

No 139

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Robert Dargie
1839



THE GRAVE,

&c.



THE GRAVE;

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY ROBERT BLAIR.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

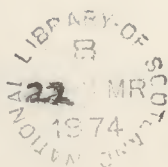
SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE, AND OBSERVATIONS
ON HIS WRITINGS,

BY ROBERT ANDERSON, M.D.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR STIRLING AND KENNEY, EDIN-
BURGH; AND LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN,
AND GREEN, LONDON.

1826.



EDINBURGH:
Printed by John Brewster,
11, Society.

THE
LIFE
OF
ROBERT BLAIR.

OF the personal history of the Author of *The Grave*, though he be generally known as an elegant and devout poet, there is no written memorial. His contemporaries, who celebrated his genius and virtue, left his life unwritten; and the particulars relating to him, which tradition has preserved, are few, and such as give little scope for amplification.

The life of a country clergyman, devoted to the duties of his profession, the practice of the domestic virtues, and the occupations of

literature, is seldom diversified by events sufficiently remarkable, in the judgment of his contemporaries, to require transmission to posterity. He rises to eminence by the solitary exercise of mental energies, which, to ordinary discernment, do not distinguish him from other men ; and when his fame is established by time, it is too late to satisfy the curiosity which his writings must excite concerning the circumstances of his life, and the peculiarities of his personal character.

The tribute of commemoration that has fallen to my share, has been delayed till the advantages of personal knowledge are unattainable ; and nothing is left to be introduced into a record of biography, but a few dates and facts, scarcely deserving the title that is given to them, communicated to me, chiefly, by his son, the late Lord President of the Court of Session, and his cousin, the late Dr. Hugh Blair, one of the ministers of the High Church, and Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh.

These authorities I produce with much pleasure, as I have thereby an opportunity of reflecting on the politeness and hereditary love of literature of the distinguished Judge, whose decease his country, and pre-eminently his friends, so recently deplore ; and of recording my obligations to the kindness of the venerable director of my youthful studies, whose established reputation can receive no addition from the testimony of a grateful pupil to the merit of his “Academical Prelections,” which constitute an era in the annals of Scottish literature.*

The family from which ROBERT BLAIR descended is of great antiquity in the district of Cunningham, in Ayrshire ; where it has acquired considerable property, and been distinguished by public offices, and honourable alliances ; but is more celebrated by

* On retiring from the discharge of his academical duties, in 1783, he published the “Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres,” which he had read in the University for twenty-four years, in 2 vols. 4to. ; a durable monument of his reputation, which time will not destroy.

the ornaments it has given, at different times, to religion, literature, and jurisprudence.

From John Blair, son of Alexander Blair, of Windyedge, brother-german of Blair of Blair, sprung his grandfather, the Rev. Robert Blair, minister of St. Andrews, and chaplain to Charles I.; a strenuous defender of the Presbyterian constitution, and the liberty of the nation, in the time of the great civil war.* While he exerted himself, in that evil time,

* From an account of his life, partly written by himself, and continued by Mr. Row, printed at Edinburgh, 1754, 12mo. it appears, that he was born at Irvine in 1593. His father was "A Merchant Adventurer at Sea." His mother was Beatrix Mure, of the ancient family of Rowallan. He had three brothers, John, James, and William, of whom the two elder filled the office of Provost in the Magistracy of Irvine, and William was sometime a Regent (Professor of Philosophy) in the University of Glasgow, and afterwards minister of Dumbarton. He also was sometime a Regent in the same University, and afterwards minister at Bangor, in Ireland. He married Beatrix Hamilton, of the family of Bardowie. He was chosen Moderator of the General Assembly in 1646. He died August 27, 1666, in the 73d year of his age.

to maintain the privileges of the church, and the rights of the people, his piety, prudence, learning, and moderation, commanded the respect of men of opposite opinions, and conciliated the favour of the Sovereign; whose catastrophe, and the subversion of the monarchy, he lived to deplore; the fatal consequence of enforcing the ritual of the episcopal hierarchy on the people of Scotland, and aspiring to absolute power.

The talents and virtues of this worthy man seem to have descended, as an inheritance, to his posterity. Of his two surviving sons, David, the eldest, embraced the sacred profession, and was the father of the author of *The Grave*; and from Hugh, the youngest, sprung the father of the celebrated author of those masterly “Discourses,” which, for beauty of sentiment, soundness of reasoning, and grace of composition, exhibit the most elegant models of pulpit eloquence, that have yet appeared in these kingdoms.*

* The first volume of the “Sermons” was printed in 1777, 8vo. and was followed, at different intervals, by three other volumes,

With the piety, learning, and prudence of his venerable father, the eldest son inherited his ardent attachment to the principles of civil and religious liberty. The sacred duties of a minister of the gospel were congenial with the dispositions of his heart ; and, having entered on public life at an alarming period, that threatened the subversion of church and state, he steadily co-operated in the measures adopted for the security of the protestant religion, and the fundamental laws of the kingdom, against the tyranny of the Sovereign. At the Revolution, when public liberty obtained perfect security, and the presbyterian form of church government was unalterably established in Scotland,* he was appointed chaplain to King

and a posthumous volume, printed in 1801. They circulated rapidly wherever the English tongue extends, and were soon translated into almost all the languages of Europe. Dr. Blair died December 27, 1800, in the 83d year of his age.

* The Presbyterian government, established at the Revolution, was infringed by an act of the British parliament in 1712, restoring patronages in the settlement of ministers ; which, in

William, and selected to be one of the ministers of the Old Church parish in Edinburgh.* He married Euphemia Nisbet, daughter of Archibald Nisbet, Esq. of Carfin, in Lanarkshire; a woman of singular good sense, and sweetness of disposition; and by her had two sons, heirs of his amiable worth, and ornaments of the sacred profession they were destined to assume.

The eldest son, who is the subject of this narrative, was born at Edinburgh, in the year 1699. At an early age, he was deprived of his father,† and left to the care of his mother;

1732, produced the Secession Church, now comprehending a large portion of the population of Scotland.

* The register of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, previous to the year 1701, having been destroyed by fire, it cannot be ascertained at what time he was admitted as one of the ministers of the Old Church; but from a list of the Moderators of the Presbytery, after the year 1687, still preserved, it appears, that he was Moderator in May 1692. Mr. William Mitchell was his Colleague. He was chosen Moderator of the General Assembly in 1700.

† The following record is extracted from the register of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, bearing date 14th June 1710. "The

who, as he grew up, had the satisfaction of observing the faculties of his mind, and the dispositions of his heart, like the flowers of spring, gradually unfold their active energies, and amiable graces.

After the usual grammatical course at the public school, he received a most liberal education, in languages and philosophy, in the University of Edinburgh; and afterwards, was sent abroad, by the direction of his guardians, for improvement, according to a fashion which then prevailed in Scotland, and spent some time on the Continent, chiefly in Holland; where he found opportunities of prosecuting his literary and philosophical studies, and of cultivating the acquaintance of men of learning and science.

Although it is too late to investigate minutely the progress of his mind, or attempt to enu-

reverend, pious, and learned servant of Jesus Christ, Mr. David Blair, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, departed this life, upon Saturday last, being the 10th day of June current, much lamented by his brethren and people."

merate his favourite studies, yet it cannot be doubted that his early attention to poetry, which gave a grace to the severe studies of philosophy, received a strong determination from the emulation of poetical composition among his youthful companions.

The cultivation of polite learning in Scotland, after the accession of the Scottish monarchs to the English throne, had been long retarded by the oppression of the government, and the rancour of religious and political controversy; but at this period, under a wise and enlightened government, founded on liberty and religious toleration, and strengthened by the union of the kingdoms, the diffusion of liberal knowledge was rapidly extending, and the general circulation of the writings of the English poets and essayists, distinguished by beauty of language, and correctness of style, had a beneficial influence on the progress of refinement among the people.

Co-operating with the taste for elegant literature, now considerably advancing, the in-

stitution of literary clubs became fashionable in Edinburgh. A society of young ladies of rank and fortune, under the name of the Fair Intellectual Club, distinguished themselves by their attention to the cultivation of polite accomplishments, and the exercise of English composition;* and an association of gentlemen, of mature judgment and taste, called the Athenian Society, extended their patronage, and assistance to a collection of "Original Poems and Translations," the performances, chiefly, of students in the University, entitled, "The Edinburgh Miscellany,"† which gave a promising hope of the rising generation.

This little volume of juvenile verses, now almost unknown, is interesting to curiosity; as it was ushered into the world by the early

* See "An account of the Fair Intellectual Club in Edinburgh, in a Letter to a honourable member of an Athenian Society there, by a young lady, secretary of the Club," Edinburgh, 4to. 1720.

† Printed for J. M'Euen, 12mo. vol. i. 1720, and inscribed to the Earl of Lauderdale. A second volume, announced in the preface "to succeed this very soon," probably never was published.

companions of Blair, aspiring to literature and to poetry; as it is the first poetical miscellany, after the manner of the English writers of verse, that appeared in Scotland; and as it is enriched by the earliest compositions of Thomson and Mallet; themselves destined, at no distant date, to rank among the chief ornaments of their country.

Although the compositions of Blair cannot be ascertained among the anonymous contributions to the “Edinburgh Miscellany,” beyond the uncertainty of conjecture, yet there is sufficient reason to suppose he contributed his share, from his habits of intimacy with John Callender, Esq.* one of the principal contribu-

* Of Craigforth, in Stirlingshire; joint author of “*Lugubres Cantus*, Poems chiefly occasioned by the death of the late ingenious youth John Mitchell, who died January 5, 1719, in the 19th year of his age; Part I. by his Brother, Part II. by his Friend,” 8vo. 1719; and father of John Callender, Esq. well known by his profound knowledge of oriental and northern literature, and his editions of *Ancient Scottish Poems*, *Paradise Lost*, *Voyages to the Terra Australis Cognita*, &c.

tors, with whom he contracted an early friendship, cemented by a similarity of taste and of pursuits. The verses, "Of the Glory of God and Heaven," and "Of the Destruction of the Canaanites,"* subscribed by the initial letter of his name, may be safely ascribed to Blair, from internal evidence; as they have the boldness and grandeur of his thoughts, and the beauties and defects of his expression.

At this time, also, on the occasion of the death of a youth of the most promising genius, his brother, Mr. Joseph Mitchell, a student of divinity, who afterwards obtained considerable reputation by his writings,† in conjunction with

* Joshua, chap. x. xi.

† He was a native of Ratho, in Mid-Lothian, and, like his brother poet, Thomson, prosecuted the study of divinity, and, like him also, repaired to London, to improve his fortune. He obtained the patronage of the Earl of Stair, and of Sir Robert Walpole, and lived in good correspondence with the most eminent poets and men of letters of his time. He published a collection of his "Poems on Several Occasions," in two vols. 8vo. 1729. His praise of Thomson's "Winter," in his friendly address to the author on its first ap-

his friend, Mr. Callender, consecrated a volume of tributary verses to his memory, entitled “*Lugubres Cantus*, Poems on several Grave and Important Subjects, &c. in Two Parts,”* with a “General Preface by appointment of the Athenian Society,” a congratulatory epistle to the Author of the “First Part,” from Mr. R. Boyd, and complimentary verses by the English poets, Ambrose Philips and Dr. Young, prophetic of the rival honours of the Scottish muse.

pearance (vol. ii. p. 273.), refutes the story of his peevish disapprobation of it, told by Cibber, in his *Life of Thomson*.

“ I greet thy genius well, invite thee forth,
And first present to public view thy worth;
I prophesied of thee, nor blush to own
The joy I feel in making Thomson known.”

He is author of a single dramatic piece, “*The Highland Fair, or the Union of the Clans*, an Opera,” 8vo. 1731. *The Fatal Extravagance*, a Tragedy, 8vo. 1721, 12mo. 1726, ascribed to him, was written for his benefit, by his friend Aaron Hill, Esq. He died February 6, 1738.

* London, printed for J. M'Euen in Edinburgh, 8vo. 1719.

The motives and views which the Athenian Society had in allowing the collection to pass under their authority, are acknowledged to be “the charms of nature and friendship which are conspicuous in these loose and careless performances, the zeal we have for our country’s honour and interest, and the encouragement we are disposed to afford our youth, who begin, of late, to show a noble genius, and discover a generous emulation in the study of all polite accomplishments, particularly poetry.”*

In the “Second Part” of the collection, the separate tribute of Mr. Callender,† a friendly, persevering mourner, is an *Epistle to Mr. Robert Blair*, soliciting his sympathy and condolence; of which the introductory lines are remarkable, as the testimony of the writer to the unbounded inquisitive disposition

* General Preface, composed by Mr. J. Hume, in the name of the Society, p. 4.

† Preceded by the laudatory verses of Major Pack, Mr. C. Cunningham, and Mr. Robert Duncan.

of his friend, and his early devotion to poetical composition.

“ While you, dear *Blair*, my old, my honest friend,
With men and books improve your curious mind ;
By turns, the Muses’ sacred arts pursue,
And search all Nature’s winding mazes thro’,
Draw largely now from the Pierian spring,
And then, t’ unbend your lab’ring spirits, sing.”

Unquestionably, Blair had given proofs of his taste for poetry, at this early period of his life, by indulging himself with his companions, in gathering the flowers that casually tempted him, in ranging the fields of science. But the cultivation of poetry was never regularly continued, the courtship of the muse being only subordinate to the more serious exercises of a student of Theology, preparatory to his undertaking the office of a minister of the gospel, the object of his hereditary reverence, and highest ambition.

To this early bent of his mind, to diffuse and increase the influence of religion, which predom-

minated through life, and which at this time seems to have estranged him from his old companions, Mr. Callender alludes in a subsequent part of his mournful epistle.

“ Tho’ nobler business hath engross’d your care,
And new companions more your converse share—
You cannot hear my melancholy case
And not be touch’d with sorrow and distress.—
Brave minds with pity and compassion glow,
And gently strive to bear another’s woe.”

Hitherto, the tenor of his life, spent in the silent acquisition of knowledge, had proceeded with remarkable uniformity. But the time was now approaching when the course of events brought him forward to public attention as a candidate for poetical fame, by the dedication of a funeral *Poem to the Memory of the late learned and eminent Mr. William Law, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh*, 4to. 1728; the tribute of affection, esteem, and gratitude to a venerable relation, one

of his guardians, and the director of his studies, which reflects equal credit on the vigour of his genius, the discrimination of his judgment, and the sensibility of his heart.

At length, the time arrived, which completed the course of his Theological studies; and having undergone the customary trials appointed by the Church of Scotland for a license to preach the Gospel, he was admitted a probationer; and soon obtained so much distinction as a warm and serious preacher, that he received a presentation to the parish of Athelstaneford, in the county of East Lothian, from its patron, Sir Francis Kinloch, Bart. of Gilmerton; where he was ordained to the office of the holy ministry by the presbytery of Haddington, January 5, 1731, with the cordial approbation, and acceptance of the parishioners.

At Athelstaneford, a retired situation, in a fertile, agricultural district, among a respectable native gentry, and an intelligent and industrious tenantry, he spent the remainder of his

life; constantly engaged in the regular discharge of the public and private duties of the pastoral office, the blameless occupations of literature and science, and the habitual, and unobtrusive practice of piety and benevolence.

In 1733, he married Isabella Law, daughter of his lamented friend and guardian, the late Professor William Law,* a young lady of uncommon beauty and amiable manners, with whom he had been brought up, under the same affectionate guidance and instruction, and to whom he had long been tenderly attached. The union had nothing discordant in it, and proved, as might reasonably be expected, a source of the purest domestic felicity.

In the course of his incumbency, he lived in a liberal intercourse of social amity with his worthy patron, Sir Francis Kinloch, Bart.,

* Of Elvingston, in East-Lothian, the inheritance of his son, the late William Law, Esq. Sheriff-depute of that county, and of his grandson, James Law, Esq. a member of the College of Surgeons in Edinburgh.

uninterrupted by any casual irritation or disagreement; and cultivated a cordial correspondence with his excellent neighbour, Colonel James Gardiner,* which only terminated with the life of that brave man, whose lamented death, he was himself destined not long to survive.

Besides his attention to poetry, resumed at intervals, amidst his pastoral avocations, he found an agreeable relaxation from severer studies, in botanical researches and optical experiments, for which he had an early predilection; and carried on an epistolary correspondence with several persons in England, distinguished by their attention to the improvement of natural science, and the prosecution

* Of Bankton, in the parish of Tranent, adjoining the field of the unfortunate battle in which he fell, September 21, 1745. He married Lady Frances Erskine, daughter of the Earl of Buchan. He is affectionately commemorated in "The Life of Colonel Gardiner," &c. by Dr. Doddridge, 8vo. 1747, and a "Visit to the Grave of Colonel Gardiner," in "Leaves from a Journal in Scotland, 1817," by the Rev. Andrew Bigelow, Medford, Massachusetts, 8vo. Boston, 1822. 8vo. Edinburgh, 1824.

of moral and literary inquiries, particularly with Henry Baker, Esq. a naturalist of considerable eminence,* and with Dr. Watts, a dissenting minister, no less remarkable for his genius and learning, than the mildness and fervency of his piety.†

The last memorable circumstance of his life, now drawing prematurely to a close, is the publication of *The Grave*, the performance that has transmitted his name to the present

* This ingenious and diligent naturalist was, like Blair, also a poet. Besides his papers in the Transactions of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies, of which he was a fellow, he is author of "Poems, Serious and Humorous," 8vo. 1725; "The Universe, a Poem, intended to restrain the Pride of Man," which has been several times reprinted; "The Microscope made Easy," 8vo. 1742; "Employment for the Microscope," 8vo.; "Account of the Water Polype," &c. 8vo.; which have gone through many editions. He died November 25, 1774.

† "Few men have left behind such purity of character, or such monuments of laborious piety. He has provided instruction for all ages, from those who are lisping their first lessons, to the enlightened readers of Malbranche and Locke; he has left neither corporeal nor spiritual nature unexamined; he has taught the art of Reasoning, and the science of the Stars."—DR. JOHNSON.

time, and given him a distinguished place among the legitimate poets of his country.

Of the design of the poem, the process he observed in composing it, and the discouragement he experienced in publishing it, an account, by good fortune, is given by himself, in the following letter to Dr. Doddridge, dated Athelstaneford, February 25, 1742, which I transcribe from his "Epistolary Correspondence," published by the Rev. Mr. Stedman of Shrewsbury,* not less for the interesting information it contains, than for the ease and modesty of the style, and the advantageous impression it conveys of his temper and disposition.

"You will be greatly surprised with a letter from one whose name is not so much as known to you, nor shall I offer to make an apology. Though I am entirely unacquainted with your person, I am no stranger to your merit as an author; neither am I altogether unacquainted with your personal character, having often heard honourable mention made of you by my

* Printed at Shrewsbury, 8vo. 1790.

much respected and worthy friends, Colonel Gardiner and Lady Frances. About ten months ago, Lady Frances did me the favour to transmit to me some manuscript hymns of yours, with which I was wonderfully delighted. I wish I could, on my part, contribute in any measure to your entertainment, as you have sometimes done to mine, in a very high degree. And that I may show how willing I am to do so, I have desired Dr. Watts to transmit to you a manuscript poem, entitled *The Grave*, written, I hope, in a way not unbecoming my profession as a minister of the gospel, though the greatest part was composed several years before I was clothed with so sacred a character. I was urged by some friends here, to whom I showed it, to make it public; nor did I decline it, provided I had the approbation of Dr. Watts, from whom I have received many civilities, and for whom I had ever entertained the highest regard. Yesterday I had a letter from the Doctor, signifying his approbation of the piece in a manner

the most obliging. A great deal less from him would have done me no small honour. But at the same time he mentions to me that he had offered it to two booksellers of his acquaintance, who, he tells me, did not care to run the risk of publishing it. They can scarce think (considering how critical an age we live in with respect to such writings), that a person living three hundred miles from London, could write so as to be acceptable to the fashionable and polite. Perhaps it may be so, though at the same time I must say, in order to make it more generally liked, I was obliged sometimes to go cross to my own inclination, well knowing, that whatever poem is written upon a serious argument, must, upon that very account, be under peculiar disadvantages; and, therefore, proper arts must be used to make such a piece go down with 'a licentious age, which cares for none of these things. I beg pardon for breaking in upon moments so precious as yours, and hope you will be so kind as to give me your opinion of the poem."

The obstacles to the publication of *The Grave*, which, to a timid, inexperienced author, seemed insurmountable, were speedily removed by the persevering kindness of Dr. Watts, and the liberality and good taste of a publisher of considerable consequence; and the poem came forth in 1743, printed in a handsome 4to. size, for M. Cooper,* at the Globe, in Paternoster Row, London, with the name of the author, and a motto from the book of Job on the title-page, as they appear in the common editions.

The success of *The Grave*, on its first appearance, when the fashionable and serious readers of moral and divine poetry, were universally attracted to the pathetic and sublime performance of a poet of the first celebrity,† surpassed the most sanguine expectations of

* Widow of T. Cooper, a respectable bookseller in Paternoster Row. Mrs. Mary Cooper, the publisher of *The Grave*, died in 1764.

† The series of Dr. Young's "Night Thoughts," was in the course of publication at this time, and received by the nation with extraordinary avidity.

the modest unambitious author, in the obscurity of retirement.

But he enjoyed the gratification, arising from the fulfilment of his anticipations of the favourable acceptance of *The Grave*, equally by the polite and pious world, a very short time. He died of a fever, on the 4th of February 1746, in the 47th year of his age, deeply lamented by his family and parishioners. Over his remains, in the church-yard of Athelstaneford, a common grave-stone is inscribed with the simple record of his mortality.

By his Lady, who survived him many years, and died in 1774, he had five sons and one daughter, David, William, Francis, Robert, Archibald, and Anne, all of whom, at different periods, with two exceptions, died without issue ; Francis, his third son, a linen manufacturer in Edinburgh, who died, 1815, leaving four sons, two of whom have died since, and a daughter, unmarried ; and Robert, his fourth son, Lord President of the Court of Session, who died, 1811, leaving a son, William Blair, Esq.

of Avontoun, West-Lothian, and three daughters, the eldest married to the Honourable Alexander Maconochie, Lord Meadowbank, a Judge of the Courts of Session and Justiciary, the second married to David Monro Binning, Esq. of Softlaw, Stirlingshire, and the youngest unmarried.*

With the memorial of his descendants, by whom the ancient and respectable family of Blair is represented,† on whom the lustre of his reputation is reflected with honest pride, and for whom the public respect is deservedly shown, I conclude the slender narrative of his uneventful, but useful and honourable life.

The private and public character of Blair in his domestic and social relations, may be esti-

* His only brother, Archibald, was minister of Garvald, in the presbytery of Haddington, whose son, Robert Blair, M.D., is Regius Professor of Astronomy in the University of Edinburgh.

† The present Mr. Blair of Blair is not the lineal representative of the family, being descended from a younger brother of Scott of Malleny, who married the heiress of Blair. The ancestor of the noble family of Dundonald was a younger son of John Blair of Blair, who married the heiress of Cochrane.

mated, in some measure, by a review of the circumstances of his life recorded here. An elaborate delineation of his intellectual endowments and literary attainments requires more ample illustration than I am able to bestow. The testimonies of contemporaries to his qualifications as a classical and polite scholar, an inquisitive and scientific naturalist, a polished and substantially accomplished gentleman, an impressive and edifying preacher, a tender and respectful husband, an affectionate and endearing parent, cannot be suspected of insincerity. An accurate and extensive knowledge of ancient and modern literature may be regarded as a common attainment in a clergyman, but the familiarity with old English literature, which his writings evince, must be considered as a rare accomplishment in his time. The amenity of his aspect, the gracefulness of his deportment, the kindness and simplicity of his manners, and the earnest persuasive style of his pulpit eloquence, were long remembered in the parish of Athelstaneford, and the contiguous parishes. The

vestiges of his taste, as a botanist, were visible in his garden long after it came into the possession of his successor, Mr. John Home, the celebrated author of the tragedy of "Douglas." Had the correspondence of Mr. Baker been preserved, it would have furnished the testimony of that intelligent and benevolent man to his proficiency in optical and microscopical knowledge, and would probably have transmitted some particulars concerning his scientific and literary pursuits, which might have gratified curiosity. The friendship of Dr. Watts, a poet and a divine, eminent for literature and venerable for piety, is the highest honour which his talents and virtues have received from the world. And the esteem of Dr. Doddridge, the biographer of their common friend Colonel Gardiner, whose learning is respected by the most erudite expositors of sacred literature,* and whose piety is venerated by christian writers of every denomination, is no inconsiderable circumstance of his fame.

* Warburton, Newton, Secker, Lyttelton, West, &c.

Of the writings he left behind, the progressive popularity may be estimated by the multiplied editions of *The Grave*, which have been printed from time to time, and widely circulated among the people. Of such editions as are most remarkable, a distinct enumeration can only be attempted here.

In an early edition of *The Grave*, printed at Edinburgh in 1747, 12mo, probably the earliest that had been undertaken in Scotland, after the author's death, a translation was introduced of an Ode from the Latin of Florence Wilson,* in his Dialogue, *De Animi Tranquillitate*, unauthorized by his family, who knew nothing of the performance that passed under his name. In a subsequent edition, the 4th, printed at

* Better known by the name of Florentius Volusenus. He was born in the vicinity of Elgin, received the first part of his education at Aberdeen, and afterwards prosecuted his studies at Paris. He resided for a considerable number of years in France, where his eminent ingenuity, modesty, probity, and elegant latinity, obtained him the most honourable patronage. He died at Vienne

Edinburgh, in 1751, 12mo,* with remarkable elegance, the translation of Wilson's Ode has no place, nor has it been admitted into any of the common, or more elegant editions that have been published, from time to time, except the edition printed at London, with engravings by W. Gardiner, B. A. in 1802, 12mo, on the

in Dauphine, in 1546, and Buchanan honoured his memory by the following epitaph.

Hic, Musis, Volusene, jaces carissime, ripam
 Ad Rhodani, terra quam procul a patria !
 Hoc meruit virtus tua, tellus quæ foret altrix
 Virtutum, ut cineres conderet illa tuos.

Of his very elegant Dialogue, there are five editions. The first was printed by Seb. Gryphius, Ludg. 1543, 4to. That of Edinb. 1707, 8vo. was published by Mr. Ruddiman, and the last, Edinb. 1751, 8vo. by Dr. Wishart. The Ode (*Nihil esse in hac vita requietis, præter id, quod a sapientia et pietate profiscitur*), inserted at the end of the Dialogue, has likewise been translated, with considerable exactness, by Ninian Paterson, minister of Libberton, in his "Epigrammatum libri octo," &c. Edinb. 1678, 12mo. This Ode, and other verses interspersed in the Dialogue, are reprinted in the "Delitiæ Poetarum Scotorum," tom. 2.

* For W. Gray, Junior.

plan of republishing the whole “ Poetical Works” of Blair. The same plan has been adopted in the present edition ; and though it has been more accurately collated with the original authorities than any former edition, yet all evidence, external and internal, is against the ascription of the feeble version of the pious Ode of Florence Wilson to the author of *The Grave*.

For the ease and satisfaction of persons, who, owing to their deficiency in the art of reading, dislike the structure of blank verse, and admire only rhyme in poetry, an edition of “ The Grave, altered into rhyme from the blank verse of Robert Blair,” was published by Henry Lemoine,* in 1790, 8vo. The editor executed the scheme of transposition he proposed to himself, with considerable felicity of performance ; but, following an injudicious

* Author of “ Typographical Antiquities,” &c. 1797, and of various tracts, translations, compositions, and contributions to the Gentleman’s Magazine, and other periodical publications. He died in 1812.

plan, and debasing unavoidably the energy, phraseology, and imagery of *The Grave*, in many passages, the edition could be considered only as an instance of the misapplication of industry and ingenuity.*

Among the "Works" of the legitimate poets of our nation, which were republished, in a general edition, with "Prefaces Biographical and Critical," under my direction, in 1795,† a distinguished place was assigned to the works of Blair,‡ and the public attention was called to his name, for the first time, in an authentic record of biography.§

* Gray's "Elegy written in a country church-yard," usually accompanying the common editions of *The Grave*, with obvious propriety, was retained in this edition, with divisions, arguments, and notes to both poems.

† Printed by Mundell and Son, Edinburgh, in 14 vols. royal 8vo.

‡ The variations from the common editions of *The Grave*, printed from a MS. copy, dated 1741-2, might have been spared, as the common readings, following the first edition, 1743, then unknown, are evidently improvements, the result of intermediate revision.

§ When I was at college, fifty years ago, a report was wander-

The awful argument and solemn imagery *The Grave* have exercised, at different times, the beneficial art of design, in moral and picturesque representations of the origin, pursuits, and end of the human race. A series of visionary representations accompanied the magnificent edition of “*The Grave*, illustrated

ing about in the literary circles of Edinburgh, which ascribed *The Grave* to an episcopal clergyman in Edinburgh, who died in 1746. Mr. Pinkerton gave circulation to this unauthorized report, in his collection of “*Ancient Scottish Poems*,” &c. 2 vols. 8vo. 1786. A more recent and circumstantial account of the author, in Mr. Lemoine’s edition of *The Grave*, is equally destitute of authenticity.

“He was born near Glasgow, about the year 1700, and took his degree of A. M. in the University of Edinburgh in 1720. He settled first in the north of Ireland, where he was some time assistant to the celebrated Mr. Ahernethy, after which he became pastor of a congregation in Duhlin. How long he remained here is uncertain, for in 1743, when he first published his excellent poem, *The Grave*, he exercised his pastoral office in Edinburgh. He died during a visit to his friends at Glasgow, in the year 1751.”

The genuine history of the poet was in some danger of being lost to the public, when a casual notice of his name in “*Doddridge’s Epistolary Correspondence*” directed me to the members of his family, for the materials of the “*Biographical Preface*” to his “*Poetical Works* ;” which is reprinted here, revised, and enlarged.

by twelve etchings, executed by Louis Schiavonetti, from the original inventions of William Blake," printed in royal 4to. by T. Bensley, London, 1808. The designs of the artist, approaching in some instances the boundaries of legitimate invention, exhibit the regular progression of man, from his first entrance into the vale of death, to his last admission into life eternal, and rival, in graphic excellence, the embellishments which accompany the works of Shakespeare and Milton.

While the common editions of *The Grave* continued to issue from the metropolitan and provincial presses, in 12mo, beyond number,* an edition on a large type, in 4to, was brought forward in Edinburgh, printed by William Blair, in 1815, embellished with a vignette title, and accompanied by "Gray's Elegy written in a country church-yard, Parnell's

* An edition published by Mr. Morison, of Perth, with preface, engraved frontispiece and title, 1799; and another, by Mr. Chapman, of Glasgow, with prefatory remarks, 1806, may be reckoned among the most considerable.

Hermit, and Biographical Notices of the Authors from Dr. Anderson's edition of the British Poets." The copies of this edition have been bought up by the public, and are seldom to be met with.

The character of Blair, as a poet, remains to be considered, and will be most completely estimated by his writings, which, after every deduction that can be made, are sufficient to entitle him to a high rank among the poets of our country, who are more distinguished by the value than the number of their writings.

Among the poets of his age, Pope appears to have been his greatest favourite, and his earliest performances are constructed on the model of the great master of heroic verse.* But he soon renounced the character of an imitator, and distinguished himself by a species of poetry entirely his own. Even in his earliest acknowledged performance, the *Poem to the Memory of Mr. Law*, written in the

* The Edinburgh Miscellany, vol. i. p. 129-133.

couplet measure, the stamp of originality is visible, in many passages. It is evidently a juvenile performance, the tribute of affection and esteem to the merits of a friend; and though it bears marks of haste, and is chargeable in some instances with incorrectness of language and incongruity of imagery, the style is simple and beautiful, the features of character are finely delineated,* and the sentiments are expressed with a tenderness and energy not unworthy the author of *The Grave*. The apostrophe to Mrs. Law is particularly pathetic, and the abrupt transition to the final conflagration of the universe, resembles the production of his more mature genius.

This earth, yon sun, and these blue tintured skies
Thro' which it rolls, must have their obsequies;

* Mr. Law was one of the four regents in the University of Edinburgh, and the first who was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy. The regents taught their pupils four years, conducting them through a course of languages and philosophy, till they became Masters of Arts.

Pluck'd from their orbits, shall the planets fall,
And smoke and conflagration cover all :
What then is man ? The creature of a day,
By moments spent, and minutes borne away ;
Time, like a raging torrent hurries on ;
Scarce can we say, *it is*, but that 'tis gone.

The Grave, his greatest work, amply establishes his fame. The argument, the awful truths of man's mortality, is universally interesting, and illustrated "in a way not unbecoming his profession as a minister of the gospel." It is a production of real genius, but is more remarkable for strength of thought and expression, than regularity and connection. It is composed of a series of unconnected descriptions, and of reflections that seem independent of one another, interwoven with striking allusions and digressive sallies of imagination. It is a series of pathetic representations, without unity of design, variegated with imagery and allusion, which exhibit a wide display of original poetry. The christian poet writes under a strong impression of moral and reli-

gious truths, and conviction gives warmth and force to his imagination. His eye is awake on the objects of creation, and on the scenes of human folly and depravity, and he is alive to every feeling of compassion and benevolence. Whatever subject is introduced, he always endeavours to melt the heart and alarm the conscience by pathetic description and serious remonstrance, and his sentiments are always delivered in a striking and energetic manner, that impresses them strongly on the mind.

Occasionally, his imagination, excursive and vigorous, seems to mislead his judgment, and exceed the bounds that criticism prescribes. Possessing strong powers of ridicule, as well as fancy, he passes too suddenly from grave and serious description to irony and satire. Instances of the improper association of incongruous circumstances too frequently occur, and the combination of the grave and the ludicrous weakens the effect.

But the defects of *The Grave* bear a very small proportion to its beauties, which are as

abundant as they are superlative. An original strain of thinking, and a magnificent cast of language and versification, pervade the whole poem, and place it far above the monotonous effusions of mediocrity. The thoughts are forcibly conceived and happily expressed. The language is the natural unforced result of the poet's conceptions. Anxious only to give each image its due prominence and relief, he has wasted no unnecessary attention on grace or embellishment. The diction, therefore, though seldom splendid, is always vigorous and animated, and carries the thought home to the heart with inexpressible energy. The versification is almost as singular as the materials upon which it is employed; sometimes careless and prosaic, and sometimes strikingly elegant and harmonious; resembling sometimes the best manner of Shakespeare, and sometimes that of Milton, but without any marks of servile imitation. A strong resemblance of the style and manner of the "Night Thoughts" of Dr. Young is observable in many

passages, but without the possibility of imitation.* It is altogether the fortuitous result of a rare union of congeniality of imagination and sensibility, with the kindred spirit of rational and sublime piety. Amidst the profusion of beautiful and striking passages in this singular poem, it is difficult to confirm these general remarks by particular quotations.

After an invocation to the *Eternal King*, whose potent arm sustains the keys of Hell and Death, expressed with much strength and animation, he describes, in the richest colours of gothic painting, an old church, the pious work of names once famed, now dubious or forgot.

* The original manuscript of *The Grave*, in the author's handwriting, sometime in my possession, is dated, January 11th, 1741-2. "The greater part of the Poem," he tells Dr. Doddridge, "was composed several years before his ordination," in 1731. The first "Night" appears in the books of the company of Stationers, as the property of Dodsley, in 1742. The preface to "Night" seventh is dated July 7th, 1744.

Doors creak, and windows clap, and night's foul bird,
Rook'd in the spire, screams loud ; the gloomy aisles,
Black-plaster'd, and hung round with shreds of scutcheons,
And tatter'd coats of arms, send back the sound
Laden with heavier airs, from the low vaults,
The mansions of the dead : Rais'd from their slumbers,
In grim array the grisly spectres rise,
Grin horrible, and obstinately sullen,
Pass and repass, hush'd as the foot of night.

The picture of boyish superstitious fear, *in the lone church-yard*, is one of the most natural delineations in the whole poem :

Oft in the lone church-yard at night I've seen,
By glimpse of moonshine chequering thro' the trees,
The school-boy, with his satchel in his hand,
Whistling aloud to bear his courage up,
And lightly tripping o'er the long flat stones,
(With nettles skirted, and with moss o'ergrown)
That tell in homely phrase who lies below.
Sudden he starts, and hears, or thinks he hears,
The sound of something purring at his heels ;
Full fast he flies, and dares not look behind him,
Till out of breath he overtakes his fellows,
Who gather round, and wonder at the tale
Of horrid apparition tall and ghastly,

That walks at dead of night, or takes his stand,
O'er some new open'd grave ; and, strange to tell !
Evanishes at crowing of the cock.

In the affecting description of *The new-made widow*, immediately succeeding, there are many minute strokes of exquisite tenderness :

Sad sight ! slow moving o'er the prostrate dead ;
Listless, she crawls along in doleful black,
While bursts of sorrow gush from either eye,
Fast falling down her wan untasted cheek.
Prone on the lonely grave of the dear man
She drops ; whilst busy meddling memory
In barbarous succession musters up
The past endearments of their softer hours,
Tenacious of its theme. Still, still she thinks
She sees him ; and indulging the fond thought,
Clings yet more closely to the senseless turf,
Nor heeds the passenger who looks that way.

From the pathetic apostrophe to the *Grave*, and to *Friendship*, the heart catches sympathetic feelings :

Invidious Grave ! how dost thou rend in sunder
Whom love has knit, and sympathy made one !

A tie more stubborn far than nature's band !
Friendship ! mysterious cement of the soul !
Sweetner of life ! and solder of society !
I owe thee much. Thou hast deserv'd from me,
Far, far beyond what I can ever pay.
Oft have I prov'd the labours of thy love,
And the warm efforts of thy gentle heart,
Anxious to please——.

There is beautiful description and much poetical enthusiasm in the following lines :

———Oh ! when my friend and I,
In some thick wood have wander'd heedless on,
Hid from the vulgar eye, and sat us down
Upon the sloping cowslip-cover'd bank,
Where the pure limpid stream has slid along
In grateful errors through the underwood,
Sweet murmuring ; methought the shrill-tongue'd thrush
Mended his song of love ; the sooty blackbird
Mellow'd his pipe, and soften'd every note ;
The eglantine smell'd sweeter, and the rose
Assum'd a dye more deep ; whilst every flower
Vied with its fellow plant in luxury
Of dress. Oh ! then the longest summer's day
Seem'd too, too much in haste : still the full heart
Had not imparted half : 'twas happiness

Too exquisite to last. Of joys departed,
Not to return, how painful the remembrance !

The description of the funeral is a fine passage.

But see ! the well-plum'd hearse comes nodding on,
Stately and slow, and properly attended
By the whole sable tribe——
How rich the trappings, now they're all unfurl'd,
And glittering in the sun ! Triumphant entries
Of conquerors, and coronation pomps,
In glory scarce exceed. Great gluts of people
Retard 'th' unwieldy shew ; while, from the casement,
And houses' tops, ranks behind ranks close-wedg'd
Hang bellying o'er——.

The *Sexton* will be readily recognised as a relation of the grave-digger in the tragedy of *Hamlet*.

———— Hoary-headed chronicle,
Of hard unmeaning face, down which ne'er stole
A gentle tear ; with mattock in his hand
Digs through whole rows of kindred and acquaintance,
By far his juniors ! Scarce a skull's cast up,

But well he knows its owner, and can tell
Some passage of his life. Poor wretch ! he minds not,
That soon some trusty brother of the trade
Shall do for him what he has done for thousands.

Among the victims of the Grave, the *Warrior*, *Beauty*, *Strength*, the *Philosopher*, the *Orator*, the *Physician*, and the *Miser*, are contrasted, and pourtrayed with admirable strength of colouring, blended with delicate strokes of satire.

The description of the death of the *strong man* is a striking passage :

What groan was that I heard ? Deep groan indeed !
With anguish heavy laden ! Let me trace it :
From yonder bed it comes, where the strong man,
By stronger arm now vanquish'd, gasps for breath
Like a hard-hunted beast. How his great heart
Beats thick ! his roomy chest by far too scant
To give the lungs full play ! What now avail
The strong built sinewy limbs, the well-spread shoulders ?
See how he toils for life, and lays about him
Mad with his pain ! Eager he catches hold
Of what comes next to hand, and grasps it hard
Just like a creature drowning. Hideous sight !
Oh ! how his eyes stand out and stare full ghastly !

While the distemper's rank and deadly venom
 Shoots like a burning arrow thro' his bowels,
 And drinks his marrow up. Heard you that groan?
 It was his last——.

The similes that embellish and illustrate the poem are beautiful and appropriate, and in such profusion, that a selection is difficult. The following are remarkable for their propriety and elegant simplicity :

——— The long-demurring maid,
 Whose lonely unappropriated sweets
 Smil'd like yon knot of cowslips on the cliff,
 Not to be come at by the willing hand.

——— Summer seas
 Show not more smooth, when kissed by southern winds
 Just ready to expire.

——— Sure the last end
 Of the good man is peace ! How calm his exit !
 Night dews fall not more gently to the ground,
 Nor weary worn out winds expire so soft.

The masterly passages, beginning, *Absurd to think to over-reach the grave*, and, *Here all*

the mighty troublers of the Earth, Th' oppressive, sturdy, man-destroying villains, exemplify the poet's strongest manner of delineation, and display a grandeur of conception, and a richness of expression, equal to the most admired passages of the poet of nature.

The observations, naturally connected with the subject, on the introduction of guilt, misery, and death into the world, by man's first disobedience, and the inestimable value of the christian redemption, are generally grand and edifying, and leave on the mind the most elevating and consolatory impressions of a pure and enlightened religion, founded on the basis of the christian hope of immortality. Occasionally, though but rarely, they are perceived through a shade of melancholy, and encumbered and enfeebled by the harshness and homeliness of the expression.

Although the originality of the matter, as well as the manner of *The Grave* is, unquestionably, very great, yet the critical reader may perceive, that Blair had studied the classical

writers of antiquity, and the epic, didactic, and dramatic poets of our country, to advantage, and has sometimes adopted their ideas and expressions; though it might be unconsciously.

His intimacy with Virgil is manifest from the invocation, and many lines and expressions in the poem, evidently suggested by similar passages in the sixth book of the *Æneid*. A few passages may be thought almost translated; but they show, that whatever he adopted from the Roman poet, he enriched with new grace.

On this side and on that, men see their friends
Drop off, like leaves in autumn.

“ Impositique ———

Quam multa in silvis autumni frigore primo,
Lapsa cadunt folia ———”

————— Here the child

Of a span long, that never saw the sun,
Nor press'd the nipple, strangled in life's porch.

“ Infantumque animæ flentes in limine primo;
Quos dulcis exsortes et ab ubere raptos,
Abstulit atra dies ———”

Death's thousand doors stand open ———

“ Quæ lati ducunt aditus centum, ostia centum.”

In his¹ enumeration of the different victims of the grave, traces of resemblance may be found in Lucian's Dialogue between Charon and Mercury, in which he directs his satire against beauty, kingly power, strength, the warrior, the philosopher, and the orator. Both the heathen philosopher and the christian poet have the same characters, and the same satirical manner of delineation ; but their aims have no resemblance. Lucian ridicules, with unlicensed freedom, the great ones of the earth, by contrasting their situation in life with their degradation in a future state, of which he had no adequate conception. Blair exposes to the light of religion and of reason, the vanity of human enjoyments, with warmth and energy, corresponding to the sincerity and strength of his conviction of the truth and importance of christianity, and its powerful tendency to promote the true happiness of

man, as a stranger on earth, an heir of immortality, and a candidate for heaven.

He undoubtedly possessed a taste for our elder poets, the “ancient wells of English undefiled,” and had studied Spenser and Shakespeare with uncommon attention, from whom he probably learned the energy, character, and truth of composition, the frequent use of compound words, and the genuine language and harmony of verse. His familiarity with the mystical and metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century is manifest, from his converting the mysterious ideas of the celebrated Platonists, More and Norris, to his own use, and the felicitous adaptation of their almost unintelligible expressions, to the improvement of the picturesque and nervous phraseology of his poem.

Tell us, ye dead ! will none of you, in pity
To those you left behind, disclose the secret ?
Oh ! that some courteous ghost would blab it out !
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be.
I've heard, that souls departed have sometimes
Forewarn'd men of their death : 'twas kindly done,
To knock and give the alarum. But what means

This stinted charity ? 'Tis but lame kindness
That does its work by halves. Why might you not
Tell us what 'tis to die ? Do the strict laws
Of your society forbid your speaking
Upon a point so nice ? I'll ask no more :
Sullen, like lamps in sepulchres, your shine
Enlightens but yourselves. Well, 'tis no matter ;
A very little time will clear up all,
And make us learn'd as you are, and as close.

The following stanzas, taken from " Meditation," a poem by Norris, contain the same ideas, and nearly the same expressions, as are to be found in the above passage :

" It must be done, my soul ; but 'tis a strange,
A dismal and mysterious change,
When thou shalt leave this tenement of clay,
And to an unknown somewhere wing away ;
When Time shall be Eternity, and thou
Shall be thou knowst not what, and live thou knowst not how.

Some courteous ghost, tell this great secrecy,
What 'tis you are, and we must be ;
You warn us, it is said, of death, and why
May we not know of you what 'tis to die ?
But you have shot the gulf, and like to see
Succeeding souls plunge in with like uncertainty."

In justice to Norris, who belongs to an exploded school of poetry, the beautiful simile copied by Blair, in the following lines, must be restored to its lawful owner :

————— The good he scorn'd,
Stalk'd off reluctant, like an ill-us'd ghost,
Not to return ; or if it did, its visits,
Like those of angels, short and far between.

“ How fading are the joys we dote upon,
Like apparitions seen and gone ;
But those which soonest take their flight,
Are the most exquisite and strong,
Like angels' visits, short and bright,
Mortality's too weak to bear them long.”

The same fairness requires the restoration of another exquisite simile to the passage from which it appears to be taken, in the argument to the second canto of the first book of More's poem, on “ The Immortality of the Soul :”

————— Fools that we are !
We wish to be where sweets unwith'ring bloom ;
But straight our wish revoke, and will not go.
So have I seen, upon a summer's even,

Fast by the riv'let's brink, a youngster play :
How wishfully he looks ! to stem the tide
This moment resolute, next unresolv'd :
At last ! he dips his foot————

“ Now I'll address me to my mighty task,
So mighty task, that makes my heart to shrink,
While I compute the labour it will ask,
And on my own frail weaknesse I'gin think.
Like tender lad that on the river's brink,
That fain would wash him, while the evening keen
With sharper air doth make his pores to wink,
Shakes all his body, nips his naked skin,
At first makes some delay, but after skippeth in.”

Coincidences of thought and expression may be traced in some passages of *The Grave*, and Shakespeare's plays, and Pope's “ *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady*.” Coincidences of expression are distinctly traceable in the following passages of the poem, and similar passages in the tragedies of Dryden and Lee. The punishment of murder, it may be perceived, is represented in the strong manner of Dryden :

Self-murder ! name it not ; our island's shame

————— Unheard-of tortures

Must be reserv'd for such : these herd together ;

The common damn'd shun their society,

And look upon themselves as fiends less foul.

“ Think, only think, on the last dreadful day,

How you will tremble there, to stand expos'd

The foremost in the rank of guilty ghosts

That must be doom'd for Murder ! Think on Murder ;

That troop is plac'd apart from common crimes ;

The damn'd themselves start wide, and shun that band,

As far more black, and more forlorn than they.”

The passages of Lee's “ Alexander the Great” possess, it may be owned, the tumidity and extravagance of the tragic poet :

In that dread moment, how the frantic soul

Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,

Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help.

“ Drives the distracted soul about her house,

Which runs to all the pores, the doors of life,

Till she is forc'd for air to leave her dwelling.”

By glimpse of moonshine cheq'ring thro' the trees.

“ Where scarce the twilight of an infant moon,

By a faint glimmer cheq'ring thro' the trees.”

A fit of common sickness pulls thee down.

“ A surfeit, nay a fit of common sickness.”

The following lines are almost a paraphrase of the first verse of the 41st chapter of the book of “ Ecclesiasticus :”

How shocking must thy summons be, O Death !
To him that is at ease in his possessions ;
Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unfurnish'd for that world to come.

“ O Death ! how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, unto the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things.”

In producing the parallel passages, where imitation is evident, it would be unjust to withhold a proper acknowledgement to Blair, for the admirable felicity with which he adapted the ideas of his favourite poets, as he found occasion for them, to the accomplishment of his own noble design. He has not, like an inferior poet, debased what he imitated ; he has collected rough stones, and presented them to the world as brilliants. When every deduction is

made that criticism requires, a charming original poem remains, that will ever lay the strongest hold upon the affections, and make the deepest impressions on the heart.

The testimonials in favour of *The Grave* are few, when compared with its popularity. Although it is written in a masculine and majestic style, that might well delight the dictators of criticism, and the writers of verse, yet it has never been mentioned, till very lately, in any critical work, nor imitated in any poetical composition. “The Task” of Cowper, a truly original performance, resembles it only in the singular combination of pathetic description, dignified satire, christian philanthropy, and pious remonstrance. Its popularity, however, must be allowed as an unquestionable authority in its favour; for by the approbation of the greatest number of people, for the longest period of time, the merit of every poetical production must be ultimately decided, and the palm of excellence awarded.

Mr. Hervey, a christian divine, in whose mind imagination and piety, orthodoxy and charity, were happily united, testified his early approbation of *The Grave*, by an appropriate quotation, in his “Meditations among the Tombs,”* and calling it “a valuable poem.”

Mr. Pinkerton, the learned and ingenious editor of “Ancient Scottish Poems,” was the first who subjected *The Grave* to the examination of criticism; and his opinion, though it may not be adopted implicitly, is deserving of attention.

“I know not that he wrote any thing else, but *The Grave* is worth a thousand common poems. The language is such as Shakespeare would have used; yet he no where imitates Shakespeare, or uses any expression of his. It is frugal and chaste; yet, upon occasion, highly poetical, without any appearance of research. It is unquestionably the best piece of blank verse we have, save those of Milton.”

* First published in February, 1745-6.

Mr. Campbell, a poet of the first order of genius, and a critic of competent judgment and taste, in his "Specimens of the British Poets," has introduced a copious selection from *The Grave*, by a concise and spirited estimate of the characteristic style of the poem, which is too valuable to be withheld.

"The eighteenth century has produced few specimens of blank verse of so powerful and simple a character as that of *The Grave*. It is a popular poem, not merely because it is religious, but because its language and imagery are free, natural, and picturesque. Blair may be a homely, and even a gloomy poet, in the eye of fastidious criticism; but there is a masculine and pronounced character even in his gloom and homeliness, that keep it most distinctly apart from either dulness or vulgarity. His style pleases us, like the powerful expression of a countenance without regular beauty."

THE GRAVE,
A POEM.

“ The house appointed for all living.”—JOB.

THE GRAVE.

WHILST some affect the sun, and some the shade,
Some flee the city, some the hermitage ;
Their aims as various, as the roads they take
In journeying through life ;—the task be mine
To paint the gloomy horrors of the tomb ;
Th' appointed place of rendezvous, where all
These travellers meet. Thy succours I implore,
Eternal King ! whose potent arm sustains
The keys of hell and death. The grave, dread thing !

Men shiver when thou'rt nam'd : Nature appall'd,
Shakes off her wonted firmness. Ah ! how dark
Thy long-extended realms, and rueful wastes !
Where nought but silence reigns, and night, dark
 night,
Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun
Was roll'd together, or had try'd his beams
Athwart the gloom profound ! The sickly taper,
By glimm'ring through thy low-brow'd misty vaults,
(Furr'd round with mouldy damps, and ropy slime)
Lets fall a supernumerary horror,
And only serves to make thy night more irksome.
Well do I know thee by thy trusty yew,
Cheerless, unsocial plant, that loves to dwell,
Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms :

THE GRAVE.



Drawn by T. Ewing.

Engraved by J. Stewart.

*The sickly taper,
By glimmering through thy low-brow'd misty vaults,
(Pur'd round with mouldy damps, and rosy slime)
Lets fall a supernumerary horror.*

P. 4.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR STIRLING & KENNEY.
1826.

Where light-heel'd ghosts, and visionary shades,
Beneath the wan cold moon (as fame reports)
Embody'd, thick, perform their mystic rounds.
No other merriment, dull tree ! is thine.

See yonder hallow'd fane ! the pious work
Of names once fam'd, now dubious or forgot,
And bury'd midst the wreck of things which were :
There lie interr'd the more illustrious dead.
The wind is up : hark ! how it howls ! methinks
Till now I never heard a sound so dreary :
Doors creak, and windows clap, and night's foul bird,
Rook'd in the spire, screams loud : the gloomy aisles,
Black-plaster'd, and hung round with shreds of 'scut-
cheons,

And tatter'd coats of arms, send back the sound,
Laden with heavier airs, from the low vaults,
The mansions of the dead. Rous'd from their slum-
bers,

In grim array, the grisly spectres rise,
Grin horrible, and obstinately sullen,
Pass and repass, hush'd as the foot of night.
Again the screech-owl shrieks : ungracious sound !
I'll hear no more ; it makes one's blood run chill.

Quite round the pile, a row of rev'rend elms,
Coeval near with that, all ragged show,
Long lash'd by the rude winds : some rift half
down

Their branchless trunks ; others so thin a-top,

That scarce two crows could lodge in the same tree.
Strange things, the neighbours say, have happen'd
here ;

Wild shrieks have issu'd from the hollow tombs :
Dead men have come again, and walk'd about ;
And the great bell has toll'd, unring, untouch'd,
(Such tales their cheer, at wake or gossiping,
When it draws near to witching time of night.)

Oft, in the lone church-yard at night I've seen,
By glimpse of moon-shine, chequering through the
trees,

The school-boy, with his satchel in his hand,
Whistling aloud to bear his courage up,
And lightly tripping o'er the long flat stones

(With nettles skirted, and with moss o'ergrown,) That tell in homely phrase who lie below ; Sudden ! he starts, and hears, or thinks he hears, The sound of something purring at his heels ; Full fast he flies, and dares not look behind him, Till out of breath he overtakes his fellows ; Who gather round, and wonder at the tale Of horrid apparition, tall and ghastly, That walks at dead of night, or takes his stand O'er some new-open'd grave ; and, strange to tell ! Evanishes at crowing of the cock.

The new-made widow too, I've sometimes spy'd,
Sad sight ! slow moving o'er the prostrate dead :
Listless, she crawls along in doleful black,

THE GRAVE.



Drawn by T. Uwins.

Engraved by J. Stewart.

*Sudden! he starts, and hears, or thinks he hears,
The sound of something purring at his heels;
Full fast he flies, and dares not look behind him.*

P. 8.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR STIRLING & KENNEY.
1826.

Whilst bursts of sorrow gush from either eye,
Fast falling down her now untasted cheek.
Prone on the lowly grave of the dear man
She drops ; whilst busy-meddling memory,
In barbarous succession, musters up
The past endearments of their softer hours,
Tenacious of its theme. Still, still she thinks
She sees him, and, indulging the fond thought,
Clings yet more closely to the senseless turf,
Nor heeds the passenger who looks that way.

Invidious grave ! how dost thou rend in sunder
Whom love has knit, and sympathy made one !
A tie more stubborn far than nature's band !
Friendship ! mysterious cement of the soul !

Sweet'ner of life ! and solder of society !

I owe thee much. Thou hast deserv'd from me
Far, far beyond what I can ever pay.

Oft have I prov'd the labours of thy love,
And the warm efforts of thy gentle heart,
Anxious to please. Oh ! when my friend and I
In some thick wood have wander'd heedless on,
Hid from the vulgar eye, and sat us down
Upon the sloping cowslip-cover'd bank,
Where the pure limpid stream has slid along
In grateful errors through the underwood,
Sweet murmuring ; methought ! the shrill-tongu'd thrush
Mended his song of love ; the sooty blackbird
Mellow'd his pipe, and soften'd every note :
The eglandine smell'd sweeter, and the rose

Assum'd a dye more deep ; whilst ev'ry flower
Vied with its fellow-plant in luxury
Of dress. Oh ! then the longest summer's day
Seem'd too, too much in haste : still the full heart
Had not imparted half: 'twas happiness
Too exquisite to last. Of joys departed,
Not to return, how painful the remembrance !

Dull grave ! thou spoil'st the dance of youthful blood,
Strik'st out the dimple from the cheek of mirth,
And ev'ry smirking feature from the face ;
Branding our laughter with the name of madness.
Where are the jesters now ? the men of health,
Complexionally pleasant ? Where the droll,
Whose ev'ry look and gesture was a joke

To clapping theatres and shouting crowds,
And made ev'n thick-lipp'd musing Melancholy
To gather up her face into a smile
Before she was aware? Ah! sullen now,
And dumb as the green turf that covers them.

Where are the mighty thunderbolts of war?
The Roman Cæsars, and the Grecian chiefs,
The boast of story? Where the hot-brain'd youth,
Who the tiara at his pleasure tore
From kings of all the then discover'd globe;
And cry'd, forsooth, because his arm was hamper'd,
And had not room enough to do its work?
Alas! how slim, dishonourably slim,
And cramm'd into a space we blush to name!

Proud royalty ! how alter'd in thy looks !
How blank thy features, and how wan thy hue !
Son of the morning ! whither art thou gone ?
Where hast thou hid thy many-spangled head,
And the majestic menace of thine eyes,
Felt from afar ? Pliant and powerless now,
Like new-born infant bound up in his swathes,
Or victim tumbled flat upon his back,
That throbs beneath the sacrificer's knife :
Mute, must thou bear the strife of little tongues,
And coward insults of the base-born crowd,
That grudge a privilege thou never hadst,
But only hop'd for in the peaceful grave,
Of being unmolested and alone.
Arabia's gums and odoriferous drugs,

And honours by the heralds duly paid
In mode and form, ev'n to a very scruple ;
Oh, cruel irony ! these come too late ;
And only mock, whom they were meant to honour.
Surely ! there's not a dungeon slave that's bury'd
In the highway, unshrouded and uncoffin'd,
But lies as soft, and sleeps as sound as he.
Sorry pre-eminence of high descent !
Above the vulgar born, to rot in state.

But see ! the well-plum'd herse comes nodding on,
Stately and slow ; and properly attended
By the whole sable tribe, that painful watch
The sick man's door, and live upon the dead,
By letting out their persons by the hour,

To mimic sorrow, when the heart's not sad.
How rich the trappings, now they're all unfurl'd,
And glittering in the sun ! triumphant entries
Of conquerors, and coronation-pomps,
In glory scarce exceed. Great gluts of people
Retard th' unwieldy show ; whilst from the case-
ments

And houses' tops, ranks behind ranks close wedg'd
Hang bellying o'er. But ! tell us, why this waste ?
Why this ado in earthing up a carcass
That's fall'n into disgrace, and in the nostril
Smells horrible ?—Ye undertakers ! tell us,
Midst all the gorgeous figures you exhibit,
Why is the principal conceal'd, for which
You make this mighty stir ? 'Tis wisely done :

What would offend the eye in a good picture,
The painter casts discreetly into shades.

Proud lineage ! now how little thou appear'st
Below the envy of the private man !
Honour ! that meddlesome officious ill,
Pursues thee even to death ; nor there stops short :
Strange persecution ! when the grave itself
Is no protection from rude sufferance.

Absurd ! to think to over-reach the grave,
And from the wreck of names to rescue ours !
The best concerted schemes men lay for fame
Die fast away : only themselves die faster.
The far-fam'd sculptor, and the laurell'd bard,

Those bold insurers of deathless fame,
Supply their little feeble aids in vain.
The tapering pyramid ! th' Egyptian's pride,
And wonder of the world ! whose spiky top
Has wounded the thick cloud, and long outliv'd
The angry shaking of the winter's storm ;
Yet spent at last by th' injuries of heaven,
Shatter'd with age, and furrow'd o'er with years,
The mystic cone, with hieroglyphics crusted,
Gives way. Oh ! lamentable sight ! at once
The labour of whole ages lumbers down ;
A hideous and mishapen length of ruins.
Sepulchral columns wrestle but in vain
With all-subduing Time : his cank'ring hand
With calm delib'rate malice wasteth them :

Worn on the edge of days, the brass consumes,
The busto moulders, and the deep-cut marble,
Unsteady to the steel, gives up its charge.
Ambition ! half convicted of her folly,
Hangs down the head, and reddens at the tale.

Here ! all the mighty troublers of the earth,
Who swam to sov'reign rule through seas of blood ;
Th' oppressive, sturdy, man-destroying villains !
Who ravag'd kingdoms, and laid empires waste,
And in a cruel wantonness of power
Thinn'd states of half their people, and gave up
To want the rest : now, like a storm that's spent,
Lie hush'd, and meanly sneak behind thy covert.
Vain thought ! to hide them from the gen'ral scorn,

That haunts and dogs them like an injur'd ghost
Implacable. Here too the petty tyrant,
Whose scant domains geographer ne'er notic'd,
And, well for neighbouring grounds, of arm as short ;
Who fix'd his iron talons on the poor,
And grip'd them like some lordly beast of prey ;
Deaf to the forceful cries of gnawing hunger,
And piteous plaintive voice of misery,
(As if a slave was not a shred of nature,
Of the same common nature with his lord)
Now ! tame and humble, like a child that's whipp'd,
Shakes hands with dust, and calls the worm his kinsman ;
Nor pleads his rank and birthright. Under ground
Precedency's a jest ; vassal and lord,
Grossly familiar, side by side consume.

When self-esteem, or others' adulation,
Would cunningly persuade us we were something
Above the common level of our kind,
The grave gainsays the smooth complexion'd flatt'ry,
And with blunt truth acquaints us what we are.

Beauty ! thou pretty plaything ! dear deceit !
That steals so softly o'er the stripling's heart,
And gives it a new pulse, unknown before,
The grave discredits thee ; thy charms expung'd,
Thy roses faded, and thy lilies soil'd,
What hast thou more to boast of ? Will thy lovers
Flock round thee now, to gaze and do thee homage ?
Methinks ! I see thee with thy head low laid,
Whilst surfeited upon thy damask cheek

The high-fed worm, in lazy volumes roll'd,
Riots unscar'd. For this, was all thy caution?
For this, thy painful labours at thy glass?
T' improve those charms, and keep them in repair,
For which the spoiler thanks thee not! Foul feeder!
Coarse fare and carrion please thee full as well,
And leave as keen a relish on the sense.
Look! how the fair one weeps! the conscious tears
Stand thick as dew-drops on the bells of flow'rs:
Honest effusion! the swoln heart in vain
Works hard to put a gloss on its distress.

Strength too! thou surly, and less gentle boast
Of those that laugh loud at the village ring!

A fit of common sickness pulls thee down
With greater ease, than e'er thou didst the stripling
That rashly dar'd thee to th' unequal fight.
What groan was that I heard? deep groan indeed!
With anguish heavy-laden! let me trace it:
From yonder bed it comes, where the strong man,
By stronger arm belabour'd, gasps for breath,
Like a hard-hunted beast. How his great heart
Beats thick! his roomy chest by far too scant
To give the lungs full play! What now avail
The strong-built sinewy limbs, and well-spread shoulders?
ders?

See! how he tugs for life, and lays about him,
Mad with his pain! Eager he catches hold

Of what comes next to hand, and grasps it hard,
Just like a creature drowning ! Hideous sight !
Oh ! how his eyes stand out, and stare full ghastly !
While the distemper's rank and deadly venom
Shoots like a burning arrow cross his bowels,
And drinks his marrow up. Heard you that groan ?
It was his last. See how the great Goliah,
Just like a child that brawl'd itself to rest,
Lies still. What mean'st thou then, O mighty
boaster !

To vaunt of nerves of thine ? what means the bull,
Unconscious of his strength, to play the coward,
And flee before a feeble thing like man ;
That, knowing well the slackness of his arm,
Trusts only in the well-invented knife ?

With study pale, and midnight vigils spent,
The star-surveying sage, close to his eye
Applies the sight-invigorating tube ;
And, travelling through the boundless length of space,
Marks well the courses of the far-seen orbs
That roll with regular confusion there,
In ecstasy of thought. But ah ! proud man !
Great heights are hazardous to the weak head ;
Soon, very soon, thy firmest footing fails ;
And down thou drop'st into that darksome place,
Where nor device, nor knowledge ever came.

Here ! the tongue-warrior lies, disabled now,
Disarm'd, dishonour'd, like a wretch that's gagg'd,
And cannot tell his ail to passers by.



THE GRAVE.



Drawn by T. Deira.

Engraved by J. Stewart.

*For this, was all thy caution?
For this, thy painful labours at the glass?*

P. 21.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR STIRLING & KENNEY
1826.

Great man of language ! whence this mighty change ?
This dumb despair, and drooping of the head ?
Though strong persuasion hung upon thy lip,
And sly insinuation's softer arts
In ambush lay about thy flowing tongue ;
Alas ! how chop-fall'n now ! thick mists and silence
Rest, like a weary cloud, upon thy breast
Unceasing. Ah ! where is the lifted arm,
The strength of action, and the force of words,
The well-turn'd period, and the well-tun'd voice,
With all the lesser ornaments of phrase ?
Ah ! fled for ever, as they ne'er had been !
Raz'd from the book of fame : or, more provoking,
Perchance some hackney hunger-bitten scribbler
Insults thy memory, and blots thy tomb

With long flat narrative, or duller rhymes,
With heavy-halting pace that drawl along ;
Enough to rouse a dead man into rage,
And warm with red resentment the wan cheek.

Here ! the great masters of the healing art,
These mighty mock-defrauders of the tomb !
Spite of their juleps and catholicons,
Resign to fate. Proud Æsculapius' son !
Where are thy boasted implements of art,
And all thy well-cramm'd magazines of health ?
Nor hill, nor vale, as far as ship could go,
Nor margin of the gravel-bottom'd brook,
Escap'd thy rifling hand : from stubborn shrubs
Thou wrung'st their shy retiring virtues out,

THE GRAVE.



Drawn by T. Uwins.

Engraved by J. Stewart.

Here! the lank-sided miser, worst of felons!

P. 27.

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And vex'd them in the fire : nor fly, nor insect,
Nor writhy snake, escap'd thy deep research :
But why this apparatus ? why this cost ?
Tell us, thou doughty keeper from the grave !
Where are thy recipes and cordials now,
With the long list of vouchers of thy cures ?
Alas ! thou speakest not. The bold impostor
Looks not more silly, when the cheat's found out.

Here ! the lank-sided miser, worst of felons !
Who meanly stole, discreditable shift !
From back, and belly too, their proper cheer ;
Eas'd of a tax it irk'd the wretch to pay
To his own carcass, now lies cheaply lodg'd,
By clam'rous appetites no longer teaz'd,

Nor tedious bills of charges and repairs.

But ah ! where are his rents, his comings in ?

Ay ! now you've made the rich man poor indeed ;

Robb'd of his gods, what has he left behind ?

Oh ! cursed lust of gold ! when for thy sake

The fool throws up his int'rest in both worlds ;

First starv'd in this, then damn'd in that to come.

// How shocking must thy summons be, O Death !

To him that is at ease in his possessions ;

Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,

Is quite unfurnish'd for that world to come !

In that dread moment, how the frantic soul

Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,

Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help ;

But shrieks in vain ! How wishfully she looks
On all she's leaving, now no longer hers !
A little longer, yet a little longer,
Oh ! might she stay, to wash away her stains,
And fit her for her passage ! Mournful sight !
Her very eyes weep blood ; and every groan
She heaves is big with horror : But the foe,
Like a staunch murd'rer, steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close through every lane of life,
Nor misses once the track, but presses on ;
Till forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks to everlasting ruin. //

Sure ! 'tis a serious thing to die ! My soul !
What a strange moment must it be, when near

Thy journey's end, thou hast the gulf in view !
That awful gulf no mortal e'er repass'd,
To tell what's doing on the other side !
Nature runs back, and shudders at the sight,
And every life-string bleeds at thoughts of parting !
For part they must : body and soul must part ;
Fond couple ! link'd more close than wedded pair.
This wings its way to its Almighty source,
The witness of its actions, now its judge ;
That drops into the dark and noisome grave,
Like a disabled pitcher of no use.

If death was nothing, and nought after death ;
If when men died, at once they ceas'd to be,
Returning to the barren womb of nothing,

Whence first they sprung ; then might the debauchee
Untrembling mouth the heav'ns : then might the
drunkard

Reel over his full bowl, and, when 'tis drain'd,
Fill up another to the brim, and laugh
At the poor bugbear death : then might the wretch
That's weary of the world, and tir'd of life,
At once give each inquietude the slip,
By stealing out of being when he pleas'd,
And by what way ; whether by hemp or steel :
Death's thousand doors stand open. Who could force
The ill-pleas'd guest to sit out his full time,
Or blame him if he goes ? Sure ! he does well,
That helps himself as timely as he can,
When able. But if there is an hereafter,

And that there is, conscience, uninfluenc'd
And suffer'd to speak out, tells ev'ry man ;
Then must it be an awful thing to die !
More horrid yet, to die by one's own hand.
Self-murder ! name it not ; our island's shame !
That makes her the reproach of neighbouring states.
Shall nature, swerving from her earliest dictate,
Self-preservation, fall by her own act ?
Forbid it, Heaven ! Let not, upon disgust,
The shameless hand be fully crimson'd o'er
With blood of its own lord. Dreadful attempt !
Just reeking from self-slaughter, in a rage,
To rush into the presence of our Judge !
As if we challeng'd him to do his worst,
And matter'd not his wrath. Unheard-of tortures

Must be reserv'd for such : these herd together ;
The common damn'd shun their society,
And look upon themselves as fiends less foul.
Our time is fix'd, and all our days are number'd :
How long, how short, we know not : this we know,
Duty requires we calmly wait the summons,
Nor dare to stir till Heaven shall give permission ;
Like centries that must keep their destin'd stand,
And wait th' appointed hour, till they're relieved.
Those only are the brave, that keep their ground,
And keep it to the last. To run away
Is but a coward's trick ; to run away
From this world's ills, that at the very worst
Will soon blow o'er, thinking to mend ourselves,
By boldly vent'ring on a world unknown,

And plunging headlong in the dark : 'tis mad ;
No frenzy half so desperate as this.

Tell us, ye dead ! will none of you, in pity
To those you left behind, disclose the secret ?
Oh ! that some courteous ghost would blab it out !
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be.
I've heard, that souls departed have sometimes
Forewarn'd men of their death : 'twas kindly done
To knock, and give the alarum. But what means
This stinted charity ? 'Tis but lame kindness
That does its work by halves. Why might you not
Tell us what 'tis to die ? Do the strict laws
Of your society forbid your speaking
Upon a point so nice ? I'll ask no more :

Sullen, like lamps in sepulchres, your shine
Enlightens but yourselves. Well, 'tis no matter ;
A very little time will clear up all,
And make us learn'd as you are, and as close.

Death's shafts fly thick ! here falls the village swain,
And there his pamper'd lord—The cup goes round ;
And who so artful as to put it by ?
'Tis long since death had the majority ;
Yet strange ! the living lay it not to heart.
See ! yonder maker of the dead man's bed,
The sexton ! hoary-headed chronicle,
Of hard unmeaning face, down which ne'er stole
A gentle tear ; with mattock in his hand
Digs through whole rows of kindred and acquaintance,

By far his juniors ! Scarce a skull's cast up,
But well he knew its owner, and can tell
Some passage of his life. Thus hand in hand
The sot has walk'd with death twice twenty years ;
And yet ne'er younker on the green laughs louder,
Or clubs a smuttier tale : when drunkards meet,
None sings a merrier catch, or lends a hand
More willing to his cup. Poor wretch ! he minds not,
That soon some trusty brother of the trade
Shall do for him what he has done for thousands.

On this side, and on that, men see their friends
Drop off, like leaves in autumn ; yet launch out
Into fantastic schemes, which the long livers
In the world's hale and undegenerate days

Could scarce have leisure for ! Fools that we are !
Never to think of death, and of ourselves
At the same time ! as if to learn to die
Were no concern of ours. Oh ! more than sottish !
For creatures of a day, in gamesome mood
To frolic on eternity's dread brink,
Unapprehensive ; when, for aught we know,
The very first swoln surge shall sweep us in.
Think we, or think we not, time hurries on
With a resistless unremitting stream,
Yet treads more soft than e'er did midnight thief,
That slides his hand under the miser's pillow,
And carries off his prize. What is this world ?
What ? but a spacious burial-field unwall'd,
Strew'd with death's spoils, the spoils of animals,

Savage and tame, and full of dead men's bones ?
The very turf on which we tread, once liv'd ;
And we that live must lend our carcasses
To cover our own offspring : in their turns
They too must cover theirs. 'Tis here all meet !
The shiv'ring Icelfander, and sunburnt Moor ;
Men of all climes, that never met before ;
And of all creeds, the Jew, the Turk, the Christian.
Here the proud prince, and favourite yet prouder,
His sov'reign's keeper, and the people's scourge,
Are huddled out of sight. Here lie abash'd
The great negociators of the earth,
And celebrated masters of the balance,
Deep read in stratagems, and wiles of courts :
Now vain their treaty-skill ! Death scorns to treat.

Here the o'erloaded slave flings down his burden
From his gall'd shoulders ; and when the stern tyrant,
With all his guards and tools of power about him,
Is meditating new unheard-of hardships,
Mocks his short arm—and quick as thought escapes
Where tyrants vex not, and the weary rest.

Here the warm lover, leaving the cool shade,
The tell-tale echo, and the babbling stream,
Time out of mind the fav'rite seats of love,
Fast by his gentle mistress lays him down,
Unblasted by foul tongue. Here friends and foes
Lie close ; unmindful of their former feuds.

The lawn-rob'd prelate and plain presbyter,
Erewhile that stood aloof, as shy to meet,

Familiar mingle here, like sister streams
That some rude interposing rock has split.
Here is the large-limb'd peasant ; here the child
Of a span long, that never saw the sun,
Nor press'd the nipple, strangled in life's porch.
Here is the mother, with her sons and daughters :
The barren wife ; and long demurring maid,
Whose lonely unappropriated sweets
Smil'd like yon knot of cowslips on the cliff,
Not to be come at by the willing hand.
Here are the prude severe, and gay coquette,
The sober widow, and the young green virgin,
Cropp'd like a rose before 'tis fully blown,
Or half its worth disclos'd. Strange medley here !

Here garrulous old age winds up his tale ;
And jovial youth, of lightsome vacant heart,
Whose ev'ry day was made of melody,
Hears not the voice of mirth: The shrill-tongu'd shrew,
Meek as the turtle-dove, forgets her chiding.
Here are the wise, the generous, and the brave ;
The just, the good, the worthless, the profane ;
The down-right clown, and perfectly well-bred ;
The fool, the churl, the scoundrel, and the mean ;
The supple statesman, and the patriot stern ;
The wrecks of nations, and the spoils of time,
With all the lumber of six thousand years.

Poor man ! how happy once in thy first state !
When yet but warm from thy great Maker's hand,

He stamp'd thee with his image, and, well-pleas'd,
Smil'd on his last fair work. Then all was well.
Sound was the body, and the soul serene ;
Like two sweet instruments, ne'er out of tune,
That play their several parts. Nor head, nor heart,
Offer'd to ache ; nor was there cause they should ;
For all was pure within : no fell remorse,
Nor anxious castings-up of what might be,
Alarm'd his peaceful bosom : Summer seas
Show not more smooth when kiss'd by southern winds
Just ready to expire. Scarce importun'd,
The generous soil, with a luxuriant hand,
Offer'd the various produce of the year,
And every thing most perfect in its kind.
Blessed ! thrice blessed days ! But, ah ! how short !

Bless'd as the pleasing dreams of holy men ;
But fugitive like those, and quickly gone.
Oh ! slipp'ry state of things ! What sudden turns ?
What strange vicissitudes in the first leaf
Of man's sad history ? To-day most happy,
And ere to-morrow's sun has set, most abject.
How scant the space between these vast extremes !
Thus far'd it with our sire : not long he enjoy'd
His paradise ! Scarce had the happy tenant
Of the fair spot due time to prove its sweets,
Or sum them up ; when straight he must be gone,
Ne'er to return again. And must he go ?
Can nought compound for the first dire offence
Of erring man ? Like one that is condemn'd,
Fain would he trifle time with idle talk,

And parley with his fate. But 'tis in vain.
Not all the lavish odours of the place,
Offer'd in incense, can procure his pardon,
Or mitigate his doom. A mighty angel,
With flaming sword, forbids his longer stay,
And drives the loiterer forth ; nor must he take
One last and farewell round. At once he lost
His glory and his God. If mortal now,
And sorely maim'd, no wonder ! Man has sinn'd.
Sick of his bliss, and bent on new adventures,
Evil he would needs try : nor try'd in vain.
(Dreadful experiment ! destructive measure !
Where the worst thing could happen, is success.)
Alas ! too well he sped ! the good he scorn'd ;
Stalk'd off reluctant, like an ill-us'd ghost,

Not to return ; or if it did, its visits,
Like those of angels, short and far between :
Whilst the black demon, with his hell-'scap'd train,
Admitted once into its better room,
Grew loud and mutinous, nor would be gone ;
Lording it o'er the man : who now too late
Saw the rash error, which he could not mend ;
An error fatal not to him alone,
But to his future sons, his fortune's heirs.
Inglorious bondage ! Human nature groans
Beneath a vassalage so vile and cruel,
And its vast body bleeds through ev'ry vein.

What havock hast thou made ! foul monster, Sin !
Greatest and first of ills ! The fruitful parent

Of woes of all dimensions ! But for thee
Sorrow had never been. All noxious thing !
Of vilest nature ! Other sorts of evils
Are kindly circumscrib'd, and have their bounds.
The fierce volcano, from its burning entrails,
That belches molten stone and globes of fire,
Involv'd in pitchy clouds of smoke and stench,
Mars the adjacent fields for some leagues round,
And there it stops. The big-swoln inundation,
Of mischief more diffusive, raving loud,
Buries whole tracts of country, threat'ning more ;
But that too has its shore it cannot pass.
More dreadful far than these ! Sin has laid waste,
Not here and there a country, but a world :
Despatching at a wide-extended blow

Entire mankind ; and, for their sakes, defacing
A whole creation's beauty with rude hands ;
Blasting the foodful grain, the loaded branches,
And marking all along its way with ruin.
Accursed thing ! Oh where shall fancy find
A proper name to call thee by, expressive
Of all thy horrors ? Pregnant womb of ills !
Of temper so transcendently malign,
That toads and serpents, of most deadly kind,
Compar'd to thee, are harmless. Sickneses
Of every size and symptom, racking pains,
And bluest plagues, are thine ! See ! how the fiend
Profusely scatters the contagion round !
Whilst deep-mouth'd slaughter, bellowing at her heels,
Wades deep in blood new spilt ; yet for to-morrow

Shapes out new work of great uncommon daring,
And inly pines till the dread blow is struck.

But hold ! I've gone too far ; too much discover'd
My father's nakedness, and nature's shame.
Here let me pause, and drop an honest tear,
One burst of filial duty and condolence,
O'er all those ample deserts Death has spread,
This chaos of mankind. O great man-eater !
Whose ev'ry day is carnival, not sated yet !
Unheard-of epicure ! without a fellow !
The veriest gluttons do not always cram ;
Some intervals of abstinence are sought
To edge the appetite : thou seekest none.
Methinks ! the countless swarms thou hast devour'd,

And thousands that each hour thou gobblest up ;
This, less than this, might gorge thee to the full !
But ah ! rapacious still, thou gap'st for more :
Like one, whole days defrauded of his meals,
On whom lank hunger lays his skinny hand,
And whets to keenest eagerness his cravings.
(As if diseases, massacres, and poison,
Famine, and war, were not thy caterers!)

But know ! that thou must render up thy dead,
And with high int'rest too ! They are not thine ;
But only in thy keeping for a season,
Till the great promis'd day of restitution ;
When loud diffusive sound, from brazen trump
Of strong-lung'd cherub, shall alarm thy captives,

And rouse the long, long sleepers into life,
Day-light, and liberty.—

Then must thy gates fly open, and reveal
The mines, that lay long forming under ground,
In their dark cells immur'd ; but now full ripe,
And pure as silver from the crucible,
That twice has stood the torture of the fire,
And inquisition of the forge. We know
Th' illustrious deliverer of mankind,
The Son of God, thee foil'd. Him in thy power
Thou couldst not hold : self-vigorous he rose,
And, shaking off thy fetters, soon retook
Those spoils his voluntary yielding lent :
(Sure pledge of our releasement from thy thrall !)
Twice twenty days he sojourn'd here on earth,

And show'd himself alive to chosen witnesses,
By proofs so strong, that the most slow assenting
Had not a scruple left. This having done,
He mounted up to heaven. Methinks ! I see him
Climb the aërial heights, and glide along
Athwart the severing clouds : but the faint eye,
Flung backward in the chase, soon drops its hold,
Disabled quite, and jaded with pursuing.
Heaven's portals wide expand to let him in ;
Nor are his friends shut out : as some great prince,
Not for himself alone procures admission,
But for his train. It was his royal will,
That where he is, there should his followers be.
Death only lies between ! a gloomy path !
Made yet more gloomy by our coward fears !

But not untrod, nor tedious : the fatigue
Will soon go off. Besides, there's no by-road
To bliss. Then, why like ill-condition'd children,
Start we at transient hardships in the way
That leads to purer air, and softer skies,
And a ne'er setting sun? Fools that we are!
We wish to be, where sweets unwith'ring bloom;
But straight our wish revoke, and will not go.
So have I seen, upon a summer's even,
Fast by a riv'let's brink, a youngster play :
How wishfully he looks ! to stem the tide
This moment resolute, next unresolv'd :
At last ! he dips his foot ; but as he dips,
His fears redouble, and he runs away
From th' inoffensive stream, unmindful now

Of all the flow'rs, that paint the further bank,
And smil'd so sweet of late. Thrice welcome, Death !
That after many a painful bleeding step
Conducts us to our home, and lands us safe
On the long-wish'd-for shore. Prodigious change !
Our bane turn'd to a blessing ! Death, disarm'd,
Loses her fellness quite : All thanks to him
Who scourg'd the venom out. Sure ! the last end
Of the good man is peace ! How calm his exit !
Night-dews fall not more gently to the ground,
Nor weary worn-out winds expire so soft.
Behold him ! in the evening tide of life,
A life well spent, whose early care it was
His riper years should not upbraid his green :
By unperceiv'd degrees he wears away ;

Yet, like the sun, seems larger at his setting !
High in his faith and hopes ; look ! how he reaches
After the prize in view ! and, like a bird
That's hamper'd, struggles hard to get away !
Whilst the glad gates of sight are wide expanded
To let new glories in, the first fair fruits
Of the fast coming harvest. Then ! oh then !
Each earth-born joy grows vile, or disappears,
Shrunk to a thing of nought. Oh ! how he longs
To have his passport sign'd, and be dismiss'd !
'Tis done ; and now he's happy : the glad soul
Has not a wish uncrown'd. Ev'n the lag flesh
Rests too in hope of meeting once again
Its better half, never to sunder more.
Nor shall it hope in vain : the time draws on

When not a single spot of burial earth,
Whether on land, or in the spacious sea,
But must give back its long-committed dust
Inviolate : and faithfully shall these
Make up the full account ; not the least atom
Embezzl'd, or mislaid, of the whole tale.
Each soul shall have a body ready furnish'd ;
And each shall have his own. Hence, ye profane !
Ask not how this can be ? Sure the same pow'r
That rear'd the piece at first, and took it down,
Can re-assemble the loose scatter'd parts,
And put them as they were. Almighty God
Hath done much more : nor is his arm impair'd
Through length of days : and what he can, he will :
His faithfulness stands bound to see it done.

When the dread trumpet sounds, the slumb'ring dust,
Not unattentive to the call, shall wake :
And ev'ry joint possess its proper place,
With a new elegance of form, unknown
To its first state. Nor shall the concious soul
Mistake its partner, but amidst the crowd,
Singling its other half, into its arms
Shall rush with all the impatience of a man
That's new come home, and, having long been absent,
With haste runs over ev'ry different room,
In pain to see the whole. Thrice happy meeting !
Nor time, nor death, shall ever part them more.

'Tis but a night, a long and moonless night,
We make the grave our bed, and then are gone.

Thus, at the shut of ev'n, the weary bird
Leaves the wide air, and in some lonely brake
Cov'rs down, and dozes till the dawn of day;
Then claps his well fledg'd wings, and bears away.

A

POEM

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY

OF

THE LATE LEARNED AND EMINENT

MR. WILLIAM LAW,

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF EDINBURGH.

A POEM

TO THE MEMORY OF

MR. WILLIAM LAW.

IN silence to suppress my griefs I've tried,
And keep within its banks the swelling tide;
But all in vain; unbidden numbers flow;
Spite of myself, my sorrows vocal grow.
This be my plea—Nor thou, dear shade, refuse
The well-meant tribute of the willing muse,
Who trembles at the greatness of its theme,
And fain would say what suits so high a name.

Which, from the crowded journal of thy fame,
Which of thy many titles shall I name ?
For like a gallant prince, that wins a crown,
By undisputed right, before his own,
Variety thou hast : our only care
Is what to single out, and what forbear.

Tho' scrupulously just, yet not severe ;
Tho' cautious, open ; courteous, yet sincere ;
Tho' reverend, yet not magisterial ;
Tho' intimate with few, yet loved by all ;
Tho' deeply read, yet absolutely free
From all the stiffnesses of pedantry ;
Tho' circumspectly good, yet never sour,
Pleasant with innocence, and never more.

Religion worn by thee, attractive show'd,
And with its own unborrowed beauty glow'd :
Unlike the bigot, from whose watery eyes
Ne'er sunshine broke, nor smile was seen to rise ;
Whose sickly goodness lives upon grimace,
And pleads a merit from a blubber'd face.
Thou kept thy raiment for the tattered poor,
And taught the fatherless to know thy door ;
From griping hunger set the needy free,
That they were needy was enough to thee.

Shy fame to please, while others restless be,
Fame laid her shyness by and courted thee ;
And tho' thou bade the flatt'ring thing give o'er,
Yet, in return, she only woo'd thee more.

How sweet thy accents ! and how mild thy look !
What smiling mirth was heard in all thou spoke !
Manhood and grizzled age were fond of thee,
And youth itself sought thy society.
The ag'd thou taught, descended to the young,
Cleared up the irresolute, confirmed the strong ;
To the perplexed thy friendly counsel lent,
And gently lifted up the diffident ;
Sighed with the sorrowful, and bore a part
In all the anguish of a bleeding heart ;
Reclaimed the headstrong, and with sacred skill
Committed hallowed rapes upon the will ;
Soothed our affections, and, with their delight,
To gain our actions, bribed our appetite.

Now who shall, with a greatness like thine own,
Thy pulpit dignify, and grace thy gown ?
Who with pathetic energy like thine,
The head enlighten, and the heart refine ?
Learned were thy lectures, noble the design,
The language Roman, and the action fine ;
The heads well rang'd, the inferences clear,
And strong and solid thy deductions were :
Thou marked the boundaries out 'twixt right and
wrong,
And showed the landmarks as thou went along.
Plain were thy reasonings, or if perplext,
Thy life was the best comment on thy text ;
For if in darker points we were deceiv'd,
'Twas only but observing how thou liv'd.

Bewilder'd in the greatness of thy fame,
What shall the muse, what next in order name ?
Which of thy social qualities commend ?
Whether of husband, father, or of friend !
A husband soft, beneficent, and kind,
As ever virgin wish'd, or wife could find ;
A father indefatigably true
To both a father's trust and tutor's too.
A friend affectionate and staunch to those
Thou wisely singled out, for few thou chose ;
Few, did I say ! that word we must recal ;
A friend, a willing friend, thou was to all.
These properties were thine, nor could we know
Which rose the uppermost, so all was thou.

So have I seen the many-coloured mead,
Brushed by the vernal breeze, its fragrance shed :
Though various sweets the various field exhal'd,
Yet could we not determine which prevail'd ;
Nor this part rose, that honey-suckle call,
But a rich bloomy aggregate of all.

And, thou, the once glad partner of his bed,
But now by sorrow's weeds distinguished,
Whose busy memory thy grief supplies,
And calls up all thine husband to thine eyes ;
Thou must not be forgot. How altered now !
How thick thy tears ! How fast thy sorrows flow !
The well known voice that cheered thee heretofore,
These soothing accents, thou must here no more.

Untold be all the tender sighs thou drew,
When on thy cheek he fetch'd a long adieu ;
Untold be all thy faithful agonies,
At the last languish of his closing eyes ;
For thou, and only such as thou, can tell
The killing anguish of a last farewell.

This earth, yon sun, and these blue tinctured skies
Thro' which it rolls, must have their obsequies ;
Pluck'd from their orbits, shall the planets fall,
And smoke and conflagration cover all :
What then is man ? the creature of a day,
By moments spent, and minutes forced away.
Time, like a raging torrent, hurries on ;
Scarce can we say it is, but that 'tis gone.

Whether, fair shade ! with social spirits, tell
(Whose properties thou once describ'd so well)
Familiar now thou hearest them relate
The rites and methods of their happy state ;
Or if, with forms more fleet, thou roams abroad,
And views the great magnificence of God,
Points out the courses of the orbs on high,
And counts the silver wonders of the sky ;
Or, if with glowing seraphim, thou greets
Heaven's King, and shoutest thro' the golden streets,
That crowds of white-rob'd choristers display,
Marching in triumph through the pearly way ?

Now thou art rais'd beyond this world of cares,
This weary wilderness, this vale of tears ;

Forgetting all thy toils and labours past,
No gloom of sorrow stains thy peaceful breast.
Now 'midst seraphic splendours shalt thou dwell,
And be what only these pure forms can tell.
How cloudless now, and cheerful is thy day !
What joys, what raptures, in thy bosom play !
How bright the sunshine, and how pure the air !
There's no difficulty of breathing there.

With willing steps, a pilgrim at thy shrine,
To dew it with my tears; the task be mine ;
In lonely dirge, to murmur o'er thy urn,
And with new-gather'd flowers thy turf adorn ;
Nor shall thy image from my bosom part,
No force shall rip thee from this bleeding heart ;

Oft shall I think o'er all I've lost in thee,

Nor shall oblivion blot thy memory :

But grateful love its energy express

(The father's gone) now to the fatherless.

AN

ODE;

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN OF

FLORENTIUS VOLUSENUS SCOTUS,

IN HIS DIALOGUE

DE ANIMI TRANQUILLITATE.

[FROM THE EDITION OF THE GRAVE, PRINTED IN 1747.]



ODE,

*That there is no rest in this life, except that which
proceeds from wisdom and piety.*

WHY do I, O most gracious God,

So heavily complain?

And at thy providence most just,

Why do I thus repine?

Since by reflecting I perceive,

And certainly do know,

That I my wretched self alone

Am cause of all my woe.

Who wittingly do strive in vain

From darkness light to bring ;

And life and solid joys expect

Under death's awful reign.

As bitter wormwood never doth

Delicious honey yield ;

Nor can the chearful grape be reap'd

From thistles in the field :

So, who, in this uncertain life,

Deceitful joys pursue,

They fruit do seek upon such trees

On which it never grew.

That fading beauty men admire,
Of person, and of face ;
That splendour of rich ornaments,
Which stately buildings grace.

That train of noble ancestors,
Which gives illustrious birth,
Wealth, luxury ; then add to these
All the delights on earth :

Yea, whatsoever object doth
Invite our wandering sight,
And whatsoe'er our touch doth feel
With pleasure and delight ;

They all, like despicable dust

And atoms, fly away ;

And are mere dreams of the short night,

Which we have here to stay.

That which is past is nothing sure,

And what of joy to come

Impatiently we want ; when got,

Is quickly past and gone :

And when 'tis past, like other things,

It nothing will be thought ;

Should then that dream, which nothing is,

So anxiously be sought ?

Go now, go, fool, to catch the wind !

Prepare thy nets to bend ;

Which thing no man but he that's mad

Did ever yet pretend.

See if thou can'st thy shadow grasp,

Which no man yet could find ;

It flies the more, the more that thou

To follow art inclin'd.

That which will leave thee 'gainst thy will,

Thou freely should'st forsake ;

And wisely choose these better things

Which none can from thee take.

What comfort can that mortal have

Who earth's whole wealth engross'd,

If, after this short span of life,

His soul's for ever lost.

With how much wiser conduct, he

His course of life doth steer,

Who by his pious endeavours

Of doing good whilst here ;

And, by an holy, humble life,

When he shall hence remove,

Secures a passage for himself

Into the heavens above.

Meanwhile, would'st thou a small taste have
Of real happiness?

And whilst thou on this earth doth dwell,
Some pleasant days possess?

Lay down all fears, and anxious cares ;
To things within thy power
Confine thy wish ; and make thy will
Strict reason's laws endure.

If thou affection do transgress,
The bounds by reason plac'd,
In noise and trouble, thou shalt live
Both wretched and disgrac'd.

If thou would'st perfect peace enjoy,

Thy heart see thou apply

To know Christ, and him crucified ;

This is the only way.

How happy is that man who doth

This blessed peace attain !

He all the joys on earth besides

Well knows to be but vain.

He doth not set his heart on wealth,

'The care of worldly men ;

But strives to do that which is good,

And heaven's rewards to gain.

He flees the fond delights which we

So ardently affect ;

Shuns them as crosses, and as things

Which contemplations check.

What we for greatest blessings take

He wholly doth disdain ;

And counts all things but loss and dung

That Christ's love he may gain.

What other men do grievous think

He calmly can endure ;

He knows none truly can rejoice

Whose right in Christ's not sure.

He on the cross of Christ alone

His wond'ring thoughts employs ;

Where in his death he hidden sees

Life and eternal joys.

Thus he can honey from the rocks,

And oil draw from hard stones ;

A gift to few, and seldom given

By Heaven, amongst men's sons.

'Tis he alone long life deserves,

And his years sweetly pass,

Who holds that treasure in his breast,

Whose worth doth all surpass.

What can he want of outward things

Who hath this pearl of price,

Which we should buy at any rate,

And all things else despise ?

Woes me ! how much do other men

In seas of troubles live,

Whose ruin oft, and endless cares,

Even things they wish do give !

'Tis he alone in earnest can

Wish for his dying day ;

All mankind's terror, yea, with tears

Expostulate its stay.

O! would to God, my soul just now
Were rais'd to such a frame,
As freely to part hence, which soon
Must be, though I reclaim.

This present flies, another life
Is swiftly passing on,
The way that leads to which, is through
The Cross of Christ alone.

Now can'st thou, without grief and tears,
Think on these impious wounds,
Which thou did'st cause, through which to thee
Salvation free redounds?

Thou, who shuns all fatigue, and gives

Thyself to soft delight,

With what assurance can'st thou crave

What is the labourer's right ?

If a strict life thou can'st not reach,

At least let him not see

Thee much unlike himself, with whom

Thou would'st partaker be.

That which resembles most the sun,

We truly may call bright ;

And what is most like to the snow,

Will whitest be to sight.

These things are sweet, which in their taste,
With honey may compare,
And these are swift, which can contend
With the light flying air ;

So, sure, the more thou art like Christ,
More perfect thou'rt indeed ;
For of all true perfection he
Both pattern is, and head.

Who are persuaded of this truth
When sore afflictions grieve,
This comfort have, that, even in this,
They more like Christ do live.

Men of this stamp are very scarce,

Whose nature doth them bear

Above the vulgar ; for what's great

Difficult is, and rare.

But we to mind salvation's work

Will never be advis'd,

And that all things are vanity,

Till death hath us surpris'd.

Then to reflect we first begin,

And our past lives abhor,

And all those empty joys which we

So much admir'd before.

Then, under terrors, we would fly
To Christ, the only rock
Of life ; whom in prosperity
We never did invoke.

The fear which can no merit have
Draws us t'implore his grace ;
So great's his mercy, that in vain
We ne'er shall seek his face.

But yet we ought, without delay,
Examine our estate ;
And saving interest get in Christ,
Far better soon than late.

If any other way we seek
Our passions to oppose,
Or get tranquillity of mind,
We time and labour lose.

OF THE
GLORY
OF
GOD AND HEAVEN.
OF THE
DESTRUCTION
OF
THE CANAANITES.

[FROM THE EDINBURGH MISCELLANY, PRINTED IN 1720.]

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GLORY
OF
GOD AND HEAVEN.

How bright, O Lord's, thy majesty divine,
Like noon days suns, when all thy servants shine ?
Yet highest angels, like faint tapers' glow,
With burning rays where all thy glories flow.

If our weak eyes decline the shining sun,
How would our dazzl'd sense thy brightness shun ?
Were but thy presence in the least display'd,
And in full lustre to our sight convey'd ?

Our flowing hairs would into bristles rise,
If a swift cherub glanc'd upon our eyes :
And should his wings, in their dread length appear,
Our frighten'd hearts would melt away with fear.
But if we saw but one superior beam
Of their great prince, how would we humbly scream,
And tremble 'till our joints asunder part,
And frighted spirits from our bosoms start ?

Thy throne, O God, is rais'd above the skies,
Where heights on heights, and worlds of glory rise ;
There, in full strength, shines an eternal light,
And dares the dark approach of sable night.
There, smiles ne'er languish into heavy glooms ;
Each scene of bliss in constant beauty blooms.

Eternal raptures fill the pleasing place,
And joys unmixed shine in every face.
What extacies transport thy ravished train ?
How blest ! how great ! how glorious is thy reign ?

What happiness do blessed souls enjoy,
Who feast on pleasures that will never cloy ?
How sweet's the heaven where faith in vision dies,
Where hope quite swallowed in fruition lies ?
Nought can be wanting to complete the bliss
That makes the soul inferior thoughts dismiss,
And sets the world in such becoming light,
That all things here seem horrid to the sight ;
Castles in ruin lie, and gilded charms affright.

Thick clouds obscure the grandeur of the place,
And masks, O God, disguise thy flaming face,
Lest divine looks shou'd flash mankind to death,
And, in a blaze, burn up the guilty earth ;
But still the searching flame the veil defies,
Pierces thro' night, and dazzles in the skies,
Lights up the heaven in ten thousand fires,
And, with its beams, the universe inspires.

When down thou com'st, the same indulgent nod
Commands the clouds to shade thy bright abode,
Thy glories still the covering disdain,
And jostle thro' the thickness of thy train.
Tho' darkness thine assum'd pavilion be,
The Godhead sparkles forth with majesty,

For infinite the creature is too weak,
And that which is unbounded every mound must
break.

'Thus thro' its rival shall the light be hurl'd,
At the confusion of the falling world,
When darkness, sallied from its deepest vault,
Shall in the heavens the sun and stars assault.
As once Mount Sinai, lost in fearful smoke,
Which shrin'd thy presence when thine angel spoke,
(Whilst tempests shrill, and thunder roaring loud,
And flashing lightning, burst the thicken'd cloud,)
Look'd terrible in darkness mixt with light;
A dreadful splendour, and amazing sight !

OF THE
DESTRUCTION
OF
THE CANAANITES.

JOSHUA—CHAP. X.

And the Sun stood still, and the Moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. And there was no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man ; for the Lord fought for Israel.

BEHOLD the slaughter of a cursed race !
Too full of sin to share the acts of grace !
Whom heaven, with unrelenting fury, slew,
When Israel's hero, like a tempest, flew
O'er ravag'd cities of the conquer'd land,
And o'er each province stretch'd the wide command ;

Till at the conquest sun and moon, amaz'd,
Forgot their course and on the carnage gaz'd :
Wond'ring they stand, and dreadful vengeance view,
Yet smile with joy, and noble actions show,
Where destin'd foes, who blindly them ador'd,
Were struck with fear, and spoiled by the sword,
Too great the success, and too great the fight,
Th' exploit too glorious for the shades of night !

Blest dismal day ! when under Heaven's command,
Great Jacob's seed, with a victorious hand,
Against the pagan enemies appear'd,
While zeal for God, did bear its own reward,
Each soldier, hearty in the glorious cause,
Another Sampson, or a David was.



JOSHUA—CHAP. XI.

And the Kings went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore, in multitude. And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, until they left them none remaining.

BEHOLD the rendezvous of Kings unite
To challenge Israel and its Lord to fight !
Who vaunting numbers to their frontiers brought,
And felt the doom their proud rebellion sought.
Abandon'd fools ! the avenging war to try,
And, in the field, almighty arms defy.

See giant troops with hideous woods of spears,
Canaan's champions, and the nations' fears ;

A mountain's size each one ! a castle's height !
In each an army's force ! a kingdom's might !
Their monstrous bulk looks terrible afar,
Like moving towers, advancing to the war ;
Yet conquer'd, they in haste inglorious fly,
Or, unlamented, in long numbers die.

What strength of empires, warlike people slain,
Chariot on chariot, heap the bloody plain !
See slaughter'd flesh fill Merom's purple streams,
And armour huge with shafts, like floating beams.
While captiv'd princes throng triumphal cars,
And fetter'd legions crown the guilty wars.
For wives and gods they fought, but fought in vain,
Their hands must wear the Israelitish chain,
Or soon their blood victorious weapons stain.

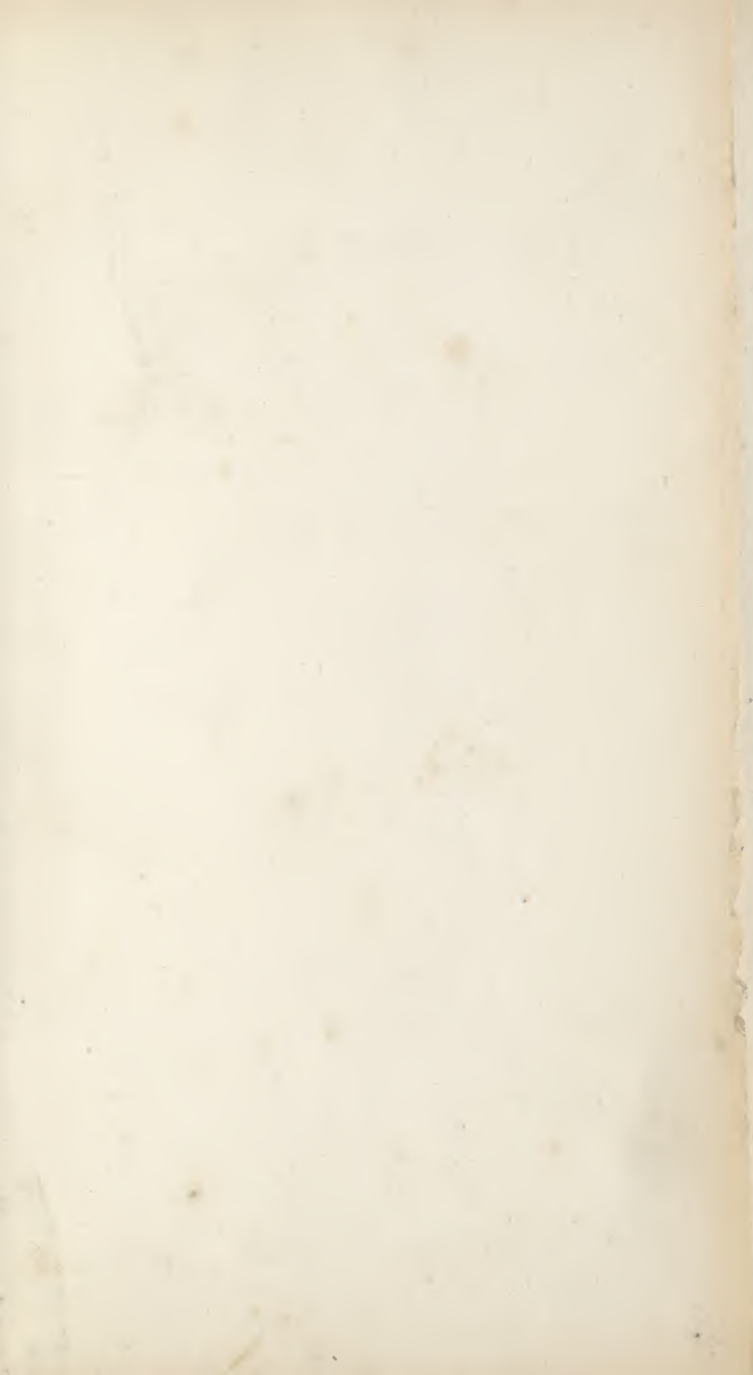
Against their Maker, and his chosen race,
None can engage and fly, without disgrace ;
Confederate powers can ne'er do Jacob harm
While shielded safe by God's almighty arm.

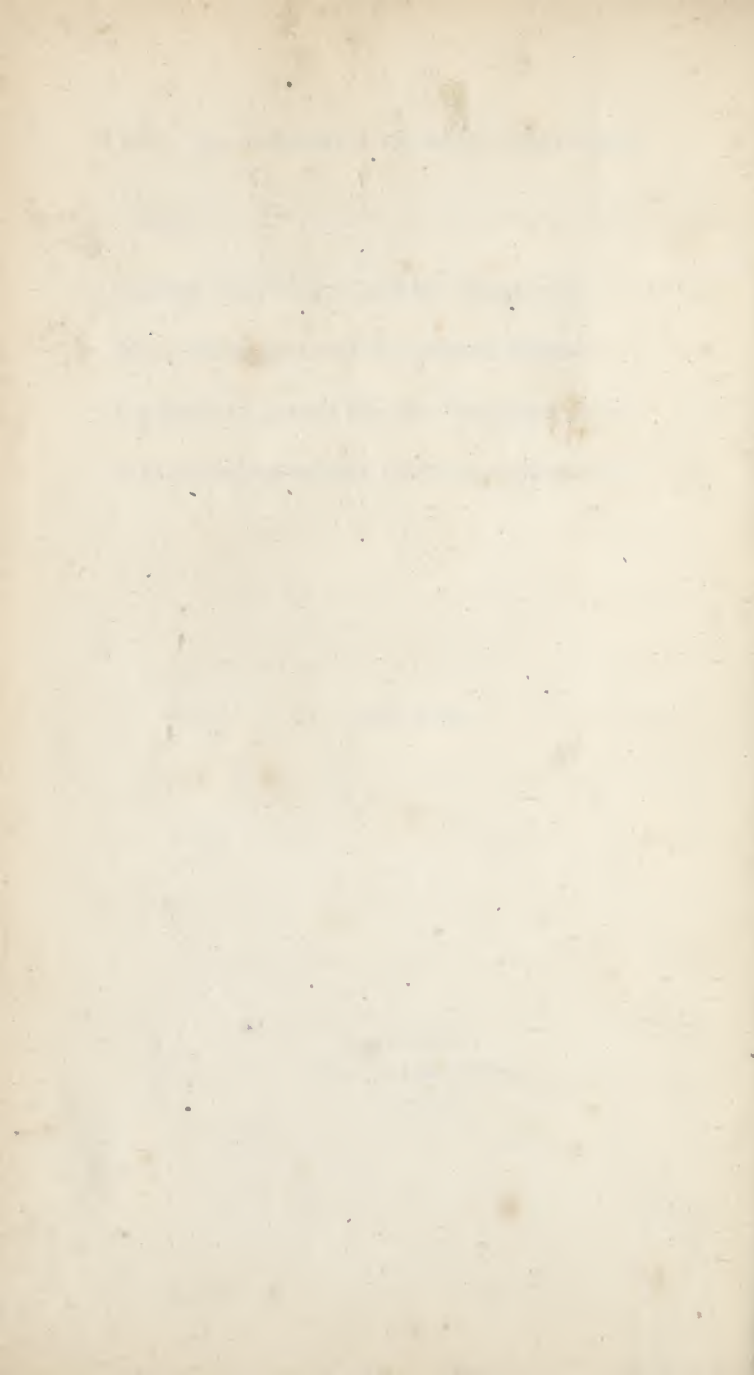
THE END.

EDINBURGH :

Printed by John Brewster;

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