

ST MICHAEL'S MOUNT.

INSCRIBED TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD SOMERS.

WHILE summer airs scarce breathe along the tide,
Oft pausing, up the mountain's craggy side
We climb, how beautiful, how still, how clear,
The scenes that stretch around ! The rocks that rear
Their shapes, in rich fantastic colours dressed ;
The hill-tops, where the softest shadows rest ;
The long-retiring bay, the level sand,
The fading sea-line, and the furthest land,
That seems, as low it lessens from the eye,
To steal away beneath the cloudless sky !

10

But yesterday, the misty morn was spread
In dreariness on the bleak mountain's head ;
No glittering prospect from the upland smiled,
The driving squall came dark, the sea heaved wild,
And, lost and lonely, the wayfarer sighed,
Wet with the hoar spray of the flashing tide.
How changed is now the circling scene ! The deep
Stirs not ; the glancing roofs and white towers peep
Along the margin of the lucid bay ;
The sails, descried far in the offing gray,
Hang motionless, and the pale headland's height
Is touched as with sweet gleams of fairy light !

20

Oh, lives there on earth's busy-stirring scene,
Whom Nature's tranquil charms, her airs serene,
Her seas, her skies, her sunbeams, fail to move
With stealing tenderness and grateful love !
Go, thankless man, to Misery's cave—behold
Captivity, stretched in her dungeon cold !
Or think on those who, in yon dreary mine,¹
Sunk fathoms deep beneath the rolling brine,

30

¹ A mine called the Wherry-Mine, beneath the surface of the sea near Penzance.

From year to year, amid the lurid shade, 31
 O'er-wearied, ply their melancholy trade ;
 That thou may'st bless the glorious sun ; and hail
 Him who with beauty clothed the hill and vale ;
 Who bent the arch of the high heavens for thee,
 And stretched in amplitude the broad blue sea !
 Now sunk are all its murmurs ; and the air
 But moves by fits the bents, that here and there
 Upshoot in casual spots of faded green :
 Here straggling sheep the scanty pasture glean, 40
 Or, on the jutting fragments that impend,
 Stray fearlessly, and gaze, as we ascend.¹

Mountain, no pomp of waving woods hast thou,
 That deck with varied shade thy hoary brow ;
 No sunny meadows at thy feet are spread,
 No streamlets sparkle o'er their pebbly bed !
 But thou canst boast thy beauties : ample views
 That catch the rapt eye of the pausing Muse ;
 Headlands around new-lighted ; sails, and seas,
 Now glassy-smooth, now wrinkling to the breeze ; 50
 And when the drisly Winter, wrapped in sleet,
 Goes by, and winds and rain thy ramparts beat,
 Fancy can see thee standing thus aloof,
 And frowning, bleak, and bare, and tempest-proof,
 Look as with awful confidence, and brave
 The howling hurricane, the dashing wave ;
 More graceful, when the storm's dark vapours frown,
 Than when the summer suns in pomp go down !

And such is he, who, clad in watchet weeds,
 And boasting little more than nature needs, 60
 Can wrap him in contentedness, and wear
 A port unchanged, in seasons rude or fair.

¹ Three or four sheep were seen rambling among the precipices, and picking here and there a blade of grass ; but in general the rock is naked, and extremely steep and craggy.

His may be Fancy's sunshine, and the Muse 63
May deck his visions with her fairest hues ;
And he may lift his honest front, and say
To the hard storm, that rends his locks of gray,
I heed thee not ;—he unappalled may stand
Beneath the cloud that shades a sinking land,
While heedless of the storm that onward sweeps,
Mad, impious Riot his loud wassail keeps, 70
Pre-eminent in native worth ; nor bend,
Though gathering ills on his bare head descend :
And when the wasteful storm sweeps o'er its prey,
And rends the kingdoms of the world away,
He, firm as stands the rock's unshaken base,
Yet panting for a surer resting-place,
The human hurricane unmoved can see,
And say, O GOD, my refuge is in Thee !

States, anchored deep, that far their shadow cast,
Rock, and are scattered by the ALMIGHTY's blast ; 80
As when, awakened from his horrid sleep,
In fiery caves, a thousand fathoms deep,
The Earthquake's Demon hies aloft ; he waits,
Nigh some high-turreted proud city's gates,
As listening to the mingled shouts and din
Of the mad crowd that feast or dance within.
Mean time sad Nature feels his sway, the wave
Heaves, and low sounds moan through the mountain cave ;
Then all at once is still, still as midnight,
When not the lime-leaf moves : Oh, piteous sight ! 90
For now the glittering domes crash from on high—
And hark, a strange and lamentable cry !
It ceases, and the tide's departing roar
Alone is heard upon the desert shore,
That, as it sweeps with slow huge swell away,
Remorseless mutters o'er its buried prey.

So Ruin hurrieth o'er this shaken ball : 97
 He bids his blast go forth, and lo ! doth fall
 A Carthage or a Rome. Then rolls the tide
 Of deep Forgetfulness, whelming the pride
 Of man, his shattered and forsaken bowers,
 His noiseless cities, and his prostrate towers.
 Some columns, eminent and awful, stand,
 Like Egypt's pillars on the lonely sand ;
 We read upon their base, inscribed by Fame,
 A HOMER's here, or here a SHAKSPEARE's name ;
 Yet think not of the surge, that soon may sweep
 Ourselves unnumbered to the oblivious deep.

Yet time has been, as mouldering legends say,¹
 When all yon western tract, and this bright bay, 110
 Where now the sunshine sleeps, and wheeling white
 The sea-mew circles in fantastic flight,
 Was peopled wide ; but the loud storm hath raved,
 Where its green top the high wood whispering waved,
 And many a year the slowly-rising flood
 Raked, where the Druids' uncooth altar stood.
 Thou only, aged mountain, dost remain,
 Stern monument amidst the deluged plain !
 And fruitless the big waves thy bulwarks beat ;
 The big waves slow retire, and murmur at thy feet : ² 120
 Thou, half-encircled by the reflux tide,
 As if thy state its utmost rage defied,
 Dost tower above the scene, as in thine ancient pride.

Mountain ! the curious Muse might love to gaze
 On the dim record of thy early days ;
 Oft fancying that she heard, like the low blast,
 The sounds of mighty generations past.

¹ Tradition reports that the rock was anciently connected by a large tract of land with the Isles of Scilly, and that the whole space between was inundated by an incursion of the sea. — ² It is only at high tide the rock is entirely surrounded by the sea ; at low water it is accessible by land.

Thee the Phœnician, as remote he sailed 128
 Along the unknown coast, exulting hailed,
 And when he saw thy rocky point aspire,
 Thought on his native shores of Aradus or Tyre.
 Distained with many a ghastly giant's blood,
 Upon thy height huge Corineus¹ stood,
 And clashed his shield ; whilst, hid in caves profound,
 His monstrous foe cowered at the fearful sound.
 Hark to the brazen clarion's pealing swell !
 The shout at intervals, the deepening yell !
 Long ages speed away, yet now again
 The noise of battle hurtles on the plain !
 Behold the dark-haired warriors !—down thy side,
 O mountain ! sternly terrible, they stride !
 Ev'n now, impatient for the promised war,
 They rear their axes² huge, and shouting, cry to Thor.
 The sounds of conflict cease—at dead of night
 A voice is heard : Prepare the Druid rite !
 And hark ! the bard upon thy summit rings
 The deep chords of his thrilling harp, and sings
 To Night's pale Queen, that through the heavens wide,
 Amidst her still host list'ning, seems to ride !
 Slow sinks the cadence of the solemn lay, 150
 And all the sombrous scenery steals away—
 The shadowy Druid throng, the darksome wood,
 And the hoar altar, wet with human blood !
 Marked ye the Angel-spectre that appeared ?
 By other hands the holy fane³ is reared

¹ One of the supposed followers of Brutus, to whom Cornwa'll was allotted. The rather by him liked, says Milton, for that the hugest giants in rocks and caves were said to lurk there ; which kind of monsters to deal with was his old exercise. — ² At the bottom of this mountain, as they were digging for tin, they found spear-heads, axes, *et cet.* — *Camden.* — ³ A convent built on the top of the rock, where the apparition of St Michael was said to have appeared.

High on the point, where, gazing o'er the flood, 156
Confessed, the glittering apparition stood.
And now the sailor, on his watch of night,
Sees, like a glimmering star, the far-off light ;
Or, homeward bound, hears on the twilight bay 160
The slowly-chanted vespers die away !

These scenes are fled and passed, yet still sublime,
And wearing graceful the gray tints of Time,
Upon the steep rock's craggy eminence
The embattled castle sits, surveying thence
The villages that strew the subject plain,
And the long winding of the lucid main :
Meantime the stranger marks its turrets high,
And muses on the tale of changeful years gone by.

Of this no more : lo ! here our journey ends ; 170
Wide and more wide the arch of heaven extends,
And on this topmost fragment as we lean,
We feel removed from dim earth's distant scene.
Lift up the hollow trump¹ that on the ground
Is cast, and let it, rolling its long sound,
Speak to the surge below, that we may gain
Tidings from those who traverse the wide main.
Or tread we now some spot of wizard-land,
And mark the sable trump, that may command
The brazen doors to fly, and with loud call 180
Scare the grim giant in his murky hall !
Hail, solitary castle ! that dost crown
This desert summit, and supreme look down
On the long-lessening landscape stretched below ;
Fearless to trace thy inmost haunts we go !

We climb the steps :—No warning signs are sent,
No fiery shapes flash on the battlement.

¹ A speaking-trumpet lying on the ground.

We enter ; the long chambers without fear 188
 We traverse ; no strange echoes meet the ear ;
 No time-worn tapestry spontaneous shakes,
 No spell-bound maiden from her trance awakes,
 But Taste's fair hand arrays the peaceful dome,
 And hither the domestic virtues come ;
 Pleased, while to this secluded scene they bear
 Sweets that oft wither in a world of care.

Castle ! no more thou frownest on the main
 In the dark terror of thy ancient reign ;
 No more thy long and dreary halls affright,
 Swept by the stoled spirits of the night ;
 But calm, and heedless of the storms that beat, 200
 Here Elegance and Peace assume their seat ;
 And when the night descends, and Ocean roars,
 Rocking without upon his darkened shores,
 These vaulted roofs to gentle sounds reply,
 The voice of social cheer, or song of harmony.¹

So fade the modes of life with slow decay, ;
 And various ages various hues display !
 Fled are the grimly shadows of Romance—
 And, pleased, we see in beauteous troop advance
 New arts, new manners, from the Gothic gloom 210
 Escaped, and scattering flowers that sweetlier bloom !

Refinement wakes ; before her beaming eye
 Dispersed, the fumes of feudal darkness fly.
 Like orient Morning on the mountain's head,
 A softer light on life's wide scene is shed ;
 Lapping in bliss the sense of human cares,
 Hark ! Melody pours forth her sweetest airs ;
 And like the shades that on the still lake lie,
 Of rocks, or fringing woods, or tinted sky,

¹ This and the foregoing reflections were suggested by seeing instruments of music, books, *et cet.*, in an apartment, elegantly but appropriately fitted up.

Painting her hues on the clear tablet lays, 220
And her own beauteous world with tender touch
displays !

Then Science lifts her form, august and fair,
And shakes the night-dews from her glittering hair ;
Meantime rich Culture clothes the living waste,
And purer patterns of Athenian Taste
Invite the eye, and wake the kindling sense ;
And milder Manners, as they play, dispense,
Like tepid airs of Spring, their genial influence !

Such is thy boast, Refinement. But deep dyes
Oft mar the splendour of thy noontide skies : 230
Then Fancy, sick of follies that deform
The face of day, and in the sunshine swarm ;
Sick of the fluttering fopperies that engage
The vain pursuits of a degenerate age ;
Sick of smooth Sophistry's insidious cant,
Or cold Impiety's defying rant ;
Sick of the muling sentiment that sighs
O'er its dead bird, while Want unpitied cries ;
Sick of the pictures that pale Lust inflame,
And flush the cheek of Love with deep, deep shame ; 240
Would fain the shade of elder days recall,
The Gothic battlements, the bannered hall ;
Or list of elfin harps the fabling rhyme,
Or wrapped in melancholy trance sublime,
Pause o'er the working of some wond'rous tale,
Or bid the spectres of the castle hail !

Oh, might I now, amid the frowning storm,
Behold, great Vision of the Mount ! thy form,
Such and so vast as thou wert seen of yore,
When looking steadfast to Bayonna's shore, 250
Thou sattest awful on the topmost stone,
Making the rock thy solitary throne !

For up the narrow steps, winding with pain, 253
The watch-tower's loftiest platform now we gain.
Departed spirit ! fruitless is the prayer,
We see alone thy long-deserted chair ;¹
And never more, or in the storm of night,
Or by the glimmering moon's illusive light,
Or when the flash, with red and hasty glance,
Sudden illumes the sea's remote expanse, 260
The shores, the cliffs, the mountain, till again
Deep darkness closes on the roaring main,
Shalt thou, dread Angel, with unaltered mien,
Sublime upon thy cloudy seat be seen !

Yet, musing much on wild tradition's lore,
And many a phantom tale, believed of yore,
Chiefly remembering the sweet song (whose strain
Shall never die) of him who wept in vain
For his loved Lycidas, in the wide sea
Whelmed, when he cried, great Angel, unto thee, 270
The fabled scene of thy renown we trace,
And hail, with thronging thoughts, thy hallowed resting-
place !

The stealing Morn goes out—here let us end
Fitliest our song, and to the shore descend.
Yet once more, azure ocean, and once more,
Ye lighted headlands, and thou stretching shore,
Down on the beauties of your scenes we cast
A tender look, the longest and the last !
Amid the arch of heaven, extended clear,
Scarce the thin flecks of feathery clouds appear ; 280
Beyond the long curve of the lessening bay
The still Atlantic stretches its bright way ;
The tall ship moves not on the tranquil brine ;
Around, the solemn promontories shine ;

¹ On the highest turret of the castle is a place called St Michael's Chair.

No sounds approach us, save, at times, the cry 285
 Of the gray gull, that scarce is heard so high ;
 The billows make no noise, and on the breast
 Of charmed Ocean, Silence sinks to rest !

Oh, might we thus from heaven's bright battlements
 Behold the scene Humanity presents ; 290
 And see, like this, all harmonised and still,
 And hear no far-off sounds of earthly ill !
 Wide landscape of the world, in purest light
 Arrayed, how fair, how cheering were the sight !

Alas ! we think upon this seat of care,
 And ask, if peace, if harmony be there.
 We hear the clangours and the cries that shake
 The mad world, and their dismal music make ;
 We see gaunt Vice, of dread, enormous size,
 That fearless in the broad day sweltering lies, 300
 And scorns the feeble arrow that assails
 His Heaven-defying crest and iron scales ;
 His brows with wan and withered roses crowned,
 And reeling to the pipe's lascivious sound,
 We see Intemperance his goblet quaff ;
 And mocking Blasphemy, with mad loud laugh,
 Acting before high Heaven a direr part,
 Sport with the weapons that shall pierce his heart !

If o'er the southern wave¹ we turn our sight,
 More dismal shapes of hideous woe affright : 310
 Grim-visaged War, that ruthless, as he hies,
 Drowns with his trumpet's blast a brother's cries ;
 And Massacre, by yelling furies led,
 With ghastly grin and eye-balls rolling red !
 O'er a vast field, wide heaped with festering slain,
 Hark ! how the Demon Passions shout amain,

¹ Alluding to the cruelties committed in France.

And cry, exulting, while the death-storm lowers, 317
Hurrah! the kingdoms of the world are ours!

O God! who madest man, I see these things,
And wearied wish for a fleet angel's wings,
That I might fly away, and hear no more
The surge that moans along this mortal shore!
But Joy's unclouded sunshine may not be,
Till, Father of all worlds, we rest with Thee!
Then Truth, uplifting from thy works the pall,
Shall speak: In wisdom hast Thou made them all;
Then angels and archangels, as they gaze,
And all the acclaiming host of heaven, shall raise
The loud hosannah of eternal praise!

Here all is mixed with sorrow; and the clouds 330
Hang awfully, whose shade the dim earth shrouds;
Therefore I mourn for man, and sighing say,
As down the steep I wind my homeward way,
Oh, when will Earth's long muttering tempests cease,
And all be sunshine (like this scene) and peace!

ON AN UNFORTUNATE AND BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

WRITTEN DECEMBER 1783.

OH, Mary, when distress and anguish came,
And slow disease preyed on thy wasted frame;
When every friend, ev'n like thy bloom, was fled,
And Want bowed low thy unsupported head;
Sure sad Humanity a tear might give,
And Virtue say, Live, beauteous sufferer, live!

But should there one be found, (amidst the few
Who with compassion thy last pangs might view),