



THE NUN.

AN ELEGY.

WITH each perfection dawning on her mind,
 All beauty's treasure opening on her cheek,
 Each flatt'ring hope subdu'd, each wish resign'd,
 Does gay Ophelia this lone mansion seek.

Say, gentle maid, what prompts thee to forsake
 The paths, thy birth and fortune strew with flow'rs?
 Through nature's kind endearing ties to break,
 And waste in cloyster'd walls thy pensive hours?

Let sober thought restrain thine erring zeal,
 That guides thy footsteps to the vestal gate,
 Lest thy soft heart (this friendship bids reveal)
 Like mine unblest shou'd mourn like mine too late.

Does some angelic lonely-whisp'ring voice,
 Some sacred impulse, or some dream divine,
 Approve the dictates of thy early choice?——
 Approach with confidence the awful shrine.

There

There kneeling at yon altar's marble base
 (While streams of rapture from thine eye-lid steal,
 And smiling heav'n illumines thy soul with grace)
 Pronounce the vow, thou never can'st repeal.

Yet if misled by false-entitled friends,
 Who say—"That peace with all her comely train;
 " From starry regions to this clime descends,
 " Smooths ev'ry frown, and softens ev'ry pain:

" That vestals tread contentment's flow'ry lawn,
 " Approv'd of innocence, by health carest:
 " That rob'd in colours bright, by fancy drawn,
 " Celestial hope sits smiling at their breast;"

Suspect their syren song and artful style,
 Their pleasing sounds some treach'rous thought conceal!
 Full oft does pride with fainted voice beguile,
 And fordid int'rest wear the mask of zeal.

A tyrant abbess here perchance may reign,
 Who, fond of pow'r, affects the imperial nod,
 Looks down disdainful on her female train,
 And rules the cloyster with an iron rod.

Reflection sickens at the life-long tie,
 Back-glancing mem'ry acts her busy part,
 Its charms the world unfolds to fancy's eye,
 And sheds allurement on the wishful heart.

Lo ! Discord enters at the sacred porch,
 Rage in her frown, and terror on her crest :
 Ev'n at the hallow'd lamps she lights her torch,
 And holds it flaming to each virgin breast.

But since the legends of monastic bliss
 By fraud are fabled, and by youth believ'd,
 Unbought experience learn from my distress,
 Oh ! mark my lot, and be no more deceiv'd.

Three lustres scarce with hasty wing were fled,
 When I was torn from ev'ry weeping friend,
 A thoughtless victim to the temple led,
 And (blush ye parents) by a father's hand.

Yet then what solemn scenes deceiv'd my choice !
 The pealing organ's animating sound,
 The choral virgins' captivating voice,
 The blazing altar, and the priests around :

The train of youths array'd in purest white,
 Who scatter'd myrtles as I pass'd along ;
 The thousand lamps that pour'd a flood of light,
 The kifs of peace from all the vestal throng :

The golden censers tofs'd with graceful hand,
 Whose fragrant breath Arabian odor shed :
 Of meek-ey'd novices the circling band,
 With blooming chaplets wove around their head.

—My

—My willing soul was caught in rapture's flame,
 While sacred ardor glow'd in ev'ry vein :
 Methought applauding angels sung my name,
 And heaven's unfulfilled glories gilt the fane.

This temporary transport soon expir'd,
 My drooping heart confess'd a dreadful void :
 E'er since, alas ! abandon'd uninspir'd,
 I tread this dome to misery allied.

No wakening joy informs my fullen breast,
 Thro' opening skies no radiant seraph smiles,
 No faint descends to sooth my soul to rest,
 No dream of bliss the dreary night beguiles.

Here haggard discontent still haunts my view ;
 The sombre genius reigns in ev'ry place,
 Arrays each virtue in the darkest hue,
 Chills ev'ry prayer, and cancels ev'ry grace.

I meet her ever in the cheerless cell,
 The gloomy grotto and unsocial wood ;
 I hear her ever in the midnight bell,
 The hollow gale, and hoarse resounding flood !

This caus'd a mother's tender tears to flow,
 (The sad remembrance time shall ne'er erase)
 When having seal'd th' irrevocable vow,
 I hasten'd to receive her last embrace.

Full-well she then presag'd my wretched fate,
 'Th' unhappy moments of each future day :
 When lock'd within this terror-shedding grate,
 My joy-deserted soul would pine away.

Yet ne'er did her maternal voice unfold
 This cloyster'd scene in all its horror drest;
 Nor did she then my trembling steps withhold
 When here I enter'd a reluctant guest.

Ah ! could she view her only child betray'd,
 And let submission o'er her love prevail ?
 Th' unfeeling priest why did she not upbraid ?
 Forbid the vow, and rend the hov'ring veil ?

Alas ! she might not—her relentless lord
 Had seal'd her lips, and chid her streaming tear,
 So anguish in her breast conceal'd its hoard,
 And all the mother sunk in dumb despair.

But thou who own'st a father's sacred name,
 What act impell'd thee to this ruthless deed ?
 What crime had forfeited my filial claim ?
 And giv'n (oh blasting thought) thy heart to bleed ?

If then thine injur'd child deserve thy care,
 Oh haste and bear her from this lonesome gloom !
 In vain—no words can sooth his rigid ear ;
 And Gallia's laws have riveted my doom.

Ye cloister'd fair—ye censure-breathing saints,
 Suppress your taunts, and learn at length to spare;
 Tho' mid these holy walls I vent my plaints,
 And give to sorrow what is due to pray'r.

I fled not to this mansion's deep recess,
 To veil the blushes of a guilty shame,
 The tenor of an ill-spent life redress,
 And snatch from infamy a sinking name.

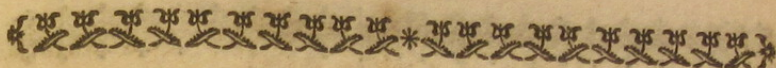
Yet let me to my fate submissive bow ;
 From fatal symptoms if I right conceive,
 This stream Ophelia has not long to flow,
 This voice to murmur, and this breast to heave.

Ah! when extended on th' untimely bier
 To yonder vault this form shall be convey'd,
 Thou'lt not refuse to shed one grateful tear,
 And breathe the requiem to my fleeting shade.

With pious footstep join the sable train,
 As thro' the lengthening ile they take their way ;
 A glimmering taper let thy hand sustain,
 Thy soothing voice attune the funeral lay :

Behold the minister who lately gave
 The sacred veil, in garb of mournful hue,
 (More friendly office) bending o'er my grave,
 And sprinkling my remains with hallow'd dew :

As o'er the corse he strews the rattling dust,
 The sternest heart will raise compassion's sigh :
 Ev'n then no longer to his child unjust,
 The tears may trickle from a father's eye.



THE GIFT: TO IRIS.

By DR. GOLDSMITH.

SAY, cruel Iris, pretty rake,
 Dear mercenary beauty,
 What annual offering shall I make,
 Expressive of my duty?

My heart, a victim to thine eyes,
 Should I at once deliver,
 Say, would the angry fair one prize
 The gift, who slights the giver?

A bill, a jewel, watch, or toy,
 My rivals give—and let 'em :
 If gems, or gold, impart a joy,
 I'll give them, when I get 'em.

I'll give—but not the full-blown rose,
 Or rose-bud more in fashion ;
 Such short-liv'd offerings but disclose
 A transitory passion :