EPILOGUE

TO

THE THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION AT STRAWBERRY HILL,

WRITTEN BY JOANNA BAILLIE, AND SPOKEN BY THE HON. ANNE S. DAMER, NOVEMBER, 1800.

WHILE fogs along the Thames' damp margin creep,
And cold winds through his leafless willows sweep;
And fairy elves, whose summer sport had been
To foot it lightly on the moonlight green,
Now, hooded close, in many a cowering form,
Troop with the surly spirits of the storm;
While by the blazing fire, with saddled nose,
The sage turns o'er his leaves of tedious prose,
And o'er their new-dealt cards, with eager eye,
Good dowagers exult or inly sigh,
And blooming maids from silken work-bags pour
(Like tangled sea-weed on the vexed shore)
Of patchwork, netting, fringe, a strange and motley store;

While all, attempting many a different mode,
Would from their shoulders hitch time's heavy load,
This is our choice, in comic sock bedight,
To wrestle with a long November night.—
"In comic sock!" methinks indignant cries
Some grave fastidious friend with angry eyes
Scowling severe, "No more the phrase abuse;
So shod, indeed there had been some excuse;
But in these walls, a once well-known retreat,
Where taste and learning kept a favourite seat,
Where gothic arches with a solemn shade
Should o'er the thoughtful mind their influence spread;
Where pictures, vases, busts, and precious things
Still speak of sages, poets, heroes, kings,
On which the stranger looks with pensive gaze,
And thinks upon the worth of other days:
Like foolish children, in their mimic play,
Confined at grandame's in a rainy day,
With paltry farce and all its bastard train,
Grotesque and broad, such precincts to profane!

It is a shame!—But no, I will not speak,
I feel the blood rise mantling to my cheek."
Indeed wise sir!—
But he who o'er our heads those arches bent,
And stored these relics dear to sentiment,
More mild than you with grave pedantic pride,
Would not have ranged him on your surly side.

But now to you, who on our frolic scene
Have looked well pleased, and gentle critics been;
Nor would our homely humour proudly spurn,
To you the good, the gay, the fair I turn,
And thank ye all.—If here our feeble powers
Have lightly winged for you some wint'ry hours;
Should these remembered scenes in fancy live,
And to some future minutes pleasure give,
To right good end we 've worn our mumming guise,
And we 're repaid and happy—ay, and wise.
Who says we are not, on his sombre birth
Gay fancy smiled not, nor heart-light'ning mirth:
Home let him hie to his unsocial rest,
And heavy sit the night-mare on his breast!