



A N

EPISTLE OF M. DE VOLTAIRE,

UPON HIS ARRIVAL AT HIS ESTATE NEAR THE LAKE
OF GENEVA, IN MARCH, MDCCLV.

FROM THE FRENCH.

O Take, O keep me, ever blest domains,
Where lovely Flora with Pomona reigns ;
Where Art fulfils what Nature's voice requires,
And gives the charms to which my verse aspires ;
Take me, the world with transport I resign,
And let your peaceful solitude be mine !

Yet not in these retreats I boast to find
That perfect bliss that leaves no wish behind ;
This, to no lonely shade kind Nature brings,
Nor Art bestows on courtiers, or on kings ;
Not even the Sage this boon has e'er possess'd,
Tho' join'd with wisdom, virtue shar'd his breast ;
This transient life, alas ! can ne'er suffice
To reach the distant goal, and snatch the prize ;
Yet, sooth'd to rest, we feel suspense from woe,
And tho' not perfect joy, yet joy we know.

Enchanting scenes ! what pleasure you dispense
Where'er I turn, to every wondering sense !
An* ocean here, where no rude tempest roars,
With crystal waters laves the hallow'd shores ;

* The lake of Geneva.

Here flowery fields with rising hills are crown'd,
 Where clustering vines empurple all the ground ;
 Now by degrees from hills to Alps they rise,
 Hell groans beneath, above they pierce the skies !
 See the proud summit, white with endless frost,
 Eternal bulkwark of the blissful coast !
 The blissful coast the hardy Lombards gain,
 And frost and mountains cross their course in vain ;
 Here glory beckon'd mighty chiefs of old,
 And planted laurels to reward the bold ;
 Charles, Otho, Conti heard her trumpet sound,
 And, borne on victory's wings, they spurn'd the mound.

See, on those banks where yon calm waters swell,
 The hair-clad epicure's luxurious cell !
 See fam'd Ripaille, where once so grave, so gay,
 Great Amedeus † pass'd from prayer to play :
 Fantastic wretch ! thou riddle of thy kind !
 What strange ambition seiz'd thy frantic mind ?
 Prince, hermit, lover ! blest thro' every hour
 With blissful change of pleasure and of power,
 Couldst thou, thus paradis'd, from care remote,
 Rush to the world, and fight for Peter's boat ?

† Amedeus the Pacific, first duke of Savoy, in 1434 retired to the priory of Ripaille, where he affected to live like an hermit, and suffered his beard to grow to an enormous length ; but he kept a mistress in his cell ; and in other respects lived in great luxury ; yet he joined with a faction against Pope Eugenius IV. and being elected to the see of Rome, he was crowned Pope by the name of Felix V. but afterwards resigned at the request of Charles VII. king of France.

Now

Now by the Gods of sweet repose I swear,
 I would not thus have barter'd ease for care,
 Spight of the keys that move our fear and hope,
 I ne'er would quit such penance to be Pope.

Let him who Rome's stern tyrant stoop'd to praise,
 The tuneful chanter of sweet georgic lays,
 Let Maro boast of streams that Nature pours
 To lave proud villas on Italia's shores ;
 Superior far the streams that court my song,
 Superior far the shores they wind along :
 Blest shores ! the dwelling of that sacred power
 Who rules each joyful, and each glorious hour,
 Queen of whate'er the good or great desire,
 The patriot's eloquence, the hero's fire,
 Shrin'd in each breast, and near the tyrant's sword
 Invok'd in whispers, and in sighs ador'd,
 Immortal Liberty, whose generous mind
 With all her gifts would bless all human-kind !
 See, from Morat* she comes in martial charms,
 And shines like Pallas in celestial arms,
 Her sword the blood of boastful Austria stains,
 And Charles, who threaten'd with opprobrious chains,
 Now hostile crowds Geneva's towers assail,
 They march in secret, and by night they scale ;

* Morat is a little town in the canton of Fribourgh in Switzerland, famous for a battle which the Switzers gained against Charles the Rash, duke of Burgundy, by which they recovered and established their liberty. Charles himself was wounded, and left 18,000 Austrians dead on the spot.

The Goddess comes—they vanish from the wall.
 Their launces shiver, and their heroes fall,
 For fraud can ne'er elude, nor force withstand
 The stroke of Liberty's victorious hand *.

She smiles ; her smiles perpetual joys diffuse ;
 A shouting nation where she turns pursues ;
 Their heart-felt Pæans thunder to the sky,
 And echoing Appenines from far reply :
 Such wreaths their temples crown as Greece entwin'd
 Her hero's brows at Marathon † to bind ;
 Such wreaths the sons of freedom hold more dear,
 Than circling gold and gems that crown the peer,
 Than the broad hat which shades the Pontiff's face,
 Or the cleft mitre's venerable grace.
 Insulting grandeur, in gay tinsel drest,
 Shows here no star embroider'd on the breast,
 No tissued ribbon on the shoulder tied,
 Vain gift implor'd by Vanity from Pride !
 Nor here stern Wealth, with supercilious eyes,
 The faltering prayer of weeping want denies ;
 Here no false Pride at honest labour sneers,
 Men here are brothers, equal but in years ;

* The duke of Savoy once attempted to surprize Geneva, and take it in the night by escalade, but the first man that mounted the wall was discovered by a woman, who courageously knocked him down, and alarmed the Genevese, who drove off the assailants, and falling after them, made a great slaughter.

† At Marathon, Miltiades, with 10,000 Athenians, defeated an army of more than 100,000 Persians, and delivered his country from a foreign yoke.

Here heaven, O ! Liberty, has fix'd thy throne,
Fill'd, glorious Liberty ! by thee alone.

Rome sees thy face, since Brutus fell, no more,
A stranger thou on many a cultur'd shore :
The Polish lord, of thy embraces vain,
Pricks his proud courser o'er Sarmatia's plain ;
Erects his haughty front in martial pride,
And spurns the burgher, grovelling at his side ;
The grovelling burgher burns with secret fires,
Looks up, beholds thee, sighs, despairs, expires.

Britain's rough sons in thy defence are bold,
Yet some pretend at London thou art sold ;
I heed them not, to sell too proud, too wise,
If blood must buy, with blood the Briton buys.

On Belgic bogs, 'tis said, thy footsteps fail,
But thou secure may'st scorn the whisper'd tale ;
To latest times the race of great Nassau,
Who rais'd seven altars* to thy sacred law,
With faithful hand thy honours shall defend,
And bid proud factions to thy fasces bend.

Thee Venice keeps, thee Genoa now regains ;
And next the throne thy seat the Swede maintains ;
How few in safety thus with kings can vie !
If not supreme, how dangerous to be high !
O ! still preside where'er the law's thy friend,
And keep thy station, and thy rights defend :
But take no factious League's † reproachful name,
Still prone to change, and zealous still to blame,

* The Union of the Seven Provinces.

† The author alludes to the famous League formed against Henry of France.

Cloud not the sunshine of a conquering race,
 Whom wisdom governs, and whom manners grace ;
 Fond of their sovereign, of subjection vain,
 They wish no favours at thy hands to gain,
 Nor need such vassals at their lord repine,
 Whose easy sway they fondly take for thine;
 Thro' the wide East less gentle is thy fate,
 Where the dumb murderer guards the sultan's gate ;
 Here pale and trembling, in the dust o'erturn'd,
 With chains dishonour'd, and by eunuchs spurn'd,
 The sword and bow-string plac'd on either side
 Thou mourn'st, while slaves of life and death decide.

Spoil'd of thy cap thro' all the bright Levant
 Tell * gave thee his, and well supply'd the want,
 O! come my Goddess, in thy chosen hour,
 And let my better fortune hail thy power ;
 Fair friendship calls thee to my green retreat,
 O! come, with friendship share the mossy seat ;
 Like thee she flies the turbulent and great,
 The craft of business, and the farce of state ;
 To you, propitious powers, at last I turn,
 To you, my vows ascend, my altars burn ;
 Let me of each the pleasing influence share,
 My joys now heighten'd, and now sooth'd my care ;
 Each ruder passion banish'd from my breast,
 Bid the short remnant of my days be blest.

* William Tell was the means of restoring liberty and independence to Switzerland by killing Grissler, the tyrant who governed it for the emperor Albert.