

XII.

How Time, all-wasting, ev'n the worst impairs,
 And each foul age to dregs still fouler runs !
 Our fires, more vicious ev'n than theirs,
 Left us, still more degenerate heirs,
 To spawn a baser brood of monster-breeding sons.



P S Y C H E: or the
 GREAT METAMORPHOSIS.

A POEM, written in Imitation of SPENSER,

I.

WHERE early Phœbus sheds his milder beams,
 The happy gardens of Adonis lay :
 There Time, well pleas'd to wonne, a youth beseems.
 Ne yet his wings were fledg'd, ne locks were grey ;
 Round him in sweet accord the Seasons play
 With fruits and blossoms meint, in goodly gree ;
 And dancing hand in hand rejoice the lea.
 Sick gardens now no mortal wight can see,
 Ne mote they in my simple verse descriven be.

II.

The temper'd clime full many a tree affords ;
 Those many trees blush forth with ripen'd fruit ;
 The blushing fruit to feast invites the birds ;
 The birds with plenteous feasts their strength recruite ;

And warble songs more sweet than shepherd's flute,
 The gentle stream that roll'd the stones among,
 Charm'd with the place, almost forgot its suite;
 But list'ning and responding to the song,
 Loit'ring, and winding often, murmured along.

III.

Here Panacea, here Nepenthe grew,
 Here Polygon, and each ambrosial weed;
 Whose vertues could decayed health renew,
 And, answering exhausted nature's need,
 Mote eath a mortal to immortal feed.
 Here lives Adonis in unfading youth;
 Celestial Venus grants him that rich meed,
 And him successive evermore renew'th,
 In recompence for all his faithful love and truth,

IV.

Not she, I ween, the wanton queen of love,
 All buxom as the waves from whence she rose,
 With her twin sons, who idly round her rove,
 One Eros hight, the other Anteros;
 Albeit brothers, different as foes:
 This fated, sullen, apt for bickermment;
 That hungry, eager, fit for derring-does.
 That flies before, with scorching flames ybrent;
 This foll'wing douts those flames with peevish discontent.

V. Celestial

V.

Celestial Venus does such ribaulds shun,
 Ne dare they in her purlues to be seen;
 But Cupid's torch, fair mother's fairest son,
 Shines with a steady unconsuming sheen;
 Not fierce, yet bright, coldness and rage between,
 The backs of Lyons fellonest he strode;
 And Lyons tamely did themselves amene;
 On nature's wild full sov'reignly he rode;
 Wild natures, chang'd, confess'd the mild puissant god.

VI.

A beauteous Fay, or heav'n-descended spright,
 Sprung from her fire, withouten female's aid,
 (As erst Minerva did) and Psyche hight,
 In that inclosure happy sojourn made.
 No art some heel'd uncomelyness betray'd,
 But nature wrought her many-colour'd stole;
 Ne tarnish'd like an Æthiopian maid,
 Scorch'd with the suns that ore her beauties roll;
 Ne faded like the dames who bleach beneath the pole.

VII.

Nor shame, nor pride of borrow'd substance wrought
 Her gay embroidery and ornament:
 But she who gave the gilded insect's coat
 Spun the soft filk, and spread the various teint:

The

The gilded insect's colours yet were feint
 To those which nature for this fairy wove.
 Our grannums thus with diff'rent dies besprent,
 Adorn'd in naked majesty the grove,
 Charm'd our great fires, and warm'd our frozen clime to love.

VIII.

On either side, and all adown her back,
 With many a ring at equal distance plac'd,
 Contrary to the rest, was heben black,
 With shades of green, quick changing as she pass'd,
 All were on ground-work of bright gold ore-cast.
 The black gave livelood to the greenish hue,
 The green still deep'd the heben ore it lac'd;
 The gold, that peep'd atween and then withdrew,
 Gave lustre to them both, and charm'd the wond'ring view.

IX.

It seem'd like arras, wrought with cunning skill,
 Where kindly meddle colours, light, and shade;
 Here flows the flood; there rising wood or hill
 Breaks off its course; gay verdure dies the mead.
 The stream, depeinten by the glitt'rand braid,
 Among the hills now winding seems to hide;
 Now shines unlook'd for thro' the op'ning glade,
 Now in full torrent pours its golden tyde;
 Hills, woods, and meads refresh'd, rejoicing by its side.

X. Her

X.

Her Cupid lov'd, whom Psyche lov'd again.

He, like her parent and her belamour,

Sought how she mote in sickness remain,

From all malengine safe, and evil flour.

“ Go tender coffer, said he, forray ore

“ These walks and lawnds; thine all these buskets are;

“ Thine ev'ry shrub, thine ev'ry fruite and flower:

“ But oh! I charge thee, love, the rose forbear;

“ For prickles sharp do arm the dang'rous rosiere,

XI.

“ Prickles will pain, and pain will banish love:

“ I charge thee, Psyche, then the rose forbear.

“ When faint and sick, thy languors to remove,

“ To yon ambrosial shrubs and plants repair;

“ Thou weetest not what med'cines in them are:

“ What wonders follow their repeated use

“ N'ote thy weak sense conceive, should I declare;

“ Their labour'd balm, and well-concocted juice,

“ New life, new forms, new thews, new joys, new worlds
[produce.

XII.

“ Thy term of tryal past with constancy,

“ That wimpling slough shall fall like filth away;

“ On pinions broad, uplifted to the sky,

“ Thou shalt, astert, thy stranger self survey.

“ Together,

" Together, Psyche, will we climb and play;
 " Together wander through the fields of air,
 " Beyond where suns and moons mete night and day.
 " I charge thee, O my love, the rose forbear,
 " If thou wouldst scape the avoid. Psyche, forewarn'd, beware!"

XIII.

" How sweet thy words to my enchanted ear!
 (With grateful, modest confidence she said)
 " If Cupid speak, I could for ever hear:
 " Trust me, my love, thou shalt be well obey'd.
 " What rich purveyance for me hast thou made,
 " The prickly rose alone denied! the rest
 " In full indulgence giv'n! 'twere to upbraid
 " To doubt compliance with this one request:
 " How small, and yet how kind, Cupid, is thy behest!

XIV.

" And is that kindness made an argument
 " To raise me still to higher scenes of bliss?
 " Is the acceptance of thy goodness meant
 " Merit in me for farther happiness?
 " No merit and no argument, I wifs,
 " Is there besides in me unworthy maid:
 " Thy gift the very love I bear thee is.
 " Trust me, my love, thou shalt be well obey'd;
 " To doubt compliance here, Cupid, were to upbraid."

XV. With-

XV.

Withouten counterfenance thus she spoke;
 Unweeting of her frailty. Light uprose
 Cupid on easy wings: yet tender look,
 And oft reverted eye on her bestows;
 Fearful, but not distrustful of her vows.
 And mild regards she back reflects on him:
 With aching eye pursues him as he goes;
 With aching heart marks each diminish'd limb;
 Till indistinct, diffus'd, and lost in air he seem.

XVI.

He went to set the watches of the east,
 That none mote rush in with the tyde of wind:
 He went to Venus to make fond request
 From fleshly firm to loosen Psyche's mind,
 And her eftsoons transmew. She forelore pin'd;
 And mov'd for solace to the glassy lake,
 To view the charms that had his heart entwin'd.
 She saw, and blush'd and smil'd; then inly spake:
 "These charms I cannot chuse but love, for Cupid's sake."

XVII.

But sea-born Venus 'gan with envy stir
 At bruite of their great happiness; and sought
 How she might wreak her spight: then call'd to her
 Her sons, and op'd what rankled in her thought;

Asking

Asking who'd venture ore the mounds to vau't
 To breed them scathe unwares; to damp the joy
 Of blisful Venus, or to bring to nought
 The liefest purpose of her darling boy,
 Or urge them both their minion Pfyche to destroy.

XVIII.

Eros recul'd, and noul'd the work atchieve.
 " Behold is th' attempt, said he, averse from love:
 " If love inspires I could derreign to reave
 " His spear from Mars, his levin-brond from Jove."
 Him Anteros, snob'd furly. " Gallefs dove!
 " Than love's, spight's mightier prowefs understond:
 " If spight inspires I dare all dangers prove:
 " And if successful, stand the levin-brond,
 " When hurlen angry forth from Jove's avenging hond."

XIX.

He said, and deffly t'wards the gardens flew;
 Horribly smiling at his foul emprise.
 When, nearer still and nearer as he drew,
 Unsufferable brightness wounds his eyes
 Forth beaming from the crystal walls; he tries
 Arrear to move, averted from the blaze.
 But now no longer the pure æther buoys
 His grosser body's disproportion'd peaze;
 Down drops, plumb from his tow'ring path, the treachor base.

XX.

So ore Avernus, or the Lucrine lake,
 The wistlefs bird purfues his purpos'd flight :
 Whether by vapours noy'd that thenceforth break,
 Or elfe deserted by an air too light,
 Down tumbles the fowl headlong from his height.
 So Anteros aftonied fell to ground,
 Provok'd, but not accoid at his ftraunge plight.
 He rofe, and wending coafts it round and round
 To find unguarded pafs, hopelefs to leap the mound.

XXI.

As on the margin of a fream he flood,
 Slow rolling from that paradise within,
 A fnake's out-cafe untenanted he view'd :
 Seizing the fpoil, albeit it worthlefs been,
 He darts himfelf into the vacant fkin.
 In borrow'd gear, th' exulting lofel glides,
 Whofe faded hues with joy flufh bright again ;
 Triumphant ore the buoyant flood he rides ;
 And shoots th' important gulph, borne on the gentle tydes.

XXII.

So fhone the brazen gates of Babylon ;
 Armies in vain her muniments affail :
 So ftrong, no engines could them batter down :
 So high, no ladders could the ramparts fcale ;

So flank'd with tow'rs, besiegers n'ote avail ;
 So wide, sufficient harvests they enclose :
 But where might yields, there stratagems prevail.
 Faithless Euphrates thro' the city flows,
 And thro' his channel pours the unexpected foes.

XXIII.

He sails along in many a wanton spire ;
 Now floats at length, now proudly rears his crest :
 His sparkling eyes and scales, instinct with fire,
 With splendor as he moves, the waves ore kest :
 And the waves gleam beneath his flaming breast.
 As through the battle, set in full array,
 When the sun walks in radiant brightness dress'd ;
 His beams that on the burnish'd helmets play,
 The burnish'd helms reflect, and spread unusual day.

XXIV.

So on he fares, and stately wreaths about,
 In semblance like a seraph glowing bright ;
 But without terror flash'd his lightning out,
 More to be wonder'd at, than to affright.
 The backward stream soon led the masker right
 To the broad lake, where hanging ore the flood
 (Narcissus like, enamour'd with the sight
 Of his own beauties) the fond Psyche stood,
 To mitigate the pains of lonely widowhood.

XXV. Un-

XXV.

Unkenn'd of her, he raught th' embroider'd bank ;
 And through the tangled flourets weft aside
 To where a rosiere by the river dank,
 Luxuriant grew in all its blowing pride,
 Not far from Pfyche ; arm'd with scaly hide
 He clamb the thorns, which no impressiion make ;
 His glitt'ring length, with all its folds untied,
 Plays floating ore the bush : then silence brake,
 And thus the nymph, astonish'd at his speech, bespake.

XXVI.

“ O fairest, and most excellent compleat
 “ In all perfections, sov'reign queen of nature !
 “ The whole creation bowing at thy feet
 “ Submissive pays thee homage ! wond'rous creature,
 “ If aught created thou ! for every feature
 “ Speaks thee a goddess issued from the skie ;
 “ Oh ! let not me offend, unbidden waiter,
 “ At awful distance gazing thus ! But why
 “ Should gazing thus offend ? or how unbidden I ?

XXVII,

“ The sun that wakes those flourets from their beds,
 “ Or opes these buds by his soft influence,
 “ Is not offended that they peep their heads,
 “ And shew they feel his pow'r by their quick sense,

“ Off’ring at his command, their sweet incense ;
 “ Thus I, drawn here, by thy enliv’ning rays,
 “ (Call not intrusion my obedience !)
 “ Perforce, yet willing thrall, am come to gaze,
 “ To pay my homage meet, and bask in beauty’s blaze.”

XXVIII.

Amaz’d she stood, nor could recover soon :
 From contemplation suddenly abraid :
 Starting at speech unusual : yet the tune
 Struck footly on her ear, and concert made
 With her own thoughts. Nor with less pleasure stray’d
 Her eyes delighted o’er his glossy skin ;
 Yet frighted at the thorn on which he play’d :
 Pleasure with horror mixt ! she hung between
 Suspended ; yields, recoils, uncertain where to lin.

XXIX.

At length she spoke : “ Reptile, no charms I know
 “ Such as you mention : yet whate’er they are,
 “ (And nill I lessen what the gods bestow)
 “ Their is the gift, and be the tribute their !
 “ For them these beauties I improve with care,
 “ Intent to them alone from eve to morn.
 “ But reed me, reptile, whence this wonder rare,
 “ That thou hast speech, as if to reason born ?
 “ And how, unhurt you sport on that forbidden thorn ?”

XXX. “ Say,

XXX.

“ Say, why forbidden thorn? the foe replied :
 “ To every reptile, every insect free,
 “ Has malice harsh to thee alone denied
 “ The fragrance of the rose enjoy’d by me ?”
 “ —’Twas love, not malice, form’d the kind decree,
 Half-wroth, she cried :) “ Thine all these baskets are,
 “ Thine fruit and flow’r, were Cupid’s words to me :
 “ But oh? I charge thee, love, the rose forbear;
 “ For prickles sharp do arm the dang’rous rosiere.

XXXI.

“ Prickles will pain, and pain will banish love:
 “ I charge thee, Psyche, then the rose forbear.
 “ When faint and sick, thy languors to remove,
 “ To yon ambrosial shrubs, and plants repair;
 “ Thou weetest not what med’cines in them are.
 “ What wonders follow their repeated use
 “ N’ote thy weak sense conceive, should I declare :
 “ Their labour’d balm, and well-concocted juice,
 “ New life, new forms, new thews, new joys, new worlds
 “ produce.

XXXII.

“ Thy term of trial past with constancy,
 “ Thy wimpling slough shall fall like filth away;
 “ On pinions broad up-lifted to the skie,
 “ Thou shalt, astart, thy stranger self survey.

- “ Together, Psyche, will we climb and play ;
 “ Together wander through the fields of air,
 “ Beyond where suns and moons mete night and day.
 “ I charge thee, O my love, the rose forbear,
 “ If thou wouldst scathe avoid, Psyche, forewarn’d, beware !”

XXXIII.

- Out burst the frannion into open laugh :
 She blush’d, and frown’d at his uncivil mirth.
 Then, soften’d to a smile, as hiding half
 What mote offend if boldly utter’d forth,
 He seem’d t’ assay to give his answer birth :
 But stop’d ; and chang’d his smiles to looks of ruth,
 “ Is this (quoth he) fit guerdon for thy worth ?
 “ Does Cupid thus impose upon thy youth ?
 “ Dwells then in heav’n such envy, void of love and truth ?

XXXIV.

- “ Is this the instance of his tendernefs,
 “ To envy Psyche what to worms is given ?
 “ To cut her off from present happiness
 “ With feign’d reversion of a promis’d heav’n ?
 “ By threat’nings false from true enjoyments driven !
 “ How innocent the thorn to touch, he knows :
 “ Where are my wounds ? or where th’ avenging levin ?
 “ How softly blush these colours of the rose ?
 “ How sweet (and div’d into the flow’r) its fragrance flows ?

XXXV. “ Disad-

XXXV.

“ Disadvantageous are thy terms of tryal ;
 “ No longer Psyche then the rose forbear.
 “ What is to recompence the harsh denial,
 “ But dreams of wand’ring thro’ the fields of air,
 “ And joys, I know not what, I know not where !
 “ As eath, on leafy pinions borne the tree
 “ Mote rush into the skies, and flutter there,
 “ As thou soar yon, and quit thy due degree :
 “ Thou for this world wert made: this world was made for thee.

XXXVI.

“ In vain you’d fly to yonder shrubs and plants ;
 “ Bitter their taste, and worthless their effect :
 “ Here is the polychrest for all thy wants ;
 “ No panacea, like the rose, expect.
 “ Mute as my fellow-brutes, as them abject
 “ And reasonless was I, till haply woke
 “ By tasting of the rose, (O weak neglect
 “ In thee the while !) the dawn of sapience broke
 “ On my admiring soul, I reason’d, and I spoke.

XXXVII.

“ Nor this the only change ; for soon I found
 “ The brisker spirits flow in fuller tyde ;
 “ And more than usual lustre spread around ;
 “ Such virtue has the rose, in me well tried.

“ But wife, I ween, thy lover has denied
 “ Its use to thee ; I join him too : beware
 “ The dang’rous rose.—For such thy beauty’s pride
 “ ’Twere death to gaze on, if improv’d !—Forbear
 “ To sharp that wit, too keen !—Touch not the rosiere.”

XXXVIII.

Uncheckt, indulg’d, her growing passions rise :
 Wonder, to see him safe, and hear his telling ;
 Ambition vain, to be more fair and wise ;
 And rage, at Cupid’s misconceiv’d false dealing :
 Various the gusts, but, all one way impelling,
 She plung’d into the bosom of the tree,
 And snatch’d the rose, no dreaded pain or quelling.
 Off drops the snake, nor farther staid to see ;
 But rush’d into the flood, and vanish’d presently.

XXXIX.

Full many a thorn her tender body rent ;
 Full many a thorn within the wounds remain,
 And throbbing cause continual dreriment :
 While gory drops her dainty form distain.
 She wishes her lost innocence again,
 And her lost peace, lost charms, lost love to find ;
 But shame upbraids her with a wish so vain :
 Despair succeeded, and aversion blind ;
 Pain fills her tortur’d sense, and horror clouds her mind.

XL. Her

XL.

Her bleeding, faint, disorder'd, woe-begon,
 Stretcht on the bank beside the fatal thorn,
 Venus who came to seek her with her son,
 Beheld. She stop'd: And albe heav'nly born,
 Ruthful of others woe, began to mourn.
 The loss of Venus' smiles sick nature found:
 As frost-nipt drops the bloom, the birds forelorn
 Sit hush'd, the faded sun spreads dimness round;
 The clatt'ring thunders crash, and earthquakes rock the ground.

XLI.

Then arming with a killing frown her brow;
 "Die, poor unhappy"—Cupid suppliant broke
 Th' unfinished sentence; and with dueful bow
 Beg'd her to doff the keenness of her look,
 Which nature feeling to her center shook.
 "Then how should Psyche bear it? Spare the maid;
 "'Tis plain that Anteros his spight has wroke;
 "Shall vengeance due to him, on her be laid?
 "Oh! let me run, and reach th' ambrosial balms," he said.

XLII.

"Ah what would Cupid ask?" the queen replies;
 "Can all those balms restore her peace again?
 "Wouldst thou a wretched life immortalize;
 "Wouldst thou protract by potent herbs, her pain?"

“ Love bids her die : thy cruel wish restrain——
 “ Why then (quoth he) in looms of fate were wove
 “ The lives of those, in long successive train,
 “ From her to spring, thro’ yon bright tracts to rove ?
 “ Due to the skyes, and meant to shine in fields above ?

XLIII.

“ Say, would thy goodness envy them the light
 “ Appointed for them, or the good prevent
 “ Foreseen from them to flow ? erasing quite
 “ The whole creation thro’ avengement ?
 “ One only species from its order rent,
 “ The whole creation shrivels to a shade.——
 “ —Better all vanish’d, said she, than be meint
 “ In wild confusion ; through free will misled,
 “ And tempted to go wrong from punishment delay’d.”

XLIV.

“ Let me that exemplary vengeance bear,
 (Benign return’d her amiable son :)
 “ Justice on her would lose its aim ; severe
 “ In vain, productive of no good ; for none
 “ Could by that desolating blow be won.
 “ So falls each generous purpose of the will
 “ Correct, extinguish’d by abortion :
 “ Whence justice would its own intendments spill ;
 “ And cut off virtue, by the stroke meant vice to kill.

XLV. “ Yet

XLV.

“ Yet lest impunity should forehead give
 “ To vice, in me let guilt adopted find
 “ A victim ; here awhile vouchsafe me live
 “ Thy proof of justice, mixt with mercy kind !”
 “ ---Oh ! strange request (quoth she) of pity blind !
 “ How shouldst thou suffer, who didst ne’er offend ?
 “ How canst thou bear to be from me disjoin’d ?
 “ To wander here, where nature ’gins to wend
 “ To waste and wilderiness, and pleasures have an end ?”

XLVI.

“ You, Venus, suffer, (said she) when you strike
 “ Not for your own, but others foul offence :
 “ Why not permitted I to do the like,
 “ When greater good, I see, will coult from thence ?
 “ That greater good orepays all punishments ;
 “ And makes my suff’rings, pleasure : if they prove
 “ A means to conquer Anteros, dispense
 “ Healings to Psyche’s wounds, regain her love,
 “ And lead her, with her happy sons, to realms above.”

XLVII.

“ To thy intreaties Psyche’s life I give,
 (Replied th’ indulgent mother to her son ;)
 “ But yet deform’d, and minish’d let her live ;
 “ ’Till thou shalt grant a better change foredone ;

“ Nor

“ Nor shall that change, but thro’ death gates be won.
 “ This meed be thine, ore her and hers to reign !
 “ Already Nature puts her horrors on :
 “ Away !—I to my bow’r of blifs again !
 “ Thou to thy task of love, and voluntary pain.”

XLVIII.

She went ; and like a shifted stage, the scene
 Vanish’d at once ; th’ ambrosial plants were lost ;
 The jarring seasons brought on various teen ;
 Each fought, each seeking, each by other crost.
 Young spring to summer flies from winter’s frost ;
 While sweltry summer thirsts for autumn’s bowl,
 Which autumn holds to winter ; winter tost
 With scorn away, young spring inflames his soul :
 Still craving, never pleas’d, thus round and round they roll.

XLIX.

Th’ inclement airs bind up the sluggish soil ;
 The sluggish soil the toilsome hand requires ;
 Yet thankless pays with sour harsh fruits the toil ;
 Ne willing yields, but ragged thorns and briers.
 Birds, birds pursue ; as hunger’s rage inspires :
 Their sweetest songs are now but songs of woe.
 Here from th’ encroaching shore the wave retires :
 There hoarse floods roar ; impetuous torrents flow ;
 Invade the land, and the scarce harvests overthrow.

L. Stretcht

L.

Stretcht on the bank eftsoons th' inviting form
 Of Psyche faded ; brac'd up lank and flim,
 Her dwindled body shrunk into a worm :
 Her make new moulded, chang'd in ev'ry limb ;
 Her colours only left, all pale and dim :
 Doom'd in her caterpillar's shape to lout.
 Her passions ill such worthless thing beseem ;
 Pride, rage, and vanity to banish out,
 She creeping crawls, and drags a loathsome length about.

LI.

How Cupid wash'd her noisome filth away ;
 What arts he tried to win her love again ;
 By what wiles guileful Ant'ros did assay,
 By leasing, still her recreant to maintain,
 And render Cupid's kindly labours vain :
 Their combat, Cupid's conquest, Psyche's crown,
 (My day's set task here ended) must remain
 Unfung ; far nobler verse mote they renown :
 Unyoke the toiled steers, the weary sun goes down,

