

ON LEAVING WINCHESTER SCHOOL.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1782.

THE spring shall visit thee again,
 Itchin! and yonder ancient fane,¹
 That casts its shadow on thy breast,
 As if, by many winters beat,
 The blooming season it would greet,
 With many a straggling wild-flower shall be dressed.

But I, amid the youthful train
 That stray at evening by thy side,
 No longer shall a guest remain,
 To mark the spring's reviving pride.
 I go not unrejoicing; but who knows,
 When I have shared, O world! thy common woes,
 Returning I may drop some natural tears;
 As these same fields I look around,
 And hear from yonder dome² the slow bell sound,
 And think upon the joys that crowned my stripling years!

HOPE, AN ALLEGORICAL SKETCH.

But thou, O Hope! with eyes so fair,
 What was thy delightful measure?

COLLINS.

I AM the comforter of them that mourn;
 My scenes well shadowed, and my carol sweet,
 Cheer the poor passengers of life's rude bourne,
 Till they are sheltered in that last retreat,

¹ St Croix. — ² The Cathedral.

Where human toils and troubles are forgot.
These sounds I heard amid this mortal road,
When I had reached with pain one pleasant spot,
So that for joy some tears in silence flowed ;
I raised mine eyes, sickness had long depressed,
And felt thy warmth, O sun ! come cheering to my breast.

The storm of night had ceased upon the plain,
When thoughtful in the forest-walk I strayed,
To the long hollow murmur of the main
Listening, and to the many leaves that made
A drowsy cadence, as the high trees waved ;
When straight a beauteous scene burst on my sight ;
Smooth were the waters that the lowland laved :
And lo ! a form, as of some fairy sprite,
Who held in her right hand a budding spray,
And like a sea-maid sung her sweetly warbled lay.

Soothing as steals the summer-wave she sung :
The grisly phantoms of the night are gone
To hear in shades forlorn the death-bell rung ;
But thou whom sickness hast left weak and wan,
Turn from their spectre-terrors the green sea
That whispers at my feet, the matin gale
That crisps its shining marge shall solace thee,
And thou my long-forgotten voice shalt hail,
For I am Hope, whom weary hearts confess
The soothest sprite that sings on life's long wilderness.

As slowly ceased her tender voice, I stood
Delighted : the hard way, so lately passed,
Seemed smooth ; the ocean's bright extended flood
Before me stretched ; the clouds that overcast

Heaven's melancholy vault hurried away,
Driven seaward, and the azure hills appeared ;
The sunbeams shone upon their summits gray,
Strange saddening sounds no more by fits were heard,
But birds, in new leaves shrouded, sung aloft,
And o'er the level seas Spring's healing airs blew soft.

As when a traveller, who many days
Hath journeyed 'mid Arabian deserts still,
A dreary solitude far on surveys,
And met, nor flitting bird, nor gushing rill,
But near some marble ruin, gleaming pale,
Sighs mindful of the haunts of cheerful man,
And thinks he hears in every sickly gale
The bells of some approaching caravan ;
At length, emerging o'er the dim tract, sees
Damascus' golden fanes, and minarets, and trees :

So beat my bosom when my winding way
Led through the thickets to a sheltered vale,
Where the fair syren sat ; a smooth clear bay
Skirted with woods appeared, where many a sail
Went shining o'er the watery surface still,
Lessening at last in the gray ocean flood ;
And yonder, half-way up the fronting hill,
Peeping from forth the trees, a cottage stood,
Above whose peaceful umbrage, trailing high,
A little smoke went up, and stained the cloudless sky.

I turned, and lo ! a mountain seemed to rise,
Upon whose top a spiry citadel
Lifted its dim-seen turrets to the skies,
Where some high lord of the domain might dwell ;

And onward, where the eye scarce stretched its sight,
Hills over hills in long succession rose,
Touched with a softer and yet softer light,
And all was blended as in deep repose ;
The woods, the sea, the hills that shone so fair,
Till woods, and sea, and hills seemed fading into air.

At once, methought, I saw a various throng
To this enchanting spot their footsteps bend ;
All drawn, sweet Hope ! by thy inspiring song,
Which melodies scarce mortal seem to blend.
First buxom Youth, with cheeks of glowing red,
Came lightly tripping o'er the morning dew,
He wore a harebell garland on his head,
And stretched his hands at the bright-bursting view :
A mountain fawn went bounding by his side,
Around whose slender neck a silver bell was tied.

Then said I : Mistress of the magic song,
Oh, pity 'twere that hearts that know no guile
Should ever feel the pangs of truth or wrong !
She heeded not, but sang with lovelier smile :
Enjoy, O youth, the season of thy May ;
Hark, how the throstles in the hawthorn sing !
The hoary Time, that resteth night nor day,
O'er the earth's shade may speed with noiseless wing ;
But heed not thou ; snatch the brief joys that rise,
And sport beneath the light of these unclouded skies.

His fine eye flashing an unwonted fire,
Then Fancy o'er the glade delighted went ;
He struck at times a small and silver lyre,
Or gazed upon the rolling element ;

Sometimes he took his mirror, which did show
The various landscape lovelier than the life ;
Beaming more bright the vivid tints did glow,
And so well mingled was the colours' strife,
That the fond heart, the beauteous shades once seen,
Would sigh for such retreats, for vales and woods so green !

Gay was his aspect, and his airy vest,
As loose it flowed, such colours did display,
As paint the clouds reposing in the west,
Or the moist rainbow's radiant arch inlay ;
And now he tripped, like fairy of the wood,
And seemed with dancing spirits to rejoice,
And now he hung his head in pensive mood :
Meantime, O Hope ! he listened to thy voice,
And whilst of joy and youth it cheerly sung,
He touched his answering harp, and o'er the valley sprung.

Pleasure, a frolic nymph, to the glad sound
Came dancing, as all tears she might forget ;
And now she gazed with a sweet archness round,
And wantonly displayed a silken net :
She won her way with fascinating air—
Her eyes illumined with a tender light,
Her smile's strange blandishment, her shaded hair
That lengthening hung, her teeth as ivory white,
That peeped from her moist lip, seemed to inspire
Tumultuous wishes warm, and dreams of fond desire.

What softer passions did thy bosom move,
When those melodious measures met thine ear,
Child of Sincerity, and virtuous Love !
Thine eyes did shine beneath a blissful tear

That still were turned towards the tranquil scene,
Where the thin smoke rose from the embowered cot ;
And thou didst think, that there, with smile serene,
In quiet shades, and every pang forgot,
Thou mightest sink on pure Affection's breast,
And listen to the winds that whispered thee to rest.

I thought, O Love, how seldom art thou found
Without annoyance in this earthly state !
For, haply, thou dost feed some rankling wound,
Or on thy youth pale poverty doth wait,
Till years, on heavy wing, have rolled away ;
Or where thou most didst hope firm faith to see,
Thou meetest fickleness estranged and cold ;
Or if some true and tender heart there be,
On which, through every change, thy soul might trust,
Death comes with his fell dart, and smites it to the dust !

But lusty Enterprise, with looks of glee,
Approached the drooping youth, as he would say,
Come to the high woods and the hills with me,
And cast thy sullen myrtle-wreath away.
Upon a neighing courser he did sit,
That stretched its arched neck, in conscious pride,
And champed as with disdain a golden bit,
But Hope her animating voice applied,
And Enterprise with speed impetuous passed,
Whilst the long vale returned his wreathed bugle's blast.

Suddenly, lifting high his ponderous spear,
A mailed man came forth with scornful pride,
I saw him, towering in his proud career,
Along the valley with a giant stride :

Upon his helm, in letters of bright gold,
That to the sun's meridian splendour shone,
Ambition's name far off I might behold.

Meantime from earth there came a hollow moan ;
But Fame, who followed, her loud trumpet blew,
And to the murmuring beach with eyes a-flame he flew.

And now already had he gained the strand,
Where a tall vessel rode with sail unfurled,
And soon he thought to reach the farther land,
Which to his eager eye seemed like a world
That he by strength might win and make his own ;
And in that citadel, which shone so bright,
Seat him, a purple sovereign, on his throne.

So he went tilting o'er the waters white,
And whilst he oft looked back with stern disdain,
In louder tone, methought, was heard the inspiring strain :

By the shade of cities old,¹

By many a river stained with gore,
By the sword of Sesac bold,

Who smote the nations from the shore
Of ancient Nile to India's farthest plain,
By Fame's proud pillars, and by Valour's shield
By mighty chiefs in glorious battle slain,

Assert thy sway ; amid the bloody field
Pursue thy march, and to the heights sublime
Of Honour's glittering cliffs, a mighty conqueror climb !

Then said I, in my heart : Man, thou dost rear
Thine eye to heaven, and vaunt thy lofty worth ;
The ensign of dominion thou dost bear
O'er nature's works ; but thou dost oft go forth,

¹ Written at the time of Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt.

Urged by proud hopes to ravage and destroy,
Thou dost build up a name by cruel deeds ;
Whilst to the peaceful scenes of love and joy,
Sorrow, and crime, and solitude, succeeds.
Hence, when her war-song Victory doth sing,
Destruction flaps aloft her iron-hurtling wing.

But see, as one awakened from a trance,
With hollow and dim eyes and stony stare,
Captivity with faltering step advance !
Dripping and knotted was her coal-black hair ;
For she had long been hid, as in the grave ;
No sounds the silence of her prison broke,
Nor one companion had she in her cave,
Save Terror's dismal shape, that no word spoke ;
But to a stony coffin on the floor
With lean and hideous finger pointed evermore.

The lark's shrill song, the early village chime,
The upland echo of the winding horn,
The far-heard clock that spoke the passing time,
Had never pierced her solitude forlorn ;
At length, released from the deep dungeon's gloom,
She feels the fragrance of the vernal gale ;
She sees more sweet the living landscape bloom,
And while she listens to Hope's tender tale,
She thinks her long-lost friends shall bless her sight,
And almost faints with joy amid the broad daylight.

And near the spot, as with reluctant feet,
Slowly desponding Melancholy drew,
The wind and rain her naked breast had beat,
Sunk was her eye, and sallow was her hue :

In the huge forest's unrejoicing shade
 Bewildered had she wandered day by day,
And many a grisly fiend her heart dismayed,
 And cold and wet upon the ground she lay ;
But now such sounds with mellow sweetness stole,
As lapped in dreams of bliss her slow-consenting soul.

Next, to the woody glen poor Mania strayed,
 Most pale and wild, yet gentle was her look ;
A slender garland she of straw had made,
 Of flowers and rushes from the running brook ;
But as she sadly passed, the tender sound
 Of its sharp pang her wounded heart beguiled ;
She dropped her half-made garland on the ground,
 And then she sighed, and then in tears she smiled :
But in such sort, that Pity would have said,
O God, be merciful to that poor hapless maid !

Now ravingly she cried : The whelming main—
 The wintry wave rolls over his cold head ;
I never shall behold his form again ;
 Hence flattering fancies—he is dead, is dead !
Perhaps on some wild shore he may be cast,
 Where on their prey barbarians howling rush,
Oh, fiercer they, than is the whelming blast !
 Hush, my poor heart ! my wakeful sorrows, hush !
He lives ! I yet shall press him to my heart,
And cry, Oh no, no, no,—we never more will part !

So sang she, when despairing, from his cell,
 Hid furthest in the lone umbrageous wood,
Where many a winter he had loved to dwell,
 Came grim Remorse ; fixed in deep thought he stood,

His senses pierced by the unwonted tone ;
Some stagnant blood-drops from his locks he shook ;
He saw the trees that waved, the sun that shone,
He cast around an agonised look ;
Then with a ghastly smile, that spoke his pain,
He hied him to his cave in thickest shades again.

And now the sun sank westward, and the sky
Was hung with thousand lucid pictures gay ;
When gazing on the scene with placid eye,
An ancient man appeared in amice gray ;
His sandal shoes were by long travel worn,
O'er hill and valley, many a weary mile,
Yet drooped he not, like one in years forlorn ;
His pale cheek wore a sad, but tender smile ;
'Twas sage Experience, by his look confessed,
And white as frost his beard descended to his breast.

Thus said I : Master, pleasant is this place,
And sweet are those melodious notes I hear,
And happy they among man's toiling race
Who, of their cares forgetful, wander near ;
Me they delight, whom sickness and slow pain
Have bowed almost to death with heavy hand ;
The fairy scenes refresh my heart again,
And, pleased, I listen to that music bland,
Which seems to promise hours of joy to come,
And bids me tranquil seek my poor but peaceful home.¹

He said : Alas ! these shadows soon may fly,
Like the gay creatures of the element ;
Yet do poor mortals still with raptured eye
Behold like thee the pictures they present ;

¹ That of a village curate.

And, charmed by Hope's sweet music, on they fare,
And think they soon shall reach that blissful goal,
Where never more the sullen knell of Care
For buried friends and severed loves shall toll :
So on they fare, till all their troubles cease,
And on a lap of earth they lie them down in peace.

But not there ceases their immortal claim ;
From golden clouds I heard a small voice say :
Wisdom rejoiceth in a higher aim,
Nor heeds the transient shadows of a day ;
These earthly sounds may die away, and all
These perishable pictures sink in night,
But Virtue from the dust her sons shall call,
And lead them forth to joy, and life, and light ;
Though from their languid grasp earth's comforts fly,
And with the silent worm their buried bodies lie.

For other scenes there are ; and in a clime
Purer, and other strains to earth unknown,
Where heaven's high host, with symphonies sublime,
Sing unto HIM that sitteth on the throne.
Enough for man, if he the task fulfil
Which GOD ordained, and to his journey's end
Bear him right on, betide him good or ill ;
Then Hope to soothe his death-bed shall descend,
Nor leave him, till in mansions of the blest
He gains his destined home, his everlasting rest.
