

The INVITATION:

To Miss B*****.

Hic gelidi fontes, hic mollia prata, Lycori,

Hic nemus : hic ipso tecum consumerer ævo.

VIRGIL.

H EALTH to my friend, and long unbroken years,
By storms unruffled and unstain'd by tears :
Wing'd by new joys may each white minute fly ;
Spring on her cheek, and sunshine in her eye :
O'er that dear breast, where love and pity springs,
May peace eternal spread her downy wings :

Sweet beaming hope her path illumine still,
And fair ideas all her fancy fill.
From glittering scenes which strike the dazzled sight
With mimic grandeur and illusive light,
From idle hurry, and tumultuous noise,
From hollow friendships, and from fickle joys,
Will DELIA, at the muse's call, retire
To the pure pleasures rural scenes inspire?
Will she from crowds and busy cities fly,
Where wreaths of curling smoke involve the sky.
To taste the grateful shade of spreading trees,
And drink the spirit of the mountain breeze?

When winter's hand the rough'ning year deforms,
And hollow winds foretel approaching storms,
Then Pleasure, like a bird of passage, flies
To brighter climes, and more indulgent skies:
Cities and courts allure her sprightly train,

From

From the bleak mountain and the naked plain ;

And gold and gems with artificial blaze,

Supply the sickly sun's declining rays.

But soon, returning on the western gale,

She seeks the bosom of the grassy vale :

There, wrapt in careless ease, attunes the lyre

To the wild warblings of the woodland quire :

The daised turf her humble throne supplies,

And early primroses around her rise.

We'll follow where the smiling goddess leads,

Thro' tangled forests or enamel'd meads ;

O'er pathless hills her airy form we'll chase,

In silent glades her fairy footsteps trace :

Small pains there needs her footsteps to pursue,

She cannot fly from friendship, and from you.

Now the glad earth her frozen zone unbinds,

And o'er her bosom breathe the western winds.

Already now the snow-drop dares appear,

The first pale blossom of th' unripen'd year ;
As FLORA's breath, by some transforming power,
Had chang'd an icicle into a flower :
Its name, and hue, the scentless plant retains,
And winter lingers in its icy veins.
To these succeed the violet's dusky blue,
And each inferior flower of fainter hue ;
Till riper months the perfect year disclose,
And FLORA cries exulting, See my Rose !

The Muse invites, my DELIA haste away,
And let us sweetly waste the careless day.
Here gentle summits lift their airy brow ;
Down the green slope here winds the labouring plow ;
Here bath'd by frequent show'rs cool vales are seen,
Cloath'd with fresh verdure, and eternal green ;
Here smooth canals, across th' extended plain,
Stretch their long arms, to join the distant main :

The

The sons of toil with many a weary stroke
Scoop the hard bosom of the solid rock ;
Resistless thro' the stiff opposing clay,
With steady patience work their gradual way ;
Compel the genius of th' unwilling flood
Thro' the brown horrors of the aged wood ;
'Cross the lone waste the silver urn they pour,
And cheer the barren heath or sullen moor.
The traveller with pleasing wonder sees
The white sail gleaming thro' the dusky trees ;
And views the alter'd landscape with surprise,
And doubts the magic scenes which round him rise.
Now, like a flock of swans, above his head
Their woven wings the flying vessels spread ;
Now meeting streams in artful mazes glide,
While each unmingled pours a separate tide ;
Now through the hidden veins of earth they flow,
And visit sulphurous mines and caves below ;

The ductile streams obey the guiding hand,
And social plenty circles round the land.

But nobler praise awaits our green retreats ;
The Muses here have fix'd their sacred seats.
Mark where its simple front yon mansion rears,
The nursery of men for future years !
Here callow chiefs and embryo statesmen lie,
And unfledg'd poets short excursions try :
While Mersey's gentle current, which too long
By fame neglected, and unknown to song,
Between his rushy banks, (no poet's theme)
Had crept inglorious, like a vulgar stream,
Reflects th' ascending seats with conscious pride,
And dares to emulate a classic tide.
Soft music breathes along each op'ning shade,
And sooths the dashing of his rough cascade.
With mystic lines his sands are figur'd o'er,

And

And circles trac'd upon the letter'd shore.
Beneath his willows rove th' inquiring youth,
And court the fair majestic form of truth.
Here nature opens all her secret springs,
And heav'n-born science plumes her eagle-wings:
Too long had bigot rage, with malice swell'd,
Crush'd her strong pinions, and her flight withheld;
Too long to check her ardent progress strove:
So writhes the serpent round the bird of Jove;
Hangs on her flight, restrains her tow'ring wing,
Twists its dark folds, and points its venom'd sting.
Yet still (if aught aright the Muse divine)
Her rising pride shall mock the vain design;
On sounding pinions yet aloft shall soar,
And thro' the azure deep untravel'd paths explore.
Where science smiles, the Muses join the train;
And gentlest arts and purest manners reign.
Ye generous youth who love this studious shade,

How

How rich a field is to your hopes display'd !
Knowledge to you unlocks the classic page ;
And virtue blossoms for a better age.
Oh golden days ! oh bright unvalued hours !
What bliss (did ye but know that bliss) were yours ?
With richest stores your glowing bosoms fraught,
Perception quick, and luxury of thought ;
The high designs that heave the labouring soul,
Panting for fame, impatient of controul ;
And fond enthusiastic thought, that feeds
On pictur'd tales of vast heroic deeds ;
And quick affections, kindling into flame
At virtue's, or their country's honour'd name ;
And spirits light, to every joy in tune ;
And friendship, ardent as a summer's noon ;
And generous scorn of vice's venal tribe ;
And proud disdain of interest's sordid bribe ;
And conscious honour's quick instinctive sense ;

And

And smiles unforc'd; and easy confidence;
And vivid fancy; and clear simple truth;
And all the mental bloom of vernal youth.

How bright the scene to fancy's eye appears,
Thro' the long perspective of distant years,
When this, this little group their country calls
From academic shades and learned halls,
To fix her laws, her spirit to sustain,
And light up glory thro' her wide domain!
Their various tastes in different arts display'd,
Like temper'd harmony of light and shade,
With friendly union in one mass shall blend,
And this adorn the state, and that defend.
These the sequester'd shade shall cheaply please,
With learned labour, and inglorious ease:
While those, impell'd by some resistless force,
O'er seas and rocks shall urge their vent'rous course;

Rich

Rich fruits matur'd by glowing suns behold,
And China's groves of vegetable gold;
From every land the various harvest spoil,
And bear the tribute to their native soil:
But tell each land (while every toil they share,
Firm to sustain, and resolute to dare,)
MAN is the nobler growth our realms supply,
And SOULS are ripen'd in our northern sky.

Some pensive creep along the shelly shore;
Unfold the silky texture of a flower;
With sharpen'd eyes inspect an hornet's sting,
And all the wonders of an insect's wing.
Some trace with curious search the hidden cause
Of nature's changes, and her various laws;
Untwist her beauteous web, disrobe her charms,
And hunt her to her elemental forms:
Or prove what hidden powers in herbs are found

To quench disease and cool the burning wound;
With cordial drops the fainting head sustain,
Call back the flitting soul, and still the throbs of pain.

The patriot passion this shall strongly feel,
Ardent, and glowing with undaunted zeal;
With lips of fire shall plead his country's cause,
And vindicate the majesty of laws.

This, cloath'd with Britain's thunder, spread alarms
Thro' the wide earth, and shake the pole with arms.

That, to the founding lyre his deeds rehearse,

Enshrine his name in some immortal verse,

To long posterity his praise consign,

And pay a life of hardships by a line.

While others, consecrate to higher aims,

Whose hallow'd bosoms glow with purer flames,

Love in their heart, persuasion in their tongue,

With words of peace shall charm the list'ning throng,

Draw

Draw the dread veil that wraps th' eternal throne,
And launch our souls into the bright unknown.

Here cease my song. Such arduous themes require
A master's pencil, and a poet's fire :
Unequal far such bright designs to paint,
Too weak her colours, and her lines too faint,
My drooping Muse folds up her fluttering wing,
And hides her head in the green lap of spring.