



The CHOICE of HERCULES.

A P O E M.

I.

NOW had the son of Jove mature, attain'd
 The joyful prime: when youth, elate and gay,
 Steps into life; and follows unrestrain'd
 Where passion leads, or prudence points the way.
 In the pure mind, at those ambiguous years,
 Or vice, rank weed, first strikes her pois'nous root:
 Or haply virtue's op'ning bud appears
 By just degrees; fair bloom of fairest fruit:
 For, if on youth's untainted thought imprest,
 The gen'rous purpose still shall warm the manly breast.

II.

As on a day, reflecting on his age
 For highest deeds now ripe, Alcides sought
 Retirement; nurse of contemplation sage;
 Step following step, and thought succeeding thought:

Musing, with steady pace the youth pursu'd
 His walk; and lost in meditation stray'd
 Far in a lonely vale, with solitude
 Conversing; while intent his mind survey'd
 The dubious path of life: before him lay
 Here Virtue's rough ascent, there Pleasure's flow'ry way.

III.

Much did the view divide his wavering mind:
 Now glow'd his breast with generous thirst of fame;
 Now love of ease to softer thoughts inclin'd
 His yielding soul, and quench'd the rising flame.
 When, lo! far off two female forms he spies;
 Direct to him their steps they seem to bear:
 Both, large and tall, exceeding human size;
 Both far exceeding human beauty, fair.
 Graceful, yet each with different grace, they move:
 This, striking sacred awe; that, softer, winning love.

IV.

The first, in native dignity surpass'd;
 Artless and unadorn'd she pleas'd the more:
 Health, o'er her looks, a genuine lustre cast;
 A vest, more white than new-fall'n snow she wore.
 August she trod, yet modest was her air;
 Serene her eye, yet darting heav'nly fire.
 Still she drew near; and nearer still more fair,
 More mild appear'd: yet such as might inspire
 Pleasure corrected with an awful fear;
 Majestically sweet, and amiably severe.

V. The

V.

The other dame seem'd ev'n of fairer hue ;
 But bold her mien ; unguarded rov'd her eye :
 And her flush'd cheeks confess'd at nearer view
 The borrow'd blushes of an artful dye.
 All soft and delicate, with airy swim
 Lightly she danc'd along ; her robe betray'd
 Thro' the clear texture ev'ry tender limb,
 Height'ning the charms it only seem'd to shade :
 And as it flow'd adown, so loose and thin,
 Her stature shew'd more tall ; more snowy-white, her skin.

VI.

Oft with a smile she view'd herself askance ;
 Ev'n on her shade a conscious look she threw ;
 Then all around her cast a careless glance,
 To mark what gazing eyes her beauty drew.
 As they came near, before that other maid
 Approaching decent, eagerly she press'd
 With hasty step ; nor of repulse afraid,
 With freedom bland the wond'ring youth address'd ;
 With winning fondness on his neck she hung ;
 Sweet as the honey-dew flow'd her enchanting tongue.

VII.

“ Dear Hercules, whence this unkind delay ?
 “ Dear youth, what doubts can thus distract thy mind ?
 “ Securely follow, where I lead the way ;
 “ And range thro' wilds of pleasure unconfin'd.
 “ With

“ With me retire, from noise, and pain, and care ;
 “ Embath’d in blifs, and rapt in endless ease :
 “ Rough is the road to fame, thro’ blood and war ;
 “ Smooth is my way, and all my paths are peace.
 “ With me retire, from toils and perils free ;
 “ Leave honour to the wretch ! Pleasures were made for thee.

VIII.

“ Then will I grant thee all thy soul’s desire ;
 “ All that may charm thine ear, and please thy sight :
 “ All that thy thought can frame, or wish require,
 “ To steep thy ravish’d senses in delight.
 “ The sumptuous feast, enhanc’d with music’s sound ;
 “ Fittest to tune the melting soul to love :
 “ Rich odours, breathing choicest sweets around ;
 “ The fragrant bow’r, cool fountain, shady grove :
 “ Fresh flowers, to strew thy couch, and crown thy head ;
 “ Joy shall attend thy steps, and ease shall smooth thy bed.

IX.

“ These will I, freely, constantly supply ;
 “ Pleasures, not earn’d with toil, nor mix’d with woe :
 “ Far from thy rest repining want shall fly ;
 “ Nor labour bathe in sweat thy careful brow.
 “ Mature the copious harvest shall be thine ;
 “ Let the laborious hind subdue the soil :
 “ Leave the rash soldier spoils of war to win ;
 “ Won by the soldier thou shalt share the spoil :
 “ These softer cares my blest allies employ,
 “ New pleasures to invent ; to wish, and to enjoy.”

X.

Her winning voice the youth attentive caught :
 He gaz'd impatient on the smiling maid ;
 Still gaz'd, and listen'd : then her name besought :
 " My name, fair youth, is Happiness, she said.
 " Well can my friends this envy'd truth maintain :
 " They share my bliss ; they best can speak my praise :
 " Tho' slander call me Sloth—detraction vain !
 " Heed not what Slander, vain detractor, says :
 " Slander, still prompt true merit to defame ;
 " To blot the brightest worth, and blast the fairest name."

XI.

By this, arriv'd the fair majestic maid :
 (She all the while, with the same modest pace,
 Compos'd, advanc'd.) " Know, Hercules," she said
 With manly tone, " thy birth of heav'nly race ;
 " Thy tender age that lov'd instruction's voice,
 " Promis'd thee generous, patient, brave and wise ;
 " When manhood should confirm thy glorious choice :
 " Now expectation waits to see thee rise.
 " Rise, youth ! Exalt thyself, and me : approve
 " Thy high descent from heav'n ; and dare be worthy Jove.

XII.

" But what truth prompts, my tongue shall not disguise ;
 " The steep ascent must be with toil subdu'd :
 " Watching and cares must win the lofty prize
 " Propos'd by heav'n ; true bliss, and real good.
 " Honour

" Honour rewards the brave and bold alone ;
 " She spurns the timorous, indolent, and base :
 " Danger and toil stand stern before her throne ;
 " And guard (so Jove commands) the sacred place.
 " Who seeks her must the mighty cost sustain,
 " And pay the price of fame ; labour, and care, and pain.

XIII.

" Wou'dst thou engage the gods peculiar care ?
 " O Hercules, th' immortal powers adore !
 " With a pure heart, with sacrifice and pray'r
 " Attend their altars ; and their aid implore.
 " Or wou'dst thou gain thy country's loud applause,
 " Lov'd as her father, as her god ador'd ?
 " Be thou the bold assertor of her cause ;
 " Her voice, in council ; in the fight, her sword.
 " In peace, in war, pursue thy country's good :
 " For her, bare thy bold breast ; and pour thy generous blood.

XIV.

" Wou'dst thou, to quell the proud and lift th' oppress'd,
 " In arts of war and matchless strength excel ?
 " First conquer thou thyself. To ease, to rest,
 " To each soft thought of pleasure, bid farewell.
 " The night alternate, due to sweet repose,
 " In watches waste ; in painful march, the day :
 " Congcal'd, amidst the rigorous winter's snows ;
 " Scorch'd, by the summer's thirst-inflaming ray.
 " Thy harden'd limbs shall boast superior might :
 " Vigour shall brace thine arm, resistless in the fight."

XV. " Hear'st

XV.

“ Hear’st thou, what monsters then thou must engage ;
 “ What dangers, gentle youth, she bids thee prove ?
 (Abrupt says Sloth) “ ill fit thy tender age
 “ Tumult and wars ; fit age, for joy and love.
 “ Turn, gentle youth, to me, to love and joy !
 “ To these I lead : no monsters here shall stay
 “ Thine easy course ; no cares thy peace annoy :
 “ I lead to bliss a nearer, smoother way.
 “ Short is my way ; fair, easy, smooth, and plain :
 “ Turn, gentle youth ! With me eternal pleasures reign.”

XVI.

“ What pleasures, vain mistaken wretch, are thine !
 (Virtue with scorn reply’d :) “ who sleep’st in ease
 “ Insensate ; whose soft limbs the toil decline
 “ That seasons bliss, and makes enjoyment please.
 “ Draining the copious bowl, ere thirst require ;
 “ Feasting, ere hunger to the feast invite :
 “ Whose tasteless joys anticipate desire ;
 “ Whom luxury supplies with appetite :
 “ Yet Nature loaths ; and you employ in vain
 “ Variety and art to conquer her disdain.

XVII.

“ The sparkling nectar, cool’d with summer snows ;
 “ The dainty board, with choicest viands spread ;
 “ To thee are tasteless all ! Sincere repose
 “ Flies from thy flow’ry couch and downy bed.

“ For

“ For thou art only tir’d with indolence :
 “ Nor is thy sleep, with toil and labour bought :
 “ Th’ imperfect sleep that lulls thy languid sense
 “ In dull oblivious interval of thought :
 “ That kindly steals th’ inactive hours away
 “ From the long, ling’ring space, that lengthens out the day.

XVIII.

“ From bounteous nature’s unexhausted stores
 “ Flows the pure fountain of sincere delights :
 “ Averse to her, you waste the joyless hours ;
 “ Sleep drowns thy days, and riot rules thy nights.
 “ Immortal tho’ thou art, indignant Jove
 “ Hurl’d thee from heaven, th’ immortals blissful place ;
 “ For ever banish’d from the realms above,
 “ To dwell on earth, with man’s degenerate race :
 “ Fitter abode ! On earth alike disgrac’d ;
 “ Rejected by the wise, and by the fool embrac’d.

XIX.

“ Fond wretch, that vainly weeneſt all delight
 “ To gratify the ſenſe reſerv’d for thee !
 “ Yet the moſt pleaſing object to the ſight,
 “ Thine own fair action, never didſt thou ſee.
 “ Tho’ lull’d with ſoſteſt ſounds thou lieſt along ;
 “ Soft muſic, warbling voices, melting lays ;
 “ Ne’er did’ſt thou hear, more ſweet than ſweeteſt ſong
 “ Charming the ſoul, thou ne’er didſt hear thy praiſe !
 “ No—to thy revels let the fool repair :
 “ To ſuch, go ſmooth thy ſpeech ; and ſpread thy tempting
 “ ſnare.

XX. “ Vaſt

XX.

- “ Vast happiness enjoy thy gay allies !
 “ A youth of follies ; and old age, of cares :
 “ Young, yet enervate ; old, yet never wise ;
 “ Vice wastes their vigour, and their mind impairs.
 “ Vain, idle, delicate, in thoughtless ease
 “ Reserving woes for age their prime they spend ;
 “ All wretched, hopeless, in the evil days
 “ With sorrow to the verge of life they tend.
 “ Griev’d, with the present ; of the past, ashamed :
 “ They live, and are despis’d : they die, nor more are nam’d.

XXI.

- “ But with the gods, and godlike men, I dwell :
 “ Me, his supreme delight, th’ almighty Sire
 “ Regards well-pleas’d : whatever works excel,
 “ All or divine or human, I inspire.
 “ Counsel with strength, and industry with art,
 “ In union meet conjoin’d, with me reside :
 “ My dictates arm, instruct, and mend the heart ;
 “ The surest policy, the wisest guide.
 “ With me, true friendship dwells : she deigns to bind
 “ Those generous souls alone, whom I before have join’d.

XXII.

- “ Nor need my friends the various costly feast ;
 “ Hunger to them th’ effects of art supplies ;
 “ Labour prepares their weary limbs to rest ;
 “ Sweet is their sleep : light, chearful, strong they rise.
 “ Thro’

“ Thro’ health, thro’ joy, thro’ pleasure and renown,
 “ They tread my paths ; and by a soft descent,
 “ At length to age all gently sinking down,
 “ Look back with transport on a life well-spent :
 “ In which, no hour flew unimprov’d away ;
 “ In which, some generous deed distinguish’d every day.

XXIII.

“ And when, the destin’d term at length compleat,
 “ Their ashes rest in peace ; eternal Fame
 “ Sounds wide their praise : triumphant over fate,
 “ In sacred song, for ever lives their name.
 “ This, Hercules, is happiness ! Obey
 “ My voice, and live. Let thy celestial birth
 “ Lift, and enlarge, thy thoughts. Behold the way
 “ That leads to fame ; and raises thee from earth
 “ Immortal ! Lo, I guide thy steps. Arise,
 “ Pursue the glorious path ; and claim thy native skies.”

XXIV.

Her words breathe fire celestial, and impart
 New vigour to his soul, that sudden caught
 The generous flame : with great intent his heart
 Swells full ; and labours with exalted thought :
 The mist of error from his eyes dispell’d,
 Thro’ all her fraudulent arts in clearest light
 Sloth in her native form he now beheld ;
 Unveil’d, she stood confess’d before his sight ;
 False Siren !—All her vaunted charms, that shone
 So fresh erewhile, and fair : now wither’d, pale, and gone.

XXV. No,

XXV.

No more, the rosy bloom in sweet disguise
 Masks her dissembled looks : each borrow'd grace
 Leaves her wan cheek ; pale sickness clouds her eyes
 Livid and sunk, and passions dim her face.
 As when fair Iris has awhile display'd
 Her watry arch, with gaudy painture gay ;
 While yet we gaze, the glorious colours fade,
 And from our wonder gently steal away :
 Where shone the beauteous phantom erst so bright,
 Now lowers the low-hung cloud ; all gloomy to the sight.

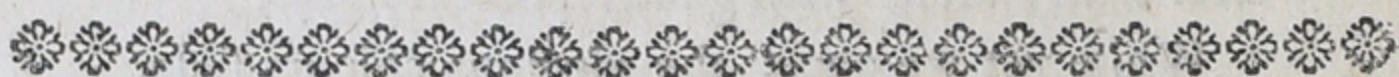
XXVI.

But Virtue more engaging all the while
 Disclos'd new charms ; more lovely, more serene
 Beaming sweet influence. A milder smile
 Soften'd the terrors of her lofty mien.
 “ Lead, goddess, I am thine ! (transported cry'd
 Alcides :) “ O propitious pow'r, thy way
 “ Teach me ! possess my soul ; be thou my guide :
 “ From thee, O never, never let me stray ! ”
 While ardent thus the youth his vows address'd ;
 With all the goddess fill'd, already glow'd his breast.

XXVII.

The heav'nly maid, with strength divine endu'd
 His daring soul ; there all her pow'rs combin'd :
 Firm constancy, undaunted fortitude,
 Enduring patience, arm'd his mighty mind.

Unmov'd in toils, in dangers undismay'd,
 By many a hardy deed and bold emprize,
 From fiercest monsters, thro' her pow'rful aid,
 He free'd the earth : thro' her he gain'd the skies.
 'Twas Virtue plac'd him in the blest abode;
 Crown'd with eternal youth; among the Gods, a God.



An O D E.

T O T H E

People of GREAT BRITAIN.

In Imitation of the Sixth ODE of the Third Book
 of HORACE.

Written in 1746.

I.

BRITON! the thunder of the wrath divine, [thine,
 Due to thy fathers crimes, and long with-held from
 Shall burst with tenfold rage on thy devoted head;
 Unless with conscious terrors aw'd,
 By meek, heart-struck repentance led,
 Suppliant thou fall before th' offended God:
 If haply yet thou may'st avert his ire;
 And stay his arm out-stretch'd to launce the avenging fire.

II. Did