Metamorphoses

by Ovid

Free public domain classic — Noveliopdf

Book I

Creation of the World

The formation of the world from the confusion of Chaos by the wisdom and power of the Deity is here described, together with a delineation of the harmonious system of the universe, and the mutual dependences and operations of powers of nature—Birds, beasts, and fishes, brought into existence—The creation of man: his superiority to other animals evinced in the structure of his body and the faculties of his mind.

Of bodies changed to various forms I sing: Ye gods, from whom these miracles did spring, Inspire my numbers with celestial heat, Till I my long laborious work complete; And add perpetual tenor to my rhymes, Deduced from Nature’s birth to Caesar’s times.

Before the seas, and this terrestrial ball, And heaven’s high canopy that covers all, One was the face of Nature; if a face: Rather a rude and indigested mass: A lifeless lump, unfashion’d and unframed, Of jarring seeds, and justly Chaos named. No sun was lighted up the world to view, No moon did yet her blunted horns renew, Nor yet was earth suspended in the sky, Nor poised, did on her own foundations lie, Nor seas about the shores their arms had thrown; But earth, and air, and water were in one. Thus air was void of light, and earth unstable, And water’s dark abyss unnavigable. No certain form on any was impress’d; All were confused, and each disturb’d the rest. For hot and cold were in one body fix’d, And soft with hard, and light with heavy, mix’d.

But God, or Nature, while they thus contend, To these intestine discords put an end. Then earth from air, and seas from earth, were driven, And grosser air sunk from ethereal heaven. Thus disembroil'd, they take their proper place; The next of kin contiguously embrace; And foes are sunder'd by a larger space. The force of fire ascended first on high, And took its dwelling in the vaulted sky: Then air succeeds, in lightness next to fire, Whose atoms from unactive earth retire; Earth sinks beneath, and draws a numerous throng Of ponderous, thick, unwieldy, seeds along. About her coasts unruly waters roar, And, rising on a ridge, insult the shore. Thus when the god, whatever god was he, Had form'd the whole, and made the parts agree, That no unequal portions might be found, He moulded earth into a spacious round: Then, with a breath, he gave the winds to blow, And bade the congregated waters flow. He adds the running springs, and standing lakes; And bounding banks for winding rivers makes. Some part, in earth are swallow'd up, the most In ample oceans disembogued, are lost. He shades the woods, the valleys he restrains With rocky mountains, and extends the plains.

And as five zones the ethereal regions bind, Five, correspondent, are to earth assign'd: The sun, with rays directly darting down, Fires all beneath, and fries the middle zone; The two beneath the distant poles complain Of endless winter, and perpetual rain. Betwixt the extremes, two happier climates hold The temper that partakes of hot and cold. The fields of liquid air, enclosing all, Surround the compass of this earthly ball: The lighter parts lie next the fires above, The grosser near the watery surface move: Thick clouds are spread, and storms engender there, And thunder's voice, which wretched mortals fear, And winds, that on their wings cold winter bear. Nor were those blust'ring brethren left at large, On seas and shores their fury to discharge: Bound as they are, and circumscribed in place, They rend the world, resistless, where they pass, And mighty marks of mischief leave behind; Such is the rage of their tempestuous kind. First Eurus to the rising morn is sent (The regions of the balmy continent), And eastern realms, where, early, Persians run To

greet the bless’d appearance of the sun. Westward, the wanton zephyr wings his flight, Pleased with the remnants of departing light. Fierce Boreas, with his offspring issues forth To invade the frozen wagon of the north; While frowning Auster seeks the southern sphere, And rots, with endless rain, the unwholesome year.

High o’er the clouds, and empty realms of wind, The god a clearer space for heaven design’d; Where fields of light, and liquid ether flow, Purged from the ponderous dregs of earth below.

Scarce had the power distinguish’d these, when straight The stars, no longer overlaid with weight, Exert their heads from underneath the mass, And upward shoot, and kindle as they pass, And with diffusive light adorn their heavenly place. Then, every void of nature to supply, With forms of gods he fills the vacant sky; New herds of beasts he sends the plains to share; New colonies of birds to people air; And to their oozy beds the finny fish repair.

A creature of a more exalted kind Was wanting yet, and then was man design’d; Conscious of thought, of more capacious breast, For empire form’d, and fit to rule the rest: Whether with particles of heavenly fire The God of nature did his soul inspire, Or earth, but new divided from the sky, And pliant, still retained the ethereal energy, Which wise Prometheus temper’d into paste, And, mix’d with living streams, the godlike image cast. Thus, while the mute creation downward bend Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend, Man looks aloft, and with erected eyes Beholds his own hereditary skies. From such rude principles our form began, And earth was metamorphosed into man.

Golden Age

During the reign of Saturn the inhabitants of the earth enjoy a state of primeval happiness, secure from the intrusion of evil passions.

The golden age was first, when man, yet new, No rule but uncorrupted reason knew,

And, with a native bent did good pursue. Unforced by punishment, unawed by fear, His words were simple, and his soul sincere; Needless was written law where none oppress'd; The law of man was written in his breast: No suppliant crowds before the judge appear'd, No court erected yet, nor cause was heard, But all was safe; for conscience was their guard. The mountain trees in distant prospect please, Ere yet the pine descended to the seas; Ere sails were spread new oceans to explore, And happy mortals, unconcern'd for more, Confined their wishes to their native shore. No walls were yet, nor fence, nor moat, nor mound, Nor drum was heard, nor trumpet's angry sound, Nor swords were forged; but, void of care and crime, The soft creation slept away their time. The teeming earth, yet guiltless of the plough, And unprovoked, did fruitful stores allow: Content with food which Nature freely bred, On wildings and on strawberries they fed; Cornels and brambleberries gave the rest, And falling acorns furnish'd out a feast. The flowers unsown, in fields and meadows reign'd; And western winds immortal spring maintain'd. In following years the bearded corn ensued From earth unask'd, nor was that earth renew'd. From veins of valleys milk and nectar broke, And honey sweating through the pores of oak.

Silver Age

The earth, no longer under the dominion of Saturn, begins to exhibit marks of degeneracy.

But when good Saturn, banish'd from above, Was driven to hell, the world was under Jove. Succeeding times a silver age behold, Excelling brass, but more excell'd by gold. Then summer, autumn, winter, did appear, And spring was but a season of the year; The sun his annual course obliquely made, Good days contracted, and enlarged the bad. Then air with sultry heats began to glow, The wings of winds were clogg'd with ice and snow; And shivering mortals, into houses driven, Sought shelter from the inclemency of heaven. Those houses, then, were caves or homely

sheds, With twining osiers fenced, and moss their beds. Then ploughs, for seed, the fruitful furrows broke, And oxen labour'd first beneath the yoke.

Brazen Age

Origin of War.

To this came next in course the brazen age; A warlike offspring, prompt to bloody rage, Not impious yet.

Iron Age

The Virtues, in despair, quit the earth; and the depravity of man becomes universal and complete.

Hard steel succeeded then, And stubborn as the metal were the men. Truth, modesty, and shame, the world forsook; Fraud, avarice, and force, their places took. Then sails were spread to every wind that blew, Raw were the sailors and the depths were new; Trees, rudely hollow'd did the waves sustain, Ere ships in triumph plough'd the watery plain.

Then landmarks limited to each his right; For all before was common as the light. Nor was the ground alone required to bear Her annual income to the crooked share, But greedy mortals, rummaging her store, Digg'd from her entrails first the precious ore (Which next to hell the prudent gods had laid), And that alluring ill to sight display'd. Thus cursed steel, and more accursed gold, Gave mischief birth, and made that mischief bold; And double death did wretched man invade, By steel assaulted, and by gold betray'd. Now (brandish'd weapons glittering in their hands) Mankind is broken loose from moral bands; No rights of hospitality remain; The guest, by him who harbour'd him, is slain; The son-in-law pursues the father's life; The wife her husband murders, he the wife; The stepdame poison for the son prepares; The son inquires into his father's years; Faith flies, and piety in exile mourns; And justice, here oppress'd, to heaven returns.

Giants' War

Men of enormous stature, sons of Coelus and Terra, affect to scale the walls of heaven, but are overthrown by the thunder of Jupiter—The earth, becoming impregnated by the blood of these monsters, begets men of similar disposition to their fathers, among whom Lycaon, tyrant of Arcadia, signalizes himself by putting to death all strangers who seek his protection—Jupiter transforms him into the shape of a wolf, and destroys the whole human race by a universal deluge, with the exception of Deucalion and Pyrrha, who people the earth with a new race by the conversion of stones into men—A huge serpent, named Pytho, makes its appearance, and excites universal terror, till he is at length destroyed by the shafts of Apollo—The Pythian games are instituted in honour of this exploit.

Nor were the gods themselves more safe above, Against beleaguer'd heaven the giants move, Hills piled on hills, on mountains mountains lie, To make their mad approaches to the sky; Till Jove, no longer patient, took his time To avenge with thunder their audacious crime. Red lightning play'd along the firmament, And their demolish'd works to pieces rent. Singed with the flames, and with the bolts transfix'd. With native earth their blood the monsters mix'd. The blood, indued with animating heat, Did, in the impregnant earth, new sons beget. They, like the seed from which they sprung, accursed, Against the gods immortal hatred nursed; An impious, arrogant, and cruel brood, Expressing their original from blood.

Which, when the king of gods beheld from high (Withal revolving in his memory What he himself had found on earth of late, Lycaon's guilt, and his inhuman treat), He sigh'd, nor longer with his pity strove, But kindled to a wrath becoming Jove.

Then call'd a general council of the gods, Who, summon'd, issue from their bless'd abodes, And fill the assembly with a shining train. A way there is in heaven's expanded plain, Which, when the skies are clear, is seen below, And mortals by the name of milky know; The groundwork is of stars; through which the road Lies open

to the Thunderer’s abode; The gods of greater nations dwell around, And, on the right and left, the palace bound; The commons where they can; the nobler sort, With winding doors wide open, front the court. This place, as far as earth with heaven may vie, I dare to call the Louvre of the sky. When all were placed in seats distinctly known, And he, their father, had assumed the throne, Upon his ivory sceptre first he lean’d, Then shook his head, that shook the firmament: Air, earth, and seas, obey’d the almighty nod, And, with a general fear, confess’d the god; At length, with indignation, thus he broke His awful silence, and the powers bespoke:

“I was not more concern’d in that debate Of empire, when our universal state Was put to hazard, and the giant race Our captive skies were ready to embrace; For though the foe was fierce, the seeds of all Rebellion sprung from one original; Now, wheresoever ambient waters glide, All are corrupt, and all must be destroy’d. Let me this holy protestation make; By hell, and hell’s inviolable lake, I tried whatever in the godhead lay; But gangrened members must be lopp’d away, Before the nobler parts are tainted to decay. There dwells below a race of demi-gods, Of nymphs in waters, and of fauns in woods, Who though not worthy yet in heaven to live, Let them, at least, enjoy that earth we give. Can these be thought securely lodged below, When I myself, who no superior know, I, who have heaven and earth at my command, Have been attempted by Lycaon’s hand?”

At this a murmur through the synod went, And, with one voice, they vote his punishment. Thus, when conspiring traitors dared to doom The fall of Caesar, and in him of Rome, The nations trembled with a pious fear, Ail anxious for their earthly Thunderer; Nor was their care, O Caesar, less esteem’d By thee, than that of heaven for Jove was deem’d: Who, with his hand and voice, did first restrain Their murmurs, then resumed his speech again. The gods to silence were composed, and sate With reverence, due to his superior state.

“Cancel your pious cares; already he Has paid his debt to justice and to me; Yet

what his crimes, and what my judgments were, Remains for me thus briefly to declare. The clamours of this vile degenerate age, The cries of orphans, and the oppressor's rage, Had reach'd the stars: 'I will descend,' said I, 'In hope to prove this loud complaint a lie.' Disguised in human shape I travell'd round The world, and more than what I heard I found. O'er Maenalus I took my steepy way, By caverns infamous for beasts of prey; Then cross'd Syllene, and the piny shade More infamous, by cursed Lycaon made: Dark night had cover'd heaven and earth before I enter'd his inhospitable door. Just at my entrance, I display'd the sign That somewhat was approaching of divine: The prostrate people pray, the tyrant grins, And adding profanation to his sins, 'I'll try,' said he, 'and if a god appear, To prove his deity shall cost him dear.' 'Twas late, the graceless wretch my death prepares, When I should soundly sleep, oppress'd with cares: This dire experiment he chose to prove If I were mortal, or undoubted Jove: But first he had resolved to taste my power. Not long before, but in a luckless hour, Some legates, sent from the Molossian state, Were on a peaceful errand come to treat; Of these he murders one, he boils the flesh, And lays the mangled morsels in a dish; Some part he roasts, then serves it up, so dress'd, And bids me welcome to this human feast. Moved with disdain, the table I o'erturn'd, And with avenging flames the palace burn'd. The tyrant, in a fright, for shelter gains The neighb'ring fields, and scours along the plains; Howling he fled, and fain he would have spoke, But human voice his brutal tongue forsook; About his lips the gather'd foam he churns, And, breathing slaughters, still with rage he burns, But on the bleating flock his fury turns. His mantle, now his hide, with rugged hairs Cleaves to his back, a famish'd face he bears, His arms descend, his shoulders sink away To multiply his legs for chase of prey; He grows a wolf, his hoariness remains, And the same rage in other members reigns, His eyes still sparkle in a narrower space, His jaws retain the grin and violence of his face.

"This was a single ruin, but not one Deserves so just a punishment alone. Mankind's

a monster, and the ungodly times Confederate into guilt are sworn to crimes; All are alike involved in ill, and all Must by the same relentless fury fall." Thus ended he; the greater gods assent, By clamours urging his severe intent, The less fill up the cry for punishment: Yet still with pity they remember man, And mourn as much as heavenly spirits can. They ask, when those were lost of human birth, What he would do with all this waste of earth; If his dispeopled world he would resign To beasts, a mute and more ignoble line; Neglected altars must no longer smoke, If none were left to worship and invoke. To whom the father of the gods replied: "Lay that unnecessary fear aside, Mine be the care new people to provide; A race unlike the first, and try my skill again."

Already had he toss'd the flaming brand, And roll'd the thunder in his spacious hand, Preparing to discharge on seas and land; But stopp'd, for fear, thus violently driven, The sparks should catch his axletree of heaven; Remembering in the Fates, a time when fire Should to the battlements of heaven aspire, And all his blazing worlds above should burn, And all the inferior globe to cinders turn. His dire artillery thus dismiss'd, he bent His thoughts to some securer punishment; Concludes to pour a watery deluge down, And what he durst not burn, resolves to drown.

The northern breath, that freezes floods, he binds, With all the race of cloud-dispelling winds; The south he loosed, who night and horror brings, And fogs are shaken from his flaggy wings; From his divided heard two streams he pours, His head and rheumy eyes distil in showers. With rain his robe and heavy mantle flow, And lazy mists are lowering on his brow; Still as he swept along with his clench'd fist He squeezed the clouds, the imprison'd clouds resisit; The skies, from pole to pole, with peals resound, And showers enlarged, come pouring on the ground; Then, clad in colours of a various dye, Junonian Iris breeds a new supply To feed the clouds; impetuous rain descends, The bearded corn beneath the burden bends, Defrauded clowns deplore their perish'd grain, And the long labours of the year are

vain.

Nor from his patrimonial heaven alone Is Jove content to pour his vengeance down; Aid from his brother of the seas he craves, To help him with auxiliary waves. The watery tyrant calls his brooks and floods, Who roll from mossy caves, their moist abodes, And with perpetual urns his palace fill, To whom, in brief, he thus imparts his will:

“Small exhortation needs; your powers employ, And this bad world, so Jove requires, destroy, Let loose the reins to all your watery store, Bear down the dams, and open every door.”

The floods, by nature enemies to land, And proudly swelling with their new command, Remove the living stones that stopp’d their way, And, gushing from their source, augment the sea. Then, with his mace, their monarch struck the ground, With inward trembling earth received the wound, And rising streams a ready passage found. The expanded waters gather on the plain, They float the fields, and overtop the grain; Then rushing onwards, with a sweepy sway, Bear flocks, and folds, and labouring hinds, away. Nor safe their dwellings were, for, sapp’d by floods, Their houses fell upon their household gods. The solid piles, too strongly built to fall, High o’er their heads behold a watery wall. Now seas and earth were in confusion lost; A world of waters, and without a coast.

One climbs a cliff; one in his boat is borne, And ploughs above where late he sow’d his corn; Others o’er chimney-tops and turrets row, And drop their anchors on the meads below, Or downward driven, they bruise the tender vine, Or toss’d aloft, are knock’d against a pine. And where, of late, the kids had cropp’d the grass, The monsters of the deep now take their place; Insulting Nereids on the cities ride, And wondering dolphins o’er the palace glide; On leaves and masts of mighty oaks they browse, And their broad fins entangle in the boughs; The frighted wolf now swims among the sheep; The yellow lion wanders in the deep; His rapid force no longer

helps the boar; The stag swims faster than he ran before; The fowls, long beating on their wings in vain, Despair of land, and drop into the main; Now hills and vales no more distinction know, And levell'd nature lies oppress'd below; The most of mortals perish in the flood, The small remainder dies for want of food.

A mountain of stupendous height there stands Betwixt the Athenian and Boeotian lands, The bound of fruitful fields, while fields they were, But then a field of waters did appear, Parnassus is its name, whose forky rise Mounts through the clouds and mates the lofty skies; High on the summit of this dubious cliff, Deucalion wafting, moor'd his little skiff; He with his wife were only left behind Of perish'd man; they two were human kind. The mountain nymphs and Themis they adore, And from her oracles relief implore. The most upright of mortal men was he; The most sincere and holy woman, she.

When Jupiter, surveying earth from high, Beheld it in a lake of water lie, That where so many millions lately lived, But two, the best of either sex, survived; He loosed the northern wind, fierce Boreas flies, To puff away the clouds and purge the skies; Serenely while he blows, the vapours driven, Discover heaven to earth, and earth to heaven. The billows fall, while Neptune lays his mace On the rough sea, and smooths its furrow'd face. Already Triton, at his call, appears Above the waves, a Tyrian robe he wears, And in his hand a crooked trumpet bears. The sovereign bids him peaceful sounds inspire And give the waves the signal to retire. His writhen shell he takes, whose narrow vent Grows by degrees into a large extent, Then gives it breath; the blast with doubling sound Runs the wide circuit of the world around; The sun first heard it, in his early east, And met the rattling echoes in the west; The waters, listening to the trumpet's roar, Obey the summons, and forsake the shore.

A thin circumference of land appears, And earth, but not at once, her visage rears, And peeps upon the seas from upper grounds; The streams, but just contain'd within their bounds, By slow degrees into their channels crawl, And earth increases as the

waters fall; In longer time the tops of trees appear, Which mud on their dishonour'd branches bear.

At length the world was all restored to view, But desolate, and of a sickly hue; Nature beheld herself, and stood aghast, A dismal desert and a silent waste.

Which when Deucalion, with a piteous look, Beheld, he wept, and thus to Pyrrha spoke: "O wife! O sister! O of all thy kind The best, and only creature left behind, By kindred, love, and now by dangers join'd; Of multitudes, who breathed the common air, We two remain; a species in a pair: The rest the seas have swallow'd; nor have we Ev'n of this wretched life a certainty. The clouds are still above; and while I speak, A second deluge o'er our heads may break. Should I be snatch'd from hence, and thou remain, Without relief, or partner of thy pain, How couldst thou such a wretched life sustain? Should I be left, and thou be lost, the sea That buried her I loved, should bury me. O could our father his old arts inspire, And make me heir of his informing fire, That so I might abolish'd man retrieve, And perish'd people in new souls might live! But Heaven is pleased, nor ought we to complain, That we, the examples of mankind, remain." He said: the careful couple join their tears, And then invoke the gods, with pious prayers. Thus, in devotion having eased their grief, From sacred oracles they seek relief, And to Cephisus' brook their way pursue; The stream was troubled, but the ford they knew: With living waters, in the fountain bred, They sprinkle first their garments and their head, Then took the way which to the temple led. The roofs were all defiled with moss and mire; The desert altars void of solemn fire. Before the gradual prostrate they adored; The pavement kiss'd; and thus the saint implor'd:

"O, righteous Themis, if the powers above By prayers are bent to pity, and to love; If human miseries can move their mind; If yet they can forgive, and yet be kind; Tell how we may restore, by second birth, Mankind, and people desolated earth." Then thus the gracious goddess, nodding, said: "Depart, and with your vestments veil your

head; And stooping lowly down, with loosen'd zones, Throw each behind your backs your mighty mother's bones." Amazed the pair, and mute with wonder, stand, Till Pyrrha first refused the dire command. "Forbid it Heaven," said she, "that I should tear Those holy relics from the sepulchre!" They ponder'd the mysterious words again, For some new sense; and long they sought in vain: At length Deucalion clear'd his cloudy brow, And said, "the dark enigma will allow A meaning, which, if well I understand, From sacrilege will free the god's command: This Earth our mighty mother is, the stones In her capacious body are her bones: These we must cast behind." With hope and fear The woman did the new solution hear: The man diffides in his own augury, And doubts the gods; yet both resolve to try. Descending from the mount, they first unbind Their vests, and veil'd, they cast the stones behind: The stones (a miracle to mortal view, But long tradition makes it pass for true) Did first the rigour of their kind expel, And suppled into softness as they fell; Then swell'd, and swelling by degrees, grew warm, And took the rudiments of human form. Imperfect shapes: in marble such are seen, When the rude chisel does the man begin; While yet the roughness of the stone remains, Without the rising muscles and the veins. The sappy parts, and next resembling juice, Were turn'd to moisture, for the body's use; Supplying humours, blood, and nourishment; The rest, too solid to receive a bent, Converts to bones; and what was once a vein, Its former name and nature did retain. By help of power divine, in little space, What the man threw assumed a manly face, And what the wife, renew'd the female race. Hence we derive our nature; born to bear Laborious life, and harden'd into care.

The rest of animals, from teeming earth Produced, in various forms received their birth. The native moisture, in its close retreat, Digested by the sun's ethereal heat, As in a kindly womb, began to breed, Then swell'd, and quicken'd by the vital seed. And some in less, and some in longer space, Were ripen'd into form, and took a several face. Thus when the Nile from Pharian fields is fled, And seeks, with ebbing tides, his ancient bed, The fat manure with heavenly fire is warm'd, And crusted

creatures, as in wombs, are form’d; These, when they turn the glebe, the peasants find; Some rude, and yet unfinish’d in their kind; Short of their limbs, a lame imperfect birth; One half alive, and one of lifeless earth.

For heat and moisture, when in bodies join’d, The temper that results from either kind Conception makes, and fighting till they mix, Their mingled atoms in each other fix. Thus Nature’s hand the genial bed prepares, With friendly discord and with fruitful wars.

From hence the surface of the ground, with mud And slime besmear’d (the feces of the flood), Received the rays of heaven, and sucking in The seeds of heat, new creatures did begin: Some were of several sorts produced before; But of new monsters earth created more. Unwillingly, but yet she brought to light Thee, Python too, the wond’ring world to fright, And the new nations, with so dire a sight: So monstrous was his bulk, so large a space Did his vast body and long train embrace; Whom Phoebus, basking on a bank, espied: Ere now the god his arrows had not tried, But on the trembling deer, or mountain goat: At this new quarry he prepares to shoot. Though every shaft took place, he spent the store Of his full quiver; and ’twas long before The expiring serpent wallow’d in his gore. Then, to preserve the fame of such a deed, For Python slain, he Pythian games decreed; Where noble youths for mastership should strive To quoit, to run, and steeds and chariots drive. The prize was fame: in witness of renown An oaken garland did the victor crown. The laurel was not yet for triumphs born, But every green, alike by Phoebus worn, Did, with promiscuous grace, his flowing locks adorn.

Transformation of Daphne Into a Laurel

Daphne, a daughter of the river Peneus, is beloved by Apollo and endeavours to remove herself from his importunities by flight—Fearful of being overtaken, the maiden invokes thy assistance of her father, who, by the aid of the gods, changes her into a laurel.

The first and fairest of his loves was she Whom not blind Fortune, but the dire decree Of angry Cupid forced him to desire: Daphne her name, and Peneus was her sire. Swell'd with the pride that new success attends, He sees the stripling, while his bow he bends, And thus insults him: "Thou lascivious boy, Are arms like these for children to employ? Know, such achievements are my proper claim, Due to my vigour and unerring aim; Resistless are my shafts, and Python late, In such a feather'd death, has found his fate. Take up thy torch (and lay my weapons by), With that the feeble souls of lovers fry." To whom the son of Venus thus replied: "Phoebus, thy shafts are sure on all beside; But mine on Phoebus; mine the fame shall be Of all thy conquests, when I conquer thee."

He said, and soaring, swiftly wing'd his flight, Nor stopp'd, but on Parnassus' airy height. Two different shafts he from his quiver draws; One to repel desire, and one to cause. One shaft is pointed with refulgent gold, To bribe the love, and make the lover bold: One blunt, and tipp'd with lead, whose base allay Provokes disdain, and drives desire away. The blunted bolt against the nymph he dress'd, But with the sharp transfix'd Apollo's breast.

The enamour'd deity pursues the chase; The scornful damsel shuns his loath'd embrace: In hunting beasts of prey her youth employs, And Phoebe rivals in her rural joys: With naked neck she goes, and shoulders bare, And with a fillet binds her flowing hair. By many suitors sought, she mocks their pains, And still her vow'd virginity maintains. On wilds and woods she fixes her desire; Nor knows what youth and kindly love inspire. Her father chides her oft: "Thou owest," says he, "A husband to thyself, a son to me." She, like a crime, abhors the nuptial bed; She glows with blushes, and she hangs her head: Then, casting round his neck her tender arms, Soothes him with blandishments and filial charms. "Give me, my lord," she said, "to live and die A spotless maid, without the marriage tie; 'Tis but a small request; I beg no more Than what Diana's father gave before." The good old sire was soften'd to consent; But said her wish would prove her punishment; For so

much youth and so much beauty join'd, Opposed the state which her desires design'd.

The god of light, aspiring to her bed, Hopes what he seeks, with flattering fancies fed, And is, by his own oracles, misled. And as in empty fields the stubble burns, Or nightly travellers, when day returns, Their useless torches on dry hedges throw, That catch the flames, and kindle all the row; So burns the god, consuming in desire, And feeding in his breast a fruitless fire: Her well-turn'd neck he view'd (her neck was bare), And on her shoulders her dishevell'd hair: "O were it comb'd," said he, "with what a gace Would every waving curl become her face!" He view'd her eyes, like heavenly lamps that shone. He view'd her lips, too sweet to view alone. Swift as the wind the damsel fled away, Nor did for these alluring speeches stay. "Stay, nymph," he cried, "I follow, not a foe. Thus from the lion trips the trembling doe; Thus from the wolf the frighten'd lamb removes, And from pursuing falcons fearful doves: Thou shunn'st a god, and shunn'st a god that loves. Ah, lest some thorn should pierce thy tender foot, Or thou shouldst fall in flying my pursuit! To sharp uneven ways thy steps decline; Abate thy speed, and I will hate of mine. Yet think from whom thou dost so rashly fly; Nor basely born, nor shepherd's swain am I. Perhaps thou know'st not my superior state; And from that ignorance proceeds thy hate. Me Claros, Delphos, Tenedos, obey; These hands the Patareian sceptre sway: The king of gods begot me: what shall be, Or is, or ever was, in fate, I see: Mine is the invention of the charming lyre: Sweet notes, and heavenly numbers, I inspire: Sure is my bow, unerring is my dart; But ah! more deadly his who pierced my heart. Med'cine is mine; what herbs and simples grow In fields and forests, all their powers I know, And am the great physician call'd below. Alas! that fields and forests can afford No remedies to heal their lovesick lord: To cure the pains of love no plant avails; And his own physic the physician fails."

She heard not half, so furiously she flies; And on her ear the imperfect accent dies. Fear gave her wings; and, as she fled, the wind Increasing, spread her flowing hair

behind.

As when the impatient greyhound, slipp'd from far, Bounds o'er the glebe, to course the fearful hare, She in her speed does all her safety lay; And he with double speed pursues the prey; O'erruns her at the sitting turn, and licks His chaps in vain, and blows upon the flix: She scapes, and for the neighb'ring covert strives, And, gaining shelter, doubts if yet she lives. If little things with great we may compare, Such was the god, and such the flying fair; She, urged by fear, her feet did swiftly move, But he more swiftly, who was urged by love. He gathers ground upon her in the chase; Now breathes upon her hair, with nearer pace; And just is fastening on the wish'd embrace. The nymph grew pale, and, in a mortal fright, Spent with the labour of so long a flight, And now despairing, cast a mournful look Upon the streams of her paternal brook: "O help," she cried, "in this extremest need! If water-gods are deities indeed; Gape earth, and this unhappy wretch entomb; Or change my form, whence all my sorrows come." Scarce had she finish'd, when her feet she found Benumb'd with cold, and fasten'd to the ground; A filmy rind about her body grows; Her hair to leaves, her arms extend to boughs: The nymph is all into a laurel gone; The smoothness of her skin remains alone. Yet Phoebus loves her still, and casting round Her bole his arms, some little warmth he found. The tree still panted in the unfinish'd part, Not wholly vegetive, and heaved her heart. He fix'd his lips upon the trembling rind; It swerved aside, and his embrace declined: To whom the god, "Because thou canst not be My mistress, I espouse thee for my tree: Be thou the prize of honour and renown; The deathless poet, and the poem, crown: Thou shalt the Roman festivals adorn, And, after poets, be by victors worn: Thou shalt returning Caesar's triumph grace, When pomps shall in a long procession pass; Wreath'd on the post before his palace wait, And be the sacred guardian of the gate: Secure from thunder, and unharm'd by Jove; Unfading as the immortal powers above: And as the locks of Phoebus are unshorn, So shall perpetual green thy boughs adorn." The grateful tree was pleased with what he said, And shook the

shady honours of her head.

Transformation of Io Into a Heifer, and the Eyes of Argus Into a Peacock's Train

Io, the daughter of Inachus, becomes the favourite mistress of Jupiter, who transforms her into the shape of a beautiful heifer, in order that she may escape the jealousy of Juno—The goddess, suspecting the fraud, obtains from her husband the animal, whose beauty she commends; and commits her to the custody of the hundred-eyed Argus—Mercury, at the command of Jupiter, destroys Argus, whose eyes are placed by Juno on the tail of the peacock, a bird sacred to her divinity; while Io, exposed to the persecutions of the enraged goddess and wandering over the greatest part of the earth, at length arrives in Egypt, where she is restored to her former shape, and worshipped as a deity under the name of Iris.

An ancient forest in Thessalia grows, Which Tempe's pleasing valley does enclose: Through this the rapid Peneus takes his course, From Pindus rolling with impetuous force: Mists from the river's mighty fall arise, And deadly damps enclose the cloudy skies; Perpetual fogs are hanging o'er the wood; And sounds of waters deaf the neighbourhood. Deep in a rocky cave he makes abode (A mansion proper for a mourning god). Here he gives audience; issuing out decrees To rivers, his dependant deities. On this occasion hither they resort, To pay their homage, and to make their court; All doubtful whether to congratulate His daughter's honour, or lament her fate. Sperchaeus, crown'd with poplar, first appears; Then old Apidanus came crown'd with years: Enipeus turbulent; Amphrysos tame; And Aeas last, with lagging waters came; Then of his kindred brooks a numerous throng Condole his loss, and bring their urns along: Not one was wanting of the watery train That fill'd his flood, or mingled with the main, But, Inachus, who, in his cave alone, Wept not another's losses, but his own; For his dear Io, whether stray'd or dead To him uncertain, doubtful tears he shed. He sought her through the world, but sought in

vain, And nowhere finding, rather fear'd her slain.

Her, just returning from her father's brook, Jove had beheld, with a desiring look: "And, O fair daughter of the flood," he said, "Worthy alone of Jove's imperial bed; Happy whoever shall those charms possess; The king of gods (nor is thy lover less) Invites thee to yon cooler shades, to shun The scorching rays of the meridian sun: Nor shalt thou tempt the dangers of the grove Alone, without a guide; thy guide is Jove: No puny power, but he whose high command Is unconfined, who rules the seas and land, And tempers thunder in his awful hand. O fly not:" for she fled from his embrace, O'er Lerna's pastures: he pursued the chase Along the shades of the Lyrcaean plain. At length the god, who never asks in vain, Involved with vapours, imitating night, Both air and earth; and then suppress'd her flight. Meantime the jealous Juno, from on high, Survey'd the fruitful fields of Arcady, And wonder'd that the mist should overrun The face of daylight, and obscure the sun. No natural cause she found, from brooks, or bogs, Or marshy lowlands, to produce the fogs: Then round the skies she sought for Jupiter, Her faithless husband; but no Jove was there. Suspecting now the worst: "Or I," she said, "Am much mistaken, or am much betray'd." With fury she precipitates her flight; Dispels the shadows of dissembled night, And to the day restores his native light. The almighty culprit, careful to prevent The consequence, foreseeing her descent, Transforms his mistress in a trice; and now In Io's place appears a lovely cow. So sleek her skin, so faultless was her make, Ev'n Juno did unwilling pleasure take To see so fair a rival of her love; And what she was, and whence, inquired of Jove; Of what fair herd, and from what pedigree? The god, half caught, was forced upon a lie, And said she sprung from earth. She took the word, And begg'd the beauteous heifer of her lord. What should he do? 'twas equal shame to Jove Or to relinquish or betray his love; Yet to refuse so slight a gift would be But more to increase his consort's jealousy: Thus fear and love, by turns, his heart assail'd; And stronger love had sure, at length, prevail'd: But some faint hope remain'd, his jealous queen Had not the mistress through the

heifer seen. The cautious goddess, of her gift possess'd, Yet harbour'd anxious thoughts within her breast; As she who knew the falsehood of her Jove, And justly fear'd some new relapse of love; Which to prevent, and to secure her care, To trusty Argus she commits the fair.

The head of Argus (as with stars the skies) Was compass'd round, and wore a hundred eyes: But two by turns their lids in slumber steep; The rest on duty still their station keep; Nor could the total constellation sleep. Thus, ever present to his eyes and mind, His charge was still before him, though behind. In fields he suffer'd her to feed by day; But when the setting sun to night gave way, The captive cow he summon'd with a call, And drove her back, and tied her to the stall. On leaves of trees and bitter herbs she fed: Heaven was her canopy; bare earth her bed: So hardly lodged:—and to digest her food, She drank from troubled streams, defiled with mud. Her woeful story fain she would have told, With hands upheld; but had no hands to hold. Her head to her ungentle keeper bow'd, She strove to speak; she spoke not, but she low'd; Affrighted with the noise, she look'd around, And seem'd to inquire the author of the sound.

Once on the banks where often she had play'd (Her father's banks) she came, and there survey'd Her alter'd visage, and her branching head; And, starting, from herself she would have fled. Her fellow nymphs, familiar to her eyes, Beheld, but knew her not in this disguise; Ev'n Inachus himself was ignorant, And in his daughter did his daughter want. She follow'd where her fellows went, as she Were still a partner of the company: They stroke her neck; the gentle heifer stands, And her neck offers to their stroking hands. Her father gave her grass; the grass she took, And lick'd his palms, and cast a piteous look, And in the language of her eyes she spoke. She would have told her name, and ask'd relief, But wanting words, in tears she tells her grief; Which, with her foot she makes him understand, And prints the name of Io in the sand.

“Ah wretched me!” her mournful father cried; “She with a sigh to wretched me replied.” About her milk-white neck his arms he threw, And wept; and then these tender words ensue; “And art thou she whom I have sought around The world, and have at length so sadly found? So found, is worse than lost: with mutual words Thou answerest not; no voice thy tongue affords; But sighs are deeply drawn from out thy breast; And speech denied by lowing is express’d. Unknowing, I prepared thy bridal bed, With empty hopes of happy issue fed: But now the husband of a herd must be Thy mate, and bellowing sons thy progeny. O, were I mortal, death might bring relief; But now my godhead but extends my grief; Prolongs my woes, of which no end I see, And makes me curse my immortality!” More had he said, but fearful of her stay, The starry guardian drove his charge away To some fresh pasture; on a hilly height He sat himself, and kept her still in sight.

Now Jove no longer could her sufferings bear, But call’d in haste his airy messenger, The son of Maia, with severe decree, To kill the keeper, and to set her free. With all his harness soon the god was sped, His flying hat was fasten’d on his head; Wings on his heels were hung, and in his hand He holds the virtue of the snaky wand. The liquid air his moving pinions wound, And, in the moment, shoot him on the ground. Before he came in sight, the crafty god His wings dismiss’d, but still retain’d his rod. That sleep-procuring wand wise Hermes took, But made it seem to sight a shepherd’s hook: With this he did a herd of goats control, Which by the way he met, and slyly stole: Clad like a country swain, he piped and sung, And, playing, drove his jolly troop along.

With pleasure Argus the musician heeds, But wonders much at those new vocal reeds. “And whosoe’er thou art, my friend,” said he, “Up hither drive thy goats, and play by me; This hill has browse for them and shade for thee.” The god, who was with ease induced to climb, Began discourse to pass away the time; And still, betwixt, his tuneful pipe he plies, And watch’d his hour, to close the keeper’s eyes. With much ado, he partly kept awake, Not suffering all his eyes repose to take; And

ask’d the stranger who did reeds invent; And whence began so rare an instrument?

Transformation of Syrinx Into Reeds

Syrinx, a nymph of Arcadia, escapes from the solicitations of the god Pan, and is changed into a reed, called Syrinx, with which the god makes himself a pipe.

Then Hermes thus: “A nymph of late there was, Whose heavenly form her fellows did surpass; The pride and joy of fair Arcadia’s plains; Beloved by deities, adored by swains; Syrinx her name; by sylvans oft pursued, As oft she did the lustful gods delude; The rural and the woodland powers disdain’d; With Cynthia hunted, and her rites maintain’d; Like Phoebe clad, even Phoebe’s self she seems, So tall, so straight, such well-proportion’d limbs: The nicest eye did no distinction know, But that the goddess bore a golden bow: Distinguish’d thus, the sight she cheated too. Descending from Lycaeus, Pan admires The matchless nymph, and burns with new desires. A crown of pine upon his head he wore; And thus began her pity to implore:— But ere he thus began, she took her flight, So swift, she was already out of sight; Nor stay’d to hear the courtship of the god; But bent her course to Ladon’s gentle flood; There by the river stopp’d, and, tired before, Relief from water-nymphs her prayers implore.

“Now while the amorous god, with speedy pace, Just thought to strain her in a strict embrace, He fills his arms with reeds, new rising on the place: And while he sighs, his ill success to find, The tender canes were shaken by the wind, And breathed a mournful air, unheard before, That, much surprising Pan, yet pleased him more. Admiring this new music—‘Thou,’ he said, ‘Who canst not be the partner of my bed, At least shall be the consort of my mind, And often, often to my lips be join’d.’ He form’d the reeds, proportion’d as they are, Unequal in their length, and wax’d with care: They still retain the name of his ungrateful fair.”

While Hermes piped, and sung, and told his tale, The keeper’s winking eyes began to fail, And drowsy slumber on the lids to creep, Till all the watchman was at length

asleep. Then soon the god his voice and song suppress'd, And with his powerful rod confirm'd his rest; Without delay his crooked falchion drew, And at one fatal stroke the keeper slew. Down from the rock fell the dissever'd head, Opening its eyes in death, and falling, bled, And mark'd the passage with a crimson trail: Thus Argus lies in pieces, cold and pale, And all his hundred eyes, with all their light, Are closed at once in one perpetual night. These Juno takes, that they no more way fail, And spreads them in her peacock's gaudy tail.

Impatient to revenge her injured bed, She wreaks her anger on her rival's head; With furies frights her from her native home, And drives her, gadding, round the world to roam; Nor ceased her madness, and her flight, before She touch'd the limits of the Pharian shore. At length, arriving on the banks of Nile, Wearied with length of ways, and worn with toil, She laid her down, and, leaning on her knees, Invoked the cause of all her miseries, And cast her languishing regards above, For help from Heaven and her ungrateful Jove. She sigh'd, she wept, she low'd; 'twas all she could; And with unkindness seem'd to tax the god: Last, with an humble prayer, she begg'd repose, Or death, at least, to finish all her woes. Jove heard her vows, and, with a flattering look, In her behalf to jealous Juno spoke. He cast his arms about her neck, and said, "Dame, rest secure; no more thy nuptial bed This nymph shall violate; by Styx I swear, And every oath that binds the Thunderer." The goddess was appeased; and at the word Was Io to her former shape restored: The rugged hair began to fall away; The sweetness of her eyes did only stay; Though not so large: her crooked horns decrease; The wideness of her jaws and nostrils cease; Her hoofs to hands return, in little space; The five long taper fingers take their place; And nothing of the heifer now is seen, Beside the native whiteness of the skin. Erected on her feet she walks again; And two the duty of the four sustain. She tries her tongue; her silence softly breaks, And fears her former lowings when she speaks: A goddess now, through all the Egyptian state, And served by priests, who in white linen wait.

Her son was Epaphus, at length believed The son of Jove, and as a god received;

With sacrifice adored, and public prayers, He common temples with his mother shares. Equal in years, and rival in renown, With Epaphus, the youthful Phaeton Like honour claims, and boasts his sire the sun. His haughty looks, and his assuming air, The son of Isis could no longer bear. “Thou takest thy mother’s word too far,” said he, “And hast usurp’d thy boasted pedigree: Go, base pretender to a borrow’d name.” Thus tax’d, he blush’d with anger and with shame: But shame repressed his rage: the daunted youth Soon seeks his mother, and inquires the truth. “Mother,” said he, “this infamy was thrown By Epaphus on you, and me your son. He spoke in public, told it to my face, Nor durst I vindicate the dire disgrace: Even I, the bold, the sensible of wrong, Restrain’d by shame, was forced to hold my tongue. To hear an open slander is a curse; But not to find an answer is a worse. If I am heaven-begot, assert your son, By some sure sign, and make my father known, To right my honour, and redeem your own.” He said, and saying, cast his arms about Her neck, and begg’d her to resolve the doubt.

’Tis hard to judge if Clymene were moved More by his prayer, whom she so dearly loved, Or more with fury fired, to find her name Traduced, and made the sport of common fame. She stretch’d her arms to heaven, and fix’d her eyes On that fair planet that adorns the skies. “Now by those beams,” said she, “whose holy fires Consume my breast, and kindle my desires; By him who sees us both, and cheers our sight, By him, the public minister of light, I swear that sun begot thee; if I lie, Let him his cheerful influence deny; Let him no more this perjured creature see, And shine on all the world but only me. If still you doubt your mother’s innocence, His eastern mansion is not far from hence; With little pains you to his levee go, And from himself your parentage may know.” With joy the ambitious youth his mother heard, And, eager for his journey, soon prepared. He longs the world beneath him to survey, To guide the chariot, and to give the day. From Meroe’s burning sands he bends his course, Nor less in India feels his father’s force; His travel urging, till he came in sight, And saw the palace by the purple light.

Book II

Story of Phaeton

Phaeton, the son of Apollo and Clymene, obtains from his fond father an oath that he will grant him whatever he requires, which is no sooner uttered than the rash youth demands the guidance of his chariot for one day—Phoebus represents the impropriety of such a request, and the dangers to which it will expose him, but in vain; and, as the oath is in violable, the youth is instructed how to proceed through the regions of the air—The advice, however, is disregarded; and the flying horses, becoming sensible of the incapacity of their driver, depart from their usual track; and the heavens and earth are threatened with a universal conflagration, when Jupiter strikes the charioteer with a thunderbolt, and hurls him headlong from heaven into the river Po.

The sun’s bright palace, on high columns raised, With burnish’d gold and flaming jewels blazed; The folding gates diffused a silver light, And with a milder gleam refresh’d the sight; Of polish’d ivory was the covering wrought; The matter vied not with the sculptor’s thought; For in the portal was display’d on high (The work of Vulcan) a fictitious sky; À waving sea the inferior earth embraced, And gods and goddesses the waters graced. Aegeon here a mighty whale bestrode; Triton, and Proteus (the deceiving god), With Doris here were carved, and all her train: Some loosely swimming in the figured main, While some on rocks their dropping hair divide, And some on fishes through the waters glide: Though various features did the sisters grace, A sister’s likeness was in every face. On earth a different landscape courts the eyes: Men, towns, and beasts, in distant prospects rise, And nymphs, and streams, and woods, and rural deities. O’er all, the heaven’s refulgent image shines: On either gate were six engraven signs.

Here Phaeton, still gaining on the ascent, To his suspected father’s palace went, Till,

pressing forward through the bright abode, He saw at distance the illustrious god: He saw at distance, or the dazzling light Had flash'd too strongly on his aching sight.

The god sits high, exalted on a throne Of blazing gems, with purple garments on: The Hours in order ranged on either hand, And Days, and Months, and Years, and Ages, stand. Here Spring appears, with flowery chaplets bound; Here Summer, in her wheaten garland crown'd; Here Autumn the rich trodden grapes besmear, And hoary Winter shivers in the rear.

Phoebus beheld the youth from off his throne; That eye which looks on all was fixed on one: He saw the boy's confusion in his face, Surprised at all the wonders of the place, And cries aloud, "What wants my son? for know My son thou art, and I must call thee so."

"Light of the world," the trembling youth replies, "Illustrious parent! since you don't despise The parent's name, some certain token give, That I may Clymene's proud boast believe, Nor longer under false reproaches grieve."

The tender sire was touch'd with what he said, And flung the blaze of glories from his head, And bade the youth advance. "My son," said he, "Come to thy father's arms! for Clymene Has told thee true: a parent's name I own, And deem thee worthy to be call'd my son. As a sure proof, make some request, and I, Whate'er it be, with that request comply: By Styx I swear, whose waves are hid in night, And roll impervious to my piercing sight."

The youth, transported, asks, without delay, To guide the sun's bright chariot for a day.

The god repented of the oath he took; For anguish thrice lis radiant head he shook. "My son," said he, "some other proof require; Rash was my promise, rash is thy desire. I'd fain deny this wish which thou hast made, Or, what I can't deny, would fain dissuade. Too vast and hazardous the task appears, Nor suited to thy strength, nor to thy years. Thy lot is mortal, but thy wishes fly Beyond the province of

mortality. There is not one of all the gods that dares (However skill’d in other great affairs) To mount the burning axletree but I; Not Jove himself, the ruler of the sky, That hurls the three-fork’d thunder from above, Dares try his strength: yet who so strong as Jove? The steeds climb up the first ascent with pain, And when the middle firmament they gain, If downwards from the heavens my head I bow, And see the earth and ocean hang below, Ev’n I am seized with horror and affright, And my own heart misgives me at the sight. A mighty downfall steeps the evening stage; And steady reins must curb the horses’ rage: Tethys herself has fear’d to see me driven Down headlong from the precipice of heaven. Besides, consider what impetuous force Turns stars and planets in a different course: I steer against their motions; nor am I Borne back by all the current of the sky. But how could you resist the orbs that roll In adverse whirls, and stem the rapid pole? But you, perhaps, may hope for pleasing woods, And stately domes, and cities fill’d with gods; While through a thousand snares your progress lies, Where forms of starry monsters stock the skies: For, should you hit the doubtful way aright, The bull, with stooping horns, stands opposite; Next him, the bright Haemonian bow is strung; And next, the lion’s grinning visage hung: The scorpion’s claws here clasp a wide extent; And here the crab’s in lesser clasps are bent. Nor would you find it easy to compose The mettled steeds, when from their nostrils flows The scorching fire that in their entrails glows. Ev’n I their headstrong fury scarce restrain, When they grow warm and restiff to the rein. Let not my son a fatal gift require; But, O! in time, recall your rash desire: You ask a gift that may your parent tell; Let these my fears your parentage reveal, And learn a father from a father’s care: Look on my face; or if my heart lay bare, Could you but look, you’d read the father there. Choose out a gift, from seas, or earth, or skies; For open to your wish all nature lies; Only decline this one unequal task, For ’tis a mischief, not a gift, you ask. You ask a real mischief, Phaeton: Nay, hang not thus about my neck, my son. I grant your wish, and Styx has heard my voice; Choose what you will, but make a wiser choice.”

Thus did the god the unwary youth advise; But he still longs to travel through the skies; When the fond father (for in vain he pleads) At length to the Vulcanian chariot leads. A golden axle did the work uphold, Gold was the beam, the wheels were orb'd with gold; The spokes in rows of silver pleased the sight; The seat with parti-colour'd gems was bright: Apollo shined amid the glare of light. The youth with secret joy the work surveys, When now the moon disclosed her purple rays: The stars were fled, for Lucifer had chased The stars away, and fled himself at last. Soon as the father saw the rosy morn, And the moon shining with a blunter horn, He bid the nimble Hours, without delay, Bring forth the steeds: the nimble Hours obey. From their full racks the generous steeds retire, Dropping ambrosial foams, and snorting fire. Still anxious for his son, the god of day, To make him proof against the burning ray, His temples with celestial ointment wet, Of sovereign virtue, to repel the heat; Then fix'd the beamy circle on his head, And fetch'd a deep foreboding sigh, and said: "Take this at least, this last advice, my son: Keep a stiff rein, and move but gently on: The coursers of themselves will run too fast; Your art must be to moderate their haste. Drive them not on directly through the skies, But where the zodiac's winding circle lies, Along the midmost zone; but sally forth, Nor to the distant south, nor stormy north. The horses' hoofs a beaten track will show; But neither mount too high, nor sink too low. That no new fires or heaven or earth infest, Keep the mid way: the middle way is best: Nor where, in radiant folds, the serpent twines, Direct your course; nor where the altar shines: Shun both extremes; the rest let Fortune guide, And better for thee than thyself provide! See, while I speak, the shades disperse away, Aurora gives the promise of a day; I'm call'd, nor can I make a longer stay. Snatch up the reins, or still the attempt forsake, And not my chariot, but my counsel, take, While yet securely on the earth you stand, Nor touch the horses with too rash a hand. Let me alone to light the world, while you Enjoy those beams which you may safely view." He spoke in vain: the youth, with active heat And sprightly vigour, vaults into the seat, And joys to hold the reins, and fondly

gives Those thanks his father with remorse receives.

Meanwhile the restless horses neigh'd aloud, Breathing out fire, and pawing where they stood. Tethys, not knowing what had pass'd, gave way, And all the waste of heaven before them lay. They spring together out, and swiftly bear The flying youth through clouds and yielding air; With wingy speed outstrip the eastern wind, And leave the breezes of the morn behind. The youth was light, nor could he fill the seat, Or poise the chariot with its wonted weight: But as at sea the unballasted vessel rides, Cast to and fro, the sport of winds and tides, So in the bounding chariot, toss'd on high, The youth is hurried headlong through the sky. Soon as the steeds perceive it, they forsake Their stated course, and leave the beaten track. The youth was in a maze, nor did he know Which way to turn the reins, or where to go: Nor would the horses, had he known, obey. Then the seven stars first felt Apollo's ray, And wish'd to dip in the forbidden sea. The folded serpent, next the frozen pole, Stiff and benumb'd before, began to roll, And raged with inward heat, and threaten'd war, And shot a redder light from every star; Nay, and 'tis said, Bootes, too, that fain Thou wouldst have fled, though cumber'd with thy wain.

The unhappy youth then, bending down his head, Saw earth and ocean far beneath him spread. His colour changed, he startled at the sight, And his eyes darken'd by too great a light. Now could he wish the fiery steeds untried, His birth obscure, and his request denied: Now would he Merops for his father own, And quit his boasted kindred to the Sun.

So fares the pilot, when his ship is toss'd In troubled seas, and all its steerage lost; He gives her to the winds, and, in despair, Seeks his last refuge in the gods and prayer.

What could he do? his eyes, if backward cast, Find a long path he had already pass'd; If forward, still a longer path they find: Both he compares, and measures in his mind; And sometimes casts an eye upon the east, And sometimes looks on the

forbidden west. The horses' names he knew not in the fright; Nor would he loose the reins, nor could he hold them right.

Now all the horrors of the heavens he spies, And monstrous shadows of prodigious size, That, deck'd with stars, lie scatter'd o'er the skies. There is a place above, where Scorpio bent In tail and arms surrounds a vast extent; In a wide circuit of the heavens he shines, And fills the space of two celestial signs. Soon as the youth beheld him, vex'd with heat, Brandish his sting, and in his poison sweat, Half dead with sudden fear, he dropp'd the reins; The horses felt them loose upon their manes, And, flying out through all the plains above, Ran, uncontroll'd, where'er their fury drove; Rush'd on the stars, and, through a pathless way Of unknown regions, hurried on the day. And now above and now below they flew, And near the earth the burning chariot drew.

The clouds disperse in fumes, the wond'ring moon Beholds her brother's steeds beneath her own: The high lands smoke, cleft by the piercing rays, Or, clad with woods, in their own fuel blaze. Next o'er the plains, where ripen'd harvests grow, The running conflagration spreads below. But these are trivial ills: whole cities burn, And peopled kingdoms into ashes turn.

The mountains kindle as the car draws near; Athos and Tmolus red with fires appear; Oeagrian Haemus (then a single name) And virgin Helicon increase the flame: Taurus and Oete glare amid the sky; And Ida, spite of all her fountains, dry: Eryx, and Othrys, and Cithaeron, glow; And Rhodope, no longer clothed in snow: High Pindus, Mimas, and Parnassus, sweat; And Aetna rages with redoubled heat: Ev'n Scythia, through her hoary regions warm'd, In vain with all her native frost was arm'd: Cover'd with flames, the towering Apennine, And Caucasus, and proud Olympus, shine; And where the long-extended Alps aspire Now stands a huge continued range of fire.

The astonish'd youth, where'er his eyes could turn, Beheld the universe around him

burn: The world was in a blaze; nor could he bear The sultry vapours and the scorching air, Which from below, as from a furnace, flow'd: And now the axletree beneath him glow'd. Lost in the whirling clouds that round him broke, And white with ashes, hovering in the smoke, He flew where'er the horses drove, nor knew Whither the horses drove, or where he flew.

'Twas then, they say, the swarthy Moor begun To change his hue, and blacken in the sun; Then Libya first, of all her moisture drain'd, Became a barren waste, a wild of sand; The water-nymphs lament their empty urns; Boeotia, robb'd of silver Dirce, mourns; Corinth Pyrene's wasted spring bewails; And Argos grieves while Amymone fails.

The foods are drain'd from every distant coast; Ev'n Tanais, though fix'd in ice, was lost: Enraged Caicus and Lycormas roar, And Xanthus, fated to be burnt once more: The famed Maeander, that unwearied strays Through many windings, smokes in every maze: From his loved Babylon Euphrates flies: The big-swoln Ganges and the Danube rise In thick'ning fumes, and darken half the skies: In flames Ismenos and the Phasis roll'd, And Tagus, floating in his melted gold: The swans, that on Cayster often tried Their tuneful songs, now sung their last, and died: The frighted Nile ran off, and under ground Conceal'd his head, nor can it yet be found; His seven divided currents all are dry, And, where they roll'd, seven gaping trenches lie: No more the Rhine or Rhone their course maintain, Nor Tiber, of his promised empire vain.

The ground, deep cleft, admits the dazzling ray, And startles Pluto with the flash of day: The seas shrink in, and to the sight disclose Wide naked plains, where once their billows rose; Their rocks are all discover'd, and increase The number of the scatter'd Cyclades; The fish in shoals about the bottom creep; Nor longer dares the crooked dolphin leap: Gasping for breath, the unshapen Phocae die, And on the boiling wave extended lie: Nereus, and Doris, with her virgin train, Seek out the last recesses of the main: Beneath unfathomable depths they faint, And secret in their

gloomy caverns pant: Stern Neptune thrice above the waves upheld His face, and thrice was by the flames repell'd.

The Earth at length, on every side embraced With scalding seas, that floated round her waist, When now she felt the springs and rivers come, And crowd within the hollow of her womb, Uplifted to the heavens her blasted head, And clapp'd her hand upon her brows, and said, (But first, impatient of the sultry heat, Sunk deeper down, and sought a cooler seat): "If you, great king of gods, my death approve, And I deserve it, let me die by Jove: If I must perish by the force of fire, Let me transfix'd with thunderbolts expire. See, while I speak, my breath the vapours choke (For now her face lay wrapp'd in clouds of smoke), See my singed hair, behold my faded eye, And wither'd face, where heaps of cinders lie! And does the plough for this my body tear? This the reward for all the fruits I bear, Tortured with rakes, and harass'd all the year? That herbs for cattle daily I renew, And food for man, and frankincense for you? But, grant me guilty, what has Neptune done? Why are his waters boiling in the sun? The wavy empire, which by lot was given, Why does it waste, and farther shrink from heaven? If I nor he your pity can provoke, See your own heavens, the heavens begin to smoke! Should once the sparkles catch those bright abodes, Destruction seizes on the heavens and gods; Atlas becomes unequal to his freight, And almost faints beneath the glowing weight. If heaven, and earth, and sea, together burn, All must again into their chaos turn. Apply some speedy cure, prevent our fate, And succour Nature ere it be too late." She ceased, for choked with vapours round her spread, Down to the deepest shades she sunk her head.

Jove call'd to witness ev'ry power above, And even the god whose son the chariot drove, That what he acts he is compell'd to do, Or universal ruin must ensue. Straight he ascends the high ethereal throne, From whence he used to dart his thunder down, From whence his showers and storms he used to pour, But now could meet with neither storm nor shower: Then, aiming at the youth, with lifted hand, Full at his head he hurl'd the forky brand In dreadful thunderings. Thus the almighty

sire Suppress’d the raging of the fires with fire.

At once from life and from the chariot driven, The ambitious boy fell thunderstruck from heaven; The horses started with a sudden bound, And flung the reins and chariot to the ground: The studded harness from their necks they broke, Here fell a wheel, and here a silver spoke, Here were the beam and axle torn away, And scatter’d o’er the earth the shining fragments lay. The breathless Phaeton, with flaming hair, Shot from the chariot like a falling star, That in a summer’s evening from the top Of heaven drops down, or seems, at least, to drop, Till on the Po his blasted corpse was hurl’d, Far from his country, in the western world.

Phaeton’s Sisters Transformed Into Trees

The nymphs of Latium erect a monument to the memory of Phaeton, whose sisters are changed into poplars while bewailing their brother’s untimely fate.

The Latian nymphs came round him, and amazed, On the dead youth, transfix’d with thunder, gazed, And, while yet smoking from the bolt he lay, His shatter’d body to a tomb convey; And o’er the tomb an epitaph devise: “Here he who drove the sun’s bright chariot lies; His father’s fiery steeds he could not guide, But in the glorious enterprise he died.”

Apollo hid his face, and pined for grief, And, if the story may deserve belief, The space of one whole day is said to run, From morn to wonted ev’n, without a sun; The burning ruins, with a fainter ray, Supply the sun, and counterfeit a day, A day that still did Nature’s face disclose, This comfort from the mighty mischief rose.

But Clymene, enraged with grief, laments, And as her grief inspires her passion vents; Wild for her son, and frantic in her woes, With hair dishevell’d, round the world she goes To seek where’er his body might be cast, Till, on the borders of the Po, at last The name inscribed on the new tomb appears The dear, dear name she bathes in flowing tears, Hangs o’er the tomb, unable to depart, And hugs the marble

to her throbbing heart.

Her daughters too lament, and sigh, and mourn (A fruitless tribute to their brother's urn), And beat their naked bosoms, and complain, And call aloud for Phaeton in vain; All the long night their mournful watch they keep, And all the day stand round the tomb and weep.

Four times, revolving, the full moon return'd, So long the mother and the daughters mourn'd, When now the eldest, Phaethusa, strove To rest her weary limbs, but could not move; Lampetia would have help'd her, but she found Herself withheld and rooted to the ground; A third, in wild affliction as she grieves, Would rend her hair, but fills her hands with leaves: One sees her thighs transform'd, another views Her arms slot out and branching into boughs, And now their legs, and breasts, and bodies, stood Crusted with bark, and harden'd into wood; But still above were female heads display'd, And mouths, that call'd the mother to their aid. What could, alas! the weeping mother do? From this to that with eager haste she flew, And kiss'd her sprouting daughters as they grew; She tears the bark that to each body cleaves; And from their verdant fingers strips the leaves; The blood came trickling where she tore away The leaves and bark. The maids were heard to say "Forbear, mistaken parent, O forbear! A wounded daughter in each tree you tear; Farewell for ever." Here the bark increased, Closed on their faces, and their words suppress'd.

The new-made trees in tears of amber run, Which, harden'd into value by the sun, Distil for ever on the stream below; The limpid streams their radiant treasure show Mix'd in the sand, whence the rich drops convey'd Shine in the dress of the bright Latian maid.

Transformation of Cycnus Into a Swan

Cycnus, the son of Sthenelus, is deeply affected at the death of his friend and relation, Phaeton; and, in the midst of his lamentations, is metamorphosed into a swan.

Cycnus beheld the nymphs transform'd, allied To their dead brother on the mortal side, In friendship and affection nearer bound, He left the cities and the realms he own'd, Through pathless fields and lonely shores to range, And woods made thicker by the sisters' change. While here within the dismal gloom alone, The melancholy monarch made his moan, His voice was lessen'd as he tried to speak, And issued through a long extended neck; His hair transforms to down, his fingers meet In skinny films and shape his oary feet; From both his sides the wings and feathers break, And from his mouth proceeds a blunted beak: All Cycnus now into a swan was turn'd, Who, still remembering how his kinsman burn'd, To solitary pools and lakes retires, And loves the waters as opposed to fires. Meanwhile Apollo, in the gloomy shade (The native lustre of his brows decay'd), Indulging sorrow, sickens at the sight Of his own sunshine, and abhors the light. The hidden griefs that in his bosom rise, Sadden his looks and overcast his eyes, As when some dusky orb obstructs his ray, And sullies, in a dim eclipse, the day.

Now secretly with inward griefs he pined, Now warm resentments to his grief he join'd, And now renounced his office to mankind. "E'er since the birth of time," said he, "I've borne A long ungrateful toil without return; Let now some other manage, if he dare, The fiery steeds, and mount the burning car; Or, if none else, let Jove his fortune try, And learn to lay his murd'ring thunder by; Then will he own, perhaps, but own too late, My son deserved not so severe a fate."

The gods stand round him, as he mourns, and pray He would resume the conduct of the day, Nor let the world be lost in endless night; Jove too himself, descending from his height, Excuses what had happen'd, and entreats, Majestically mixing prayers and threats. Prevail'd upon at length, again he took The harness'd steeds, that still with horror shook, And plies them with the lash, and whips them on, And, as he whips, upbraids them with his son.

Story of Calisto

Calisto, a nymph in the train of Diana, is seduced by Jupiter, under the form of that goddess, and is delivered of a son, named Arcas Juno transforms Calisto into the shape of a bear; but Jupiter removes both mother and child to the celestial mansions, where they are converted into a constellation called the Bear.

The day was settled in its course, and Jove Walk'd the wide circuit of the heavens above. To search if any cracks or flaws were made; But all was safe: the earth he then survey'd, And cast an eye on ev'ry different coast, And ev'ry land, but on Arcadia most. Her fields he clothed, and cheer'd her blasted face With running fountains and with springing grass. No tracks of heaven's destructive fire remain, The fields and woods revive, and nature smiles again.

But as the god walk'd to and fro the earth, And raised the plants, and gave the spring its birth, By chance a fair Arcadian nymph he view'd, And felt the lovely charmer in his blood. The nymph nor spun nor dress'd with artful pride. Her vest was gather'd up, her hair was tied: Now in her hand a slender spear she bore, Now a light quiver on her shoulders wore; To chaste Diana from her youth inclined, The sprightly warriors of the wood she join'd. Diana too the gentle huntress loved, Nor was there one of all the nymphs that roved O'er Maenalus, amid the maiden throng, More favour'd once; but favour lasts not long.

The sun now shone in all its strength, and drove The heated virgin panting to the grove: The grove around a grateful shadow cast: She dropp'd her arrows, and her bow unbraced; She flung herself on the cool grassy bed, And on the painted quiver raised her head. Jove saw the charming huntress unprepared, Stretch'd on the verdant turf, without a guard. "Here I am safe," he cries, "from Juno's eye: Or should my jealous queen the theft descry, Yet I would venture on a theft like this, And stand her rage, for such, for such a bliss!" Diana's shape and habit straight he took, Soften'd his brows, and smooth'd his awful look, And mildly in a female accent spoke: "How fares my girl? how went the morning chase?" To whom the

virgin, starting from the grass, “All hail! bright deity, whom I prefer To Jove himself, though Jove himself were here.” The god was nearer than she thought, and heard, Well pleased, himself before himself preferr’d.

He then salutes her with a warm embrace; And, ere she half had told the morning chase, With love inflamed, and eager on his bliss: Smother’d her words, and stopp’d her with a kiss: His kisses with unwonted ardour glow’d, Nor could Diana’s shape conceal the god.

Possess’d at length of what his heart desired, Back to his heavens the exulting god retired.

But now Diana, with a sprightly train Of quiver’d virgins, bounding o’er the plain, Call’d to the nymph; the nymph began to fear A second fraud, a Jove disguised in her; But when she saw the sister nymphs, suppress’d Her rising fears, and mingled with the rest.

How in the look does conscious guilt appear! Slowly she moved, and loiter’d in the rear; Nor lightly tripp’d, nor by the goddess ran, As once she used, the foremost of the train; Her looks were fush’d, and sullen was her mien, That sure the virgin goddess (had she been Aught but a virgin) must the guilt have seen. ’Tis said the nymphs saw all, and guess’d aright. And now the moon had nine times lost her light, When Dian, fainting in the midday beams, Found a cool covert and refreshing streams, That in soft murmurs through the forest flow’d, And a smooth bed of shining gravel show’d.

A covert so obscure and streams so clear The goddess praised: “And now no spies are near; Let’s strip, my gentle maids, and wash,” she cries. Pleased with the motion, every maid complies; Only the blushing huntress stood confused, And form’d delays, and her delays excused: In vain excused; her fellows round her press’d, And the reluctant nymph by force undress’d. The naked huntress all her shame reveal’d, In vain her hands her pregnancy conceal’d; “Begone!” the goddess cries, with stern

disdain, “Begone! nor dare the hallow’d stream to stain.” She fled, for ever banish’d from the train.

This Juno heard, who long had watch’d her time To punish the detested rival’s crime; The time was come; for, to enrage her more, A lovely boy the teeming rival bore.

The goddess cast a furious look, and cried, “It is enough! I’m fully satisfied! This boy shall stand a living mark, to prove My husband’s baseness and the harlot’s love: But vengeance shall awake: those guilty charms, That drew the Thunderer from Juno’s arms, No longer shall their wonted force retain, Nor please the god, nor make the mortal vain.”

This said, her hand within her hair she wound, Swung her to earth, and dragg’d her on the ground. The prostrate wretch lifts up her arms in prayer; Her arms grow shaggy and deform’d with hair, Her nails are sharpen’d into pointed claws, Her hands bear balf her weight and turn to paws, Her lips, that once could tempt a god, begin To grow distorted in an ugly grin; And, lest the supplicating brute might reach The cars of Jove, she was deprived of speech; Her surly voice through a hoarse passage came In savage sounds, her mind was still the same. The furry monster fix’d her eyes above, And heaved her new unwieldy paws to Jove, And begg’d his aid with inward groans; and though She could not call him false she thought him so.

How did she fear to lodge in woods alone, And haunt the fields and meadows once her own! How often would the deep-mouth’d dogs pursue, While from her hounds the frighted huntress flew! How did she fear her fellow brutes, and shun The shaggy bear, though now herself was one! How from the sight of rugged wolves retire, Although the grim Lycaon was her sire!

But now her son had fifteen summers told, Fierce at the chase, and in the forest bold; When, as he beat the woods in quest of prey, He chanced to rouse his mother where she lay. She knew her son, and kept him in her sight, And fondly gazed. The boy

was in a fright, And aim'd a pointed arrow at her breast, And would have slain his mother in the beast; But Jove forbade, and snatch'd them through the air In whirlwinds up to heaven, and fix'd them there; Where the new constellations nightly rise, And add a lustre to the northern skies.

When Juno saw the rival in her height, Spangled with stars and circled round with light, She sought old Ocean in his deep abodes, And Tethys, both revered among the gods. They ask what brings her there. "Ne'er ask," says she, "What brings me here, heaven is no place for me. You'll see, when all things are obscured by night, Jove's starry mistress with resplendent light Usurp the heavens; you'll see her proudly roll In her new orb, and brighten all the pole. And who shall now on Juno's altars wait, When those she hates grow greater by her hate? I on the nymph a brutal form impress'd, Jove to a goddess has transform'd the beast. This, this was all my weak revenge could do; But let the god his chaste amours pursue, And, as he acted after Io's rape, Restore the adultress to her former shape; Then may he cast his Juno off, and lead The great Lycaon's offspring to his bed. But you, ye venerable powers, be kind, And, if my wrongs a due resentment find, Receive not in your waves their setting beams, Nor let the glaring harlot taint your streams."

The goddess ended, and her wish was given Back she return'd in triumph up to heaven; Her gaudy peacocks drew her through the skies; Their tails were spotted with a thousand eyes; The eyes of Argus on their tails were ranged, At the same time the raven's colour changed.

Story of Coronis, and Birth of Esculapius

Apollo is informed by the raven, whose plumage was originally white, of the infidelity of Coronis, his favourite mistress, whom he destroys, while he delivers her newborn son, Esculapius, to the custody of Chiron—A dark colour is bestowed on the raven as a punishment of his garrulity.

The raven once in snowy plumes was dress'd, White as the whitest dove's unsullied

breast, Fair as the guardian of the capitol, Soft as the swan, a large and lovely fowl; His tongue, his prating tongue, had changed him quite To sooty blackness from the purest white.

The story of his change shall here be told. In Thessaly there lived a nymph of old, Coronis named; a peerless maid she shined, Confess'd the fairest of the fairer kind. Apollo loved her till her guilt he knew, While true she was, or while he thought her true; "But his own bird, the raven, chanced to find The false one with a secret rival join'd. Coronis begg'd him to suppress the tale; But could not with repeated prayers prevail. His milk-white pinions to the god he plied; The busy daw flew with him side by side, And, by a thousand teasing questions, drew The important secret from him as they flew. The daw gave honest counsel, though despised, And, tedious in her tattle, thus advised:

"Stay, silly bird, the illnatured task refuse; Nor be the bearer of unwelcome news. Be warn'd by my example. You discern What now I am, and what I was shall learn. My foolish honesty was all my crime: Then hear my story. Once upon a time, The two-shaped Ericthonius had his birth (Without a mother) from the teeming earth: Minerva nursed him, and the infant laid Within a chest of twining osiers made. The daughters of King Cecrops undertook To guard the chest, commanded not to look On what was hid within. I stood to see The charge obey'd, perch'd on a neighbouring tree, The sisters, Pandrosos and Herse, keep The strict command; Aglauros needs would peep, And saw the monstrous infant, in a fright, And call'd her sisters to the hideous sight. A boy's soft shape did to the waist prevail; But the boy ended in a dragon's tail. I told the stern Minerva all that pass'd; But for my pains discarded and disgraced. The frowning goddess drove me from her sight, And for her fav'rite chose the bird of night. Be then no telltale; for I think my wrong Enough to teach a bird to hold her tongue.

"But you, perhaps, may think I was removed As never by the heavenly maid

beloved: But I was loved; ask Pallas if I lie; Though Pallas hates me now, she wont deny. For I, whom in a feather'd shape you view, Was once a maid, by heaven the story's true! A blooming maid, and a king's daughter too. A crowd of lovers own'd my beauty's charms; My beauty was the cause of all my harms; Neptune, as on his shores I wont to rove, Observed me in my walks, and fell in love. He made his courtship, he confess'd his pain, And offer'd force when all his arts were vain: Swift he pursued; I ran along the strand, Till spent and wearied on the sinking sand, I shriek'd aloud, with cries I fill'd the air To gods and men, nor god nor man was there: A virgin goddess heard a virgin's prayer. For, as my arms I lifted to the skies, I saw black feathers from my fingers rise; I strove to fling my garment on the ground, My garment turn'd to plumes, and girt me round; My hands to beat my naked bosom try, Nor naked bosom now nor hands had I; Lightly I tripp'd, nor weary as before: Sunk in the sand, but skimm'd along the shore, Till, rising on my wings, I was preferr'd To be the chaste Minerva's virgin bird. Preferr'd in vain! I now am in disgrace: Nyctimene, the owl, enjoys my place.

"On her incestuous life I need not dwell (In Lesbos still the horrid tale they tell), And of her dire amours you must have heard, For which she now does penance in a bird; That, conscious of her shame, avoids the light, And loves the gloomy covering of the night. The birds, where'er she flutters, scare away The hooting wretch, and drive her from the day."

The raven, urged by such impertinence, Grew passionate, it seems, and took offence, And cursed the harmless daw; the daw withdrew. The raven to her injured patron flew, And found him out, and told the fatal truth Of false Coronis, and the favour'd youth.

The god was wroth, the colour left his look, The wreath his head, the harp his hand, forsook; His silver bow and feather'd shafts he took, And lodged an arrow in the tender breast That had so often to his own been press'd. Down fell the wounded

nymph, and sadly groan'd, And pull'd his arrow reeking from the wound; And, weltering in her blood, thus faintly cried: "Ah, cruel god! though I have justly died, What has, alas! my unborn infant done, That he should fall, and two expire in one?" This said, in agonies she fetch'd her breath.

The god dissolves in pity at her death; He hates the bird that made her falsehood known, And hates himself for what himself had done; The feather'd shaft that sent her to the Fates, And his own hand that sent the shaft, he hates. Fain would he heal the wound and ease her pain, And tries the compass of his art in vain. Soon as he saw the lovely nymph expire, The pile made ready, and the kindling fire, With sighs and groans her obsequies he kept, And, if a god could weep, the god had wept. Her corpse he kiss'd, and heavenly incense brought, And solemnized the death himself had wrought.

But lest his offspring should her fate partake, Spite of the immortal mixture in his make, He ripp'd her womb and set the child at large, And gave him to the centaur Chiron's charge; Then in his fury black'd the raven o'er, And bade him prate in his white plumes no more.

Ocyrrhoe Transformed to a Mare

Ocyrrhoe, the daughter of Chiron, is transformed into a mare, for abusing her gift of prophecy.

Old Chiron took the babe with secret joy, Proud of the charge of the celestial boy. His daughter too, whom on the sandy shore The nymph Chariclo to the centaur bore, With hair dishevell'd on her shoulders, came To see the child, Ocyrrhoe was her name; She knew her father's arts, and could rehearse The depths of prophecy in sounding verse. Once as the sacred infant she survey'd, The god was kindled in the raving maid, And thus she utter'd her prophetic tale: "Hail! great physician of the world, all hail! Hail! mighty infant! who in years to come Shalt heal the nations and defraud the tomb. Swift be thy growth! thy triumphs unconfined! Make kingdoms

thicker, and increase mankind. Thy daring art shall animate the dead, And draw the thunder on thy guilty head: Then shalt thou die; but from the dark abode Rise up victorious, and be twice a god. And thou, my sire, not destined by thy birth To turn to dust, and mix with common earth, How wilt thou toss, and rave, and long to die, And quit thy claim to immortality, When thou shalt feel, enraged with inward pains, The Hydra's venom rankling in thy veins! The gods, in pity, shall contract thy date, And give thee over to the power of Fate."

Thus, entering into destiny, the maid The secrets of offended Jove betray'd: More had she still to say; but now appears Qppress'd with sobs and sighs, and drown'd in tears: "My voice," says she, "is gone, my language fails, Through every limb my kindred shape prevails: Why did the god this fatal gift impart, And with prophetic raptures swell my heart? What new desires are these? I long to pace O'er flowery meadows, and to feed on grass; I hasten to a brute, a maid no more: But why, alas! am I transform'd all o'er? My sire does half a human shape retain, And in his upper parts preserves the man."

Her tongue no more distinct complaints affords, But in shrill accents and misshapen words Pours forth such hideous wailings, as declare The human form confounded in the mare, Till by degrees accomplish'd in the beast, She neigh'd outright, and all the steed expressed; Her stooping body on her hands is borne, Her hands are turn'd to hoofs and shod in horn; Her yellow tresses ruffle in a mane, And in a flowing tail she frisks her train. The mare was finish'd in her voice and look, And a new name from the new figure took.

Transformation of Battus to a Touchstone

Battus, a shepherd of Pylos, promises Mercury that he will not reveal his theft of the flocks of Admetus, which Apollo tended—The promise is violated, and Battus turned into a pumice-stone.

Sore wept the centaur, and to Phoebus pray'd. But how could Phoebus give the

centaur aid? Degraded of his power by angry Jove, In Elis then a herd of bees he drove, And wielded in his hand a staff of oak, And o'er his shoulders threw the shepherd's cloak. On seven compacted reeds he used to play, And on his rural pipe to waste the day.

As once attentive to his pipe he play'd, The crafty Hermes from the god convey'd A drove, that separate from their fellows stray'd. The theft an old insidious peasant view'd (They call'd him Battus in the neighbourhood), Hired by a wealthy Pylian prince to feed His fav'rite mares, and watch the generous breed. The thievish god suspected him, and took The hind aside, and thus in whispers spoke: "Discover not the theft, whoe'er thou be, And take that milk-white heifer for thy fee." "Go, stranger," cries the clown, "securely on, That stone shall sooner tell," and showed a stone.

The god withdrew, but straight return'd again, In speech and habit like a country swain, And cries out: "Neighbour, hast thou seen a stray Of bullocks and of heifers pass this way? In the recovery of my cattle join, A bullock and a heifer shall be thine." The peasant quick replies: "You'll find them there In yon dark vale;" and in the vale they were. The double bribe had his false heart beguiled. The god, successful in the trial, smiled: "And dost thou thus betray myself to me? Me to myself dost thou betray?" says he. Then to a touchstone turns the faithless spy, And in his name records his infamy.

Story of Aglauros Transformed Into a Statue

Herse, a daughter of Cecrops, is beloved by Mercury, who discloses his passion to Aglauros, her sister, who exacts large sums of money as the price of her connivance at the intrigue—Minerva, offended at the rapacity of the maiden, commands Envy to torment her continually; and Mercury at length changes her into a stone.

This done, the god flew up on high, and pass'd O'er lofty Athens, by Minerva graced, And wide Munichia, while his eyes survey All the vast region that beneath

him lay.

’Twas now the feast, when each Athenian maid Her yearly homage to Minerva paid, In canisters with garlands cover’d o’er, High on their heads their mystic gifts they bore; And now, returning in a solemn train, The troop of shining virgins fill’d the plain.

The god, well pleased, beheld the pompous show, And saw the bright procession pass below, Then veer’d about and took a wheeling flight, And hover’d o’er them; as the spreading kite, That smells the slaughter’d victims from on high, Flies at a distance, if the priests are nigh, And sails around and keeps it in her eye, So kept the god the virgin choir in view, And in slow winding circles round them flew.

As Lucifer excels the meanest star, Or as the full-orb’d Phoebe Lucifer, So much did Herse all the rest outvie, And gave a grace to the solemnity. Hermes was fired as in the clouds he hung; So the cold bullet, that with fury slung From Balearic engines, mounts on high, Glows in the whirl, and burns along the sky. At length he pitch’d upon the ground, and show’d The form divine, the features of a god. He knew their virtue o’er a female heart, And yet he strives to better them by art. He hangs his mantle loose, and sets to show The golden edging on the seam below; Adjusts his flowing curls, and in his hand, Waves with an air the sleep-procuring wand; The glittering sandals to his feet applies, And to each heel the well-trimm’d pinion ties.

His ornaments with nicest art display’d, He seeks the apartment of the royal maid. The roof was all with polish’d ivory lined, That richly mix’d, in clouds of tortoise shined; Three rooms, contiguous, in a range were placed, The midmost by the beauteous Herse graced, Her virgin sisters lodged on either side. Aglauros first the approaching god descried, And as he cross’d her chamber asked his name, And what his bus’ness was, and whence he came. “I come,” replied the god, “from heaven, to woo Your sister, and to make an aunt of you. I am the son and messenger of Jove, My name is Mercury, my bus’ness love; Do you, kind damsel, take a lover’s part,

And gain admittance to your sister's heart."

She stared him in the face with looks amaz'd, As when she on Minerva's secret gaz'd, And asks a mighty treasure for her hire, And till he brings it makes the god retire. Minerva griev'd to see the nymph succeed, And now remembering the late impious deed, When, disobedient to her strict command, She touch'd the chest with an unhallow'd hand, In big-swoln sighs her inward rage express'd, That heav'd the rising aegis on her breast; Then sought out Envy in her dark abode, Defil'd with ropy gore and clots of blood: Shut from the winds and from the wholesome skies, In a deep vale the gloomy dungeon lies, Dismal and cold, where not a beam of light Invades the winter or disturbs the night.

Directly to the cave her course she steer'd, Against the gates her martial lance she rear'd, The gates flew open, and the fiend appear'd. A pois'nous morsel in her teeth she chew'd, And gorged the flesh of vipers for her food. Minerva, loathing, turn'd away her eye; The hideous monster, rising heavily, Came stalking forward with a sullen pace, And left her mangled offals on the place. Soon as she saw the goddess gay and bright, She fetch'd a groan at such a cheerful sight; Livid and meager were her looks, her eye In foul distorted glances turn'd awry; A hoard of gall her inward parts possess'd, And spread a greenness o'er her canker'd breast; Her teeth were brown with rust, and from her tongue, In dangling drops, the stringy poison hung; She never smiles but when the wretched weep, Nor lulls her malice with a moment's sleep; Restless in spite, while watchful to destroy, She pines and sickens at another's joy; Foe to herself, distressing and distress'd, She bears her own tormentor in her breast. The goddess gave (for she abhorr'd her sight) A short command: "To Athens speed thy flight; On cursed Aglauros try thy utmost art, And fix thy rankest venoms in her heart." This said, her spear she push'd against the ground, And mounting from it with an active bound, Flew off to heaven. The hag with eyes askew Look'd up, and mutter'd curses as she flew; For sore she fretted, and began to grieve At the success which she herself must give; Then takes her staff, hung round with wreaths

of thorn, And sails along, in a black whirlwind borne, O’er fields and flowery meadows. Where she steers Her baneful course a mighty blast appears, Mildews and blights; the meadows are defaced, The fields, the flowers, and the whole year, laid waste. On mortals next and peopled towns she falls, And breathes a burning plague among their walls.

When Athens she beheld, for arts renown’d, With peace made happy, and with plenty crown’d, Scarce could the hideous fiend from tears forbear To find out nothing that deserved a tear. The apartment now she enter’d where at rest Aglauros lay, with gentle sleep oppress’d, To execute Minerva’s dire command; She stroked the virgin with her canker’d hand, Then prickly thorns into her breast convey’d, That stung to madness the devoted maid; Her subtle venom still improves the smart, Frets in the blood, and festers in the heart.

To make the work more sure, a scene she drew, And placed before the dreaming virgin’s view Her sister’s marriage, and her glorious fate; The imaginary bride appears in state, The bridegroom with unwonted beauty glows; For envy magnifies whate’er she shows. Full of the dream, Aglauros pin’d away In tears all night, in darkness all the day; Consumed like ice, that just begins to run, When feebly smitten by the distant sun; Or like unwholesome weeds, that, set on fire, Are slowly wasted, and in smoke expire. Given up to envy (for in every thought The thorns, the venom, and the vision wrought), Oft did she call on death, as oft decreed, Rather than see her sister’s wish succeed, To tell her awful father what had pass’d; At length before the door herself she cast, And, sitting on the ground with suilen pride, A passage to the lovesick god denied. The god caress’d and for admission pray’d, And soothed in softest words the envenom’d maid. In vain he soothed. “Begone!” the maid replies, “Or here I keep my seat and never rise.” “Then keep thy seat for ever,” cries the god, And touch’d the door, wide opening to his rod. Fain would she rise and stop him, but she found Her trunk too heavy to forsake the ground; Her joints are all benumb’d, her hands are pale, And marble now appears in every nail. As when a

cancer in the body feeds, And gradual death from limb to limb proceeds, So does the chillness to each vital part Spread by degrees, and creeps into her heart, Till hardening everywhere, and speechless grown, She sits unmoved, and freezes to a stone. But still her envious hue and sullen mien Are in ’he sedentary figure seen.

Europa’s Rape

Europa, the daughter of Agenor, is beloved by Jupiter, who assumes the shape of a bull, and mingles with the herd—The maiden caresses the beautiful animal, and at length ventures to sit on his back; when the god immediately hastens to the shore, and crosses the sea—He arrives safe at Crete with his mistress, where he resumes his original shape.

When now the god his fury had allay’d, And taken vengeance of the stubborn maid, From where the bright Athenian turrets rise He mounts aloft, and reascends the skies. Jove saw him enter the sublime abodes, And, as he mix’d among the crowd of gods, Beckon’d him out, and drew him from the rest, And in soft whispers thus his will express’d:

“My trusty Hermes, by whose ready aid Thy sire’s commands are through the world convey’d, Resume thy wings, exert their utmost force, And to the walls of Sidon speed thy course; There find a herd of heifers wandering o’er The neighb’ring hill, and drive them to the shore.”

Thus spoke the god, concealing his intent. The trusty Hermes on his message went, And found the herd of heifers wand’ring o’er A neighb’ring hill, and drove them to the shore Where the king’s daughter, with a lovely train Of fellow-nymphs, was sporting on the plain.

The dignity of empire laid aside (For love but ill agrees with kingly pride), The ruler of the skies, the thund’ring god, Who shakes the world’s foundations with a nod, Among a herd of lowing heifers ran, Frisk’d in a bull, and bellow’d o’er the plain.

Large rolls of fat about his shoulders clung, And from his neck the double dewlap hung; His skin was whiter than the snow that lies Unsullied by the breath of southern skies: Small shining horns on his curl'd forehead stand, As turn'd and polish'd by the workman's hand; His eyeballs roll'd, not formidably bright, But gazed and languish'd with a gentle light; His every look was peaceful, and express'd The softness of the lover in the beast.

Agenor's royal daughter, as she play'd Among the fields, the milk-white bull survey'd, And view'd his spotless body with delight, And at a distance kept him in her sight. At length she pluck'd the rising flowers, and fed The gentle beast, and fondly stroked his head. He stood, well pleased to touch the charming fair, But hardly could confine his pleasures there. And now he wantons o'er the neighb'ring strand, Now rolls his body on the yellow sand; And, now perceiving all her fears decay'd, Comes tossing forward to the royal maid. Gives her his breast to stroke, and downward turns His grisly brow, and gently stoops his horns. In flowery wreaths the royal virgin dress'd His bending horns, and kindly clapp'd his breast; Till now grown wanton and devoid of fear, Not knowing that she press'd the Thunderer, She placed herself upon his back, and rode O'er fields and meadows, seated on the god.

He gently march'd along, and by degrees Left the dry meadow, and approach'd the seas, Where now he dips his hoofs and wets his thighs, Now plunges in, and carries off the prize. The frighted nymph looks backward on the shore, And hears the tumbling billows round her roar; But still she holds him fast; one hand is borne Upon his back, the other grasps a horn; Her train of ruffling garments flies behind, Swells in the air, and hovers in the wind.

Through storms and tempests he the virgin bore, And lands her safe on the Dictaean shore; Where now, in his divinest form array'd, In his true shape he captivates the maid, Who gazes on him, and with wond'ring eyes Beholds the new majestic figure

rise, His glowing features, and celestial light, And all the god discover’d to her sight.

Book III

Story of Cadmus

The sons of Agenor are despatched by their father in quest of their sister, with injunctions never to return until they find her—Cadmus consults the oracle of Apollo, and is directed to build a city where he shall see a young heifer stop in the grass, and to call the country Boeotia: he finds the heifer according to the instructions of the oracle, and sends his companions in search of water, all of whom are devoured by a dragon, which is destroyed by Cadmus with the assistance of Minerva—The goddess commands the hero to sow the monster’s teeth in the plain, which is no sooner performed than armed men instantly spring from the ground, who direct their rage against each other, till all perish except five, who assist Cadmus in building the city.

When now Agenor had his daughter lost, He sent his son to search on every coast, And sternly bid him to his arms restore The darling maid, or see his face no more, But live in exile in a foreign clime; Thus was the father pious to a crime.

The restless youth search’d all the world around; But how can Jove in his amours be found? When, tired at length with unsuccessful toil, To shun his angry sire and native soil, He goes a suppliant to the Delphic dame; There asks the god what new-appointed home Should end his wand’rings, and his toil relieve. The Delphic oracles this answer give:

“Behold among the fields a lonely cow, Unworn with yokes, unbroken to the plough: Mark well the place where first she lays her down, There measure out thy walls, and build thy town; And from the guide Boeotia call the land, In which the destined walls and town shall stand.”

No sooner had he left the dark abode, Big with the promise of the Delphic god, When in the fields the fatal cow he view'd, Nor gall'd with yokes, nor worn with servitude; Her gently at a distance he pursued, And, as he walk'd aloof, in silence pray'd To the great power whose counsels he obey'd. Her way through flowery Panope she took, And now, Cephisus, cross'd thy silver brook, When to the heavens her spacious front she raised, And bellow'd thrice, then backward turning gazed On those behind, till on the destined place She stoop'd, and couch'd amid the rising grass.

Cadmus salutes the soil, and gladly hails The new-found mountains and the nameless vales, And thanks the gods, and turns about his eye To see his new dominions round him lie; Then sends his servants to a neighb'ring grove For living streams, a sacrifice to Jove. O'er the wide plain there rose a shady wood Of aged trees; in its dark bosom stood A bushy thicket, pathless and unworn, O'errun with brambles, and perplex'd with thorn: Amid the brake a hollow den was found, With rocks and shelving arches vaulted round.

Deep in the dreary den, conceal'd from day, Sacred to Mars, a mighty dragon lay, Bloated with poison to a monstrous size; Fire broke in flashes when he glanced his eyes; His towering crest was glorious to behold, His shoulders and his sides were scaled with gold; Three tongues he brandish'd when he charged his foes, His teeth stood jaggy in three dreadful rows. The Tyrians in the den for water sought, And with their urns explored the hollow vault; From side to side their empty urns rebound, And rouse the sleeping serpent with the sound. Straight he bestirs him, and is seen to rise, And now with dreadful hissings fills the skies, And darts his forky tongues, and rolls his glaring eyes. The Tyrians drop their vessels in the fright, All pale and trembling at the hideous sight. Spire above spire uprear'd in air he stood, And gazing round him overlook'd the wood, Then floating on the ground in circles roll'd, Then leap'd upon them in a mighty fold. Of such a bulk and such a monstrous size The serpent in the polar circle lies, That stretches over half the northern skies.

In vain the Tyrians on their arms rely, In vain attempt to fight, in vain to fly; All their endeavours and their hopes are vain; Some die entangled in the winding train; Some are devour'd, or feel a loathsome death, Swoln up with blasts of pestilential breath.

And now the scorching sun was mounted high, In all its lustre, to the noonday sky, When, anxious for his friends, and fill'd with cares, To search the woods the impatient chief prepares. A lion's hide around his loins he wore, The well-poised javelin to the field he bore, Inured to blood, the far-destroying dart, And, the best weapon, an undaunted heart.

Soon as the youth approach'd the fatal place, He saw his servants breathless on the grass; The scaly foe amid their corpse he view'd, Basking at ease and feasting in their blood. "Such friends," he cries, "deserved a longer date; But Cadmus will revenge, or share their fate." Then heaved a stone, and rising to the throw, He sent it in a whirlwind at the foe; A lower, assaulted by so rude a stroke, With all its lofty battlements had shook; But nothing here the unwieldy rock avails, Rebounding harmless from the plaited scales, That, firmly join'd, preserved him from a wound, With native armour crusted all around. With more success the dart unerring flew, Which at his back the raging warrior threw: Amid the plaited scales it took its course, And in the spinal marrow spent its force. The monster hiss'd aloud, and raged in vain, And writhed his body to and fro with pain; He bit the dart, and wrench'd the wood away; The point still buried in the marrow lay; And now his rage, increasing with his pain, Reddens his eyes and beats in every vein; Churn'd in his teeth the foamy venom flows, While from his mouth a blast of vapours rose, Such as the infernal Stygian waters cast; The plants around him wither in the blast. Now in a maze of rings he lies enroll'd; Now all unravell'd and without a fold; Now, like a torrent, with a mighty force Bears down the forest in his boist'rous course. Cadmus gave back, and on the lion's spoil Sustain'd the shock, then forced him to recoil: The pointed javelin warded off his rage: Mad with his pains, and furious to

engage, The serpent champs the steel, and bites the spear, Till blood and venom all the point besmear. But still the hurt he yet received was slight; For, while the champion with redoubled might Strikes home the javelin, his retiring foe Shrinks from the wound, and disappoints the blow.

The dauntless hero still pursues his stroke, And presses forward, till a knotty oak Retards his foe, and stops him in the rear; Full in his throat he plunged the fatal spear, That in the extended neck a passage found, And pierced the solid timber through the wound. Fix'd to the reeling trunk, with many a stroke Of his huge tail he lash'd the sturdy oak, Till spent with toil, and lab'ring hard for breath, He now lay twisting in the pangs of death. Cadmus beheld him wallow in a flood Of swimming poison intermix'd with blood, When suddenly a speech was heard from high (The speech was heard, nor was the speaker nigh), "Why dost thou thus with secret pleasure see, Insulting man! what thou thyself shalt be?" Astonish'd at the voice, he stood amazed, And all around, with inward horror, gazed, When Pallas, swift descending from the skies, Pallas, the guardian of the bold and wise, Bids him plough up the field, and scatter round The dragon's teeth o'er all the furrow'd ground; Then tells the youth how to his wondering eyes Embattled armies from the field shall rise.

He sows the teeth at Pallas's command, And flings the future people from his hand; The clods grow warm, and crumble where he sows, And now the pointed spears advance in rows; Now nodding plumes appear, and shining crests, Now the broad shoulders and the rising breasts; O'er all the field the breathing harvest swarms, A growing host, a crop of men and arms.

So through the parting stage a figure rears Its body up, and limb by limb appears By just degrees, till all the man arise, And in his full proportion strikes the eyes.

Cadmus, surprised and startled at the sight Of his new foes, prepared himself for fight; When one cried out, "Forbear, fond man, forbear, To mingle in a blind

promiscuous war." This said, he struck his brother to the ground, Himself expiring by another's wound; Nor did the third his conquest long survive, Dying ere scarce he had begun to live.

The dire example ran through all the field, Till heaps of brothers were by brothers kill'd; The furrows swam in blood, and only five Of all the vast increase were left alive. Echion one, at Pallas's command Let fall the guiltless weapon from his hand, And with the rest a peaceful treaty makes, Whom Cadmus as his friends and partners takes. So founds a city on the promised earth, And gives his new Boeotian empire birth.

Here Cadmus reign'd; and now one would have guess'd The royal founder in his exile bless'd: Long did he live within his new abodes, Allied by marriage to the deathless gods; And in a fruitful wife's embraces old, A long increase of children's children told: But no frail man, however great or high, Can be concluded bless'd before he die.

Actaeon was the first of all his race, Who grieved his grandsire in his borrow'd face, Condemn'd by stern Diana to bemoan The branching horns and visage not his own; To shun his once loved dogs, to bound away, And from their huntsman to become their prey. And yet consider why the change was wrought, You'll find it his misfortune, not his fault; Or, if a fault, it was the fault of chance: For how can guilt proceed from ignorance?

Transformation of Actaeon Into a Stag

Actaeon, in pursuing the amusements of the chase, sees Diana and her nymphs bathing near Gargaphia; for which he is changed into a stag by the angry goddess, and is devoured by his own dogs.

In a fair chase a shady mountain stood, Well stored with game, and mark'd with trails of blood; Here did the huntsmen, till the heat of day, Pursue the stag, and load

themselves with prey; When thus Actaeon calling to the rest: “My friends,” said he, “our sport is at the best, The sun is high advanced, and downward sheds His burning beams directly on our heads; Then by consent abstain from further spoils, Call off the dogs, and gather up the toils, And ere to-morrow’s sun begins his race Take the cool morning to renew the chase.” They all consent, and in a cheerful train The jolly huntsmen, laden with the slain, Return in triumph from the sultry plain.

Down in a vale with pine and cypress clad, Refresh’d with gentle winds, and brown with shade, The chaste Diana’s private haunt there stood, Full in the centre of the darksome wood, A spacious grotto, all around o’ergrown With hoary moss, and arch’d with pumice-stone. From out its rocky clefts the waters flow, And trickling swell into a lake below. Nature had everywhere so play’d her part, That everywhere she seem’d to vie with art. Here the bright goddess, toil’d and chafed with heat, Was wont to bathe her in the cool retreat.

Here did she now with all her train resort, Panting with heat, and breathless from the sport; Her armour-bearer laid her bow aside, Some loosed her sandals, some her veil untied; Each busy nymph her proper part undress’d, While Crocale, more handy than the rest, Gather’d her flowing hair, and in a noose Bound it together, while her own hung loose; Five of the more ignoble sort, by turns, Fetch up the water, and unlade the urns.

Now all undress’d the shining goddess stood, When young Actaeon wilder’d in the wood, To the cool grot by his hard fate betray’d, The fountains fill’d with naked nymphs survey’d. The frighted virgins shriek’d at the surprise (The forest echo’d with their piercing cries), Then in a huddle round their goddess press’d; She, proudly eminent above the rest, With blushes glow’d; such blushes as adorn The ruddy welkin or the purple morn; And though the crowding nymphs her body hide, Half backward shrunk, and view’d him from aside. Surprised, at first she would have snatch’d her bow, But sees the circling waters round her flow; These in the

hollow of her hand she took, And dash’d them in his face, while thus she spoke: “Tell, if thou canst, the wondrous sight disclosed, A goddess naked to thy view exposed.”

This said, the man began to disappear By slow degrees, and ended in a deer. A rising horn on either brow he wears, And stretches out his neck, and pricks his ears; Rough is his skin, with sudden hairs o’ergrown, His bosom pants with fears before unknown; Transform’d at length, he flies away in haste, And wonders why he flies away so fast. But, as by chance within a neighb’ring brook, He saw his branching horns and alter’d look, Wretched Actaeon! in a doleful tone He tried to speak, but only gave a groan; And as he wept, within the watery glass He saw the big round drops, with silent pace, Run trickling down a savage hairy face. What should he do? Or seek his old abodes, Or herd among the deer and skulk in woods? Here shame dissuades him, there his fear prevails, And each by turns his aching heart assails.

As he thus ponders, he behind him spies His op’ning hounds, and now he hears their cries: A gen’rous pack, or to maintain the chase, Or snuff the vapour from the scented grass.

He bounded off with fear, and swiftly ran O’er craggy mountains and the flow’ry plain, Through brakes and thickets forced his way, and flew Through many a ring where once he did pursue. In vain he oft endeavour’d to proclaim His new misfortune, and to tell his name; Nor voice, nor words, the brutal tongue supplies, From shouting men, and horns, and dogs, he flies, Deafen’d and stunn’d with their promiscuous cries. When now the fleetest of the pack, that press’d Close at his heels and sprung before the rest, Had fasten’d on him, straight another pair Hung on his wounded haunch, and held him there, Till all the pack came up, and every hound Tore the sad huntsman grovelling on the ground, Who now appear’d but one continued wound. With dropping tears his bitter fate he moans, And fills the mountain with his dying groans. His servants with a piteous look he spies, And turns

about his supplicating eyes. His servants, ignorant of what had chanced, With eager haste and joyful shouts advanced, And call'd their lord, Actaeon, to the game; He shook his head in answer to the name; He heard, but wish'd he had indeed been gone; Or only to have stood a looker-on: But to his grief he finds himself too near, And feels his ravenous dogs with fury tear Their wretched master panting in a deer.

Birth of Bacchus

Semele, becoming pregnant by Jupiter, is persuaded by Juno, in the disguise of an old nurse, to prove the divinity of her lover, by exacting an exhibition of the same majesty as when he approached Juno—The god, having sworn by Styx to grant whatever she required, is unable to withstand her solicitations, and the unfortunate Semele is reduced to ashes—The infant Bacchus is rescued from destruction, and lodged in the thigh of Jupiter till the full period of his birth.

Actaeon's sufferings, and Diana's rage, Did all the thoughts of men and gods engage; Some call'd the evils which Diana wrought Too great, and disproportion'd to the fault: Others, again, esteem'd Actaeon's woes Fit for a virgin goddess to impose. The hearers into different parts divide, And reasons are produced on either side.

Juno alone, of all that heard the news, Nor would condemn the goddess, nor excuse; She heeded not the justice of the deed, But joy'd to see the race of Cadmus bleed; For still she kept Europa in her mind, And, for her sake, detested all her kind. Besides, to aggravate her hate, she heard How Semele, to Jove's embrace preferr'd, Was now grown big with an immortal load, And carried in her womb a future god. Thus, terribly incensed, the goddess broke To sudden fury, and abruptly spoke:

"Are my reproaches of so small a force? 'Tis time I then pursue another course. It is decreed the guilty wretch shall die, If I'm indeed the mistress of the sky; If rightly styled, among the powers above, The wife and sister of the thundering Jove (And none can sure a sister's right deny), It is decreed the guilty wretch shall die. She

boasts an honour I can hardly claim, Pregnant she rises to a mother's name; While proud and vain she triumphs in her Jove, And shows the glorious tokens of his love: But if I'm still the mistress of the skies, By her own lover the fond beauty dies." This said, descending in a yellow cloud, Before the gates of Semele she stood.

Old Beroe's decrepit shape she wears, Her wrinkled visage, and her hoary hairs, While in her trembling gait she totters on, And learns to tattle in the nurse's tone. The goddess thus disguised in age, beguiled With pleasing stories her false foster-child. Much did she talk of love, and when she came To mention to the nymph her lover's name, Fetching a sigh, and holding down her head, " 'Tis well," says she, "if all be true that's said. But trust me, child, I'm much inclined to fear Some counterfeit in this your Jupiter. Many an honest, well-designing maid, Has been by these pretended gods betray'd. But if he be indeed the thund'ring Jove, Bid him, when next he courts the rites of love, Descend triumphant, from the ethereal sky, In all the pomp of his divinity, Encompass'd round by those celestial charms With which he fills the immortal Juno's arms."

The unwary nymph, insnared with what she said, Desired of Jove, when next he sought her bed, To grant a certain gift which she would choose. "Fear not," replied the god, "that I'll refuse Whate'er you ask: may Styx confirm my voice, Choose what you will, and you shall have your choice." "Then," says the nymph, "when next you seek my arms, May you descend in those celestial charms With which your Juno's bosom you inflame, And fill with transport heaven's immortal dame." The god, surprised, would fain have stopp'd her voice, But he had sworn, and she had made her choice.

To keep his promise he ascends, and shrouds His awful brow in whirlwinds and in clouds; While all around, in terrible array, His thunders rattle and his lightnings play; And yet the dazzling lustre to abate, He set not out in all his pomp and state, Clad in the mildest lightning of the skies, And arm'd with thunder of the smallest

size: Not those huge bolts by which the giants slain Lay overthrown on the Phlegrean plain; ’Twas of a lesser mould and lighter weight, They call it thunder of a second rate; For the rough Cyclops, who by Jove’s command Temper’d the bolt, and turn’d it to his hand, Work’d up less flame and fury in its make, And quench’d it sooner in the standing lake. Thus dreadfully adorn’d with horror bright, The illustrious god, descending from his height, Came rushing on her in a storm of light.

The mortal dame, too feeble to engage The lightning’s flashes and the thunder’s rage, Consumed amid the glories she desired, And in the terrible embrace expired.

But to preserve his offspring from the tomb, Jove took him smoking from his mother’s womb, And, if on ancient tales we may rely, Enclosed the abortive infant in his thigh. Here when the babe had all his time fulfill’d, Ino first took him for her foster-child; Then the Niseans, in their dark abode, Nursed secretly with milk the thriving god.

Transformation of Echo

Juno punishes the loquacity of Echo, which frequently prevented her from discovering the intrigues of her husband, by restricting her tongue to the mere repetitions of sound—The nymph, after this, falls in love with Narcissus; which, not being returned, she pines away, and is changed into a stone, which still retains the power of utterance.

Famed far and near for knowing things to come, From him the inquiring nations sought their doom. The fair Liriope his answers tried, And first the unerring prophet justified. This nymph the god Cephisus had abused, With all his winding waters circumfused, And by the Nereid had a lovely boy, Whom the soft maids ev’n then beheld with joy.

The tender dame, solicitous to know Whether her child should reach old age or no, Consults the sage Tiresias; who replies, “If e’er he knows himself he surely dies.”

Long lived the dubious mother in suspense, Till time unriddled all the prophet’s sense.

Narcissus now his sixteenth year began, Just turn’d of boy, and on the verge of man; Many a friend the blooming youth caress’d, Many a lovesick maid in vain her flame confess’d, Such was his pride, in vain the friend caress’d, The lovesick maid in vain her flame confess’d.

Once, in the woods, as he pursued the chase, The babbling Echo had descried his face, She, who in other words her silence breaks, Nor speaks herself but when another speaks. Echo was then a maid of speech bereft, Of wonted speech; for though her voice was left, Juno a curse did on her tongue impose, To sport with every sentence in the close. Full often when the goddess might have caught Jove and her rivals in the very fault, This nymph with subtle stories would delay Her coming, till the lovers slipp’d away. The goddess found out the deceit in time, And then she cried, “That tongue, for this thy crime, Which could so many subtle tales produce, Shall be hereafter but of little use.” Hence ’tis she prattles in a fairer tone, With mimic sounds and accents not her own.

This lovesick virgin, overjoy’d to find The boy alone, still follow’d him behind; When glowing warmly at her near approach, As sulphur blazes at the taper’s touch, She long’d her hidden passion to reveal And tell her pains, but had not words to tell; She can’t begin, but waits for the rebound To catch his voice, and to return the sound.

The nymph, when nothing could Narcissus move, Still dash’d with blushes for her slighted love, Lived in the shady covert of the woods, In solitary caves and dark abodes, Where pining wander’d the rejected fair, Till harass’d out and worn away with care, The sounding skeleton, of blood bereft, Besides her bones and voice, had nothing left. Her bones are petrified, her voice is found In vaults, where still it doubles every sound.

Story of Narcissus

A handsome youth, named Narcissus, beholding his face reflected in a fountain, becomes enamoured with it, and wastes away with grief—After his death the Naiads raise a funeral pile to burn his body, when they find nothing but a beautiful flower, which still bears his name.

Thus did the nymphs in vain caress the boy, He still was lovely, but he still was coy, When one fair virgin of the slighted train Thus pray'd the gods, provoked by his disdain: "O! may he love like me, and love like me in vain!" Rhamnusia pitied the neglected fair, And with just vengeance answer'd to her prayer.

There stands a fountain in a darksome wood, Nor stain'd with falling leaves, nor rising mud, Untroubled by the breath of winds it rests, Unsullied by the touch of men or beasts; High bowers of shady trees above it grow, And rising grass and cheerful greens below. Pleased with the form and coolness of the place, And overheated by the morning chase, Narcissus on the grassy verdure lies; But while within the crystal fount he tries To quench his heat, he feels new heat arise: For, as his own bright image he survey'd, He fell in love with the fantastic shade, And o'er the fair resemblance hung unmoved; Nor knew, fond youth! it was himself he loved. The well-turn'd neck and shoulders he descries, The spacious forehead, and the sparkling eyes, The hands that Bacchus might not scorn to show, And hair that round Apollo's head might flow, With all the purple youthfulness of face, That gently blushes in the watery glass. By his own flames consumed the lover lies, And gives himself the wound by which he dies. To the cold water oft he joins his lips, Oft catching at the beauteous shade he dips His arms, as often from himself he slips. Nor knows he who it is his arms pursue With eager clasps, but loves he knows not who.

What could, fond youth, this helpless passion move? What kindled in thee this unpitied love? Thy own warm blush within the water glows, With thee the colour'd

shadow comes and goes, Its empty being on thyself relies; Step thou aside and the frail charmer dies.

Still o’er the fountain’s watery gleam he stood, Mindless of sleep, and negligent of food, Still view’d his face, and languish’d as he view’d. At length he raised his head, and thus began To vent his griefs, and tell the woods his pain: “You trees,” says he, “and thou surrounding grove, Who oft have been the kindly scenes of love, Tell me, if e’er within your shades did lie A youth so tortured, so perplex’d as I? I, who before me see the charming fair, While there he stands, and yet he stands not there: In such a maze of love my thoughts are lost; And yet no bulwark’d town nor distant coast Preserves the beauteous youth from being seen, No mountains rise nor oceans flow between; A shallow water hinders my embrace, And yet the lovely mimic wears a face That kindly smiles, and when I bend to join My lips to his, he fondly bends to mine. Hear, gentle youth, and pity my complaint; Come from thy well, thou fair inhabitant. My charms an easy conquest have obtain’d O’er other hearts, by thee alone disdain’d. But why should I despair? I’m sure he burns With equal flames, and languishes by turns. Whene’er I stoop, he offers at a kiss, And when my arms I stretch, he stretches his; His eyes with pleasure on my face he keeps, He smiles my smiles, and when I weep he weeps: Whene’er I speak his moving lips appear To utter something, which I cannot hear.

“Ah, wretched me! I now begin too late To find out all the long perplex’d deceit; It is myself I love, myself I see, The gay delusion is a part of me; I kindle up the fires by which I burn, And my own beauties from the well return. Whom should I court? how utter my complaint? Enjoyment but produces my restraint, And too much plenty makes me die for want. How gladly would I from myself remove! And at a distance set the thing I love; My breast is warm’d with such unusual fire, I wish him absent whom I most desire; And now I faint with grief, my fate draws nigh, In all the pride of blooming youth I die. Death will the sorrows of my heart relieve. O! might the visionary youth survive, I should with joy my latest breath resign! But, oh!

I see his fate involved in mine.”

This said, the weeping youth again return’d To the clear fountain, where again he burn’d. His tears defaced the surface of the well, With circle after circle as they fell; And now the lovely face but half appears, O’errun with wrinkles and deform’d with tears. “Ah! whither,” cries Narcissus, “dost thou fly? Let me still feed the flame by which I die; Let me still see, though I’m no further bless’d.” Then rends his garment off and beats his breast; His naked bosom redden’d with the blow, In such a blush as purple clusters show, Ere yet the sun’s autumnal heats refine Their sprightly juice, and mellow it to wine; The glowing beauties of his breast he spies, And with a new redoubled passion dies. As wax dissolves, as ice begins to run And trickle into drops before the sun, So melts the youth, and languishes away, His beauty withers, and his limbs decay, And none of those attractive charms remain, To which the slighted Echo sued in vain.

She saw him in his present misery, Whom, spite of all her wrongs, she grieved to see. She answer’d sadly to the lover’s moan, Sigh’d back his sighs, and groan’d to every groan. “Ah youth! beloved in vain,” Narcissus cries; “Ah youth! beloved in vain,” the nymph replies. “Farewell,” says he; the parting sound scarce fell From his faint lips, but she replied, “Farewell.” Then on the unwholesome earth he gasping lies, Till death shuts up those self-admiring eyes. To the cold shades his fitting ghost retires, And in the Stygian waves itself admires.

For him the Naiads and the Dryads mourn, Whom the sad Echo answers in her turn; And now the sister-nymphs prepare his urn: When, looking for his corpse, they only found A rising stalk with yellow blossoms crown’d.

Story of Pentheus

Pentheus, King of Thebes, refuses to acknowledge the divinity of Bacchus, and forbids his subjects to pay adoration to the new god, who, under the disguise of Acetes, is led in captivity to the presence of the monarch.

This sad event gave blind Tiresias fame, Through Greece establish’d in a prophet’s name.

The unhallow’d Pentheus only durst deride The cheated people and their eyeless guide. To whom the prophet in his fury said, Shaking the hoary honours of his head, “ ’Twere well, presumptuous man, ’twere well for thee, If thou wert eyeless too, and blind like me: For the time comes, nay, ’tis already here, When the young god’s solemnities appear, Which, if thou dost not with just rites adorn, Thy impious carcass, into pieces torn, Shall strew the woods, and hang on every thorn. Then, then remember what I now foretell, And own the blind Tiresias saw too well.”

Still Pentheus scorns him, and derides his skill; But time did all the prophet’s threats fulfil. For now through prostrate Greece young Bacchus rode, While howling matrons celebrate the god. All ranks and sexes to his orgies ran, To mingle in the pomps and fill the train, When Pentheus thus his wicked rage express’d: “What madness, Thebans, has your souls possess’d? Can hollow timbrels, can a drunken shout, And the lewd clamours of a beastly rout, Thus quell your courage? Can the weak alarm Of women’s yells those stubborn souls disarm, Whom nor the sword nor trumpet e’er could fright, Nor the loud din and horror of a fight? And you, our sires, who left your old abodes, And fix’d in foreign earth your country gods, Will you without a stroke your city yield, And poorly quit an undisputed field? But you, whose youth and vigour should inspire Heroic warmth, and kindle martial fire, Whom burnish’d arms and crested helmets grace, Not flowery garlands and a painted face; Remember him to whom you stand allied; The serpent for his well of waters died. He fought the strong, do you his courage show, And gain a conquest o’er a feeble foe. If Thebes must fall, O might the Fates afford A nobler doom from famine, fire, or sword; Then might the Thebans perish with renown: But now a beardless victor sacks the town, Whom nor the prancing steed, nor ponderous shield, Nor the hack’d helmet, nor the dusty field, But the soft joys of luxury and ease, The purple vests, and flowery garlands, please. Stand then aside, I’ll make the counterfeit

Renounce his godhead, and confess the cheat. Acrisius from the Grecian walls repell'd This boasted power: why then should Pentheus yield? Go quickly, drag the impostor boy to me, I'll try the force of his divinity." Thus did the audacious wretch those rites profane; His friends dissuade the andacious wretch in vain, In vain his grandsire urged him to give o'er His impious threats, the wretch but raves the more.

So have I seen a river gently glide In a smooth course and inoffensive tide, But if with dams its current we restrain, It bears down all, and foams along the plain.

But now his servants came, besmear'd with blood, Sent by their haughty prince to seize the god; The god they found not in the frantic throng, But dragg'd a zealous votary along.

Mariners Transformed to Dolphins

Bacchus here personates Acoetes, the pilot of a ship which carried away the infant Bacchus from the Isle of Naxos—The crew were changed into sea monsters, but Acaetes was preserved.

Him Pentheus view'd with fury in his look, And scarce withheld his hands while thus he spoke: "Vile slave! whom speedy vengeance shall pursue, And terrify thy base seditious crew, Thy country and thy parentage reveal, And why thou join'st in these mad orgies tell."

The captive views him with undaunted eyes, And, arm'd with inward innocence, replies:

"From high Maeonia's rocky shores I came, Of poor descent, Acoetes is my name. My sire was meanly born; no oxen plough'd His fruitful fields, nor in his pastures low'd; His whole estate within the waters lay, With lines and hooks he caught the finny prey; His art was all his livelihood, which he Thus with his dying lips bequeathed to me: 'In streams, my boy, and rivers, take thy chance, There swims,' said he, 'thy whole inheritance.' Long did I live on this poor legacy, Till, tired with

rocks and my old native sky, To arts of navigation I inclined, Observed the turns and changes of the wind, Learn’d the fit havens, and began to note The stormy Hyades, the rainy Goat, The bright Taygete, and the shining Bears, With all the sailors’ catalogue of stars. Once, as by chance for Delos I design’d, My vessel, driven by a strong gust of wind, Moor’d in a Chian creek; ashore I went, And all the following night in Chios spent. When morning rose, I sent my mates to bring Supplies of water from a neighb’ring spring, While I the motion of the winds explored; Then summon’d in my crew and went aboard. Opheltes heard my summons, and with joy Brought to the shore a soft and lovely boy, With more than female sweetness in his look, Whom straggling in the neighb’ring fields he took. With fumes of wine the little captive glows, And nods with sleep, and staggers as he goes.

“I view’d him nicely, and began to trace Each heavenly frature, each immortal grace, And saw divinity in all his face: ‘I know not who,’ said I, ‘this god should be, But that he is a god I plainly see. And thou, whoe’er thou art, excuse the force These men have used; and O befriend our course!’ ‘Pray not for us,’ the nimble Dictys cried, Dictys, that could the main-topmast bestride, And down the ropes with active vigour slide. To the same purpose old Epopeus spoke, Who overlook’d the oars, and timed the stroke: The same the pilot, and the same the rest, Such impious avarice their souls possess’d. ‘Nay, Heaven forbid that I should bear away Within my vessel so divine a prey,’ Said I; and stood to hinder their intent, When Lycabas, a wretch for murder sent From Tuscany, to suffer banishment, With his clinch’d fist had struck me overboard, Had not my hands in falling grasp’d a cord.

“His base confederates the fact approve, When Bacchus (for ’twas he) began to move, Waked by the noise and clamours which they raised, And shook his drowsy limbs, and round him gazed: ‘What means this noise?’ he cries, ‘am I betray’d? Ah! whither, whither must I be convey’d?’ ‘Fear not,’ said Proteus, ‘child, but tell us where You wish to land, and trust our friendly care.’ ‘To Naxos then direct your course,’ said he, ‘Naxos a hospitable port shall be To each of you, a joyful home to

me.’ By every god that rules the sea or sky, The perjured villains promise to comply, And bid me hasten to unmoor the ship. With eager joy I launch into the deep; And, heedless of the fraud, for Naxos stand. They whisper oft, and beckon with the hand, And give me signs, all anxious for their prey, To tack about and steer another way. ‘Then let some other to my post succeed,’ Said I, ‘I’m guiltless of so foul a deed.’ ‘What!’ says Ethalion, ‘must the ship’s whole crew Follow your humour, and depend on you?’ And straight himself he seated at the prore, And tack’d about and sought another shore.

“The beauteous youth now found himself betray’d, And from the deck the rising waves survey’d, And seem’d to weep, and as he wept he said: ‘And do you thus my easy faith beguile? Thus do ye bear me to my native isle? Will such a multitude of men employ Their strength against a weak, defenceless boy?’

“In vain did I the godlike youth deplore, The more I begg’d, they thwarted me the more. And now by all the gods in heaven, that hear This solemn oath, by Bacchus’ self I swear, The mighty miracle that did ensue, Although it seems beyond belief, is true. The vessel, fix’d and rooted in the flood, Unmoved by all the beating billows, stood. In vain the mariners would plough the main With sails unfurl’d, and strike their oars in vain; Around their oars a twining ivy cleaves, And climbs the mast, and hides the cords in leaves: The sails are cover’d with a cheerful green, And berries in the fruitful canvass seen. Amid the waves a sudden forest rears Its verdant head, and a new spring appears.

“The god we now behold with open’d eyes; A herd of spotted panthers round him lies In glaring forms, the grapy clusters spread On his fair brows, and dangle on his head. And while he frowns and brandishes his spear, My mates, surprised with madness or with fear, Leap’d overboard; first perjur’d Madon found Rough scales and fins his stiff’ning sides surround.

“ ‘Ah! what,’ cries one, ‘has thus transform’d thy look?’ Straight his own mouth

grew wider as he spoke: And now himself he views with like surprise. Still at his oar the industrious Libys plies; But, as he plies, each busy arm shrinks in, And by degrees is fashion'd to a fin. Another, as he catches at a cord, Misses his arms, and, tumbling overboard, With his broad fins and forky tail he laves The rising surge, and flounces in the waves. Thus all my crew transform'd around the ship, Or dive below, or on the surface leap, And spout the waves, and wanton in the deep. Full nineteen sailors did the ship convey, A shoal of nineteen dolphins round her play. I only in my proper shape appear, Speechless with wonder, and half dead with fear, Till Bacchus kindly bid me fear no more. With him I landed on the Chian shore, And him shall ever gratefully adore."

"This forging slave," says Pentheus, "would prevail O'er our just fury by a far-fetch'd tale: Go; let him feel the whips, the swords, the fire, And in the tortures of the rack expire." The officious servants hurry him away, And the poor captive in a dungeon lay. But, while the whips and tortures are prepared, The gates fly open, of themselves unbarr'd; At liberty the unfetter'd captive stands, And flings the loosen'd shackles from his hands.

Death of Pentheus

Pentheus is punished for his impiety by being torn in pieces by his mother and aunts, while under the influence of Bacchus.

But Pentheus, grown more furious than before, Resolved to send his messengers no more, But went himself to the distracted throng, Where high Cithaeron echo'd with their song. And as the fiery warhorse paws the ground, And snorts and trembles at the trumpet's sound, Transported thus he heard the frantic rout, And raved and madden'd at the distant shout.

A spacious circuit on the hill there stood, Level and wide, and skirted round with wood; Here the rash Pentheus, with unhallow'd eyes, The howling dames and mystic orgies spies. His mother sternly view'd him where he stood, And kindled into

madness as she view’d: Her leafy javelin at her son she cast, And cries, “The boar that lays our country waste! The boar, my sisters! Aim the fatal dart, And strike the brindled monster to the heart.”

Pentheus astonish’d heard the dismal sound, And sees the yelling matrons gathering round; He sees, and weeps at his approaching fate, And begs for mercy, and repents too late. “Help! help! my aunt Autonoe,” he cried, “Remember how your own Actaeon died.” Deaf to his cries, the frantic matron crops One stretch’d-out arm, the other Ino lops. In vain does Pentheus to his mother sue, And the raw bleeding stumps present to view. His mother howl’d, and, heedless of his prayer, Her trembling hand she twisted in his hair, “And this,” she cried, “shall be Agave’s share;” When from his neck his struggling head she tore, And in her hands the ghastly visage bore. With pleasure all the hideous trunk survey, Then pull’d and tore the mangled limbs away, As starting in the pangs of death it lay. Soon as the wood its leafy honours casts, Blown off and scatter’d by autumnal blasts, With such a sudden death lay Pentheus slain, And in a thousand pieces strow’d the plain.

By so distinguishing a judgment awed, The Thebans tremble and confess the god.

Book IV

Story of Alcithoe and Her Sisters

Undeterred by the punishment of Pentheus, Alcithoe and her sisters dare to ridicule the orgies of Bacchus, and to employ themselves in the labours of the loom during the festival of that god.

Yet still Alcithoe perverse remains, And Bacchus still and all his rites disdains. Too rash and madly bold, she bids him prove Himself a god, nor owns the son of Jove: Her sisters too unanimous agree, Faithful associates in impiety.

Be this a solemn feast, the priest had said; Be, with each mistress, unemploy’d each

maid. With skins of beasts your tender limbs enclose, And with an ivy crown adorn your brows; The leafy thyrsus high in triumph bear, And give your locks to wanton in the air.

These rites profaned, the holy seer foreshow'd A mourning people, and a vengeful god. Matrons and pious wives obedience show, Distaffs, and wool half spun, away they throw: Then incense burn, and, Bacchus, thee adore: Or lovest thou Neseus, or Lyaeus, more? O, doubly got! O, doubly born! they sung, Thou mighty Bromius, hail! from lightning sprung. Hail! Thyon, Eleleus, each name is thine: Or, listen parent of the genial vine! Iacchus! Evan! loudly they repeat, And not one Grecian attribute forget, Which to thy praise, great deity, belong, Styled, justly, Liber in the Roman song. Eternity of youth is thine! enjoy Years roll'd on years, yet still a blooming boy. In heaven thou shinest with a superior grace; Conceal thy horns, and 'tis a virgin's face. Thou taught'st the tawny Indian to obey, And Ganges, smoothly flowing, own'd thy sway. Lycurgus, Pentheus, equally profane, By thy just vengeance equally were slain. By thee the Tuscans, who conspired to keep Thee captive, plunged and cut with fins the deep. With painted reins, all glittering from afar, The spotted Lynxes proudly draw thy car; Around the Bacchae and the Satyrs throng, Behind, Silenus, drunk, lags slow along; On his dull ass he nods from side to side, Forbears to fall, yet half forgets to ride. Still at thy near approach applauses loud Are heard, with yellings of the female crowd; Timbrels, and boxen pipes, with mingled cries, Swell up in sounds confused and rend the skies. Come, Bacchus, come propitious, all implore, And act thy secret orgies o'er and o'er.

But Mineus' daughters, while these rites were paid, At home impertinently busy stay'd; Their wicked tasks they ply with various art, And through the loom the sliding shuttle dart, Or at the fire to comb the wool they stand, Or twirl the spindle with a dext'rous hand. Guilty themselves, they force the guiltless in, Their maids, who share the labour, share the sin. At last one sister cries, who nimbly knew To draw nice threads, and wind the finest clue,

“While others idly rove, and gods revere, Their fancied gods! they know not who or where; Let us, whom Pallas taught her better arts, Still working, cheer with mirthful chat our hearts; And, to deceive the time, let me prevail With each by turns to tell some antique tale.” She said: her sisters liked the humour well, And, smiling, bade her the first story tell. But she a while profoundly seem’d to muse, Perplex’d amid variety to choose; And knew not whether she should first relate The poor Dircetis, and her wondrous fate (The Palestines believe it to a man, And show the lake in which her scales began): Or if she rather should the daughter sing, Who in the hoary verge of life took wing; Who soar’d from earth, and dwelt in towers on high, And now a dove she flits along the sky: Or how the tree, which once white berries bore, Still crimson bears, since stain’d with crimson gore. The tree was new; she likes it, and begins To tell the tale, and as she tells she spins.

Story of Pyramus and Thisbe

A Babylonian youth, named Pyramus, becomes enamoured of Thisbe, a beautiful maiden—The flame is mutual, and the two lovers disregard the prohibition of their parents, and converse through the chink of wall which separates the houses—They now determine to elude the vigilance of their friends, and to meet in the neighbourhood under a white mulberry-tree—Thisbe first arrives at the appointed place, but the sudden appearance of a lioness affrights her; and, during her flight into a neighbouring cave, she drops her veil, which the lioness finds and besmears with blood—Pyramus recognises the garment, and, concluding that she has been devoured by wild beasts, stabs himself—Thisbe, when her fears vanish, returns from the cave, and, at the sight of the dying Pyramus, falls on the sword still reeking with his blood—The mulberry-tree, stained with the blood of the lovers, ever after hears fruit of that colour.

“In Babylon, where first her queen, for state, Raised walls of brick magnificently great, Lived Pyramus and Thisbe, lovely pair! He found no eastern youth his equal

there, And she beyond the fairest nymph was fair. A closer neighbourhood was never known, Though two the houses, yet the roof was one. Acquaintance grew, the acquaintance they improve To friendship, friendship ripen'd into love: Love had been crown'd, but, impotently mad, What parents could not hinder, they forbade: For with fierce flames young Pyramus still burn'd, And grateful Thisbe flames as fierce return'd. Aloud in words their thoughts they dare not break, But silent stand: and silent looks can speak. The fire of love, the more it is suppress'd, The more it glows and rages in the breast.

"When the division-wall was built, a chink Was left, the cement unobserved to shrink. So slight the cranny, that it still had been For centuries unclosed, because unseen. But, oh! what thing so small, so secret lies, Which 'scapes, if form'd for love, a lover's eyes? Ev'n in this narrow chink they quickly found A friendly passage for a trackless sound. Safely they told their sorrows and their joys, In whisper'd murmurs and a dying noise; By turns to catch each other's breath they strove, And suck'd in all the balmy breeze of love. Oft, as on different sides they stood, they cried, 'Malicious wall, thus lovers to divide! Suppose thou shouldst a while to us give place, To lock and fasten in a close embrace; But, if too much to grant so sweet a bliss, Indulge at least the pleasure of a kiss. We scorn ingratitude: to thee, we know, This safe conveyance of our minds we owe.'

"Thus, they their vain petition did renew Till night, and then they softly sigh'd adieu. But first they strove to kiss, and that was all, Their kisses died untasted on the wall. Soon as the morn had o'er the stars prevail'd, And, warn'd by Phoebus, flowers their dews exhaled, The lovers to their well-known place return, Alike they suffer and alike they mourn. At last their parents they resolve to cheat (If to deceive in love he call'd deceit), To steal by night from home, and thence unknown To seek the fields, and quit the unfaithful town. But, to prevent their wand'ring in the dark, They both agree to fix upon a mark, A mark, that could not their designs expose, The tomb of Ninus was the mark they chose. There they might rest secure beneath

the shade, Which boughs, with snowy fruit encumber'd, made: A wide-spread mulberry its rise had took Just on the margin of a gurgling brook. Impatient for the friendly dusk they stay, And chide the slowness of departing day. In western seas down sunk at last the light, From western seas uprose the shades of night. The loving Thisbe ev'n prevents the hour, With cautious silence she unlocks the door, And veils her face, and marching through the gloom, Swiftly arrives at th' assignation tomb. For still the fearful sex can fearless prove, Boldly they act, if spirited by love. When, lo! a lioness rush'd o'er the plain, Grimly besmear'd with blood of oxen slain: And what to the dire sight new horrors brought, To slake her thirst the neighb'ring spring she sought; Which, by the moon, when trembling Thisbe spies, Wing'd with her fear, swift as the wind, she flies, And in a cave recovers from her fright, But dropp'd her veil, confounded in her flight. When sated with repeated draughts, again The queen of beasts scour'd back along the plain: She found the veil, and, mouthing it all o'er, With bloody jaws the lifeless prey she tore.

"The youth, who could not cheat his guards so soon, Late came, and noted by the glimmering moon Some savage feet new printed on the ground, His cheeks turn'd pale, his limbs no vigour found: But when, advancing on, the veil he spied Distain'd with blood, and ghastly torn, he cried, 'One night shall death to two young lovers give, But she deserved unnumber'd years to live! 'Tis I am guilty, I have thee betray'd, Who came not early as my charming maid. Whatever slew thee, I the cause remain, I named and fix'd the place where thou wast slain. Ye lions, from your neighb'ring dens repair, Pity the wretch; this impious body tear! But cowards thus for death can idly cry; The brave still have it in their power to die.' Then to the appointed tree he hastes away, The veil first gather'd, though all rent it lay; The veil all rent, yet still itself endears, He kiss'd, and kissing, wash'd it with his tears. 'Though rich,' he cried, 'with many a precious stain, Still from my blood a deeper tincture gain.' Then in his breast his shining sword he drown'd, And fell supine extended on the ground. As out again the blade he dying drew, Out spun the blood,

and streaming upwards flew. So, if a conduit-pipe e'er burst you saw, Swift spring the gushing waters through the flaw; Then spouting in a bow they rise on high, And a new fountain plays amid the sky. The berries, stain'd with blood, began to show A dark complexion, and forgot their snow, While, fatten'd with the flowing gore, the root Was doom'd for ever to a purple fruit.

"Meantime poor Thisbe fear'd, so long she stay'd, Her lover might suspect a perjured maid. Her fright scarce o'er, she strove the youth to find With ardent eyes, which spoke an ardent mind. Already in his arms, she hears him sigh At her destruction, which was once so nigh. The tomb, the tree, but not the fruit, she knew. The fruit she doubted for its alter'd hue. Still as she doubts, her eyes a body found, Quivering in death, and gasping on the ground. She started back, the red her cheeks forsook, And every nerve with thrilling horrors shook. So trembles the smooth surface of the seas, If brush'd o'er gently with a rising breeze. But when her view her bleeding love confess'd, She shriek'd, she tore her hair, she beat her breast. She raised the body, and embraced it round, And bathed with tears unfeign'd the gaping wound; Then her warm lips to the cold face applied, 'And is it thus, ah! thus we meet?' she cried, 'My Pyramus! whence sprung thy cruel fate? My Pyramus!—ah speak, ere 'tis too late. I, thy own Thisbe, but one word implore, One word thy Thisbe never ask'd before.' At Thisbe's name, awaked, he open'd wide His dying eyes, with dying eyes he tried On her to dwell, but closed them slow, and died.

"The fatal cause was now at last explored, Her veil she knew, and saw his sheathless sword: 'From thy own hand thy ruin thou hast found,' She said, 'but love first taught that hand to wound: Ev'n I for thee as bold a hand can show, And love, which shall as true direct the blow. I will against the woman's weakness strive, And never thee, lamented youth, survive. The world may say I caused, alas! thy death, But saw thee breathless, and resign'd my breath. Fate, though it conquers, shall no triumph gain, Fate, that divides us, still divides in vain.

“ ‘Now, both our cruel parents, hear my prayer; My prayer to offer for us both I dare, Oh! see our ashes in one urn confined, Whom love at first, and fate at last, has join’d. The bliss you envied is not our request; Lovers, when dead, may sure together rest. Thou, tree, where now one lifeless lump is laid, Ere long o’er two shall cast a friendly shade. Still let our loves from thee be understood, Still witness in thy purple fruit our blood.’ She spoke, and in her bosom plunged the sword, All warm and reeking from its slaughter’d lord.

“The prayer which dying Thisbe had preferr’d, Both gods and parents with compassion heard. The whiteness of the mulberry soon fled, And, ripening, sadden’d in a dusky red; While both their parents their lost children mourn, And mix their ashes in one golden urn.”

Thus did the melancholy tale conclude, And a short silent interval ensued. The next in birth unloosed her artful tongue, And drew attentive all the sister throng.

Story of Leucothoe and the Sun

Leucothoe is beloved by Apollo, who introduces himself to her by assuming the shape of her mother—Their affection is mutual; when Clytie, who tenderly loves the god, discovers the whole intrigue to the father of the maiden, who orders his daughter to be buried alive—Her lover, unable to save her from death, sprinkles nectar and ambrosia on her tomb, which, penetrating to her body, change it into a beautiful tree which bears the frankincense.

“The Sun, the source of light, by beauty’s power Once amorous grew; then hear the sun’s amour. Venus, and Mars, with his far-piercing eyes, This god first spied; this god first all things spies. Stung at the sight, and swift on mischief bent, To haughty Juno’s shapeless son he went, To him his consort’s shame to represent. Poor Vulcan soon desired to hear no more, He dropp’d his hammer, and he shook all o’er; Then courage takes, and full of vengeful ire He heaves the bellows, and blows fierce the fire; From liquid brass, though sure, yet subtle snares He forms, and next a

wondrous net prepares, Drawn with such curious art, so nicely sly, Unseen the meshes cheat the searching eye. Not half so thin their webs the spiders weave, Which the most wary buzzing prey deceive. These chains, obedient to the touch, he spread In secret foldings o’er the conscious bed.

“Through heaven the news of this surprisal run, But Venus did not thus forget the Sun. He, who stolen transports idly had betray’d, By a betrayer was in kind repaid. What now avails, great god, thy piercing blaze, That youth, and beauty, and those golden rays? Thou, who canst warm this universe alone, Feel’st now a warmth more pow’rful than thy own; And those bright eyes, which all things should survey, Know not from fair Leucothoe to stray. The lamp of light, for human good design’d, Is to one virgin niggardly confin’d. Sometimes too early rise thy eastern beams, Sometimes too late they set in western streams; ’Tis then her beauty thy swift course delays, And gives to winter skies long summer days. Now in thy face thy lovesick mind appears, And spreads through impious nations empty fears; For when thy beamless head is wrapp’d in night, Poor mortals tremble in despair of light. ’Tis not the moon that o’er thee casts a veil, ’Tis love alone which makes thy looks so pale. Leucothoe is grown thy only care, Not Phaeton’s fair mother now is fair. The youthful Rhodos moves no tender thought, And beauteous Persa is at last forgot. Fond Clytie, scorn’d, yet loved and sought thy bed, Ev’n then thy heart for other virgins bled. Leucothoe has all thy soul possess’d, And chased each rival passion from thy breast. To this bright nymph Eurynome gave birth, In the bless’d confines of the spicy earth. Excelling others, she herself beheld, By her own blooming daughter far excell’d. The sire was Orchamus, whose vast command, The seventh from Belus, ruled the Persian land.

“Deep in cool vales, beneath the Hesperian sky, For the Sun’s fiery steeds the pastures lie. Ambrosia there they eat, and thence they gain New vigour, and their daily toils sustain. While thus on heavenly food the coursers fed, And Night around her gloomy empire spread, The god assumed the mother’s shape and air, And pass’d

unheeded to his darling fair. Close by a lamp, with maids encompass'd round, The royal spinster full employ'd he found: Then cried, 'Awhile from work, my daughter, rest,' And, like a mother, scarce her lips he press'd. 'Servants retire; nor secrets dare to hear, Entrusted only to a daughter's ear.' They swift obey'd; not one, suspicious, thought The secret which their mistress would be taught. Then he: 'Since now no witnesses are near, Behold the god who guides the various year! The world's vast eye, of light the source serene, Who all things sees, by whom are all things seen. Believe me, nymph (for I the truth have show'd), Thy charms have power to charm so great a god.' Confused, she heard him his soft passion tell, And on the floor, untwirl'd, the spindle fell: Still from the sweet confusion some new grace Blush'd out by stealth, and languish'd in her face. The lover, now inflamed, himself put on, And out at once the god all radiant shone. The virgin startled at his alter'd form, Too weak to bear a god's impetuous storm.

"This Clytie knew, and knew she was undone, Whose soul was fixed, and doted on the Sun. She raged to think on her neglected charms, And Phoebus panting in another's arms. With envious madness fired, she flies in haste, And tells the king his daughter was unchaste. The king, incensed to hear his honour stain'd, No more the father nor the man retain'd. In vain she stretch'd her arms, and turn'd her eyes To her loved god, the enlightener of the skies. In vain she own'd it was a crime, yet still It was a crime not acted by her will. The brutal sire stood deaf to every prayer, And deep in earth entomb'd alive the fair. What Phoebus could do was by Phoebus done, Full on her grave with pointed beams he shone; To pointed beams the gaping earth gave way; Had the nymph eyes, her eyes had seen the day; But lifeless now, yet lovely still, she lay. Not more the god wept when the world was fired, And in the wreck his blooming boy expired. The vital flame he strives to light again, And warm the frozen blood in every vein; But since resistless fates denied that power, On the cold nymph he rain'd a nectar shower. 'Ah! undeserving thus,' he said, 'to die, Yet still in odours thou shalt reach the sky.' The body soon dissolved, and all around

Perfumed with heavenly fragrances the ground. A sacrifice for gods uprose from thence, A sweet delightful tree of frankincense."

Transformation of Clytie

Clytie, being deserted by Apollo, pines away, and is changed into a sunflower, which still turns its head towards the sun, in token of her love.

"Though guilty Clytie thus the Sun betray'd, By too much passion she was guilty made. Excess of love begot excess of grief, Grief fondly bade her hence to hope relief. But angry Phoebus hears unmoved her sighs, And scornful from her loath'd embraces flies. All day, all night, in trackless wilds alone She pined, and taught the listening rocks her moan. On the bare earth she lies, her bosom bare, Loose her attire, dishevell'd is her hair. Nine times the morn unbarr'd the gates of light, As oft were spread the alternate shades of night, So long no sustenance the mourner knew, Unless she drank her tears, or suck'd the dew. She turn'd about, but rose not from the ground, Turn'd to the sun still as he roll'd his round; On his bright face hung her desiring eyes, Till, fix'd to earth, she strove in vain to rise; Her looks their paleness in a flower retain'd, But here and there some purple streaks they gain'd. Still the loved object the fond leaves pursue, Still move their root the moving sun to view, And in the heliotrope the nymph is true."

The sisters heard these wonders with surprise, But part received them as romantic lies, And pertly rallied, that they could not see In powers divine so vast an energy. Part own'd true gods such miracles might do, But own'd not Bacchus one among the true. At last a common, just request they make, And beg Alcithoe her turn to take. "I will," said she, "and please you if I can;" Then shot her shuttle swift, and thus began:

"The fate of Daphnis is a fate too known, Whom an enamour'd nymph transform'd to stone; Because she fear'd another nymph might see The lovely youth, and love as much as she: So strange the madness is of jealousy! Nor shall I tell what changes

Scython made, And how he walk’d a man, or tripp’d a maid. You too would peevish frown, and patience want To hear, how Celmis grew an adamant: He once was dear to Jove, and saw of old Jove when a child; but what he saw he told. Crocus and Smilax may be turn’d to flowers, And the Curetes spring from bounteous showers. I pass a hundred legends stale as these, And with sweet novelty your taste will please.”

Story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus

A beautiful youth, named Hermaphroditus, is beloved by a river nymph, who surprises him while bathing, and entreats the gods to unite them in one body; a request which is granted by the indulgent deities.

“How Salmacis, with weak, enfeebling streams, Softens the body, and unnerves the limbs, And what the secret cause, shall here be shown; The cause is secret, but the effect is known.

“The Naiads nursed an infant heretofore, That Citherea once to Hermes bore: From both the illustrious authors of his race The child was named, nor was it hard to trace Both the bright parents through the infant’s face. When fifteen years in Ida’s cool retreat The boy had told, he left his native seat, And sought fresh fountains in a foreign soil: The pleasure lessen’d the attending toil. With eager steps the Lycian fields he cross’d, And fields that border on the Lycian coast: A river here he view’d, so lovely bright, It show’d the bottom in a fairer light, Nor kept a sand conceal’d from human sight: The stream produced nor slimy ooze, nor weeds, Nor miry rushes, nor the spiky reeds, But dealt enriching moisture all around, The fruitful banks with cheerful verdure crown’d, And kept the spring eternal on the ground. A nymph presides, not practised in the chase, Nor skilful at the bow, nor at the race; Of all the blue-eyed daughters of the main, The only stranger to Diana’s train. Her sisters often, as ’tis said, would cry, ‘Fy, Salmacis: what! always idle; fy! Or take thy quiver, or thy arrows seize, And mix the toils of hunting with they ease.’ Nor

quivers she, nor arrows, e'er would seize, Nor mix the toils of hunting with her ease; But oft would bathe her in the crystal tide, Oft with a comb her dewy locks divide; Now in the limpid stream she views her face, And dress'd her image in the floating glass: On beds of leaves she pow reposed her limbs, Now gather'd flowers that grew about her streams, And then by chance was gathering, as she stood To view the boy, and long'd for what she view'd.

"Fain would she meet the youth with hasty feet, She fain would meet him, but refused to meet Before her looks were set with nicest care, And well deserved to be reputed fair.

" 'Bright youth,' she cries, 'whom all thy features prove A god, and, if a god, the god of love; But if a mortal, bless'd thy nurse's breast, Bless'd are thy parents, and thy sisters bless'd: But O! how bless'd, how more than bless'd thy bride! Allied in bliss, if any yet allied. If so, let mine the stolen enjoyments be; If not, behold a willing bride in me.'

"The boy knew naught of love, and, touch'd with shame, He strove, and blush'd, but still the blush became; In rising blushes still fresh beauties rose; The sunny side of fruit such blushes shows, And such the moon, when all her silver white Turns in eclipses to a ruddy light. The nymph still begs, if not a nobler bliss, A cold salute at least, a sister's kiss; And now prepares to take the lovely boy Between her arms. He, innocently coy, Replies, 'Or leave me to myself alone, You rude uncivil nymph, or I'll be gone.' 'Fair stranger, then,' says she, 'it shall be so;' And, for she fear'd his threats, she feign'd to go; But, hid within a covert's neighbouring green, She kept him still in sight, herself unseen. The boy now fancies all the danger o'er, And innocently sports about the shore; Playful and wanton to the stream he trips, And dips his foot, and shivers as he dips. The coolness pleased him, and, with eager haste, His airy garments on the banks he cast; His godlike features, and his heavenly hue, And all his beauties, were exposed to view.

“Now all undress’d upon the banks he stood, And clapp’d his sides, and leap’d into the flood: His lovely limbs the silver waves divide; His limbs appear more lovely through the tide; As lilies, shut within a crystal case, Receive a glossy lustre from the glass. ‘He’s mine, he’s all my own,’ the Naiad cries, And flings of all, and after him she flies. And now she fastens on him as he swims, And holds him close, and wraps about his limbs. ‘And why, coy youth,’ she cries, ‘why thus unkind? O may the gods thus keep us over join’d! O may we never, never part again!’ So pray’d the nymph, nor did she pray in vain: For now she finds him, as his limbs she press’d. Grow nearer still, and nearer to her breast, Till, piercing each the other’s flesh, they run Together, and incorporate in one: Last, in one face are both their faces join’d, As when the stock and grafted twig combined Shoot up the same, and wear a common ring.”

Alcithoe and Her Sisters Transformed to Bats

The impiety of Alcithoe and her sisters is punished by their transformation into the shape of bats by the power of Bacchus.

But Mineus’ daughters still their task pursue, To wickedness most obstinately true; At Bacchus still they laugh, when all around, Unseen, the timbrels hoarse were heard to sound. Saffron and myrrh their fragrant odours shed, And now the present deity they dread. Strange to relate! here ivy first was seen, Along the distaff crept the wondrous green; Then sudden, springing vines began to bloom, And the soft tendrils curl’d around the loom; While purple clusters, dangling from on high, Tinged the wrought purple with a second die.

Now from the skies was shot a doubtful light, The day declining to the bounds of night. The fabric’s firm foundations shake all o’er, False tigers rage, and figured lions roar, Torches, aloft, seem blazing in the air, And angry flashes of red lightnings glare. To dark recesses, the dire sight to shun, Swift the pale sisters in confusion run: Their arms were lost in pinions as they fled, And subtle films each

slender limb o'erspread. Their alter'd forms their senses soon reveal'd; Their forms, how alter'd, darkness still conceal'd. Close to the roof each, wond'ring, upwards springs, Borne on unknown, transparent, plumeless wings. They strove for words; their little bodies found No words, but murmur'd in a fainting sound. In towns, not woods, the sooty bats delight, And never till the dusk begin their flight; Till Vesper rises with his evening flame, From whom the Romans have derived their name.

Transformation of Ino and Melicerta to Sea-Gods

Juno, jealous of the prosperity of Ino, the nurse of Bacchus, sends the fury Tisiphone to the house of Athamas, her husband, who is seized with such a sudden frenzy, that he mistakes his wife and children for a lioness with her whelps, and dashes his son Learchus against a wall—Ino effects her escape, and from a high rock precipitates herself into the sea with Melicerta in her arms—She is promoted by Neptune to the dignity of a sea-deity, afterward called Leucothoe, while Melicerta becomes a sea-god, known by the name of Palaemon.

The power of Bacchus now o'er Thebes had flown: With awful reverence soon the god they own. Proud Ino all around the wonder tells, And on her nephew deity still dwells. Of numerous sisters, she alone yet knew No grief, but grief which she from sisters drew.

Imperial Juno saw her with disdain Vain in her offspring, in her consort vain, Who ruled the trembling Thebans with a nod, But saw her vainest in her foster-god. "Could then," she cried, "a bastard boy have power To make a mother her own son devour? Could he the Tuscan crew to fishes change, And now three sisters damn to forms so strange? Yet shall the wife of Jove find no relief? Shall she still unrevenged disclose her grief? Have I the mighty freedom to complain? Is that my power? Is that to ease my pain? A foe has taught me vengeance; and who ought To scorn that vengeance which a foe has taught? What sure destruction frantic rage can throw, The gaping wounds of slaughter'd Pentheus show. Why should not Ino, fired

with madness, stray, Like her mad sisters her own kindred slay? Why she not follow where they lead the way?”

Down a steep yawning cave where yews display’d In arches meet, and lend a baleful shade, Through silent labyrinths a passage lies To mournful regions and infernal skies. Here Styx exhales its noisome clouds, and here, The funeral rites once paid, all souls appear, Stiff, cold; and horror, with a ghastly face, And staring eyes, infests the dreary place. Ghosts, new-arrived, and strangers to these plains, Know not the palace where grim Pluto reigns; They journey doubtful, nor the road can tell, Which leads to the metropolis of hell. A thousand avenues those towers command, A thousand gates for ever open stand. As all the rivers, disembogued, find room For all their waters in old Ocean’s womb, So this vast city worlds of shades receives, And space for millions still of worlds she leaves. The unbodied spectres freely rove, and show Whate’er they loved on earth they love below: The lawyers still, or right or wrong support, The courtiers smoothly glide to Pluto’s court, Still airy heroes thoughts of glory fire, Still the dead poet strings his deathless lyre, And lovers still with fancied darts expire.

The queen of heaven, to gratify her hate, And sooth immortal wrath, forgets her state; Down from the realms of day to realms of night, The goddess swift precipitates her flight. At hell arrived, the noise hell’s porter heard, The enormous dog his triple head uprear’d: Thrice from three grisly throats he howl’d profound, Then suppliant couch’d, and stretch’d along the ground. The trembling threshold, which Saturnia press’d, The weight of such divinity confess’d.

Before a lofty adamantine gate, Which closed a tower of brass, the Furies sate; Misshapen forms, tremendous to the sight, The implacable foul daughters of the night. A sounding whip each bloody sister shakes, Or from her tresses combs the curling snakes. But now great Juno’s majesty was known; Through the thick gloom all heavenly bright she shone; The hideous monsters their obedience show’d, And,

rising from their seats, submissive bow'd.

This is the place of wo, here groan the dead: Huge Tityus o'er nine acres here is spread: Fruitful for pain the immortal liver breeds, Still grows, and still the insatiate vulture feeds: Poor Tantalus to taste the water tries, But from his lips the faithless water flies: Then thinks the bending tree he can command; The tree starts backwards, and eludes his hand: The labour too of Sisyphus is vain; Up the steep mount he heaves the stone with pain, Down from the summit rolls the stone again: The Belides their leaky vessels still Are ever filling, and yet never fill; Doom'd to this punishment for blood they shed, For bridegrooms slaughter'd in the bridal bed; Stretch'd on the rolling wheel Ixion lies; Himself he follows, and himself he flies. Ixion, tortured, Juno sternly eyed, Then turn'd, and toiling Sisyphus espied: "And why," she said, "so wretched is the fate Of him, whose brother proudly reigns in state? Yet still my altars unadored have been By Athamas and his presumptuous queen."

What caused her hate, the goddess thus confess'd, What caused her journey now was more than guess'd, That hate, relentless, its revenge did want, And that revenge the Furies soon could grant: They could the glory of proud Thebes efface, And hide in ruin the Cadmean race. For this she largely promises, entreats, And to entreaties adds imperial threats.

Then fell Tisiphone with rage was stung, And from her mouth the untwisted serpents flung. "To gain this trifling boon, there is no need," She cried, "in formal speeches to proceed. Whatever thou command'st to do is done; Believe it finish'd, though not yet begun. But from these melancholy seats repair To happier mansions, and to purer air." She spoke. The goddess, darting upwards, flies, And joyous reascends her native skies: Nor enter'd there, till round her Iris threw Ambrosial sweets, and pour'd celestial dew.

The faithful fury, guiltless of delays, With cruel haste the dire command obeys. Girt

in a bloody gown, a torch she shakes, And round her neck twines speckled wreaths of snakes. Fear, and dismay, and agonizing pain, With frantic rage, complete her loveless train. To Thebes her flight she sped, and hell forsook; At her approach the Theban turrets shook; The sun shrunk back, thick clouds the day o'ercast, And springing greens were wither'd as she pass'd.

Now, dismal yellings heard, strange spectre seen, Confound as much the monarch as the queen. In vain to quit the palace they prepared, Tisiphone was there, and kept the ward. She wide extended her unfriendly arms, And all the fury lavish'd all her harms, Part of her tresses loudly hiss, and part Spread poison, as their forky tongues they dart: Then from her middle locks two snakes she drew, Whose merit from superior mischief grew: The envenom'd ruin, thrown with spiteful care, Clung to the bosoms of the hapless pair. The hapless pair soon with wild thoughts were fired, And madness by a thousand ways inspired. 'Tis true, the unwounded body still was sound, But 'twas the soul which felt the deadly wound. Nor did the unsated monster here give o'er, But dealt of plagues a fresh unnumber'd store. Each baneful juice too well she understood, Foam churn'd by Cerberus, and Hydra's blood. Hot hemlock and cold aconite she chose, Delighted in variety of woes. Whatever can untune the harmonious soul, And its mild reas'ning faculties control, Give false ideas, raise desires profane, And whirl in eddies the tumultuous brain, Mix'd with cursed art, she direfully around Through all their nerves diffused the sad compound; Then toss'd her torch in circles still the same, Improved their rage, and added flame to flame. The grinning fury her own conquest spied, And to her rueful shades return'd with pride, And threw the exhausted useless snakes aside.

Now Athamas cries out, his reason fled, "Here, fellow-hunters, let the toils be spread. I saw a lioness, in quest of food, With her two young, run roaring in this wood." Again the fancied savages were seen, As through his palace still he chased his queen; Then tore Learchus from her breast: the child Stretch'd little arms, and on its father smiled: A father now no more, who now begun Around his head to whirl

his giddy son, And, quite insensible to nature's call, The helpless infant flung against the wall. The same mad poison in the mother wrought: Young Melicerta in her arms she caught, And with disorder'd tresses, howling, flies, "O! Bacchus, Evoe, Bacchus!" loud she cries. The name of Bacchus Juno laugh'd to hear, And said, "Thy foster-god has cost thee dear."

A rock there stood, whose side the beating waves Had long consumed, and hollow'd into caves; The head shot forwards in a bending steep, And cast a dreadful covert o'er the deep. The wretched Ino, on destruction bent, Climb'd up the cliff, such strength her fury lent, Thence with her guiltless boy, who wept in vain, At one bold spring she plunged into the main.

Her niece's fate touch'd Cytherea's breast, And in soft sounds she Neptune thus address'd: "Great god of waters, whose extended sway Is next to his whom heaven and earth obey, Let not the suit of Venus thee displease, Pity the floaters on the Ionian seas. Increase thy subject-gods, nor yet disdain To add my kindred to that glorious train. If from the sea I may such honours claim, If 'tis desert that from the sea I came, As Grecian poets artfully have sung, And in the name confess'd from whence I sprung."

Pleased Neptune nodded his assent, and free Both soon became from frail mortality. He gave them form, and majesty divine, And bade them glide along the foamy brine. For Melicerta is Palaemon known, And Ino once, Leucothoe is grown.

Transformation of the Theban Matrons

The companions of Ino, lamenting the fate of their unhappy mistress, excite the displeasure of Juno, who transforms them into stones and birds.

The Theban matrons their loved queen pursued, And tracing to the rock, her footsteps view'd. Too certain of her fate, they rend the skies With piteous shrieks, and lamentable cries; All beat their breasts, and Juno all upbraid, Who still

remember'd a deluded maid, Who, still revengeful for one stolen embrace, Thus wreak'd her hate on the Cadmean race. This Juno heard: "And shall such elfs," she cried "Dispute my justice, or my power deride? You too shall feel my wrath not idly spent; A goddess never for insults was meant."

She who loved most, and who most loved had been, Said: "Not the waves shall part me from my queen." She strove to plunge into the roaring flood, Fix'd to the stone, a stone herself she stood; This, on her breast would fain her blows repeat; Her stiffen'd hands refused her breast to beat; That stretch'd her arms unto the seas, in vain Her arms she labour'd to unstretch again. To tear her comely locks another tried; Both comely locks and fingers petrified. Part thus; but Juno, with a softer mind, Part doom'd to mix among the feather'd kind. Transform'd, the name of Theban birds they keep, And skim the surface of that fatal deep.

Cadmus and His Queen Transformed Into Serpents

Wearied with toil and infirm with age, Cadmus and his wife retire to Illyricum, and at their own request are changed into Serpents.

Meantime the wretched Cadmus mourns, nor knows That they who mortal fell, immortal rose. With a long series of new ills oppress'd, He droops, and all the man forsakes his breast: Strange prodigies confound his frighted eyes; From the fair city, which he raised, he flies; As it misfortune not pursued his race, But only hung o'er that devoted place. Resolved by sea to seek some distant land, At last he safely gain'd the Illyrian strand. Cheerless himself, his consort still he cheers, Hoary, and laden both with woes and years. Then to recount past sorrows they begin, And trace them to the gloomy origin. "That serpent sure was hallow'd," Cadmus cried, "Which once my spear transfix'd with foolish pride; When the big teeth, a seed before unknown, By me along the wond'ring glebe were sown, And sprouting armies by themselves o'erthrown. If thence the wrath of heaven on me is bent, May heaven conclude it with one sad event; To an extended serpent change the man;" And, while

he spoke, the wish’d-for change began. His skin with sea-green spots was varied round, And on his belly prone he press’d the ground; He glitter’d soon with many a golden scale, And his shrunk legs closed in a spiry tail; Arms yet remain’d, remaining arms he spread To his loved wife, and human tears yet shed. “Come, my Harmonia, come, thy face recline Down to my face; still touch what still is mine. O! let these hands, while hands, be gently press’d, While yet the serpent has not all possess’d.” More he had spoke, but strove to speak in vain, The forky tongue refused to tell his pain, And learn’d in hissings only to complain.

Then shriek’d Harmonia: “Stay, my Cadmus, stay, Glide not in such a monstrous shape away! Destruction, like impetuous waves, rolls on. Where are thy feet, thy legs, thy shoulders, gone? Changed is thy visage, changed is all thy frame, Cadmus is only Cadmus now in name. Ye gods, my Cadmus to himself restore, Or me like him transform; I ask no more.”

The husband serpent show’d he still had thought, With wonted fondness an embrace he sought, Play’d round her neck in many a harmless twist, And lick’d that bosom which, a man, he kiss’d. The lookers-on (for lookers-on there were), Shock’d at the sight, half died away with fear. The transformation was again renew’d, And, like the husband, changed the wife they view’d. Both serpents now, with fold involved in fold, To the next covert amicably roll’d. There curl’d they lie, or wave along the green, Fearless see men, by men are fearless seen, Still mild, and conscious what they once have been.

Story of Perseus

Acrisius, the grandfather of Perseus, is at length compelled to acknowledge the divinity of Bacchus, and to commemorate the splendid achievements of his descendant.

Yet though this harsh inglorious fate they found, Each in the deathless grandson lived renown’d. Through conquer’d India Bacchus nobly rode, And Greece with

temples hail'd the conquering god. In Argos only proud Acrisius reign'd, Who all the consecrated rites profaned. Audacious wretch! thus Bacchus to deny, And the great Thunderer's great son defy! Nor him alone: thy daughter vainly strove Brave Perseus of celestial stem to prove, And herself pregnant by a golden Jove. Yet this was true, and truth in time prevails; Acrisius now his unbelief bewails. His former thought an impious thought he found, And both the hero and the god were own'd. He saw, already, one in heaven was placed, And one with more than mortal triumphs graced. The victor Perseus, with the Gorgon head, O'er Libyan sands his airy journey sped. The gory drops distill'd, as swift he flew, And from each drop envenom'd serpents grew. The mischiefs brooded on the barren plains, And still the unhappy fruitfulness remains.

Atlas Transformed to a Mountain

Perseus, after the conquest of the Gorgons, passes by the palace of Atlas, and solicits the rites of hospitality, which are refused—Perseus exhibits the head of Medusa, and the monarch is instantly changed into a large mountain, on which the world is supposed to rest.

Thence Perseus, like a cloud, by storms was driven, Through all the expanse beneath the cope of heaven. The jarring winds unable to control, He saw the southern and the northern pole; And eastward thrice, and westward thrice, was whirl'd, And from the skies survey'd the nether world. But when gray evening show'd the verge of night, He fear'd in darkness to pursue his flight. He poised his pinions, and forgot to soar, And, sinking, closed them on the Hesperian shore Then begg'd to rest, till Lucifer begun To wake the morn, the morn to wake the sun.

Here Atlas reign'd, of more than human size, And in his kingdom the world's limit lies. Here Titan bids his wearied coursers sleep, And cools the burning axle in the deep: The mighty monarch, uncontroll'd, alone His sceptre sways: no neighb'ring states are known: A thousand flocks on shady mountains fed, A thousand herds o'er

grassy plains were spread: Here wondrous trees their shining stores unfold, Their shining stores too wondrous to be told, Their leaves, their branches, and their apples, gold. Then Perseus the gigantic prince address'd, Humbly implored a hospitable rest: "If bold exploits thy admiration fire," He said, "I fancy mine thou wilt admire: Or, if the glory of a race can move, Not mean my glory, for I spring from Jove." At this confession Atlas ghastly stared, Mindful of what an oracle declared, That the dark womb of time conceal'd a day, Which should, disclosed, the bloomy gold betray; All should at once be ravish'd from his eyes, And Jove's own progeny enjoy the prize. For this, the fruit he loftily immured, And a fierce dragon the strait pass secured: For this, all strangers he forbade to land, And drove them from the inhospitable strand. To Perseus then: "Fly, quickly fly, this coast, Nor falsely dare thy acts and race to boast." In vain the hero for one night entreats, Threat'ning he storms, and next adds force to threats. By strength not Perseus could himself defend; For who in strength with Atlas could contend? "But since short rest to me thou wilt not give, A gift of endless rest from me receive." He said, and backward turn'd, no more conceal'd The present, and Medusa's head reveal'd. Soon the high Atlas a high mountain stood; His locks and beard became a leafy wood; His hands and shoulders into ridges went; The summit-head still crown'd the steep ascent; His bones a solid, rocky hardness gain'd, He, thus immensely grown (as Fate ordain'd), The stars, the heavens, and all the gods, sustain'd.

Andromeda Rescued from the Sea Monster

Perseus, returning in the air from the conquest of the Gorgons, beholds Andromeda chained to a rock, and exposed to a sea monster—The hero proposes to the father of the maiden to deliver her and destroy the monster, if he will consent to bestow her in marriage on him—The offer is joyfully accepted, and the promise speedily fulfilled.

Now Aeolus had with strong chains confined, And deep imprison'd every blustering

wind; The rising Phospher with a purple light Did sluggish mortals to new toils invite. His feet again the valiant Perseus plumes, And his keen sabre in his hand resumes: Then nobly spurns the ground, and upwards springs, And cuts the liquid air with sounding wings. O’er various seas, and various lands, he pass’d, Till Ethiopia’s shore appear’d at last. Andromeda was there, doom’d to atone By her own ruin follies not her own: And if injustice in a god can be, Such was the Libyan god’s unjust decree. Chain’d to a rock she stood; young Perseus stay’d His rapid flight, to view the beauteous maid. So sweet her frame, so exquisitely fine, She seem’d a statue by a hand divine, Had not the wind her waving tresses show’d, And down her cheeks the melting sorrows flow’d. Her faultless form the hero’s bosom fires; The more he looks, the more he still admires. The admirer almost had forgot to fly, And swift descended, fluttering from on high: “O virgin! worthy no such chains to prove, But pleasing chains in the soft folds of love; Thy country, and thy name,” he said, “disclose, And give a true rehearsal of thy woes.”

A quick reply her bashfulness refused, To the free converse of a man unused. Her rising blushes had concealment found From her spread hands, but that her hands were bound. She acted to her full extent of power, And bathed her face with a fresh, silent shower. But by degrees in innocence grown bold, Her name, her country, and her birth she told: And how she suffer’d for her mother’s pride, Who with the Nereids once in beauty vied. Part yet untold, the seas began to roar, And mounting billows tumbled to the shore. Above the waves a monster raised his head, His body o’er the deep was widely spread: Onward he flounced; aloud the virgin cries; Each parent to her shrieks in shrieks replies: But she had deepest cause to rend the skies. Weeping, to her they cling; no sign appears Of help, they only lend their helpless tears. “Too long you vent your sorrows,” Perseus said, “Short is the hour, and swift the time of aid; In me the son of thundering Jove behold, Got in a kindly shower of fruitful gold: Medusa’s snaky head is now my prey, And through the clouds I boldly wing my way: If such desert be worthy of esteem, And if your daughter I from death

redeem, Shall she be mine? Shall it not then be thought A bride so lovely was too cheaply bought? For her my arms I willingly employ, If I may beauties, which I save, enjoy." The parents eagerly the terms embrace: For who would slight such terms in such a case? Nor her alone they promise, but, beside, The dowry of a kingdom with the bride.

As well-rigg'd galleys, which slaves, sweating, row, With their sharp beaks the whiten'd ocean plough; So, when the monster moved, still at his back The furrow'd waters left a foamy track. Now to the rock he was advanced so nigh, Whirl'd from a sling, a stone the space would fly. Then, bounding upwards, the brave Perseus sprung, And in mid air on hovering pinions hung. His shadow quickly floated on the main; The monster could not his wild rage restrain, But at the floating shadow leap'd in vain. As when Jove's bird a speckled serpent spies, Which in the shine of Phoebus basking lies, Unseen, he souses down, and bears away, Truss'd from behind, the vainly hissing prey. To writhe his neck the labour naught avails, Too deep the imperial talons pierce his scales. Thus the wing'd hero now descends, now soars, And at his pleasure the vast monster gores. Full in his back, swift stooping from above, The crooked sabre to its hilt he drove. The monster raged, impatient of the pain, First bounded high, and then sunk low again. Now, like a savage boar, when chafed with wounds, And bay'd with opening mouths of hungry hounds, He on the foe turns with collected might, Who still eludes him with an airy flight; And, wheeling round, the scaly armour tries Of his thick sides; his thinner tail now plies; Till, from repeated strokes, out gush'd a flood, And the waves redden'd with the streaming blood. At last the dropping wings, befoam'd all o'er, With flaggy heaviness their master bore: A rock he spied, whose humble head was low, Bare at an ebb, but cover'd at a flow. A ridgy hold, he, thither flying, gain'd, And with one hand his bending weight sustain'd; With the other, vig'rous blows he dealt around, And the home thrusts the expiring monster own'd. In deaf'ning shouts the glad applauses rise, And peal on peal runs rattling through the skies. The saviour-youth

the royal pair confess, And with heaved hands their daughter's bridegroom bless The beauteous bride moves on, now loosed from chains, The cause, and sweet reward, of all the hero's pains.

Meantime on shore triumphant Perseus stood, And purged his hands, smear'd with the monster's blood: Then in the windings of a sandy bed Composed Medusa's execrable head. But to prevent the roughness, leaves he threw, And young green twigs, which soft in waters grew, There soft, and full of sap; but here, when laid, Touch'd by the head, that softness soon decay'd. The wonted flexibility quite gone, The tender scions harden'd into stone. Fresh juicy twigs, surprised, the Nereids brought, Fresh juicy twigs the same contagion caught. The nymphs the petrifying seeds still keep, And propagate the wonder through the deep. The pliant sprays of coral yet declare Their stiff'ning nature, when exposed to air. Those sprays, which did like bending osiers move, Snatch'd from their element obdurate prove, And shrubs beneath the waves grow stones above.

The great immortals grateful Perseus praised, And to three powers three turfy altars raised. To Hermes this; and that he did assign To Pallas; the mid honours, Jove, were thine: He hastes for Pallas a white cow to cull, A calf for Hermes, but for Jove a bull. Then seized the prize of his victorious fight, Andromeda, and claim'd the nuptial rite, Andromeda alone he greatly sought, The dowry kingdom was not worth his thought.

Pleased Hymen now his golden torch displays; With rich oblations fragrant altars blaze, Sweet wreaths of choicest flowers are hung on high, And cloudless pleasure smiles in every eye; The melting music melting thoughts inspires, And warbling songsters aid the warbling lyres; The palace opens wide in pompous state, And, by his peers surrounded, Cepheus sate; A feast was served, fit for a king to give, And fit for godlike heroes to receive. The banquet ended, the gay cheerful bowl Moved round, and brighten'd, and enlarged each soul. Then Perseus ask'd what customs

there obtain’d, And by what laws the people were restrain’d; Which told, the teller a like freedom takes, And to the warrior his petition makes, To know what arts had won Medusa’s snakes.

Story of Medusa’s Head

Medusa, one of the three Gorgons, and celebrated for her personal beauty, is violated by Neptune in the temple of Minerva who changes the flowing ringlets, which had attracted the admiration of the god, into hissing snakes, which are finally transferred to the aegis of Minerva.

The hero with his just request complies, Shows how a vale beneath cold Atlas lies, Where, with aspiring mountains fenced around, He the two daughters of old Phorcus found. Fate had one common eye to both assign’d, Each saw by turns, and each by turns was blind. But while one strove to lend her sister sight, He stretch’d his hand, and stole their mutual light, And left both eyeless, both involved in night. Through devious wilds, and trackless woods, he pass’d, And at the Gorgon seats arrived at last: But as he journey’d, pensive, he survey’d What wasteful havoc dire Medusa made. Here, stood still breathing statues, men before; There, rampant lions seem’d in stone to roar. Nor did he, yet affrighted, quit the field; But in the mirror of his polish’d shield, Reflected, saw Medusa slumbers take, And not one serpent, by good chance, awake. Then backward an unerring blow he sped, And from her body lopp’d at once her head. The gore prolific proved; with sudden force Sprung Pegasus, and wing’d his airy course.

The heaven-born warrior faithfully went on, And told the numerous dangers which he run; What subject seas, what lands he had in view, And nigh what stars the advent’rous hero flew. At last he silent sat; the list’ning throng Sigh’d at the pause of his delightful tongue. Some begg’d to know why this alone should wear, Of all the sisters, such destructive hair.

Great Perseus then: “With me you shall prevail, Worth the relation, to relate a tale.

Medusa once had charms; to gain her love A rival crowd of envious lovers strove. They who have seen her own, they ne’er did trace More moving features in a sweeter face: Yet, above all, her length of hair, they own, In golden ringlets waved, and graceful shone. Her Neptune saw, and with such beauties fired, Resolved to compass what his soul desired. The bashful goddess turn’d her eyes away, Nor durst such bold impurity survey; But on the lovely virgin vengeance takes, Her shining hair is changed to hissing snakes. These, in her aegis, Pallas joys to bear: The hissing snakes her foes more sure insnare, Than they did lovers once, when shining hair.”

Book V

Story of Perseus Continued

Phineus, the brother of Cepheus, had been betrothed to his niece Andromeda before she had been exposed to the rage of a sea-monster; and, in order to interrupt the marriage ceremony, he collects a considerable number of his adherents, who assault Perseus—The hero, after defending himself with courage, is in danger of being overpowered, when the assailants are suddenly turned into stone by the head of Medusa.

While Perseus entertain’d with this report His father Cepheus, and the list’ning court, Within the palace walls was heard aloud The roaring noise of some unruly crowd; Not like the songs which cheerful friends prepare For nuptial days, but sounds that threaten’d war; And all the pleasures of this happy feast, To tumult turn’d, in wild disorder ceased: So, when the sea is calm, we often find A storm raised sudden by some furious wind.

Chief in the riot Phineus first appear’d, The rash ringleader of this boist’rous herd, And brandishing his brazen-pointed lance, “Behold,” he said, “an injured man

advance, Stung with resentment for his ravish'd wife; Nor shall thy wings, O Perseus, save thy life; Nor Jove himself, though we've been often told, Who got thee in the form of tempting gold." His lance was aim'd, when Cepheus ran and said, "Hold! brother, hold! what brutal rage has made Your frantic mind so black a crime conceive? Are these the thanks that you to Perseus give? This the reward that to his worth you pay, Whose timely valour saved Andromeda? Nor was it he, if you would reason right, That forced her from you, but the jealous spite Of envious Nereids, and Jove's high decree, And that devouring monster of the sea, That ready, with his jaws wide gaping, stood To eat my child, the fairest of my blood. You lost her then, when she seem'd past relief, And wish'd, perhaps, her death to ease your grief With my afflictions: not content to view Andromeda in chains, unhelp'd by you, Her spouse, and uncle; will you grieve that he Exposed his life the dying maid to free? And shall you claim his merit? Had you thought Her charms so great, you should have bravely sought That blessing on the rocks where fix'd she lay: But now let Perseus bear his prize away, By service gain'd, by promised faith possess'd; To him I owe it, that my age is bless'd Still with a child: nor think that I prefer Perseus to thee, but to the loss of her."

Phineus on him and Perseus roll'd about His eyes in silent rage, and seem'd to doubt Which to destroy, till, resolute at length, He threw his spear with the redoubled strength His fury gave him, and at Perseus struck; But missing Perseus, in his seat it stuck; Who, springing nimbly up, return'd the dart, And almost plunged it in his rival's heart; But he for safety to the altar ran; Unfit protection for so vile a man: Yet was the stroke not vain, as Rhoetus found, Who in his brow received a mortal wound; Headlong he tumbled, when his scull was broke, From which his friends the fatal weapon took, While he lay trembling, and his gushing blood In crimson streams around the table flow'd.

But this provoked the unruly rabble worse: They flung their darts; and some in loud discourse To death young Perseus and the monarch doom; But Cepheus left before

the guilty room, With grief appealing to the gods above, Who laws of hospitality approve, Who faith protect, and succour injured right, That he was guiltless of this barb'rous fight.

Pallas her brother Perseus close attends, And with her ample shield from harm defends, Raising a sprightly courage in his heart: But Indian Athis took the weaker part: Born in the crystal grottoes of the sea, Limnate's son, a fenny nymph, and she Daughter of Ganges: graceful was his mien, His person lovely, and his age sixteen: His habit made his native beauty more: A purple mantle fringed with gold he wore; His neck, well turn'd, with golden chains was graced; His hair, with myrrh perfumed, was nicely dress'd. Though with just aim he could the javelin throw, Yet with more skill he drew the bending bow; And now was drawing it with artful hand, When Perseus, snatching up a flaming brand, Whirl'd sudden at his face the burning wood, Crush'd his eyes in, and quench'd the fire with blood; Through the soft skin the splinter'd bones appear, And spoil'd the face that lately was so fair.

When Lycabas his Athis thus beheld, How was his heart with friendly horror fill'd! A youth so noble, to his soul so dear, To see his shapeless look, his dying groans to hear! He snatch'd the bow the boy was used to bend, And cried, "With me, false traitor, dare contend; Boast not a conquest o'er a child, but try Thy strength with me, who all thy powers defy, Nor think so mean an act a victory." While yet he spoke he flung the whizzing dart, Which pierced the plaited robe, but miss'd his heart. Perseus defied, upon him fiercely press'd With sword unsheathed, and plunged it in his breast: His eyes o'erwhelm'd with night, he stumbling falls, And with his latest breath on Athis calls; Pleased that so near the lovely youth he lies, He sinks his head upon his friend, and dies.

Next eager Phorbas, old Methion's son, Came rushing forward with Amphimedon, When the smooth pavement, slippery made with gore, Tripp'd up their feet, and flung them on the floor: The sword of Perseus, who by chance was nigh, Prevents

their rise; and where they fall, they lie: Full in his ribs Amphimedon he smote, And then stuck fiery Phorbas in the throat. Eurythus lifting up his axe, the blow Was thus prevented by his nimble foe: A golden cup he seizes, high emboss'd, And at his head the massy goblet toss'd: It hits, and from his forehead bruised rebounds, And blood and brains he vomits from his wounds; With his slain fellows on the floor he lies, And death for ever shuts his swimming eyes. Then Polydaemon fell, a goddess born: Phlegias and Elycen, with locks unshorn, Next follow'd: next the stroke of death he gave To Clytus, Abanis, and Lycetus brave; While o'er unnumber'd heaps of ghastly dead The Argive hero's feet triumphant tread.

But Phineus stands aloof, and dreads to feel His rival's force, and flies his pointed steel; Yet threw a dart from far; by chance it lights On Idas, who for neither party fights: But wounded, sternly thus to Phineus said: "Since of a neuter thou a foe hast made, This I return thee," drawing from his side The dart, which, as he strove to fling, he died. Odites fell by Clymenus's sword; The Cephen court had not a greater lord. Hypseus his blade does in Protenor sheath; But brave Lyncides soon revenged his death. Here too was old Emathion, one that fear'd The gods, and in the cause of Heaven appear'd, Who, only wishing the success of right, And by his age exempted from the fight, Both sides alike condemns: "This impious war Cease, cease," he cries; "these bloody broils forbear." This scarce the sage, with high concern, had said, When Chromis, at a blow, struck off his head, Which, dropping, on the royal altar roll'd, Still staring on the crowd with aspect bold; And still it seem'd their horrid strife to blame; In life and death his pious zeal the same: While clinging to the horns the trunk expires, The sever'd head consumes amid the fires.

Then Phineus, who from far his javelin threw, Broteas and Ammon, twins and brothers, slew; For knotted gauntlets matchless in the field; But gauntlets must to swords and javelins yield. Ampycus next, with hallow'd fillets bound, As Ceres' priest, and with a mitre crown'd, His spear transfix'd, and struck him to the ground.

O Iapetides, with pain I tell How you, sweet lyrist, in the riot fell: What worse than brutal rage his breast could fill Who did thy blood, O bard celestial! spill? Kindly you press'd amid the princely throng, To crown the feast, and give the nuptial song: Discord abhorr'd the music of thy lyre, Whose notes did gentle peace so well inspire: Thee when fierce Pettalus far off espied, Defenceless with thy harp, he scoffing cried, "Go, to the ghosts thy soothing lessons play; We loathe thy lyre, and scorn thy peaceful lay;" And, as again he fiercely bid him go, He pierced his temples with a mortal blow. His harp he held, though sinking on the ground, Whose strings in death his trembling fingers found, By chance, and tuned by chance a dying sound.

With grief Lycormas saw him fall, from far, And wresting from the door a massy bar, Full in his poll lays on a load of knocks, Which stun him, and he falls like a devoted ox. Another bar Pelates would have snatch'd, But Corythus his motions slyly watch'd; He darts his weapon from a private stand, And rivets to the post his veiny hand; When straight a missive spear transfix'd his side, By Abas thrown, and, as he hung, he died.

Melaneus on the prince's side was slain, And Dorylas, who own'd a fertile plain, Of Nasamonia's fields the wealthy lord, Whose crowded barns could scarce contain their hoard: A whizzing spear obliquely gave a blow, Stuck in his groin, and pierced the nerves below: His foe beheld his eyes convulsive roll, His ebbing veins, and his departing soul, Then taunting said: "Of all thy spacious plains, This spot thy only property remains." He left him thus; but had no sooner left, Than Perseus in revenge his nostrils cleft; From his friend's breast the murdering dart he drew, And the same weapon at the murderer threw; His head in halves the darted javelin cut, And on each side the brain came issuing out.

Fortune his friend, his deaths around he deals, And this his lance, and that his falchion feels: Now Clytius dies; and, by a different wound, The twin, his brother Clanis, bites the ground: In his rent jaw the bearded weapon sticks, And the steel'd

dart does Clytius' thigh transfix. With these Mendesian Celadon he slew; And Astreus next, whose mother was a Jew; His sire uncertain: then by Perseus fell Aethion, who could things to come foretell; But now he knows not whence the javelin flies That wounds his breast, nor by whose arm he dies.

The squire to Phineus next his valour tried, And fierce Agyrtes stain'd with parricide.

As these are slain, fresh numbers still appear, And wage with Perseus an unequal war; To rob him of his right—the maid he won, By honour, promise, and desert his own. With him the father of the beauteous bride, The mother, and the frighted virgin, side: With shrieks and doleful cries they rend the air: Their shrieks confounded with the din of war, With clashing arms, and groanings of the slain, They grieve unpitied, and unheard complain. The floor with ruddy streams Bellona stains; And Phineus a new war with double rage maintains.

Perseus begirt, from all around they pour Their lances on him, a tempestuous shower, Aim'd all at him; a cloud of darts and spears, Or blind his eyes, or whistle round his ears. Their numbers to resist, against the wall He guards his back secure, and dares them all. Here from the left Molpeus renews the fight, And bold Ethemon presses on the right: As when a hungry tiger near him hears Two lowing herds, a while he both forbears, Nor can his hopes of this or that renounce, So strong he lusts to prey on both at once: Thus Perseus now with that or this is loath To war distinct, but rain would fall on both: And first Chaonian Molpeus felt his blow, And fled, and never after faced his foe: Then fierce Ethemon, as he turn'd his back, Hurried with fury, aiming at his neck, His brandish'd sword against the marble struck With all his might; the brittle weapon broke, And in his throat the point rebounding stuck. Too slight the wound for life to issue thence, And yet too great for battle or defence: His arms extended, in this piteous state, For mercy he would sue, but sues too late; Perseus has in his bosom plunged the sword, And ere he speaks, the wound prevents

the word.

The crowds increasing, and his friends distress'd Himself by warring multitudes oppress'd; "Since thus unequally you fight, 'tis time," He cried, "to punish your presumptuous crime: Beware, my friends:" his friends were soon prepar'd; Their sight averting, high the head he rear'd, And Gorgon on his foes severely stared. "Vain shift!" says Thescelus, with aspect bold, "Thee and thy bugbear monster I behold With scorn:" he lifts his arm, but ere he threw The dart, the hero to a statue grew. In the same posture still the marble stands, And holds the warrior's weapons in its hands. Amphyx, whom yet this wonder can't alarm, Heaves at Lyncides' breast his impious arm; But, while thus daringly he presses on, His weapon and his arrn are turn'd to stone. Next Nileus, he who vainly said he owed His origin to Nile's prolific flood; Who on his shield seven silver rivers bore, His birth to witness by the arms he wore; Full of his sevenfold father, thus express'd His boast to Perseus, and his pride confess'd: "See whence we sprung: let this thy comfort be, In thy sure death, that thou did'st die by me." While yet he spoke, the dying accents hung In sounds imperfect on his marble tongue: Though changed to stone, his lips he seem'd to stretch, And through the insensate rock would force a speech.

This Eryx saw, but seeing would not own: "The mischief by yourselves," he cries, "is done; 'Tis your cold courage turns your hearts to stone: Come, follow me; fall on the stripling boy, Kill him, and you his magic arms destroy." Then rushing on, his arm to strike he rear'd, And marbled o'er his varied frame appear'd.

These for affronting Pallas were chastised, And justly met the death they had despised; But brave Aconteus, Perseus' friend, by chance Look'd back, and met the Gorgon's fatal glance; A statue now become, he ghastly stares, And still the foe to mortal combat dares. Astyages the living likeness knew, On the dead stone with vengeful fury flew; But impotent his rage; the jarring blade No print upon the solid marble made: Again, as with redoubled might he struck, Himself astonish'd in the

quarry stuck.

The vulgar deaths ’twere tedious to rehearse, And fates below the dignity of verse: Their safety in their flight two hundred found; Two hundred by Medusa’s head were stoned. Fierce Phineus now repents the wrongful fight, And views his varied friends; a dreadful sight; He knows their faces, for their help he sues, And thinks, not hearing him, that they refuse; By name he begs their succour, one by one, Then doubts their life, and feels the friendly stone. Struck with remorse, and conscious of his pride, Convict of sin, he turn’d his eyes aside; With suppliant mien, to Perseus thus he prays: “Hence with the head, as far as winds and seas Can bear thee; hence; O quit the Cephen shore, And never curse us with Medusa more; That horrid head, which stiffens into stone Those impious men, who, daring death, look on. I warr’d not with thee out of hate or strife; My honest cause was to defend my wife, First pledged to me: what crime could I suppose, To arm my friends, and vindicate my spouse? But vain, too late, I see, was our design; Mine was the title, but the merit thine. Contending made me guilty, I confess; But penitence should make that guilt the less: ’Twas thine to conquer by Minerva’s power; Favour’d by heaven, thy mercy I implore; For life I sue, the rest to thee I yield: In pity from my sight remove the shield.” He suing said, nor durst revert his eyes On the grim head; and Perseus thus replies: “Coward, what is in me to grant I will, Nor blood, unworthy of my valour, spill; Fear not to perish by my vengeful sword; From that secure, ’tis all the Fates afford. Where now I see thee, thou shalt still be seen, A lasting monument, to please our queen; There still shall thy betroth’d behold her spouse, And find his image in her father’s house.” This said, where Phineus turn’d to shun the shield, Full in his face the staring head he held; As here and there he strove to turn aside, The wonder wrought; the man was petrified: All marble was his frame, his humid eyes Dropp’d tears, which hung upon the stone like ice; In suppliant posture, with uplifted hands, And fearful look, the guilty statue stands

Hence Perseus to his native city hies, Victorious, and rewarded with his prize:

Conquest, o’er Praetus the usurper, won, He reinstates his grandsire in the throne. Praetus his brother dispossess’d by might, His realm enjoy’d, and still detain’d his right: But Perseus pull’d the haughty tyrant down, And to the rightful king restored the throne; Weak was the usurper, as his cause was wrong: Where Gorgon’s head appears, what arms are strong? When Perseus to his host the monster held, They soon were statues, and their king expell’d.

Thence to Seriphus with the head he sails, Whose prince his story treats as idle tales: Lord of a little isle, he scorns to seem Too credulous, but laughs at that and him; Yet did he not so much suspect the truth, As, out of pride or envy, hate the youth. The Argive prince, at his contempt enraged, To force his faith by fatal proof engaged: “Friends, shut your eyes,” he cries: his shield he takes, And to the king exposed Medusa’s snakes: The monarch felt the power he would not own, And stood convict of folly in the stone.

Minerva’s Interview with the Muses

Minerva visits Mount Helicon, the seat of the Muses, by whom she is hospitably entertained.

Thus far Minerva was content to rove With Perseus, offspring of her father Jove: Now hid in clouds Seriphus she forsook, And to the Theban towers her journey took; Cythnos and Gyaros, lying to the right, She pass’d unheeded in her eager flight; And choosing first on Helicon to rest, The virgin muses in these words address’d:

“Me the strange tidings of a new-found spring, Ye learned sisters, to this mountain bring. If all the true that Fame’s wide rumours tell, ’Twas Pegasus discover’d first your well; Whose piercing hoof gave the soft earth a blow, Which broke the surface where these waters flow. I saw that horse by miracle obtain Life, from the blood of dire Medusa slain; And now this equal prodigy to view, From distant isles to famed Boeotia few.”

The muse Urania said: “Whatever cause So great a goddess to this mansion draws, Our shades are happy with so bright a guest; You, queen, are welcome, and we muses bless’d. What Fame has publish’d of our spring is true; Thanks for our spring to Pegasus are due.” Then with becoming courtesy, she led The curious stranger to their fountain’s head, Who long survey’d, with wonder and delight, Their sacred water, charming to the sight; Their ancient groves, dark grottoes, shady bowers, And smiling plains, adorn’d with various flowers. “O happy muses!” she with rapture cried, “Who, safe from cares, on this fair hill reside; Bless’d in your seat, and free, yourselves to please With joys of study, and with glorious ease.”

Fate of Pyreneus

The Muses find shelter from the fury of the elements in the house of Pyreneus, King of Thrace, who presumes to offer violence to his guests—The goddesses take to their wings, and are pursued by their perfidious host, who is killed by a fall from a lofty precipice.

Then one replies: “O goddess, fit to guide Our humble works, and in our choir preside, Who sure would wisely to these fields repair, To taste our pleasures, and our labours share, Were not your virtue and superior mind, To higher arts and nobler deeds inclined; Justly you praise our works, and pleasing seat, Which all might envy in this soft retreat, Were we secured from dangers and from harms; But maids are frighten’d with the least alarms, And none are safe in this licentious time: Still fierce Pyreneus, and his daring crime, With lasting horror strikes my feeble sight, Nor is my mind recover’d from the fright. With Thracian arms this bold usurper gain’d Daulis and Phocis, where he proudly reign’d. It happen’d once, as through his lands we went, For the bright temple of Parnassus bent, He met us there, and, in his artful mind, Hiding the faithless action he design’d, Conferr’d on us (whom, O too well he knew!) All honours that to goddesses are due. ‘Stop, stop, ye muses, ’tis your friend who calls,’ The tyrant said; ‘behold the rain that falls On every side, and that

ill-boding sky, Whose lowering face portends more storms are nigh: Pray make my house your own, and, void of fear, While this bad weather lasts, take shelter here: Gods have made meaner places their resort, And for a cottage left their shining court.'

"Obliged to stop, by the united force Of pouring rains, and complaisant discourse, His courteous invitation we obey, And in his hall resolve a while to stay. Soon it clear'd up, the clouds began to fly, The driving north refined the showery sky; Then to pursue our journey we began; But the false traitor to his portal ran; Stopp'd our escape; the door securely barr'd, And to our honour violence prepared; But we, transform'd to birds, avoid his snare, On pinions rising in the yielding air.

"But he, by lust and indignation fired, Up to his highest tower with speed retired, And cries 'In vain you from my arms withdrew, The way you go your lover will pursue.' Then in a flying posture wildly placed, And daring from that height himself to cast, The wretch fell headlong, and the ground bestrew'd With broken bones, and stains of guilty blood."

Story of the Pierides

The daughters of Pierus challenge the Muses to a trial in music.

The muse yet spoke, when they began to hear A noise of wings that flutter'd in the air; And straight a voice, from some high-spreading bough, Seem'd to salute the company below. The goddess wonder'd, and inquired from whence That tongue was heard, that spoke so plainly sense. (It seem'd to her a human voice to be, But proved a bird's; for in a shady tree Nine magpies perch'd, lament their alter'd state, And what they hear are skilful to repeat.)

The sister to the wondering goddess said, "These, foil'd by us, by us were thus repaid: These did Evippe of Paeonia bring, With nine hard labour-pangs, to Pella's king. The foolish virgins, of their number proud, And puff'd with praises of the

senseless crowd, Through all Achaia and the Aemonian plains, Defied us thus, to match their artless strains: ‘No more, ye Thespian girls, your notes repeat, Nor with false harmony the vulgar cheat; In voice or skill if you with us will vie, As many we in voice or skill will try: Surrender you to us, if we excel, Famed Aganippe, and Medusa’s well: The conquest yours, your prize from us shall be The Aemathian plains to snowy Paeone: The nymphs our judges.’ To dispute the field We thought a shame; but greater shame to yield. On seats of living stone the sisters sit, And by the rivers swear to judge aright.”

Song of the Pierides

The challengers select the rebellion of the giants, and the various transformations of the gods to avoid their rage, as the subject of their song.

“Then rises one of the presumptuous throng, Steps rudely forth, and first begins the song; =With vain address describes the giants’ wars, And to the gods their fabled acts prefers. She sings from earth’s dark womb how Typhon rose, And struck with mortal fear his heavenly foes; How the gods fled to Egypt’s slimy soil, And hid their heads beneath the banks of Nile; How Typhon from the conquer’d skies pursued Their routed godheads to the seven-mouth’d flood: Forced every god, his fury to escape, Some beastly form to take, or earthly shape. Jove (so she sung) was changed into a ram, From whence the horns of Lybian Ammon came: Bacchus a goat; Apollo was a crow; Phoebe a cat; the wife of Jove a cow, Whose hue was whiter than the falling snow; Mercury to a nasty ibis turn’d, The change obscene, afraid of Typhon mourn’d; While Venus from a fish protection craves, And once more plunges in her native waves.

“She sung, and to her harp her voice applied: Then us again to match her they defied: But our poor song, perhaps, for you to hear, Nor leisure serves, nor is it worth your ear.” “That causeless doubt remove, O muse; rehearse,” The goddess cried, “your ever-grateful verse:” Beneath a checker’d shade she takes her seat, And

bids the sister her whole song repeat. The sister thus: “Calliope we chose For the performance.” The sweet virgin rose, With ivy crown’d; she tunes her golden strings, And to her harp this composition sings:

Song of the Muses

The Muses commence their song with describing the arts of Venus and Cupid to inflame the god Pluto with a passion for Proserpine.

“First Ceres taught the labouring hind to plough The pregnant earth, and quick’ning seed to sow; She first for man did wholesome food provide, And with just laws the wicked world supplied: All good from her derived, to her belong The grateful tributes of the muse’s song; Her more than worthy of our verse we deem; Oh! were our verse more worthy of the theme!

“Jove on the giant fair Trinacria hurl’d, And with one bolt revenged his starry world. Beneath her burning hills Typhoeus lies, And, struggling always, strives in vain to rise. Down does Pelorus his right hand suppress Towards Latium; on the left Pachyne weighs: His legs are under Lilybaeum spread, And Aetna presses hard his horrid head: On his broad back he there extended lies, And vomits clouds of ashes to the skies: Oft labouring with his load, at last he tires, And pours out in revenge a flood of fires: Mountains he struggles to o’erwhelm, and towns; Earth’s inmost bowels quake, and Nature groans: His terrors reach the direful king of hell; He fears his throes will to the day reveal The realms of night, and fright his trembling ghosts.

“This to prevent, he quits the Stygian coasts, In his black car, by sooty horses drawn, Fair Sicily he seeks, and dreads the dawn: Around her plains he casts his eager eyes, And every mountain to the bottom tries. But when, in all the careful search, he saw No cause of fear, no ill-suspected flaw; Secure from harm, and wand’ring on at will, Venus beheld him from her flowery bill; When straight the dame her little Cupid press’d, With secret rapture, to her snowy breast, And in these words the fluttering boy address’d:

“ ‘O thou, my arms, my glory, and my power, My son, whom men and deathless gods adore, Bend thy sure bow, whose arrows never miss’d, No longer let hell’s king thy sway resist; Take him, while straggling from his dark abodes, He coasts the kingdoms of superior gods. If sovereign Jove, if gods who rule the waves, And Neptune, who rules them, have been thy slaves, Shall hell be free? The tyrant strike, my son; Enlarge thy mother’s empire, and thy own: Let not our heaven be made the mock of hell, But Pluto to confess thy power compel. Our rule is slighted in our native skies; See Pallas, see Diana too, defies Thy darts, which Ceres’ daughter would despise: She too our empire treats with awkward scorn: Such insolence no longer’s to be borne: Revenge our slighted reign, and with thy dart Transfix the virgin’s to the uncle’s heart.’

“She said; and from his quiver straight he drew A dart that surely would the business do; She guides his hand; she makes her touch the test, And of a thousand arrows chose the best: No feather better poised, a sharper head None had, and sooner none, and surer sped. He bends his how, he draws it to his ear, Through Pluto’s heart it drives, and fixes there.”

Rape of Proserpine

Pluto surprises Proserpine while gathering towers in the plains of Enna, and transports her to the internal regions.

Near Enna’s walls a spacious lake is spread, Famed for the sweetly-singing swans it bred; Pergusa is its name: and never more Were heard, or sweeter on Cayster’s shore. Woods crown the lake; and Phoebus ne’er invades The tufted fences, or offends the shades: Fresh fragrant breezes fan the verdant bowers, And the moist ground smiles with enamell’d flowers: The cheerful birds their airy carols sing, And the whole year is one eternal spring.

Here while young Proserpine, among the maids, Diverts herself in these delicious shades; While, like a child, with busy speed and care, She gathers lilies here, and

violets there; While first to fill her little lap she strives, Hell’s grisly monarch at the shade arrives; Sees her thus sporting on the flowery green, And loves the blooming maid as soon as seen. His urgent flame impatient of delay, Swift as his thought he seized the beauteous prey, And bore her in his sooty car away. The frighted goddess to her mother cries; But all in vain, for now far off she flies; Far she behind her leaves her virgin train; To them too cries, and cries to them in vain; And while with passion she repeats her call, The violets from her lap and lilies fall: She misses them, poor heart! and makes new moan; Her lilies, ah! are lost, her violets gone.

O’er hills the ravisher and valleys speeds, By name encouraging his foamy steeds; He rattles o’er their necks the rusty reins, And ruffles with the stroke their shaggy manes. O’er lakes he whirls his flying wheels, and comes To the Palici, breathing sulph’rous fumes; And thence to where the Bacchiads of renown, Between unequal havens, built their town; Where Arethusa, round the imprison’d sea, Extends her crooked coast to Cyane; The nymph who gave the neighb’ring lake a name, Of all Sicilian nymphs the first in fame: She from the waves advanced her beauteous head; The goddess knew, and thus to Pluto said: “Farther thou shalt not with the virgin run; Ceres unwilling, canst thou be her son? The maid should be by sweet persuasion won: Force suits not with the softness of the fair; For, if great things with small I may compare, Me Anapis once loved; a milder course He took, and won me by his words, not force.”

Then, stretching out her arms, she stopp’d his way: But he, impatient of the shortest stay, Throws to his dreadful steeds the slacken’d rein, And strikes his iron sceptre through the main; The depths profound through yielding waves he cleaves, And to hell’s centre a free passage leaves; Down sinks his chariot, and his realms of night The god soon reaches with a rapid flight.

Cyane Dissolves to a Fountain

The nymph Cyane, bewailing the loss of Proserpine, is changed into a fountain.

But still does Cyane the rape bemoan, And with the goddess' wrongs laments her own: For the stolen maid, and for her injured spring, Time to her trouble no relief can bring; In her sad heart a heavy load she bears, Till the dumb sorrow turns her all to tears: Her mingling waters with that fountain pass, Of which she late immortal goddess was; Her varied members to a fluid melt; A pliant softness in her bones is felt; Her wavy locks first drop away in dew, And liquid next her slender fingers grew; The body's change soon seizes its extreme; Her legs dissolve, and feet flow off in stream; Her arms, her back, her shoulders, and her side, Her swelling breasts, in little currents glide; A silver liquor only now remains Within the channel of her purple veins; Nothing to fill love's grasp: her husband chaste Bathes in that bosom he before embraced.

Boy Transformed to an Eft

Overcome with fatigue, while in pursuit of her daughter, Ceres requests an old woman to supply her with a draught of water—A more generous liquor is hospitably afforded by the matron; and the goddess, while eagerly allaying her thirst, is derided by a boy, who is immediately transformer into an eft.

Thus while through all the earth and all the main, Her daughter mournful Ceres sought in vain, Aurora, when with dewy looks she rose, Nor burnish'd Vesper found her in repose. At Aetna's flaming mouth two pitchy pines, To light her in her search, at length she tines; Restless, with these, through frosty night she goes, Nor fears the cutting winds, nor heeds the snows; And when the morning star the day renews, From east to west her absent child pursues.

Thirsty at last by long fatigue she grows, But meets no spring, no riv'let near her flows: Then looking round, a lowly cottage spies, Smoking among the trees, and thither hies. The goddess knocking at the little door, 'Twas open'd by a woman old and poor, Who, when she begg'd for water, gave her ale Brew'd long, but well preserved from being stale. The goddess drank: a chuffy lad was by, Who saw the

liquor with a grudging eye, And grinning cries, “She’s greedy more than dry.”

Ceres, offended at his foul grimace, Flung what she had not drunk into his face. The sprinklings speckle where they hit the skin, And a long tail does from his body spin; His arms are turn’d to legs, and, lest his size Should make him mischievous, and he might rise Against mankind, diminutives his frame Less than a lizard, but in shape the same. Amazed the dame the wondrous sight beheld, And weeps, and fain would touch her quondam child; Yet her approach the affrighted vermin shuns, And fast into the greatest crevice runs: A name they gave him, which the spots express’d, That rose like stars, and varied all his1 breast.

What lands, what seas, the goddess wander’d o’er, Were long to tell; for there remain’d no more; Searching all round, her fruitless toil she mourns, And with regret to Sicily returns. At length, where Cyane now flows she came, Who could have told her, were she still the same As when she saw her daughter sink to hell; But what she knows she wants a tongue to tell; Yet this plain signal manifestly gave; The virgin’s girdle floating on a wave, As late she dropp’d it from her slender waist, When with her uncle through the deep she pass’d. Ceres the token by her grief confess’d, And tore her golden hair, and beat her breast: She knows not on what land her curse should fall, But, as ingrate, alike upbraids them all, Unworthy of her gifts; Trinacria most, Where the last steps she found of what she lost. The plough for this the vengeful goddess broke, And with one death the ox and owner struck. In vain the fallow fields the peasant tills, The seed, corrupted ere ’tis sown, she kills; The fruitful soil, that once such harvests bore, Now mocks the farmer’s care, and teems no more, And the rich grain, which fills the furrow’d glade, Rots in the seed, or shrivels in the blade; Or too much sun burns up, or too much rain Drowns, or black blights destroy the blasted plain; Or greedy birds the new-sown seed devour; Or darnel, thistles, and a crop impure Of knotted grass, along the acres stand, And spread their thriving roots through all the land.

Then from the waves soft Arethusa rears Her head, and back she flings her dropping hairs. “O mother of the maid, whom thou so far Hast sought, of whom thou canst no tidings hear; O thou,” she cried, “who art to life a friend, Cease here thy search, and let thy labour end. Thy faithful Sicily’s a guiltless clime, And should not suffer for another’s crime; She neither knew nor could prevent the deed: Nor think that for my country thus I plead: My country’s Pisa; I’m an alien here; Yet these abodes to Elis I prefer; No clime to me so sweet, no place so dear. These springs I, Arethusa, now possess, And this my seat, O gracious goddess, bless. This island why I love, and why I cross’d Such spacious seas to reach Ortygia’s coast, To you I shall impart, when, void of care, Your heart’s at ease, and you’re more fit to hear; When on your brow no pressing sorrow sits; For gay content alone such tales admits. When through earth’s caverns I a while have roll’d My waves, I rise, and here again behold The long-lost stars; and, as I late did glide Near Styx, Proserpina there I espied: Fear still with grief might in her face be seen; She still her loss laments: yet, made a queen, Beneath those gloomy shades her sceptre sways; And ev’n the infernal king her will obeys.”

This heard, the goddess like a statue stood, Stupid with grief, and in that musing mood Continued long; new cares a while suppress’d The reigning powers of her immortal breast. At last to Jove, her daughter’s sire, she flies, And with her chariot cuts the crystal skies: She comes in clouds, and with dishevell’d hair, Standing before his throne, prefers her prayer:

“King of the gods, defend my blood and thine, And use it not the worse for being mine. If I no more am gracious in thy sight, Be just, O Jove, and do thy daughter right. In vain I sought her the wide world around, And when I most despair’d to find her, found. But how can I the fatal finding boast, By which I know she is for ever lost? Without her father’s aid, what other power Can to my arms the lovely maid restore? Let him restore her, I’ll the crime forgive; My child, dishonour’d, I’d with joy receive. Pity your daughter with a thief should wed, Though mine, you think,

deserves no better bed."

Jove thus replies: "It equally belongs To both to guard our common pledge from wrongs: But if to things we proper names apply, This hardly can be call'd an injury: The theft is love; nor need we blush to own The thief, if I can judge, to be our son; Had you of his desert no other proof, To be Jove's brother is, methinks, enough: Nor was my throne by worth superior got; Heaven fell to me, as hell to him, by lot: If you are still resolved her loss to mourn, And nothing less will serve than her return, Upon these terms she may again be yours (The irrevocable terms of fate, not ours); Of Stygian food if she did never taste, Hell's bounds may then, and only then, be pass'd."

Transformation of Ascalaphus Into an Owl

When Ceres has obtained from Jupiter her daughter's freedom and return to earth, provided she has eaten nothing in the kingdom of Pluto, the goddess hastens to the infernal regions, and finds that Proserpine has already partaken of the fruit of the pomegranate-tree by the testimony of Ascalaphus, whose loquacity is punished by his transformation into an owl.

The goddess now, resolving to succeed, Down to the gloomy shades descends with speed; But adverse fate had otherwise decreed; For, long before, her giddy, thoughtless child Had broke her fast, and all her projects spoil'd. As in the garden's shady walk she stray'd, A fair pomegranate charm'd the simple maid, Hung in her way, and tempting her to taste, She pluck'd the fruit, and took a short repast. Seven times, a seed at once, she eat the food: The fact Ascalaphus had only view'd, Whom Acheron begot, in Stygian shades, On Orphne, famed among Avernal maids; He saw what pass'd, and, by discovering all, Detain'd the ravish'd nymph in cruel thrall.

But now a queen, she with resentment heard, And changed the vile informer to a bird. In Phlegethon's black stream her hand she dips, Sprinkles his head, and wets his babbling lips. Soon on his face, bedropp'd with magic dew, A change appear'd,

and gaudy feathers grew; A crooked beak the place of nose supplies; Rounder his head, and larger are his eyes; His arms and body waste, but are supplied With yellow pinions, flagging on each side; His nails grow crooked, and are turn'd to claws, And lazily along his heavy wings he draws: Ill-omen'd in his form, the unlucky fowl, Abhorr'd by men, and call'd a screeching owl.

Daughters of Achelous Transformed Into Sirens

The Sirens, daughters of Achelous and the Muse Melpomene, disconsolate at the abduction of Proserpine, entreat the gods to afford them wings, that they may seek her by sea as well as by land—Jupiter, to appease the resentment of Ceres and sooth her grief, decrees that Proserpine shall remain six months in each year with her husband, and the remainder with her mother on earth.

"Justly this punishment was due to him, And less had been too little for his crime; But, O ye nymphs! that from the flood descend, What fault of yours the gods could so offend, With wings and claws your beauteous forms to spoil, Yet save your maiden face and winning smile? Were you not with her in Pergusa's bowers, When Proserpine went forth to gather flowers? Since Pluto in his car the goddess caught, Have you not for her in each climate sought? And when on land you long had search'd in vain, You wish'd for wings to cross the pathless main: The earth and sea might witness to your care: The gods were easy, and return'd your prayer: With golden wing o'er foamy waves you fled, And to the sun your plumy glories spread. But lest the soft enchantment of your songs, And the sweet music of your flatt'ring tongues, Should quite be lost (as courteous fates ordain), Your voice and virgin beauty still remain."

Jove, some amends for Ceres' loss to make, Yet unwilling Pluto should the joy partake, Gives them of Proserpine an equal share, Who, claim'd by both, with both divides the year. The goddess now in either empire sways, Six moons in hell, and six with Ceres stays: Her peevish temper's changed; that sullen mind Which made ev'n

hell uneasy, now is kind; Her voice refines; her mien more sweet appears; Her forehead free from frowns, her eyes from tears. As when, with golden light, the conqu'ring day Through dusky exhalations clears a way; Ceres her daughter's loss no longer mourn'd, But back to Arethusa's spring return'd; And, sitting on the margin, bid her tell From whence she came, and why a sacred well.

Story of Arethusa

The god Alpheus, becoming enamoured of Arethusa, a follower of Diana, pursues her for a considerable distance, when the nymph, ready to sink under fatigue, implores the aid of her protectress, who changes her into a fountain, with whose streams the river Alpheus mingles.

Still were the purling waters, and the maid From the smooth surface raised her beauteous head, Wipes off the drops that from her tresses ran, And thus to tell Alpheus' loves began.

"In Elis first I breathed the living air; The chase was all my pleasure, all my care: None loved like me the forest to explore, To pitch the toils, and drive the bristled boar. Of fair, though masculine, I had the name, But gladly would to that have quitted claim: It less my pride than indignation raised, To hear the beauty I neglected praised; Such compliments I loathed, such charms as these I scorn'd, and thought it infamy to please.

"Once, I remember, in the summer's heat, Tired with the chase, I sought a cool retreat, And walking on, a silent current found, Which gently glided o'er the gravelly ground; The crystal water was so smooth, so clear, My eye distinguish'd every pebble there; So soft its motion, that I scarce perceived The running stream, or what I saw believed: The hoary willow and the poplar made, Along the shelving bank, a grateful shade. In the cool rivulet my feet I dipp'd, Then waded to the knee, and then I stripp'd: My robe I careless on an osier threw, That near the place commodiously grew; Nor long upon the border naked stood, But plunged with speed

into the silver flood: My arms a thousand ways I moved, and tried To quicken, if I could, the lazy tide, Where, while I play'd my swimming gambols o'er, I heard a murm'ring voice, and frighted sprung to shore. 'Oh! whither, Arethusa, dost thou fly?' From the brook's bottom did Alpheus cry. Again I heard him, in a hollow tone: 'Oh! whither, Arethusa, dost thou run?' Naked I flew, nor could I stay to hide My limbs; my robe was on the other side: Alpheus follow'd fast; the inflaming sight Quicken'd his speed, and made his labour light: He sees me ready for his eager arms, And with a greedy glance devours my charms. As trembling doves from pressing danger fly, When the fierce hawk comes sousing from the sky, And as fierce hawks the trembling doves pursue, From him I fled, and after me he few. First by Orchomenus I took my flight, And soon had Psophis and Cyllene in sight; Behind me then high Maenalus I lost, And craggy Erimanthus, scaled with frost; Elis was next: thus far the ground I trod, With nimble feet, before the distanced god: But here I lagg'd, unable to sustain The labour longer, and my flight maintain; While he, more strong, more patient of the toil, And fired with hopes of beauty's speedy spoil, Gain'd my lost ground, and, by redoubled pace, Now left between us but a narrow space. Unwearied I till now o'er hills and plains, O'er rocks and rivers, ran, and felt no pains; The sun behind me and the god I kept; But when I fastest should have run, I stepp'd. Before my feet his shadow now appear'd; As what I saw, or rather what I fear'd: Yet there I could not be deceived by fear, Who felt his breath pant on my braided hair, And heard his sounding tread, and knew him to be near. Tired and despairing, 'O celestial maid, I'm caught,' I cried, 'without thy heavenly aid; Help me, Diana, help a nymph forlorn, Devoted to the woods, who long has worn Thy livery, and long thy quiver borne.' The goddess heard; my pious prayer prevail'd; In muffling clouds my virgin head was veil'd. The am'rous god, deluded of his hopes, Searches the gloom, and through the darkness gropes: Twice where Diana did her servant hide He came, and twice, 'O Arethusa!' cried. How shaken was my soul, how sunk my heart! The terror seized on every trembling part. Thus

when the wolf about the mountain prowls For prey, the lambkin hears his horrid howls: The tim'rous hare, the pack approaching nigh Thus hearkens to the hounds, and trembles at the cry; Nor dares she stir, for fear her scented breath Direct the dogs, and guide the threaten'd death. Alpheus in the cloud no traces found To mark my way, yet stays to guard the ground. The god so near, a chilly sweat possess'd My fainting limbs, at every pore express'd; My strength distill'd in drops, my hair in dew; My form was changed, and all my substance new: Each motion was a stream, and my whole frame Turn'd to a fount, which still preserves my name. Resolved I should not his embrace escape, Again the god resumes his fluid shape; To mix his streams with mine he fondly tries, But still Diana his attempt denies: She cleaves the ground; through caverns dark I run A different current, while he keeps his own; To dear Ortygia she conducts my way, And here I first review the welcome day."

Here Arethusa stopp'd; then Ceres takes Her golden car, and yokes her fiery snakes; With a rein, along mid-heaven she flies, O'er earth and seas, and cuts the yielding skies: She halls at Athens, dropping like a star, And to Triptolemus resigns her car. Parent of seed, she gave him fruitful grain, And bade him teach to till and plough the plain; The seed to sow, as well in fallow fields, As where the soil manured a richer harvest yields.

Transformation of Lyncus

Triptolemus, whom Ceres commissions to teach mankind husbandry, arrives at the court of Lyncus, King of Scythia, who determines to assassinate his guest during sleep—The fatal weapon is already raised, when the monarch is suddenly changed into a lynx.

The youth o'er Europe and o'er Asia drives, Till at the court of Lyncus he arrives: The tyrant Scythia's barb'rous empire sway'd; And when he saw Triptolemus, he said: "How camest thou, stranger, to our court, and why? Thy country, and thy name?" The youth did thus reply: "Triptolemus my name; my country's known O'er

all the world, Minerva's fav'rite town, Athens, the first of cities in renown: By land I neither walk'd, nor sail'd by sea, But hither through the ether made my way; By me the goddess who the fields befriends, These gifts, the greatest of all blessings, sends; The grain she gives if in your soil you sow, Thence wholesome food in golden crops shall grow."

Soon as the secret to the king was known, He grudged the glory of the service done, And wickedly resolved to make it all his own. To hide his purpose, he invites his guest, The friend of Ceres, to a royal feast, And when sweet sleep his heavy eves had seized. The tyrant with his steel attempts his breast: Him straight a lynx's shape the goddess gives, And home the youth her sacred dragons drives.

The Pierides Transformed to Magpies

The Muses are unanimously pronounced victorious, and the daughters of Pierus are punished for their presumption by their transformation into magpies.

The chosen muse here ends her sacred lays: The nymphs, unanimous, decree the bays, And give the Heliconian goddesses the praise. Then, far from vain that we should thus prevail. But much provoked to hear the vanquish'd rail. Calliope resumes: "Too long we've borne Your daring taunts, and your affronting scorn: Your challenge justly merited a curse, And this unmanner'd railing makes it worse: Since you refuse us calmly to enjoy Our patience, next our passions we'll employ, The dictates of a mind enraged pursue, And what our just resentment bids us, do." The railers laugh, our threats and wrath despise, And clap their hands, and make a scolding noise: But in the fact they're seized: beneath their nails Feathers they feel, and on their faces scales: Their horny beaks at once each other scare; Their arms are plumed, and on their backs they bear Pied wings, and flutter in the fleeting air: Chatt'ring, the scandal of the woods they fly, And there continue still their clam'rous cry; The same their eloquence as maids or birds, Now only noise, and nothing then but words.

Book VI

Transformation of Arachne Into a Spider

Arachne presumes to challenge Minerva to a trial of skill in needlework—Being defeated, she hangs herself in despair, and is changed into a spider by the goddess.

Pallas, attending to the muse’s song, Approved the just resentment of their wrong, And thus reflects: “While tamely I commend Those who their injured deities defend, My own divinity affronted stands, And calls aloud for justice at my hands;” Then takes the hint, ashamed to lag behind, And on Arachne bends her vengeful mind; One at the loom so excellently skill’d, That to the goddess she refused to yield.

Low was her birth, and small her native town: She from her art alone obtain’d renown. Idmon, her father, made it his employ To give the spongy fleece a purple die: Of vulgar strain her, mother, lately dead, With her own rank had been content to wed; Yet she their daughter, though her time was spent In a small hamlet, and of mean descent, Through the great towns of Lydia gain’d a name, And fill’d the neighb’ring countries with her fame.

Oft, to admire the niceness of her skill, The nymphs would quit their fountain, shade, or hill; Thither, from green Tymolus, they repair, And leave the vineyards, their peculiar care: Thither, from famed Partolus’ golden stream, Drawn by her art, the curious Naiads came: Nor would the work, when finish’d, please so much, As, while she wrought, to view each graceful touch: Whether the shapeless wool in balls she wound, Or with quick motion turn’d the spindle round, Or with her pencil drew the neat design, Pallas, her mistress, shone in every line. This the proud maid, with scornful air, denies, And ev’n the goddess at her work defies; Disowns her heavenly mistress every hour, Nor asks her aid, nor deprecates her power. “Let us,” she cries, “but to a trial come, And, if she conquers, let her fix my doom.”

The goddess then a beldam’s form put on; With silver hairs her hoary temples

shone; Propp'd hy a staff, she hobbles in her walk, And, tottering, thus begins her old wives' talk:

"Young maid attend, nor stubbornly despise The admonitions of the old and wise; For age, though scorn'd, a ripe experience bears, That golden fruit, unknown to blooming years: Still may remotest fame your labours crown, And mortals your superior genius own; But to the goddess yield, and, humbly meek, A pardon for your bold presumption seek: The goddess will forgive." At this the maid, With passion fired, her gliding shuttle stay'd, And, darting vengeance, with an angry look, To Pallas in disguise thus fiercely spoke:

"Thou doting thing, whose idle, babbling tongue But too well shows the plague of living long, Hence, and reprove, with this your sage advice, Your giddy daughter, or your awkward niece: Know I despise your counsel, and an still A woman, ever wedded to my will; And, if your skilful goddess better knows, Let her accept the trial I propose."

"She does," impatient Pallas straight replies, And, clothed with heavenly light, sprung from her odd disguise. The nymphs and virgins of the plain adore The awful goddess, and confess her power: The maid alone stood unappall'd, yet show'd A transient blush, that for a moment glow'd, Then disappear'd, as purple streaks adorn The opening beauties of the rosy morn; Till Phoebus, rising prevalently bright, Allays the tincture with his silver light. Yet she persists, and, obstinately great, In hopes of conquest, hurries on her fate. The goddess now the challenge waves no more, Nor, kindly good, advises as before. Straight to their posts appointed both repair, And fix their threaded looms with equal care: Around the solid beam the web is tied, While hollow canes the parting warp divide, Through which, with nimble flight, the shuttles play, And for the woof prepare a ready way: The woof and warp unite, press'd by the toothy sley.

Thus both, their mantles button'd to their breast, Their skilful fingers play with

willing haste, And work with pleasure, while they cheer the eye With glowing purple of the Tyrian die: Or, justly intermixing shades with light, Their colourings insensibly unite. As when a shower, transpierced with sunny rays, Its mighty arch along the heaven displays, From whence a thousand different colours rise, Whose fine transition cheats the clearest eyes: So like the intermingled shading seems, And only differs in the last extremes, Then threads of gold both artfully dispose, And, as each part in just proportion rose, Some antique fable in their work disclose.

Pallas in figures wrought the heavenly powers, And Mars's hill among the Athenian towers: On lofty thrones twice six celestials sate, Jove in the midst, and held their warm debate; The subject weighty, and well known to fame. "From whom the city should receive its name." Each god by proper features was express'd; Jove, with majestic mien, excell'd the rest: His three-fork'd mace the dewy sea-god shook, And, looking sternly, smote the ragged rock, When from the stone leap'd forth a sprightly steed, And Neptune claims the city for the deed.

Herself she blazons, with a glittering spear, And crested helm, that veil'd her braided hair, With shields, and scaly breastplate, implements of war. Struck with her pointed lance, the teeming earth Seem'd to produce a new surprising birth, When, from the glebe, the pledge of conquest sprung— A tree pale green, with fairest olives hung.

And then, to let her giddy rival learn What just rewards such boldness was to earn, Four trials at each corner had their part, Design'd in miniature, and touch'd with art. Haemus in one, and Rhodope of Thrace, Transform'd to mountains, fill'd the foremost place, Who claim'd the titles of the gods above, And vainly used the epithets of Jove. Another show'd where the Pigmaean dame, Profaning Juno's venerable name, Turn'd to an airy crane, descends from far, And with her pygmy subjects wages war. In a third part, the rage of heaven's great queen, Display'd on proud Antigone, was seen, Who, with presumptuous boldness, dared to vie, For beauty, with the emperess of the sky. Ah! what avails her ancient princely race; Her

sire a king, and Troy her native place? Now, to a noisy stork transform'd, she flies, And with her whiten'd pinions cleaves the skies: And in the last remaining part was drawn Poor Cinyras, that seem'd to weep in stone; Clasping the temple steps, ne sadly mourn'd His lovely daughters, now to marble turn'd. With her own tree the finish'd piece is crown'd And wreaths of peaceful olive all the work surround.

Arachne drew the famed intrigues of Jove, Changed to a bull, to gratify his love; How through the briny tide, all foaming hoar, Lovely Europa on his back he bore. The sea seem'd waving, and the trembling maid Shrunk up her tender feet, as if afraid, And, looking back on the forsaken strand, To her companions wafts her distant hand. Next she design'd Asteria's fabled rape, When Jove assumed a soaring eagle's shape: And show'd how Leda lay supinely press'd, While the soft snowy swan sat hovering o'er her breast: How in a satyr's form the god beguiled, When fair Antiope with twins he fill'd: Then, like Amphitryon, but a real Jove, In fair Alcmena's arms he cool'd his love: In fluid gold to Danae's heart he came: Aegina felt him in a lambent flame: He took Mnemosyne in shepherd's make And for Deois was a speckled snake.

She made thee, Neptune, like a wanton steer, Pacing the meads for love of Arne dear: Next, like a stream, thy burning flame to slake; And like a ram, for fair Bisaltis' sake. Then Ceres in a steed your vigour tried, Nor could the mare the yellow goddess hide: Next, to a fowl transform'd, you won by force The snake-hair'd mother of the winged horse; And, in a dolphin's fishy form, subdued Melantho sweet, beneath the oozy flood.

All these the maid with lively features drew, And open'd proper landscapes to the view. There Phobus, roving like a country swain, Attunes his jolly pipe along the plain; For lovely Isso's sake, in stepherd's weeds, O'er pastures green his bleating flock he feeds. There Bacchus, imaged like the clustering grape, Melting, bedrops Erigone's fair lap: And there old Saturn, stung with youthful heat, Form'd like a

stallion, rushes to the feat. Fresh flowers, which twists of ivy intertwine, Mingling a running foliage, close the neat design.

This the bright goddess, passionately moved, With envy saw, yet inwardly approved. The scene of heavenly guilt with haste she tore, Nor longer the affront with patience bore: A boxen shuttle in her hand she took, And more than once Arachne's forehead struck. The unhappy maid, impatient of the wrong, Down from a beam her injured person hung; When Pallas, pitying her wretched state, At once prevented and pronounced her fate: "Live; but depend, vile wretch," the goddess cried, "Doom'd in suspense for ever to be tied; That all your race, to utmost date of time, May feel the vengeance, and detest the crime."

Then, going off, she sprinkled her with juice, Which leaves of baneful aconite produced. Touch'd with the pois'nous drug, her flowing hair Fell to the ground, and left her temples bare; Her usual features vanish'd from their place Her body lessen'd all, but most her face: Her slender fingers, hanging on each side, With many joints, the use of legs supplied; A spider's bag the rest, from which she gives A thread, and still by constant weaving lives.

Story of Niobe

Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, is united in marriage to Amphion, by whom she has seven sons and as many daughters—She has the imprudence to exalt herself above Latona, who entreats her children to punish the arrogant Niobe—Her prayers are heard, and all the sons expire by the shafts of Apollo, while the daughters are in like manner destroyed by Diana—Amphion, in despair, puts a period to his existence.

Swift through the Phrygian towns the rumour flies, And the strange news each female tongue employs: Niobe, who, before she married, knew The famous nymph, now found the story true; Yet, unreclaim'd by poor Arachne's fate, Vainly above the gods assumed a state. Her husband's fame, their family's descent, Their power, and rich dominions' wide extent, Might well have justified a decent pride: But not on

these alone the dame relied. Her lovely progeny, that far excell'd, The mother's heart with vain ambition swell'd: The happiest mother not unjustly styled, Had no conceited thoughts her tow'ring fancy fill'd.

For once a prophetess, with zeal inspired, Their slow neglect to warm devotion fired; Through every street of Thebes who ran possess'd, And thus, in accents wild, her charge express'd: "Haste, haste, ye Theban matrons, and adore, With hallow'd rites, Latona's mighty power, And to the heavenly twins that from her spring, With laurel crown'd, your smoking incense bring." Straight the great summons every dame obey'd, And due submission to the goddess paid: Graceful, with laurel chaplets dress'd, they came, And offer'd incense in the sacred flame.

Meanwhile, surrounded with a courtly guard, The royal Niobe in state appear'd, Attired in robes embroider'd o'er with gold, And mad with rage, yet lovely to behold; Her comely tresses, trembling as she stood, Down her fine neck with easy motion flow'd; Then, darting round a proud, disdainful look, In haughty tone her hasty passion broke, And thus began: "What madness this, to court A goddess, founded merely on report? Dare ye a poor pretended power invoke, While yet no altars to my godhead smoke? Mine, whose immediate lineage stands confess'd From Tantalus, the only mortal guest That e'er the gods admitted to their feast. A sister of the Pleiads gave me birth; And Atlas, mightiest mountain upon earth, Who bears the globe of all the stars above, My grandsire was; and Atlas sprung from Jove. The Theban towns my majesty adore; And neighb'ring Phrygia trembles at my power; Raised by my husband's lute, with turrets crown'd, Our lofty city stands secured around; Within my court, where'er I turn my eyes, Unbounded treasures to my prospect rise; With these, my face I modestly may name As not unworthy of so high a claim. Seven are my daughters, of a form divine, With seven fair sons, an indefective line. Go, fools! consider this, and ask the cause From which my pride its strong presumption draws; Consider this, and then prefer to me Caeus the Titan's vagrant progeny, To whom, in travail, the whole spacious earth No room afforded

for her spurious birth; Not the least part in earth, in heaven, or seas, Would grant your outlaw'd goddess any ease, Till, pitying hers, from his own wandering case, Delos, the floating island, gave a place; There she a mother was of two at most; Only the seventh part of what I boast. My joys all are beyond suspicion fix'd, With no pollutions of misfortune mix'd; Safe on the basis of my power I stand, Above the reach of Fortune's fickle hand; Lessen she may my inexhausted store, And much destroy, yet still must leave me more. Suppose it possible that some may die Of this my numerous, lovely progeny, Still with Latona I might safely vie, Who, by her scanty breed, scarce fit to name, But just escapes the childless woman's shame. Go then, with speed your laurell'd heads uncrown, And leave the silly farce you have begun."

The tim'rous throng their sacred rites forbore, And from their heads the verdant laurel tore; Their haughty queen they with regret obey'd, And still in gentle murmurs softly pray'd.

High on the top of Cynthus' shady mount, With grief the goddess saw the base affront, And, the abuse revolving in her breast, The mother her twin offspring thus address'd:

"Lo I, my children, who with comfort knew Your godlike birth, and thence my glory drew, And thence have claim'd precedency of place From all but Juno of the heavenly race, Must now despair, and languish in disgrace. My godhead question'd, and all rites divine, Unless you succour, banish'd from my shrine: Nay, more, the imp of Tantalus has flung Reflections with her vile paternal tongue: Has dared prefer her mortal breed to mine, And call'd me childless, which, just Fate, may she repine!"

When to urge more the goddess was prepared, Phoebus in haste replies: "Too much we've heard, And every moment's lost while vengeance is deferr'd." Diana spoke the same. Then both enshroud Their heavenly bodies in a sable cloud, And to the

Theban towers descending light, Through the soft yielding air direct their flight.

Without the wall there lies a champaign ground, With even surface, far extending round, Beaten and levell'd, while it daily feels The trampling horse, and chariot's grinding wheels. Part of proud Niobe's young rival breed, Practising there to ride the managed steed, Their bridles boss'd with gold, were mounted high On stately furniture of Tyrian die. Of these, Ismenos, who by birth had been The first fair issue of the fruitful queen, Just as he drew the rein, to guide his horse Around the compass of the circling course, Sigh'd deeply, and the pangs of smart express'd, While the shaft stuck, engored within his breast; And, the reins dropping from his dying hand, He sunk quite down, and tumbled on the sand. Sipylus next the rattling quiver heard, And with full speed for his escape prepared. As when the pilot from the black'ning skies A gathering storm of wintry rain descries, His sails unfurl'd, and crowded all with wind, He strives to leave the threat'ning cloud behind, So fled the youth; but an unerring dart O'ertook him, quick discharged, and sped with art; Fix'd in his neck behind it trembling stood, And at his throat display'd the point besmear'd with blood: Prone as his posture was, he tumbled o'er, And bathed his courser's mane with steaming gore. Next at young Phaedimus they took their aim, And Tantalus, who bore his grandsire's name; These, when their other exercise was done, To try the wrestler's oily sport begun, And, straining every nerve, their skill express'd In closest grapple, joining breast to breast, When from the bending bow an arrow sent, Join'd as they were, through both their bodies went; Both groan'd, and writhing both their limbs with pain, They fell together, bleeding on the plain; Then both their languid eyeballs faintly roll, And thus together breathe away their soul. With grief Alphenor saw their doleful plight, And smote his breast, and sicken'd at the sight, Then to their succour ran, with eager haste, And, fondly grieved, their stiff'ning limbs embraced; But in the action falls: a thrilling dart, By Phoebus guided, pierced him to the heart: This, as they drew forth, his midriff tore: Its barbed point the fleshy fragments bore, And let the soul gush out in streams of purple gore. But

Damasichthon, by a double wound, Beardless and young, lay gasping on the ground: Fix'd in his sinewy ham, the steely point, Stuck through his knee, and pierced the nervous joint; And as he stoop'd to tug the painful dart, Another stuck him in a vital part; Shot through his windpipe, by the wing it hung, The life-blood forced it out, and darting upward sprung. Ilioneus, the last, with terror stands, Lifting in prayer his unavailing hands, And ignorant from whom his griefs arise; "Spare me, O all ye heavenly powers," he cries. Phoebus was touch'd too late; the sounding bow Had sent the shaft, and struck the fatal blow, Which yet but gently gored his tender side; So by a slight and easy wound he died.

Swift to the mother's ears the rumour came, And doleful sighs the heavy news proclaim. With anger and surprise inflamed by turns, In furious rage her haughty stomach burns. First she disputes the effects of heavenly power; Then at their daring boldness wonders more; For poor Amphion, with sore grief distress'd, Hoping to sooth his cares by endless rest, Had sheathed a dagger in his wretched breast: And she who toss'd her high disdainful head When through the streets, in solemn pomp, she led The throng that from Latona's altar fled, Assuming state beyond the proudest queen, Was now the miserablest object seen: Prostrate among the clay-cold dead she fell, And kiss'd an undistinguish'd, last farewell; Then, her pale arms advancing to the skies, "Cruel Latona! triumph now," she cries. "My grieving soul in bitter anguish drench, And with my woes your thirsty passion quench, Feast your black malice at a price thus dear, While the sore pangs of seven such deaths I bear. Triumph, too cruel rival, and display Your conquering standard, for you've won the day; Yet I'll excel; for yet, though seven are slain, Superior still in number I remain." Scarce had she spoke, the bow-string's twanging sound Was heard, and dealt fresh terrors all around, Which all, but Niobe alone, confound. Stunn'd and obdurate by her load of grief, Insensible she sits, nor hopes relief.

Before the funeral biers, all weeping sad, Her daughters stood, in vests of sable clad. When one surprised, and stung with sudden smart, In vain attempts to draw the

sticking dart; But to grim death her blooming youth resigns, And o'er her brother's corpse her dying head reclines; This, to assuage her mother's anguish tries, And, silenced in the pious action, dies; Shot by a secret arrow, wing'd with death, Her falt'ring lips but only gasp'd for breath. One, on her dying sister, breathes her last; Vainly in flight another's hopes are placed; This, hiding from her fate, a shelter seeks; That trembling stands, and fills the air with shrieks And all in vain; for now all six had found Their way to death, each by a diff'rent wound. The last, with eager care, the mother veil'd, Behind her spreading mantle close conceal'd, And with her body guarded, as a shield. "Only for this, this youngest, I implore, Grant me this one request, I ask no more; O grant me this!" she passionately cries: But, while she speaks, the destined virgin dies.

Transformation of Niobe

Niobe, struck with horror at the magnitude of her calamities is changed into a stone.

Widow'd, and childless, lamentable state! A doleful sight, among the dead she sate; Harden'd with woes, a statue of despair, To ev'ry breath of wind unmoved her hair; Her cheek still reddening, but its colour dead, Faded her eyes, and set within her head; No more her pliant tongue its motion keeps, But stands congeal'd within her frozen lips; Stagnate and dull, within her purple veins, Its current stopp'd, the lifeless blood remains; Her feet their usual offices refuse; Her arms and neck their graceful gestures lose: Action and life from ev'ry part are gone, And ev'n her entrails turn to solid stone: Yet still she weeps, and whirld by stormy winds, Borne through the air, her native country finds; There, fix'd, she stands upon a bleaky hill, There yet her marble cheeks eternal tears distil.

Peasants of Lycia Transformed to Frogs

The goddess Latona, while concealing herself from the rage of Juno, arrives in Lycia, where she is insulted and ridiculed hy peasants, of whom she begs a draught

of water, while they are weeding a marsh—Their refusal and insolence provoke her, and she implores Jupiter to punish their barbarity—The god consents, and transforms them into frogs.

Then all, reclaim'd by this example, show'd A due regard for each peculiar god: Both men and women their devoirs express'd, And great Latona's awful power confess'd. Then, tracing instances of older time, To suit the nature of the present crime, Thus one begins his tale:—"Where Lycia yields A golden harvest from its fertile fields, Some churlish peasants, in the days of yore, Provoked the goddess to exert her power. The thing, indeed, the meanness of the place Has made obscure, surprising as it was; But I myself once happen'd to behold This famous lake, of which the story's told. My father, then, worn out by length of days, Nor able to sustain the tedious ways, Me with a guide had sent the plains to roam, And drive his well-fed straggling heifers home. Here, as we saunter'd through the verdant meads, We spied a lake o'ergrown with trembling reeds, Whose wavy tops an op'ning scene disclose, From which an antique smoky altar rose. I, as my superstitious guide had done, Stopp'd short, and bless'd myself, and then went on Yet I inquired to whom the altar stood, Faunus, the Naiads, or some native god? 'No sylvan deity,' my friend replies, 'Enshrined within this hallow'd altar lies: For this, O youth, to that famed goddess stands, Whom, at the imperial Juno's rough commands, Of ev'ry quarter of the earth bereaved, Delos, the floating isle, at length received; Who there, in spite of enemies, brought forth, Beneath an olive shade, her great twin birth.

" 'Hence too she fled the furious stepdame's power And in her arms a double godhead bore; And now the borders of fair Lycia gain'd, Just when the summer solstice parch'd the land. With thirst the goddess languishing, no more Her emptied breast would yield its milky store, When, from below, the smiling valley show'd A silver lake that in its bottom flow'd: A sort of clowns were reaping, near the bank, The bending osier, and the bulrush dank, The cress, and water-lily, fragrant weed, Whose juicy stalk the liquid fountains feed: The goddess came, and kneeling on the

brink, Stoop'd at the fresh repast, prepared to drink. Then thus, being hinder'd by the rabble race, In accents mild, expostulates the case: "Water I only ask, and sure 'tis hard From Nature's common rights to be debarr'd: This, as the genial sun, and vital air, Should flow alike to ev'ry creature's share. Yet still I ask, and as a favour crave, That which a public bounty nature gave: Nor do I seek my weary limbs to drench, Only, with one cool draught, my thirst I'd quench. Now from my throat the usual moisture dries, And ev'n my voice in broken accents dies: One draught as dear as life I should esteem, And water, now I thirst, would nectar seem: O! let my little babes your pity move, And melt your hearts to charitable love; They (as by chance they did) extend to you Their little hands, and my request pursue." '

"Whom would these soft persuasions not subdue, Though the most rustic and unmanner'd crew? Yet they the goddess's request refuse, And with rude words reproachfully abuse. Nay, more, with spiteful feet the villains trode O'er the soft bottom of the marshy flood, And blacken'd all the lake with clouds of rising mud.

"Her thirst, by indignation, was suppress'd; Bent on revenge, the goddess stood confess'd. Her suppliant hands uplifting to the skies, For a redress to heaven she now applies: 'And may you live,' she passionately cried, 'Doom'd in that pool for ever to abide.'

"The goddess has her wish: for now they choose To plunge and dive among the watery ooze; Sometimes they show their head above the brim, And on the glassy surface spread to swim; Often upon the bank their station take, Then spring and leap into the cooly lake. Still, void of shame, they lead a clam'rous life. And, croaking, still scold on in endless strife; Compell'd to live beneath the liquid stream, Where still they quarrel, and attempt to scream. Now, from their bloated throat, their voice puts on Imperfect murmurs in a hoarser tone; Their noisy jaws, with bawling now grown wide, An ugly sight! extend on either side; Their motley back, streak'd with a list of green, Join'd to their head, without a neck, is seen; And, with a belly broad

and white, they look Mere frogs, and still frequent the muddy brook.”

Fate of Marsyas

Marsyas, a celebrated player on the flute, is hanged and flayed alive by Apollo, as a punishment for his imprudence in challenging the god to a trial of skill—The death of the musician is universally lamented by the Fauns, Satyrs, and Dryads; and from their abundant tears arises a river of Phrygia, well known by the name of Marsyas.

Scarce had the mar; this famous story told, Of vengeance on the Lycians shown of old, When, straight, another pictures to their view The satyr’s fate, whom angry Phoebus slew; Who, raised with high conceit, and puff’d with pride, At his own pipe the skilful god defied. “Why do you tear me from myself?” he cries; “Ah! cruel; must my skin be made the prize? This for a silly pipe?” he roaring said; Meanwhile the skin from off his limbs was flay’d. All bare, and raw, one large continued wound, With streams of blood his body bathed the ground. The bluish veins their trembling pulse disclosed, The stringy nerves lay naked and exposed, His entrails too distinctly each express’d, With every shining fibre of his breast.

The fauns and sylvans, with the nymphs that rove Among the satyrs in the shady grove, Olympus, known of old, and every swain That fed, or flock, or herd, upon the plain, Bewail’d the loss, and with their tears, that flow’d, A kindly moisture on the earth bestow’d, That soon, conjoin’d and in a body ranged, Sprung from the ground, to limpid water changed; Which, down through Phrygia’s rocks, a mighty stream, Comes tumbling to the sea, and Marsya is its name.

Story of Pelops

Pelops, the son of Tantalus, is murdered by his father, and served up in an entertainment to the gods, to make trial of their divinity—Jupiter discovers the perfidious cruelty, and restores Pelops to life—Part of the shoulder, which Ceres

incautiously devoured, is supplied by a substitute made of ivory.

From these relations straight the people turn To present truths, and lost Amphion mourn; The mother most was blamed, yet some relate That Pelops pitied and bewail'd her fate, And stripp'd his clothes, and laid his shoulder bare And made the ivory miracle appear. This shoulder, from the first, was form'd of flesh, As lively as the other, and as fresh; But, when the youth was by his father slain, The gods restored his mangled limbs again; Only that place which joins the neck and arm, The rest untouch'd, was found to suffer harm; The loss of which an ivory piece sustain'd; And thus the youth his limbs and life regain'd.

Story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela

Procne, the wife of Tereus, king of Thrace, revenges the injuries which her sister Philomela has sustained from her husband on her son Itys, whom she sacrifices to her resentment, and serves as a dish at the table of his father, who partakes of the horrible repast without suspicion, till Philomela appears with the head of the unfortunate youth—The monarch draws his sword, and pursues the two sisters, when he is transformed into a lapwing, Philomela into a nightingale, Procne into a swallow, and Itys into a pheasant.

To Thebes the neighb'ring princes all repair, And with condolence the misfortune share. Each bord'ring state in solemn form address'd, And each, betimes, a friendly grief express'd; Argos, with Sparta's and Mycenae's towns, And Calydon, yet free from fierce Diana's frowns; Corinth for finest brass well famed of old; Orchomenos for men of courage bold; Cleonae lying in the lowly dale; And rich Messene with its fertile vale; Pylos for Nestor's city after famed; And Troezen, not as yet from Pittheus named; And those fair cities, which are hemm'd around By double seas within the Isthmian ground; And those which farther from the seacoast stand, Lodged in the bosom of the spacious land.

Who can believe it? Athens was the last, Though for politeness famed for ages past:

For a strait siege, which then their walls enclosed, Such acts of kind humanity opposed: And thick with ships, from foreign nations bound, Seaward their city lay invested round.

These, with auxiliar forces led from far, Tereus of Thrace, brave, and inured to war, Had quite defeated, and obtain'd a name, The warrior's due, among the sons of fame. This, with his wealth, and power, and ancient line, From Mars derived, Pandion's thoughts incline His daughter Procne with the prince to join.

Nor Hymen, nor the Graces, here preside, Nor Juno, to befriend the blooming bride; But fiends with funeral brands the process led, And furies waited at the genial bed; And, all night long, the screeching owl aloof, With baleful notes, sat brooding o'er the roof. With such ill omens was the match begun, That made them parents of a hopeful son. Now Thrace congratulates their seeming joy, And they, in thankful rites, their minds employ: If the fair queen's espousals pleased before, Itys, the newborn prince, now pleases more; And each bright day the birth and bridal feast Were kept with hallow'd pomp above the rest. So far true happiness may lie conceal'd, When, by false lights, we fancy 'tis reveal'd!

Now, since their nuptials, had the golden sun Five courses round his ample zodiac run, When gentle Procne thus her lord address'd, And spoke the secret wishes of her breast: "If I," she said, "have ever favour found, Let my petition with success be crown'd. Let me at Athens my dear sister see; Or, let her come to Thrace and visit me; And, lest my father should her absence mourn, Promise that she shall make a quick return. With thanks I'd own the obligation due, Only, O Tereus, to the gods and you."

Now, plied with oar and sail at his command, The nimble galleys reach'd the Athenian land, And anchor'd in the famed Piraean bay, While Tereus to the palace takes his way; The king salutes, and, ceremonies pass'd, Begins the fatal embassy at last: The occasion of his voyage he declares, And, with his own, his wife's request

prefers; Asks leave that, only for a little space, Their lovely sister might embark for Thrace.

Thus, while he spoke, appear'd the royal maid, Bright Philomela, splendidly array'd; But most attractive in her charming face, And comely person, turn'd with ev'ry grace: Like those fair nymphs that are described to rove Across the glades and op'nings of the grove; Only that these are dress'd for sylvan sports, And less become the finery of courts.

Tereus beheld the virgin, and admired, And with the coals of burning love was fired; Like crackling stubble, or the summer hay, When forked lightnings o'er the meadows play. Such charms in any breast might kindle love, But him the heats of inbred passion move, To which, though Thrace is naturally prone, Yet his is still superior, and his own. Straight her attendants he designs to buy, And with large bribes her governess would try; Herself with ample gifts resolves to bend, And his whole kingdom in the attempt expend; Or, snatch'd away, by force of arms to bear, And justify the act with open war. The boundless passion boils within his breast, And his projecting soul admits no rest.

And now, impatient of the least delay, By pleading Procne's cause, he speeds his way: The eloquence of love his tongue inspires, And, in his wife's, he speaks his own desires; Hence all his importunities arise, And tears unmanly trickle from his eyes.

Ye gods! what thick involving darkness blinds The stupid faculties of mortal minds! Tereus the credit of good-nature gains From these his crimes; so well the villain feigns, And, unsuspecting of his base designs, In the request fair Philomela joins; Her snowy arms her aged sire embrace, And clasp his neck with an endearing grace: Only to see her sister she entreats, A seeming blessing, which a curse completes. Tereus surveys her with a luscious eye, And in his mind forestalls the blissful joy: Her circling arms a scene of love inspire, And ev'ry kiss foments the raging fire.

Fondly he wishes for the father’s place, To feel, and to return, the warm embrace; Since not the nearest ties of filial blood Would damp his flame, and force him to be good.

At length, for both their sakes, the king agrees; And Philomela, on her bended knees, Thanks him for what her fancy calls success, When cruel Fate intends her nothing less.

Now Phoebus, hast’ning to ambrosial rest, His fiery steeds drove sloping down the west; The sculptured gold with sparkling wines was fill’d, And, with rich meats, each cheerful table smiled. Plenty and mirth the royal banquet close, Then all retire to sleep and sweet repose. But the amorous monarch, though withdrawn apart, Still feels love’s poison rankling in his heart: Her face divine is stamp’d within his breast, Fancy imagines, and improves the rest: And thus, kept waking by intense desire, He nourishes his own prevailing fire.

Next day the good old king for Tereus sends, And to his charge the virgin recommends: His hand with tears the indulgent father press’d, Then spoke, and thus with tenderness address’d:

“Since the kind instances of pious love Do all pretence of obstacle remove: Since Procne’s, and her own, with your request, O’errule the fears of a paternal breast, With you, dear son, my daughter I entrust, And, by the gods, adjure you to be just; By truth, and ev’ry consanguineal tie, To watch and guard her with a father’s eye; And, since the least delay will tedious prove, In keeping from my sight the child I love, With speed return her, kindly to assuage The tedious troubles of my ling’ring age. And you, my Philomel, let it suffice, To know your sister’s banish’d from my eyes; If any sense of duty sways your mind, Let me from you the shortest absence find.” He wept; then kiss’d his child; and while he speaks, The tears fall gently down his aged cheeks. Next, as a pledge of fealty, he demands, And, with a solemn charge, conjoins their hands; Then to his daughter and his grandson sends, And by

their mouth a blessing recommends; While, in a voice with dire forebodings broke. Sobbing and faint, the last farewell was spoke.

Now Philomela, scarce received on board, And in the royal gilded bark secured, Beheld the dashes of the bending oar, The ruffled sea, and the receding shore, When straight (his joy impatient of disguise) “We’ve gain’d our point,” the rough barbarian cries; “Now I possess the dear, the blissful hour, And ev’ry wish subjected to my power.” As when the bold rapacious bird of Jove, With crooked talons, stooping from above, Has snatch’d, and carried to his lofty nest A captive hare, with cruel gripes oppress’d, Secure, with fix’d and unrelenting eyes, He sits, and views the helpless, trembling prize.

Their vessels now had made the intended land. And all with joy descend upon the strand, When the false tyrant seized the princely maid, And to a lodge in distant woods convey’d; Pale, sinking, and distress’d with jealous fears, And, asking for her sister, all in tears. The monster, on his purpose fully bent, No longer now delay’d his base intent. Her piercing accents to her sire complain, And to her absent sister, but in vain; In vain she importunes, with doleful cries, Each unattentive godhead of the skies. She pants and trembles like the bleating prey, From some close-hunted wolf just snatch’d away, That still with fearful horror looks around, And on its flank regards the bleeding wound: Or, as the tim’rous dove, the danger o’er, Beholds her shining plumes besmear’d with gore; And though deliver’d from the falcon’s claw, Yet shivers, and retains a secret awe.

But when her mind a calm reflection shared, And all her scatter’d spirits were repaired, Torn and disorder’d while her tresses hung, Her livid hands, like one that mourn’d, she wrung, Then thus, with grief o’erwhelmed her languid eyes: “Savage, inhuman, cruel wretch!” she cries, “Whom nor a parent’s strict commands could move, Though charged and utter’d with the tears of love, Nor virgin innocence, nor all that’s due To the strong contract of the nuptial vow; Virtue, by this, in wild

confusion’s laid, And I compelled to wrong my sister’s bed; While you, regardless of your marriage oath, With stains of incest have defiled us both. Though I deserved some punishment to find, This was, ye gods! too cruel and unkind. Yet, villain, to complete your horrid guilt, Stab here, and let my tainted blood be spilt. O! happy, had it come before I knew The cursed embrace of vile perfidious you; Then, my pale ghost, pure from incestuous love, Had wander’d spotless through the Elysian grove. But, if the gods above have power to know, And judge those actions that are done below, Unless the dreaded thunders of the sky, Like me, subdued, and violated lie, Still my revenge shall take its proper time, And suit the baseness of your hellish crime; Myself abandon’d, and devoid of shame, Through the wide world your actions will proclaim; Or, though I’m prison’d in this lonely den, Obscured and buried from the sight of men, My mournful voice the pitying rocks shall move, And my complainings echo through the grove. Hear me, O Heaven! and, if a god be there, Let him regard me, and accept my prayer.”

Struck with these words, the tyrant’s guilty breast With fear and anger was by turns possess’d; Now, with remorse his conscience deeply stung, He drew the falchion that beside him hung, And first her tender arms behind her bound, Then dragg’d her by the hair along the ground. The princess willingly her throat reclined, And view’d the steel with a contented mind; But soon her tongue the girding pincers strain, With anguish, soon she feels the piercing pain: “O father, father!” she would fain have spoke, But the sharp torture her intention broke; In vain she tries, for now the blade has cut Her tongue sheer off, close to the trembling root; The mangled part still quiver’d on the ground, Murmuring with a faint, imperfect sound: And, as a serpent writhes his wounded train, Uneasy, panting, and possess’d with pain, The piece, while life remain’d, still trembled fast, And to its mistress pointed to the last.

The monarch ventures to his Procne’s sight; Loaded with guilt, and cloyed with long delight; There, with feign’d grief, and false dissembled sighs, Begins a formal narrative of lies; Her sister’s death he artfully declares, Then weeps, and raises

credit from his tears. Her vest with flowers of gold embroider'd o'er, With grief distress'd, the mournful matron tore, And a beseeming suit of gloomy sable wore. With cost, an honorary tomb she raised, And thus the imaginary ghost appeased. Deluded queen! the fate of her you love, Nor grief, nor pity, but revenge, should move.

Through the twelve signs had pass'd the circling sun, And round the compass of the zodiac run; What must unhappy Philomela do, For ever subject to her keeper's view? Huge walls of massy stone the lodge surround, From her own mouth no way of speaking's found. But all our wants by wit may be supplied, And art makes up what fortune has denied. With skill exact a Phrygian web she strung, Fix'd to a loom that in her chamber hung, Where inwrought letters, upon white display'd, In purple notes, her wretched case betray'd. The piece, when finish'd, secretly she gave Into the charge of one poor menial slave; And then, with gestures, made him understand It must be safe convey'd to Procne's hand. The slave, with speed, the queen's apartment sought, And render'd up his charge, unknowing what he brought. But when the ciphers, figured in each fold, Her sister's melancholy story told, (Strange that she could!) with silence she survey'd The tragic piece, and without weeping read: In such tumultuous haste her passions sprung, They choked her voice, and quite disarm'd her tongue. No room for female tears; the Furies rise, Darting vindictive glances from her eyes; And, stung with rage, she bounds from place to place, While stern revenge sits low'ring in her face.

Now the triennial celebration came, Observed to Bacchus by each Thracian dame; When, in the privacies of night retired, They act his rites, with sacred rapture fired. By night, the tinkling cymbals ring around, While the shrill notes from Rhodope resound; By night, the queen, disguised, forsakes the court, To mingle in the festival resort: Leaves of the curling vine her temples shade, And, with a circling wreath, adorn her head; Adown her back the stag's rough spoils appear, Light on her shoulder leans a cornel spear.

Thus, in the fury of the god conceal’d, Procne her own mad headstrong passion veil’d: Now, with her gang, to the thick wood she flies, And with religious yellings fills the skies: The fatal lodge, as ’twere by chance, she seeks, And through the bolted doors an entrance breaks. From thence, her sister snatching by the hand, Mask’d like the ranting Bacchanalian band, Within the limits of the court she drew, Shading, with ivy green, her outward hue. But Philomela, conscious of the place, Felt new reviving pangs of her disgrace; A shiv’ring cold prevail’d in ev’ry part, And the chill’d blood ran trembling to her heart.

Soon as the queen a fit retirement found, Stripp’d of the garlands that her temples crown’d, She straight unveil’d her blushing sister’s face, And fondly clasp’d her with a close embrace: But, in confusion lost, the unhappy maid, With shame dejected, hung her drooping head, As guilty of a crime that stain’d her sister’s bed. That speech, that should her injured virtue clear, And make her spotless innocence appear, Is now no more, only her hands and eyes Appeal, in signals, to the conscious skies. In Procne’s breast the rising passions boil, And burst in anger with a mad recoil; Her sister’s ill-timed grief with scorn she blames, Then, in these furious words, her rage proclaims:

“Tears, unavailing, but defer our time, The stabbing sword must expiate the crime; Or worse, if wit, on bloody vengeance bent, A weapon more tormenting can invent. O sister! I’ve prepared my stubborn heart To act some hellish and unheard-of part; Either the palace to surround with fire, And see the villain in the flames expire, Or, with a knife, dig out his cursed eyes, Or his false tongue with racking engines seize. Tortures enough my passion has design’d, But the variety distracts my mind.”

Awhile thus wav’ring stood the furious dame, When Itys fondling to his mother came; From him the cruel, fatal hint she took, She view’d him with a stern, remorseless look; “Ah! but too like thy wicked sire,” she said, Forming the direful purpose in her head. At this a sullen grief her voice suppress’d, While silent passions

struggle in her breast.

Now, at her lap arrived, the flatt'ring boy Salutes his parent with a smiling joy: About her neck his little arms are thrown, And he accosts her in a prattling tone; Then her tempestuous anger was allay'd, And in its full career her vengeance stay'd; While tender thoughts, in spite of passion, rise, And melting tears disarm her threat'ning eyes. But, when she found the mother's easy heart Too fondly swerving from the intended part, Her injured sister's face again she view'd, And, as by turns, surveying both she stood. "While this fond boy," she said, "can thus express The moving accents of his fond address, Why stands my sister of her tongue bereft, Forlorn and sad, in speechless silence left? O Procne! see the fortune of your house; Such is your fate when match'd to such a spouse! Conjugal duty, if observed to him, Would change from virtue, and become a crime: For all respect to Tereus must debase The noble blood of great Pandion's race."

Straight, at these words, with big resentment fill'd, Furious her look, she flew and seized her child, Like a fell tigress of the savage kind, That drags the tender suckling of the hind Through India's gloomy groves, where Ganges laves The shady scene, and rolls his streamy waves.

Now to a close apartment they were come, Far off retired within the spacious dome, When Procne, on revengeful mischief bent, Home to his heart a piercing poniard sent. Itys, with rueful cries, but all too late, Holds out his hands, and deprecates his fate, Still at his mother's neck he fondly aims, And strives to melt her with endearing names; Yet still the cruel mother perseveres, Nor with concern his bitter anguish hears. This might suffice; but Philomela too Across his throat a shining cutlass drew. Then both, with knives, dissect each quiv'ring part, And carve the butcher'd limbs with cruel art, Which, whelm'd in boiling cauldrons o'er the fire, Or, turn'd on spits, in steamy smoke aspire; While the long entries, with their slippery floor, Run down in purple streams of clotted gore.

Ask’d by his wife to this inhuman feast, Tereus, unknowingly, is made a guest, While she, her plot the better to disguise, Styles it some unknown mystic sacrifice; And such the nature of the hallow’d rite, The wife her husband only could invite; The slaves must all withdraw, and be debarr’d the sight. Tereus, upon a throne of antique state, Loftily raised, before the banquet sate; And, glutton like, luxuriously pleased, With his own flesh his hungry maw appeased. Nay, such a blindness o’er his senses falls That he for Itys to the table calls. When Procne, now impatient to disclose The joy that from her full revenge arose, Cries out, in transports of a cruel mind, “Within yourself your Itys you may find.” Still at this puzzling answer, with surprise, Around the room he sends his curious eyes; And, as he still inquired, and call’d aloud, Fierce Philomela, all besmeared with blood, Her hands with murder stain’d, her spreading hair Hanging dishevell’d, with a ghastly air Stepp’d forth, and flung, full in the tyrant’s face, The head of Itys, gory as it was: Nor ever long’d so much to use her tongue, And with a just reproach to vindicate her wrong.

The Thracian monarch from the table flings, While with his cries the vaulted parlour rings: His imprecations echo down to hell, And rouse the snaky furies from their Stygian cell. One while he labours to disgorge his breast, And free his stomach from the cursed feast; Then, weeping o’er his lamentable doom, He styles himself his son’s sepulchral tomb. Now, with drawn sabre and impetuous speed, In close pursuit he drives Pandion’s breed, Whose nimble feet spring with so swift a force Across the fields, they seem to wing their course. And now on real wings themselves they raise, And steer their airy flight by different ways; One to the woodland’s shady covert hies, Around the smoky roof the other flies, Whose feathers yet the marks of murder stain, Where, stamp’d upon her breast, the crimson spots remain. Tereus, through grief, and haste to be revenged, Shares the like fate, and to a bird is changed: Fix’d on his head the crested plumes appear, Long is his beak, and sharpen’d like a spear: Thus arm’d, his looks his inward mind display, And, to a lapwing turn’d, he fans his way.

Exceeding trouble for his children's fate, Shorten'd Pandion's days, and changed his date; Down to the shades below, with sorrow spent, An earlier, unexpected ghost he went.

Boreas in Love

Boreas is enamoured of the beautiful Orithyia, whom he carries off against her inclination—She afterward becomes the mother of Zethes and Calais, who accompany the Argonautic expedition.

Erechtheus next the Athenian sceptre sway'd Whose rule the state with joint consent obey'd; So mix'd his justice with his valour flow'd, His reign one scene of princely goodness show'd. Four hopeful youths, as many females bright, Sprung from his loins, and sooth'd him with delight.

Two of these sisters, of a lovelier air, Excell'd the rest, though all the rest were fair. Procris to Cephalus in wedlock tied, Bless'd the young sylvan with a blooming bride: For Orithyia Boreas suffer'd pain; For the coy maid sued long, but sued in vain; Tereus, his neighbour, and his Thracian blood, Against the match a main objection stood, Which made his vows, and all his suppliant love, Empty as air, and ineffectual, prove.

But when he found his soothing flatteries fail, Nor saw his soft addresses could avail, Blustering with ire, he quickly has recourse To rougher arts, and his own native force. " 'Tis well," he said; "such usage is my due, When thus disguised by foreign ways I sue; When my stern airs and fierceness I disclaim, And sigh for love, ridiculously tame; When soft addresses foolishly I try, Nor my own stronger remedies apply. By force and violence I chiefly live, By them the low'ring stormy tempests drive, In foaming billows raise the hoary deep, Writhe knotted oaks, and sandy deserts sweep, Congeal the falling flakes of fleecy snow, And bruise with rattling hail the plain below. I and my brother winds, when join'd above, Through the waste champaign of the skies we rove, With such a boisterous full career engage,

That heaven’s whole concave thunders at our rage. While, struck from nitrous clouds, fierce lightnings play, Dart through the storm, and gild the gloomy day: Or when, in subterraneous caverns pent, My breath against the hollow earth is bent, The quaking world above, and ghosts below, My mighty power, by dear experience, know, Tremble with fear, and dread the fatal blow. This is the only cure to be applied, Thus to Erechtheus I should be allied; And thus the scornful virgin should be woo’d, Not by entreaty, but by force subdued.”

Boreas, in passion, spoke these huffing things, And, as he spoke, he shook his dreadful wings, At which, afar the shivering sea was fann’d, And the wide surface of the distant land: His dusty mantle o’er the hills he drew, And swept the lowly valleys as he flew; Then, with his yellow wings, embraced the maid, And, wrapp’d in dusky clouds, far off convey’d. The sparkling blaze of love’s prevailing fire Shone brighter as he flew, and flamed the higher And now the god, possess’d of his delight, To northern Thrace pursued his airy flight.

Two lovely twins, the effect of this embrace, Crown their soft labours, and their nuptials grace, Who, like their mother, beautiful and fair, Their father’s strength, and feather’d pinions, share: Yet these at first were wanting, as ’tis said, And after, as they grew, their shoulders spread. Zethes and Calais, the pretty twins, Remain’d unfledg’d, while smooth their beardless chins: But when, in time, the budding silver down Shaded their face, and on their cheeks was grown, Two sprouting wings upon their shoulders sprung, Like those in birds, that veil the callow young. Then, as their age advanced, and they began From greener youth to ripen into man, With Jason’s Argonauts they cross’d the seas, Embark’d in quest of the fam’d golden fleece; There, with the rest, the first frail vessel tried, And boldly ventured on the swelling tide.

Book VII

Story of Medea and Jason

Jason, at the command of the usurper Pelias, who compasses his destruction, arrives at Colchos, accompanied by the princes of Greece, and resolved to effect the recovery of the golden fleece—Medea, the daughter of the king, is captivated with his beauty, and convinced by his professions of unalterable attachment—By her knowledge of magic, she enables him to overcome all opposition, and sets sail with her lover for Greece, where they arrive in safety.

The Argonauts now stemm'd the foaming tide, And to Arcadia's shore their course applied; Where sightless Phineus spent his age in grief, But Boreas' sons engage in his relief, And those unwelcome guests, the odious race Of harpies, from the monarch's table chase. With Jason, then, they greater toils sustain, And Phasis' slimy banks at last they gain. Here boldly they demand the golden prize Of Scythia's king, who sternly thus replies: "That mighty labours they must first o'ercome, Or sail their Argo thence unfreighted home."

Meanwhile Medea, seized with fierce desire, By reason strives to quench the raging fire; But strives in vain;—"Some god," she said, "withstands, And Reason's baffled counsel countermands. What unseen power does this disorder move? 'Tis love—at least 'tis like what men call love. Else wherefore should the king's commands appear To me too hard?—But so indeed they are. Why should I for a stranger fear, lest he Should perish, whom I did but lately see? His death or safety, what are they to me? Wretch! from thy virgin breast this flame expel, And soon—O! could I, all would then be well. But love, resistless love, my soul invades: Discretion this, affection that, persuades. I see the right, and I approve it too, Condemn the wrong, and yet—the wrong pursue. Why, royal maid, shouldst thou desire to wed A wanderer, and court a foreign bed? Thy native land, though barb'rous, can present A bridegroom worth a royal bride's consent; And whether this adventurer lives or dies, In Fate and Fortune's fickle pleasure lies. Yet may he

live! for to the powers above, A virgin, led by no impulse of love, So just a suit may, for the guiltless, move. Whom would not Jason's valour, youth, and blood, Invite? or, could these merits be withstood, At least his charming person must incline The hardest heart—I'm sure 'tis so with mine! Yet, if I help him not, the flaming breath Of bulls, and earthborn foes, must be his death: Or, should he through these dangers force his way, At last he must be made the dragon's prey. If no remorse for such distress I feel, I am a tigress, and my breast is steel. Why do I scruple then to see him slain, And with the tragic scene my eyes profane? My magic's art employ, not to assuage The savages, but to inflame their rage? His earthborn foes to fiercer fury move, And accessary to his niurder prove? The gods forbid!—but prayers are idle breath, When action only can prevent his death. Shall I betray my father, and the state, To intercept a rambling hero's fate, Who may sail off next hour, and, saved from harms By my assistance, bless another's arms? While I, not only of my hopes bereft, But to unpitied punishment am left. If he is false, let the ingrateful bleed! But no such symptom in his looks I read. Nature would ne'er have lavish'd so much grace Upon his person, if his soul were base. Besides, he first shall plight his faith, and swear By all the gods; what therefore canst thou fear? Medea haste, from danger set him free, Jason shall thy eternal debtor be. And thou, his queen, with sovereign state install'd, By Grecian dames, the kind preserver call'd. Hence! idle dreams, by lovesick fancy bred; Wilt thou, Medea, by vain wishes led, To sister, brother, father, bid adieu? Forsake thy country's gods, and country too? My father's harsh, my brother but a child, My sister rivals me, my country's wild; And, for its gods, the greatest of them all Inspires my breast, and I obey his call. That great endearments I forsake, is true, But greater far the hopes that I pursue. The pride of having saved the youths of Greece (Each life more precious than our golden fleece); A nobler soil by me shall be possess'd, I shall see towns with arts and manners bless'd; And, what I prize above the world beside, Enjoy my Jason—and when once his bride, Be more than mortal, and to gods allied. They talk of hazards I must first sustain, Of floating

islands justling in the main; Our tender bark exposed to dreadful shocks Of fierce Charybdis' gulf, and Scylla's rocks, Where breaking waves in whirling eddies roll, And ravenous dogs that in deep caverns howl: Amid these terrors, while I lie possess'd Of him I love, and lean on Jason's breast, In tempests unconcern'd I will appear, Or only for my husband's safety fear. Didst thou say husband?—canst thou so deceive Thyself, fond maid, and thy own cheat believe? In vain thou strivest to varnish o'er thy shame, And grace thy guilt with wedlock's sacred name. Pull off the cozening mask, and, O! in time Discover and avoid the fatal crime." She ceased—the Graces now, with kind surprise, And Virtue's lovely train, before her eyes Present themselves, and vanquish'd Cupid flies.

She then retires to Hecate's shrine, that stood Far in the covert of a shady wood: She finds the fury of her flames assuaged, But, seeing Jason there, again they raged. Blushes and paleness did by turns invade Her tender cheeks, and secret grief betray'd. As fire, that sleeping under ashes lies, Fresh blown, and roused, does up in blazes rise, So flamed the virgin's breast— New kindled by her lover's sparkling eyes. For chance, that day, had, with uncommon grace Adorn'd the lovely youth, and through his face Display'd an air so pleasing, as might charm A goddess, and a vestal's bosom warm. Her rayish'd eyes survey him o'er and o'er, As some gay wonder never seen before; Transported to the skies she seems to be, And thinks she gazes on a deity. But, when he spoke, and press'd her trembling hand, And did, with tender words, her aid demand, With vows, and oaths, to make her soon his bride, She wept a flood of tears, and thus replied: "I see my error, yet to ruin move, Nor owe my fate to ignorance, but love: Your life I'll guard, and only crave of you To swear once more, and—to your oath be true." He swears, by Hecate he would all fulfil, And by her grandfather's prophetic skill, By every thing that doubting love could press, His present danger, and desired success. She credits him, and kindly does produce Enchanted herbs, and teaches him their use. Their mystic names and virtues he admires, And with his booty joyfully retires.

Impatient for the wonders of the day, Aurora drives the loit’ring stars away. Now Mars’s mount the pressing people fill, The crowd below, the nobles crown the hill; The king himself high-throned above the rest, With iv’ry sceptre, and in purple dress’d.

Forthwith the brass-hoof’d bulls are set at large, Whose furious nostrils sulph’rous flame discharge: The blasted herbage by their breath expires; As forges rumble with excessive fires, And furnaces with fiercer fury glow, When water on the panting mass ye throw, With such a noise, from their convulsive breast, Through bellowing throats the struggling vapour press’d.

Yet Jason marches up without concern While on the advent’rous youth the monsters turn Their glaring eyes, and, eager to engage, Brandish their steel-tipp’d horns in threat’ning rage; With brazen hoofs they beat the ground, and choke The ambient air with clouds of dust and smoke: Each gazing Grecian for his champion shakes, While bold advances he securely makes Through singing blasts; such wonders magic art Can work, when Love conspires, and plays his part. The passive savages like statues stand, While he their dewlaps strokes with soothing hand; To unknown yokes their brawny necks they yield, And, like tame oxen, plough the wond’ring field. The Colchians stare; the Grecians shout, and raise Their champion’s courage with inspiring praise.

Imbolden’d now, on fresh attempts he goes, With serpent’s teeth the fertile furrows sows; The glebe fermenting, with enchanted juice, Makes the snake’s teeth a human crop produce: For, as an infant, pris’ner to the womb, Contented sleeps, till to perfection come, Then does the cell’s obscure confinement scorn, He tosses, throbs, and presses to be born, So, from the lab’ring earth, no single birth, But a whole troop of lusty youths, rush forth; And, what’s more strange, with martial fury warm’d, And for encounter all completely arm’d; In rank and file, as they were sow’d, they stand, Impatient for the signal of command. No foe but the Aemonian youth

appears; At him they level their steel-pointed spears; His frighted friends, who triumph'd just before, With peals of sighs, his desperate case deplore; And where such hardy warriors are afraid, What must the tender and enamour'd maid? Her spirits sink, the blood her cheek forsook; She fears, who for his safety undertook; She knew the virtue of the spells she gave, She knew the force, and knew her lover brave: But what's a single champion to a host? Yet, scorning thus to see him tamely lost, Her strong reserve of secret arts she brings, And last, her never-failing song she sings. Wonders ensue; among his gazing foes The massy fragment of a rock he throws; This charm in civil war engaged them all; By mutual wounds those earthborn brothers fall.

The Greeks, transported with the strange success, Leap from their seats the conq'ror to caress; Commend, and kiss, and clasp him in their arms So would the kind contriver of the charms; But her, who felt the tenderest concern, Honour condemns in secret flames to burn; Committed to a double guard of fame, Awed by a virgin's and a princess' name. But thoughts are free, and fancy unconfined, She kisses, courts, and hugs him in her mind; To fav'ring powers her silent thanks she gives, By whose indulgence her loved hero lives.

One labour more remains, and, though the last, In danger far surmounting all the past; That enterprise, by Fates, in store was kept, To make the dragon sleep, that never slept, Whose crest shoots dreadful lustre; from his jaws A triple tire of forked stings he draws, With fangs, and wings of a prodigious size: Such was the guardian of the golden prize. Yet him, besprinkled with Lethaean dew, The fair enchantress into slumber threw; And then, to fix him, thrice she did repeat The rhyme, that makes the raging winds retreat; In stormy seas can halcyon seasons make, Turn rapid streams into a standing lake; While the soft guest his drowsy eyelids seals, The unguarded golden fleece the stranger steals; Proud to possess the purchase of the toil, Proud of his royal bride, the richer spoil; To sea both prize and patroness he bore, And lands triumphant on his native shore.

Old Aeson Restored to Youth

Medea, at the request of her husband, restores his aged father, Aeson, to the vigour and sprightliness of youth.

Aemonian matrons, who their absence mourn'd, Rejoice to see their prosp'rous sons reiurn'd: Rich curling fumes of incense feast the skies, A hecatomb of voted victims dies, With gilded horns, and garlands on their head, And all the pomp of death, to the altar led. Congratulating bowls go briskly round, Triumphant shouts in louder music drown'd. Amid these revels, why that cloud of care On Jason's brow? (to whom the largest share Of mirth was due)—his father was not there. Aeson was absent, once the young and brave, Now crush'd with years, and bending to the grave. At last withdrawn, and by the crowd unseen, Pressing her hand (with starting sighs between), He supplicates his kind and skilful queen.

"O patroness, preserver of my life! (Dear when my mistress, and much dearer wife) Your favours to so vast a sum amount, 'Tis past the power of numbers to recount; Or, could they be to computation brought, The history would a romance be thought: And yet, unless you add one favour more, Greater than all that you conferr'd before, But not too hard for love and magic skill, Your past are thrown away, and Jason's wretched still. The morning of my life is just begun, But my declining father's race is run; From my large stock retrench the long arrears, And add them to expiring Aeson's years."

Thus spake the generous youth, and wept the rest Moved with the piety of his request, To his aged sire such filial duty shown, So different from her treatment of her own, But still endeav'ring her remorse to hide, She check'd her rising sighs, and thus replied:

"How could the thought of such inhuman wrong Escape," said she, "from pious Jason's tongue? Does the whole world another Jason bear, Whose life Medea can to yours prefer? Or could I with so dire a change dispense, Hecate will never join in

that offence: Unjust is the request you make, and I, In kindness, your petition shall deny; Yet she, that grants not what you do implore, Shall yet essay to give her Jason more, Find means to increase the stock of Aeson's years, Without retrenchment of your life's arrears, Provided that the triple goddess join A strong confederate in my bold design."

Thus was her enterprise resolved; but still Three tedious nights are wanting to fulfil The circling crescents of the increasing moon; Then, in the height of her nocturnal noon, Medea steals from court; her ankles bare, Her garments closely girt, but loose her hair; Thus sallied, like a solitary sprite, She traverses the terrors of the night.

Men, beasts, and birds, in soft repose lay charm'd, No boist'rous wind the mountain-woods alarm'd; Nor did those walks of love, the myrtle-trees, Of am'rous Zephyr hear the whisp'ring breeze; All elements chain'd in unactive rest, No sense but what the twinkling stars express'd; To them (that only waked) she rears her arms, And thus commences her mysterious charms.

She turn'd her thrice about, as oft she threw On her pale tresses the nocturnal dew, Then yelling thrice a most enormous sound, Her bare knee bended on the flinty ground, "O Night," said she, "thou confidant and guide Of secrets, such as darkness ought to hide; Ye stars and moon, that, when the sun retires, Support his empire with succeeding fires; And thou, great Hecate, friend to ny design; Songs, mutt'ring spells, your magic forces join; And thou, O Earth, the magazine that yields The midnight sorc'rer drugs; skies, mountains, fields; Ye watery powers of fountain, stream, and lake; Ye sylvan gods, and gods of night, awake, And generously your parts in my adventure take.

"Oft, by your aid, swift currents I have led, Through wand'ring banks, back to their fountain-head; Transform'd the prospect of the briny deep; Made sleeping billows rave, and raving billows sleep Made clouds or sunshine, tempests rise or fall, And stubborn, lawless winds obey my call; With mutter'd words disarm'd the viper's

jaw, Up by the roots vast oaks and rocks could draw; Make forests dance, and trembling mountains come, Like malefactors, to receive their doom: Earth groan, and frighted ghosts forsake their tomb; Thee, Cynthia, my resistless rhymes drew down, When tinkling cymbals strove my voice to drown, Nor stronger Titan could their force sustain, In full career, compell'd to stop his wain; Nor could Aurora's virgin blush avail, With pois'nous herbs I turn'd their roses pale; The fury of the fiery bulls I broke, Their stubborn necks submitting to my yoke; And when the sons of Earth with fury burn'd, Their hostile rage upon themselves I turn'd; The brothers made with mutual wounds to bleed, And by their fatal strife my lover freed; And, while the dragon slept, to distant Greece, Through cheated guards, convey'd the golden fleece. But now to bolder action I proceed, Of such prevailing juices now have need, That wither'd years back to their bloom can bring, And in dead winter raise a second spring. And you'll perform 't— You will; for lo! the stars, with sparkling fires, Presage as bright success to my desires: And, now, another happy omen see! A chariot drawn by dragons waits for me."

With these last words she leaps into the wain, Strokes the snakes' necks, and shakes the golden rein; That signal given, they mount up is the skies, And now beneath her fruitful Tempe lies, Whose stores she ransacks; then to Crete she flies; There Ossa, Pelion, Othrys, Pindus, all To the fair ravisher a booty fall; The tribute of their verdure she collects, Nor proud Olympus' height his plants protects. Some by the roots she plucks; the tender tops Of others with her culling sickle crops. Nor could the plunder of the hills suffice, Down to the humble vales and meads she flies. A pidanus, Amphrysus, the next rape Sustain, nor could Enipeus' bank escape; Through Beebes marsh, and through the border ranged, Whose pasture Glaucus to a triton changed.

Now the ninth day, and ninth successive night, Had wonder'd at the restless rover's flight; Meanwhile her dragons, fed with no repast, But her exhaling simples' od'rous blast, Their tarnish'd scales and wrinkled skins had cast. At last return'd before her

palace gate, Quitting her chariot, on the ground she sate, The sky her only canopy of state. All conversation with her sex she fled, Shunn'd the caresses of the nuptial bed; Two altars next of grassy turf she rears, This Hecate's name, that youth's inscription bears; With forest boughs and vervain these she crown'd, Then delves a double trench in lower ground, And sticks a black-fleeced ram, that ready stood, And drench'd the ditches with devoted blood: New wine she pours, and milk from the udder warm, With mystic murmurs to complete the charm, And subterranean deities alarm. To the stern king of ghosts she next applied, And gentle Proserpine, his injured bride, That for old Aeson with the laws of fate They would dispense, and lengthen his short date. Thus with repeated prayers she long assails The infernal tyrant, and at last prevails; Then calls to have decrepit Aeson brought, And stupifies him with a sleeping draught. On earth his body, like a corpse, extends, Then charges Jason and his waiting friends To quit the place, that no unhallow'd eye Into her art's forbidden secrets pry. This done, the enchantress, with her locks unbound, About her altars trips a frantic round; Piecemeal the consecrated wood she splits, And dips the splinters in the bloody pits, Then hurls them on the piles; the sleeping sire She lustrates thrice, with sulphur, water, fire.

In a large cauldron now the med'cine boils, Compounded of her late collected spoils; Blending into the mesh the various powers Of wonder-working juices, roots, and flowers; With gems i' the eastern ocean's cell refined, And such as ebbing tides had left behind; To them the midnight's pearly dew she flings, A screech-owl's carcass, and ill-boding wings; Nor could the wizard wolf's warm entrails 'scape (That wolf who counterfeits a human shape). Then, from the bottom of her conj'ring bag, Snakes' skins, and liver of a long-lived stag; Last a crow's head, to such an age arrived, That he had now nine centuries survived. These, and with these a thousand more that grew In sundry soils, into her pot she threw; Then with a wither'd olive-bough she rakes The bubbling broth; the bough fresh verdure takes; Green leaves at first the perish'd plant surround, Which the next minute with ripe fruit

were crown’d. The foaming juices now the brink o’erswell; The barren heath, where’er the liquor fell, Sprang out with vernal grass, and all the pride Of blooming May. When this Medea spied, She cut her patient’s throat; the exhausted blood Recruiting with her new-enchanted flood; While at his mouth, and through his opening wound, A double inlet her infusion found; His feeble frame resumes a youthful air, A glossy brown his hoary beard and hair. The meager paleness from his aspect fled, And in its room sprang up a florid red; Through all his limbs a youthful vigour flies, His emptied arteries swell with fresh supplies; Gazing spectators scarce believe their eyes. But Aeson is the most surprised to find A happy change in body and in mind; In sense and constitution the same man, As when his fortieth active year began.

Bacchus, who from the clouds this wonder view’d, Medea’s method instantly pursued, And his indulgent nurse’s youth renew’d.

Death of Pelias

The daughters of Pelias, desirous of restoring their father to youth, apply to Medea to enable them to effect their purpose—The enchantress, desirous of revenging the injuries formerly sustained by her husband, directs the credulous maidens to cut their father to pieces, and place his limbs in a cauldron of boiling water—On the arrival of Medea at Corinth, she finds her husband united in marriage to Glauce, the daughter of Creon—This infidelity is severely punished by the injured wife, who contrives to destroy the bride and her father, whose palace she razes to the ground; and cruelly murders her own sons in the presence of Jason, who attempts to pursue her; but the princess makes her escape through the air, on a chariot drawn by winged dragons.

Thus far obliging love employ’d her art, But now revenge must act a tragic part.

Medea feigns a mortal quarrel bred Betwixt her and the partner of her bed; On this pretence to Pelias’ court she flies, Who languishing with age and sickness lies: His

guiltless daughters, with inveigling wiles, And well-dissembled friendship, she beguiles: The strange achievements of her art she tells, With Aeson's cure, and long on that she dwells, Till them to firm persuasion she has won, The same for their old father may be done: For him they court her to employ her skill, And put upon the cure what price she will. At first she's mute, and with a grave pretence Of difficulty, holds them in suspense Then promises, and bids them from the fold Choose out a ram, the most infirm and old; That so by facts their doubts may be removed, And first on him the operation proved.

A wreath-horn'd ram is brought, so far o'ergrown With years, his age was to that age unknown; Of sense too dull the piercing point to feel, And scarce sufficient blood to stain the steel. His carcass she into a cauldron threw, With drugs whose vital qualities she knew; His limbs grow less, he casts his horns and years, And tender bleatings strike their wond'ring ears. Then instantly leaps forth a frisking lamb, That seeks (too young to graze) a suckling dam. The sisters, thus confirm'd with the success, Her promise with renew'd entreaty press. To countenance the cheat, three nights and days Before experiment the enchantress stays; Then into limpid water, from the springs, Woods and ingredients of no force she flings; With antique ceremonies for pretence, And rambling rhymes without a word of sense.

Meanwhile the king, with all his guards, lay bound In magic sleep, scarce that of death so sound; The daughters now are by the sorc'ress led Into his chamber, and surround his bed. "Your father's health's concern'd, and can ye stay? Unnatural nymphs, why this unkind delay? Unsheath your swords, dismiss his lifeless blood, And I'll recruit it with a vital flood. Your father's life and health are in your hand, And can ye thus like idle gazers stand? Unless you are of common sense bereft, If yet one spark of piety is left, Despatch a father's cure, and disengage The monarch from his toilsome load of age: Come, drench your weapons in his putrid gore; 'Tis charity to wound, when wounding will restore."

Thus urged, the poor deluded maids proceed, Betray'd by zeal to an inhuman deed, And, in compassion, make a father bleed. Yes, she who had the kindest, tend'rest heart, Is foremost to perform the bloody part.

Yet, though to act the butchery betray'd, They could not bear to see the wounds they made; With looks averted, backward they advance, Then strike and stab, and leave the blows to chance.

Waking in consternation, he essays (Welt'ring in blood) his feeble arms to raise, Environ'd with so many swords. "From whence This barb'rous usage? what is my offence? What fatal fury, what infernal charm, 'Gainst a kind father does his daughters arm?"

Hearing his voice, as thunderstruck, they stopp'd, Their resolution and their weapons dropp'd; Medea then the mortal blow bestows, And, that perform'd, the tragic scene to close, His corpse into the boiling cauldron throws.

Then, dreading the revenge that must ensue, High mounted on her dragon coach she few; And in her stately progress through the skies, Beneath her shady Pelion first she spies, With Othrys, that above the clouds did rise, With skilful Chiron's cave, and neighb'ring ground, For old Cerambus' strange escape renown'd, By nymphs deliver'd when the world was drown'd, Who him with unexpected wings supplied, When deluged hills a safe retreat denied. Aeolian Pitane on her left hand She saw, and there the statued dragon stand, With Ida's grove, where Bacchus, to disguise His son's bold theft, and to secure the prize, Made the stolen steer a stag to represent; Cocytus' father's sandy monument; And fields that held the murder'd sire's remains, Where howling Moera frights the startled plains: Euryphilus' high town, with towers defaced By Hercules and matrons more disgraced, With sprouting horns, in signal punishment, From Juno or resenting Venus sent. Then Rhodes, which Phoebus did so dearly prize, And Jove no less severely did chastise; For he the wizard native's pois'ning sight, That used the farmer's hopeful crops to blight, In rage o'erwhelm'd

with everlasting night. Cartheia's ancient walls come next in view, Where once the sire almost a statue grew; With wonder, which a strange event did move, His daughter turn'd into a turtle-dove. Then Hyrie's lake and Tempe's field o'erran, Famed for the boy who there became a swan; For there enamour'd Phyllius, like a slave, Perform'd what tasks his paramour would crave. For presents he had mountain-vultures caught, And from the desert a tame lion brought; Then a wild bull commanded to subdue; The conquer'd savage by the horns he drew; But, mock'd so oft, the treatment he disdains, And from the craving boy this prize detains. Then thus in choler the resenting lad: "Won't you deliver him? You'll wish you had." No sooner said, but, in a peevish mood, Leap'd from the precipice on which he stood. The standers-by were struck with fresh surprise, Instead of falling, to behold him rise A snowy swan, and soaring to the skies.

But dearly the rash prank his mother cost, Who ignorantly gave her son for lost; For his misfortune wept, till she became A lake, and still renown'd with Hyrie's name.

Thence to Latona's isle, where once was seen, Transform'd to birds, a monarch and his queen. Far off she saw how old Cephisus mourn'd His son, into a seal by Phoebus turn'd; And where, astonish'd at a stranger sight, Eumelus gazed on his wing'd daughter's flight.

Aetolian Pleuron she did next survey, Where sons a mother's murder did essay; But sudden plumes the matron bore away. On her right hand, Cyllene, a fair soil, Fair, till Menephron there the beauteous hill Attempted with foul incest to defile.

Her harness'd dragons now direct she drives For Corinth, and at Corinth she arrives, Where, if what old tradition tells be true, In former ages men from mushrooms grew.

But here Medea finds her bed supplied, During her absence, by another bride, And, hopeless to recover her lost game, She sets both bride and palace in a flame: Nor could a rival's death her wrath assuage, Nor stopp'd at Creon's family her rage: She murders her own infants, in despite To faithless Jason, and in Jason's sight; Yet ere

his sword could reach her, up she springs, Securely mounted on her dragon’s wings.

Story of Aegeus

From Corinth Medea proceeds to Athens, where she becomes the wife of Aegeus, and attempts to poison his son Theseus: the hero, however, is fortunately recognised by his father, who compels his cruel queen to quit the Athenian territories—In the meantime, Minos, king of Crete, threatens to invade Athens, in order to revenge the murder of his son Androgeus—For this purpose he forms treaties of alliance with the neighbouring states, and endeavours to effect a league with Aeacus, the king of Aegina, who continues faithful to his compact with the Athenians, and entertains their ambassador Cephalus with hospitality and kindness.

From hence to Athens she directs her flight, Where Phineus, so renown’d for doing right, Where Periphas, and Polyphemon’s niece, Soaring with sudden plumes, amazed the towns of Greece.

Here Aegeus so engaging she address’d, That first he treats her like a royal guest, Then takes the sorc’ress for his wedded wife; The only blemish of his prudent life.

Meanwhile his son, from actions of renown, Arrives at court, but to his sire unknown. Medea, to despatch a dangerous heir, (She knew him) did a pois’nous draught prepare: Drawn from a drug, was long reserved in store For desperate uses, from the Scythian shore; That from the Echydnaean monster’s jaws Derived its origin, and this the cause:—

Through a dark cave a craggy passage lies, To ours ascending from the nether skies, Through which, by strength of hand, Alcides drew Chain’d Cerberus, who lagg’d, and restiff grew, With his blear’d eyes our brighter day to view. Thrice he repeated his enormous yell, With which he scares the ghosts and startles hell; At last outrageous (though compell’d to yield), He sheds his foam in fury on the field, Which, with its own, and rankness of the ground, Produced a weed, by sorcerers

renown'd, The strongest constitution to confound, Call'd aconite, because it can unlock All bars, and force its passage through a rock.

The pious father, by her wheedles won, Presents this deadly potion to his son, Who with the same assurance takes the cup, And to the monarch's health had drunk it up: But in the very instant he applied The goblet to his lips, old Aegeus spied The iv'ry-hilted sword that graced his side. That certain signal of his son he knew, And snatch'd the bowl away; the sword he drew; Resolved, for such a son's endanger'd life, To sacrifice the most perfidious wife. Revenge is swift; but her more active charms A whirlwind raised, that snatch'd her from his arms; While conjured clouds their baffled sense surprise, She vanishes from their deluded eyes, And through the hurricane triumphant flies.

The gen'rous king, although o'erjoy'd to find His son was safe, yet, bearing still in mind The mischief by his treach'rous queen design'd, The horror of the deed, and then how near The danger drew, lie stands congeal'd with fear. But soon that fear into devotion turns; With grateful incense ev'ry altar burns; Proud victims, and unconscious of their fate, Stalk to the temple, there to die in state. In Athens never had a day been found, For mirth, like that grand festival renown'd. Promiscuously the peers and people dine, Promiscuously their thankful voices join In songs of wit, sublimed by sprightly wine: To list'ning spheres their joint applause they raise, And thus resound their matchless Theseus' praise:

Great Theseus! thee the Marathonian plain Admires, and wears with pride the noble stain Of the dire monster's blood by valiant Theseus slain: That now Cromyon's swains in safety sow And reap their fertile field, to thee they owe: By thee the infested Epidaurian coast Was clear'd, and now can a free commerce boast: The traveller his journey can pursue, With pleasure the late dreadful valley view, And cry, "Here Theseus the grand robber slew: Cephisus' flood cries to his rescued shore; The merciless Procrustes is no more: In peace, Eleusis, Ceres' rites renew,

Since Theseus' sword the fierce Cercyon slew; By him the torturer Sinis was destroy'd, Of strength (but strength to barb'rous use employ'd) That tops of tallest pines to earth could bend, And thus in pieces wretched captives rend: Inhuman Scyron now has breathed his last, And now Alcatho's roads securely pass'd; By Theseus slain, and thrown into the deep; But earth nor sea his scatter'd bones would keep, Which, after floating long, a rock became, Still infamous with Scyron's hated name. When Fame to count thy acts and years proceeds, Thy years appear but ciphers to thy deeds. For thee, brave youth, as for our commonwealth, We pray, and drink, in yours, the public health: Your praise the senate and plebeians sing; With your loved name the court and cottage ring: You make our shepherds and our sailors glad; And not a house in this vast city's sad."

But mortal bliss will never come sincere: Pleasure may lead, but grief brings up the rear: While, for his son's arrival, rev'lling joy Aegeus and all his subjects does employ; While they for only costly feasts prepare, His neighb'ring monarch, Minos, threatens war: Weak in land forces, nor by sea more strong, But powerful in a deep-resented wrong; For a son's murder, arm'd with pious rage: Yet prudently, before he would engage, To raise auxiliaries resolved to sail, And with the powerful princes to prevail.

First Anaphe, then proud Astypalaea gains, By presents that, and this by threats, obtains: Low Mycone; Cymolus, chalky soil; Tall Cythnos; Scyros; flat Seriphos' isle; Paros, with marble cliffs afar display'd; Impregnable Sithonia, yet betray'd To a weak foe, by a gold-admiring maid, Who, changed into a daw of sable hue, Still hoards up gold, and hides it from the view.

But as these islands cheerfully combine, Others refuse to embark in his design. Now leftward, with an easy, sail, he bore, And prosperous passage, to Oenopia's shore; Oenopia once, but now Aegina call'd, And with his royal mother's name install'd By Aeacus, under whose reign did spring The Myrmidons, and now their reigning

king.

Down to the port, amid the rabble, run The princes of the blood; with Telamon, Peleus, the next, and Phocus, the third son. Then Aeacus, although oppress'd with years, To ask the cause of their approach appears.

That question does the Gnossian's grief renew, And sighs from his afflicted bosom drew; Yet, after a short solemn respite made, The river of the hundred cities said:

"Assist our arms, raised for a murder'd son; In this religious war no risk you'll run Revenge the dead; for who refuse to give Rest to their urns, unworthy are to live."

"What you request," thus Aeacus replies, "Not I, but truth and common faith denies: Athens and we have long been sworn allies: Our leagues are fix'd, confed'rate are our powers, And who declare themselves their foes, are ours."

Minos rejoins: "Your league shall dearly cost;" Yet (mindful how much safer 'twas to boast, Than there to waste his forces and his fame, Before in field with his grand foe he came) Parts without blows; nor long had left the shore, Ere into port another navy bore, With Cephalus, and all his jolly crew: The Aeacides their old acquaintance knew. The princes bid him welcome, and in state Conduct the hero to their palace gate, Who, ent'ring, seem'd the charming mien to wear As when in youth he paid his visit there. In his right hand an olive-branch he holds, And, salutation pass'd, the chief unfolds His embassy from the Athenian state, Their mutual friendship, leagues of ancient date, Their common danger; ev'ry thing could wake Concern, and his address successful make; Strength'ning his plea with all the charms of sense, And those, with all the charms of eloquence.

Then thus the king: "Like suiters do you stand For that assistance which you may command? Athenians, all our listed forces use (They're such as no bold service will refuse); And when ye've drawn them off, the gods be praised, Fresh legions can within our isle be raised; So stock'd with people, that we can prepare Both for domestic and for distant war, Ours or our friends' insulters to chastise."

“Long may he flourish thus,” the prince replies. “Strange transport seized me as I pass’d along, To meet so many troops and all so young, As if your army did of twins consist; Yet among them my late acquaintance miss’d; Ev’n all that to your palace did resort, When first you entertain’d me at your court; And cannot guess the cause from whence could spring So vast a change.” Then thus the sighing king:

“Illustrious guest, to my strange tale attend, Of sad beginning, but a joyful end: The whole to a vast history would swell; I shall but half, and that confusedly, tell. That race whom so deservedly you admired Are all into their silent tombs retired: They fell, and falling, how they shook my state, Thought may conceive, but words can ne’er relate.”

Story of Ants Changed to Men

King Aeacus relates to Cephalus that a pestilence having formerly depopulated his territories, he entreated Jupiter to repeople his kingdom—His request was granted, and, according to his desire, all the ants in an old oak were changed into men, and called by Aeacus Myrmidons, from a Greek word signifying an ant.

“A dreadful plague from angry Juno came, To scourge the land that bore her rival’s name. Before her fatal anger was reveal’d, And teeming malice lay as yet conceal’d, All remedies we try, all med’cines use, Which nature could supply, or art produce; The unconquer’d foe derides the vain design, And art and nature foil’d, declare the cause divine.

“At first we only felt the oppressive weight Of gloomy clouds, then teeming with our fate, And lab’ring to discharge unactive heat: But ere four moons alternate changes knew, With deadly blasts the fatal south wind blew, Infected all the air, and poison’d as it flew Our fountains too a dire infection yield, For crowds of vipers creep along the field, And, with polluted gore, and baneful steams, Taint all the lakes, and venom all the streams.

“The young disease with milder force began, And raged on birds and beasts, excusing man. The lab’ring oxen fall before the plough; The unhappy ploughmen stare, and wonder how: The tabid sheep, with sickly bleatings, pines, Its wool decreasing as its strength declines: The warlike steed, by inward foes compell’d, Neglects his honours, and deserts the field, Unnerved and languid, seeks a base retreat, And at the manger groans, but wish’d a nobler fate: The stags forget their speed, the boars their rage, Nor can the bears the stronger herds engage; A general faintness does invade them all, And in the woods and fields promiscuously they fall The air receives the stench, and, strange to say, The rav’nous birds and beasts avoid the prey; The offensive bodies rot upon the ground, And spread the dire contagion all around.

“But now the plague, grown to a larger size, Riots on man, and scorns a meaner prize. Intestine heats begin the civil war, And flushings first the latent flame declare, And breath inspired, which seem’d like fiery air. Their black dry tongues are swell’d, and scarce can move, And short thick sighs from panting lungs are drove; They gape for air, with flattering hopes to abate Their raging flames, but that augments their heat. No bed, no covering, can the wretches bear, But on the ground, exposed to open air, They lie, and hope to find a pleasing coolness there. The suffering earth, with that oppression cursed, Returns the heat which they imparted first.

“In vain physicians would bestow their aid, Vain all their art, and useless all their trade; And they, even they, who fleeting life recall, Feel the same powers, and undistinguish’d fall. If any proves so daring to attend His sick companion, or his darling friend, The officious wretch sucks in contagious breath, And with his friend does sympathize in death.

“And now the care and hopes of life are pass’d, They please their fancies and indulge their taste: At brooks and streams, regardless of their shame, Each sex,

promiscuous, strives to quench their flame; Nor do they strive in vain to quench it there, For thirst and life at once extinguish'd are. Thus in the brooks the dying bodies sink, But heedless still the rash survivers drink.

"So much uneasy down the wretches hate, They fly their beds, to struggle with their fate, But if decaying strength forbids to rise, The victim crawls and rolls, till on the ground he lies: Each shuns his bed as each would shun his tomb, And thinks the infection only lodged at home.

"Here one, with fainting steps, does slowly creep O'er heaps of dead, and straight augments the heap: Another, while his strength and tongue prevail'd, Bewails his friend, and falls himself, bewail'd: This, with imploring looks, surveys the skies, The last dear office of his closing eyes, But finds the heavens implacable, and dies.

"What now, ah, what! empioy'd my troubled mind, But only hopes my subjects' fate to find? What place soe'er my weeping eyes survey, There in lamented heaps the vulgar lay; As acorns scatter when the winds prevail, Or mellow fruit from shaken branches fall.

"You see that dome which rears its front so high. 'Tis sacred to the monarch of the sky: How many there, with unregarded tears, And fruitless vows, sent up successless prayers! There fathers for expiring sons implored, And there the wife bewail'd her gasping lord: With pious offerings they appease the skies, But they, ere yet the atoning vapours rise, Before the altars fall, themselves a sacrifice; They fall while yet their hands the gums contain, Their gums surviving, but their offerer's slain.

"The destined ox, with holy garlands crown'd, Prevents the blow, and feels an unexpected wound. When I myself invoked the powers divine, To drive the fatal pest from me and mine: When now the priest with hands uplifted stood, Prepared to strike, and shed the sacred blood, The gods themselves the mortal stroke bestow, The victim falls, but they impart the blow: Scarce was the knife with the pale purple stain'd, And no presages could be then obtain'd, From putrid entrails, where the

infection reign’d.

“Death stalk’d around with such resistless sway, The temples of the gods his force obey, And suppliants feel his stroke while yet they pray. ‘Go now,’ said he, ‘your deities implore For fruitless aid, for I defy their power;’ Then with a cursed, malicious joy survey’d The very altars, stain’d with trophies of the dead.

“The rest grown mad, and frantic with despair, Urge their own fate, and so prevent the fear. Strange madness that, when death pursued so fast, To anticipate the blow with impious haste.

“No decent honours to their urns are paid, Nor could the graves receive the numerous dead; For, or they lay unburied on the ground, Or, unadorn’d, a needy funeral found: All reverence past, the fainting wretches fight For funeral piles which were another’s right. Unmourn’d they fall, for who survived to mourn? And sires and mothers unlamented burn; Parents and sons sustain an equal fate, And wandering ghosts their kindred shadows meet: The dead a larger space of ground require, Nor are the trees sufficient for the fire.

“Despairing under grief’s oppressive weight, And sunk by these tempestuous blasts of fate, ‘O Jove,’ said I, ‘if common fame says true, If e’er Aegina gave those joys to you, If e’er you lay enclosed in her embrace, Fond of her charms, and eager to possess; O father, if you do not yet disclaim Paternal care, nor yet disown the name, Grant my petitions, and with speed restore My subjects numerous as they were before, Or make me partner of the fate they bore.’ I spoke, and glorious lightning shone around, And rattling thunder gave a prosperous sound: ‘So let it be, and may these omens prove A pledge,’ said I, ‘of your returning love.’

“By chance a reverend oak was near the place, Sacred to Jove, and of Dodona’s race, Where frugal ants laid up their winter meat, Whose little bodies bear a mighty weight: We saw them march along, and hide their store, And much admired their number and their power; Admired at first, but after envied more. Full of amazement,

thus to Jove I pray'd: 'O grant, since thus my subjects are decay'd, As many subjects to supply the dead.' I pray'd, and strange convulsions moved the oak, Which murmur'd, though by ambient winds unshook: My trembling hands and stiff-erected hair Express'd all tokens of uncommon fear; Yet both the earth and sacred oak I kiss'd, And scarce could hope, yet still I hoped the best; For wretches, whatsoe'er the Fates divine, Expound all omens to their own design.

"But now 'twas night, when even distraction wears A pleasing look, and dreams beguile our cares: Lo! the same oak appears before my eyes, Nor alter'd in his shape nor former size; As many ants the numerous branches bear, The same their labour and their frugal care; The branches too a like commotion found, And shook the industrious creatures on the ground, Who by degrees (what's scarce to be believed) A nobler form and larger bulk received, And on the earth walk'd an unusual pace, With manly strides and an erected face: Their numerous legs and former colour lost, The insects could a human figure boast.

"I wake, and, waking, find my cares again, And to the unperforming gods complain, And call their promise and pretences vain. Yet in my court I heard the murm'ring voice Of strangers, and a mix'd, uncommon noise: But I suspected all was still a dream, Till Telamon to my apartment came, Opening the door with an impetuous haste— 'O come,' said he, 'and see your faith and hopes surpass'd.' I follow, and, confused with wonder, view Those shapes which my presaging slumbers drew: I saw, and own'd, and call'd them subjects; they Confess'd my power, submissive to my sway. To Jove, restorer of my race decay'd, My vows were first with due oblations paid; I then divide, with an impartial hand, My empty city, and my ruin'd land, To give the newborn youth an equal share, And call them Myrmidons, from what they were. You saw their persons, and they still retain The thrift of ants, though now transform'd to men; A frugal people, and inured to sweat, Lab'ring to gain, and keeping what they get. These, equal both in strength and years, shall join Their willing aid, and follow your design, With the first southern gale that shall present To

fill your sails, and favour your intent."

With such discourse they entertain the day; The evening pass'd in banquets, sport, and play; Then, having crown'd the night with sweet repose, Aurora (with the wind at east) arose. Now Pallas' sons to Cephalus resort, And Cephalus with Pallas' sons to court, To the king's levee; him sleep's silken chain And pleasing dreams beyond his hour detain; But then the princes of the blood, in state, Expect and meet them at the palace gate.

Story of Cephalus and Procris

Cephalus, in his turn, relates to Aeacus his adventures during his absence from his wife Procris, whose constancy he overcomes by profuse presents in the disguise of a stranger—The matron flies from the presence of her husband, who at length prevails on her to return with promises of forgiveness—Her jealousy is in like manner excited, and her unfounded suspicions direct her to an adjoining wood, where Cephalus is hunting; and he, mistaking her for a wild beast, transfixes her with a dart; and she expires in the arms of her agonized husband.

To the inmost courts the Grecian youths were led, And placed by Phocus on a Tyrian bed, Who, soon observing Cephalus to hold A dart of unknown wood, but arm'd with gold— "None better loves," said he, "the huntsman's sport, Or does more often to the woods resort, Yet I that javelin's stem with wonder view, Too brown for box, too smooth a grain for yew I cannot guess the tree; but never art Did form, or eyes behold, so fair a dart!" The guest then interrupts him:—" 'Twould produce Still greater wonder, if you knew its use: It never fails to strike the game, and then Comes bloody back into your hand again." Then Phocus each particular desires, And the author of the wondrous gifts inquires; To which the owner thus, with weeping eyes, And sorrow for his wife's sad fate, replies; "This weapon here, O prince! can you believe This dart the cause for which so much I grieve, And shall continue to grieve on, till Fate Afford such wretched life no longer date? Would I

this fatal gift had ne’er enjoy’d; This fatal gift my tender wife destroy’d; Procris her name, allied in charms and blood To fair Orithyia, courted by a god. Her father seal’d my hopes with rites divine, But firmer love before had made her mine. Men call’d me bless’d, and bless’d I was indeed. The second month our nuptials did succeed, When (as upon Hymettus’ dewy head, For mountain stags, my net betimes I spread) Aurora spied, and ravish’d me away— With rev’rence to the goddess, I must say, Against my will, for Procris had my heart, Nor would her image from my thoughts depart. At last, in rage, she cried, ‘Ingrateful boy, Go to your Procris, take your fatal joy:’ And so dismiss’d me: musing, as I went, What those expressions of the goddess meant, A thousand jealous fears possess me now, Lest Procris had profaned her nuptial vow: Her youth and charms did to my fancy paint A lewd adult’ress, but her life a saint: Yet I was absent long; the goddess too Taught me how far a woman could be true. Aurora’s treatment much suspicion bred; Besides, who truly love ev’n shadows dread. I straight inpatient for the trial grew, What courtship back’d with richest gifts could do. Aurora’s envy aided my design, And lent me features far unlike to mine. In this disguise to my own house I came, But all was chaste, no conscious sign of blame With thousand arts I scarce admittance found, And then beheld her weeping on the ground For her lost husband: hardly I retain’d My purpose, scarce the wish’d embrace refrain’d. How charming was her grief! Then, Phocus, guess What killing beauties waited on her dress. Her constant answer, when my suit I press’d, ‘Forbear, my lord’s dear image guards this breast; Where’er he is, whatever cause detains, Whoe’er has his, my heart unmoved remains.’ What greater proofs of truth than these could be? Yet I persist, and urge my destiny. At length she found, when my own form return’d, Her jealous lover there, whose loss she mourn’d. Enraged with my suspicion, swift as wind, She fled at once from me and all mankind; And so became, her purpose to retain, A nymph, and huntress in Diana’s train. Forsaken thus, I found my flames increase I own’d my folly, and I sued for peace: It was a fault, but not of guilt, to move Such

punishment—a fault of too much love. Thus I retrieved her to my longing arms, And many happy days possess'd her charms: But with herself she kindly did confer What gifts the goddess had bestow'd on her: The fleetest greyhound, with this lovely dart— And I of both have wonders to impart. Near Thebes a savage beast, of race unknown, Laid waste the field, and bore the vineyards down: The swains fled from him; and, with one consent, Our Grecian youth to chase the monster went. More swift than lightning he the toils surpass'd, And in his course spears, men, and trees, o'ercast. We slipp'd our dogs, and last my Lelaps too, When none of all the mortal race would do: He long before was struggling from my hands, And, ere we could unloose him, broke his bands: That minute where he was we could not find, And only saw the dust he left behind. I climb'd a neighbouring hill to view the chase, While in the plain they held an equal race: The savage now seems caught, and now, by force, To quit himself, nor holds the same straight course, But, running counter, from the foe withdraws, And with short turning cheats his gaping jaws; Which he retrieves, and still so closely press'd, You'd fear at every stretch he were possess'd; Yet for the gripe his fangs in vain prepare— The game shoots from him, and he chops the air. To cast my javelin then I took my stand; But as the thongs were fitting to my hand, While to the valley I o'erlook'd the wood, Before my eyes two marble statues stood; That, as pursued appearing at full stretch, This, barking after, and at point to catch: Some god their course did with this wonder grace, That neither might be conquer'd in the chase." A sudden silence here his tongue suppress'd, He here stops short, and fain would wave the rest.

The eager prince then urged him to impart The fortune that attended on the dart. "First then," said he, "past joys let me relate; For bliss was the foundation of my fate: No language can those happy hours express, Did from our nuptials me and Procris bless: The kindest pair! What more could Heaven confer? For she was all to me, and I to her. Had Jove made love, great Jove had been despised; And I my Procris more than Venus prized. Thus while no other joy we did aspire, We grew at

last one soul and one desire. Forth to the woods I went at break of day (The constant practice of my youth), for prey; Nor yet for servant, horse, or dog, did call— I found this single dart to serve for all. With slaughter tired, I sought the cooler shade, And winds that from the mountains pierced the glade. ‘Come, gentle air,’ so was I wont to say, ‘Come, gentle air—sweet Aura, come away.’ This always was the burden of my song— ‘Come ’suage my flames—sweet Aura, come along: Thou always art most welcome to my breast; I faint; approach, thou dearest, kindest guest!’ These blandishments, and more than these, I said (By Fate to unsuspected ruin led). ‘Thou art my joy; for thy dear sake I love Each desert hill and solitary grove; When (faint with labour) I refreshment need, For cordials on thy fragrant breath I feed.’ At last a wandering swain in hearing came, And, cheated with the sound of Aura’s name, He thought I had some assignation made, And to my Procris’ ear the news convey’d. Great love is soonest with suspicion fired: She swoon’d, and with the tale almost expired. ‘Ah, wretched heart!’ she cried, ‘ah, faithless man!’ And then to curse the imagined nymph began: Yet oft she doubts, oft hopes she is deceived, And chides herself, that ever she believed Her lord to such injustice could proceed, Till she herself were witness of the deed. Next morn I to the woods again repair, And, weary with the chase, invoke the air. ‘Approach, dear Aura, and my bosom cheer:’ At which a mournful sound did strike my ear: Yet I proceeded, till the thicket by, With rustling noise and motion, drew my eye. I thought some beast of prey was shelter’d there, And to the covert threw my certain spear; From whence a tender sigh my soul did wound: ‘Ah me!’ it cried, and did like Procris sound. Procris was there, too well the voice I knew, And to the place with headlong horror flew; Where I beheld her gasping on the ground, In vain attempting from the deadly wound To draw the dart, her love’s dear fatal gift! My guilty arms had scarce the strength to lift The beauteous load: my silks and hair I tore (If possible), to stanch the pressing gore; For pity begg’d her keep her flitting breath, And not to leave me guilty of her death. While I entreat she fainted fast away, And these few words had

only strength to say: ‘By all the sacred bonds of plighted love, By all your reverence to the powers above, By all that made me charming once appear, By all the truth for which you held me dear, And last, by love, the cause through which I bleed, Let Aura never to my bed succeed.’ I then perceived the error of our fate, And told it her, but found and told too late! I felt her lower to my bosom fall; And while her eyes had any sight at all, On mine she fix’d them; in her pangs still press’d My hand, and sigh’d her soul into my breast; Yet, being undeceived, resign’d her breath Methought more cheerfully, and smiled in death.”

With such concern the weeping hero told This tale, that none who heard him could withhold From melting into sympathizing tears, Till Aeacus with his two sons appears, Whom he commits, with their new-levied bands, To Fortune’s, and so brave a general’s, hands.

Book VIII

Story of Nisus and Scylla

Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, king of Megara, becomes enamoured of King Minos while besieging the walls of her father’s capital, the safety of which is said by the oracle to depend on a purple lock of hair on the king’s head—The maiden steals the fatal treasure from her sleeping parent, and the town is immediately captured; but Minos regards the crime with aversion—The gods convert Nisus into a hawk, and his daughter into a lark.

Now shone the morning star in bright array, To vanquish night, and usher in the day; The wind veers southward, and moist clouds arise, That blot with shades the blue meridian skies. Cephalus feels with joy the kindly gales; His new allies unfurl the swelling sails; Steady their course, they cleave the yielding main, And, with a wish, the intended harbour gain.

Meanwhile King Minos, on the Attic strand, Displays his martial skill, and wastes the land: His army lies encamp'd upon the plains Before Alcathoe's walls, where Nisus reigns, On whose gray head a lock of purple hue, The strength and fortune of his kingdom, grew.

Six moons were gone and past, when still from far Victoria hover'd o'er the doubtful war. So long, to both inclined, the impartial maid Between them both her equal wings display'd.

High on the walls, by Phoebus vocal made, A turret of the palace raised its head; And where the god his tuneful harp resign'd, The sound within the stones still lay enshrined: Hither the daughter of the purple king Ascended oft, to hear its music ring, And, striking with a pebble, would release The enchanted notes, in times of happy peace. But now from thence the curious maid beheld Rough feats of arms, and combats of the field; And, since the siege was long, had learn'd the name Of every chief, his character, and fame; Their arms, their horse, and quiver, she descried, Nor could the dress of war the warrior hide.

Europa's son she knew above the rest, And more than well became a virgin breast. In vain the crested morion veils his face, She thinks it adds a more peculiar grace: His ample shield, emboss'd with burnish'd gold, Still makes the bearer lovelier to behold: When the tough javelin, with a whirl, he sends, His strength and skill the sighing maid commends; Or, when he strains to draw the circling bow, And his fine limbs a manly posture show, Compared with Phoebus, he performs so well, Let her be judge, and Minos shall excel.

But when, the helm put off, display'd to sight, And set his features in an open light; When, vaulting to his seat, his steed he press'd, Caparison'd in gold, and richly dress'd, Himself in scarlet sumptuously array'd, New passions rise, and fire the frantic maid. "O happy spear!" she cries, "that feels his touch; Nay, ev'n the reins he holds are bless'd too much." O! were it lawful, she could wing her way Through the

stern hostile troops without dismay, Or throw her body to the distant ground, And in the Cretans' happy camp be found. Would Minos but desire it, she'd expose Her native country to her country's foes, Unbar the gates, the town with flames infest, Or any thing that Minos should request.

And as she sat, and pleased her longing sight, Viewing the king's pavilion, veil'd with white, "Should joy or grief," she said, "possess my breast, To see my country by a war oppress'd? I'm in suspense! for, though 'tis grief to know I love a man that is declared my foe, Yet, in my own despite, I must approve That lucky war, which brought the man I love: Yet were I tender'd as a pledge of peace, The cruelties of war might quickly cease: O! with what joy I'd wear the chains he gave, A patient hostage, and a willing slave. Thou lovely object! if the nymph that bare Thy charming person were but half so fair, Well might a god her lovely bloom desire, And with a kiss indulge his youthful fire. O! had I wings to glide along the air, To his dear tent I'd fly, and settle there; There tell my quality, confess my flame, And grant him any dowry that he'd name; All, all I'd give; only my native land, My dearest country, should excepted stand: For, perish love, and all expected joys, Ere with so base a thought my soul complies. Yet oft the vanquish'd some advantage find, When conquer'd by a noble, generous mind. Brave Minos justly has the war begun, Fired with resentment for his murder'd son: The righteous gods a righteous cause regard, And will with victory his arms reward: We must be conquer'd; and the captive's fate Will surely seize us, though it seize us late. Why then should love be idle, and neglect What Mars, by arms and perils, will effect? O prince! I die, with anxious fear oppress'd, Lest some rash hand should wound my charmer's breast; For, if they saw, no barb'rous mind could dare Against that lovely form to raise a spear.

"But I'm resolved, and fix'd in this decree, My father's country shall my dowry be: Thus I prevent the loss of life and blood, And, in effect, the action must be good. Vain resolution! for, at every gate The trusty sentinels successive wait; The keys my

father keeps: ah! there's my grief; 'Tis he obstructs all hopes of my relief. Gods! that this hated light I'd never seen! Or all my life without a father been! But gods we all may be; for those that dare Are gods, and Fortune's chiefest favours share The ruling powers a lazy prayer detest; The bold adventurer succeeds the best. What other maid, inspired with such a flame, But would take courage, and abandon shame? But would, though ruin should ensue, remove Whate'er opposed, and clear the way to love? This shall another's feeble passion dare, While I sit tame, and languish in despair? No; for though fire and sword before me lay, Impatient love through both should force its way. Yet I have no such enemies to fear; My sole obstruction is my father's hair; His purple lock my sanguine hope destroys, And clouds the prospect of my rising joys."

While thus she spoke, amid the thick'ning air Night supervenes, the greatest nurse of care; And as the goddess spreads her sable wings, The virgin's fears decay, and courage springs. The hour was come, when man's o'er-labour'd breast Surceased its care, by downy sleep possess'd: All things now hush'd, Scylla, with silent tread, Urged her approach to Nisus' royal bed; There of the fatal lock (accursed theft!) She her unwitting father's head bereft. In safe possession of her impious prey, Out at a postern gate she takes her way. Imbolden'd by the merit of the deed, She traverses the adverse camp with speed, Till Minos' tent she reach'd: the righteous king She thus bespoke, who shiver'd at the thing:

"Behold the effect of love's resistless sway! I, Nisus' royal seed, to thee betray My country and my gods. For this strange task, Minos, no other boon but thee I ask. This purple lock, a pledge of love, receive; No worthless present, since in it I give My father's head." Moved at a crime so new, And with abhorrence fill'd, back Minos drew, Nor touch'd the unhallow'd gift, but thus exclaim'd (With mien indignant, and with eyes inflamed)— "Perdition seize thee, thou, thy kind's disgrace! May thy devoted carcass find no place In earth, or air, or sea, by all outcast! Shall Minos, with so foul a monster, blast His Cretan world, where cradled Jove was nursed?

Forbid it, heaven!—away, thou most accursed!”

And now Alcathoe, its lord exchanged, Was under Minos’ domination ranged. While the most equal king his care applies To curb the conquer’d, and new laws devise, The fleet, by his command, with hoisted sails, And ready oars, invites the murmuring gales. At length the Cretan hero anchor weigh’d, Repaying with neglect the abandon’d maid: Deaf to her cries, he furrows up the main; In vain she prays, solicits him in vain.

And now she furious grows, in wild despair She wrings her hands and throws aloft her hair. “Where runn’st thou?” thus she vents her deep distress, “Why shunn’st thou her that crown’d thee with success? Her whose fond love to thee could sacrifice Her country and her parent; sacred ties! Can nor my love, nor proffer’d presents, find A passage to thy heart, and make thee kind? Can nothing move thy pity? O ingrate! Canst thou behold my lost, forlorn estate, And not be soften’d? Canst thou throw off one Who has no refuge left but thee alone? Where shall I seek for comfort? whither fly? My native country does in ashes lie: Or were ’t not so, my treason bars me there, And bids me wander. Shall I next repair To a wrong’d father, by my guilt undone?— Me all mankind deservedly will shun. I out of all the world myself have thrown, To purchase an access to Crete alone, Which, since refused, ungenerous man, give o’er To boast thy race; Europa never bore A thing so savage: thee some tigress bred, On the bleak Syrt’s inhospitable bed, Or where Charybdis pours its rapid tide Tempestuous. Thou art not to Jove allied; Nor did the king of gods thy mother meet Beneath a bull’s forged shape, and bear to Crete: That fable of thy glorious birth is feign’d; Some wild outrageous bull thy dam sustain’d. O, father Nisus, now my death behold: Exult, O city, by my baseness sold: Minos, obdurate, has avenged ye all; But ’twas more just by those I wrong’d to fall: For why shouldst thou, who only didst subdue By my offending, my offence pursue? Well art thou match’d to one whose amorous flame Too fiercely raged for humankind to tame; One who, within a wooden heifer thrust, Courted a lowing bull’s mistaken lust, And

from whose monster-teeming womb the earth Received, what much it mourn'd, a bi-form birth. But what avail my plaints? the whistling wind, Which bears him far away, leaves them behind. Well weigh'd Pasiphae, when she preferr'd A bull to thee, more brutish than the herd. But ah! time presses, and the labour'd oars To distance drive the fleet, and lose the lessening shores. Think not, ungrateful man, the liquid way And threat'ning billows shall enforce my stay: I'll follow thee in spite: my arms I'll throw Around thy oars, or grasp thy crooked prow, And drag through drenching seas." Her eager tongue Had hardly closed the speech, when forth she sprung, And proved the deep. Cupid, with added force, Recruits each nerve, and aids her watery course. Soon she the ship attains; unwelcome guest! And as with close embrace its sides she press'd, A hawk from upper air came pouring down. ('Twas Nisus cleft the sky with wings new-grown.) At Scylla's head his horny bill he aims; She, fearful of the blow, the ship disclaims, Quitting her hold; and yet she fell not far, But, wond'ring, finds herself sustain'd in air. Changed to a lark, she mottled pinions shook, And, from the ravish'd lock, the name of Ciris took.

The Labyrinth

Theseus destroys the Minotaur by the aid of Ariadne, who conducts the hero through the windings of the labyrinth—Her kindness is ill requited by her lover, who cruelly deserts her in the Isle of Dias, where she is discovered by Bacchus, who makes her his wife, and presents her with a splendid crown, which is afterward made a constellation.

Now Minos, landed on the Cretan shore, Performs his vows to Jove's protecting power: A hundred bullocks, of the largest breed, With flowerets crown'd, before his altar bleed; While trophies of the vanquish'd, brought from far, Adorn the palace with the spoils of war.

Meanwhile the monster of a human beast His family's reproach and stain increased. His double kind the rumour swiftly spread, And evidenced the mother's beastly

deed; When Minos, willing to conceal the shame That sprung from the reports of tattling Fame, Resolves a dark enclosure to provide, And far from sight the two-form'd creature hide.

Great Daedalus of Athens was the man That made the draught, and form'd the wondrous plan; Where rooms within themselves encircled lie, With various windings, to deceive the eye. As soft Maeander's wanton current plays, When through the Phrygian fields it loosely strays; Backward and forward rolls the dimpled tide, Seeming at once two different ways to glide: While circling streams their former banks survey, And waters past succeeding waters see; Now floating to the sea with downward course, Now pointing upward to its ancient source: Such was the work, so intricate the place, That scarce the workman all its turns could trace; And Daedalus was puzzled how to find The secret ways of what himself design'd. These private walls the Minotaur include, Who twice was glutted with Athenian blood; But the third tribute more successful proved— Slew the foul monster, and the plague removed. When Theseus, aided by the virgin's art, Had traced the guiding thread through every part, He took the gentle maid that set him free, And, bound for Dias, cut the briny sea; There, quickly cloy'd, ungrateful, and unkind, Left his fair consort in the isle behind, Whom Bacchus sees and loves; decrees the dame Shall shine for ever in the rolls of fame; And bids her crown among the stars be placed, With an eternal constellation graced. The golden circle mounts, and, as it flies, Its diamonds twinkle in the distant skies; There, in their pristine form, the gemmy rays Between Alcides and the dragon blaze.

Story of Daedalus and Icarus

Daedalus, accompanied by his son Icarus, effects his escape from the custody of Minos by the aid of wings compacted with wax—The heat of the sun melts tie pinions of the youth, who mounts too high, and he is precipitated into the sea; while the father arrives in Sicily, where he is kindly received by the king of that country.

In tedious exile now too long detain'd, Daedalus languish'd for his native land; The sea foreclosed his flight, yet thus he said: "Though earth and water in subjection laid, O cruel Minos, thy dominion be, We'll go through air; for sure the air is free." Then to new arts his cunning thought applies, And to improve the work of nature tries. A row of quills in gradual order placed, Rise by degrees in length from first to last; As on a cliff the ascending thicket grows, Or different reeds the rural pipe compose. Along the middle runs a twine of flax, The bottom stems are join'd by pliant wax: Thus, well compact, a hollow bending brings The fine composure into real wings.

His boy, young Icarus, that near him stood, Unthinking of his fate, with smiles pursued The floating feathers, which the moving air Bore loosely from the ground, and wafted here and there: Or with the wax impertinently play'd, And, with his childish tricks, the great design de lay'd.

The final master-stroke at last imposed, And now the neat machine completely closed; Fitting his pinions on, a flight he tries, And hung, self-balanced, in the beaten skies. Then thus instructs his child: "My boy, take care To wing your course along the middle air: If low, the surges wet your flagging plumes; If high, the sun the melting wax consumes. Steer between both; nor to the northern skies, Nor south Orion, turn your giddy eyes, But follow me: let me before you lay Rules for the flight, and mark the pathless way." Then, teaching, with a fond concern, his son, He took the untried wings and fix'd them on; But fix'd with trembling hands; and, as he speaks, The tears roll gently down his aged cheeks: Then kiss'd, and in his arms embraced him fast, But knew not this embrace must be the last; And, mounting upward, as he wings his flight, Back on his charge he turns his aching sight; As parent birds, when first their callow care Leave the high nest to tempt the liquid air: Then cheers him on, and oft, with fatal art, Reminds the stripling to perform his part.

These, as the angler at the silent brook, Or mountain shepherd leaning on his crook,

Or gaping ploughman, from the vale descries, They stare and view them with religious eyes, And straight conclude them gods; since none but they Through their own azure skies could find a way. Now Delos, Paros, on the left are seen, And Samos, favour'd by Jove's haughty queen; Upon the right, the isle Lebynthos named, And fair Calymne, for its honey famed. When now the boy, whose childish thoughts aspire To loftier aims, and make him ramble higher, Grown wild and wanton, more imbolden'd, flies Far from his guide, and soars among the skies. The softening wax, that felt a nearer sun, Dissolved apace, and soon began to run; The youth in vain his melting pinions shakes, His feathers gone, no longer air he takes; O! father, father! as he strove to cry, Down to the sea he tumbled from on high, And found his fate; yet still subsists by fame Among those waters that retain his name.

The father, now no more a father, cries: "Ho, Icarus! where are you?" as he flies; "Where shall I seek my boy?" he cries again, And saw his feathers scatter'd on the main. Then cursed his art; and funeral rites conferr'd, Naming the country from the youth interr'd.

A partridge, from a neighbouring stump, beheld The sire his monumental marble build; Who, with peculiar call and fluttering wing, Chirp'd joyful, and malicious seem'd to sing; The only bird of all its kind, and late Transform'd in pity to a feather'd state: From whence, Daedalus, thy guilt we date.

His sister's son, when not twelve years were pass'd, Was, with his uncle, as a scholar placed; The unsuspecting mother saw his parts And genius fitted for the finest arts. This soon appear'd; for when the spiny bone In fishes' backs was by the stripling known, A rare invention thence he learn'd to draw, Filed teeth in iron, and made the grating saw. He was the first, that from a knob of brass Made two straight arms with widening stretch to pass; That, while one stood upon the centre's place, The other round it drew a circling space. Daedalus envied this, and from the top Of fair Minerva's temple let him drop; Feigning, that, as he lean'd upon the tower,

Careless he stoop’d too much, and tumbled o’er.

The goddess, who the ingenious still befriends, On this occasion her assistance lends; His arms with feathers, as he fell, she veils, And in the air a new-made bird he sails. The quickness of his genius, once so fleet, Still in his wings remains, and in his feet; Still, though transform’d, his ancient name he keeps, And with low flight the new-shorn stubble sweeps, Declines the lofty trees, and thinks it best To brood in hedge-rows o’er its humble nest; And, in remembrance of the former ill, Avoids the heights and precipices still.

At length, fatigued with long laborious flights, On fair Sicilia’s plains the artist lights; Where Cocalus, the king, that gave him aid, Was, for his kindness, with esteem repaid. Athens no more her doleful tribute sent, That hardship gallant Theseus did prevent; Their temples hung with garlands, they adore Each friendly god, but most Minerva’s power; To her, to Jove, to all, their altars smoke, They each with victims and perfumes invoke.

Now talking Fame, through every Grecian town, Had spread, immortal Theseus, thy renown. From him, the neighbouring nations, in distress, In suppliant terms implore a kind redress.

Story of Meleager and Atalanta

Meleager, the son of Oeneus, King of Aetolia, destroys a frightful boar, which desolates the whole country by the command of Diana, as a punishment for the neglect of her worship—The conqueror bestows the head and skin of the animal on Atalanta, who first wounded it—This partiality inflames the resentment of the uncles of the youth, who endeavour to rob the heroine of her honourable present, and are killed by their nephew in the attempt—Althaea, the mother of Meleager, no sooner hears this intelligence, than she snatches a brand, on which the life of her son is said to depend, who expires as soon as it is consumed—The daughters of Althaea, while bewailing the fate of their brother, are changed into birds.

From him the Calydonians sought relief. Though valiant Meleagrus was their chief. The cause, a boar, which ravaged far and near; Of Cynthia's wrath the avenging minister. For Oeneus, with autumnal plenty bless'd, By gifts to heaven his gratitude express'd; Cull'd sheafs to Ceres; to Lyaeus wine; To Pan and Pales offer'd sheep and kine; And fat of olives to Minerva's shrine. Beginning from the rural gods, his hand Was liberal to the powers of high command: Each deity in every kind was bless'd, Till at Diana's fane the invidious honour ceased.

Wrath touches ev'n the gods: the queen of night, Fired with disdain, and jealous of her right, "Unhonour'd though I am, at least," said she, "Not unrevenged that impious act shall be." Swift as the word, she sped the boar away, With charge on those devoted fields to prey. No larger bulls the Egyptian pastures feed, And none so large Sicilian meadows breed; His eyeballs glare with fire suffused with blood; His neck shoots up a thickset thorny wood; His bristled back a trench impaled appears, And stands erected, like a field of spears; Froth fills his chaps, he sends a grunting sound, And part he churns, and part befoams the ground; For tusks with Indian elephants he strove, And Jove's own thunder from his mouth he drove; He burns the leaves, the scorching blast invades The tender corn, and shrivels up the blades; Or suff'ring not their yellow beards to rear, He tramples down the spikes, and intercepts the year. In vain the barns expect their promised load, Nor barns at home, nor ricks are heap'd abroad In vain the hinds the thrashing-floor prepare, And exercise their flails in empty air. With olives ever green the ground is strew'd, And grapes ungather'd shed their generous blood. Amid the fold he rages, nor the sheep Their shepherds, nor the grooms their bulls can keep.

From fields to walls the frighted rabble run, Nor think themselves secure, within the town, Till Meleagrus, and his chosen crew, Contemn the danger, and the praise pursue. Fair Leda's twins (in time to stars decreed) One fought on foot, one curb'd the fiery steed; Then issued forth famed Jason after these, Who mann'd the foremost ship that sail'd the seas, Then Theseus join'd with bold Pirithous came, A single

concord in a double name; The Thestian sons, Idas, who swiftly ran, And Ceneus, once a woman, now a man; Lynceus, with eagle's eyes and lion's heart; Leucippus, with his never-erring dart; Acastus, Phileus, Phoenix, Telamon, Echion, Lelix, and Eurytion; Achilles' father, and great Phocus' son; Dryas the fierce, and Hippasus the strong; With twice old Iolas, and Nestor, then but young; Laertes active, and Ancaeus bold; Mopsus, the sage, who future things foretold, And the other seer,2 yet by his wife unsold; A thousand others of immortal fame; Among the rest fair Atalanta came, Grace of the woods: a diamond buckle bound Her vest behind, that else had flow'd upon the ground, And show'd her buskin'd legs; her head was bare, But for her native ornament of hair, Which in a simple knot was tied above: Sweet negligence! unheeded bait of love! Her sounding quiver on her shoulder tied, One hand a dart, and one a bow supplied. Such was her face, as in a nymph display'd A fair fierce boy, or in a boy betray'd The blushing beauties of a modest maid. The Calydonian chief at once the dame Beheld, at once his heart received the flame, With heavens averse. "O, happy youth!" he cried, "For whom thy Fates reserve so fair a bride." He sigh'd, and had no leisure more to say; His honour call'd his eyes another way, And forced him to pursue the now neglected prey.

There stood a forest on a mountain's brow, Which overlook'd the shaded plains below: No sounding axe presumed those trees to bite; Coeval with the world, a venerable sight. The heroes there arrived, some spread around The toils; some search the footsteps on the ground Some from the chains the faithful dogs unbound. Of action eager, and intent in thought, The chiefs their honourable danger sought: A valley stood below, the common drain Of waters from above, and falling rain; The bottom was a moist and marshy ground, Whose edges were with bending osiers crown'd: The knotty bulrush next in order stood, And all within of reeds a trembling wood.

From hence the boar was roused, and sprung amain, Like lightning sudden on the warrior train, Beats down the trees before him, shakes the ground, The forest echoes

to the crackling sound; Shout the fierce youth, and clamours ring around. All stood with their protended spears prepared, With broad steel heads the brandish'd weapons glared. The beast impetuous, with his tusks, aside Deals glancing wounds; the fearful dogs divide: All spend their mouths aloof, but none abide. Echion threw the first, but miss'd his mark, And stuck his boar-spear on a maple's bark. Then Jason, and his javelin seem'd to take, But fail'd with over force, and whizz'd above his back. Mopsus was next, but, ere he threw, address'd To Phoebus thus: "O patron, help thy priest! If I adore, and ever have adored, Thy power divine, thy present aid afford, That I may reach the beast." The god allow'd His prayer, and, smiling, gave him what he could: He reach'd the savage, but no blood he drew; Dian unarm'd the javelin as it flew.

This chafed the boar, his nostrils' flames expire, And his red eyeballs roll with living fire. Whirl'd from a sling, or from an engine thrown, Amid her foes, so flies a mighty stone, As flew the beast: the left wing put to flight, The chiefs o'erborne, he rushes on the right. Empalamos and Pelagon he laid In dust, and next to death, but for their fellows' aid Onesimus fared worse, prepared to fly, The fatal fang drove deep within his thigh, And cut the nerves: the nerves no more sustain The bulk; the bulk, unpropp'd, falls headlong on the plain.

Nestor had fail'd the fall of Troy to see, But, leaning on his lance, he vaulted on a tree; Then, gathering up his feet, look'd down with fear, And thought his monstrous foe was still too near. Against a stump his tusk the monster grinds; And in the sharpen'd edge new vigour finds; Then, trusting to his arms, young Othrys found, And ranch'd his hips with one continued wound Now Leda's twins, the future stars, appear, White were their habits, white their horses were; Conspicuous both, and both in act to throw Their trembling lances brandish'd at the foe: Nor had they miss'd, but he to thickets fled, Conceal'd from aiming spears, not pervious to the steed; But Telamon rush'd in, and happ'd to meet A rising root, that held his fasten'd feet; So down he fell, whom, sprawling on the ground, His brother from the

wooden gyves unbound.

Meantime the virgin huntress was not slow To expel the shaft from her contracted bow; Beneath his car the fasten'd arrow stood, And from the wound appear'd the trickling blood. She blush'd for joy: but Meleagrus raised His voice with loud applause, and the fair archer praised. He was the first to see, and first to show His friends the mark of the successful blow. "Nor shall thy valour want the praises due," He said; a virtuous envy seized the crew; They shout; the shouting animates their hearts, And all at once employ their thronging darts; But, out of order thrown, in air they join, And multitude makes frustrate the design. With both his hands, the proud Ancaeus takes And flourishes his double-biting axe; Then, forward to his fate, he took a stride Before the rest, and to his fellows cried: "Give place, and mark the difference, if you can, Between a woman warrior and a man. The boar is doom'd, nor, though Diana lend Her aid, Diana can her beast defend." Thus boasted he; then, stretch'd on tiptoe stood Secure, to make his promise good; But the more wary beast prevents the blow, And upward rips the groin of his audacious foe: Ancaeus falls; his bowels, from the wound, Rush out, and clotted blood distains the ground.

Pirithous, no small portion of the war, Press'd on, and shook his lance; to whom, from far, Thus Theseus cried: "O stay! my better part, My more than mistress, of my heart the heart: The strong may fight aloof: Ancaeus tried His force too near, and, by presuming, died." He said, and, while he spake, his javelin threw; Hissing in air the unerring weapon flew; But on an arm of oak, that stood betwixt The marksman and the mark, his lance he fix'd.

Once more bold Jason threw, but fail'd to wound The boar, and slew an undeserving hound, And through the dog the dart was nail'd to ground.

Two spears from Meleager's hand were sent, With equal force, but various in the event; The first was fix'd in earth, the second stood On the boar's bristled back, and deeply drank his blood. Now, while the tortured savage turns around And flings

about his foam, impatient of the wound, The wound's great author, close at hand, provokes His rage, and plies him with redoubled strokes, Wheels as he wheels, and, with his pointed dart, Explores the nearest passage to his heart: Quick, and more quick, he spins in giddy gyres, Then falls, and in much foam his soul expires. This act, with shouts heaven-high, the friendly band Applaud, and strain in theirs the victor's hand. Then all approach the slain, with vast surprise Admire on what a breadth of earth he lies, And, scarce secure, reach out their spears afar, And blood their points to prove their partnership of war.

But he, the conquering chief, his foot impress'd On the strong neck of that destructive beast, And gazing on the nymph with ardent eyes, "Accept," said he, "fair Nonacrine, my prize, And, though inferior, suffer me to join My labours, and my part of praise, with thine:" At this, presents her with the tusky head And chine, with rising bristles roughly spread. Glad she received the gift, and seem'd to take With double pleasure, for the giver's sake; The rest were seized with sullen discontent, And a deep murmur through the squadron went; All envied, but the Thestian brethren show'd The least respect, and thus they vent their spleen aloud: "Lay down those honour'd spoils, nor think to share, Weak woman as thou art, the prize of war; Ours is the title, thine a foreign claim, Since Meleagrus from our lineage came: Trust not thy beauty, but restore the prize Which he, besotted on that face and eyes, Would rend from us." At this, inflamed with spite, From her they snatch the gift, from him the giver's right.

But soon the impatient prince his falchion drew, And cried, "Ye robbers of another's due, Now learn the difference, at your proper cost, Betwixt true valour and an empty boast." At this advanced, and, sudden as the word, In proud Plexippus' bosom plunged the sword; Toxeus amazed, and with amazement slow, Or to revenge, or ward the coming blow, Stood doubting, and, while doubting thus he stood, Received the steel bathed in his brother's blood.

Pleased with the first, unknown the second, news, Althaea to the temples pays their dues, For her son's conquest, when, at length, appear Her grisly brethren stretch'd upon the bier: Pale at the sudden sight, she changed her cheer, And with her cheer her robes; but hearing tell The cause, the manner, and by whom they fell, 'Twas grief no more, or grief and rage were one Within her soul; at last 'twas rage alone; Which, burning upwards in succession, dries The tears, that stood considering in her eyes.

There lay a log unlighted on the hearth, When she was lab'ring in the throes of birth For the unborn chief; the fatal sisters came, And raised it up, and toss'd it on the flame; Then on the rock a scanty measure place Of vital flax, and turn'd the wheel apace, And, turning, sung, "To this red brand and thee, O, newborn babe! we give an equal destiny;" So vanish'd out of view. The frighted dame Sprung hasty from her bed, and quench'd the flame. The log, in secret lock'd, she kept with care, And that, while thus preserved, preserved her heir. This brand she now produced, and first she strows The hearth with heaps of chips, and after blows; Thrice heaved her hand, and heaved, she thrice repress'd, The sister and the mother long contest, Two doubtful titles in one tender breast; And now her eyes and cheeks with fury glow, Now pale her cheeks, her eyes with pity flow; Now low'ring looks presage approaching storms, And now prevailing love her face reforms: Resolved, she doubts again; the tears she dried With burning rage, are by new tears supplied; And, as a ship, which winds and waves assail, Now with the current drives, now with the gale, Both opposite, and neither long prevail. She feels a double force, by turns obeys The imperious tempest, and the impetuous seas; So fares Althaea's mind; she first relents With pity, of that pity then repents: Sister and mother long the scales divide, But the beam nodded on the sister's side: Sometimes she softly sigh'd, then roar'd aloud; But sighs were stifled in the cries of blood.

The pious impious wretch at length decreed, To please her brothers' ghosts, her son should bleed; And when the funeral flames began to rise, "Receive," she said, "a

sister’s sacrifice. A mother’s bowels burn:” high in her hand, Thus while she spoke, she held the fatal brand, Then thrice before the kindled pile she bow’d, And the three furies thrice invoked aloud: “Come, come, revenging sisters, come and view A sister paying her dead brothers’ due: A crime I punish, and a crime commit; But blood for blood, and death for death, is fit: Great crimes must be with greater crimes repaid, And second funerals on the former laid. Let the whole household in one ruin fall, And may Diana’s curse o’ertake us all! Shall Fate to happy Oeneus still allow One son, while Thestius stands deprived of two? Better three lost than one unpunish’d go. Take then, dear ghosts (while yet admitted new In hell you wait my duty), take your due: A costly offering on your tomb is laid, When, with my blood, the price of yours is paid.

“Ah! whither am I hurried? Ah! forgive, Ye shades, and let your sister’s issue live; A mother cannot give him death; though he Deserves it, he deserves it not from me.

“Then shall the unpunish’d wretch insult the slain, Triumphant live, nor only live, but reign; While you, thin shades, the sport of winds, are toss’d O’er dreary plains, or tread the burning coast. I cannot, cannot bear; ’tis past, ’tis done; Perish this impious, this detested son; Perish his sire, and perish I withal, And let the house’s heir and the hoped kingdom fall.

“Where is the mother fled, her pious love, And where the pains, with which ten months I strove? Ah! hadst thou died, my son, in infant years, Thy little hearse had been bedew’d with tears.

“Thou liv’st by me, to me thy breath resign, Mine is the merit, the demerit thine; Thy life, by double title, I require, Once given at birth, and once preserved from fire: One murder pay, or add one murder more, And me to them, who fell by thee, restore.

“I would, but cannot, my son’s image stands Before my sight, and now their angry hands My brothers hold, and vengeance these exact, This pleads compassion, and

repents the fact.

“He pleads in vain, and I pronounce his doom, My brothers, though unjustly, shall o’ercome; But having paid their injured ghosts their due, My son requires my death, and mine shall his pursue.”

At this, for the last time, she lifts her hand, Averts her eyes, and, half unwilling, drops the brand. The brand, amid the flaming fuel thrown, Or drew, or seem’d to draw, a dying groan; The fires themselves but faintly lick’d their prey, Then loathed their impious food, and would have shrunk away.

Just then the hero cast a doleful cry, And in those absent flames began to fry; The blind contagion raged within his veins, But he with manly patience bore his pains: He fear’d not fate, but only grieved to die Without an honest wound, and by a death so dry. “Happy Ancaeus,” thrice aloud he cried, “With what becoming fate in arms he died!” Then call’d his brothers, sisters, sire, around, And her to whom his nuptial vows were bound, Perhaps his mother; a long sigh he drew, And, his voice failing, took his last adieu; For as the flames augment, and as they stay At their full height, then languish to decay, They rise and sink by fits, at last they soar In one bright blaze, and then descend no more; Just so his inward heats, at height, impair, Till the last burning breath shoots out the soul in air.

Now lofty Calydon in ruins lies, All ages, all degrees, unsluice their eyes: And heaven and earth resound with murmurs, groans, and cries; Matrons and maidens beat their breasts, and tear Their habits, and root up their scatter’d hair; The wretched father, father now no more, With sorrow sunk, lies prostrate on the floor, Deforms his hoary locks with dust obscene, And curses age, and loathes a life prolong’d with pain; By steel her stubborn soul his mother freed, And punish’d on herself her impious deed.

Had I a hundred tongues, a wit so large As could their hundred offices discharge— Had Phoebus all his Helicon bestow’d In all the streams, inspiring all the god, Those

tongues, that wit, those streams, that god in vain Would offer to describe his sisters' pain; They beat their breasts with many a bruising blow, Till they turn livid, and corrupt the snow; The corpse they cherish, while the corpse remains, And exercise and rub, with fruitless pains; And when to funeral flames 'tis borne away, They kiss the bed on which the body lay; And when those funeral flames no longer burn (The dust composed within a pious urn), Ev'n in that urn their brother they confess, And hug it in their arms, and to their bosoms press.

His tomb is raised; then, stretch'd along the ground, Those living monuments his tomb surround; Ev'n to his name, inscribed, their tears they pay, Till tears and kisses wear his name away.

But Cynthia now had all her fury spent, Not with less ruin than a race content, Excepting Gorge, perish'd all the seed, And her3 whom Heaven for Hercules decreed. Satiate at last, no longer she pursued The weeping sisters, but with wings endued And horny beaks, and sent to flit in air, Who, yearly, round the tomb in feather'd flocks repair.

Transformation of the Naiads

The river Achelous, displeased at the neglect of the Naiads converts them into the islands called Echinades.

Theseus, meanwhile, acquitting well his share In the bold chase, confed'rate like a war, To Athens' lofty towers his march ordain'd, By Pallas loved, and where Erectheus reign'd; But Achelous stopp'd him on the way, By rains a deluge, and constrain'd his stay.

"O famed for glorious deeds, and great by blood, Rest here," says he, "nor trust the rapid flood; It solid oaks has from its margin tore, And rocky fragments down its current bore, The murmur hoarse, and terrible the roar. Oft have I seen herds, with their shelt'ring fold, Forced from the banks, and in the torrent roll'd; Nor strength

the bulky steer from ruin freed, Nor matchless swiftness saved the racing steed; In cataracts, when the dissolving snow Falls from the hills and floods the plains below, Tossed by the eddies, with a giddy round, Strong youths are in the sucking whirlpools drown'd: 'Tis best with me in safety to abide, Till usual bounds restrain the ebbing tide, And the low waters in their channel glide."

Theseus, persuaded, in compliance bow'd: "So kind an offer, and advice so good, O Achelous! cannot be refused; I'll use them both," said he; and both he used

The grot he enter'd; pumice built the hall, And tophi made the rustic of the wall; The floor, soft moss a humid carpet spread, And various shells the checker'd roof inlaid: 'Twas now the hour when the declining sun Two thirds had of his daily journey run; At the spread table Theseus took his place, Next his companions in the daring chase; Pirithous here, there elder Lelex lay, His locks betraying age with sprinkled gray: Acharnia's river-god disposed the rest, Graced with the equal honour of the feast, Elate with joy, and proud of such a guest. The nymphs were waiters, and, with naked feet, In order served the courses of the meat. The banquet done, delicious wine they brought, Of one transparent gem the cup was wrought.

Then the great hero of this gallant train, Surveying far the prospect of the main, "What is that land," says he, "the waves embrace?" (And with his finger pointed at the place:) "Is it one parted isle, which stands alone? How named? and yet, methinks, it seems not one." To whom the watery god made this reply: " 'Tis not one isle, but five; distinct they lie: 'Tis distance which deceives the cheated eye: But, that Diana's act may seem less strange, These once proud Naiads were, before their change. 'Twas on a day more solemn than the rest, Ten bullocks slain, a sacrificial feast: The rural gods of all the regions near They bid to dance and taste the hallow'd cheer: Me they forgot; affronted with the slight, My rage and stream swell'd to the greatest height; And with the torrent of my flooding store, Large woods from woods, and fields from fields, I tore: The guilty nymphs, O, then

rememb'ring me, I, with their country, wash'd into the sea; And joining waters with the social main, Rent the gross land, and split the firm champaign: Since, the Echinades, remote from shore, Are view'd as many isles as nymphs before."

Perimele Turned Into an Island

The nymph Perimele suffers violence from the river-god Achelous, and is cast into the sea by her enraged father—Neptune, in compassion, converts her into a rock.

"But yonder far, lo! yonder does appear An isle, a part to me for ever dear; From that (it sailors Perimele name) I doting, forced, by strength, a virgin's fame. Hippodamas's passion grew so strong, Gall'd with the abuse, and fretted at the wrong, He cast his pregnant daughter from a rock; I spread my waves beneath and broke the shock; And, as her swimming weight my stream convey'd, I sued for help divine, and thus I pray'd: 'O powerful thou! whose trident does command The realm of waters, which surround the land; We sacred rivers, wheresoe'er begun, End in thy lot, and to thy empire run; With favour hear, and help with present aid Her whom I bear, 'twas guilty I betray'd. Yet, if her father had been just or mild, He would have been less impious to his child; In her, have pitied force in the abuse; In me, admitted love for my excuse: O let relief for her hard case be found, Her, whom paternal rage expell'd from ground; Her, whom paternal rage relentless drown'd. Grant her some place, or change her to a place Which I may ever clasp with my embrace.'

"His nodding head the sea's great ruler bent, And all his waters shook with his assent: The nymph still swam, though with the fright distress'd; I felt her heart leap trembling in her breast; But, hard'ning soon, while I her pulse explore, A crusting cased her stiff body o'er; And, as accretions of new-cleaving soil Enlarged the mass, the nymph became an isle."

Story of Baucis and Philemon

Jupiter and Mercury, while travelling in disguise, arrive at the cottage of an aged

pair, who entertain their guests with unaffected hospitality, which is amply requited by the transformation of their humble dwelling into a magnificent temple, of which they are appointed the priests—After living to an extreme age, they expire at the same time, and their bodies are changed into trees.

Thus Achelous ends; his audience hear With admiration, and, admiring, fear The powers of heaven, except Ixion’s son, Who laugh’d at all the gods, believed in none: He shook his impious head, and thus replies: “These legends are no more than pious lies. You attribute too much to heavenly sway, To think they gave us forms, and take away.”

The rest, of better minds, their sense declared Against this doctrine, and with horror heard. Then Lelex rose, an old experienced man, And thus, with sober gravity, began: “Heaven’s power is infinite: earth, air, and sea, The manufacture mass, the making power obey: By proof to clear your doubt; in Phrygian ground Two neighbouring trees, with walls encompass’d round, Stand on a moderate rise, with wonder shown, One a hard oak, a softer linden one: I saw the place, and them, by Pittheus sent To Phrygian realms; my grandsire’s government. Not far from thence is seen a lake, the haunt Of coots, and of the fishing cormorant: Here Jove with Hermes came; but in disguise Of mortal men conceal’d their deities; One laid aside his thunder, one his rod, And many toilsome steps together trod: For harbour at a thousand doors they knock’d; Not one of all the thousand but was lock’d. At last a hospitable house they found, A homely shed; the roof, not far from ground, Was thatch’d, with reeds and straw together bound. There Baucis and Philemon lived, and there Had lived long married, and a happy pair: Now old in love, though little was their store, Inured to want, their poverty they bore, Nor aim’d at wealth, professing to be poor. For master or for servant here to call Were all alike, where only two were all. Command was none, where equal love was paid, Or rather both commanded, both obey’d.

“From lofty roofs the gods repulsed before, Now stooping, enter’d through the little door: The man (their hearty welcome first express’d) A common settle drew for either guest, Inviting each his weary limbs to rest. But ere they sat, officious Baucis lays Two cushions stuff’d with straw, the seat to raise; Coarse, but the best she had; then rakes the load Of ashes from the hearth, and spreads abroad The living coals; and, lest they should expire, With leaves and bark she feeds her infant fire: It smokes; and then with trembling breath she blows, Till in a cheerful blaze the flames arose. With brushwood and with chips she strengthens these, And adds at last the boughs of rotten trees. The fire thus form’d, she sets the kettle on (Like burnish’d gold the little seether shone); Next took the coleworts which her husband got From his own ground (a small, well-water’d spot); She stripp’d the stalks of all their leaves; the best She cull’d, and them with handy care she dress’d. High o’er the hearth a chine of bacon hung; Good old Philemon seized it with a prong, And from the sooty rafter drew it down, Then cut a slice, but scarce enough for one; Yet a large portion of a little store, Which for their sakes alone he wish’d were more. This in the pot he plunged without delay, To tame the flesh, and drain the salt away. The time between, before the fire they sat, And shorten’d the delay by pleasing chat.

“A beam there was, on which a beechen pail Hung by the handle, on a driven nail: This fill’d with water, gently warm’d, they set Before their guests; in this they bathed their feet, And after with clean towels dried their sweat. This done, the host produced the genial bed, Sallow the feet, the borders, and the sted, Which with no costly coverlet they spread, But coarse old garments; yet such robes as these They laid alone at feasts on holydays. The good old housewife, tucking up her gown The table sets; the invited gods lie down. The trivet-table of a foot was lame, A blot which prudent Baucis overcame, Who thrust beneath the limping leg a sherd; So was the mended board exactly rear’d: Then rubb’d it o’er with newly-gather’d mint, A wholesome herb, that breathed a grateful scent. Pallas began the feast, where first was seen The parti-colour’d olive, black and green: Autumnal cornels next in order

served, In lees of wine well pickled and preserved. A garden salad was the third supply, Of endive, radishes, and succory: Then curds and cream, the flower of country fare, And new-laid eggs, which Baucis' busy care Turn'd by a gentle fire, and roasted rare. All these in earthenware were served to board; And, next in place, an earthen pitcher stored With liquor of the best the cottage could afford. This was the table's ornament and pride, With figures wrought: like pages at his side Stood beechen bowls; and these were shining clean, Varnish'd with wax without, and lined within. By this the boiling kettle had prepared, And to the table sent the smoking lard; On which with eager appetite they dine, A sav'ry bit, that served to relish wine; The wine itself was suiting to the rest, Still working in the must, and lately press'd. The second course succeeds like that before, Plums, apples, nuts; and of their wintry store Dry figs, and grapes, and wrinkled dates were set In canisters, to enlarge the little treat: All these a milk-white honeycomb surround, Which in the midst the country banquet crown'd: But the kind hosts their entertainment grace With hearty welcome, and an open face: In all they did, you might discern with ease A willing mind, and a desire to please.

"Meantime the beechen bowls went round, and still, Though often emptied, were observed to fill: Fill'd without hands, and of their own accord Ran without feet, and danced about the board. Devotion seized the pair, to see the feast With wine, and of no common grape, increased; And up they held their hands, and fell to pray'r, Excusing, as they could, their country fare.

"One goose they had ('twas all they could allow), A wakeful sentry, and on duty now, Whom to the gods for sacrifice they vow: Her with malicious zeal the couple view'd; She ran for life, and limping they pursued: Full well the fowl perceived their bad intent, And would not make her master's compliment; But persecuted, to the powers she flies, And close between the legs of Jove she lies: He with a gracious ear the suppliant heard, And saved her life; then what he has declared, And own'd the god. 'The neighbourhood,' said he, 'Shall justly perish for impiety: You stand alone

exempted; but obey With speed, and follow where we lead the way: Leave these accursed, and to the mountain's height Ascend, nor once look backward in your flight.'

"They haste, and what their tardy feet denied, The trusty staff (their better leg) supplied. An arrow's flight they wanted to the top, And there secure, but spent with travel, stop; Then turn their now no more forbidden eyes; Lost in a lake the floated level lies: A watery desert covers all the plains, Their cot alone, as in an isle, remains. Wondering, with weeping eyes, while they deplore Their neighbours' fate, and country now no more; Their little shed, scarce large enough for two, Seems, from the ground increased, in height and bulk to grow. A stately temple shoots within the skies, The crotches of their cot in columns rise; The pavement polish'd marble they behold, The gates with sculpture graced, the spires and tiles of gold.

"Then thus the sire of gods, with looks serene: 'Speak thy desire, thou only just of men; And thou, O woman, only worthy found To be with such a man in marriage bound.'

"A while they whisper; then to Jove address'd, Philemon thus prefers their joint request: 'We crave to serve before your sacred shrine, And offer at your altar rites divine: And since not any action of our life Has been polluted with domestic strife, We beg one hour of death, that neither she With widow's tears may live to bury me, Nor weeping I, with wither'd arms, may bear My breathless Baucis to the sepulchre.' The godheads sign their suit. They run the race In the same tenor all the appointed space: Then, when their hour was come, while they relate These past adventures at the temple gate, Old Baucis is by old Philemon seen Sprouting with sudden leaves of sprightly green: Old Baucis look'd where old Philemon stood, And saw his lengthen'd arms a sprouting wood: New roots their fasten'd feet begin to bind, Their bodies stiffen in a rising rind: Then, ere the bark above their shoulders grew, They give and take at once their last adieu. 'At once farewell, O faithful

spouse,' they said; At once the encroaching rinds their closing lips invade. Ev'n yet, an ancient Tyanaean shows A spreading oak, that near a linden grows; The neighbourhood confirm the prodigy, Grave men, not vain of tongue, or like to lie. I saw myself the garlands on their boughs, And tablets hung for gifts of granted vows; And offering fresher up, with pious prayer, 'The good,' said I, 'are God's peculiar care, And such as honour Heaven shall heavenly honour share.' "

Changes of Proteus

Achelous relates to his guest the various transformations of Proteus.

He ceased in his relation to proceed, While all admired the author and the deed; But Theseus most, inquisitive to know From gods what wondrous alterations grow. Whom thus the Calydonian stream address'd, Raised high to speak, the couch his elbow press'd. "Some, when transform'd, fix in the lasting change; Some, with more right, through various figures range. Proteus, thus large thy privilege was found, Thou inmate of the seas, which earth surround. Sometimes a blooming youth you graced the shore; Oft a fierce lion or a furious boar: With glist'ring spires now seem'd a hissing snake. The bold would tremble in his hands to take: With horns assumed a bull; sometimes you proved A tree by roots, a stone by weight unmoved: Sometimes two wav'ring contraries became, Flow'd down in water, or aspired in flame."

Story of Erisichthon

Erisichthon impiously derides the worship of Ceres, whose groves he destroys.

In various shapes thus to deceive the eyes, Without a settled stint of her disguise, Rash Erisichthon's daughter had the power, And brought it to Autolycus in dower. Her atheist sire the slighted gods defied, And ritual honours to their shrines denied. As fame reports, his hand an axe sustain'd, Which Ceres' consecrated grove profaned; Which durst the venerable gloom invade, And violate with light the awful

shade. An ancient oak in the dark centre stood, The covert's glory, and itself a wood: Garlands embraced its shaft, and from the boughs Hung tablets, monuments of prosp'rous vows. In the cool dusk its unpierced verdure spread, The dryads oft their hallow'd dances led; And oft, when round their gauging arms they cast, Full fifteen ells it measured in the waist: Its height all under-standards did surpass, As they aspired above the humbler grass.

These motives, which would gentler minds restrain, Could not make Triope's bold son abstain; He sternly charged his slaves with strict decree To fell with gashing steel the sacred tree. But while they, lingering, his commands delay'd, He snatch'd an axe, and thus blaspheming said: "Was this no oak, nor Ceres' favourite care, But Ceres' self, this arm, unawed, should dare Its leafy honours in the dust to spread, And level with the earth its airy head." He spoke, and as he poised a slanting stroke, Sighs heaved, and tremblings shook the frighted oak: Its leaves look'd sickly, pale its acorns grew, And its long branches sweat a chilly dew. But when his impious hand a wound bestow'd, Blood from the mangled bark in currents flow'd. When a devoted bull of mighty size, A sinning nation's grand atonement, dies, With such a plenty from the spouting veins, A crimson stream the turfy altars stains.

The wonder all amazed; yet one more bold, The fact dissuading, strove his axe to hold. But the Thessalian, obstinately bent, Too proud to change, too harden'd to repent, On his kind monitor his eyes, which burn'd With rage, and with his eyes his weapon turn'd: "Take the reward," says he, "of pious dread:" Then with a blow lopp'd off his parted head. No longer check'd, the wretch his crime pursu'd, Doubled his strokes, and sacrilege renew'd; When from the groaning trunk a voice was heard: "A dryad I, by Ceres' love preferr'd, Within the circle of this clasping rind Coeval grew, and now in ruin join'd: But instant vengeance shall thy sin pursue, And death is cheer'd with this prophetic view."

At last the oak with cords enforced to bow, Strain'd from the top, and sapp'd with

wounds be low, The humbler wood, partaker of its fate, Crush’d with its fall, and shiver’d with its weight.

The grove destroy’d, the sister dryads moan, Grieved at its loss, and frighted at their own. Straight suppliants for revenge to Ceres go, In sable weeds, expressive of their wo.

The beauteous goddess with a graceful air Bow’d in consent, and nodded to their prayer. The awful motion shook the fruitful ground, And waved the fields with golden harvests crown’d. Soon she contrived in her projecting mind A plague severe, and piteous in its kind (If plagues for crimes of such presumptuous height Could pity in the softest breast create); With pinching want, and hunger’s keenest smart, To tear his vitals, and corrode his heart. But since her near approach by Fate’s denied To Famine, and broad climes their powers divide, A nymph, the mountain’s ranger, she address’d, And, thus resolved, her high commands express’d.

Description of Famine

The goddess afflicts Erisichthon with continual hunger.

“Where frozen Scythia’s utmost bound is placed, A desert lies, a melancholy waste: In yellow crops there Nature never smiled, No fruitful tree to shade the barren wild. There sluggish cold its icy station makes, There paleness frights, and anguish trembling shakes. Of pining Famine this the fated seat, To whom my orders in these words repeat: ‘Bid her this miscreant with her sharpest pains Chastise, and sheath herself into his veins; Be unsubdued by plenty’s baffled store, Reject my empire, and defeat my power; And lest the distance, and the tedious way, Should with the toil and long fatigue dismay, Ascend my chariot, and, convey’d on high, Guide the rein’d dragons through the parting sky.’

The nymph, accepting of the granted car, Sprung to the seat, and posted through the air; Nor stopp’d till she to a bleak mountain came Of wondrous height, and

Caucasus its name. There in a stony field the fiend she found, Herbs gnawing, and roots scratching from the ground. Her elf-lock hair in matted tresses grew, Sunk were her eyes, and pale her ghastly hue; Wan were her lips, and foul with clammy glue, Her throat was furr'd, her entrails seen within With snaky crawlings through her parchment skin. Her jutting hips seem'd starting from their place, And for a stomach's was a belly's space. Her joints protuberant by leanness grown, Consumption sunk the flesh, and raised the bone. Her knees' large orbits bunch'd to monstrous size, And ankles to undue proportion rise.

This plague the nymph, not daring to draw near, At distance hail'd, and greeted from afar; And though she told her charge without delay, Though her arrival late, and short her stay, She felt keen famine, or she seem'd to feel, Invade her blood, and on her vitals steal. She turn'd, from the infection to remove, And back to Thessaly the serpents drove.

The fiend obey'd the goddess's command (Though their effects in opposition stand), She cut her way, supported by the wind, And reach'd the mansion by the nymph assign'd.

'Twas night, when, entering Erisichthon's room, Dissolv'd in sleep, and thoughtless of his doom, She clasp'd his limbs, by impious labour tired, With battish wings, but her whole self inspired; Breathed on his throat and chest a tainting blast, And in his veins infused an endless fast.

The task despatch'd, away the fury flies From plenteous regions, and from ripening skies; To her old barren north she wings her speed, And cottages distress'd with pinching need.

Still slumbers Erisichthon's senses drown, And sooth his fancy with their softest down. He dreams of viands delicate to eat, And revels on imaginary meat. Chews with his working mouth, but chews in vain, And tires his grinding teeth with fruitless pain; Deludes his throat with visionary fare, Feasts on the wind, and

banquets on the air.

The morning came, the night and slumbers pass’d, But still the furious pangs of hunger last; The cank’rous rage still gnaws with griping pains, Stings in his throat, and in his bowels reigns.

Straight he requires, impatient in demand, Provisions from the air, the seas, the land. But though the land, air, seas, provisions grant, Starves at full tables, and complains of want. What to a people might in dole be paid, Or victual cities for a long blockade, Could not one wolfish appetite assuage; For glutting nourishment increased its rage. As rivers pour’d from every distant shore The sea insatiate drinks, and thirsts for more, Or as the fire, which all materials burns, And wasted forests into ashes turns, Grows more voracious as the more it preys, Recruits dilate the flame, and spread the blaze, So impious Erisichthon’s hunger raves, Receives refreshments, and refreshments craves. Food raises a desire for food, and meat Is but a new provocative to eat. He grows more empty, as the more supplied, And endless cramming but extends the void.

Transformations of Erisichthon’s Daughter

Metra, the daughter of Erisichthon, uses her powers of transformation for the support of her father, who at last devours his own flesh for want of food.

Now riches hoarded by paternal care Were sunk, the glutton swallowing up the heir. Yet the devouring flame no stores abate, Nor less the hunger grew with his estate. One daughter left, as left his keen desire, A daughter worthy of a better sire: Her too he sold, spent nature to sustain; She scorn’d a lord with generous disdain, And flying, spread her hands upon the main.

The god was moved at what the fair had sued, When she so lately by her master view’d In her known figure, on a sudden took A fisher’s habit, and a manly look. To whom her owner hasted to inquire: “O thou,” said he, “whose baits hide treacherous

wire; Whose art can manage, and experienced skill The taper angle, and the bobbing quill, So may the sea be ruffled with no storm, But smooth with calms, as you the truth inform; So your deceit may no shy fishes feel, Till struck, and fasten'd on the bearded steel. Did not you standing view upon the strand A wandering maid? I'm sure I saw her stand, Her hair disorder'd, and her homely dress Betray'd her want, and witness'd her distress."

"Me heedless," she replied, "whoe'er you are, Excuse, attentive to another care. I settled on the deep my steady eye, Fix'd on my float, and bent on my employ: And that you may not doubt what I impart, So may the ocean's god assist my art, If on the beach since I my sport pursued, Or man or woman, but myself, I view'd." Back o'er the sands, deluded, he withdrew, While she for her old form put off her new.

Her sire her shifting power to change perceived, And various chapmen by her sale deceived. A fowl with spangled plumes, a brinded steer, Sometimes a crested mare, or antler'd deer: Sold for a price, she parted, to maintain Her starving parent with dishonest gain.

At last all means, as all provisions, fail'd; For the disease by remedies prevail'd; His muscles with a furious bite he tore, Gorged his own tatter'd flesh, and gulf'd his gore. Wounds were his feast, his life to life a prey, Supporting nature by its own decay.

"But foreign stories why should I relate? I too myself can to new forms translate; Though the variety's not unconfined, But fix'd in number, and restrain'd in kind: For often I this present shape retain, Oft curl a snake the volumes of my train. Sometimes my strength into my horns transferr'd, A bull I march, the captain of the herd. But while I once those goring weapons wore, Vast wresting force one from my forehead tore, Lo, my maim'd brows the injury still own." He ceased; his words concluding with a groan.

Book IX

Story of Achelous and Hercules

Achelous relates to Theseus the contest between himself and Hercules for the hand of Dejanira, who becomes the wife of the latter.

Theseus requests the god to tell his woes, Whence his maim'd brow, and whence his groans arose: When thus the Calydonian stream replied, With twining reeds his careless tresses tied: "Ungrateful is the tale, for who can bear, When conquer'd, to rehearse the shameful war? Yet I'll the melancholy story trace; So great a conqueror softens the disgrace: Nor was it still so mean the prize to yield, As great and glorious to dispute the field.

"Perhaps you've heard of Dejanira's name, For all the country spoke her beauty's fame. Long was the nymph by numerous suitors woo'd, Each with address his envied hopes pursued: I join'd the loving band to gain the fair, Reveal'd my passion to her father's ear: Their vain pretensions all the rest resign, Alcides only strove to equal mine; He boasts his birth from Jove, recounts his spoils, His stepdame's hate subdued, and finish'd toils.

" 'Can mortals then,' said I, 'with gods compare? Behold a god! mine is the watery care: Through your wide realms I take my mazy way, Branch into streams, and o'er the region stray: No foreign guest your daughter's charms adores, But one who rises in your native shores. Let not his punishment your pity move: Is Juno's hate an argument for love? Though you your life from fair Alcmena drew, Jove's a feign'd father, or by fraud a true. Choose then, confess thy mother's honour lost, Or thy descent from Jove no longer boast.'

"While thus I spoke, he look'd with stern disdain, Nor could the sallies of his wrath restrain, Which thus break forth: 'This arm decides our right, Vanquish'd in words, be mine the prize in fight.'

“Bold he rush’d on. My honour to maintain, I fling my verdant garments on the plain, My arms stretch forth, my pliant limbs prepare, And with bent hands expect the furious war. O’er my sleek skin now gather’d dust he throws, And yellow sand his mighty muscles strows: Oft he my neck and nimble legs assails; He seems to grasp me, but as often fails; Each part he now invades with eager hand, Safe in my bulk immoveable I stand; So when loud storms break high, and foam and roar, Against some mole that stretches from the shore, The firm foundation lasting tempests braves, Defies the warring winds and driving waves.

“Awhile we breathe, then forward rush amain, Renew the combat, and our ground maintain; Foot strove with foot, I, prone, extend my breast, Hands war with hands, and forehead forehead press’d. Thus have I seen two furious bulls engage, Inflamed with equal love and equal rage, Each claims the fairest heifer of the grove, And conquest only can decide their love: The trembling herds survey the fight from far, Till victory decides the important war: Three times, in vain, he strove my joints to wrest, To force my hold, and throw me from his breast; The fourth he broke my gripe, that clasp’d him round, Then with new force he stretch’d me on the ground; Close to my back the mighty burden clung, As if a mountain o’er my limbs were flung; Believe my tale; nor do I, boastful, aim By feign’d narration to extol my fame; No sooner from his arm I freedom get, Unlock my arms, that flow’d with trickling sweat, But quick he seized me, and renew’d the strife, As my exhausted bosom pants for life; My neck he gripes, my knee to earth he strains, I fall, and bite the sand with shame and pains.

“O’ermatch’d in strength, to wiles and arts I take, And slip his hold in form of speckled snake, Who, when I writhed in spires my body round, Or show’d my forky tongue with hissing sound, Smiles at my threats: ‘Such foes my cradle knew,’ He cries; ‘dire snakes my infant hand o’erthrew: A dragon’s form might other conquests gain; To war with me you take that shape in vain: Art thou proportion’d to the hydra’s length, Who by his wounds received augmented strength? He raised a

hundred hissing heads in air; When one I lopp'd, up sprung a dreadful pair: By his wounds fertile, and with slaughter strong, Singly I quell'd him, and stretch'd dead along. What canst thou do, a form precarious, prone, To rouse my rage with terrors not thy own?' He said, and round my neck his hands he cast, And with his straining fingers wrung me fast; My throat he tortured close as pincers clasp; In vain I strove to loose the forceful grasp.

"Thus vanquish'd too, a third form still remains, Changed to a bull, my lowing fills the plains: Straight on the left his nervous arms were thrown Upon my brindled neck, and tugg'd it down; Then deep he struck my horn into the sand, And fell'd my bulk along the dusty land: Nor yet his fury cool'd; 'twixt rage and scorn, From my maim'd front he tore the stubborn horn; This, heap'd with flowers and fruits, the Naiads bear, Sacred to plenty, and the bounteous year."

He spoke, when lo! a beauteous nymph appears, Girt, like Diana's train, with flowing hairs: The horn she brings, in which all autumn's stored, And ruddy apples for the second board.

Now morn begins to dawn, the sun's bright fire Gilds the high mountains, and the youths retire; Nor stay'd they till the troubled stream subsides, And in its bounds with peaceful current glides; But Achelous in his oosy bed Deep hides his brow deform'd, and rustic head; No real wound the victor's triumph show'd, But his lost honours grieved the watery god; Yet ev'n that loss the willow's leaves o'erspread, And verdant reeds, in garlands, bind his head.

Death of Nessus the Centaur

The centaur Nessus, who offers violence to Dejanira, is killed by the shafts of Hercules—Before he expires, he presents a poisoned tunic to the woman he has injured, assuring her of its efficacy to recall the affections of a faithless husband.

This virgin too, thy love, O Nessus, found; To her alone you owe the fatal wound.

As the strong son of Jove his bride conveys, Where his paternal lands their bulwarks raise; Where from her slopy urn Evenus pours Her rapid current, swell'd by wintry showers, He came. The frequent eddies whirl'd the tide, And the deep rolling waves all pass denied. As for himself, he stood unmoved by fears, For now his bridal charge employ'd his cares. The strong-limb'd Nessus thus officious cried (For he the shallows of the stream had tried), "Swim thou, Alcides, all thy strength prepare, On yonder bank I'll lodge thy nuptial care."

The Aonian chief to Nessus trusts his wife, All pale and trembling for her hero's life. Clothed as he stood in the fierce lion's hide, The laden quiver o'er his shoulder tied (For cross the stream his bow and club were cast), Swift he plunged in: "These billows shall be pass'd," He said, nor sought where smoother waters glide, But stemm'd the rapid dangers of the tide. The bank he reach'd, again the bow he bears, When, hark! his bride's known voice alarms his ears. "Nessus, to thee I call," aloud he cries, "Vain is thy trust in flight, be timely wise: Thou monster double-shaped, my right set free: If thou no rev'rence owe my fame and me, Yet kindred should thy lawless lust deny. Think not, perfidious wretch, from me to fly; Though wing'd with horses' speed, wounds shall pursue." Swift as his words the fatal arrow flew: The centaur's back admits the feather'd wood, And through his breast the barbed weapon stood, Which when, in anguish, through the flesh he tore, From both the wounds gush'd forth the spumy gore, Mix'd with Lernaean venom; this he took, Nor dire revenge his dying breast forsook; His garment, in the reeking purple died, To rouse love's passion, he presents the bride.

Death of Hercules

Dejanira sends the poisoned tunic of Nessus, by the hands of Lychas to recall the hero from the attractions of a rival.

Now a long interval of time succeeds, When the great son of Jove's immortal deeds, And stepdame's hate, had fill'd earth's utmost round, He from Oechalia, with new

laurels crown'd, In triumph was return'd: he rites prepares, And to the king of gods directs his prayers: "When Fame (whom Falsehood clothes in Truth's disguise, And swells her little bulk with growing lies) Thy tender ear, O Dejanira, moved, That Hercules the fair Iole loved." Her love believes the tale; the truth she fears Of his new passion, and gives way to tears. The flowing tears diffused her wretched grief, "Why seek I thus, from streaming eyes, relief?" She cries; "indulge not thus these fruitless cares, The harlot will but triumph in thy tears: Let something be resolved, while yet there's time, My bed not conscious of a rival's crime. In silence shall I mourn, or loud complain? Shall I seek Calydon, or here remain? What though allied to Meleager's fame, I boast the honours of a sister's name? My wrongs, perhaps, now urge me to pursue Some desp'rate deed, by which the world shall view How far revenge and woman's rage can rise, When welt'ring in her blood the harlot dies."

Thus various passions ruled by turns her breast, She now resolves to send the fatal vest, Died with Lernaean gore, whose power might move His soul anew, and rouse declining love. Nor knew she what her sudden rage bestows, When she to Lychas trusts her future woes; With soft endearments she the boy commands To bear the garment to her husband's hands.

The unwitting hero takes the gift in haste, And o'er his shoulders Lerna's poison cast: At first the fire with frankincense he strows, And utters to the gods his holy vows, And on the marble altar's polish'd frame Pours forth the grapy stream; the rising flame Sudden dissolves the subtle pois'nous juice, Which taints his blood, and all his nerves bedews. With wonted fortitude he bore the smart, And not a groan confess'd his burning heart. At length his patience was subdued by pain; He rends the sacred altar from the plain; Oete's wide forests echo with his cries: Now to rip off the deathful robe he tries. Where'er he plucks the vest, the skin he tears, The mangled muscles and huge bones he bares, (A ghastful sight!) or raging with his pain, To rend the sticking plague he tugs in vain.

As the red iron hisses in the flood, So boils the venom in his curdling blood. Now with the greedy flame his entrails glow, And livid sweats down all his body flow; The cracking nerves burnt up are burst in twain, The lurking venom melts his swimming brain.

Then, lifting both his hands aloft, he cries, “Glut thy revenge, dread emp’ress of the skies; Sate with my death the rancour of thy heart, Look down with pleasure, and enjoy my smart. Or, if e’er pity moved a hostile breast (For here I stand thy enemy profess’d), Take hence this hateful life, with tortures torn, Inured to trouble, and to labours born. Death is the gift most welcome to my wo, And such a gift a stepdame may bestow. Was it for this Busiris was subdued, Whose barbarous temples reek’d with strangers’ blood? Press’d in these arms his fate Antaeus found, Nor gain’d recruited vigour from the ground. Did I not triple-form’d Geryon fell? Or did I fear the triple dog of hell? Did not these hands the bull’s arm’d forehead hold? Are not our mighty toils in Elis told? Do not Stymphalian lakes proclaim thy fame? And fair Parthenian woods resound thy name? Who seized the golden belt of Thermodon? And who the dragon-guarded apples won? Could the fierce centaur’s strength my force with stand, Or the fell boar that spoil’d the Arcadian land? Did not these arms the hydra’s rage subdue, Who from his wounds to double fury grew? What if the Thracian horses, fat with gore, Who human bodies in their mangers tore, I saw, and with their barb’rous lord o’erthrew? What if these hands Nemaea’s lion slew? Did not this neck the heavenly globe sustain? The female partner of the Thunderer’s reign Fatigued at length suspends her harsh commands, Yet no fatigue hath slack’d these valiant hands. But now new plagues pursue me, neither force, Nor arms, nor darts, can stop their raging course. Devouring flame through my rack’d entrails strays, And on my lungs and shrivell’d muscles preys. Yet still Eurystheus breathes the vital air. What mortal now shall seek the gods with prayer?”

Transformation of Lychas Into a Rock

Lychas is thrown into the Euboean Sea by his angry master, and is changed into a rock by the compassion of the gods.

The hero said; and, with the torture stung, Furious o’er Oete’s lofty hills he sprung. Stuck with the shaft, thus scours the tiger round, And seeks the flying author of his wound. Now might you see him trembling, now he vents His anguish’d soul in groans, and loud laments; He strives to tear the clinging vest in vain, And with uprooted forests strows the plain; Now kindling into rage, his hands he rears, And to his kindred gods directs his prayers. When Lychas, lo, he spies; who trembling flew, And in a hollow rock conceal’d from view, Had shunn’d his wrath. Now grief renew’d his pain, His madness chafed, and thus he raves again:

“Lychas, to thee alone my fate I owe, Who bore the gift, the cause of all my wo.” The youth all pale with shiv’ring fear was stung, And vain excuses falter’d on his tongue. Alcides snatch’d him, as with suppliant face He strove to clasp his knees, and beg for grace: He toss’d him o’er his head with airy course, And hurl’d with more than with an engine’s force: Far o’er the Euboean main aloof he flies, And hardens by degrees amid the skies. So show’ry drops, when chilly tempests blow, Thicken at first, then whiten into snow, In balls congeal’d the rolling fleeces bound, In solid hail result upon the ground. Thus, whirl’d with nervous force through distant air, The purple tide forsook his veins with fear; All moisture left his limbs. Transform’d to stone, In ancient days the craggy flint was known: Still in the Euboean waves his front he rears, Still the small rock in human form appears, And still the name of hapless Lychas bears.

Apotheosis of Hercules

Hercules, finding his end approaching, bestows his bow and arrows on his friend Philoctetes, and expires on Mount Oeta; after which the hero is enrolled in the number of the gods.

But now the hero of immortal birth Fells Oete’s forests on the groaning earth; A pile

he builds; to Philoctetes' care He leaves his deathful instruments of war; To him commits those arrows, which again Shall see the bulwarks of the Trojan reign. The son of Paeon lights the lofty pyre, High round the structure climbs the greedy fire; Placed on the top, thy nervous shoulders spread With the Nemaean spoils, thy careless head Raised on the knotty club, with look divine, Here thou, dread hero of celestial line, Wert stretch'd at ease; as when a cheerful guest, Wine crown'd thy bowls, and flowers thy temples dress'd.

Now on all sides the potent flames aspire, And crackle round those limbs that mock the fire. A sudden terror seized the immortal host, Who thought the world's profess'd defender lost. This when the Thunderer saw, with smiles he cries, " 'Tis from your fears, ye gods, my pleasures rise; Joy swells my breast, that my all-ruling hand O'er such a grateful people boasts command, That you my suffering progeny would aid; Though to his deeds this just respect be paid, Me you've obliged. Be all your fears forborne, The Oetean fires do thou, great hero, scorn. Who vanquish'd all things shall subdue the flame That part alone of gross material frame Fire shall devour; while what from me he drew Shall live immortal, and its force subdue That, when he's dead, I'll raise to realms above; May all the powers the righteous act approve! If any god dissent, and judge too great The sacred honours of the heavenly seat, Ev'n he shall own his deeds deserve the sky, Ev'n he reluctant shall at length comply." The assembled powers assent. No frown till now Had mark'd with passion vengeful Juno's brow. Meanwhile whate'er was in the power of flame Was all consumed; his body's nervous frame No more was known; of human form bereft, The eternal part of Jove alone was left. As an old serpent casts his scaly vest, Writhes in the sun, in youthful glory dress'd, So when Alcides mortal mould resign'd, His better part enlarged, and grew refined; August his visage shone; almighty Jove In his swift car his honour'd offspring drove; High o'er the hollow clouds the coursers fly, And lodge the hero in the starry sky.

Transformation of Galanthis

The delivery of Alcmena is effected by the sagacity of a servant-maid, named Galanthis, whose fidelity excites the displeasure of Juno, who converts her into a weasel.

Atlas perceived the load of heaven's new guest. Revenge still rancour'd in Eurystheus' breast Against Alcides' race. Alcmena goes To Iole, to vent maternal woes; Here she pours forth her grief, recounts the spoils Her son had bravely reap'd in glorious toils. This Iole, by Hercules' commands, Hyllus had loved, and join'd in nuptial bands. Her swelling sides the teeming birth confess'd, To whom Alcmena thus her speech address'd: "O may the gods protect thee, in that hour, When, midst thy throes, thou call'st the Ilithyian power! May no delays prolong thy racking pain, As when I sued for Juno's aid in vain.

"When now Alcides' mighty birth drew nigh, And the tenth sign roll'd forward on the sky, My sides extend with such a mighty load, As Jove the parent of the burden show'd. I could no more the increasing smart sustain, My horror kindles to recount the pain; Cold chills my limbs while I the tale pursue, And now methinks I feel my pangs anew. Seven days and nights amid incessant throes, Fatigued with ills I lay, nor knew repose; When lifting high my hands, in shrieks I pray'd, Implored the gods, and call'd Lucina's aid. She came, but prejudiced, to give my fate A sacrifice to vengeful Juno's hate. She hears the groaning anguish of my fits, And on the altar at my door she sits. O'er her left knee her crossing leg she cast, Then knits her fingers close, and wrings them fast: This stay'd the birth; in mutt'ring verse she pray'd; The mutt'ring verse the unfinish'd birth delay'd. Now with fierce struggles, raging with my pain, At Jove's ingratitude I rage in vain. How did I wish for death! such groans I sent, As might have made the flinty heart relent.

"Now the Cadmeian matrons round me press, Offer their vows, and seek to bring redress; Among the Theban dames Galanthis stands, Strong-limb'd, red-hair'd, and

just to my commands: She first perceived that all these racking woes From the persisting hate of Juno rose. As here and there she pass'd, by chance she sees The seated goddess; on her close-press'd knees Her fast-knit hands she leans; with cheerful voice Galanthis cries, 'Whoe'er thou art, rejoice, Congratulate the dame, she lies at rest, At length the gods Alcmena's prayers have bless'd.' Swift from her seat the startled goddess springs; No more conceal'd, her hands abroad she flings: The charm unloosed, the birth my pangs relieved; Galanthis' laughter vex'd the power deceived. Fame says, the goddess dragg'd the laughing maid Fast by the hair; in vain her force essay'd Her grovelling body from the ground to rear; Changed to forefeet her shrinking arms appear: Her hairy back her former hue retains, The form alone is lost; her strength remains; Who, since the lie did from her mouth proceed, Shall from her pregnant mouth bring forth her breed; Nor shall she quit her long-frequented home, But haunt those houses where she loved to roam."

Fable of Dryope

Dryope, who incautiously plucks a branch of the lotus-tree for the amusement of her infant son, is herself transformed by the angry sylvan deities into a tree of the same species.

She said, and for her lost Galanthis sighs; When the fair consort of her son replies; "Since you a servant's ravish'd form bemoan, And kindly sigh for sorrows not your own, Let me (tears and grief permit) relate A nearer wo, a sister's stranger fate. No nymph of all Oechalia could compare, For beauteous form, with Dryope the fair; Her tender mother's only hope and pride (Myself the offspring of a second bride), This nymph, compress'd by him who rules the day, Whom Delphi and the Delian isle obey, Andraemon loved; and bless'd in all those charms That pleased a god, succeeded to her arms.

"A lake there was, with shelving banks around, Whose verdant summit fragrant myrtles crown'd. Those shades, unknowing of the Fates, she sought, And to the

Naiads flowery garlands brought; Her smiling babe (a pleasing charge) she press'd Between her arms, and nourish'd at her breast. Not distant far a watery lotus grows; The spring was new, and all the verdant boughs, Adorn'd with blossoms, promised fruits that vie In glowing colours with the Tyrian die. Of these she cropp'd, to please her infant son, And I myself the same rash act had done, But, lo! I saw (as near her side I stood) The violated blossoms drop with blood; Upon the tree I cast a frightful look, The trembling tree with sudden horror shook: Lotis the nymph (if rural tales be true), As from Priapus' lawless love she flew, Forsook her form; and fixing here became A flowery plant, which still preserves her name.

"This change unknown, astonish'd at the sight, My trembling sister strove to urge the flight; Yet first the pardon of the nymphs implored, And those offended sylvan powers adored: But when she backward would have fled, she found Her stiff'ning feet were rooted to the ground: In vain to free her fasten'd feet she strove, And as she struggles only moves above; She feels the encroaching bark around her grow By slow degrees, and cover all below. Surprised at this, her trembling hand she heaves To rend her hair; her hand is fill'd with leaves; Where late was hair, the shooting leaves are seen To rise, and shade her with a sudden green. The child Amphisus, to her bosom press'd, Perceived a colder and a harder breast, And found the springs, that ne'er till then denied Their milky moisture, on a sudden dried. I saw, unhappy, what I now relate, And stood the helpless witness of thy fate: Embraced thy boughs, the rising bark delay'd, There wish'd to grow, and mingle shade with shade.

"Behold Andraemon and the unhappy sire Appear, and for their Dryope inquire; A springing tree for Dryope they find, And print warm kisses on the panting rind; Prostrate, with tears their kindred plant bedew, And close embraced, as to the roots they grew; The face was all that now remain'd of thee; No more a woman, nor yet quite a tree: Thy branches hung with humid pearls appear, From every leaf distils a trickling tear; And straight a voice, while yet a voice remains, Thus through the trembling boughs in sighs com plains:

“ ‘If to the wretched any faith be given, I swear by all the unpitying powers of heaven, No wilful crime this heavy vengeance bred, In mutual innocence our lives we led. If this be false, let these new greens decay, Let sounding axes lop my limbs away, And crackling flames on all my honours prey. Now from my branching arms this infant bear, Let some kind nurse supply a mother’s care; Yet to his mother let him oft be led, Sport in her shades, and in her shades be fed; Teach him, when first his infant voice shall frame Imperfect words, and lisp his mother’s name, To hail this tree, and say with weeping eyes, “Within this plant my hapless parent lies:” And when in youth he seeks the shady woods, O, let him fly the crystal lakes and floods, Nor touch the fatal flowers; but, warn’d by me, Believe a goddess shrined in every tree. My sire, my sister, and my spouse, farewell! If in your breasts or love or pity dwell, Protect your plant, nor let my branches feel The browsing cattle, or the piercing steel. Farewell! and since I cannot bend to join My lips to yours, advance at least to mine. My son, thy mother’s parting kiss receive, While yet thy mother has a kiss to give. I can no more, the creeping rind invades My closing lips, and hides my head in shades: Remove your hands; the bark shall soon suffice, Without their aid, to seal these dying eyes.’ She ceased at once to speak, and ceased to be, And all the nymph was lost within the tree: Yet latent life through her new branches reign’d, And long the plant a human heat retain’d.”

Iolaus Restored to Youth

Hebe, at the request of Hercules, renews the youth of her son Iolaus.

While Iole the fatal change declares, Alcmena’s pitying hand oft wiped her tears. Grief too stream’d down her cheeks; soon sorrow flies, And rising joy the trickling moisture dries, Lo Iolaus stands before their eyes. A youth he stood, and the soft down began O’er his smooth chin to spread, and promise man. Hebe submitted to her husband’s prayers, Instill’d new vigour, and restored his years.

Prophecy of Themis

The events and consequences of the Theban war are foretold by Themis.

Now from her lips a solemn oath had pass'd, That Iolaus this gift alone should taste, Had not just Themis thus maturely said (Which check'd her vow, and awed the blooming maid):

"Thebes is embroil'd in war. Capaneus stands Invincible, but by the Thunderer's hands. Ambition shall the guilty brothers4 fire, Both rush to mutual wounds, and both expire. The reeling earth shall ope her gloomy womb, Where the yet breathing bard shall find his5 tomb. The son6 shall bathe his hands in parents' blood, And in one act be both unjust and good. Of home and sense deprived, where'er he flies, The Furies, and his mother's ghost, he spies. His wife the fatal bracelet shall implore, And Phegeius stain his sword in kindred gore. Callirhoe shall then with suppliant prayer Prevail on Jupiter's relenting ear. Jove shall with youth her infant sons inspire, And bid their bosoms glow with manly fire."

Debate of the Gods

The gods are forbidden by Jupiter to renew the youth of those mortals whom they favour.

When Themis this with prescient voice had spoke, Among the gods a various murmur broke; Dissension rose in each immortal breast, That one should grant what was denied the rest. Aurora for her aged spouse complains, And Ceres grieves for Jason's freezing veins; Vulcan would Erichthonius' years renew; Her future race the care of Venus drew, She would Anchises' blooming age restore; A diff'rent care employ'd each heavenly power: Thus various interests did their jars increase, Till Jove arose: he spoke; their tumults cease.

"Is any rev'rence to our presence given, Then why this discord 'mong the powers of heaven? Who can the settled will of fate subdue? 'Twas by the Fates that Iolaus

knew A second youth. The Fates' determined doom Shall give Callirhoe's race a youthful bloom. Arms nor ambition can this power obtain; Quell your desires; ev'n me the Fates restrain. Could I their will control, no rolling years Had Aeacus bent down with silver hairs; Then Rhadamanthus still had youth possess'd, And Minos with eternal bloom been bless'd." Jove's words the synod moved; the powers give o'er, And urge in vain unjust complaint no more. Since Rhadamanthus' veins now slowly flow'd, And Aeacus and Minos bore the load; Minos, who in the flower of youth and fame Made mighty nations tremble at his name, Infirm with age, the proud Miletus fears, Vain of his birth, and in the strength of years; And now regarding all his realms as lost, He durst not force him from his native coast. But you by choice, Miletus, fled his reign, And thy swift vessel plough'd the Aegean main; On Asiatic shores a town you frame, Which still is honour'd with the founder's name. Here you Cyanee knew, the beauteous maid, As on her father's7 winding banks she stray'd: Caunus and Byblis hence their lineage trace, The double offspring of your warm embrace.

Passion of Byblis

Byblis falls passionately in love with her brother Caunus, who rejects her advances with horror—The nymph becomes frantic with despair, and is converted into a fountain by the indulgent deities.

Let the sad fate of wretched Byblis prove A dismal warning to unlawful love: One birth gave being to the hapless pair, But more was Caunus than a sister's care; Unknown she loved, for yet the gentle fire Rose not in flames, nor kindled to desire. 'Twas thought no sin to wonder at his charms, Hang on his neck, and languish in his arms. Thus wing'd with joy fled the soft hours away, And all the fatal guilt on harmless Nature lay.

But love (too soon from piety declined) Insensibly depraved her yielding mind. Dress'd she appears, with nicest art adorn'd, And every youth, but her loved brother,

scorn'd; For him alone she labour'd to be fair, And cursed all charms that might with hers compare. 'Twas she, and only she, must Caunus please, Sick at her heart, yet knew not her disease: She call'd him lord, for brother was a name Too cold and dull for her aspiring flame; And, when he spoke, if sister he replied, "For Byblis change that frozen word," she cried. Yet waking still she watch'd her struggling breast, And love's approaches were in vain address'd, Till gentle sleep an easy conquest made, And by her side the conqueror was laid. "Ah me!" she cried, "how monstrous do I seem! Why these vile thoughts, and this ill-omen'd dream? Envy herself ('tis true) must own his charms, But what is beauty in a sister's arms? Oh! were I not that despicable she, How bless'd, how pleased, how happy, should I be! But unregarded now must bear my pain, And but in dreams my wishes can obtain. Oh! gentle Caunus, quit thy hated line, Or let thy parents be no longer mine: Oh! that in common all things were enjoy'd, But those alone who have our hopes destroy'd. Were I a princess, thou an humble swain, The proudest kings should rival thee in vain. It cannot be: alas! the dreadful ill Is fix'd by fate, and he's my brother still. Hear me, ye gods! I must have friends in heaven, For Jove himself was to a sister given: But what are their prerogatives above, To the short liberties of human love? Fantastic thoughts! down, down, forbidden fires, Or instant death extinguish my desires. Strict virtue, then, with thy malicious leave Without a crime, I may a kiss receive. But say, should I in spite of laws comply, Yet cruel Caunus might himself deny. Yet why should youth, and charms like mine, despair? Such fears ne'er startled the Aetolian pair; No ties of blood could their full hopes destroy, They broke through all for the prevailing joy; And who can tell but Caunus too may be Rack'd and tormented in his breast for me? Like me, to the extremest anguish drove; Like me, just waking from a dream of love? But stay, O whither would my fury run? What arguments I urge to be undone! Away! fond Byblis, quench these guilty flames, Caunus thy love but as a brother claims; Yet had he first been touch'd with love of me, The charming youth could I despairing see? Oppress'd with grief, and

dying by disdain? Ah! no; too sure I should have eased his pain: Since, then, if Caunus ask'd me, it were done, Asking myself, what dangers can I run? But canst thou ask, and see that right betray'd, From Pyrrha down to thy whole sex convey'd? That self-denying gift we all enjoy, Of wishing to be won, yet seeming to be coy. Well, then, for once, let a fond mistress woo, The force of love no custom can subdue; This frantic passion he by words shall know, Soft as the melting heart from whence they flow." The pencil then in her fair hand she held, By fear discouraged, but by love compell'd; She writes, then blots, writes on, and blots again, Likes it as fit, then razes it as vain; Shame and assurance in her face appear, And a faint hope just yielding to despair. Sister was wrote and blotted, as a word Which she, and Caunus too (she hoped) abhorr'd; But now resolved to be no more controll'd, By scrup'lous virtue, thus her grief she told:

"Thy lover, gentle Caunus, wishes thee That health, which thou alone canst give to me. O charming youth! the gift I ask bestow, Ere thou the name of the fond writer know; To thee without a name I would be known, Since, knowing that, my frailty I must own. Yet why should I my wretched name conceal, When thousand instances my flames reveal? Wan looks and weeping eyes have spoke my pain, And sighs discharged from my heaved heart in vain: Had I not wish'd my passion might be seen, What could such fondness and embraces mean? Yet (though extremest rage has rack'd my soul, And raging fires in my parch'd bosom roll) Be witness gods! how piously I strove To rid my thoughts of this enchanting love. But who could 'scape so fierce and sure a dart, Aim'd at a tender, a defenceless heart? Alas! what maid could suffer I have borne, Ere the dire secret from my breast was torn; To thee, a helpless, vanquish'd wretch I come; 'Tis you alone can save, or give my doom: My life or death this moment you may choose, Yet think, O think, no hated stranger sues, No foe; but one, alas! too near allied, And wishing still much nearer to be tied. The forms of decency let age debate, And virtue's rules by their cold morals state; Their ebbing joys give leisure to inquire, And blame those noble flights our youth

inspire: O pardon and oblige a blushing maid, Whose rage the pride of her vain sex betray'd, Nor let my tomb thus mournfully complain— Here Byblis lies, by her loved Caunus slain."

Forced here to end, she with a falling tear Temper'd the pliant wax which did the signet bear The curious cipher was impress'd by art, But love had stamp'd one deeper in her heart. Her page, a youth of confidence and skill (Secret as night), stood waiting on her will; Sighing, she cried, "Bear this, thou faithful boy, To my sweet partner in eternal joy." Here a long pause her secret guilt confess'd; And when, at length, she would have spoken the rest, Half the dear name lay buried in her breast.

Thus, as he list'ned to her vain command, Down fell the letter from her trembling hand. The omen shock'd her soul. "Yet go," she cried. "Can a request from Byblis be denied?"

To the Maeandrian youth this message's borne; The half-read lines by his fierce rage were torn. "Hence," he exclaim'd, "thou vile accomplice, hence; Enjoy the triumph of thy great offence. Thy instant death will but divulge her shame, Or thy life's blood should quench the guilty flame." Frighted, from threat'ning Caunus he withdrew, And with the dreadful news to his lost mistress flew. The sad repulse so struck the wounded fair, Her sense was buried in her wild despair: Pale was her visage, as the ghastly dead, And her scared soul from the sweet mansion fled; Yet with her life renew'd, her love returns, And faintly thus her cruel fate she mourns: " 'Tis just, ye gods! was my false reason blind To write a secret of this tender kind? With female craft, I should at first have strove, By dubious hints to sound his distant love, And tried those useful, though dissembled, arts, Which women practise on disdainful hearts. I should have watch'd whence the black storm might rise, Ere I had trusted the unfaithful skies. Now on the rolling billows I am toss'd, And with extended sails on the blind shelves am lost. Did not indulgent heaven my deem foretell, When from my hand the fatal letter fell? What madness seized my soul, and

urged me on, To take the only course to be undone? I could myself have told the moving tale, With such alluring grace as must prevail; Then had his eyes beheld my blushing fears, My rising sighs, and my descending tears. Round his dear neck these arms I then had spread, And, if rejected, at his feet been dead: If singly these had not his thoughts inclined, Yet all united would have shock'd his mind. Perhaps my careless page might be in fault, And, in a luckless hour, the fatal message brought; Business and worldly thoughts might fill his breast, Sometimes ev'n love itself may be an irksome guest; He could not else have treated me with scorn, For Caunus was not of a tigress born, Nor steel, nor adamant, has fenced his heart; Like mine, 'tis naked to the burning dart.

"Away, false fears! he must, he shall be mine, In death alone I will my claim resign: 'Tis vain to wish my written crime unknown, And for my guilt much vainer to atone." Repulsed and baffled, fiercer still she burns, And Caunus, with disdain, her impious love returns. He saw no end of her injurious flame, And fled his country to avoid the shame. Forsaken Byblis, who had hopes no more, Burst out in rage, and her loose robes she tore; With her fair hands she smote her tender breast, And to the wond'ring world her love confess'd. O'er hills and dales, o'er rocks and streams she flew, But still in vain did her wild love pursue. Wearied, at length, on the cold earth she fell, And now in tears alone could her sad story tell. Relenting gods in pity fix'd her there, And to a fountain turn'd the weeping fair.

Fable of Iphis and Ianthe

A poor man named Lygdus directs his wife to destroy her newborn child should it prove a female—The tenderness of a mother induces her to conceal the sex of her daughter, and Lygdus, at a fit age, provides a suitable partner for his supposed son, whose sex is changed by the interposition of the goddess Isis.

The fame of this, perhaps, through Crete had flown, But Crete had newer wonders of her own, In Iphis changed; for near the Gnossian bounds (As loud report the miracle

resounds), At Phaestus dwelt a man of honest blood, But meanly born, and not so rich as good, Esteem'd and loved by all the neighbourhood, Who, to his wife, before the time assign'd For childbirth came, thus bluntly spoke his mind: "If heaven," said Lygdus, "will vouchsafe to hear, I have but two petitions to prefer, Short pains for thee, for me a son and heir. Girls cost as many throes in bringing forth; Besides, when born, they prove of little worth, Weak, puling things, unable to sustain Their share of labour, and their bread to gain. If, therefore, thou a creature shalt produce, Of so great charges, and so little use (Bear witness, heaven, with what reluctancy), Her helpless innocence I doom to die." He said; and tears the common grief display, Of him who bade, and her who must obey.

Yet Telethusa still persists, to find Fit arguments to move a father's mind, To extend his wishes to a larger scope, And in one vessel not confine his hope. Lygdus continues hard: her time drew near, And she her heavy load could scarcely bear, When slumbering, in the latter shades of night, Before the approaches of returning light, She saw, or thought she saw, before her bed, A glorious train, and Isis at their head: Her moony horns were on her forehead placed, And yellow sheaves her shining temples graced; A mitre, for a crown, she wore on high; The dog and dappled bull were waiting by; Osiris, sought along the banks of Nile: The silent god; the sacred crocodile; And, last, a long procession moving on With timbrels, that assist the labouring moon. Her slumbers seem'd dispell'd, and, broad awake, She heard a voice that thus distinctly spake: "My votary, thy babe from death defend, Nor fear to save whate'er the gods will send. Delude with art thy husband's dire decree; When danger calls, repose thy trust on me, And know thou hast not served a thankless deity." This promise made, with night the goddess fled; With joy the woman wakes and leaves her bed, Devoutly lifts her spotless hands on high, And prays the powers their gifts to ratify.

Now grinding pains proceed to bearing throes, Till its own weight the burden did disclose. 'Twas of the beauteous kind, and brought to light With secrecy, to shun the

father’s sight; The indulgent mother did her care employ, And pass’d it on her husband for a boy. The nurse was conscious of the fact alone. The father paid his vows as for a son, And call’d him Iphis, by a common name, Which either sex with equal right may claim. Iphis his grandsire was; the wife was pleased, Of half the fraud by Fortune’s favour eased. The doubtful name was used without deceit, And truth was cover’d with a pious cheat; The habit show’d a boy, the beauteous face With manly fierceness mingled female grace.

Now thirteen years of age were swiftly run, When the fond father thought the time drew on Of settling in the world his only son. Ianthe was his choice, so wondrous fair, Her form alone with Iphis could compare, A neighbour’s daughter of his own degree, And not more bless’d with fortune’s goods than he.

They soon espoused; for they with ease were join’d, Who were before contracted in the mind; Their age the same, their inclinations too, And bred together, in one school they grew. Thus, fatally disposed to mutual fires, They felt, before they knew, the same desires; Equal their flame, unequal was their care, One loved with hope, one languish’d in despair; And, scarce refraining tears, “Alas,” said she, “What issue of my love remains for me! How wild a passion works within my breast! With what prodigious flames am I possess’d! Could I the care of Providence deserve, Heaven must destroy me, if it would preserve; And that’s my fate, or sure it would have sent Some usual evil for my punishment: Not this unkindly curse, to rage and burn, Where nature shows no prospect of return.

“And yet no guards against our joys conspire, No jealous husband hinders our desire, My parents are propitious to my wish, And she herself consenting to the bliss; All things concur to prosper our design, All things to prosper any love but mine. Heaven has been kind, as far as Heaven can be, Our parents with our own desires agree; But Nature, stronger than the gods above, Refuses her assistance to my love; She sets the bar that causes all my pain: One gift refused makes all their

bounty vain And now the happy day is just at hand To bind our hearts in Hymen's holy band."

Thus lovesick Iphis her vain passion mourns, With equal ardour fair Ianthe burns, Invoking Hymen's name, and Juno's power, To speed the work, and haste the happy hour.

She hopes, while Telethusa fears the day, And strives to interpose some new delay, Now feigns a sickness, now is in a fright For this bad omen, or that boding sight. But having done whate'er she could devise, And emptied all her magazine of lies, The time approach'd, the next ensuing day The fatal secret must to light betray. Then Telethusa had recourse to prayer, She, and her daughter, with dishevell'd hair; Trembling with fear, great Isis they adored, Embraced her altar, and her aid implored.

"Fair queen, who dost on fruitful Egypt smile, Who sway'st the sceptre of the Pharian isle, And sevenfold falls of disemboguing Nile, Relieve, in this our last distress," she said, "A suppliant mother, and a mournful maid. Thou, goddess, thou wert present to my sight; Reveal'd I saw thee by thy own fair light; I saw thee, in my dream, as now I see, With all thy marks of awful majesty, The glorious train that compass'd thee around, And heard the hollow timbrels' holy sound. Thy words I noted, which I still retain, Let not thy sacred oracles be vain. That Iphis lives, that I myself am free From shame and punishment, I owe to thee. On thy protection all our hopes depend; Thy counsel saved us, let thy power defend."

Her tears pursued her words, and, while she spoke, The goddess nodded, and her altar shook; The temple doors, as with a blast of wind, Were heard to clap; the lunar horns, that bind The brows of Isis, cast a blaze around, The trembling timbrel made a murm'ring sound.

Some hopes these happy omens did impart, Forth went the mother with a beating heart, Not much in fear, nor fully satisfied; But Iphis follow'd with a larger stride:

The whiteness of her skin forsook her face, Her looks imbolden’d with an awful grace; Her features and her strength together grew, And her long hair to curling locks withdrew; Her sparkling eyes with manly vigour shone; Big with her voice, audacious was her tone. The maid becomes a youth. No more delay Your vows, but look, and confidently pay. Their gifts the parents to the temple bear, The votive tables this inscription wear: “Iphis, the man, has to the goddess paid The vows that Iphis offer’d when a maid.”

Now, when the star of day had shown his face, Venus and Juno with their presence grace The nuptial rites, and Hymen, from above, Descending to complete their happy love; The gods of marriage lend their mutual aid, And the fond youth obtains the lovely maid.

Book X

Story of Orpheus and Eurydice

Orpheus, by his skill in music, obtains from Pluto the restoration of his wife Eurydice on condition of not looking behind him till his arrival in the upper regions: his promises are for gotten; and he turns to gaze on his long-lost wife, who instantly vanishes from his eyes—Her husband, in despair, totally separates himself from the society of mankind.

Thence, in his saffron robe, for distant Thrace, Hymen departs, through air’s unmeasured space, By Orpheus call’d, the nuptial power attends, But with ill-omen’d augury descends; Nor cheerful look’d the god, nor prosperous spoke, Nor blazed his torch, but wept in hissing smoke. In vain they whirl it round, in vain they shake, No rapid motion can its flames awake.

With dread these inauspicious signs were view’d, And soon a more disastrous end ensued; For as the bride, amid the Naiad train, Ran joyful, sporting o’er the flow’ry

plain, A venom'd viper bit her as she pass'd; Instant she fell, and sudden breathed her last.

When long his loss the Thracian had deplored, Not by superior powers to be restored, Inflamed by love, and urged by deep despair, He leaves the realms of light and upper air, Daring to tread the dark Tenarian road, And tempt the shades in their obscure abode, Through gliding spectres of the interr'd to go. And phantom people of the world below: Persephone he seeks, and him who reigns O'er ghosts, and hell's uncomfortable plains. Arrived, he, tuning to his voice his strings, Thus to the king and queen of shadows sings:

"Ye powers, who under earth your realms extend, To whom all mortals must one day descend, If here 'tis granted sacred truth to tell, I come not curious to explore your hell, Nor come to boast (by vain ambition fired) How Cerberus at my approach retired; My wife alone I seek, for her loved sake These terrors I support, this journey take: She, luckless wandering, or by fate misled, Chanced on a lurking viper's crest to tread; The vengeful beast, inflamed with fury, starts, And through her heel his deathful venom darts. Thus was she snatch'd untimely to her tomb. Her growing years cut short, and springing bloom. Long I my loss endeavour'd to sustain, And strongly strove; but strove, alas! in vain: At length I yielded, won by mighty love; Well known is that omnipotence above: But here, I doubt, his unfelt influence fails; And yet a hope within my heart prevails, That here, ev'n here, he has been known of old, At least if truth be by tradition told. If fame of former loves belief may find, You both by love, and love alone, were join'd. Now, by the horrors which these realms surround, By the vast chaos of these depths profound, By the sad silence, which eternal reigns O'er all the waste of these wide-stretching plains, Let me again Eurydice receive, Let fate her quick-spun thread of life reweave. All our possessions are but loans from you, And soon or late you must be paid your due; Hither we haste to humankind's last seat, Your endless empire, and our sure retreat. She too, when ripen'd years she shall attain, Must, of avoidless right, be yours again. I but the

transient use of that require, Which soon, too soon, I must resign entire. But if the destinies refuse my vow, And no remission of her doom allow, Know, I'm determined to return no more; So both retain, or both to life restore."

Thus, while the bard melodiously complains, And to his lyre accords his vocal strains, The very bloodless shades attention keep, And silent seem compassionate to weep; Ev'n Tantalus his flood unthirsty views, Nor flies the stream, nor he the stream pursues, Ixion's wondering wheel its whirl suspends, And the voracious vulture, charm'd, attends; No more the Belides their toil bemoan, And Sisyphus, reclined, sits listening on his stone.

Then first, ('tis said,) by sacred verse subdued, The furies felt their cheeks with tears bedew'd. Nor could the rigid king or queen of hell The impulse of pity in their hearts repel.

Now, from a troop of shades that last arrived, Eurydice was call'd, and stood revived: Slow she advanced, and halting, seem'd to feel The fatal wound yet painful in her heel. Thus he obtains the suit so much desired, On strict observance of the terms required; For if, before he reach the realms of air, He backward cast his eyes to view the fair, The forfeit grant, that instant, void is made, And she for ever left a lifeless shade.

Now through the noiseless throng their way they bend, And both with pain the rugged road ascend: Dark was the path, and difficult, and steep, And thick with vapours from the smoky deep. They wellnigh now had pass'd the bounds of night, And just approach'd the margin of the light, When he, mistrusting lest her steps might stray, And gladsome of the glimpse of dawning day, His longing eyes impatient backward cast To catch a lover's look, but look'd his last; For, instant dying, she again descends, While he to empty air his arm extends: Again she died, nor yet her lord reproved: What could she say but that too well he loved? One last farewell she spoke, which scarce he heard; So soon she dropp'd, so sudden

disappear’d.

All stunn’d he stood when thus his wife he view’d, By second fate and double death subdued; Not more amazement by that wretch was shown Whom Cerberus beholding turn’d to stone; Nor Olenus could more astonish’d look, When on himself Lethea’s fault he took; His beauteous wife, who, too secure, had dared Her face to vie with goddesses, compared; Once join’d by love, they stand united still, Turn’d to contiguous rocks on Ida’s hill.

Now to repass the Styx in vain he tries; Charon, averse, his pressing suit denies. Seven days entire, along the infernal shores Disconsolate, the bard Eurydice deplores; Defiled with filth his robe, with tears his cheeks; No sustenance, but grief and cares he seeks; Of rigid fate incessant he complains, And hell’s inexorable gods arraigns. This ended, to high Rhodope he hastes, And Haemus mountain, bleak with northern blasts

And now his yearly race the circling sun Had thrice complete through watery Pisces run, Since Orpheus fled the face of womankind, And all soft union with the sex declined. Whether his ill success this change had bred, Or binding vows made to his former bed, Whate’er the cause, in vain the nymphs contest, With rival eyes, to warm his frozen breast; For every nymph with love his lays inspired, But every nymph, repulsed, with grief retired.

A hill there was, and on that hill a mead, With verdure thick, but destitute of shade; Where, now, the muse’s son no sooner sings, No sooner strikes his sweet-resounding strings, But distant groves the flying sounds receive, And listening trees their rooted stations leave; Themselves transplanting, all around they grow, And various shades their various kinds bestow: Here, tall Chaonian oaks their branches spread, While weeping poplars, there, erect their head; The foodful esculus here shoots his leaves; That turf, soft lime-tree, this, fat beech, receives: Here, brittle hazels; laurels, here, advance; And there, tough ash, to form the hero’s lance: Here,

silver firs, with knotless trunks, ascend; There, scarlet oaks beneath their acorns bend: That spot admits the hospitable plane; On this, the maple grows with clouded grain: Here, watery willows are with lotus seen; There, tamarisk, and box, for ever green: With double hue, here, myrtles grace the ground, And laurustines with purple berries crown'd; With pliant feet, now, ivies this way wind, Vines yonder rise, and elms with vines entwined; Wild ornus now, the pitch-tree next, takes root, And arbutus adorn'd with blushing fruit; Then easy-bending palms, the victor's prize, And pines erect with bristly tops arise; For Rhea grateful still, the pine remains, For Atys still some favour she retains; He once in human shape her breast had warm'd, And now is cherish'd, to a tree transform'd.

Fable of Cyparissus

Cyparissus by accident kills a favourite stag, which affects him with so much grief, that he pines away, and is changed into a cypress-tree by Apollo.

Amid the throng of this promiscuous wood, With pointed top, the taper cypress stood, A tree, which once a youth, and heavenly fair, Was of that deity the darling care, Whose hand adapts, with equal skill, the strings To bows with which he kills, and harps to which he sings.

For heretofore, a mighty stag was bred, Which on the fertile fields of Caea fed; In shape and size he all his kind excell'd, And to Carthaean nymphs was sacred held; His beamy head, with branches high display'd, Afforded to itself an ample shade; His horns were gilt, and his smooth neck was graced With silver collars thick with gems enchased; A silver boss upon his forehead hung, And brazen pendants in his ear-rings rung; Frequenting houses he familiar grew, And learn'd, by custom, nature to subdue, Till by degrees, of fear and wildness broke, Ev'n stranger hands his proffer'd neck might stroke.

Much was the beast by Caea's youth caress'd, But thou, sweet Cyparissus, lovedst him best; By thee, to pastures fresh, he oft was led, By thee oft water'd at the

fountain’s head; His horns with garlands, now, by thee were tied, And, now, thou on his back wouldst wanton ride; Now here, now there, wouldst bound along the plains, Ruling his tender mouth with purple reins.

’Twas when the summer sun, at noon of day, Through glowing Cancer shot his burning ray, ’Twas then, the fav’rite stag, in cool retreat, Had sought a shelter from the scorching heat: Along the grass his weary limbs he laid, Inhaling freshness, from the breezy shade, When Cyparissus, with his pointed dart, Unknowing, pierced him to the panting heart; But when the youth, surprised, his error found, And saw him dying of the cruel wound, Himself he would have slain through desperate grief; What said not Phoebus, that might yield relief: To cease his mourning he the boy desired, Or mourn no more than such a loss required; But ho incessant grieved. At length address’d To the superior powers a last request; Praying, in expiation of his crime, Thenceforth to mourn to all succeeding time.

And now of blood exhausted he appears, Drain’d by a torrent of continual tears; The fleshy colour in his body fades, And a green tincture all his limbs invades: From his fair head, where curling locks late hung, A horrid bush with bristled branches sprung, Which, stiffening by degrees, its stem extends, Till to the starry skies the spire ascends.

Apollo sad look’d on, and sighing, cried: “Then, be for ever what thy prayer implied, Bemoan’d by me, in others grief excite, And still preside at every funeral rite.”

Thus the sweet artist in a wondrous shade Of verdant trees, which harmony had made, Encircled sat, with his own triumphs crown’d, Of listening birds and savages around. Again the trembling strings he dext’rous tries, Again from discord makes soft music rise; Then tunes his voice: “Oh muse, from whom I sprung, Jove be my theme, and thou inspire my song: To Jove ray grateful voice I oft have raised, Oft his almighty power with pleasure praised. I sung the giants in a solemn strain,

Blasted and thunderstruck on Phlegra's plain. Now be my lyre in softer accents moved, To sing of blooming boys by gods beloved, And to relate what virgins, void of shame, Have suffer'd vengeance for a lawless flame."

Hyacinthus Transformed Into a Flower

A beautiful youth, named Hyacinthus, is accidentally killed while playing at quoits with Apollo, who changes his blood into a flower hearing the name of his deceased friend.

Phoebus for thee too, Hyacinth, design'd A place among the gods, had fate been kind: Yet this he gave: as oft as wintry rains Are pass'd, and vernal breezes soothe the plains, From the green turf a purple flower you rise, And with your fragrant breath perfume the skies.

You, when alive, were Phoebus' darling boy; In you he placed his hopes and fix'd his joy: Their god the Delphic priests consult in vain. Eurotas now he loves, and Sparta's plain: His hands the use of bow and harp forget, And hold the dogs, or bear the corded net; O'er hanging cliffs swift he pursues the game; Each hour his pleasure, each augments his flame.

The midday sun now shone with equal light Between the past and the succeeding light; They strip, then, smooth'd with suppling oil, essay To pitch the rounded quoit, their wonted play. A well-poised disk first hasty Phoebus threw; It cleft the air, and whistled as it flew; It reach'd the mark, a most surprising length, Which spoke an equal share of art and strength. Scarce was it fallen, when, with too eager hand, Young Hyacinth ran to snatch it from the sand; But the curs'd orb, which met a stony soil, Flew in his face with violent recoil. Both faint, both pale and breathless, now appear, The boy with pain, the anxious god with fear. He ran, and raised him bleeding from the ground, Chafes his cold limbs, and wipes the fatal wound; Then herbs of noblest juice in vain applies; The wound is mortal, and his skill defies.

As in a water'd garden's blooming walk, When some rude hand has bruised its tender stalk, A fading lily droops its languid head, And bends to earth, its life and beauty fled; So Hyacinth, with head reclined, decays, And, sickening, now no more his charms displays.

"Oh, thou art gone, my boy," Apollo cried, "Defrauded of thy youth in all its pride! Thou, once my joy, art all my sorrow now; And to my guilty hand my grief I owe. Yet from myself I might the fault remove, Unless to sport and play a fault should prove, Oh could I for thee, or but with thee, die! But cruel fates to me that power deny: Yet on my tongue thou shalt for ever dwell; Thy name my lyre shall sound, my verse shall tell; And to a flower transform'd, unheard of yet, Stamp'd on thy leaves, my cries thou shalt repeat: The time shall come, prophetic I foreknow, When, join'd to thee, a mighty chief8 shall grow, And with my plaints his name thy leaf shall show."

While Phoebus thus the laws of fate reveal'd, Behold, the blood which stain'd the verdant field Is blood no longer; but a flower full blown, Far brighter than the Tyrian scarlet, shone: A lily's form it took; its purple hue Was all that made a difference to the view: Nor stopp'd he here: the god upon its leaves The sad expression of his sorrow weaves; And to this hour the mournful purple wears Ai, Ai, inscribed in funeral characters. Nor are the Spartans, who so much are famed For virtue, of their Hyacinth ashamed, But still, with pompous wo and solemn state, The Hyacinthian feasts they yearly celebrate.

Transformations of the Cerastae and Propoetides

The Cerastae are punished for their cruelty to strangers, by being changed into oxen by Venus—The angry goddess punishes the wantonness of the Propoetides by their transformation into stones.

Inquire of Amathus, whose wealthy ground With veins of every metal does abound, If she to her Propoetides would show The honour Sparta does to him allow. "No

more," she'd say, "such wretches would we grace, Than those whose crooked horns deform'd their face, From thence Cerastae call'd, an impious race, Before whose gates a reverend altar stood, To Jove inscribed, the hospitable god: This had some stranger seen, with gore besmear'd, The blood of lambs and bulls it had appear'd: Their slaughter'd guests' it was; not flock nor herd."

Venus these barb'rous sacrifices view'd With just abhorrence, and with wrath pursued. At first, to punish such nefarious crimes, Their towns she meant to leave, her once-loved climes. "But why," said she, "for their offence should I My dear delightful plains and cities fly? No, let the impious people, who have sinn'd, A punishment in death or exile find: If death or exile too severe be thought, Let them in some vile shape bemoan their fault; While next her mind a proper form employs, Admonish'd by their horns, she fix'd her choice, Their former crest remains upon their heads, And their strong limbs an ox's shape invades.

The blasphemous Propoetides denied Worship of Venus, and her power defied; Unknowing how to blush, and shameless grown, A small transition changes them to stone.

Story of Pygmalion and the Statue

Pygmalion, a celebrated artist, becomes enamoured of a beautiful statue of ivory which he has made; and at his request Venus endues it with animation, and crowns their union by the birth of a son.

Pygmalion, loathing their lascivious life, Abhorr'd all womankind, but most a wife; So single chose to live, and shunn'd to wed, Well pleased to want a consort of his bed; Yet fearing idleness, the nurse of ill, In sculpture exercised his happy skill, And carved in ivory such a maid, so fair, As nature could not with his art compare, Were she to work; but, in her own defence, Must take her pattern here, and copy hence. Pleased with his idol, he commends, admires, Adores, and last, the thing adored desires: A very virgin in her face was seen, And had she moved, a living maid had

been: One would have thought she could have stirr'd, but strove With modesty, and was ashamed to move: Art hid with art, so well perform'd the cheat, It caught the carver with his own deceit: He knows 'tis madness, yet he must adore, And still the more he knows it, loves the more. The flesh, or what so seems, he touches oft, Which feels so smooth that he believes it soft; Fired with this thought, at once he strain'd the breast, And on the lips a loving kiss impress'd. 'Tis true, the harden'd breast resists the gripe, And the cold lips return a kiss unripe: But when, retiring back, he look'd again, To think it ivory was a thought too mean; With flattery now he seeks her mind to move, And now with gifts, the powerful bribes of love: He furnishes her closet first, and fills The crowded shelves with rarities of shells; Adds orient pearls, which from the conchs he drew, And all the sparkling stones of various hue; And parrots, imitating human tongue, And singing birds, in silver cages hung; And every fragrant flower and odorous green Were sorted well, with lumps of amber laid between: Rich fashionable robes her person deck, Pendants her ears, and pearls adorn her neck: Her taper'd fingers too with rings are graced, And an embroider'd zone surrounds her slender waist. Thus like a queen array'd, so richly dress'd, Beauteous she show'd, but unadorn'd the best. Then from the floor he raised a royal bed, With coverings of Sidonian purple spread.

The feast of Venus came, a solemn day, To which the Cypriots due devotion pay; With gilded horns the milk-white heifers led, Slaughter'd before the sacred altars bled.

Pygmalion offering, first approach'd the shrine, And then with prayers implored the powers divine: Almighty gods, if all we mortals want, If all we can require, be yours to grant, Make this fair statue mine, he would have said, But changed his words for shame, and only pray'd, "Give me the likeness of my ivory maid."

The golden goddess, present at the prayer, Well knew he meant th' inanimated fair, And gave the sign of granting his desire; For thrice in cheerful flames ascends the

fire. The youth, returning to his mistress hies, And, impudent in hope, with ardent eyes, And beating breast, by the dear statue lies. He kisses her white lips, renews the bliss, And looks, and thinks they redden at the kiss; He thought them warm before, nor longer stays, But next his hand on the hard substance lays; Hard as it was, beginning to relent, It seem'd the block beneath his fingers bent: He felt again—his fingers made a print— 'Twas flesh, but flesh so firm, it rose against the dint: The pleasing task he fails not to renew; Soft, and more soft, at every touch it grew; Like pliant wax, when chafing hands reduce The former mass to form, and frame for use. He would believe, but yet is still in pain, And tries his argument of sense again, Presses the pulse, and feels the leaping vein: Convinced, o'erjoy'd, his studied thanks and praise, To her who made the miracle, he pays: Then lips to lips he join'd; now freed from fear, He found the savour of the kiss sincere. At this the waken'd image oped her eyes, And view'd at once the light and lover with surprise. The goddess, present at the match she made, So bless'd the bed, such fruitfulness convey'd, That ere ten months had sharpen'd either horn, To crown their bliss, a lovely boy was born: Paphos his name, who, grown to manhood, wall'd The city Paphos, from the founder call'd.

Story of Venus and Adonis

Venus becomes enamoured of young Adonis, whom she cautions against the pursuit of wild beasts, lest he should meet a premature death—The youth disregards this advice, and receives a mortal bite from a wild boar which he has wounded; and Venus, after lamenting his fate, changes him into a flower called anemone.

For Cytherea's lips while Cupid press'd, He with a heedless arrow razed her breast: The goddess felt it, and, with fury stung, The wanton mischief from her bosom flung: Yet thought at first the danger slight; but found The dart too faithful, and too deep the wound. Fired with a mortal beauty, she disdains To haunt the Idalian mount or Phrygian plains: She seeks not Cnidos, nor her Paphian shrines Nor Amathus, that

teems with brazen mines: Ev’n heaven itself, with all its sweets unsought, Adonis far a sweeter heaven is thought: On him she hangs, and fonds with ev’ry art, And never, never knows from him to part. She whose soft limbs had only been display’d On rosy beds, beneath the myrtle shade, Whose pleasing care was to improve each grace, And add more charms to an unrivall’d face, Now buskin’d, like the virgin huntress, goes Through woods, and pathless wilds, and mountain snows: With her own tuneful voice she joys to cheer The panting hounds, that chase the flying deer: She runs the labyrinth of fearful hares; But fearless beasts and dangerous prey forbears; Hunts not the grinning wolf or foamy boar, And trembles at the lion’s hungry roar. Thee too, Adonis, with a lover’s care, She warns, if warn’d, thou wouldst avoid the snare: “To furious animals advance not nigh; Ply those that follow, follow those that fly; ’Tis chance alone must the survivors save, Whene’er brave spirits will attempt the brave. Oh, lovely youth! in harmless sports delight; Provoke not beasts, which, arm’d by nature, fight: For me, if not thyself, vouchsafe to fear; Let not thy thirst of glory cost me dear. Boars know not how to spare a blooming age, No sparkling eyes can soothe the lion’s rage: Nor all thy charms a savage breast can move, Which have so deeply touch’d the queen of love. When bristled boars from beaten thickets spring, In grinded tusks a thunderbolt they bring: The daring hunters lions roused devour; Vast is their fury, and as vast their power: Cursed be their tawny race: if thou wouldst hear What kindled thus my hate, then lend an ear; The wondrous tale I will to thee unfold, How the fell monsters rose from crimes of old: But by long toils I faint. See! wide display’d, A grateful poplar courts us with a shade; The grassy turf, beneath, so verdant shows, We may secure delightfully repose:

“Perhaps thou mayst have heard a virgin’s name, Who still in swiftness swiftest youths o’ercame. Wondrous, that female weakness should outdo A manly strength; the wonder yet is true ’Twas doubtful if her triumphs in the field Did to her form’s triumphant glories yield; Whether her face could with more ease decoy A crowd of

lovers, or her feet destroy: For once Apollo she implored to show If courteous fates a consort would allow. ‘A consort brings thy ruin,’ he replied: ‘Oh learn to want the pleasures of a bride! Nor shalt thou want them to thy wretched cost, And Atalanta living shall be lost.’ With such a rueful fate the affrighted maid Sought green recesses in the woodland glade; Nor signing suitors her resolves could move; She bade them show their speed, to show their love. He only who could conquer in the race Might hope the conquer’d virgin to embrace; While he whose tardy feet had lagg’d behind, Was doom’d the sad reward of death to find. Though great the prize, yet rigid the decree; But blind with beauty, who can rigour see? Ev’n on these laws the fair they rashly sought, And danger in excess of love forgot.

“There sat Hippomenes, prepared to blame In lovers such extravagance of flame. ‘And must,’ he said, ‘the blessings of a wife Be dearly purchased by a risk of life?’ But when he saw the wonders of her face, And her limbs naked, springing to the race, Her limbs, as exquisitely turned as mine, Or, if a woman thou, might vie with thine, With lifted hands, he cried, ‘Forgive the tongue Which durst, ye youths, your well-timed courage wrong: I knew not that the nymph for whom you strove Deserved the unbounded transports of your love.’ He saw, admired, and thus her spotless frame He praised, and praising, kindled his own flame. A rival now to all the youths who run, Envious, he fears they should not be undone. ‘But why,’ reflects he, ‘idly thus is shown The fate of others, yet untried my own? The coward must not on love’s aid depend; The god was ever to the bold a friend.’ Meantime the virgin flies, or seems to fly, Swift as a Scythian arrow cleaves the sky: Still more and more the youth her charms admires: The race itself to exalt her charms conspires. The golden pinions, which her feet adorn, In wanton flutterings by the winds are borne: Down from her head the long fair tresses flow, And sport with lovely negligence below: The waving ribbons, which her buskins tie, Her snowy skin with waving purple die; As crimson veils in palaces display’d, To the white marble lend a blushing shade. Nor long he gazed, yet while he gazed, she gain’d The goal, and the

victorious wreath obtain’d. The vanquish’d sigh, and, as the law decreed, Pay the dire forfeit, and prepare to bleed.

“Then rose Hippomenes, not yet afraid, And fix’d his eyes full on the beauteous maid. ‘Where is,’ he cried, ‘the mighty conquest won, To distance those who want the nerves to run? Here prove superior strength; nor shall it be Thy loss of glory, if excell’d by me. High my descent; near Neptune I aspire, For Neptune was grand parent to my sire: From that great god the fourth myself I trace, Nor sink my virtues yet beneath my race. Thou from Hippomenes, o’ercome, mayst claim An envied triumph, and a deathless fame.’

“While thus the youth the virgin power defies, Silent she views him still with softer eyes: Thoughts in her breast a doubtful strife begin: If ’tis not happier now to lose than win. ‘What god, a foe to beauty, would destroy The promised ripeness of this blooming boy? With his life’s danger does he seek my bed? Scarce am I half so greatly worth,’ she said. ‘Nor has his beauty moved my breast to love; And yet, I own, such beauty well might move; ’Tis not his charms, ’tis pity would engage My soul to spare the greenness of his age. What, that heroic courage fires his breast, And shines through brave disdain of fate confess’d? What, that his patronage by close degrees Springs from the imperial ruler of the seas? Then add the love, which bids him undertake The race, and dare to perish for my sake. Of bloody nuptials, heedless youth, beware! Fly, timely fly, from a too barb’rous fair. At pleasure choose: thy love will be repaid By a less foolish and more beauteous maid. But why this tenderness, before unknown? Why beats and pants my breast for him alone? His eyes have seen his numerous rivals yield; Let him too share the rigour of the field, Since, by their fates untaught, his own he courts, And thus with ruin insolently sports. Yet for what crime shall he his death receive? Is it a crime with me to wish to live? Shall his kind passion his destruction prove? Is this the fatal recompense of love? So fair a youth destroy’d, would conquest shame, And nymphs eternally detest my fame. Still why should nymphs my guiltless fame upbraid? Did I the fond

adventurer persuade? Alas! I wish thou wouldst the course decline, Or that my swiftness was excell'd by thine. See what a virgin's bloom adorns the boy! Why wilt thou run, and why thyself destroy? Hippomenes! oh that I ne'er had been By those bright eyes unfortunately seen! Ah! tempt not thus a swift untimely fate; Thy life is worthy of the longest date.'

"Thus she disclosed the woman's secret heart, Young, innocent, and new to Cupid's dart. Her thoughts, her words, her actions, wildy rove, With love she burns, yet knows not that 'tis love.

"Her royal sire now with the murm'ring crowd. Demands the race impatiently aloud. Hippomenes then with true fervour pray'd: 'My bold attempt let Venus kindly aid: By her sweet power I felt this amorous fire; Still may she succour whom she did inspire.' A soft, unenvious wind, with speedy care, Wafted to heaven the lover's tender prayer. Pity, I own, soon gain'd the wish'd consent, And all the assistance he implored I lent. The Cyprian lands, though rich, in richness yield To that surnamed the Tamasenian field: That field of old was added to my shrine, And its choice products consecrated mine: A tree there stands, full glorious to behold, Gold are the leaves, the crackling branches gold, It chanced, three apples in my hands I bore, Which newly from the tree I sportive tore; Seen by the youth alone, to him I brought The fruit, and when and how to use it taught. The signal sounding by the king's command, Both start at once, and sweep the imprinted sand: So swiftly moved their feet, they might with ease, Scarce moisten'd, skim along the glassy seas; Or, with a wondrous levity be borne O'er yellow harvests of unbending corn. Now favouring peals resound from every part, Spirit the youth, and fire his fainting heart. 'Hippomenes!' they cried, 'thy life preserve, Intensely labour, and stretch every nerve: Base fear alone can baffle thy design; Shoot boldly onward, and the gaol is thine.' 'Tis doubtful whether shouts like these convey'd More pleasures to the youth or to the maid. When a long distance oft she could have gain'd, She check'd her swiftness, and her feet restrain'd: She sigh'd, and dwelt, and languish'd, on his face,

Then with unwilling speed pursued the race. O’erspent with heat, his breath he faintly drew, Parch’d was his mouth, nor yet the gaol in view, And the first apple on the plain he threw. The nymph stopp’d sudden at the unusual sight, Struck with the fruit so beautifully bright. Aside she starts, the wonder to behold, And eager stoops to catch the rolling gold. The observant youth pass’d by, and scour’d along, While peals of joy rung from the applauding throng. Unkindly she corrects the short delay, And to redeem the time fleets swift away, Swift as the lightning, or the northern wind, And far she leaves the panting youth behind. Again he strives the flying nymph to hold With the temptation of the second gold: The bright temptation fruitlessly was toss’d So soon, alas! she won the distance lost. Now but a little interval of space Remain’d for the decision of the race. ‘Fair author of the precious gift,’ he said, ‘Be thou, oh goddess, author of my aid!’ Then of the shining fruit the last he drew, And with his full-collected vigour threw; The virgin still the longer to detain, Threw not directly, but across the plain. She seem’d a while perplex’d in dubious thought, If the far distant apple should be sought: I lured her backward mind to seize the bait, And to the massy gold gave double weight: My favour to my votary was show’d; Her speed I lessen’d, and increased her load. But lest, though long, the rapid race he run, Before my longer, tedious tale is done, The youth the gaol, and so the virgin, won.

“Might I, Adonis, now not hope to see His grateful thanks pour’d out for victory? His pious incense on my altars laid? But he nor grateful thanks, nor incense paid. Enraged, I vow’d, that with the youth the fair, For his contempt, should my keen vengeance share: That future lovers might my power revere, And, from their sad examples, learn to fear. The silent fanes, the sanctified abodes, Of Cybele, great mother of the gods, Raised by Echion in a lonely wood, And full of brown, religious horror stood: By a long painful Journey faint, they chose Their weary limbs here secret to repose. But soon my power inflamed the lustful boy; Careless of rest, he sought untimely joy. A hallow’d gloomy cave, with moss o’ergrown, The temple

join’d, of native pumice stone, Where antique images by priests were kept, And wooden deities securely slept; Thither the rash Hippomenes retires, And gives a loose to all his wild desires, And the chaste cell pollutes with wanton fires. The sacred statues trembled with surprise; The towery goddess, blushing, veil’d her eyes, And the vile pair to Stygian sounds had sent; But unrevengeful seem’d that punishment: A heavier doom such black profaneness draws— Their taper fingers turn to crooked paws: No more their necks the smoothness can retain, Now cover’d sudden with a yellow mane: Arms change to legs: each finds the hard’ning breast Of rage unknown, and wond’rous strength possess’d: Their alter’d looks with fury grim appear; And on the ground their brushing tails they bear: They haunt the woods: their voices, which before Were musically sweet, now hoarsely roar. Hence lions, dreadful to the lab’ring swains, Are tamed by Cybele, and curb’d with reins, And humbly draw her car along the plains. ‘But thou, Adonis, my delightful care, Of these, and beasts as fierce as these, beware! The savage, which not shuns thee, timely shun; For by rash prowess shouldst thou be undone, A double ruin is contain’d in one.’ ” Thus cautious Venus school’d her favourite boy; But youthful heat all cautions will destroy. His sprightly soul beyond grave counsel flies, While with yoked swans the goddess cuts the skies His faithful hounds, led by the tainted wind, Lodged in thick coverts chanced a boar to find. The callow hero show’d a manly heart, And pierced the savage with a sidelong dart: The flying savage, wounded, turn’d again, Wrench’d out the gory dart, and foam’d with pain. The trembling boy by flight his safety sought, And now recall’d the lore which Venus taught: But now, too late, to fly the boar he strove, Who in the groin his tusks impetuous drove: On the discolour’d grass Adonis lay— The monster trampling o’er his beauteous prey.

Fair Cytherea, Cyprus scarce in view, Heard from afar his groans, and own’d them true, And turn’d her snowy swans, and backward flew. But as she saw him gasp his latest breath, And quivering agonize in pangs of death, Down with swift flight she

plunged, nor rage forbore, At once her garments and her hair she tore: With cruel blows she beat her guiltless breast, The fates upbraided, and her love confess'd. "Nor shall they yet," she cried, "the whole devour, With uncontroll'd inexorable power. For thee, lost youth, my tears and restless pain Shall in immortal monuments remain: With solemn pomp, in annual rites return'd, Be thou for ever, my Adonis, mourn'd. Could Pluto's queen with jealous fury storm, And Menthe to a fragrant herb transform? Yet dares not Venus with a change surprise, And in a flower bid her fallen hero rise?" Then on the blood sweet nectar she bestows— The scented blood in little bubbles rose; Little as rainy drops, which fluttering fly, Borne by the winds, along a lowering sky. Short time ensued, till where the blood was shed, A flower began to rear its purple head; Such as on Punic apples is reveal'd, Or in the filmy rind but half conceal'd. Still here the fate of lovely forms we see, So sudden fades the sweet anemone: The feeble stems, to stormy blasts a prey, Their sickly beauties droop, and pine away: The winds forbid the flowers to flourish long, Which, owe to winds their names in Grecian song.

Book XI

Death of Orpheus

The Thracian women, offended at the coldness of Orpheus, tear him to pieces, and throw his head into the Hebras, whose streams convey it to the coast of the Aegean sea, where a serpent, while sucking his blood, is changed into a stone.

Here, while the Thracian bard's enchanting strain Soothes beasts, and woods, and all the listening plain, The female Bacchanals, devoutly mad, In shaggy skins, like savage creatures, clad, Warbling in air, perceived his lovely lay, And from a rising ground beheld him play; When one, the wildest, with dishevell'd hair, That loosely stream'd and ruffled in the air, Soon as her frantic eye the lyrist spied, "See, see, the hater of our sex," she cried; Then at his face her missive javelin sent, Which wizz'd

along, and brush'd him as it went; But the soft wreaths of ivy twisted round Prevent a deep impression of the wound. Another, for a weapon, hurls a stone, Which, by the sound subdued as soon as thrown, Falls at his feet, and, with a seeming sense, Implores his pardon for its late offence.

But now their frantic rage unbounded grows, Turns all to madness, and no measure knows: Yet this the charms of music might subdue; But that, with all its charms, is conquer'd too: In louder strains their hideous yellings rise, And squeaking hornpipes echo through the skies, Which, in hoarse concert with the drum, confound The moving lyre, and every gentle sound: Then 'twas the deafen'd stones flew on with speed, And saw, unsoothed, their tuneful poet bleed. The birds, the beasts, and all the savage crew Which the sweet lyrist to attention drew, Now by the female mob's more furious rage Are driven, and forced to quit the shady stage. Next their fierce hands the bard himself assail, Nor can his song against their wrath prevail: They flock like birds, when, in a clustering flight, By day they chase the boding fowl of night: So crowded amphitheatres survey The stag, to greedy dogs a future prey. Their steely javelins, which soft curls entwine Of budding tendrils from the leafy vine, For sacred rites of mild religion made, Are flung promiscuous at the poet's head. Those, clods of earth or flints discharge; and these Hurl prickly branches, sliver'd from the trees And lest their passion should be unsupplied, The rabble crew, by chance, at distance spied Where oxen, straining at the heavy yoke, The fallow'd field with slow advances broke; Nigh which the brawny peasants dug the soil, Procuring food with long laborious toil: These, when they saw the ranting throng draw near Quitted their tools, and fled, possess'd with fear. Long spades, and rakes of mighty size, were found, Carelessly left upon the broken ground: With these the furious lunatics engage— And first the labouring oxen feel their rage; Then to the poet they return with speed, Whose fate was, past prevention, now decreed: In vain he lifts his suppliant hands, in vain He tries, before, his never-failing strain: And from those sacred lips, whose thrilling sound Fierce tigers and insensate rocks could

wound. Ah, gods! how moving was the mournful sight! To see the fleeting soul now take its flight. Thee the soft warblers of the feather'd kind Bewail'd; for thee thy savage audience pined; Those rocks and woods that oft thy strain had led, Mourn for their charmer, and lament him dead; And drooping trees their leafy glories shed: Naiads and Dryads, with dishevell'd hair, Promiscuous weep, and scarfs of sable wear; Nor could the river gods conceal their moan, But with new floods of tears augment their own. His mangled limbs lay scatter'd all around; His head and harp a better fortune found— In Hebrus' streams they gently roll'd along, And soothed the waters with a mournful song: Soft deadly notes the lifeless tongue inspire; A doleful tune sounds from the floating lyre: The hollow banks in solemn concert mourn, And the sad strain in echoing groans return: Now with the current to the sea they glide, Borne by the billows of the briny tide, And driven where waves round rocky Lesbos roar, They strand, and lodge upon Methymna's shore.

But here, when landed on the foreign soil, A venom'd snake, the product of the isle, Attempts the head, and sacred locks, imbrued With clotted gore and still fresh-dropping blood. Phoebus at last his kind protection gives, And from the fact the greedy monster drives; Whose marbled jaws his impious crime atone— Still grinning ghastly, though transform'd to stone.

His ghost flies downward to the Stygian shore, And knows the places it had seen before: Among the shadows of the pious train He finds Eurydice, and loves again; With pleasure views the beauteous phantom's charms, And clasps her in his unsubstantial arms: There side by side they unmolested walk, Or pass their blissful hours in pleasing talk; Aft or before the bard securely goes, And without danger can review his spouse.

Thracian Women Transformed to Trees

Bacchus punishes the cruelty of the Thracian women by transforming them into trees.

Bacchus, resolving to revenge the wrong, Of Orpheus murder'd, on the madding throng, Decreed that each accomplice dame should stand, Fix'd by the roots, along the conscious land. Their wicked feet, that late so nimbly ran To wreak their malice on the guiltless man, Sudden with twisted ligatures were bound, Like trees, deep planted in the turfy ground: And as the fowler, with his subtle gins, His feather'd captives by the feet entwines, That fluttering pant, and struggle to get loose, Yet only closer draw the fatal noose; So these were caught; and, as they strove in vain To quit the place, they but increased their pain. They flounce and toil, yet find themselves controll'd; The root, though pliant, toughly keeps its hold. In vain their toes and feet they look to find, For even their shapely legs are clothed with rind. One smites her thighs with a lamenting stroke, And finds the flesh transform'd to solid oak; Another, with surprise and grief distress'd, Lays on above, but beats a wooden breast. A rugged bark their softer neck invades; Their branching arms shoot up delightful shades: At once they seem and are a real grove, With mossy trunks below, and verdant leaves above.

Fable of Midas

The hospitality of Midas towards Silenus, the tutor of Bacchus, is rewarded by the grateful deity with a permission to choose whatever recompense he pleases—Midas imprudently demands that whatever he touches may be turned into gold—His prayers are granted; and he is in danger of perishing by hunger, when the indulgent god supplies a remedy—Some time after this adventure Midas has the folly to maintain the superiority of Pan to Apollo in musical skill; for which rash opinion his ears are changed into those of an ass, to denote his ignorance and stupidity.

Nor this sufficed; the god's disgust remains, And he resolves to quit their hated plains: The vineyards of Tymole engross his care, And with a better choir he fixes there; Where the smooth streams of clear Pactolus roll'd, Then undistinguish'd for

its sands of gold. The satyrs with the nymphs, his usual throng, Come to salute their god, and jovial dance along: Silenus only miss'd; for while he reel'd, Feeble with age and wine, about the field, The hoary drunkard had forgot his way, And to the Phrygian clowns became a prey; Who to King Midas drag the captive god, While on his totty pate the wreaths of ivy nod.

Midas from Orpheus had been taught his lore, And knew the rites of Bacchus long before: He, when he saw his venerable guest, In honour of the god ordain'd a feast. Ten days in course, with each continued night, Were spent in genial mirth and brisk delight; Then on the eleventh, when, with brighter ray, Phosphor had chased the fading stars away, The king through Lydia's fields young Bacchus sought, And to the god his foster-father brought. Pleased with the welcome sight, he bids him soon But name his wish, and swears to grant the boon. A glorious offer! yet but ill bestow'd On him whose choice so little judgment show'd. "Give me," says he, (nor thought he ask'd too much,) "That with my body whatsoe'er I touch, Changed from the nature which it held of old, May be converted into yellow gold." He had his wish: but yet the god repined, To think the fool no better wish could find.

But the brave king departed from the place With smiles of gladness sparkling in his face; Nor could contain, but, as he took his way, Impatient longs to make the first essay. Down from a lowly branch a twig he drew, The twig straight glitter'd with a golden hue. He takes a stone, the stone was turn'd to gold: A clod he touches, and the crumbling mould Acknowledged soon the great transforming power, In weight and substance like a mass of ore: He pluck'd the corn, and straight his grasp appears Fill'd with a bending tuft of golden ears. An apple next he takes, and seems to hold The bright Hesperian vegetable gold: His hand he careless on a pillar lays, With shining gold the fluted pillars blaze; And, while he washes, as the servants pour, His touch converts the stream to Dane's shower.

To see these miracles so finely wrought Fires with transporting joy his giddy

thought. The ready slaves prepare a sumptuous board, Spread with rich dainties for their happy lord; Whose powerful hands the bread no sooner hold, But its whole substance is transform'd to gold: Up to his mouth he lifts the savoury meat, Which turns to gold as he attempts to eat: His patron's noble juice of purple hue, Touch'd by his lips, a gilded cordial grew, Unfit for drink; and, wondrous to behold, It trickles from his jaws a fluid gold.

The rich poor fool, confounded with surprise, Starving in all his various plenty lies; Sick of his wish, he now detests the power, For which he ask'd so earnestly before; Amid his gold with pinching famine cursed, And justly tortured with an equal thirst: At last, his shining arms to heaven he rears, And, in distress, for refuge flies to prayers. "Oh, Father Bacchus, I have sinn'd," he cried, "And foolishly thy gracious gift applied; Thy pity now, repenting, I implore, Oh may I feel the golden plague no more!"

The hungry wretch, his folly thus confess'd, Touch'd the kind deity's good-natured breast; The gentle god annull'd his first decree, And from the cruel compact set him free. But then, to cleanse him quite from further harm, And to dilute the relics of the charm, He bids him seek the stream, that cuts the land Nigh where the towers of Lydias Sardis stand; Then trace the river to the fountain head And meet it rising from its rocky bed; There, as the bubbling tide pours forth amain, To plunge his body in, and wash away the stain. The king, instructed, to the fount retires, But with the golden charm the stream inspires; For, while this quality the man forsakes, An equal power the limpid water takes; Informs with veins of gold the neighbouring land, And glides along a bed of golden sand.

Now loathing wealth, the occasion of his woes, Far in the woods, he sought a calm repose In caves and grottoes, where the nymphs resort, And keep with mountain Pan their sylvan court. Ah! had he left his stupid soul behind; But his condition alter'd not his mind.

For where high Tmolus rears his shady brow, And from his cliffs surveys the seas below In his descent, by Sardis bounded here, By the small confines of Hypaepa there, Pan to the nymphs his frolic ditties play'd, Tuning his reeds beneath the checker'd shade. The nymphs are pleased, the boasting sylvan plays, And speaks with slight of great Apollo's lays. Tmolus was arbiter; the boaster still Accepts the trial with unequal skill. The venerable judge was seated high On his own hill, that seem'd to touch the sky. Above the whispering trees his head he rears, From their encumbering boughs to free his ears; A wreath of oak alone his temples bound, The pendant acorns loosely dangled round. "In me, your judge," says he, "there's no delay;" Then bids the goatherd god begin and play. Pan tuned his pipe, and with his rural song Pleased the low taste of all the vulgar throng. Such songs a vulgar judgment mostly please, Midas was there, and Midas judged with these.

The mountain sire, with grave deportment, now To Phoebus turns his venerable brow; And, as he turns, with him the listening wood In the same posture of attention stood. The god his own Parnassian laurel crown'd, And in a wreath his golden tresses bound; Graceful his purple mantle swept the ground. High on the left his ivory lute he raised; The lute, emboss'd with glittering jewels, blazed; In his right hand he nicely held the quill, His easy posture spoke a master's skill; The strings he touch'd with more than human art, Which pleased the judge's ear, and soothed his heart; Who soon judiciously the palm decreed, And to the lute postponed the squeaking reed.

All, with applause, the rightful sentence heard, Midas alone dissatisfied appear'd; To him unjustly given the judgment seems, For Pan's barbaric notes he most esteems. The lyric god, who thought his untuned ear Deserved but ill a human form to wear, Of that deprives him, and supplies the place With some more fit, and of an ampler space, Fix'd on his noddle an unseemly pair, Flagging, and large, and full of whitish hair; Without a total change from what he was, Still in the man preserves the simple ass.

He, to conceal the scandal of the deed, A purple turban folds about his head, Veils the reproach from public view, and fears The laughing world would spy his monstrous ears. One trusty barber slave, that used to dress His master's hair, when lengthen'd to excess, The mighty secret knew, but knew alone, And, though impatient, durst not make it known. Restless, at last a private place he found, Then dug a hole, and told it to the ground; In a low whisper he reveal'd the case, And cover'd in the earth, and silent left the place.

In time, of trembling reeds a plenteous crop From the confided furrow sprouted up, Which, high advancing with the ripening year, Made known the tiller, and his fruitless care; For then the rustling blades and whispering wind To tell the important secret both combined.

Building of Troy

Apollo and Neptune engage with Laomedon to build the walls of Troy for a stipulated sum, which he refuses to pay: for which breach of faith his territories are laid waste by the encroachments of the sea—He is delivered from the rage of a sea monster by the valour of Hercules, whom he in like manner defrauds: the hero is therefore obliged to besiege Troy, and take it by force of arms.

Phoebus, with full revenge, from Tmolus flies, Darts through the air, and cleaves the liquid skies; Near Hellespont he lights, and treads the plains Where great Laomedon sole monarch reigns; Where, built between the two projecting strands, To Panomphaean Jove an altar stands; Here first aspiring thoughts the king employ To found the lofty towers of future Troy. The work, from schemes magnificent begun, At vast expense, was slowly carried on; Which Phoebus seeing, with the trident god, Who rules the swelling surges with his nod, Assuming each a mortal shape, combine, At a set price, to finish his design. The work was built, the king their price denies, And his injustice backs with perjuries: This Neptune could not brook, but drove the main, A mighty deluge, o'er the Phrygian plain; 'Twas all a sea, the waters

of the deep From every vale the copious harvest sweep; The briny billows overflow the soil, Ravage the fields, and mock the ploughman’s toil.

Nor this appeased the god’s revengeful mind, For still a greater plague remains behind; A huge sea monster lodges on the sands, And the king’s daughter for his prey demands. To him, that saved the, damsel, was decreed A set of horses of the sun’s fine breed; But, when Alcides from the rock untied The trembling fair, the ransom was denied. He, in revenge, the new-built walls attack’d, And the twice-perjured city bravely sack’d. Telamon aided; and, in justice, shared Part of the plunder as his due reward: The princess, rescued late, with all her charms, Hesione, was yielded to his arms: For Peleus, with a goddess bride, was more Proud of his spouse than of his birth before; Grandsons to Jove there might be more than one, But he the goddess had beloved alone.

Story of Thetis and Peleus

Thetis, after assuming various shapes to avoid the importunities of Peleus, is at length compelled to yield her consent to the nuptials.

For Proteus thus to virgin Thetis said: “Fair goddess of the waves, consent to wed, And take some sprightly lover to your bed: A son you’ll have, the terror of the field, To whom, in fame and power, his sire shall yield.”

Jove, who adored the nymph with boundless love, Did from his breast the dangerous flame remove; He knew the fates, nor cared to raise up one Whose fame and greatness should eclipse his own. On happy Peleus he bestow’d her charms, And bless’d his grandson in the goddess’ arms.

A silent creek Thessalia’s coast can show, Two arms project, and shape it like a bow; ’Twould make a bay, but the transparent tide Does scarce the yellow-gravell’d bottom hide; For the quick eye may through the liquid wave A firm, unweedy, level beach perceive: A grove of fragrant myrtle near it grows, Whose boughs, though

thick, a beauteous grot disclose; The well-wrought fabric, to discerning eyes, Rather by art than nature seems to rise. A bridled dolphin oft fair Thetis bore To this her loved retreat, her favourite shore; Here Peleus seized her, slumbering while she lay, And urged his suit with all that love could say. The nymph, o'erpower'd, to art for succour flies, And various shapes the eager youth surprise; A bird she seems, but plies her wings in vain, His hands the fleeting substance still detain; A branchy tree high in the air she grew, About its bark his nimble arms he threw; A tiger next, she glares with flaming eyes, The frighten'd lover quits his hold, and flies The sea gods he with sacred rites adores, Then a libation on the ocean pours; While the fat entrails crackle in the fire, And sheets of smoke, in sweet perfume, aspire; Till Proteus, rising from his oozy bed, Thus to the poor desponding lover said: "No more in anxious thoughts your mind employ, For yet you shall possess the dear expected joy. You must, once more, the unwary nymph surprise, As coolly in her grot she slumbering lies; Then bind her fast with unrelenting hands, And strain her tender limbs with knotted bands; Still hold her under every different shape, Till, tired she tries no longer to escape." Thus he, then sunk beneath the glassy flood, And broken accents flutter'd where he stood.

Bright Sol had almost now his journey done, And down the steepy western convex run, When the fair Nereid left the briny wave, And, as she used, retreated to her cave. He scarce had bound her fast, when she arose, And into various shapes her body throws; She went to move her arms, and found them tied, Then, with a sigh, "Some god assists ye," cried, And in her proper shape stood blushing by his side. About her waist his longing arms he flung, From which alliance great Achilles sprung.

Transformation of Daedalion

Daedalion is so much afflicted at the death of his daughter Chione, that he throws himself from Mount Parnassus, and is changed into a hawk by Apollo.

Peleus unmix'd felicity enjoy'd, (Bless'd in a valiant son and virtuous bride,) Till fortune did in blood his hands imbrue, And his own brother, by cursed chance, he slew: Then driven from Thessaly, his native clime, Trachinia first gave shelter to his crime, Where peaceful Ceyx mildly fill'd the throne, And like his sire, the morning' planet, shone; But now, unlike himself, bedew'd with tears, Mourning a brother lost, his brow appears: First to the town, with travel spent and care, Peleus, and his small company, repair; His herds and flocks the while at leisure feed On the rich pasture of a neighbouring mead. The prince before the royal presence brought, Show'd, by the suppliant olive, what he sought; Then tells his name, and race, and country, right, But hides the unhappy reason of his flight. He begs the king some little town to give, Where they may safe his faithful vassals live. Ceyx replied, "To all my bounty flows, A hospitable realm your suit has chose. Your glorious race, and far-resounding fame, And grandsire Jove, peculiar favours claim; All you can wish I grant; entreaties spare; My kingdom (would 'twere worth the sharing) share."

Tears stopp'd his speech: astonish'd Peleus pleads To know the cause from whence his grief proceeds. The prince replied, "There's none of ye but deems This hawk was ever such as now it seems; Know 'twas a hero once, Daedalion named, For warlike deeds, and haughty valour, famed; Like me, to that bright luminary born, Who wakes Aurora, and brings on the morn. His fierceness still remains, and love of blood, Now dread of birds and tyrant of the wood: My make was softer, peace my greatest care; But this, my brother, wholly bent on war; Late, nations fear'd, and routed armies fled, That force, which now the timorous pigeons dread. A daughter he possess'd, divinely fair, And scarcely yet had seen her fifteenth year, Young Chione. A thousand rivals strove To win the maid, and teach her how to love. Phoebus and Mercury, by chance, one day, From Delphi and Cyllene pass'd this way; Together they the virgin saw: desire At once warm'd both their breasts with am'rous fire. Her time complete nine circling moons had run, To either god she bore a lovely son; To Mercury Autolycus she brought, Who turn'd to thefts and tricks his

subtle thought: Possess'd he was of all his father's slight, At will made white look black, and black look white. Philammon born to Phoebus, like his sire, The muses loved, and finely struck the lyre, And made his voice and touch in harmony conspire. In vain, fond maid, you boast this double birth, The love of gods, and royal father's worth, And Jove among your ancestors rehearse! Could blessings such as these e'er prove a curse? To her they did, who with audacious pride, Vain of her own, Diana's charms decried. Her taunts the goddess with resentment fill, 'My face you like not, you shall try my skill.' She said, and straight her vengeful bow she strung, And sent a shaft, that pierced her guilty tongue. The bleeding tongue in vain its accents tries, In the red stream her soul reluctant flies. With sorrow wild I ran to her relief, And tried to moderate my brother's grief; He, deaf as rocks by stormy surges beat, Loudly laments, and hears me not entreat. When on the funeral pile he saw her laid, Thrice he to rush into the flames essay'd, Thrice with officious care by us was stay'd. Now, mad with grief, away he fled amain, Like a stung heifer, that resents the pain, And, bellowing loudly, bounds along the plain. O'er the most rugged ways so fast he ran, He seem'd a bird already, not a man; He left us breathless all behind, and now, In quest of death, had gain'd Parnassus' brow; But when from thence headlong himself he threw, He fell not, but with airy pinions flew. Phoebus in pity changed him to a fowl, Whose crooked beak and claws the birds control, Little of bulk, but of a warlike soul. A hawk become, the feather'd race's foe, He tries to ease his own, by others' wo."

A Wolf Turned Into Marble

A wolf, which desolates the plains of Trachinia, is changed into marble by the intercession of Thetis.

While they astonish'd heard the king relate These wonders of his hapless brother's fate, The prince's herdsman at the court arrives, And fresh surprise to all the audience gives. "Oh Peleus! Peleus! dreadful news I bear," He said, and trembled as

he spoke for fear. The worst affrighted Peleus bid him tell, While Ceyx too grew pale with friendly zeal. Thus he began: “When Sol mid-heaven had gain’d, And half his way was pass’d, and half remain’d, I to the level shore my cattle drove, And let them freely in the meadows rove. Some stretch’d at length, admire the watery plain, Some cropp’d the herb, some wanton swam the main A temple stands of antique make hard by, Where no gilt domes, or marble, lure the eye. Unpolish’d rafters bear its lowly height, Hid by a grove, as ancient, from the sight. Here Nereus, and the Nereids they adore: I learn’d it from the man who thither bore His net to dry it on the sunny shore. Adjoins a lake, enclosed with willows round, Where swelling waves have overflow’d the mound, And muddy, stagnate, on the lower ground, From thence a rustling noise, increasing, flies, Strikes the still shore, and frights us with surprise; Straight a huge wolf rush’d from the marshy wood, His jaws besmear’d with mingled foam and blood, Though equally by hunger urged, and rage, His appetite he minds not to assuage; Naught that he meets his rapid fury spares, But the whole herd with mad disorder tears. Some of our men, who strove to drive him thence, Torn by his teeth, have died in their defence; The echoing lakes, the sea, and fields, and shore, Impurpled blush with streams of reeking gore: Delay is loss, nor have we time for thought, While yet some few remain alive, we ought To seize our arms, and, with confederate force, Try if we so can stop his bloody course.” But Peleus cared not for his ruin’d herd, His crime he call’d to mind, and thence inferr’d That Psamathe’s revenge this havoc made, In sacrifice to murder’d Phocus’ shade. The king commands his servants to their arms, Resolved to go, but the loud noise alarms His lovely queen, who from her chamber flew, And her half-platted hair behind her threw, About his neck she hung with loving fears, And now with words, and now with pleading tears, Entreated that he’d send his men alone, And stay himself, to save two lives in one. Then Peleus: “Your just fears, oh queen, forget, Too much the offer leaves me in your debt: No arms against the monster I shall bear, But the sea nymphs appease with humble prayer.”

The citadel's high turrets pierce the sky, Which home-bound vessels glad, from far descry; This they ascend, and thence with sorrow ken The mangled heifers lie, and bleeding men; The inexorable ravager they view, With blood discolour'd, still the rest pursue: There, Peleus pray'd submissive towards the sea, And deprecates the ire of injured Psamathe. But deaf to all his prayers the nymph remain'd, Till Thetis for her spouse the boon obtain'd. Pleased with the luxury, the furious beast, Unstopp'd, continues still his bloody feast: While yet upon a sturdy bull he flew, Changed by the nymph, a marble block he grew. No longer dreadful now the wolf appears, Buried in stone, and vanish'd like their fears. Yet still the fates unhappy Peleus vex'd, To the Magnesian shore he wanders next. Acastus there, who ruled the peaceful clime, Grants his request, and expiates his crime.

Story of Ceyx and Alcyone

Ceyx, the husband of Alcyone, is drowned while on a voyage to consult the oracle of Apollo—The wife is apprized, in a dream, of his fate, and throws herself into the sea, when she and Ceyx are transformed into halcyons or kingfishers.

These prodigies affect the pious prince: But more perplex'd with those that happen'd since, He purposes to seek the Clarian god, Avoiding Delphi, his more famed abode. Since Phrygian robbers made unsafe the road: Yet could he not, from her he loved so well, The fatal voyage he resolved, conceal. But when she saw her lord prepared to part, A deadly cold ran shivering to her heart, Her faded cheeks are changed to boxen hue, And in her eyes the tears are ever new. She thrice essay'd to speak, her accents hung, And, faltering, died unfinish'd on her tongue, Or vanish'd into sighs: with long delay Her voice return'd, and found the wonted way.

"Tell me, my lord," she said, "what fault unknown Thy once beloved Alcyone has done? Whither, ah! whither is thy kindness gone? Can Ceyx, then, sustain to leave his wife, And, unconcern'd, forsake the sweets of life? What can thy mind to this long journey move? Or need'st thou absence to renew thy love? Yet, if thou goest by

land, though grief possess My soul, ev'n then my fears will be the less. But, ah! be warn'd to shun the watery way, The face is frightful of the stormy sea; For late I saw adrift disjointed planks, And empty tombs erected on the banks. Nor let false hopes to trust betray thy mind, Because my sire in caves constrains the wind, Can with a breath their clam'rous rage appease, They fear his whistle, and forsake the seas: Not so: for, once indulged, they sweep the main, Deaf to the call, or, hearing, hear in vain; But bent on mischief bear the waves before, And not content with seas, insult the shore, When ocean, air, and earth at once engage, And rooted forests fly before their rage: At once the clashing clouds to battle move, And lightnings rim across the fields above: I know them well, and mark'd their rude comport, While yet a child within my father's court: In times of tempest they command alone: And he but sits precarious on the throne: The more I know, the more my fears augment; And fears are oft prophetic of the event; But if not fears, or reasons will prevail, If fate has fix'd thee obstinate to sail, Go not without thy wife, but let me bear My part of danger with an equal share, And present, what I suffer only fear; Then o'er the bounding billows shall we fly, Secure to live together, or to die."

These reasons moved her starlike husband's heart, But still he held his purpose to depart; For as he loved her equal to his life, He would not to the seas expose his wife; Nor could be wrought his voyage to refrain, But sought by arguments to soothe her pain; Nor these avail'd; at length he lights on one, With which so difficult a case he won: "My love, so short an absence cease to fear, For by my father's holy flame I swear, Before two moons their orb with light adorn, If Heaven allow me life, I will return."

This promise of so short a stay prevails; He soon equips the ships, supplies the sails, And gives the word to launch; she trembling views This pomp of death, and parting tears renews; Last with a kiss, she took a long farewell, Sigh'd with a sad presage, and swooning fell: While Ceyx seeks delays, the lusty crew, Raised on their banks, their oars in order drew To their broad breasts, the ship with fury flew.

The queen recover'd, rears her humid eyes, And first her husband on the poop espies, Shaking his hand at distance on the main; She took the sign, and shook her hand again: Still as the ground recedes, contracts her view With sharpen'd sight, till she no longer knew The much-loved face; that comfort lost supplies With less, and with the galley feeds her eyes; The galley borne from view by rising gales, She follow'd with her sight the flying sails; When ev'n the flying sails were seen no more, Forsaken of all sight she left the shore.

Then on her bridal bed her body throws And sought in sleep her wearied eyes to close; Her husband's pillow, and the widow'd part Which once he press'd, renew'd the former smart.

And now a breeze from shore began to blow, The sailors ship their oars, and cease to row, Then hoist their yards a-trip, and all their sails Let fall, to court the wind, and catch the gales. By this the vessel half her course had run, And as much rested till the rising sun; Both shores were lost to sight, when at the close Of day a stiffer gale at east arose: The sea grew white, the rolling waves from far, Like heralds, first denounce the watery war.

This seen, the master soon began to cry: "Strike, strike the topsail, let the mainsheet fly, And furl your sails:" the winds repel the sound, And in the speaker's mouth the speech is drown'd. Yet of their own accord, as danger taught Each in his way, officiously they wrought; Some stow their oars, or stop the leaky sides; Another bolder, yet the yard bestrides, And folds the sails; a fourth with labour laves The intruding seas, and waves ejects on waves.

In this confusion, while their work they ply, The winds augment the winter of the sky, And wage intestine wars, the suffering seas Are toss'd, and mingled, as their tyrants please. The master would command, but, in despair Of safety, stands amazed with stupid care; Nor what to bid, or what forbid he knows, The ungovern'd tempest to such fury grows: Vain is his force, and vainer is his skill, With such a concourse

comes the flood of ill; The cries of men are mix’d with rattling shrouds, Seas dash on seas, and clouds encounter clouds; At once from east to west, from pole to pole, The forky lightnings flash, the roaring thunders roll.

Now waves on waves ascending scale the skies, And in the fires above the water fries; When yellow sands are sifted from below, The glittering billows give a golden show; And when the fouler bottom spews the black, The Stygian die the tainted waters take; Then frothy white appear the flatted seas, And change their colour, changing their disease. Like various fits the Trachin vessel finds; And now sublime, she rides upon the winds; As from a lofty summit looks from high, And from the clouds beholds the nether sky; Now from the depth of hell they lift their sight, And at a distance see superior light; The lashing billows make a loud report, And beat her sides, as battering rams a fort; Or as a lion bounding in his way, With force augmented, bears against his prey, Sidelong to seize, or unappall’d with fear, Springs on the toils, and rushes on the spear; So seas impell’d by winds, with added power Assault the sides, and o’er the hatches tower.

The planks (their pitchy covering wash’d away) Now yield, and now a yawning breach display; The roaring waters with a hostile tide Rush through the ruins of her gaping side Meantime in sheets of rain the sky descends, And ocean swell’d with waters upward tends; One rising, falling one, the heavens and sea Meet at their confines, in the middle way: The sails are drunk with showers, and drop with rain; Sweet waters mingle with the briny main; No star appears to lend his friendly light; Darkness and tempest make a double night; But flashing fires disclose the deep by turns, And while the lightnings blaze, the water burns.

Now all the waves their scatter’d force unite, And, as a soldier foremost in the fight, Make way for others, and a host alone Still presses on, and urging gains the town; So, while the invading billows come abreast, The hero tenth advanced before the rest, Sweeps all before him with impetuous sway, And from the walls descends upon

the prey; Part following enter, part remain without, With envy hear their fellows' conquering shout, And mount on others' backs, in hopes to share The city, thus become the seat of war.

A universal cry resounds aloud, The sailors run in heaps, a helpless crowd; Art fails, and courage fails, no succour near; As many waves, as many deaths appear: One weeps, and yet despairs of late relief; One cannot weep, his fears congeal his grief, But, stupid, with dry eyes expects his fate; One with loud shrieks laments his lost estate, And calls those happy, whom their funerals wait: This wretch with prayers and vows the gods implores, And ev'n the skies he cannot see, adores: That other, on his friends his thoughts bestows, His careful father, and his faithful spouse; The covetous worldling, in his anxious mind, Thinks only on the wealth he left behind.

All Ceyx his Alcyone employs, For her he grieves, yet in her absence joys; His wife he wishes, and would still be near, Not her with him, but wishes him with her: Now with last looks he seeks his native shore, Which fate has destined him to see no more; He sought, but, in the dark tempestuous night, He knew not whither to direct his sight; So whirl the seas, such darkness blinds the sky, That the black night receives a deeper dye.

The giddy ship ran round, the tempest tore Her mast, and overboard the rudder bore; One billow mounts, and with a scornful brow, Proud of her conquest gain'd, insults the waves below; Nor lighter falls, than if some giant tore Pindus and Athos with the freight they bore, And toss'd on seas, press'd with the ponderous blow, Down sinks the ship within the abyss below; Down with the vessel sink into the main The many, never more to rise again. Some few on scatter'd planks, with fruitless care, Lay hold, and swim, but while they swim despair.

Ev'n he who late a sceptre did command, Now grasps a floating fragment in his hand; And while he struggles on the stormy main, Invokes his father, and his wife's, in vain. But yet his consort is his greatest care, Alcyone he names amid his prayer;

Names as a charm against the waves and wind; Most in his mouth, and ever in his mind. Tired with his toil, all hopes of safety pass'd, From pray'rs to wishes he descends at last, That his dead body, wafted to the sands, Might have its burial from her friendly hands. As oft as he can catch a gulp of air, And peep above the seas, he names the fair; And ev'n when plunged beneath, on her he raves, Murmuring Alcyone below the waves: At last a falling billow stops, his breath, Breaks o'er his head, and whelms him underneath. Bright Lucifer unlike himself appears That night, his heavenly form obscured with tears, And since he was forbid to leave the skies, He muffled with a cloud his mournful eyes.

Meantime Alcyone (his fate unknown) Computes how many nights he had been gone: Observes the waning moon with hourly view, Numbers her age, and wishes for a new; Against the promised time provides with care, And hastens in the woof the robes he was to wear; And for herself employs another loom, New dress'd to meet her lord returning home, Flattering her heart with joys that never were to come: She fumed the temples with an odorous flame, And oft before the sacred altars came, To pray for him, who was an empty name. All powers implored, but far above the rest To Juno she her pious vows address'd, Her much-loved lord from perils to protect, And safe o'er seas his voyage to direct: Then pray'd, that she might still possess his heart, And no pretending rival share a part. This last petition heard of all her prayer, The rest, dispersed by winds, were lost in air.

But she, the goddess of the nuptial bed, Tired with her vain devotions for the dead, Resolved the tainted hand should be repell'd, Which incense offer'd, and her altar held. Then Iris thus bespoke: "Thou faithful maid, By whom thy queen's commands are well convey'd, Haste to the house of sleep, and bid the god, Who rules the night by visions with a nod, Prepare a dream, in figure and in form Resembling him who perish'd in the storm: This form before Alcyone present, To make her certain of the sad event."

Indued with robes of various hue, she flies, And flying draws an arch, (a segment of the skies,) Then leaves her bending bow, and from the steep Descends, to search the silent house of sleep.

Near the Cimmerians, in his dark abode, Deep in a cavern dwells the drowsy god, Whose gloomy mansion nor the rising sun, Nor setting, visits, nor the lightsome noon: But lazy vapours round the region fly, Perpetual twilight, and a doubtful sky; No crowing cock does there his wings display, Nor with his horny bill provoke the day, Nor watchful dogs, nor the more wakeful geese, Disturb with nightly noise the sacred peace, Nor beast of nature, nor the tame are nigh, Nor trees with tempests rock'd, nor human cry, But safe repose, without an air of breath, Dwells here, and a dumb quiet next to death.

An arm of Lethe, with a gentle flow Arising upward from the rock below, The palace moats, and o'er the pebbles creeps, And with soft murmurs calls the coming sleeps. Around its entry nodding poppies grow, And all cool simples that sweet rest bestow; Night from the plants their sleepy virtue drains, And, passing, sheds it on the silent plains. No door there was, the unguarded house to keep, On creaking hinges turn'd, to break his sleep.

But in the gloomy court was raised a bed, Stuff'd with black plumes, and on an ebon 'sted; Black was the covering too, where lay the god, And slept supine, his limbs display'd abroad; About his head fantastic visions fly, Which various images of things supply, And mock their forms, the leaves on trees not more, Nor bearded ears in fields, nor sands upon the shore.

The virgin entering bright, indulged the day To the brown cave, and brush'd the dreams away, The god, disturb'd with this new glare of light, Cast sudden on his face, unseal'd his sight, And raised his tardy head, which sunk again, And, sinking, on his bosom knock'd his chin; At length shook off himself, and ask'd the dame (And asking yawn'd) for what intent she came.

To whom the goddess thus: “Oh sacred rest, Sweet pleasing sleep, of all the powers the best! Oh peace of mind! repairer of decay! Whose balms renew the limbs to labours of the day, Care shuns thy soft approach, and sullen flies away! Adorn a dream, expressing human form, The shape of him who suffer’d in the storm, And send it flitting to the Trachin court, The wreck of wretched Ceyx to report; Before his queen bid the pale spectre stand, Who begs a vain relief at Juno’s hand.” She said, and scarce awake her eyes could keep, Unable to support the fumes of sleep, But fled, returning by the way she went, And swerved along her bow with swift ascent.

The god, uneasy till he slept again, Resolved at once to rid himself of pain; And, though against his custom, call’d aloud, Exciting Morpheus from the sleepy crowd; Morpheus, of all his numerous train, express’d The shape of man, and imitated best; The walk, the words, the gesture, could supply, The habit mimic, and the mien bely; Plays well, but all his action is confined, Extending not beyond our humankind. Another, birds, and beasts, and dragons apes, And dreadful images, and monster shapes; This demon, Icelos, in heaven’s high hall, The gods have named, but men Phobetor call. A third is Phantasus, whose actions roll On meaner thoughts, and things devoid of soul; Earth, fruits, and flowers, he represents in dreams, And solid rocks unmoved, and running streams. These three to kings and chiefs their scenes display, The rest before the ignoble commons play. Of these the chosen Morpheus is despatch’d, Which done, the lazy monarch, overwatch’d, Down from his propping elbow drops his head, Dissolved in sleep, and shrinks within his bed.

Darkling the demon glides, for flight prepared, So soft, that scarce his fanning wings are heard. To Trachin, swift as thought, the flitting shade Through air his momentary journey made; Then lays aside the steerage of his wings, Forsakes his proper form, assumes the king’s; And, pale as death, despoil’d of his array, Into the queen’s apartment takes his way, And stands before the bed at dawn of day: Unmoved his eyes, and wet his beard appears, And shedding vain, but seeming real, tears, The

briny waters dropping from his hairs; Then, staring on her with a ghastly look, And hollow voice, he thus the queen bespoke:

“Know’st thou not me? Not yet, unhappy wife? Or are my features perish’d with my life? Look once again, and for thy husband lost, Lo! all that’s left of him, thy husband’s ghost! Thy vows for my return were all in vain, The stormy south o’ertook us in the main, And never shalt thou see thy living lord again. Bear witness Heaven, I call’d on thee in death, And, while I call’d, a billow stopp’d my breath. Think not that flying fame reports my fate, I present, I appear, and my own wreck relate. Rise, wretched widow, rise, nor undeplored Permit my soul to pass the Stygian ford; But rise, prepared in black, to mourn thy perish’d lord.”

Thus said the player god, and adding art Of voice and gesture, so perform’d his part, She thought (so like her love the shade appears) That Ceyx spoke the words, and Ceyx shed the tears. She groan’d, her inward soul with grief oppress’d, She sigh’d, she wept, and, sleeping, beat her breast; Then stretch’d her arms to embrace his body bare; Her clasping arms enclose but empty air; At this, not yet awake, she cried, “Oh stay! One is our fate, and common is our way!”

So dreadful was the dream, so loud she spoke, That, starting sudden up, the slumber broke, Then cast her eyes around, in hope to view Her vanish’d lord, and find the vision true; For now the maids, who waited her commands, Ran in with lighted tapers in their hands. Tired with the search, not finding what she seeks, With cruel blows she pounds her blubber’d cheeks; Then from her beaten breast the linen tear, And cut the golden caul that bound her hair. Her nurse demands the cause: with louder cries She prosecutes her griefs, and thus replies:

“No more Alcyone; she suffered death With her lov’d lord, when Ceyx lost his breath: No flattery, no false comfort, give me none, My shipwreck’d Ceyx is for ever gone. I saw, I saw him manifest in view, His voice, his figure, and his gestures knew; His lustre lost, and every living grace, Yet I retain’d the features of his face;

Though with pale cheeks, wet beard, and dropping hair, None but my Ceyx could appear so fair; I would have strain'd him with a strict embrace, But through my arms he slipp'd, and vanish'd from the place. There, ev'n just there, he stood:" and, as she spoke, Where last the spectre was she cast her look; Fain would she hope, and gazed upon the ground, If any printed footsteps might be found.

Then sigh'd, and said, "This I too well foreknew, And my prophetic fears presaged too true: 'Twas what I begg'd, when with a bleeding heart I took my leave, and suffer'd thee to part; Or I to go along, or thou to stay, Never, ah! never, to divide our way! Happier for me, that all our hours assign'd Together we had lived, ev'n not in death disjoin'd! So had my Ceyx still been living here, Or with my Ceyx I had perish'd there; Now I die absent, in the vast profound, And me, without myself, the seas have drown'd. The storms were not so cruel: should I strive To lengthen life, and such a grief survive; But neither will I strive, nor wretched thee In death forsake, but keep thee company: If not one common sepulchre contains Our bodies, or one urn our last remains, Yet Ceyx and Alcyone shall join, Their names remember'd in one common line."

No further voice her mighty grief affords, For sighs come rushing in between her words And stopp'd her tongue; but what her tongue denied, Soft tears, and groans, and dumb complaints supplied.

'Twas morning: to the port she takes her way, And stands upon the margin of the sea; That place, that very spot of ground, she sought, Or thither by her destiny was brought, Where last he stood; and while she sadly said: " 'Twas here he left me, lingering here delay'd His parting kiss, and there his anchors weigh'd."

Thus speaking, while her thoughts past actions trace, And call to mind, admonish'd by the place, Sharp at her utmost ken she cast her eyes, And somewhat floating from afar descries: It seem'd a corpse adrift to distant sight, But at a distance who could judge aright? It wafted nearer yet, and then she knew That what before she but

surmised was true: A corpse it was, but whose it was unknown; Yet moved, howe'er, she made the case her own, Took the bad omen of a shipwreck'd man, As for a stranger wept, and thus began:

"Poor wretch, on stormy seas to lose thy life: Unhappy thou, but more thy widow'd wife!" At this she paused, for now the flowing tide Had brought the body nearer to the side. The more she looks, the more her fears increase At nearer sight, and she's herself the less. Now driven ashore, and at her feet it lies, She knows too much in knowing whom she sees, Her husband's corpse; at this she loudly shrieks, " 'Tis he! 'tis he!" she cries, and tears her cheeks, Her hair, and vest; and stooping to the sands, About his neck she cast her trembling hands.

"And is it thus, oh dearer than my life! Thus, thus return'st thou to thy longing wife?" She said, and to the neighbouring mole she strode: (Raised there to break the incursions of the flood:) Headlong from hence to plunge herself she springs, But shoots along, supported on her wings; A bird new made, about the banks she plies, Not far from shore, and short excursions tries; Nor seeks in air her humble flight to raise, Content to skim the surface of the seas. Her bill, though slender, sends a creaking noise, And imitates a lamentable voice. Now lighting where the bloodless body lies, She, with a funeral note, renews her cries: At all her stretch, her little wings she spread, And with her feather'd arms embraced the dead; Then flickering to his pallid lips, she strove To print a kiss, the last essay of love. Whether the vital touch revived the dead, Or that the moving waters raised his head To meet the kiss, the vulgar doubt alone For sure a present miracle was shown. The gods their shapes to winter birds translate, But both obnoxious to their former fate. Their conjugal affection still is tied, And still the mournful race is multiplied. The raging Aeolus at length is kind, Calms every storm, and hushes every wind; Prepares his empire for his daughter's ease, And for his hatching nephews smoothes the seas.

Aesacus Transformed Into a Cormorant

Aesacus, a prince of Troy, becomes enamoured of Hesperia, whom he pursues into the woods, where the maiden is killed by the venom of a snake—Her lover in despair throws himself into the sea, and is changed into a cormorant.

These some old man sees wanton in the air, And praises the unhappy constant pair; Then to his friend the long-neck'd cormorant shows, The former tale reviving others' woes. "That sable bird," he cries, "which cuts the flood, With slender legs, was once of royal blood, His ancestors from mighty Tros proceed, The brave Laomedon, and Ganymede, (Whose beauty tempted Jove to steal the boy,) And Priam, hapless prince! who fell with Troy: Himself was Hector's brother, and (had fate But given this hopeful youth a longer date) Perhaps had rivall'd warlike Hector's worth, Though on the mother's side of meaner birth. Fair Alyxothoe, a country maid, Bare Aesacus, by stealth, in Ida's shade. He fled the noisy town, and pompous court, Loved the lone hills and simple rural sport, And seldom to the city would resort; Yet he no rustic clownishness profess'd, Nor was soft love a stranger to his breast; The youth had long the nymph Hesperia woo'd, Oft through the thicket, or the mead, pursued: Her haply on her father's bank he spied, While fearless she her silver tresses dried; Away she fled; not stags with half such speed, Before the prowling wolf, scud o'er the mead; Not ducks, when they the safer flood forsake, Pursued by hawks, so swift regain the lake; As fast he follow'd in the hot career, Desire the lover wing'd, the virgin fear, A snake unseen now pierced her heedless foot, Quick through the veins the venom'd juices shoot; She fell, and 'scaped by death his fierce pursuit. Her lifeless body, frighted, he embraced, And cried, 'Not this I dreaded, but thy haste; Oh! had my love been less, or less thy fear: The victory, thus bought, is far too dear. Accursed snake! yet I more cursed than he: He gave the wound; the cause was given by me. Yet none shall say, that unrevenged you died.' He spoke; then climb'd a cliff's o'erhanging side, And, resolute, leap'd on the foaming tide. Tethys received him gently on the wave, The death he sought denied, and feathers gave. Debarr'd the surest remedy of grief, And forced to live,

he cursed th’ unask’d relief, Then on his airy pinions upward flies, And at a second fall successless tries: The downy plume a quick descent denies. Enraged, he often dives beneath the wave, And there in vain expects to find a grave. His ceaseless sorrow for the unhappy maid Meager’d his look, and on his spirits prey’d. Still near the sounding deep he lives: his name From frequent diving and emerging came.”

Book XII

Trojan War

Preparations are making by the Greeks for the hostile invasion of Troy—Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, is about to be sacrificed to Diana, when her life is saved by the indulgent goddess, and a hind substituted in her stead.

Priam, to whom the story was unknown, As dead, deplored his metamorphosed son. A cenotaph his name and title kept, And Hector round the tomb, with all his brothers, wept.

This pious office Paris did not share, Absent alone, and author of the war, Which, for the Spartan queen, the Grecians drew To avenge the rape, and Asia to subdue.

A thousand ships were mann’d to sail the sea; Nor had their just resentments found delay, Had not the winds and waves opposed their way. At Aulis, with united powers, they meet; But there, cross winds or calms detain’d the fleet. Now, while they raise an altar on the shore, And Jove with solemn sacrifice adore, A boding sign the priests and people see: A snake of size immense ascends a tree, And in the leafy summit spied a nest, Which o’er her callow young a sparrow press’d; Eight were the birds, unfledged; their mother flew And hover’d round her care, but still in view, Till the fierce reptile first devour’d the brood; Then seized the fluttering dam, and drank her blood. This dire ostent the fearful people view; Calchas alone, by Phoebus taught, foreknew What heaven decreed; and with a smiling glance, Thus gratulates

to Greece her happy chance: “Oh Argives, we shall conquer; Troy is ours, But long delays shall first afflict our powers; Nine years of labour the nine birds portend, The tenth shall in the town’s destruction end.”

The serpent, which his maw obscene had fill’d, The branches in his curl’d embraces held; But, as in spires he stood, he turn’d to stone; The stony snake retain’d the figure still his own.

Yet, not for this, the wind-bound navy weigh’d, Slack were their sails, and Neptune disobey’d. Some thought him loth the town should be destroy’d, Whose building had his hands divine employ’d: Not so the seer, who knew, and known foreshow’d, The virgin Phoebe, with a virgin’s blood Must first be reconciled. The common cause Prevail’d, and pity yielding to the laws, Fair Iphigenia, the devoted maid, Was, by the weeping priests, in linen robes array’d. All mourn her fate, but no relief appear’d; The royal victim bound, the knife already rear’d When that offended power, who caused their wo, Relenting ceased her wrath, and stopp’d the coming blow. A mist before the ministers she cast, And, in the virgin’s room, a hind she placed. The oblation slain, and Phoebe reconciled, The storm was hush’d, and dimpled ocean smiled: A favourable gale arose from shore, Which to the port desired the Grecian galleys bore.

House of Fame

The goddess Fame reports through the whole world the invasion of Troy—Protesilaus, who first lands on the hostile shore, is slain by Hector.

Full in the midst of this created space, Between heaven, earth, and skies, there stands a place, Confining on all three, with triple bound, Whence all things, though remote, are view’d around, And thither bring their undulating sound. The palace of loud Fame, her seat of power, Placed on the summit of a lofty tower; A thousand winding entries long and wide Receive of fresh reports a flowing tide. A thousand crannies in the walls are made, Nor gate, nor bars, exclude the busy trade: ’Tis built of brass, the

better to diffuse The spreading sounds, and multiply the news; Where echoes in repeated echoes play; A mart for ever full, and open night and day. Nor silence is within, nor voice express, But a deaf noise of sounds, that never cease. Confused, and chiding, like the hollow roar Of tides receding from the insulted shore; Or like the broken thunder heard from far, When Jove to distance drives the rolling war. The courts are fill'd with a tumultuous din Of crowds, or issuing forth, or entering in; A thoroughfare of news, where some devise Things never heard, some mingle truth with lies; The troubled air with empty sounds they beat, Intent to hear, and eager to repeat; Error sits brooding there, with added train Of vain credulity, and joys as vain: Suspicion, with sedition join'd, are near, And rumours raised, and murmurs mix'd, and panic fear. Fame sits aloft, and sees the subject ground, And seas about, and skies above; inquiring all around.

The goddess gives the alarm, and soon is known The Grecian fleet descending on the town. Fix'd on defence, the Trojans are not slow To guard their shore from an expected foe. They meet in fight. By Hector's fatal hand Protesilaus falls, and bites the strand; Which with expense of blood the Grecians won, And proved the strength unknown of Priam's son: And to their cost the Trojan leaders felt The Grecian heroes, and what deaths they dealt.

Story of Cycnus

Cycnus, a son of Neptune, and invulnerable in every part of his body, is at length strangled by Achilles, who strips him of his armour, when he is changed into a swan.

From these first onsets, the Sigaean shore Was strew'd with carcasses, and stain'd with gore. Neptunian Cycnus troops of Greeks had slain; Achilles in his car had scoured the plain, And clear'd the Trojan ranks; where'er he fought, Cycnus, or Hector, through the fields he sought. Cycnus he found; on him his force essay'd; For Hector was to the tenth year delay'd. His white maned steeds, that bow'd beneath the yoke, He cheer'd to courage, with a gentle stroke, Then urged his fiery chariot

on the foe, And rising shook his lance, in act to throw. But first, he cried, “Oh youth, be proud to bear Thy death, ennobled by Pelides’ spear.” The lance pursued the voice without delay, Nor did the whizzing weapon miss the way, But pierced his cuirass, with such fury sent, And sign’d his bosom with a purple dint. At this the seed of Neptune: “Goddess born, For ornament, not use, these arms are worn; This helm, and heavy buckler, I can spare, As only decorations of the war; So Mars is arm’d for glory, not for need. ’Tis somewhat more from Neptune to proceed, Than from a daughter of the sea to spring; Thy sire is mortal, mine is ocean’s king. Secure of death, I should contemn thy dart, Though naked, and impassable depart.” He said, and threw; the trembling weapon pass’d Through nine bull hides, each under other placed, On his broad shield, and stuck within the last. Achilles wrench’d it out, and sent again The hostile gift: the hostile gift was vain. He tried a third, a tough, well-chosen spear, The inviolable body stood sincere, Though Cycnus then did no defence provide, But scornful offer’d his unshielded side.

Not otherwise the impatient hero fared, Than as a bull encompass’d with a guard, Amid the circus roars, provoked from far By sight of scarlet and a sanguine war: They quit their ground; his bended horns elude; In vain pursuing, and in vain pursued.

Before to further fight he would advance, He stood considering, and survey’d his lance; Doubts if he wielded not a wooden spear Without a point: he look’d; the point was there. “This is my hand, and this my lance,” he said, “By which so many thousand foes are dead; Oh whither is their usual virtue fled! I had it once; and the Lyrnessian wall, And Tenedos, confess’d it in their fall. Thy streams, Caicus, rolled a crimson flood; And Thebes ran red with her own natives’ blood Twice Telephus employ’d their piercing steel, To wound him first, and afterward to heal. The vigour of this arm was never vain: And that my wonted prowess I retain, Witness these heaps of slaughter on the plain.” He said; and, doubtful of his former deeds, So some new trial of his force proceeds. He chose Menaetes from among the rest; At him he

launch'd his spear, and pierced his breast On the hard earth the Lycian knock'd his head, And lay supine, and forth the spirit fled.

Then thus the hero: "Neither can I blame The hand or javelin; both are still the same: The same I will employ against this foe, And wish but with the same success to throw." So spoke the chief; and while he spoke he threw; The weapon with unerring fury flew, At his left shoulder aim'd: nor entrance found; But back, as from a rock, with swift rebound, Harmless return'd: a bloody mark appear'd, Which, with false joy, the flatter'd hero cheer'd: Wound there was none; the blood that was in view, The lance before from slain Menaetes drew.

Headlong he leaps from off his lofty car, And in close fight on foot renews the war: Raging with high disdain, repeats his blows: Nor shield nor armour can their force oppose: Huge cantlets of his buckler strew the ground, And no defence in his bored arms is found: But on his flesh no wound or blood is seen; The sword itself is blunted on the skin.

This vain attempt the chief no longer bears, But round his hollow temples and his ears His buckler beats: the son of Neptune, stunn'd With these repeated buffets, quits his ground; A sickly sweat succeeds, and shades of night; Inverted nature swims before his sight: The insulting victor presses on the more, And treads the steps the vanquished trod before, Nor rest nor respite gives. A stone there lay Behind his trembling foe, and stopp'd his way: Achilles took the advantage which he found, O'erturn'd, and push'd him backward on the ground. His buckler held him under, while he press'd With both his knees above his panting breast: Unlaced his helm: about his chin the twist He tied; and soon the strangled soul dismiss'd.

With eager haste he went to strip the dead: The vanish'd body from his arms was fled: His sea-god sire, to immortalize his frame, Had turn'd it to the bird that bears his name.

A truce succeeds the labours of this day, And arms suspended with a long delay.

While Trojan walls are kept with watch and ward, The Greeks before their trenches mount the guard: The feast approach'd, when to the blue-eyed maid His vows for Cycnus slain the victor paid, And a white heifer on her altar laid; The reeking entrails on the fire they threw, And to the gods the grateful odour flew: Heaven had its part in sacrifice; the rest Was broil'd and roasted for the future feast. The chief invited guests were set around; And, hunger first assuaged, the bowls were crown'd, Which in deep draughts their cares and labours drown'd. The mellow harp did not their ears employ; And mute was all the warlike symphony: Discourse, the food of souls, was their delight, And pleasing chat prolong'd the summer's night; The subject, deeds of arms, and valour shown, Or on the Trojan side, or on their own: Of dangers undertaken, fame achieved, They talk'd by turns—the talk by turns relieved. What things but these could fierce Achilles tell; Or what could fierce Achilles hear so well? The last great act perform'd, of Cycnus slain, Did most the martial audience entertain; Wondering to find a body free by fate From steel, and which could ev'n that steel rebate Amazed, their admiration they renew; And scarce Pelides could believe it true.

Story of Caeneus

The nymph Caenis, having suffered violence from Neptune, prevails on her ravisher to change her sex, and make her in vulnerable.

Then Nestor thus: "What once this age has known In fated Cycnus, and in him alone, These eyes have seen in Caeneus long before, Whose body not a thousand swords could bore, Caeneus in courage and in strength excell'd; And still his Othrys with his fame is fill'd: But what did most his martial deeds adorn— Though since he changed his sex, a woman born."

A novelty so strange, and full of fate, His listening audience ask'd him to relate. Achilles thus commends their common suit: "Oh father, first for prudence in repute, Tell, with that eloquence so much thy own, What thou hast heard, or what of

Caeneus known: What was he; whence his change of sex begun: What trophies, join'd in wars with thee, he won: Who conquer'd him; and in what fatal strife The youth, without a wound, could lose his life?"

Neleides then: "Though tardy age and time Have shrunk my sinews and decay'd my prime; Though much I have forgotten of my store, Yet, not exhausted, I remember more. Of all that arms achieved, or peace design'd, That action still is fresher in my mind Than aught beside. If reverend age can give To faith a sanction, in my third I live.

" 'Twas in my second century I survey'd Young Caenis, then a fair Thessalian maid: Caenis the bright, was born to high command; A princess, and a native of thy land, Divine Achilles: every tongue proclaim'd Her beauty, and her eyes all hearts inflamed. Peleus, thy sire, perhaps had sought her bed, Among the rest; but he had either led Thy mother then, or was by promise tied: But she to him, and all, alike her love denied.

"It was her fortune once to take her way Along the sandy margin of the sea: The power of ocean view'd her as she pass'd, And, loved as soon as seen, by force embraced: Then thus, transported, to the nymph he cried: 'Ask what thou wilt, no prayer shall be denied:' This also fame relates. The haughty fair, Who not the rape ev'n of a god could bear, This answer, proud, return'd: 'To mighty wrongs A mighty recompense, of right, belongs: Give me no more to suffer such a shame, But change the woman for a better name; One gift for all:' she said; and while she spoke, A stern, majestic, manly tone she took: A man she was: and, as the godhead swore, To Caeneus turn'd, who Caenis was before.

"To this the lover adds, without request, No force of steel should violate his breast. Glad of the gift, the new-made warrior goes, And arms among the Greeks, and longs for equal foes.

Skirmish Between the Centaurs and Lapithites

The marriage of Pirithous, king of the Lapithae, with Hippodamia, is rendered memorable by a furious contest with their centaur guests, who endeavour to seize the bride, but are defeated.

“Now brave Pirithous, bold Ixion’s son, The love of fair Hippodame had won. The cloud begotten race, half men, half beast, Invited, came to grace the nuptial feast: In a cool cave’s recess the treat was made, Whose entrance trees with spreading boughs o’ershade. They sat; and, summon’d by the bridegroom, came, To mix with those the Lapithaean name: Nor wanted I. The roofs with joy resound; And, ‘Hymen, Io Hymen,’ rung around. Raised altars shone with holy fires: the bride, Lovely herself, (and lovely, by her side, A bevy of bright nymphs, with sober grace,) Came glittering like a star, and took her place: Her heavenly form beheld, all wish’d her joy; And little wanted; but in vain their wishes all employ:

“For one, most brutal of the brutal brood, Or whether wine or beauty fired his blood, Or both at once, beheld with joyful eyes The bride, at once resolved to make his prize. Down went the board; and, fastening on her hair, He seized with sudden force the frighted fair. ’Twas Eurytus began: his bestial kind His crime pursued; and each, as pleased his mind, Or her whom chance presented, took: the feast An image of a taken town express’d.

“The cave resounds with female shrieks; we rise, Mad with revenge, to make a swift reprise: And Theseus first: ‘What frenzy has possess’d, Oh Eurytus,’ he cried, ‘thy brutal breast, To wrong Pirithous, and not him alone, But while I live, two friends conjoin’d in one?’

“To justify his threat, he thrusts aside The crowd of centaurs, and redeems the bride. The monster naught replied; for words were vain, And deeds could only deeds unjust maintain; But answers with his hand, and forward press’d, With blows redoubled, on his face and breast. An ample goblet stood, of antique mould, And

rough with figures of the rising gold; The hero snatch'd it up, and toss'd in air Full at the front of the foul ravisher: He falls, and falling, vomits forth a flood Of wine, and foam, and brains, and mingled blood. Half roaring, and half neighing, through the hall, 'Arms! arms!' the double-form'd with fury call; To wreak their brother's death: a medley flight Of bowls and jars at first supply the fight; Once instruments of feasts, but now of fate: Wine animates their rage, and arms their hate.

"Bold Amycus from the robb'd vestry brings The chalices of heaven, and holy things Of precious weight: a sconce that hung on high, With tapers fill'd, to light the sacristy, Torn from the cord, with his unhallow'd hand, He threw amid the Lapithaean band. On Celadon the ruin fell, and left His face of feature, and of form bereft: So, when some brawny sacrificer knocks, Before an altar led, an offer'd ox, His eyeballs, rooted out, are thrown to ground; His nose, dismantled, in his mouth is found; His jaws, cheeks, front, one undistinguished wound.

"This Belates, the avenger, could not brook, But, by the foot, a maple board he took, And hurl'd at Amycus: his chin it bent Against his chest, and down the centaur sent; Whom, sputtering bloody teeth, the second blow Of his drawn sword despatch'd to shades below.

"Grineus was near, and cast a furious look On the side altar, censed with sacred smoke, And bright with flaming fires: 'The gods,' he cried, 'Have with their holy trade our hands supplied: Why use we not their gifts?' Then from the floor An altar stone he heaved, with all the load it bore: Altar, and altar's freight, together flew, Where thickest throng'd the Lapithaean crew, And at once Broteas and Oryus slew. Oryus' mother, Mycale, was known Down from her sphere to draw the labouring moon.

"Exadius cried: 'Unpunish'd shall not go, This fact, if arms are found against the foe. He look'd about, where on a pine were spread The votive horns of a stag's branching head: At Grineus these he throws; so just they fly, That the sharp antlers

stuck in either eye: Breathless and blind he fell, with blood besmear'd; His eyeballs, beaten out, hung dangling on his beard. Fierce Rhaetus from the hearth a burning brand Selects, and whirling waves, till from his hand The fire took flame, then dash'd it on the right, On fair Charaxus' temples, near the sight: The whistling pest came on, and pierced the bone, And caught the yellow hair, that shrivell'd while it shone: Caught, like dry stubble fired, or like seerwood; Yet from the wound ensued no purple flood, But look'd a bubbling mass of frying blood. His blazing locks sent forth a crackling sound, And hiss'd, like red-hot iron within the smithy drown'd. The wounded warrior shook his flaming hair; Then (what a team of horse could hardly rear) He heaves the threshold stone, but could not throw; The weight itself forbad the threaten'd blow; Which, dropping from his lifted arms, came down Full on Cometes' head, and crush'd his crown. Nor Rhaetus then restrained his joy, but said: 'So by their fellows may our foes be sped:' Then with redoubled strokes he plies his head: The burning lever not deludes his pains; But drives the batter'd scull within the brains.

"Thus flush'd, the conqueror, with force renew'd, Evagrus, Dryas, Corythus, pursued. First Corythus, with downy cheeks, he slew, Whose fall when fierce Evagrus had in view, He cried: 'What palm is from a beardless prey?' Rhaetus prevents what more he had to say, And drove within his mouth the fiery death, Which enter'd hissing in, and choked his breath. At Dryas next he flew: but weary chance No longer would the same success advance; For while he whirl'd in fiery circles round The brand, a sharpen'd stake strong Dryas found, And in the shoulder's joint inflicts the wound. The weapon stuck, which, roaring out with pain, He drew; nor longer durst the fight maintain, But turn'd his back, for fear, and fled amain. With him fled Orneus, with like dread possess'd; Thaumas, and Medon, wounded in the breast; And Mermeros, in the late race renown'd, Now limping ran, and tardy, with his wound. Pholus and Melaneous from fight withdrew, And Abas maim'd, who boars encountering slew: And Augur Astylos, whose art in vain From

fight dissuaded the four-footed train, Now beat the hoof with Nessus on the plain, But to his fellow cried: ‘Be safely slow; Thy death deferr’d is due to great Alcides’ bow.’

“Meantime strong Dryas urged his chance so well, That Lycidas, Areos, Imbreus, fell, All one by one, and fighting face to face: Crenaeus fled, to fall with more disgrace; For, fearful, while he look’d behind, he bore, Between his nose and front, the blow before. Amid the noise and tumult of the fray, Snoring, and drunk with wine, Aphidas lay; Ev’n then the bowl within his hand he kept, And on a bear’s rough hide securely slept: Him Phorbas with his flying dart transfix’d: ‘Take thy next draught with Stygian waters mix’d, And sleep thy fill,’ the insulting victor cried: Surprised with death unfelt, the centaur died: The ruddy vomit, as he breathed his soul, Repass’d his throat, and fill’d his empty bowl.

“I saw Petraeus’ arms employ’d around A well-grown oak, to root it from the ground: This way and that he wrench’d the fibrous bands; The trunk was like a sapling in his hands, And still obey’d the bent: while thus he stood, Pirithous’ dart drove on, and nail’d him to the wood: Lycus and Chromis fell, by him oppress’d: Helops and Dictys added to the rest A nobler palm: Helops through either ear, Transfix’d, received the penetrating spear: This Dictys saw, and, seized with sudden fright, Leap’d headlong from the hill of steepy height, And crush’d an ash beneath, that could not bear his weight: The shatter’d tree receives his fall, and strikes Within his full-blown paunch the sharpen’d spikes. Strong Aphareus had heaved a mighty stone, The fragment of a rock, and would have thrown; But Theseus, with a club of harden’d oak, The cubit-bone of the bold centaur broke, And left him maim’d; nor seconded the stroke: Then leap’d on tall Bianor’s back; (who bore No mortal burden but his own before;) Press’d with his knees his sides: the double man, His speed with spurs increased, unwilling ran. One hand the hero fasten’d on his locks; His other plied him with repeated strokes; The club rang round his ears and batter’d brows: He falls, and, lashing up his heels, his rider throws.

“The same Herculean arms Nedymnus wound, And lay by him Lycotas on the ground; And Hippasus, whose beard his breast invades; And Ripheus, hunter of the woodland shades; And Tereus, used with mountain bears to strive, And from their dens to draw the indignant beasts alive.

“Demoleon could not bear this hateful sight, Or the long fortune of the Athenian knight, But pull’d with all his force, to disengage From earth a pine, the product of an age: The root stuck fast: the broken trunk he sent At Theseus: Theseus frustrates his intent, And leaps aside; by Pallas warn’d the blow To shun: (for so he said, and we believed it so.) Yet not in vain the enormous weight was cast, Which Crantor’s body sunder’d at the waist; Thy father’s ’squire, Achilles, and his care, Whom, conquer’d in the Pelopeian war, Their king, his present ruin to prevent, A pledge of peace implored, to Peleus sent.

“Thy sire, with grieving eyes, beheld his fate, And cried, ‘Not long, loved Crantor, shalt thou wait Thy vow’d revenge.’ At once he said, and threw His ashen spear, which quiver’d as it flew; With all his force and all his soul applied, The sharp point enter’d in the centaur’s side: Both hands to wrench it out the monster join’d, And wrench’d it output left the steel behind; Stuck in his lungs it stood: enraged he rears His hoofs, and down to ground thy father bears. Thus trampled under foot, his shield defends His head; his other hand the lance portends: Ev’n while he lay extended on the dust, He sped the centaur with one single thrust: Two more his lance before transfix’d from far; And two his sword had slain in closer war. To these was added Dorylas, who spread A bull’s two goring horns round his head: With these he push’d: in blood already died, Him fearless I approach’d, and thus defied: ‘Now, monster, now by proof it shall appear Whether thy horns are sharper, or my spear.’ At this, I threw: for want of other ward, He lifted up his hand, his front to guard: His hand it pass’d, and fix’d it to his brow: Loud shouts of ours attend the lucky blow. Him Peleus finish’d, with a second wound, Which through the navel pierced: he reel’d around, And dragg’d his dangling bowels on the ground; Trod what he

dragg'd, and what he trod, he crush'd, And to his mother earth with empty belly rush'd."

Story of Cyllarus and Hylonome

The centaur Cyllarus is mortally wounded in the conflict with the Lapithae; and his mistress Hylonome expires in his arms.

"Nor could thy form, oh Cyllarus, foreslow Thy fate: (if form to monsters men allow:) Just bloom'd thy beard; thy beard of golden hue: Thy locks in golden waves about thy shoulders flew: Sprightly thy look! Thy shapes in every part So clean, as might instruct the sculptor's art, As far as man extended: where began The beast, the beast was equal to the man: Add but a horse's head and neck, and he, Oh Castor, was a courser worthy thee: So was his back proportion'd for the seat; So rose his brawny chest; so swiftly moved his feet: Coal black his colour, but like jet it shone; His legs and flowing tail were white alone: Beloved by many maidens of his kind; But fair Hylonome possess'd his mind; Hylonome, for features, and for face, Excelling all the nymphs of double race: Nor less her blandishments than beauty move; At once both living, and confessing love. For him she dress'd; for him, with female care, She comb'd, and set in curl her auburn hair: Of roses, violets, and lilies mix'd, And sprigs of flowing rosemary betwixt, She form'd the chaplet that adorn'd her front: In waters of the Pegasaean fount, And in the streams that from the fountain play, She wash'd her face, and bathed her twice a day. The scarf of furs, that hung below her side, Was ermine, or the panther's spotted pride: Spoils of no common beast. With equal flame They loved: their sylvan pleasures were the same.

"Uncertain from what hand, a flying dart At Cyllarus was sent, which pierced his heart. The javelin drawn from out the mortal wound, He faints with stagg'ring steps, and seeks the ground: The fair within her arms received his fall, And strove his wandering spirits to recall; And while her hand the streaming blood opposed, Join'd face to face, his lips with hers she closed. Stifled with kisses, a sweet death he dies:

She fills the fields with undistinguish'd cries; At last her words were in her clamour drown'd; For my stunn'd ears received no vocal sound. In madness of her grief, she seized the dart New drawn, and reeking from her lover's heart; To her bare bosom the sharp point applied, And wounded fell; and falling by his side, Embraced him in her arms; and thus embracing died.

"Ev'n still methinks I see Phaeocomes; Strange was his habit, and as odd his dress: Six lions' hides, with thongs together fast, His upper part defended to his waist: And where man ended, the continued vest, Spread on his back, the houss and trappings of a beast. A stump too heavy for a team to draw, (It seems a fable, though the fact I saw,) He threw at Pholon; the descending blow Divides the scull, and cleaves his head in two. The brains, from nose, and mouth, and either ear, Came issuing out, as through a colander The curdled milk, or from the press the whey, Driven down by weights above, is drain'd away.

"But him, while stooping down to spoil the slain, Pierced through the paunch, I tumbled on the plain. Then Chthonius and Teleboas I slew: A fork the former arm'd; a dart his fellow threw. The javelin wounded me; (behold the scar: Then was my time to seek the Trojan war; Then I was Hector's match in open field; But he was then unborn, at least a child: Now I am nothing.) I forbear to tell By Periphantas how Pyretus fell; The centaur by the knight: nor will I stay On Amphyx, or what deaths he dealt that day: What honour, with a pointless lance, he won, Stuck in the front of a four-footed man: What fame young Macareus obtain'd in fight; Or dwell on Nessus, now return'd from flight: How Prophet Mopsus not alone divined, Whose valour equall'd his foreseeing mind."

Caeneus Transformed to an Eagle

The nymph Caenis, whose name is changed to Caeneus, pursues the centaurs with great slaughter, who at length crush the hero with huge forests of trees—The gods, however, in compassion, change him into an eagle.

“Already Caeneus, with his conquering hand, Had slaughter’d five, the boldest of their band, Pyrachmus, Helymus, Antimachus, Bromus the brave, and stronger Stiphelus. Their names I number’d, and remember well, No trace remaining, by what wounds they fell.

“Latreus, the bulkiest of the double race, Whom the spoil’d arms of slain Halesus grace; In years retaining still his youthful might, Though his black hairs were interspersed with white, Between the embattled ranks began to prance, Proud of his helm, and Macedonian lance, And rode the ring around, that either host Might hear him, while he made this empty boast: ‘And from a female shall we suffer shame? For Caenis still, not Caeneus, is thy name; And still the native softness of thy kind Prevails, and leaves the woman in thy mind: Remember what thou wert; what price was paid To change thy sex; to make thee not a maid And but a man in show: go, card and spin, And leave the business of the war to men.’

“While thus the boaster exercised his pride, The fatal spear of Caeneus reach’d his side; Just in the mixture of the kinds it ran, Between the nether beast and upper man: The monster, mad with rage, and stung with smart, His lance directed at the hero’s heart: It struck; but bounded from his hardened breast, Like hail from tiles, which the safe house invest: Nor seem’d the stroke with more effect to come, Than a small pebble falling on a drum. He next his falchion tried, in closer fight; But the keen falchion had no power to bite: He thrust; the blunted point return’d again; ‘Since downright blows,’ he cried, ‘and thrusts are vain, I’ll prove his side:’ in strong embraces held, He proved his side; his side the sword repell’d: His hollow belly echoed to the stroke, Untouch’d his body as a solid rock: Aim’d at his neck, at last the blade in shivers broke.

“The impassive knight stood idle, to deride His rage, and offer’d oft his naked side: At length, ‘Now, monster, in thy turn,’ he cried, ‘Try thou the strength of Caeneus:’ at the word He thrust, and in his shoulder plunged the sword; Then writhed his hand;

and as he drove it down, Deep in his breast, made many wounds in one.

“The centaurs saw, enraged, the unhoped success, And rushing on in crowds, together press; At him, and him alone, their darts they threw: Repulsed they from his fated body flew. Amazed they stood, till Monichus began: ‘Oh shame, a nation conquer’d by a man! A woman-man! yet more a man is he Than all our race; and what he was, are we. Now what avail our nerves? the united force Of two the strongest creatures, man and horse: Nor goddess-born, nor of Ixion’s seed We seem, (a lover built for Juno’s bed,) Master’d by this half-man. Whole mountains throw With woods at once, and bury him below. This only way remains: nor need we doubt To choke the soul within, though not to force it out; Heap weights instead of wounds.’ He chanced to see Where southern storms had rooted up a tree; This, raised from earth, against the foe he threw, The example shown, his fellow-brutes pursue. With forest loads the warrior they invade Othrys and Pelion soon were void of shad And spreading groves were naked mountains made. Press’d with the burden, Caeneus pants for breath, And on his shoulders bears the wooden death: To heave the intolerable weight he tries; At length it rose above his mouth and eyes: Yet still he heaves; and struggling with despair, Shakes all aside, and gains a gulp of air: A short relief, which but prolongs his pain; He faints by fits; and then respires again. At last the burden only nods above, As when an earthquake stirs the Idaean grove: Doubtful his death: he suffocated seem’d To most; but otherwise our Nopsus deem’d; Who said he saw a yellow bird arise From out the piles, and cleave the liquid skies: I saw it too, with golden feathers bright, Nor ere before beheld so strange a sight: Whom Mopsus viewing, as it soar’d around Our troop, and heard the pinion’s rattling sound ‘All hail,’ he cried, ‘thy country’s grace and love! Once first of men below, now first of birds above.’ Its author to the story gave belief: For us, our courage was increased by grief: Ashamed to see a single man, pursued With odds, to sink beneath a multitude, We push’d the foe; and forced to shameful flight; Part fell, and part escaped by favour of the night.”

Fate of Periclymenos

Periclymenos, the brother of Nestor, is endowed by Neptune with the power of assuming whatever shape he pleases—In the form of an eagle he assaults Hercules, who mortally wounds him with an arrow.

This tale, by Nestor told, did much displease Tlepolemus, the seed of Hercules; For often he had heard his father say That he himself was present at the fray, And more than shared the glories of the day.

“Old Chronicle,” he said, “among the rest, You might have named Alcides at the least: Is he not worth your praise?” The Pylian prince Sigh’d ere he spoke, then made this proud defence: “My former woes, in long oblivion drown’d, I would have lost; but you renew the wound: Better to pass him o’er, than to relate The cause I have your mighty sire to hate: His fame has fill’d the world, and reach’d the sky, (Which, oh I wish, with truth, I could deny!) We praise not Hector, though his name, we know, Is great in arms: ’tis hard to praise a foe.

“He, your great father, levell’d to the ground Messenia’s towers; nor better fortune found Elis and Pylos: that a neighbouring state, And this my own; both guiltless of their fate.

“To pass the rest; twelve, wanting one, he slew, My brethren, who their birth from Neleus drew; All youths of early promise, had they lived; By him they perish’d: I alone survived: The rest were easy conquest: but the fate Of Periclymenos is wondrous to relate: To him our common grandsire of the main Had given to change his form, and changed, resume again. Varied at pleasure, every shape he tried, And in all beasts Alcides still defied: Vanquish’d on earth, at length he soar’d above, Changed to the bird that bears the bolt of Jove. The new-dissembled eagle, now endued With beak and pounces, Hercules pursued, And cuff’d his manly cheeks, and tore his face, Then safe retired, and tower’d in empty space. Alcides bore not long his flying foe, But bending his inevitable bow, Reach’d him in air, suspended as he

stood, And in his pinion fix'd the feather'd wood. Light was the wound; but in the sinew hung The point, and his disabled wing unstrung. He wheel'd in air, and stretch'd his vans in vain; His vans no longer could his flight sustain; For while one gather'd wind, one unsupplied Hung drooping down, nor poised his other side. He fell: the shaft that slightly was impress'd, Now from his heavy fall, with weight increased, Drove through his neck aslant; he spurns the ground, And the soul issues through the windpipe's wound.

"Now, brave commander of the Rhodian seas, What praise is due from me to Hercules? Silence is all the vengeance I decree For my slain brothers; but 'tis peace with thee."

Thus, with a flowing tongue, old Nestor spoke; Then to full bowls each other they provoke: At length, with weariness and wine oppress'd, They rise from table, and withdraw to rest.

Death of Achilles

Achilles, having fallen a sacrifice to the hostility of Apollo and the shafts of Paris, Ajax and Ulysses advance their claims to the armour of the deceased hero.

The sire of Cycnus, monarch of the main, Meantime laments his son in battle slain, And vows the victor's death; nor vows in vain. For nine long years the smother'd pain he bore: (Achilles was not ripe for fate before:) Then when he saw the promised hour was near, He thus bespoke the god that guides the year: "Immortal offspring of my brother Jove, My brightest nephew, and whom best I love, Whose hands were join'd with mine, to raise the wall Of tottering Troy, now nodding to her fall, Dost thou not mourn our power employ'd in vain, And the defenders of our city slain? To pass the rest, could noble Hector lie Unpitied, dragg'd around his native Troy? And yet the murderer lives: himself by far A greater plague than all the wasteful war: He lives, the proud Pelides lives, to boast Our town destroy'd, our common labour lost. Oh, could I meet him! but I wish too late: To prove my trident

is not in his fate! But let him try (for that's allow'd) thy dart, And pierce his only penetrable part."

Apollo bows to the superior throne, And to his uncle's anger adds his own; Then, in a cloud involved, he takes his flight, Where Greeks and Trojans mix'd in mortal fight, And found out Paris, lurking where he stood, And stain'd his arrows with plebeian blood: Phoebus to him alone the god confess'd, Then to the recreant knight he thus address'd: "Dost thou not blush, to spend thy shafts in vain On a degenerate and ignoble train? If fame or better vengeance be thy care, There aim; and with one arrow end the war."

He said; and show'd from far the blazing shield And sword, which, but Achilles, none could wield, And how he moved a god, and mow'd the standing field. The deity himself directs aright The envenom'd shaft, and wings the fatal flight.

Thus fell the foremost of the Grecian name, And he, the base adulterer, boasts the fame; A spectacle to glad the Trojan train, And please old Priam, after Hector slain. If by a female hand he had foreseen He was to die, his wish had rather been The lance and double axe of the fair warrior queen. And now the terror of the Trojan field, The Grecian honour, ornament, and shield, High on a pile the unconquer'd chief is placed; The god that arm'd him first, consumed at last. Of all the mighty man, the small remains A little urn, and scarcely fill'd, contains. Yet great in Homer, still Achilles lives, And equal to himself, himself survives.

His buckler owns its former lord, and brings New cause of strife between contending kings; Who worthiest after him his sword to wield, Or wear his armour, or sustain his shield. Ev'n Diomede sat mute, with downcast eyes, Conscious of wonted worth to win the prize; Nor Menelaus presumed these arms to claim; Nor he, the king of men, a greater name: Two rivals only rose: Laertes' son, And the vast bulk of Ajax Telamon. The king, who cherish'd each with equal love, And from himself all envy would remove, Left both to be determined by the laws, And to the Grecian chiefs

transferr’d the cause.

Book XIII

Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses

Ajax and Ulysses lay claim to the armour of Achilles, which is assigned to the latter by the Grecian chiefs.

The chiefs were set; the soldiers crown’d the field; To these the master of the sevenfold shield Upstarted fierce, and kindled with disdain. Eager to speak, unable to contain His boiling rage, he roll’d his eyes around The shore and Grecian galleys haul’d aground; Then, stretching out his hands, “Oh Jove,” he cried, “Must then our cause before the fleet be tried? And dares Ulysses for the prize contend, In sight of what he durst not once defend? But basely fled that memorable day, When I from Hector’s hands redeem’d the flaming prey; So much ’tis safer at the noisy bar With words to flourish, than engage in war. By different methods we maintain our right; Nor am I made to talk, nor he to fight: In bloody fields I labour to be great; His arms are a smooth tongue and soft deceit: Nor need I speak my deeds, for those you see; The sun and day are witnesses for me: Let him who fights unseen relate his own, And vouch the silent stars and conscious moon. Great is the prize demanded, I confess; But such an abject rival makes it less: That gift, those honours, he but hoped to gain, Can leave no room for Ajax to be vain: Losing, he wins, because his name will be Ennobled by defeat, who durst contend with me. Were my known valour question’d, yet my blood Without that plea, would make my title good: My sire was Telamon, whose arms, employ’d With Hercules, these Trojan walls destroy’d; And who before, with Jason sent from Greece, In the first ship brought home the golden fleece. Great Telamon from Aeacus derives His birth: (the inquisitor of guilty lives In shades below; where Sisyphus, whose son This thief is thought, rolls up the restless heavy stone.) Just Aeacus, the king of gods above

Begot: thus Ajax is the third from Jove: Nor should I seek advantage from my line, Unless, Achilles, it was mix'd with thine. As next of kin, Achilles' arms I claim: This fellow would ingraft a foreign name Upon our stock; and the Sisyphian seed By fraud and theft asserts his father's breed. Then must I lose these arms, because I came To fight uncall'd, a voluntary name; Nor shunn'd the cause, but offer'd you my aid? While he long lurking was to war betray'd: Forced to the field he came, but in the rear, And feign'd distraction to conceal his fear, Till one more cunning caught him in the snare, (Ill for himself,) and dragg'd him into war. Now let a hero's arms a coward vest, And he who shunn'd all honours gain the best; And let me stand excluded from my right, Robb'd of my kinsman's arms, who first appear'd in fight. Better for us, at home had he remain'd, Had it been true the madness which he feign'd, Or so believed; the less had been our shame, The less his counsell'd crime, which brands the Grecian name Nor Philoctetes had been left enclosed In a bare isle, to wants and pains exposed, Where to the rocks, with solitary groans, His sufferings and our baseness he bemoans: And wishes (so may Heaven his wish fulfil!) The due reward to him who caused his ill: Now he, with us to Troy's destruction sworn, Our brother of the war, by whom are borne Alcides' arrows, pent in narrow bounds, With cold and hunger pinch'd, and pain'd with wounds, To find him food and clothing, must employ Against the birds the shafts due to the fate of Troy. Yet still he lives, and lives from treason free, Because he left Ulysses' company: Poor Palamede might wish, so void of aid Rather to have been left, than so to death betray'd. The coward bore the man immortal spite, Who shamed him out of madness into fight; Nor daring otherwise to vent his hate, Accused him first of treason to the state, And then, for proof, produced the golden store Himself had hidden in his tent before: Thus of two champions he deprived our host, By exile one, and one by treason lost. Thus fights Ulysses, thus his fame extends, A formidable man but to his friends: Great, for what greatness is in words and sound; Ev'n faithful Nestor less in both is found. But that he might without a rival reign, He left his faithful Nestor on

the plain: Forsook his friend ev'n at his utmost need, Who tired, and tardy with his wounded steed, Cried out for aid, and call'd him by his name; But cowardice has neither ears nor shame. Thus fled the good old man, bereft of aid, And, for as much as lay in him, betray'd. That this is not a fable forged by me, Like one of his, an Ulyssean lie, I vouch ev'n Diomed, who, though his friend, Cannot that act excuse, much less defend: He call'd him back aloud, and tax'd his fear; And sure enough he heard, but durst not hear.

"The gods with equal eyes on mortals look, He justly was forsaken who forsook: Wanted that succour he refused to lend, Found every fellow such another friend: No wonder if he roar'd that all might hear; His elocution was increased by fear: I heard, I ran; I found him out of breath, Pale, trembling, and half dead with fear of death. Though he had judged himself by his own laws, And stood condemn'd, I help'd the common cause; With my broad buckler hid him from the foe: (Ev'n the shield trembled as he lay below:) And from impending fate the coward freed: Good Heaven forgive me for so bad a deed! If still he will persist, and urge the strife, First let him give me back his forfeit life: Let him return to that opprobrious field; Again creep under my protecting shield: Let him lie wounded; let the foe be near; And let his quivering heart confess his fear: There put him in the very jaws of fate; And let him plead his cause in that estate. And yet when snatch'd from death, when from below My lifted shield I loosed, and let him go, Good heavens, how light he rose, with what a bound He sprung from earth, forgetful of his wound; How fresh, how eager then his feet to ply: Who had not strength to stand, had speed to fly!

"Hector came on, and brought the gods along: Fear seized alike the feeble and the strong: Each Greek was an Ulysses; such a dread The approach, and ev'n the sound, of Hector bred: Him, flesh'd with slaughter, and with conquest crown'd, I met, and overturn'd him to the ground; When after, matchless as he deemed in might, He challenged all our host to single fight: All eyes were fixed on me: the lots were thrown; But for your champion I was wish'd alone. Your vows were heard: we

fought, and neither yield; Yet I return'd unvanquish'd from the field. With Jove to friend, the insulting Trojan came, And menaced us with force, our fleet with flame. Was it the strength of this tongue-valiant lord, In that black hour, that saved you from the sword? Or was my breast exposed alone, to brave A thousand swords, a thousand ships to save? The hopes of your return! And can you yield, For a saved fleet, less than a single shield? Think it no boast, oh Grecians, if I deem These arms want Ajax, more than Ajax them: Or, I with them an equal honour share; They honour'd to be worn, and I to wear. Will he compare my courage with his sleight? As well he may compare the day with night. Night is indeed the province of his reign: Yet all his dark exploits no more contain Than a spy taken, and a sleeper slain; A priest made prisoner; Pallas made a prey: But none of all these actions done by day; Nor aught of these was done, and Diomed away. If on such petty merits you confer So vast a prize, let each his portion share; Make a just dividend; and if not all, The greater part to Diomed will fall. But why for Ithacus such arms as those, Who naked, and by night, invades his foes? The glittering helm by moonlight will proclaim The latent robber, and prevent his game: Nor could he hold his tottering head upright Beneath that morion, or sustain the weight; Nor that right arm could toss the beamy lance; Much less the left that ampler shield advance, Ponderous with precious weight, and rough with cost, Of the round world in rising gold emboss'd. That orb would ill become his hand to wield, And look as for the gold he stole the shield; Which, should your error on the wretch bestow, It would not frighten, but allure the foe. Why asks he what avails him not in fight, And would but cumber and retard his flight, In which his only excellence is placed? You give him death, that intercept his haste. Add, that his own is yet a maiden shield, Nor the least dint has suffer'd in the field, Guiltless of fight: mine, batter'd, hew'd, and bored, Worn out of service, must forsake its lord. What further need of words, our right to scan? My arguments are deeds; let action speak the man. Since from a champion's arms the strife arose, Go cast the glorious prize amid the foes; Then send us to redeem both

arms and shield, And let him wear who wins them in the field."

He said: a murmur from a multitude, Or somewhat like a stifled shout ensued; Till from his seat arose Laertes' son, Look'd down a while, and paused ere he begun; Then to the expecting audience raised his look, And not without prepared attention spoke: Soft was his tone, and sober was his face; Action his words, and words his action grace.

"If Heaven, my lords, had heard our common prayer, These arms had caused no quarrel for an heir; Still great Achilles had his own possess'd, And we with great Achilles had been bless'd: But since hard fate, and Heaven's severe decree, Have ravish'd him away from you and me," (At this he sigh'd, and wiped his eyes, and drew, Or seem'd to draw, some drops of kindly dew,) "Who better can succeed Achilles lost, Than he who gave Achilles to your host? This only I request, that neither he May gain, by being what he seems to be, A stupid thing, nor I may lose the prize, By having sense, which Heaven to him denies; Since great or small, the talent I enjoy'd Was ever in the common cause employ'd: Nor let my wit, and wonted eloquence, Which often has been used in your defence, And in my own, this only time be brought To bear against myself, and deem'd a fault: Make not a crime where nature made it none; For every man may freely use his own. The deeds of long-descended ancestors Are but by grace of imputation ours, Theirs in effect; but since he draws his line From Jove, and seems to plead a right divine; From Jove, like him, I claim my pedigree, And am descended in the same degree. My sire Laertes was Arcesius' heir; Arcesius was the son of Jupiter: No parricide, no banish'd man is known, In all my line: let him excuse his own. Hermes ennobles too my mother's side, By both my parents to the gods allied. But not because that on the female part My blood is better, dare I claim desert, Or that my sire from parricide is free; But judge by merit between him and me: The prize be to the best; provided yet That Ajax for a while his kin forget, And his great sire, and greater uncle's name, To fortify by them his feeble claim; Be kindred and relation laid aside, And honour's

cause by laws of honour tried: For if he plead proximity of blood; That empty title is with ease withstood. Peleus, the hero's sire, more nigh than he, And Pyrrhus, his undoubted progeny, Inherit first these trophies of the field; To Scyros, or to Phthia, send the shield: And Teucer has an uncle's right; yet he Waves his pretensions, nor contends with me. Then since the cause on pure desert is placed, Whence shall I take my rise, what reckon last? I not presume on every act to dwell, But take these few, in order as they fell. Thetis, who knew the fates, applied her care To keep Achilles in disguise from war; And till the threatening influence was past, A woman's habit on the hero cast: All eyes were cozen'd by the borrow'd vest, And Ajax (never wiser than the rest) Found no Pelides there: at length I came With proffer'd wares to this pretended dame; She, not discover'd by her mien or voice, Betray'd her manhood by her manly choice; And while on female toys her fellows look, Grasp'd in her warlike hand, a javelin shook: Whom, by this act reveal'd, I thus bespoke: 'Oh goddess born! resist not Heaven's decree, The fall of Ilium is reserved for thee.' Then seized him, and produced in open light, Sent blushing to the field the fatal knight. Mine then are all his actions of the war; Great Telephus was conquer'd by my spear, And after cured: to me the Theban's owe, Lesbos, and Tenedos, their overthrow; Scyros and Cylla: not on all to dwell, By me Lyrnessus and strong Chrysa fell: And since I sent the man who Hector slew, To me the noble Hector's death is due: Those arms I put into his living hand, Those arms, Pelides dead, I now demand.

"When Greece was injured in the Spartan prince, And met at Aulis to avenge the offence, 'Twas a dead calm, or adverse blasts, that reign'd, And in the port the wind-bound fleet detain'd: Bad signs were seen, and oracles severe Were daily thunder'd in our general's ear; That by his daughter's blood we must appease Diana's kindled wrath, and free the seas. Affection, interest, fame, his heart assail'd; But soon the father o'er the king prevail'd: Bold, on himself he took the pious crime, As angry with the gods as they with him. No subject could sustain their sovereign's

look, Till this hard enterprise I undertook: I only durst the imperial power control, And undermined the parent in his soul: Forced him to exert the king for common good, And pay our ransom with his daughter's blood. Never was cause more difficult to plead, Than where the judge against himself decreed: Yet this I won by dint of argument; The wrongs his injured brother underwent, And his own office, shamed him to consent.

" 'Twas harder yet to move the mother's mind, And to this heavy task was I design'd: Reasons against her love I knew were vain; I circumvented whom I could not gain: Had Ajax been employ'd, our slacken'd sails Had still at Aulis waited happy gales.

"Arrived at Troy, your choice was fix'd on me A fearless envoy, fit for a bold embassy: Secure, I enter'd through the hostile court, Glittering with steel, and crowded with resort: There, in the midst of arms, I plead our cause, Urge the foul rape, and violated laws; Accuse the foes, as authors of the strife, Reproach the ravisher, demand the wife. Priam, Antenor, and the wiser few, I moved; but Paris and his lawless crew Scarce held their hands and lifted swords; but stood In act to quench their impious thirst of blood: This Menelaus knows; exposed to share With me the rough preludium of war.

"Endless it were to tell what I have done In arms, or council, since the siege begun: The first encounter's pass'd, the foe repell'd, They skulk'd within the town, we kept the field. War seem'd asleep for nine long years; at length Both sides resolved to push, we tried our strength. Now what did Ajax, while our arms took breath. Versed only in the gross mechanic trade of death? If you require my deeds, with ambush'd arms I trapp'd the foe, or tired with false alarms; Secured the ships, drew lines along the plain, The fainting cheer'd, chastised the rebel train. Provided forage, our spent arms renew'd; Employ'd at home, or sent abroad, the common cause pursued.

"The king, deluded in a dream by Jove, Despair'd to take the town, and order'd to

remove. What subject durst arraign the power supreme? Producing Jove to justify his dream. Ajax might wish the soldiers to retain From shameful flight, but wishes were in vain: As wanting of effect had been his words, Such as of course his thundering tongue affords. But did this boaster threaten, did he pray, Or by his own example urge their stay? None, none of these; but ran himself away. I saw him run, and was ashamed to see; Who plied his feet so fast to get aboard as he? Then speeding through the place, I made a stand, And loudly cried, 'Oh, base degenerate band, To leave a town already in your hand! After so long expense of blood for fame, To bring home nothing but perpetual shame!' These words, or what I have forgotten since, (For grief inspired me then with eloquence,) Reduced their minds; they leave the crowded port, And to their late forsaken camp resort: Dismay'd the council met: this man was there, But mute, and not recover'd of his fear: Thersites tax'd the king, and loudly rail'd, But his wide-opening mouth with blows I seal'd. Then, rising, I excite their souls to fame, And kindle sleeping virtue into flame. From thence, whatever he perform'd in fight Is justly mine, who drew him back from flight.

"Which of the Grecian chiefs consorts with thee? But Diomed desires my company, And still communicates his praise with me. As guided by a god, secure he goes, Arm'd with my fellowship, amid the foes: And sure no little merit I may boast, Whom such a man selects from such a host; Unforced by lots I went without affright, To dare with him the dangers of the night: On the same errand sent, we met the spy Of Hector, double-tongued, and used to lie; Him I despatch'd, but not till undermined, I drew him first to tell what treacherous Troy design'd: My task perform'd, with praise I had retired, But not content with this, to greater praise aspired; Invaded Rhesus, and his Thracian crew, And him and his in their own strength I slew; Return'd a victor, all my vows complete, With the king's chariot, in his royal seat: Refuse me now his arms, whose fiery steeds Were promised to the spy for his nocturnal deeds; And let dull Ajax bear away my right, When all his days

outbalance this one night.

“Nor fought I darkling still: the sun beheld With slaughter’d Lycians when I strew’d the field: You saw, and counted as I pass’d along, Alastor, Chromius, Ceranos the strong, Alcander, Prytanis, and Halius, Noemon, Charopes, and Ennomus; Coon, Chersidamas; and five beside, Men of obscure descent, but courage tried: All these this hand laid breathless on the ground; Nor want I proofs of many a manly wound: All honest, all before: believe not me, Words may deceive, but credit what you see.”

At this he bared his breast, and show’d his scars, As of a furrow’d field, well plough’d with wars; “Nor is this part unexercised,” said he; “That giant bulk of his from wounds is free: Safe in his shield, he fears no foe to try, And better manages his blood than I: But this avails me not; our boaster strove Not with our foes alone, but partial Jove, To save the fleet: this I confess is true: (Nor will I take from any man his due:) But thus assuming all, he robs from you. Some part of honour to your share will fall, He did the best indeed, but did not all. Patroclus in Achilles’ arms, and thought The chief he seem’d, with equal ardour fought; Preserved the fleet, repell’d the raging fire, And forced the fearful Trojans to retire.

“But Ajax boasts, that he was only thought A match for Hector, who the combat sought: Sure he forgets the king, the chiefs, and me: All were as eager for the fight as he: He but the ninth, and not by public voice, Or ours preferr’d, was only fortune’s choice: They fought; nor can our hero boast the event, For Hector from the field unwounded went.

“Why am I forced to name that fatal day, That snatch’d the prop and pride of Greece away? I saw Pelides sink, with pious grief, And ran in vain, alas! to his relief; For the brave soul was fled: full of my friend I rush’d amid the war, his relics to defend: Nor ceased my toil till I redeem’d my prey, And, loaded with Achilles, march’d away: Those arms which on these shoulders then I bore ’Tis just you to these shoulders should restore. You see I want not nerves, who could sustain The

pond'rous ruins of so great a man: Or if in others equal force you find, None is indued with a more grateful mind.

"Did Thetis then, ambitious in her care, These arms thus labour'd for her son prepare, That Ajax after him the heavenly gift should wear? For that dull soul to stare, with stupid eyes, On the learn'd unintelligible prize! What are to him the sculptures of the shield, Heaven's planets, earth, and ocean's watery field? The Pleiads, Hyads; less and greater Bear, Undipp'd in seas; Orion's angry star; Two differing cities, graved on either hand; Would he wear arms he cannot understand?

"Besides, what wise objections he prepares Against my late accession to the wars? Does not the fool perceive his argument Is with more force against Achilles bent? For if dissembling be so great a crime, The fault is common, and the same in him: And if he taxes both of long delay, My guilt is less, who sooner came away. His pious mother, anxious for his life, Detain'd her son; and me, my pious wife. To them the blossoms of our youth were due, Our riper manhood we reserved for you. But grant me guilty, 'tis not much my care, When with so great a man my guilt I share: My wit to war the matchless hero brought, But by this fool I never had been caught.

"Nor need I wonder, that on me he threw Such foul aspersions, when he spares not you; If Palamede unjustly fell by me, Your honour suffer'd in the unjust decree: I but accused, you doom'd: and yet he died Convinced of treason, and was fairly tried: You heard not he was false; your eyes beheld The traitor manifest; the bribe reveal'd.

"That Philoctetes is on Lemnos left, Wounded, forlorn, of human aid bereft, Is not my crime, or not my crime alone; Defend your justice, for the fact's your own: 'Tis true, the advice was mine; that staying there He might his weary limbs with rest repair, From a long voyage free, and from a long war. He took the counsel, and he lives at least; The event declares I counsell'd for the best: Though faith is all in ministers of state; For who can promise to be fortunate? Now since his arrows are

the fate of Troy, Do not my wit, or weak address employ: Send Ajax there, with his persuasive sense, To mollify the man, and draw him thence: But Xanthus shall run backward; Ida stand A leafless mountain; and the Grecian band Shall fight for Troy; if, when my counsel fail, The wit of heavy Ajax shall prevail.

“Hard Philoctetes, exercise thy spleen Against thy fellows, and the king of men; Curse my devoted head above the rest, And wish in arms to meet rue breast to breast: Yet I the dangerous task will undertake, And either die myself, or bring thee back.

“Nor doubt the same success, as when before The Phrygian prophet to these tents I bore, Surprised by night, and forced him to declare In what was placed the fortune of the war, Heaven’s dark decrees, and answers to display, And how to take the town, and where the secret lay: Yet this I compass’d, and from Troy convey’d The fatal image of their guardian maid: That work was mine; for Pallas, though our friend, Yet while she was in Troy, did Troy defend. Now what has Ajax done, or what design’d? A noisy nothing, and an empty wind. If he be what he promises in show, Why was I sent, and why fear’d he to go? Our boasting champion thought the task not light To pass the guards, commit himself to night; Not only through a hostile town to pass, But scale, with steep ascent, the sacred place; With wandering steps to search the citadel, And from the priests their patroness to steal: Then through surrounding foes to force my way, And bear in triumph home the heavenly prey; Which had I not, Ajax in vain had held, Before that monstrous bulk his sevenfold shield. That night to conquer Troy I might be said, When Troy was liable to conquest made.

“Why point’st thou to my partner of the war? Tydides had indeed a worthy share In all my toil and praise; but when thy might Our ships protected, didst thou singly fight? All join’d, and thou of many wert but one: I ask’d no friend, nor had, but him alone: Who had he not been well assured, that art And conduct were of war the

better part, And more avail'd than strength, my valiant friend Had urged a better right than Ajax can pretend: As good at least Eurypylus may claim, And the more moderate Ajax of the name: The Cretan king, and his brave charioteer, And Menelaus bold with sword and spear: All these had been my rivals in the shield, And yet all these to my pretensions yield. Thy boisterous hands are then of use, when I With this directing head those hands apply. Brawn without brain is thine: my prudent care Foresees, provides, administers the war. Thy province is to fight; but when shall be The time to fight, the king consults with me: No dram of judgment with thy force is join'd: Thy body is of profit, and my mind. By how much more the ship her safety owes To him who steers, than him that only rows; By how much more the captain merits praise, Than he who fights, and fighting but obeys; By so much greater is my worth than thine, Who canst but execute what I design. What gain'st thou brutal man, if I confess Thy strength superior, when thy wit is less? Mind is the man: I claim my whole desert, From the mind's vigour, and the immortal part.

"But you, oh Grecian chiefs, reward my care, Be grateful to your watchman of the war: For all my labours in so long a space, Sure I may plead a title to your grace: Enter the town; I then unbarr'd the gates, When I removed their tutelary fates. By all our common hopes, if hopes they be Which I have now reduced to certainty; By falling Troy, by yonder tottering towers, And by their taken gods, which now are ours; Or if there yet a farther task remains, To be perform'd by prudence, or by pains; If yet some desperate action rests behind, That asks high conduct, and a dauntless mind; If aught be wanting to the Trojan doom, Which none but I can manage and o'ercome, Award those arms I ask, by your decree: Or give to this, what you refuse to me."

He ceased: and ceasing, with respect he bow'd, And with his hand at once the fatal statue show'd. Heaven, air, and ocean, rung with loud applause, And by the general vote he gain'd his cause. Thus conduct won the prize, when courage fail'd, And

eloquence o’er brutal force prevail’d.

Death of Ajax

Ajax, in despair, puts a period to his existence, and the blood of the hero is changed into a hyacinth.

He who could often, and alone, withstand The foe, the fire, and Jove’s own partial hand, Now cannot his unmaster’d grief sustain, But yields to rage, to madness, and disdain; Then snatching out his falchion, “Thou,” said he, “Art mine; Ulysses lays no claim to thee. Oh often tried, and ever-trusty sword, Now do thy last kind office to thy lord: ’Tis Ajax who requests thy aid, to show None but himself himself could overthrow:” He said, and with so good a will to die, Did to his breast the fatal point apply. It found his heart, a way till then unknown, Where never weapon enter’d but his own. No hands could force it thence, so fix’d it stood, Till out it rush’d, expell’d by streams of spouting blood. The fruitful blood produced a flower, which grew On a green stem, and of a purple hue: Like his, whom unaware Apollo slew: Inscribed in both, the letters are the same, But those express the grief, and these the name.

Story of Polyxena and Hecuba

Polyxena, the daughter of Priam, is sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles, while her brother Polydore, by his great riches, excites the avarice of Polymestor, king of Thrace, who murders him—The lifeless body of her son is discovered by Hecuba, who contrives to deprive the faithless monarch of his eyes—His subjects pursue her with darts and stones, when she if metamorphosed into a bitch.

The victor with full sails for Lemnos stood, (Once stain’d by matrons with their husbands’ blood,) Thence great Alcides’ fatal shafts to bear, Assign’d to Philoctetes’ secret care. These with their guardian to the Greeks convey’d, Their ten years’ toil with wish’d success repaid. With Troy old Priam falls: his queen survives; Till all her woes complete, transform’d she grieves In borrow’d sounds, nor with a human

face, Barking tremendous o’er the plains of Thrace. Still Ilium’s flames their pointed columns raise, And the red Hellespont reflects the blaze. Shed on Jove’s altar are the poor remains Of blood, which trickled from old Priam’s veins. Cassandra lifts her hands to heaven in vain, Dragg’d by her sacred hair; the trembling train Of matrons to their burning temples fly: There to their gods for kind protection cry; And to their statues cling till forced away, The victor Greeks bear off the invidious prey. From those high towers Astyanax is thrown, Whence he was wont with pleasure to look down, When oft his mother with a fond delight Pointed to view his fathers rage in fight, To win renown, and guard his country’s right.

The winds now call to sea; brisk northern gales Sing in the shrouds, and court the spreading sails. “Farewell, dear Troy,” the captive matrons cry: “Yes, we must leave our long-loved native sky.” Then prostrate on the shore they kiss the sand, And quit the smoking ruins of the land. Last Hecuba on board, sad sight! appears; Found weeping o’er her children’s sepulchres: Dragg’d by Ulysses from her slaughter’d sons, While yet she grasp’d their tombs, and kiss’d their mouldering bones. Yet Hector’s ashes from his urn she bore, And in her bosom the sad relic wore: Then scatter’d on his tomb her hoary hairs, A poor oblation mingled with her tears.

Opposed to Ilium lie the Thracian plains, Where Polymestor safe in plenty reigns. King Priam to his care commits his son, Young Polydore, the chance of war to shun. A wise precaution! had not gold, consign’d For the child’s use, debauch’d the tyrant’s mind. When sinking Troy to its last period drew, With impious hands his royal charge he slew; Then in the sea the lifeless corse is thrown; As with the body he the guilt could drown.

The Greeks now riding on the Thracian shore, Till kinder gales invite, their vessels moor. Here the wide-opening earth to sudden view Disclosed Achilles, great as when he drew The vital air, but fierce with proud disdain, As when he sought Briseis to regain; When stern debate, and rash injurious strife Unsheathed his sword, to

reach Atrides' life. "And will ye go?" he said. "Is then the name Of the once great Achilles lost to fame? Yet stay, ungrateful Greeks; nor let me sue In vain for honours to my manes due. For this just end, Polyxena I doom With victim rites to grace my slighted tomb."

The phantom spoke; the ready Greeks obey'd, And to the tomb led the devoted maid Snatch'd from her mother, who with pious care Cherish'd this last relief of her despair. Superior to her sex, the fearless maid Approach'd the altar, and around survey'd The cruel rites, and consecrated knife, Which Pyrrhus pointed at her guiltless life. Then, as with stern amaze intent he stood: "Now strike," she said; "now spill my generous blood; Deep in my breast or throat your dagger sheathe, While thus I stand prepared to meet my death: For life on terms of slavery I despise: Yet sure no god approves this sacrifice. Oh! could I but conceal this dire event From my sad mother, I should die content. Yet should she not with tears my death deplore, Since her own wretched life demands them more. But let not the rude touch of man pollute A virgin victim; 'tis a modest suit. It best will please, whoe'er demands my blood, That I untainted reach the Stygian flood. Yet let one short, last, dying prayer be heard, To Priam's daughter pay this last regard; 'Tis Priam's daughter, not a captive, sues; Do not the rites of sepulture refuse. To my afflicted mother, I implore, Free without ransom my dead corse restore: Nor barter me for gain, when I am cold: But be her tears the price if I am sold: Time was she could have ransom'd me with gold."

Thus as she pray'd, one common shower of tears Burst forth, and stream'd from every eye but hers. Ev'n the priest wept, and with a rude remorse Plunged in her heart the steel's resistless force. Her slacken'd limbs sunk gently to the ground, Dauntless her looks, unalter'd by the wound. And as she fell, she strove with decent pride To guard what modest women care to hide. The Trojan matrons the pale corse receive, And the whole slaughter'd race of Priam grieve. Sad they recount the long disastrous tale, Then with fresh tears, thee, royal maid, bewail; Thy widow'd mother

too, who flourish'd late The royal pride of Asia's happier state: A captive lot now to Ulysses born, Whom yet the victor would reject with scorn, Were she not Hector's mother: Hector's fame Scarce can a master for his mother claim! With strict embrace the lifeless corse she view'd; And her fresh grief that flood of tears renew'd, With which she lately mourn'd so many dead; Tears for her country, sons, and husband shed. With the thick-gushing stream she bathed the wound; Kiss'd her pale lips; then weltering on the ground, With wanton rage her frantic bosom tore, Sweeping her hair amid the clotted gore; While her sad accents thus her loss deplore:

"Behold a mother's last dear pledge of wo! Yes, 'tis the last I have to suffer now. Thou, my Polyxena, my ills must crown: Already in thy fate I feel my own. 'Tis thus, lest haply of my numerous seed One should unslaughter'd fall, even thou must bleed: And yet I hoped thy sex had been thy guard: But neither has thy tender sex been spared. The same Achilles, by whose deadly hate Thy brothers fell, urged thy untimely fate! The same Achilles, whose destructive rage Laid waste my realms, has robb'd my childless age. When Paris' shafts with Phoebus' certain aid At length had pierced this dreadful chief, I said, 'Secure of future ills, he can no more:' But see, he still pursues me as before. With rage rekindled his dead ashes burn; And his yet murdering ghost my wretched home must mourn. This tyrant's lust of slaughter I have fed With large supplies from my too fruitful bed. Troy's towers lie waste; and the wide ruin ends The public wo; but me fresh wo attends. Troy still survives to me; to none but me; And from its ills I never must be free. I who so late had power, and wealth, and ease, Bless'd with my husband, and a large increase, Must now in poverty an exile mourn; Ev'n from the tombs of my dead offspring torn: Given to Penelope, who, proud of spoil, Allots me to the loom's ungrateful toil; Points to her dames, and cries, with scorning mien, 'See Hector's mother, and great Priam's queen!' And thou, my child, sole hope of all that's lost, Thou now art slain, to soothe this hostile ghost. Yes, my child falls an offering to my foe! Then what am I,

who still survive this wo? Say, cruel gods! for what new scenes of death Must a poor aged wretch prolong this hated breath? Troy fallen, to whom could Priam happy seem? Yet was he so; and happy must I deem His death; for, oh, my child! he saw not thine, When he his life did with his Troy resign. Yet sure due obsequies thy tomb might grace; And thou shalt sleep amid thy kingly race. Alas, my child! such fortune does not wait Our suffering house in this abandon'd state. A foreign grave, and thy poor mother's tears, Are all the honours that attend thy hearse. All now is lost! Yet no; one comfort more Of life remains, my much-loved Polydore, My youngest hope. Here on this coast he lives, Nursed by the guardian king, he still survives. Then let me hasten to the cleansing flood, And wash away these stains of guiltless blood."

Straight to the shore her feeble steps repair With limping pace, and torn dishevell'd hair, Silver'd with age. "Give me an urn," she cried, "To bear back water from this swelling tide:" When on the banks her son in ghastly hue Transfix'd with Thracian arrows strikes her view. The matrons shriek'd; her big swoln grief surpass'd The power of utterance; she stood aghast; She had nor speech, nor tears to give relief: Excess of wo suppress'd the rising grief. Lifeless as stone, on earth she fix'd her eyes, And then look'd up to heaven with wild surprise. Now she contemplates o'er with sad delight Her son's pale visage; then her aching sight Dwells on his wounds: she varies thus by turns, Till with collected rage at length she burns, Wild as the mother lion, when among The haunts of prey she seeks her ravish'd young. Swift flies the ravisher; she marks his trace, And by the print directs her anxious chase. So Hecuba with mingled grief and rage Pursues the king, regardless of her age. She greets the murderer, with dissembled joy Of secret treasure hoarded for her boy. The specious tale the unwary king betray'd. Fired with the hopes of prey, "Give quick," he said, With soft enticing speech, "the promised store: Whate'er you give, you give to Polydore. Your son, by the immortal gods I swear, Shall this with all your former bounty share." She stands attentive to his soothing lies, And darts avenging horror

from her eyes; Then full resentment fires her boiling blood: She springs upon him, mid the captive crowd: (Her thirst of vengeance want of strength supplies:) Fastens her forky fingers in his eyes; Tears out the rooted balls; her rage pursues, And in the hollow orbs her hand imbrues.

The Thracians, fired at this inhuman scene, With darts and stones assail the frantic queen. She snarls and growls, nor in a human tone; Then bites impatient at the bounding stone; Extends her jaws, as she her voice would raise To keen invectives in her wonted phrase; But barks, and thence the yelping brute betrays. Still a sad monument the place remains, And from this monstrous change its name obtains: Where she, in long remembrance of her ills, With plaintive howlings the wide desert fills.

Greeks, Trojans, friends and foes, and gods above, Her numerous wrongs to just compassion move. Ev'n Juno's self forgets her ancient hate, And owns she had deserved a milder fate.

Funeral of Memnon

Memnon, the son of Aurora, is killed by Achilles at the siege of Troy—In honour of his memory, and in compliance with the prayers of his mother, Jupiter causes birds, called Memnonides, to spring from his ashes, who divide into two parties, and contend with mutual acrimony.

Yet bright Aurora, partial as she was To Troy, and those that loved the Trojan cause, Nor Troy nor Hecuba can now bemoan, But weeps a sad misfortune, more her own. Her offspring Memnon, by Achilles slain, She saw extended on the Phrygian plain: She saw, and straight the purple beams, that grace The rosy morning, vanish'd from her face; A deadly pale her wonted bloom invades, And veils the lowering skies with mournful shades. But when his limbs upon the pile were laid, The last kind duty that by friends is paid, His mother to the skies directs her flight, Nor could sustain to view the doleful sight: But frantic, with her loose neglected hair, Hastens

to Jove, and falls a suppliant there. “Oh king of heaven, oh father of the skies,” The weeping goddess passionately cries; “Though I the meanest of immortals am, And fewest temples celebrate my fame, Yet still a goddess, I presume to come Within the verge of your ethereal dome; Yet still may plead some merit, if my light “With purple dawn controls the powers of night; If from a female hand that virtue springs, Which to the gods and men such pleasure brings. Yet I nor honours seek, nor rites divine, Nor for more altars or more fanes repine; Oh that such trifles were the only cause From whence Aurora’s mind its anguish draws! For Memnon lost, my dearest only child, With weightier grief my heavy heart is fill’d; My warrior son! that lived but half his time, Nipp’d in the bud, and blasted in his prime; Who for his uncle early took the field, And by Achilles’ fatal spear was kill’d. To whom but Jove should I for succour come? For Jove alone could fix his cruel doom. Oh sovereign of the gods, accept my prayer, Grant my request, and soothe a mother’s care; On the deceased some solemn boon bestow, To expiate the loss, and ease my wo.”

Jove, with a nod, complied with her desire; Around the body flamed the funeral fire; The pile decreased, that lately seem’d so high, And sheets of smoke roll’d upward to the sky: As humid vapours from a marshy bog Rise by degrees, condensing into fog, That intercept the sun’s enlivening ray, And with a cloud infect the cheerful day; The sooty ashes wafted by the air, Whirl round, and thicken in a body there; Then take a form, which their own heat and fire, With active life and energy inspire. Its lightness makes it seem to fly, and soon It skims on real wings, that are its own; A real bird, it beats the breezy wind, Mix’d with a thousand sisters of the kind, That, from the same formation newly sprung, Upborne aloft on plumy pinions hung. Thrice round the pile advanced the circling throng; Thrice, with their wings, a whizzing consort rung. In the fourth flight their squadron they divide, Rank’d in two different troops, on either side: Then two and two, inspired with martial rage, From either troop in equal pairs engage. Each combatant with beak and pounces press’d, In wrathful ire, his adversary’s breast; Each falls a victim, to preserve the fame Of

that great hero whence their being came. From him their courage and their name they take; And, as they lived, they die for Memnon's sake. Punctual to time, with each revolving year, In fresh array the champion birds appear; Again, prepared with vengeful minds, they come To bleed, in honour of the soldier's tomb.

Therefore in others it appear'd not strange To grieve for Hecuba's unhappy change: But poor Aurora had enough to do With her own loss, to mind another's wo; Who still in tears her tender nature shows, Besprinkling all the world with pearly dews.

Voyage of Aeneas

Aeneas, with his father Anchises, is hospitably entertained at Delos, by Anius the priest of Apollo—After visiting the island of Phaeacia, the hero at length arrives at the dangerous rocks of Scylla.

Troy thus destroy'd, 'twas still denied by fate, The hopes of Troy should perish with the state. His sire, the son of Cytherea bore, And household gods from burning Ilium's shore. The pious prince (a double duty paid) Each sacred burden through the flames convey'd. With young Ascanius, and this only prize, Of heaps of wealth, he from Antandros flies; But struck with horror, left the Thracian shore, Stain'd with the blood of murder'd Polydore. The Delian isle receives the banish'd train, Driven by kind gales, and favour'd by the main.

Here pious Anius, priest and monarch, reign'd, And either charge with equal care sustain'd; His subjects ruled, to Phoebus homage paid, His god obeying, and by those obey'd.

The priest displays his hospitable gate, And shows the riches of his church and state; The sacred shrubs, which eased Latona's pain, The palm, and olive, and the votive fane. Here grateful flames with fuming incense fed, And mingled wine ambrosial odours shed; Of slaughter'd steers the crackling entrails burn'd; And then the strangers to the court return'd.

On beds of tap'stry placed aloft, they dine With Ceres' gift, and flowing bowls of wine; When thus Anchises spoke, amid the feast: "Say, mitred monarch, Phoebus' chosen priest, Or (ere from Troy by cruel fate expell'd) When first mine eyes these sacred walls beheld, A son, and twice two daughters crown'd thy bliss? Or errs my memory, and I judge amiss?"

The royal prophet shook his hoary head, With snowy fillets bound, and sighing, said: "Thy memory errs not, prince; thou saw'st me then The happy father of so large a train: Behold me now, (such turns of chance befall The race of man!) almost bereft of all. For ah! what comfort can my son bestow, What help afford, to mitigate my wo! While far from hence, in Andros' isle he reigns, (From him so named,) and there my place sustains. Him Delius prescience gave; the twice-born god A boon more wondrous on the maids bestow'd. Whate'er they touch'd, he gave them to transmute, (A gift past credit, and above their suit,) To Ceres, Bacchus, and Minerva's fruit. How great their value, and how rich their use, Whose only touch such treasures could produce!

"The dire destroyer of the Trojan reign, Fierce Agamemnon, such a prize to gain, (A proof we also were design'd by fate To feel the tempest that o'erturn'd your state,) With force superior, and a ruffian crew, From these weak arms the helpless virgins drew; And sternly bade them use the grant divine, To keep the fleet in corn, in oil, and wine. Each, as they could, escaped: two strove to gain Euboea's isle, and two their brother's reign. The soldier follows, and demands the dames; If held by force, immediate war proclaims. Fear conquer'd nature in their brother's mind, And gave them up to punishment assign'd. Forgive the deed; nor Hector's arm was there, Nor thine, Aeneas, to maintain the war; Whose only force upheld your Ilium's towers, For ten long years against the Grecian powers. Prepared to bind their captive arms in bands, To heaven they rear'd their yet unfetter'd hands, 'Help, Bacchus, author of the gift,' they pray'd; The gift's great author gave immediate aid; If such destruction of the human frame, By ways so wondrous, may deserve the name; Nor could I hear,

nor can I now relate Exact the manner of their alter'd state; But this in general of my loss I knew, Transform'd to doves, on milky plumes they flew, Such as on Ida's mount thy consort's chariot drew."

With such discourse they entertain'd the feast; Then rose from table, and withdrew to rest. The following morn, ere Sol was seen to shine, The inquiring Trojans sought the sacred shrine; The mystic power commands them to explore Their ancient mother, and a kindred shore. Attending to the sea, the generous prince Dismiss'd his guests with rich munificence, In old Anchises' hand a sceptre placed, A vest and quiver young Ascanius graced, His sire a cup; which from the Aonian coast, Ismenian Therses sent his royal host. Alcon of Myle made what Therses sent, And carved thereon this ample argument.

A town with seven distinguish'd gates was shown, Which spoke its name, and made the city known; Before it, piles and tombs, and rising flames, The rites of death, and choirs of mourning dames Who bared their breasts, and gave their hair to flow, The signs of grief, and marks of public wo. Their fountains dried, the weeping Naiads mourn'd, The trees stood bare, with searing cankers burn'd, No herbage clothed the ground, a ragged flock Of goats half famish'd lick'd the naked rock Of manly courage, and with mind serene, Orion's daughters in the town were seen; One heav'd her chest to meet the lifted knife, One plunged the poniard through the seat of life, Their country's victims; mourns the rescued state, The bodies burns, and celebrates their fate. To save the failure of the illustrious line, From the pale ashes rose, of form divine, Two generous youths; these, fame Coronae calls, Who join the pomp, and mourn their mother's falls.

These burnish'd figures form'd of antique mould, Shone on the brass, with rising sculpture bold; A wreath of gilt acanthus round the brim was roll'd.

Nor less expense the Trojan gifts express'd; A fuming censor for the royal priest, A chalice, and a crown of princely cost, With ruddy gold, and sparkling gems

emboss’d.

Now hoisting sail, to Crete the Trojans stood, Themselves remembering sprung from Teucer’s blood; But heaven forbids, and pestilential Jove, From noxious skies the wandering navy drove. Her hundred cities left, from Crete they bore, And sought the destined land, Ausonia’s shore; But toss’d by storms at either Strophas lay, Till scared by harpies from the faithless bay. Then passing onward with a prosperous wind, Left sly Uylsses’ spacious realms behind; Ambracia’s state, in former ages known The strife of gods, the judge transform’d to stone They saw; for Actian Phoebus since renown’d, Who Caesar’s arms with naval conquest crown’d; Next pass’d Dodona, wont of old to boast Her vocal forest; and Chaonia’s coast, Where King Molossus’ sons on wings aspired, And saw secure the harmless fuel fired.

Now to Phaeacia’s happy isle they came, For fertile orchards known to early fame; Epirus pass’d, they next beheld with joy A second Ilium, and fictitious Troy; Here Trojan Helenus the sceptre sway’d, Who show’d their fate, and mystic truths display’d; By him confirm’d, Sicilia’s isle they reach’d, Whose sides to sea, three promontories stretch’d; Pachynos to the stormy south is placed, On Lilybaeum blows the gentle west, Peloro’s cliffs the northern Bear survey, Who rolls above, and dreads to touch the sea; By this they steer, and favour’d by the tide, Secure by night in Zancle’s harbour ride.

Here cruel Sylla gains the rocky shore, And there the waves of loud Charybdis roar; This sucks, and vomits ships, and bodies drown’d, And ravenous dogs the womb of that surround; In face a virgin, and (if aught be true By bards recorded) once a virgin too.

A train of youths in vain desired her bed, By sea nymphs loved, to nymphs of seas she fled; The maid to these, with female pride, display’d Their baffled courtship, and their love betray’d.

When Galatea thus bespoke the fair, (But first she sigh’d,) while Scylla comb’d her

hair, “You, lovely maid, a generous race pursues, Whom safe you may (as now you do) refuse; To me, though powerful in a numerous train Of sisters, sprung from gods, who rule the main, My native seas could scarce a refuge prove, To shun the fury of the cyclop’s love.” Tears choked her utterance here; the pitying maid With marble fingers wiped them off, and said; “My dearest goddess, let thy Scylla know (For I am faithful) whence these sorrows flow.” The maid’s entreaties o’er the nymph prevail, Who thus to Scylla tells the mournful tale.

Story of Acis, Polyphemus, and Galatea

Galatea, a sea nymph, is passionately beloved by the cyclop Polyphemus, whom she treats with disdain, while Acis, a shepherd of Sicily, is the object of her affections—Stung with jealousy, the cyclop crushes his rival with a piece of broken rock—His mistress is inconsolable for his loss; and since she is unable to restore him to life, changes him into a fountain.

“Acis, the lovely youth, whose loss I mourn, From Faunus, and the nymph Symethis, born, Was both his parents’ pleasure, but to me, Was all that love could make a lover be. The gods our minds in mutual bands did join, I was his only joy, and he was mine. Now sixteen summers the sweet youth had seen, And doubtful down began to shade his chin, When Polyphemus first disturbed our joy, And loved me fiercely, as I loved the boy. Ask not which passion in my soul was higher My last aversion, or my first desire, Nor this the greater was, nor that the less, Both were alike, for both were in excess. Thee, Venus, thee, both heaven and earth obey, Immense thy power, and boundless is thy sway. The cyclop, who defied the ethereal throne, And thought no thunder louder than his own, The terror of the woods, and wilder far Than wolves in plains, or bears in forests, are, The inhuman host, who made his bloody feasts On mangled members of his butcher’d guests, Yet felt the force of love, and fierce desire, And burn’d for me with unrelenting fire Forgot his caverns, and his woolly care, Assumed the softness of a lover’s air, And comb’d,

with teeth of rakes, his rugged hair: Now with a crooked scythe his beard he sleeks, And mows the stubborn stubble of his cheeks; Now in the crystal stream he looks, to try His courteous bows, and rolls his glaring eye. His cruelty and thirst for blood are lost; And ships securely sail along the coast.

“The prophet Telemus (arrived by chance Where Aetna’s summits to the seas advance, Who mark’d the tracks of every bird that flew, And sure presages from their flying drew) Foretold the cyclop that Ulysses hand In his broad eye should thrust a flaming brand. The giant, with a scornful grin, replied, ‘Vain augur, thou hast falsely prophesied; Already love his flaming brand has toss’d, Looking on two fair eyes my sight I lost.’ Thus, warn’d in vain, with stalking pace he strode, And stamp’d the margin of the briny flood With heavy steps, and weary, sought again The cool retirement of his gloomy den.

“A promontory, sharpening by degrees, Ends in a wedge, and overlooks the seas, On either side below, the water flows; This airy walk the giant lover chose. Here on the midst he sat, his flocks unled, Their shepherd follow’d, and securely fed; A pine, so burly, and of length so vast, That sailing ships required it for a mast, He wielded for a staff, his steps to guide, But laid it by, his whistle while he tried; A hundred reeds, of a prodigious growth, Scarce made a pipe proportion’d to his mouth, Which, when he gave it wind, the rocks around, And watery plains, the dreadful hiss resound. I heard the ruffian shepherd rudely blow, Where in a hollow cave I sat below; On Acis’ bosom I my head reclined, And still preserve the poem in my mind.

“ ‘Oh, lovely Galatea! whiter far Than falling snows and rising lilies are; More flowery than the meads, as crystal bright; Erect as alders, and of equal height: More wanton than a kid, more sleek thy skin Than orient shells, that on the shores are seen: Than apples fairer, when the boughs they lade; Pleasing as winter suns, or summer shade: More grateful to the sight than goodly plains, And softer to the touch than down of swans; Or curds new turn’d; and sweeter to the taste Than swelling

grapes, that to the vintage haste: More clear than ice, or running streams, that stray Through garden plots, but, ah! more swift than they.

“ ‘Yet, Galatea, harder to be broke Than bullocks, unreclaim’d to bear the yoke, And far more stubborn than the knotted oak: Like sliding streams, impossible to hold; Like them fallacious, like their fountains cold; More warping than the willow, to decline My warm embrace, more brittle than the vine; Immoveable and fix’d in thy disdain: Rough as these rocks, and of a harder grain. More violent than is the rising flood; And the praised peacock is not half so proud. Fierce as the fire, and sharp as thistles are, And more outrageous than a mother bear: Deaf as the billows to the vows I make; And more revengeful than a trodden snake In swiftness fleeter than the flying hind, Or driven tempests, or the driving wind. All other faults with patience I can bear, But swiftness is the vice I only fear.

“ ‘Yet, if you knew me well, you would not shun My love, but to my wish’d embraces run: Would languish in your turn, and court my stay, And much repent of your unwise delay.

“ ‘My palace in the living rock is made By nature’s hand: a spacious pleasing shade; Which neither heat can pierce, nor cold invade. My garden fill’d with fruits you may behold, And grapes in clusters, imitating gold; Some blushing bunches of a purple hue; And these, and those, are all reserved for you. Red strawberries, in shades, expecting stand, Proud to be gather’d by so white a hand. Autumnal cornels later fruit provide, And plums, to tempt you, turn their glossy side: Not those of common kinds, but such alone As in Phaeacian orchards might have grown: Nor chestnuts shall be wanting to your food, Nor garden fruits, nor wildings of the wood; The laden boughs for you alone shall bear; And yours shall be the product of the year.

“ ‘The flocks you see are all my own; beside The rest that woods and winding valleys hide, And those that folded in the caves abide. Ask not the numbers of my growing store; Who knows how many, knows he has no more: Nor will I praise my

cattle, trust not me, But judge yourself, and pass your own decree: Behold their swelling dugs, the sweepy weight Of ewes, that sink beneath the milky freight; In the warm folds their tender lambkins lie, Apart from kids, that call with human cry. New milk in nut-brown bowls is duly served For daily drink; the rest for cheese reserved. Nor are these household dainties all my store: The fields and forests will afford us more; The deer, the hare, the goat, the savage boar. All sorts of venison; and of birds the best; A pair of turtles taken from the nest. I walk'd the mountains, and two cubs I found, (Whose dam had left them on the naked ground,) So like, that no distinction could be seen: So pretty, they were presents for a queen; And so they shall: I took them both away, And keep to be companions of your play.

" 'Oh raise, fair nymph, your beauteous face above The waves, nor scorn my presents and my love. Come, Galatea, come, and view my face; I late beheld it in the watery glass, And found it lovelier than I fear'd it was. Survey my towering stature, and my size: Not Jove, the Jove you dream that rules the skies, Bears such a bulk, or is so largely spread: My locks (the plenteous harvest of my head) Hang o'er my manly face, and dangling down, As with a shady grove, my shoulders crown: Nor think, because my limbs and body bear A thickset underwood of bristling hair, My shape deform'd; what fouler sight can be Than the bald branches of a leafless tree? Foul is the steed without a flowing mane, And birds without their feathers and their train. Wool decks the sheep, and man receives a grace From bushy limbs, and from a bearded face: My forehead with a single eye is fill'd, Round as a ball, and ample as a shield; The glorious lamp of heaven, the radiant sun, Is nature's eye, and she's content with one: Add, that my father sways your seas, and I, Like you, am of the watery family; I make you his, in making you my own; You I adore, and kneel to you alone. Jove, with his fabled thunder, I despise, And only fear the lightning of your eyes. Frown not, fair nymph; yet I could bear to be Disdain'd, if others were disdain'd with me But to repulse the cyclop, and prefer The love of Acis, heavens! I cannot bear. But let the stripling please himself; nay, more, Please you, though that's

the thing I most abhor; The boy shall find, if e'er we cope in fight,' These giant limbs endued with giant might. His living bowels, from his belly torn, And scatter'd limbs, shall on the flood be borne; Thy flood, ungrateful nymph, and fate shall find That way for thee and Acis to be join'd: For, oh! I burn with love, and thy disdain Augments at once my passion and my pain. Translated Aetna flames within my heart, And thou, inhuman, wilt not ease my smart.'

"Lamenting thus in vain, he rose, and strode With furious paces to the neighbouring wood: Restless his feet, distracted was his walk, Mad were his motions, and confused his talk: Mad as the vanquish'd bull when forced to yield His lovely mistress, and forsake the field.

"Thus far unseen I saw; when fatal chance His looks directing, with a sudden glance, Acis and I were to his sight betray'd, Where, naught suspecting, we securely play'd, From his wide mouth a bellowing cry he cast: 'I see, I see; but this shall be your last.' A roar so loud made Aetna to rebound; And all the cyclop labour'd in the sound. Affrighted with his monstrous voice, I fled, And in the neighbouring ocean plunged my head: Poor Acis turn'd his back, and, 'Help,' he cried, 'Help, Galatea; help, my parent gods, And take me, dying, to your deep abodes.' The cyclop follow'd, but he sent before A rib, which from the living rock he tore: Though but an angle reach'd him of the stone, The mighty fragment was enough alone To crush all Acis. 'Twas too late to save; But what the fntes allow'd to give, I gave; That Acis to his lineage should return, And roll among the river gods his urn. Straight issued from the stone a stream of blood, Which lost the purple, mingling with the flood: Then like a double torrent it appear'd, The torrent too, in little space was clear'd The stone was cleft and through the yawning chink New reeds arose on the new river's brink. The rock, from out its hollow womb, disclosed A sound like water in its course opposed, When, wondrous to behold! full in the flood, Up starts a youth, and navel-high he stood; Horns from his temples rise, and either horn Thick wreaths of reeds (his native growth) adorn. Were not his stature taller than before, His bulk

augmented, and his beauty more, His colour blue, for Acis he might pass, And Acis changed into a stream he was: But mine no more; he rolls along the plains With rapid motion, and his name retains."

Story of Glaucus and Scylla

Glaucus, a fisherman of Boeotia, is transformed into a sea god, and becomes enamoured of a nereid, named Scylla, who rejects his suit.

Here ceased the nymph; the fair assembly broke, The sea-green nereids to the waves betook; While Scylla, fearful of the wide-spread main, Swift to the safer shore returns again; There o'er the sandy margin, unarray'd, With printless footsteps, flies the bounding maid; Or in some winding creek's secure retreat She bathes her weary limbs, and shuns the noonday heat. Her, Glaucus saw, as o'er the deep he rode, New to the seas, and late received a god. He saw, and languish'd for the virgin's love. With many an artful blandishment he strove Her flight to hinder, and her fears remove. The more he sues, the more she wings her flight. And nimbly gains a neighbouring mountain's height Steep shelving to the margin of the flood, A neighbouring mountain bare and woodless stood. Here, by the place secured, her steps she stay'd, And, trembling still, her lover's form survey'd. His shape, his hue, her troubled sense appal, And drooping locks, that o'er his shoulders fall; She sees his face divine, and manly brow, End in a fish's writhy tail below; She sees, and doubts within her anxious mind, Whether he comes of god or monster kind. This Glaucus soon perceived, and, "Oh, forbear!" His hand supporting on a rock lay near, "Forbear," he cried, "fond maid, this needless fear; Nor fish am I, nor monster of the main, But equal with the watery gods I reign; Nor Proteus, nor Palaemon me excel, Nor he whose breath inspires the sounding shell. My birth, 'tis true, I owe to mortal race, And I myself but late a mortal was: Ev'n then, in seas, and seas alone, I joy'd, The seas my hours and all my cares employ'd. In meshes now the twinkling prey I drew; Now skilfully the slender line I threw, And silent sat the moving float to view.

Not far from shore there lies a verdant mead, With herbage half, and half with water spread: There nor the horned heifers browsing stray, Nor shaggy kids, nor wanton lambkins play: There nor the sounding bees their nectar cull, Nor rural swains their genial chaplets pull, Nor flocks, nor herds, nor mowers, haunt the place, To crop the flowers, or cut the bushy grass: Thither sure first of living race came I, And sat, by chance, my drooping nets to dry. My scaly prize, in order all display'd, By number on the greensward there I laid My captives, which or in my nets I took, Or hung unwary on my wily hook. Strange to behold! yet what avails a lie? I saw them bite the grass as I sat by, Then sudden darting o'er the verdant plain, They spread their fins, as in their native main; I paused, with wonder'struck, while all my prey Left their new master, and regain'd the sea. Amazed, within my secret self I sought, What god, what herb, the miracle had wrought. "But sure no herbs have power like this," I cried, And straight I pluck'd some neighbouring herbs and tried. Scarce had I bit, and proved the wondrous taste, When strong convulsions shook my troubled breast, I felt my heart grow fond of something strange, And my whole nature labouring with a change. Restless I grew, and ev'ry place forsook, And still upon the seas I bent my look. "Farewell for ever! farewell, land!" I said, And plunged among the waves my sinking head. The gentle powers, who that low empire keep, Received me as a brother of the deep: To Tethys, and to Ocean old they pray To purge my mortal earthy parts away. The watery parents to their suit agreed, And thrice nine times a secret charm they read, Then with lustrations purify my limbs, And bid me bathe beneath a hundred streams: A hundred streams from various fountains run, And on my head at once come rushing down. Thus far each passage I remember well, And faithfully thus far the tale I tell; But then oblivion dark on all my senses fell. Again, at length, my thoughts reviving came, When I no longer found myself the same; Then first this sea-green beard I felt to grow, And these large honours on my spreading brow, My long descending locks the billows sweep, And my broad shoulders cleave the yielding deep; My fishy tail, my arms of azure hue, And every

part divinely changed, I view. But what avails these useless honours now? What joys can immortality bestow? What, though our Nereids all my form approve? What boots it, while fair Scylla scorns my love?”

Thus far the god; and more he would have said; When from his presence flew the ruthless maid. Stung with repulse, in such disdainful sort, He seeks Titanian Circe’s horrid court.

Book XIV

Transformation of Scylla

The goddess Circe, becoming enamoured of Glaucus, and finding his preference for Scylla, revenges herself on her unhappy rival by a hideous transformation—This sudden metamorphosis so terrifies her, that she throws herself into that part of the sea which separates the coasts of Italy and Sicily, where she is changed into dangerous rocks, which still bear her name.

Now Glaucus, with a lover’s haste, bounds o’er The swelling waves, and seeks the Latian shore: Messena, Rhegium, and the barren coast Of flaming Aetna, to his sight are lost: At length he gains the Tyrrhene seas, and views The hills where baneful filters Circe brews; Monsters in various forms around her press; And thus the god salutes the sorceress:

“Oh Circe, be indulgent to my grief, And give a lovesick deity relief. Too well the mighty power of plants I know, To those my figure and new fate I owe. Against Messena, on the Ausonian coast, I Scylla view’d, and from that hour was lost. In tenderest sounds I sued; but still the fair Was deaf to vows, and pitiless to prayer. If numbers can avail, exert their power; Or energy of plants, if plants have more. I ask no cure; let but the virgin pine With dying pangs, or agonies, like mine.”

No longer Circe could her flame disguise, But to the suppliant god marine replies:

“When maids are coy, have manlier aims in view; Leave those that fly, but those that like pursue. If love can be by kind compliance won, See, at your feet, the daughter of the sun.”

“Sooner,” said Glaucus, “shall the ash remove From mountains, and the swelling surges love, Or humble seaweed to the hills repair, Ere I think any but my Scylla fair.”

Straight Circe reddens with a guilty shame, And vows revenge for her rejected flame. Fierce liking oft a spite as fierce creates; For love refused, without aversion, hates. To hurt her hapless rival she proceeds, And, by the fall of Scylla, Glaucus bleeds.

Some fascinating beverage now she brews, Composed of deadly drugs, and baneful juice. At Rhegium she arrives; the ocean braves, And treads with unwet feet the boiling waves. Upon the beach a winding bay there lies, Shelter’d from seas, and shaded from the skies: This station Scylla chose; a soft retreat From chilling winds, and raging Cancer’s heat. The vengeful sorceress visits this recess; Her charm infuses, and infects the place. Soon as the nymph wades in, her nether parts Turn into dogs, then at herself she starts; A ghastly horror in her eyes appears, But yet she knows not who it is she fears: In vain she offers from herself to run, And drags about her what she strives to shun.

Oppress’d with grief the pitying god appears, And swells the rising surges with his tears; From the detested sorceress he flies; Her art reviles, and her address denies; While hapless Scylla, changed to rocks, decrees Destruction to those barks that beat the seas.

Voyage of Aeneas Continued

After being detained at Carthage, Aeneas at length arrives on the coast of Naples.

Here bulged the pride of famed Ulysses’ fleet, But good Aeneas ’scaped the fate he

met. As to the Latian shore the Trojan stood, And cut with well-timed oars the foaming flood, He weather'd fell Charybdis; but ere long The skies were darken'd, and the tempest strong; Then to the Libyan coast he stretches o'er, And makes at length the Carthaginian shore. Here Dido, with a hospitable care, Into her heart receives the wanderer. From her kind arms the ungrateful hero flies, The injured queen looks on with dying eyes, Then to her folly falls a sacrifice.

Aeneas now sets sail, and plying gains Fair Eryx, where his friend Acestes reigns: First to his sire does funeral rites decree, Then gives the signal next, and stands to sea, Outruns the islands where volcanoes roar, Gets clear of sirens and their faithless shore; But loses Palinurus in the way; Then makes Inarime and Prochyta.

Transformation of Cercopians Into Apes

The inhabitants of the island Pithecusa are changed into monkeys as a punishment of their dishonesty.

The galleys now by Pithecusa pass; The name is from the natives of the place. The father of the gods detesting lies, Oft with abhorrence heard their perjuries. The abandon'd race, transform'd to beasts, began To mimic the impertinence of man: Flatnosed and furrow'd, with grimace they grin, And look to what they were too near akin; Merry in make, and busy to no end, This moment they divert, the next offend: So much this species of their past retains, Though lost the language, yet the noise remains.

Aeneas Descends to Hell

Aeneas entreats the sibyl to permit him to seek the shade of his father in the Elysian fields.

Now, on his right, he leaves Parthenope, His left, Misenus jutting in the sea; Arrives at Cuma, and with awe survey'd The grotto of the venerable maid: Begs leave through black Avernus to retire, And view the much-loved manes of his sire.

Straight the divining virgin raised her eyes; And, foaming with a holy rage, replies:

“Oh thou, whose worth thy wondrous works proclaim, The flames thy piety, the world thy fame, Though great be thy request, yet shalt thou see The Elysian fields, the infernal monarchy, Thy parent’s shade. This arm thy steps shall guide: To suppliant virtue nothing is denied.”

She spoke, and pointing to the golden bough, Which in the Avernian grove refulgent grew, “Seize that,” she bids: he listens to the maid, Then views the mournful mansions of the dead; The shade of great Anchises, and the place By fates determined to the Trojan race.

As back to upper light the hero came, He thus salutes the visionary dame: “Oh! whether some propitious deity, Or loved by those bright rulers of the sky, With grateful incense I shall style you one, And doom no godhead greater than your own. ’Twas you restored me from the realms of night, And gave me to behold the fields of light, To feel the breezes of congenial air, And nature’s best benevolence to share.”

Story of the Sibyl

Apollo becomes enamoured of the sibyl, and offers to grant whatever she asks—The request is made of a continuance of life for as many years as there are grains in a heap of sand; but the enjoyment of health and beauty are unfortunately forgotten by the applicant.

“I am no deity,” replied the dame, “But mortal, and religious rites disclaim, Yet had avoided death’s tyrannic sway, Had I consented to the god of day. With promises he sought my love, and said: ‘Have all you wish, my fair Cumaean maid.’ I paused: then pointing to a heap of sand, ‘For every grain, to live a year demand.’ But, ah! unmindful of the effect of time, Forgot to covenant for youth and prime. The smiling bloom I boasted once is gone And feeble age with lagging limbs creeps on. Seven

centuries have I lived; three more fulfil The period of the years to finish still. Who'll think that Phoebus, dress'd in youth divine, Had once believed his lustre less than mine? This wither'd frame (so fates have will'd) shall waste To nothing but prophetic words at last."

The sibyl mounting now from nether skies, And the famed Ilian prince at Cuma rise. He sail'd, and near the place to anchor came, Since call'd Cajeta from his nurse's name; Here did the luckless Macareus, a friend To wise Ulysses, his long labours end; Here, wandering, Achaemenides he meets, And, sudden, thus his late associate greets:

"Whence came you here, oh friend, and whither bound? All gave you lost on fair cyclopean ground; A Greek's at last aboard a Trojan found."

Adventures of Achaemenides

Achaemenides, a companion of Ulysses, is left behind on the coast of Sicily, where Aeneas finds him on his voyage to Italy.

Thus Achaemenides: "With thanks I name Aeneas, and his piety proclaim. I 'scaped the cyclop through the hero's aid, Else in his maw my mangled limbs had laid. When first your navy under sail he found, He raved till Aetna labour'd with the sound; Raging, he stalk'd along the mountain's side, And vented clouds of breath at every stride; His staff a mountain ash, and in the clouds, Oft as he walks, his grisly front he shrowds; Eyeless he groped about with vengeful haste, And justled promontories as he pass'd: Then heaved a rock's high summit to the main, And bellow'd like some bursting hurricane:

" 'Oh! could I seize Ulysses in his flight, How unlamented were my loss of sight! These jaws should piecemeal tear each panting vein, Grind every crackling bone, and pound his brain.'

"As thus he raved my joints with horror shook; The tide of blood my chilling heart

forsook; I saw him once disgorge huge morsels, raw, Of wretches undigested in his maw. From the pale breathless trunks whole limbs he tore, His beard all clotted with o'erflowing gore. My anxious hours I pass'd in caves, my food Was forest fruits and wildings of the wood; At length a sail I wafted, and aboard My fortune found a hospitable lord.

"Now, in return, your own adventures tell, And what, since first you put to sea, befell."

Adventures of Macareus

Macareus relates the adventures of Ulysses and his companions during their voyage to Ithaca, with the enchantments of Circe, who detains the hero at her court twelve months.

Then Macareus: "There reign'd a prince of fame O'er Tuscan seas, and Aeolus his name. A largess to Ulysses he consign'd, And in a steer's tough hide enclosed a wind; Nine days before the swelling gale we ran, The tenth to make the meeting land began, When now the merry mariners, to find Imagined wealth within, the bag unbind. Forthwith outrush'd a gust, which backward bore Our galleys to the Laestrygonian shore, Whose crown Antiphates the tyrant wore. Some few commission'd were with speed to treat; We to his court repair; his guards we meet. Two, friendly flight preserved, the third was doom'd To be by those cursed cannibals consumed. Inhumanly our hapless friends they treat; Our men they murder, and destroy our fleet. In time the wise Ulysses bore away, And dropp'd his anchor in yon faithless bay. The thoughts of perils past we still retain, And fear to land, till lots appoint the men. Polites true, Elpenor given to wine, Eurylochus, myself, the lots assign. Design'd for dangers, and resolved to dare, To Circe's fatal palace we repair.

"Before the spacious front a herd we find Of beasts, the fiercest of the savage kind. Our trembling steps with blandishments they meet, And fawn, unlike their species,

at our feet. Within, upon a sumptuous throne of state, On golden columns raised, the enchantress sate; Rich was her robe, and amiable her mien, Her aspect awful, and she look'd a queen; Her maids not mind the loom, nor household care, Nor wage in needlework a Scythian war, But cull, in canisters, disastrous flowers, And plants from haunted heaths, and fairy bowers, With brazen sickles reap'd at planetary hours. Each dose the goddess weighs with watchful eye, So nice her art in impious pharmacy. Entering, she greets us with a gracious look, And airs, that future amity bespoke. Her ready nymphs serve up a rich repast; The bowl she dashes first, then gives to taste. Quick, to our own undoing we comply; Her power we prove, and show the sorcery.

"Soon, in a length of face, our head extends, Our chine stiff bristles bears, and forward bends, A breadth of brawn new burnishes our neck; Anon we grunt, as we begin to speak. Alone Eurylochus refused to taste, Nor to a beast obscene the man debased. Hither Ulysses hastes, (so fates command, And bears the powerful moly in his hand, Unsheaths his cimeter, assaults the dame, Preserves his species, and remains the same. The nuptial rite this outrage straight attends; The dower desired is his transfigured friends. The incantation backward she repeats, Inverts her rod, and what she did defeats.

"And now our skin grows smooth, our shape upright, Our arms stretch up, our cloven feet unite; With tears our weeping general we embrace, Hang on his neck, and melt upon his face. Twelve silver moons in Circe's court we stay, While there they waste the unwilling hours away. 'Twas here I spied a youth in Parian stone, His head a pecker bore, the cause unknown To passengers. A nymph of Circe's train The mystery thus attempted to explain:

Story of Picus and Canens

Picus, king of Latium, becomes the husband of Canens, whom he tenderly loves—Shortly after the nuptials, the youth, while indulging in the pleasures of the

chase, is met by Circe, who becomes deeply enamoured of him—Picus meets the advances of the goddess with coldness; and she, in revenge, transforms him into a woodpecker, and his companions into wild beasts; while Canens, in despair, wastes away, and is changed into a voice.

“ ‘Picus, who once the Ausonian sceptre held, Could rein the steed, and fit him for the field. So like he was to what you see, that still We doubt if real, or the sculptor’s skill. The graces in the finish’d piece, you find, Are but the copy of his fairer mind. Four lustres scarce the royal youth could name, Till every lovesick nymph confess’d a flame. Oft for his love the mountain dryads sued, And every silver sister of the flood: Those of Numicus, Albula, and those Where Almo creeps, and hasty Nar o’erflows; Where sedgy Anio glides through smiling meads, Where shady Farfar rustles in the reeds; And those that love the lakes, and homage owe To the chaste goddess of the silver bow.

“ ‘In vain each nymph her brightest charms put on, His heart no sovereign would obey but one, She whom Venilia, on Mount Palatine, To Janus bore, the fairest of his line; Nor did her face alone her charms confess, Her voice was ravishing, and pleased no less. Whene’er she sung, so melting were her strains, The flocks, unfed, seem’d listening on the plains; The rivers would stand still, the cedars bend; And birds neglect their pinions to attend; The savage kind in forest wilds grow tame; And Canens, from her heavenly voice, her name.

“ ‘Hymen had now, in some ill-fated hour, Their hands united, as their hearts before. While their soft moments in delights they waste, And each new day was dearer than the past, Picus would sometimes o’er the forests rove, And mingle sports with intervals of love. It chanced, as once the foaming boar he chased, His jewels sparkling on his Tyrian vest, Lascivious Circe well the youth survey’d, As simpling on the flowery hills she stray’d: Her wishing eyes their silent message tell, And from her lap the verdant mischief fell. As she attempts at words, his courser springs O’er

hills, and lawns, and ev’n a wish outwings.

“ ‘ “Thou shalt not ’scape me so,” pronounced the dame, “If plants have power, and spells be not a name.” She said, and forthwith form’d a boar of air, That sought the covert with dissembled fear. Swift to the thicket Picus wings his way, On foot, to chase the visionary prey.

“ ‘Now she invokes the daughters of the night, Does noxious juices smear, and charms recite, Such as can veil the moon’s more feeble fire, Or shade the golden lustre of her sire. In filthy fogs she hides the cheerful noon. The guard at distance, and the youth alone— “By those fair eyes,” she cries, “and every grace That finish all the wonders of your face, Oh! I conjure thee, hear a queen complain, Nor let the sun’s soft lineage sue in vain.”

“ ‘ “Whoe’er thou art,” replied the king, “forbear! None can my passion with my Canens share: She first my every tender wish possess’d, And found the soft approaches to my breast; In nuptials bless’d, each loose desire we shun, Nor time can end what innocence begun.”

“ ‘ “Think not,” she cried, “to saunter out a life Of form, with that domestic drudge—a wife; My just revenge, dull fool, ere long shall show What ills we women, if refused, can do. Think me a woman and a lover too. From dear successful spite we hope for ease, Nor fail to punish where we fail to please.”

“ ‘Now twice to east she turns, as oft to west; Thrice waves her wand, as oft a charm express’d. On the lost youth her magic power she tries, Aloft he springs, and wonders how he flies. On painted plumes the woods he seeks, and still The monarch oak he pierces with his bill. Thus changed, no more o’er Latian lands he reigns; Of Picus nothing but the name remains.

“ ‘The winds from drisling damps now purge the air, The mist subsides, the settling skies are fair; The court their sovereign seek with arms in hand; They threaten Circe, and their lord demand. Quick she invokes the spirits of the air, And twilight elves,

that on dun wings repair To charnels, and the unhallow'd sepulchre.

" 'Now, strange to tell, the plants sweat drops of blood, The trees are toss'd from forests where they stood. Blue serpents o'er the tainted herbage slide, Pale glaring spectres on the ether ride, Dogs howl, earth yawns, rent rocks forsake their beds, And from their quarries heave their stubborn heads. The sad spectators, stiffen'd with their fears, She sees, and sudden every limb she smears, Then each of savage beasts the figure bears.

" 'The sun did now to western waves retire, In tides to temper his bright world of fire. Canens laments her royal husband's stay, Ill suits fond love with absence or delay. Where she commands, her ready people run; She wills, retracts; bids, and forbids anon. Restless in mind, and dying with despair, Her breasts she beats, and tears her flowing hair. Six days and nights she wanders on, as chance Directs, without or sleep or sustenance. Tiber at last beholds the weeping fair; Her feeble limbs no more the mourner bear; Stretch'd on his banks, she to the flood complains, And faintly tunes her voice to dying strains. The sickening swan thus hangs her silver wings, And, as she droops, her elegy she sings. Ere long sad Canens wastes to air; while fame The place still honours with her hapless name.'

"Here did the tender tale of Picus cease; Above belief the wonder I confess. Again we sail, but more disasters meet, Foretold by Circe, to our suffering fleet. Myself unable further woes to bear, Declined the voyage, and am refuged here."

Aeneas Arrives in Italy

Latinus, king of Latium, bestows the hand of his daughter on Aeneas, who is opposed by Turnus, the affianced husband of the maiden—Aeneas obtains a supply of auxiliary troops from the Etruscans; while the Rutuli despatch an embassy to Diomed in behalf of Tumus.

Thus Macareus. Now with a pious aim Had good Aeneas raised a funeral flame, In

honour of his hoary nurse’s name. Her epitaph he fix’d; and setting sail, Cajeta left, and catch’d at every gale.

He steer’d at distance from the faithless shore, Where the false goddess reigns with fatal power, And sought those grateful groves, that shade the plain, Where Tiber roll’s majestic to the main, And fattens, as he runs, the fair champaign.

His kindred gods the hero’s wishes crown With fair Lavinia, and Latinus’ throne; But not without a war the prize he won. Drawn up in bright array the battle stands: Turnus with arms his promised wife demands. Etrurians, Latians equal fortune share, And doubtful long appears the face of war. Both powers from neighbouring princes seek supplies, And embassies appoint for new allies. Aeneas, for relief, Evander moves; His quarrel he asserts, his case approves. The bold Rutulians, with an equal speed, Sage Venulus despatch to Diomed. The king, late griefs revolving in his mind, These reasons for neutrality assign’d:

“Shall I, of one poor dotal town possess’d, My people thin, my wretched country waste; An exiled prince, and on a shaking throne; Or risk my patron’s subjects, or my own? You’ll grieve the harshness of our hap to hear; Nor can I tell the tale without a tear.

Adventures of Diomedes

Diomed briefly recounts to the Rutulian embassy the misfortunes he has encountered since the destruction of Troy.

“After famed Ilium was by Argives won, And flames had finish’d what the sword begun; Pallas, incensed, pursued us to the main, In vengeance of her violated fane. Alone Oileus forced the Trojan maid, Yet all were punish’d for the brutal deed. A storm begins, the raging waves run high, The clouds look heavy, and benight the sky; Red sheets of lightning o’er the seas are spread, Our tackling yields, and wrecks at last succeed. ’Tis tedious our disastrous state to tell; Ev’n Priam would have

pitied what befell. Yet Pallas saved me from the swallowing main; At home new wrongs to meet, as fates ordain. Chased from my country, I once more repeat All sufferings seas could give, or war complete. For Venus, mindful of her wound, decreed Still new calamities should past succeed. Agmon, impatient through successive ills, With fury, love's bright goddess thus reviles: 'These plagues in spite of Diomed are sent; The crime is his, but ours the punishment. Let each my friends her puny spleen despise, And dare that proud dictator of the skies.'

"The rest of Agmons insolence complain, And of irreverence the wretch arraign. About to answer, his blaspheming throat Contracts, and shrieks in some disdainful note. To his new skin a fleece of feathers clings, Hides his late arms and lengthens into wings. The lower features of his face extend, Warp into horn, and in a beak descend. Some more experience Agmon's destiny, And wheeling in the air, like swans they fly: These thin remains to Daunus' realms I bring, And here I reign, a poor precarious king."

Transformation of Appulus

The disrespectful treatment of the wood nymphs by Appulus is punished by his transformation into a wild olive-tree.

Thus Diomedes. Venulus withdraws; Unsped the service of the common cause. Puteoli he passes, and survey'd A cave long honour'd for its awful shade. Here trembling reeds exclude the piercing ray, Here streams in gentle falls through windings stray, And with a passing breath cool zephyrs play. The goatherd god frequents the silent place, As once the wood nymphs of the sylvan race, Till Appulus with a dishonest air, And gross behaviour, banish'd thence the fair: The bold buffoon, whene'er they tread the green, Their motion mimics, but with jest obscene. Loose language oft he utters; but ere long A bark in filmy network binds his tongue. Thus changed, a base wild olive he remains; The shrub the coarseness of the clown retains.

Trojan Ships Transformed to Sea Nymphs

Turnus sets fire to the Trojan ships, which are transformed into sea deities by Cybele—Aeneas, at length, surmounts all opposition, and is united to Lavinia.

Meanwhile the Latians all their power prepare, ’Gainst fortune, and the foe to push the war. With Phrygian blood the floating-fields they stain; But short of succours, still contend in vain. Turnus remarks the Trojan fleet ill mann’d, Unguarded, and at anchor near the strand; He thought; and straight a lighted brand he bore, And fire invades what ’scaped the waves before. The billows from the kindling prow retire; Pitch, rosin, searwood on red wings aspire, And Vulcan on the seas exerts his attribute of fire.

This when the mother of the gods beheld, Her towery crown she shook, and stood reveal’d; Her brindled lions rein’d, unveil’d her head, And hovering o’er her favour’d fleet, she said: “Cease, Turnus, and the heavenly powers respect, Nor dare to violate what I protect. These galleys once fair trees on Ida stood, And gave their shade to each descending god. Nor shall consume; irrevocable fate Allots their being no determined date.”

Straight peals of thunder heaven’s high arches rend The hailstones leap, the showers in spouts descend. The winds with widen’d throats the signal give; The cables break, the smoking vessels drive. Now, wondrous, as they beat the foaming flood, The timbers soften into flesh and blood; The yards and oars new arms and legs design; A trunk the hull; the slender keel a spine: The prow a female face; and by degrees The gallies rise green daughters of the seas. Sometimes on coral beds they sit in state, Or wanton on the waves they fear’d of late. The barks that beat the seas are still their care, Themselves remembering what of late they were; To save a Trojan sail in throngs they press, But smile to see Alcinous in distress.

Unable were those wonders to deter The Latians from their unsuccessful war. Both sides for doubtful victory contend; And on their courage and their gods depend. Nor

bright Lavinia, nor Latinus' crown, Warm their great soul to war, like fair renown. Venus at last beholds her godlike son Triumphant, and the field of battle won; Brave Turnus slain, strong Ardea but a name, And buried in fierce deluges of flame. Her towers, that boasted once a sovereign sway, The fate of fancied grandeur now betray. A famish'd heron from the ashes springs, And beats the ruin with disastrous wings. Calamities of towns distress'd she feigns, And oft, with woeful shrieks, of war complains.

Deification of Aeneas

The prayers of Venus prevail, and Aeneas is admitted into the number of the gods, while his descendants sway the sceptre of Latium.

Now had Aeneas, as ordain'd by fate, Survived the period of Saturnia's hate, And, by a sure irrevocable doom, Fix'd the immortal majesty of Rome, Fit for the station of his kindred stars, His mother goddess thus her suit prefers:

"Almighty arbiter, whose powerful nod Shakes distant earth, and bows our own abode; To thy great progeny indulgent be, And rank the goddess-born a deity. Already has he view'd, with mortal eyes, Thy brother's kingdoms of the nether skies."

Forthwith a conclave of the godhead meets, Where Juno in the shining senate sits. Remorse for past revenge the goddess feels; Then thundering Jove the almighty mandate seals; Allots the prince of his celestial line An apotheosis, and rites divine. The crystal mansions echo with applause, And, with her Graces, love's bright queen withdraws, Shoots in a blaze of light along the skies, And, born by turtles, to Laurentum flies: Alights, where through the reeds Numicius strays, And to the seas his watery tribute pays. The god she supplicates to wash away The parts more gross and subject to decay, And cleanse the goddess-born from radical allay. The horned flood with glad attention stands, Then bids his streams obey their sire's commands.

His better parts by lustral waves refined, More pure, and nearer to ethereal mind, With gums of fragrant scent the goddess strews, And on his features breathes ambrosial dews. Thus deified, new honours Rome decrees, Shrines, festivals; and styles him Indiges.

Ascanius now the Latian sceptre sways; The Alban nation, Sylvius, next obeys. Then young Latinus; next an Alba came, The grace and guardian of the Alban name. Then Epitus; then gentle Capys reign'd; Then Capetis the regal power sustain'd. Next he who perish'd on the Tuscan flood, And honour'd with his name the river god. Now haughty Remulus began his reign, Who fell by thunder he aspired to feign. Meek Acrota succeeded to the crown; From peace endeavouring, more than arms, renown, To Aventinus well resign'd his throne. The mount, on which he ruled, preserves his name, And Procas wore the regal diadem.

Story of Vertumnus and Pomona

Vertumnus prosecutes his suit to the nymph Pomona in the disguise of an old woman.

A hamadryad flourish'd in these days, Her name Pomona, from her woodland race. In garden culture none could so excel, Or form the pliant souls of plants so well; Or to the fruit more generous flavours lend, Or teach the trees with nobler loads to bend.

The nymph frequented not the flattering stream, Nor meads, the subject of a virgin's dream; But to such joys her nursery did prefer, Alone to attend her vegetable care. A pruning hook she carried in her hand, And taught the stragglers to obey command; Lest the licentious, and unthrifty bough, The too-indulgent parent should undo. She shows, how stocks invite to their embrace A graft, and naturalize a foreign race To mend the savage teint; and in its stead Adopt new nature, and a nobler breed.

Now hourly she observes her growing care, And guards the nonage from the bleaker

air: Then opes her streaming sluices, to supply With flowing draughts her thirsty family.

Long had she labour'd to continue free From chains of love, and nuptial tyranny; And in her orchard's small extent immured, Her vow'd virginity she still secured, Oft would loose Pan, and all the brutal train Of satyrs, tempt her innocence in vain. Vertumnus too pursued the maid no less; But with his rivals shared a like success. To gain access a thousand ways he tries: Oft, in the hind, the lover would disguise. The heedless lout comes shambling on, and seems Just sweating from the labour of his teams. Then, from the harvest of the mimic swain, Seems bending with a load of bearded grain. Sometimes a dresser of the vine he feigns, And lawless tendrils to their bounds restrains. Sometimes his sword a soldier shows; his rod An angler; still so various is the god. Now, in a forehead cloth, some crone he seems, A staff supplying the defect of limbs; Admittance thus he gains; admires the store Of fairest fruit; the fair possessor more; Then greets her with a kiss: the unpractised dame Admired a grandame kiss'd with such a flame. Now, seated by her, he beholds a vine Around an elm in amorous foldings twine. "If that fair elm," he cried, "alone should stand, No grapes would glow with gold and tempt the hand; Or if that vine without her elm should grow, 'Twould creep a poor neglected shrub below.

"Be then, fair nymph, by these examples led; Nor shun, for fancied fears, the nuptial bed. Not she for whom the Lapithites took arms, Nor Sparta's queen, could boast such heavenly charms. And if you would on woman's faith rely, None can your choice direct so well as I. Though old, so much Pomona I adore, Scarce does the bright Vertumnus love her more. 'Tis your fair self alone his breast inspires With softest wishes, and unsoil'd desires. Then fly all vulgar followers, and prove The god of seasons only worth your love: On my assurance well you may repose; Vertumnus scarce Vertumnus better knows. True to his choice, all looser flames he flies; Nor for new faces fashionably dies. The charms of youth, and every smiling grace Bloom in his features, and the god confess. Besides, he puts on every shape at

ease; But those the most that best Pomona please. Still to oblige her is her lover's aim; Their likings and aversions are the same. Nor the fair fruit your burden'd branches bear, Nor all the youthful product of the year, Could bribe his choice; yourself alone can prove A fit reward for so refined a love. Relent, fair nymph, and with a kind, regret, Think 'tis Vertumnus weeping at your feet. A tale attend, through Cyprus known, to prove How Venus once revenged neglected love.

Story of Iphis and Anaxarete

The disguised Vertumnus cautions his mistress from the indulgence of an unfeeling disregard to the sufferings of her lover by the example of Anaxarete, who is converted into a statue as a punishment for her pride—The god then resumes his natural shape, and Pomona renounces her prepossessions in favour of a single life.

"Iphis, of vulgar birth, by chance had view'd Fair Anaxarete of Teucer's blood. Not long had he beheld the royal dame Ere the bright sparkle kindled into flame. Oft did he struggle with a just despair, Unfix'd to ask, unable to forbear. But love, who flatters still his own disease, Hopes all things will succeed he knows will please Where'er the fair one haunts, he hovers there, And seeks her confidant with sighs, and prayer; Or letters he conveys, that seldom prove Successless messengers in suits of love.

"Now shivering at her gates the wretch appears, And myrtle garlands on the columns rears, Wet with a deluge of unbidden tears. The nymph, more hard than rocks, more deaf than seas, Derides his prayers, insults his agonies; Arraigns of insolence the aspiring swain, And takes a cruel pleasure in his pain. Resolved at last to finish his despair, He thus upbraids the inexorable fair:

" 'Oh, Anaxarete, at last forget The license of a passion indiscreet. Now triumph, since a welcome sacrifice Your slave prepares to offer to your eyes. My life, without reluctance, I resign; That present best can please a pride like thine. But, oh! forbear to blast a flame so bright, Doom'd never to expire but with the light. And you, great

powers, do justice to my name; The hours, you take from life, restore to fame.'

"Then o'er the posts, once hung with wreaths, he throws The ready cord, and fits the fatal noose; For death prepares; and bounding from above, At once the wretch concludes his life and love.

"Ere long the people gather, and the dead Is to his mourning mother's arms convey'd. First, like some ghastly statue she appears; Then bathes the breathless corse in seas of tears, And gives it to the pile; now as the throng Proceed in sad solemnity along, To view the passing pomp the cruel fair Hastes, and beholds her breathless lover there. Struck with the sight, inanimate she seems; Set are her eyes, and motionless her limbs; Her features without fire, her colour gone, And, like her heart, she hardens into stone. In Salamis the statue still is seen, In the famed temple of the Cyprian queen. Warn'd by this tale, no longer then disdain, Oh, nymph beloved, to ease a lover's pain. So may the frosts in spring your blossoms spare, And winds their rude autumnal rage forbear."

The story oft Vertumnus urged in vain, But then assumed his heavenly form again. Such looks, and lustre the bright youth adorn, As when with rays glad Phoebus paints the morn. The sight so warms the fair admiring maid, Like snow she melts: so soon can youth persuade. Consent, on eager wings, succeeds desire; And both the lovers glow with mutual fire.

Latian Line

Romulus, having restored his grandfather Numitor to the throne of which he had been unjustly dispossessed by his brother Amulius, at length succeeds to the crown.

Now Procas yielding to the fates, his son Mild Numitor succeeded to the crown. But false Amulius, with a lawless power, At length deposed his brother Numitor. Then Ilia's valiant issue, with the sword, Her parent re-enthroned, the rightful lord. Next Romulus to people Rome contrives; The joyous time of Pales' feast arrives; He

gives the word to seize the Sabine wives. The sires enraged take arms, by Tatius led, Bold to revenge their violated bed. A fort there was, not yet unknown to fame, Call'd the Tarpeian, its commander's name. This by the false Tarpeia was betray'd, But death well recompensed the treacherous maid. The foe on this new-bought success relies, And, silent, march, the city to surprise. Saturnia's arts with Sabine arms combine; But Venus countermines the vain design; Entreats the nymphs that o'er the springs preside, Which near the fane of hoary Janus glide, To send their succours; every urn they drain, To stop the Sabines' progress, but in vain.

The Naiads now more stratagems essay, And kindling sulphur to each source convey. The floods ferment, hot exhalations rise, Till from the scalding ford the army flies. Soon Romulus appears in shining arms, And to the war the Roman legions warms: The battle rages, and the field is spread With nothing but the dying and the dead. Both sides consent to treat without delay, And their two chiefs at once the sceptre sway. But Tatius by Lavinian fury slain, Great Romulus continued long to reign.

Assumption of Romulus

The god Mars translates Romulus to the skies, where hew inrolled in the number of the gods under the name of Qurinus.

Now warrior Mars his burnish'd helm puts on, And thus addresses heaven's imperial throne:

"Since the inferior world is now become One vassal globe, and colony to Rome, This grace, oh Jove, for Romulus I claim, Admit him to the skies, from whence he came. Long hast thou promised an ethereal state To Mars's lineage; and thy word is fate."

The sire, that rules the thunder with a nod, Declared the fiat, and dismiss'd the god.

Soon as the power armipotent survey'd The flashing skies, the signal he obey'd;

And leaning on his lance, he mounts his car, His fiery coursers lashing through the air. Mount Palatine he gains, and finds his son Good laws enacting on a peaceful throne; The scales of heavenly justice holding high, With steady hand, and a discerning eye. Then vaults upon his car, and to the spheres, Swift, as a flying shaft, Rome's founder bears. The parts more pure, in rising are refined, The gross and perishable lag behind. His shrine in purple vestments stands in view; He looks a god, and is Quirinus now.

Assumption of Hersilia

A seat in the celestial mansions is assigned to Hersilia, the wile of Romulus, who assumes the name of Ora.

Ere long the goddess of the nuptial bed, With pity moved, sends Iris in her stead To sad Hersilia. Thus the meteor maid:

"Chaste relict! in bright truth to heaven allied, The Sabines' glory, and the sex's pride; Honour'd on earth, and worthy of the love Of such a spouse, as now resides above, Some respite to thy killing griefs afford; And if thou wouldst once more behold thy lord, Retire to yon steep mount, with groves o'erspread, Which with an awful gloom his temples shade."

With fear the modest matron lifts her eyes, And to the bright ambassadress replies:

"Oh goddess, yet to mortal eyes unknown, But sure thy various charms confess thee one: Oh quick to Romulus thy votress bear, With looks of love he'll smile away my care: In whate'er orb he shines, my heaven is there."

Then hastes with Iris to the holy grove; And up the Mount Quirinal as they move A lambent flame glides downward through the air, And brightens with a blaze Hersilia's hair. Together on the bounding ray they rise, And shoot a gleam of light along the skies. With opening arms Quirinus met his bride, Now Ora named, and press'd her to his side.

Book XV

Pythagorean Philosophy

The Pythagorean system of philosophy, which is here minutely described, is adopted and taught by Numa, who is chosen by the Romans to be the successor of Romulus.

A king is sought to guide the growing state, One able to support the public weight, And fill the throne where Romulus had sate. Renown, which oft bespeaks the public voice, Had recommended Numa to their choice: A peaceful pious prince; who not content To know the Sabine rites, his study bent To cultivate his mind; to learn the laws Of nature, and explore their hidden cause. Urged by this care, his country he forsook, And to Crotona thence his journey took. Arrived, he first inquired the founder's name Of this new colony, and whence he came. Then thus a senior of the place replies: (Well read, and curious of antiquities:)

" 'Tis said, Alcides hither took his way From Spain, and drove along his conquer'd prey; Then, leaving in the fields his grazing cows, He sought himself some hospitable house; Good Croton entertain'd his godlike guest; While he repair'd his weary limbs with rest. The hero, thence departing, bless'd the place; 'And here,' he said, 'in lime's revolving race, A rising town shall take his name from thee.' Revolving time fulfill'd the prophecy. For Myscelos, the justest man on earth, Alemon's son, at Argos had his birth. Him Hercules, arm'd with his club of oak, O'ershadow'd in a dream, and thus bespoke: 'Go, leave thy native soil, and make abode Where Aesaris rolls down his rapid flood.' He said; and sleep forsook him, and the god. Trembling he waked, and rose with anxious heart; His country laws forbade him to depart. What should he do? 'twas death to go away, And the god menaced if he dared to stay. All day he doubted, and when night came on, Sleep, and the same forewarning dream, begun: Once more the god stood threatening o'er his head: With added curses if he disobey'd. Twice warn'd, he studied flight; but

would convey At once his person and his wealth away: Thus while he linger'd his design was heard; A speedy process form'd, and death declared. Witness there needed none of his offence; Against himself the wretch was evidence: Condemn'd, and destitute of human aid, To him for whom he suffer'd thus he pray'd:

" 'Oh power, who hast deserved in heaven a throne, Not given, but by thy labours made thy own, Pity thy suppliant, and protect his cause, Whom thou hast made obnoxious to the laws.'

"A custom was of old, and still remains, Which life or death by suffrages ordains: White stones and black within an urn are cast; The first absolve, but fate is in the last. The judges to the common urn bequeath Their votes, and drop the sable signs of death; The box receives all black, but, pour'd from thence, The stones came candid forth the hue of innocence. Thus Alemonides his safety won, Preserved from death by Alcumena's son: Then to his kinsman god his vows he pays, And cuts with prosperous gales the Ionian seas: He leaves Tarentum favour'd by the wind, And Thurine bays, and Temises, behind; Soft Sybaris, and all the capes that stand Along the shore, he makes in sight of land; Still doubling, and still coasting, till he found The mouth of Aesaris, and promised ground; Then saw, where, on the margin of the flood, The tomb that held the bones of Croton stood: Here, by the gods' command, he built, and wall'd The place predicted; and Crotona call'd. Thus fame, from time to time, delivers down The sure tradition of the Italian town.

"Here dwelt the man divine, whom Samos bore, But now self-banish'd from his native shore, Because he hated tyrants, nor could bear The chains, which none but servile souls will wear. He, though from heaven remote, to heaven could move, With strength of mind, and tread the abyss above; And penetrate, with his interior light, Those upper depths which nature hid from sight: And what he had observed and learn'd from thence, Loved in familiar language to dispense.

"The crowd with silent admiration stand, And heard him as they heard their god's

command; While he discoursed of Heaven’s mysterious laws, The world’s original, and nature’s cause; And what was God; and why the fleecy snows In silence fell, and rattling winds arose; What shook the steadfast earth, and whence begun The dance of planets round the radiant sun; If thunder was the voice of angry Jove, Or clouds with nitre pregnant, burst above; Of these, and things beyond the common reach, He spoke, and charm’d his audience with his speech.

“He first the taste of flesh from tables drove, And argued well, if arguments could move: ‘Oh mortals, from your fellows’ blood abstain, Nor taint your bodies with a food profane. While corn and pulse by nature are bestow’d, And planted orchards bend their willing load; While labour’d gardens wholesome herbs produce, And teeming vines afford their generous juice; Nor tardier fruits of cruder kind are lost, But tamed with fire, or mellow’d by the frost; While kine to pails distended udders bring, And bees their honey redolent of spring; While earth not only can your needs supply, But lavish of her store, provides for luxury; A guiltless feast administers with ease, And without blood is prodigal to please. Wild beasts their maws with their slain brethren fill; And yet not all, for some refuse to kill; Sheep, goats, and oxen, and the nobler steed, On browse, and corn, and flowery meadows feed. Bears, tigers, wolves, the lion’s angry brood, Whom Heaven indued with principles of blood, He wisely sunder’d from the rest, to yell In forests, and in lonely caves to dwell; Where stronger beasts oppress the weak by might, And all in prey and purple feasts delight.

“ ‘Oh impious use! to nature’s laws opposed, Where bowels are in other bowels closed: Where fatten’d by their fellows’ fat, they thrive; Maintain’d by murder, and by death they live. ’Tis then for naught, that mother earth provides The stores of all she shows, and all she hides, If men with fleshy morsels must be fed, And chew with bloody teeth the breathing bread What else is this, but to devour our guests, And barb’rously renew cyclopean feasts! We, by destroying life, our life sustain; And gorge the ungodly maw with meats obscene.

“ ‘Not so the golden age, who fed on fruit, Nor durst with bloody meals their mouths pollute. Then birds in airy space might safely move, And timorous hares on heaths securely rove: Nor needed fish the guileful hooks to fear, For all was peaceful; and that peace sincere. Whoever was the wretch (and cursed be he) That envied first our food’s simplicity, The essay of bloody feasts on brutes began, And after forged the sword to murder man. Had he the sharpen’d steel alone employ’d On beasts of prey, that other beasts destroy’d; Or man invaded with their fangs and paws, This had been justified by nature’s laws And self-defence: but who did feasts begin Of flesh, he stretch’d necessity to sin. To kill man-killers man has lawful power, But not the extended license to devour.

“ ‘Ill habits gather by unseen degrees, As brooks make rivers, rivers run to seas. The sow, with her broad snout, for rooting up The entrusted seed, was judged to spoil the crop, And intercept the sweating farmer’s hope: The covetous churl, of unforgiving kind, The offender to the bloody priest resign’d: Her hunger was no plea: for that she died. The goat came next in order to be tried: The goat had cropp’d the tendrils of the vine: In vengeance laity and clergy join, Where one had lost his profit, one his wine. Here was at least some shadow of offence; The sheep was sacrificed on no pretence, But meek and unresisting innocence. A patient, useful creature, born to bear The warm and woolly fleece, that clothed her murderer; And daily to give down the milk she bred, A tribute for the grass on which she fed. Living, both food and raiment she supplies, And is of least advantage when she dies.

“ ‘How did the toiling ox his death deserve, A downright simple drudge, and horn to serve? Oh tyrant! with what justice canst thou hope The promise of the year, a plenteous crop; When thou destroy’st thy labouring steer, who till’d And plough’d with pains, thy else ungrateful field? From his yet reeking neck, to draw the yoke, That neck with which the surly clods he broke; And to the hatchet yield thy husbandman, Who finish’d autumn, and the spring began.

“ ‘Nor this alone! but Heaven itself to bribe, We to the gods our impious acts ascribe; First recompense with death their creatures’ toil; Then call the bless’d above to share the spoil: The fairest victim must the powers appease, (So fatal ’tis sometimes too much to please!) A purple fillet his broad brow adorns, With flowery garlands crown’d, and gilded horns: He hears the murderous prayer the priest prefers, But understands not ’tis his doom he hears: Beholds the meal between his temples cast; (The fruit and product of his labours past;) And in the water views perhaps the knife, Uplifted to deprive him of his life; Then broken up alive, his entrails sees Torn out, for priests to inspect the gods’ decrees.

“ ‘From whence, oh mortal men, this gust of blood Have you derived, and interdicted food? Be taught by me this dire delight to shun, Warn’d by my precepts, by my practice won: And when you eat the well-deserving beast, Think on the labourer of your field you feast!

“ ‘Now since the god inspires me to proceed, Be that, whate’er inspiring power, obey’d: For I will sing of mighty mysteries, Of truths conceal’d before, from human eyes, Dark oracles unveil, and open all the skies. Pleased as I am to walk along the sphere Of shining stars, and travel with the year, To leave the heavy earth, and scale the height Of Atlas, who supports the heavenly weight; To look from upper light, and thence survey Mistaken mortals wandering from the way, And wanting wisdom, fearful for the state Of future things, and trembling at their fate!

“ ‘Those I would teach; and by right reason bring To think of death as but an idle thing. Why thus affrighted at an empty name, A dream of darkness, and fictitious flame? Vain themes of wit, which but in poems pass, And fables of a world that never was? What feels the body when the soul expires, By time corrupted, or consumed by fires? Nor dies the spirit, but new life repeats In other forms, and only changes seats.

“ ‘Ev’n I, who these mysterious truths declare, Was once Euphorbus in the Trojan

war; My name and lineage I remember well, And how in fight by Sparta's king I fell. In Argive Juno's fame I late beheld My buckler hung on high, and own'd my former shield.

" 'Then death, so call'd, is but old matter dress'd In some new figure, and a varied vest: Thus all things are but alter'd, nothing dies; And here and there the unbodied spirit flies, By time, or force, or sickness dispossess'd, And lodges, where it lights, in man or beast; Or hunts without, till ready limbs it find, And actuates those according to their kind; From tenement to tenement is toss'd, The soul is still the same, the figure only lost: And, as the soften'd wax new seals receives, This face assumes, and that impression leaves; Now call'd by one, now by another name; The form is only changed, the wax is still the same. So death, so call'd, can but the form deface; The immortal soul flies out in empty space, To seek her fortune in some other place.

" 'Then let not piety be put to flight, To please the taste of glutton appetite; But suffer inmate souls secure to dwell, Lest from their seats your parents you expel; With rabid hunger feed upon your kind, Or from a beast dislodge a brother's mind.

" 'And since, like Typhis parting from the shore, In ample seas I sail, and depths untried before, This let me farther add, that nature knows No steadfast station, but or ebbs or flows: Ever in motion; she destroys her old, And casts new figures in another mould. Ev'n times are in perpetual flux, and run, Like rivers from their fountain, rolling on; For time, no more than streams, is at a stay; The flying hour is ever on her way: And as the fountain still supplies her store, The wave behind impels the wave before: Thus in successive course the minutes run, And urge their predecessor minutes on, Still moving, ever new: for former things Are set aside, like abdicated kings; And every moment alters what is done, And innovates some act, till then unknown.

" 'Darkness we see emerges into light, And shining suns descend to sable night;

Ev’n heaven itself receives another dye, When wearied animals in slumbers lie Of midnight ease: another, when the gray Of morn preludes the splendour of the day. The disk of Phoebus, when he climbs on high, Appears at first but as a bloodshot eye; And when his chariot downward drives to bed, His ball is with the same suffusion red; But mounted high in his meridian race, All bright he shines, and with a better face: For there, pure particles of ether flow, Far from the infection of the world below.

“ ‘Nor equal light the unequal moon adorns, Or in her waxing, or her waning horns; For every day she wanes, her face is less; But gathering into globe, she fattens at increase.

“ ‘Perceiv’st thou not the process of the year, How the four seasons in four forms appear, Resembling human life in every shape they wear? Spring, first, like infancy, shoots out her head, With milky juice requiring to be fed: Helpless, though fresh, and wanting to be led. The green stem grows in stature, and in size, But only feeds with hope the farmer’s eyes; Then laughs the childish year with flow’rets crown’d, And lavishly perfumes the fields around. But no substantial nourishment receives; Infirm the stalks, unsolid are the leaves.

“ ‘Proceeding onward whence the year began, The summer grows adult, and ripens into man. This season, as in men, is most replete With kindly moisture, and prolific heat.

“ ‘Autumn succeeds, a sober tepid age, Not froze with fear, nor boiling into rage; More than mature, and tending to decay, When our brown locks repine to mix with odious gray.

“ ‘Last, winter creeps along with tardy pace; Sour is his front, and furrow’d is his face: His scalp, if not dishonour’d quite of hair, The ragged fleece is thin; and thin is worse than bare.

“ ‘Ev’n our own bodies daily change receive, Some part of what was theirs before,

they leave; Nor are to-day what yesterday they were; Nor the whole same to-morrow will appear.

“ ‘Time was when we were sow’d, and just began To show the promise of a future man: Then nature’s hand (fermented as it was) Moulded to shape the soft coagulated mass; And when the little man was fully form’d, The breathless embryo with a spirit warm’d; But when the mother’s throes begin to come, The creature, pent within the narrow room, Breaks his blind prison, pushing to repair His stifled breath, and draw the living air; Cast on the margin of the world he lies, A helpless babe, but by instinct he cries. He next essays to walk, but downward press’d On four feet imitates his brother beast: By slow degrees he gathers from the ground His legs, and to the rolling chair is bound; Then walks alone; a horseman now become, He rides a stick, and travels round the room. In time he vaunts among his youthful peers; Strong boned, and strung with nerves, in pride of years, He runs with mettle his first merry stage, Maintains the next, abated of his rage, But manages his strength, and spares his age. Heavy the third, and stiff, he sinks apace, And though ’tis downhill all, he creeps along the race. Now sapless on the verge of death he stands, Contemplating his former feet and hands; And, Milo like, his slacken’d sinews sees, And wither’d arms, once fit to cope with Hercules, Unable now to shake, much less to tear, the trees.

“ ‘So Helen wept, when her too faithful glass Reflected on her eyes the ruins of her face:

“ ‘Thy teeth, devouring time, thine, envious age, On things below still exercise your rage: With venom’d grinders you corrupt your meat, And then, at lingering meals, the morsels eat.

“ ‘Nor those, which elements we call, abide, Nor to this figure, nor to that are tied; For this eternal world is said, of old, But four prolific principles to hold, Four different bodies; two to heaven ascend, And other two down to the centre tend: Fire

first with wings expanded mounts on high, Pure, void of weight, and dwells in upper sky; Then air, because unclogg'd in empty space, Flies after fire, and claims the second place: But weighty water, as her nature guides, Lies on the lap of earth; and mother earth subsides.

" 'All things are mix'd of these, which all contain, And into these are all resolved again: Earth rarifies to dew; expanded more, The subtle dew in air begins to soar; Spreads, as she flies, and weary of her name Extenuates still, and changes into flame; Thus having by degrees perfection won, Restless they soon untwist the web they spun, And fire begins to lose her radiant hue, Mix'd with gross air, and air descends to dew; And dew condensing, does her form forego, And sinks a heavy lump of earth below.

" 'Thus are their figures never at a stand, But changed by nature's innovating hand; All things are alter'd, nothing is destroy'd, The shifted scene for some new show employ'd.

" 'Then, to be born is to begin to be Some other thing we were not formerly: And what we call to die, is not to appear, Or be the thing that formerly we were. Those very elements, which we partake Alive, when dead some other bodies make: Translated grow, have sense, or can discourse; But death on deathless substance have no force.

" 'That forms are changed, I grant; that nothing can Continue in the figure it began: The golden age to silver was debased, To copper that; our metal came at last.

" 'The face of places, and their forms decay; And that is solid earth that once was sea: Seas in their turn retreating from the shore, Make solid land, what ocean was before And far from strands are shells of fishes found, And rusty anchors fix'd on mountain ground: And what were fields before, now wash'd and worn By falling floods from high, to valleys turn, And crumbling still descend to level lands; And lakes, and trembling bogs, are barren sands: And the parch'd desert floats in streams

unknown, Wondering to drink of waters not her own.

“ ‘Here nature living fountains opes; and there Seals up the wombs, where living fountains were: Or earthquakes stop their ancient course, and bring Diverted streams to feed a distant spring. So Lycus, swallow’d up, is seen no more, But far from thence knocks out another door. Thus Erasmus dives; and blind in earth Runs on, and gropes his way to second birth, Starts up in Argos’ meads, and shakes his locks Around the fields, and fattens all the flocks. So Mysus by another way is led, And, grown a river, now disdains his head; Forgets his humble birth, his name forsakes, And the proud title of Caicus takes. Large Amenane, impure with yellow sands, Runs rapid often, and as often stands; And here he threats the drunken fields to drown; And there his dugs deny to give their liquor down.

“ ‘Anigros once did wholesome draughts afford, But now his deadly waters are abhorr’d: Since, hurt by Hercules, as fame resounds, The centaurs in his current wash’d their wounds. The streams of Hypanis are sweet no more, But brackish lose the taste they had before. Antissa, Pharos, Tyre, in seas were pent, Once isles, but now increase the continent; While the Leucadian coast, main land before, By rushing seas is sever’d from the shore. So Zancle to the Italian earth was tied, And men once walk’d where ships at anchor ride; Till Neptune overlook’d the narrow way, And in disdain pour’d in the conquering sea.

“ ‘Two cities, that adorn’d the Achaian ground, Buris, and Helice, no more are found, But whelm’d beneath a lake, are sunk and drown’d; And boatmen, through the crystal water, show To wondering passengers the walls below.

“ ‘Near Troezen stands a hill, exposed in air To winter winds of leafy shadows bare: This once was level ground: but (strange to tell) The included vapours, that in caverns dwell, Labouring with colic pangs, and close confined, In vain sought issue for the rumbling wind: Yet still they heaved for vent, and heaving still Enlarged the concave, and shot up the hill; As breath extends a bladder, or the skins Of goats are

blown to enclose the hoarded wines: The mountain yet retains a mountain's face, And gather'd rubbish heals the hollow space. Of many wonders which I heard, or knew, Retrenching most, I will relate but few: What, are not springs with qualities opposed, Endued at seasons, and at seasons lost? Thrice in a day thine, Ammon, change their form, Cold at high noon, at morn and evening warm: Thine, Athaman, will kindle wood, if thrown On the piled earth, and in the waning moon. The Thracians have a stream, if any try The taste, his harden'd bowels petrify; Whate'er it touches, it converts to stones, And makes a marble pavement where it runs.

" 'Crathis, and Sybaris, her sister flood, That slide through our Calabrian neighbour wood, With gold and amber die the shining hair, And thither youth resort: (for who would not be fair?)

" 'But stranger virtues yet in streams we find, Some change not only bodies, but the mind: Who has not heard of Salmacis obscene, Whose waters into women soften men? Or Aethiopian lakes, which turn the brain To madness, or in heavy sleep constrain? Clytorian streams the love of wine expel, (Such is the virtue of the abstemious well,) Whether the colder nymph, that rules the flood, Extinguishes, and balks the drunken god; Or that Melampus (so have some assured) When the mad Proetides with charms he cured, And powerful herbs, both charms, and simples cast Into the sober spring, where still their virtues last.

" 'Unlike effects Lyncestis will produce; Who drinks his waters, though with moderate use, Reels us with wine, and sees with double sight; His heels too heavy, and his head too light. Ladon, once Pheneus, an Arcadian stream, (Ambiguous in the effects, as in the name,) By day is wholesome beverage, but is thought By night infected, and a deadly draught.

" 'Thus running rivers, and the standing lake, Now of these virtues, now of those partake: Time was (and all things time and fate obey) When fast Ortygia floated on the sea; Such were Cyanean isles, when Typhis steer'd Between their straits, and

their collision fear'd; They swam where now they sit; and firmly join'd, Secure of rooting up, resist the wind. Nor Aetna, vomiting sulphureous fire, Will ever belch; for sulphur will expire: (The veins exhausted of the liquid store:) Time was, she cast no flames; in time will cast no more.

" 'For whether earth's an animal, and air Imbibes, her lungs with coolness to repair, And what she sucks remits, she still require Inlets for air, and outlets for her fires; When tortured with convulsive fits she shakes, That motion choke the vent, till other vent she makes: Or when the winds in hollow caves are closed, And subtle spirits find that way opposed, They toss up flints in air; the flints that hide The seeds of fire, thus toss'd in air, collide, Kindling the sulphur, till the fuel spent, The cave is cool'd, and the fierce winds relent.

" 'Or whether sulphur, catching fire, feeds on Its unctuous parts, till all the matter gone, The flames no more ascend; for earth supplies The fat that feeds them; and when earth denies That food, by length of time consumed, the fire Famish'd for want of fuel must expire.

" 'A race of men there are, as fame has told, Who shivering suffer Hyperborean cold, Till nine times bathing in Minerva's lake, Soft feathers, to defend their naked sides they take. 'Tis said, the Scythian wives (believe who will) Transform'd themselves to birds by magic skill: Smear'd over with an oil of wondrous might, That adds new pinions to their airy flight.

" 'But this by sure experiment we know, That living creatures from corruption grow: Hide in a hollow pit a slaughter'd steer, Bees from his putrid bowels will appear; Who, like their parents, haunt the fields, and bring Their honey harvest home, and hope another spring. The warlike steed is multiplied, we find, To wasps, and hornets of the warrior kind. Cut from a crab his crooked claws, and hide The rest in earth, a scorpion thence will glide, And shoot his sting; his tail in circles toss'd Refers the limbs his backward father lost; And worms, that stretch on leaves their filmy loom,

Crawl from their bags, and butterflies become. Ev’n slime begets the frog’s loquacious race: Short of their feet at first, in little space With arms, and legs endued, long leaps they take, Raised on their hinder part, and swim the lake, And waves repel; for nature gives their kind, To that intent, a length of legs behind.

“ ‘The cubs of bears a living lump appear, When whelp’d, and no determined figure wear. Their mother licks them into shape, and gives As much of form, as she herself receives.

“ ‘The grubs from their sexangular abode Crawl out unfinish’d, like the maggot’s brood: Trunks without limbs; till time at leisure brings, The thighs they wanted, and their tardy wings.

“ ‘The bird, that draws the car of Juno, vain Of her crown’d head, and of her starry train; And he that bears the artillery of Jove, The strong-pounced eagle, and the billing dove; And all the feather’d kind, who could suppose (But that for sight, the surest sense, he knows) They from the included yolk, not ambient white, arose?

“ ‘There are, who think the marrow of a man, Which in the spine, while he was living, ran, When dead, the pith corrupted will become A snake, and hiss within the hollow tomb.

“ ‘All these receive their birth from other things; Out from himself the phoenix only springs: Self-born, begotten by the parent flame In which he burn’d, another and the same; Who not by corn, or herbs his life sustains, But the sweet essence of amomum drains; And watches the rich gums Arabia bears, While yet in tender dew they drop their tears. He, (his five centuries of life fulfill’d,) His nest on oaken boughs begins to build, Or trembling tops of palm; and first he draws The plan with his broad bill, and crooked claws. Nature’s artificers; on this the pile Is form’d, and rises round, then with the spoil Of cassia, cinnamon, and stems of nard, (For softness strew’d beneath,) his funeral bed is rear’d Funeral and bridal both; and all around The borders with corruptless myrrh are crown’d. On this incumbent, till ethereal flame

First catches, then consumes the costly frame: Consumes him too, as on the pile he lies; He lived on odours, and in odours dies.

“ ‘An infant phoenix from the former springs, His father’s heir, and from his tender wings Shakes off his parent dust, his method he pursues, And the same lease of life on the same terms renews. When grown to manhood he begins his reign, And with stiff pinions can his flight sustain; He lightens of its load the tree that bore His father’s royal sepulchre before, And his own cradle: this with pious care Placed on his back, he cuts the buxom air, Seeks the sun’s city, and his sacred church, And decently lays down his burden in the porch.

“ ‘A wonder more amazing would we find? The hyena shows it, of a double kind: The thin chameleon fed with air, receives The colour of the thing to which he cleaves.

“ ‘India when conquer’d, on the conquering god For planted vines the sharp-eyed lynx bestow’d, Whose moisture shed before it touches earth Congeals in air, and gives to gems their birth. So coral soft, and white in ocean’s bed, Comes harden’d up in air, and glows with red.

“ ‘All changing species should my song recite; Before I ceased, would change the day to night. Nations and empires flourish, and decay, By turns command, and in their turns obey; Time softens hardy people; time again Hardens to war a soft, unwarlike train. Thus Troy for ten long years her foes withstood, And, daily bleeding, bore the expense of blood: Now for thick streets it shows an empty space, Or, only fill’d with tombs of her own perish’d race, Herself becomes the sepulchre of what she was.

“ ‘Mycene, Sparta, Thebes, of mighty fame, Are vanish’d out of substance into name; And Dardan Rome, that just begins to rise On Tiber’s banks, in time shall mate the skies; Widening her bounds, and working on her way, Ev’n now she meditates imperial sway: Yet this is change, but she by changing thrives, Like

moons new born, and in her cradle strives To fill her infant horns: an hour shall come, When the round world shall be contain'd in Rome.

" 'For thus old saws foretell, and Helenus Anchises' drooping son enliven'd thus, When Ilium now was in a sinking state, And he was doubtful of his future fate: "Oh goddess born! with thy hard fortune strive; Troy never can be lost, and thou alive. Thy passage thou shalt free through fire and sword, And Troy in foreign lands shall be restored: In happier fields a rising town I see Greater than whate'er was, or is, or e'er shall be; And Heaven yet owes the world a race derived from thee. Sages and chiefs, of other lineage born, The city shall extend—extended, shall adorn: But from Iulus he must draw his breath, By whom thy Rome shall rule the conquer'd earth Whom heaven will lend mankind, on earth to reign, And late require the precious pledge again." This Helenus to great Aeneas told, Which I retain, e'er since in other mould My soul was clothed; and now rejoice to view My country walls rebuilt, and Troy revived anew, Raised by the fall, decreed by loss to gain, Enslaved but to be free, and conquer'd but to reign.

" ' 'Tis time my hard mouth'd coursers to control, Apt to run riot, and transgress the goal; And therefore I conclude, whatever lies In earth, or flits in air, or fills the skies, All suffer change; and we that are of soul And body mix'd, are members of the whole: Then when our sires or grandsires shall forsake The forms of men, and brutal figures take, Thus housed, securely let their spirits rest, Nor violate thy father in the beast, Thy friend, thy brother, any of thy kin; If none of these, yet there's a man within: Oh spare to make a Thyestaean meal, To enclose his body, and his soul expel.

" 'Ill customs by degrees to habits rise, Ill habits soon become exalted vice: What more advance can mortals make in sin, So near perfection, who with blood begin? Deaf to the calf that lies beneath the knife, Looks up, and from her butcher begs her life; Deaf to the harmless kid, that, ere he dies, All methods to procure thy mercy

tries, And imitates in vain thy children's cries? Where will he stop, who feeds with household bread, Then eats the poultry which before he fed? Let plough thy steers, that when they lose their breath, To nature, not to thee, they may impute their death. Let goats for food their loaded udders lend, And sheep from winter cold thy sides defend; But neither springes, nets, nor snares employ, And be no more ingenious to destroy. Free as in air, let birds on earth remain, Nor let insidious glue their wings constrain; Nor opening hounds the trembling stags affright, Nor purple feathers intercept his flight; Nor hooks conceal'd in baits for fish prepare, Nor lines to heave them twinkling up in air.

" 'Take not away the life you cannot give; For all things have an equal right to live: Kill noxious creatures, where 'tis sin to save; This only just prerogative we have: But nourish life with vegetable food, And shun the sacrilegious taste of blood.' "

These precepts by the Samian sage were taught, Which godlike Numa to the Sabines brought, And thence transferr'd to Rome, by gift his own; A willing people, and an offer'd throne. Oh happy monarch! sent by Heaven to bless A savage nation with soft arts of peace; To teach religion, rapine to restrain, Give laws to lust, and sacrifice ordain: Himself a saint, a goddess was his bride; And all the muses o'er his acts preside.

Story of Hippolytus

Hippolytus, rejecting with horror the advances of his stepmother Phaedra, is accused by her of the guilt which he has refused to contract—The angry Theseus entreats Neptune to punish the incontinence of his son, and the innocent youth is thrown from his chariot and dashed to pieces—He is after ward restored to life by Diana, who disguises his features, and bestows on him immortal existence.

Advanced in years he died; one common date His reign concluded, and his mortal state. Their tears plebeians and patricians shed, And pious matrons wept their monarch dead. His mournful wife, her sorrows to bewail, Withdrew from Rome, and

sought the Arician vale: Hid in thick woods, she made incessant moans, Disturbing Cynthia's sacred rites with groans. How oft the nymphs, who ruled the wood and lake, Reproved her tears, and words of comfort spake! "How oft in vain," the son of Theseus said, "Thy stormy sorrows be with patience laid; Nor are thy fortunes to be wept alone; Weigh others' woes, and learn to bear thine own. Be mine an instance to assuage thy grief: Would mine were none! yet mine may bring relief.

"You've heard, perhaps, in conversation told, What once befell Hippolytus of old; To death by Theseus' easy faith betray'd, And caught in snares his wicked stepdame laid. The wondrous tale your credit scarce may claim, Yet, strange to say, behold in me the same Whom amorous Phaedra oft had press'd in vain, My father's honour and my own to stain; Till, seized with fear, or by revenge inspired, She charged on me the crimes herself desired. Expell'd by Theseus, from his home I fled, With heaps of curses on my guiltless head. Forlorn, I sought Pitthean Troezen's land, And drove my chariot o'er Corinthus' strand; When from the surface of the level main A billow rising, heaved above the plain, Rolling and gathering, till so high it swell'd, A mountain's height the enormous mass excell'd; Then bellowing, burst, when from the summit cleaved, A horned bull his ample chest upheaved: His mouth and nostrils storms of briny rain, Expiring, blew. Dread horror seized my train. I stood unmoved. My father's cruel doom Claim'd all my soul, nor fear could find a room. Amazed, a while my trembling coursers stood, With prick'd-up ears, contemplating the flood; Then, starting sudden from the dreadful view, At once like lightning from the seas they flew, And o'er the craggy rocks the chariot drew. In vain to stop the hot-mouthed steeds I tried, And, bending backward, all my strength applied; The frothy foam in driving flakes distains The bits and bridles, and bedews the reins. But though as yet untamed they run, at length Their heady rage had tired beneath my strength, When in the spokes a stump entangling, tore The shatter'd wheel, and from its axle bore. The shock impetuous toss'd me from the seat, Caught in the reins, beneath my horses' feet; Then stretch'd, the well-knit limbs in pieces haled; Part

stuck behind, and part the chariot trail'd, Till, midst my cracking joints and breaking bones, I breathed away my wearied soul in groans. No part distinguish'd from the rest was found, But all my parts a universal wound.

"Now say, self-tortured nymph, can you compare Our griefs as equal, or in justice dare? I saw besides the darksome realms of wo, And bathed my wounds in smoking streams below. There I had stay'd, nor second life enjoy'd, But Paean's son his wondrous art employ'd. To light restored, by medicinal skill, In spite of fate, and rigid Pluto's will, The invidious object to preserve from view, A misty cloud around me Cynthia threw; And lest my sight should stir my foes to rage, She stamp'd my visage with the marks of age. My former hue was changed, and for it shown A set of features and a face unknown. A while the goddess stood in doubt, or Crete, Or Delos' isle, to choose for my retreat. Delos and Crete refused, this wood she chose, Bade me my former luckless name depose, Which kept alive the memory of my woes; Then said, 'Immortal life be thine, and thou, Hippolytus once call'd, be Virbius now.' Here then a god, but of the inferior race, I serve my goddess, and attend her chase."

Egeria Transformed to a Fountain

Egeria, the wife of Numa, while lamenting the loss of her husband, is changed by Apollo into a fountain.

But others' woes were useless to appease Egeria's grief, or set her mind at ease: Beneath the hill fill comfortless she laid; The dropping tears her eyes incessant shed, Till pitying Phoebus eased her pious wo, Thaw'd to a spring, whose streams for ever flow.

The nymphs and Virbius like amazement fill'd, As seized the swains who Tyrrhene furrows till'd, When heaving up, a clod was seen to roll, Untouch'd, self-moved, and big with human soul. The spreading mass, in former shape deposed, Began to shoot, and arms and legs disclosed, Till, form'd a perfect man, the living mould Oped its

new mouth, and future truths foretold; And, Tages named by natives of the place, Taught arts prophetic to the Tuscan race.

Or such as once by Romulus was shown, Who saw his lance with sprouting leaves o'ergrown, When fix'd in earth the point began to shoot, And, growing downward, turn'd a fibrous root; While spread aloft, the branching arms display'd, O'er wondering crowds, an unexpected shade.

Story of Cippus

A noble Roman, named Cippus, while returning victorious to the city, finds horns growing on his forehead, which are pronounced by the soothsayers to foretell his future reign if he should enter Rome—Unwilling to enslave his country, he voluntarily banishes himself; and a large portion of land without the city walls is allotted for his support by the grateful senate.

Or as when Cippus in the current view'd The shooting horns that on his forehead stood, His temples first he feels, and, with surprise, His touch confirms the assurance of his eyes. Straight to the skies his horned front he rears, And to the gods directs these pious prayers:

"If this portent be prosperous, oh decree To Rome the event; if otherwise, to me." An altar then of turf he hastes to raise; Rich gums in fragrant exhalations blaze; The panting entrails crackle as they fry, And boding fumes pronounce a mystery. Soon as the augur saw the holy fire, And victims with presaging signs expire, To Cippus then he turns his eyes with speed, And views the horny honours of his head; Then cried, "Hail, conqueror! thy call obey; Those omens I behold presage thy sway: Rome waits thy nod, unwilling to be free, And owns thy sovereign power as fate's decree."

He said; and Cippus, starting at the event, Spoke in these words his pious discontent:

"Far hence, ye gods, this execration send, And the great race of Romulus defend.

Better that I in exile live abhorr’d, Than e’er the capitol should style me lord.”

This spoke, he hides with leaves his omen’d head Then prays; the senate next convenes, and said:

“If augurs can foresee, a wretch is come, Design’d by destiny the bane of Rome. Two horns (most strange to tell) his temples crown: If e’er he pass the walls, and gain the town, Your laws are forfeit that ill-fated hour, And liberty must yield to lawless power. Your gates he might have enter’d; but this arm Seized the usurper, and withheld the harm. Haste, find the monster out, and let him be Condemn’d to all the senate can decree; Or tied in chains, or into exile thrown, Or by the tyrant’s death prevent your own.”

The crowd such murmurs utter as they stand, As swelling surges breaking on the strand: Or as when gathering gales sweep o’er the grove, And their tall heads the bending cedars move. Each with confusion gazed, and then began To feel his fellow’s brows, and find the man. Cippus then shakes his garland off, and cries, “The wretch you want I offer to your eyes.”

The anxious throng look’d down, and, sad in thought, All wish’d they had not found the sign they sought. In haste, with laurel wreaths his head they bind: Such honour to such virtue was assign’d. Then thus the senate: “Hear, oh Cippus, hear: So godlike is thy tutelary care, That since in Rome thyself forbids thy stay, For thy abode those acres we convey The ploughshare can surround, the labour of a day. In deathless records thou shalt stand enroll’d; And Rome’s rich posts shall shine with horns of gold.”

Occasion of Esculapius Being Brought to Rome

The city of Rome is delivered from a plague by the presence of Esculapius, who willingly accompanies the Roman ambassadors from Epidaurus in the form of a serpent.

Melodious maids of Pindus, who inspire The flowing strains, and tune the vocal lyre, Tradition's secrets are unlock'd to you, Old tales revive, and ages past renew; You who can hidden causes best expound, Say, whence the isle which Tiber flows around, Its altars with a heavenly stranger graced, And in our shrines the god of physic placed.

A wasting plague infected Latium's skies; Pale, bloodless looks were seen, with ghastly eyes; The dire disease's marks each visage wore, And the pure blood was changed to putrid gore: In vain were human remedies applied; In vain the power of healing herbs was tried: Wearied with death, they seek celestial aid, And visit Phoebus in his Delphic shade; In the world's centre sacred Delphos stands, And gives its oracles to distant lands: Here they implore the god, with fervent vows, His salutary power to interpose, And end a great afflicted city's woes. The holy temple sudden tremours proved; The laurel grove and all its quivers moved; In hollow sounds the priestess thus began, And through each bosom thrilling horrors ran: "The assistance, Roman, which you here implore, Seek from another, and a nearer shore; Relief must be implored, and succour won, Not from Apollo, but Apollo's son; My son, to Latium borne, shall bring redress; Go with good omens, and expect success."

When these clear oracles the senate knew, The sacred tripod's counsels they pursue, Depute a pious and a chosen band, Who sail to Epidaurus' neighbouring land. Before the Grecian elders when they stood, They pray them to bestow the healing god: "Ordain'd was he to save Ausonia's state; So promised Delphos, and unerring fate."

Opinions various their debates enlarge: Some plead to yield to Rome the sacred charge; Others, tenacious of their country's wealth, Refuse to grant the power who guards its health.

While dubious they remain'd, the wasting light Withdrew before the growing shades of night; Thick darkness now obscured the dusky skies: Now, Roman, closed in

sleep were mortal eyes, When health's auspicious god appears to thee, And thy glad dreams his form celestial see: In his left hand, a rural staff preferr'd, His right is seen to stroke his decent beard. "Dismiss," said he, with mildness all divine, "Dismiss your fears; I come, and leave my shrine. This serpent view, that with ambitious play My staff encircles, mark him every way; His form, though larger, nobler, I'll assume, And changed, as gods should be, bring aid to Rome." Here fled the vision, and the vision's flight Was follow'd by the cheerful dawn of light.

Nor was the morn with blushing streaks o'erspread, And all the starry fires of heaven were fled; The chiefs perplex'd, and fill'd with doubtful care, To their protector's sumptuous roofs repair, By genuine signs implore him to express, What seats he deigns to choose, what land to bless: Scarce their ascending prayers had reached the sky; Lo, the serpentine god, erected high! Forerunning hissings his approach confess'd; Bright shone his golden scales, and waved his lofty crest; The trembling altar his appearance spoke; The marble floor, and glittering ceiling shook; The doors were rock'd; the statue seemed to nod; And all the fabric own'd the present god; His radiant chest he taught aloft to rise, And round the temple cast his flaming eyes: Struck was the astonish'd crowd; the holy priest, His temples with white bands of ribboned dress'd, With reverent awe the power divine confess'd! "The god! the god!" he cries; "all tongues be still! Each conscious breast devoutest ardour fill! Oh beauteous! oh divine! assist our cares, And be propitious to thy vot'ries prayers!" All with consenting hearts, and pious fear, The words repeat, the deity revere: The Romans in their holy worship join'd, With silent awe, and purity of mind: Gracious to them, his crest is seen to nod, And, as an earnest of his care, the god, Thrice hissing, vibrates thrice his forked tongue; And now the smooth descent he glides along: Still on the ancient seats he bends his eyes, In which his statue breathes, his altars rise; His long-loved shrine with kind concern he leases, And to forsake the accustom'd mansion grieves: At length his weeping bulk in state is borne Through the throng'd streets, which scatter'd flowers adorn; Through many

a fold he winds his mazy course, And gains the port and moles, which break the ocean's force. 'Twas here he made a stand, and having view'd The pious train, who his last steps pursued, Seem'd to dismiss their zeal with gracious eyes, While gleams of pleasure in his aspect rise.

And now the Latian vessel he ascends; Beneath the weighty god the vessel bends: The Latins on the strand great Jove appease, Their cables loose, and plough the yielding seas: The high-rear'd serpent from the stern displays His gorgeous form, and the blue deep surveys; The ship is wafted on with gentle gales, And o'er the calm Ionian smoothly sails; On the sixth morn the Italian coast they gain, And touch Lacinia, graced with Juno's fane; Now fair Calabria to the sight is lost, And all the cities on her fruitful coast; They pass at length the rough Sicilian shore, The Brutian soil, rich with metallic ore, The famous isles, where Aeolus was king, And Paestus blooming with eternal spring: Minerva's cape they leave, and Capreae's isle, Campania, on whose hills the vineyards smile, The city, which Alcides' spoils adorn, Naples, for soft delight and pleasure born; Fair Stabiae, with Cumean sibyls' seats, And Baiae's tepid baths, and green retreats; Linternum next they reach, where balmy gums Distil from mastic trees, and spread perfumes; Cajeta, from the nurse so named for whom With pious care Aeneas raised a tomb. Vulturne, whose whirlpools suck the numerous sands, And Trachas, and Minturnae's marshy lands, And Formia's coast is left, and Circe's plain, Which yet remembers her enchanting reign; To Antium, last, his course the pilot guides.

Here, while the anchor'd vessel safely rides, (For now the ruffled deep portends a storm,) The spiry god unfolds his spheric form, Through large indentings draws his lubric train, And seeks the refuge of Apollo's fane; The fane is situate on the yellow shore: When the sea smiled, and the winds raged no more, He leaves his father's hospitable lands, And furrows, with his rattling scales, the sands Along the coast; at length the ship regains, And sails to Tibur, and Lavinium's plains. Here mingling crowds to meet their patron came, Ev'n the chaste guardians of the Vestal flame,

From every part tumultuous they repair, And joyful acclamations rend the air: Along the flow'ry banks, on either side, Where the tall ship floats on the swelling tide, Disposed in decent order altars rise, And crackling incense, as it mounts the skies, The air with sweets refreshes; while the knife, Warm with the victim's blood, lets out the streaming life.

The world's great mistress, Rome, receives him now; On the mast's top reclined he waves his brow, And from that height surveys the great abodes, And mansions, worthy of residing gods. The land, a narrow neck, itself extends, Round which his course the stream divided bends; The stream's two arms, on either side, are seen, Stretch'd out in equal length; the land between. The isle, so call'd, from hence derives its name: 'Twas here the salutary serpent came; Nor sooner has he left the Latian pine, But he assumes again his form divine, And now no more the drooping city mourns, Joy is again restored, and health returns.

Deification of Julius Caesar

Venus, unable to arrest the impending death of Julius Cesar, procures his admission into the celestial mansions.

But Esculapius was a foreign power: In his own city Caesar we adore: Him arms and arts alike renown'd beheld, In peace conspicuous, dreadful in the field; His rapid conquests, and swift-finish'd wars, The hero justly fix'd among the stars; Yet is his progeny his greatest fame: The son immortal makes the father's name. The sea-girt Britons, by his courage tamed, For their high rocky cliffs, and fierceness famed; His dreadful navies, which victorious rode O'er Nile's affrighted waves and seven-sourced flood; Numidia, and the spacious realms regain'd, Where Cinyphis or flows, or Juba reign'd; The powers of titled Mithridates broke, And Pontus added to the Roman yoke; Triumphal shows decreed, for conquests won, For conquests, which the triumphs still outshone; These are great deeds; yet less, than to have given The world a lord, in whom, propitious Heaven, When you decreed the sovereign rule

to place, You bless'd with lavish bounty human race.

Now lest so great a prince might seem to rise Of mortal stem, his sire must reach the skies; The beauteous goddess, that Aeneas bore, Foresaw it, and foreseeing did deplore; For well she knew her hero's fate was nigh, Devoted by conspiring arms to die. Trembling, and pale, Jo every god she cried: "Behold, what deep and subtle arts are tried, To end the last, the only branch that springs From my lulus, and the Dardan kings! How bent they are! how desperate to destroy All that is left me of unhappy Troy! Am I alone by fate ordain'd to know Uninterrupted care and endless wo? Now from Tydides' spear I feel the wound: Now Ilium's towers the hostile flames surround: Troy laid in dust, my exiled son I mourn, Through angry seas, and raging billows borne; O'er the wide deep his wandering course he bends; Now to the sullen shades of Styx descends: With Turnus driven at last fierce wars to wage, Whether with unpitying Juno's rage. But why record I now my ancient woes? Sense of past ills in present fears I lose; On me their points the impious daggers throw; Forbid it, gods, repel the direful blow: If by cursed weapons Numa's priest expires, No longer shall ye burn, ye Vestal fires."

While such complainings Cypria's grief disclose, In each celestial breast compassion rose: Not gods can alter fate's resistless will; Yet they foretold by signs the approaching ill. Dreadful were heard, among the clouds, alarms Of echoing trumpets, and of clashing arms; The sun's pale image gave so faint a light, That the sad earth was almost veil'd in night; The ether's face with fiery meteors glow'd; With storms of hail were mingled drops of blood; A dusky hue the morning star o'erspread, And the moon's orb was stain'd with spots of red; In every place portentous shrieks were heard, The fatal warnings of the infernal bird; In every place the marble melts to tears; While in the groves, revered through length of years, Boding and awful sounds the ear invade, And solemn music warbles through the shade; No victim can atone the impious age, No sacrifice the wrathful gods assuage; Dire wars and civil fury threat the state; And every omen points out Caesar's fate:

Around each hallow'd shrine, and sacred dome, Night-howling dogs disturb the peaceful gloom; Their silent seats the wandering shades forsake, And fearful tremblings the rock'd city shake.

Yet could not, by these prodigies, be broke The plotted charm, or stay'd the fatal stroke; Their swords the assassins in the temple draw: Their murdering hands nor gods nor temples awe; This sacred place their bloody weapons stain, And virtue falls, before the altar slain. 'Twas now fair Cypria, with her woes oppress'd, In raging anguish smote her heavenly breast; Wild with distracting fears, the goddess tried Her hero in the ethereal cloud to hide; The cloud, which youthful Paris did conceal, When Menelaus urged the threat'ning steel; The cloud, which once deceived Tydides' sight, And saved Aeneas in the unequal fight.

When Jove: "In vain, fair daughter, you essay To o'errule destiny's unconquer'd sway: Your doubts to banish, enter fate's abode; A privilege to heavenly powers allow'd; There you shall see the records graved, in length, On iron and solid brass, with mighty strength; Which heaven and earth's concussion shall endure, Maugre all shocks, eternal, and secure: There, on perennial adamant design'd, The various fortunes of your race you'll find: Well I have mark'd them, and will now relate To thee the settled laws of future fate. He, goddess, for whose death the fates you blame, Has finish'd his determined course with fame: To thee 'tis given at length, that he shall shine Among the gods, and grace the worshipp'd shrine: His son to all his greatness shall be heir, And worthily succeed to empire's care: Ourself will lead his wars, resolved to aid The brave avenger of his father's shade: To him its freedom Mutina shall owe, And Decius his auspicious conduct know; His dreadful powers shall shake Pharsalia's plain, And drench in gore Phillippi's fields again: A mighty leader, in Sicilia's flood, Great Pompey's warlike son, shall be subdued; Egypt's soft queen, adorn'd with fatal charms, Shall mourn her soldiers' unsuccessful arms: Too late shall find her swelling hopes were vain, And know that Rome o'er Memphis still must reign: What name I Afric, or Nile's hidden head For as both

oceans roll, his power shall spread: All the known earth to him shall homage pay, And the seas own his universal sway: When cruel war no more disturbs mankind, To civil studies shall he bend his mind; With equal justice guardian laws ordain, And by his great example vice restrain: Where will his bounty or his goodness end? To times unborn his generous views extend; The virtues of his heir our praise engage, And promise blessings to the coming age: Late shall he in his kindred orbs be placed, With Pylian years, and crowded honours graced. Meantime, your hero's fleeting spirit bear, Fresh from his wounds, and change it to a star: So shall great Julius rites divine assume, And from the skies eternal smile on Rome."

This spoke, the goddess to the senate flew; Where, her fair form conceal'd from mortal view, Her Caesar's heavenly part she made her care, Nor left the recent soul to waste to air; But bore it upward to its native skies: Glowing with newborn fires she saw it rise; Forth springing from her bosom up it flew, And, kindling as it soar'd, a comet grew: Above the lunar sphere it took its flight, And shot behind it a long trail of light.

Reign of Augustus, in Which Ovid Flourished

The superiority of Augustus to his great predecessor is insisted on by the courteous poet.

Thus raised, his glorious offspring Julius view'd. Beneficently great, and scattering good, Deeds, that his own surpass'd, with joy beheld, And his large heart dilates to be excell'd. What though this prince refuses to receive The preference, which his juster subjects give; Fame uncontroll'd, that no restraint obeys, The homage, shunn'd by modest virtue, pays, And proves disloyal only in his praise. Though great his sire, him greater we proclaim: So Atreus yields to Agamemnon's fame; Achilles so superior honours won, And Peleus must submit to Peleus' son: Examples yet more noble to disclose, So Saturn was eclipsed, when Jove to empire rose: Jove rules the heavens, the earth Augustus sways; Each claims a monarch's,

and a father’s praise.

Celestials, who for Rome your cares employ; Ye gods, who guarded the remains of Troy; Ye native gods, here born, and fix’d by fate; Quirinus, founder of the Roman state; Oh parent Mars, from whom Quirinus sprung; Chaste Vesta, Caesar’s household gods among Most sacred held; domestic Phoebus, thou, To whom with Vesta chaste alike we bow; Great guardian of the high Tarpeian rock; And all ye powers, whom poets may invoke; Oh grant, that day may claim our sorrows late, When loved Augustus shall submit to fate, Visit those seats, where gods and heroes dwell, And leave, in tears, the world he ruled so well!

The Poet Concludes

Ovid concludes with a rapturous anticipation of the renown which will follow the publication of this work.

The work is finish’d, which nor dreads the rage Of tempests, fire, or war, or wasting age; Come, soon or late, death’s undetermined day, This mortal being only can decay; My nobler part, my fame, shall reach the skies, And to late times with blooming honours rise: Whate’er the unbounded Roman power obeys, All climes and nations shall record thy praise: If ’tis allow’d to poets to divine. One half of round eternity is mine.

Colophon

Metamorphoses was completed in 8 AD by Ovid. It was translated from Latin in 1717 by John Dryden, Joseph Addison, Laurence Eusden, Arthur Maynwaring, Samuel Croxall, Nahum Tate, William Stonestreet, Thomas Vernon, John Gay, Alexander Pope, Stephen Harvey, William Congreve, John Ozell, Temple Stanyan, Alexander Stopford Catcott, Nicholas Rowe, Samuel Garth, and Leonard Welsted.

This ebook was transcribed and produced for Standard Ebooks by Emma Sweeney,

and is based on digital scans from the HathiTrust Digital Library.

The cover page is adapted from The Fall of Phaeton, a painting completed in 1608 by Sir Peter Paul Rubens. The cover and title pages feature the League Spartan and Sorts Mill Goudy typefaces created in 2014 and 2009 by The League of Moveable Type.

This edition was released on November 15, 2026, 3:06 a.m. and is based on revision bdc9ecb. The first edition of this ebook was released on March 29, 2023, 5:57 a.m. You can check for updates to this ebook, view its revision history, or download it for different ereading systems at standardebooks.org/ebooks/ovid/metamorphoses/various-translators.

The volunteer-driven Standard Ebooks project relies on readers like you to submit typos, corrections, and other improvements. Anyone can contribute at standardebooks.org.

Endnotes

Stellio.

Amphiaraus.

Dejanira.

Eteocles and Polynices.

Amphiaraus.

Alcmaeon.

Maeander.

Ajax.

Imprint

This ebook is the product of many hours of hard work by volunteers for Standard Ebooks, and builds on the hard work of other literature lovers made possible by the public domain.

This particular ebook is based on digital scans from the HathiTrust Digital Library.

The source text and artwork in this ebook are believed to be in the United States public domain; that is, they are believed to be free of copyright restrictions in the United States. They may still be copyrighted in other countries, so users located outside of the United States must check their local laws before using this ebook. The creators of, and contributors to, this ebook dedicate their contributions to the worldwide public domain via the terms in the CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication. For full license information, see the Uncopyright at the end of this ebook.

Standard Ebooks is a volunteer-driven project that produces ebook editions of public domain literature using modern typography, technology, and editorial standards, and distributes them free of cost. You can download this and other ebooks carefully produced for true book lovers at standardebooks.org.

Uncopyright

May you do good and not evil. May you find forgiveness for yourself and forgive others. May you share freely, never taking more than you give.

Copyright pages exist to tell you that you can’t do something. Unlike them, this Uncopyright page exists to tell you that the writing and artwork in this ebook are believed to be in the United States public domain; that is, they are believed to be free of copyright restrictions in the United States. The United States public domain represents our collective cultural heritage, and items in it are free for anyone in the United States to do almost anything at all with, without having to get permission.

Copyright laws are different all over the world, and the source text or artwork in this

ebook may still be copyrighted in other countries. If you're not located in the United States, you must check your local laws before using this ebook. Standard Ebooks makes no representations regarding the copyright status of the source text or artwork in this ebook in any country other than the United States.

Non-authorship activities performed on items that are in the public domain—so-called "sweat of the brow" work—don't create a new copyright. That means that nobody can claim a new copyright on an item that is in the public domain for, among other things, work like digitization, markup, or typography. Regardless, the contributors to this ebook release their contributions under the terms in the CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication, thus dedicating to the worldwide public domain all of the work they've done on this ebook, including but not limited to metadata, the titlepage, imprint, colophon, this Uncopyright, and any changes or enhancements to, or markup on, the original text and artwork. This dedication doesn't change the copyright status of the source text or artwork. We make this dedication in the interest of enriching our global cultural heritage, to promote free and libre culture around the world, and to give back to the unrestricted culture that has given all of us so much.

Table of Contents

Titlepage Imprint Book I Creation of the World Golden Age Silver Age Brazen Age Iron Age Giants' War Transformation of Daphne Into a Laurel Transformation of Io Into a Heifer, and the Eyes of Argus Into a Peacock's Train Transformation of Syrinx Into Reeds Book II Story of Phaeton Phaeton's Sisters Transformed Into Trees Transformation of Cycnus Into a Swan Story of Calisto Story of Coronis, and Birth of Esculapius Ocyrrhoe Transformed to a Mare Transformation of Battus to a Touchstone Story of Aglauros Transformed Into a Statue Europa's Rape Book III Story of Cadmus Transformation of Actaeon Into a Stag Birth of Bacchus

Transformation of Echo Story of Narcissus Story of Pentheus Mariners Transformed to Dolphins Death of Pentheus Book IV Story of Alcithoe and Her Sisters Story of Pyramus and Thisbe Story of Leucothoe and the Sun Transformation of Clytie Story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus Alcithoe and Her Sisters Transformed to Bats Transformation of Ino and Melicerta to Sea-Gods Transformation of the Theban Matrons Cadmus and His Queen Transformed Into Serpents Story of Perseus Atlas Transformed to a Mountain Andromeda Rescued from the Sea Monster Story of Medusa's Head Book V Story of Perseus Continued Minerva's Interview with the Muses Fate of Pyreneus Story of the Pierides Song of the Pierides Song of the Muses Rape of Proserpine Cyane Dissolves to a Fountain Boy Transformed to an Eft Transformation of Ascalaphus Into an Owl Daughters of Achelous Transformed Into Sirens Story of Arethusa Transformation of Lyncus The Pierides Transformed to Magpies Book VI Transformation of Arachne Into a Spider Story of Niobe Transformation of Niobe Peasants of Lycia Transformed to Frogs Fate of Marsyas Story of Pelops Story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela Boreas in Love Book VII Story of Medea and Jason Old Aeson Restored to Youth Death of Pelias Story of Aegeus Story of Ants Changed to Men Story of Cephalus and Procris Book VIII Story of Nisus and Scylla The Labyrinth Story of Daedalus and Icarus Story of Meleager and Atalanta Transformation of the Naiads Perimele Turned Into an Island Story of Baucis and Philemon Changes of Proteus Story of Erisichthon Description of Famine Transformations of Erisichthon's Daughter Book IX Story of Achelous and Hercules Death of Nessus the Centaur Death of Hercules Transformation of Lychas Into a Rock Apotheosis of Hercules Transformation of Galanthis Fable of Dryope Iolaus Restored to Youth Prophecy of Themis Debate of the Gods Passion of Byblis Fable of Iphis and Ianthe Book X Story of Orpheus and Eurydice Fable of Cyparissus Hyacinthus Transformed Into a Flower Transformations of the Cerastae and Propoetides Story of Pygmalion and the Statue Story of Venus and Adonis Book XI Death of Orpheus Thracian Women Transformed to Trees Fable of Midas

Building of Troy Story of Thetis and Peleus Transformation of Daedalion A Wolf Turned Into Marble Story of Ceyx and Alcyone Aesacus Transformed Into a Cormorant Book XII Trojan War House of Fame Story of Cycnus Story of Caeneus Skirmish Between the Centaurs and Lapithites Story of Cyllarus and Hylonome Caeneus Transformed to an Eagle Fate of Periclymenos Death of Achilles Book XIII Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses Death of Ajax Story of Polyxena and Hecuba Funeral of Memnon Voyage of Aeneas Story of Acis, Polyphemus, and Galatea Story of Glaucus and Scylla Book XIV Transformation of Scylla Voyage of Aeneas Continued Transformation of Cercopians Into Apes Aeneas Descends to Hell Story of the Sibyl Adventures of Achaemenides Adventures of Macareus Story of Picus and Canens Aeneas Arrives in Italy Adventures of Diomedes Transformation of Appulus Trojan Ships Transformed to Sea Nymphs Deification of Aeneas Story of Vertumnus and Pomona Story of Iphis and Anaxarete Latian Line Assumption of Romulus Assumption of Hersilia Book XV Pythagorean Philosophy Story of Hippolytus Egeria Transformed to a Fountain Story of Cippus Occasion of Esculapius Being Brought to Rome Deification of Julius Caesar Reign of Augustus, in Which Ovid Flourished The Poet Concludes Endnotes Colophon Uncopyright

Landmarks