



A R I S B E to M A R I U S Junior.

From F O N T E N E L L E. By the Same.

When Marius was expelled from Rome by Sylla's faction, and retired into Africa, his son (who accompany'd him) fell into the hands of Hiempfal king of Numidia, who kept him prisoner. One of the mistresses of that king fell in love with Marius junior, and was so generous to contrive and give him his liberty, though by that means she sacrificed her love for ever. 'Twas after he had rejoin'd his father, that she writ him the following letter.

I.

OF all I valued, all I lov'd, bereft,
Say, has my heart this little comfort left?
That you the mem'ry of its truth retain,
And think with grateful pity on my pain?

II.

Tho' but with life my sorrows can have end,
(For death alone can join me to my friend)
Yet think not I repent I fet you free,
I mourn your absence, not your liberty.

III.

Before my Marius left Numidia's coast,
Each day I saw him; scarce an hour was lost:
Now months and years must pass, nay life shall prove
But one long absence from the man I love.

IV. Painful

IV.

Painful reflection ! poyson to my mind !
 Was it but mortal too, it would be kind :
 But mad with grief I search the palace round,
 And in that madness dream you're to be found.

V.

Would'st thou believe it ? to those walls I fly
 Where thou wert captive held ; there frantick cry,
 These fetters sure my vagrant's flight restrain'd ;
 Alas ! these fetters I myself unchain'd.

VI.

The live-long day I mourn, I loath the light,
 And wait impatient each returning night :
 What, tho' the horrid gloom augment my grief ?
 'Tis grateful still, for I disclaim relief.

VII.

That coz'ner hope intrudes not on my woe ;
 One only interval my sorrows know ;
 When dreams, the kind reversers of my pain,
 Bring back my charming fugitive again.

VIII.

Yet there's a grief surpassing all the rest ;
 A jealous dæmon whispers in my breast,
 Marius was false, for liberty alone
 The show of love the hypocrite put on.

IX. Then

IX.

Then I reflect (ah ! would I could forget !)
 How much your thoughts on war and Rome were set.
 How little passion did that conduct prove !
 Too strong thy reason, but too weak thy love.

X.

Thy sword, 'tis true, a father's cause demands ;
 But 'twas a mistress gave it to thy hands :
 To love, and duty just, give each their part,
 His be the arm, and mine be all thy heart.

XI.

But what avail these thoughts ? fond wretch, give o'er !
 Marius, or false, or true, is thine no more :
 Since Fate has cast the lot, and we must part,
 Why should I wish to think I had his heart ?

XII.

Yes : let me cherish that remembrance still ;
 That thought alone shall soften ev'ry ill ;
 To tell my soul, his love, his truth was such,
 All was his due, nor have I done too much.

XIII.

Deceitful comfort ! let me not persuade
 My cred'ulous heart its fondness was repaid ;
 It makes my soul with double anguish mourn
 Those joys, which never, never must return.

XIV.

Perhaps ev'n you what most I wish oppose,
 And in the Roman all the lover lose :
 I'm a Numidian, and your soul disdains
 To bear th' inglorious weight of foreign chains.

XV.

Can any climate then so barb'rous prove,
 To stand excluded from the laws of Love ?
 His empire's universal, unconfin'd,
 His proxy beauty, and his slaves mankind.

XVI.

Nor am I a Numidian but by name,
 For I can int'rest for my love disclaim :
 My virtue shows what 'twas the gods design'd,
 By chance on Africk's clay they stamp'd a Roman mind.

XVII.

Not all the heroes which your Rome can boast,
 So much for fame, as I for you have lost :
 Yourself I lost : oh ! grateful, then confess,
 My tryal greater, tho' my glory less.

XVIII.

Yes, partial gods ! inflictors of my care !
 Be witness what I felt, what grief, what fear !
 When full of stifled woes the night he fled,
 No sigh I dar'd to breathe, no tear to shed.

XIX. Whilst

XIX.

Whilst men of faith approv'd, a chosen crew,
Firm to their trust, and to their mistrefs true,
With care too punctual my commands obey,
And in one freight my life and thee convey.

XX.

The harder task was mine; condemn'd to bear
With brow serene, my agonizing care;
To mix in idle talk; to force a smile,
A king and jealous lover to beguile.

XXI.

Think in that dreadful interval of fate,
All I held dear, thy safety in debate,
Think what I suffer'd, whilst my heart afraid
Suggests a thousand times, that's all betray'd.

XXII.

A thousand times revolving in my mind
The doubtful chance; oh! Love! said I, be kind:
Propitious to my scheme, thy vot'ry aid,
And be my fondness by success repaid.

XXIII.

Now bolder grown, with sanguine hopes elate,
My fancy represents thy smiling fate;
The guards deceiv'd, and ev'ry danger o'er,
The winds already waft him from the shore.

XXIV. These

XXIV.

These pleasing images anew impart
 Life to my eyes, and gladness to my heart;
 Dispel the gloomy fears that cloud my face,
 And charm the little flutterer to peace.

XXV.

But now the king, or tasteless to my charms,
 Or weary of an absent mistress' arms,
 His own apartment seeks, and grateful rest;
 That courted stranger to the careful breast.

XXVI.

Whilst I, by hopes and fears alternate sway'd,
 Impatient ask the slaves if I'm obey'd.
 'Tis done, they cry'd, and struck me with despair;
 For what I long'd to know, I dy'd to hear.

XXVII.

Fantastick turn of a distracted mind;
 I blam'd the gods for having been too kind;
 Curs'd the success they granted to my vows,
 And this assistant hand that fill'd my woes.

XXVIII.

Such was my frenzy in that hour of care,
 And such th' injustice of my bold despair;
 That even those, ungrateful I upbraid,
 Whose fatal diligence my will obey'd.

XXIX. Scarce,

XXIX.

Scarce, Marius, did thyself escape my rage;
(Most lov'd of men!) when fears of black presage
Describe thy heart so fond of liberty,
It never gave one parting throb for me.

XXX.

At every step you should have turn'd your eye,
Dropt a regretful tear, and heav'd a sigh;
The nature of the grace I shew'd was such,
You not deserv'd it, if it pleas'd too much.

XXXI.

A lover would have linger'd as he fled,
And oft in anguish to himself have said,
Farewel for ever! Ah! yet more he'd done,
A lover never would have fled alone.

XXXII.

To force me from a hated rival's bed,
Why comes not Marius at an army's head?
Oh! did thy heart but wish to see that day,
'Twould all my past, and future woes o'er-pay.

XXXIII.

But vain are all these hopes: preserve thy breast
From falshood only, I forgive the rest:
Too happy, if no envy'd rival boast
Those joys Arisbe for her Marius lost.