

T H E
O R I G I N
O F
SONG-WRITING.*

*Illic indocto primum se exercuit arcu;
Hei mihi quam doctas nunc habet ille manus!*

TIBUL.

WHEN Cupid, wanton boy, was young,
His wings unfledg'd, and rude his tongue,
E He

* Addressed to the Author of *Essays on Song-Writing*.

He loiter'd in Arcadian bowers,
And hid his bow in wreaths of flowers ;
Or pierc'd some fond unguarded heart,
With now and then a random dart ;
But heroes scorn'd the idle boy,
And love was but a shepherd's toy :
When Venus, vex'd to see her child
Amid the forests thus run wild,
Would point him out some nobler game,
Gods, and godlike men to tame.
She seiz'd the boy's reluctant hand,
And led him to the virgin band,
Where the sister Muses round
Swell the deep majestic sound ;
And in solemn strains unite,
Breathing chaste, severe delight :
Songs of chiefs, and heroes old,
In unsubmitting virtue bold ;

Of even valour's temperate heat,
And toils to stubborn patience sweet ;
Of nodding plumes, and burnish'd arms,
And glory's bright terrific charms.

The potent sounds like light'ning dart
Resistless thro' the glowing heart ;
Of power to lift the fixed soul
High o'er fortune's proud controul ;
Kindling deep, prophetic musing ;
Love of beauteous death infusing ;
Scorn, and unconquerable hate
Of tyrant pride's unhallow'd state.
The boy abash'd, and half afraid,
Beheld each chaste immortal maid :
Pallas spread her Egis there ;
Mars stood by with threat'ning air ;

And stern Diana's icy look
With sudden chill his bosom struck.

Daughters of Jove receive the child,
The queen of beauty said, and smil'd;
(Her rosy breath perfum'd the air
And scatter'd sweet contagion there;
Relenting nature learn'd to languish,
And sicken'd with delightful anguish :)
Receive him, artless yet and young ;
Refine his air and smoothe his tongue :
Conduct him thro' your fav'rite bowers,
Enrich'd with fair perennial flowers,
To solemn shades and springs that lie
Remote from each unhallow'd eye ;
Teach him to spell those mystic names
That kindle bright immortal flames ;

And

And guide his young unpractis'd feet
To reach coy learning's lofty feat.

Ah, luckless hour ! mistaken maids !
When Cupid fought the Muse's shades :
Of their sweetest notes beguil'd,
By the sly insidious child,
Now of power his darts are found
Twice ten thousand times to wound.
Now no more the slacken'd strings
Breathe of high immortal things,
But Cupid tunes the Muse's lyre
To languid notes of soft desire.
In every clime, in every tongue,
'Tis love inspires the poet's song :
Hence Sappho's soft infectious page ;
Monimia's woe ; Othello's rage ;
Abandon'd Dido's fruitless prayer ;

And Eloisa's long despair ;
The garland blest'd with many a vow,
For haughty Sacharissa's brow ;
And, wash'd with tears, the mournful verse
That Petrarch laid on Laura's herse.

But more than all the sister quire,
Music confess'd the pleasing fire.
Here fovereign Cupid reign'd alone ;
Music and song were all his own.
Sweet as in old Arcadian plains,
The British pipe has caught the strains :
And where the Tweed's pure current glides,
Or Liffy rolls her limpid tides,
Or Thames his oozy waters leads
Thro' rural bowers or yellow meads,
With many an old romantic tale
Has cheer'd the lone sequester'd vale ;

With

With many a sweet and tender lay
Deceiv'd the tiresome summer-day.

'Tis yours to cull with happy art
Each meaning verse that speaks the heart ;
And fair array'd, in order meet,
To lay the wreath at beauty's feet.