



THE GENIUS OF BRITAIN.

AN IAMBIC ODE.

WRITTEN IN MDCCLVI.

AS late o'er Britain's chalky coasts
 The Genius of the island flew,
 The venal swarm of foreign hosts
 Inglorious basking in his view,
 Deep in his breast he felt the new disgrace,
 And honest blushes warm'd his godlike face.

Quick flash'd the lightning of his spear,
 Which blasted France on Cressy's field,
 He wheel'd the blazing sword in air,
 And on his shoulders spread the shield,
 As when, o'er Agincourt's blood-purpled lands,
 Pale Terror stalk'd thro' all the Gallic bands.

Soon as he cast his eyes below,
 Deep heav'd the sympathetic sigh,
 Sudden the tears of anguish flow,
 For sore he felt th' indignity ;
 Discordant passions shook his heavenly frame,
 Now Horror's damp, now indignation's flame:

Ah! what avails, he cried, the blood
 Shed by each patriot band of yore,
 When Freedom's unpaid legions stood
 Protectors of this sea-girt shore,
 When antient Wisdom deem'd each British sword
 From hostile power could guard its valiant lord.

What tho' the Danish raven spread
 Awhile his wings o'er English ground,
 The bird of prey funereal fled
 When Alfred call'd his peers around,
 Whose fleets triumphant riding on the flood,
 Deep stain'd each chalky cliff with Denmark's blood,

Alfred on natives could depend,
 And scorn'd a foreign force t'employ,
 He thought, who dar'd not to defend
 Were never worthy to enjoy ;
 The realm's and monarch's interest deem'd but one,
 And arm'd his subjects to maintain their own.

What tho' weak John's divided reign
 The Gallic legions tempted o'er,
 When Henry's barons join'd again,
 Those feather'd warriors left the shore ;
 Learn, Britons, hence you want no foreign friends,
 The Lion's safety on himself depends.

Reflect on Edward's glorious name ;
 On my fifth Henry's martial deeds ;
 Think on those peers of deathless fame,
 Who met their king on Thames's meads,
 When sovereign might acknowledg'd reason's plea,
 That heaven created man for liberty.

Tho' Rome's fell star malignant shone,
 When good Eliza rul'd this state,
 On English hearts she plac'd her throne,
 And in their happiness her fate,
 While blacker than the tempests of the North,
 The papal tyrant sent his curses forth.

Lo! where my Thames's waters glide
 At great Augusta's regal feet,
 Bearing on each returning tide
 From distant realms a golden fleet,
 Which homeward wafts the fruits of every zone,
 And makes the wealth of all the world your own.

Shall on his silver waves be borne
 Of armed slaves a venal crew ?
 Lo! the old God denotes his scorn,
 And shudders at th' unusual view,
 Down to his deepest cave retires to mourn,
 And tears indignant bathe his crystal urn.

O ! how can vassals born to bear
 The galling weight of Slavery's chain,
 A patriot's noble ardor share,
 Or Freedom's sacred cause maintain ?
 Britons, exert your own unconquer'd might,
 A Freeman best defends a Freeman's right.

Look back on every deathless deed
 For which your fires recorded stand ;
 To battle, let your nobles lead
 The sons of toil, a hardy band ;
 The sword on each rough peasant's thigh be worn,
 And war's green wreaths the shepherd's front adorn.

But see ! upon his utmost shores
 America's sad Genius lies,
 Each wasted province he deplores,
 And casts on me his languid eyes,
 Bless'd with heav'n's favourite ordinance I fly
 To raise the oppress'd, and humble tyranny.

This said, the Vision westward fled,
 His wrinkled brow denouncing war ;
 The way fire-mantled Vengeance led,
 And Justice drove his airy car ;
 Behind firm-footed Peace her olive bore,
 And Plenty's horn pour'd blessings on the shore.