

CUMNOR HALL.

THE dews of summer night did fall;
The moon (sweet regent of the sky)
Silvered the walls of Cumnor Hall,
And many an oak that grew thereby.

Now nought was heard beneath the skies
(The sounds of busy life were still),
Save an unhappy lady's sighs,
That issued from that lonely pile.

'Leicester,' she cried, 'is this thy love
That thou so oft hast sworn to me,
To leave me in this lonely grove,
Immured in shameful privacy?

'No more thou comest with lover's speed,
Thy once beloved bride to see;
But be she alive, or be she dead,
I fear, stern earl, 's the same to thee.

'Not so the usage I received
When happy in my father's hall;
No faithless husband then me grieved,
No chilling fears did me appal.

'I rose up with the cheerful morn,
No lark more blithe, no flow'r more gay;
And, like the bird that haunts the thorn,
So merrily sang the live-long day.

'If that my beauty is but small,
Among court ladies all despised,
Why didst thou rend it from that hall,
Where (scornful earl) it well was prized?

'And when you first to me made suit,
How fair I was you oft would say!
And, proud of conquest—pluck'd the fruit,
Then left the blossom to decay.

'Yes! now neglected and despised,
The rose is pale,—the lily's dead;—
But be that once their charms so prized,
Is sure the cause those charms are fled.

'For know, when sick'ning grief doth prey,
And tender love's repaid with scorn,
The sweetest beauty will decay—
What flow'r yet can endure the storm?

'At court, I'm told, is beauty's throne,
Where every lady's passing rare;
That eastern flow'rs, that shame the sun,
Are not so glowing, not so fair.

'Then, earl, why didst thou leave the beds
Where roses and where lilies vie,
To seek a primrose, whose pale shades
Must sicken—when those gaudes are by?

'Mong rural beauties I was one,
Among the fields wild flow'rs are fair;
Some country swain might me have won,
And thought my lady passing rare.

'But, Leicester, (or I much am wrong),
Or 'tis not beauty hurls thy vows;
Rather ambition's gilded crown
Makes thee forget thy humble spouse.

'Then, Leicester, why, again I plead
(The injured surely may repine),
Why didst thou wed a country maid,
When some fair princess might be thine?

'Why didst thou praise my humble charms,
And, oh! then leave them to decay?
Why didst thou win me to thy arms,
Then leave me to mourn the live-long day?

'The village maidens of the plain
Salute me lowly as they go;
Envious they mark my silken train,
Nor think a countess can have woe.

'The simple nymphs! they little know
How far more happy's their estate,—
—To smile for joy—than sigh for woe—
—To be content—than to be great.

'How far less blest am I than them,
Dually to pine and waste with care!
Like the poor plant that, from its stem
Divided,—feels the chilling air.

'Nor (cruel earl!) can I enjoy
The humble charms of solitude;
Your minions proud my peace destroy
By sullen frowns or pratings rude.

'Last night, as sad I chanced to stray,
The village death-bell smote my ear;
They wink'd aside, and seem'd to say,
"Countess, prepare—thy end is near!"

'And now, while happy peasants sleep,
Here I sit lonely and forlorn;
No one to soothe me as I weep,
Save Philomel on yonder thorn.

'My spirits flag—my hopes decay—
Still that dread death-bell smites my ear;
And many a lodging seems to say,
"Countess, prepare—thy end is near!"

Thus sore and sad that lady griev'd
In Cumnor Hall, so lone and drear,
And many a heartfelt sigh she heav'd,
And let fall many a bitter tear.

And ere the dawn of day appear'd,
In Cumnor Hall, so lone and drear,
Full many a piercing scream was heard,
And many a cry of mortal fear.

The death-bell thrice was heard to ring,
An aerial voice was heard to call,
And thrice the raven flap'd its wing
Around the tow'rs of Cumnor Hall.

The mastiff howl'd at village door,
The oaks were shatter'd on the green;
Woe was the hour—for never more
That hapless countess e'er was seen!

And in that manor now no more
Is cheerful feast and sprightly ball;
For ever since that dreary hour
Have spirits haunted Cumnor Hall.

The village maids, with fearful glance,
Avoid the ancient moss-grown wall;
Nor ever lead the merry dance
Among the groves of Cumnor Hall.

Full many a traveller oft hath sigh'd,
And pensive wret the countess' fall,
As wand'ring onwards they've espied
The haunted towers of Cumnor Hall.