

ODE TO SLEEP.

BY MR. H——.

I.

FRRIEND to the gloomy shade of night!
Vast source of fanciful delight!
Power! whose care-dissolving sway,
The slave that pants o'er Indian hills,
The wretch whom snow-girt Zembla chills,
And wide creation's fertile race obey;
The joyous choristers that flit in air,
The mutes that dwell beneath the silver flood,
The savage howling o'er th' affrighted wood,
And man, th' imperious lord of all, thy power declare.

II.

Thy magic wand can oft restrain
The miser's sordid hopes of gain;
Can make each heart-felt trouble cease;
Or from the sickening thought suspend
The image of a dying friend;
And lull Suspicion's wakeful eyes in peace.
If thou but soothe the faithful lover's rest,
No fond remembrance of each parting sigh,
Of beauty's smile, or pity's streaming eye,
In grief's soft moments steal around his aching breast.

III.

Fair virtue's friend! thou ne'er shalt shed
 Thy blessings o'er the impious head,
 Or 'midst the noise of crowds be found;
 Thy balm-distilling sweets alone
 To ermin'd Innocence are known,
 And gay Content with rural garlands crown'd.
 By thee the shadow-trembling murderer's guilt
 With doubled terror wrings the tortur'd soul,
 The purpled steel, the life-destructive bowl,
 Recall the baleful horrors of the blood he spilt.

IV.

When by some pale and livid light
 I cheat the tedious hours of night,
 Indulging o'er the Attic page:
 The dying taper warns to rest,
 Thy visions seize my ravish'd breast,
 And pictur'd beauties real woes assuage.
 O'er Helicon^r my bleating lambs I guard,
 Or mix'd with dull Bœotia's simple swains
 Protect my flocks in humble Ascra's plains,
 And view the sky-born sisters hail their favourite bard.

V.

Methinks I hear the Theban lyre:
 I feel my ravish'd soul aspire:

^r Hesiod is said to have led the life of a shepherd on mount Helicon, where, as he relates in his Theogony, the Muses appeared to him, and adopted him in their service. V. 24.

The nymphs surround the infant boy.
Already conscious of his fame

The festive choirs their hopes proclaim,
While Pan exults with uncouth signs of joy;
For thee ^s, sole glory of thy abject race,
The thyme-fed bees their luscious sweets diffuse,
To soothe the numbers of thy copious muse,
And in Bœotia fix each coy reluctant grace.

VI.

Oft fir'd with Bacchanalian rage,
The ^t Father of the Grecian stage
In terror clad annoys my rest;
I feel unnumber'd horrors rise!

The sight forsakes my swimming eyes,
While hissing furies rush upon my breast.
In solemn pomp, I see old Gela mourn,
Dissolv'd in grief beside the poet's grave
To sorrowing sounds he lulls each plaintive wave,
His willows fading and his sea-green mantle torn.

^s Pindar: whose birth the Nymphs and Pan are said to have solemnized with dances: we are likewise told, that in his infancy the bees fed him with their honey. He was born at Thebes, the capital of Bœotia, a province remarkable for the dulness of its inhabitants, of which he himself takes notice in his Olympics.

^t Æschylus, who was reported never to have wrote but when inspirited by wine; he had a particular genius for terrifying the audience: of which the Chorus of Furies in his Eumenides is a remarkable and well known instance. He was buried near the river Gela, where the tragedians performed dramas at his tomb.

VII.

With longing taste, with eager lip,
 In raptur'd visions oft I sip
 The honeys of the tragic ^u bee;
 Whose strains could every tempest quell,
 Could every noxious blast dispell,
 And still the hollow roaring of the sea.
 Whose powerful fancy, whose exhaustless vein,
 Whose daring genius, whose triumphant wing,
 Deep source from whence ten thousand rivers spring,
 Just bounds could limit, and each rigid rule restrain.

VIII.

How oft inspir'd with magic dread,
 By fancy to the cave I'm led
 Where sits the wise Piérian ^x sage;
 With piercing eye, with pensive mind,
 In attic solitude reclin'd,
 Stern virtue's precepts chill the poet's rage.
 Blest bard! whose muse, mid mildest morals strong,
 Could each rebellious appetite controul,
 Could wake each tender feeling of the soul,
 And deck instruction in the pleasing charms of song.

^u Sophocles, who, it is said, was able to check the fury of the winds and sea. Philostratus de Vita Apollonii Tyanci, lib. viii. pag. 393.

^x Euripides, who, we learn from Aul. Gellius lib. xv. cap. 20, pag. 418. was reported to have wrote many of his tragedies in an old melancholy cave. He was generally distinguished by the epithet of *Wise*.

IX. With

IX.

With patriot ardor I behold
 The ^y mirthful muse for freedom bold;
 Tho' chaste, severe; tho' poignant, sweet;
 For long uncertain where to rest,
 At length upon the poet's breast
 The sportive Graces fix'd their gay retreat.
 With simpler strains the ^z Doric muses charm,
 And oft to nobler themes of heavenly praise
 As Lybia's ^a poet hymns his solemn lays,
 The wanton Teian ^b loves each chaster thought disarm.

X.

Thus may thy languid charms dispense
 Their blessings o'er my ravish'd sense
 By thee to Attic worlds convey'd.
 Thus if at Juno's ^c fond request
 Thou e'er on Ida's top oppress
 Th' Almighty Thunderer with thy dewy shade,
 To soothe one mortal thy fond care employ!
 And, Morpheus, thus may thy mild Lethéan powers,
 For ever hovering round my midnight hours,
 Thro' Fancy's mirror wrap me in idéal joy.

^y Aristophanes, who is esteemed to have been of singular service to the commonwealth, by representing to his fellow-citizens the pernicious designs of their leading men.

^z Theocritus.

^a Callimachus.

^b Anacreon.

^c Alluding to a passage in Homer. Iliad Ξ V. 233.