

THE THREE LAMPS;

OR,

THE HERMIT OF THE WOOD.

OBEDIENT to th' omnipotent command,
Nature confess'd its mighty former's hand;
First smiling vegetation gaily rose,
Since, o'er the earth, unconscious beauty glows;
And from that heavenly spark that spread his sway,
Was kindled animation's vital ray.
By fine degrees extending still the plan,
To godlike reason, and imperial man,
Highly endow'd, the sov'reign of the whole,
Nor him the swift escape, nor strong control.
O'er earth he sits on an unquestion'd throne,
A tributary here to God alone;
Nor are his views alone to earth confin'd,
To higher views are needful aids assign'd.

Meanly content or arrogantly bold,
 Then let not man his faith and hope withhold.
 Let faith and hope imperfect virtue aid,
 And finite—own what infinite has said.
 Come dress me fiction for the ear of youth,
 Some tale that shall impress the sacred truth.

In days remote, and in a distant clime,
 The place and date unchronicled by time ;
 Alcestes lived, the wonder of his age,
 His country loved and prided in the sage ;
 All bounteous heaven enrich'd his copious store,
 With kind affections, and persuasion's pow'r ;
 If earth too strongly once had drawn his mind,
 One early trial earth-born cares refin'd ;
 Sudden he lost, in pride of blooming years,
 The lovely partner of his joys and cares.
 His patient tears were sown with future praise,
 And quench'd the sanguine hopes of following days ;
 He mark'd the good and ill as equal given,
 A guide thro' time and death, to life and heaven ;
 And on a mind so temper'd, heaven bestow'd,
 Its needful aids to keep his heavenly road ;
 Then who so fit the traveller to convey,
 And guide the inexperienc'd in their way.

Philario's sons his anxious cares divide,
 For them were fortune, cares, and pray'rs employ'd.

Love still more fearful, as it more endears,
 Gave him the anxious joys of hopes and fears;
 He oft their virtues and their faults would try,
 And scan them with a parent's watchful eye;
 As heirs of heav'n, his sons he fondly view'd,
 Nor his low aim confin'd to earthly good;
 Early exalting his unclouded powers,
 His oldest son to learning gave his hours;
 By philosophic virtue firmly arm'd,
 By moral beauty was Eugenio charm'd;
 Unaided by high hopes or coward fear,
 All for itself to him was virtue dear;
 Worthy the scale he held in nature's plan,
 Approv'd by reason, and becoming man.
 As toys or bugbears, children please or fright,
 Rewards and punishments were motives light,
 Hence in Philario's breast foreboding fears,
 Hence self-dependent virtue, drew his tears.

The loves and graces smil'd on Philo's morn,
 And all the charities his soul adorn;
 From generous feelings, Philo's actions move,
 And all his God was form'd of peace and love;
 He joy'd to hope rewards for virtue given,
 But thought no stern decree could flow from heaven;
 His gentle nature, stranger to offence,
 Treated the vicious with benevolence;

He said for misery God no being gave,
 And e'en the guilty, mercy meant to save;
 With joy his father view'd his virtues mild,
 Yet would he mourn one error of his child,
 That thro' his actions tho' they sweetly shone,
 Those virtues sat on an unguarded throne.

The fair perfections which his brother own'd,
 With admiration soon Ascanius found;
 Candid, his less attainments soon could see,
 But those he guarded by humility;
 His knowledge would by patient labour earn,
 Nor ever deem'd himself too wise to learn;
 The dread of pain and prospect of reward,
 His heart accepted, as its firmest guard.

Such were the sons who won each tender part,
 Each anxious feeling of Philario's heart,
 His happiest hours were with their virtues shar'd,
 Nor tender lessons to their faults he spar'd;
 But habits ever strengthen in their course,
 And lessons oft repeated lose their force;
 That truth might be with novelty convey'd,
 The careful father sought for foreign aid;
 His searches met the sages high renown,
 For wisdom and for virtue fully known;
 To him Philario sought his doubts to paint,
 And pour'd his soul in many a fond complaint;

Pity he said, and hear me reverend sage,
 So heaven support thee in declining age ;
 Thy counsels to my need then straight display,
 And aid me, far as human wisdom may ;
 Thy deeds are wisdom, and thy trust is God,
 Then who so fit to mark a dubious road ;
 Three virtuous sons I have, my age's pride,
 To fame on earth, and to heaven's hopes allied ;
 Oh ! may their virtues ne'er their hearts forsake,
 Nor those high hopes be lost by sad mistake,
 As fares the mariners who near the shore,
 Trust the false calm and count the dangers o'er,
 When sad reverse, he thoughtless meets between,
 The sudden tempest, and the rock unseen,
 All unprovided with the means to save,
 For home and safety he must meet a grave.
 The means are heaven's, Alcestes gently said,
 By my success be confidence repaid ;
 To morrow, e'er the orb serene of night,
 Gives her chaste beam for Sol's departed light ;
 Let me receive thy treasures to my care,
 The closing day I ever end with prayer ;
 As to high heaven events are only known,
 So sanctified be mortal works begun.

Philario leaves the sage with thanks exprest,
 And lighten'd were the cares that weigh'd his breast;

The sage's message to his sons he broke,
 And highly of his worth and wisdom spoke.
 The youths with fond attention catch the strain,
 And chide the hours that yet their steps detain.
 Eugenio's fancy, in Alcestes finds,
 Those equal pow'rs that charm in kindred minds,
 Thinks how the depths of science they'll explore,
 And to exalted heights of knowledge soar;
 Or how they shall define th' unerring plan,
 Which honour draws for rectitude in man.
 Fix virtue in her independent sphere,
 Unaided by reward or abject fear;
 With warm impatience Philo's bosom glows,
 To such a friend his feelings to disclose;
 Revolves the joy that sympathy imparts,
 When generous feelings bind congenial hearts;
 And while such sympathies their hearts expand,
 They shall not, marking mercy's sparing hand,
 Deem punishment annex'd to man's offence,
 But clasp the scheme of wide benevolence.

Ascanius hopes to hear by him defin'd,
 Heaven's mercy with its justice how combin'd;
 Those high rewards that meet the happy saint,
 The joys of heaven, he longs to hear him paint;
 Potent, the strong temptation to defeat,
 Speak the dire scenes th' impenitent await;

Each thinks Alcestes as himself believes,
 And thus the intermediate time deceives.

'Twas when the virgin yields her brilliant sway,
 And temper'd seasons smile in equal day,
 Philario's sons, by youthful ardor bent,
 To greet Alcestes' mansion joyful went.
 In youth's gay season, when few cares annoy,
 Alive to present and to future joy,
 Imagination aids each scene to warm,
 And paints each beauty with a heighten'd charm;
 More gay to them, reviving spring is seen,
 More fresh, the verdure of its tender green;
 More richly wafts the fragrance of the air,
 Unclouded dawns the promise of their year,
 More sweet, the season crown'd with Flora's rose,
 Where ripen'd beauty summer's suns disclose;
 Where splendor, fragrance, and soft harmony,
 Meet health's full sense and fancy's vivid eye;
 So, to the youths now more majestic shone,
 Illustrious autumn, on her golden throne,
 Queen of the year, they see her now display,
 The gifts which tributary seasons pay;
 The blushing orchard, and the waving corn,
 Beneath her painted skies her reign adorn;
 Nor lost to them, her colours now expand,
 As her rich tints display her changing hand.

Thus pleas'd they leave their parent and their home,
 And now most pleas'd they see Alcestes' dome.
 Midway, adown a mountain's woody side,
 The mansion rose in venerable pride ;
 Midst rocks and groves it rose in stately show,
 And seem'd the sovereign of the vale below ;
 Where the gay scenes that struck the wond'ring eye,
 Seem'd empires of each rural deity ;
 Her golden banners Ceres there display'd,
 And Flora's lovely children paint the mead ;
 Pomona o'er the hedgerow spreads her blush,
 And with rich purple decks the lowly bush ;
 Amidst tall firs, and solemn-seeming yew,
 The village church, there steals upon the view ;
 As just emerging from surrounding shade,
 It gives a decent order to the glade.
 Hills rise on hills, to lead th' extended eye,
 Till with its kindred blue, they mix in sky.
 Its streams collecting, gathering still new force,
 Between, a river takes its rapid course ;
 A careful debtor, and a subject free,
 Hast'ning its willing waters to the sea.
 From scenes like these their soften'd hearts imbibe,
 What most have felt, but few can well describe.

Alcestes now advances to their view,
 Whom the appointed time to meet them drew ;

Serene as eve, as autumn rich to bless,
 He seem'd the genius of his native place ;
 With hasten'd step, Philario's sons he meets,
 And thus in accents mild their coming greets,
 Welcome young friends, your presence pleases more,
 As thus observant of an old man's hour,
 For faith and truth Philario's sons be known,
 Tho' youth to folly and neglect is prone,
 Our course of friendship shall be safely trod,
 Hope marks the end, when we begin with God ;
 From dignity serene, and mild benevolence,
 These words mix awe with gentle confidence.
 He leads them thro' the winding of the wood,
 To where the chapel of the mansion stood,
 In decent order all the household there,
 Attend the blessing of their master's pray'r,
 And there th' observance of the world they shun,
 Thus ev'ry day was closed, and morn begun ;
 No warm disputes, or lectures oft as vain,
 Employ the hours of eve that yet remain,
 But thro' the harmless jest, or story's course,
 Instruction lost its name, but took its force.

Philario's sons with admiration fraught,
 An humbler notion of themselves are taught,
 Their recollected vanity regret,
 And view their wisdom as a counterfeit ;

Their hearts, late nature's lovely scenes expand,
 And now they own a master's skilful hand ;
 Freeing from blind opinion to receive,
 Th' important lesson which he wish'd to give ;
 Dressing his purpose in a pleasing view,
 Which they as entertainment only knew ;
 Long as delightless, linger joyless years,
 Swift fly th' aspiring moments friendship shares ;
 As high in wisdom and refin'd in taste,
 All seem'd a wonder that the sage possest ;
 Nor aught escaped them as they took their way,
 Passing along to where their chambers lay.
 And now, as still prepared for new delight,
 A gallery stored with pictures struck their sight,
 There many a sage and patriot appear'd,
 Who blest in life, and were in death rever'd,
 Not those whose dubious worth high fortune crown'd,
 But whom unquestion'd merit had renown'd ;
 Amongst the many which they wond'ring saw,
 Three more than all their fix'd attention draw,
 The painter's zeal his magic hand obey'd,
 And almost life and breath his forms display'd,
 One narrow path to a bright mansion led,
 Along the landscape, o'er the canvass spread ;
 Three figures pass it with a different fate,
 And draw our admiration and regret,
 While one with steady eye surveys the ground,
 Keeps firm the path, and is with honour crown'd,

The others leave it, and with wand'ring feet,
 Tho' they approach to bliss, destruction meet;
 These pictures long their curious eyes detain,
 And much they wish their meaning to explain,
 Why the same landscape o'er the three are spread,
 And whence the different figures there display'd;
 At early matins they with joy attend,
 And anxious wait the coming of their friend,
 Hearts open to his counsels they prepare,
 And join him in devotion's ardent prayer;
 The cow bestows them her salubrious treat,
 And bread and fruits their wholesome meal compleat,
 Enraptur'd of the pictures now they speak,
 And for their meaning to Alcestes seek;
 Oh deign, they said, the mystery to relate,
 And why those figures meet such different fate;
 Then to the gallery straight their host they lead,
 And point the pieces which they wish to read;
 Alcestes view'd them with a wishful eye,
 And ere he spoke, he heav'd a feeling sigh;
 'Tis there, he said, enraptured with the theme,
 The painter gives to sight the poet's dream,
 For him entwines a never fading wreath,
 And almost bids his airy phantoms breathe;
 Nor to the painter give we all the praise,
 But now attend to what the legend says;
 This said, a scroll of parchment next he shews,
 And thus proceeds its legend to disclose;