

VERSES WRITTEN IN LONDON ON THE  
APPROACH OF SPRING.

EARLY the sun his radiant axle guides,  
Sloping his steep course with the Pleiades ;  
On every fragrant briar the flowret blooms,  
And the wild woodlark chaunts his early song  
In heedless carol, to the smiling Hours,  
Young Maia's festive train ; their wavy dance  
She jocund leads, and from her horn profuse  
Pours roses, violets, woodbines, eglantine,  
Fair Flora's dower, what time the youthful Spring  
Clasp'd her all-blushing in a secret bower :  
Thou the mild offspring of their warm embrace,  
Oh lovely May, and these thine heritage,  
Which bounteous thou with an unsparing hand  
Scatterest to all, tho' chief thou lov'st to deck  
The village Phæbe's brow, and fairer far  
Is thy adorning, than the sunny glow  
Of eastern ruby, ill assorted grace  
That decks not but deforms the faded cheek  
Of the wan courtier.—Far more raptur'd greets  
Fancy's fond ear, where'er she musing roves,  
Thy minstrelsy untutor'd, than the trill  
And languid descant of Italian art.

Yet sings the woodlark, and the hawthorn blooms,  
 Unheard the song, the fragrance unperceiv'd  
 By me; tho' not among the sons of men  
 There lives, who listens with more raptur'd ear,  
 Or feels more lively, Nature's varied boon,  
 For tho' confined in the city walls  
 To dwell with busy Care, and with him watch  
 The call of Interest, is my lot affix'd,  
 Far happier seems to me the peasant's life,  
 Who treads the furrow labouring, yet his mind  
 Vacant of thought can muse of what around  
 Strikes his rapt eye with beauty, or his ear  
 With pleasing song, than if a golden mine  
 Disclos'd its boundless treasures, but condemn'd  
 My carking thought, to watch the gilded mischief,  
 And cunningly devise t' increase the store.

Bereav'd of every pleasure Nature gives  
 Each plain but heart-felt rapture, what is wealth ?  
 In artful mazes we but toil for bliss :  
 True Pleasure dwells not in the arched roof,  
 She sings no carol to the midnight ball ;  
 The loaded board and Bacchus' fluttering draughts  
 In vain are tryed, for ah she dwells not there !  
 She dwells not with such rude ill-manner'd mirth,  
 But seeks with her mild sister Chearfulness  
 The russet plain ; there prompts the virgin's song,  
 Breathes the brisk carol from the cottage reed,  
 Strikes the quick tabor glad with echoing pulse,

And

And animates the village holiday.  
 Nor then alone but when his honest labour  
 Calls the good swain, she early joins his step;  
 For the mild radiance of the opening dawn  
 Gives to her sight the wide-extended view  
 Of hill and dale, hoar forest, flowering heath,  
 Rich harvest, verdant meadow, where the stream  
 Rolls far its plenteous wave, and all around  
 To Pleasure's ear most grateful, thousand birds,  
 Lark, linnet, thrush, and thou of all the grove  
 The sweetest songster, witching Philomel,  
 Art rising to hymn out thy morning song.

Thou too at eve, when all his labour o'er,  
 He at the furrow's end unyokes the steer,  
 And seeks with weary step his rest at home,  
 Dost with thy tranquil warble sooth his soul;  
 Best prelude to the peace his cottage gives.

There at the door his numerous offspring watch  
 Their sire's return, and eager run to tell  
 The tyding of his coming, while his dame  
 Plys her glad evening care, to deck the board  
 With food uncater'd by the baleful hand  
 Of Luxury, and fittest to refresh  
 His toil-worn spirit, and her smiling welcome  
 Gives its due relish to the simple fare.

What are to this the proud luxurious feasts,  
 The City's boast, where distant colonies  
 Of East and Western worlds must be explor'd

To strike the sickly palate's feeble sense  
 With faint delight? Oh what are all our joys,  
 Ev'n those of monarchs, to the thousand beauties  
 That strike the rapt soul of the rudest hind?

Can Art's best mimicry their form express?  
 Can rich Loraine mix up the glowing tint  
 Bright as Aurora? Can he form a shade  
 To strike the fancy with a gloom so solemn  
 As every thicket, copse, or secret grove  
 At twilight hour affords? Can savage Rosa  
 With aught so wildly noble fill the mind,  
 As where the ancient oak in the wood's depth  
 Has shed his leafy honours, and around  
 The woodman with fell axe has lower'd the pride  
 Of many a tall tree, he deserted stands  
 A barren trunk, while rude winds howl around,  
 And dreary torrents lash his naked limbs?  
 Mean time the rising thunder dreadful roars,  
 The livid lightnings flash, and elements  
 Conjoin'd pour out their wrath, as if to rend  
 The lone, defenceless, aged, feeble oak.  
 Such scenes awake Imagination's powers  
 To sacred thought; such Rosa cannot paint;  
 'Tis his alone to show the shatter'd trunk:  
 The winds keen howl, the thunder's awful sound,  
 The dreary rain, these mock the pencil's power.

Can aught of artful music sooth the soul  
 To so serene a temper, as the sight

Of songsters in the grove ? or can thy strain,  
 (Tho' there Enchantment strike the magic chord)  
 Oh matchless Purcell ! with so wild a charm  
 Transport the mind, as when at dusk of eve  
 From the hoar battlement the lone owl's cry  
 Pierces the awful silence, and the fall'n  
 And time-worn hollow towers convey the sound  
 To the near wood, where in the devious path  
 Retired Fancy wanders, on her ear  
 The faint sound murmurs, strait the distant low  
 Of unyok'd heifer, strait the cuckow's note  
 She hears, while oft the roving Zephyr's tread  
 Rustling alarms her, and the measur'd step  
 Of the slow steer, who brushes thro' the thicket  
 To seek his food, beats duly regular.  
 As on he wanders, thro' the opening bower  
 He sees the pale moon rising ; clouds on clouds  
 Pil'd mountainous awhile obstruct her beam,  
 Till labouring thence she lifts her silver brow,  
 And pours her full ray on the ivy'd steeple.  
 And hark its bell now tolls the minute knell,  
 And thro' the churchway path the surplic'd priest  
 Walks slowly forward, while the snowy pall  
 Covering the relicks of some love-lorn virgin,  
 Passes with awful pace along the glade.  
 Wrapt harmonist ! what tho' thy studied chord  
 Can sound the slow knell, echo to the note  
 The lone owl utters, breathe the heifer's low,

And

And mark the funeral step with pausing cadence;  
 And music can no more, where is the tower  
 O'er-hung with ivy, seen by the pale moon,  
 Whose faint beam glimmers on the snowy pall?  
 Where are the rocky clouds from whence she breaks?  
 Yet do not these, does not the rustling breeze  
 And the slow-treading heifer add delight?  
 Do not accordant senses join to fill  
 The musing mind with calm and holy rapture?  
 And can the city by the utmost force  
 Of mimic art, with labour'd imitation  
 So soothe the soul, or give such mild delight?

Ye gay and sportive votaries of Joy,  
 Forgive the thoughtless Muse, for she has led me  
 To talk of pleasing horror, and the bliss  
 Which melancholy gives; ye cannot form  
 Amid the circling follies, which urge on  
 Your laughing hours, perhaps ye cannot form  
 A notion of these joys, and with a taunt  
 Of high contempt, despise the wild enthusiasm.  
 Yet on the well-trod stage have ye not seen  
 Your Roscius fired by the natural bard,  
 Immortal Shakespear, wander the bleak heath  
 A poor and outcast king, nor blame the winds  
 Whose keen tooth seiz'd his age, nor chide the elements  
 For their unkindness, while the rustling storm  
 Tore the proud garments from his shivering trunk,  
 And the fierce lightnings fir'd his maddening brain?

Have

Have you not then felt horror ? Would ye not  
 Change your rich pomp for Edgar's naked hovel,  
 And be the poor king's host ?—Have ye not wish'd  
 To range with Rosaline the forest wild,  
 Or live beneath the shelter of some oak  
 With melancholy Jaques ? Tell me, why then  
 Ye look'd on wealth and greatness with a scorn ?  
 Why but because the Muse with native strength  
 Pour'd truth on Fancy's eye ; and yet the Muse  
 Can only boast in the most warm description  
 A faint resemblance, nor has she such force  
 To strike as Nature has. Alas ! her voice  
 But wakes remembrance of our absent blifs ;  
 And when she sings of incense-breathing Spring,  
 She wafts no odours to the longing sense,  
 But only prompts our sigh, that we must dwell  
 Confin'd in the full city, distant far  
 From every scene of rural innocence,  
 Whose woods, whose shades, whose storms, or funerals,  
 Ev'n raise a sense of pleasure. What can then  
 The brighter views, what can the happy hour  
 That gives the blushing bride to the true arms  
 Of faithful Damon ? Thenot pleas'd revives  
 To former youth, and gayest of the day  
 Provokes the village mirth, and from his soul  
 Enjoys the spoufal of his boy, who scarce  
 (O'ercome with rapture) can himself conduct  
 His festival ; and but for busy Thenot,

Each due right were neglected, and the guests  
 Unbidden by the tabor's sprightly sound  
 To seek the green, and in the jocund dance  
 Each maiden with her youth breathe sport and joy,  
 Save the still happier pair : their greater bliss  
 Fills the whole breast, nor leaves a vacant place  
 For lighter mirth. Unnotic'd speaks the pipe :  
 They hear no sound but the endearing voice  
 Of mutual love : they do not mark the joy  
 In every face around ; for their attention,  
 Fix'd on each other, watches every glance  
 Diffused by the lovely languid eye.  
 Well may all else be unperceiv'd ; for who  
 Observes bright Hesper dart his pointed ray,  
 When riding high mild Cynthia pours serene  
 Her steady beam. Oh tell me, when compar'd  
 To these true raptures, what's the shadowy pomp  
 And artful splendour, when the golden shackles  
 Fetter two venal souls, by interest call'd  
 To prostitute the ever-hallow'd rites  
 Of holy Hymen ?—On the village plain  
 Nought joins but mutual love ; no fordid motive  
 Promotes unnatural union ; but the flame  
 That first united glows throughout their life  
 A steady fire, whose unabating light  
 Gilds Youth with rapture, and with fostering warmth  
 Cheers drooping Age, who smiling sees his offspring  
 Step forth to claim the joys he celebrates

With



With annual hospitality, what time  
 The circling year brings round the happy day  
 That shower'd down blessings on him, when it gave  
 To his fond vow the willing Sylvia's charms,  
 Then blooming young, now hoary, but her heart  
 Unchang'd by time ; for still the same desire  
 To add to every joy, or fondly soothe  
 Each woe he feels, reigns unabated there.  
 His social roof receives each welcome guest,  
 His open heart diffuses round his pleasure,  
 And each plain neighbour with unfeigning tongue  
 Congratulates his blifs. Who would not leave  
 For these sincere delights, the pageant pomp,  
 The rich array, the courtly formal speech  
 Unutter'd by the heart, the birth-day wish  
 Of venal hirelings, who for interest croud  
 The glittering levee ? Happier (Reason deems  
 View'd in each light) the simple village life,  
 Than all that courtiers wish; or kings bestow.  
 Kings cannot give a boon of so rich price  
 As are thy smiles, O lovely Health ! and thou  
 Shunning the tumult, to the rural green  
 Retirest. There, not built by mortal hand,  
 Stands on the southern slope of the fresh hill  
 Thy temple, from whose roof the eglantine  
 And vagrant woodbine hang ; and at the porch  
 Sits thy good priestess Ease, administering  
 To Exercise (who up the gentle slope

By moderate footing moves) the holy cup  
 Of Temperance, nymph of the crystal spring  
 That dwells beneath thy altar; and from thence  
 Warbling with gentle lapse joins the full stream,  
 That winding wild delays its silver course  
 In the rich mead, whose bank the peasant oft  
 Approaches to allay his thirst, and quaffs  
 The simple beverage from the limpid fount.  
 Bright virgin, thee of all the Powers who range  
 The rural plain, I woo with constant vow  
 Most ardent! Deign around my temples bind  
 Thy fragrant wreath, and deck my purpled cheek  
 With thy rich glow. Then undisturb'd the mind  
 Musing pursues its holy meditation,  
 And rapt in trance, can trace a thousand gifts  
 Shower'd by the gracious hand of Nature's King  
 To deck the various field. The wondering eye  
 Roams o'er the fair creation; then to heaven  
 Unbidden soars; for the full soul impress'd  
 With holy transport, there directs its view  
 From whence its blessings flow, and the rapt voice  
 Accordant hymns the grateful song of praise.  
 The rapid gusts of passion, which or pride,  
 Or folly, or the thousand varying forms  
 Of courtly affectation ever raise,  
 Here all subside, and the composed breast  
 Expands with love, and to its utmost power  
 Diffuses blessings to mankind, nor fears

Ingratitude

Ingratitude should check, or pride should spurn  
The offer'd bounties of the generous heart.

Bless'd be the day, and doubly blest the hour,  
When my Fidele with unfeign'd vow

Gave her fond hand, and own'd her constant love :

Tho' since that hour already thrice the sun

From every sign has seen our growing bliss ;

And tho' thy smile of unaffected love

Adds joy to every joy, and charms to ease

The brow of Care ; tho' thou art all that heaven

Could give in woman, tenderness, and truth,

And all my heart e'er wish'd, when warmest Fancy

Form'd the fond future view of household bliss ;

Yet happier still perhaps our lot had been,

Hadst thou beneath the rural thatch receiv'd

My faithful vow, and we had never heard

Of town or city life ; a Marian thou,

And rustic Corin I. Then on the plain

Contented we had pass'd Life's little day.

While Youth with sprightly beam illum'd her hours,

They would move on with joy ; and when at noon

Firm Manhood call'd us forth to till the soil,

And with our labouring hand direct the plough,

We would be ready, nor refuse the task,

Due tribute to the public ; till at eve

Our vigour lost, when Age came creeping on,

We would unyoke our heifers, and retire

To welcome ease, our best skill then employ'd

At our own home ; attentive there to thatch  
 The chinks which Time had made, and to root up  
 Each foul weed that deform'd our little plot.  
 This business over, calm we should attend  
 Th' approaching hour of our eternal rest ;  
 And when it came, borne to our peaceful grave  
 By the plain villager ; what tho' no tomb  
 Of sculptur'd marble call'd the passing eye  
 To read our story, yet the cottage tear  
 Should on our ashes fall, and the good heart  
 O'erflow sincerely for a neighbour lost :  
 Upon our bier the virgin troop would hang  
 Fresh-woven chaplets of the sweetest flowers ;  
 Green turf should deck our grave ; and every year  
 In spring-time would some friendly hand with care  
 Bind the fresh briar around, to guard the place  
 From the rude insult of the careless step ;  
 And faithful Memory to late time record,  
 We were the happiest pair of human kind.