

ODE
TO
BORROWDALE
IN CUMBERLAND.

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[*Written in 1794.*]

HAIL, Derwent's beauteous pride!

Whose charms rough rocks in threatening grandeur
guard,

Whose entrance seems to mortals barred,
But to the Genius of the storm thrown wide.

He on thy rock's dread height,
Reclined beneath his canopy of clouds,
His form in darkness shrouds,
And frowns as fixt to keep thy beauties from the
sight.

But rocks and storms are vain :
Midst mountains rough and rude
Man's daring feet intrude,
Till, lo ! upon the ravished eye
Burst thy clear stream, thy smiling sky,
Thy wooded valley, and thy matchless plain.

Bright vale ! the Muse's choicest theme,
My morning thought, my midnight dream ;
Still memory paints thee, smiling scene,
Still views the robe of purest green,
Refreshed by beauty-shedding rains,
Which wraps thy flower-enamelled plains ;

Still marks thy mountains' fronts sublime,
Force graces from the hand of time ;
Still I thy rugged rocks recall,
Which seem as nodding to their fall,
Whose wonders fixed my aching sight,
Till terror yielded to delight,
And my surprises, pleasures, fears,
Were told by slow delicious tears.

But suddenly the smiling day
That cheered the valley, flies away ;
The wooded rocks, the rapid stream,
No longer boast the noon-tide beam ;

But storms athwart the mountains sail,
And darkly brood o'er Borrowdale.
The frightened swain his cottage seeks,
Ere the thick cloud in terror speaks :—
And see, pale lightning flashes round !
While as the thunder's awful sound
On Echo's pinion widely flies,
Yon cataract's roar unheeded dies ;....
And thee, Sublimity ! I hail,
Throned on the gloom of Borrowdale.

But soon the thunder dies away,
The flash withdraws its fearful ray ;

Again upon the silver stream
Waves in bright wreaths the noon-tide beam.

O scene sequestered, varied, wild,
Scene formed to soothe Affliction's child,
How blest were I to watch each charm
That decks thy vale in storm or calm!

To see Aurora's hand unbind
The mists by night's chill power confined;
Upon the mountain's dusky brow
Then mark their colours as they flow,
Gliding the colder West to seek,
As from the East day's splendours break.

Now the green plain enchants the sight,
Adorned with spots of yellow light;
While, by its magic influence, shade
With contrast seems each charm to aid,
And clothes the woods in deeper dyes,
To suit the azure-vested skies:
While, lo! the lofty rocks above,
Where proudly towers the bird of Jove;
See from the view yon radiant cloud
His broad and sable pinions shroud,
Till, as he onward wings his flight,
He vanishes in floods of light;
Where feathered clouds on æther sail,
And glittering hang o'er Borrowdale.....

Or, at still midnight's solemn hour,
When the dull bat revolves no more,
In search of nature's awful grace,
I'd go, with slow and cautious pace,
Where the loud torrent's foaming tide
Lashes the rock's uneven side,....
That rock which, o'er the stream below
Bending its moss-clad crumbling brow,
Makes pale with fear the wanderer's cheek,
Nor midnight's silence fails to break
By fragments from its aged head,
Which, rushing to the river's bed,
Cause, as they dash the waters round,
A dread variety of sound ;

While I the gloomy grandeur hail,
And awe-struck rove through Borrowdale.

Yes, scene sequestered, varied, wild,
So form'd to soothe Affliction's child,
Sweet Borrowdale! to thee I'll fly,
To hush my bosom's ceaseless sigh.
If yet in Nature's store there be
One kind heart-healing balm for me,
Now the long hours are told by sighs,
And sorrow steals health's crimson dyes,—
If aught can smiles and bloom restore,
Ah! surely thine's the precious power!

Then take me to thy world of charms,
And hush my tortured breast's alarms ;
Thy scenes with unobtrusive art
Shall steal the mourner from her heart,....
The hands in sorrow claspt unclose,
Bid her sick soul on Heaven repose,
And, soothed by time and nature, hail
Health, peace, and hope in Borrowdale.