

## ARGUMENT of the FOURTH BOOK.

*The post comes in.—The news-paper is read.—The world contemplated at a distance.—Address to Winter.—The amusements of a rural winter evening compared with the fashionable ones. Address to evening.—A brown study.—Fall of snow in the evening.—The waggoner.—A poor family piece.—The rural thief.—Public houses.—The multitude of them censured.—The farmer's daughter, what she was.—What she is.—The simplicity of country manners almost lost.—Causes of the change.—Desertion of the country by the rich.—Neglect of magistrates.—The militia principally in fault.—The new recruit and his transformation.—Reflection on bodies corporate.—The love of rural objects natural to all, and never to be totally extinguished.*



THE HISTORY OF THE ROMANS

BOOK I

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BOOK IV.

THE WINTER EVENING.

HARK! 'tis the twanging horn! o'er yonder  
bridge

That with its wearisome but needful length  
Besides the wintry flood, in which the moon  
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright,  
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,  
With spatter'd boots, strapp'd waist, and frozen locks,  
News from all nations lumb'ring at his back.  
True to his charge the close-pack'd load behind,  
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern  
Is to conduct it to the destin'd inn,



And having dropp'd th' expected bag—pafs on.  
 He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,  
 Cold and yet cheerful : messenger of grief  
 Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some,  
 To him indiff'rent whether grief or joy.  
 Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,  
 Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet,  
 With tears that trickled down the writers cheeks  
 Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,  
 Or charged with am'rous sighs of absent swains  
 Or nymphs responsive, equally affect  
 His horse and him, unconscious of them all.  
 But oh th' important budget ! usher'd in  
 With such heart-shaking music, who can say  
 What are its tidings ? have our troops awaked ?  
 Or do they still, as if with opium drugg'd,  
 Snore to the murmurs of th' Atlantic wave ?  
 Is India free ? and does she wear her plumed  
 And jewell'd turban with a smile of peace,  
 Or do we grind her still ? the grand debate,

The



The popular harrangue, the tart reply,  
 The logic and the wisdom and the wit  
 And the loud laugh—I long to know them all;  
 I burn to set th' imprison'd wranglers free,  
 And give them voice and utterance once again.

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,  
 Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,  
 And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn  
 Throws up a steamy column, and the cups  
 That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,  
 So let us welcome peaceful evening in.  
 Not such his evening, who with shining face  
 Sweats in the crowded theatre, and squeezed  
 And bored with elbow-points through both his sides,  
 Out folds the ranting actor on the stage.  
 Nor his, who patient stands 'till his feet throb  
 And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath  
 Of patriots bursting with heroic rage,  
 Or placemen, all tranquillity and smiles.

This



This folio of four pages, happy work !  
 Which not ev'n critics criticise, that holds  
 Inquisitive attention while I read  
 Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,  
 Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break,  
 What is it but a map of busy life  
 Its fluctuations and its vast concerns ?  
 Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge  
 That tempts ambition. On the summit, see,  
 The seals of office glitter in his eyes ;  
 He climbs, he pants, he grasps them. At his heels,  
 Close at his heels a demagogue ascends,  
 And with a dext'rous jerk soon twists him down  
 And wins them, but to lose them in his turn.  
 Here rills of oily eloquence in soft  
 Meanders lubricate the course they take ;  
 The modest speaker is ashamed and grieved  
 T' engross a moment's notice, and yet begs,  
 Begg a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,  
 However trivial all that he conceives.

Sweet



Sweet bashfulness! it claims, at least, this praise,  
 The dearth of information and good sense  
 That it foretells us, always comes to pass.  
 Cataracts of declamation thunder here,  
 There forests of no-meaning spread the page  
 In which all comprehension wanders lost;  
 While fields of pleasantry amuse us there,  
 With merry descants on a nation's woes.  
 The rest appears a wilderness of strange  
 But gay confusion, roses for the cheeks  
 And lilies for the brows of faded age,  
 Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,  
 Heav'n, earth, and ocean plunder'd of their sweets,  
 Nectareous effences, Olympian dews,  
 Sermons and city feasts and fav'rite airs,  
 Ætherial journies, submarine exploits,  
 And Katterfelto with his hair on end  
 At his own wonders, wond'ring for his bread.

Tis pleasant through the loop-holes of retreat

To peep at such a world. To see the stir

Of



Of the great Babel and not feel the crowd.  
 To hear the roar she sends through all her gates  
 At a safe distance, where the dying sound  
 Falls a soft murmur on th' uninjured ear.  
 Thus sitting and surveying thus at ease  
 The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced  
 To some secure and more than mortal height,  
 That lib'rates and exempts me from them all.  
 It turns submitted to my view, turns round  
 With all its generations ; I behold  
 The tumult and am still. The found of war  
 Has lost its terrors 'ere it reaches me,  
 Grieves but alarms me not. I mourn the pride  
 And av'rice that make man a wolf to man,  
 Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats  
 By which he speaks the language of his heart,  
 And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.  
 He travels and expatiates, as the bee  
 From flow'r to flow'r, so he from land to land ;  
 The manners, customs, policy of all

Pay



pay contribution to the store he gleans,  
 He sucks intelligence in ev'ry clime,  
 And spreads the honey of his deep research  
 At his return, a rich repast for me.  
 He travels and I too. I tread his deck,  
 Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes  
 Discover countries, with a kindred heart  
 Suffer his woes and share in his escapes,  
 While fancy, like the finger of a clock,  
 Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.

Oh Winter ! ruler of th' inverted year,  
 Thy scatter'd hair with fleet like ashes fill'd,  
 Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks  
 Fring'd with a beard made white with other snows  
 Than those of age; thy forehead wrapt in clouds,  
 A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne  
 A sliding car indebted to no wheels,  
 But urged by storms along its slipp'ry way;  
 I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,  
 And



And dreaded as thou art. Thou hold'st the fun  
 A pris'ner in the yet undawning East,  
 Short'ning his journey between morn and noon,  
 And hurrying him impatient of his stay  
 Down to the rosy West. But kindly still  
 Compensating his loss with added hours  
 Of social converse and instructive ease,  
 And gathering at short notice in one group  
 The family dispersed, and fixing thought  
 Not less dispersed by day light and its cares.  
 I crown thee King of intimate delights,  
 Fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness,  
 And all the comforts that the lowly roof  
 Of undisturb'd retirement, and the hours  
 Of long uninterrupted evening know.  
 No ratt'ling wheels stop short before these gates,  
 No powder'd pert proficient in the art  
 Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors  
 'Till the street rings. No stationary steeds  
 Cough their own knell, while heedless of the sound

The



The silent circle fan themselves, and quake,  
 But here the needle plies its busy task,  
 The pattern grows, the well-depicted flow'r  
 Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn  
 Unfolds its bosom, buds and leaves and sprigs  
 And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,  
 Follow the nimble finger of the fair,  
 A wreath that cannot fade, of flow'rs that blow  
 With most success when all besides decay.  
 The poet's or historian's page, by one  
 Made vocal for th' amusement of the rest;  
 The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds  
 The touch from many a trembling chord shakes out;  
 And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,  
 And in the charming strife triumphant still,  
 Beguile the night, and set a keener edge  
 On female industry; the threaded steel  
 Flies swiftly, and unfelt the task proceeds.  
 The volume closed, the customary rites  
 Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal.

L

Such



Such as the mistress of the world once found  
 Delicious, when her patriots of high note,  
 Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,  
 And under an old oak's domestic shade  
 Enjoyed, spare feast! a radish and an egg.  
 Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,  
 Nor such as with a frown forbids the play  
 Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth.  
 Nor do we madly, like an impious world,  
 Who deem religion frenzy, and the God  
 That made them an intruder on their joys,  
 Start at his awful name, or deem his praise  
 A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone  
 Exciting oft our gratitude and love,  
 While we retrace with mem'ry's pointing wand  
 That calls the past to our exact review,  
 The dangers we have scaped, the broken snare,  
 The disappointed foe, deliv'rance found  
 Unlook'd for, life preserved and peace restored,  
 Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.

Oh



Oh evenings worthy of the Gods ! exclaim'd  
 The Sabine bard. Oh evenings, I reply,  
 More to be prized and coveted than yours,  
 As more illumin'd and with nobler truths,  
 That I and mine and those we love, enjoy.

Is winter hideous in a garb like this ?  
 Needs he the tragic fur, the smoke of lamps,  
 The pent-up breath of an unfav'ry throng  
 To thaw him into feeling, or the smart  
 And snappish dialogue that flippant wits  
 Call comedy, to prompt him with a smile ?  
 The self-complacent actor when he views  
 (Stealing a side long glance at a full house)  
 The slope of faces from the floor to th' roof,  
 (As if one master-spring controul'd them all)  
 Relax'd into an universal grin,  
 Sees not a count'nance there that speaks a joy  
 Half so refin'd or so sincere as ours.  
 Cards were superfluous here, with all the tricks



That idleness has ever yet contrived  
 To fill the void of an unfurnish'd brain,  
 To palliate dullness and give time a shove,  
 Time as he passes us, has a dove's wing,  
 Unsoiled and swift and of a filken sound.  
 But the world's time, is time in masquerade.  
 Theirs, should I paint him, has his pinions fledg'd  
 With motley plumes, and where the peacock shows  
 His azure eyes, is tintured black and red  
 With spots quadrangular of di'mond form,  
 Enfanguin'd hearts, clubs typical of strife,  
 And spades, the emblem of untimely graves.  
 What should be, and what was an hour-glass once  
 Becomes a dice-box, and a billiard mast  
 Well does the work of his destructive scythe.  
 Thus deck'd he charms a world whom fashion blinds  
 To his true worth, most pleas'd when idle most,  
 Whose only happy are their wasted hours.  
 Ev'n misses, at whose age their mother's wore  
 The back-string and the bib, assume the dress

Of



Of womanhood, fit pupils in the school  
 Of card-devoted time, and night by night  
 Plac'd at some vacant corner of the board,  
 Learn ev'ry trick, and soon play all the game.  
 But truce with censure. Roving as I rove,  
 Where shall I find an end, or how proceed?  
 As he that travels far, oft turns aside  
 To view some rugged rock or mould'ring tow'r,  
 Which seen delights him not; then coming home,  
 Describēs and prints it, that the world may know  
 How far he went for what was nothing worth;  
 So I with brush in hand and pallet spread  
 With colours mixt for a far diff'rent use,  
 Paint cards and dolls, and ev'ry idle thing  
 That fancy finds in her excursive flights.

Come evening once again, season of peace,  
 Return sweet evening, and continue long!  
 Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,  
 With matron-step slow-moving, while the night



Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employ'd

In letting fall the curtain of repose

On bird and beast, the other charged for man

With sweet oblivion of the cares of day;

Not sumptuously adorn'd, nor needing aid

Like homely featur'd night, of clust'ring gems,

A star or two just twinkling on thy brow

Suffices thee; save that the moon is thine

No less than hers, not worn indeed on high

With ostentatious pageantry, but set

With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,

Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.

Come then, and thou shalt find thy vot'ry calm

Or make me so. Composure is thy gift.

And whether I devote thy gentle hours

To books, to music, or the poets toil,

To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit;

Or twining silken threads round iv'ry reels

When they command whom man was born to please,

I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.

Just



Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze  
 With lights by clear reflection multiplied  
 From many a mirrour, in which he of Gath  
 Goliath, might have seen his giant bulk  
 Whole without stooping, tow'ring crest and all,  
 My pleasures too begin. But me perhaps  
 The glowing hearth may satisfy awhile  
 With faint illumination that uplifts  
 The shadow to the cieling, there by fits  
 Dancing uncouthly to the quiv'ring flame,  
 Not undelightful is an hour to me  
 So spent in parlour twilight; such a gloom  
 Suits well the thoughtfull or unthinking mind,  
 The mind contemplative, with some new theme  
 Pregnant, or indisposed alike to all.  
 Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial pow'rs  
 That never feel a stupor, know no pause  
 Nor need one. I am conscious, and confess  
 Fearless, a foul that does not always think.  
 Me oft has fancy ludicrous and wild



Sooth'd with a waking dream of houses, tow'rs,  
 Trees, churches, and strange villages express'd  
 In the red cinders, while with poring eye  
 I gazed, myself creating what I saw.  
 Nor less amus'd have I quiescent watch'd  
 The footy films that play upon the bars  
 Pendulous, and foreboding in the view  
 Of superstition prophesying still  
 Though still deceived, some strangers near approach.  
 'Tis thus the understanding takes repose  
 In indolent vacuity of thought,  
 And sleeps and is refresh'd. Meanwhile the face  
 Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask  
 Of deep deliberation, as the man  
 Were task'd to his full strength, absorb'd and lost.  
 Thus oft reclin'd at ease, I lose an hour  
 At evening, till at length the freezing blast  
 That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home  
 The recollected powers, and snapping short  
 The glassy threads with which the fancy weaves

Her



Her brittle toys, restores me to myself.  
 How calm is my recess, and how the frost  
 Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear  
 The silence and the warmth enjoy'd within.  
 I saw the woods and fields at close of day  
 A variegated show; the meadows green  
 Though faded, and the lands where lately waved  
 The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,  
 Upturn'd so lately by the forceful share.  
 I saw far off the weedy fallows smile  
 With verdure not unprofitable, grazed  
 By flocks fast feeding and selecting each  
 His fav'rite herb; while all the leafless groves  
 That skirt th' horizon wore a sable hue,  
 Scarce noticed in the kindred dusk of eve.  
 To-morrow brings a change, a total change!  
 Which even now, though silently perform'd  
 And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face  
 Of universal nature undergoes.  
 Fast falls a fleecy show'r. The downy flakes

Descending



Descending and with never-ceasing lapse  
 Softly alighting upon all below,  
 Assimilate all objects. Earth receives  
 Gladly the thick'ning mantle, and the green  
 And tender blade that fear'd the chilling blast,  
 Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.

In such a world, so thorny, and where none  
 Finds happiness unblighted, or if found,  
 Without some thiftly sorrow at its side,  
 It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin  
 Against the law of love, to measure lots  
 With less distinguish'd than ourselves, that thus  
 We may with patience bear our mod'rate ills,  
 And sympathize with others, suffering more.  
 Ill fares the trav'ler now, and he that stalks  
 In pond'rous boots beside his reeking team,  
 The wain goes heavily, impeded fore  
 By congregated loads adhering close  
 To the clogg'd wheels; and in its sluggish pace

Noiseless,



Noiseless, appears a moving hill of snow.  
 The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,  
 While ev'ry breath by respiration strong  
 Forced downward, is consolidated soon  
 Upon their jutting chests. He, form'd to bear  
 The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,  
 With half-shut eyes and pucker'd cheeks, and teeth  
 Presented bare against the storm, plods on.  
 One hand secures his hat, save when with both  
 He brandishes his pliant length of whip,  
 Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.  
 Oh happy ! and in my account, denied  
 That sensibility of pain with which  
 Refinement is endued, thrice happy thou.  
 Thy frame robust and hardy, feels indeed  
 The piercing cold, but feels it unimpair'd.  
 The learned finger never need explore  
 Thy vig'rous pulse, and the unhealthy East,  
 That breathes the spleen, and searches ev'ry bone  
 Of the infirm, is wholesome air to thee.

Thy

pace  
 Noiseless,



Thy days roll on exempt from household care,  
 Thy waggon is thy wife; and the poor beasts  
 That drag the dull companion to and fro,  
 Thine helpless charge, dependent on thy care.  
 Ah treat them kindly! rude as thou appear'st  
 Yet show that thou hast mercy, which the great  
 With needfuls hurry whirl'd from place to place,  
 Humane as they would seem, not always show.

Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,  
 Such claim compassion in a night like this,  
 And have a friend in ev'ry feeling heart.  
 Warm'd, while it lasts, by labor, all day long  
 They brave the season, and yet find at eve  
 Ill clad and fed but sparsely time to cool.  
 The frugal housewife trembles when she lights  
 Her scanty stock of brush-wood, blazing clear  
 But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.  
 The few small embers left she nurses well,  
 And while her infant race with outspread hands

And



And crowded knees sit cowering o'er the sparks,  
 Retires, content to quake, so they be warm'd.  
 The man feels least, as more inur'd than she  
 To winter, and the current in his veins  
 More briskly moved by his severer toil;  
 Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs.  
 The taper soon extinguished, which I saw  
 Dangled along at the cold fingers end  
 Just when the day declined, and the brown loaf  
 Lodged on the shelf half-eaten without sauce  
 Of sav'ry cheese, or butter costlier still,  
 Sleep seems their only refuge. For alas!  
 Where penury is felt the thought is chain'd,  
 And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few.  
 With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care  
 Ingenious parsimony takes, but just  
 Saves the small inventory, bed and stool,  
 Skillet and old carved chest from public sale,  
 They live, and live without extorted alms  
 From grudging hands, but other boast have none

To

And



To sooth their honest pride that scorns to beg,  
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.

I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,  
For ye are worthy; chusing rather far

A dry but independent crust, hard-earn'd

And eaten with a sigh, than to endure

The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs

Of knaves in office, partial in the work

Of distribution; lib'ral of their aid

To clam'rous importunity in rags,

But oft-times deaf to suppliant who would blush

To wear a tatter'd garb however coarse,

Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth;

These ask with painful shyness, and refused

Because deserving, silently retire.

But be ye of good courage. Time itself

Shall much befriend you. Time shall give increase,

And all your num'rous progeny well train'd

But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,

And labor too. Meanwhile ye shall not want

What

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What conscious of your virtues we can spare,  
 Nor what a wealthier than ourselves may send.  
 I mean the man, who when the distant poor  
 Need help, denies them nothing but his name.

But poverty with most who whimper forth  
 Their long complaints, is self inflicted woe,  
 Th' effect of laziness or sottish waste.  
 Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad  
 For plunder; much solicitous how best  
 He may compensate for a day of sloth,  
 By works of darkness and nocturnal wrong.

Woe to the gard'ner's pale, the farmer's hedge  
 Plash'd neatly, and secured with driven stakes  
 Deep in the loamy bank. Uptorn by strength  
 Resistless in so bad a cause, but lame  
 To better deeds, he bundles up the spoil  
 An asses burthen, and when laden most  
 And heaviest, light of foot steals fast away.  
 Nor does the boarded hovel better guard

The



The well stack'd pile of riven logs and roots  
 From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave  
 Unwrench'd the door however well secured,  
 Where chanticler amidst his haram sleeps  
 In unsuspecting pomp. Twitch'd from the perch  
 He gives the princely bird with all his wives  
 To his voracious bag, struggling in vain,  
 And loudly wond'ring at the sudden change.  
 Nor this to feed his own. 'Twere some excuse  
 Did pity of their sufferings warp aside  
 His principle, and tempt him into sin  
 For their support, so destitute. But they  
 Neglected pine at home, themselves, as more  
 Exposed than others, with less scruple made  
 His victims, robb'd of their defenceless all.  
 Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchless thirst  
 Of ruinous ebriety that prompts  
 His ev'ry action and imbrutes the man.  
 Oh for a law to noose the villain's neck  
 Who starves his own. Who persecutes the blood

He



He gave them in his childrens veins, and hates  
And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love.

Pass where we may, through city or through town,  
Village or hamlet of this merry land  
Though lean and beggar'd, ev'ry twentieth pace  
Conducts the unguarded nose to such a whiff  
Of stale debauch forth-issuing from the styes  
That law has licensed, as makes temp'rance reel.  
There sit involved and lost in curling clouds  
Of Indian fume, and guzzling deep, the boor,  
The lacquey and the groom. The craftsman there  
Takes a Lethæan leave of all his toil;  
Smith, cobbler, joiner, he that plies the sheers,  
And he that kneads the dough; all loud alike,  
All learned, and all drunk. The fiddle screams  
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wailed  
Its wasted tones and harmony unheard:  
Fierce the dispute whate'er the theme. While she,  
Fell Discord, arbitress of such debate,

M

Perch'd



Perch'd on the sign-post, holds with even hand  
 Her undecisive scales. In this she lays  
 A weight of ignorance, in that, of pride,  
 And smiles delighted with th' eternal poise.  
 Dire is the frequent curse and its twin sound  
 The cheek-distending oath, not to be praised  
 As ornamental, musical, polite,  
 Like those which modern senators employ,  
 Whose oath is rhet'ric, and who swear for fame.  
 Behold the schools in which plebeian minds,  
 Once simple, are initiated in arts  
 Which some may practise with politer grace,  
 But none with readier skill! tis here they learn  
 The road that leads from competence and peace  
 To indigence and rapine; till at last  
 Society grown weary of the load,  
 Shakes her incumber'd lap, and casts them out,  
 But censure profits little. Vain th' attempt  
 To advertize in verse a public pest,  
 That like the filth with which the peasant feeds

His



His hungry acres, stinks and is of use.  
 'Th' excise is fatten'd with the rich result  
 Of all this riot. And ten thousand casks  
 For ever dribbling out their base contents,  
 Touched by the Midas finger of the state,  
 Bleed gold for Ministers to sport away.  
 Drink and be mad then. 'Tis your country bids.  
 Gloriously drunk obey th' important call,  
 Her cause demands th' assistance of your throats,  
 Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.

Would I had fall'n upon those happier days  
 That poets celebrate. Those golden times  
 And those Arcadian scenes that Maro sings,  
 And Sydney, warbler of poetic prose.  
 Nymphs were Dianas then, and swains had hearts  
 That felt their virtues. Innocence it seems,  
 From courts dismiss'd, found shelter in the groves.  
 The footsteps of simplicity impress'd  
 Upon the yielding herbage (so they sing)

M 2

Then



Then were not all effaced. Then, speech profane  
 And manners profligate were rarely found,  
 Observed as prodigies, and soon reclaim'd.  
 Vain wish ! those days were never. Airy dreams  
 Sat for the picture. And the poet's hand  
 Imparting substance to an empty shade,  
 Imposed a gay delirium for a truth.  
 Grant it. I still must envy them an age  
 That favor'd such a dream, in days like these  
 Impossible, when virtue is so scarce  
 That to suppose a scene where she presides,  
 Is tramontane, and stumbles all belief.  
 No. We are polish'd now. The rural lass  
 Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,  
 Her artless manners and her neat attire  
 So dignified, that she was hardly less  
 Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,  
 Is seen no more. The character is lost.  
 Her head adorn'd with lappets pinn'd aloft  
 And ribbands streaming gay, superbly raised

And



And magnified beyond all human size,  
 Indebted to some smart wig-weavers hand  
 For more than half the tresses it sustains;  
 Her elbows ruffled, and her tott'ring form  
 Ill propp'd upon French heels; she might be deemed  
 (But that the basket dangling on her arm  
 Interprets her more truly) of a rank  
 Too proud for dairy-work or sale of eggs.  
 Expect her soon with foot-boy at her heels,  
 No longer blushing for her awkward load,  
 Her train and her umbrella all her care.

The town has tinged the country. And the stain  
 Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,  
 The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs  
 Down into scenes still rural, but alas!  
 Scenes rarely graced with rural manners now.  
 Time was when in the pastoral retreat  
 Th' unguarded door was safe. Men did not watch  
 T' invade another's right, or guard their own.



Then sleep was undisturb'd by fear, unscared  
 By drunken howlings; and the chilling tale  
 Of midnight murder was a wonder heard  
 With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes,  
 But farewell now to unuspicious nights  
 And slumbers unalarm'd. Now 'ere you sleep  
 See that your polish'd arms be prim'd with care,  
 And drop the night-bolt. Ruffians are abroad,  
 And the first larum of the cock's shrill throat  
 May prove a trumpet, summoning your ear  
 To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.  
 Ev'n day-light has its dangers. And the walk  
 Through pathless wastes and woods, unconscious once  
 Of other tenants than melodious birds  
 Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.  
 Lamented change ! to which full many a cause  
 Invet'rate, hopeles of a cure, conspires.  
 The course of human things from good to ill,  
 From ill to worse, is fatal, never fails.  
 Increase of pow'r begets increase of wealth,

Wealth



Wealth luxury, and luxury excess;  
 Excess, the scrophulous and itchy plague  
 That seizes first the opulent, descends  
 To the next rank contagious, and in time  
 Taints downward all the graduated scale  
 Of order, from the chariot to the plough.  
 The rich, and they that have an arm to check  
 The license of the lowest in degree,  
 Desert their office; and themselves intent  
 On pleasure, haunt the capital, and thus,  
 To all the violence of lawless hands  
 Resign the scenes their presence might protect,  
 Authority herself not seldom sleeps,  
 Though resident, and witness of the wrong.  
 The plump convivial parson often bears  
 The magisterial sword in vain, and lays  
 His rev'rence and his worship both to rest  
 On the same cushion of habitual sloth.  
 Perhaps timidity restrains his arm,  
 When he should strike, he trembles, and sets free,  
 Himself



Himself enslaved by terror of the hand,  
 Th' audacious convict whom he dares not bind,  
 Perhaps, though by profession ghostly pure,  
 He too may have his vice, and sometimes prove  
 Less dainty than becomes his grave outside,  
 In lucrative concerns. Examine well  
 His milk-white hand. The palm is hardly clean—  
 But here and there an ugly smutch appears.  
 Foh! 'twas a bribe that left it. He has touched  
 Corruption. Who so seeks an audit here  
 Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fish,  
 Wildfowl or ven'son, and his errand speeds,

But faster far and more than all the rest  
 A noble cause, which none who bears a spark  
 Of public virtue, ever wish'd removed,  
 Works the deplor'd and mischievous effect,  
 'Tis universal soldiiership has stabb'd  
 The heart of merit in the meaner class.  
 Arms through the vanity and brainless rage

Of



Of those that bear them in whatever cause,  
Seem most at variance with all moral good,  
And incompatible with serious thought.  
The clown, the child of nature, without guile,  
Blest with an infant's ignorance of all  
But his own simple pleasures, now and then  
A wrestling match, a foot-race, or a fair,  
Is ballotted, and trembles at the news.  
Sheepish he doffs his hat, and mumbling swears  
A Bible-oath to be whate'er they please,  
To do he knows not what. The task perform'd,  
That instant he becomes the serjeant's care,  
His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.  
His aukward gait, his introverted toes,  
Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,  
Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,  
Unapt to learn and formed of stubborn stuff,  
He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,  
Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well.  
He stands erect, his slouch becomes a walk,

He



He steps right onward, martial in his air  
 His form and movement; is as smart above  
 As meal and larded locks can make him; wears  
 His hat or his plumed helmet with a grace,  
 And his three years of heroism expired,  
 Returns indignant to the flighted plough.  
 He hates the field in which no fife or drum  
 Attends him, drives his cattle to a march,  
 And sighs for the smart comrades he has left.  
 'T were well if his exterior change were all—  
 But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost  
 His ignorance and harmless manners too.  
 To swear, to game, to drink, to shew at home  
 By lewdness, idleness, and sabbath-breach,  
 The great proficiency he made abroad,  
 T' astonish and to grieve his gazing friends,  
 To break some maiden's and his mother's heart,  
 To be a pest where he was useful once,  
 Are his sole aim, and all his glory now.

Man



Man in society is like a flow'r  
 Blown in its native bed. 'Tis there alone  
 His faculties expanded in full bloom  
 Shine out, there only reach their proper use.  
 But man associated and leagued with man  
 By regal warrant, or self-joined by bond  
 For interest-sake, or swarming into clans  
 Beneath one head for purposes of war,  
 Like flow'rs selected from the rest, and bound  
 And bundled close to fill some crowded vase,  
 Fades rapidly, and by compression marred  
 Contracts defilement not to be endured.  
 Hence charter'd boroughs are such public plagues,  
 And burghers, men immaculate perhaps  
 In all their private functions, once combined  
 Become a loathsome body, only fit  
 For dissolution, hurtful to the main.  
 Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin  
 Against the charities of domestic life,  
 Incorporated, seem at once to lose

Their



Their nature, and disclaiming all regard  
 For mercy and the common rights of man,  
 Build factories with blood, conducting trade  
 At the sword's point, and dying the white robe  
 Of innocent commercial justice red.  
 Hence too the field of glory, as the world  
 Misdemeans it, dazzled by its bright array,  
 With all the majesty of its thund'ring pomp,  
 Enchanting music and immortal wreaths,  
 Is but a school where thoughtlessness is taught  
 On principle, where foppery atones  
 For folly, gallantry for ev'ry vice,

But slighted as it is, and by the great  
 Abandon'd, and, which still I more regret,  
 Infected with the manners and the modes  
 It knew not once, the country wins me still.  
 I never fram'd a wish, or form'd a plan  
 That flatter'd me with hopes of earthly bliss,  
 But there I laid the scene. There early stray'd

My



My fancy, 'ere yet liberty of choice  
 Had found me, or the hope of being free.  
 My very dreams were rural, rural too  
 The first-born efforts of my youthful muse  
 Sportive, and jingling her poetic bells  
 'Ere yet her ear was mistress of their pow'rs.  
 No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned  
 To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats  
 Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe  
 Of Tityrus, assembling as he sang  
 The rustic throng beneath his fav'rite beech.  
 Then Milton had indeed a poet's charms.  
 New to my taste, his Paradise surpass'd  
 The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue  
 To speak its excellence; I danced for joy.  
 I marvel'd much that at so ripe an age  
 As twice sev'n years, his beauties had then first  
 Engaged my wonder, and admiring still  
 And still admiring, with regret supposed  
 The joy half lost because not sooner found.

Thee



Thee too enamour'd of the life I loved,  
 Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit  
 Determined, and possessing it at last  
 With transports such as favor'd lovers feel,  
 I studied, prized, and wished that I had known  
 Ingenious Cowley ! and though now, reclaimed,  
 By modern lights from an erroneous taste,  
 I cannot but lament thy splendid wit  
 Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools,  
 I still revere thee, courtly though retired,  
 Though stretch'd at ease in Chertsey's silent bow'rs  
 Not unemploy'd, and finding rich amends  
 For a lost world in solitude and verse.  
 'Tis born with all. The love of Nature's works  
 Is an ingredient in the compound, man,  
 Infused at the creation of the kind.  
 And though th' Almighty Maker, has throughout  
 Discriminated each from each, by strokes  
 And touches of his hand with so much art  
 Diversified, that two were never found

Twins

Twins at  
 That all  
 And all  
 And tute  
 But none  
 It is a fla  
 Where no  
 Nor habi  
 Whatever  
 In human  
 The villas  
 Like a sw  
 Prove it.  
 The glim  
 The citize  
 Ev'n in th  
 A garden  
 That foot  
 That here  
 Of nightf



Twins at all points—yet this obtains in all,  
 That all discern a beauty in his works  
 And all can taste them. Minds that have been form'd  
 And tutor'd, with a relish more exact,  
 But none without some relish, none unmoved.  
 It is a flame that dies not even there  
 Where nothing feeds it. Neither business, crowds,  
 Nor habits of luxurious city-life,  
 Whatever else they smother of true worth  
 In human bosoms, quench it or abate.  
 The villas with which London stands begirt  
 Like a swarth Indian with his belt of beads,  
 Prove it. A breath of unadulterate air,  
 The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer  
 The citizen, and brace his languid frame!  
 Ev'n in the stifling bosom of the town,  
 A garden in which nothing thrives, has charms  
 That sooth the rich possessor; much consoled  
 That here and there some sprigs of mournful mint,  
 Of nightshade or valerian grace the well

He



He cultivates. These serve him with a hint  
 That Nature lives, that sight-refreshing green  
 Is still the liv'ry she delights to wear,  
 Though sickly samples of th' exub'rant whole.  
 What are the casements lined with creeping herbs,  
 The prouder fashions fronted with a range  
 Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed  
 The Frenchman's\* darling? are they not all proofs  
 That man immured in cities, still retains  
 His inborn inextinguishable thirst  
 Of rural scenes, compensating his loss  
 By supplemental shifts, the best he may?  
 The most unfurnished with the means of life,  
 And they that never pass their brick-wall bounds  
 To range the fields and treat their lungs with air,  
 Yet feel the burning instinct: over-head  
 Suspend their crazy boxes planted thick  
 And water'd duely. There the pitcher stands

A fragment,

\* Mignonette,



A fragment, and the spoutless tea-pot there ;  
 Sad witness how close-pent man regrets  
 The country, with what ardour he contrives  
 A peep at nature, when he can no more.

Hail therefore patroness of health and ease  
 And contemplation, heart-consoling joys  
 And harmless pleasures in the throng'd abode  
 Of multitudes unknown, hail rural life !

Address himself who will to the pursuit  
 Of honors or emolument or fame,  
 I shall not add myself to such a chace,  
 Thwart his attempts, or envy his success.  
 Some must be great. Great offices will have  
 Great talents. And God gives to ev'ry man  
 The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,  
 That lifts him into life, and lets him fall  
 Just in the niche he was ordain'd to fill.]  
 To the deliv'rer of an injured land

He gives a tongue t' enlarge upon, an heart

N

To



To feel, and courage to redress her wrongs ;

To monarchs dignity, to judges sense,

To artists ingenuity and skill ;

To me an unambitious mind, content

In the low vale of life, that early felt

A wish for ease and leisure, and 'ere long

Found here that leisure and that ease I wish'd.