

rected the storm, 'Lo! these are the avengers of perjured guilt. Mine are the thunders that burst from the cloud; mine the forked lightnings that blaze through the sky; and thine the devoted head that must endure their wrath.'

Lower to the earth bowed the sulphur-breathing cloud, and burst with more impetuous rage, while the spectres of Remorse vanished before the Recluse; and Despair alone remained, bestriding the lurid blast. Gigantic was his form as the leviathan of the deep, and rude as the howling savage of the woods. Sullen was the glare of his deep sunken eye; clotted the sable locks that shaded his lowering brow; and like the fangs of the wolf the terrors of his loud-gnashing teeth.—At his frown Nature stood appalled.

'Caitiff!' said the fiend, as he seized upon his prey, 'to me thou art resigned. Yield then to my power: resistance is in vain: mine are all the children of Guilt.'

Congealed was the blood of Fitzcary at the touch, and Horror slackened the sinews of his once dauntless might. The spectre snatched him aloft. High o'er the swelling Frore he suspended him in the air: then headlong plunged him into the foaming wave.

'Spirits of Mercy!' exclaimed the victim as he fell, 'must repentance and tears be fruitless and despised? Must the dominion of Despair prevail for ever?'

The petitions of repentance ascended on high: the lightnings of heaven chased the darkness of the night; and the tempest was heard no more. The Recluse stood restored on the margin of the stream, like the fawn escaped from the pursuing wolf, or the dove from the fowler's art.

Changed was the scene which had smote him with dismay; and where darkness and horror had harrowed up his soul, the cheerful beauties of the prospect reflected peace to his breast—like the smiles of love to the bosom of the youth long drooping with anguish and despair. The silver moon illuminated the azure vault of heaven, thick spangled with burnished stars. Her cheerful beams played among the dripping foliage of Selwood, and waned with the rippling stream. The bird of ill-omen was silent in the ruined tower, and Philomel attuned her sweetest song, while sighing Echo prolonged the soothing strain.

In shining robes, tinged as with dawning light, the spirit of Hope appeared before the Recluse, smiled with placid mien; and fixing her aspiring eye on the white-robed Genius of Mercy, who waved his palmy sceptre through the air, and warbled his consoling strain.

'Mortal!' said the shining harbinger of Peace, as she smiled with cherubic grace, 'attend to my instructive voice: for vain, without me, are the tears of contrition, and remorse can only lead to increasing guilt. Why wanderest thou here in the fullness of grief, nor seekest to repair the injury thou hast done? Not the tunic of the Hermit, nor the solitary musings of the Recluse, can restore to the spotted soul the purity it has lost, or atone to society for the vices of youth. Why hang thy arms neglected in this ruined tower, when Cruelty and Oppression are stalking abroad?'

'Say, as in the indolence of grief thou reclinest in thy mouldering cell, as thou mournest among the ruins of this Saxon castle, (whose turrets thy former valour humbled to the dust) do not the clang of thy shield and spear, and the trappings of war, as they shake with the passing blast,—ah! do not they remind thee of former glory, and reproach thy inglorious sloth? Are plunder and oppression heard of no more? Is this forest not infested by murderous bands; that thou trustest alone to thy groans, and thy tears, and the plaints of unavailing regret?'

'Lo! even now, mayest thou hope for pardon and for peace. Virtue and Joy may again be inmates of thy bosom, and the injured spirit of Egwina be appeased, if thy limbs were clasped in the warrior's steel; if the plaited mail shone on thy manly breast, and the trusty weapon armed thy undaunted hand.'

Such was the vision of Fitzcary, who, stretched on a wretched pallet, among the ruins of a dismantled tower, snatched a short and troubled repose in the centre of the forest of Selwood—the obscure retreat of penitence and despair. His neglected arms hung disordered over his head, polluted with cankered rust.

Troubled was his soul by the vision of the night; and eagerly he sought to reply: but the shrieks of distress resounding through the ruined domes, roused him from his sleep.

CANTO II.

Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.
VIRG.

By sad experience taught, alas! to know
The pangs of grief, I learn to succour woe.

FITZCARY started from his couch; his former value burned his throbbing heart. He snatches his helm, and again the plumed crest nods o'er his martial brow: he seizes his shield and sword, and rushes