

LEGEND.

The longest day in night must die,
 And winter ends the year :
 And so to contemplation's eye,
 Must human life appear.

Herman had fourscore winters past,
 His latest thread was spun :
 Of many days he liv'd his last,
 And view'd life's setting sun.

Yet ere his spirit took its leave
 Of all it valued here ;
 One fond embrace he fain would give,
 And bless his children dear.

His children dear approach his couch ;
 My sons he faintly said,
 My heart still rests where I've lov'd much,
 And shrinks from death with dread.

The parting stroke, were death no strife,
 'Tis agony to bear ;
 From those who gave it's joy to life,
 And ev'ry pleasing care.

Yet, ere my latest sand is shed,
 And while a breath I draw,

May filial duty, from this bed,
Retain a father's law.

No well fill'd coffers you'll receive,
Or aught of wealth or cost,
But ah! a mansion I would give,
Which distant realms can boast.

And sure it was my anxious care,
To fit you for the road;
And while I warn'd the danger there,
The high reward I shew'd.

As thro' the wilderness no more
A pilot to your youth,
Be dying words, my living pow'r,
And your support, your truth.

And now they clasp his clammy hands,
Bathe them with many a tear,
And vow, his ever lov'd commands
Are more than life's blood dear.

'Tis well he said, the pow'r is good,
Who grants me strength to say,
The holy hermit of the wood,
Shall best direct your way.

Thus Herman breath'd his last adieu,
 Low in the dust he lies ;
 And pious prayers and honours due,
 Before his ashes rise.

His children dear, with honours meet,
 Have mourn'd the pious dead ;
 And next the sainted sage they greet,
 Who bless'd the solemn shade.

Hail holy hermit ! oft they cry,
 Thy suppliant's are we,
 And meek they raise th' imploring eye,
 And low they bend the knee.

Oh ! mark us out the safest way
 To a bright mansion given ;
 For well thou canst, that saint did say,
 Whose spirit rests in heaven.

With pious hands his mortal part,
 Beneath the green sward laid,
 And with the mourning of the heart,
 His funeral honours paid.

His dying and his strict command,
 'Tis thus we have pursu'd ;

When we implore thy guiding hand,
 Oh hermit of the wood !

The hermit rais'd them from the ground,
 And cheering was his look ;
 Compassion in his face they found,
 And in the words he spoke.

For well of all the hermit knew,
 In past nor future scant,
 To holy men, 'twas held as true,
 Heaven did such knowledge grant.

Far as my faithful word may guide,
 The holy hermit said,
 My counsel shall not be denied,
 To those who seek my aid.

He took them to his simple cell,
 Of fare he gave his best :
 Bright water from the purest well,
 And fruits of dainty taste.

And then around each neck he threw,
 A chain of purest gold ;
 Which, to each breast a lock so true,
 In forms of anchors hold.

Tho' small in size, of countless worth,
 Three lamps the chain suspend,
 And thus the hermit well set forth,
 Their value and their end.

Sons of my friend! I hold you dear,
 Accept these gifts of love:
 These answers to your prayers appear,
 And your true guides shall prove.

And now he takes them to the grave,
 And shews the prospect round:
 And points out with parental love,
 Where the safe path is found.

Beyond he says your country lies,
 Nor rest in aught beneath;
 That narrow path commands the prize,
 Which Herman did bequeath.

Tho' narrow, and too little trod,
 These lamps shall guide your feet,
 Be your conductors thro' the road,
 And find yon blest retreat.

They were not wrought by mortal hand,
 Observe and mark them well,

These lights two different views command,
To lead and to repel.

By each your way be ever known,
Tho' some might seem more fair.
Thro' this is the bright region shewn,
That crowns your course of care.

The last from specious snares shall warn,
Still potent to disclose ;
Altho' some transient charm adorns,
The depth of hidden woes.

I mark impatience in each eye,
Thus youth is wont to be ;
Still ardent unknown scenes to try,
Ere they their dangers see.

Yet for a moment I detain,
And further counsel hold ;
Whate'er I gave and said were vain,
If aught remain'd untold.

While mindful of their destin'd use,
Their owners these employ ;
As them no mortal could produce,
No mortal can destroy.

But with such sacred art combin'd,
 And so united glows,
 That one neglected still you'll find,
 Shades o'er the other throws.

Well, Herman's sons observe my words,
 So speed you in your course,
 And may the counsel you've implor'd,
 Be your secure resource.

And much he grieved their thoughtless haste,
 Which scant their thanks could spare;
 And fear'd those counsels must be waste,
 Which scarce to hear they bear.

Till sight could them no more disclose,
 The Hermit's eyes pursued;
 Then care to sooth, with calm repose,
 He sought his native wood.

Together yet their pilgrim feet,
 The bidden path pursue;
 Observe the bonds for kindred meet,
 And to their faith keep true.

And bitterly I trust was rued,
 That pride which first begun,

Pernicious counsels to intrude,
 In Herman's oldest son;
 This present from our friend, he says,
 Was made with kind design;
 But as I cannot need its aid,
 I think but light of mine.
 To some it were a potent spell;
 The weak are prone to err,
 And ignorance, I know it well,
 Is moved by hope and fear.
 Then this he said, and touch'd the spring,
 To others may have use,
 To me, a poor and trifling thing,
 My path, I know and chuse.
 And potent were those words to lose,
 The talisman that bound,
 The sacred charm around his neck,
 That shew'd his safest ground.
 Ah! charm no more, the anchor fails,
 The links desert the chain;
 The lamp a lasting darkness veils,
 Nor fear or hope remain.

In conscious virtue all elate,
 His wisdom was his pride,
 He parts, as from a vain conceit,
 With an unerring guide.

He yet a while the path pursues,
 Tho' some appear more fair;
 Some dangers too, he well subdues,
 Which he encounters there.

Such snares and dangers yet he tried,
 As haughty minds can scorn,
 But those which are to pride allied,
 It ever ill has born.

As o'er the youth his gentle nature yearns,
 To the first painting then Alcestes turns;
 Observe he said, in Herman's oldest hope,
 High thoughts of self, which ill to counsel stoop,
 He views the country with familiar air,
 As if he deem'd a guide superfluous there:
 Yet there is something noble in his mein,
 The traits of honour, and a soul within;
 But much I fear the legend will disclose,
 That airy honour meets with potent foes:
 Foes, which his lamp had sov'reign power to check,
 But that you see is falling from his neck;

Sovereign by shewing to the traveller's eye,
 The high reward of glorious victory;
 Shewing the scenes that fallen virtue wait,
 A sovereign warning from its dreadful fate:
 Dark is the guide and dubious is the way,
 Its end, you see no glorious prize display;
 Its dangerous wanderings, there inspire no dread,
 No gulphs of fire are seen, or horrors spread;
 But now the legend will those scenes relate,
 Which self-exalted virtue mourns too late:

For now, adapted to his mind,
 See lofty hills invite;
 He leaves the humbe vale behind,
 To climb the envied height.

Vainly affection prompts his stay,
 With brethren once so dear;
 Vainly they point the safer way,
 The bliss or danger near.

The apt temptation, strong of power,
 A weak defence o'erthrows;
 As broken bulwarks guard the shore,
 When mighty seas oppose.

And now the giddy height he gain'd,
 Nor thought of gulphs below:

But ill the slippery path sustain'd,
 Along the mountain's brow.

Alass, he dreamt of solid bliss,
 And straight was seen no more :
 'Twas fear'd he found a dread abyss.
 A deep without a shore.

Now to the painting, see him gain'd the height,
 And how his looks express his vast delight :
 No air more suited, could ambition breathe,
 But quite conceal'd the gulph which yawns beneath :
 The gulph which finishes his mad career,
 And on its brink you see him next appear ;
 One foot upon the sloping surface see,
 The next, within the dread abyss must be :
 To save a mortal tongue the dreadful tale,
 See charity prepared to spread her veil ;
 The motto there in golden letters read,
 Judge not of him, but shun the sinner's meed.

The second painting now we should explain,
 And to the legend must return again :

His rashness, oft his brothers mourn,
 And much they doubt his fate ;
 How sad 'tis needful aid to scorn,
 They fear he found too late.

Another's errors ever meet
 Our wonder and our blame;
 Nor think what may our peace defeat,
 And blast our virtuous name.

'Twas ill the second brother said,
 The hermit's gift to slight;
 To me he added, 'tis a prize,
 View'd by the pleasing light.

The other was to me no store,
 So perish'd by neglect;
 To use it was to keep its pow'r,
 So did the sage direct.

Ill-fated youth! so said the sage,
 And further said most true;
 One clouded, did he well presage,
 Would shade the other view.

Distant and faint those prospects rise,
 Which glory would disclose;
 And darkness only meets the eyes,
 Where terrors should oppose.

But yet, a while he safely treads,
 Charm'd by a distant good;

Nor yet ambition's glare misleads,
Dangers or toils subdued.

But ah! yon flattering scene beware,
Yon way so like the true;
That pleasure's near enticing snare
Cheat not the distant view.

Whether that road may guide as near,
He said I soon shall learn;
If wrong, when there it shall appear,
'Tis easy to return.

Misguided youth! thy hopes are vain,
Thy rash resolve I grieve;
For never more shalt thou regain,
What thoughtless thou shalt leave.

All vain a brother's tears may flow,
He thinks it causeless grief;
His lamp reveal'd him nought of woe,
Nor counsel gain'd belief.

Dread pits, which sedgy verdure o'er
Had speciously conceal'd;
As now the traveller's feet explore,
Are fatally reveal'd.

Careless of warning, perish'd he,
 Who came so near the prize ;
 Then whilst we pity, let us be
 By sad example wise.

And now my youthful friends, Alcestes cries,
 To the next painting I would lead your eyes ;
 The dullest eye may note the temper here,
 Benevolence was never mark'd more clear ;
 This figure, now his lamp delighted tries,
 As if he saw some pleasing prospect rise :
 What pity that a mind so form'd for bliss,
 Our legend says, that happiness could miss ;
 Now be his lamp the object of your sight,
 His hand, observe it, covers o'er one light ;
 As if some view he dreaded to receive,
 But nought unneedful would the Hermit give ;
 If mercy and reward were all his view,
 He found temptations that could those subdue :
 Alcestes view'd them with a moment's pause,
 And to the legend their attention draws :

And now of Herman's sons so lov'd,
 The youngest but remain'd :
 All that obedient to him prov'd,
 Or the bright mansion gain'd.

And well he might obtain the prize,
 Who mark'd his guide with care ;
 And saw the blissful prospect rise,
 And saw the dreadful snare.

And now my friends, Alcestes says once more,
 The paintings let us yet again explore :
 One figure still perhaps is unobserv'd,
 And pleasing hope for that we have reserv'd ;
 The whole expression of this face you see,
 Is soften'd by a sweet humility ;
 And here the painter, master of his art,
 Displays the very movements of his heart.
 Revered Alphonso ! here thy love is seen,
 For me thy pencil traced this moral scene ;
 To these he fixed my mind with early care,
 And bid me place my guardian safety there ;
 There, warnings to my youth, these scenes have
 brought,
 There, lessons to the young my age has taught.

Observe this lamp with both its lights display'd,
 With care you see this figure seems to tread ;
 In every winding dreadful gulphs are seen,
 The onward path leads to yon glorious scene.

Enough our honour'd friend ! the brothers cry,
 Thy generous purpose we can well apply ;

The glowing tints speak from that striking scene,
 A lesson that shall point thy wish within ;
 Strong but in weakness, in our strength most weak,
 Our conscious weakness, now these aids would seek ;
 More diffident our course of virtue run,
 And chuse the lamp of Herman's youngest son.