

Her tempting eyes my gaze inclin'd,
 Their pleasing lesson first I caught ;
 Her sense, her friendship next confin'd
 The willing pupil she had taught.
 Should fortune, stooping from her sky,
 Conduct me to her bright alcove ;
 Yet, like the turtle, I should die,
 Denied the kiss of her love.



THE
 LADY AND THE LINNET,
 A T A L E.

ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND.

Sumit Myrrha novos, veteres ut ponit amictus,
 Mutat amatores miseros, sic mutat amicos.

FRAGM. INCERT. AUTH.

TO lift the low, the proud depress,
 And succour weakness in distress ;
 A foe forgive, and yet contend
 With generous ardour for a friend :
 Are virtues, tho' but thinly sown,
 Not circumscrib'd to you alone ;
 Since hourly observation finds
 They spring in some inferior minds ;

Which?

Which, tho' we justly pass our praise on,
 Are not the sound effects of reason ;
 But often flow from whim or fashion,
 From pride, or some impurer passion.

But you, whom heaven at first design'd
 The boast and envy of your kind ;
 Above your sex's censure plac'd,
 In beauty, breeding, temper, taste ;
 Who only show regard to merit,
 Unconscious what yourself inherit ;
 While other ladies fume and rail
 In indignation at my tale ;
 With each reflection pick a quarrel,
 And find a satire in each moral ;
 May safely every page peruse,
 Nor be offended with the Muse ;
 Where not a single line appears,
 Which honour dreads, or virtue fears.

A hungry hawk, in quest of prey,
 Wide o'er the forest wing'd his way ;
 Whence every bird, that haunts the glade,
 Or warbles in the rural shade,
 Dispers'd, in wild disorder flies
 Before the tyrant of the skies.
 A linnet, feebler than the rest,
 With weary wings and panting breast
 Sought Sylvia's window in despair,
 And fluttering crav'd protection there.
 Compassion touch'd the fair one's mind,
 (For female hearts are always kind.)

Upward the gliding fash she threw,
 And in the little stranger flew ;
 There, in her fragrant bosom prest,
 The nymph revives her drooping guest ;
 Then (danger o'er, and all serene)
 Restores him to his fields again.
 What wondrous joy, what grateful love !
 Inspir'd the wanderer of the grove !
 In unexpected life elate,
 When now he recollects his fate !
 And sets the friendly fair in view,
 Who gave him life and freedom too !
 For gratitude, to courts unknown,
 And unreturn'd by man alone,
 Wide thro' the wing'd creation reigns,
 And dwells amidst the humble plains ;
 In every verdant field and shade,
 The just, the generous debt is paid.
 Back from the Sylvan bower he hies,
 To thank his dear deliverer flies ;
 And, at her window, chaunting stood
 Her praise, with all the zeal he could.
 There Lin his morning visits pays,
 And there he tunes his evening lays ;
 There oft the noon-day hour prolongs,
 And pours his little soul in songs.
 His heavenly airs attention drew,
 And Sylvia soon the warbler knew ;
 Then uses every charm to win,
 And draw the wild musician in ;

He enters, fearless of a snare,
For how should fraud inhabit there?

And now by frequent visits free,
At first he perches on her knee ;
Then, grown by long acquaintance bolder,
Familiarly ascends her shoulder ;
And, wholly now devoid of fear,
Plays with the pendant in her ear ;
O'er all her neck and bosom strays,
And, like a lover, learns to teaze ;
Pecks on her hand, and fondly sips
Delicious nectar from her lips.

Thrice happy bird, how wert thou blest'd,
Of such superior love possess'd !
Couldst thou but make the tenure sure,
And those unrivall'd hours endure ;
But love, a light, fantastic thing,
Like thee, is always on the wing ;
And sacred friendship oft a jest,
When center'd in a female breast !

Thus Lin the circling moments past
In raptures too refin'd to last ;
When (as his constant court he paid)
Some envious songsters of the shade
Observ'd his motions to and fro,
For merit's ne'er without a foe.
They mark'd the transports of his eye,
His sprightly air and glossy dye ;
And all agreed to know, ere night,
What gave the vagrant such delight.

Strait to the beauteous bower they throng,
 Nor for admittance waited long;
 The nymph, whom every charm attends,
 Receives her new, aerial friends;
 With crumbled cake, and fruitage feeds,
 And feasts them on her choicest feeds;
 Did all, that kindness could inspire,
 To bring her coy acquaintance nigh her;
 And Linny now returns, to pay
 The due devotions of the day;
 When to his wondering eyes arose
 A numerous circle of his foes;
 Grief touch'd his soul, to see them there,
 But, with a seeming easy air,
 He took his place among the rest,
 And sat an undistinguish'd guest.

Alas, how soon can time destroy
 The surest pledge of earthly joy?
 A favourite's flattering hopes defeat,
 And tumble tyrants from their state?
 For time, indulgent but to few,
 Deposes kings—and linnets too.

He, who was once the nymph's delight,
 Sits now neglected in her sight;
 In vain to charm her ear he tries,
 New forms engag'd her ears and eyes!
 The goldfinch spreads his gaudy coat,
 And all were ravish'd with his note;
 While none attends to Linny's strain,
 For, ah, poor Linny's plumes were plain.

And

And now (the mournful warbler flown)
 The nymph and friendly bower their own,
 O'er all reserve their spleen prevails,
 And every tongue in concert rails :
 All wonder'd what her eyes could see
 In such a worthless thing as he !
 Who still pursues his private ends,
 Ungrateful to his kindest friends ;
 One instance sure might serve to show him !
 Alas, how little did they know him ?

Some then recounted all the arts
 He us'd, to vanquish little hearts ;
 Affirm'd, he still was making love,
 And kept a miss in every grove ;
 Could trifle with the meanest fowl,
 Nay, offer courtship to an owl !

Scandal, tho' pointed in the dark,
 Is seldom known to miss its mark ;
 While few will interrupt its aim,
 Regardless of another's fame !
 Even they, by whom we once were lov'd,
 Thro' life for several years approv'd !
 When spleen and envy rail aloud,
 Are often carried with the crowd ;
 Preferring, rather than contend,
 To sacrifice their nearest friend.

Thus Sylvia yielded to the birds,
 Too complaisant to doubt their words ;
 Nor thought, that creatures so polite
 Could deal in calumny and spite !

The injur'd Linnet, with their leaves,
 For decency she still receives;
 Who, tho' he sees his foes carest,
 Like some fond lover, hopes the best;
 And doubts his own discerning eyes,
 But, ah, how obvious is disguise?
 At length of hope itself bereft,
 When now no friendly look was left,
 And every mark of fondness fled;
 He hung his wings, and droop'd his head.
 And am I then resign'd, he says,
 To such ungenerous foes as these?
 By these defrauded of my bliss?
 Is all her kindness come to this?
 Yet ah, my tongue, forbear to blame
 That lov'd, that ever-honour'd name;
 This heart, howe'er misus'd at last,
 Must own unnumber'd favours past;
 And shall, tho' ne'er to meet again,
 The dear remembrance still retain.

He spoke—and to the window flew,
 There sat, and sung his last adieu.

