

THE
BASBLEU.

VESEY! of Verse the judge and friend!

Awhile my idle strain attend:

Not with the days of early Greece,

I mean to ope' my slender piece;

The rare Symposium to proclaim,

Which crown'd th' Athenians' social name;

Or how ASPASIA's parties shone,

The first *Bas-bleu* at Athens known;

Nor need I stop my tale, to shew,
 At least to Readers such as you, 10
 How all that Rome esteem'd polite,
 Supp'd with LUCULLUS every night;
 LUCULLUS, who, from Pontus come,
 Brought conquests, and brought cherries home:
 Name but the suppers in th' Apollo, 15
 What classic images will follow!
 How wit flew round, while each might take
 Conchyliæ from the Lucrine lake;
 And Attic Salt, and Garum Sauce,
 And Lettuce from the Isle of Cos; 20
 The first and last from Greece transplanted,
 Us'd here—because the rhyme I wanted:
 How Pheasants' heads, with cost collected,
 And Phenicopters' stood neglected,

'To laugh at SCIPIO's lucky hit, 25
 POMPEY's bon-mot, or CÆSAR's wit!
 Intemperance, list'ning to the tale,
 Forgot the Mullet growing * stale;
 And Admiration, balanc'd, hung
 'Twixt PEACOCKS' brains, and TULLY's tongue. 30
 I shall not stop to dwell on these,
 But be as epic as I please,
 And plunge at once in medias res.
 To prove the privilege I plead,
 I'll quote some Greek I cannot read; 35
 Stunn'd by Authority, you yield,
 And I, not Reason, keep the field.

Long was Society e'er-run
 By Whift, that defolating Hun;

* Seneca says, that in his time the Romans were arrived at such a pitch of luxury, that the Mullet was reckoned stale which did not die in the hands of the guest.

Long did Quadrille despotic sit, 40
 That Vandal of colloquial wit;
 And Conversation's setting light
 Lay half-obscur'd in Gothic night;
 Till LEO's triple crown, to you,
 BOSCAWEN sage, bright MONTAGU, 45
 Divided, fell;—your cares in haste
 Rescued the ravag'd realms of Taste;
 And LYTTLTON's accomplish'd name,
 And witty PULTNEY shar'd the fame;
 The Men, not bound by pedant rules, 50
 Nor Ladies' *precieuses ridicules*;
 For polish'd WALPOLE shew'd the way,
 How Wits may be both learn'd and gay;
 And CARTER taught the female train,
 The deeply wise are never vain; 55
 And

And she, who SHAKESPEARE'S wrongs redrest,
Prov'd that the brightest are the best.

O! how unlike the wit that fell,
RAMBOUILLET *! at thy quaint Hotel;
Where point, and turn, and equivoque,
Distorted every word they spoke!
All so intolerably bright,
Plain Common Sense was put to flight;
Each speaker, so ingenious ever,
'Twas tiresome to be quite so clever;
There twisted Wit forgot to please,
And Mood and Figure banish'd ease:
Poor exil'd Nature houseless stray'd,
'Till SEVIGNÉ receiv'd the maid.

* The Society at the Hotel de RAMBOUILLET, though composed of polite and ingenious persons, was much tainted with affectation and false taste. See VOITURE, MENAGE, &c.

Tho' here she comes to bless our isle, 70
 Not universal is her smile.
 Muse! snatch the lyre which CAMBRIDGE strung,
 When he the *empty ball-room* sung;
 'Tis tun'd above thy pitch, I doubt,
 And thou no music wou'dst draw out; 75
 Yet, in a lower note, presume
 To sing the full, dull Drawing-room,
 Where the dire *Circle* keeps its station,
 Each common phrase is an oration;
 And cracking fans, and whisp'ring Misses, 80
 Compose their Conversation blisses.
 The Matron marks the goodly shew,
 While the tall daughter eyes the Beau—
 The frigid Beau!—Ah! luckless fair,
 'Tis not for you that studied air; 85

Ah!

Ah! not for you that sidelong glance,
 And all that charming nonchalance;
 Ah! not for you the three long hours
 He worship'd the "Cosmetic powers;"
 That finish'd head which breathes perfume,
 And kills the nerves of half the room;
 And all the murders meant to lie
 In that large, languishing, grey eye;
 Desist;—less wild th' attempt wou'd be,
 To warm the snows of Rhodope:
 Too cold to feel, too proud to feign,
 For him you're wise and fair in vain.

Chill shade of that affected Peer,
 Who dreaded Mirth! come safely here;
 For here no vulgar joy effaces
 Thy rage for polish, ton, and graces.

Cold Ceremony's leaden hand,
 Waves o'er the room her poppy wand;
 Arrives the stranger; every guest
 Conspires to torture the distress;
 At once they rise—so have I seen—
 You guess the simile I mean,
 Take what comparison you please,
 The crowded streets, the swarming bees,
 The pebbles on the shores that lie,
 The stars, which form the galaxy;
 This serves t' embellish what is said,
 And shews, besides, that one has read;
 At once they rise—th' astonish'd guest
 Back in a corner flinks, distress;
 Scar'd at the many bowing round,
 And shock'd at her own voice's sound,

Forgot the thing she meant to say,
 Her words, half-utter'd, die away;
 In sweet oblivion down she sinks, 120
 And of her ten appointments thinks:
 While her loud neighbour on the right,
 Boasts what she has to do to-night;
 So very much, you'd swear her pride is
 To match the labours of ALCIDES; 125
 'Tis true, in hyperbolic measure,
 She nobly calls her labours *Pleasure*;
 In this, unlike ALCMENA'S son,
 She never means they shou'd be done;
 Her fancy of no *limits* dreams, 130
 No! *ne plus ultra* bounds her schemes;
 Fir'd at th' idea, out she flounces,
 And a new Martyr JOHN announces.

We pass the pleasures vast and various
 Of Routs, not social, but gregarious;
 And, pleas'd, to gentler scenes retreat,
 Where Conversation holds her seat.

Small were that art which wou'd ensure
 The Circle's boasted quadrature
 See VESSEY's plastic genius make
 A Circle every figure take;
 Nay, shapes and forms which wou'd defy
 All science of Geometry,
 Isosceles, and Parallel,
 Names hard to speak, and hard to spell
 Th' enchantress wav'd her wand, and spoke
 Her potent wand the Circle broke;
 The social Spirits hover round,
 And bless the liberated ground.

Ask you what charms this gift dispense? 150

'Tis the strong spell of COMMON SENSE.

Away fell Ceremony flew,

And with her bore Detraction too.

○ Nor only Geometric Art,

Does this presiding power impart; 155

But Chymists too, who want the essence,

Which makes or mars all coalescence,

Of her the secret rare might get,

How different kinds amalgamate:

And he, who wilder studies chose, 160

Find here a new metempsychose;

How forms can other forms assume,

Within her Pythagoric room;

Or be, and stranger is th' event,

The very things which Nature meant; 165

Nor strive, by art and affectation,
 To cross their genuine destination.
 Here sober Duchesses are seen,
 Chaste Wits, and Critics void of spleen;
 Physicians, fraught with real science,
 And Whigs and Tories in alliance;
 Poets, fulfilling Christian duties,
 Just Lawyers, reasonable Beauties;
 Bishops who preach, and Peers who pay,
 And Countesses who seldom play;
 Learn'd Antiquaries, who, from college,
 Reject the rust, and bring the knowledge;
 And, hear it, age, believe it, youth,
 Polemics, really seeking truth;
 And Travellers of that rare tribe,
 Who've *seen* the countries they describe;

Ladies who point, nor think me partial,
 An Epigram as well as MARTIAL ;
 Yet in all female worth succeed,
 As well as those who cannot read. 185

Right pleasant were the task, I ween,
 To name the groupes which fill the scene ;
 But Rhyme's of such fastidious nature,
 She proudly scorns all Nomenclature,
 Nor grace our Northern names her lips, 190
 Like HOMER's Catalogue of Ships.

Once—faithful Memory ! heave a sigh,
 Here ROSCIUS gladden'd every eye.
 Why comes not MARO ? Far from town,
 He rears the Urn to Taste, and BROWN ; 195
 His English garden breathes perfume,
 And promises perennial bloom.

Here,

Here, rigid CATO, awful Sage!
 Bold Cenfor of a thoughtless age,
 Once dealt his pointed moral round,
 And, not unheeded, fell the found;
 The Muse his honour'd memory weeps,
 For CATO now with ROSCIUS sleeps!
 Here once HORTENSIUS lov'd to fit,
 Apostate now from social Wit:
 Ah! why in wrangling senates waste
 The noblest parts, the happiest taste?
 Why Democratic Thunders wield,
 And quit the Muses' calmer field?
 Taste thou the gentler joys they give;
 With HORACE and with LELIUS live.
 Hail, Conversation, soothing Power,
 Sweet Goddesses of the social hour!

Not with more heart-felt warmth, at least,
Does LELIUS bend, thy true High Priest, 215
Than I, the lowest of thy train,
These field-flow'rs bring to deck thy fane;
Who to thy shrine like him can haste,
With warmer zeal, or purer taste?
O may thy worship long prevail, 220
And thy true votaries never fail!
Long may thy polish'd altars blaze
With wax-lights' undiminish'd rays!
Still be thy nightly offerings paid,
Libations large of Limonade! 225
On silver Vases, loaded, rise
The biscuits' ample sacrifice!
Nor be the milk-white streams forgot
Of thirst-assuaging, cool orgeat;

Rise, incense pure from fragrant Tea, 230

Delicious incense, worthy Thee!

Hail, Conversation, heav'nly fair,

Thou blifs of life, and balm of care!

Call forth the long-forgotten knowlege

Of school, of travel, and of college! 235

For thee, best solace of his toil!

The sage consumes his midnight oil;

And keeps late vigils, to produce

Materials for thy future use.

If none behold, ah! wherefore fair? 240

Ah! wherefore wise, if none must hear?

Our intellectual ore must shine,

Not slumber, idly, in the mine.

Let Education's moral mint

The noblest images imprint; 245

Let

Let Taste her curious touchstone hold,
 To try if standard be the gold ;
 But 'tis thy commerce, Conversation,
 Must give it use by circulation ;
 That noblest commerce of mankind, 250
 Whose precious merchandize is MIND !

What stoic Traveller wou'd try
 A sterile soul, and parching sky,
 Or dare th' intemperate Northern zone,
 If what he saw must ne'er be known ? 255
 For this he bids his home farewell,
 The joy of seeing is to tell.
 Trust me, he never wou'd have stirr'd,
 Were he forbid to speak a word ;
 And Curiosity wou'd sleep, 260
 If her own secrets she must keep :

The blifs of telling what is past,
 Becomes her rich reward at last.
 Yet not from low desire to shine,
 Does Genius toil in Learning's Mine; 265
 Not to indulge in idle vision,
 But strike new light by strong collision.

O'er books the mind inactive lies,
 Books, the mind's food, not exercise!
 Her vigorous wing she scarcely feels, 270
 'Till use the latest strength reveals;
 Her slumbering energies call'd forth,
 She rises, conscious of her worth;
 And, at her new-found powers elated,
 Thinks them not rous'd, but new created. 275

Enlighten'd spirits! you, who know
 What charms from polish'd converse flow,

Speak,

Speak, for you can, the pure delight
 When kindred sympathies unite;
 When correspondent tastes impart
 Communion sweet from heart to heart;
 You ne'er the cold gradations need
 Which vulgar souls to union lead;
 No dry discussion to unfold
 The meaning, caught as soon as told:
 But sparks electric only strike
 On souls electrical alike;
 The flash of Intellect expires,
 Unless it meet congenial fires.
 The language to th' Elect alone
 Is, like the Mason's mystery, known;
 In vain th' unerring sign is made
 To him who is not of the *Trade*.

What lively pleasure to divine,
 The thought implied, the hinted line,
 To feel Allusion's artful force,
 And trace the Image to its source!
 Quick Memory blends her scatter'd rays,
 'Till Fancy kindles at the blaze;
 The works of ages start to view,
 And ancient Wit elicits new.

But wit and parts if thus we praise,
 What nobler altars shou'd we raise,
 Those sacrifices cou'd we see
 Which Wit, O Virtue! makes to Thee.
 At once the rising thought to dash,
 To quench at once the bursting flash,
 The shining Mischief to subdue,
 And lose the praise, and pleasure too!

This is high Principle's controul! 310

This is true continence of soul!

Blush, heroes, at your cheap renown,

A vanquish'd realm, a plunder'd town!

Your conquests were to gain a name,

This conquest triumphs over Fame; 315

So pure its essence, 'twere destroy'd

If known, and if commended, void.

Amidst the brightest truths believ'd,

Amidst the fairest deeds atchiev'd,

Shall stand recorded and admir'd, 320

That Virtue sunk what Wit inspir'd!

But let the letter'd, and the fair,

And, chiefly, let the Wit beware;

You, whose warm spirits never fail,

Forgive the hint which ends my tale. 325

Tho' Science nurs'd you in her bow'rs,
 Tho' Fancy crown your brow with flowers,
 Each thought, tho' bright Invention fill,
 Tho' Attic bees each word distil;
 Yet, if one gracious power refuse 330
 Her gentle influence to infuse,
 In vain shall listening crowds approve,
 They'll praise you, but they will not love.
 What is this power, you're loth to mention,
 This charm, this witchcraft? 'tis ATTENTION: 335
 Mute Angel, yes; thy looks dispense
 The silence of intelligence;
 Thy graceful form I well discern,
 In act to listen and to learn;
 'Tis Thou for talents shalt obtain 340
 That pardon Wit wou'd hope in vain;

Thy wond'rous power, thy secret charm,
Shall Envy of her sting disarm;
Thy silent flattery soothes our spirit,
And we forgive eclipsing merit; 345
The sweet atonement screens the fault,
And love and praise are cheaply bought.
With mild complacency to hear,
Tho' somewhat long the tale appear,—
'Tis more than Wit, 'tis moral Beauty, 350
'Tis Pleasure rising out of Duty.

T H E E N D.

N