

THE

CHILD OF SORROW.

As 'mid romantic Vecta's paths I stray'd,
Where clear Medina* rolls its silver wave,
Beneath a solitary willow's shade,
Whose pendent boughs the lucid waters lave,

A Child of Sorrow caught my wandering eye;
Loose her attire, dishevell'd was her hair,
Pallid her cheek, and oft a bursting sigh
Proclaim'd her breast the dwelling of Despair.

Yet peerless beauty with unconquer'd sway
Resistless shone in her neglected form,
As the effulgence of the god of day
Gleams through the darkness of the wintry storm.

* The name of a river in the Isle of Wight.

Off o'er the waves she cast a wistful view,
As off the torrent of her tears did flow;
Then to the shore her streaming eyes withdrew,
And in disorder'd words thus spoke her woe:

Dash, dash, ye waves, against the sounding shore,
Your rage no longer can my bosom move;
Louder, ye winds, and yet still louder roar,
You can no more destroy my only love.

Victim of sorrow from the dawn of life,
I can no more admit new joy or grief;
Perfidious Fortune, freed from all thy strife,
Even in despair my soul shall find relief.---

Touch'd with compassion at these plaintive sounds,
Slow I approach'd, and to the Stranger said:
What deep afflictions cause such heart-felt wounds?
What storms of Fortune bow thy youthful head?

Could I alleviate?---Never, she replied,
Can human power my mind from anguish save;---
Never, oh! never can my woes subside,
But 'mid the shadows of the darksome grave.

Yet since soft Pity seems to touch thy heart,
And the big tear stands trembling in thine eye,
The story of my grief I will impart,
Then leave me to my hapless destiny.

Where proud Augusta rears her lofty head,
My childhood pass'd in affluence and ease:
Far from my paths the train of Sorrow fled,
While gay I bask'd in Fortune's brightest blaze,

But short those joys; for scarce had fifteen years
Taught me my happiness to know and prize,
When swift the splendid vision disappears,
And pale Adversity's dun clouds arise.

Misfortunes unforeseen depriv'd my sire
In little time of his abounding wealth;
To highest views accustom'd to aspire,
He lost his wonted cheerfulness and health.

I saw Despair o'ercast his manly brow,
While silent Grief sat rankling at his breast;
I saw his head with Disappointment bow,
Till an untimely death restor'd his rest.

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Long time I mourn'd---nor did I mourn alone---
A virtuous mother shar'd in all my woe;
A husband and a father we bemoan,
And for his loss our tears alternate flow.

But Time, whose lenient hand can oft assuage
The sharpest wounds of unrelenting Fate,
Had soften'd by degrees Affliction's rage
To fond Remembrance and Concern sedate.

Together we forsook the venal crowd,
And in this island found a still retreat,
Far from the gay, the thoughtless, and the proud,
For Poverty and Resignation meet.

Contented here we liv'd, nor e'er repin'd
At memory of what we once possess'd;
But grateful own'd, that the unsullied mind
In its own conscious rectitude is blest.

Hard by our cottage, on a rising ground,
In simple state Ardelio's mansion stood---
Ardelio lov'd by all the country round,
Friend to the poor, the artless, and the good.

Large was his fortune, liberal his heart,
Faultless his manners, undefil'd his mind;
Free from ambition, avarice, or art,
His only study was to serve mankind.

By chance conducted to our lone abode,
He found me friendless, pitied me, and lov'd:
His bounteous hand a quick relief bestow'd,
And soon each trace of indignance remov'd.

The day was fix'd, when at the sacred shrine
Attested Heaven should hear our mutual vows;
And sprightly Pleasure seem'd once more to twine
Her freshest roses for my favour'd brows.

But, ah! those roses bloom'd but to decay;
For, like the bud before the eastern wind,
Their beauties faded immature away,
But fading left a lasting thorn behind.

Oblig'd to leave me for a little space,
Presaging tears his fatal absence mourn;
But the kind youth, my rising grief to chase,
At parting promis'd he would soon return.

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Mean time a fever's unremitting rage
Invaded all my parent's trembling frame;
No remedy its fury can assuage,
Her frantic cries in vain my succour claim.

A thousand times I kiss'd her pallid cheek,
And with my tears bedew'd her burning hand,
While with officious care I vainly seek
Those cures which unavailing Science plann'd.

Clasp'd in these arms she died: no friend was near,
In whom this sad, this breaking heart could trust,
When I beheld her on the sable bier,
And heard the solemn sentence, Dust to dust!

Frantic with sorrow, to the rocky shore
With an uncertain course my steps I bend:
Unheeded round me the deep thunders roar,
And the blue lightning's lurid flames descend.

Yet one dread object my attention drew:
Near the rude cliffs a vessel I espied,
And heard the clamours of its frightened crew,
Who vainly tried to stem the billowy tide.

For, by the fury of the tempest tost,

Against the rocks its severing planks rebound;

The floating wreck is driven towards the coast,

With seamen's lifeless bodies scatter'd round.

New anguish seiz'd my grief-devoted mind:

While I survey'd the horrors of the storm,

I thought, perhaps even now, to death consign'd,

Floats 'mid those waves my lov'd Ardelio's form.

Pierc'd with the thought, adown the craggy steep

I hasten to explore the fatal strand;

Just then, emerging from the raging deep,

A breathless corse is thrown upon the sand.

Shuddering I look with half averted eye---

Ah me, my dread forebodings were too true!---

She paus'd---then utter'd, with a bursting sigh,

Ardelio's torn for ever from my view!
