art must next produce,
 Tho' not for present, yet for future use ; 100
 Our sons some slave of greatness may behold,
 Cast in the genuine Asiatic mould ;
 Who's of three realms shall condescend to know
 No more than he can spy from Windsor's brow ;
 For Him that blessing of a better time, 105
 The Muse shall deal awhile in brick and lime ;
 Surpass the bold ΑΔΕΛΦΙ in design,
 And o'er the Thames fling one stupendous line

E

Of

N O T E S.

Verse 98. [Where shall our mimic London, &c.] “ There is likewise in the same garden, viz. Yven-Ming-Yven, near Peking, a *fortified town*, with its port, streets, public squares, temples, markets, shops, and tribunals of justice ; in short, with every thing that is at Peking, only on a smaller scale.”

“ In this town the Emperors of China, who are too much *the slaves of their greatness* to appear in public, and their women, who are excluded from it by custom, are frequently diverted with the hurry and bustle of the capital, which is there represented, several times in the year, by the eunuchs of the palace.” Page 32.

Of marble arches, in a bridge, that cuts
 From Richmond Ferry flant to Brentford Butts. 110
 Brentford with London's charms will we adorn;
 Brentford, the bishoprick of Parson Horne.
 There at one glance, the royal eye shall meet
 Each varied beauty of St. James's Street;
 Stout T*lb*t there shall ply with hackney chair, 115
 And Patriot Betty fix her fruitshop there.
 Like distant thunder, now the coach of state
 Rolls o'er the bridge that groans beneath its weight.
 The Court have cross'd the stream; the sports begin;
 Now N**l preaches of Rebellion's sin: 120
 And as the powers of his strong pathos rise,
 Lo, brazen tears fall from Sir Fl**r's eyes.

While

N O T E S.

Verse 109. [Of marble arches.] See Sir William's enormous account of Chinese bridges, too long to be here inserted. Vide page 53.

Verse 115. [Stout T*lb*t, &c.] "Some of these eunuchs personate porters." Page 32.

Verse 116. [And Patriot Betty.] "Fruits and all sorts of refreshments are cried about the streets in this mock city." Page 33.

Verse 122. [Lo brazen tears, &c.]

Drew *iron* tears down Pluto's cheek. Milton.

While skulking round the pews, that babe of grace,
 Who ne'er before at sermon shew'd his face,
 See Jemmy Twitcher shambles; stop! stop thief! 125
 He's stol'n the E* of D*nb*h's handkerchief.
 Let B*rr*t*n arrest him in mock fury,
 And M**d hang the knave without a jury.
 But hark the voice of battle shouts from far,
 The Jews and Macaroni's are at war: 130
 The Jews prevail, and, thund'ring from the stocks,
 They seize, they bind, they circumcise C*s F*.
 Fair Schw***n smiles the sport to see,
 And all the Maids of Honour cry Te! He!

N O T E S.

Verse 125. [See Jemmy Twitcher shambles.] "Neither are thieves, pickpockets, and sharpers forgot in these festivals; that noble profession is usually allotted to a good number of the most dextrous eunuchs." Vide, *ibid.*

Verse 127. [Let B*rr*t*n.] "The watch seizes on the culprit." Vide, *ibid.*

Verse 128. [And M**d, &c.] "He is conveyed before the Judge, and sometimes severely bastinadoed." *Ibid.*

Verse 129. [But hark, &c.] "Quarrels happen—battles ensue." *ibid.*

Verse 132. [Circumcise C*s F*.] "Every liberty is permitted, there is no distinction of persons." *ibid.*

Verse 134. [And all the Maids of Honour, &c.] "This is done to divert his Imperial Majesty, and the ladies of his train." Vide *ibid.*

Be these the rural pastimes that attend
 Great B*ntw*k's leisure: these shall best unbend
 His royal mind, when'er from state withdraw'n,
 He treads the velvet of his Richmond lawn;
 These shall prolong his Asiatic dream,
 Tho' Europe's balance trembles on its beam. 135
 And thou, Sir William! while thy plastic hand
 Creates each wonder, which thy Bard has plann'd,
 While, as thy art commands, obsequious rise
 Whate'er can please, or frighten, or surprize,
 O! let that Bard his Knight's protection claim,
 And share, like faithful Sancho, Quixote's fame. 146



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