

THE  
FAMILY OF ADVERSITY.

PART I.

The writer of this poem wishes first to consider adverse situations in that point of view, wherein they are productive of invention, the mistrefs of all the mechanic powers; and in the second place to point out how far the heart may be improved, and the understanding enlarged, by a patient submission to those trials which it may be our lot to experience.

TO thee the fatal Urn\* was given,  
Dispenser of the wrath of heaven,  
Sad treasurer of human woe!  
Sparing the dire contents bestow,  
Nor suddenly thy terrors pour,  
O'erwhelming in th'unguarded hour.

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\* Two Urns by Jove's high throne have ever stood,  
The source of evil one, and one of good.

*Iliad, Book 24.*

'Till of thy clouded gifts we learn,  
 Th' intrinsic value to discern :  
 Our joy from sorrow to procure,  
 And rise from ardent trials pure.

Where pleasure with her festive train,  
 Had shone with bright but transient reign,  
 By sad reverse was quickly seen,  
 A matron of a sordid mien.  
 For sofas soft—with velvet spread,  
 Her seats were on the broken reed ;  
 For pearls—which golden robes adorn,  
 For gems—which bid the gazer turn,  
 Her mournful garments now display,  
 The veil which shades the absent day.  
 For melting sounds, 'twas joy to hear,  
 When dying on the list'ning ear,  
 Harsh discords still to her belong,  
 And hoarse the raven screams his song.  
 Where myrtle's fragrance did exhale,  
 And roses more perfum'd the gale.  
 The drooping willow there she view'd,  
 And life-destroying upas\* strew'd.

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\* Where seas of glass in gay reflection smile,  
 Round the green coasts of Java's happy isle ;  
 Soft zephyrs blow, eternal summers reign,  
 And showers prolific bless the soil—in vain !  
 Fierce in dread silence on the blasted heath,  
 Fell upas sits, the hydra tree of death.

To sum the whole of earthly grace,  
 Where shone the mind illumin'd face,  
 And as the animating soul,  
 Gave vital vigour to the whole.  
 Her looks for fear alone were made,  
 And horror in deep furrows laid,  
 Where gay amusements used to cheer,  
 Her's were to human thought severe.  
 Nor costly viands suit her need,  
 On human tears compell'd to feed.  
 A fatal change her presence wrought,  
 And gardens into desarts brought.  
 The pumice stone oft mark'd her road,  
 And verdure faded where she trod.

Full many a child this matron bore,  
 And train'd them to her rugged lore,  
 Ruthless—her bosom could forego,  
 The tenderness that mothers show,  
 Tho' wayward tempers should misuse,  
 The fond caress they best can use.  
 By terrors only skill'd to rule,  
 Remorseless was her rigid school.  
 And yet, beneath her rugged care,  
 Arose a train of daughters fair,  
 For heaven their souls she well refin'd,  
 Or sent them forth to bless mankind.

'Twas soon her joy, if joy e'er came,  
 To train her first to deeds of fame.  
 Teach her aspiring eye to soar,  
 And give her arm unequal'd power;  
 And by the woes she made her feel,  
 Remov'd each dread of other ill.  
 Her massy weapons high she'd wield,  
 And teach how hardest rocks must yield:  
 They bear the print of many a wound,  
 And distant far her strokes resound,  
 Their strokes so deep, to echo tell,  
 Who trembling! counts them in her cell.  
 And thus she said, and sternly frown'd,  
 Resistless I am ever found,  
 Heir of my fortune! yield to fate,  
 I shall instruct thee to be great,  
 Unaw'd by threats, unchang'd by woes.  
 Superior still the damsel rose,  
 Aiming her parent to delight,  
 She robed herself in purest white.  
 All vain her fury to disarm,  
 For what can rugged natures charm:  
 And soon to urge her daughter's fate,  
 She led her thro' her gloomy state.  
 Her barren desarts first she show'd,  
 From these she said receive thy food.  
 Vainly were her intreaties made,  
 To guard her there her mother staid,

She turn'd her piercing eye around,  
 To view th' inhospitable ground.  
 Yet in extremity of woe,  
 Despair she still disdain'd to know.  
 At length, to meet her searching eyes,  
 A bended wand, well pleas'd she spies,  
 She seized it with presaging smile,  
 And oft she turn'd the barren soil ;  
 Which as she turn'd, all fair to view,  
 A nymph her quick attention drew ;  
 The golden sheaves which harvest spread,  
 Composed a garland for her head.  
 She in her hand a basket bore,  
 With many a plant, and seed, and flow'r,  
 And as a cheering look she throws,  
 A tree all fresh and blooming rose,  
 And its gay branches to entwine,  
 Luxuriant wound the curling vine.  
 This crown she said, by Ceres wrought,  
 To thee undaunted maid I've brought.  
 Vertumnus and Pomona join,  
 To hail thee too, with gifts divine.  
 Nature shall at thy touch revive,  
 And Flora's beauteous offspring live,  
 Thee I attend, aspiring maid,  
 To strew these gifts where thou shalt lead.  
 And soon a fresher verdure rose,  
 And soon the golden harvest glows ;

Thro' fertile vallies rivers glide,  
 And foliage cloaths the mountain's side,  
 Sweet herbage decks the fragrant field,  
 And orchards all their treasures yield.

Tho' in her own created ground,  
 No gentler was her mother found;  
 Think not she said to rest thee here,  
 Thy glory must be purchased dear,  
 Then cleave for me that rugged oak,  
 And learn to move yon solid rock;  
 Prepare thee for this wond'rous deed,  
 By me compell'd, thou must succeed.  
 Full oft she views her task severe,  
 With anxious thought, attentive care.  
 In silence bids her active mind,  
 Assistance for her trials find.  
 And many a thought repulsed again,  
 By many an effort weak and vain;  
 Could not subdue th' aspiring aim,  
 To add these glories to her name;  
 Till half refin'd from earthly mold,  
 Her mind illumin'd, could behold  
 The pow'r who with the gifts of gods,  
 Descends to comfort man's abodes.  
 Slow she trod the earth she bless'd,  
 Her silver locks a circle press'd;

As she majestic took her way,  
 These words she said, or seem'd to say:  
 As light of day and midnight oil,  
 Witness'd thy unremitting toil,  
 To thy extended mind is giv'n  
 The choicest blessings under heav'n ;  
 Reward of many an anxious hour,  
 Receive these gifts, and try their pow'r,  
 Now cleave the oak and raise the rock,  
 And earth's deep storehouses unlock.  
 The damsel saw with eager eyes,  
 Their wonder working power she tries.  
 To shew her deeds, the time would fail,  
 Volumes could scarcely tell the tale ;  
 How all the treasures earth had stor'd,  
 She for the use of man explor'd,  
 And suiting to his wants applied,  
 And o'er the ocean was his guide ;  
 Thro' her the weak the strong restrain,  
 And to their use the mighty train ;  
 As mistress of each useful art,  
 She rose endear'd to ev'ry heart ;  
 Nor here her mother seal'd her worth,  
 But more accomplish'd sent her forth,  
 And to the useful, taught to join  
 All that could polish and refine,  
 Delight the eye, enchant the ear,  
 And steal the spirit from its care.

Thus from a rigid parent soars,  
 A daughter whom the world adores,  
 Counting the trials she has foil'd,  
 All hate the mother, love the child.



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PART II.

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ADVERSITY ! if e'er thy dart,  
With poignant sting has touch'd my heart,  
If, sick'ning to my mortal taste,  
Thy cup to me has ever past ;  
Oh may thy wounds with soundness heal,  
Thy bitter draughts with vigour fill ;  
That so unblamed I now may trace,  
The brightest daughter of thy race ;  
Thy second lovely to be seen,  
Of tend'rest heart and mildest mein,  
With each engaging grace her own,  
Ne'er charm'd away her mother's frown.  
Who ever, strange as it appears,  
Seem'd most delighted with her tears ;

Yet skill'd to torture, joy she show'd,  
And mock'd her with delusive good.

Of me severe, the offspring mild,  
Hear me, she said, obedient child;  
All fair to view, from me receive,  
The portion I deceitful give;  
Smiling malignant as she rose,  
There if thou can'st, she said, repose.  
Then on with sullen step she leads,  
The path her child obedient treads;  
Possess, she said, by my command,  
Fit scenes for a correcting hand,  
Whose prospect now delights thine eyes,  
The fairy land of promises;  
Where my gay sister keeps her court,  
Where all the willing world resort,  
To taste the bounties of her store,  
Which few enjoy but all adore.  
Her dangerous gifts let VIRTUE fear,  
And still remember I am near.

New charms still nearer views display'd,  
As onward goes the artless-maid;  
Each flatt'ring scene subdued its part,  
And shared the feelings of her heart,  
And now the form appear'd in view,  
Whose charms surrounding vot'ries drew.

With brilliance dress'd, with fragrance crown'd,  
 And hands that spread her favours round.  
 As from an urn, all to delight,  
 She drew her treasures infinite.  
 Whate'er employ'd a mortal care,  
 All that inspir'd a hope was there.  
 Health's vital vigour nerv'd the strong,  
 Pleasure's soft charms allur'd the young,  
 She honour's purple robe bequeaths,  
 And blind ambition's random wreathes;  
 Grandeur to vacant pride affords,  
 And fills the grasping miser's hoards:  
 She pomgranates and myrtles joins,  
 And loves perennial bands entwines;  
 Beauty was there—the world to charm,  
 And wit—that could the wise disarm:  
 And gratitude, and perfum'd praise,  
 That gifts enhance, and merits raise.  
 She flatt'ry's honey'd poison draws,  
 To swell the vain, with false applause.  
 She friendship's purest flame could light,  
 And there the vine and elm unite.

The urn, the nymph with transport views,  
 And meekly to the goddess sues:  
 Pity she said my state forlorn,  
 To hatred of my parent born;

Me rescue from a doom so hard,  
 And from that parent be my guard.  
 A languid look the goddess gave,  
 Again she pleads her pow'r to save,  
 While prostrate she that pow'r ador'd,  
 She humbly thus her gifts implor'd.

I pour not here my humble pray'r,  
 For joy which takes no tint of care;  
 For more myself to know,  
 Goddess, perhaps thy gifts bestow'd,  
 To me were the securer good,  
 Chasten'd by shades of woe.

Yet smooth my rugged parent's frown,  
 Her thorns, oh may thy roses crown;  
 Thy light, her shades among,  
 With vernal hope rise ever new,  
 While timid fear of changing hue,  
 Warns my approach to wrong.

Bestow thine aromatic wreathe,  
 While here the vital air I breathe,  
 With health my temples bind,  
 If there should mix some faded leaves,  
 For transient pain my bosom grieves,  
 Shall joy be more refin'd.

Now meek contentment's olives bring,  
 Let cheerfulness her rubies fling,  
 Upon my sighing breast.  
 With syren song, and transient rose,  
 By giddy youth be pleasure chose,  
 Repented when possest.

May blind ambition's random crown,  
 Be on disorder'd passion thrown,  
 Which aims some airy height,  
 But honour's purple robe bestow,  
 Whose guiltless smile, and open brow,  
 Shall more than fame delight.

Of gold I ask no mighty store,  
 I shrink from fortune's dangerous pow'r,  
 Yet oh, that share impart;  
 Which leaves a little to bestow,  
 To ease some want of sighing woe,  
 Raise, not corrupt my heart.

The passion and the tender care,  
 While wealth and beauty amply share,  
 Be mine the safer helm;  
 Of friendship at whose hallowed shrine,  
 Oh goddess! now for me entwine  
 The vine around the elm.

Sincerity, of heart so pure,  
 With confidence that rests secure,  
 And faith's unbroken seal ;  
 Solicitude so swift to serve,  
 With constancy that cannot swerve,  
 Her presence shall reveal.

Her pray'r to hear the goddess seems,  
 And smiles her into golden dreams,  
 And health's fresh rose and balmy wreathes,  
 The goddess freely now bequeathes.  
 But soon her mother touch'd the crown,  
 All its salubrious sweets are flown :  
 Hemlock and deadly nightshade now,  
 Compose a garland for her brow ;  
 And ev'ry boon the goddess gives,  
 Her mother blasts as she receives.  
 And now she frown'd upon her view,  
 Nor more the nymph could joy pursue.  
 No more, she said, my sister seek,  
 In gifts revers'd 'tis I who speak,  
 Now tainting health's salubrious gale,  
 I bring disease, and thou art pale ;  
 But ask thy heart, and it shall tell,  
 What blessings may with sickness dwell ;  
 It early calms all anxious strife,  
 For the frail vanities of life ;

The brittle tenure of thy days,  
 It marks, and wisdom guides thy ways :  
 Another's pain to thee reveals,  
 And all thy soften'd bosom feels,  
 I wave with scorn the peacock's plumes,  
 And honour's purple robe consumes,  
 From slander's tongue, and pride's parade,  
 Receive a grace which cannot fade ;  
 Slander and scorn themselves deceive,  
 Then nobly pity and forgive ;  
 Thine innocence thy breast shall calm,  
 And crown thee with thy native palm ;  
 I by injustice turn the scales,  
 And thy expected treasure fails ;  
 But inward turn and there explore,  
 Resources unperceiv'd before,  
 What prosp'rous days awhile conceal'd,  
 Adversity has oft reveal'd ;  
 As stars, obscured by dazzling light,  
 Adorn the sable brow of night ;  
 For gratitude so rich in store  
 To make the benefactors poor ;  
 I overpow'ring ivy bring,  
 And the embosom'd adder's sting.  
 If what thy bounty could impart  
 Flow'd from the feelings of thy heart,  
 The joys thy kind intentions earn,  
 Arise above a base return ;

For praise which merit might enhance,  
 I bring thee envy's bas'lisk glance ;  
 And for the concord of the heart,  
 Point enmity's keen forked dart ;  
 The dying fern and choaking reed,  
 To love's perennial bands succeed.  
 The vine shall bind the elm no more,  
 Nor friend protect, nor love adore.  
 These bitter dregs, now drain my bowl,  
 And purify thy spotless soul.

Of me severe, the offspring mild,  
 I give the world my darling child,  
 Above all theory of speech,  
 To live the lessons others teach ;  
 Her presence solitude shall cheer,  
 And ev'ry public bliss endear ;  
 With equal fortitude shall own,  
 A martyr's, or a monarch's crown.

Tho' many were the numbers more,  
 Of children whom this matron bore,  
 Than these among the shining race,  
 None more exalted could we trace ;  
 Their hearts to soften, minds enlarge,  
 Was her severe and fav'rite charge.