CLIFTON,

A

POEM.

In Imitation of SPENSER.

Tantum inter denſas umbroſa Cacumina Fagos
Aſſidue veniebat: ibi hæc incondita ſolus
Montibus et Sylvis ſtudio jactabat inani. VIRG.

——— *Such ruſtic Lays*
As Foes may ſlight,—but partial Friends will praiſe.
SHENSTONE.

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M,DCC,LXXV.

To

Lady *Draper*

This Poem is

Inſcribed,

With the greateſt Reſpect,

by

The AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

IT is the lot of many to be able to amuſe themſelves without poſſeſſing the power of transferring their amuſement to thoſe around them.—I, perhaps, may be one of the number :—For I muſt acknowledge, that however ineffectual the following Poem may be to afford pleaſure to others, it has been the ſource of much delight to myſelf ;—and in weaving the thoughts of it into verſe, I found a charm which has often lengthened my morning's ride and my evening's walk.

I love and admire the place, which I mean to celebrate, with a real enthuſiaſm !—and as I have, at different times, contemplated thoſe objects which compoſe its beauty, the ideas of them, which are written on the following pages, aroſe in my mind, almoſt, in the very form wherein they are now preſented to the public eye.

That

That ſome will objeſt to the manner in which this Poem is written, I am well aware.—That I mingle with the ſervile herd of imitators I acknowledge;—and that I imitate SPENSER whoſe works are now but ſeldom read. —The quaintneſs of his expreſſion, the obſoletneſs of his terms and the frequent recurrence of his rhymes are very general objections to one of the fineſt poets who ever lived.—But I ſhould pay very little attention to any objections which might be made to his Stanza if I had but one ray of his genius to illuminate it.—I am only afraid, that having adopted the one without being in poſſeſſion of the other, I may be giving a falſe idea of my original;—and that they who are accuſtomed to the correct and poliſhed verſe of theſe days may, from my imperfect imitation, be diſcouraged from looking into that mine of poetry, that fruitful garden of imagination,—the Fairy Queen of Spenſer.

—But I do not mean to enter into a defence of this great Poet.—I only wiſh to apologize for myſelf by aſſuring my readers that this Poem was caſual, and written without the leaſt premeditation.——That a thought occurred to me in a penſive walk; and occurred to me in the Stanza of Spenſer.—At other times, ſucceſſive thoughts aroſe in my mind,—and the

form

form of the firſt gave ſhape to all the reſt.—At length, in a vacant hour, I collected the ſcattered materials together, gave them ſome order and arrangement,—and I now offer them to the candour and indulgence of thoſe who reſide in, or may occaſionally viſit, the favourite Village which is the object of my ſincere but imperfect praiſe.

---That in ſome parts I might have improved the verſification,---and that in others I might have given greater accuracy to expreſſion, I do not deny. -----But the labour of correction and the flow of the heart have not much to do with each other;---and the latter governed through the whole of this little performance.---I have, therefore, ſuffered it to retain its firſt natural dreſs, and I leave it, with all its imperfections, to the hearts of its readers.

——My thoughts have never ſtrayed into Rhyme but to gild the ſhade of retirement, to heighten the pleaſures of a penſive mind,—or to pleaſe thoſe who were reſolved to be pleaſed.——My muſe never ventured to unfold herſelf before to the public view:--her flight has been in the valley, and her ſport in the ſhade;—and to the valley and the ſhade ſhe haſtens away, and will never ſing to the world again.

---If

—If I were vain enough to wiſh for reputation, or ſo ignorant as to ſuppoſe that this compoſition deſerved it,the locality of the ſubject would render all expectations or deſires of that nature fruitleſs and ineffectual.—But I ſhall be more than contented, if this circumſtance, which precludes the hopes of fame, ſecures me from the laſh of cenſure.——Though, if my verſe ſhould, perchance, happen to pleaſe and make any half-hour paſs away more agreeably than it would, otherwiſe, have done,—I ſhall give an importance to this little poetical progreſs, which, as it had not any claim to expect, I did not imagine it would ever be its lot to receive.

But after all, however I may fail in attaining the higher flights of Poetry; —however the nice ear and the correct taſte may be offended in this Poem, —the thoughts of it, I truſt, cannot be condemned.—My muſe, though weak her wing, is amiable in her deſigns.———She does not make the tear to ſtart from the eye of innocence, ſhe does not encrimſon the cheek of modeſty with a bluſh,—ſhe plants not a thorn on any pillow, nor gives a pang to any boſom.——She takes an humble flight,——ſhe ſings a moral and an applauſive ſtrain,—and her language is the language of the heart.

CLIFTON,

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A POEM,

In Imitation of SPENSER.

I.

HOW varied are the wanderings of the Muſe!
Amid the bloody fields of doubtful fight
She, fearleſs, the advent'rous ways purſues.
Now, with more lofty wing, ſhe takes her flight
Far, far beyond the ſtretch of human ſight!
Then to the roaring billows of the ſea
She tunes her notes;—and now ſhe takes delight,
'Mid rural Swains, to deck the village tree
With ever-blooming wreaths of ſweeteſt Poeſie!

II.

Times yet to come ſhall dwell upon his name;*
To him immortal praiſes do belong,
Who gave to *Windſor*'s woods eternal fame,
And made the Thames to murmur in his ſong!
Nor would I do his gentle ſpirit wrong †
Who hail'd on *Grongar* Hill the riſing ſun,
And tun'd his reed the *Cambrian* Vales among.
He ‡ too, of late, the Muſes' wreath has won,
Who ſung, in pleaſing ſtrains, the *Hill of Farringdon.*

III.

Thy beauties, *Clifton*, I will ſtrive to ſing!
For thee, thou lovely ſcene, I tune my lay!
For thee, my poor, forſaken Lyre I ſtring,
And at the Muſes' ſhrine my vows I pay.
Ye ſacred virgins, wherefoe'er ye ſtray,
On *Pindus* Hill,---or, by the favourite ſtream
Of *Helicon*, your airy flight delay;
Hear me, and bleſs my fond poetic dream,
And give my daring Verſe the Beauties of my Theme!

How

* Mr. Pope. † Mr. Dyer. ‡ Mr. Pye.

IV.

How great the ſcenes which do mine eyes aſſail!
Whate'er rich Nature, in her laviſh mood,
Could give to deck the hill or dreſs the vale,
The craggy rock or the meand'ring flood,
On *Clifton*, ſhe, kind Goddeſs, has beſtow'd;
From where the *Cambrian* mountains meet the ſky,
To the tall Tower which long has boldly ſtood
With anxious joy to fill the ſailor's eye,
When *Dund'ry*'s welcome peak he hap'ly doth eſpy.

V.

The Muſe, diſtracted, checks her dubious flight,
Nor knows ſhe where to guide her trembling wing!
Till *Briſtol*, 'riſing to the aſtoniſh'd ſight,
Claims the firſt tribute of the ſtrain I ſing.---
I who ne'er drank of *Heliconian* ſpring,
Or cropt one flower that on its border grows;
Will ſhe accept my humble offering,
Within whoſe walls the tide of commerce flows,
And bears encreaſe of Wealth with every wind that blows?

VI.

BRITANNIA ſmiles to view her ſwelling ſtore,
And bids her golden ſtreams for ever glide:
While VENUS, queen of beauty, now no more
From her dejected daughters turns aſide;
They joyful revel all in beauty's pride,
And boaſt the Paphian grace, the magic Eye,
From whence young CUPID doth his arrows guide;
Thoſe arrows, wing'd with many a bitter ſigh,
Which to the heart do give a pleaſing miſery.

VII.

But 'mid the blooming band, aright to chuſe
And cull the faireſt forms I do deſpair!—
But SPROWLE appears! —and now the faithful Muſe,
Of every vernal floweret, doth prepare
An odorous garland for her flowing hair.
But tho' adorn'd with every native grace,
Her poliſh'd mind an higher form doth wear,
And Reaſon, pleas'd her mental charms to trace,
Improves the roſy bloom of her enchanting face.

VIII. And

VIII.

And STONHOUSE too, whofe earlieft age I knew:—
I faw the bud fair opening to the day!
With joy mine eye beheld it as it grew;
And now th' enraptur'd Mufe doth well effay
Its pride of full-bloom beauty to difplay.
Delighted Nature owns her favourite flower,
And Virtue will preferve it from decay:
For when the rough winds blow and ftorms do lower,
She'll bear it far from harm to her own facred bower.

IX.

Grace of my meafure,—of my verfe the pride!
To thee I could attune my humble ftrain,
'Till the bright Sun his golden head doth hide
Deep in the bofom of the weftern main!
But *Clifton*'s green-rob'd DRYADS would complain
That I fo foon from their lov'd haunts fhould ftray;
That, won by thine, I do their charms difdain,
And, pleas'd to bafk in beauty's funny ray,
Forget the promis'd fame of my devoted lay!

X. But

X.

But, ſure, I'm borne to ſome enchanted ground,
Where dazzling ſpars in twiſted columns riſe,
And bear a ſplendid roof:—while, all around,
Unnumber'd beauties meet my raviſh'd eyes,
And bind my ſenſes in a ſweet ſurprize.
Diſpos'd in juſt array, the glittering ore,
With ſparkling minerals of a thouſand dyes,
And ſpeckled ſhells, delighted, I explore,
Cull'd from the ſecret caves and from the diſtant ſhore.

XI.

O Goldney!—highly bleſt and happy they
Who could, like thee, their leiſure hours employ!
Could paſs, like thee, their inoffenſive day,
Foes to the hurry of tumultuous joy,
And ſeek thoſe pleaſures which do never cloy!
Th' enchanting grot, by thy fond labours dreſt,
Old time ſhall totter e'er he dare deſtroy.
Oh may thy gentle ſhade in quiet reſt,
And the green, graſſy turf lie lightly on thy breaſt!

XII. Again

XII.

Again I ſpread the wing, and take my way
To where the column bears a CHATHAM's name :
But its hard baſe ſhall moulder and decay
Ee'r dark oblivion will obſcure his fame.
Oh could I blow the trumpet's loud acclaim !
But mine's a ſhepherd's reed, and doth diſown
The power to ſing the Patriot's noble aim :
It only cheers the flocks upon the Down,
Nor mingles with the ſong that tells of bright renown.

XIII.

But ah !—this tomb proclaims the honour'd dead !
I read the warriors names and ſad deplore
The valiant heroes who for Britain bled,
For Britain conquer'd :—but they are no more,
And 'round their graves the Indian billows roar.
The Chief his valiant ſoldiers fame reveres,
And, while they ſleep upon a diſtant ſhore,
To them the ſculptur'd monument he rears,
And calls the virtuous Muſe to ſhed her ſacred tears.

XIV.

DRAPER!—thou honour to the human race!
If I, alas, could raiſe my feeble ſtrain,
Thy well-earn'd triumphs I would gladly trace,
Won from the prowes of inſulting *Spain*,
When Victory crown'd thee on *Manilla's* plain.
Oh long may time thy living glories ſave!
And when pale fate doth cut thy thread in twain,
All will lament the generous and the brave,
And weeping honour hang her enſigns o'er thy grave.

XV.

But I muſt leave the battle's bloody ſtrife
To tell the virtues of thy feeling breaſt:
To tell that, in the charities of life,
By bleſſing others thou thyſelf art bleſt;
Of huſbands, fathers, and of friends the beſt!
Her too I ſing, who, from the northern ſhore,
In every native grace and beauty dreſt,
With tender triumph, you to Britain bore.—
Long may ye happy be,—I humbly do implore!

XVI. Bright

XVI.

Bright PHŒBUS now attains his higheſt power,
And nature droops beneath the parching ray :
His ſearching beams inflame my ſecret bower :
I to the higher hill muſt take my way,
Where the gales cool the fervor of the day.
Ariſe ye ſoft winds from the diſtant ſeas,
Where o'er the rolling waves ye fondly play !
They riſe ;—and now the kind, refreſhing breeze
Sweeps gently o'er the hill and whiſpers in the trees.

XVII.

Nor ſunny heat I feel,—nor riſing gale,
When as on *Avon's* winding wave I view
A fleet, engulph'd in rocks, unfurl the ſail,
And to the ſtormy main their way purſue.
I ſee the hurries of the buſy crew ;
I hear the daſhings of the parting oar.
Adieu, ye jolly mariners, adieu !
May proſperous breezes blow and waft you o'er
The dangers of the deep,---and to the diſtant ſhore !

XVIII.

I leave the amazing ſcene and ſkirt the plain,
And look o'er meads and groves, o'r hill and dale,
To where the virtuous SOUTHWELL's fair domain
Riſes, in awful beauty, from the vale.
But here I reſt,—for here my powers would fail
To tell the charms that do each ſenſe ſurprize:
My bark o'er *Severn's* flood doth fear to ſail
To *Cambria's* ſhores, where hills on hills ariſe,
And liſt their tall, blue heads and mingle with the ſkies.

XIX.

But now, fatigu'd with her excurſive flight,
So bold a flight ſhe never took before,
The Muſe muſt reſt;—or much would ſhe delight
Fair *Henb'ry's* beauteous vallies to explore,
And Nature, on her verdant throne, adore
With tuneful note and humble offering;
But ah!—her fluttering pinions wexen ſore,
That ſhe muſt leave the hill and ſeek the ſpring,
And take th' enliv'ning draught and plume the flagging wing.

XX.

O Health thou faireſt offspring of the ſky!
Oh let thy balmy ſtreams for ever flow,
To give new brightneſs to the languid eye,
And make freſh roſes on the cheek to glow!
Their virtues ſav'd AURELIA from the blow
Of threat'ning fate;—and baniſh'd all her pain.
—Thus ISRAEL's thirſty ſons forgot their woe,
When, 'mid the horrors of the deſart plain,
The Prophet gave the word,—and rivers flow'd amain.

XXI.

Avaunt, ye grieſly fiends!—ye baleful train!
That ſpread your black wings o'er the healing wave!
Begone!—and in your noiſome dens remain;
Nor ſtop the hand of health who ſtrives to ſave
The young and blooming from an early grave!
Ye ſmile, and, pointing to your deſtin'd prey,
The powerful arts of medicine ye brave.
Ah DELIA!—in the morning of thy day,
Struck by their deadly ſhafts, you haſten to decay.

XXII. Where's

XXII.

Where's thy enchanting grace, thy vernal bloom,
And all the glories of thy ſparkling eye ?——
What,—doſt thou hurry to the ſilent tomb ?
And muſt FLIRTILLA, then, prepare to die ?---
Oh, the ſad end of human vanity !
In pleaſure's airy dance you did delight,
And roſy Health from your embrace did fly :
Soon muſt thoſe eyes, which us'd to ſhine ſo bright,
Be dimm'd by ſable clouds of everlaſting night.

XXIII.

Falſe are the gay delights of human life !
They're but the Heralds of approaching woe !
How oft is peace the harbinger of ſtrife:—
And 'neath the fragrant roſe the thorn doth grow.
The gentle Robin's ſong that oft doth cheer
The penſive muſings of the lonely ſwain,
Marks the ſad progreſs of the gliding year.
Thy notes, ſweet bird, while they ſalute the plain,
Tell winter's bleak approach and all it's dreary train. !

XXIV.

Pleaſure's the bane of every good below;
Foe to fair nature and the child of art;
That, in ſweet guiſe, doth work us mickle woe,
And ſteals ſo ſoftly to the youthful heart:
Nor ſolid joys it gives, but bitter ſmart.
Oh!—from her dwelling turn your longing eye,
Ye blooming train, and from her paths depart!
For midſt her bowers do poiſonous adders lie,
And want, and pale diſeaſe, and grinning infamy.

XXV.

Go, FLAVIA, join the Dance, and join the ſong!
To wondering eyes thy glowing charms diſplay!
In joyous ſports the feſtive nights prolong;
In airy laughter, paſs the haſty day:---
Life's made for pleaſure,---ſnatch it while you may!
Its nimble, fluttering hours will ſoon be o'er.
Go curl thine auburn locks e'er they be grey!
Enjoy each ſoft delight, e'er Charon's oar
Shall row thy fleeting ghoſt to the eternal ſhore.

XXVI. Thus

XXVI.

Thus ſings the Syren with enchanting ſound,
And FLAVIA the deluſive call obeys :
She joins the dance, ſhe treads the idle round
Of airy pleaſure through each winding maze,
And to the gazer's eye her charms diſplays.
---May reaſon teach thee, e'er it be too late,
That while the ſweet ſong ſooths thee, it betrays !
O FLAVIA ! ſhun the falſe alluring bait,
Or mourn, miſtaken maid, a miſerable fate.

XXVII.

Ye guardian ſpirits !—from your ſilver bowers,
Oh, led by ſwift-wing'd pity, quick deſcend :
Or from your beds of ever blooming flowers,
Ariſe,—and to theſe rocks your pinions bend !
The virtuous LAURA calls you to befriend
Her fading form, that bows to taſte the wave ;
From the grim tyrant's arm her life defend !
—Alas !—'tis all in vain :—ye cannot ſave
The dear,—the lovely maid from an untimely grave.

XXVIII. She

XXVIII.

She died!—I ſaw her on the ſable bier!—
The ſhroud's pale trappings did her limbs adorn
I gaz'd,——and ſoon the death-bell ſmote mine ear,
And lowering clouds deform'd the riſing morn.
Oh hapleſs fate, that ever I was born!
—Around my lyre the baleful wreaths I twine,
And ſtrike its mournful notes ſad and forlorn.
O LAURA, the fair tomb that doth enſhrine
Thy dear, thy ſacred duſt,—will ſoon inherit mine!

XXIX.

Oh lead me where the gloomy Cypreſs grows,
Or the black yews the diſmal Valley ſhade;
Where nor the Violet ſweet or fragrant Roſe
E'er gave their odours to the dreary glade!
There, when the glowing day begins to fade,
Woo'd by my ſorrows, I'll in ſilence go;
And, on ſome craggy rock or hillock laid,
While from my eyes the briny rivers flow,
To hoarſe echoes tell my grievous tale of woe.

 There

XXX.

There will I tell that LAURA is no more:
That, in the pride of youth and beauty's bloom,
Death, from my arms, the lovely victim tore,
And gave her ſacred relics to the tomb!
E'en 'mid the horrors of the charnel's gloom,
I now could wander where my LAURA lies:
There weep my fate which ſtill prolongs the doom,
That would for ever dry my ſtreaming eyes,
And waft my ſoul to where ſhe dwells above the ſkies.

XXXI.

Here ceaſe the warblings of my ſimple lyre!
Here muſt I check the fond, preſumptuous ſtrain,
And quench the flame of impotent deſire:
My breathleſs LAURA ſhall not preach in vain.
While in this deſart world I do remain,
I'll bow to heaven and its decrees adore;
Nor ſhall I e'er attune my voice again.
Oh, then, farewell my Lyre!—Thy ſtrains are o'er:
Farewell! for I ſhall ſtrike thy ſounding ſtrings no more!

F I N I S.