

THE
INFLUENCE OF STATICS

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THE
INFLUENCE OF APATHY,
ETC.

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THE
INFLUENCE OF APATHY,
AND
OTHER POEMS.

BY
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THE
INFLUENCE OF APATHY.

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ARGUMENT.

INVOCATION.—The disposition of youth to affection; to confidence; to imbibe flattery; to engage unadvisedly in friendships.—The result of the abuse of this ingenuousness—suspicion and distrust, art, and indifference to all that previously interested.—Suicide considered.—The inefficacy of private or public tuition, in the abstract, to avert the evils incident to entering the world; to invalidate the temptations of sin.—The tendency of a career of sin to deaden the sensibility of our affections.—The effects of over leniency and over severity.—The doctrine of the existence in infancy of a moral sense, and the instinctive power of discriminating between good and evil, right and wrong.—The diminution of these faculties when brought into collision with the world, and by the too frequent contemplation of the reverses sustained by the virtuous, and the triumphs of the vicious.—The consequently increased influence of temptation, and the miseries derived from yielding to it.—The probability that repeated afflictions will annihilate the kindly sympathies of our nature.—Revenge.—The passion excited by trifling annoyances; fatal consequences of yielding to it, as operating on the heart; exception, Byron.—The disappointment generally attendant upon ambition, and its paralysing action on the feelings.—A night scene, leading to a reflection on the instability of human existence compared with the duration of inanimate objects.—In life, the first emotion experienced, curiosity; its successors, pleasure and pain, reflection and experience, truth, despair, lastly apathy.—Ingratitude; a dangerous enemy to the determination to adopt insensibility as a negative state of happiness.—Allusion to the numerous calamities of life, and the futility of desiring to retain those feelings which alone render us vulnerable to their attacks.—The incapability of worldly enjoyments to insure happiness.—Happiness, tranquillity of mind.—Tranquillity of mind attainable only by the means of apathy.

THE
INFLUENCE OF APATHY.

DAYS of confiding youth ! whose rainbow gleam
Wanes coldly distant on my cloudy theme ;—
When on Hope's tablet Fancy smiling drew
A picture gay—enchanting—but untrue,—
And every object, like Dodona's grove,
Prophetic spoke delusive peace and love,—
When in perspective this dark present rose
Soft as an evening sunshine of repose,—
And threat'ning clouds but gathered—to depart,
Tinged with the rays effulging from the heart ;

Eye of my life!—like that the prophet made
To watch Gehazi while through sin he strayed—
Still, ever lovely, through the veil of years
Seen as a mocking beauty through my tears—
Raise on the shadowed memory of my mind
The phantom feelings that delude mankind—
Nor let them pass, as they have passed away,
Till for a transient space they flit across my lay.

In early years, ere yet the mazy thread
Of busy Discord round the heart is spread—
Ere yet the world's Iscariot kiss hath stole
The amulet of truth from out the soul—
Ere man, to blindness of his future driven,
Counts with each hour another step from heaven—
Ere, like that tree of melancholy hue,
The dark and solitary church-yard yew,

A baneful influence round him he must throw,
And foully rocted in corruption grow,—
In life's first spring that brings no summer sun,
By various ties Affection's web is spun ;
The gnomon of a dial—care unknown—
Man marks the fleeting sunny hours alone ;
In eager sympathy his young pulse beats
To every kindly pressure that it meets ;
The hollow welcome fails not to allure ;
His heart expands on Flattery's shifting shore,
Glowes to the siren melody around,
Nor marks the quicksands of that fatal ground ;
Onward impelled, he views no peril near,
Laughs with the laugh, and sorrows with the tear ;
Freely the vow of amity is made,
And, unbetraying, sees not he 's betrayed.

Not long may last this trust in human breast ;
The hand that wounds him is the one loved best.
Too soon, and yet too late his credence ends,
He owns his worst of enemies are—friends.
Who plunged the weapon into Clitus' side ?
Who dealt the keenest blow when Cæsar died ?
Where is the stain on murdered Charles's fame ?
The page that weeps with injured Stafford's name.—
And when revolts the sense at James's fate ?
When his own children leave him desolate.—
Sure as the shaft from the death-angel's bow,
Falls, soon or late, the paralysing blow ;
Like Œdipus, he seeks the truth, and bleeds,
The victim of th' enigma that he reads ;
Then like the adder, save in deafness, rears
Suspicion's crest from the heart's cell of tears :

Fast on the track rush Selfishness and Pride,
With guile their ghastly lineaments to hide ;
For him no more can Nature's scenes adorn
The desert path—he passes them in scorn—
Or, as the spider, from the fairest flowers
He sucks a poison for his future hours :
For him no more can the Arcadian lyre
Of innocence and love his soul inspire ;
No more with gratitude his bosom thrills ;
Remembrance over all a baneful dew distils.

In that consuming atrophy which steals
Upon the heart ere yet its warmth congeals—
That craving after novelties to please,
Which tend alone to nurture its disease—
The languid morbid symptoms which betray
The last sad stage preceding its decay—

In that half-phrensied fever of a mind
Religion tutors not to be resigned,
When those the nearest—dearest—make us own
We live unloved, unheeded, and alone,
The soul may find an antidote to grief,
The wounded spirit still may seek relief ;
A sudden beam illumines Despondence' eye—
The sense that we have yet the power to die.
Demon of sorrow ! when thou givest the brand
Of self-destruction to a mortal hand,
Dost thou release thy victim, and destroy
The iron chain of agony ? or buoy
Our being's essence to a distant shore,
Where writhing anguish howls for evermore ?
Oh ! tell me not—nor shake my earnest trust
In Him who is all-merciful and just—

That the worn wretch unearthly powers control,
E'en with such last sin burning on his soul,
From tortures more than mortal sense can bear
Flies to his God, and finds no refuge there!

Thus, when the mists of passion so condense
As to obscure the intellectual sense,
Argues the Suicide:—"Why longer train
"Of misery th' inexorable chain?
"Ebbs memory's tide not on its waste to show
"To-day is but the yesterday of woe?
"Earth hath no prospect save to wear away
"By grief's attrition to a slow decay
"The spirit's prison—live I not a curse
"Unto myself—and those—distraction! worse,—
"Those who once loved me? must I tamely wait
"Till even pity turn to worse than hate?

- “ To seek enervated the bonds I’ve torn,
“ Crouch like a slave—and bend the knee to—Scorn?
“ Bereaved of all that can to life endear—
“ Hope-seared—heart-broken—ever doomed to bear
“ The weight of woes that crush not—like to him
“ The Tantalus of fable: can the grim
“ Aspect of death, and but conceived pain
“ Of after-punishment, this hand restrain?
“ No—from the fathomless cold realms of space
“ Where Night, and her twin sister, Darkness, pace
“ In an eternal chaos with their king—
“ Where, on the plumage of thy dusky wing,
“ Wakes not the trembling whisper of a breath—
“ To my embrace arise—I call thee—Death!—
“ Come in thy fiercest terrors—thou hast not
“ A rack can add a torment to this lot—

“ Or, if thou hast, I hail it—for to this

“ All change—e’en change of suffering—were bliss.”

Thus says Philosophy:—“ You say you leave

“ A real ill for one you but conceive ;—

“ True—but that ill, though of a thousand years,

“ An atom to infinity appears—

“ Th’ extreme point of a point—the smallest part

“ Of what is smallest. From the first you start

“ With this one vital error—to suppose

“ This life an end—on which your hopes repose—

“ When ’tis a painful means. ‘ Then, strange,’ you

say,

“ ‘ To cast a gem so highly prized away !’

“ No,—life become unlovely by your love,

“ You spurn the ties too passionately wove ;

- “ Wedded to false chimeras of your brain,
“ You find, like Ixion, but a cloud—most vain—
“ And what you most have loved you most disdain—
“ But sell not—spendthrift of your bliss—to feed
“ The present transient moment of your need ;
“ The rich reversion promised you by Heaven,
“ That ‘ unto those that have not shall be given.’—
“ Mark those now falling round you—is the date
“ Far off your folly would anticipate?—
“ Light your pale lamp of hope, and by its rays
“ Discern the nothingness of life—and gaze
“ Upon the importance given it when you go
“ Grovelling beneath an incubus of woe.
“ Leave, self-deluded, your ill-judged attempt—
“ Is it by flight you would evince contempt?—
“ No—rather draw around your heart the shroud
“ Of apathy, and rise above misfortune proud.”

Man's moral nature is the Punch of fate,
Which holds the strings to which it must vibrate ;—
'Tis soft and evanescent as the snows
On which a feather-weight a print bestows ;—
'Tis as a cloud in skies half foul—half fair—
And takes fantastic shapes from every air ;—
His bosom, as a mirror, does not own
Intrinsic objects—it reflects alone.—
We see two youths, by different systems taught—
One good, one ill—they differ in each thought.
The one, as fiend of dark abhorrent hue,
Sees Sin portrayed—his lure concealed from view ;
The other, by long contact, hath been taught
He hath delights that are too dearly bought ;—
In manhood both on life unaided thrust—
And lo ! a paradox !—the good falls first.—

Is it so marvellous that fairest minds
Like fairest plants first fall to blasting winds ?
The boy whom parents' weakness keeps from school
(It does not follow will be quite a fool)
Will stock of worldly wisdom rarely raise ;
Which wisdom is the only fund that pays.
This, then, at home, is lost—but haply there
Gains he postponement of an ill career ;
No petty deeds of cruelty obtrude
Upon his sight to reconcile to blood ;
No bladdered cat from storied height he spins ;
Nor tortures worms or cockchafers on pins ;
No bull-dog fights, or rifles sparrows' nest ;
Which freeze the milk of kindness in the breast ;
No urchin Nero's tyrannies he sees,
And seeing, copies—but in lieu of these,

Worse than Cimmerian darkness keeps the light
Of common sense completely from his sight—
Without which guide, too suddenly he'll find
He is the helpless victim of mankind.
Whether is 't better, then, like Vathek's dwarf,
To be of men the foot-ball and the laugh,
Or, safer system, on the other hand,
A Dionysius and a Scapin stand?
On school and home, too prosing, I dilate,
To shew that systems work not to create
The good indelible they may intend.—
Upon no stated rule may we depend
As sure specific 'gainst an evil end.—
It seems that Chance alone may cast the die
Of virtue or of vice—whose child is Apathy.

It were a long and weary voyage to sail
O'er Education's ocean of detail—
To trace each rivulet that tends to swell
The tide that creeps to heaven or sweeps to hell.
To those who smoothly down the wave have gone,
With sunny smiles to cheer their progress on,
I leave the glad remembrance of their fate,
And, lighter task, its good to designate.—
To those who from their morning wave have drawn
The bitter draught that taught them young to mourn,
And through the prism of whose early tears
All seems perverted which to life endears,—
Until they, fly-like, slide down Memory's glass,
Cling to the flaws, and o'er its smoothness pass ;
To those the task were heavier to trace back
The current of their own more stormy track—

Or from the charts of others to select
The various systems which my theme affect,—
Suffice it here to single two, that tend
To have the wreck of feeling for their end.

The carpet hero, who in childhood's days
Feasts uncontrolled on sugar-plums and praise—
Whose tears, as angry billows, have the power
To rend the barriers of the stormy hour—
Who sees admired, or borne, each wayward whim,
Until creation seems to be—for him,—
Launched from the petty circle of his sway,
Among his equals, who will not obey—
Hates where he cannot govern—and we find
His hatred must embrace one half mankind.
Of over-leniency we mark this fruit—
The infant *bore* matured into the brute.

But woe to him, beguiling and beguiled,
The privileged hypocrite, who hath defiled
The power nature gave him to protect,
With passion or with bitterer neglect!—
Who, like a coward, to the world asserts
Affection breeds the rigour he exerts.
Sad—sad will be that parent's life's last stage,
Who spurned in youth the balm required in age.
Sad the conviction he too late must meet,
That undeserved reproof begets deceit,
And that the boy whom guile alone can save,
Once only is a dupe—for ever is a knave.

There are who hold that with existence born,
A moral sense our being must adorn,—
An innate maxim, and a conscience nice—
Th' instinctive love of virtue—dread of vice—

The quick perception of the right and wrong—
Which with our bodies' progress grows more strong.
We grant the first position be correct,
But the last thesis (of its growth) reject.
Could this discriminating sense retain
Its strong palladium against sin and pain ;
Could it, like Lænas' magic wand, define
Bounds to temptation—'twere indeed divine.
But no—this strong preservative from crime
Dissolves within the crucible of time.
The world's collision fails not to entice
The basilisk eye of fascinating vice—
We dare not fly it, though its glance appal,
We see men rise by sin—by virtue fall—
This false conception grafted on the mind,
Excuse for evil easily we find.—

How should frail man explore a passage trod
By Him alone, the gifted Son of God?
Have we His shield to dare the Tempter's skill?
'Twixt future joys we choose, and present ill—
We read of future hell—but mercy grew
Out of that fiat, and we read that too.
Brief is the doubt—temptation's rich repast
Is spread—and seized—its sweets enhanced by fast.
Temptation leads to sorrows—sorrows make
Callous the heart they have not power to break.
Slowly, but sure—incrusted by the flow
On its first softness of perpetual woe—
Its nature changes—as soft moss hath grown
By frequent drippings petrified to stone.—
“Seize then at once”, the marble Stoic says,
“Like us the quiet Apathy conveys—

- “ This be your moment—turn not to resent
“ The wrongs that are but preludes to content.
“ You would not—from Torpedo’s touch awake—
“ Rush back in spite to meet another stroke.
“ Why, ’cause thou art racked on disappointment’s
 wheel,
“ Vindictive smite the instruments of—weal?
“ Blest are the waters thus misnamed of woes,
“ They flow to Lethe’s fountain of repose.”

This is not in man’s nature—you must heat
The metal, ere its temper be complete.
Strike the fresh flint, you but produce its fire ;
You must strike on to make its sparks expire.
The wounded prey-bird shuns his fellow’s sight—
The coward whale harpooned avoids the light—

The stricken stag to distant fern will hie—
The harassed hare will steal away to die—
But man—the serpent man—a venom makes
From his hope's poisoned chalice, till he slakes
The fevered thirst his smarting wound sustains—
The foot that crusheth him shall share his pains ;
Snorts red Destruction's charger in his course,
And Death's pale steed, and Hell's, obey his curse ;
Shakes to the blow, the earthquake of the mind—
Through the heart's chasm pours the avenging wind—
Stream forth the bloody vials of his wrath—
Burst the unsated whelps of Havoc forth—
Hate's demons howl the voice of mercy down,
Nor slack, till Vengeance shrieks "the deed is done !"

Revenge maintains her empire in the breast
Though every other feeling freeze to rest ;

And sooner may the crew-deserted bark,
When tempests wildly rage and nights are dark,
Admit a pilot—than may man obtain
Reason, when tossed upon her angry main.
Search history's records—read why savage War
Her satellites linked to Menelaus' car ;
Why Coriolanus bared the avenging brand,
And Rome too late deplored her harsh command ;
Why Hannibal—the sworn in hate—unfurled
His flag, and shed the blood of half the world :—
These had gross injuries—but oft is known
Revenge as deadly from mere trifles grown :—
'Tis strange how petty worries will control
The reign of reason in the greatest soul ;—
A dog, a horse, a woman, or a child ;
A literary failure—drives us wild.—

Thus the Pancratias with vexation burst
To kick the wiser ass that kicked him first.
A hive of little evils often tend
More than great griefs our quiet to offend—
Like captious wasps about the heart they cling,
And more exasperate by their frequent sting ;
Haply it is, their insolence annoys
The humour great calamity destroys.
Slight cause may move dissension 'twixt mankind,
And this experience bids us bear in mind ;
For injuries the aggressor may atone,
But insults compensation never own.
Slight was the cause, when, by revenge impelled,
Warwick a king restored—a king expelled.
The Roman senator, who bore to see
His country crouch to Gallic victory,

Brooked not the proud barbarian's taunting mood,
But struck the blow that deluged Rome with blood.
No purple tide had Actium's billow seen
Had poor Octavia slighted never been.
Read how Mæonius—whose presumptuous hand
Hurled against custom and his king's command
A hunting spear, and was awhile confined—
Cherished the fancied insult in his mind ;
The memory of the offence not long remained,
The penalty a scorpion sting retained—
Time passed—not to his hate—the assassin's knife
Drew from his monarch kinsman's breast the life.—
From deeds of darkness such as these arise
The icy blasts that shiver human ties—
Man gives not long unruly passions sway
Ere the heart's fabric crumbles to decay.

One sad exception—one whose soul hath fled
Stricken—but not polluted—to the dead ;
The slave of feeling—but too proud to show
That feeling to a world esteemed a foe ;
Barred from thy native land—compelled to roam—
Adored of nations—yet without a home ;
No kindred arm thy fevered head to rear,
No fond attention thy last hour to cheer ;
Not one to light that moment's awful gloom
And gild with hope the darkness of the tomb ;
To read the wishes of thy life's last page,
Thy wants supply, thine agony assuage ;
To picture future scenes of new delight,
And sooth the struggling spirit ere its flight ;
Seal the cold eyelid with affection's tear,
And to thy child a parent's blessing bear ;

A husband, and a father—names with power
To wound, not calm thee in thy dying hour ;—
Such was thy fate,—and are there none to mourn,
Departed spirit, o'er thy hallowed urn ?
Must then thy radiant course like comet glare
Win the world's gaze, and vanish into air ?
No—while the wings of genius dare explore
The golden waters of Pirenian shore—
While taste and feeling from his casque shall grow
Like the Athenian goddess from the brow
Of the great parent,—while the mind of man
The paths of science shall presume to scan—
Thy name with Homer, Milton, Pope, shall claim
From future worlds a monument of fame.

And is there left on history's leaf no tear
But cold hypocrisy's to deck thy bier ?

Must barren hearts—the readiest to condemn
The faults that owed their very birth to them—
Must those the beings who with icy sneer
Warped each warm virtue of thy brief career—
Who spurned the feeling oft too truly shown,
Because that feeling never was their own—
Must lips like these to after ages tell
He lived admired, but unmourned he fell?
Forbid it Greece! While Freedom dare expand
Her orient standard o'er her native land ;
Long as the shades of the departed brave,
Who nobly bled thy injured realms to save ;
Long as a Marathon and Leuctra reign,
Plataea and Thermopyle remain
A bright memorial on the book of time
Of the first valour of thy envied clime ;

Till classic learning from her task shall cease
And blot from history's page the name of Greece ;—
Thy grateful sons shall write for other years
The name of Byron in a nation's tears.—
Who hath not felt when glory's golden ray
Irradiates some meteor of the day ;
Who hath not felt that burning glow within
His hope's intoxication ?—Who hath seen
The weeping clouds of disappointment fling
Their mouldering damp on young ambition's wing,
Nor turned disgusted from his own essay
To reach the fen-like light that mocks his way ?
Feeds on his soul despair's corroding chain,
Flings back his spirit its cold weight in vain,
Like him who strove to steal the heavenly fire,
Bound to a rock and never to expire—

The bare rock of despondence, ever torn
And harassed by the vulture-beak of scorn ;
Inert, but restless, hating what he prized,
He lives to envy those he most despised.
Say what succeeds? Can man such change endure,
And be the sanguine fool he was before ?
The draught of fame Fate sneering bade him sip
Has turned to wormwood on his thirsting lip ;
Hurled from his brain-built pinnacle of pride,
The world he wooed, observes him—to deride ;
And can he with such mortal wound bestow
Smiles on the world that deals the fatal blow ?
Can he the dirty chemist's part assume,
And draw from civet ordure, a perfume ?
Will not all human sympathies rush back
On his heart's tender fibres, till they crack ?

Yes ; they will burst ; and what will then remain ?—

The apathy to pleasure and to pain.

Hark ! on the winds of time hath pealed the knell
Of foiled ambition's votaries! Sad it fell,
And awful as the footstep on the grave :
Is there no warning in the voice to save ?
There is : in heaven the warning first began,
And angels heard it ere it fell on man—
He had that warning ; the too vain compeer
Of God's admitted, Satan, did he fear ?
No—deaf to all but power's mad dream he fell,
And for a heaven risked his fate—a hell.
Glory, that shadow of a sound, will win
Saints from religion, profligates from sin :
There is a spell in an undying name
Deludes to struggle blindly on for fame.

Empires have been, and are not ; cities rose
Arrayed in pomp and beauty—where are those ?
Where is proud Sparta ? See—a goatherd's cot
Smiles on a barren, wasted, desolate spot !
A bondsman's fortune is the grass that waves
Over Leonidas' and Agis' graves !
Names alone mock destruction ; they survive
The doom of all creation : hence we hivel
The rapturous hope of immortality ;—
Men worship that which never seems to die.
What of the future know we but of death ?
Have ages had the power to stifle Glory's breath ?
A land but promised, and a goal he views—
No marvel 'tis that man the last should choose ;
No marvel 'tis his every nerve is strained
To gain a port that others have attained ;

No marvel 'tis, when adverse gales have blown,
Back on the wave of life a shattered wreck is thrown.

'Tis night ; and contemplation on the wing
Of silence steals : the past and present fling
Their shadows on the future. 'Tis a night
Sad as the thought of feeling's early blight—
Cold as the heart that is affection's tomb—
Dark as the hue of disappointment's gloom.—
Let sadness come—to me it hath but made
Life as the fleeting vision of a shade ;
Let coldness come—the glacier's silver crest
Hath not a colder region than man's breast ;
Let darkness come—for yet I scarce can view
That pale beam smile as it was wont to do,
Upon a scene oft visited before,
With smiling hopes, that visit me no more :—

The long grass withers by the mountain rill ;
The frequent blasts sigh wildly on the hill ;—
O'er yon high oak a howling requiem pour,
Which wintry gales have seared to bud no more ;—
The hazy moon sinks dimly from the vale,
Where sleepy vapours, stagnant, shun the gale.—
To Superstition's eye, in such bleak land,
Where Desolation's cold and withering hand
Hath fallen blastingly—at such an hour—
Free from the stir of men, and daylight's power—
The wandering 'habitants of worlds unknown—
The ghastly shapes distempered fancies own—
Unhallowed shades, whose crimes forbid to sleep—
Might, unmolested, mystic vigils keep.
The cynic churl, or meditative mind
Of grave philosophy, might haply find

A semblance of mortality—for here
A laughing landscape used the eye to cheer.
Through yon scathed tree, which stag-like rears its head,
The golden sun a checkered radiance shed ;—
And where those rank weeds cluster round its base
The weeping eye of Memory may trace
The yellow harvest swell to summer showers,
And green cool shades renew the fragrant flowers.

Such is the fate of all corporeal things—
And man, though raised pre-eminent, but wings
A flight more transient o'er life's barren plain.—
How soon th' ethereal essence bursts the chain
Of mortal thralldom !—preordained to go—
Where ?—where we know not—but too soon shall know.
A few short hours man labours to attain
Th' ideal good he reaches to disdain ;

A few short hours of hope—a few to see
That hope's bud blighted like that lonely tree.
A few of dotage on religious creed,
As drowning wretch who grasps a broken reed—
Still loth to sigh his last of being's breath—
Not from the love of life, but fear of death.
Poor slave of doubt!—he gains his destined goal,
Struggling against the fate that is to free his soul.

When from the tree of death inviting fell
The fruit of knowledge—misery and hell—
Say, what the insatiate thirst the subtle snake
Raised on Eve's fevered lip, and bade her slake?—
What urged the deed?—what infancy must drink
With life from woman, when 'tis given to think.
The first emotion that man's bosom knows
Is curiosity—and thenceforth grows

Pleasure, the wintry sunbeam of an hour—
And pain, coeval shadow of life's dower ;—
Nursed in the womb of Time, and fed by Pain—
Betrothed to Thought—the giant of the brain—
Experience follows—from which wedded pair
Truth late is born—whose issue is—Despair.
He who of late was Fancy's demi-god,
Now grovels to the worm on which he trod.
Mock monarch of creation! thou art taught
The fatal value of thy power of thought!—
Now seize the last mean cowardice of grief,
By railing on the past to seek relief.
Go—curse the destiny thou thought'st to rule—
Stamp on thy brain, with Memory's signet—fool.
Thou now art taught, vain man, to hail the tomb,
Though it should greet thee with Penthean doom.

Startest thou to see thy fate?—on Hope's decrease,
See where it spreads the halcyon wing of Peace!—
See where it beckons!—see it slowly wave
The hand that points to madness—or the grave,—
Where rankling Memory shall no more pursue,
And haggard Care no more appal thy view,—
Where, and where only, thou may'st find the rest
Thy life and reason sought, but ne'er possesst.
But lo! the spectre changes—and it wears
A chaplet watered by Reflection's tears—
Which, like the night-flower, perfume will impart
More sweet as darkness clouds upon the heart.
If but thy strength of mind and frame allow
To reach those flowers, and place them on thy brow,
Their shade will cool the fever on thy brain,
Extend thy life—the future free from pain—

Bid of the past experience only stay,
Like Bethlehem's star to guide thee on thy way ;
The wreath of cold indifference adore—
And fawn-eyed sorrow sleeps—to wake no more.

My lay has long been silent—do I dream?
And am I not a portion of my theme?—
Is feeling still an instinct in my breast,
To mark me to be sneered at or opprest?—
Lives there on earth incitement that can move
That heart to hate, which long hath ceased to love?—
Ingratitude!—thy monstrous sight hath brought
Again the Mephistophiles of thought.—
On Memory's midnight now I see thee soar,
Thy raven wings my bosom's void explore.—
“ All—all is desolate and dark within,”
I hear thee murmur—“ can my pinions win,

“ In this cold vault, though closed to all beside,
“ No place to dwell in?—not from wounded pride?”
Accursed of Heaven! I feel thee raise again
My hand, like Ismael’s, ’gainst my fellow men.
Much though I’ve borne, thou still hast power to
 shock,
And draw, like Moses, waters from a rock.
Thy vision, base Ingratitude, I see,
And the big tear rolls forth its gall to thee.

Scourge of mankind!—thy noxious life began
Its foul career when God created man.
Still, as the light of life acquired force,
Thy baneful shadow lengthened on its course;—
Full on the brow of Cain thy dark scowl fell,
And sent a blackened fratricide to hell.

Tarshish! thy isle is waste!—Shriek, Moab! shriek!—
High-crested Babylon! thy voice is weak.
Writhe in thine agony, Gomorrah!—writhe!—
The flames of vengeance, Sodom, o'er thee breathe!—
Thankless in pride, ye turned—and how were left?—
Of every gift God granted, ye bereft:—
Ye have all passed, with other states, away,
Examples for a past—a future day.—
But ye have passed unheeded—or but seem
Some vague phenomena of th' historian's dream.
Greece—Rome—barbarians—yesterday—to-day—
Abhorrent fiend! some deed of thine display.
Of wide existence' sea no wave can roll
To its last ebb that breaks not on thy shoal;
The hateful annals of thy crimes disclose,
Like light-house lamps where thy Charybdis flows.

Beacons that warn in vain!—thick mists arise,
And History's land-marks fade to human eyes ;
Our own supposed security from pain
Engenders these thick vapours of the brain ;
Man's self the graven image of his thought—
Small wisdom see we by example taught—
He slights the warning every day makes known,
Nor feels for wrongs till they become his own.

Who styled men brethren? Wisely 'twas ordained,
His death refuted what his life maintained.
Lo ! in his scorching brazen bull he shrinks !
Say where are now these pure fraternal links ?
Poor doting speculist ! thy creed declare,
As Laughter hails thy shout of agonised despair !

My hungry search is gluttoned by the food
Found in earth's records, everywhere imbrued
In thy blood-tinctured stream, Ingratitude !
The Genius of Tradition turns away,
Sick with the stain he ever must portray,
And blushes man's pre-eminence to own,
As on the lists, with human brutes o'ergrown,
Contrasted stands one beast—a dog—alone.
My task of reference soothes me, for I find
Thy frost-work, Apathy, creep on my mind.
My own wrongs I relate not :—if I mourn
The memory of a moment, 'tis to scorn
The feeling that betrays me ; I would cast
For ever off the weakness that hath passed—
Passed with the drop that, gushing to the eye,
Rose like a desert spring upon a waste to die.

Who, that hath marked around the stem of life
Th' innumerable weeds with poison rife ;
The many evils that with being start,
To twine around the nucleus of the heart ;
Th' insidious creepers that about it cling,
And slowly suck the verdure of its spring ;
The biting penury, whose fibres place
Their lank claws forth, in withering embrace ;
The briars of fell disease, whose endless fold
Winds like the serpent round the priest of old ;
The parasites—fit term—that grovelling take
From out the base wherewith their thirst to slake ;
The wanton woodbine that, like woman, plays
Around the heart whose weakness it betrays ;
The envious ivy, whose obnoxious leaf
Bends in dark mockery o'er the tomb of grief ;

And the pernicious moss, whose tribes keep pace
With all the miseries that infect our race ;—
Who, that hath watched how Hope's fair sun recedes
Behind th' increasing shadow of such weeds,
Would seek the sap of feeling there to stay,
Nor hail the blast that brings a quick decay ?

Sweet were the boon, to own the sea-bird's nest,
High on an island cliff to brood at rest,
Within a hollow cleft secure to ride
Unseen, and reckless of life's stormy tide ;—
Sweet were the boon, the tempest's wrath to brave,
Like that half-fish half-flower beneath the wave,
The sea-anemone, on a rock to cling,
While life scarce felt flies by on Slumber's wing.
Alas ! vain wish, to gain for life's decline
Calm such as this !—Yet do I not repine :

Life hath for me a blessing—it hath cast
The lotus of oblivion on the past ;—
Life hath for me a blessing—to instil
The present with the apathy of ill ;—
And to my soul a whispering angel saith—
“ Life hath a blessing for the future—death.”

Those who admire and censure by a rule,
Exclaim, lo ! one of the Satanic school !
That servile herd, who of its leader use
All but the inspiration of his muse !
And must not Sorrow bear the face of woe ?
And must not Hatred to expression grow ?
And must Contempt repress his bitter sneer ?
And Gloom the laughing lip of Gaiety wear ?
Must we, to be original, be glad,
Because the master-soul of verse was sad ?

Must we gild human nature when we write,
Because one drew it in the shade of night ?
Do we the radiance of the heavens shun,
'Cause Iran's sect adored the rising sun ?—
Epicureans ! doaters on the bright
Motes in the gaudy sunbeam of delight !
Ye who to bliss the world's enjoyments deem
Essential as the fountain to the stream,
Who boast that pleasure only can impart
Peace to the mind—Elysium to the heart—
Say what is pleasure ? Is it to dispense
With thought, and purchase gaiety with sense ?
In noisy laughter hath it being ? See—
Delirious fever laughs as loud as ye !
Is it with gross and sensual delights
To pamper passion's captious appetites ?

Is it the praise obtained when keenly sought ?
Or lives it but in purity of thought ?—
Alas ! I too have sought it, and I know
'Tis but the death-light o'er the tomb of woe.

But ye who chaunt its pæans, can you say
You can insure its presence for a day ?
Hath it endued ye with the strength to look
On life's reverses, or on death, unshook ?—
Go to Disease's pillow ; from the bed
Of Sickness say if worldly joys have shed
Aught but a feverish halo round the head.
Was their possession spotless, unalloyed ?
Have they not left behind a dismal void ?
Have they not left you like that abject thing,
The soured, cast off minion of a king ?

He was no shallow sciolist who held
That pleasure rises but from pain dispelled ;
Pain from the pleasurable sense destroyed :—
It follows hence we pleasure should avoid ;
For if they both co-equally vibrate,
Alternately to lower or elate,
Certain it is, the higher we attain
To pleasure, heavier is the fall to pain.
Life's hope is happiness ; but tell me where
May this be found, if pleasure leads to care ?
It centres in tranquillity of mind,
To which indifference hath the course assigned ;
Nor can we reach indifference at one spring ;—
To gain the honey we must risk the sting.
Not—not without a struggle may we know
To check the stream of passion's wonted flow,

And not without a struggle can we leave
All that deceived, but can no more deceive.—
Sad is the task, to exile from the heart
Feelings that have become of life a part ;
The thirst of riches, or desire of fame,
Frail Friendship's warmth, or Love's far dearer name
Oh ! woman ! jewelled link of being's chain,
First dream of love, last object of disdain,
Sad is the storm, o'erwhelming is the sea,
Star of the soul ! that turns our course from thee ;—
But all must be forgotten, all must cease
But Apathy, for him who seeks on earth for peace.

NOTES.

Page 3, line 5.

“ And every object, like Dodona's grove.”

See HERODOTUS.

P. 19, l. 7.

“ Could it, like Lænas' magic wand, define.”

POPILIUS LÆNAS. Liv. xlv. c. 12.

P. 24, l. 1.

“ Thus the Pancratias”, &c.

Ctesiphone, the conqueror at all the Olympic Games.

PLUT.

P. 24, l. 15.

“ The Roman senator”, &c.—PAPIRIUS.

P. 25, l. 5.

“ Read how Mæonius”, &c.

GIBBON, Vol. I. c. xi. p. 309.

P. 32, l. 5.

“ A bondsman's fortune is the grass that waves

“ Over Leonidas' and Agis' graves!”

CHATEAUBRIAND'S TRAVELS IN GREECE.