

ODE TO LOVE.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LADY DUDLEY AND WARD.

ALL hail to thee, resistless pow'r!

Before whose shrine all Nature bows,

And fondly breathes her ardent vows!

Hail, parent of the blissful hour!

Hail, theme of Sappho's trembling lyre!

Hail, theme of Petrarch's plaintive strain!

Hail, mystic source of joy and pain!

Hail, theme of Nature's woodland choir!

With mazy dance, and breathing song,

The joys around thy altar throng.

Though, amid thy smiling train,

Jocund pleasures tread the plain;

Yet mark yon spectre's gloomy air,
Who, whilst the Graces fondly twine
Their roseate wreaths around thy shrine,
Insidious plants the cypress there.

Say, Cupid, now what phantom drear

Approaches near,

On whose torn breast

The serpent rears his scaly crest;

Tearing, with venom'd tooth,

The feat of life and truth;

Whilst through the gaping wound black gore,

In fullen tide, is seen to pour.

Thy matted hair,

Thy frantic stare,

Thy green eye fell;

These, jealous fiend, thy name will tell.

See, as the Loves disporting round,
 Dance to the rebeck's jocund found,
 With rage inspir'd,
 By vengeance fir'd,
 Whilst, horror-struck, the Graces gaze ;
 See madly through the Dædal maze,
 As coupled now with writhing pain,
 In hurried step he treads the plain ;
 And, spurning, Love, thy wily song,
 Disperfes thus thy frightened throng.

O! thou who, 'mid the roaring wave,
 An early fate to Sappho gave ;
 Who lur'd with Syren strain,
 And promis'd joy,
 The Grecian boy,
 To plow the wint'ry main,
 Though quench'd in night
 Thy faithless light,

That beam'd on high,
And let a lover die.
Amid the elemental war
He ask'd in vain the dove-drawn car,
That erst thy goddess-mother bore
From Neptune's realm to Paphos' shore:
But deaf to Hero's ardent pray'rs,
But heedless of a lover's cares,
And deaf to sad Leander's cries,
You fought, false pow'r, serener skies.
Then, Heloise, thy victim fell.
Ah! see her stretch'd in yonder cell.
By all thy fiercest passions borne,
Bereft of hope, through thee forlorn.
Attentive hear each groan, each sigh,
And mark the lamps that dimly burn
Around her lover's holy urn.

Now pouring flow
Sad notes of woe,
See Petrarch seek his Laura's grave.
Hark! how the faddening strain
Wanders o'er Vaclusa's plain.
Thine are his lays,
And thine the praise
Thou kindledst first the fatal fire,
Then tun'd to grief his plaintive lyre.
Round Laura's tomb,
With cheerless gloom,
Thy cypress sad is seen to wave,
Whilst Pity's self flow pausing there,
With Lethe's blifsful balm,
The mourner's pangs could calm;
But yonder groan, that pierc'd the air,
Proclaimeth all thy reign despair.

Since such thy pow'r, since such thy deeds,

Since gor'd by thee each bosom bleeds,

From me thy shafts, dread Godhead, turn;

Ne'er shall my breast devoted burn.

Thy cup Circean freely give

To those who wish with thee to live.

Thy arts I spurn, thy joys despise;

Minerva's smile alone I prize.