

JAMES BEATTIE

THE MINSTREL; OR THE
PROGRESS OF GENIUS

James Beattie
The Minstrel; or the
Progress of Genius

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PREFACE TO THE MINSTREL

The design was, to trace the progress of a Poetical Genius, born in a rude age, from the first dawning of fancy and reason, till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing in the world as a Minstrel, that is, as an itinerant Poet and Musician; – a character, which, according to the notions of our fore-fathers, was not only respectable, but sacred.

I have endeavoured to imitate Spenser in the measure of his verse, and in the harmony, simplicity, and variety, of his composition. Antique expressions I have avoided; admitting, however, some old words, where they seemed to suit the subject; but I hope none will be found that are now obsolete, or in any degree unintelligible to a reader of English poetry.

To those, who may be disposed to ask, what could induce me to write in so difficult a measure, I can only answer, that it pleases my ear, and seems, from its Gothic structure and original, to bear

some relation to the subject and spirit of the Poem. It admits both of simplicity and magnificence of sound and of language, beyond any other stanza that I am acquainted with. It allows the sententiousness of the couplet, as well as the more complex modulation of blank verse. What some critics have remarked, of its uniformity growing at last tiresome to the ear, will be found to hold true, only when the poetry is faulty in other respects.

THE MINSTREL; IN TWO BOOKS

*Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musæ,
Quarum sacra fero, ingenti percussus amore,
Accipiant. —*

Virgil.

THE MINSTREL; OR, THE PROGRESS OF GENIUS. BOOK FIRST

I

Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The steep, where Fame's proud temple shines afar!
Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime
Has felt the influence of malignant star,
And waged with Fortune an eternal war!
Checked by the scoff of Pride, by Envy's frown,
And Poverty's unconquerable bar,
In life's low vale remote has pined alone,
Then dropt into the grave, unpitied and unknown!

II

And yet, the languor of inglorious days
Not equally oppressive is to all.
Him, who ne'er listened to the voice of praise,

The silence of neglect can ne'er appal.
There are, who, deaf to mad Ambition's call,
Would shrink to hear th' obstreperous trump of Fame;
Supremely blest, if to their portion fall
Health, competence, and peace. Nor higher aim
Had He, whose simple tale these artless lines proclaim.

III

This sapient age disclaims all classic lore;
Else I should here, in cunning phrase, display,
How forth The Minstrel fared in days of yore,
Right glad of heart, though homely in array;
His waving locks and beard all hoary grey:
And, from his bending shoulder, decent hung
His harp, the sole companion of his way,
Which to the whistling wind responsive rung:
And ever as he went some merry lay he sung.

IV

Fret not yourselves, ye silken sons of pride,
That a poor Wanderer should inspire my strain.
The Muses fortune's fickle smile deride,

Nor ever bow the knee in Mammon's fane;
For their delights are with the village-train,
Whom Nature's laws engage, and Nature's charms:
They hate the sensual, and scorn the vain;
The parasite their influence never warms,
Nor him whose sordid soul the love of wealth alarms.

V

Though richest hues the peacock's plumes adorn,
Yet horror screams from his discordant throat.
Rise, sons of harmony, and hail the morn,
While warbling larks on russet pinions float;
Or seek, at noon, the woodland scene remote,
Where the grey linnets carol from the hill.
O let them ne'er, with artificial note,
To please a tyrant, strain the little bill!
But sing what heaven inspires, and wander where they will.

VI

Liberal, not lavish, is kind Nature's hand;
Nor was perfection made for man below.
Yet all her schemes with nicest art are planned,

Good counteracting ill, and gladness woe.
With gold and gems if Chilian mountains glow,
If bleak and barren Scotia's hills arise;
There, plague and poison, lust and rapine grow;
Here, peaceful are the vales, and pure the skies,
And freedom fires the soul, and sparkles in the eyes.

VII

Then grieve not, thou, to whom the indulgent Muse
Vouchsafes a portion of celestial fire;
Nor blame the partial fates, if they refuse
The imperial banquet, and the rich attire.
Know thine own worth, and reverence the lyre.
Wilt thou debase the heart which God refined?
No; let thy heaven-taught soul to heaven aspire,
To fancy, freedom, harmony, resigned;
Ambition's grovelling crew for ever left behind.

VIII

Canst thou forego the pure ethereal soul
In each fine sense so exquisitely keen,
On the dull couch of Luxury to loll,

Stung with disease, and stupified with spleen;
Fain to implore the aid of Flattery's screen,
Even from thyself thy loathsome heart to hide,
(The mansion, then, no more of joy serene)
Where fear, distrust, malevolence, abide,
And impotent desire, and disappointed pride?

IX

O, how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields!
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even,
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,
O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!

X

These charms shall work thy soul's eternal health,
And love, and gentleness, and joy, impart.
But these thou must renounce, if lust of wealth

E'er win its way to thy corrupted heart;
For ah! it poisons like a scorpion's dart;
Prompting the ungenerous wish, the selfish scheme,
The stern resolve, unmoved by pity's smart,
The troublous day, and long distressful dream.
Return, my roving Muse! resume thy purposed theme.

XI

There lived, in Gothic days, as legends tell,
A shepherd-swain, a man of low degree;
Whose sires, perchance, in Fairyland might dwell,
Sicilian groves, or vales of Arcady;
But he, I ween, was of the North Countrie:
A nation famed for song, and beauty's charms;
Zealous, yet modest; innocent, though free;
Patient of toil; serene amidst alarms;
Inflexible in faith; invincible in arms.

XII

The shepherd-swain, of whom I mention made,
On Scotia's mountains fed his little flock;
The sickle, scythe, or plough, he never swayed;

An honest heart was almost all his stock;
His drink the living water from the rock:
The milky dams supplied his board, and lent
Their kindly fleece to baffle winter's shock;
And he, though oft with dust and sweat besprent,
Did guide and guard their wanderings, wheresoe'er they went.

XIII

From labour health, from health contentment springs.
Contentment opes the source of every joy.
He envied not, he never thought of kings;
Nor from those appetites sustained annoy,
Which chance may frustrate, or indulgence cloy:
Nor fate his calm and humble hopes beguiled;
He mourned no recreant friend, nor mistress coy,
For on his vows the blameless Phœbe smiled,
And her alone he loved, and loved her from a child.

XIV

No jealousy their dawn of love o'er cast,
Nor blasted were their wedded days with strife;
Each season looked delightful, as it past,

To the fond husband, and the faithful wife.
Beyond the lowly vale of shepherd life
They never roamed; secure beneath the storm
Which in Ambition's lofty land is rife,
Where peace and love are cankered by the worm
Of pride, each bud of joy industrious to deform.

XV

The wight, whose tale these artless lines unfold,
Was all the offspring of this simple pair.
His birth no oracle or seer foretold:
No prodigy appeared in earth or air,
Nor aught that might a strange event declare.
You guess each circumstance of Edwin's birth;
The parent's transport, and the parent's care;
The gossip's prayer for wealth, and wit, and worth;
And one long summer-day of indolence and mirth.

XVI

And yet poor Edwin was no vulgar boy;
Deep thought oft seemed to fix his infant eye.
Dainties he heeded not, nor gaude, nor toy,

Save one short pipe of rudest minstrelsy.
Silent when glad; affectionate, though shy;
And now his look was most demurely sad,
And now he laughed aloud, yet none knew why.
The neighbours stared and sighed, yet blessed the lad:
Some deemed him wondrous wise, and some believed him
mad.

XVII

But why should I his childish feats display?
Concourse, and noise, and toil, he ever fled;
Nor cared to mingle in the clamorous fray
Of squabbling imps; but to the forest sped,
Or roamed at large the lonely mountain's head;
Or, where the maze of some bewildered stream
To deep untrodden groves his footsteps led,
There would he wander wild, 'till Phœbus' beam,
Shot from the western cliff, released the weary team.

XVIII

The exploit of strength, dexterity, or speed,
To him nor vanity nor joy could bring.

His heart, from cruel sport estranged, would bleed
To work the woe of any living thing,
By trap, or net; by arrow, or by sling;
These he detested, those he scorned to wield:
He wished to be the guardian, not the king,
Tyrant, far less, or traitor, of the field.
And sure the sylvan reign unbloody joy might yield.

XIX

Lo! where the stripling, wrapt in wonder, roves
Beneath the precipice o'erhung with pine;
And sees, on high, amidst the encircling groves,
From cliff to cliff the foaming torrents shine:
While waters, woods, and winds, in concert join,
And Echo swells the chorus to the skies.
Would Edwin this majestic scene resign
For aught the huntsman's puny craft supplies?
Ah! no: he better knows great Nature's charms to prize.

XX

And oft he traced the uplands, to survey,
When o'er the sky advanced the kindling dawn,

The crimson cloud, blue main, and mountain grey,
And lake, dim-gleaming on the smoky lawn;
Far to the west the long, long vale withdrawn,
Where twilight loves to linger for a while;
And now he faintly kens the bounding fawn,
And villager abroad at early toil.
But, lo! the sun appears! and heaven, earth, ocean, smile.

XXI

And oft the craggy cliff he loved to climb,
When all in mist the world below was lost.
What dreadful pleasure! there to stand sublime,
Like shipwrecked mariner on desert coast,
And view the enormous waste of vapour, tost
In billows, lengthening to the horizon round,
Now scooped in gulfs, with mountains now embossed!
And hear the voice of mirth and song rebound,
Flocks, herds, and waterfalls, along the hoar profound!

XXII

In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,
Fond of each gentle, and each dreadful scene.

In darkness, and in storm, he found delight:
Nor less, than when on ocean-wave serene
The southern sun diffused his dazzling shene.
Even sad vicissitude amused his soul:
And if a sigh would sometimes intervene,
And down his cheek a tear of pity roll,
A sigh, a tear, so sweet, he wished not to controul.

XXIII

‘O ye wild groves, O where is now your bloom!’
(The Muse interprets thus his tender thought.)
‘Your flowers, your verdure, and your balmy gloom,
‘Of late so grateful in the hour of drought!
‘Why do the birds, that song and rapture brought
‘To all your bowers, their mansions now forsake?
‘Ah! why has fickle chance this ruin wrought!
‘For now the storm howls mournful through the brake,
‘And the dead foliage flies in many a shapeless flake.

XXIV

‘Where now the rill, melodious, pure, and cool,
‘And meads, with life, and mirth, and beauty, crowned!

'Ah! see, the unsightly slime, and sluggish pool,
'Have all the solitary vale imbrowned;
'Fled each fair form, and mute each melting sound.
'The raven croaks forlorn on naked spray:
'And, hark! the river, bursting every mound,
'Down the vale thunders; and, with wasteful sway,
'Uproots the grove, and rolls the shattered rocks away.

XXV

'Yet such the destiny of all on earth:
'So flourishes and fades majestic man.
'Fair is the bud his vernal morn brings forth,
'And fostering gales awhile the nursling fan.
'O smile, ye heavens, serene; ye mildews wan,
'Ye blighting whirlwinds, spare his balmy prime,
'Nor lessen of his life the little span.
'Borne on the swift, though silent, wings of Time,
'Old-age comes on apace to ravage all the clime.

XXVI

'And be it so. Let those deplore their doom,
'Whose hope still grovels in this dark sojourn.

‘But lofty souls, who look beyond the tomb,
‘Can smile at Fate, and wonder how they mourn.
‘Shall spring to these sad scenes no more return?
‘Is yonder wave the sun’s eternal bed?
‘Soon shall the orient with new lustre burn,
‘And spring shall soon her vital influence shed,
‘Again attune the grove, again adorn the mead.

XXVII

‘Shall I be left abandoned in the dust,
‘When Fate, relenting, lets the flower revive?
‘Shall Nature’s voice, to man alone unjust,
‘Bid him, though doomed to perish, hope to live?
‘Is it for this fair Virtue oft must strive
‘With disappointment, penury, and pain?
‘No: Heaven’s immortal spring shall yet arrive;
‘And man’s majestic beauty bloom again,
‘Bright through the eternal year of Love’s triumphant reign.’

XXVIII

This truth sublime his simple sire had taught.
In sooth, ’twas almost all the shepherd knew.

No subtle nor superfluous lore he sought,
Nor ever wished his Edwin to pursue.
'Let man's own sphere (quoth he) confine his view,
'Be man's peculiar work his sole delight.'
And much, and oft, he warned him, to eschew
Falsehood and guile, and aye maintain the right,
By pleasure unsexed, unawed by lawless might.

XXIX

'And, from the prayer of Want, and plaint of Woe,
'O never, never turn away thine ear.
'Forlorn, in this bleak wilderness below,
'Ah! what were man, should Heaven refuse to hear!
'To others do (the law is not severe)
'What to thyself thou wishest to be done.
'Forgive thy foes; and love thy parents dear,
'And friends, and native land; nor those alone;
'All human weal and woe learn thou to make thine own.'

XXX

See, in the rear of the warm sunny shower,
The visionary boy from shelter fly!

For now the storm of summer-rain is o'er,
And cool, and fresh, and fragrant is the sky.
And, lo! in the dark east, expanded high,
The rainbow brightens to the setting sun!
Fond fool, that deem'st the streaming glory nigh,
How vain the chace thine ardour has begun!
'Tis fled afar, ere half thy purposed race be run.

XXXI

Yet couldst thou learn, that thus it fares with age,
When pleasure, wealth, or power, the bosom warm,
This baffled hope might tame thy manhood's rage,
And Disappointment of her sting disarm. —
But why should foresight thy fond heart alarm?
Perish the lore that deadens young desire!
Pursue, poor imp, the imaginary charm,
Indulge gay hope, and fancy's pleasing fire:
Fancy and Hope too soon shall of themselves expire.

XXXII

When the long-sounding curfew, from afar,
Loaded with loud lament the lonely gale,

Young Edwin, lighted by the evening star,
Lingering and listening, wandered down the vale.
There would he dream of graves, and corpses pale;
And ghosts, that to the charnel-dungeon throng,
And drag a length of clanking chain, and wail,
Till silenced by the owl's terrific song,
Or blast that shrieks by fits the shuddering aisles along.

XXXIII

Or, when the setting moon, in crimson dyed,
Hung o'er the dark and melancholy deep,
To haunted stream, remote from man, he hied,
Where fays, of yore, their revels wont to keep;
And there let Fancy roam at large, till sleep
A vision brought to his entranced sight.
And first, a wildly murmuring wind 'gan creep
Shrill to his ringing ear; then tapers bright,
With instantaneous gleam, illumed the vault of night.

XXXIV

Anon in view a portal's blazoned arch
Arose; the trumpet bids the valves unfold;

And forth an host of little warriors march,
Grasping the diamond lance, and targe of gold.
Their look was gentle, their demeanour bold,
And green their helms, and green their silk attire;
And here and there, right venerably old,
The long-robed minstrels wake the warbling wire,
And some with mellow breath the martial pipe inspire.

XXXV

With merriment, and song, and timbrels clear,
A troop of dames from myrtle bowers advance;
The little warriors doff the targe and spear,
And loud enlivening strains provoke the dance.
They meet, they dart away, they wheel askance;
To right, to left, they thrid the flying maze;
Now bound aloft with vigorous spring, then glance
Rapid along: with many-coloured rays
Of tapers, gems, and gold, the echoing forests blaze.

XXXVI

The dream is fled. Proud harbinger of day,
Who scar'dst the vision with thy clarion shrill,

Fell chanticleer! who oft hast reft away
My fancied good, and brought substantial ill!
O to thy cursed scream, discordant still,
Let Harmony aye shut her gentle ear:
Thy boastful mirth let jealous rivals spill,
Insult thy crest, and glossy pinions tear,
And ever in thy dreams the ruthless fox appear.

XXXVII

Forbear, my Muse. Let love attune thy line.
Revoke the spell. Thine Edwin frets not so.
For how should he at wicked chance repine,
Who feels, from every change, amusement flow?
Even now his eyes with smiles of rapture glow,
As on he wanders through the scenes of morn,
Where the fresh flowers in living lustre blow,
Where thousand pearls the dewy lawns adorn,
A thousand notes of joy in every breeze are borne.

XXXVIII

But who the melodies of morn can tell?
The wild brook babbling down the mountain side;

The lowing herd; the sheepfold's simple bell;
The pipe of early shepherd, dim descried
In the lone valley; echoing far and wide,
The clamorous horn, along the cliffs above;
The hollow murmur of the ocean-tide;
The hum of bees, and linnet's lay of love,
And the full choir that wakes the universal grove.

XXXIX

The cottage-curs at early pilgrim bark;
Crowned with her pail the tripping milkmaid sings;
The whistling ploughman stalks afield; and, hark!
Down the rough slope the ponderous waggon rings;
Through rustling corn the hare astonished springs;
Slow tolls the village-clock the drowsy hour;
The partridge bursts away on whirring wings;
Deep mourns the turtle in sequestered bower,
And shrill lark carols clear from her aërial tour.

XL

O Nature, how in every charm supreme!
Whose votaries feast on raptures ever new!

O for the voice and fire of seraphim,
To sing thy glories with devotion due!
Blessed be the day I 'scaped the wrangling crew,
From Pyrrho's maze, and Epicurus' sty;
And held high converse with the godlike few,
Who to the enraptured heart, and ear, and eye,
Teach beauty, virtue, truth, and love, and melody.

XL I

Hence! ye, who snare and stupify the mind,
Sophists, of beauty, virtue, joy, the bane!
Greedy and fell, though impotent and blind,
Who spread your filthy nets in Truth's fair fane,
And ever ply your venom'd fangs amain!
Hence to dark Error's den, whose rankling slime
First gave you form! hence! lest the Muse should deign,
(Though loath on theme so mean to waste a rhyme),
With vengeance to pursue your sacrilegious crime.

XL II

But hail, ye mighty masters of the lay,
Nature's true sons, the friends of man and truth!

Whose song, sublimely sweet, serenely gay,
Amused my childhood, and informed my youth.
O let your spirit still my bosom sooth,
Inspire my dreams, and my wild wanderings guide!
Your voice each rugged path of life can smooth;
For well I know, wherever ye reside,
There harmony, and peace, and innocence, abide.

XLIII

Ah me! abandoned on the lonesome plain,
As yet poor Edwin never knew your lore,
Save when against the winter's drenching rain,
And driving snow, the cottage shut the door.
Then, as instructed by tradition hoar,
Her legends when the Beldam 'gan impart,
Or chant the old heroic ditty o'er,
Wonder and joy ran thrilling to his heart;
Much he the tale admired, but more the tuneful art.

XLIV

Various and strange was the long-winded tale;
And halls, and knights, and feats of arms, displayed;

Or merry swains, who quaff the nut-brown ale,
And sing, enamoured of the nut-brown maid;
The moon-light revel of the fairy glade;
Or hags, that suckle an infernal brood,
And ply in caves the unutterable trade,
'Midst fiends and spectres, quench the moon in blood,
Yell in the midnight storm, or ride the infuriate flood.

XLV

But when to horror his amazement rose,
A gentler strain the Beldam would rehearse,
A tale of rural life, a tale of woes,
The orphan-babes, and guardian uncle fierce.
O cruel! will no pang of pity pierce
That heart by lust of lucre seared to stone!
For sure, if aught of virtue last, or verse,
To latest times shall tender souls bemoan
Those helpless orphan-babes by thy fell arts undone.

XLVI

Behold, with berries smeared, with brambles torn,
The babes, now famished, lay them down to die;

'Midst the wild howl of darksome woods forlorn,
Folded in one another's arms they lie;
Nor friend, nor stranger, hears their dying cry:
'For from the town the man returns no more.'
But thou, who Heaven's just vengeance darest defy,
This deed with fruitless tears shalt soon deplore,
When Death lays waste thy house, and flames consume thy
store.

XLVII

A stifled smile of stern vindictive joy
Brightened one moment Edwin's starting tear. —
'But why should gold man's feeble mind decoy,
'And innocence thus die by doom severe?'
O Edwin! while thy heart is yet sincere,
The assaults of discontent and doubt repel:
Dark even at noontide is our mortal sphere;
But let us hope; to doubt, is to rebel;
Let us exult in hope, that all shall yet be well.

XLVIII

Nor be thy generous indignation checked,

Nor checked the tender tear to misery given;
From Guilt's contagious power shall that protect,
This soften and refine the soul for heaven.
But dreadful is their doom, whom doubt hath driven
To censure Fate, and pious hope forego;
Like yonder blasted boughs by lightning riven,
Perfection, beauty, life, they never know,
But frown on all that pass, a monument of woe.

XLIX

Shall he, whose birth, maturity, and age,
Scarce fill the circle of one summer-day,
Shall the poor gnat, with discontent and rage,
Exclaim that Nature hastens to decay,
If but a cloud obstruct the solar ray,
If but a momentary shower descend!
Or shall frail man Heaven's dread decree gainsay,
Which bade the series of events extend
Wide through unnumbered worlds, and ages without end!

L

One part, one little part, we dimly scan,

Through the dark medium of life's feverish dream;
Yet dare arraign the whole stupendous plan,
If but that little part incongruous seem.
Nor is that part, perhaps, what mortals deem;
Oft from apparent ill our blessings rise.
O then, renounce that impious self-esteem,
That aims to trace the secrets of the skies:
For thou art but of dust; be humble, and be wise.

L I

Thus, Heaven enlarged his soul in riper years.
For Nature gave him strength, and fire, to soar,
On Fancy's wing above this vale of tears;
Where dark cold-hearted sceptics, creeping, pore
Through microscope of metaphysic lore:
And much they grope for truth, but never hit.
For why? their powers, inadequate before,
This art preposterous renders more unfit;
Yet deem they darkness light, and their vain blunders wit.

L II

Nor was this ancient dame a foe to mirth.

Her ballad, jest, and riddle's quaint device,
Oft cheered the shepherds round their social hearth;
Whom levity or spleen could ne'er entice
To purchase chat or laughter at the price
Of decency. Nor let it faith exceed,
That Nature forms a rustic taste so nice.
Ah! had they been of court or city breed,
Such delicacy were right marvellous indeed.

LIII

Oft when the winter-storm had ceased to rave,
He roamed the snowy waste at even, to view
The cloud stupendous, from the Atlantic wave
High-towering, sail along the horizon blue:
Where, 'midst the changeful scenery ever new,
Fancy a thousand wondrous forms descries,
More wildly great than ever pencil drew;
Rocks, torrents, gulfs, and shapes of giant size,
And glittering cliffs on cliffs, and fiery ramparts rise.

LIV

Thence, musing, onward to the sounding shore,

The lone enthusiast oft would take his way,
Listening, with pleasing dread, to the deep roar
Of the wide-weltering waves. In black array
When sulphurous clouds rolled on the vernal day,
Even then he hastened from the haunt of man,
Along the darkening wilderness to stray,
What time the lightning's fierce career began,
And o'er heaven's rending arch the rattling thunder ran.

LV

Responsive to the sprightly pipe, when all
In sprightly dance the village-youth were joined,
Edwin, of melody aye held in thrall,
From the rude gambol far remote reclined,
Soothed with the soft notes warbling in the wind.
Ah then, all jollity seemed noise and folly.
To the pure soul, by Fancy's fire refined,
Ah, what is mirth, but turbulence unholy,
When with the charm compared of heavenly melancholy!

LVI

Is there a heart that music cannot melt?

Ah me! how is that rugged heart forlorn!
Is there, who ne'er those mystic transports felt,
Of solitude and melancholy born?
He needs not woo the Muse; he is her scorn.
The sophist's rope of cobweb he shall twine;
Mope o'er the schoolman's peevish page; or mourn,
And delve for life, in Mammon's dirty mine;
Sneak with the scoundrel fox, or grunt with glutton swine.

LVII

For Edwin, Fate a nobler doom had planned;
Song was his favourite and first pursuit.
The wild harp rang to his adventurous hand,
And languished to his breath the plaintive flute.
His infant muse, though artless, was not mute:
Of elegance, as yet, he took no care;
For this of time and culture is the fruit;
And Edwin gained, at last, this fruit so rare:
As in some future verse I purpose to declare.

LVIII

Meanwhile, whate'er of beautiful, or new,

Sublime, or dreadful, in earth, sea, or sky,
By chance, or search, was offered to his view,
He scanned with curious and romantic eye.
Whate'er of lore tradition could supply
From Gothic tale, or song, or fable old,
Roused him, still keen to listen and to pry.
At last, though long by penury controuled,
And solitude, his soul her graces 'gan unfold.

LIX

Thus, on the chill Lapponian's dreary land,
For many a long month lost in snow profound,
When Sol from Cancer sends the season bland,
And in their northern cave the storms hath bound;
From silent mountains, straight, with startling sound,
Torrents are hurled; green hills emerge; and lo,
The trees with foliage, cliffs with flowers are crowned;
Pure rills through vales of verdure warbling go;
And wonder, love, and joy, the peasant's heart o'erflow.

LX

Here pause, my Gothic lyre, a little while.

The leisure hour is all that thou can'st claim.
But on this verse if Montagu should smile,
New strains, ere long, shall animate thy frame:
And his applause to me is more than fame;
For still with truth accords his taste refined.
At lucre or renown let others aim,
I only wish to please the gentle mind,
Whom Nature's charms inspire, and love of humankind.

THE MINSTREL; BOOK SECOND

*Doctrina sed vim promovet insitam,
Rectique cultus pectora roborant.*

Horat.

THE MINSTREL; OR, THE PROGRESS OF GENIUS. BOOK SECOND

I

Of chance or change, O let not man complain,
Else shall he never never cease to wail:
For, from the imperial dome, to where the swain
Rears the lone cottage in the silent dale,
All feel the assault of fortune's fickle gale;
Art, empire, earth itself, to change are doomed;
Earthquakes have raised to heaven the humble vale;
And gulfs the mountain's mighty mass entombed;
And where the Atlantic rolls wide continents have bloomed.

II

But sure to foreign climes we need not range,
Nor search the ancient records of our race,
To learn the dire effects of time and change,
Which in ourselves, alas! we daily trace.
Yet, at the darkened eye, the withered face,
Or hoary hair, I never will repine:
But spare, O Time, whate'er of mental grace,
Of candour, love, or sympathy divine,
Whate'er of fancy's ray, or friendship's flame, is mine.

III

So I, obsequious to Truth's dread command,
Shall here, without reluctance, change my lay,
And smite the Gothic lyre with harsher hand;
Now when I leave that flowery path, for aye,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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