

(111)
LUCY, OR THE BANKS OF AVON.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF SEVENTEEN,

AND NEVER MEANT BY MR. B. FOR THE PUBLIC EYE *.

WHERE gentle Avon winds its silver stream,
A moss-grown cottage rears its humble head;
There Lucy first the vernal air inhal'd,
And spent beneath its roof her infant years.

* These lines are printed from the first foul copy, preserved by his Mother without Mr. B.'s knowledge. Mr. B. perpetually burned numbers of beautiful productions of his early youth. Mr. B. came one morning into his Mother's dressing-room, saying, "He had just met with a little poem that he thought she would like to hear, if at leisure." He took his seat, and read as far as to the five last lines; then ceased, and asked how she liked it. Mrs. B. replied, "Like it; my dear child! why the man was a great villain, and the poor girl a great fool. Who wrote it?" Mr. B. replied, "It is not quite finished." He then read the five last lines, when Mrs. B. not guessing her son to be the writer, exclaimed, "The moral is delightful, and makes it *all* beautiful; tell me, if you know, who wrote it." He replied, "An Eton boy;" adding, in his sweetly musical voice, "I am happy that you like it, my dear Madam; it is, in verse, what you have been inculcating on me from my childhood in prose."—Mr. B. at a very early age wrote a wonderfully beautiful panegyric on the late Earl of Chatham. Nothing could ever prevail on Mr. B. to flatter *any one*; but he ever spoke, and wrote, obliging truths most elegantly.

Like Avon's stream those years flow'd gently on,
Nor heav'd a murm'ring sigh for pomp or wrath;
Her Parents' toil to ease was all her care.
Their cott, with three small fields, was all their store;
This little all, by labour, not by fraud
Obtain'd, by bounteous Heav'n was kindly blest,
And ever did their frugal wants supply.
To Nature, not to Art, her charms she ow'd;
By all the hamlet were those charms confests'd,
Still had she liv'd, and still had happy been,
Had honour been young Edward's constant guide;
But Edward, tutor'd long in Fashion's school,
Lord of each pleasing art, each winning grace,
To visit Shakspeare's hallow'd Mulberry came,
By Lucy guided to the classic shade.
Beneath its ancient boughs he woo'd the Nymph,
And twice two moons on Avon's banks he spent,
Ere the sad Maid, by hapless love betray'd,
Yielded her virgin honour to his arms.

Ye Vestals stern, who oft a virtue boast
That springs unbidden in your frigid breasts,
Scorning weak Love, be still *severely* chaste!
Yet, spare; oh! spare poor Lucy's injur'd shade:
For once resemble HEAVEN, and pardon Her,
If ever *you* for HEAVEN's pardon hope;
For crimes *you* have, though not from Love they spring,
And had young Edward sought your cold embrace,
Then you like Lucy might have lov'd and fall'n.
Sad Lucy once possess'd, her arms he left
To pluck fresh roses in a distant clime;
And twice two years on transatlantic shores,
Edward, false Edward, spent, ere he return'd
To visit injur'd Lucy's native land.
She, like the plaintive bird, her love bewail'd,
And, ever sighing, stray'd on Avon's banks;
Like Avon's stream her tears flow'd ceaseless down,
For three long years her fate she sorely mourn'd;

The fourth, no longer able to endure
The pangs of hope delay'd, and blasted fame,
In Avon's stream the ruin'd Lucy plung'd;
Avonian nymphs the love-lorn fair receiv'd,
And deeply mourn'd a sister's hapless fate.
And now vile Edward came; to Avon's banks
His guilty steps he bent, and sought his Fair,
Who now on Avon's banks had ceas'd to stray;
But ere poor Lucy's well-known cott he reach'd,
He met the Sexton grim, who, jeering, said,
"Go to thy Lucy 'neath yon yew-tree's shade!
In bridal honours deck'd she waits thee there."
Guided by the pale Moon trembling he went,
But, ah! no Lucy there sad Edward found:
Nought but the stone that told her tale of woe,
Full long entranc'd in grief he speechless stood,
Then sheath'd his glitt'ring poignard in his breast,
And sunk expiring on his Lucy's grave.

From this said tale one moral may we learn,
That Virtue's paths alone are paths of peace,
And that the man who these pure paths shall quit
For Pleasure's gilded halls and roseate bow'rs
Through life's long course will ne'er true blifs attain.