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P R O E M.

GENTLE READER!

LO, here a CAMERA OBSCURA¹ is presented
to thy view, in which are lights and shades
dancing on a whited canvas, and magnified
into apparent life!--if thou art perfectly at
leisure for such trivial amusement, walk in,

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and view the wonders of my INCHANTED
GARDEN.

Whereas P. OVIDIUS NASO,² a great
Necromancer in the famous Court of
AUGUSTUS CÆSAR,³ did by art poetic
transmute Men, Women, and even Gods and
Goddesses, into Trees and Flowers; I have
undertaken by similar art to restore some of
them to their original animality, after having
remained prisoners so long in their respective
vegetable mansions; and have here exhibited
them before thee. Which thou may'st
contemplate as diverse little pictures
suspended over the chimney of a Lady's
dressing-room, *connected only by a slight
festoon of ribbons*. And which,

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though thou may'st not be acquainted with
the originals, may amuse thee by the beauty
of their persons, their graceful attitudes, or
the brilliancy of their dress.

F A R E W E L L.

[Figure: [Cameo] T. Holloway sculp.⁴]

¹ Latin for “dark room”; a room or a box into which light enters through a small hole, which may have a lens, to project an image on an opposite wall or other surface. The image would be projected upside-down, unless the camera obscura was fitted with a mirror. As well as being used for entertainment, it was used by artists for tracing images.

² Roman poet Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE), not literally a necromancer. ED refers to his poem *Metamorphoses*, composed c. 2–8 CE, a collection of myths with an emphasis on shape-changing.

³ Title given to Octavian (63 BCE–4 CE), first emperor of Rome.

⁴ “sculp” stands for “sculpsit,” that is, engraved the image. Thomas Holloway’s (1748–1827) greatest project was contributing to the engravings for the English edition of *Essays on Physiognomy* (1789–98) by Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801). The hundreds of engravings for the publication, to which William Blake (1757–1827) also contributed, were overseen by artist, writer, and translator Henry Fuseli (1741–1825). A different design had been used in 1789 (see Appendix 1.2). In ED’s words, the 1789 image shows Cupid “giving warmth or love to a Butterfly” and in the subsequent version, “inspiring or inflaming a flower” (King-Hele, ed., *Letters*, 89-12).