COWPER'S POEMS.

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought;
Away went hat and wig—

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POEMS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.;

WITH

A NEW MEMOIR.

COMPILED FROM JOHNSON, SOUTHEY AND OTHER SOURCES.

Philadelphia:
URIAH HUNT & SON,
44 North Fourth Street.

1846

MEMOIR

OF

WILLIAM COWPER.

William Cowper was born on the 15th of November, (old style,) 1731, in the Rectory of Great Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire. His father, the Rector of the parish, was John Cowper, D. D., son of Spencer Cowper, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, and next brother to the first earl Cowper, Lord Chancellor. His mother, the daughter of Roger Donne, Esq., of Norfolk, was of noble, and remotely of royal descent. It is not, however, for her genealogy, but for being the mother of a great poet, that this lady will be remembered. She died at the age of thirty-four, leaving of several children, only two sons. "I can truly say," said Cowper, nearly fifty years after her death, "that not a week passes, (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day,) in which I do not think of her; such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short." At the time of her death, Cowper was but six years old; but young as he was, he felt his loss most poignantly, and has recorded his feelings on the occasion of her loss, in the most beautiful of his minor poems.

Soon after his mother's death, Cowper was sent to a boarding-school, where he suffered much from the cruelty of one of the elder boys. "Such was his savage treatm-

of me," says he, "that I well remember being afraid to lift my eyes higher than his knees, and I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress." His infancy is said to have been "delicate in no common degree," and his constitution appears early to have discovered a morbid tendency to despondency. When Cowper was ten years old, he was sent to Westminster School, where he remained eight years. At Westminster he obtained an excellent classical education, and was much beloved by his companions, among whom were Lloyd, Colman, Churchill, and Warren Hastings; but he complains much of his want of religious instruction at this school. "At the age of eighteen," he says, "being tolerably well furnished with grammatical knowledge, but as ignorant of all kinds of religion as the satchel at my back, I was taken from Westminster."

He was now placed with an attorney, and had for his fellow clerk Thurlow, the after Lord Chancellor. He, however, made but little progress in the study of the law. "I did actually live," he writes his cousin Lady Hesketh, many years afterwards, "three years with a Solicitor; that is to say, I slept three years in his house; but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days, in Southampton Row, as you well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night, in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law."

In 1752, at the age of twenty-one, Cowper took chambers in the Temple; and in a Memoir which he wrote some years afterwards, he thus describes the commencement of that malady which embittered so much of his future life. "Not long after my settlement in the Temple, I was struck with such a dejection of spirits, as none but they who have felt the same, can have any conception of. [illegible] and night I was upon the rack, lying down in horror [illegible]ing up in despair. . . . . In this state of mind I

continued near a twelve-month; when having experienced the inefficacy of all human means, I, at length, betook myself to God in prayer." Shortly after this, as he was walking in the country, "I felt," he continues, "the weight of all my misery taken off, and my heart became light and joyful in a moment. . . . . But Satan, and my own wicked heart, soon persuaded me that I was indebted for my deliverance, to nothing but a change of scene, and on this hellish principle I burnt my prayers, and away went all my thoughts of devotion."

For ten years after being called to the bar, Cowper continued to reside in the Temple, amusing himself with literature and society, and making little or no effort to pursue his profession. He belonged to the "Nonsense Club," consisting of seven Westminster men, among whom were Lloyd, Colman, and Bonnell Thornton; assisted the two latter in the "Connoisseur," and "though he wrote and published," says Hayley, "both verse and prose, it was as the concealed assistant of less diffident authors."

Meantime, he had fixed his affections on Theodora Jane, the daughter of his uncle, Ashley Cowper; one of those ladies with whom he used to "giggle and make giggle," in Southampton Row. She is described as a lady of great personal and mental attractions; and their affection was mutual. But her father objected to their union, both on the score of means and consanguinity. When it was found that his decision was final, the lovers never met again. It does not appear that this disappointment had any influence in inducing the return of his malady. In respect to love, as well as friendship and fame, few poets, and perhaps few men, have possessed feelings more sane and healthy, than Cowper. In after life, he said to Lady Hesketh, "I still look back to the memory of your sister and regret her; but how strange it is; if we were to meet now, we should not know each other." It was different with Theodo

She lived unmarried, to extreme old age, and carefully preserved the poems which he had given her during their intercourse, to the end of her life.

At the age of thirty-one, the little patrimony, which had been left Cowper by his father, was well nigh spent. At this time, his uncle, who had the place at his disposal, offered him the clerkship of the Journals of the House of Lords. Cowper gladly accepted the offer, as the business being transacted in private, would be especially suited to his disposition, which was shy and reserved to a remarkable degree. But some political opposition arising, it was found necessary that he should prepare himself for an examination at the bar of the House. And now began a course of mental suffering, such as, perhaps, has never been described, except in his own fearful "Memoir." "I knew" says he, "to demonstration, that on these terms, the clerkship of the Journals was no place for me, to whom a public exhibition of myself on any occasion, was mortal poison." As the time for his examination approached, his distress of mind increased. He even hoped, and expected, that his intellect would fail him, in time to excuse his appearance at the bar. "But the day of decision drew near" he continues, "and I was still in my senses. At last came the grand temptation;—the point, to which Satan had all the time been driving me; the dark and hellish purpose of self-murder." In short, after several irresolute attempts at suicide, by poison and drowning, Cowper actually hanged himself to the door of his chamber; and only escaped death by the breaking of his garter, by which he was suspended. All thoughts of the office were now, of course, given up. His insanity remained, but its form was somewhat modified. He was no longer disposed to suicide, but "conviction of sin, and especially of that just committed," and despair of God's mercy, were now never absent from his thoughts. In every book that he opened he

found something which struck him to the heart. He almost believed that the "voice of his conscience was loud enough for any one to hear;" and he thought that "the people in the street stared and laughed" at him. When he attempted to repeat the creed, which he did, in experiment of his faith, he felt a sensation in his brain, "like a tremulous vibration of all its fibres," and thus lost the words; and he therefore concluded, in unspeakable agony, that he had committed the unpardonable sin. At length, he became a raving madman, and his friends now placed him at St. Albans, under the care of Dr. Cotton, a skilful and humane physician. Sometime previous to his removal to St. Albans, Cowper wrote the following Stanzas, descriptive of his state of mind:

Hatred and vengeance—my eternal portion
Scarce can endure delay of execution—
Wait with impatient readiness to seize my
Soul in a moment.

Damned below Judas; more abhorred than he was
Who for a few pence sold his holy Master!
Twice betrayed Jesus me, the last delinquent,
Deems the profanest.

Man disavows, and Deity disowns me.
Hell might afford my miseries a shelter;
Therefore, Hell keeps her ever-hungry mouths all
Bolted against me.

Hard lot! encompassed with a thousand dangers;
Weary, faint, trembling with a thousand terrors,
I'm called in anguish to receive a sentence
Worse than Abiram's.

"This," says Southey, "was the character of his madness—the most dreadful in which madness can present itself. He threw away the Bible, as a book in which he no longer had any interest or portion. A vein of ser-

loathing and abhorrence ran through all his insanity, and he passed some months in continual expectation that the Divine vengeance would instantly plunge him into the bottomless pit. But horrors in madness are like those in dreams; the maniac and the dreamer seem to undergo what could not possibly be undergone by one awake or in his senses." With Dr. Cotton, Cowper remained five months, without amendment; but after discovering various symptoms of returning reason, during the next three "my despair," he says, "suddenly took wings, and left me in joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

When his recovery was considered complete, his relatives subscribed an annual allowance, just sufficient, with his own small means, to support him respectably in retirement, and sent him to reside at Huntingdon. Here he soon became greatly attached to the family of Mr. Unwin, a clergyman, in whose house he finally took up his abode. From this excellent family he never separated, until death dissolved their connexion. Mrs. Unwin, the "Mary" of one of his most popular minor poems, was his friend in health, and his nurse in sickness, for more than twenty years.

Of his way of life at Huntingdon, he thus writes: "As to what the world calls amusements, we have none. We refuse to take part in them, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. We breakfast between eight and nine: till eleven we read the Scriptures or the sermons of some faithful preacher, when we attend divine service, which is performed here, twice every day." Walking, gardening, reading, religious conversation, and singing hymns, filled up the interval till evening, when they again had a sermon or hymns, and closed the day with family worship. "I need not say," he continues, "that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness; accordingly we are all happy." At this time Cowper had

little communication with his relatives, and none with his former companions.

In July 1767, Mr. Unwin died; his children had previously settled in life; and Cowper and Mrs. Unwin uniting their means of living, now much reduced, went to reside at Olney. Here they lived many years under the pastoral care of the celebrated Mr. Newton, with whom they were in the strictest habits of personal intimacy.

"Mr. Newton," says Southey, "was a man, whom it was impossible not to admire for his strength and sincerity of heart, vigorous intellect, and sterling worth. A sincerer friend Cowper could not have found: he might have found a more discreet one." Cowper's religious duties and exercises were now much more arduous than at Huntingdon. This "man of trembling sensibilities" attended the sick, and administered consolation to the dying; and so constantly was he employed in offices of this kind, that he was considered as a sort of curate to Mr. Newton. In the prayer-meetings which Mr. Newton established, Cowper, to whom "public exhibition of himself was mortal poison," was expected to take a part. "I have heard him say," says Mr. Greatheed, in Cowper's funeral sermon, "that when he was expected to take the lead in your social worship, his mind was always greatly agitated for some hours preceding."

Cowper's correspondence with his friends was now even more restricted than heretofore. This was partly owing to his engagements with Mr. Newton, from whom he was seldom "seven waking hours apart;" but it was the tendency of those engagements to restrict his sympathies, and render his friendships torpid. "A letter on any other subject than that of religion," he writes at this time, "is more insipid to me, than even my task was when a school-boy." He read little, and had little society except that of Mr. Newton and Mrs. Unwin; and the only really intellectual

occupation, in which he was engaged for nearly seven years, was the composition of some of the "Olney Hymns." This, Hayley represents as a "perilous employment" for a mind like Cowper's; "and if," says Southey, "Cowper expressed his own state of mind in these hymns, (and that he did so, who can doubt) Hayley has drawn the right conclusion from the fact."

His malady was now about to return. Its recurrence has been referred to various causes;—the death of his brother, and a supposed engagement of marriage with Mrs. Unwin, have both been adduced, as the probable occasions; the latter of which, Southey considers as utterly unfounded.

Cowper's mind was, doubtless, at all times, highly susceptible of derangement from several causes. The disease, which was inherent to his constitution, only required some untoward circumstance to develop it. And the chief disturbing influence at this time, appears to have been religious excitement. His tender, willing, and easily-troubled spirit, had so often thrilled with the exstasies of devotion; and had so often been agitated and repulsed by those of its duties, which were uncongenial, and to him, even revolting, that it at last became epileptic. He sometimes speaks of his heart as if it was paralized; and the moaning burden of his later hymns is that he "cannot feel." According to Mr. Newton's own account of himself, "his name was up through the country, for preaching people mad;" it would therefore seem to follow, that he should have been the last person in the world, to take spiritual charge of one, who had once been a madman. But from whatever cause, in January, 1773, Cowper's case had become one of decided insanity. Medical advice was not sought until eight months after this time; as Mr. Newton, believing his disease to be entirely the work of the Enemy, expected his cure only special interposition of Providence. "From what

I told Dr. Cotton," Mr. Newton writes in August, "he seemed to think it a difficult case. It may be so according to medical rules; but I still hope the Great Physician will cure him either by giving a blessing to means, or immediately by His own hand." But Cowper still continued to grow worse, and in the following October, he attempted suicide. A remarkable characteristic of his delirium, at this time, and one which shows how strongly, even in insanity, Cowper was influenced by conscience, was his perfect submission to what he believed to be the will of God. "And he believed," says Mr. Newton, "that it was the will of God, he should, after the example of Abraham, perform an expensive act of obedience, and offer not a son, but himself." He again believed, as heretofore, that, by a sort of special act, he had been excluded from salvation, and all the gifts of the spirit; and with "deplorable consistency," says Mr. Greatheed, "abstained not only from public and domestic worship, but also from private prayer."

In this state of hopeless misery he remained till the ensuing May, when he began to manifest symptoms of amendment. "Yesterday," writes Mr. Newton, May 14th, "as he was feeding chickens,—for he is always busy if he can get out of doors,—some little incident made him smile. I am pretty sure it was the first smile that has been seen upon his face for more than sixteen months." Soon after this he began to pay some attention to gardening: and in gardening, and other light occupations, he continued to employ himself nearly two years, gradually improving in health and spirits, but incapable of being entertained either by books or company. It was at this interval that Cowper amused himself with the far-famed hares, Tiney, Puss and Bess, which he has immortalized, both in verse and prose.

But in the autumn of 1777, though his fatal delusic

specting his spiritual welfare continued, his intellect and social feelings awoke to activity. He now renewed his correspondence with some of his old friends, his love of reading revived, and he occasionally produced a small poem. Mrs. Unwin, observing the happy effect of composition on his health and spirits, now excited him to more decided literary exertion; and, at her suggestion, he commenced his Moral Satires. So eagerly did he pursue his new employment, that the first of these poems was written in December, 1780, and the last in the following March.

These productions met with the approbation of his friends, and by them,—for Cowper was almost indifferent on the subject,—it was finally determined to publish them.

Mr. Newton had the year previous, much to Cowper's regret, removed to London. But the loss of his society, was for a time, more than made up by a new acquaintance. This was Lady Austen, a highly intelligent and agreeable woman, the widow of a baronet, who, while Cowper was preparing his volume for the press, visited Olney; and the acquaintance which was then formed, soon ripened into such warm friendship, between Cowper and Mrs. Unwin, and herself, that she ultimately, in consequence, came to Olney to reside. Their kindly intercourse, however, after continuing about two years, was unhappily broken off; and love and jealousy have been mentioned as among the causes of their estrangement. That there may have been jealousy of attention and of influence between "two women constantly in the society of one man," and that man, Cowper, all, who know the female heart, will readily believe. But it does not appear, as has been asserted, that there was any expectation of marriage entertained by either of the parties. Cowper, and Mrs. Unwin, who was considerably older than himself, had now lived together some years on joint income; and no pecuniary objection existed to their union.

But the only union, that either desired, had long since been formed. It was a union purely of the nobler sympathies—of religious and social feelings—of self-sacrificing devotedness, and of consequent grateful affection;—such as must, almost of necessity, arise between a man and a woman, possessed of the highest moral qualities, and relatively situated, as they were to each other, but which the vulgar and censorious (great and small) cannot or will not understand. As to Lady Austen, Cowper's own account of the matter is, that she had too much vivacity for their staid course of life, that the attentions she exacted interfered with his studies, and that she was too easily offended; hence a coldness ensued, and finally a separation. But while the intimacy continued, Lady Austen undoubtedly exercised a highly valuable influence on Cowper's literary efforts. "Had it not been for Mrs. Unwin," says Southey, "Cowper would probably never have appeared in his own person as an author; had it not been for Lady Austen, he would never have been a popular one." His first volume of Poems, which was published in 1782, obtained but little notice, except among his friends; but to please his friends was sufficient for Cowper, and he continued to write, notwithstanding the disregard of the public. Lady Austen, whose conversation, for a time, is said to have had "as happy an effect on his spirits as the harp of David upon Saul," one afternoon, when he was unusually depressed, told him the story of John Gilpin, which she had heard in her childhood. The story amused him greatly, and before the next morning, he had turned it into a ballad. This soon found its way into the newspapers, and sometime afterwards, it was recited, with wonderful effect, by Henderson, the actor, who was then delivering public recitations at Freemason's Hall. The ballad now became suddenly popular, and Gilpin was to be seen in every print-shop, while the author was unknown. Meantime the

Task, suggested also by Lady Austen, and far the best and most popular of his longer poems, had been completed; it was published in 1785, and with it, was printed John Gilpin. Cowper was therefore known to be its author; and those who had been amused with the ballad, now read the Task, and inquired for his previous volume, and Cowper became, at once, the most popular poet of the day.

In November, 1784, immediately after the completion of the Task, Cowper began the translation of Homer. He had now found by experience that regular employment was essential to his well-being;—employment too, of a really intellectual nature, such as would call into activity, without too much exciting, the best powers of his mind. "A long and perplexing thought," he said, "buzzed about in his brain, till it seemed to be breaking all the fibres of it." "Plaything-avocations" wearied him; while such as engaged him much, and attached him closely, were rather serviceable than otherwise.

The unfaithfulness of Pope's translation of Homer had long been universally acknowledged by scholars, and Cowper, who was well qualified for the task, after translating one book, as he says, for want of employment, "became convinced that he could render an acceptable service to the literary world by translating the whole." The undertaking thus commenced, he availed himself of the Gentleman's Magazine to produce on the public, an impression favorable to his design, and issued proposals to publish by subscription. His Poems had been given away, and when published, he had been careless of popular favor in respect to them. But fame, coming, as it did, unexpectedly, was not the less welcome to him; and he was now, not only anxious to sustain it, by the success of his present undertaking, but also to secure a profitable result to himself. "Five hundred names," he writes, "at three guineas, will put about a thousand pounds in my purse; and I

am doing my best to obtain them." And again, to Lady Hesketh, "I am not ashamed to confess that having commenced author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have (what perhaps you little suspect me of) in my nature, an infinite share of ambition.* But with it, I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities, it has been owing, that till lately, I stole through life without undertaking anything, yet always wishing to distinguish myself."

During this and the following year, Cowper advanced steadily with his translation, receiving much attention and encouragement from his friends. Through the kindness of Lady Hesketh, and his neighbor, Sir John Throckmorton, he and Mrs. Unwin were enabled to remove to the Lodge, at Weston-Underwood, about a mile from Olney, which was far more commodious and healthful, than their habitation at Olney.

Lady Hesketh's occasional visits, at this time, were also a source of much enjoyment to him, and his grateful and affectionate heart was strongly moved and interested by the singular kindness manifested for him by an anonymous correspondent. "Hours and hours and hours," he writes Lady Hesketh, in reference to this subject, "have I spent in endeavors, altogether fruitless, to trace the writer of the letter that I send, by a minute examination of the character, and never did it strike me, till this moment, that your father wrote it." This suspicion, Lady Hesketh, who was apparently in the secret, did not confirm. The letter in question was, evidently, from some one minutely acquainted with the circumstances of Cowper's early life; and after many expressions of kindness and encouragement, the writer concludes by presenting him with an annuity of fifty pounds. After receiving another letter from the same source, Cowper writ

"Anonymous is come again. May God bless him, whoever he may be;" and he adds, in a postscript, "I kept my letter unsealed to the last moment, that I might give you an account of the expected parcel. It is, at all points, worthy of the letter-writer. Snuff-box, purse, notes—Bess, Puss, Tiney—all safe. Again may God bless him!" On the snuff-box, was a view of the "Peasant's Nest," as described in the Task, with the figures of three hares in the foreground. And for these "womanly presents," as Southey calls them, he appoints Lady Hesketh his "receiver general of thanks;" as "it is very pleasant, my dear cousin," he says, "to receive presents, so delicately conveyed, but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for them." "Alas, the love of woman!" Southey conjectures that Anonymous was no other than Theodora, the object of Cowper's early love, whom he had not seen for five-and-twenty years.

In one of those sincere, affectionate, and inimitably graceful letters, written, about this time, to his favorite cousin, Lady Hesketh, which have secured to Cowper the title of "the best of English letter-writers," he gives the following retrospect of his state of mind:—

"You do not ask me, my dear, for an explanation of what I could mean by *anguish* of *mind*. Because you *do not* ask, and because your reason for not asking consists of a delicacy and tenderness peculiar to yourself; for that very cause I will tell you. A wish suppressed is more irresistible than many wishes plainly uttered. Know then, that in the year 1773, the same scene that was acted at St. Alban's, opened upon me again at Olney, only covered by a still deeper shade of melancholy; and ordained to be of much longer duration. I was suddenly reduced from my wonted rate of understanding, to an almost childish imbecility. I did not, indeed, lose my senses, but I lost the power to exercise them. I could return a rational answer,

even to a difficult question; but a question was necessary, or I never spoke. I believed that every body hated me, and that Mrs. Unwin hated me worst of all,—was convinced that all my food was poisoned, together with ten thousand megrims of the same stamp. I would not be more circumstantial than is necessary. Dr. Cotton was consulted. He recommended particular vigilance lest I should attempt my life,—a caution for which there was the greatest occasion. At the same time that I was convinced of Mrs. Unwin's aversion to me, I could endure no other companion. The whole management of me consequently devolved upon her, and a terrible task she had. She performed it, however, with a cheerfulness hardly ever equalled on such an occasion; and I have often heard her say, that if she ever praised God in her life, it was when she found that she was to have all the labor. Methinks I hear you ask,—your affection for me, will, I know, make you wish to do so,—"Is your malady removed?" I reply, in a great measure, but not quite. Occasionally I am much distressed, but that distress becomes continually less frequent, and, I think, less violent. I find writing, and especially poetry my best remedy. Perhaps had I understood music, I had never written verse, but had lived on fiddle-strings instead. . . . I have been emerging gradually from this pit. As soon as I became capable of action, I commenced carpenter, made cupboards, boxes and stools. I grew weary of this in about a twelvemonth, and addressed myself to the making of bird-cages. To this employment succeeded that of gardening, which I intermingled with that of drawing; but finding that the latter occupation injured my eyes, I renounced it, and commenced poet. I have given you, my dear, a little history in short hand. I know it will touch your feelings; but do not let it interest them too much."

According to Cowper's narrative of his first attack,

believed that his disease was entirely the work of the Enemy, and that his recovery was supernatural. Mr. Newton and Mrs. Unwin were of the same opinion, and many months elapsed, as we have seen, after the commencement of the second attack,—much the most violent and protracted,—before they could bring themselves to seek earthly remedies. But Mr. Newton was now away, and Mrs. Unwin, says Southey, "was governed by her natural good sense;" and the rational view of his condition which Cowper took at the time of writing this letter, was such as to induce the reasonable hope of his perfect restoration. Of the religious impulses by which he had been actuated, while at Olney, he thus speaks: "Good is intended, but harm is done too often, by the zeal with which I was at that time animated."

But despair of salvation never wholly left him after his second attack; and this feeling discovers itself, more or less strongly, in all his letters to Mr. Newton.

From a sincere, but mistaken zeal for Cowper's spiritual welfare, Mr. Newton seems to have interfered at this time rather unwarrantably in his domestic affairs. He objected to their removal to Weston; and because Cowper and Mrs. Unwin had occasionally visited the Throckmortons and other neighbouring gentry, accused them of deviating into forbidden paths, and seeking worldly amusement and society. In reply to one of his letters of censure, Cowper says: "You say well that there was a time when I was happy at Olney, and I am as happy now as I expect to be anywhere without the presence of God." And again: "Be assured, that notwithstanding all rumors to the contrary, we are exactly what we were when you saw us last;—I miserable on account of God's departure from me, which I believe to be final; and she seeking his return to me in the path of duty, and by continual prayer." This was a constant and abiding impression;—and so constant was

it, that in time, it lost something of its gloomy effect on his spirits. Scott, in his Demonology, narrates the case of a man, who was so constantly attended by a frightful spectral illusion, that from the effect of custom, he came at last to speak of it quietly, and was, at times, almost unconscious of its presence. Cowper's case was, in some respects, similar to this. He sometimes adverts to his despair as a matter of course, and without much emotion. "I would," he writes Mr. Newton, "that I could see some of the mountains that you have seen; especially, because Dr. Johnson has pronounced that no man is qualified to be a poet, who has never seen a mountain. But mountains I shall never see, unless it be in a dream, or unless there are such in heaven; nor then, unless I receive twice as much mercy as ever yet was shown to any man."

His disease had now been dormant for some years; but in January 1787, (a month which he always dreaded,) it again became active. He now once more attempted suicide, and would have effected it, but for Mrs. Unwin, who finding him suspended by the neck, possessed presence of mind enough to cut him down. His malady was quite as severe as on former occasions, but of much shorter duration. There is no other account of it than the little which his own letters furnish, after his recovery. "My indisposition could not be of a worse kind. The sight of any face, except Mrs. Unwin's, was an insupportable grievance. From this dreadful condition I emerged suddenly." In about seven months, he appears to have renewed his intercourse with his neighbours, and resumed his correspondence. Writing to Lady Hesketh of his renewed health, he says, "I have but little confidence, in truth none, in so flattering a change, but *expect, when I least expect it*, to wither again. The past is a pledge for the future." And again, to the same: "I continue to write though in compassion to my pate, you advised me, for t

present, to abstain. In reality, I have no need, at least I believe not, of any such caution. Those jarrings which made my skull feel like a broken egg-shell, and those twirls which I spoke of, have been removed by an infusion of bark." In another letter, he thus playfully speaks of his diseased sensations: "I have a perpetual din in my head, and though I am not deaf, hear nothing aright; neither my own voice, nor that of others. I am under a tub, from which tub, accept my best love. Yours,

W. C."

But in the letter with which he renewed his correspondence with Mr. Newton, he still speaks of gloom and despair, and of "the storms of which even the remembrance, makes hope impossible." The same letter also exhibits a peculiar and distinct feature in this most remarkable case of insanity. "My dear friend," he begins, "after a long but necessary interruption of our correspondence, I return to it again, in one respect at least, better qualified for it than before; I mean by a belief in your identity, which for thirteen years I did not believe."

Cowper now resumed his translation, which he pursued during the next four years, with little interruption. In the circumstances of his life at this time, there was much to cheer him. His abode was comfortable, his employment satisfactory, his reputation established and increasing, he had renewed his correspondence with his relatives, and some of the companions of his early life, by whom he was occasionally visited; and Lady Hesketh's annual visits, and the society of the Throckmortons, which, notwithstanding Mr. Newton's censure, he and Mrs. Unwin still continued to enjoy, afforded him the relaxation of happy social intercourse. An incident, too, which with its attendant circumstances, added much to Cowper's happiness during the latter portion of this interval, was the receipt of his mother's picture. "It was his lot," to

quote Southey's Narrative, "happy indeed in this respect, to form new friendships as he advanced in years, instead of having to mourn for the dissolution of old ones by death. During seven-and-twenty years he had held no intercourse with his maternal relations, and knew not whether they were living or dead; the malady which made him withdraw from the world seems, in its milder consequences, to have withheld him from making any inquiry concerning them; and from their knowledge he had entirely disappeared till he became known to the public. One of a younger generation was the first to seek him out. This was Mr. John Johnson, grandson of his mother's brother. . . . . During his visit he observed with what affection Cowper spoke of his mother; the only portrait of her was in possession of her niece, Mrs. Bodham, who had been a favourite cousin of Cowper's in her childhood; and upon young Johnson's report of his visit, on his return home, this picture was sent to Weston as a present, with a letter from his kinswoman, written in the fulness of her heart. It was replied to with kindred feeling, thus:"—

"My dear Rose, whom I thought withered and fallen from the stalk, but whom I find still alive: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know it, and to learn it from yourself. I loved you dearly when you were a child, and love you not a jot the less for having ceased to be so. Every creature that bears any affinity to my mother is dear to me, and you, the daughter of her brother, are but one remove distant from her: I love you, therefore, and love you much, both for her sake and for your own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt, had the dear original presented herself to

my embraces. I kissed it and hung it where it is the last object that I see at night, and, of course, the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I completed my sixth year; yet I remember her well, and am ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember, too, a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than of the Cowper; and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side. I was thought in the days of my childhood much to resemble my mother; and in my natural temper, of which at the age of fifty-eight I must be supposed to be a competent judge, can trace both her, and my late uncle, your father. Somewhat of his irritability; and a little, I would hope, both of his and her,—I know not what to call it, without seeming to praise myself, which is not my intention,—but speaking to *you*, I will even speak out, and say *good nature*. Add to this, I deal much in poetry, as did our venerable ancestor, the Dean of St. Pauls's, and I think I have proved myself a Donne at all points. The truth is, that whatever I am, I love you all. I am much obliged to Mr. Bodham for his kindness to my Homer, and with my love to you all, and Mrs. Unwin's kind respects, am

My dear, dear Rose, ever yours,
W. C."

About this time, the laureateship became vacant by the death of Warton; Cowper was always ready at occasional verses; and his friends were desirous to procure the office for him; but he declined their services in this matter, in the following letter to Lady Hesketh:—

The Lodge, May 20th, 1790.

MY DEAREST COZ,

I thank thee for the offer of thy best services on this occasion. But Heaven guard my brows from the wreath you mention, whatever wreath beside may hereafter adorn them! It would be a leaden extinguisher clapped on all the fire of my genius, and I would never more produce a line worth reading. To speak seriously, it would make me miserable, and therefore I am sure that thou, of all my friends, would least wish me to wear it.

Adieu, ever thine—in Homer-hurry.

W. C.

In the summer of 1791, his Homer was published; and nough it does not now hold that rank among the translated classics, which he and his friends expected it would establish for itself, it was, at the time, well received, its merits as a faithful version were allowed; and on settling with his bookseller, Cowper expressed himself satisfied with the pecuniary result of his labor. "Few of my concerns," said he, "have been so happily concluded."

In the following August, (1792,) Cowper made a three-days' journey into Sussex, to visit, at Eartham, his friend Haley, the poet, who had sought and made his acquaintance the previous year. He was so unaccustomed to travel that the journey was undertaken only at the earnest entreaty of his friend, and not without many misgivings. "I laugh," he writes Haley, a few days before he set out, "to think what stuff these solicitudes are made of, and what an important thing it is for me to travel, while other men steal from their homes, and make no disturbance." Again:—"Fortunately for my intentions, as the day approaches, my terrors abate, for had they continued what they were a week since, I must, after all, have disappoir ed you." At Eartham Cowper met Hurdis, Chark

Smith, the novelist, and Romney; to the latter of whom he sat for his portrait. During the first part of the six weeks, which he spent with Haley and his friends, their society had a beneficial effect on his spirits; but at last, he began to be somewhat dejected, and evidently longed for the repose and seclusion of Weston. New scenes and strange objects, he complained, dissipated his powers of thinking, and composition, and even letter-writing became irksome to him. "I am, in truth," he writes, "so unaccountably local in the use of the pen, that, like the man in the fable, who could only leap well at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all, except at Weston. It has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine is peculiarly gratified." On his way home, he passed but a single night,—and that a gloomy one,—in London, which he had not visited since he left it, a madman, in 1763. This was the only long journey that Cowper ever made. The year previous he wrote Hurdis, "I have not been thirteen miles from home these twenty years, and so far but seldom."

The translation of Homer, which occupied him nearly six years, was the last literary undertaking of importance which Cowper lived to finish. At the suggestion of a friend, he commenced a poem on the Four Ages, of which, he at first, had high hopes, but he was unable to make much progress in it. Previously to his engagement with Homer, he had commenced an original work with a similar result. His Task and other poems had been written with ease and rapidity; but "the mind," he remarked, in reference to this subject, "is not a fountain, but a cistern." The facts, observations, and impressions, which had been accumulating in his mind, during the somewhat long period of his life, before he commenced author, had gradually become, as it were, crystalized into thoughts and images of beauti- clearness and precision; and to polish these and arrange

them into verse, was a healthful and amusing occupation rather than an irksome labor. But his resources for original composition appear to have been mainly exhausted when he had finished the Task. For a man of literature, his reading was limited; he had seen but little; and though he saw clearly and felt strongly, what he saw and felt at all, and transferred his impressions with admirable distinctness to the minds of others, yet his sympathies were not extensive; and where he was not attracted, he was too often repulsed. At the request of friends, he wrote a few ballads on Slavery, and he was repeatedly urged to make this the subject of an extended poem; but he rejected the theme as "odious and disgusting;" one which he could not bear to contemplate. Poet of nature as he was, his enjoyment, even, of natural scenery was limited; and he complained, on his visit to Haley, that the wildness of the hills and woods around Eartham oppressed his spirits. "Cowper," says Sir James Mackintosh, "does not describe the most beautiful scenes in nature; he discovers what is most beautiful in ordinary scenes. His poetical eye and his moral heart detected beauty in the sandy flats of Buckinghamshire."

Another design, which he undertook, at the request of Johnson, his bookseller, and which was also left unfinished, was a new edition of Milton, which was intended to rival in splendor, Boydell's Shakspeare. But Cowper was now beginning to feel the effects of age as well as of disease. Not only this, but his old and dear friend, and faithful and affectionate nurse, Mrs. Unwin, "who had known no wish but his for the last twenty years," had now fallen into a state of hopeless imbecility. "Their relative situation to each other," says Southey, "was now reversed. She was the helpless person, and he the attentive nurse. As her reasoning faculties decayed, her character underwent a total change, and she exacted constant atten-

tion from him without the slightest consideration for his health or state of mind. Poor creatures that we are, even the strength of religious principle and virtuous habit, fail us, if reason fails."

This circumstance sensibly affected his spirits; and though no sudden and striking change henceforth took place in his demeanor, it now became evident that reason was gradually losing its influence over his mind. This was especially shewn by a correspondence which he commenced, about this time, with one Teedon, a poor, conceited schoolmaster, of Olney. Cowper had long been troubled, not only with hideous dreams, but with audible illusions. During the night, and on waking in the morning, he frequently heard, as he said, some sentence uttered in a distinct voice, to which he gave implicit credit, as having some relation either to his temporal or spiritual concerns. He had long known Teedon, and understood his character; and in former days, had sometimes been amused with his vanity and conceit. But he had now, by some means, become persuaded that this man was especially favored by Providence; and to him, the sentences which he heard, with an account of his dreams and other nocturnal experiences, were regularly sent off; and the result of these "pitiable consultations," Cowper carefully wrote in a book till he had filled several volumes. The following will serve as specimens of these letters. "Dear Sir—I awoke this morning, with these words relating to my work [Milton] loudly and distinctly spoken—'*Apply assistance in my case indigent and necessitous.*'" Again: "This morning, at my waking, I heard these—'*Fulfil thy promise to me.*'" On another occasion, he writes Teedon as follows.—"I have been visited with a horrible dream, in which I seemed to be taking a final leave of my dwelling. I felt the tenderest regret at the separation, and looked about for something durable to carry with me as a

memorial. The iron hasp of the garden-door presenting itself, I was on the point of taking that, but recollecting that the heat of the fire, in which I was going to be tormented, would fuse the metal, and that it would only serve to increase my insupportable misery, I left it. I then awoke in all the horror with which the reality of such circumstances would fill me." Thus, "hunted by spiritual hounds in the night season," and by day, "forecasting the fashion of uncertain evils." the gloom of despair was now settling down on Cowper for the last time. His temporal wants were, however, now amply provided for; a pension of three hundred pounds having been granted him by government.

In the summer of 1795, his friends thought it advisable that he and Mrs. Unwin, (for it would have been cruel to separate them,) should visit the coast for the benefit of the sea air. After a short sojourn at Mundsley, productive of little advantage, they finally went to reside at East Dereham, in Norfolk, at the house of Cowper's cousin, the Rev. John Johnson, the relative mentioned in a former part of this narrative, who procured for him the portrait of his mother. Here Cowper remained to the end of his life, and here Mrs. Unwin died some time before him. When his health and spirits would permit, Cowper occupied himself at Dereham with the revisal of his Homer, and he sometimes wrote a few verses. The last original piece that he composed was the Castaway; and in the words of Southey, "all circumstances considered, it is one of the most affecting that ever was composed." At length, however, he refused either to read or write, and his only employment afterwards, was in listening to works of fiction —almost the only books that appeared to interest him: and "so happy," says Mr. Johnson, "was the influence of these in riveting his attention, that he discovered peculiar satisfaction when any one of more than ordinary ler-

was introduced." This being perceived by his kinsman, the novels of Richardson were obtained, and they afforded him the more pleasure on account of his former personal acquaintance with the author. "Perhaps too," Southey adds, "there may be more satisfaction in re-perusing a good book after an interval of many years, than is felt in reading it for the first time." These readings did not, however wholly abstract Cowper's mind from the contemplation of his own wretched state. In one of the few most melancholy letters which he wrote during these years to Lady Hesketh, he says, "I expect that in six days, at the latest, I shall no longer foresee, but feel the accomplishment of all my fears. O, lot of unexampled misery incurred in a moment! O wretch! to whom death and life are alike impossible! Most miserable at present in this, that being thus miserable I have my senses continued to me, only that I may look forward to the worst. It is certain, at least, that I have them for no other purpose, and but very imperfectly for this. My thoughts are like loose and dry sand, which, the closer it is grasped, slips the sooner away. Mr. Johnson reads to me, but I lose every other sentence through the inevitable wanderings of my mind, and experience, as I have these two years, the same shattered mode of thinking on every subject, and on all occasions. If I seem to write with more connexion, it is only because the gaps do not appear.

"Adieu.—I shall not be here to receive your answer, neither shall I ever see you more. Such is the expectation of the most desperate, and the most miserable of all beings.

W. C."

The last reading which Cowper heard was that of his own Poems. He listened in silence to Mr. Johnson, till they came to John Gilpin, but this he begged his kinsman to omit. In February, 1800, he was taken with dropsy, which in a short time confined him to his chamber. The

physician who was called to attend him, asking him "how he felt?" "Feel!" said Cowper, "I feel unutterable despair!" To the consolations of religion he refused to listen; and when, on one occasion, Mr. Johnson spoke to him of a "merciful Redeemer, who had prepared unspeakable happiness for all his children,—and therefore for him," Cowper, with passionate entreaties, begged him to desist from any further observations of a similar kind. A few days after this sad scene, the attendant offering him a cordial, he rejected it, saying, "What can it signify;" and these were the last words he was heard to utter. He died on the following morning, the 25th of April, 1800.

No one, it would seem, can read Southey's Biography of this blameless and suffering man of genius, without strong feelings of regret that he did not, earlier in life, resort to literature as a serious employment. Full and congenial occupation was absolutely indispensible, not merely, as in ordinary cases, to his enjoyment of life, but to his exemption from the most cruel disease; and to any other pursuits than those of literature, his wretched nervous system rendered him utterly incompetent. What Göethe says of Hamlet, may, with some modification, apply to Cowper. Any of the common avocations, and any of the onerous and vexatious duties of life, were to him as "an oak tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom; the roots expand, the jar is shivered." It is scarcely probable that any combination of circumstances could have availed, wholly to avert the malady which poisoned his existence. His whole system, both of mind and body was so peculiar in its organization,—so admirable in some of its parts, and so feeble and defective in others,—that too much, or too little, or any uncongenial action was sure to disturb destroy its balance. But literature, though tried proved to be infinitely the best remedy to soothe and

late this diseased action; and had Cowper found at Huntingdon, the employment and the society, which he at last, after the departure of Mr. Newton, found at Olney and Weston, he might, perchance, have escaped many years of woe.

THE TASK.

BOOK I.

THE SOFA.

ARGUMENT OF THE FIRST BOOK.

Historical deduction of seats, from the Stool to the Sofa—A Schoolboy's ramble—A walk in the country—The scene described—Rural sounds as well as sights delightful—Another walk—Mistake concerning the charms of solitude corrected—Colonnades commended—Alcove, and the view from it—The wilderness—The grove—The thresher—The necessity and benefit of exercise—The works of nature superior to, and in some instances inimitable by, art—The wearisomeness of what is commonly called a life of pleasure—Change of scene sometimes expedient—A common described, and the character of crazy Kate introduced—Gipsies—The blessings of civilized life—That state most favourable to virtue—The South Sea Islanders compassionate, but chiefly Omai—His present state of mind supposed—Civilized life friendly to virtue, but not great cities—Great cities, and London in particular, allowed their due praise, but censured—Fête champêtre—The book concludes with a reflection on the fatal effects of dissipation and effeminacy upon our public measures.

I SING the *Sofa*. I, who lately sang
Truth, Hope, and Charity, and touch'd with awe
The solemn chords, and, with a trembling hand,
Escap'd with pain from that advent'rous flight,
Now seek repose upon an humbler theme;
The theme, though humble, yet august and proud
Th' occasion—for the fair commands the song.
Time was, when clothing, sumptuous or for use,
Save their own painted skins, our sires had none.
As yet black breeches were not; satin smooth,
Or velvet soft, or plush with shaggy pile:
The hardy chief, upon the rugged rock
Wash'd by the sea, or on the gravelly bank
Thrown up by wintry torrents roaring loud,
Fearless of wrong, repos'd his weary strength.
Those barb'rous ages past, succeeded next
The birthday of Invention; weak at first,
Dull in design, and clumsy to perform.
Joint-stools were then created; on three legs
Upborne they stood. Three legs upholding firm
A massy slab, in fashion square or round.
On such a stool immortal Alfred sat,
And sway'd the sceptre of his infant realms:
And such in ancient halls and mansions drear
May still be seen; but perforated sore,
And drill'd in holes, the solid oak is found,
By worms voracious eating through and through.
At length a generation more refin'd
Improv'd the simple plan; made three legs four,

Gave them a twisted form vermicular,
And o'er the seat, with plenteous wadding stuff'd,
Induc'd a splendid cover, green and blue,
Yellow and red, of tapestry richly wrought
And woven close, of needlework sublime.
There might ye see the piony spread wide,
The full-blown rose, the shepherd and his lass,
Lapdog and lambkin with black staring eyes,
And parrots with twin cherries in their beak.
Now came the cane from India, smooth and bright,
With nature's varnish; sever'd into stripes,
That interlac'd each other, these supplied
Of texture firm a lattice-work, that brac'd
The new machine, and it became a chair.
But restless was the chair; the back erect
Distress'd the weary loins, that felt no ease;
The slipp'ry seat betrayed the sliding part
That press'd it, and the feet hung dangling down,
Anxious in vain to find the distant floor.
These for the rich; the rest, whom fate had plac'd
In modest mediocrity, content
With base materials, sat on well-tann'd hides,
Obdurate and unyielding, glassy smooth,
With here and there a tuft of crimson yarn,
Or scarlet crewel, in the cushion fix'd,
If cushion might be call'd, what harder seem'd
Than the firm oak, of which the frame was form'd.

No want of timber then was felt or fear'd
In Albion's happy isle. The lumber stood
Pond'rous and fix'd by its own massy weight.
But elbows still were wanting; these, some say,
An alderman of Cripplegate contrived;
And some ascribe th' invention to a priest
Burly, and big, and studious of his ease.
But rude at first, and not with easy slope
Receding wide, they press'd against the ribs,
And bruis'd the side; and, elevated high,
Taught the rais'd shoulders to invade the ears.
Long time elaps'd or e'er our rugged sires
Complain'd, though incommodiously pent in,
And ill at ease behind. The ladies first
'Gan murmur, as became the softer sex.
Ingenious Fancy, never better pleas'd
Than when employ'd t' accommodate the fair,
Heard the sweet moan with pity, and devis'd
The soft settee; one elbow at each end,
And in the midst an elbow it receiv'd,
United, yet divided, twain at once.
So sit two kings of Brentford on one throne;
And so two citizens, who take the air,
Close pack'd, and smiling, in a chaise and one.
But relaxation of the languid frame,
By soft recumbency of outstretch'd limbs,
Was bliss reserv'd for happier days. So slow
The growth of what is excellent; so hard
T' attain perfection in this nether world.
Thus first Necessity invented stools,
Convenience next suggested elbow-chairs,
And Luxury th' accomplish'd *Sofa* last.

The nurse sleeps sweetly, hir'd to watch the sick
Whom snoring she disturbs. As sweetly he,
Who quits the coach-box at a midnight hour,
To sleep within the carriage more secure,
His legs depending at the open door.
Sweet sleep enjoys the curate in his desk,
The tedious rector drawling o'er his head;
And sweet the clerk below. But neither sleep
Of lazy nurse, who snores the sick man dead;
Nor his, who quits the box at midnight hour
To slumber in the carriage more secure;
Nor sleep enjoy'd by curate in his desk;
Nor yet the dozings of the clerk, are sweet,
Compar'd with the repose the *Sofa* yields.
O may I live exempted (while I live
Guiltless of pamper'd appetite obscene)
From pangs arthritic, that infest the toe
Of libertine Excess. The *Sofa* suits
The gouty limb, 't is true: but gouty limb,
Though on a *Sofa*, may I never feel:
For I have lov'd the rural walk through lanes
Of grassy swarth, close cropp'd by nibbling sheep,
And skirted thick with intertexture firm
Of thorny boughs; have lov'd the rural walk
O'er hills, through valleys, and by rivers' brink,
E'er since a truant boy I pass'd my bounds
T' enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames;
And still remember, not without regret,
Of hours, that sorrow since has much endear'd,
How oft, my slice of pocket store consum'd,

Still hung'ring, pennyless, and far from home,
I fed on scarlet hips and stony haws,
Or blushing crabs, or berries, that emboss
The bramble, black as jet, or sloes austere.
Hard fare! but such as boyish appetite
Disdains not; nor the palate, undeprav'd
By culinary arts, unsav'ry deems.
No *Sofa* then awaited my return;
Nor *Sofa* then I needed. Youth repairs
His wasted spirits quickly, by long toil
Incurring short fatigue; and, though our years,
As life declines, speed rapidly away,
And not a year but pilfers as he goes
Some youthful grace, that age would gladly keep;
A tooth or auburn lock, and by degrees
Their length and colour from the locks they spare;
The elastic spring of an unwearied foot,
That mounts the stile with ease, or leaps the fence;
That play of lungs, inhaling and again
Respiring freely the fresh air, that makes
Swift pace or steep ascent no toil to me,
Mine have not pilfer'd yet; nor yet impair'd
My relish of fair prospect; scenes that sooth'd
Or charm'd me young, no longer young, I find
Still soothing, and of pow'r to charm me still.
And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
Fast lock'd in mine, with pleasure such as love,
Confirm'd by long experience of thy worth

And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire—
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.
Thou know'st my praise of nature most sincere,
And that my raptures are not conjur'd up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.
How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While Admiration, feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene;
Thence, with what pleasure have we just discern'd
The distant plough slow moving, and beside
His lab'ring team, that swerv'd not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,
Stand, never overlook'd, our fav'rite elms,
That screen the herdsmen's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tow'r,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the list'ning ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages, remote.
Scenes must be beautiful, which daily view'd

Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years.
Praise justly due to those that I describe.
  Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid Nature. Mighty winds,
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of Ocean on his winding shore,
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind;
Unnumber'd branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast flutt'ring, all at once.
Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighb'ring fountain, or of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
In matted grass, that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds
But animated nature sweeter still,
To sooth and satisfy the human ear.
Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one
The livelong night; nor these alone, whose notes
Nice-finger'd Art must emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime
In still-repeated circles, screaming loud,
The jay, the pie, and e'en the boding owl,
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me,
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns,
And only there, please highly for their sake.

Peace to the artist, whose ingenious thought
Devis'd the weatherhouse, that useful toy!
Fearless of humid air and gath'ring rains,
Forth steps the man—an emblem of myself;
More delicate his tim'rous mate retires.
When Winter soaks the fields, and female feet,
Too weak to struggle with tenacious clay,
Or ford the rivulets, are best at home,
The task of new discov'ries falls on me.
At such a season, and with such a charge,
Once went I forth; and found, till then unknown,
A cottage, whither oft we since repair:
'T is perch'd upon the green hill top, but close
Environ'd with a ring of branching elms,
That overhang the thatch, itself unseen
Peeps at the vale below; so thick beset
With foliage of such dark redundant growth,
I call'd the low-roof'd lodge the *peasant's nest*.
And, hidden as it is, and far remote
From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear
In village or in town, the bay of curs
Incessant, clinking hammers, grinding wheels,
And infants clam'rous whether pleas'd or pain'd,
Oft have I wish'd the peaceful coveret mine.
Here, I have said, at least I should possess
The poet's treasure, Silence, and indulge
The dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure.
Vain thought! the dweller in that still retreat
Dearly obtains the refuge it affords.
Its elevated site forbids the wretch
To drink sweet waters of the crystal well;

He dips his bowl into the weedy ditch,
And, heavy laden, brings his bev'rage home,
Far fetch'd and little worth; nor seldom waits,
Dependent on the baker's punctual call,
To hear his creaking panniers at the door,
Angry, and sad, and his last crust consum'd.
So farewell envy of the *peasant's nest!*
If solitude make scant the means of life,
Society for me!—thou seeming sweet,
Be still a pleasing object in my view;
My visit still, but never mine abode.
Not distant far, a length of colonnade
Invites us. Monument of ancient taste,
Now scorn'd, but worthy of a better fate.
Our fathers knew the value of a screen
From sultry suns: and, in their shaded walks
And long protracted bow'rs, enjoy'd at noon
The gloom and coolness of declining day.
We bear our shades about us; self-depriv'd
Of other screen, the thin umbrella spread,
And range an Indian waste without a tree.
Thanks to Benevolus*—he spares me yet
These chestnuts rang'd in corresponding lines;
And, though himself so polish'd, still reprieves
The obsolete prolixity of shade.
Descending now (but cautious, lest too fast)
A sudden steep upon a rustic bridge,
We pass a gulf, in which the willows dip
Their pendent boughs, stooping as if to drink.

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* John Courtney Throckmorton, Esq., of Western Un 'erwood.

Hence, ankle deep in moss and flow'ry thyme,
We mount again, and feel at ev'ry step
Our foot half sunk in hillocks green and soft,
Rais'd by the mole, the miner of the soil.
He, not unlike the great ones of mankind,
Disfigures Earth: and, plotting in the dark,
Toils much to earn a monumental pile
That may record the mischief he has done.
The summit gain'd, behold the proud alcove
That crowns it! yet not all its pride secures
The grand retreat from injuries impress'd
By rural carvers, who with knives deface
The panels, leaving an obscure, rude name,
In characters uncouth, and spelt amiss.
So strong the zeal t' immortalize himself
Beats in the breast of man, that e'en a few,
Few transient years, won from th' abyss abhorr'd
Of blank oblivion, seem a glorious prize,
And even to a clown. Now roves the eye;
And, posted on this speculative height,
Exults in its command. The sheepfold here
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
At first, progressive as a stream, they seek
The middle field; but, scatter'd by degrees,
Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.
There from the sunburnt hayfield homeward creeps
The loaded wain; while, lighten'd of its charge
The wain that meets it passes swiftly by;
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team
Vociferous, and impatient of delay.

Nor less attractive is the woodland scene,
Diversified with trees of ev'ry growth,
Alike, yet various. Here the gray smooth trunks
Of ash, or lime, or beech, distinctly shine,
Within the twilight of their distant shades;
There, lost behind a rising ground, the wood
Seems sunk, and shorten'd to its topmost boughs.
No tree in all the grove but has its charms,
Though each its hue peculiar; paler some,
And of a wannish gray; the willow such,
And poplar, that with silver lines his leaf,
And ash far-stretching his umbrageous arm;
Of deeper green the elm; and deeper still,
Lord of the woods, the long surviving oak.
Some glossy leav'd, and shining in the sun,
The maple and the beech of oily nuts
Prolific, and the lime at dewy eve
Diffusing odours: nor unnoted pass
The sycamore, capricious in attire,
Now green, now tawny, and, ere autumn yet
Have chang'd the woods, in scarlet honours
bright.
O'er those, but, far beyond (a spacious map
Of hill and valley interpos'd between)
The Ouse, dividing the well-water'd land,
Now glitters in the sun, and now retires,
As bashful, yet impatient to be seen.
Hence the declivity is sharp and short,
And such the reascent; between them weeps
A little naiad her impov'rish'd urn
All summer long, which winter fills again.
The folded gates would bar my progress now,

But that the lord* of this enclos'd demesne,
Communicative of the good he owns
Admits me to a share; the guiltless eye
Commits no wrong, nor wastes what it enjoys.
Refreshing change! where now the blazing sun?
By short transition we have lost his glare,
And stepp'd at once into a cooler clime.
Ye fallen avenues! once more I mourn
Your fate unmerited, once more rejoice
That yet a remnant of your race survives.
How airy and how light the graceful arch,
Yet awful as the consecrated roof
Re-echoing pious anthems! while beneath
The checker'd earth seems restless as a flood
Brush'd by the wind. So sportive is the light
Shot through the boughs, it dances as they dance,
Shadow and sunshine intermingling quick,
And dark'ning, and enlight'ning, as the leaves
Play wanton, ev'ry moment, ev'ry spot.
And now, with nerves new brac'd and spirits cheer'd,
We tread the wilderness, whose well-roll'd walks,
With curvature of slow and easy sweep—
Deception innocent—give ample space
To narrow bounds. The grove receives us next;
Between the upright shafts of whose tall elms
We may discern the thresher at his task.

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* See the foregoing note.

Thump after thump resounds the constant flail,
That seems to swing uncertain, and yet falls
Full on the destin'd ear. Wide flies the chaff,
The rustling straw sends up a frequent mist
Of atoms, sparkling in the noonday beam.
Come hither, ye that press your beds of down,
And sleep not; see him sweating o'er his bread
Before he eats it.—'T is the primal curse,
But soften'd into mercy; made the pledge
Of cheerful days and nights without a groan.
By ceaseless action all that is subsists.
Constant rotation of th' unwearied wheel
That Nature rides upon, maintains her health,
Her beauty, her fertility. She dreads
An instant's pause, and lives but while she moves:
Its own revolvency upholds the World,
Winds from all quarters agitate the air,
And fit the limpid element for use,
Else noxious; oceans, rivers, lakes, and streams,
All feel the fresh'ning impulse, and are cleans'd
By restless undulation: e'en the oak
Thrives by the rude concussion of the storm:
He seems indeed indignant, and to feel
Th' impression of the blast with proud disdain,
Frowning, as if in his unconscious arm
He held the thunder: but the monarch owes
His firm stability to what he scorns,
More fix'd below, the more disturb'd above.
The law, by which all creatures else are bound,
Binds man, the Lord of all. Himself derives
No mean advantage from a kindred cause,

From strenuous toil his hours of sweetest ease.
The sedentary stretch their lazy length
When Custom bids, but no refreshment find,
For none they need: the languid eye, the cheek
Deserted of its bloom, the flaccid, shrunk,
And wither'd muscle, and the vapid soul,
Reproach their owner with that love of rest,
To which he forfeits e'en the rest he loves.
Not such the alert and active. Measure life
By its true worth, the comforts it affords,
And theirs alone seems worthy of the name.
Good health, and its associate in the most,
Good temper; spirits prompt to undertake,
And not soon spent, though in an arduous task;
The pow'rs of fancy and strong thought are
theirs;
E'en age itself seems privileg'd in them
With clear exemption from its own defects.
A sparkling eye beneath a wrinkled front
The vet'ran shows, and, gracing a gray beard
With youthful smiles, descends towards the
grave
Sprightly, and old almost without decay.
Like a coy maiden, Ease, when courted most,
Furthest retires—an idol, at whose shrine
Who oft'nest sacrifice are favour'd least.
The love of Nature, and the scenes she draws,
Is nature's dictate. Strange! there should be
found,
Who, self-imprison'd in their proud saloons,
Renounce the odours of the open field
For the unscented fictions of the loom;

Who, satisfied with only pencill'd scenes,
Prefer to the performance of a God
Th' inferior wonders of an artist's hand!
Lovely indeed the mimic works of Art;
But Nature's works far lovelier. I admire,
None more admires the painter's magic skill;
Who shows me that which I shall never see,
Conveys a distant country into mine,
And throws Italian light on English walls:
But imitative strokes can do no more
Than please the eye—sweet Nature's ev'ry sense.
The air salubrious of her lofty hills,
The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales,
And music of her woods—no works of man
May rival these, these all bespeak a pow'r
Peculiar, and exclusively her own.
Beneath the open sky she spreads the feast;
'T is free to all—'t is ev'ry day renew'd;
Who scorns it starves deservedly at home.
He does not scorn it, who, imprison'd long
In some unwholesome dungeon, and a prey
To sallow sickness, which the vapours, dank
And clammy, of his dark abode have bred,
Escapes at last to liberty and light:
His cheek recovers soon its healthful hue;
His eye relumines its extinguish'd fires;
He walks, he leaps, he runs—is wing'd with joy,
And riots in the sweets of ev'ry breeze.
He does not scorn it, who has long endur'd
A fever's agonies, and fed on drugs.

Nor yet the mariner, his blood inflam'd
With acrid salts; his very heart athirst,
To gaze at Nature in her green array,
Upon the ship's tall side he stands, possess'd
With visions prompted by intense desire;
Fair fields appear below, such as he left
Far distant, such as he would die to find—
He seeks them headlong, and is seen no more.
The spleen is seldom felt where Flora reigns;
The low'ring eye, the pétulance, the frown,
And sullen sadness, that o'ershade, distort,
And mar the face of Beauty, when no cause
For such immeasurable wo appears,
These Flora banishes, and gives the fair
Sweet smiles, and bloom less transient than her own.
It is the constant revolution, stale
And tasteless, of the same repeated joys,
That palls and satiates, and makes languid life
A pedler's pack, that bows the bearer down.
Health suffers, and the spirits ebb, the heart
Recoils from its own choice—at the full feast
Is famish'd—finds no music in the song,
No smartness in the jest; and wonders why.
Yet thousands still desire to journey on,
Though halt, and weary of the path they tread.
The paralytic, who can hold her cards,
But cannot play them, borrows a friend's hand,
To deal and shuffle, to divide and sort
Her mingled suits and sequences; and sits,
Spectatress both and spectacle, a sad

And silent cypher, while her proxy plays.
Others are dragg'd into a crowded room
Between supporters; and, once seated, sit,
Through downright inability to rise,
Till the stout bearers lift the corpse again.
These speak a loud memento. Yet e'en these
Themselves love life, and cling to it, as he
That overhangs a torrent, to a twig.
They love it, and yet loathe it; fear to die,
Yet scorn the purposes for which they live.
Then wherefore not renounce them? No—the dread,
The slavish dread of solitude, that breeds,
Reflection and remorse, the fear of shame,
And their invet'rate habits, all forbid.
Whom call we gay? That honour has been long
The boast of mere pretenders to the name.
The innocent are gay—the lark is gay,
That dries his feathers, saturate with dew,
Beneath the rosy cloud, while yet the beams
Of day-spring overshoot his humble nest.
The peasant too, a witness of his song,
Himself a songster, is as gay as he.
But save me from the gayety of those,
Whose headaches nail them to a noonday bed;
And save me too from theirs, whose haggard eyes
Flash desperation, and betray their pangs
For property stripp'd off by cruel chance;
From gayety, that fills the bones with pain,
The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with wo.

The earth was made so various, that the mind
Of desultory man, studious of change,
And pleas'd with novelty, might be indulg'd.
Prospects, however lovely, may be seen
Till half their beauties fade: the weary sight
Too well acquainted with their smiles, slides off,
Fastidious, seeking less familiar scenes.
Then snug enclosures in the shelter'd vale,
Where frequent hedges intercept the eye,
Delight us; happy to renounce awhile,
Not senseless of its charms, what still we love,
That such short absence may endear it more.
Then forests, or the savage rock, may please,
That hides the sea-mew in his hollow clefts
Above the reach of man. His hoary head,
Conspicuous many a league, the mariner
Bound homeward, and in hope already there,
Greets with three cheers exulting. At his waist
A girdle of half-wither'd shrubs he shows,
And at his feet the baffled billows die.
The common, overgrown with fern, and rough
With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deform'd,
And dang'rous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
Yields no unpleasing ramble; there the turf
Smells fresh, and, rich in odorif'rous herbs
And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
With luxury of unexpected sweets.

There often wanders one, whom better days
Saw better clad, in cloak of satin trimm'd
With lace, and hat with splendid riband bound,
A serving maid was she, and fell in love
With one who left her, went to sea, and died.
Her fancy followed him through foaming waves
To distant shores; and she would sit and weep
At what a sailor suffers; fancy too,
Delusive most where warmest wishes are,
Would oft anticipate his glad return,
And dream of transports she was not to know.
She heard the doleful tidings of his death—
And never smil'd again! and now she roams
The dreary waste; there spends the livelong day,
And there, unless when charity forbids,
The livelong night. A tatter'd apron hides,
Worn as a cloak, and hardly hides, a gown
More tatter'd still; and both but ill conceal
A bosom heav'd with never-ceasing sighs.
She begs an idle pin of all she meets,
And hoards them in her sleeve; but needful food,
Though press'd with hunger oft, or comelier clothes,
Though pinch'd with cold, asks never.—Kate is craz'd.
I see a column of slow rising smoke
O'ertop the lofty wood, that skirts the wild.
A vagabond and useless tribe there eat
Their miserable meal. A kettle, slung
Between two poles upon a stick transverse,

Receives the morsel—flesh obscene of dog,
Or vermin, or at best of cock purloin'd
From his accustom'd perch. Hard faring race!
They pick their fuel out of ev'ry hedge,
Which, kindled with dry leaves, just saves unquench'd
The spark of life. The sportive wind blows wide
Their flutt'ring rags, and shows a tawny skin,
The vellum of the pedigree they claim.
Great skill have they in palmistry, and more
To conjure clean away the gold they touch,
Conveying worthless dross into its place;
Loud when they beg, dumb only when they steal.
Strange! that a creature rational, and cast
In human mould, should brutalize by choice
His nature; and, though capable of arts,
By which the world might profit, and himself
Self-banish'd from society, prefer
Such squalid sloth to honourable toil!
Yet even these, though feigning sickness oft
They swathe the forehead, drag the limping limb,
And vex their flesh with artificial sores,
Can change their whine into a mirthful note,
When safe occasion offers; and with dance,
And music of the bladder and the bag,
Beguile their woes, and make the woods resound.
Such health and gayety of heart enjoy
The houseless rovers of the sylvan world;

And, breathing wholesome air, and wand'ring much,
Need other physic none to heal th' effects
Of loathsome diet, penury, and cold.
Blest he, though undistinguish'd from the crowd
By wealth or dignity, who dwells secure,
Where man by nature fierce has laid aside
His fierceness, having learnt, though slow to learn,
The manners and the arts of civil life.
His wants indeed are many; but supply
Is obvious, plac'd within the easy reach
Of temp'rate wishes and industrious hands.
Here virtue thrives as in her proper soil;
Not rude and surly, and beset with thorns,
And terrible to sight, as when she springs,
(If e'er she spring spontaneously,) in remote
And barb'rous climes, where violence prevails,
And strength is lord of all; but gentle, kind,
By culture tam'd, by liberty refreshed,
And all her fruits by radiant truth matur'd.
War and the chase engross the savage whole;
War follow'd for revenge or to supplant
The envied tenants of some happier spot:
The chase for sustenance, precarious trust!
His hard condition with severe constraint
Binds all his faculties, forbids all growth
Of wisdom, proves a school, in which he learns
Sly circumvention, unrelenting hate,
Mean self-attachment, and scarce aught beside.
Thus fare the shiv'ring natives of the north,

And thus the rangers of the western world,
Where it advances far into the deep,
Tow'rds the antarctic. E'en the favour'd isles
So lately found, although the constant sun
Cheer all their seasons with a grateful smile,
Can boast but little virtue; and inert
Through plenty, lose in morals what they gain
In manners—victims of luxurious ease.
These therefore I can pity, plac'd remote
From all that science traces, art invents,
Or inspiration teaches; and enclos'd
In boundless oceans never to be pass'd
By navigators uninform'd as they,
Or plough'd perhaps by British bark again.
But far beyond the rest, and with most cause,
Thee, gentle savage![*] whom no love of thee
Or thine, but curiosity perhaps,
Or else vain glory, promoted us to draw
Forth from thy native bow'rs, to show thee here
With what superior skill we can abuse
The gifts of Providence, and squander life.
The dream is past; and thou hast found again
Thy cocoas and bananas, palms and yams,
And homestall thatch'd with leaves. But hast thou found
Their former charms? And, having seen our state,
Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp
Of equipage, our gardens, and our sports,
And heard our music; are thy simple friends,

[*] Omai.

Thy simple fare, and all thy plain delights,
As dear to thee as once? And have thy joys
Lost nothing by comparison with ours?
Rude as thou art, (for we return'd thee rude
And ignorant, except of outward show,)
I cannot think thee yet so dull of heart
And spiritless, as never to regret
Sweets tasted here, and left as soon as known.
Methinks I see thee straying on the beach,
And asking of the surge that bathes thy foot,
If ever it has wash'd our distant shore,
I see thee weep, and thine are honest tears,
A patriot's for his country: thou art sad
At thought of her forlorn and abject state,
From which no pow'r of thine can raise her up.
Thus fancy paints thee, and, though apt to err,
Perhaps errs little, when she paints thee thus.
She tells me too, that duly ev'ry morn
Thou climb'st the mountain top, with eager eye
Exploring far and wide the wat'ry waste
For sight of ship from England. Ev'ry speck
Seen in the dim horizon turns thee pale
With conflict of contending hopes and fears.
But comes at last the dull and dusky eve,
And sends thee to thy cabin, well prepar'd
To dream all night of what the day denied.
Alas! expect it not. We found no bait
To tempt us in thy country. Doing good,
Disinterested good, is not our trade.
We travel far, 'tis true, but not for nought;
And must be brib'd to compass Earth again
By other hopes and richer fruits than yours.

But though true worth and virtue in the mild
And genial soil of cultivated life
Thrive most, and may perhaps thrive only there,
Yet not in cities oft: in proud, and gay,
And gain-devoted cities. Thither flow,
As to a common and most noisome sewer,
The dregs and feculence of every land.
In cities, foul example on most minds
Begets its likeness. Rank abundance breeds,
In gross and pamper'd cities, sloth, and lust,
And wantonness, and gluttonous excess.
In cities, vice is hidden with most ease,
Or seen with least reproach; and virtue, taught
By frequent lapse, can hope no triumph there
Beyond th' achievement of successful flight.
I do confess them nurseries of the arts,
In which they flourish most; where in the beams
Of warm encouragement, and in the eye
Of public note, they reach their perfect size.
Such London is, by taste and wealth proclaim'd
The fairest capital of all the world,
By riot and Incontinence the worst.
There touch'd by Reynolds, a dull blank becomes
A lucid mirror, in which Nature sees
All her reflected features. Bacon there
Gives more than female beauty to a stone,
And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips.
Nor does the chisel occupy alone
The pow'rs of sculpture, but the style as much
Each province of her art her equal care.

With nice incision of her guided steel
She ploughs a brazen field, and clothes a soil
So sterile with what charms soe'er she will,
The richest scenery and the loveliest forms.
Where finds Philosophy her eagle eye,
With which she gazes at yon burning disk
Undazzled, and detects and counts his spots?
In London. Where her implements exact,
With which she calculates, computes and scans,
All distance, motion, magnitude, and now
Measures an atom, and now girds a world?
In London. Where has commerce such a mart,
So rich, so throng'd, so drain'd, and so supplied,
As London—opulent, enlarg'd, and still
Increasing London? Babylon of old
Not more the glory of the Earth, than she,
A more accomplish'd world's chief glory now.
She has her praise. Now mark a spot or two,
That so much beauty would do well to purge;
And show this queen of cities, that so fair,
May yet be foul; so witty, yet not wise.
It is not seemly, nor of good report,
That she is slack in discipline; more prompt
T' avenge than to prevent the breach of law:
That she is rigid in denouncing death
On petty robbers, and indulges life,
And liberty, and oftimes honour too,
To peculators of the public gold:
That thieves at home must hang; but he that puts

Into his overgorg'd and bloated purse
The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes.
Nor is it well, nor can it come to good,
That, through profane and infidel contempt
Of holy writ, she has presum'd t' annul
And abrogate, as roundly as she may,
The total ordinance and will of God;
Advancing Fashion to the post of Truth,
And centring all authority in modes
And customs of her own, till sabbath rites
Have dwindled into unrespected forms,
And knees and hassacks are well-nigh divorc'd.
God made the country, and man made the town.
What wonder then that health and virtue, gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, should most abound
And least be threaten'd in the fields and groves?
Possess ye, therefore, ye who, borne about
In chariots and sedans, know no fatigue
But that of idleness, and taste no scenes
But such as art contrives, possess ye still
Your element, there only can ye shine;
There only minds like yours can do no harm.
Our groves were planted to console at noon
The pensive wand'rer in their shades. At eve
The moon-beam, sliding softly in between
The sleeping leaves, is all the light they wish,
Birds warbling all the music. We can spare
The splendour of your lamps; they but eclipse
Our softer satellite. Your songs confound

Our more harmonious notes: the thrush departs
Scar'd, and th' offended nightingale is mute.
Their is a public mischief in your mirth:
It plagues your country. Folly such as yours,
Grac'd with a sword, and worthier of a fan,
Has made, what enemies could ne'er have done,
Our arch of empire, steadfast but for you,
A mutilated structure soon to fall.

THE TASK.

BOOK II.

THE TIME-PIECE.

ARGUMENT OF THE SECOND BOOK.

Reflections suggested by the conclusion of the former book—Peace among the nations recommended on the ground of their common fellowship in sorrow—Prodigies enumerated—Sicilian earthquakes—Man rendered obnoxious to these calamities by sin—God the agent in them—The philosophy that stops at secondary causes reproved—Our own late miscarriages accounted for—Satirical notice taken of our trips to Fontainbleau—But the pulpit, not satire, the proper engine of reformation—The Reverend Advertiser of engraved sermons—Petit-maitre parson—The good preacher—Picture of a theatrical clerical coxcomb—Story-tellers and jesters in the pulpit reproved—Apostrophe to popular applause—Retailers of ancient philosophy expostulated with—Sum of the whole matter—Effects of sacerdotal mismanagement on the laity—Their folly and extravagance—The mischiefs of profusion—Profusion itself, with all its consequent evils, ascribed, as to its principal cause, to the want of discipline in the universities.

O FOR a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more! My ear is pain'd,
My soul is sick with ev'ry day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd.
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart;
It does not feel for man; the natural bond
Of brotherhood is sever'd, as the flax,
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not colour'd like his own; and having pow'r
T' enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause
Dooms and devotes him as a lawful prey.
Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interpos'd
Make enemies of nations, who had else
Like kindred drops been mingled into one.
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys;
And worse than all, and most to be deplor'd,
As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that Mercy with a bleeding heart,
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.
Then what is man? And what man, seeing this,
And having human feelings, does not blush,
And hang his head, to think himself a man?
I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews bought and sold have ever earn'd.

No: dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Just estimation priz'd above all price,
I had much rather be myself the slave,
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.
We have no slaves at home.—Then why abroad?
And they themselves, once ferried o'er the wave
That parts us, are emancipate and loos'd.
Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free;
They touch our country, and their shackles fall.
That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it, then,
And let it circulate through ev'ry vein
Of all your empire: that, where Britain's pow'r
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.
  Sure there is need of social intercourse,
Benevolence, and peace, and mutual aid,
Between the nations, in a world that seems
To toll the death-bell of its own disease,
And by the voice of all its elements
To preach the gen'ral doom.* When were the winds
Let slip with such a warrant to destroy?
When did the waves so haughtily o'erleap
Their ancient barriers, deluging the dry?
Fires from beneath, and meteors† from above,
Portentous, unexampled, unexplain'd
Have kindled beacons in the skies; and th' old
And crazy Earth has had her shaking fits

* Alluding to the calamities in Jamaica.
† August, 18, 1783.

More frequent, and foregone her usual rest.
Is it a time to wrangle, when the props
And pillars of our planet seem to fail,
And Nature with a dim and sickly eye*
To wait the close of all? But grant her end
More distant, and that prophecy demands
A longer respite, unaccomplish'd yet:
Still they are frowning signals, and bespeak
Displeasure in his breast who smites the Earth
Or heals it, makes it languish or rejoice.
And 'tis but seemly, that, where all deserve
And stand expos'd by common peccancy
To what no few have felt, there should be peace,
And brethren in calamity should love.
Alas for Sicily! rude fragments now
Lie scatter'd, where the shapely columns stood.
Her palaces are dust. In all her streets
The voice of singing and the sprightly chord
Are silent. Revelry, and dance, and show,
Suffer a syncope and solemn pause;
While God performs upon the trembling stage
Of his own works his dreadful part alone.
How does the earth receive him? with what signs
Of gratulation and delight her king?
Pours she not all her choicest fruits abroad,
Her sweetest flow'rs, her aromatick gums,
Disclosing Paradise where'er he treads?
She quakes at his approach. Her hollow womb,
Conceiving thunders, through a thousand deeps

Alluding to the fog that covered both Europe and Asia during the whole summer of 1783.

And fiery caverns roars beneath his foot.
The hills move lightly, and the mountains smoke,
For he has touch'd them. From th' extremest point
Of elevation down into the abyss
His wrath is busy, and his frown is felt.
The rocks fall headlong, and the valleys rise,
The rivers die into offensive pools,
And, charg'd with putrid verdure, breathe a gross
And mortal nuisance into all the air.
What solid was, by transformation strange,
Grows fluid; and the fix'd and rooted earth,
Tormented into billows, heaves and swells,
Or with vortiginous and hideous whirl
Sucks down its prey insatiable. Immense
The tumult and the overthrow, the pange
And agonies of human and of brute
Multitudes, fugitive on ev'ry side,
And fugitive in vain. The sylvan scene
Migrates uplifted: and, with all its soil
Alighting in far distant fields, finds out
A new possessor, and survives the change.
Ocean has caught the frenzy, and, upwrought
To an enormous and o'erbearing height,
Not by a mighty wind, but by that voice
Which winds and waves obey, invades the shore
Resistless. Never such a sudden flood,
Upridg'd so high, and sent on such a charge,
Possess'd an inland scene. Where now the throng
That press'd the beach, and, hasty to depart,
Look'd to the sea for safety? They are gone

Gone with the refluent wave into the deep—
A prince with half his people! Ancient tow'rs,
And roofs embattled high, the gloomy scenes
Where beauty oft and letter'd worth consume
Life in the unproductive shades of death,
Fall prone: the pale inhabitants come forth,
And, happy in their unforeseen release
From all the rigours of restraint, enjoy
The terrours of the day that sets them free.
Who, then, that has thee, would not hold thee fast
Freedom! whom they that lose thee so regret,
That e'en a judgment, making way for thee,
Seems in their eyes a mercy for thy sake?
Such evil Sin hath wrought; and such a flame
Kindled in Heav'n, that it burns down to Earth,
And in the furious inquest that it makes
On God's behalf, lays waste his fairest works.
The very elements, though each be meant
The minister of man, to serve his wants,
Conspire against him. With his breath he draws
A plague into his blood; and cannot use
Life's necessary means, but he must die.
Storms rise t' o'erwhelm him; or if stormy winds
Rise not, the waters of the deep shall rise,
And, needing none assistance of the storm,
Shall roll themselves ashore, and reach him there
The earth shall shake him out of all his holds,
Or make his house his grave: nor so content,
Shall counterfeit the motions of the flood,
And drown him in her dry and dusty gulfs.
What then!—were they the wicked above all,

And we the righteous, whose fast-anchor'd isle
Mov'd not, while theirs was rock,d, like a light
skiff,
The sport of every wave? No; none are clear,
And none than we more guilty. But, where all
Stand chargeable with guilt, and to the shafts
Of wrath obnoxious, God may choose his mark:
May punish, if he please, the less, to warn
The more malignant. If he spar'd not them,
Tremble and be amaz'd at thine escape,
Far guiltier England, lest he spare not thee!
Happy the man, who sees a God employ'd
In all the good and ill that cheeker life!
Resolving all events, with their effects
And manifold results, into the will
And arbitration wise of the Supreme.
Did not his eye rule all things, and intend
The least of our concerns; (since from the least
The greatest oft originate;) could chance
Find place in his dominion, or dispose
One lawless particle to thwart his plan;
Then God might be surpris'd, and unforeseen
Contingence might alarm him, and disturb
The smooth and equal course of his affairs.
This true Philosophy, though eagle-ey'd
In nature's tendencies, oft overlooks;
And, having found his instrument, forgets,
Or disregards, or, more presumptuous still,
Denies the power that wields it. God proclaims
His hot displeasure against foolish men,
That live an atheist life; involves the Heavens
In tempests; quits his grasp upon the winds,

And gives them all their fury; bids a plague
Kindle a fiery bile upon the skin,
And putrefy the breath of blooming Health.
He calls for Famine, and the meagre fiend
Blows mildew from between his shrivell'd lips,
And taints the golden ear. He springs his mines,
And desolates a nation at a blast.
Forth steps the spruce Philosopher, and tells
Of homogeneal and discordant springs,
And principles; of causes how they work
By necessary laws their sure effects
Of action and reaction: he has found
The source of the disease that nature feels,
And bids the world take heart and banish fear.
Thou fool! will thy discov'ry of the cause
Suspend th' effect, or heal it? Has not God
Still wrought by means since first he made the world?
And did he not of old employ his means
To drown it? What is his creation less,
Than a capacious reservoir of means,
Form'd for his use, and ready at his will?
Go, dress thine eyes with eye-salve; ask of Him
Or ask of whomesoever he has taught;
And learn, though late, the genuine cause of all.
England, with all thy faults, I love thee still—
My country! and while yet a nook is left,
Where English minds and manners may be found,
Shall be constrain'd to love thee. Though thy clime
fickle, and thy year most part deform'd

With dripping rains, or wither'd by a frost,
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies,
And fields without a flow'r, for warmer France
With all her vines: nor for Ausonia's groves
Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bow'rs.
To shake thy senate, and from heights sublime
Of patriot eloquence to flash down fire
Upon thy foes, was never meant my task:
But I can feel thy fortunes, and partake
Thy joys and sorrows, with as true a heart
As any thund'rer there. And I can feel
Thy follies too; and with a just disdain
Frown at effeminates, whose very looks
Reflect dishonour on the land I love.
How in the name of soldiership and sense,
Should England prosper, when such things, as smooth
And tender as a girl, all essenc'd o'er
With odours, and as profligate as sweet;
Who sell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,
And love when they should fight: when such as these
Presume to lay their hand upon the ark
Of her magnificent and awful cause;
Time was when it was praise and boast enough
In every clime, and travel where we might,
That we were born her children. Praise enough
Th fill th' ambition of a private man
That Chatham's language was his mother-tongue,
And Wolf's great name compatriot with his own.
Farewell those honours, and farewell with them
The hope of such hereafter! They have fall'n

Each in his field of glory; one in arms,
And one in council—Wolfe upon the lap
Of smiling Victory that moment won,
And Chatham heart-sick of his country's shame!
They made us many soldiers. Chatham, still
Consulting England's happiness at home,
Secur'd it by an unforgiving frown,
If any wrong'd her. Wolfe, where'er he fought,
Put so much of his heart into his act,
That his example had a magnet's force,
And all were swift to follow whom all lov'd.
Those suns are set. O rise some other such!
Or all that we have left is empty talk
Of old achievements and despair of new.
Now hoist the sail, and let the streamers float
Upon the wanton breezes. Strew the deck
With lavender, and sprinkle liquid sweets,
That no rude savour maritime invade
The nose of nice nobility! Breathe soft,
Ye clarionets; and softer still, ye flutes;
That winds and waters, lull'd by magick sounds
May bear us smoothly to the Gallic shore.
True, we have lost an empire—let it pass.
True, we may thank the perfidy of France,
That pick'd the jewel out of England's crown,
With all the cunning of an envious shrew.
And let that pass—'twas but a trick of state—
A brave man knows no malice, but at once
Forgets in peace the injuries of war,
And gives his direst foe a friend's embrace.
And sham'd as we have been, to th' very beard
Brav'd and defied, and in our own sea prov'd

Too weak for those decisive blows that once
Ensur'd us mast'ry there, we yet retain
Some small pre-eminence; we justly boast
At least superiour jockeyship, and claim
The honours of the turf as all our own!
Go, then, well worthy of the praise ye seek,
And show the shame ye might conceal at home,
In foreign eyes!—be grooms and win the plate,
Where once your nobler fathers won a crown!—
'Tis gen'rous to communicate your skill
To those that need it. Folly is soon learn'd:
And under such preceptors who can fail?
There is a pleasure in poetick pains,
Which only poets know. The shifts and turns,
Th' expedients and inventions multiform,
To which the mind resorts, in chase of terms,
Though apt, yet coy, and difficult to win—
T' arrest the fleeting images, that fill
The mirror of the mind, and hold them fast,
And force them sit, till he has pencil'd off
A faithful likeness of the forms he views;
Then to dispose his copies with such art,
That each may find its most propitious light,
And shine by situation, hardly less
Than by the labour and the skill it cost;
Are occupations of the poet's mind
So pleasing, and that steal away the thought,
With such address from themes of sad import,
That, lost in his own musings, happy man!
He feels the anxieties of life denied
Their wonted entertainment; all retire.
Such joys has he that sings. But ah! not such,

Or seldom such, the hearers of his song.
Fastidious, or else listless, or perhaps
Aware of nothing arduous in a task
They never undertook, they little note
His dangers or escapes, and haply find
Their least amusement where he found the most.
But is amusement all? Studious of song,
And yet ambitious not to sing in vain,
I would not trifle merely, though the world
Be loudest in their praise who do no more.
Yet what can satire, whether grave or gay?
It may correct a foible, may chastise
The freaks of fashion, regulate the dress,
Retrench a sword-blade, or displace a patch,
But where are its sublimer trophies found?
What vice has it subdued? whose heart reclaim'd
By rigour, or whom laugh'd into reform?
Alas! Leviathan is not so tam'd:
Laugh'd at, he laughs again; and stricken hard,
Turns to the stroke his adamantine scales,
That fear no discipline of human hands.
The pulpit, therefore—(and I name it fill'd
With solemn awe, that bids me well beware
With what intent I touch that holy thing)—
The pulpit—(when the sat'rist has at last,
Strutting and vap'ring in an empty school,
Spent all his force, and made no proselyte)—
I say the pulpit (in the sober use
Of its legitimate peculiar pow'rs)
Must stand acknowledg'd, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,

Support, and ornament, of Virtue's cause.
There stands the messenger of truth; there stands
The legate of the skies!—His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders: and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.
He 'stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wand'rer, binds the broken heart,
And, arm'd himself in panoply complete
Of heav'nly temper, furnishes with arms
Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war
The sacramental host of God's elect:
Are all such teachers?—would to Heav'n all were!
But hark—the doctor's voice!—fast wedg'd between
Two empiricks he stands, and with swoln cheeks
Inspires the news, his trumpet. Keener far
Than all invective is his bold harangue,
While through that publick organ of report
He hails the clergy; and, defying shame,
Announces to the world his own and theirs!
He teaches those to read whom schools dismiss'd,
And colleges, untaught: sells accent, tone,
And emphasis in score, and gives to pray'r
Th' *adagio* and *andante* it demands.
He grinds divinity of other days
Down into modern use; transforms old print
To zigzag manuscript, and cheats the eyes

Of gall'ry critics by a thousand arts.
Are there who purchase of the doctor's ware?
O, name it not in Gath!—it cannot be,
That grave and learned clerks should need such aid.
He doubtless is in sport, and does but droll,
Assuming thus a rank unknown before—
Grand caterer and dry-nurse of the church!
I venerate the man, whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life,
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause.
To such I render more than mere respect,
Whose actions say that they respect themselves.
But loose in morals and in manners vain,
In conversation frivolous, in dress
Extreme at once rapacious and profuse;
Frequent in park with lady at his side,
Ambling and prattling scandal as he goes;
But rare at home, and never at his books,
Or with his pen, save when he scrawls a card;
Constant at routs, familiar with a round
Of ladyships, a stranger to the poor;
Ambitious of preferment for its gold,
And well prepar'd by ignorance and sloth,
By infidelity and love of world,
To make God's work a sinecure; a slave
To his own pleasures and his patron's pride;
From such apostles, O ye mitred heads,
Preserve the church! and lay not careless hands
On skulls that cannot teach, and will not learn.

Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
Were he on Earth, would hear, approve, and own,
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
His master-strokes, and draw from his design.
I would express him simple, grave, sincere;
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture; much impress'd
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too; affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men.
Behold the picture!—Is it like?—Like whom?
The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,
And then skip down again? pronounce a text?
Cry—hem; and, reading what they never wrote
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
And with a well bred whisper close the scene!
In man or woman, but far most in man
And most of all in man that ministers
And serves the altar, in my soul I loathe
All affectation. 'Tis my perfect scorn;
Object of my implacable disgust.
What!—will a man play tricks—will he indulge
A silly fond conceit of his fair form,
And just proportion, fashionable mein,
And pretty face, in presence of his God?
Or will he seek to dazzle me with tropes,
As with the diamond on his lily hand,
And play his brilliant parts before my eyes,

When I am hungry for the bread of life?
He mocks his Maker, prostitutes and shames
His noble office, and, instead of truth,
Displaying his own beauty, starves his flock.
Therefore avaunt all attitude and stare,
And start theatrick, practis'd at the glass!
I seek divine simplicity in him
Who handles things divine; and all besides,
Though learn'd with labour, and though much admir'd
By curious eyes and judgment ill-inform'd,
To me is odious as the nasal twang
Heard at conventicle where worthy men,
Misled by custom, strain celestial themes
Through the press'd nostril, spectacle-bestrid.
Some, decent in demeanour while they preach,
That task perform'd, relapse into themselves;
And, having spoken wisely, at the close
Grow wanton, and give proof to ev'ry eye,
Whoe'er was edify'd, themselves were not!
Forth comes the pocket-mirror. First we stroke
An eyebrow; next compose a straggling lock,
Then with an air most gracefully perform'd,
Fall back into our seat, extend an arm,
And lay it at its ease with gentle care,
With handkerchief in hand depending low;
The better hand more busy gives the nose
Its bergamot, or aids th' indebted eye
With op'ra glass, to watch the moving scene,
And recognize the slow retiring fair.—
Now this is fulsome; and offends me more
Than in a churchman slovenly neglect

And rustic coarseness would. A heavenly mind
May be indiff'rent to her house of clay,
And slight the hovel as beneath her care;
But how a body so fantastic, trim,
And quaint, in its deportment and attire,
Can lodge a heav'nly mind—demands a doubt.
He that negotiates between God and man,
As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitiful
To court a grin, when you should woo a soul:
To break a jest, when pity would inspire
Pathetick exhortation; and t' address
The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
When sent with God's commission to the heart!
So did not Paul. Direct me to a quip
Or merry turn in all he ever wrote,
And I consent you take it for your text,
Your only one, till sides and benches fail.
No: he was serious in a serious cause,
And understood too well the weighty terms,
That he had ta'en in charge. He would not stoop
To conquer those by jocular exploits,
Whom truth and soberness assail'd in vain.
O Popular Applause! what heart of man
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms?
The wisest and the best feel urgent need
Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales;
But swell'd into a gust—who, then, alas!
With all his canvass set, and inexpert,
And therefore heedless, can withstand thy pow'r?

Praise from the rivell'd lips of toothless, bald
Decrepitude, and in the looks of lean
And craving Poverty, and in the bow
Respectful of the smutch'd artificer,
Is oft too welcome and may much disturb
The bias of the purpose. How much more,
Pour'd forth by beauty splendid and polite,
In language soft as Adoration breathes?
Ah, spare your idol, think him human still.
Charms he may have, but he has frailties too!
Dote not too much nor spoil what ye admire.
All truth is from the sempiternal source
Of light divine. But Egypt, Greece, and Rome,
Drew from the stream below. More favor'd, we
Drink when we choose it, at the fountain head.
To them it flow'd much mingled and defil'd
With hurtful errour, prejudice, and dreams
Illusive of philosophy, so call'd,
But falsely. Sages after sages strove
In vain to filter off a crystal draught
Pure from the lees, which often more enhanc'd
The thirst than slak'd it, and not seldom bred
Intoxication and delirium wild.
In vain they push'd inquiry to the birth
And spring time of the world; ask'd, Whence
is man?
Why form'd at all? and wherefore as he is?
Where must he find his maker? with what rites
Adore him? Will he hear, accept, and bless?
Or does he sit regardless of his works?
Has man within him an immortal seed?
Or does the tomb take all? If he survive

His ashes, where? and in what weal or wo?
Knots worthy of solution, which alone
A Deity could solve. Their answers, vague
And all at random, fabulous and dark,
Left them as dark themselves. Their rules of life
Defective and unsanction'd, prov'd too weak
To bind the roving appetite, and lead
Blind nature to a God not yet reveal'd.
'Tis Revelation satisfies all doubts,
Explains all mysteries, except her own,
And so illuminates the path of life
That fools discover it, and stray no more.
Now tell me, dignified and sapient sir,
My man of morals, nutur'd in the shades
Of Academus—is this false or true?
Is Christ the abler teacher or the schools?
If Christ, then why resort at ev'ry turn
To Athens, or to Rome, for wisdom short
Of man's occasions, when in him reside
Grace, knowledge, comfort, an unfathom'd store?
How oft, when Paul has serv'd us with a text,
Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully, preach'd!
Men that, if now alive, would sit content
And humble learners of a Saviour's worth,
Preach it who might. Such was their love of truth,
Their thirst of knowledge, and their candour too.
And thus it is.—The pastor, either vain
By nature, or by flatt'ry made so, taught
To gaze at his own splendour, and t' exalt
Absurdly, not his office, but himself;

Or unenlighten'd and too proud to learn;
Or vicious, and not therefore apt to teach;
Perverting often by the stress of lewd
And loose example, whom he should instruct;
Exposes, and holds up to broad disgrace,
The noblest function, and discredits much
The brightest truths that man has ever seen.
For ghostly counsel; if it either fall
Below the exigence, or be not back'd
With show of love, at least with hopeful proof
Of some sincerity on the giver's part;
Or be dishonour'd in th' exteriour form
And mode of its conveyance, by such tricks
As move derision, or by foppish airs
And histrionick mumm'ry that let down
The pulpit to the level of the stage;
Drops from the lips a disregarded thing.
The weak perhaps are mov'd, but are not taught,
While prejudice in men of stronger minds
Takes deeper root, confirm'd by what they see.
A relaxation of religion's hold
Upon the roving and untutor'd heart
Soon follows, and, the curb of conscience snapp'd
The laity run wild. But do they now?
Note their extravagance, and be convinc'd.
As nations, ignorant of God, contrive
A wooden one: so we, no longer taught
By monitors, that mother church supplies,
Now make our own. Posterity will ask,
(If e'er posterity see verse of mine.)
Some fifty or a hundred lustrums hence,

What was a monitor in George's days?
My very gentle reader, yet unborn,
Of whom I needs must augur better things,
Since Heav'n would sure grow weary of a world
Productive only of a race like ours,
A monitor is wood—plank shaven thin.
We wear it at our backs. There, closely brac'd
And neatly fitted, it compresses hard
The prominent and most unsightly bones,
And binds the shoulder flat. We prove its use
Sov'reign and most effectual to secure
A form, not now gymnastick as of yore,
From rickets, and distortion, else our lot.
But thus admonish'd, we can walk erect—
One proof at least of manhood! while the friend
Sticks close, a Mentor worthy of his charge.
Our habits, costlier than Lucullus wore,
And by caprice as multiplied as his,
Just please us while the fashion is at full,
But change with ev'ry moon. The sycophant,
Who waits to dress us, arbitrates their date;
Surveys his fair reversion with keen eye;
Finds one ill made, another obsolete,
This fits not nicely, that is ill conceiv'd;
And, making prize of all that he condemns,
With our expenditure defrays his own.
Variety's the very spice of life,
That gives it all its flavour. We have run
Through ev'ry change, that Fancy at the loom
Exhausted, has had genius to supply;
And studious of mutation still, discard
A real elegance, a little us'd,

For monstrous novelty and strange disguise.
We sacrifice to dress, till household joys
And comforts cease. Dress drains our cellar dry,
And keeps our larder lean; puts out our fires;
And introduces hunger, frost, and wo,
Where peace and hospitality might reign.
What man that lives, and that knows how to live,
Would fail t' exhibit at the public shows
A form as splendid as the proudest there,
Though appetite raise outcries at the cost?
A man o' th' town dines late, but soon enough,
With reasonable forecast and despatch,
T' insure a side box station at half price.
You think, perhaps, so delicate his dress,
His daily fare as delicate. Alas!
He picks clean teeth, and, busy as he seems
With an old tavern quill, is hungry yet!
The rout is Folly's circle, which she draws
With magick wand. So potent is the spell,
That none, decoy'd into that fatal ring,
Unless by Heav'n's peculiar grace, escape.
There we grow early gray, but never wise;
There form connexions, but acquire no friend;
Solicit pleasure hopeless of success;
Waste youth in occupations only fit
For second childhood, and devote old age
To sports, which only childhood could excuse.
There, they are happiest who dissemble best
Their weariness; and they the most polite
Who squander time and treasure with a smile,

Though at their own destruction. She that asks
Her dear five hundred friends, contemns them all,
And hates their coming. They (what can they less?)
Make just reprisals; and with cringe and shrug,
And bow obsequious, hide their hate of her.
All catch the frenzy, downward from her grace,
Whose flambeaux flash against the morning skies,
And gild our chamber ceilings as they pass,
To her, who, frugal only that her thrift
May feed excesses she can ill afford,
Is hackney'd home unlackey'd; who, in haste
Alighting, turns the key in her own door,
And, at the watchman's lantern borrowing light,
Finds a cold bed her only comfort left.
Wives beggar husbands, husbands starve their wives,
On fortune's velvet altar off'ring up
Their last poor pittance—Fortune, most severe
Of goddesses yet known, and costlier far
Than all that held their routs in Juno's Heav'n.—
So fare we in this prison-house, the World;
And 'tis a fearful spectacle to see
So many maniacks dancing in their chains.
They gaze upon the links, that hold them fast,
With eyes of anguish, execrate their lot,
Then shake them in despair, and dance again!
Now basket up the family of plagues,
That waste our vitals; peculation, sale
Of honour, perjury, corruption, frauds

By forgery, by subterfuge of law,
By tricks and lies as num'rous and as keen
As the necessities their authors feel:
Then cast them, closely bundled, ev'ry brat
At the right door. Profusion is the sire.
Profusion unrestrain'd with all that's base
In character, has litter'd all the land,
And bred, within the mem'ry of no few,
A priesthood, such as Baal's was of old,
A people, such as never was till now.
It is a hungry vice:—it eats up all
That gives society its beauty, strength,
Convenience, security, and use:
Makes men mere vermin, worthy to be trapp'd
And gibbeted, as fast as catchpole claws
Can seize the slippery prey: unties the knot
Of union, and converts the sacred band
That holds mankind together, to a scourge.
Profusion deluging a state with lusts
Of grossest nature and of worst effects.
Prepares it for its ruin: hardens, blinds,
And warps, the consciences of publick men,
Till they can laugh at Virtue; mock the fools
That trust them; and in th' end disclose a face,
That would have shock'd Credulity herself.
Unmask'd, vouchsafing this their sole excuse—
Since all alike are selfish, why not they?
This does Profusion, and th' accursed cause
Of such deep mischief has itself a cause.

In colleges and halls in ancient days,
When learning, virtue, piety and truth,
Were precious and inculcated with care,

There dwelt a sage call'd Discipline. His head,
Not yet by time completely silver'd o'er,
Bespoke him past the bounds of freakish youth
But strong for service still, and unimpair'd.
His eye was meek and gentle, and a smile
Play'd on his lips; and in his speech was heard
Paternal sweetness, dignity, and love.
The occupation dearest to his heart
Was to encourage goodness. He would stroke
The head of modest and ingenuous worth.
That blush'd at his own praise: and press the youth
Close to his side that pleas'd him. Learning grew
Beneath his care, a thriving vig'rous plant;
The mind was well informed, the passions held
Subordinate, and diligence was choice.
If e'er it chanc'd, as sometimes chance it must
That one among so many overleap'd
The limits of control, his gentle eye
Grew stern, and darted a severe rebuke;
His frown was full of terrour, and his voice
Shook the delinquent with such fits of awe,
As left him not, till penitence had won
Lost favour back again, and clos'd the breach.
But Discipline, a faithful servant long,
Declin'd at length into the vale of years.
A palsy struck his arm; his sparkling eye
Was quenched in rheums of age; his voice unstrung,
Grew tremulous, and mov'd derision more
Than rev'rence, in perverse rebellious youth.

So colleges and halls neglected much
Their good old friend; and Discipline at length,
O'erlook'd and unemploy'd, fell sick and died.
Then Study languished, Emulation slept,
And Virtue fled. The schools became a scene
Of solemn farce, where Ignorance in stilts,
His cap well lin'd with logick not his own,
With parrot tongue perform'd the scholar's part,
Proceeding soon a graduated dunce.
Then compromise had place, and scrutiny
Became stone blind; precedence went in truck,
And he was competent whose purse was so.
A dissolution of all bonds ensued;
The curbs invented for the mulish mouth
Of headstrong youth were broken; bars and bolts
Grew rusty by disuse; and massy gates
Forgot their office, op'ning with a touch;
Till gowns at length are found mere masquerade,
The tassel'd cap and the spruce band a jest,
A mock'ry of the World! What need of these
For gamesters, jockeys, brothelers impure,
Spendthrifts, and booted sportsmen, oft'ner seen
With belted waist and pointers at their heels,
Than in the bounds of duty? What was learn'd,
If aught was learn'd in childhood, is forgot:
And such expense, as pinches parents blue,
And mortifies the lib'ral hand of love,
Is squander'd in pursuit of idle sports
And vicious pleasures; buys the boy a name
That sits a stigma on his father's house,
And cleaves through life inseparably close

To him that wears it. What can after games
Of riper joys, and commerce with the world,
The lewd vain world, that must receive him soon,
Add to such erudition, thus acquired,
Where science and where virtue are professed?
They may confirm his habits, rivet fast
His folly, but to spoil him is a task
That bids defiance to th' united powers
Of fashion, dissipation, taverns, stews.
Now blame we most the nurselings or the nurse?
The children crook'd, and twisted, and deform'd,
Through want of care; or her, whose winking eye
And slumb'ring oscitancy mars the brood?
The nurse, no doubt. Regardless of her charge,
She needs herself correction; needs to learn
That it is dang'rous sporting with the world,
With things so sacred as a nation's trust,
The nurture of her youth, her dearest pledge.
All are not such. I had a brother once—
Peace to the memory of a man of worth,
A man of letters, and of manners too!
Of manners sweet as Virtue always wears,
When gay good-nature dresses her in smiles.
He grac'd a college,* in which order yet
Was sacred; and was honour'd, lov'd, and wept
By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.
Some minds are temper'd happily, and mix'd
With such ingredients of good sense, and taste
Of what is excellent in man, they thrist

* Bene't Coll. Cambridge.

With such a zeal to be what they approve,
That no restraints can circumscribe them more
Than they themselves by choice, for wisdom's sake.
Nor can example hurt them; what they see
Of vice in others but enhancing more
The charms of virtue in their just esteem.
If such escape contagion, and emerge
Pure from so foul a pool to shine abroad,
And give the world their talents and themselves,
Small thanks to those whose negligence or sloth
Expos'd their inexperience to the snare,
And left them to an undirected choice.
See then the quiver broken and decay'd
In which are kept our arrows! Rusting there
In wild disorder, and unfit for use,
What wonder, if discharg'd into the world,
They shame their shooters with a random flight,
Their points obtuse, and feathers drunk with wine!
Well may the church wage unsuccessful war
With such artil'ry arm'd. Vice parries wide
Th' undreaded volley with a sword of straw,
And stands an impudent and fearless mark.
Have we not track'd the felon home, and found
His birthplace and his dam? The country mourns,
Mourns because ev'ry plague that can infest
Society, and that saps and worms the base

Of th' edifice that policy has rais'd,
Swarms in all quarters: meets the eye, the ear,
And suffocates the breath at ev'ry turn.
Profusion breeds them; and the cause itself
Of that calamitous mischief has been found:
Found, too, where most offensive, in the skirts
Of the rob'd pedagogue! Else let th' arraign'd
Stand up unconscious, and refute the charge.
So when the Jewish leader stretch'd his arm,
And wav'd his rod divine, a race obscene,
Spawn'd in the muddy beds of Nile, came forth,
Polluting Egypt: gardens, fields, and plains,
Were cover'd with the pest; the streets were filled;
The croaking nuisance lurk'd in ev'ry nook;
Nor places, nor even chambers, 'scap'd;
And the land stank—so num'rous was the fry.

THE TASK.

BOOK III.

THE GARDEN.

ARGUMENT OF THE THIRD BOOK.

Self-recollection, and reproof—Address to domestic happiness—Some account of myself—The vanity of many of their pursuits, who are reputed wise—Justification of my censures—Divine illumination necessary to the most expert philosopher—The question, What is truth? answered by other questions—Domestic happiness addressed again—Few lovers of the country—My tame hare—Occupations of a retired gentleman in his garden—Pruning—Framing—Greenhouse—Sowing of flower seeds—The country preferable to the town even in the winter—Reasons why it is deserted at that season—Ruinous effects of gaming and of expensive improvement—Book concludes with an apostrophe to the metropolis.

As one, who long in thickets and in brakes
Entangled, winds now this way and now that
His devious course uncertain, seeking home;
Or, having long in miry ways been foil'd

And sore discomfited, from slough to slough
Plunging, and half despairing of escape;
If chance at length he find a greensward smooth
And faithful to the foot, his spirits rise.
He cherups brisk his ear-erecting steed,
And winds his way with pleasure and with ease.
So I, designing other themes, and call'd
T' adorn the Sofa with eulogium due,
To tell its slumbers, and to paint its dreams,
Have rambled wide. In country, city, seat
Of academic fame, (howe'er deserv'd,)
Long held, and scarcely disengag'd at last:
But now with pleasant pace a cleanlier road
I mean to tread. I feel myself at large,
Courageous, and refresh'd for future toil,
If toil await me, or if dangers new.
Since pulpits fail, and sounding boards reflect
Most part an empty ineffectual sound,
What chance that I, to fame so little known,
Nor conversant with men or manners much,
Should speak to purpose, or with better hope
Crack the satiric thong? 'Twere wiser far
For me, enamour'd of sequester'd scenes,
And charm'd with rural beauty, to repose
Where chance may throw me, beneath elm or vine,
My languid limbs; when summer sears the plains;
Or, when rough winter rages, on the soft
And shelter'd Sofa, while the nitrous air
Feeds a blue flame, and makes a chee hearth;

There, undisturb'd by Folly, and appriz'd
How great the danger of disturbing her,
To muse in silence, or at least confine
Remarks, that gall so many, to the few
My partners in retreat. Disgust conceal'd
Is oftimes proof of wisdom, when the fault
Is obstinate, and cure beyond our reach.
Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise, that has surviv'd the fall!
Though few now taste thee unimpair'd and pure,
Or tasting, long enjoy thee! too infirm,
Or too incautious, to preserve thy sweets
Unmix'd with drops of bitter, which neglect
Or temper sheds into thy crystal cup;
Thou art the nurse of Virtue—in thine arms
She smiles, appearing, as in truth she is,
Heav'n-born, and destin'd to the skies again.
Thou art not known where Pleasure is ador'd,
That reeling goddess, with the zoneless waist
And wand'ring eyes, still leaning on the arm
Of Novelty, her fickle, frail support;
For thou art meek and constant, hating change,
And finding in the calm of truth-tried love,
Joys that her stormy raptures never yield,
Forsaking thee, what shipwreck have we made
Of honour, dignity, and fair renown!
Till prostitution elbows us aside
In all our crowded streets; and senates seem
Conven'd for purposes of empire less
Than to release the adult'ress from her bond.
Th' adult'ress! what a theme for angry verse!
What provocation to th' indignant heart,

That feels for injur'd love! but I disdain
The nauseous task to paint her as she is.
Cruel, abandon'd, glorying in her shame!
No:—let her pass, and, charioted along
In guilty splendour, shake the public ways;
The frequency of crimes has wash'd them white,
And verse of mine shall never brand the wretch,
Whom matrons now of character unsmirch'd
And chaste themselves, are not asham'd to own.
Virtue and vice had bound'ries in old time,
Not to be pass'd: and she that had renounced
Her sex's honour, was renounc'd herself
By all that priz'd it; not for prud'ry's sake
But dignity's, resentful of the wrong.
'Twas hard perhaps on here and there a waif,
Desirous to return and not receiv'd:
But was a wholesome rigour in the main,
And taught th' unblemish'd to preserve with care
That purity, whose loss was loss of all.
Men too were nice in honour in those days,
And judg'd offenders well. Then he that sharp'd,
And pocketed a prize by fraud obtain'd,
Was mark'd and shunn'd as odious. He that sold
His country, or was slack when she requir'd
His ev'ry nerve in action and at stretch,
Paid with the blood that he had basely spar'd
The price of his default. But now—yes, now
We are become so candid and so fair
So lib'ral in construction, and so rich
In christian charity, (good natur'd age!)

That they are safe; sinners of either sex
Transgress what laws they may. Well dress'd, well bred,
Well equipag'd, is ticket good enough,
To pass as readily through ev'ry door.
Hypocrisy, detest her as we may,
(And no man's hatrid ever wrong'd her yet,)
May claim this merit still—that she admits
The worth of what she mimics, with such care,
And thus gives virtue indirect applause;
But she has burnt her mask, not needed here,
Where vice has such allowance, that her shifts
And specious semb!ances have lost their use.
I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
Long since. With many an arrow deep infix'd
My panting side was charg'd, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by one who had himself
Been hurt by th' archers. In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and heal'd, and bade me live.
Since then, with few associates, in remote
And silent woods I wander, far from those
My former partners of the peopled scene;
With few associates, and not wishing more.
Here much I ruminate, as much I may,
With other views of men and manners now
Than once, and others of a life to come
I see that all are wand'rers, gone astray
Each in his own delusions; they are lost

In chase of fancied happiness, still woo'd
And never won. Dream after dream ensues;
And still they dream that they shall still succeed,
And still are disappointed. Rings the world
With the vain stir. I sum up half mankind
And add two-thirds of the remaining half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears
Dreams, empty dreams. The million flit as gay,
As if created only like the fly,
That spreads his motly wings in th' eye of noon,
To sport their season, and be seen no more.
The rest are sober dreamers, grave and wise,
And pregnant with discoveries new and rare.
Some write a narrative of wars, and feats
Of heroes little known; and call the rant
A history: describe the man, of whom
His own coevals took but little note
And paint his person, character, and views,
As they had known him from his mother's womb.
They disentangle from the puzzled skein,
In which obscurity has wrapp'd them up,
The threads of politic and shrewd design,
That ran through all his purposes, and charge
His mind with meanings that he never had,
Or, having, kept conceal'd. Some drill and bore
The solid earth, and from the strata there
Extract a register, by which we learn,
That he who made it and reveal'd its date
To Moses, was mistaken in its age.

Some, more acute, and more industrious still,
Contrive creation; travel nature up
To the sharp peak of her sublimist height,
And tell us whence the stars: why some are fix'd,
And planetary some; what gave them first
Rotation, from what fountain flow'd their light.
Great contest follows, and much learned dust,
Involves the combatants; each claiming truth,
And truth disclaiming both. And thus they spend
The little wick of life's poor shallow lamp
In playing tricks with nature, giving laws
To distant worlds, and trifling in their own.
Is't not a pity now, that tickling rheums
Should ever tease the lungs, and blear the sight
Of oracles like these? Great pity, too,
That having wielded th' elements, and built
A thousand systems, each in his own way,
They should go out in fume, and be forgot.
Ah! what is life thus spent? and what are they
But frantic, who thus spend it? all for smoke—
Eternity for bubbles, proves at last
A senseless bargain. When I see such games
Play'd by the creatures of a pow'r who swears
That he will judge the Earth, and call the fool
To a sharp reck'ning, that has liv'd in vain;
And when I weigh this seeming wisdom well,
And prove it in th' infallible result
So hollow and so false—I feel my heart
Dissolve in pity, and account the learn'd,
If this be learning, most of all deceiv'd.

Great crimes alarm the conscience, but it sleeps,
While thoughtful man is plausibly amused.
Defend me, therefore, common sense, say I,
From reveries so airy, from the toil
Of dropping buckets into empty wells,
And growing old in drawing nothing up!
'Twere well, says one, sage, erudite, profound,
Terribly arch'd and aquiline his nose,
And overbuilt with most impending brows,
'Twere well, could you permit the World to live
As the World pleases: what's the World to you?
Much. I was born of woman, and drew milk
As sweet as charity from human breasts.
I think, articulate—I laugh and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How then should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other? Pierce my vein,
Take of the crimson stream meand'ring there,
And catechise it well: apply thy glass,
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood
Congenial with thine own: and, if it be,
What edge of subtlety canst thou suppose
Keen enough, wise and skilful as thou art,
To cut the link of brotherhood, by which
One common Maker bound me to the kind?
True; I am no proficient, I confess,
In arts like yours. I cannot call the swift
And perilous lightnings from the angry clouds,
And bid them hide themselves in earth beneath;

I cannot analyze the air, nor catch
The parallax of yonder luminous point,
That seems half quench'd in the immense
abyss:
Such powers I boast not—neither can I rest
A silent witness of the headlong rage,
Or heedless folly, by which thousands die,
Bone of my bone, and kindred souls to mine.
God never meant that man should scale the
Heav'ns
By strides of human wisdom. In his works,
Though wondrous, he commands us in his word
To seek him rather where his mercy shines.
The mind, indeed, enlighten'd from above,
Views him in all; ascribes to the grand cause
The grand effect; acknowledges with joy
His manner, and with rapture tastes his style.
But never yet did philosophic tube,
That brings the planets home into the eye
Of observation, and discovers, else
Not visible, his family of worlds.
Discover him that rules them; such a veil
Hangs over mortal eyes, blind from the birth,
And dark in things divine. Full often too,
Our wayward intellect, the more we learn
Of nature, overlooks her author more;
From instrumental causes proud to draw
Conclusions retrograde, and mad mistake.
But if his word once teach us—shoot a ray
Through all the heart's dark chambers, and
reveal
Truths undiscern'd but by that holy light;

Then all is plain. Philosophy, baptiz'd
In the pure fountain of eternal love,
Has eyes indeed; and viewing all she sees
As meant to indicate a God to man,
Gives *him* his praise, and forfeits not her own.
Learning has borne such fruit in other days
On all her branches: piety has found
Friends in the friends of science, and true pray'r
Has flow'd from lips wet with Castalian dews.
Such was thy wisdom, Newton, childlike sage!
Sagacious reader of the works of God,
And in his word sagacious. Such, too, thine,
Milton, whose genius had angelic wings,
And fed on manna! And such thine, in whom
Our British Themis gloried with just cause,
Immortal Hale! for deep discernment prais'd,
And sound integrity, not more than fam'd
For sanctity of manners undefil'd.

All flesh is grass, and all its glory fades
Like the fair flow'r dishevell'd in the wind;
Riches have wings, and grandeur is a dream,
The man we celebrate must find a tomb,
And we that worship him, ignoble graves.
Nothing is proof against the gen'ral curse
Of vanity that seizes all below.
The only amaranthine flow'r on earth
Is virtue; th' only lasting treasure, truth.
But what is truth? 'Twas Pilate's question put
To Truth itself, that deign'd him no reply.
And wherefore? will not God impart his light
To them that ask it?—Freely—'tis his joy,
His glory, and his nature, to impart.

But to the proud, uncandid, insincere,
Or negligent inquirer, not a spark.
What's that which brings contempt upon a book,
And him who writes it, though the style be neat,
The method clear, and argument exact:
That makes a minister in holy things
The joy of many, and the dread of more.
His name a theme for praise and for reproach?—
That, while it gives us worth in God's account,
Depreciates and undoes us in our own?
What pearl is it, that rich men cannot buy,
That learning is too proud to gather up;
But which the poor, and the despis'd of all,
Seek and obtain, and often find unsought;
Tell me—and I will tell thee what is truth.
O friendly to the best pursuits of man,
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace!
Domestic life in rural leisure pass'd!
Few know thy value, and few taste thy sweets;
Though many boast thy favours, and affect
To understand and choose thee for their own.
But foolish man foregoes his proper bliss,
E'en as his first progenitor, and quits,
Though plac'd in Paradise, (for earth has still,
Some traces of her youthful beauty left)
Substantial happiness for transient joy:
Scenes form'd for contemplation, and to nurse
The growing seeds of wisdom; that suggest
By ev'ry pleasing image they present,
Reflections such as meliorate the heart,
Compose the passions, and exalt the mind;
Scenes such as these 'tis his supreme delight

To fill with riot, and defile with blood.
Should some contagion, kind to the poor brutes
We persecute, annihilate the tribes
That draw the sportsman over hill and dale,
Fearless and wrapt away from all his cares;
Should never game-fowl hatch her eggs again,
Nor baited hook deceive the fish's eye;
Could pageantry and dance, and feast and song,
Be quell'd in all our summer-months' retreats;
How many self-deluded nymphs and swains,
Who dream they have a taste for fields and
groves,
Would find them hideous nurs'ries of the spleen,
And crowd the roads, impatient for the town!
They love the country, and none else, who seek,
For their own sake, its silence and its shade.
Delights which who would leave that has a heart
Susceptible of pity, or a mind
Cultur'd and capable of sober thought
For all the savage din of the swift pack
And clamours of the field?—Detested sport,
That owes its pleasures to another's pain;
That feeds upon the sobs and dying shrieks
Of harmless nature, dumb, but yet endued
With eloquence, that agonies inspire,
Of silent tears and heart-distending sighs?
Vain tears, alas, and sighs that never find
A corresponding tone in jovial souls!
Well—one at least is safe. One shelter'd hare
Has never heard the sanguinary yell
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes.
Innocent partner of my peaceful home,

Whom ten long years' experience of my care
Has made at last familiar: she has lost
Much of her vigilant instinctive dread,
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine.
Yes—thou mayst eat thy bread, and lick the hand
That feeds thee; thou mayst frolic on the floor
At ev'ning, and at night retire secure
To thy straw couch, and slumber unalarm'd,
For I have gained thy confidence, have pledg'd
All that is human in me, to protect
Thine unsuspecting gratitude and love.
If I survive thee, I will dig thy grave;
And, when I place thee in it, sighing say,
I knew at least one hare that had a friend.*
How various his employments, whom the world
Calls idle; and who justly in return
Esteems that busy world an idler too!
Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
Delightful industry enjoy'd at home,
And nature in her cultivated trim
Dress'd to his taste, inviting him abroad—
Can he want occupation who has these?
Will he be idle who has much t' enjoy?
Me therefore studious of laborious ease,
Not slothful, happy to deceive the time,
Not waste it, and aware that human life
Is but a loan to be repaid with use,
When He shall call his debtors to account,
From whom are all our blessings, business finds
E'en here: while sedulous I seek t' improve,

* See the note at the end.

At least neglect not, or leave unemploy'd,
The mind he gave me; driving it, though slack
Too oft, and much impeded in its work
By causes not to be divulg'd in vain,
To its just point—the service of mankind.
He that attends to his interior self,
That has a heart, and keeps it: has a mind
That hungers and supplies it; and who seeks
A social, not a dissipated life,
Has business; feels himself engag'd to achieve
No unimportant, though a silent task.
A life all turbulence and noise may seem
To him that leads it wise, and to be prais'd;
But wisdom is a pearl with most success
Sought in still water, and beneath clear skies:
He that is ever occupied in storms,
Or dives not for it, or brings up instead,
Vainly industrious, a disgraceful prize.
The morning finds the self-sequester'd man
Fresh for his task, intend what task he may.
Whether inclement seasons recommend
His warm but simple home, where he enjoys
With her who shares his pleasures and his heart
Sweet converse, sipping calm the fragrant lymph,
Which neatly she prepares: then to his book
Well chosen, and not sullenly perus'd
In selfish silence, but imparted, oft
As aught occurs that she may smile to hear,
Or turn to nourishment, digested well,
Or if the garden with its many cares,
All well repaid, demand him, he attends
The welcome call, conscious how much the hand

Of lubbard Labour needs his watchful eye,
Oft loit'ring lazy, if not o'erseen,
Or misapplying his unskilful strength.
Nor does he govern only, or direct,
But much performs himself. No works indeed,
That ask robust, tough sinews bred to toil,
Servile employ; but such as may amuse,
Nor tire, demanding rather skill than force.
Proud of his well-spread walls he views his trees,
That meet, no barren interval between,
With pleasure more than e'en their fruits afford;
Which, save himself who trains them, none can feel.
These therefore are his own peculiar charge;
No meaner hand may discipline the shoots.
None but his steel approach them. What is weak,
Distemper'd, or has lost prolific pow'rs,
Impair'd by age, his unrelenting hand
Dooms to the knife: nor does he spare the soft
And succulent, that feeds its giant growth,
But barren, at th' expense of neighb'ring twigs
Less ostentatious, and yet studded thick
With hopeful gems. The rest, no portion left
That may disgrace his art, or disappoint
Large expectation, he disposes neat
At measur'd distances, that air and sun,
Admitted freely may afford their aid,
And ventilate and warm the swelling buds.
Hence summer has her riches, Autumn hence,
And hence e'en Winter fills his wither'd hand

With blushing fruits, and plenty not his own.*
Fair recompense of labour well bestow'd,
And wise precaution; which a clime so rude
Makes needful still, whose Spring is but the child
Of churlish Winter, in her froward moods
Discov'ring much the temper of her sire.
For oft, as if in her the stream of mild
Maternal nature had revers'd its course,
She brings her infants forth with many smiles;
But once deliver'd, kills them with a frown.
He therefore, timely warn'd, himself supplies
Her want of care, screening and keeping warm
The plenteous bloom, that no rough blast may
sweep
His garlands from the boughs. Again, as oft
As the sun peeps, and vernal airs breathe mild,
The fence withdrawn, he gives them ev'ry
beam,
And spreads his hopes before the blaze of day.
To raise the prickly and green-coated gourd,
So grateful to the palate, and when rare
So coveted, else base and disesteem'd—
Food for the vulgar merely—is an art
That toiling ages have but just matur'd,
And at this moment unessay'd in song.
Yet gnats have had, and frogs and mice, long
since,
Their eulogy; those sang the Mantuan bard,
And these the Grecian, in ennobling strains;
And in thy numbers, Philips, shines for aye

* Miraturque novus fructus et non sua poma. *Virg.*

The solitary shilling. Pardon, then,
Ye sage dispensers of poetic fame,
Th' ambition of one meaner far, whose pow'rs,
Presuming an attempt not less sublime,
Pant for the praise of dressing to the taste
Of critic appetite, no sordid fare,
A cucumber, while costly yet and scarce.
The stable yields a stercoraceous heap,
Impregnated with quick fermenting salts,
And potent to resist the freezing blast:
For ere the beach and elm have cast their leaf
Decidious, when now November dark
Checks vegitation in the torpid plant
Expos'd to his cold breath, the task begins.
Warily, therefore, and with prudent heed,
He seeks a favour'd spot; that where he builds
Th' agglomerated pile his frame may front
The sun's meridian disk, and at the back
Enjoy close shelter, wall, or reeds, or hedge
Impervious to the wind. First he bids spread
Dry fern or litter'd hay, that may imbibe
Th' ascending damps; then leisurely impose,
And lightly shaking it with agile hand
From the full fork, the saturated straw.
What longest binds the closest forms secure
The shapely side that as it rises takes,
By just degrees, an overhanging breath,
Shelt'ring the base with its projected eaves;
Th' uplifted frame, compact at ev'ry joint,
And overlaid with clear translucent glass,
He settles next upon the sloping mount,
Whose sharp declivity shoots off secure

From the dash'd pane the deluge as it falls.
He shuts it close, and the first labour ends.
Thrice must the voluble and restless Earth
Spin round upon her axle, ere the warmth,
Slow gath'ring in the midst, through the square mass
Diffus'd, attain the surface; when, behold!
A pestilent and most corrosive stream,
Like a gross fog Bœotian, rising fast,
And fast condens'd upon the dewy sash,
Asks egress? which obtain'd, the overcharg'd
And drench'd conservatory breathes abroad,
In volumes wheeling slow the vapour dank;
And, purified, rejoices to have lost
Its foul inhabitant. But to assuage
Th' impatient fervour, which it first conceives
Within its reeking bosom, threat'ning death
To his young hopes, requires discreet delay.
Experience, slow preceptress, teaching oft
The way to glory by miscarriage foul,
Must prompt him, and admonish how to catch
Th' auspicious moment, when the temper'd heat,
Friendly to vital motion, may afford
Soft fomentation, and invite the seed.
The seed, selected wisely, plump, and smooth,
And glossy, he commits to pots of size
Diminutive, well-fill'd with well-prepar'd
And fruitful soil, that has been treasur'd long,
And drank no moisture from the dripping clouds
These on the warm and genial earth that hides
The smoking manure, and o'erspreads it all,
He places lightly, and, as time subdues

The rage of fermentation, plunges deep
In the soft medium, till they stand immers'd.
Then rise the tender germs, upstarting quick
And spreading wide their spongy lobes; at first
Pale, wan, and livid; but assuming soon,
If fann'd by balmy and nutritious air,
Strain'd through the friendly mats, a vivid green.
Two leaves produc'd, two rough indented leaves,
Cautious he pinches from the second stalk
A pimple that portends a future sprout,
And interdicts its growth. Thence straight succeed
The branches, sturdy to his utmost wish;
Prolific all, and harbingers of more.
The crowded roots demand enlargement now,
And transplantation in an ampler space.
Indulg'd in what they wish, they soon supply
Large foliage, overshadowing golden flow'rs,
Blown on the summit of the apparent fruit.
These have their sexes; and when summer shines
The bee transports the fertilizing meal
From flow'r to flow'r, and e'en the breathing air
Wafts the rich prize to its appointed use.
Not so when winter scowls. Assistant Art
Then acts in Nature's office, brings to pass
The glad espousals, and ensures the crop.
Grudge not, ye rich, (since Luxury must have
His dainties, and the World's more num'rous half
Lives by contriving delicates for you,)
"dge not the cost. Ye little know the cares
'igilance, the labour, and the skill,

That day and night are exercis'd, and hang
Upon the ticklish balance of suspense,
That ye may garnish your profuse regales
With summer fruits brought forth by wintry suns.
Ten thousand dangers lie in wait to thwart
The process. Heat, and cold, and wind, and steam,
Moisture and drought, mice, worms, and swarming flies,
Minute as dust, and numberless, oft work
Dire disappointment, that admits no cure,
And which no care can obviate. It were long,
Too long, to tell th' expedients and the shifts,
Which he that fights a season so severe
Devises while he guards his tender trust;
And oft at last in vain. The learn'd and wise
Sarcastic would exclaim, and judge the song
Cold as its theme, and like its theme the fruit
Of too much labour, worthless when produc'd.
Who loves a garden loves a green-house too.
Unconscious of a less propitious clime,
There blooms exotic beauty, warm and snug,
While the winds whistle and the snows descend
The spiry myrtle with unwith'ring leaf
Shines there, and flourishes. The golden boast
Of Portugal and western India there,
The ruddier orange, and the paler lime,
Peep through their polish'd foliage at the storm,
And seem to smile at what they need not fear.
The amomum there with intermingling flow'rs
And cherries hangs her twigs. Geranium boast

Her crimson honours; and the spangled beau,
Ficoides glitters bright the winter long.
All plants of ev'ry leaf, that can endure
The winter's frown, if screen'd from his shrewd bite,
Live there, and prosper. Those Ausonia claims,
Levantine regions these; th' Azores send
Their jessamine, her jessamine remote
Caffraria: foreigners from many lands,
They form one social shade, as if conven'd
By magic summons of th' Orphean lyre.
Yet just arrangement, rarely brought to pass
But by a master's hand, disposing well
The gay diversities of leaf and flow'r,
Must lend its aid t' illustrate all their charms,
And dress the regular yet various scene.
Plant behind plant aspiring, in the van
The dwarfish, in the rear retir'd, but still
Sublime above the rest, the statelier stand.
So once were rang'd the sons of ancient Rome,
A noble show! while Roscius trod the stage;
And so, while Garrick, as renown'd as he,
The sons of Albion; fearing each to lose
Some note of Nature's music from his lips,
And covetous of Shakspeare's beauty, seen
In ev'ry flash of his far-beaming eye,
Nor taste alone and well-contriv'd display
Suffice to give the marshall'd ranks the grace
Of their complete effect. Much yet remains
Unsung, and many cares are yet behind,
And more laborious; cares on which depend
Their vigour, injur'd soon, not soon restor'd.

The soil must be renew'd, which often wash'd
Loses its treasure of salubrious salts,
And disappoints the roots; the slender roots
Close interwoven, where they meet the vase,
Must smooth be shorn away; the sapless branch,
Must fly before the knife; the wither'd leaf
Must be detach'd, and where it strews the floor
Swept with a woman's neatness, breeding else
Contagion and disseminating death.
Discharge but these kind offices, (and who
Would spare, that loves them, offices like these?)
Well they repay the toil. The sight is pleased,
The scent regal'd, each odorif'rous leaf,
Each op'ning blossom, freely breathes abroad
Its gratitude, and thanks him with its sweets.
So manifold, all pleasing in their kind,
All healthful, are th' employs of rural life.
Reiterated as the wheel of time
Runs round; still ending, and beginning still.
Nor are these all. To deck the shapely knoll
That softly swell'd and gaily dress'd appears
A flow'ry island, from the dark green lawn
Emerging, must be deem'd a labour due
To no mean hand, and asks the touch of taste.
Here also grateful mixture of well-match'd
And sorted hues, (each giving each relief,
And by contrasted beauty shining more,)
Is needful. Strength may wield the pond'rous spade,
May turn the clod, and wheel the compost home;
But elegance, chief grace the garden shows,
And most attractive, is the fair result

Of thought, the creature of a polish'd mind.
Without it all is Gothic as the scene
To which th' insipid citizen resorts
Near yonder heath; where industry mispent,
But proud of his uncouth, ill-chosen task,
Has made a Heav'n on Earth; with suns and moons
Of close-ramm'd stones has charg'd th' encumber'd soil,
And fairly laid the zodiac in the dust.
He, therefore, who would see his flow'rs dispos'd
Sightly and in just order, ere he gives
The beds the trusted treasure of their seeds,
Forecasts the future whole; that, when the scene
Shall break into its preconceiv'd display,
Each for itself, and all as with one voice
Conspiring, may attest his bright design,
Nor even then dismissing as perform'd,
His pleasant work, may he suppose it done.
Few self-supported flow'rs endure the wind
Uninjur'd, but expect the upholding aid
Of the smooth shaven prop, and, neatly tied,
Are wedded thus, like beauty to old age,
For int'rest sake, the living to the dead.
Some clothe the soil that feeds them, far diffus'd
And lowly creeping, modest and yet fair,
Like virtue, thriving most where little seen
Some more aspiring catch the neighbour shrub
With clasping tendrils, and invest his branch,
Else unadorn'd, with many a gay festoon
And fragrant chaplet, recompensing well

The strength they borrow with the grace they lend.
All hate the rank society of weeds,
Noisome, and ever greedy to exhaust
Th' impov'rish'd earth; an overbearing race,
That, like the multitude made faction mad,
Disturb good order, and degrade true worth.
O blest seclusion from a jarring world,
Which he, thus occupied, enjoys! Retreat
Cannot indeed to guilty man restore
Lost innocence, or cancel follies past;
But it has peace, and much secures the mind,
From all assaults of evil; proving still
A faithful barrier, not o'erleap'd with ease
By vicious Custom, raging uncontroll'd
Abroad, and desolating public life.
When fierce Temptation, seconded within
By traitor Appetite, and arm'd with darts
Temper'd in Hell, invades the throbbing breast,
To combat may be glorious, and success
Perhaps may crown us; but to fly is safe.
Had I the choice of sublunary good,
What could I wish, that I possess not here?
Health, leisure, means t' improve it, friendship, peace,
No loose or wanton, though a wand'ring muse.
And constant occupation without care.
Thus blest, I draw a picture of that bliss;
Hopeless, indeed, that dissipated minds,
And profligate abusers of a world
Created fair so much in vain for them,
Should seek the guiltless joys that I describe,

Allur'd by my report: but sure no less
That self-condemn'd they must neglect the prize,
And what they will not taste must yet approve.
What we admire we priase; and when we praise
Advance it into notice, that, its worth
Acknowledg'd, others may admire it too.
I therefore recommend, though at the risk
Of popular disgust, yet boldly still,
The cause of piety and sacred truth,
And virtue, and those scenes which God ordain'd
Should best secure them, and promote them most;
Scenes that I love, and with regret perceive
Forsaken, or through folly not enjoy'd.
Pure is the nymph, though lib'ral of her smiles,
And chaste, though unconfin'd, whom I extol.
Not as the prince in Shushan, when he call'd,
Vain-glorious of her charms, his Vashti forth,
To grace the full pavilion. His design
Was but to boast his own peculiar good,
Which all might view with envy, none partake.
My charmer is not mine alone; my sweets,
And she that sweetens all my bitters too,
Nature, enchanting Nature, in whose form
And lineaments divine I trace a hand
That errs not, and find raptures still renew'd,
Is free to all men—universal prize.
Strange that so fair a creature should yet want
Admirers, and be destin'd to divide
With meaner objects e'en the few she finds!
Stripp'd of her ornaments, her leaves and flow'rs,

She loses all her influence. Cities then
Attract us, and neglected nature pines,
Abandon'd as unworthy of our love.
But are not wholesome airs, though unperfum'd
By roses; and clear suns, though scarcely felt;
And groves, if unharmonious, yet secure
From clamour, and whose very silence charms:
To be preferr'd to smoke, to the eclipse,
That metropolitan volcanoes make,
Whose Stygian throats breathe darkness all day long;
And to the stir of Commerce, driving slow,
And thund'ring loud, with his ten thousand wheels?
They would be, were not madness in the head,
And folly in the heart; were England now,
What England was, plain, hospitable, kind,
And undebauch'd. But we have bid farewell
To all the virtues of those better days,
And all their honest pleasures. Mansions once
Knew their own masters; and laborious hinds,
Who had surviv'd the father, serv'd the son.
Now, the legitimate and rightful lord
Is but a transient guest, newly arriv'd,
And soon to be supplanted. He that saw
His patrimonial timber cast its leaf,
Sells the last scantling, and transfers the price
To some shrewd sharper, ere it buds again.
Estates are landscapes, gaz'd upon a while,
Then advertis'd, and auctioneer'd away.
The country starves, and they that feed th' o'rcharg'd

And surfeited lewd town with her fair dues,
By a just judgment stript and starve themselves.
The wings that waft our riches out of sight,
Grow on the gamester's elbows; and the alert
And nimble motion of those restless joints,
That never tire, soon fans them all away.
Improvement, too, the idol of the age,
Is fed with many a victim. Lo, he comes!
Th' omnipotent magician, Brown, appears!
Down falls the venerable pile, th' abode
Of our forefathers—a grave whisker'd race,
But tasteless. Springs a palace in its stead,
But in a distant spot; where more expos'd
It may enjoy th' advantage of the north,
And aguish east, till time shall have transform'd
Those naked acres to a shelt'ring grove.
He speaks. The lake in front becomes a lawn;
Woods vanish, hills subside, and valleys rise:
And streams, as if created for his use,
Pursue the track of his directing wand.
Sinuous or straight, now rapid and now slow,
Now murm'ring soft, now roaring in cascades—
E'en as he bids! The enraptur'd owner smiles.
'Tis finish'd, and yet, finish'd as it seems
Still wants a grace, the loveliest it could show,
A mine to satisfy th' enormous cost.
Drain'd to the last poor item of his wealth,
He sighs, departs, and leaves th' accomplish'd plan
That he has touch'd, retouch'd many a long day
Labour'd, and many a night pursu'd in dreams,
Just when it meets his hopes, and proves the
Heav'n

He wanted, for a wealthier to enjoy!
And now perhaps the glorious hour is come,
When, having no stake left, no pledge t' endear,
Her int'rests, or that gives her sacred cause
A moment's operation on his love,
He burns with most intense and flagrant zeal
To serve his country. Ministerial grace
Deals him out money from the public chest;
Or, if that mine be shut, some private purse
Supplies his need with a usurious loan,
To be refunded duly, when his vote
Well-manag'd shall have earn'd its worthy price.
O innocent, compar'd with arts like these,
Crape, and cock'd pistol, and the whistling ball
Sent through the trav'ller's temples! He that finds
One drop of Heav'n's sweet mercy in his cup,
Can dig, beg, rot, and perish, well content,
So he may wrap himself in honest rags
At his last gasp: but could not for a world
Fish up his dirty and dependent bread
From pools and ditches of the commonwealth,
Sordid and sick'ning at his own success.
Ambition, avarice, penury, incurr'd
By endless riot, vanity, the lust
Of pleasure and variety, despatch
As duly as the swallows disappear,
The world of wand'ring knights and squires to town.
London engulfs them all! The shark is there,
And the shark's prey; the spendthrift, and the leech
That sucks him: there the sycophant, and he

Who, with bareheaded and obsequious bows
Begs a warm office, doom'd to a cold jail
And groat per diem, if his patron frown,
The levee swarms, as if in golden pomp
Were character'd on ev'ry statesman's door,
"*Batter'd and bankrupt fortunes mended here.*"
These are the charms that sully and eclipse
The charms of nature. 'Tis the cruel gripe,
That lean, hard-handed Poverty inflicts,
The hope of better things, the chance to win,
The wish to shine, the thirst to be amus'd,
That at the sound of Winter's hoary wing
Unpeople all our countries of such herds
Of flutt'ring, loit'ring, cringing, begging, loose,
And wanton vagrants, as make London, vast
And boundless as it is, a crowded coop.
O thou resort and mart of all the earth,
Checker'd with all complexions of mankind,
And spotted with all crimes; in whom I see
Much that I love, and more that I admire,
And all that I abhor; thou freckled fair,
That pleasest and yet shockest me! I can laugh,
And I can weep, can hope and can despond
Feel wrath and pity, when I think on thee!
Ten righteous would have sav'd a city once,
And thou hast many righteous.—Well for thee—
That salt preserves thee; more corrupted else,
And therefore more obnoxious, at this hour,
Than Sodom in her day had pow'r to be,
For whom God heard his Abr'ham plead in vain.

THE TASK.

BOOK IV.

THE WINTER EVENING.

ARGUMENT OF THE FOURTH BOOK.

The post comes in—The newspaper is read—The World contemplated at a distance—Address to Winter—The rural amusements of a winter evening compared with the fashionable ones—Address to evening—A brown study—Fall of snow in the evening—The wagoner—A poor family piece—The rural thief—Public houses—The multitude of them censured—The farmer's daughter: what she was,—what she is—The simplicity of country manners almost lost—Causes of the change—Desertion of the country by the rich—Neglect of the magistrates—The militia principally in fault—The new recruit and his transformation—Reflection on the bodies corporate—The love of rural objects natural to all, and never to be totally extinguished.

HARK! 'tis the twanging horn o'er yonder bridge,
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood; in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright:—
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spatter'd boots, strapp'd waist, and frozen locks,

News from all nations lumb'ring at his back.
True to his charge, the close-pack'd load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destin'd inn;
And having dropp'd th' expected bag, pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch.
Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some;
To him indiff'rent whether grief or joy.
Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,
Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet.
With tears, that trickled down the writer's cheeks
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
Or charg'd with am'rous sighs of absent swains,
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect
His horse and him, unconscious of them all.
But O, th' important budget! usher'd in
With such heart-shaking music, who can say
What are its tidings? have our troops awak'd?
Or do they still, as if with opium drugg'd,
Snore to the murmurs of the Atlantic wave?
Is India free? and does she wear her plum'd
And jewel'd turban with a smile of peace,
Or do we grind her still? The grand debate,
The popular harangue, the tart reply,
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh—I long to know them all;
I burn to set th' imprisoned wranglers free,
And give them voice and utt'rance once again.
Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And, while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,

That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful ev'ning in.
Not such his ev'ning, who with shining face
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and, squeez'd
And bor'd with elbow points through both his sides,
Outscolds the ranting actor on the stage:
Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
Of patriots, bursting with heroic rage,
Or placemen, all tranquillity and smiles.
This folio of four pages happy work!
Which not e'en critics criticise; that holds
Inquisitive attention, while I read,
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break;
What is it, but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns?
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge,
That tempts Ambition. On the summit see
The seals of office glitter in his eyes;
He climbs, he pants, he grasps them! At his heels,
Close at his heels, a demagogue ascends,
And with a dext'rous jerk soon twists him down,
And wins them, but to loose them in his turn.
Here rills of oily eloquence, in soft
Meanders lubricate the course they take;
The modest speaker is asham'd and griev'd,
T' engross a moment's notice; and yet begs
Begs a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,
However trivial, all that he conceives.
Sweet bashfulness; it claims at least this pr
The dearth of information and good sense

That it foretells us always comes to pass.
Cataracts of declamation thunder here;
There forests of no meaning spread the page,
In which all comprehension wanders, lost;
While fields of pleasantry amuse us there
With merry descants on a nation's woes.
The rest appears a wilderness of strange
But gay confusion; roses for the cheeks,
And lilies for the brows of faded age,
Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
Heav'n, earth, and ocean, plundered of their
sweets,
Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
Sermons, and city feasts, and fav'rite airs,
Æthcrial journeys, submarine exploits,
And Katterfelto, with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wond'ring for his bread.
'Tis pleasant, through the loopholes of retreat,
To peep at such a world; to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd;
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on th' uninjur'd ear.
Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanc'd
To some secure and more than mortal height,
That liberates and exempts me from them all.
It turns submitted to my view, turns round
With all its generations; I behold
The tumult, and am still. The sound of war
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me;
rieves, but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
d av'rice that make man a wolf to man;

Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats,
By which he speaks the language of his heart,
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flow'r to flow'r, so he from land to land;
The manners, customs, policy, of all
Pay contribution to the store he gleans;
He sucks intelligence in ev'ry clime,
And spreads the honey of his deep research
At his return—a rich repast for me.
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
Discover countries; with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes;
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.
O Winter, ruler of th' inverted year,
Thy scatter'd hair with sleet like ashes fill'd,
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fring'd with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapp'd in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urg'd by storms along its slipp'ry way,
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art! Thou hold'st the sun
A pris'ner in the yet undawning east,
Short'ning his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy west: but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gath'ring, at short notice, in one group

The family dispers'd, and fixing thought,
Not less dispers'd by daylight and its cares.
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturb'd Retirement, and the hours
Of long, uninterrupted ev'ning know.
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates,
No powder'd pert proficient in the art
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors
Till the street rings; no stationary steeds
Cough their own knell; while, heedless of the sound,
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake;
But here the needle plies its busy task,
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flow'r,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully dispos'd,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair;
A wreath, that cannot fade, or flow'rs that blow
With most success when all besides decay.
The poet's or historian's page by one
Made vocal for th' amusement of the rest:
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds
The touch from many a tembling chord shakes out;
And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,
And in the charming strife triumphant still,
Beguile the night, and set a keener edge
On female industry: the threaded steel
Flies swiftly, and unfelt the task proceeds.

The volume clos'd, the customary rites
Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal:
Such as the mistress of the world once found
Delicious, when her patriots of high note,
Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
And under an old oak's domestic shade,
Enjoy'd, spare feast! a radish and an egg.
Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth:
Nor do we madly, like an impious World,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
That made them an intruder on their joys,
Start at his awful name, or deem his praise
A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone
Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
While we retrace with Mem'ry's pointing wand,
That calls the past to our exact review,
The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,
The disappointed foe, deliv'rance found
Unlook'd for, life preserv'd, and peace restor'd—
Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.
O ev'nings worthy of the gods! exclaim'd
The Sabine bard. O ev'nings, I reply,
More to be priz'd and coveted than yours,
As more illumin'd, and with nobler truths,
That I, and mine, and those we love, enjoy.
Is Winter hideous in a garb like this?
Needs he the tragic fur, the smoke of lamps,
The pent-up breath of an unsav'ry throng,
To thaw him into feeling, or the smart
And snappish dialogue, that flippant wits
Call comedy, to prompt him with a smile?

The self-complacent actor, when he views
(Stealing a sidelong glance at a full house)
The slope of faces, from the floor to th' roof
(As if one master spring controll'd them all,)
Relax'd into a universal grin,
Sees not a count'nance there, that speaks of joy
Half so refin'd or so sincere as ours.
Cards were superfluous here, with all the tricks
That idleness has ever yet contriv'd
To fill the void of an unfurnish'd brain,
To palliate dulness, and give time a shove.
Time, as he passes us, has a dove's wing,
Unsoil'd, and swift, and of a silken sound;
But the world's Time is Time in masquerade!
Theirs, should I paint him, has his pinions fledg'd,
With motley plumes; and where the peacock shows
His azure eyes, is tinctur'd black and red
With spots quadrangular of diamond form,
Ensanguined hearts, clubs typical of strife,
And spades, the emblem of untimely graves.
What should be, and what was an hourglass once,
Becomes a dicebox, and a billiard mace
Well does the work of his destructive scythe.
Thus deck'd, he charms a World whom Fashion blinds
To his true worth, most pleas'd when idle most:
Whose only happy, are their idle hours.
E'en misses, at whose age their mothers wore
The backstring and the bib, assume the dress
Of womanhood, sit pupils in the school
[illegible]ard devoted Time, and, night by night,
[illegible] at some vacant corner of the board,

Learn ev'ry trick, and soon play all the game.
But truce with censure. Roving as I rove,
Where shall I find an end, or how proceed?
As he that travels far oft turns aside,
To view some rugged rock or mould'ring tow'r,
Which seen, delights him not; then coming
home,
Describes and prints it, that the world may know
How far he went for what was nothing worth:
So I, with brush in hand and pallet spread,
With colours mix'd for a far diff'rent use,
Paint cards, and dolls, and ev'ry idle thing,
That fancy finds in her excursive flights.
Come, Ev'ning, once again, season of peace,
Return, sweet Ev'ning, and continue long!
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron step slow-moving, while the Night
Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employ'd
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charg'd for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day:
Not sumptuously adorn'd, nor needing aid,
Like homely-featur'd Night, of clust'ring gems;
A star or two, just twinkling on thy brow,
Suffices thee; save that the moon is thine
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high
With ostentatious pageantry, but set
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.
Come then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm
Or make me so. Composure is thy gift;
And, whether I devote thy gentle hour,
To books, to music, or the poet's toil;

To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit;
Or twining silken threads round ivory reels,
When they command whom man was born to
please;
I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.
Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
With lights, by clear reflection multiplied
From many a mirror, in which he of Gath,
Goliah, might have seen his giant bulk
Whole without stooping, tow'ring crest and all,
My pleasures, too, begin. But me perhaps
The glowing hearth may satisfy awhile
With faint illumination, that uplifts
The shadows to the ceiling, there by fits
Dancing uncouthly to the quiv'ring flame,
Not undelightful is an hour to me
So spent in parlour twilight: such a gloom
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
The mind contemplative, with some new theme
Pregnant, or indispos'd alike to all.
Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial
pow'rs,
That never feel a stupor, know no pause,
Nor need one; I am conscious, and confess
Fearless, a soul that does not always think.
Me oft has Fancy, ludicrous and wild,
Sooth'd with a waking dream of houses, tow'rs,
Trees, churches, and strange visages, express'd
In the red cinders, while with poring eye
I gaz'd, myself creating what I saw.
Nor less amus'd have I quiescent watch'd
[illegible] sooty films that play upon the bars
[illegible]ulous, and foreboding in the view

Of superstition prophesying still.
Though still deceiv'd, some stranger's near approach.
'Tis thus the understanding takes repose
In indolent vacuity of thought,
And sleeps, and is refresh'd. Meanwhile the face
Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask
Of deep deliberation, as the man
Were task'd to his full strength, absorb'd and lost.
Thus oft, reclin'd at ease, I lose an hour
At ev'ning, till at length the freezing blast
That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
The recollected pow'rs; and snapping short
The glassy threads, with which the Fancy weaves
Her brittle toils, restores me to myself.
How calm is my recess; and how the frost,
Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear
The silence and the warmth enjoy'd within!
I saw the woods and fields at close of day,
A variegated show; the meadows green,
Though faded; and the lands, where lately wav'd
The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,
Upturn'd so lately by the forceful share.
I saw far off the weedy fallows smile
With verdure not unprofitable, graz'd
By flocks, fast feeding, and selecting each
His fav'rite herb: while all the leafless groves
That skirt th' horizon wore a sable hue,
Scarce notic'd in the kindred dusk of eve.
To-morrow brings a change, a total change!
Which even now, though silently perform'd,

And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face
Of universal nature undergoes.
Fast falls a fleecy show'r; the downy flakes
Descending, and with never-ceasing lapse,
Soft alighting upon all below,
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives
Gladly the thick'ning mantle; and the green
And tender blade, that fear'd the chilling blast,
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.
In such a world, so thorny, and where none
Finds happiness unblighted, or, if found,
Without some thistly sorrow at its side;
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin
Against the law of love, to measure lots
With less distinguish'd than ourselves; that thus
We may with patience bear our moderate ills,
And sympathize with others suff'ring more.
Ill fares the trav'ller now, and he that stalks
In pond'rous boots beside his reeking team.
The wain goes heavily, impeded sore
By congregated loads adhering close
To the clogg'd wheels; and in its sluggish pace
Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow.
The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,
While ev'ry breath, by respiration strong
Forc'd downward, is consolidated soon
Upon their jutting chests. He, form'd to bear
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half shut eyes, and pucker'd cheeks and teeth
Presented bare against the storm, plods on.
One hand secures his hat, save when with both

He brandishes his pliant length of whip,
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.
O happy; and in my account denied
That sensibility of pain with which
Refinement is endur'd, thrice happy thou!
Thy frame, robust and hardy, feels indeed
The piercing cold, but feels it unimpair'd.
The learn'd finger never need explore
Thy vig'rous pulse; and the unhealthful east,
That breathes the spleen, and searches ev'ry bone
Of the infirm, is wholesome air to thee.
Thy days roll on exempt from household care;
Thy wagon is thy wife; and the poor beasts,
That drag the dull companion to and fro,
Thine helpless charge, dependent on thy care.
Ah, treat them kindly; rude as thou appear'st,
Yet show that thou hast mercy! which the great,
With needless hurry whirl'd from place to place,
Humane as they would seem, not always show.
Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in ev'ry feeling heart.
Warm'd, while it lasts, by labour, all day long
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill clad, and fed but sparely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brushwood blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left she nurses well;
And, while her infant race, with outspread hands
And crowded knees, sit cow'ring o'er the sparks,
Retires, content to quake, so they be warm'd

The man feels least, as more inur'd than she
To winter, and the current in his veins
More briskly mov'd by his severer toil;
Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs.
The taper soon extinguish'd, which I saw
Dangled along at the cold finger's end
Just when the day declin'd: and the brown loaf
Lodg'd on the shelf half eaten without sauce
Of sav'ry cheese, or butter, costlier still;
Sleep seems their only refuge: for, alas!
Where penury is felt the thought is chain'd,
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few!
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care,
Ingenious Parsimony takes, but just
Saves the small inventory, bed, and stool,
Skillet, and old carv'd chest, from public sale.
They live, and live without extorted alms
From grudging hands: but other boast have none,
To sooth their honest pride, that scorns to beg,
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,
For ye are worthy; choosing rather far
A dry but independent crust, hard earn'd,
And eaten with a sigh, than to endure
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs
Of knaves in office, partial in the work
Of distribution; lib'ral of their aid
To clam'rous Importunity in rags,
But oftimes deaf to suppliants, who would blush
To wear a tatter'd garb, however coarse,
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth:
These ask with painful shyness, and, refus'd

Because deserving, silently retire!
But be ye of good courage! Time itself
Shall much befriend you. Time shall give
increase;
And all your numerous progeny, well train'd,
But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,
And labour too. Meanwhile ye shall not want
What, conscious of your virtues, we can spare,
Nor what a wealthier than ourselves may send.
I mean the man, who, when the distant poor
Need help, denies them nothing but his name.
But poverty with most, who whimper forth
Their long complaints, is self-inflicted wo;
The effect of laziness or sottish waste.
Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad
For plunder; much solicitous how best
He may compensate for a day of sloth
By works of darkness and nocturnal wrong.
Wo to the gard'ners pale, the farmer's hedge,
Plash'd neatly, and secur'd with driven stakes
Deep in the loamy bank. Uptorn by strength,
Resistless in so bad a cause, but lame
To better deeds, he bundles up the spoil.
An ass's burden, and, when laden most
And heaviest, light of foot, steals fast away.
Nor does the bordered hovel better guard
The well-stack'd pile of riven logs and roots
From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave
Unwrench'd the door, however well secur'd,
Where Canticleer amidst his haram sleeps
In unsuspecting pomp. Twitch'd from the perch,
He gives the princely bird, with all his wives,

To his voracious bag, struggling in vain,
And loudly wond'ring at the sudden change.
Nor this to feed his own. 'Twere some excuse
Did pity of their suff'rings warp aside
His principle, and tempt him into sin
For their support, so destitute. But they
Neglected, pine at home; themselves, as more
Expos'd than others, with less scruple made
His victims, robb'd of their defenceless all.
Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchless thirst
Of ruinous ebriety, that prompts
His ev'ry action, and imbrutes the man.
O for a law to noose the villain's neck
Who starves his own; who persecutes the blood
He gave them in his children's veins, and hates
And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love!
Pass where we may, through city or through town,
Village or hamlet, of this merry land,
Though lean and beggar'd, every twentieth pace,
Conducts th' unguarded nose to such a whiff
Of stale debauch, forth-issuing from the sties
That law has licens'd, as makes Temp'rance reel.
There sit, involv'd and lost in curling clouds
Of Indian fume, and guzzling deep, the boor,
The lackey, and the groom; the craftsman there
Takes a Lethean leave of all his toil;
Smith, cobbler, joiner, he that plies the shears,
And he that kneads the dough; all loud alike,
All learned and all drunk! the fiddle screams
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wail'd
Its wasted tones and harmony unheard,

Fierce the dispute, whate'er the theme; while she,
Fell Discord, arbitress of such debate,
Perch'd on the signpost, holds with even hand
Her undecisive scales. In this she lays
A weight of ignorance; in that, of pride;
And smiles delighted with the eternal poise.
Dire is the frequent curse, and its twin sound,
The cheek distending oath, not to be prais'd
As ornamental, musical, polite,
Like those which modern senators employ,
Whose oath is rhet'ric, and who swear for fame!
Behold the schools, in which plebeian minds,
Once simple, are initiated in arts
Which some may practise with politer grace,
But none with readier skill!—'Tis here they learn
The road that leads from competence and peace
To indigence and rapine; till at last
Society, grown weary of the load,
Shakes her encumber'd lap, and casts them out.
But censure profits little; vain th' attempt
To advertise in verse a public pest,
That, like the filth with which the peasant feeds
His hungry acres, stinks, and is of use.
Th' excise is fatten'd with the rich result
Of all this riot; and ten thousand casks,
For ever dribbling out their base contents,
Touch'd by the Midas finger of the state,
Bleed gold for ministers to sport away.
Drink, and be mad then; 'tis your country bids!
Gloriously drunk, obey th' important call!
Her cause demands th' assistance of your throa

Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.
Would I had fall'n upon those happier days
That poets celebrate: those golden times,
And those Arcadian scenes that Maro sings,
And Sidney, warbler of poetic prose.
Nymphs were Dianas then, and swains had hearts
That felt their virtues: Innocence, it seems,
From courts dismiss'd, found shelter in the groves;
The footsteps of simplicity, impress'd
Upon the yielding herbage, (so they sing.)
Then were not all effac'd; then speech profane,
And manners profligate, were rarely found,
Observ'd as prodigies, and soon reclaim'd.
Vain wish! those days were never; airy dreams
Sat for the picture: and the poet's hand,
Imparting substance to an empty shade,
Impos'd a gay delirium for a truth.
Grant it: I still must envy them an age
That favour'd such a dream: in days like these
Impossible when Virtue is so scarce,
That to suppose a scene where she presides
Is tramontane, and stumbles all belief.
No: we are polish'd now. The rural lass,
Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,
Her artless manners, and her neat attire,
So dignified, that she was hardly less
Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,
Is seen no more. The character is lost!
Her head, adorn'd with lappets pinn'd aloft,
And ribands streaming gay, superbly rais'd,
And magnified beyond all human size,
Indebted to some smart wig-weaver's hand

For more than half the tresses it sustains:
Her elbows ruffled, and her tott'ring form
Ill propp'd upon French heels; she might be deem'd
(But that the basket dangling on her arm
Interprets her more truly) of a rank
Too proud for dairy work, or sale of eggs—
Expect her soon with footboy at her heels,
No longer blushing for her awkward load,
Her train and her umbrella all her care!
The town has ting'd the country; and the stain
Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,
The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs
Down into scenes still rural; but, alas,
Scenes rarely grac'd with rural manners now!
Time was when in the pastoral retreat
Th' unguarded door was safe; men did not watch
T' invade another's right, or guard their own.
Then sleep was undisturbed by fear, unscar'd
By drunken howlings; and the chilling tale
Of midnight murder was a wonder heard
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.
But farewell now to unsuspicious nights,
And slumbers unalarm'd! Now, ere you sleep,
See that your polish'd arms be prim'd with care,
And drop the night-bolt;—ruffians are abroad;
And the first larum of the cock's shrill throat
May prove a trumpet, summoning your ear
To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.
E'en daylight has its dangers; and the walk
Through pathless wastes and woods, unconcious once

Of other tenants than melodius birds,
Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.
Lamented change! to which full many a cause
Invet'rate, hopeless of a cure, conspires.
The course of human things from good to ill,
From ill to worse, is fatal. never fails.
Increase of pow'r begets increase of wealth;
Wealth luxury, and luxury excess;
Excess, the scrofulous and itchy plague,
That seizes first the opulent, descends
To the next rank contagious, and in time,
Taints downward all the graduated scale
Of order, from the chariot to the plough.
The rich, and they that have an arm to check
The license of the lowest in degree,
Desert their office; and themselves, intent
On pleasure, haunt the capital, and thus
To all the violence of lawless hands
Resign the scenes their presence might protect.
Authority herself not seldom sleeps,
Though resident, and witness of the wrong.
The plump convivial parson often bears
The magisterial sword in vain, and lays
His rev'rence and his worship both to rest
On the same cushion of habitual sloth.
Perhaps timidity restrains his arm;
When he should strike he trembles, and sets free,
Himself enslav'd by terror of the band—
Th' audacious convict whom he dares not bind.
Perhaps, though by profession ghostly pure,
He, too, may have his vice, and sometimes prove
Less dainty than becomes his grave outside

In lucrative concerns. Examine well
His milk-white hand; the palm is hardly clean—
But here and there an ugly smutch appears.
Foh! 'twas a bribe that left it: he has touch'd
Corruption. Whoso seeks an audit here
Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fish,
Wild fowl or venison: and his errand speeds.
But faster far, and more than all the rest,
A noble cause, which none, who bears a spark
Of public virtue, ever wish'd remov'd,
Works the deplor'd and mischievous effect.
'Tis universal soldiership has stabb'd
The heart of merit in the meaner class.
Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage
Of those that bear them, in whatever cause,
Seem most at variance with all moral good,
And incompatible with serious thought.
The clown, the child of nature, without guile,
Blest with an infant's ignorance of all
But his own simple pleasures; now and then
A wrestling match, a foot-race, or a fair;
Is balloted, and trembles at the news:
Sheepish he doffs his hat, and mumbling swears
A bible oath to be whate'er they please,
To do he knows not what. The task perform'd,
That instant he becomes the sergeant's care,
His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.
His awkward gait, his introverted toes,
Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,
Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,
Unapt to learn, and form'd of stubborn stuff,
He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,

Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well:
He stands erect: his slouch becomes a walk;
He steps right onward, martial in his air,
His form and movement; is as smart above
As meal and larded locks can make him; wears
His hat, or his plum'd helmet, with a grace;
And, his three years of heroship expir'd,
Returns indignant to the slighted plough.
He hates the field, in which no fife or drum
Attends him; drives his cattle to a march;
And sighs for the smart comrades he has left.
'Twere well if his exterior change were all—
But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost
His ignorance and harmless manners too.
To swear, to game, to drink; to show at home
By lewdness, idleness, and sabbath breach,
The great proficiency he made abroad;
T' astonish, and to grieve his gazing friends;
To break some maiden's and his mother's heart
To be a pest where he was useful once;
Are his sole aim, and all his glory, now.
  Man in society is like a flow'r
Blown in its native bed; 'tis there alone
His faculties, expanded in full bloom,
Shine out; there only reach their proper use.
But man, associated and leagued with man
By regal warrant or self-joined by bond
For int'rest sake, or swarming into clans
Beneath one head for purposes of war,
Like flow'rs selected from the rest, and bound
And bundled close to fill some crowded vase,
Fades rapidly, and, by compression marr'd,

Contracts defilement not to be endur'd.
Hence charter'd boroughs are such public plagues;
And burghers, men immaculate perhaps
In all their private functions, once combin'd,
Become a loathsome body, only fit
For dissolution, hurtful to the main.
Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin
Against the charities of domestic life,
Incorporated, seem at once to lose
Their nature; and, disclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man,
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the sword's point, and dying the white robe
Of innocent commercial Justice red.
Hence, too, the field of glory, as the world
Misdeems it, dazzled by its bright array,
With all its majesty of thundering pomp,
Enchanting music, and immortal wreaths,
Is but a school, where thoughtlessness is taught
On principle, where foppery atones
For folly, gallantry for every vice.
But slighted as it is, and by the great
Abandon'd, and, which still I more regret,
Infected with the manners and the modes
It knew not once, the country wins me still.
I never fram'd a wish, or form'd a plan,
That flatter'd me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But there I laid the scene. There early stray'd
My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
Had found me, or the hope of being free.
My very dreams were rural; rural too
The first-born efforts of my youthful muse,

Sportive and jingling her poetic bells,
Ere yet her ear was mistress of their pow'rs.
No bard could please me but whose lyre was tun'd
To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
Fatigu'd me, never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sang,
The rustic throng beneath his fav'rite beech.
Then Milton had indeed a poet's charms:
New to my taste, his Paradise surpass'd
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue
To speak its excellence. I danc'd for joy.
I marvelled much that, at so ripe an age
As twice seven years, his beauties had then first
Engag'd my wonder; and admiring still,
And still admiring, with regret suppos'd
The joy half lost, because not sooner found.
There, too, enamour'd of the life I lov'd,
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit
Determin'd and possessing it at last,
With transports such as favour'd lovers feel,
I studied, priz'd, and wish'd that I had known,
Ingenious Cowley! and, though now reclaim'd
By modern lights from an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools.
I still revere thee, courtly though retir'd;
Though stretch'd at ease in Chertsey's silent bow'rs,
Not unemploy'd; and finding rich amends
For a lost world in solitude and verse.
'Tis born with all: The love of Nature's works

Is an ingredient in the compound man,
Infus'd at the creation of the kind.
And, though th' Almighty Maker has throughout
Discriminated, each from each, by strokes
And touches of his hand, with so much art
Diversified, that two were never found
Twins at all points—yet this obtains in all,
That all discern a beauty in his works,
And all can taste them: minds that have been
form'd
And tutor'd with a relish more exact,
But none without some relish, none unmov'd.
It is a flame that dies not even there,
Where nothing feeds it: neither business, crowds,
Nor habits of luxurious city life,
Whatever else they smother of true worth
In human bosoms, quench it or abate.
The villas, with which London stands begirt,
Like a swarth Indian with his belt of beads
Prove it. A breath of unadult'rate air,
The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer
The citizen, and brace his languid frame!
E'en in the stifling bosom of the town
A garden, in which nothing thrives, has charms
That sooth the rich possessor; much consol'd,
That here and there some sprigs of mournful
mint,
Of nightshade, or valerian, grace the well
He cultivates. These serve him with a hint
That nature lives; that sight-refreshing green
Is still the liv'ry she delights to wear,
Though sickly samples of the exhub'rant whol

What are the casements lin'd with creeping herbs,
The prouder sashes fronted with a range
Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed,
The Frenchman's darling?* are they not all proofs,
That man, immur'd in cities, still retains
His inborn inextinguishable thirst
Of rural scenes, compensating his loss
By supplemental shifts, the best he may?
The most unfurnish'd with the means of life,
And they, that never pass their brick-wall bounds,
To range the fields, and treat their lungs with air,
Yet feel the burning instinct; over head
Suspend their crazy boxes planted thick,
And water'd duly. There the pitcher stands
A fragment, and the spoutless teapot there;
Sad witnesses how close-pent man regrets
The country, with what ardour he contrives
A peep at Nature, when he can no more.
Hail, therefore, patroness of health and ease,
And contemplation, heart-consoling joys,
And harmless pleasures in the throng'd abode
Of multitudes unknown! hail, rural life!
Address himself who will to the pursuit
Of honours, or emoluments, or fame;
I shall not add myself to such a chase,
Thwart his attempts, or envy his success.

* Mignionette.

Some must be great. Great offices will have
Great talents. And God gives to ev'ry man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.
To the deliv'rer of an injur'd land
He gives a tongue t' enlarge upon a heart
To feel, and courage to redress his wrongs;
To monarchs dignity; to judges sense;
To artists ingenuity and skill;
To me, an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wish'd.

THE TASK.

BOOK V.

THE WINTER MORNING WALK.

ARGUMENT OF THE FIFTH BOOK.

A frosty morning—The foddering of cattle—The woodman and his dog—The poultry—Whimsical effects of a frost at a waterfall—The empress of Russia's palace of ice—Amusements of monarchs—War, one of them—Wars, whence—And whence monarchy—The evils of it—English and French loyalty contrasted—The Bastile, and a prisoner there—Liberty the chief recommendation of this country—Modern patriotism questionable, and why—The perishable nature of the best human institutions—Spiritual liberty not perishable—The slavish state of man by nature—Deliver him, Deist, if you can—Grace must do it—The respective merits of patriots and martyrs stated—Their different treatment—Happy freedom of the man whom grace makes free—His relish of the works of God—Address to the Creator.

'Tis morning; and the sun, with ruddy orb
Ascending, fires th' horizon; while the clouds
That crowd away before the driving wind,
More ardent as the disk emerges more,

Resemble most some city in a blaze,
Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
And, tinging all with his own rosy hue,
From ev'ry herb and ev'ry spiry blade
Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.
Mine spindling into longitude immense,
In spite of gravity, and sage remark
That I myself am but a fleeting shade,
Provokes me to a smile. With eye askance,
I view the muscular proportion'd limb
Transform'd to a lean shank. The shapeless pair,
As they design'd to mock me, at my side,
Take step for step; and, as I near approach
The cottage, walk along the plaster'd wall,
Prepost'rous sight! the legs without the man.
The verdure of the plain lies buried deep
Beneath the dazzling deluge; and the bents,
And coarser grass, upspearing o'er the rest,
Of late unsightly and unseen, now shine
Conspicuous, and in bright apparel clad,
And, fledg'd with icy feathers, nod superb.
The cattle mourn in corners, where the fence
Screens them, and seem half petrified to sleep
In unrecumbent sadness. There they wait
Their wonted fodder; not like hung'ring man,
Fretful if unsupplied; but silent, meek,
And patient of the slow-paced swain's delay.
He from the stack carves out the accustom'd load,

Deep-plunging, and again deep-plunging oft.
His broad keen knife into the solid mass;
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,
With such undeviating and even force
He severs it away; no needless care,
Lest storm should overset the leaning pile
Deciduous, or its own unbalanc'd weight.
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcern'd
The cheerful haunts of man; to wield the axe,
And drive the wedge, in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve his solitary task.
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropp'd short, half lurcher and half cur—
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow; and now, with many a frisk
Wide-scamp'ring, snatches up the drifted snow
With iv'ry teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powder'd coat, and barks for joy.
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark; nor stops for aught,
But now and then with pressure of his thumb
T' adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube,
That fumes beneath his nose: the trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.
Now from the roost, or from the neighb'ring pale,
Where diligent to catch the first faint gleam
Of smiling day, they gossip'd side by side,

Come trooping at the housewife's well known call
The feather'd tribes domestick. Half on wing,
And half on foot, they brush the fleecy flood,
Conscious and fearful of too deep a plunge.
The sparrows peep, and quit the shelt'ring eaves,
To seize the fair occasion; well they eye
The scatter'd grain, and thievishly resolv'd
T' escape th' impending famine, often scar'd
As oft return—a pert voracious kind.
Clean riddance quickly made, one only care
Remains to each, the search of sunny nook,
Or shed impervious to the blast. Resign'd
To sad necessity, the cock foregoes
His wonted strut; and, wading at their head
With well-consider'd steps, seems to resent
His alter'd gait, and stateliness retrench'd.
How find the myriads, that in summer cheer
The hills and valleys with their ceaseless songs,
Due sustenance, or where subsist they now?
Earth yields them naught; th' imprison'd worm is safe
Beneath the frozen clod; all seeds of herbs
Lie cover'd close; and berry-bearing thorns,
That feed the thrush, (whatever some suppose,)
Afford the smaller minstrels no supply.
The long-protracted rigour of the year
Thins all their num'rous flocks. In chinks and holes
Ten thousand seek an unmolested end,
As instinct prompts; self-buried ere they die.
The very rooks and daws forsake the fields,

Where neither grub, nor root, nor earth-nut, now
Repays their labour more; and perch'd aloft
By the way-side, or stalking in the path,
Lean pensioners upon the trav'ller's track,
Pick up their nauseous dole, though sweet to them,
Of voided pulse or half-digested grain.
The streams are lost amid the splendid blank,
O'erwhelming all distinction. On the flood,
Indurated and fix'd, the snowy weight
Lies undissolv'd; while silently beneath,
And unperceiv'd, the current steals away.
Not so where, scornful of a check, it leaps
The mill-dam, dashes on the restless wheel,
And wantons in the pebbly gulf below:
No frost can bind it there: its utmost force
Can but arrest the light and smoky mist,
That in its fall the liquid sheet throws wide.
And see where it has hung the embroider'd banks
With forms so various, that no pow'rs of art,
The pencil, or the pen, may trace the scene!
Here glitt'ring turrets rise, upbearing high,
(Fantastick misarrangement!) on the roof
Large growth of what may seem the sparkling trees
And shrubs of fairy land. The crystal drops
That trickled down the branches, fast congeal'd
Shoot into pillars of pellucid length,
And prop the pile they but adorn'd before.
Here grotto within grotto safe defies

The sunbeam; there, emboss'd and fretted wild,
The growing wonder takes a thousand shapes
Capricious, in which fancy seeks in vain
The likeness of some object seen before.
Thus Nature works as if to mock at Art,
And in defiance of her rival pow'rs;
By these fortuitous and random strokes
Performing such inimitable feats,
As she with all her rules can never reach.
Less worthy of applause, though more admir'd,
Because a novelty, the work of man,
Imperial mistress of the fur clad Russ,
Thy most magnificent and mighty freak,
The wonder of the North. No forest fell
When thou wouldst build; no quarry sent its stores,
T' enrich thy walls: but thou did'st hew the floods
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.
In such a palace Aristæus found
Cyrene, when he bore the plaintive tale
Of his lost bees to her maternal ear:
In such a palace poetry might place
The armory of Winter; where his troops,
The gloomy clouds, find weapons, arrowy sleet,
Skin-piercing volley, blossom-bruising hail,
And snow, that often blinds the trav'ller's course,
And wraps him in an unexpected tomb.
Silently as a dream the fabrick rose;
No sound of hammer or of saw was there:
Ice upon ice, the well-adjusted parts
Were soon conjoin'd, nor other cement ask'd
Than water interfus'd, to make them one.

Lamps gracefully dispos'd, and of all hues,
Illumin'd ev'ry side: a wat'ry light
Gleam'd through the clear transparency, that seem'd
Another moon new ris'n, or meteor fall'n
From Heav'n to Earth, of lambent flame serene
So stood the brittle prodigy; though smooth
And slipp'ry the materials, yet frost-bound
Firm as a rock. Nor wanted aught within,
That royal residence might well befit,
For grandeur or for use. Long wavy wreaths
Of flow'rs that fear'd no enemy but warmth,
Blush'd on the pannels. Mirror needed none
Where all was vitreous; but in order due
Convivial table and commodious seat
(What seem'd at least commodious seat) were there:
Sofa, and couch, and high-built throne august,
The same lubricity was found in all,
And all was moist to the warm touch; a scene
Of evanescent glory, once a stream,
And soon to slide into a stream again.
Alas! 'twas but a mortifying stroke
Of undesign'd severity, that glanc'd,
(Made by a monarch,) on her own estate,
On human grandeur and the courts of kings.
'Twas transient in its nature, as in show
'Twas durable; as worthless, as it seem'd
Intrinsically precious; to the foot
Treach'rous and false; it smil'd, and it was cold.
Great princes have great play-things. Some have play'd

At hewing mountains into men, and some
At building human wonders mountain-high.
Some have amus'd the dull, sad years of life,
(Life spent in indolence, and therefore sad,)
With schemes of monumental fame; and sought
By pyramids and mausolean pomp,
Short liv'd themselves, t' immortalize their bones.
Some seek diversion in the tented field,
And make the sorrows of mankind their sport.
But war's a game, which, were their subjects wise,
Kings would not play at. Nations would do well,
T' extort their truncheons from the puny hands
Of heroes, whose infirm and baby minds
Are gratified with mischief; and who spoil,
Because men suffer it, their toy, the world.
When Babel was confounded, and the great
Confed'racy of projectors wild and vain
Was split into diversity of tongues,
Then, as a shepherd separates his flock,
These to the upland, to the valley those,
God drove asunder, and assign'd their lot
To all the nations. Ample was the boon
He gave them, in its distribution fair
And equal; and he bade them dwell in peace.
Peace was awhile their care; they plough'd, and sow'd,
And reap'd their plenty without grudge or strife
But violence can never longer sleep
Than human passions please. In every hear
Are sown the sparks that kindle fiery war;
Occasion needs but fan them, and they blaze

Cain had already shed a brother's blood:
The deluge wash'd it out: but left unquench'd
The seeds of murder in the breast of man.
Soon by a righteous judgment in the line
Of his descending progeny was found
The first artificer of death; the shrewd
Contriver, who first sweated at the forge,
And forc'd the blunt and yet unbloodied steel
To a keen edge, and made it bright for war.
Him, Tubal nam'd, the Vulcan of old times,
The sword and falchion their inventor claim;
And the first smith was the first murd'rer's son.
His art surviv'd the waters; and ere long,
When man was multiplied and spread abroad
In tribes and clans, and had begun to call
These meadows and that range of hills his own,
The tasted sweets of property begat
Desire of more; and industry in some,
T' improve and cultivate their just demesne,
Made others covet what they saw so fair.
Thus war began on Earth: these fought for spoil,
And those in self-defence. Savage at first
The onset, and irregular. At length
One eminent above the rest for strength,
For stratagem, for courage, or for all,
Was chosen leader; him they served in war,
And him in peace, for sake of warlike deeds,
Rev'rence no less. Who could with him compare?
Or who so worthy to control themselves,
As he, whose prowess had subdu'd their foes?
Thus war, affording field for the display
Of virtue, made one chief, whom times of peace,

Which have their exigencies too, and call
For skill in goverment, at length made king.
King was a name too proud for man to wear
With modesty and meekness; and the crown
So dazzling in their eyes, who set it on,
Was sure t' intoxicate the brows it bound;
It is the abject property of most,
That, being parcel of the common mass,
And destitute of means to raise themselves,
They sink, and settle lower than they need.
They know not what it is to feel within
A comprehensive faculty, that grasps
Great purposes with ease, that turns and wields,
Almost without an effort, plans too vast
For their conception, which they cannot move.
Conscious of impotence they soon grow drunk
With gazing, when they see an able man
Step forth to notice; and, besotted thus,
Build him a pedestal, and say, "Stand there,
"And be our admiration and our praise."
They roll themselves before him in the dust,
Then most deserving in their own account,
When most extravagant in his applause,
As if, exalting him, they rais'd themselves.
Thus by degrees, self-cheated of their sound
And sober judgment, that he is but a man,
They demi-deify and fume him so,
That in due season he forgets it too.
Inflated and astrut with self conceit,
He gulps the windy diet; and ere long,
Adopting their mistake, profoundly thinks
The world was made in vain, if not for him.

Thenceforth they are his cattle; drudges, born
To bear his burdens, drawing in his gears,
And sweating in his service, his caprice
Becomes the soul that animates them all.
He deems a thousand, or ten thousand lives
Spent in the purchase of renown for him,
An easy reck'ning: and they think the same.
Thus kings were first invented, and thus kings
Were burnish'd into heroes, and became
The arbiters of this terraqueous swamp;
Storks among frogs, that have but croak'd and died.
Strange, that such folly, as lifts bloated man
To eminence, fit only for a god,
Should ever drivel out of human lips,
E'en in the cradled weakness of the world!
Still stranger much, that, when at length mankind
Had reach'd the sinewy firmness of their youth,
And could discriminate and argue well
On subjects more mysterious, they were yet
Babes in the cause of freedom, and should fear
And quake before the gods themselves had made:
But above measure strange, that neither proof
Of sad experience, nor examples set
By some whose patriot virtue has prevail'd,
Can even now, when they are grown mature
In wisdom, and with philosophick deeds
Familiar, serve t' emancipate the rest!
Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone
To rev'rence what is ancient, and can plead
Custom for its use,
even servitude, the worst of ills,

Because deliver'd down from sire to son,
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing.
But is it fit, or can it bear the shock
Of rational discussion, that a man,
Compounded and made up like other men
Of elements tumultuous, in whom lust
And folly in as ample measure meet
As in the bosoms of the slaves he rules,
Should be a despot absolute, and boast
Himself the only freeman of his land?
Should, when he pleases, and on whom he will,
Wage war, with any or with no pretence
Of provocation giv'n, or wrong sustain'd,
And force the beggarly last doit, by means
That his own humour dictates, from the clutch
Of poverty, that thus he may procure
His thousands, weary of penurious life,
A splendid opportunity to die?
Say ye, who (with less prudence than of old
Jotham ascrib'd to his assembled trees
In politick convention) put your trust
I' th' shadow of a bramble, and, reclin'd
In fancied peace beneath his dang'rous branch,
Rejoice in him, and celebrate his sway,
Where find ye passive fortitude? Whence springs
Your self-denying zeal, that holds it good
To stroke the prickly grievance, and to hang
His thorns with streamers of continual praise?
We too are friends to loyalty. We love
The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
And reigns content within them: him we serve
Freely and with delight, who leaves us free:

But recollecting still that he is man,
We trust him not too far. King though he be,
And king in England too, he may be weak
And vain enough to be ambitious still;
May exercise amiss his proper pow'rs,
Or covet more than freemen choose to grant!
Beyond that mark is treason. He is ours,
T' administer, to guard, t' adorn the state
But not to warp or change it. We are his,
To serve him nobly in the common cause,
True to the death; but not to be his slaves.
Mark now the diff'rence, ye that boast your love
Of Kings, between your loyalty and ours.
We love the man; the paltry pageant, you:
We the chief patron of the commonwealth;
You, the regardless author of its woes:
We, for the sake of liberty, a king;
You, chains and bondage for a tyrant's sake:
Our love is principle, and has its root
In reason; is judicious, manly, free;
Yours, a blind instinct, crouches to the rod,
And licks the foot that treads it in the dust.
Were kingship as true treasure as it seems,
Sterling, and worthy of a wise man's wish,
I would not be a king to be belov'd
Causeless, and daub'd with undiscerning praise,
Where love is mere attachment to the throne,
Not to the man who fills it as he ought.
Whose freedom is by suff'rance, and at will
Of a superiour, he is never free.
Who lives, and is not weary of a life
·nos'd to manacles, deserves them well.

The state that strives for liberty, though foil'd,
And forc'd to abandon what she bravely sought,
Deserves at least applause for her attempt,
And pity for her loss. But that's a cause
Not often unsuccessful: pow'r usurp'd
Is weakness when oppos'd; conscious of wrong,
'Tis pusillanimous and prone to flight.
But slaves, that once conceive the glowing thought
Of freedom, in that hope itself possess
All that the contest calls for; spirit, strength,
The scorn of danger, and united hearts;
The surest presage of the good they seek.*
Then shame to manhood, and opprobrious more
To France than all her losses and defeats,
Old or of later date, by sea or land,
Her house of bondage, worse than that of old
Which God aveng'd on Pharaoh—the Bastile;
Ye horrid tow'rs, th' abode of broken hearts:
Ye dungeons, and ye cages of despair,
That monarchs have supplied from age to age
With musick, such as suits their sov'reign ears—
The sighs and groans of miserable men!
There's not an English heart that would not leap
To hear that ye were fall'n at last; to know

*The author hopes that he shall not be censured for unnecessary warmth upon so interesting a subject. He is aware, that it is become almost fashionable, to stigmatize such sentiments as no better than empty declamation but it is an ill symptom, and peculiar to modern times.

That e'en our enemies, so oft employ'd
In forging chains for us, themselves are free.
For he who values, Liberty, confines
His zeal for her predominence within
No narrow bounds; her cause engages him
Wherever pleaded. 'Tis the cause of man.
There dwell the most forlorn of human kind,
Immur'd though unaccus'd, condemn'd untried,
Cruelly spar'd, and hopeless of escape.
There, like the visionary emblem seen
By him of Babylon, life stands a stump,
And, filleted about with hoops of brass,
Still lives, though all his pleasant boughs are
gone.
To count the hour-bell and expect no change;
And ever as the sullen sound is heard,
Still to reflect, that, though a joyless note
To him whose moments all have one dull pace,
Ten thousand rovers in the world at large
Account it musick; that it summons some
To theatre, or jocund feast, or ball;
The wearied hireling finds it a release
From labour; and the lover, who has chid
Its long delay, feels ev'ry welcome stroke
Upon his heart-strings, trembling with delight—
To fly for refuge from distracting thought
To such amusements of ingenious wo
Contrives, hard shifting, and without her tools—
To read engraven on the mouldy walls,
In stagg'ring types, his predecessor's tale,
A sad memorial, and subjoin his own—
To turn purveyor to an overgorg'd

And bloated spider, till the pamper'd pest
Is made familiar, watches his approach,
Comes at his call, and serves him for a friend—
To wear out time in numb'ring to and fro
The studs that thick emboss his iron door;
Then downward and then upward, then aslant,
And then alternate; with a sickly hope
By dint of change to give his tasteless task
Some relish; till the sum, exactly found
In all directions, he begins again—
O comfortless existence! hemm'd around
With woes, which who that suffers would not kneel
And beg for exile, or the pangs of death?
That man should thus encroach on fellow man,
Abridge him of his just and native rights,
Eradicate him, tear him from his hold
Upon th' endearments of domestick life
And social, nip his fruitfulness and use,
And doom him for perhaps a heedless word
To barrenness, and solitude, and tears,
Moves indignation, makes the name of king,
(Of king whom such prerogative can please)
As dreadful as the Manichean god,
Ador'd through fear, strong only to destroy.
'Tis liberty alone, that gives the flow'r
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume;
And we are weeds without it. All constraint,
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,
Is evil: hurts the faculties, impedes
Their progress in the road of science; blinds
The eyesight of Discovery; and begets,

In those that suffer it, a sordid mind,
Bestial, a meager intellect, unfit
To be the tenant of man's noble form.
Thee therefore still, blame-worthy as thou art,
With all thy loss of empire, and though squeez'd
By publick exigence, till annual food
Fails for the craving hunger of the state,
Thee I account still happy, and the chief
Among the nations, seeing thou art free;
My native nook of earth! Thy clime is rude,
Replete with vapours, and disposes much
All hearts to sadness, and none more than mine:
Thine unadulterate manners are less soft
And plausible than social life requires,
And thou hast need of discipline and art,
To give thee what politer France receives
From Nature's bounty—that humane address
And sweetness, with which no pleasure is
In converse, either starv'd by cold reserve,
Or flush'd by fierce dispute, a senseless brawl.
Yet, being free, I love thee: for the sake
Of that one feature can be well content,
Disgrac'd as thou hast been, poor as thou art,
To seek no sublunary rest beside.
But once enslav'd, farewell! I could endure
Chains no where patiently; and chains at home,
Where I am free by birthright, not at all.
Then what were left of roughness in the grain
Of British natures, wanting its excuse
That it belongs to freemen, would disgust
And shock me. I should then with double pain
Feel all the rigour of thy fickle clime;

And, if I must bewail the blessing lost,
For which our Hampdens and our Sidneys bled,
I would at least bewail it under skies
Milder, among a people less austere;
In scenes, which having never known me free,
Would not reproach me with the loss I felt.
Do I forebode impossible events,
And tremble at vain dreams? Heav'n grant I
may!
But th' age of virtuous politicks is past,
And we are deep in that of cold pretence.
Patriots are grown too shrewd to be sincere,
And we too wise to trust them. He that takes
Deep in his soft credulity the stamp
Design'd by loud declaimers on the part
Of liberty, (themselves the slaves of lust,)
Incurs derision for his easy faith
And lack of knowledge, and with cause enough:
For when was publick virtue to be found,
Where private was not? Can he love the whole,
Who loves no part? He be a nation's friend,
Who is in truth the friend of no man there?
Can he be strenuous in his country's cause,
Who slights the charities, for whose dear sake,
That country, if at all, must be belov'd?
'Tis therefore sober and good men are sad
For England's glory, seeing it wax pale
And sickly, while her champions wear their hearts
So loose to private duty, that no brain
Healthful and undisturb'd by factious fumes,
Can dream them trusty to the gen'ral weal.
Such were they not of old, whose temper'd blac

Dispers'd the shackles of usurp'd control,
And hew'd them link from link; then Albion's sons
Were sons indeed; they felt a filial heart
Beat high within them at a mother's wrongs;
And, shining each in his domestick sphere,
Shone brighter still, once call'd to publick view.
'Tis therefore many, whose sequester'd lot
Forbids their interference, looking on,
Anticipate perforce some dire event;
And, seeing the old castle of the state,
That promis'd once more firmness, so assail'd,
That all its tempest-beaten turrets shake,
Stand motionless expectants of its fall.
All has its date below; the fatal hour
Was register'd in Heav'd ere time began.
We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works
Die too: the deep foundations that we lay,
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.
We build with what we deem eternal rock;
A distant age asks where the fabric stood;
And in the dust, sifted and search'd in vain,
The undiscoverable secret sleeps.
But there is yet a liberty, unsung
By poets, and by senators uprais'd,
Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the pow'rs
Of Earth and Hell confed'rate take away:
A liberty, which persecution, fraud,
Oppression, prisons, have no pow'r to bind,
Which whoso tastes can be enslav'd no more.
'Tis liberty of heart deriv'd from Heav'n,
Bought with his blood, who gave it to mankind,

And seal'd with the same token. It is held
By charter, and that charter sanction'd sure
By th' unimpeachable and awful oath
And promise of a God. His other gifts
All bear the royal stamp that speaks them his,
And are august! but this transcends them all.
His other works, the visible display
Of all-creating energy and might,
Are grand, no doubt, and worthy of the word
That, finding an interminable space
Unoccupied, has fill'd the void so well,
And made so sparkling what was dark before.
But these are not his glory. Man, 'tis true,
Smit with the beauty of so fair a scene,
Might well suppose th' artificer divine
Meant it eternal, had he not himself
Pronounc'd it transient, glorious as it is,
And, still designing a more glorious far,
Doom'd it as insufficient for his praise.
These therefore are occasional, and pass;
Form'd for the confutation of the fool,
Whose lying heart disputes against a God;
That office serv'd, they must be swept away
Not so the labours of his love: they shine
In other heav'ns than these that we behold,
And fade not. There is paradise that fears
No forfeiture, and of its fruits he sends
Large prelibation oft to saints below.
Of these the first in order, and the pledge,
And confident assurance of the rest,
Is liberty; a flight into his arms,
Ere yet mortality's fine threads give way,

A clear escape from tyrannising lust,
And full immunity from penal wo.
  Chains are the portion of revolted man,
Stripes, and a dungeon; and his body serves
The triple purpose. In that sickly, foul,
Opprobrious residence, he finds them all.
Propense his heart to idols, he is held
In silly dotage on created things,
Careless of their creator. And that low
And sordid gravitation of his pow'rs
To a vile clod, so draws him, with such force
Resistless from the centre he should seek,
That he at last forgets it. All his hopes
Tend downward; his ambition is to sink,
To reach a depth profounder still, and still
Profounder, in the fathomless abyss
Of folly, plunging in pursuit of death.
But ere he gain the comfortless repose
He seeks, and acquiescence of his soul
In Heav'n-renouncing exile, he endures—
What does he not, from lusts oppos'd in vain,
And self-reproaching conscience? He foresees
The fatal issue to his health, fame, peace,
Fortune, and dignity; the loss of all
That can ennoble man and make frail life,
Short as it is, supportable. Still worse,
Far worse than all the plagues with which his sins
Infect his happiest moments, he forbodes
Ages of hopeless mis'ry. Future death,
And death still future. Not a hasty stroke,
Like that which sends him to the dusty grave:

But unrepealable, enduring, death.
Scripture is still a trumpet to his fears:
What none can prove a forgery, may be true,
What none but bad men wish exploded, must;
That scruple checks him. Riot is not loud
Nor drunk enough to drown it. In the midst
Of laughter his compunctions are sincere;
And he abhors the jest by which he shines.
Remorse begets reform. His master-lust
Falls first before his resolute rebuke,
And seems dethron'd and vanquish'd. Peace ensues,
But spurious and short liv'd: the puny child
Of self-congratulating Pride begot
On fancied Innocence. Again he falls,
And fights again; but finds, his best essay
A presage ominous, portending still
Its own dishonour by a worse relapse.
Till Nature, unavailing Nature, foil'd
So oft, and wearied in the vain attempt,
Scoffs at her own performance. Reason now
Takes part with appetite, and pleads the cause
Perversely, which of late she so condemn'd;
With shallow shifts and old devices, worn
And tatter'd in the service of debauch,
Cov'ring his shame from his offended sight.
"Hath God indeed giv'n appetites to man,
And stor'd the earth so plenteously with means
To gratify the hunger of his wish;
And doth he reprobate, and will he damn
The use of his own bounty? making first
So frail a kind, and then enacting laws

So strict, that less than perfect must despair?
Falsehood! which whoso but suspects of truth,
Dishonours God, and makes a slave of man.
Do they themselves, who undertake for hire
The teacher's office, and dispense at large
Their weekly dole of edifying strains,
Attend to their own music? have they faith
In what, with such solemnity of tone
And gesture, they propound to our belief?
Nay—Conduct hath the loudest tongue. The voice
Is but an instrument, on which the priest
May play what tune he pleases. In the deed,
The unequivocal, authentic deed,
We find sound argument, we read the heart."
Such reas'nings (if that name must needs belong
T' excuses in which reason has no part)
Serve to compose a spirit well inclin'd
To live on terms of amity with vice,
And sin without disturbance. Often urg'd,
(As often as, libidinous discourse
Exhausted, he resorts to solemn themes
Of theological and grave import,)
They gain at last his unreserv'd assent;
Till, harden'd his heart's temper in the forge
Of lust, and on the anvil of despair,
He slights the strokes of conscience. Nothing moves,
Or nothing much, his constancy in ill;
Vain tamp'ring has but foster'd his disease;
'T is desp'rate, and he sleeps the sleep of death.

Haste, now, philosopher, and set him free.
Charm the deaf serpent wisely. Make him hear
Of rectitude and fitness, moral truth
How lovely, and the moral sense how sure,
Consulted and obey'd, to guide his steps
Directly to the *first and only fair.*
Spare not in such a cause. Spend all the pow'rs
Of rant and rhapsody in virtue's praise;
Be most sublimely good, verbosely grand,
And with poetic trappings grace thy prose,
Till it out-mantle all the pride of verse.—
Ah, tinkling cymbal, and high sounding brass,
Smitten in vain! such music cannot charm
The eclipse, that intercepts truth's heav'nly beam
And chills and darkens a wide wand'ring soul.
The *still small voice* is wanted. He must speak,
Whose word leaps forth at once to its effect;
Who calls for things that are not, and they come.
Grace makes the slave a freeman. 'Tis a change
That turns to ridicule the turgid speech
And stately tone of moralists, who boast
As if, like him of fabulous renown,
They had indeed ability to smooth
The shag of savage nature, and were each
An Orpheus, and omnipotent in song;
But transformation of apostate man
From fool to wise, from earthly to divine,
Is work for Him that made him. He alone,
And he by means in philosophic eyes
Trivial and worthy of disdain, achieves
The wonder; humanizing what is brute

In the lost kind, extracting from the lips
Of asps their venom, overpow'ring strength
By weakness, and hostility by love.
Patriots have toil'd, and, in their country's cause
Bled nobly; and their deeds, as they deserve,
Receive proud recompense. We give in charge
Their names to the sweet lyre. Th' historic muse,
Proud of the treasure, marches with it down
To latest times; and Sculpture, in her turn,
Gives bond in stone and ever-during brass
To guard them, and t' immortalize her trust:
But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,
To those, who, posted at the shrine of Truth,
Have fall'n in her defence. A patriot's blood,
Well spent in such a strife, may earn indeed,
And, for a time, ensure to his lov'd land
The sweets of liberty and equal laws;
But martyrs struggle for a brighter prize,
And win it with more pain. Their blood is shed
In confirmation of the noblest claim—
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,
To walk with God, to be divinely free,
To soar, and to anticipate the skies.
Yet few remember them. They liv'd unknown,
Till persecution dragg'd them into fame,
And chas'd them up to Heaven. Their ashes flew—
No marble tells us whither. With their names
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song:
And history, so warm on meaner themes,

Is cold on this. She execrates indeed
The tyranny that doom'd them to the fire,
But gives the glorious suff'rers little praise.*
He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside. There's not a chain
That hellish foes, confed'rate for his harm,
Can wind around him, but he casts it off
With as much ease as Samson his green withes.
He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and though poor, perhaps, compar'd
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His t' enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,
Can lift to heav'n an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say—"My Father made them all!"
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of int'rest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love,
That plann'd, and built, and still upholds a world
So cloth'd with beauty for rebellious man?
Yes—ye may fill your garners, ye that reap
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good
In senseless riot; but ye will not find
In feast or in the chase, in song or dance,

* See Hume.

A liberty like his, who, unimpeach'd
Of usurpation, and to nō man's wrong,
Appropriates nature as his Father's work,
And has a richer use of yours than you.
He is indeed a freeman. Free by birth
Of no mean city; plann'd or ere the hills
Were built, the fountains open'd, or the sea,
With all his roaring multitude of waves.
His freedom is the same in ev'ry state;
And no condition of this changeful life,
So manifold in cares, whose ev'ry day
Brings its own evil with it, makes it less:
For he has wings, that neither sickness, pain,
Nor penury, can cripple or confine.
No nook so narrow, but he spreads them there
With ease, and is at large. Th' oppressor holds
His body bound; but knows not what a range
His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain;
And that to bind him is a vain attempt,
Whom God delights in, and in whom He dwells.
Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st taste
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before:
Thine eye shall be instructed; and thine heart,
Made pure, shall relish with divine delight,
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought
Brutes graze the mountain-top, with faces prone,
And eyes intent upon the scanty herb
It yields them: or, recumbent on its brow,
Ruminate heedless of the scene outspread
Beneath, beyond, and stretching far away

From inland regions to the distant main.
Man views it, and admires; but rests content
With what he views. The landscape has his praise,
But not its author. Unconcern'd who form'd
The Paradise he sees, he finds it such,
And such well pleas'd to find it, asks no more.
Not so the mind that has been touch'd from Heav'n,
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught
To read His wonders, in whose thought the world,
Fair as it is, existed ere it was.
Nor for its own sake merely, but for his
Much more who fashion'd it, he gives it praise;
Praise that from earth resulting, as it ought,
To earth's acknowledg'd sov'reign, finds at once
Its only just proprietor in Him.
The soul that sees him, or receives sublim'd
New faculties, or learns at least t' employ
More worthily the powers she own'd before,
Discerns in all things what, with stupid gaze
Of ignorance, till then she overlook'd,
A ray of heavenly light, gilding all forms
Terrestrial in the vast and the minute;
The unambiguous footsteps of the God,
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds.
Much conversant with Heaven, she often holds
With those fair ministers of light to man,
That fill the skies nightly with silent pomp,

Sweet conference. Inquires what strains were they
With which Heaven rang, when every star, in haste
To gratulate the new-created earth,
Sent forth a voice, and all the sons of God
Shouted for joy.—"Tell me, ye shining hosts,
That navigate a sea that knows no storms,
Beneath a vault unsullied with a cloud,
If from your elevation, whence ye view
Distinctly scenes invisible to man,
And systems, of whose birth no tidings yet
Have reach'd this nether world, ye spy a race
Favour'd as ours: transgressors from the womb
And hasting to a grave, yet doom'd to rise,
And to possess a brighter Heaven than yours?
As one, who, long detain'd on foreign shores,
Pants to return; and when he sees afar
His country's weather-bleach'd and batter'd rocks,
From the green wave emerging, darts an eye
Radiant with joy toward the happy land;
So I with animated hopes behold,
And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,
That show like beacons in the blue abyss,
Ordain'd to guide th' embodied spirit home
From toilsome life to never-ending rest.
Love kindles as I gaze. I feel desires
That give assurance of their own success,
And that, infus'd from Heaven, must thither tend."
So reads he Nature, whom the lamp of truth

Illuminates. Thy lamp, mysterious Word!
Which whoso sees, no longer wanders lost,
With intellects bemaz'd in endless doubt,
But runs the road of wisdom. Thou hast built
With means that wear not, till by thee employ'd,
Worlds that had never been, hadst thou in strength
Been less, or less benevolent than strong.
They are thy witnesses, who speak thy pow'r
And goodness infinite, but speak in ears
That hear not, or receive not their report
In vain thy creatures testify of thee,
Till thou proclaim thyself. Theirs is indeed
A teaching voice; but 'tis the praise of thine,
That whom it teaches it makes prompt to learn,
And with the boon gives talents for its use.
Till thou art heard, imaginations vain
Possess the heart, and fables false as hell:
Yet deem'd oracular, lure down to death
The uninform'd and heedless souls of men.
We give to chance, blind chance, ourselves as blind,
The glory of thy work; which yet appears
Perfect and unimpeachable of blame,
Challenging human scrutiny, and prov'd
Then skilful most when most severely judg'd.
But chance is not; or is not where thou reign'st;
Thy providence forbids that fickle pow'r
(If pow'r she be, that works but to confound)
To mix her wild vagaries with thy laws.
Yet thus we dote, refusing while we can,
Instruction, and inventing to ourselves

Gods such as guilt makes welcome; gods that sleep,
Or disregard our follies, or that sit
Amus'd spectators of this bustling stage.
Thee we reject, unable to abide
Thy purity, till pure as thou art pure,
Made such by thee, we love thee for that cause,
For which we shunn'd and hated thee before.
Then we are free. Then liberty, like day,
Breaks on the soul, and by a flash from heav'n
Fires all the faculties with glorious joy.
A voice is heard that mortal ears hear not,
Till thou hast touch'd them; 'tis the voice of song,
A loud Hosanna sent from all thy works;
Which he that hears it, with a shout repeats,
And adds his rapture to the general praise!
In that blest moment, Nature, throwing wide
Her veil opaque, discloses with a smile
The author of her beauties, who, retir'd
Behind his own creation, works unseen
By the impure, and hears his pow'r denied:
Thou art the source and centre of all minds,
Their only point of rest, eternal Word!
From thee departing, they are lost, and rove
At random, without honour, hope, or peace.
From thee is all that soothes the life of man,
His high endeavour, and his glad success,
His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.
But O thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown!
Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor,
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.

THE TASK.

BOOK VI.

THE WINTER WALK AT NOON.

ARGUMENT OF THE SIXTH BOOK.

Bells at a distance—Their effect—A fine noon in winter—A sheltered walk—Meditation better than books—Our familiarity with the course of Nature makes it appear less wonderful than it is—The transformation that Spring effects in a shrubbery, described—A mistake concerning the course of Nature corrected—God maintains it by an unremitted act—The amusements fashionable at this hour of the day reproved—Animals happy, a delightful sight—Origin of cruelty to animals—That it is a great crime proved from Scripture—That proof illustrated by a tale—A line drawn between the lawful and unlawful destruction of them—Their good and useful properties insisted on—Apologies for the encomiums bestowed by the author on animals—Instances of man's extravagant praise of man—The groans of the creation shall have an end—A view taken of the restoration of all things—An invocation and an invitation of Him who shall bring it to pass—The retired man vindicated from the charge of uselessness—Conclusion

THERE is in souls a sympathy with sounds,
And as the mind is pitch'd, the ear is pleas'd
With melting airs or martial, brisk, or grave;
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touch'd within us, and the heart replies,
How soft the music of those village bells,
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet, now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on!
With easy force it opens all the cells
Where Mem'ry slept. Wherever I have heard
A kindred melody, the scene recurs,
And with it all its pleasures and its pains.
Such comprehensive views the spirit takes,
That in a few short moments I retrace
(As in a map the voyager his course)
The windings of my way through many years.
Short as in retrospect the journey seems,
It seem'd not always short; the rugged path,
And prospect oft so dreary and forlorn,
Mov'd many a sigh at its disheart'ning length.
Yet feeling present evils, while the past
Faintly impress the mind or not at all,
How readily we wish time spent revok'd,
That we might try the ground again, where once
(Through inexperience as we now perceive)
We miss'd that happiness we might have found!
Some friend is gone, perhaps his son's best friend!
A father, whose authority, in show
When most severe, and must'ring all its force,

Was but the graver countenance of love;
Whose favour, like the clouds of spring, might low'r,
And utter now and then an awful voice,
But had a blessing in its darkest frown,
Threat'ning at once and nourishing the plant.
We lov'd, but not enough, the gentle hand
That rear'd us. At a thoughtless age, allur'd
By ev'ry gilded folly, we renounced
His shelt'ring side, and wilfully forewent
That converse which we now in vain regret.
How gladly would the man recall to life
The boy's neglected sire! a mother too,
That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,
Might he demand them at the gates of death.
Sorrow has, since they went, subdu'd and tam'd
The playful humour: he could now endure,
(Himself grown sober in the vale of tears,)
And feel a parent's presence no restraint.
But not to understand a treasure's worth,
Till time has stol'n away the slighted good,
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the World the wilderness it is.
The few that pray at all, pray oft amiss,
And, seeking grace t' improve the prize they hold,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.
The night was winter in its roughest mood;
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
And where the woods fence off the norther blast,

The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
Without a cloud, and white without a speck
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale;
And through the trees I view th' embattled tow'r,
Whence all the music. I again perceive
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,
And settle in soft musings as I tread
The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
The roof, though movable through all its length
As the wind sways it, has yet well suffic'd,
And, intercepting in their silent fall
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought
The red-breast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes, and more than half suppress'd:
Pleas'd with his solitude, and flitting light
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,
That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence. Meditation here
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
May give a useful lesson to the head,
And Learning wiser grow without his books.
Knowledge and Wisdom, far from being one,

Have oftimes no connexion. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which Wisdom builds,
Till smooth'd, and squar'd, and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems t' enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.
Books are not seldom talismans and spells,
By which the magic art of shrewder wits
Hold an unthinking multitude enthrall'd.
Some to the fascination of a name,
Surrender judgment hood-wink'd. Some the style
Infatuates, and through labyrinths and wilds
Of error leads them, by a tune entranc'd.
While sloth seduces more, too weak to bear
The insupportable fatigue of thought,
And swallowing, therefore, without pause or choice
The total grist unsifted, husks and all.
But trees and rivulets, whose rapid course
Defies the check of winter, haunts of deer,
And sheep-walks populous with bleating lambs,
And lanes, in which the primrose ere her time
Peeps through the moss, that clothes the hawthorn root,
Deceive no student. Wisdom there, and truth
Not shy, as in the world, and to be won
By slow solicitation, seize at once

The roving thought and fix it on themselves.
What prodigies can pow'r divine perform
More grand than it produces year by year,
And all in sight of inattentive man?
Familiar with th' effect, we slight the cause,
And in the constancy of Nature's course,
The regular return of genial months,
And renovation of a faded world,
See nought to wonder at. Should God again,
As once in Gibeon, interrupt the race
Of th' undeviating and punctual sun,
How would the world admire! But speaks it less
An agency divine, to make him know
His moment when to sink and when to rise,
Age after age, than to arrest his course?
All we behold is miracle; but seen
So duly, all is miracle in vain.
Where now the vital energy, that mov'd
While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph
Through th' imperceptible meand'ring veins
Of leaf and flow'r? It sleeps; and th' icy touch
Of unprolific winter has impress'd
A cold stagnation on th' intestine tide.
But let the months go round, a few short months,
And all shall be restor'd. These naked shoots,
Barren as lances, among which the wind
Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,
Shall put their graceful foliage on again,
And more aspiring, and with ampler spread,
Shall boast new charms, and more than they have lost.

Then each in its peculiar honours clad,
Shall publish even to the distant eye
Its family and tribe. Laburnum, rich
In streaming gold; syringa, iv'ry pure;
The scentless and the scented rose; this red
And of a humbler growth, other* tall,
And throwing up into the darkest gloom
Of neighb'ring cypress, or more sable yew,
Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf,
That the wind severs from the broken wave;
The lilac, various in array, now white,
Now sanguine, and her beauteous head now set
With purple spikes pyramidal, as if
Studious of ornament, yet unresolv'd
Which hue she most approv'd, she chose them all;
Copious of flowers, the woodbine, pale and wan,
But well compensating her sickly looks
With never cloying odours, early and late;
Hypericum all bloom, so thick a swarm
Of flowers, like flies clothing her slender rods,
That scarce a leaf appears; mezereon, too,
Though leafless, well-attir'd and thick beset
With blushing wreaths, investing every spray;
Althæa with the purple eye; the broom
Yellow and bright, as bullion unalloy'd,
Her blossoms; and luxuriant above all
The jasmine, throwing wide her elegant sweets,
The deep dark green of whose unvarnish'd leaf
Makes more conspicuous, and illumines more

* The Guelder Rose.

The bright profusion of her scatter'd stars.—
These have been, and these shall be in their day;
And all this uniform uncolour'd scene
Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load,
And flush into variety again.
From dearth to plenty, and from death to life,
Is Nature's progress, when she lectures man
In heav'nly truth; evincing, as she makes
The grand transition, that their lives and works
A soul in all things, and that soul is God.
The beauties of the wilderness are his,
That makes so gay the solitary place,
Where no eye sees them. And the fairer forms,
That cultivation glories in, are his.
He sets the bright procession on its way,
And marshals all the order of the year;
He marks the bounds, which winter may not pass,
And blunts his pointed fury; in its case,
Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ,
Uninjur'd, with inimitable art;
And, ere one flow'ry season fades and dies,
Designs the blooming wonders of the next.
Some say that in the origin of things,
When all creation started into birth,
The infant elements receiv'd a law
From which they swerv'd not since. That under force
Of that controlling ordinance they move,
And need not His immediate hand who first
Prescrib'd their course, to regulate it now.

Thus dream they, and contrive to save a God
Th' encumbrance of his own concerns, and spare
The great artificer of all that moves
The stress of a continual act, the pain
Of unremitted vigilance and care,
As too laborious and severe a task.
So man, the moth, is not afraid, it seems,
To span omnipotence, and measure might
That knows no measure, by the scanty rule
And standard of his own, that is to-day,
And is not ere to-morrow's sun go down.
But how should matter occupy a charge,
Dull as it is, and satisfy a law
So vast in its demands, unless impell'd
To ceaseless service by a ceaseless force,
And under pressure of some conscious cause?
The Lord of all, himself through all diffus'd,
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.
Nature is but a name for an effect,
Whose cause is God. He feeds the secret fire,
By which the mighty process is maintain'd,
Who sleeps not, is not weary; in whose sight
Slow circling ages are as transient days;
Whose work is without labour; whose designs
No flaw deforms, no difficulty thwarts;
And whose beneficence no charge exhausts.
Him blind antiquity profan'd, not serv'd,
With self-taught rites, and under various names,
Female and male, Pomona, Pales, Pan,
And Flora, and Vertumnus; peopling earth
With tutelary goddesses and gods,

That were not; and commending as they would
To each some province, garden, field, or grove.
But all are under one. One spirit—His
Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brows—
Rules universal nature. Not a flower
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
Of his unrivall'd pencil. He inspires
Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
In grains as countless as the seaside sands,
The forms with which he sprinkles all the earth.
Happy who walks with him! whom what he finds
Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower
Of what he views of beautiful or grand
In nature, from the broad majestic oak
To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
Prompts with remembrance of a present God
His presence, who made all so fair, perceiv'd,
Makes all still fairer. As with him no scene
Is dreary, so with him all seasons please.
Though winter had been gone, had man been true
And earth be punish'd for its tenant's sake,
Yet not in vengeance; as this smiling sky,
So soon succeeding such an angry night,
And these dissolving snows, and this clear stream
Recov'ring fast its liquid music, prove.
Who, then, that has a mind well strung and tuned

To contemplation, and within his reach
A scene so friendly to his fav'rite task,
Would waste attention at the chequer'd board.
His host of wooden warriors to and fro
Marching and countermarching, with an eye
As fix'd as marble, with a forehead ridg'd
And furrow'd into storms, and with a hand
Trembling, as if eternity were hung
In balance on his conduct of a pin?
Nor envies he aught more their idle sport,
Who pant with application misapplied
To trivial toys, and, pushing iv'ry balls
Across a velvet level, feel a joy
Akin to rapture, when the bauble finds
Its destin'd goal, of difficult access.
Nor deems he wiser him, who gives his noon
To miss, the mercer's plague from shop to shop
Wand'ring, and litt'ring with unfolded silks
The polish'd counter, and approving none,
Or promising with smiles to call again.
Nor him, who by his vanity seduc'd,
And sooth'd into a dream, that he discerns
The diff'rence of a Guido from a daub,
Frequents the crowded auction: station'd there
As duly as the Langford of the show,
With glass at eye, and catalogue in hand,
And tongue accomplish'd in the fulsome cant
And pedantry that coxcombs learn with ease:
Oft as the price-deciding hammer falls,
He notes it in his book, then raps his box,
Swears 'tis a bargain, rails at his hard fate,
That he has let it pass—but never bids!

Here unmolested, through whatever sign
The sun proceeds, I wander. Neither mist,
For freezing sky nor sultry, checking me,
Nor stranger intermeddling with my joy.
E'en in the spring and playtime of the year,
That calls the unwonted villager abroad
With all her little ones, a sportive train,
To gather kingcups in the yellow mead,
And prink their hair with daisies, or to pick
A cheap but wholesome salad from the brook—
These shades are all my own. The tim'rous hare,
Grown so familiar with her frequent guest,
Scarce shuns me; and the stock-dove, unalarm'd,
Sits cooing in the pinetree, nor suspends
His long love ditty for my near approach.
Drawn from his refuge in some lonely elm,
That age or injury has hollow'd deep,
Where, on his bed of wool and matted leaves,
He has outslept the winter, ventures forth,
To frisk awhile, and bask in the warm sun,
The squirrel, flippant, pert, and full of play;
He sees me, and at once, swift as a bird,
Ascends the neighb'ring beech; there whisks his brush,
And perks his ears, and stamps, and cries aloud,
With all the prettiness of feign'd alarm,
And anger insignificantly fierce.
The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowship, as being void
Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
To love and friendship both, that is not pleas'd
With sight of animals enjoying life,

Nor feels their happiness augment his own.
The bounding fawn, that darts across the glade
When none pursues, through mere delight of heart
And spirits buoyant with excess of glee;
The horse as wanton, and almost as fleet,
That skims the spacious meadow at full speed,
Then stops, and snorts, and throwing high his heels,
Starts to the voluntary race again;
The very kine that gambol at high noon,
The total herd receiving first from one,
That leads the dance, a summons to be gay,
Though wild their strange vagaries, and uncouth
Their efforts, yet resolv'd, with one consent,
To give such act and utt'rance as they may
To ecstasy too big to be suppress'd—
These, and a thousand images of bliss,
With which kind Nature graces ev'ry scene,
Where cruel man defeats not her design,
Impart to the benevolent, who wish
All that are capable of pleasure pleas'd,
A far superior happiness to theirs,
The comfort of a reasonable joy.
Man scarce had ris'n, obedient to his call
Who form'd him from the dust, his future grave,
When he was crown'd as never king was since.
God set the diadem upon his head,
And angel choirs attended. Wond'ring stood
The new-made monarch, while before him pass'd
All happy, and all perfect in their kind,
The creatures, summon'd from their var haunts,

To see their sov'reign, and confess his sway.
Vast was his empire, absolute his pow'r,
Or bounded only by a law, whose force
'Twas his sublimest privilege to feel
And own—the law of universal love.
He rul'd with meekness, they obey'd with joy;
No cruel purpose lurk'd within his heart,
And no distrust of his intent in theirs.
So Eden was a scene of harmless sport,
Where kindness on his part who rul'd the whole,
Begat a tranquil confidence in all,
And fear as yet was not, nor cause for fear.
But sin marr'd all: and the revolt of man,
That source of evils not exhausted yet,
Was punish'd with revolt of his from him.
Garden of God, how terrible the change
Thy groves and lawns then witness'd! Ev'ry heart,
Each animal, of ev'ry name, conceiv'd
A jealousy, and an instinctive fear,
And, conscious of some danger, either fled
Precipitate the loath'd abode of man,
Or growl'd defiance in such angry sort,
As taught him too to tremble in his turn.
Thus harmony and family accord
Were driv'n from Paradise; and in that hour
The seeds of cruelty, that since have swell'd
To such gigantic and enormous growth,
Were sown in human nature's fruitful soil.
Hence date the persecution and the pain,
That man inflicts on all inferior kinds,
Regardless of their plaints. To make him sport,

To gratify the frenzy of his wrath,
Or his base gluttony, are causes good
And just in his account, why bird and beast
Should suffer torture, and the streams be died
With blood of their inhabitants impal'd.
Earth groans beneath the burden of a war
Wag'd with defenceless innocence, while he,
Not satisfied to prey on all around,
Adds tenfold bitterness to death by pangs
Needless, and first torments ere he devours.
Now happiest they that occupy the scenes
The most remote from his abhorr'd resort,
Whom once, as delegate of God on earth,
They fear'd, and as his perfect image, lov'd.
The wilderness is theirs, with all its caves,
Its hollow glens, its thickets, and its plains,
Unvisited by man. There they are free,
And howl and roar as likes them, uncontroll'd;
Nor ask his leave to slumber or to play.
Wo to the tyrant, if he dare intrude
Within the confines of their wild domain:
The lion tells him—I am monarch here—
And if he spare him, spares him on the terms
Of royal mercy, and through gen'rous scorn
To rend a victim trembling at his foot.
In measure, as by force of instinct drawn
Or by necessity constrain'd, they live
Dependent upon man; those in his fields,
These at his crib, and some beneath his roof.
They prove too often at how dear a rate
He sells protection—Witness at his foot
The spaniel dying for some venial fault

Under dissection of the knotted scourge;
Witness the patient ox, with stripes and yells
Driv'n to the slaughter, goaded, as he runs,
To madness; while the savage at his heels
Laughs at the frantic suff'rer's fury, spent
Upon the guiltless passenger o'erthrown.
He too is witness, noblest of the train
That wait on man, the flight-performing horse;
With unsuspecting readiness he takes
His murd'rer on his back, and, push'd all day
With bleeding sides and flanks that heave for life,
To the far distant goal arrives and dies.
So little mercy shows who needs so much!
Does law, so jealous in the cause of man,
Denounce no doom on the delinquent? None.
He lives and o'er his brimming beaker boasts
(As if barbarity were high desert,)
Th' inglorious feat, and clamorous in praise
Of the poor brute, seems wisely to suppose
The honours of his matchless horse his own.
But many a crime, deem'd innocent on earth,
Is register'd in Heav'n; and these no doubt,
Have each their record, with a curse annex'd.
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,
But God will never. When he charg'd the Jew
T' assist his foe's down-fallen beast to rise;
And when the bush-exploring boy, that seiz'd
The young, to let the parent bird go free;
Prov'd he not plainly, that his meaner works
Are yet his care, and have an int'rest all,
All, in the universal Father's love?
Noah, and in him on all mankind,

The charter was conferr'd by which we hold
The flesh of animals in fee, and claim
O'er all we feed on pow'r of life and death.
But read the instrument, and mark it well:
Th' oppression of a tyrannous control
Can find no warrant there. Feed then, and yield,
Thanks for thy food. Carnivorous, through sin,
Feed on the slain, but spare the living brute!
The Governor of all, himself to all
So bountiful, in whose attentive ear
The unfledg'd raven and the lion's whelp
Plead not in vain for pity on the pangs
Of hunger unassuag'd, has interpos'd,
Not seldom, his avenging arm, to smite
Th' injurious trampler upon Nature's law,
That claims forbearence even for a brute.
He hates the hardness of a Balaam's heart;
And, prophet as he was, he might not strike
The blameless animal, without rebuke,
On which he rode. Her opportune offence
Sav'd him, or the unrelenting seer had died.
He sees that human equity is slack
To interfere, though in so just a cause:
And makes the task his own. Inspiring dumb
And helpless victims with a sense so keen
Of injury, with such knowledge of their strength
And such sagacity to take revenge,
That oft the beast has seem'd to judge the man.
An ancient, not a legendary tale,
By one of sound intelligence rehears'd,
(If such who plead for Providence may seem

In modern eyes,) shall make the doctrine clear.
Where England, stretch'd towards the setting sun,
Narrow and long, o'erlooks the western wave,
Dwelt young Misagathus; a scorner he
Of God and goodness, atheist in ostent,
Vicious in act, in temper savage-fierce.
He journey'd: and his chance was, as he went,
To join a trav'ller, of far different note,
Evander, fam'd for piety, for years
Deserving honour, but for wisdom more.
Fame had not left the venerable man
A stranger to the manners of the youth,
Whose face, too, was familiar to his view.
Their way was on the margin of the land,
O'er the green summit of the rocks, whose base
Beats back the roaring surge, scarce heard so high.
The charity that warm'd his heart, was mov'd
At sight of the man-monster. With a smile
Gentle and affable, and full of grace,
As fearful of offending whom he wish'd
Much to persuade, he plied his ear with truths,
Not hardly thunder'd forth or rudely press'd,
But, like his purpose, gracious, kind, and sweet.
"And dost thou dream," th' impenetrable man
Exclaim'd, "that me the lullabies of age,
And fantasies of dotards, such as thou,
Can cheat, or move a moment's fear in me?
Mark now the proof I give thee, that the brave
Need no such aids as superstition lends
To steel their hearts against the dread of death."

He spoke, and to the precipice at hand
Push'd with a madman's fury. Fancy shrinks
And the blood thrills and curdles at the thought
Of such a gulf as he designed his grave.
But though the felon on his back could dare
The dreadful leap, more rational, his steed
Declin'd the death, and wheeling swiftly round.
Or ere his hoof had press'd the crumbling verge,
Baffled his rider, sav'd against his will.
The frenzy of the brain may be redress'd
By med'cine well applied, but without grace
The heart's insanity admits no cure:
Enrag'd the more, by what might have reform'd
His horrible intent, again he sought
Destruction, with a zeal to be destroy'd,
With sounding whip and rowels died in blood,
But still in vain. The Providence that meant
A longer date to the far nobler beast,
Spar'd yet again th' ignobler for his sake.
And now, his prowess prov'd, and his sincere
Incurable obduracy evinc'd,
His rage grew cool, and, pleas'd perhaps t' have
earn'd
So cheaply, the renown of that attempt,
With looks of some complacence he resum'd
His road, deriding much the blank amaze
Of good Evander, still where he was left
Fix'd motionless, and petrified with dread.
So on they far'd. Discourse on other themes
Ensuing seem'd t' obliterate the past;
And tamer for so much fury shown,
(As is the course of rash and fiery men,)

The rude companion smil'd, as if transform'd—
But 'twas a transient calm. A storm was near,
An unsuspected storm. His hour was come.
The impious challenger of Pow'r divine
Was now to learn, that Heav'n, though slow to wrath,
Is never with impunity defied.
His horse, as he had caught his master's mood,
Snorting, and starting into sudden rage,
Unbidden, and not now to be controll'd,
Rush'd to the cliff, and, having reach'd it, stood,
At once the shock unseated him: he flew
Sheer o'er the craggy barrier; and immers'd
Deep in the flood, found, when he sought it not,
The death he had deserv'd, and died alone.
So God wrought double justice; made the fool
The victim of his own tremendous choice,
And taught a brute the way to safe revenge.
I would not enter on my list of friends,
(Though grac'd with polish'd manners and fine sense,
Yet wanting sensibility,) the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.
An inadvertent step may crush the snail
That crawls at ev'ning in the public path;
But he that has humanity, forewarn'd,
Will tread aside, and let the reptile live.
The creeping vermin, loathsome to the sight,
And charg'd perhaps with venom, that intrudes,
A visitor unwelcome, into scenes
cred to neatness and repose, th' alcove,
chamber, or refectory, may die:

A necessary act incurs no blame.
Not so when, held within their proper bounds,
And guiltless of offence, they range the air,
Or take their pastime in the spacious field:
There they are privileg'd; and he that hunts
Or harms them there is guilty of a wrong,
Disturbs the economy of Nature's realm,
Who, when she form'd, design'd them an abode.
The sum is this: If man's convenience, health,
Or safety, interfere, his rights and claims
Are paramount, and must extinguish theirs.
Else they are all—the meanest things that are—
As free to live, and to enjoy that life,
As God was free to form them at the first,
Who in his sov'reign wisdom made them all.
Ye, therefore, who love mercy, teach your sons
To love it too. The spring time of our years
Is soon dishonour'd and defil'd in most
By budding ills, that ask a prudent hand
To check them. But, alas! none sooner shoots,
If unrestrain'd, into luxuriant growth,
Than cruelty, most dev'lish of them all.
Mercy to him that shows it, is the rule
And righteous limitation of its act,
By which Heav'n moves in pard'ning guilty man;
And he that shows none, being ripe in years,
And conscious of the outrage he commits,
Shall seek it, and not find it, in his turn.
Distinguish'd much by reason, and still more
By our capacity of grace divine,
From creatures, that exist but for our sake,

Which having serv'd us, perish, we are held
Accountable; and God some future day
Will reckon with us roundly for th' abuse
Of what he deems no mean nor trivial trust.
Superior as we are, they yet depend
Not more on human help than we on theirs.
Their strength, or speed, or vigilance, were giv'n
In aid of our defects. In some are found
Such teachable and apprehensive parts,
That man's attainments in his own concerns,
Match'd with th' expertness of the brutes in theirs,
Are ofttimes vanquish'd and thrown far behind.
Some shew that nice sagacity of smell,
And read with such discernment, in the port
And figure of the man, his secret aim,
That oft we owe our safety to a skill
We could not teach, and must despair to learn.
But learn we might, if not too proud to stoop
To quadruped instructors many a good
And useful quality, and virtue too,
Rarely exemplified among ourselves.
Attachment never to be wean'd, or chang'd
By any change of fortune: proof alike
Against unkindness, absence and neglect;
Fidelity, that neither bribe nor threat
Can move or warp; and gratitude for small
And trivial favours, lasting as the life,
And glist'ning even the dying eye.
Man praises man. Desert in arts or arms
Wins public honour; and ten thousand sit

Patiently present at a sacred song,
Commemoration mad; content to hear
(O wonderful effect of music's power!)
Messiah's eulogy for Handel's sake!
But less, methinks, than sacrilege might serve—
(For, was it less, what heathen would have
dar'd
To strip Jove's statue of his oaken wreath,
And hang it up in honour of a man?)
Much less might serve, when all that we design
Is but to gratify an itching ear,
And give the day to a musician's praise.
Remember Handel! Who, that was not born
Deaf as the dead to harmony, forgets,
Or can, the more than Homer of his age?
Yes—we remember him; and while we praise
A talent so divine, remember too
That his most holy book from whom it came,
Was never meant, was never us'd before,
To buckram out the mem'ry of a man.
But hush!—the Muse perhaps is too severe
And with a gravity beyond the size
And measure of th' offence, rebukes a deed
Less impious than absurd, and owing more
To want of judgment than to wrong design.
So in the chapel of old Ely House,
When wand'ring Charles, who meant to be the
third,
Had fled from William, and the news was fresh,
The simple clerk, but loyal, did announce,
And eke did roar right merrily, two staves,
Sung to the praise and glory of King George!

—Man praises man; and Garrick's mem'ry next,
When time hath somewhat mellow'd it, and made
The idol of our worship while he liv'd
The God of our idolatry once more,
Shall have its altar; and the world shall go
In pilgrimage to bow before his shrine.
The theatre too small, shall suffocate
Its squeez'd contents, and more than it admits
Shall sigh at their exclusion, and return
Ungratified; for there some noble lord
Shall stuff his shoulders with King Richard's bunch,
Or wrap himself in Hamlet's inky cloak,
And strut, and storm, and straddle, stamp, and stare,
To show the world how Garrick did not act.
For Garrick was a worshipper himself;
He drew the liturgy, and fram'd the rites
And solemn ceremonial of the day,
And call'd the world to worship on the banks
Of Avon, fam'd in song. Ah, pleasant proof
That piety has still in human hearts
Some place, a spark or two not yet extinct.
The mulberry tree was hung with blooming wreaths;
The mulberry tree stood centre of the dance;
The mulberry tree was hymn'd with dulcet airs;
And from his touchwood trunk the mulberry tree
Supplied such relics as devotion holds
Still sacred, and preserves with pious care.
'twas a hallow'd time: decorum reign'd,

And mirth without offence. No few return'd,
Doubtless, much edified, and all refresh'd.
—Man praises man. The rabble all alive
From tippling benches, cellars, stalls, and styes,
Swarm in the streets. The statesman of the day,
A pompous and slow-moving pageant, comes.
Some shout him, and some hang upon his car,
To gaze in 's eyes, and bless him. Maidens wave
Their kerchiefs, and old women weep for joy:
While others, not so satisfied, unhorse
The gilded equipage, and turning loose
His steeds, usurp a place they well deserve.
Why? what has charm'd them? Hath he saved the state?
No. Doth he purpose its salvation? No.
Enchanting novelty, that moon at full,
That finds out ev'ry crevice of the head
That is not sound, and perfect, hath in theirs
Wrought this disturbance. But the wane is near,
And his own cattle must suffice him soon.
Thus idly do we waste the breath of praise,
And dedicate a tribute, in its use
And just direction sacred, to a thing
Doom'd to the dust, or lodg'd already there.
Encomium in old time was poet's work;
But poets, having lavishly long since
Exhausted all materials of the art,
The task now falls into the public hand;
And I contented with an humbler theme,
Have pour'd my stream of panegyric down
The vale of Nature, where it creeps and winds

Among her lovely works with a secure
And unambitious course, reflecting clear,
If not the virtues, yet the worth of brutes.
And I am recompensed; and deem the toils
Of poetry not lost, if verse of mine
May stand between an animal and wo,
And teach one tyrant pity for his drudge.
The groans of Nature in this nether world,
Which heav'n has heard for ages, have an end.
Foretold by prophets, and by poets sung,
Whose fire was kindled at the prophets' lamp,
The time of rest, the promis'd sabbath, comes
Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh
Fulfill'd their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world; and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of human things
Is merely as the working of a sea
Before a calm that rocks itself to rest;
For He, whose car the winds are, and the clouds
The dust that waits upon his sultry march,
When sin hath mov'd him, and his wrath is hot,
Shall visit earth in mercy; shall descend
Propitious in his chariot pav'd with love;
And what his storms have blasted and defac'd
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.
Sweet is the harp of prophecy; too sweet
Not to be wrong'd by a mere mortal touch;
Nor can the wonders it records be sung
To meaner music, and not suffer loss.
But when a poet, or when one like me,
Happy to rove among poetic flow'rs,
Though poor in skill to rear them, lights at last

On some fair theme, some theme divinely fair,
Such is the impulse and the spur he feels
To give it praise proportioned to its worth,
That not t' attempt it, arduous as he deems
The labour, were a task more arduous still.
O scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,
Scenes of accomplish'd bliss! which who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refresh'd with foretaste of the joy?
Rivers of gladness water all the earth,
And clothe all climes with beauty; the reproach
Of barrenness is past. The fruitful field
Laughs with abundance; and the land, once lean,
Or fertile only in its own disgrace,
Exults to see its thistly curse repeal'd.
The various seasons woven into one,
And that one season an eternal spring,
The garden fears no blight, and needs no fence,
For there is none to covet, all are full.
The lion, and the libbard, and the bear,
Graze with the fearless flocks: all bask at noon
Together, or all gambol in the shade
Of the same grove, and drink one common stream;
Antipathies are none. No foe to man
Lurks in the serpent now; the mother sees,
And smiles to see, her infant's playful hand
Stretched forth to dally with the crested worm,
To stroke his azure neck, or to receive
The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.
All creatures worship man, and all mankin

One Lord, one Father. Error has no place;
That creeping pestilence is driv'n away;
The breath of Heav'n has chas'd it. In the heart
No passion touches a discordant string,
But all is harmony and love. Disease
Is not: the pure and uncontaminate blood
Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.
One song employs all nations; and all cry,
"Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!"
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round.
Behold the measure of the promise fill'd;
See Salem built, the labour of a God!
Bright as a sun the sacred city shines;
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light; the glory of all lands
Flows into her; unbounded is her joy,
And endless her increase. Thy rams are there
Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there;*
The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,
And Saba's spicy groves pay tribute there.
Praise is in all her gates; upon her walls,
And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,
Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there

* Nebaioth and Kedar, the sons of Ishmael, and progenitors of the Arabs in the prophetic Scripture here alluded to, may be reasonably considered as representatives of the Gentiles at large.

Kneels with the native of the farthest west;
And Æthiopia spreads abroad the hand,
And worships. Her report has travell'd forth
Into all lands. From ev'ry clime they come
To see thy beauty, and to share thy joy,
O Sion! an assembly such as Earth
Saw never, such as Heav'n stoops down to see.
Thus heav'nward all things tend. For all were once
Perfect, and all must be at length restor'd.
So God has greatly purpos'd; who would else
In his dishonour'd works himself endure
Dishonour, and be wrong'd without redress.
Haste, then, and wheel away a shatter'd world,
Ye slow-revolving seasons! we would see
(A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)
A world, that does not dread and hate his laws,
And suffer for its crime; would learn how fair
The creature is, that God pronounces good;
How pleasant in itself what pleases him.
Here ev'ry drop of honey hides a sting:
Worms wind themselves into our sweetest flow'rs
And e'en the joy, that haply some poor heart
Derives from Heav'n, pure as the fountain is,
Is sullied in the stream, taking a taint
From touch of human lips, at best impure.
O for a world in principle as chaste
As this is gross and selfish! over which
Custom and prejudice shall bear no sway,
That govern all things here, shouldering aside,
The meek and modest Truth, and forcing her

To seek a refuge from the tongue of Strife
In nooks obscure, far from the ways of men;
Where Violence shall never lift the sword,
Nor Cunning justify the proud man's wrong,
Leaving the poor no remedy but tears;
Where he that fills an office, shall esteem
Th' occasion it presents for doing good
More than the perquisite: where Law shall speak
Seldom, and never but as Wisdom prompts
And Equity; not jealous more to guard
A worthless form than to decide aright:
Where Fashion shall not sanctify abuse,
Nor smooth Good-breeding (supplemental grace)
With lean performance ape the work of Love!
Come, then, and added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy! It was thine
By ancient covenant, ere Nature's birth;
And thou hast made it thine by purchase since;
And o'erpaid its value with thy blood.
Thy saints proclaim thee king; and in their hearts
Thy title is engraven with a pen
Dipp'd in the fountain of eternal love.
Thy saints proclaim thee king; and thy delay
Gives courage to their foes, who, could they see
The dawn of thy last advent, long desir'd,
Would creep into the bowels of the hills,
And flee for safety to the falling rocks.
The very spirit of the world is tir'd
Of its own taunting question, ask'd so long,

"Where is the promise of your Lord's approach?"
The infidel has shot his bolts away,
Till his exhausted quiver yielding none,
He gleans the blunted shafts, that have recoil'd,
And aims them at the shield of Truth again.
The veil is rent, rent too by priestly hands,
That hides divinity from mortal eyes;
And all the mysteries to faith propos'd,
Insulted and traduc'd are cast aside,
As useless, to the moles and to the bats.
They now are deem'd the faithful and are prais'd,
Who, constant only in rejecting Thee,
Deny thy Godhead with a martyr's zeal,
And quit their office for their error's sake.
Blind and in love with darkness! yet e'en these
Worthy, compar'd with sycophants, who kneel
Thy name adoring, and thenpreach thee man;
So fares thy church. But how thy church may fare
The world takes little thought. Who will may preach,
And what they will. All pastors are alike
To wand'ring sheep, resolv'd to follow none.
Two gods divide them all—Pleasure and Gain;
For these they live, they sacrifice to these,
And in their service wage perpetual war
With Conscience and with Thee. Lust in their hearts,
And mischief in their hands, they roam the earth
To prey upon each other; stubborn, fierce,
High-minded, foaming out their own disgrace.

Thy prophets speak of such; and noting down
The features of the last degen'rate times,
Exhibit every lineament of these.
Come, then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,
Due to thy last and most effectual work,
Thy word fulfill'd, the conquest of a world!
He is the happy man, whose life e'en now
Shows somewhat of that happier life to come;
Who, doom'd to an obscure but tranquil state,
Is pleas'd with it, and, were he free to choose,
Would make his fate his choice; whom peace, the fruit
Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,
Prepare for happiness; bespeak him one
Content indeed to sojourn while he must
Below the skies, but having there his home.
The world o'erlooks him in her busy search
Of objects more illustrious in her view;
And occupied as earnestly as she,
Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the World.
She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not;
He seeks not hers, for he has prov'd them vain.
He cannot skim the ground like summer birds
Pursuing gilded flies; and such he deems
Her honours, her emoluments, her joys.
Therefore in contemplation is his bliss,
Whose pow'r is such, that whom she lifts from earth
She makes familiar with a Heav'n unseen,
And shows him glories yet to be reveal'd.
Not slothful he, though seeming unemployed,

And censur'd oft as useless. Stillest streams
Oft water fairest meadows, and the bird
That flutters least is longest on the wing.
Ask him, indeed, what trophies he has rais'd,
Or what achievements of immortal fame
He purposes, and he shall answer—None.
His warfare is within. There, unfatigu'd,
His fervent spirit labours. There he fights
And there obtains fresh triumphs o'er himself,
And never-with'ring wreaths, compar'd with which,
The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds.
Perhaps the self-approving, haughty world,
That as she sweeps him with her whistling silks
Scarce deigns to notice him, or if she see,
Deems him a cypher in the works of God,
Receives advantage from his noiseless hours,
Of which she little dreams. Perhaps she owes
Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring
And plenteous harvest, to the pray'r he makes,
When, Isaac like, the solitary saint
Walks forth to meditate at eventide,
And think on her who thinks not for herself.
Forgive him, then, thou bustler in concerns
Of little worth, an idler in the best,
If, author of no mischief and some good,
He seeks his proper happiness by means
That may advance, but cannot hinder, thine.
Nor, though he tread the secret path of life,
Engage no notice, and enjoy much ease,
Account him an encumbrance on the state,
Receiving benefits, and rend'ring none.

His sphere, though humble, if that humble sphere
Shines with his fair example; and though small
His influence, if that influence all be spent
In soothing sorrow, and in quenching strife,
In aiding helpless indigence in works
From which at least a grateful few derive
Some taste of comfort in a world of wo;
Then let the supercilious great confess
He serves his country, recompenses well
The state beneath the shadow of whose vine
He sits secure, and in the scale of life
Holds no ignoble, though a slighted, place.
The man, whose virtues are more felt than seen,
Must drop indeed the hope of public praise:
But he may boast, what few that win it can,
That if his country stand not by his skill,
At least his follies have not wrought her fall.
Polite Refinement offers him in vain
Her golden tube, through which a sensual World
Draws gross impurity, and likes it well,
The neat conveyance, hiding all the offence.
Not that he peevishly rejects a mode,
Because that World adopts it. If it bear
The stamp and clear impression of good sense,
And be not costly more than of true worth
He puts it on, and for decorum sake
Can wear it e'en as gracefully as she.
She judges of refinement by the eye;
He, by the test of conscience, and a heart

Not soon deceiv'd; aware, that what is base
No polish can make sterling; and that vice,
Though well perfum'd and elegantly dress'd,
Like an unburied carcass trick'd with flow'rs,
Is but a garnish'd nuisance, fitter far
For cleanly riddance than for fair attire.
So life glides smoothly and by stealth away,
More golden than that age of fabled gold
Renown'd in ancient song; not vex'd with care
Or stain'd with guilt, beneficent, approv'd
Of God and man, and peaceful in its end.
So glide my life away! and so at last
My share of duties decently fulfill'd,
May some disease, not tardy to perform
Its destin'd office, yet with gentle stroke,
Dismiss me weary to a safe retreat,
Beneath the turf that I have often trod.
It shall not grieve me then, that once, when call'd
To dress a Sofa with the flow'rs of verse,
I play'd awhile, obedient to the fair,
With that light Task; but soon, to please her more,
Whom flowers alone I knew would little please,
Let fall th' unfinish'd wreath, and rov'd for fruit;
Rov'd far, and gather'd much; some harsh, 'tis true,
Pick'd from the thorns and briars of reproof,
But wholesome, well digested; grateful some
To palates that can taste immortal truth;
Insipid else, and sure to be despised.
But all is in His hand whose praise I seek.

In vain the poet sings, and the World hears,
If he regard not, though divine the theme.
'Tis not in artful measures, in the chime
And idle tinkling of a minstrel's lyre,
To charm His ear whose eye is on the heart,
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation—prosper even mine.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY

OF

JOHN GILPIN;

Showing how he went further than he intended, and came safe home again.

John Gilpin was a citizen
  Of credit and renown,
A trainband captain eke was he
  Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear,
  Though wedded we have been
These twice ten tedious years, yet we
  No holy-day have seen.

To-morrow is our wedding-day,
  And we will then repair
Unto the bell at Edmonton,
  All in a chaise and pair.

My sister, and my sister's child,
Myself, and children three,
Will fill the chaise; so you must ride
On horseback after we.

He soon replied, I do admire
Of womankind but one,
And you are she, my dearest dear,
Therefore it shall be done.

I am a linen-draper bold,
As all the world doth know,
And my good friend the calender
Will lend his horse to go.

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin, that's well said,
And for that wine is dear,
We will be furnish'd with our own,
Which is both bright and clear.

John Gilpin kiss'd his loving wife;
O'erjoy'd was he to find,
That though on pleasure she was bent,
She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaise was brought,
But yet was not allow'd
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud.

So three doors off the chaise was stay'd,
Where they did all get in;

Six precious souls, and all agog
To dash through thick and thin.

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,
Were never folk so glad;
The stones did rattle underneath,
As if Cheapside were mad.

John Gilpin at his horse's side
Seized fast the flowing mane,
And up he got, in haste to ride,
But soon came down again;

For saddle-tree scarce reach'd had he,
His journey to begin,
When turning round his head, he saw
Three customers come in.

So down he came; for loss of time
Although it griev'd him sore,
Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,
Would trouble him much more.

'Twas long before the customers
Were suited to their mind,
When Betty screaming came down stairs,
"The wine is left behind!"

Good lack! quoth he—yet bring it me,
My leathern belt likewise,
In which I bear my trusty sword,
When I do exercise.

Now mistress Gilpin, (careful soul!)
Had two stone bottles found,
To hold the liquor that she lov'd,
And keep it safe and sound.

Each bottle had a curling ear,
Through which the belt he drew,
And hung a bottle on each side,
To make his balance true.

Then over all, that he might be
Equipp'd from top to toe,
His long red cloak, well brush'd and neat,
He manfully did throw.

Now see him mounted once again
Upon his nimble steed,
Full slowly pacing o'er the stones,
With caution and good heed.

But finding soon a smoother road
Beneath his well shod feet,
The snorting beast began to trot,
Which gall'd him in his seat.

So fair and softly, John he cried,
But John he cried in vain,
That trot became a gallop soon,
In spite of curb and rein.

So stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright,

He grasp'd the mane with both his hands,
And eke with all his might.

His horse, who never in that sort
Had handled been before,
What thing upon his back had got
Did wonder more and more.

Away went Gilpin, neck or naught;
Away went hat and wig;
He little dreamt when he set out,
Of running such a rig.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,
Like streamer long and gay,
Till, loop and button failing both,
At last it flew away.

Then might all people well discern
The bottles he had slung;
A bottle swinging at each side,
As hath been said or sung.

The dogs did bark, the children scream'd,
Up flew the windows all;
And ev'ry soul cried out, well done!
As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin—who but he?
His fame soon spread around,
He carries weight! he rides a race!
'Tis for a thousand pound!

And still, as fast as he drew near,
'Twas wonderful to view,
How in a trice the turnpike men
Their gates wide open threw.

And now as he went bowing down
His reeking head full low,
The bottles twain behind his back
Were shatter'd at a blow.

Down ran the wine into the road,
Most piteous to be seen,
Which made his horse's flanks to smoke
As they had basted been.

But still he seem'd to carry weight,
With leathern girdle brac'd;
For all might see the bottle-necks
Still dangling at his waist.

Thus all through merry Islington
These gambols he did play,
Until he came unto the Wash
Of Edmonton so gay;

And there he threw the wash about
On both sides of the way,
Just like unto a trundling mop,
Or a wild goose at play.

At Edmonton his loving wife
From the balcony spied

Her tender husband, wond'ring much
To see how he did ride.

Stop, stop, John Gilpin—Here's the house—
They all at once did cry;
The dinner waits, and we are tir'd;
Said Gilpin—So am I!

But yet his horse was not a whit
Inclin'd to tarry there;
For why?—his owner had a house
Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew,
Shot by an archer strong;
So did he fly—which brings me to
The middle of my song.

Away went Gilpin out of breath,
And sore against his will,
Till at his friend the calender's
His horse at last stood still.

The calender, amaz'd to see
His neighbour in such trim,
Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,
And thus accosted him:

What news? what news? your tidings tell;
Tell me you must and shall—
Say why bareheaded you are come,
Or why you come at all?

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,
And lov'd a timely joke;
And thus unto the calender
In merry guise he spoke:

I came because your horse would come;
And, if I well forbode,
My hat and wig will soon be here,
They are upon the road.

The calender right glad to find
His friend in merry pin,
Return'd him not a single word,
But to the house went in:

Whence straight he came with hat and wig
A wig that flow'd behind,
A hat not much the worse for wear,
Each comely in its kind.

He held them up, and in its turn
Thus show'd his ready wit,
My head is twice as big as yours,
They therefore needs must fit.

But let me scrape the dirt away
That hangs upon your face;
And stop and eat, for well you may
Be in a hungry case.

Said John, it is my wedding day,
And all the world would stare,

If wife should dine at Edmonton,
And I should dine at Ware.

So turning to his horse, he said,
I am in haste to dine;
'Twas for your pleasure you came here,
You shall go back for mine.

Ah, luckless speech, and bootless boast,
For which he paid full dear;
For, while he spake, a braying ass
Did sing most loud and clear.

Whereat his horse did snort, as he
Had heard a lion roar,
And gallop'd off with all his might,
As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went Gilpin's hat and wig;
He lost them sooner than at first,
For why—they were too big.

Now mistress Gilpin, when she saw
Her husband posting down
Into the country far away,
She pull'd out half a crown;

And thus unto the youth she said,
That drove them to the Bell,
This shall be yours, when you bring back
My husband safe and well.

The youth did ride, and soon did meet,
John coming back amain:
Whom in a trice he tried to stop,
By catching at his rein;

But not performing what he meant,
And gladly would have done,
The frighted steed he frighted more,
And made him faster run.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went bostboy at his heels,
The postboy's horse right glad to miss
The lumb'ring of the wheels.

Six gentlemen upon the road,
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,
With postboy scamp'ring in the rear,
They rais'd the hue and cry:—

Stop thief! stop thief!—a highwayman!
Not one of them was mute;
And all and each that pass'd that way
Did join in the pursuit.

And now the turnpike gates again
Flew open in short space;
The toll-men thinking as before,
That Gilpin rode a race.

And so he did, and won it too,
For he got first to town;

Nor stopp'd till where he did get up
He did again get down.

Now let us sing, long live the king,
And Gilpin long live he;
And when he next doth ride abroad,
May I be there to see!

ON A SPANIEL, CALLED BEAU,

KILLING A YOUNG BIRD.

[*July* 15, 1793.]

A SPANIEL, Beau, that fares like you,
Well fed, and at his ease,
Should wiser be than to pursue
Each trifle that he sees.

But you have kill'd a tiny bird,
Which flew not till to-day,
Against my orders, whom you heard
Forbidding you the prey.

Nor did you kill that you might eat,
And ease a doggish pain,
For him, though chas'd with furious heat,
You left where he was slain.

Nor was he of the thievish sort,
Or one whom blood allures,
But innocent was all his sport
Whom you have torn for yours.

My dog! what remedy remains,
Since, teach you all I can,
I see you, after all my pains,
So much resemble Man?

BEAU'S REPLY.

Sir, when I flew to seize the bird
In spite of your command,
A louder voice than yours I heard,
And harder to withstand.

You cried—forbear—but in my breast
A mightier cried—proceed—
'Twas Nature, Sir, whose strong behest
Impell'd me to the deed.

Yet much as nature I respect,
I ventur'd once to break,
(As you, perhaps, may recollect)
Her precept for your sake;

And when your linnet on a day,
Passing his prison door,
Had flutter'd all his strength away,
And panting press'd the floor,

Well knowing him a sacred thing,
Not destin'd to my tooth,
I only kiss'd his ruffled wing,
And lick'd the feathers smooth.

Let my obedience *then* excuse
My disobedience *now*,
Nor some reproof yourself refuse
From your aggriev'd Bow-wow;

If killing birds be such a crime,
(Which I can hardly see,)
What think you, Sir, of killing Time
With verse address'd to me?

FROM A LETTER TO THE REV. MR. NEWTON,

Late Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth.

[Dated May 28, 1782.]

Says the pipe to the snuff-box, I can't understand,
What the ladies and gentlemen see in your face,
That you are in fashion all over the land,
And I am so much fallen into disgrace.

Do but see what a pretty contemplative air
I give to the company—pray do but note 'em—
You would think that the wise men of Greece were all there,
Or, at least would suppose them the wise men of Gotham.

My breath is as sweet as the breath of blo roses,
While you are a nuisance where'er you pear;

There is nothing but sniv'ling and blowing of noses,
Such a noise as turns any man's stomach to-hear.

Then lifting his lid in a delicate way,
And op'ning his mouth with a smile quite engaging,
The box in reply was heard plainly to say,
What a silly dispute is this we are waging!

If you have a little of merit to claim,
You may think the sweet-smelling Virginian weed,
And I, if I seem to deserve any blame,
The before-mentioned drug in apology plead.

Thus neither the praise nor the blame is our own,
No room for a sneer, much less a cachinnus,
We are vehicles, not of tobacco alone,
But of any thing else they may choose to put in us.

TO MARY.

[*Autumn of* 1793.]

THE twentieth year is well nigh past
Since first our sky was overcast,
Ah would that this might be the last!
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see them daily weaker grow—
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disus'd, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou play'dst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads, with magic art,
Have wound themselves about this heart
My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language utter'd in a dream;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

For could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet gently prest, press gently mine,
My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou prov'st,
That now at every step thou mov'st,
Upheld by two, yet still thou lov'st,
My Mary!

And still to love, though prest with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know
How oft the sadness that I show,
Transforms thy smiles to looks of wo,
My Mary!

And should my future lot be cast
With which resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!

THE CASTAWAY.

[*March*, 20, 1799.]

OBSCUREST night involv'd the sky;
Th' Atlantic billows roar'd,
When such a destined wretch as I,
Wash'd headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast,
Than he, with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast,
With warmer wishes sent.
He lov'd them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay:
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away;
But wag'd with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted; nor his friends had fail'd
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevail'd,
That, pitiless, perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford,
And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delay'd not to bestow
But he (they knew) nor ship nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seem'd, could he
Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld:
And so long he, with unspent pow'r
His destiny repell'd:
And ever as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried—"Adieu!"

At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in ev'ry blast,
Could catch the sound no more.

For then, by toil subdu'd, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him: but the page
  Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age
  Is wet with Anson's tear.
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
  Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
  A more enduring date.
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allay'd,
  No light propitious shone;
When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
  We perish'd each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he.

THE YEARLY DISTRESS,

OR,

TITHING TIME AT STOCK, IN ESSEX.

Verses addressed to a country clergyman, complaining of the disagreeableness of the day annually appointed for receiving the dues at the parsonage.

Come, ponder well, for 'tis no jest,
To laugh it would be wrong,
The troubles of a worthy priest,
The burden of my song.

The priest he merry is and blithe,
Three quarters of the year,
But, oh! it cuts him like a sithe,
When tithing time draws near.

He then is full of frights and fears,
As one at point to die,
And long before the day appears,
He heaves up many a sigh.

For then the farmers come, jog, jog,
  Along the miry road,
Each heart as heavy as a log,
  To make their payments good.

In sooth, the sorrow of such days
  Is not to be express'd,
When he that takes, and he that pays,
  Are both alike distress'd.

Now all unwelcome at his gates
  The clumsy swains alight,
With rueful faces and bald pates—
  He trembles at the sight.

And well he may, for well he knows
  Each bumpkin of the clan,
Instead of paying what he owes,
  Will cheat him if he can.

So in they come—each makes his leg,
  And flings his head before,
And looks as if he came to beg,
  And not to quit a score.

"And how does miss and madam do,
  "The little boy, and all!"
"All tight and well. And how do you
  "Good Mr. What-d'ye call?"

dinner comes, and down they sit:
ere e'er such hungry folk?

There's little talking, and no wit;
It is no time to joke.

One wipes his nose upon his sleeve,
One spits upon the floor,
Yet not to give offence or grieve,
Holds up the cloth before.

The punch goes round, and they are dull
And lumpish still as ever;
Like barrels with their bellies full,
They only weigh the heavier.

At length the busy time begins,
"Come, neighbours, we must wag—"
The money chinks, down drop their chins,
Each lugging out his bag.

One talks of mildew and of frost,
And one of storms of hail,
And one of pigs, that he has lost
By maggots at the tail.

Quoth one, "A rarer man than you
"In pulpit none shall hear;
"But yet, methinks, to tell you true,
"You sell it plaguy dear."

O why are farmers made so coarse,
Or clergy made so fine?
A kick that scarce would move a horse,
May kill a sound divine.

Then let the boobies stay at home;
'Twould cost him, I dare say,
Less trouble taking twice the sum,
Without the clowns that pay.

VERSES

Supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk, during his solitary abode on the island of Juan Fernandez.

I.

I AM monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute:
From the centre all round to the sea,
I am lord of the fowl and the brute.
O Solitude! where are the charms
That sages have seen in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
Than reign in this horrible place.

II.

I am out of humanity's reach,
I must finish my journey alone,
Never hear the sweet music of speech,
I start at the sound of my own.
The beasts that roam over the plain,
My form with indifference see;
They are so unacquainted with man,
Their tameness is shocking to me.

III.

Society, friendship, and love,
Divinely bestow'd upon man,
O had I the wings of a dove,
How soon would I taste you again!
My sorrows I then might assuage
In the ways of religion and truth,
Might learn from the wisdom of age,
And be cheer'd by the sallies of youth.

IV.

Religion! what treasure untold
Resides in that heavenly word!
More precious than silver and gold,
Or all that this earth can afford.
But the sound of the church-going bell
These valleys and rocks never heard,
Never sigh'd at the sound of a knell,
Or smil'd when a sabbath appear'd.

V.

Ye winds that have made me your sport,
Convey to this desolate shore
Some cordial endearing report
Of a land I shall visit no more.
My friends, do they now and then send
A wish or a thought after me?
O tell me I yet have a friend,
Though a friend I am never to see.

VI.

How fleet is a glance of the mind!
  Compar'd with the speed of its flight,
The tempest itself lags behind,
  And the swift-winged arrows of light.
When I think of my own native land,
  In a moment I seem to be there;
But, alas! recollection at hand
  Soon hurries me back to despair.

VII.

But the sea-fowl is gone to her nest,
  The beast is laid down in his lair;
Even here is a season of rest,
  And I to my cabin repair.
There's mercy in every place,
  And mercy, encouraging thought!
Gives even affliction a grace,
  And reconciles man to his lot.

REPORT

Of an adjudged Case, not to be found in any of the Books.

I.

Between Nose and Eyes a strange contest arose,
The spectacles set them unhappily wrong;
The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,
To which the said spectacles ought to belong.

II.

So Tongue was the lawyer, and argued the cause
With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning,
While chief baron Ear sat to balance the laws,
So fam'd for his talent in nicely discerning.

III.

In behalf of the Nose it will quickly appear,
And your lordship, he said, will undoubtedly find,
That the Nose has had spectacles always in wear,
Which amounts to possession time out of mind.

IV.

Then holding the spectacles up to the court,
Your lordship observes they are made with a straddle

As wide as the ridge of the Nose is; in short,
Design'd to sit close to it, just like a saddle.

V.

Again, would your lordship a moment suppose,
('Tis a case that has happen'd, and may be again,)
That the visage or countenance had not a Nose,
Pray who would, or who could, wear spectacles then?

VI.

On the whole it appears, and my argument shows,
With a reasoning the court will never condemn,
That the spectacles plainly were made for the Nose
And the Nose was as plainly intended for them.

VII.

Then shifting his side, (as a lawyer knows how,)
He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes:
But what were his arguments few people know,
For the court did not think they were equally wise.

VIII.

So his lordship decreed, with a grave solemn tone.
Decisive and clear, without one *if* or *but*—
That, whenever the Nose put his spectacles
By day-light or candle-light—Eyes should shut.

CATHARINA.

Addressed to Miss Stapleton, now Mrs. Courtney.

She came—she is gone—we have met—
And meet perhaps never again,
The sun of that moment is set,
And seems to have risen in vain.
Catharina has fled like a dream—
(So vanishes pleasure, alas!)
But has left a regret and esteem,
That will not so suddenly pass.

The last ev'ning ramble we made,
Catharina, Maria, and I,
Our progress was often delay'd
By the nightingale warbling nigh.
We paus'd under many a tree,
And much she was charm'd with a tone
Less sweet to Maria and me,
Who so lately had witness'd her own.

My numbers that day she had sung,
And gave them a grace so divine,
As only her musical tongue
Could infuse into numbers of mine.

The longer I heard, I esteem'd
  The work of my fancy the more,
And e'en to myself never seem'd
  So tuneful a poet before.

Though the pleasures of London exceed
  In number the days of the year,
Catharina, did nothing impede,
  Would feel herself happier here;
For the close-woven arches of limes
  On the banks of our river, I know,
Are sweeter to her many times
  Than aught that the city can show.

So it is, when the mind is endu'd
  With a well-judging taste from above
Then whether embellish'd or rude
  'Tis nature alone that we love;
The achievements of art may amuse,
  May even our wonder excite,
But groves, hills, and vallies diffuse
  A lasting, a sacred delight.

Since, then, in the rural recess
  Catharina alone can rejoice,
May it still be her lot to possess
  The scene of her sensible choice!
'To inhabit a mansion remote
  From the clatter of street-pacing steeds,
And by Philomel's annual note
  To measure the life that she leads.

With her book, and her voice, and her lyre
To wing all her moments at home;
And with scenes that new rapture inspire,
As oft as it suits her to roam;
She will have just the life she prefers,
With little to hope or to fear,
And ours would be pleasant as hers,
Might we view her enjoying it here.

ON THE

LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE.

[*To the March in Scipio.*]

WRITTEN WHEN THE NEWS ARRIVED.

[*September*, 1782.]

Toll for the brave!
The brave that are no more,
All sunk beneath the wave,
Fast by their native shore!

Eight hundred of the brave,
Whose courage well was tried,
Had made the vessel heel,
And laid her on her side.

A land breeze shook the shrouds,
And she was overset;

Down went the Royal George,
With all her crew complete.

Toll for the brave!
Brave Kempenfelt is gone;
His last sea-fight is fought;
His work of glory done.

It was not in the battle;
No tempest gave the shock;
She sprang no fatal leak;
She ran upon no rock.

His sword was in his sheath;
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down,
With twice four hundred men.

Weigh the vessel up,
Once dreaded by our foes!
And mingle with our cup,
The tear that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
And she may float again,
Full-charg'd with England's thunder,
And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,
His victories are o'er;
And he and his eight hundred,
Shall plough the wave no more.

THE NEEDLESS ALARM.

A TALE.

THERE is a field, through which I often pass
Thick overspread with moss and silky grass,
Adjoining close to Kilwick's echoing wood,
Where oft the bitch fox hides her hapless brood,
Reserv'd to solace many a neighb'ring squire,
That he may follow them through brake and brier,
Contusion, hazarding of neck, or spine,
Which rural gentleman call sport divine.
A narrow brook, by rushy banks conceal'd
Runs in a bottom, and divides the field;
Oaks intersperse it, that had once a head,
But now wear crests of oven-wood instead;
And where the land slopes to its wat'ry bourn,
Wide yawns a gulph beside a ragged thorn;
Bricks line the sides, but shiver'd long ago,
And horrid brambles intertwine below;
A hollow scoop'd, I judge, in ancient time,
For baking earth, or burning rock to lime.

Not yet the hawthorn bore her berries red,
With which the fieldfare, wintry guest, is fed;
Nor autumn yet had brush'd from ev'ry spray,
With her chill hand the mellow leaves away;
But corn was hous'd and beans were in the
stack;

Now therefore issu'd forth the spotted pack,
With tails high mounted, ears hung low, and throats,
With a whole gamut fill'd of heav'nly notes,
For which, alas! my destiny severe,
Though ears she gave me two, gave me no ear.

The sun, accomplishing his early march,
His lamp now planted on Heav'n's topmost arch,
When, exercise and air my only aim,
And heedless whither, to that field I came,
Ere yet with ruthless joy the happy hound
Told hill and dale that Reynard's track was found,
Or with the high-rais'd horn's melodious clang
All Kilwick* and all Dinglederry* rang.

Sheep graz'd the field; some with soft bosom press'd
The herb as soft, while nibbling stray'd the rest;
Nor noise was heard but of the hasty brook,
Struggling, detain'd in many a petty nook.
All seem'd so peaceful, that, from them convey'd,
To me their peace by kind contagion spread.

But when the huntsman with distended cheek,
'Gan make his instrument of music speak,
And from within the wood that crash was heard,

---

* Two woods belonging to John Throckmorton, Esq.

Though not a hound from whom it burst appear'd,
The sheep recumbent, and the sheep that graz'd,
All huddling into phalanx, stood and gaz'd,
Admiring, terrified, the novel strain,
Then cours'd the field around, and cours'd it round again;
But, recollecting with a sudden thought,
That flight in circles urg'd advanc'd them nought,
They gather'd close around the old pit's brink,
And thought again—but knew not what to think.

The man to solitude accustom'd long
Perceives in every thing that lives a tongue,
Not animals alone, but shrubs and trees,
Have speech for him, and understood with ease;
After long drought when rains abundant fall;
He hears the herbs and flow'rs rejoicing all;
Knows what the freshness of their hue implies,
How glad they catch the largess of the skies;
But, with precision nicer still, the mind
He scans of ev'ry locomotive kind;
Birds of all feather, beasts of ev'ry name,
That serve mankind, or shun them, wild or tame;
The looks and gestures of their griefs and fears
Have all articulation in his ears;
He spells them true by intuition's light,
And needs no glossary to set him right.

This truth premis'd was needful as a text
To win due credence to what follows next.

Awhile they mus'd; surveying ev'ry face,
Thou hadst suppos'd them of superior race;
Their periwigs of wool, and fears combin'd
Stamp'd on each countenance such marks of mind,
That sage they seem'd as lawyers o'er a doubt
Which, puzzling long, at last they puzzle out;
Or academic tutors, teaching youths,
Sure ne'er to want them, mathematic truths;
When thus a mutton, statelier than the rest,
A ram, the ewes and weathers sad, address'd.

Friends! we have liv'd too long. I never heard.
Sounds such as these, so worthy to be fear'd.
Could I believe, that winds for ages pent
In Earth's dark womb have found at last a vent,
And from their prison-house below arise,
With all these hideous howlings to the skies,
I could be much compos'd, nor should appear,
For such a cause, to feel the slightest fear.
Yourselves have seen, what time the thunders roll'd
All night, me resting quiet in the fold,
Or heard we that tremendous bray alone,
I could expound the melancholy tone;
Should deem it by our old companion made,
The ass; for he, we know, has lately stray'd,
And being lost, perhaps and wand'ring wide,
Might be suppos'd to clamour for a guide.
But ah! those dreadful yells what soul can hear
That owns a carcass and not quake for fear?

Demons produce them doubtless, brazen claw'd,
And fang'd with brass, the demons are abroad;
I hold it therefore wisest and most fit,
That, life to save, we leap into the pit.

Him answer'd then his loving mate and true,
But more discreet than he a Cambrian ewe.

How! leap into the pit our life to save?
To save our life leap all into the grave!
For who can find it less? Contemplate first
The depth how awful! falling there we burst;
Or should the brambles interpos'd, our fall
In part abate, that happiness were small:
For with a race like theirs no chance I see
Of peace or ease to creatures clad as we.
Meantime, noise kills not. Be it Dapple's bray,
Or be it not, or be it whose it may,
And rush those other sounds, that seem by tongues
Of demons utter'd from whatever lungs,
Sounds are but sounds, and till the cause appear,
We have at least commodious standing here.
Come fiend, come fury, giant, monster, blast
From Earth or Hell, we can but plunge at last.

While thus she spake, I fainter heard the peals,
For Reynard, close attended at his heels
By panting dog, tir'd man, and spatter'd horse,
Through mere good fortune, took a diff'rent course.

The flock grew calm again, and I the road
Foll'wing, that led me to my own abode.
Much wonder'd that the silly sheep had found
Such cause of terror in an empty sound,
So sweet to huntsman, gentleman, and hound.

MORAL.

Beware of desp'rate steps. The darkest day,
Live till to-morrow, will have pass'd away.

A POETICAL EPISTLE TO LADY AUSTEN.

[Dec. 17, 1781.]

Dear Anna—between friend and friend,
Prose answers every common end;
Serves, in a plain and homely way,
T' express th' occurrence of the day;
Our health, the weather, and the news;
What walks we take, what books we choose;
And all the floating thoughts we find
Upon the surface of the mind.

But when a poet takes the pen,
Far more alive than other men,
He feels a gentle tingling come
Down to his finger and his thumb,
Deriv'd from nature's noblest part,
The centre of a glowing heart:
And this is what the world, who knows
No flights above the pitch of prose,
His more sublime vagaries slighting,
Denominates an itch for writing.
No wonder I, who scribble rhyme

To catch the triflers of the time,
And tell them truths divine and clear,
Which, couch'd in prose, they will not hear;
Who labour hard to allure and draw
The loiterers I never saw,
Should feel that itching, and that tingling
With all my purpose intermingling,
To your intrinsic merit true,
When call'd t' address myself to you.

Mysterious are his ways, whose power
Brings forth that unexpected hour,
When minds, that never met before,
Shall meet, unite, and part no more:
It is the allotment of the skies,
The hand of the Supremely Wise,
That guides and governs our affections,
And plans and orders our connexions:
Directs us in our distant road,
And marks the bounds of our abode.
Thus we were settled when you found us,
Peasants and children all around us,
Not dreaming of so dear a friend,
Deep in the abyss of Silver-End.*
Thus Martha, e'en against her will,
Perch'd on the top of yonder hill;
And you, though you must needs prefer
The fairest scenes of sweet Sancerre,†

* An obscure part of Olney, adjoining to the residence
vper, which faced the market-place.
† Austen's residence in France.

Are come from distant Loire, to choose
A cottage on the banks of Ouse.
This page of Providence quite new,
And now just op'ning to our view,
Employs our present thoughts and pains
To guess, and spell, what it contains:
But day by day, and year by year,
Will make the dark enigma clear;
And furnish us, perhaps, at last,
Like other scenes already past,
With proof, that we, and our affairs,
Are part of a Jehovah's cares:
For God unfolds, by slow degrees,
The purport of his deep decrees;
Sheds every hour a clearer light
In aid of our defective sight;
And spreads at length before the soul
A beautiful and perfect whole,
Which busy man's inventive brain
Toils to anticipate, in vain.

Say, Anna, had you never known
The beauties of a rose full blown,
Could you, tho' luminous your eye,
By looking on the bud, descry,
Or guess, with a prophetic power,
The future splendour of the flower?
Just so, the Omnipotent who turns
The system of a world's concerns,
From mere minutiæ can educe
Events of most important use;
And bid a dawning sky display

The blaze of a meridian day.
The works of man tend, one and all,
As needs they must, from great to small,
And vanity absorbs at length
The monuments of human strength.
But who can tell how vast the plan
Which this day's incident began!
Too small, perhaps, the slight occasion,
For our dim-sighted observation;
It pass'd unnotic'd, as the bird
That cleaves the yielding air unheard,
And yet may prove, when understood,
An harbinger of endless good.

Not that I deem, or mean to call
Friendship a blessing cheap or small.
But merely to remark, that ours,
Like some of nature's sweetest flowers,
Rose from a seed of tiny size,
That seem'd to promise no such prize;
A transient visit intervening,
And made almost without a meaning,
(Hardly the effect of inclination,
Much less of pleasing expectation,)
Produc'd a friendship, then begun,
That has cemented us in one;
And placed it in our pow'r to prove,
By long fidelity and love,
That Solomon has wisely spoken:
"A threefold cord is not soon broken."

PAIRING TIME ANTICIPATED.

A FABLE.

I shall not ask Jean Jaques Rosseau,*
If birds confabulate or no;
'Tis clear that they were always able
To hold discourse—at least in fable;
And e'en the child who knows no better,
Than to interpret by the letter,
A story of a cock and bull,
Must have a most uncommon skull.
It chanc'd then on a winter's day,
But warm, and bright, and calm as May,
The birds, conceiving a design
To forestall sweet St. Valentine,
In many an orchard, copse, and grove,
Assembled on affairs of love,

* It was one of the whimsical speculations of this sopher, that all fables, which ascribe reason and spe animals, should be withheld from children, as being vehicles of deception. But what child was ever de by them, or can be, against the evidence of the sens

And with much twitter and much chatter,
Began to agitate the matter.
At length a Bulfinch, who could boast
More years and wisdom than the most,
Entreated, op'ning wide his beak,
A moment's liberty to speak;
And, silence publicly enjoin'd,
Deliver'd briefly thus his mind:
My friends! be cautious how ye treat
The subject upon which we meet;
I fear we shall have winter yet.
A Finch, whose tongue knew no control,
With golden wing, and satin poll,
A last year's bird, who ne'er had tried
What marriage means, thus pert replied:
Methinks the gentleman, quoth she,
Opposite in the apple tree,
By his good will would keep us single
Till yonder Heav'n and earth shall mingle,
Or, (which is likelier to befall,)
Till death exterminate us all.
I marry without more ado,
My dear Dick Redcap, what say you?
Dick heard, and tweedling, ogling, bridling,
Turning short round, strutting, and sideling,
Attested, glad, his approbation
Of an immediate conjugation.
Their sentiments so well express'd,
Influenc'd mightily the rest,
All pair'd and each pair built a nest.
But though the birds were thus in haste,
leaves came on not quite so fast,

An aspect stern on man's affairs,
Not altogether smil'd on theirs.
The wind of late breath'd gently forth,
Now shifted east, and east by north;
Bare trees and shrubs but ill, you know,
Could shelter them from rain or snow.
Stepping into their nests they paddled,
Themselves were chill'd, their eggs were addled;
Soon ev'ry father bird and mother
Grew quarrelsome, and peck'd each other,
Parted without the least regret,
Except that they had never met;
And learn'd, in future, to be wiser
Than to neglect a good adviser.

MORAL.

Misses! the tale that I relate
This lesson seems to carry—
Choose not alone a proper mate,
But proper time, to marry.

THE ROSE.

The Rose had been wash'd, just wash'd in a
shower,
Which Mary to Anna convey'd,
The plentiful moisture encumber'd the flow'r,
And weigh'd down its beautiful head.

The cup was all fill'd, and the leaves were all wet,
And it seem'd to a fanciful view,
To weep for the buds it had left with regret,
On the flourishing bush where it grew.

I hastily seized it, unfit as it was
For a nosegay, so dripping and drown'd,
And swinging it rudely, too rudely, alas!
I snapp'd it—it fell to the ground.

And such, I exclaim'd, is the pitiless part
Some act by the delicate mind,
Regardless of wringing and breaking a heart
Already to sorrow resign'd.

This elegant rose, had I shaken it less,
Might have bloom'd with its owner a while;
And the tear that is wip'd with a little address,
May be follow'd perhaps by a smile.

THE NEGRO'S COMPLAINT.

FORC'D from home and all its pleasures,
Afric's coast I left forlorn;
To increase a stranger's treasures,
O'er the raging billows borne.
Men from England bought and sold me,
Paid my price in paltry gold;
But though slave they have enroll'd me,
Minds are never to be sold.

Still in thought as free as ever,
What are England's rights I ask,
Me from my delights to sever,
Me to torture, me to task?
Fleecy locks and black complexion,
Cannot forfeit Nature's claim;
Skins may differ, but affection
Dwells in white and black the same.

Why did all-creating Nature
Make the plant for which we toil—
Sighs must fan it, tears must water,
Sweat of ours must dress the soil.

Think, ye masters, iron-hearted,
Lolling at your jovial boards;
Think how many backs have smarted
For the sweets your cane affords.

Is there, as ye sometimes tell us,
Is there one, who reigns on high!
Has he bid you buy and sell us,
Speaking from his throne, the sky?
Ask him, if your knotted scourges,
Matches, blood-extorting screws,
Are the means that duty urges
Agents of his will to use?

Hark! he answers—wild tornadoes,
Strewing yonder sea with wrecks;
Wasting towns, plantations, meadows,
Are the voice with which he speaks.
He, foreseeing what vexations
Afric's sons should undergo,
Fix'd their tyrants' habitations
Where his whirlwinds answer—No.

By our blood in Afric wasted,
Ere our necks receiv'd the chain;
By the mis'ries that we tasted,
Crossing in your barks the main;
By our suff'rings since ye brought us
To the man-degrading mart;
All-sustain'd by patience, taught us
Only by a broken heart;

Deem our nation brutes no longer,
Till some reason ye shall find
Worthier of regard, and stronger
Than the colour of our kind.
Slaves of gold, whose sordid dealings
Tarnish all your boasted pow'rs,
Prove that you have human feelings,
Ere you proudly question ours!

On the receipt of my Mother's Picture out of Norfolk, the gift of my cousin Ann Bodham.

O THAT those lips had language! Life has pass'd
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same, that oft in childhood solac'd me;
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
"Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away!"
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes,
(Bless'd be the art that can immortalize,
The art that baffles Time's tyrannic claim
To quench it,) here shines on me still the same.

Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,
O welcome guest, though unexpected here!
Who bidd'st me honour with an artless song,
Affectionate, a mother lost so long.
I will obey, not willingly alone,
But gladly, as the precept were her own:
And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,
Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,
A momentary dream, that thou art she.

My mother! when I learn'd that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hover'd thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a kiss,
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—
Ah, that maternal smile! it answers—Yes.
I heard the bell toll'd on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And turning from my nurs'ry window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such?—It was—where thou art gone
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more!
Thy maidens, griev'd themselves at my concern,
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.
What ardently I wish'd, I long believ'd,
And disappointed still, was still deceiv'd.
By expectation ev'ry day beguil'd,
Dupe of *to-morrow* even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till all my stock of infant sorrows spent,
I learn'd at last submission to my lot,
But though I less deplor'd thee, ne'er forgot.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nurs'ry floor;
And where the gard'ner, Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,

Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapp'd
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet cap,
'Tis now become a hist'ry little known,
That once we call'd the past'ral house our own
Short-liv'd possession! but the record fair,
That mem'ry keeps of all the kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm, that has effac'd
A thousand other themes less deeply trac'd.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou mightst know me safe and warmly laid;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionary plum,
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestow'd
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glow'd:
All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughen'd by those cataracts and breaks
That humour interpos'd too often makes;
All this still legible in mem'ry's page,
And still to be so to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honours to thee as my numbers may:
Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
Not scorn'd in Heav'n, though little notic'd here.

Could Time, his flight revers'd, restore the hours,
When, playing with thy vesture's tissu'd flow'rs,
The violet, the pink, and jessamine,

I prick'd them into paper with a pin,
(And thou was happier than myself the while,
Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head and smile,)
Could those few pleasant days again appear,
Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?
I would not trust my heart—the dear delight
Seems so to be desir'd, perhaps I might—
But no—what here we call our life is such,
So little to be lov'd, and thou so much,
That I should ill requite thee to constrain
Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast,
(The storms all weather'd and the ocean cross'd)
Shoots into port at some well-haven'd isle,
Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile,
There sits quiescent on the floods that show
Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
While airs impregnated with incense play
Around her fanning light her streamers gay;
So thou, with sails how swift! hast reach'd the shore,
"Where tempests never beat nor billows roar,"*
And thy lov'd consort on the dang'rous tide
Of life long since has anchor'd by thy side.
But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,

* Garth.

Always from port withheld, always distress'd—
Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest-toss'd,
Sails ripp'd, seams op'ning wide, and compass lost,
And day by day some current's thwarting force
Sets me more distant from a prosp'rous course.
Yet O the thought, that thou art safe, and he!
That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.
My boast is not, that I deduce my birth
From loins enthron'd, and rulers of the Earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
The son of parents pass'd into the skies.
And now farewell—Time unrevok'd has run
His wonted course, yet what I wish'd is done,
By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,
I seem t' have my childhood o'er again;
To have renew'd the joys that once were mine,
Without the sin of violating thine;
And while the wings of Fancy still are free,
And I can view this mimic show of thee,
Time has but half succeeded in his theft—
Thyself remov'd, thy pow'r to sooth me left.

GRATITUDE.

ADDRESSED TO LADY HESKETH.

[1786.]

THIS cap, that so stately appears,
With riband-bound tassel on high,
Which seems by the crest that it rears
Ambitious of brushing the sky:
This cap to my cousin I owe,
She gave it, and gave me beside,
Wreath'd into an elegant bow,
The riband with which it is tied.

This wheel-footed studying chair,
Contriv'd both for toil and repose,
Wide-elbow'd and wadded with hair,
In which I both scribble and doze,
Bright-studded to dazzle the eyes,
And rival in lustre of that
In which, or astronomy lies,
Fair Cassiopeia sat:

These carpets, so soft to the foot,
  Caledonia's traffic and pride,
Oh, spare them, ye knights of the boot,
  Escaped from a cross-country ride!
This table and mirror within,
  Secure from collision and dust,
At which I oft shave cheek and chin
  And periwig nicely adjust:

This movable structure of shelves,
  For its beauty admired, and its use,
And charged with octavos and twelves,
  The gayest I had to produce.
Where, flaming in scarlet and gold,
  My poems enchanted I view,
And hope, in due time to behold
  My Iliad and Odyssey too:

This china, that decks the alcove,
  Which here people call a buffet,
But what the gods call it above,
  Has ne'er been reveal'd to us yet;
These curtains, that keep the room warm
  Or cool, as the season demands,
These stoves that for pattern and form,
  Seem the labour of Mulciber's hands:

All these are not half what I owe
  To one, from her earliest youth
To me ever ready to show
  Benignity, friendship, and truth;

For time, the destroyer declar'd
And foe of our perishing kind,
If even her face he has spar'd,
Much less could he alter her mind.

Thus compass'd about with the goods
And chattels of leisure and ease,
I indulge my poetical moods,
In many such fancies as these ;
And fancies I fear they will seem—
Poet's goods are not often so fine ;
The poets will swear that I dream,
When I sing of the splendor of mine.

THE DOG AND THE WATER-LILY.

NO FABLE.

THE noon was shady, and soft airs
  Swept Ouse's silent tide,
When, scap'd from literary cares,
  I wander'd on his side.

My spaniel, prettiest of his race,
  And high in pedigree,
(Two nymphs* adorn'd with ev'ry grace
  That spaniel found for me.)

Now wanton'd lost in flags and reeds,
  Now starting into sight,
Pursu'd the swallow o'er the meads
  With scarce a slower flight.

It was the time when Ouse display'd
  His lilies newly blown;
Their beauties I intent survey'd,
  And one I wished my own.

With cane extended far I sought
  To steer it close to land;

* Sir Robert Gunning's daughters.

But still the prize, though nearly caught,
Escap'd my eager hand.

Beau mark'd my unsuccessful pains
With fix'd considerate face,
And puzzling set his puppy brains
To comprehend the case.

But with a cherup clear and strong,
Dispersing all his dream,
I thence withdrew, and follow'd long
The windings of the stream.

My ramble ended, I return'd;
Beau trotting far before,
The floating wreath again discern'd,
And plunging left the shore.

I saw him with that lily cropp'd,
Impatient swim to meet
My quick approach, and soon he dropp'd
The treasure at my feet.

Charm'd with the sight, the world, I cried,
Shall hear of this thy deed:
My dog shall mortify the pride
Of man's superior breed:

But chief myself I will enjoin,
Awake at duty's call,
To show a love as prompt as thine,
To him who gives me all.

SONG.*

Air—"The Lass of Pattie's Mill."

When all within is peace,
How nature seems to smile!
Delights that never cease,
The live-long day beguile.
From morn to dewy eve,
With open hand she showers
Fresh blessings to deceive,
And sooth the silent hours.

It is content of heart
Gives nature power to please;
The mind that feels no smart,
Enlivens all it sees;
Can make a wint'ry sky
Seem bright as smiling May,
And evening's closing eye
As peep of early day.

The vast majestic globe,
So beauteously array'd

* Also written at the request of Lady Auston.

In nature's various robe,
With wondrous skill display'd,
Is to a mourner's heart
A dreary wild at best;
It flutters to depart,
And longs to be at rest.

EPITAPH ON A HARE.

Here lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue,
Nor swifter grayhound follow,
Whose foot ne'er tainted morning dew,
Nor ear heard huntsman's halloo.

Old Tiney, surliest of his kind,
Who, nurs'd with tender care,
And to domestic bounds confin'd,
Was still a wild Jack-hare.

Though duly from my hand he took
His pittance ev'ry night,
He did it with a jealous look,
And, when he could, would bite.

His diet was of wheaten bread,
And milk, and oats, and straw;
Thistles, or lettuces instead,
With sand to scour his maw.

On twigs of hawthorn he regal'd,
On pippen's russet peel,
And, when his juicy sallads fail'd,
[illegible]c'd carrot pleas'd him well.

A turkey carpet was his lawn
Whereon he lov'd to bound,
To skip and gambol like a fawn,
And swing his rump around.

His frisking was at ev'ning hours,
For then he lost his fear,
But most before approaching show'rs,
Or when a storm drew near.

Eight years and five round rolling moons
He thus saw steal away,
Dozing out all his idle noons,
And ev'ry night at play.

I kept him for his humour's sake,
For he would oft beguile
My heart of thoughts, that made it ache,
And force me to a smile.

But now beneath this walnut shade
He finds his long last home,
And waits, in snug concealment laid,
Till gentler Puss shall come.

He, still more aged, feels the shocks,
From which no care can save,
And, partner once of Tiney's box,
Must soon partake his grave.

EPITAPHIUM ALTERUM.

Hic etiam jacet,
Qui totum novennium vixit,
Puss.
Siste paulisper,
Qui præteriturus es,
Et tecum sic reputa—
Hunc neque canis venaticus,
Nec plumbum missile,
Nec laqueus,
Nec imbres nimii,
Confecere;
Tamen mortuus est—
Et moriar ego.

THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF THE TREATMENT OF HIS HARES WAS INSERTED BY MR. COWPER IN THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE, WHENCE IT IS TRANSCRIBED.

IN the year 1774, being much indisposed both in mind and body, incapable of diverting myself either with company or books, and yet in a condition that made some diversion necessary, I was glad of any thing that would engage my attention without fatiguing it. The children of a neighbor of mine had a leveret given them for a plaything; it was at that time about three months old. Understanding better how to teaze the poor creature than to feed it, and soon becoming weary of their charge, they readily consented that their father, who saw it pining and growing leaner every day, should offer in to my acceptance. I was willing enough to take the prisoner under my protection, perceiving that, in the management of such an animal, and in the attempt to tame it, I should find just that sort of employment which my case required. It was soon known among the neighbors that I was pleased with the present; and the consequence was, that in a short time I had as many leverets offered to me as would have stocked a paddock. I undertook the care of three, which it is necessary that I should here distinguish by the names I gave them—Puss, Tiney, and Bess. Notwiths-

ing the two feminine appellatives, I must inform you that they were all males. Immediately commencing carpenter, I built them houses to sleep in; each had a separate apartment, so contrived, that their ordure would pass through the bottom of it; an earthen pan placed under each received whatsoever fell, which being duly emptied and washed, they were thus kept perfectly sweet and clean. In the day time they had the range of a hall, and at night retired, each to his own bed, never intruding into that of another.

Puss grew presently familiar, would leap into my lap, raise himself upon his hinder feet, and bite the hair from my temples. He would suffer me to take him up, and to carry him about in my arms, and has more than once fallen asleep upon my knee. He was ill three days, during which time I nursed him, kept him apart from his fellows, that they might not molest him, (for, like many other wild animals, they persecute one of their own species that is sick,) and by constant care, and trying him with a variety of herbs, restored him to perfect health. No creature could be more grateful than my patient after his recovery; a sentiment which he most significantly expressed by licking my hand, first the back of it, then the palm, then every finger separately, then between all the fingers, as if anxious to leave no part of it unsaluted; a ceremony which he never performed but once again upon a similar occasion. Finding him extremely tractable, I made it my custom to carry him always after

breakfast into the garden, where he hid himself generally under the leaves of a cucumber vine, sleeping or chewing the cud till evening: in the leaves also of that vine he found a favourite repast. I had not long habituated him to this taste of liberty, before he began to be impatient for the return of the time when he might enjoy it. He would invite me to the garden by drumming upon my knee, and by a look of such expression as it was not possible to misinterpret. If this rhetoric did not immediately succeed, he would take the skirt of my coat between his teeth, and pull at it with all his force. Thus Puss might be said to be perfectly tamed, the shyness of his nature was done away, and on the whole it was visible by many symptons, which I have not room to enumerate, that he was happier in human society than when shut up with his natural companions.

Not so Tiney; upon him the kindest treatment had not the least effect. He, too, was sick, and in his sickness had an equal share of my attention; but if after his recovery I took the liberty to stroke him, he would grunt, strike with his fore feet, spring forward, and bite. He was, however, very entertaining in his way; even his surliness was matter of mirth; and in his play he preserved such an air of gravity, and performed his feats with such a solemnity of manner, that in him, too, I had an agreeable companion.

Bess, who died soon after he was full grown and whose death was occasioned by his being

turned into his box, which had been washed, while it was yet damp, was a hare of great humour and drollery. Puss was tamed by gentle usage! Tiney was not to be tamed at all: and Bess had a courage and confidence that made him tame from the beginning. I always admitted them into the parlour after supper, when the carpet afforded their feet a firm hold, they would frisk, and bound and play a thousand gambols, in which Bess, being remarkably strong and fearless, was always superior to the rest, and proved himself the Vestris of the party. One evening the cat, being in the room, had the hardiness to pat Bess upon the cheek, an indignity which he resented by drumming upon her back with such violence that the cat was happy to escape from under his paws, and hide herself.

I describe these animals as having each a character of his own. Such they were in fact, and their countenances were so expressive of that character, that, when I looked only on the face of either, I immediately knew which it was. It is said that a shepherd, however numerous his flock, soon becomes so familiar with their features, that he can by that indication only, distinguish each from all the rest; and yet, to a common observer, the difference is hardly perceptible. I doubt not that the same discrimination in the cast of countenances would be discoverable in hares, and am persuaded that among a thousand of them, no two could be found exactly similar; a circumstance little suspected by

those who have not had opportunity to observe it. These creatures have a singular sagacity in discovering the minutest alteration that is made in the place to which they are accustomed and instantly apply their nose to the examination of a new object. A small hole being burnt in the carpet, it was mended with a patch, and that patch in a moment underwent the strictest scrutiny. They seem, too, to be very much directed by the smell in the choice of their favourites; to some persons, though they saw them daily, they could never be reconciled, and would even scream when they attempted to touch them; but a miller coming in engaged their affections at once: his powdered coat had charms that were irresistible. It is no wonder that my intimate acquaintance with these specimens of the kind, has tanght me to hold the sportsman's amusement in abhorrence: he little knows what amiable creatures he persecutes, of what gratitude they are capable, how cheerful they are in their spirits, what enjoyment they have of life, and that, impressed as they seem with a peculiar dread of man, it is only because man gives them peculiar cause for it.

That I may not be tedious, I will just give a short summary of these articles of diet that suit them best.

I take it to be a general opinion that they graze, but it is an erroneous one; at least grass is not their staple; they seem rather to use it medicinally, soon quitting it for leaves of almo-

any kind. Sowthistle, dandelion, and lettuce, are their favorite vegetables, especially the last. I discovered by accident that fine white sand is in great estimation with them; I suppose as a digestive. It happened that I was cleaning a bird cage while the hares were with me: I placed a pot filled with such sand upon the floor, which, being at once directed to by a strong instinct, they devoured voraciously; since that time I have generally taken care to see them well supplied with it. They account green corn a delicacy, both blade and stalk, but the ear they seldom eat: straw of any kind, especially wheat straw, is another of their dainties; they will feed greedily upon oats, but if furnished with clean straw, never want them; it serves them also for a bed, and if shaken up daily, will be kept sweet and dry for a considerable time. They do not indeed require aromatic herbs, but will eat a small quantity of them with great relish, and are particularly fond of the plant called musk: they seem to resemble sheep in this, that if their pasture be too succulent, they are very subject to the rot; to prevent which, I always made bread their principal nourishment, and, filling a pan with it cut into small squares, placed it every evening in their chambers, for they feed only at evening, and in the night: during the winter, when vegetables were not to be got, I mingled this mess of bread with shreads of carrot, adding to it the rind of apples cut extremely thin; for, though they are fond of the paring, the apple

itself disgusts them. These, however, not being a sufficient substitute for the juice of summer herbs, they must at this time be supplied with water; but so placed, that they cannot overset it into their beds. I must not omit, that occasionly they are much pleased with twigs of hawthorn and of the common brier, eating even the very wood when it is of considerable thickness.

Bess, I have said, died young; Tiney lived to be nine years old, and died at last. I have reason to think, of some hurt in his loins by a fall: Puss is still living, and has just completed his tenth year, discovering no signs of decay, nor even of age, except that he is grown more discreet and less frolicsome than he was. I cannot conclude without observing, that I have lately introduced a dog to his acquaintance—a spaniel that had never seen a hare, to a hare that had never seen a spaniel. I did it with great caution, but there was no real need of it. Puss discovered no token of fear, nor Marquis the least symptom of hostility. There is, therefore, it should seem, no natural antipathy between dog and hare, but the pursuit of the one occasions the flight of the other, and the dog pursues because he is trained to it; they eat bread at the same time out of the same hand, and are in all respects sociable and friendly.

I should not do complete justice to my subject, did I not add, that they have no ill scent belonging to them; that they are indefatigably nice in keeping themselves clean, for which pur-

pose nature has furnished them with a brush under each foot; and that they are never infested by any vermin.

May 28, 1784.

Memorandum found among Mr. Cowper's papers.

Tuesday, March 9, 1786.

This day died poor Puss, aged eleven years eleven months. He died between twelve and one at noon, of mere old age, and apparently without pain.

THE END.