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A DESCRIPTIVE
POEM—
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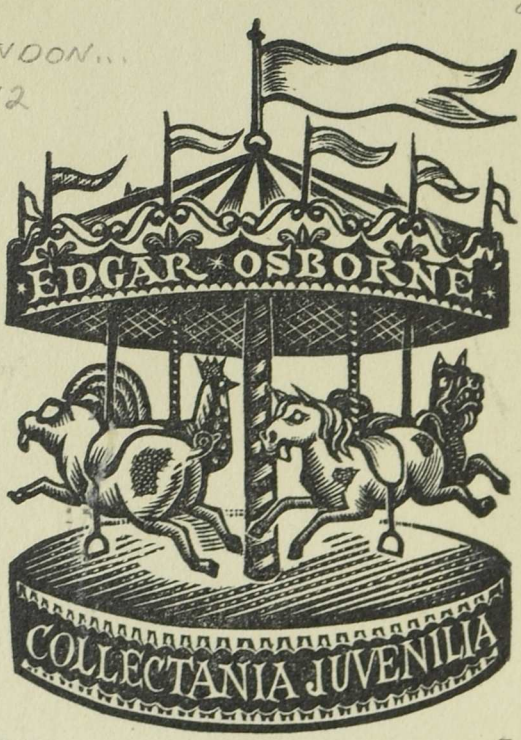

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LONDON:

A

DESCRIPTIVE

POEM.

Illustrated with Engravings.

SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED.

LONDON:

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LONDON:

A POEM.

WHILST other Bards delight in humble strains,
In purling rivers, and in verdant plains,
In rural plaints which rustic shepherds sing,
In fading autumn, or in rising spring,
May not a youth, with bolder pen, invite
Th' inspiring Muses from their heav'nly height,
To sing of LONDON, whose exalted spires,
With conscious pride, each British bosom fires?
LONDON, for wealth, for beauty long renown'd,
By science courted, and by commerce crown'd.

Quit, then, O Muse! the low inglorious strain,
The purling river, and the verdant plain;
Nor loitering pause upon the rural scene,
Where smiling flowers ever deck the green;
Where Colin whispers love, and Delia sighs,
And rocks resound with amorous replies;
Inspire your Bard to tune a nobler theme;
Exalted LONDON, and the Thamean stream!

In every realm some city stands confest
Richer, and more resplendent than the rest;
Where senates shine, and palaces arise,
And wealth commands her towering fanes to rise;
Where Justice sways her legislative wand,
And speaks her laws, and statutes to the land;
Where, when invasive danger presses round,
The trembling nation, all in arms, are found:
Such LONDON is to England's genial clime,
Where grandeur reigns, and temples rise sublime.

When rolling ages bid thy walls decay,
Thy temples moulder, grandeur fade away;
When this bright wave shall wash the silent shore,
Nor bear the freighted ship, nor hear the sounding oar;
When slumbering Thames shall over ruins swell,
Say, must no Bard to future ages tell,
That senates here, in all the pomp of power,
Display'd the fleeting pageants of an hour?
That princely levees once were seen to smile,
Where prostrate lies the desolated pile;
This masy dome, now tottering to the ground,
Heard the full organ swell it's sacred sound,
Whilst listening ears the heavenly numbers caught,
And pure religion woke the pious thought;
Here barks majestic mov'd in gayest pride,
Where now unnotic'd runs the sleeping tide?

Then come, descriptive nymph, with lively mien,
And take a transcript of the living scene;

Here raise thy strain to what the soul inspires,
What rapture kindles, and what glory fires;
That since all things are subject to decay,
And states and kingdoms flourish but their day
Thy faithful pencil may these scenes pourtray.

As Tiber's banks beheld majestic Rome,
That mine of learning, and of art that womb,
Rise on his banks, so Thames beholds to rise
Imperial LONDON reaching to the skies.
But here more purely flows the limpid wave :—
Tiber, a monarch's birth-place, and a grave,
With patriot blood oft stain'd the sanguine shore,
And, on the crimson wave, her navies bore;
When civil discord rear'd her fatal band,
Baleful destruction hover'd round the strand,
From ev'ry vein Rome pour'd her vital blood,
And murder'd senates dy'd the purple flood :—

St. Paul's Cathedral from the Thame

Here Thames, in murmurs, gently rolls along,
Soft as the music of an amorous song.

To summer's suns, O Thames! thy dews arise,
And fill with pregnant showers the gentle skies;
Benignant Ceres wooes thy genial reign,
And spreads her teeming plenty o'er the plain;
Flora, to thee her fragrant flowers unfold,
And bright Pomona hangs her groves with gold;
Where'er thy waves meandering roll, appear
The ripening harvests of the hopeful year;
Not Ganges swelling from his heavenly source,
Though golden billows mark his wandering course;
Not Nilus' stream, whose periodic rise
To thirsty plains an annual crop supplies,
O Thames! with they less ample current vies.

When peace benignly spreads her olive wand
O'er the wide globe, then genial arts expand,

Then torpid industry revives again,
And countless vessels croud the swelling main;
Then Britain's shores invite the hopeful sail,
Her circling harbours ope to every gale;
And brisk-ey'd plenty on each bosom smiles,
To see the varied pennant floating round her isles.

COMMERCE! 'tis thine to swell the veins of state,
To raise a realm, and make a kingdom great;
'Tis thine to sap the kingdom thou hast made;—
Where wealth profusely flows, there morals fade.
Carthage, once mistress of the world, beheld,
Her temples splendid, and her coffers fill'd,
Commerce was hers—her sails, in ev'ry bay,
From east to climes beyond the setting day,
Transported riches, which unnerv'd the state,
And urg'd the rapid wheels of direful fate.
Then Grecians felt alone the patriot flame,
And rear'd on virtue every right to fame;

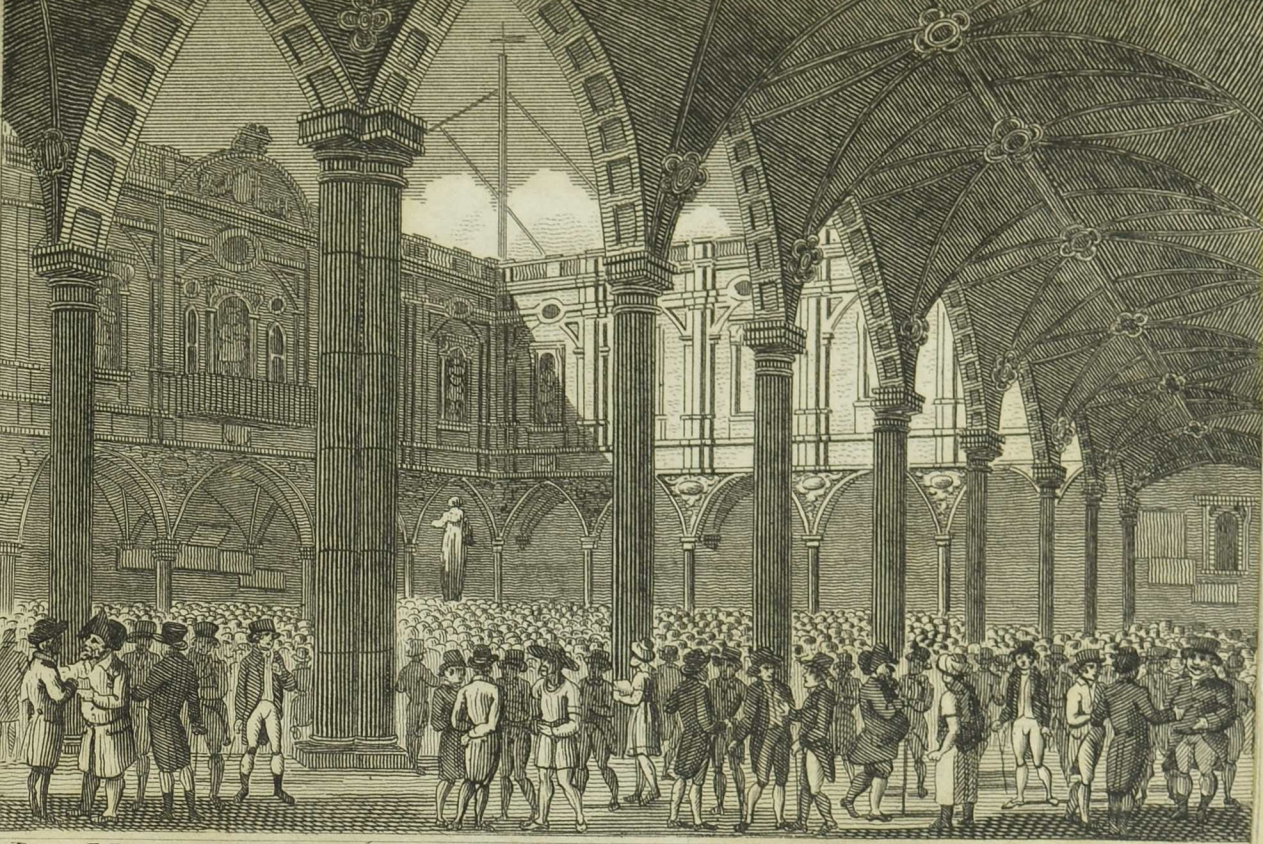
Against indignant arms their freedom stood,
And bath'd each hand in base invading blood;
But when for wealth the patriot glow gave way,
Their martial ardor moulder'd to decay.

ENGLAND! what wealth thy freighted navies bring
From farthest shores, beneath the canvas wing;
No clime too distant, too remote no isle,
If plenty swell the rich productive soil;
From pole to pole thy daring vessels fly,
To glean the produce of the varying sky.
May wealth and liberty with thee unite,
To know thy claims, and vindicate thy right!

O Rome! what virtue and what vice were thine!
Thy sons appear'd half brutal, half divine;
Thy conquests noble, but thy triumphs base,
Deserving praise, yet meriting disgrace;

Thy captive kings—a melancholy train!
To grace thy triumphs, dragg'd the servile chain;
But heaven ordains that even vice shall lend
Her aid to art, to raise a conqu'ring land;
Hence rose the stately arch and massy pile,
And Roman souls confess'd them with a smile.
Turn now, O Muse! to England's gentler clime,
Where equal buildings lift their fanes sublime;
Which wealth or safety call'd on art to raise,
As lasting objects of unceasing praise.

On Thames's banks the Tower majestic rears
Its bulwarks, form'd t' oppose intestine wars,
When, thro' triumphant William's conquering reign,
Discordant faction spread her poisonous bane.
Here a long race of British kings retir'd,
Here many a soul for patriot zeal expir'd,
When base injustice sway'd the bloody steel,
And tyrant bosoms had not learn'd to feel.



Royal Exchange, *Cornhill*

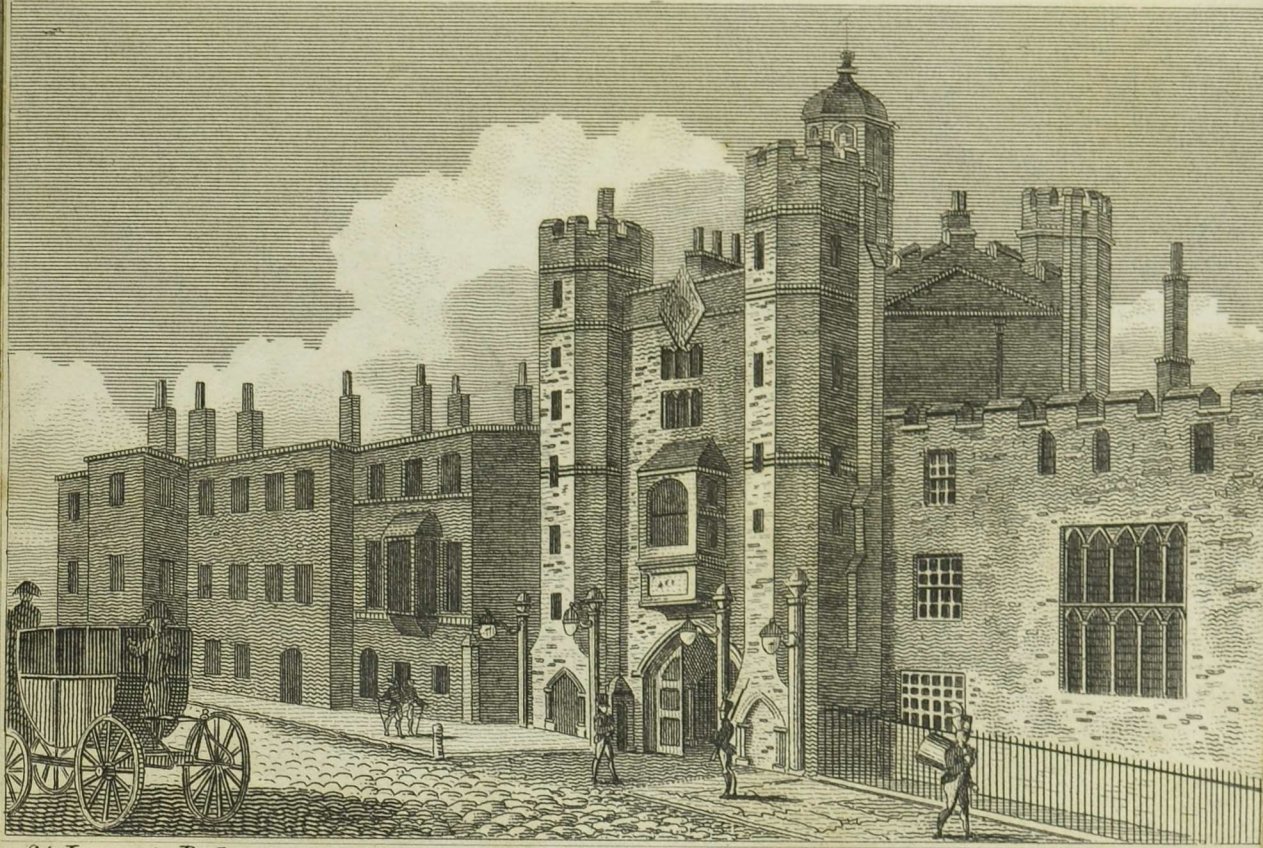
But mercy mild round fair Britannia's brows,
Now binds the thistle, shamrock, and the rose ;
Emblems of peace, of unity and love,
Which hate nor faction ever hence can move.
Lo ! where the crown and regal ensigns lie,
To strike with dignity the public eye ;
How tinsell'd pomp and ermin'd robes command !
A pageant sceptre rules a generous land.
Long may it rule with worth like ours ally'd,
While justice sways, and mercy is its guide !
A long, long line, illustrious it owns,
Excell'd or rivall'd by no other thrones.

When first society began to spread,
And mutual wants to man suggested trade,
Exchange was fetter'd, for no standard known,
Could measure others riches by their own.
Commerce was check'd, till rifled from the mine,
Inventive man disclos'd the useful coin ;

Then flocks, herds, fruits, dissolv'd into one stream,
And equaliz'd each other by this beam.

While, rapt in praise, the muse delights to sing,
And wakes, with pain, the elegiac string,
Imagination, led by local views,
Reads horrors past, and former times renews.
Here, while the Monument attracts our gaze,
Fancy steals back to witness former days,
When direful flames spread all the city round,
And rattling roofs came crashing to the ground;
While the black dæmon, Faction, with delight,
Beheld our city perish from the sight.
But as the Lybian bird, in flames expires,
And rises brighter from th' extinguish'd fires,
So LONDON, from her ashes towering bright,
With increas'd splendor rose upon the sight.

Lo! where St. Paul's lifts up its stately dome,
The rival of the vestiges of Rome,



St. James's Palace, Westminster.

Whose noble pile, magnificently great,
Gives pride, renown, and glory, to our state;
Here art, grace, beauty, elegance, unite
At once to charm, and strain the wond'ring sight.
Should LONDON fall into oblivious tale,
Her buildings moulder, still shalt thou prevail,
Still over time's usurping hand arise,
And future realms with grandeur shalt surprise;
Still shall thy sacred walls be then explor'd,
Our Wren distinguish'd, and his times ador'd:
Let Greece her columns, Rome her arches boast,
Mere pageants once, and now for ever lost;
To gods let them erect the glittering pile,
Which only forc'd from heaven a pitying smile;
Such useless walls from itching greatness spring,
Pride of some hero, honour of some king;
Efforts that nobly show, and loudly speak,
A nation wisely rude, and greatly weak;

While we behold, with far more worthy pride,
Th' exchange, where commerce spreads her riches wide;
Where Turk and Jew, where Christian, Infidel,
Confirm the world the commonwealth of all.

Ere realm with realm the social compact made,
Or distant nations join'd for mutual aid,
Conquest alone from other climes could gain
The smiling produce of the fertile plain;
Whence direful wars brought home the fruitful spoil,
And robb'd the true possessor of his toil;—
What's their's by arms, by art is justly ours,
That British labour culls Arabian flowers.

What different tribes commingling croud the way,
Sons of all climes their various garbs display!
Here the black Indian, there the bearded Jew,
The turban'd Turk, in one close throng we view.

Westminster Abbey from the Thames.

Delightful scene! Trade's wide extended chain,
Links in one bond the African and Dane;
For mutual wants the wings of commerce spread,
Spice from the Turk, and iron from the Swede.

England! how bright thy glorious virtues shine,
But most the praise of charity is thine;
No tender orphan pines unfriended here,
But lisping infants learn to speak thy care.
If the frail sex whom pleasure leads astray,
And vice beguiles from virtue's heavenly way,
Implores thine aid, expiring hope to cheer,
To soften grief, and mollify despair,
Thy lib'ral hand conducts th' offending fair,
To scenes of plenty, piety, and prayer:
To thy blest daughters, Magdalen! is giv'n,
To lead the truly penitent to heaven.

Let now the muse to nobler themes aspire,
Fly to the vault where brightest souls retire;

Leave busy man, in life's expanded bloom,
To contemplate his image in the tomb.
O'er prostrate kings behold the ABBEY stride,
Covering their pomp, their pageantry, and pride.
To them no more the flattering voice of fame,
Shall raise the soul, or feed ambition's flame;
On them no more a servile senate wait,
To swell with pride the open ears of state.

Here mix'd with poets, kings and heroes lie,
The sceptre here, and there the lyre close by,
That govern'd earth—this harmoniz'd the sky.
Cold are those hands that once the sceptre sway'd,
Those fingers cold, that once the lyre essay'd;
Which once were animate, to souls belong'd,
And heavenly numbers to the ear prolong'd,
Numbers that ran discursive 'long the sphere,
And kindled angels who came down to hear;

Mortals exalted seem'd to blaze awhile,
And spleen relax'd her features to a smile.

Here heroes crowd, this citadel is last
This conquest made, and all their toils are past;
To them no more shall hostile shouts resound,
Nor patriot armies circle them around;
This their last camp, here all their cares repose,
A life of danger in the tomb shall close.

Here sleeps profound, without one claim to save,
A titled son forgotten in the grave,
Whose only boast was honours not his own:—
How base to wear unmerited renown!
Shall such be mix'd with men of genuine worth,
Whose splendid names give honour to the earth?

Here, whilst I pause upon the letter'd tomb,
(My soul associate with the kindred gloom,)

Tears steal unbidden from the pensive eye,
To think such honor'd worth was born to die.

Here lies a hero by his country mourn'd,
Whose bosom once with patriot ardor burn'd;
Who laurels won and merited renown,
And join'd his country's honours with his own:
Here sleeps a statesman, whose laborious zeal
For England's safety only learn'd to feel;
Whose laws (his epitaphs) will ever raise
The liberal tongue of well earn'd patriot praise:
Here lies what once was man, with manners blest,
Love in his heart, and friendship in his breast.

How many precepts learn we from the grave,
To form the just, laborious, and the brave.

From scenes of art, the muse to nature strays,
Where sportive zephyrs through the aspen plays;

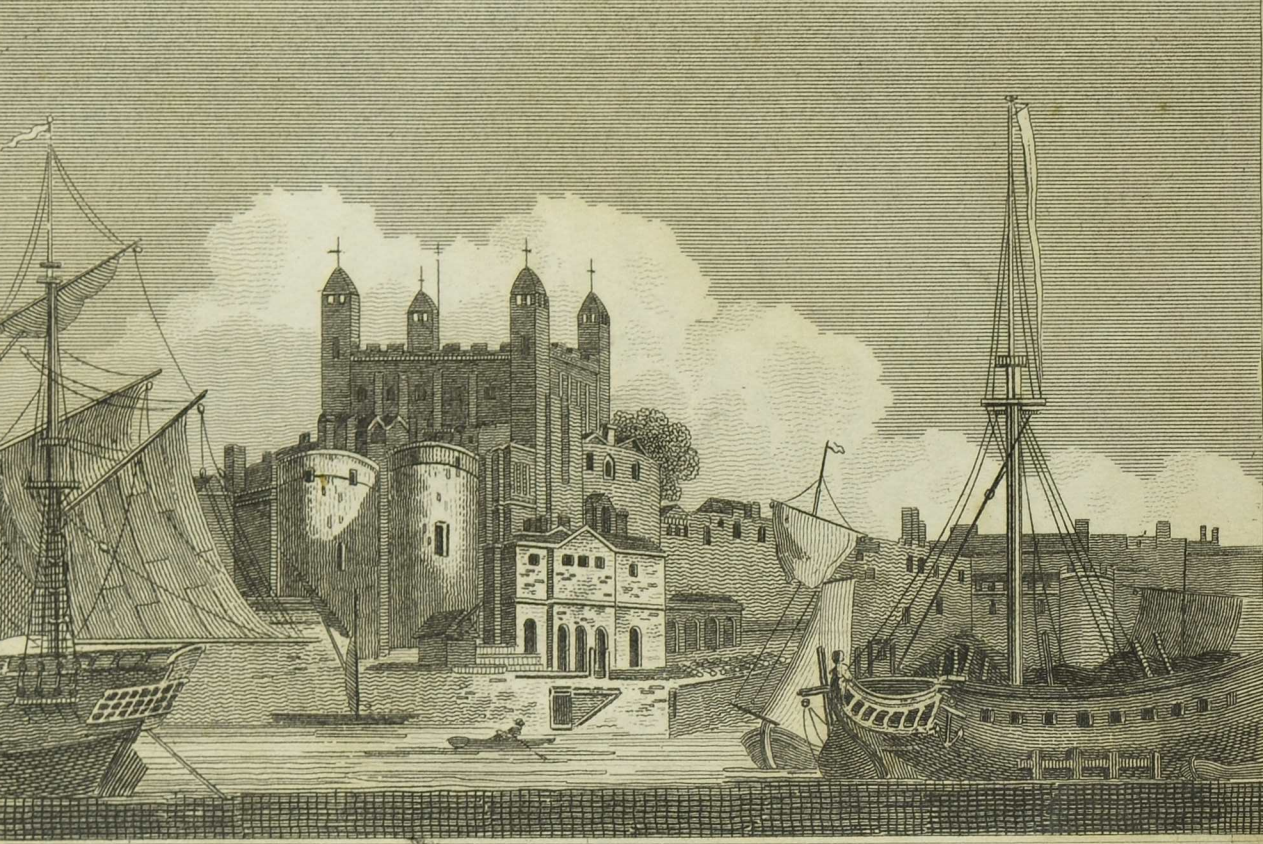
St. James's Park from the Bird Cage Walk.

From lofty roofs to trembling trees I turn,
And quit the gloomy contemplating urn
For rural Parks, where numerous crowds retire,
And purer airs, and fresher gales inspire.
Here mark the Palace : may its Rulers long
Live in each heart, the glory of each tongue ;
May genial suns auspiciously arise,
And kindle calmer and more tranquil skies ;
May they outlive the thundering shouts of war,
And see, in peace, Bellona quench her star !
Blest is he then, who Britain's sceptre sways,
And earns by generous care the nation's praise ;
Whose eye paternal watches every part,
And gives to each its merited desert ;
Honours the worthy, and rewards the brave,
And saves expiring merit from the grave.

While round the globe we cast th' impartial eye,
From Indus' bank, to Zembla's frigid sky,

Though plains more fertile richer harvests yield,
And lavish nature swells the fruitful field ;
Though warmer suns, and brighter prospects rise,
England ! like thee, none liberty supplies ;
But trembling vassals hug the servile chain,
And abject fear their murmuring plaints restrain.
Let no oppression, back on wings of prayer,
Swell its complaining note on tyranny's deaf ear ;
'Tis his to rule, and theirs obedient nod,
To praise his vices, and to dread his rod.
Whilst, thus enslav'd, some neighbouring nations bow
Beneath the yoke, and tyrant power allow ;
While their free souls in fetters feel decay,
And age in painful slavery melts away,
We, loos'd from bonds, with uncheck'd freedom roam,
The king our father, and his realm our home.

When sable slavery stretch'd her baleful flight,
And buried Greece in everlasting night,



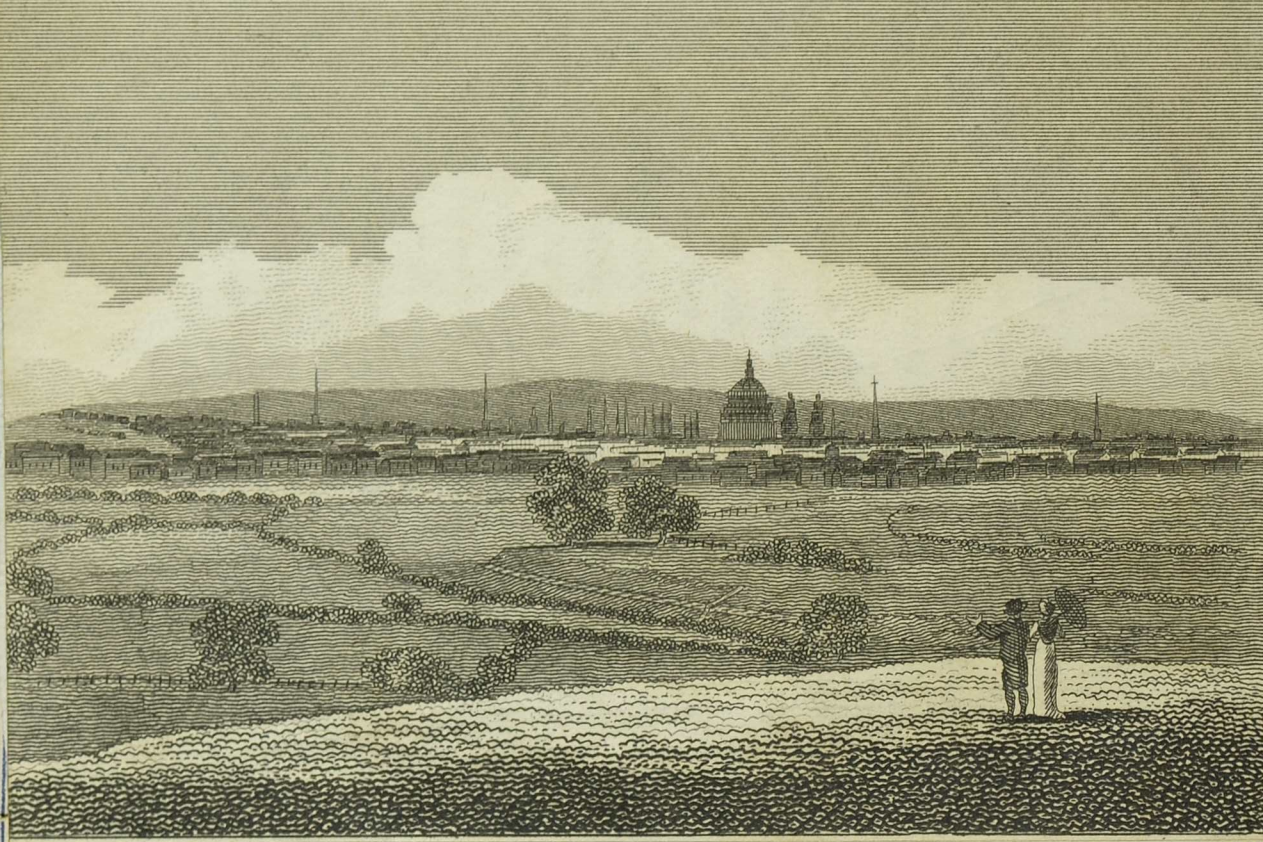
The Tower from the Thames.

Freedom gave way, to Roman plains retir'd,
And, in her sacred cause, each bosom fir'd.
But savage nations with resistless rage,
Drove the bright Genius from th' Italian stage,
Till she resolv'd, thus from her station driven,
To quit the earth, and reign again in heaven.
While from the world she climb'd the towering height,
Alluring Britain swell'd upon her sight,
To British plains she steer'd her genial flight;
Here undisputed she divides the crown,
Claims half the sceptre, and alike the throne,
That freedom now, and majesty are one.

If in Britannia's sea-encircled isle,
An opening flower of genius 'gins to smile,
Though in some vale obscure it spreads its bloom,
London's the muses universal tomb.
Tis there transplanted to a kindlier air,
And nurs'd and cherish'd with protecting care;

But oft, too oft, when its luxuriance spreads,
A tempest lowers, and its beauty fades;
Th' enlivening sun of hope withdraws his rays,
And in th' impoverish'd soil, abandon'd, it decays.

Here OTWAY once, who every heart could move
To melting pity, or impassion'd love,
Could wake for fictious woes a general moan,
But not raise one soft feeling for his own.
Here SAVAGE strung his wild resounding lyre,
Which all approv'd, yet let the Bard expire.
Here CHATTERTON his wondrous youth began,
Whilst teeming thought dropt living from his pen.
Scorn'd by the great, who think no virtues rest
In poverty's uneducated breast,
He hous'd with wretchedness, tho' born with powers,
To give refinement to life's chequer'd hours.
When want's chill hand oppress'd his lingering soul,
He seiz'd and drank the deadly poisonous bowl;



iew of London *from Primrose Hill.*

Then envy ceas'd, and England mourn'd him dead,
They sung his honours, who denied him bread;
Hush'd be this strain, let memory cast a blot,
O'er what all wish should ever be forgot.

When warmer gales and brighter suns ascend,
And Flora crowns the odoriferous land;
When groves with strains, and streams with murmurs [swell,
And flocks retiring court the shady dell;
From London then, what numerous crowds repair,
To sport in fields, and taste the untainted air!
From smoky walls direct the tranquil eye,
To verdant banks where tuneful shepherds lie;
Where the soft reed in silvery cadence swells
Its tender notes, and wakes the neighbouring dells.
Let wealth throw off the care, which courts require,
And to the country's sports and scenes retire;
Fly to the rural walk, and rippling flood,
The shady bower, and the cooling wood.

Delightful change ! there morning suns arise,
With greater glory to illume the skies ;
There o'er some distant bank his rays are seen,
With streams, and woods, and dewy fields, between.
In town, behind some gloomy chimney's height,
They catch his radiance, and receive his light ;
There from each window what a prospect wide !
Plains, flocks, and hills, delight on every side !
With scenes so placid noble minds are fir'd,
But soon of flocks, plains, hills, and groves, are tir'd.
Unus'd, along the shelvy bank, to stray,
Dwell on the cultur'd page, or hear the midnight lay,
They pine for scenes, where protean pleasure reigns,
And pleas'd resign the silence of the plains.
The vacant mind, unblest with genius, flies
To varying charms, to feast the wond'ring eyes ;
Wisdom alone enjoys the humble vill,
The lonely valley, or the verdant hill.

When Flora bids to leave the genial land,
And icy Winter sends his frigid band;
Calls down the sun from his exalted sphere,
To turn the seasons, and reverse the year:
Then LONDON teems, her throngs return again,
And quit the naked solitary plain.

As when the world lifts up its southern pole,
And seas, in fetters bound, begin to roll;
Then wandering birds, in thickening flights, prepare
To quit the northern clime, and seek a kindlier air;
Round warmer rocks, and over burning lands,
In clouds they settle, covering black the sands.

Though sylvan groves to minds, unblest with powers
To cheer the lingering unproductive hours,
Seem dull and heavy, full of spleen and care,
Such are unknown in LONDON's bustling air.

No eye need languish, and no sense repine,
Mirth, pleasure, beauty, LONDON! all are thine;
'Tis thine to please, rich funds diffuse around,
In every street, some cheering scene is found,
Some novel view, some genial sight, to raise,
Our admiration, or attract our praise.

Turn now, O muse! to where the Thespian scene,
Delights the heart, and dissipates the spleen;
Where sprightly comedy is wont to raise
The spark of mirth, or kindle humour's blaze;
Unbend the mind with revelry and ease,
And soften nature while the soul they please.
Here tragedy commands her streams to flow,
And all are taught to weep at fancy'd woe;
Here Kemble shines, and Cooke, with equal powers,
To chase away the wintry lingering hours;
Here Garrick once bade every passion move,
And woke the soul to frenzy, or to love.

Now having rang'd the varied scene around,
Where beauty and magnificence abound,
Another theme invites the trembling muse;—
'Tis freedom calls, who freedom can refuse?
This realm, she cries, my once obedient isle,
Confess'd me queen, and own'd my fostering smile;
Then jarring discord had not rear'd her head,
Nor envy started from her snaky bed.

FACTION! be still, once more let union draw
Each patriot heart, to own the force of law;
Knit close our bonds, and watchful guard the throne,
And, with firm zeal, complete a circling zone.
From it our lives, our safeties, we acquire,
With it we flourish, and with it expire.
As from the heart the blood profusely flows,
Blooms in the cheek, or in the bosom glows,
So from the throne our liberties expand,
And flow thro' every breast of Britain's land.

What tho' stern Mars calls forth his warlike host,
He leaves, in sacred reverence, our coast;
O'er distant plains his thund'ring tempests fly,
Shake the low vale, and tremble thro' the sky.
While the affrighted shepherd gazes round,
Or leans to hear the shouts of war resound,
And trembling sees the blazing torch, afar,
Throw o'er the plain its inauspicious glare,
We, safe at home, unrous'd by dangers, sleep,
Or mourn, when sympathy commands to weep.
Let every heart, with grateful utterance, raise
To heaven its thanks, an offering of praise,
That here no desolating dangers doom
Our sons by plague, or famine to the tomb;
Nor sickening airs, with withering blasts, descend,
To thin the vigorous guardians of our land.

Finis.