Ode Written in the Beginning of the Year 1746

How sleep the brave\(^1\) who sink to rest
By all their country’s wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mold,
5 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;
There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
10 To bless the turf that wraps their clay,
And Freedom shall awhile repair,
To dwell a weeping hermit there!

1746

Ode on the Death of Mr. Thomson\(^1\)

1
In yonder grave a Druid\(^2\) lies
Where slowly winds the stealing wave!
The year's best sweets shall duteous rise
To deck its poet's sylvan grave!\(^3\)

2
5 In yon deep bed of whispering reeds
His airy harp\(^4\) shall now be laid,
That he, whose heart in sorrow bleeds,
May love through life the soothing shade.

3
Then maids and youths shall linger here,
10 And while its sounds at distance swell,

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1. Collins is presumably thinking of those who lost their lives defending England in 1745, when the Scotch Jacobites, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, penetrated to within 127 miles of London.
2. I.e., Thomson himself. The Druids, an order of priests in ancient Britain, had been idealized by Thomson as poet-philosophers of nature. Druidic circles like Stonehenge remain standing in England, and Collins's *Ode* itself might be said to have a circular form (the same beginning and ending).
3. The year pays tribute to Thomson because he wrote *The Seasons*.
4. Thomson had helped to popularize the Aeolian harp, which is played by the wind.
Shall sadly seem in pity's ear
To hear the woodland pilgrim's knell.

Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore
When Thames in summer wreaths is dressed,
And oft suspend the dashing oar
To bid his gentle spirit rest!

And oft as ease and health retire
To breezy lawn or forest deep,
The friend shall view yon whitening spire,
And mid the varied landscape weep.

But thou, who own'st that earthy bed,
Ah! what will every dirge avail?
Or tears, which love and pity shed
That mourn beneath the gliding sail!

Yet lives there one, whose heedless eye
Shall scorn thy pale shrine glimmering near?
With him, sweet bard, may fancy die,
And joy desert the blooming year.

But thou, lorn stream, whose sullen tide
No sedge-crowned sisters now attend,
Now waft me from the green hill's side,
Whose cold turf hides the buried friend!

And see, the fairy valleys fade,
Dun night has veiled the solemn view!
—Yet once again, dear parted shade,
Meek nature's child, again adieu!

The genial meads, assigned to bless
Thy life, shall mourn thy early doom,
Their hinds and shepherd girls shall dress
With simple hands thy rural tomb.

Long, long, thy stone and pointed clay
Shall melt the musing Briton's eyes,
"O! vales and wild woods," shall he say,
"In yonder grave your Druid lies!"

5. Richmond Church, seen from the water.
6. Naiads, or river nymphs, supposed to have deserted the Thames since Thomson's death.
7. I.e., pointed out to visitors.