

LANCASTER CASTLE,

BY MOONLIGHT.

NOW the full moon departed day supplies,

Her ray serene invites me here to stray :

Hail her in azure, queen of spangled skies ;

And bless the chearer of the traveller's way.

But chief, beneath these venerable towers,

I find the scenes for contemplation fraught ;

Congenial scenes to solitary hours,

Congenial to the muse of pensive thought.

Within yon grates, now twinkling lights dispense

Their little blaze, to those who durance 'bide ;

Along those battlements the moon beams glance,

And o'er that awful portal shadows glide.

Thou ancient pile! whose founder sleeps unknown,
 But since to ages, first he gave his plan,
 Full many a change has Britain's empire shewn,
 And pass'd has many a race of feeble man.

How far remote, tradition spares to say ;
 Nor found its date in legend's fertile page ;
 But mould'ring time has wrought it no decay ;
 Nor has it felt the shock of hostile rage.

While low full many a noble fabric lies ;
 By savage fray, or time subdu'd at length ;
 Genius still kind to thee its aid supplies*,
 Adds grandeur to thy grandeur, strength to
 strength.

Here station'd, to her gods their altars rose †,
 When Rome of Britain took her transient hold ;
 This site, her skilful warriors early chose ;
 And seated here, annoy'd the foe so bold ‡.

* The grand and useful improvements making by Mr. Harrison, will long bear an honourable testimony to his genius.

† An altar dedicated to Mars has been found in making the present improvements.

‡ The Caledonians.

When jarring nations and long time had pass'd,
 This front thy royal Gaunt thus bid arise ;
 Summon'd some H - - - n, in gothic taste,
 With solemn grandeur to attract all eyes.

Sublime thy fabric, and how fair around,
 Survey'd by day the lovely view appears !
 But faded now, as tints in memory's found,
 When it would draw for age its youthful years.

Tho' distant hills are wrapp'd in clouds of night,
 And vivid colours mix in graver shade ;
 Where first I breath'd the air and saw the light,
 With rapture still, my native town's survey'd.

Oft from its streets my eye well pleas'd I cast,
 On verdant hills, whence rose its early name* ;
 And still, a little tribute to the past,
 It yet retains, in part, its ancient claim†.

Here oft in infancy with awe I've trod,
 Hearing of secret caverns deep and drear ;
 And many a winding subterranean road,
 Wond'ring why man his fellow man should fear?

* The Saxon name was Green Town.

† That part of Lancaster called Green Aer.

Quitting the calm serene that sooths around,
 Within these walls humanity shall turn;
 Think on the holds where human misery's found,
 And ask for whom those glimmering tapers burn.

Some there, perhaps, were rear'd with fondest pride,
 Wore rich attire, and fed on costly fare;
 But now, of common liberty denied,
 And the free current of the vital air.

Ye fallen! where are now those crouded calls,
 That throng'd from dissipation's giddy train?
 Say, need there massy bolts and lofty walls,
 To banish friends when fortune's on the wane?

But scenes more solemn still attend my way,
 As thro' the church-yard path I pensive tread;
 Yon gloomy towers, alas! no light display,
 And all is silent as the sleeping dead.

Save where a shriek for mercy strikes the ear,*
 Which ah! if pity hear, it hears in vain;
 For daring vice is stopp'd in mad career,
 And awful justice holds its rigid reign.

* The convicts under sentence of death,

O'er sanguinary laws the good must mourn,
 And breathe a wish, that nations, generous, great,
 To other modes, for warning soon would turn,
 And death assign but for the murderer's fate.

Oh ye whose nights are ease, and days delight,
 Think on the prisoner in his lonely cell ;
 Within whose heart, thro' all his long dark night,
 Bitter reflections, sad forebodings dwell.

Him, his fond mother nurs'd with tender love,
 Joy'd in his growth, guarded his health with care,
 Thought not of hardship, when for him she strove,
 And for his good her little all would spare.

Alas ! a tempting world seduced his youth,
 And from a virtuous course his heart could steal,
 Maternal tears he scorn'd and warning truth,
 Which adds a pang to all he's doom'd to feel.

He thro' his days of bondage deeply mourns,
 Waters his little garden with his tears*,
 In thought, to times of innocence returns,
 When simple pleasures charm'd his harmless years.

* The Crown Prisoners in Lancaster Castle have small gardens.

Ye good, with gentle counsels calm his heart !
 Increase his comforts, you, where much is given,
 Spare tears from fictions, pity here impart,
 From follies spare, to take your hold on Heaven !

H - - n, to thee my Muse glad tribute pays,
 Long ere thy gentle spirit is set free ;
 Be painful duties soothed by general praise,
 And soft humanity dispensed by thee.

May all who bind the bonds the wretched bear,
 And hold dominion in their sad abode ;
 With lenient hand fulfil their task severe,
 And have their mercy shewn, to plead with God.

May thy pitying spirit here pervade,
 Howard, thy generous efforts still avail ;
 The cell of bondage fewer woes invade,
 For man with man may mercy still prevail.

With Howard's name revered my song shall close,
 For him what trophies shall Britannia raise ?
 In distant lands his ashes must repose,
 Her prisons be his monuments of praise.