

ELEGY WRITTEN AT THE HOTWELLS, BRISTOL,

JULY, 1789.

INSCRIBED TO THE REV. W. HOWLEY.¹

- 1 THE morning wakes in shadowy mantle gray,
The darksome woods their glimmering skirts unfold,
Prone from the cliff the falcon wheels her way,
And long and loud the bell's slow chime is tolled.
- 2 The reddening light gains fast upon the skies,
And far away the glistening vapours sail,
Down the rough steep the accustomed hedger hies,
And the stream winds in brightness through the vale.
- 3 Mark how those riven rocks on either shore
Uplift their bleak and furrowed fronts on high ;
How proudly desolate their foreheads hoar,
That meet the earliest sunbeams of the sky !
- 4 Bound for yon dusky mart,² with pennants gay,
The tall bark, on the winding water's line,
Between the riven cliffs slow plies her way,
And peering on the sight the white sails shine.
- 5 Alas ! for those by drooping sickness worn,
Who now come forth to meet the cheering ray ;
And feel the fragrance of the tepid morn
Round their torn breasts and throbbing temples play !³

¹ Afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. — ² Bristol. — ³ From a latin prize poem, by W. Jackson—

“ Et lacerum Pectus zephyri mulcere tepentes.”

- 6 Perhaps they muse with a desponding sigh
On the cold vault that shall their bones inurn ;
Whilst every breeze seems, as it whispers by,
To breathe of comfort never to return.
- 7 Yet oft, as sadly thronging dreams arise,
Awhile forgetful of their pain they gaze,
A transient lustre lights their faded eyes,
And o'er their cheek the tender hectic plays.
- 8 The purple morn that paints with sidelong gleam
The cliff's tall crest, the waving woods that ring
With songs of birds rejoicing in the beam,
Touch soft the wakeful nerve's according string.
- 9 Then at sad Meditation's silent hour
A thousand wishes steal upon the heart ;
And, whilst they meekly bend to Heaven's high power,
Ah ! think 'tis hard, 'tis surely hard to part :
- 10 To part from every hope that brought delight,
From those that loved them, those they loved so much !
Then Fancy swells the picture on the sight,
And softens every scene at every touch.
- 11 Sweet as the mellowed woods beneath the moon,
Remembrance lends her soft-uniting shades ;
"Some natural tears she drops, but wipes them soon :"—
The world retires, and its dim prospect fades !
- 12 Airs of delight, that soothe the aching sense ;
Waters of health, that through yon caverns glide ;
Oh ! kindly yet your healing powers dispense,
And bring back feeble life's exhausted tide !

- 13 Perhaps to these gray rocks and mazy springs
Some heart may come, warmed with the purest fire ;
For whom bright Fancy plumes her radiant wings,
And warbling Muses wake the lonely lyre.
- 14 Some orphan Maid, deceived in early youth,
Pale o'er yon spring may hang in mute distress ;
Who dream of faith, of happiness, and truth,
Of love—that Virtue would protect and bless.
- 15 Some musing Youth in silence there may bend,
Untimely stricken by sharp Sorrow's dart ;
For friendship formed, yet left without a friend,
And bearing still the arrow at his heart.
- 16 Such was lamented RUSSELL'S¹ early doom,
The gay companion of our stripling prime ;
Ev'n so he sank unwept into the tomb,
And o'er his head closed the dark gulph of time.
- 17 Hither he came, a wan and weary guest,
A softening balm for many a wound to crave ;
And wooed the sunshine to his aching breast,
Which now seems smiling on his verdant grave !
- 18 He heard the whispering winds that now I hear,
As, boding much, along these hills he passed ;
Yet ah ! how mournful did they meet his ear
On that sad morn he heard them for the last !

¹ The Rev. Thomas Russell, Fellow of New College, Oxford, author of some beautiful sonnets, died at the Hotwells 1788, in the twenty-sixth year of his age. His poems were first published by Mr Howley, with whom we wooed the Muses together on the banks of Itchen. Headley was a pupil of Dr Parr.

- 19 So sinks the scene, like a departed dream,
 Since late we sojourned blythe in Wykeham's bowers,¹
Or heard the merry bells by Isis' stream,
 And thought our way was strewed with fairy flowers!
- 20 Of those with whom we played upon the lawn
 Of early life, in the fresh morning played;
Alas! how many, since that vernal dawn,
 Like thee, poor RUSSELL, 'neath the turf are laid!
- 21 Joyous a while they wandered hand in hand,
 By friendship led along the springtide plain;
How oft did Fancy wake her transports bland,
 And on the lids the glistening tear detain!
- 22 I yet survive, now musing other song,
 Than that which early pleased my vacant years;
Thinking how days and hours have passed along,
 Marked by much pleasure some, and some by tears!
- 23 Thankful, that to these verdant scenes I owe
 That he² whom late I saw all drooping pale,
Raised from the couch of sickness and of woe,
 Now lives with me these mantling views to hail.
- 24 Thankful, that still the landscape beaming bright,
 Of pendant mountain, or of woodland gray,
Can wake the wonted sense of pure delight,
 And charm a while my solitary way.
- 25 Enough :—through the high heaven the proud sun rides,
 My wandering steps their silent path pursue
Back to the crowded world where fortune guides:
 Clifton, to thy white rocks and woods adieu!

¹ Winchester College. — ² The Rev. Dr Howley, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.