

THE AUTHOR.

TO ARTHUR MURPHY, ESQ.

TO sing of beauty and its pow'r divine,
 Let other Bards invoke the tuneful Nine;
 Another theme demands my humble lays,
 A theme illum'd by Truth's resplendent rays;
 To no fictitious scenes the Muse shall rove,
 Nor seek, by frenzy led, the Delphic grove;
 Alas! the mournful scenes we mean to shew,
 In real, not in fancied life we know:
 The ills from Genius' source that daily spring,
 My penfive Muse in plaintive strains shall sing.

All hail! ye brethren of the tuneful art;
 Whether ye lull the ear, or charm the heart;

Whether beneath some half-roof'd shed you lie,
Unpity'd live, or unlamented die;
Or if (severer fate) your sacred lays
Proclaim some titled Patron's fulsome praise;
O list awhile to my untutor'd song,
And bless those numbers which to you belong.

In early youth, when all our joys are pure,
And pleasure woos us with a harmless lure;
When, blest, and thoughtless of our future fate,
Around the cheerful hearth we lively prate;
Whilst tales of goblins stern, and fairies kind,
Impress with pleasing awe the infant mind;
Or, if serener skies to fields invite,
We chace, with anxious steps, the may-bug's flight;
Or else with pigmy hand the mead despoil,
And cowslip's chaplet weave with curious toil;
E'en then, the hapless breast that Genius lights
With double rapture hails these first delights;

To Fancy's sway he yields his guileless heart,
Unaw'd by fashion, and unspoil'd by art;
To him who Fancy's magic influence knows,
With brighter glow appears the blushing rose;
By Nature form'd to relish all her sweets,
Her daify'd meadows, and her green retreats.

At length to school remov'd, the happy boy,
The mother's earnest of much future joy;
Forfakes the scene of dear domestic bliss,
The father's smile, the mother's ardent kifs;
Nor quits he yet without some falling tear
Those fields his infant joys have render'd dear.

At first, the clamour of the buzzing schools,
And classic Lily's salutary rules,
With terrors new his infant mind appall,
And present fears his pristine joys recall;
But when the dry grammarian's toils are o'er,
And Ovid opens all his tender store;

With kindred flame his ardent bosom glows,
His version pure the rising genius shews;
And the pleas'd master sees, with flatt'ring hope,
The early efforts of a future Pope.

Now partial friends predict his rising fame,
With hand unweary'd fan Ambition's flame;
At length some guardian care removes the youth
To those blest scenes of wisdom, and of truth,
Where holy Science holds her peaceful reign,
Where Genius wanders o'er the classic plain;
On Isis' verdant bank he shapes his way,
'Mid scenes that heard a Warton's virgin lay;
Or lingers, Cam, beside thy sedgy stream,
Of Maſon's matchleſs verſe the darling theme.

Here Science woos him with her tempting lore;
He pants while ſhe unfolds her mental ſtore;
With eager ſoul ſeizes the valued prize,
Ambition prompts him, and his proſpects riſe:

Still where, devoid of care, the stripling roves,
Beside the stream, or through the nodding groves;
Each lively thought the hallow'd Muse inspires;
Big with idea, glowing with her fires,
He gazes round. Genius adores the youth,
And leads him smiling to the shrine of Truth.

Perchance, lov'd Isis, by thy gentle stream
The wading youth pursues his wayward theme;
And as thy waves in flow succession glide,
To mix with Ocean's undistinguish'd tide,
With fond expectance waits th' eventful hour,
That yields departure from thy much-lov'd bow'r,
With hopes of fame his hapless bosom glows,
Nor more, Content, thy peaceful empire knows.
Now glittering visions in his sleep appear,
The splendid premium, and the patron Peer;
By Hope deluded, and Ambition led,
The willing Muse he vows for life to wed.

With her he seeks that splendid sink of vice,
Where Peers, instead of Poets, have their price.
The Drama now his constant thoughts engage,
With eager eye he rifles Shakspeare's page,
And hopes, like Murphy, to adorn the stage.
But though, like him, he matchless pow'rs possess,
Though Phœbus' self the fond attempt should bless;
Yet ere his numbers meet the public eye
A thousand deaths the hapless Bard must die;
Condemn'd to torture by good Larpent's pen,
Who cuts by patent, and may come again;
Larpent! who dare the pouring wight arraign!
Lo! Genius struggles in his torpid chain.
Near him Apollo veils his heav'nly fires,
And ev'ry Muse with Larpent's name expires.
At length arrives the dread, the awful night,
When the maim'd infant sees the burst of light.

The boxes fill'd with noisy froth—the pit
Replete alone with malice and with wit.
With vulgar dissonance the gall'ries arm'd,
By nought but Edwin's monkey visage charm'd,
In senseless clamour their huge prowess shew,
And fright with noise alone the *Ton* below;
Yielding rich harvest to the critic flail,
Nurse Prologue then repeats her wonted tale.
At length to ev'ry gazing eye appears,
Who opes with Nature's key the source of tears.
Critics, though stern, awhile their voice suspend,
Till, charm'd by Siddons, at her shrine they bend;
Yet what avails the tribute Nature pays?
Her tenderest tear is but her noblest praise;
The sons of sordid wealth and splendid pow'r
Feel but the sorrows of the passing hour:
For, mark the name 'mid glory's glitt'ring roll,
Where Mis'ry scowl'd not on th' aspiring soul.

Know those who wept o'er woes his fancy fram'd
Withheld the bread an Otway's hunger claim'd.
Ill-fated Otway, o'er whose melting page
Soft Pity's tear shall fall in ev'ry age,
If ghastly Famine, with unhallow'd pow'r,
Triumphant mark'd his last expiring hour.
Ah! who, by Genius blest'd, yet curs'd by Fate,
Can for his sorrow hope a shorter date?

Yet list, ye hapless sons of magic verse,
While your deep woe my humble lays rehearse,
From Fame's bright source let Hope refulgent shine;
For, yours alone is great Apollo's shrine:
A shrine to which the fool shall never bend;
Or, off'ring there, the god shall ne'er befriend.
The time may come, when England's rocky shore
Shall prize the balance of the world no more,
When some proud victor o'er this happy land
Shall impious stretch the tyrant's fated wand,

Whene'er, o'er Britain doom'd to reign no more,
Her shrine removing to the Western shore,
Sweet Freedom, heav'nly maid, shall wing her way,
And to new worlds disclose her lustrous day;
The Nine lov'd partners of each former flight,
Disdaining still to own a tyrant's right,
With her shall seek the blest'd, the favour'd clime,
Where each shall wait the awful close of Time.
The jealous guardians of your well-earn'd fame
Shall to the tawney tribes your worth proclaim.
And, whilst around new empires rise to view,
Their mingled praise shall still belong to you.
Yet what avails this bright, this flatt'ring thought,
By Hope inspir'd, nay, more, by Reason taught;
Since, ere her pillar Fame begins to raise,
The fated Bard thy debt, O Nature, pays?
When all the varied ills of life are o'er,
And flighted worth is doom'd to feel no more,

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When hears'd in death the woe-worn Genius sleeps,
Then o'er his grave a grateful country weeps,
And loads with costly pile the hallow'd spot,
Where all that Famine spar'd is doom'd to rot.