

THE

MISCELLANEOUS WORKS,

IN PROSE AND VERSE,

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VER-VERT*, THE **PARROT** OF NÉVERS;

AN HEROIC POEM,

INSCRIBED TO THE ABBESS OF D*****.

From the French of GRESSET †.

CANTO I.

THOU, whose attractions, from the world retir'd,
Glow without art, and blush to be admir'd —
Whose piercing intellect, and born for truth,
To virtue has allied the charm of youth —
Has bound the Muses in a wreath of taste,
And vestal honour with a dimple grac'd ;
At whose command I sing, in playful rhyme,
Offending purity, infection's crime,

The dupe, the cheat, the polish'd, and the coarse,
The saint by art, the libertine by force;
Be thou alone the genius of my lay,
The model of my verse, *thyself* convey;
Breathe into mine the soul-impassion'd Muse,
And those pathetic melodies infuse,
That stream'd in living sorrows of the lyre
When Beauty saw the dear *Fidelle** expire,
Who, on thy lap caress'd, was, in his prime,
Seiz'd by the partial hand of jealous Time:
So may the *Parrot's* theme, abjuring fear,
Live in the fame of that "*melodious tear* †!"

There are, whose fancy, touch'd with *Homer's* fire,
In Epic note an *Odyssey* require,
Of this terraqueous pilgrim's motley fate
The loves and the achievements to relate;
Invoke æthereal spirits to their vein,
And superannuated Gods retain;

Some to *Æneas* would the bird compare,
The *pious* † bird, but less of gods the care,
Of equal virtue, and of more distress :
But strains like these *Euphrosyne* oppress.
Her Muses take their pattern from the bees,
That on the scented bloom at random seize,
They never dwell upon a *single* taste,
Or on the *cup at hand* their passion waste,

But sipping, each in turn, with speed of light,
From this to that perfume they shift their flight.
If, bold and free, the Convent I have trac'd,
And rudely have the sister-nuns unlac'd,
If the uplifted veil I here expose,
And cloister'd love to ridicule expose,
The shaft is innocent, if *you* forgive;
Smile, and the colours will be sure to live:
—— * Could Virtue ever be to earth reveal'd,
Her playful air to art would never yield,
Her features would no *solemn* cast inherit;
In *thy* resemblance would an altar merit.
The Bards have sung, the wise have preach'd in vain,
That vice in *travels* many a Pilgrim stain;
That wandering feet, and shifted scenes, impart
The devious turns and mazes of the heart;
That *Syrens* may around the vessel swarm,
Allure the fancy, and the soul deform.
The wisdom of this antiquated theme
Historians from oblivion shall redeem;

A *Parrot's* doom records the living tale,
Till birds are mute, and ships no more can sail;
Till streams are dry, that fleets to Ocean bore,
And Beauty, such as thine, can charm no more.
If doubt should whisper, that my rhymes deceive,
And the cold heart should wish to disbelieve,
The Convent parlour's echo at *Névers*

Stamps with its proof the legend of despair.

Immur'd with *Nuns* of unexampled grace
A *Parrot* liv'd, the meteor of his race;
With tender passions, and with polish'd air,
He justified capricious Fortune's care;

If against fate the heart could be ensur'd.

From *India's* burning clime, a native there,
In *France* the denizen was nam'd *Ver-vert* *.
In cloister'd cell, though young, he was inclos'd,
And, for his good, in pious chains repos'd.
His eye was brilliant, and his colours gay,
His manners *débonnaire*, and full of play;
The heart was open, though reserv'd the life,
And fond—as a departed *Bramin's* wife;
To Nuns in prattle a congenial bird,
Nor any so caress'd, and so preferr'd.

Perhaps it would superfluous appear
To mark how Nuns the minion would endear:
When their *Director* had explain'd the text,
It has been often said—the bird came *next*;
And *Fame* could whisper, that by *some* the bird
Was to the man of God, their *Saint*, preferr'd;
At least, he shar'd the comfits and *liqueurs*,
That zeal monastic for its Guide procures;
A licens'd object of their vacant love,
His cherish'd beak from lips to lips could rove;
He was of beauty's ripening charm the feast,
With passion courted, and with pain releas'd:
The *ag'd* alone, duennas to the rest,
Were uncaressing, and were uncaress'd.

Exempt, as under age, from laws of reason,
Crimes were a jest, and privileg'd was treason ;
To charm, *his* follies could be ever certain ;
At holy vespers he undrew the curtain,
Or peck'd at stomachers, but unreprov'd,
Perhaps unpinn'd them, and the sight *improv'd* ;

No measures of delight were ever plann'd
Unless their *beau* was perch'd upon their hand,
Or danc'd curvetting, or in transport flew,
Or sung, or whistled, or impatient grew,
Though modest, and with timid air, to sip
The living nectar of the rosy lip ;
Just as a coward *Novice* might have done
Before she was accomplish'd as a *Nun*.

By all the learn'd, with probing art assail'd,
His just and pointed answers never fail'd ;
Thus to four languages, adept in each,
Could *Julius* dictate an imperial speech.

Admitted freely, and with no reserve,
The Nuns to *him the refectory* serve ;
There fruits, to appetite, with ample measure,
Supplied, in varied sweets, a copious treasure.
The pockets of the sisterhood were lin'd
With pilfer'd stores, by taste and love refin'd :
A *Parrot* of the Court could not be more
Endear'd and fondled on a palace-floor.
The lovely Pensioner was all in all.
His days no chilling office could enthral ;

At night he chose the Sister's favour'd cell,
And lov'd her, it was thought, perhaps *too* well;
For old and jealous prudes her pet would steal,
And the lov'd minion from her eye conceal:
He, in *finesse* expert, profound, and sage,
Would seem, by choice, to pitch his tent with *age*;
But still at heart the young and fresh prefer'd,
In all selection a sagacious Bird.

The feather'd Anchoret, his option made,
On some choice relics of devotion laid,
Repos'd him till the morn;—blest witness, then,
He saw—what never had been seen by *men*!

He saw—*the toilette*;—whisper'd is the word,
But I relate the gossip: I have heard,
That beauties veil'd and cloth'd in stuff like these
Before a mirrour can their fancy tease,
To give their *flowing draperies* a turn,
Which tempts the eye proportions to discern;
Arrangements these, at which *the Loves* preside,
Avenging Nature's insulated pride.

The Loves, that oft can spin the subtle scheme,
Elude the fetters, and the bonds redeem,
Breathe on the fillet a peculiar grace,
Float in the limbs, and languish in the face.

Resume, ye Nine, the Hero of my verse,
And the Voluptuary's life rehearse;
Nor fast, nor prayer, to *him* the Nuns impart;
He is their King,—his throne is in the heart.

For *him* *Térèse* her Sparrow could forget,
Three Nightingales were martyrs of the pet;
And six great Cats, the minions heretofore,
With envy bursting, fell—to rise no more.
Alas! what piercing thought could then presage,
That in this Fairy-land, this golden age,
Though nurs'd by Vestal Saints with jealous care,
He wasted all their sweetness in the air?
That other times would come, of guilt and shame,
Their Pupil to corrupt, their work defame?

Suspend, pathetic Muse, the gushing tear,
That soon on Beauty's eyelid *must* appear,
When Love, in torture of despair, shall find
That art is fruitless, and that hope is blind.

The feather'd Pupil could not be a fool
 In gift of speech at such a vocal school,
 But he was eloquent ; the silver tone
 Was by the Nuns adopted for their own.
 It may be added that *he talk'd a book*
 With a monastic air, and sapient look ;
 No gasconader, flirting, and profane,
 Of the fair sex impertinently vain,
 Or who, by *secular* endearments press'd,
 Was into vice and foppery caress'd ;
 For he was moral, and of beak demure,
 A Saint in feathers, innocent and pure ;
 His dreams of guilt no image call'd before 'em ;
 His words could never drop an indecorum.
 Then all the *Canticles* * he knew by heart,
 In *Benedicites* * he took his part ;
La mère * and *vôtre charité* * he knew ;
 The fam'd *soliloquy* * his passion grew ;
 The gifted Abbess, or the Nuns at hand,
 Who had all Saints and Legends at command.

He was an echo to the words he caught,
Chaste as the sound by Virgin-seraphs taught ;
Their pious lore, with emulating strife,
Leap'd from the canvas to a second life: —
The nasal twang, the matins, loud or faint,
The pealing anthem, or the dove's complaint,
That form'd the music of these hallow'd quires,
And lull'd into repose profane desires ;
For him the *Liturgy's* * reforming strain
Was never sung, was never preach'd in vain.

Such gifts, in such a "*napkin*" too confin'd,
Had learnt by fame a theatre to find ;
In all *Névers* from day to night it rung,
Fill'd every seat, and play'd on every tongue ;
No other song but of the Bird inspir'd,
The *cells* were envy'd, and the *veil* desir'd ;
Nay, from the city of *Moulins* by dozens
Came troops of aunts, of sisters, and of cousins.
The dove-like *Mélanie*, to all preferr'd,
Was *Maid of honour* to the cherish'd Bird ;
Pure as the cambrick that her bosom wore,
In her soft hand the miracle she bore ;
With modest air the dazzling plume display'd,
Nor left a single beauty in the shade.
His *temper* next, above the reach of art,
His tenderness of nature, won the heart.
But of Religion's lovely *Anchoret*
Not half the beauties are discover'd yet ;
No farther homage can the sight commend,
The ravish'd *ear* new miracles attend ;

Refin'd, accomplish'd, and with phrases dress'd,
That owed their lustre to the young *profess'd*,
The sainted beak its rhetorick began,
From lip to lip the choral plaudits ran,
So eloquent in idiom's bright *finesse*
That *French Academies* would shame confess ;
And for a public speaker it was odd
That none who heard him could be seen to nod.
What Orator of this or any age
Could such a waking set of eyes engage?
They listen'd ; call'd his memory divine,
And felt new rapture spring at every line.
Adept and perfect in coquetting made,
As if convinc'd that glory was a shade,

With coy distress their tribute he receiv'd, -
And look'd as if he said—" *Be undeceiv'd!*
I'm nothing curious—quite a common Bird;
You are too partial, childish, and absurd:"
Like flatter'd Beauties, modest in their pride,
Who love the fiction they would seem to chide.
When he had now develop'd all he knew,
The beak half-clos'd, his periods fainter grew ;
'Then, to a modern Preacher's grace allied,
He left his flock enamour'd of their Guide:
No word impure defil'd his precious labours,
Except a little scandal on his neighbours,
Or, now and then, a harmless *équivoque*,
That by a chance the Nuns had spilt in joke.

Thus bred in so delectable a nest,
The Bird of grace, by tempting charms caress'd,
By more than one of cloister'd Seraphs lov'd,
Sleek as a Monk, nor less by Saints approv'd,
Upon his beauty and his learning plum'd,
In frolick perch'd, in holy musk perfum'd,
By all *the Loves* endear'd, a minion quite,
And vain of his indifference to delight.

Nor yet the Fates *their* secrets had unravel'd ;
Alas ! how bless'd if he had never *travel'd* !

At length arrives the period of dismay,
Which Memory could wish to pass away —
The time that all his glories will be laid
In cold oblivion's desolating shade.

Oh, infamy of guilt with horror trac'd !
Oh, fatal voyage to the good and chaste !
Why may not from the annals of the world
This blotted page of destiny be hurl'd ?
Alas, how dangerous a pearl is fame !
How to be envy'd those whom none can blame !

Tis innocent obscurity alone,
That fickle planets never can disown :
How often talents, beauty, and renown,
Corrupt the heart, and throw its pageants down !
The **Parrot**, for achievements proudly fam'd,
Alas ! by other scenes too soon was claim'd ;
At *Nantes* the Convent's meteor was announc'd —
There, and for him, were other pets renounc'd.
“ *The Visitation*” there, whose bar could hold
A corps of matrons in its grated fold,
Had yet one feature of their carnal *Eve*—
A thirst the cup of knowledge to receive.
On *them* was prompt intelligence conferr'd
Of the miraculous and gifted Bird:
Their chaste and snowy bosoms were on fire
To see his canoniz'd perfections nigher ;
The wishing maid no discipline can tame —
But a *Nun's wish* is passion's maddening flame.
The coldest bosoms for possession burn'd ;
By mystic zeal the firmest heads were turn'd.
They wrote, and the Superior of *Névers*
Assail'd, with subtle purpose to ensnare ;

Besought her, only for a time, to lend
This dear memorial of their bosom-friend,
Upon the river *Loire* to waft him over —
Then, at a word, their jewel to recover.

The cunning missive its departure took,
Pursued with lifted hands and flurried look ;
“ But when at soonest will the answer come ? ”
“ Of twelve long days a melancholy sum ! ”

Again they wrote ; and letter upon letter,
To guard their object, or to veil it better ;
Sleep at a distance from their eyelids fled —
All had their *fevers*, and *Cécile* was dead.

Now at *Névers* the guarded suit arriv'd,
A chapter call'd—when reason had surviv'd
The tumult half-suppress'd of rage and tear,
All ears were open'd the debates to hear.
“What! shall we lose the fond tho' chaste *Ver-Vert*?
No!—let us die—before the bird is there!
How in these living tombs, these hollow towers,
Can we, poor Vestals, chase the lingering hours,
If this dear partner of the midnight cell
Against his bound allegiance can rebel?”

Thus with a sigh that rent the heart exclaim'd
The tender *Novices*, but half-asham'd;
Their glowing hearts, of barren leisure tir'd,
The charm of innocent endearments fir'd;
And—sober truth to say—it was the least,
That parch'd and solitary lips could feast,
The very least; *no other Bird* was theirs,
A Parrot's love, to dissipate their cares.

But the sage council of the Matrons old
Was more sedate, more providently cold ;
These reverend Hags the junior senate sway'd,
The calm approv'd, the mutinous obey'd.
The vote imported — “ that, by way of loan,
The Bird shall live at *Nantes* two weeks alone ;”
Those calculating heads had mischief seen
That might, if not resisted, intervene —
The two communities of zeal divide —
The barriers open, and let in the tide.

When thus it was arrang'd, in written form,
Despair and pique the junior Belles deform ;
Revolt is menac'd — “ What a sacrifice !”
The wretched *Séraphine* delirious cries.

But all things have an end ; the tower is pass'd,
And of their parting looks it 's now the last.

With *him*, chaste love, the partner of their bed,
Impassion'd, though with barren zeal, has fled ;
“ Go, Bird of Paradise, where honour calls —
Return more charming to these hallow'd walls.”

Thus in the vernal morn of rising bloom
A *Novice* cheer'd her solitude and gloom ;
A *Novice* who, to dissipate her grief,
Had found, by art, prohibited relief —
In secret orisons of soft *Racine*
Had felt the charm of *his* impassion'd scene ;
A *Novice* who, with all her fluttering heart,
Would have consented from her chains to part.

But all is pass'd ; the Fugitive 's on board —
Alas ! till then, for innocence ador'd,
For modest words, and for deportment grave:
May all these virtues, that a Convent gave,
Defend his heart, and at no distant hour
Again produce him an unsullied flower !
Be it, however, as it may ; — the oars
Impel the bark, and spurn the lessening shores,
The dashing billows echo in the air ;
Away departs the *Parrot* of *Névers*.

CANTO THE THIRD.

1

In this light bark, his fugitive abode,
A pair of Nymphs, gay libertines, were stow'd —
A couple of *Dragoons* to these were join'd,
In ribbald wit both heroes of their kind —
A Monk—a Nurse—a thund'ring Gasconader,
Of Saints and Vestals a renown'd invader.
It must be own'd, that for a Bird of grace
The whims of chance had found a comic place :

But *strange* * are *bedfellows* that flock together,
With no credentials for it but the *weather*.

Amaz'd, *Ver-Vert* in pleasure's giddy range
Encounter'd habits that were new and strange;
Nor manners legible, nor language known,
Upon a savage country he was thrown,
Scar'd and embarrass'd at the foreign style,
As if his boat had sail'd upon the *Nile*.

Where are the edifying orisons
That breath'd in air the purity of Nuns,
The note that sigh'd, the whisper half-suppress'd,
And the soft raptures of the sainted breast?
Instead of these, with many an odious word
The licence of the Bacchanal is heard.
The warriors twain, with irreligious tongue,
A language held that of the tavern rung.
To charm the dullness of the lingering day,
Their lips to social bumpers found the way.
The *Gascon Hero* to a *Cyprian Miss*
Detail'd the chapter of unhallow'd bliss.

Wild in their cups the noisy boatmen swore,
And us'd a *Saint* as they would use an *oar* ;
With complicated blasphemies exclaim'd,
And when *most naked*—were the *least ashamed* :
Their manly tone upon the listening Bird,
Round and articulate, impress'd the word.
At first, his thoughts entangled and confus'd,
A mute reserve the timid Stranger us'd ;
He dar'd not in such company be known,
And wish'd he could his *eloquence* disown.
But with a courtly tone they all concurr'd
In supplicating language to the Bird.

At length, with air entranc'd and rolling eyes,
An "*Ave-Mary*" came, half lost in sighs.
Imagine at those words the peal of mirth—
Perhaps you 'll guess the *revolution's birth*.
A Novice, open thus to ridicule,
Began to fear that he had play'd the fool ;
And that he could not ears well-bred allure
Unless the Convent-style he could abjure.
Proud from his birth, nor had the Courtier's lay
Been ever coy its tickling dues to pay ;
His guards unseen the Loves and Graces wept,
Suspicion fled, and jealous Honour slept ;
He could not bear the lash of gay contempt,
And sinn'd, from fashion's whip to be exempt—
(Nor he alone—for ask the rake of note
If *he* is not a *libertine by rote*,
Who gets the vicious character by heart,
And pays to vanity the borrow'd part !)
The *Gascon debauchée* his tongue defil'd,
His *failing* heart its early pets revil'd,
For *they* had never put into his head
The lively rhetorick at *Paris* bred,

Where faint and bold, in wild confusion strung,
Make anarchy the charter of the tongue.
Little he said, but he was mute for shame ;
With listening ear sat brooding on his aim ;
Deep in reflections, on the task intent,
He gave the mimic ear no other bent :
But first it was judicious to *forget*
The chaste endearments of the Nun-coquette.
Alas ! before two little days were past,
Of airs demure he whistled off the last :—
Of *Monk* and of *Dragoon* the manly tone,
Their style, their tactic, he had made his own ;—

For, as the docile nature vacant grew,
At once to ripeness bad instruction flew ;
With apt facility, and prone to ill,
He curs'd and swore, as if the time to kill.
Like an old Fiend in holy water's cup,
Who taints the hallow'd stream, or drinks it up,
Of abstinence the penal code abjur'd,
Thought it a vulgar illness, and was cur'd.

It has been said, that only by degrees
The Devil enters, and the Angel flees ;
But *he* at one bold stroke became *profess'd*,
Without *novitiate*, perfect as the rest.
His ear too well the alphabet retain'd,
That memory and love to habit chain'd ;
When half the ribbald words to air had sprung,
The other half ran glibly off the tongue ;
Wrapt in himself the upstart Minion grew,
Disown'd his early fame, and grasp'd the new ;
To soothe and flatter a suborning world,
From Heaven, apostate sinner, he was hurl'd.
Example thus can shed its venom'd juice,
Corrode the habits, and the heart seduce.

Amid these baneful scenes of honour lost,
What generous tears had this elopement cost!
Enamour'd Sisters, by a *Jilt* embrac'd;
What lavish blessings you are still to waste
Upon the *dear perfidious* *; reckoning hours,
And for his wish'd return preparing flowers;
Alas, for *him*—the satyr of your zeal,
Whose breast has parted with its power to feel,
With depth of sorrow for the *pet* resign'd,
On the cold earth by fading lamps you pin'd,

Or, as if silence could your frenzy tame,
Carthusians for a miracle became!
Cease the fond strife! your lov'd is *yours* no more,
Corrupt and faithless on a foreign shore:
The beak so gentle, and the air so pure,
The mind religious, and the voice demure,
Are fled, and lost: a ruffian bold and coarse,
Apostate, impious, with blaspheming hoarse:
The Winds and River-nymphs *your* harvest reap;—
The Vices in their net your truant keep:
No more his learning or his talents boast,
For what is genius, fled from honour's post?
Oh, think of him no more, but *let* him stray—
His gifts and promis'd virtues thrown away!

But, oh, what Muse can touch the rising flame,
When to the Port of *Nantes* this wonder came!
For keen desire too late the morn appear'd,
And late the Moon its radiant lamp has rear'd:
In these dread intervals the busy mind
Leaves tir'd and panting Nature far behind.

It promis'd here a cultivated Bird,
In whom the Virtues and the Loves concurr'd,
Of noble manners, tender and humane,
A mind impervious to the moral stain,
An exemplary teacher, guide, and friend! —
Perfidious hopes! — calamity their end!

The boat arriv'd — upon the bank a Nun,
Provider for the rest, had breathless run;
There every dawn, since first the letter went,
That forc'd or brib'd *Névers* to her assent,
Had seen the holy Maid her vigils keep,
And stretch her eyes impatient o'er the deep,
As if to hasten Love's prophetic sail,
And whistle for more pinions to the gale.

The Bird experienc'd knew her by her mien,
Her prudish eyes, half open, half unseen —
By the large cap, and linen superfine —
Her gloves of lily hue, the vestal sign —
Her dying notes, and little cross, unfold
The Bigot Maid, in sacrifice enroll'd.

He shudder'd ; and it staggers all belief,
That with an oath, explicit, round, and brief,
He gave her and her beads *en militaire*
To all the merry devils he could spare :
It's clear of doubt, at least, that he had rather
Have mess'd with his *Dragoons* in stormy weather,
With *Rakes* whose wanton frolicks he had learnt,
Than with a Missal have his fingers burnt.
At ceremony's claim he took offence ;
But spleen to the subdued is no defence :
By force to a detested grate she bore him,
And spread her venerable charms before him.
'Tis whisper'd, that he bit her on the road ;
But *on what part* his vengeance he bestow'd
Is undetermin'd, and a contest yet,
A theme of disappointment and regret.

Some to the *neck* this outrage have consign'd,
Some have the *fingers* to his beak resign'd ;
Others more deep—" *will hardly tell us where :*"
But why should this be any Poet's care ?
Suffice it, that he reach'd the hallow'd cells,
In which, though all are Saints, the heart rebels.

The fame of his august arrival flew,
And bells in concert wild the Sisters drew.
It happen'd all were at the matin choir,
But soon they left the consecrated fire :
They run—they leap ; "*'tis he—'tis he, my Sister :*
Last night the Abbess dreamt that he had kiss'd her."

Mère Angélique betray'd her years no more—
She ran, though never seen to run before.

CANTO THE FOURTH.

At length are seen the beauties long deferr'd,
And lips of melting snow have kiss'd the Bird.
Nor *Fiction's* herald was the gossip Fame,
But modest when the living meteor came;
His brilliant eye no painter's hue could reach,
No voice could emulate his gifted speech;
Nor less approv'd credentials to the Fair,
A look of spirit and a martial air.
Alas, that Beauty's provident Creator
Should in these charms have dress'd a shameless
traitor!

Why cannot we distinguish in the face
A Bird of *Satan* from a Bird of Grace?
With lavish praise on such a host of charms,
The tongues of zeal impassion'd are in arms.

And such the chorus of applauding wonder,
That none could listen to a peal of thunder.

But, though his vocal air no secrets told,
Like a young *Carmelite* his eyes he roll'd ;
Eyes un-equivocal—that, understood,
Inflam'd the wicked, and alarm'd the good.

Of Indiscretions, this was lot the first,
I wish it could have also been the worst.
For lot the second—Oh, could I impress it!
No Libertine alive could ever guess it.

When the fond Prioress, with holy zeal,
Impatient grew her visions to reveal,
In lips entranc'd and mystic hope convey'd,
—With fashion'd air he first explor'd the Maid ;

Then, with a toss genteel and cavalier,
Without reflecting who the words could hear,
As if instructed in the *Paphian* school,
Mark'd all the Nuns for Hypocrites or Fools.

At this *début* the Sister *Augustaine*,
With melting grace, adjur'd him to abstain ;
And said *fi-donc* to this unhallow'd Brother ;
With simpering leer he gave her—such another,
And chim'd in words of such infernal sound,
That horror shook the consecrated ground.

“ *Vive Jesu!*—’tis a Fiend,”—the Abbess cried,
“ ’Tis hell and sorcery,” the Nuns replied.
Was ever so inveterate a Rake ?

What—*this*—it cannot be—’tis pure mistake,
The **Parrot**, by Religion’s breath inspir’d,
By Saints adopted, and by Nuns desir’d.

Next the bold Chief, to shew that he was *game*,
Began to fulminate his oaths of shame.
The Vestal, blushing, and with tortur’d ear,
Flew to arrest the little pioneer ;
Each found a packet ready for her use,
Wrapt in voluptuous hints, or droll abuse ;

With younger Saints he disciplined the jest,
His mimping tone their faint alarm express'd ;
Yet without mercy at the Hags he rose,
And peckt at their apostrophizing nose ;
But these were preludes only :—the Corsair,
Foe to the chaunt, and sick of cloyster'd air,
With rage half-bursting, and with fumes of spite,
He gave at once, to make his burden light,
The words of joy deprav'd, and love impure,
That none but savage Libertines endure.
Around his beak, with many a "*sacre-Dieu!*"
The ribbald notes in giddy circle flew ;

Neat as imported from the river brought,
Rich drafts of eloquence in brothels taught.
The junior sisters fancy'd it was *Greek*,
But were so petrify'd—they could not speak ;
Pale at the sound, and struck, they knew not why,
From this dread Libertine the cowards fly.
Full speed they gallop'd, and their Saints address'd,
With crosses huddled in the panting breast ;
Each to her cell with ghastly omens hurl'd,
As at the wreck of Nature and the world.
Old Mother *Cunegonde* upon her nose
Fell with a *single* tooth—with *none* she rose :
Her mouth unlocking, that sepulchral cave,
The ancient *Béliane* began to rave :
“ Eternal Father! *ah, miséricorde!*
What Antichrist is here with fire and sword!
What Fiend commission'd! Save us, blessed Heaven,
And cleanse thy altar from Pollution's leaven!
How has that wretch the conscience, like the damn'd,
Here—in thy vineyards pure—to curse the land!
Are these of cloyster'd grain the bitter fruits,
The talent, *this*, which love monastic suits?
Is he the Bird that Vestals can revere?

Dispatch him to his friends—who sent him here!"

"Oh, Saints and Martyrs! oh, sublime *Nevers*,"
Econte exclaim'd—"was he instructed there;
Could Heaven's elect such elocution teach,
Are these, alas! *their* elements of speech?
Is youth so form'd by Nuns? or *can* the veil
Admit such Hereticks within its pale;
Oh, let not such a pest be harbour'd here,
With him the garrisons of Hell appear."

Decreed—that, in the durance of a cage,
First he should bridle his demoniac rage;

And then remanded, like a vagrant lost,
Should learn the task of penance to his cost.

No better sport the fickle Bird requir'd,
For of his *last* adventure he was *tir'd!*
Condemn'd—and by a solemn verdict found,
The rash profaner of religious ground;
In hallow'd realms of sacrilege attaint,
And leagues with Hell against the Vestal Saint,
His doom in tears the Novices had sign'd,
Though to the lovely Sinner much inclin'd;
“Pity,” they said, “that he was thus deprav'd,
But could he not be reconcil'd, and sav'd?”
It melted their philanthropies to know
So wild a Ruffian mask'd in such a Beau;
Though he was prov'd a Libertine at heart,
They *sigh'd, and look'd,* at seeing him depart.

Away decamping in the Sister's hand,
Who first receiv'd him when he touch'd the land,
He bit her not—as to the Port he went:
A cabin took him, with his free consent.

As from the shore with careless joy he fled,
No plea was interpos'd—no tears were shed.

Alas! what Muse can tell—what Fancy guess—
(Oh, tragic theme! dread Iliad of distress!)

The goading shame that, when he reach'd *Névers*,
Stung all the Sisters who caress'd him there,
When Love's refin'd endearments he repaid
With his un-edifying serenade;

Their flushing cheek redoubled veils conceal,
But still the heart can melt—and *Saints can feel*.

Nine venerable Matrons, cold and sage,
With nine descents accomplish'd in their age;
Assemble in the *descrétoire*, and there
No partial bosoms the convicted spare.

No champions for the *dear perfidious** plead,
No hearts enamour'd for their passion bleed ;
In fetters bound, and stript of all his fame,
The sullen Victim of Despair and Shame,
Stands at the bar, to hear his final doom.
In colours black two Sibyls vote—the tomb ;
But other two, in vengeance more discreet,
Consign the *Indian* to his native seat,
In climes profane, to *Superstition* dear,
(The Fiend whom dark Idolaters revere ;)
The five remaining have the sentence past,
“ For two whole months of penance he shall *fast* ;
Three shall he mope in solitude ; and four
Shall in mute grief his eloquence deplore.”

The garden, toilette, comfits, and alcove,
Are all withheld from his polluting love ;
But, Misery's dread heap imperfect yet,
A guard and jailor at the door they set ;
Alecto of the Nuns, all crape and fur,
But old enough to be a dowager ;

A beldam she, of eighty at the least,
And stern as *Alva's* Duke, or *Spanish* Priest.
Yet this keen *Argus* could not quite prevent
The intercourse of hearts that anguish rent.
At leisure from the vespers and the matins,
The Novice came, and strok'd his feather'd satins ;
Alleviated the rigour of his fate,
And gave him comfits at his prison gate ;
When sleep had clos'd the jealous turnkey's eye,
Or gold, the net for age, could mercy buy.

The Petimmur'd, though blest with conscience free,
With such a penance never could agree ;

By Shame corrected, by Misfortune taught,
Or sickening of the gaoler, as 'tis thought,
He reconnoiter'd all the sins he own'd,
And with contrition for the past aton'd ;
The Monk, Dragoons, and kisses he forgot —
Then for a milder prison chang'd his lot,
With holy Sisters he convers'd again,
His forfeit health and spirits to regain,
Canonically edified became,
And cheer'd his appetites with temper'd flame.

Intelligence of this *conversion* flew,
And soon disarm'd the *Tisiphonian* crew ;
The time of exile was abridg'd ; the day
Of his recall prepar'd its genial ray ;
The taste of mirth and festival at hand
For these co-parceners in Holy Land ;
The busy interval their plans approv'd,
As Fancy whisper'd, or as Art improv'd.

Oh, syren pleasures and allurements vain!
That Hope's gay dream with perfidy can stain!
The dormitories trick'd in gay festoon,
The tea, the lively dance, and frolic tune,
The tumult sweet, the liberty entire,
Breath'd passions unprov'd, and vestal fire:
No Bird of omen sung the warning note,
For who can discipline as well as doat?
Inordinate compassion for the past
Chang'd into surfeit the atoning fast;
In sweets of honey, and of rich *liqueurs*,
Inflam'd and bursting, he no more endures
The vital air—on sugar-plumbs he fell;
The Loves grew pale, and Beauty rung his knell.

In vain the orisons invoke his breath,
And call his fleeting spirit back from Death :
With soft excess they only urge his fate —
He dies of transport, and of pleasure's weight ;
His parting voice the junior Saints admir'd,
His parting kiss their nectar'd lips requir'd. —
Then *Venus* to *Elysium* in her arms
Propitious bore his consecrated charms ;
There plac'd him by the heroes of his kind,
And close to *him* upon whose urn reclin'd
Corinna's deathless Bard enamour'd hung,
And with impassion'd stains the *Næmia* sung.

But who can tell how Death's illustrious prize
With tears of anguish fill'd the Vestal eyes !
A meeting held, *la Sœur dépositaire*
Of circular dispatches took the care ;
From that record the piteous tale withdrew,
My Hero's deathless honours to renew :
From Nature drawn, the portrait's living *traits*
Can still assert and vindicate his praise.

Led by the hand of Love, the needle's power
Has cherish'd and preserv'd the vital flower ;
Grief, whose memorials bid the past return,
With tears that speak bedew'd the sacred urn ;
Funereal honours crown the hallow'd shade,
Such as the Muse to Birds of note has paid.
The mausoleum that enshrin'd his tomb
Was overshadow'd by a myrtle's gloom ;
There, by the tender *Artemisias* grac'd,
In characters of gold these rhymes were plac'd.

EPITAPH.

Ye Novice-juniors, who for chat retire,
Suspend that innocent and calm desire;
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With no averted eye the tear abjure.
You read in silence: but no more be mute;
A single word shall recommend the suit;
Speak!—and *your* eloquence to Death impart!
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'Tis rumour'd, and 'tis there my tale is clos'd,
 That in this tomb the dead is *not* enclos'd;
 That his gay spirit in the Convent glides,
 And still in all the *Sisterhood* resides:
 From Nun to Nun transmigrating the Bird,
 Their spirits cheering, in their prattle heard!