

Beauties of the Muses.

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SIR ELDRED OF THE BOWER.

PART III.

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BY HANNAH MORE.

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SIR ELDRED OF THE BOWER.



- ‘ O Ardolph, might I dare aspire  
‘ To claim so bright a boon !  
‘ Good old Sir Eldred was my sire—  
‘ And thou hast lost a son.
- ‘ And tho’ I want a worthier plea  
‘ To urge so dear a cause ;  
‘ Yet, let me to thy bosom be  
‘ What once thy Edwy was.
- ‘ My trembling tongue its aid denies ;  
‘ For thou may’st disapprove ;  
‘ Then read it in my ardent eyes.  
‘ Oh ! read the tale of love.
- ‘ Thy beauteous BIRTHA !’ ‘ Gracious power,  
‘ How cou’d I e’er repine,’  
Cries Ardolph, ‘ since I see this hour ?  
‘ Yes— BIRTHA shall be thine.’



A little transient gleam of red  
Shot faintly o'er her face,  
And every trembling feature spread  
With sweet disordered grace.

The tender father kindly smil'd  
With fulness of content,  
And fondly eyed his darling child,  
Who, bashful, blush'd consent.

O then to paint the vast delight  
That fill'd Sir Eldred's heart,  
To tell the transports of the knight,  
Wou'd mock the Muse's art.

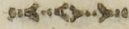
But every kind and gracious soul,  
Where gentle passions dwell,  
Will better far conceive the whole,  
Than any Muse can tell.

The more the knight his Birtha knew,  
 The more he priz'd the maid;  
 Some worth each hour ~~betray'd~~ *disclos'd to view*  
 Some grace each hour betry<sup>a</sup>d.

The virgin too was fond to charm  
 The dear accomplish'd youth;  
 His single breast she strove to warm,  
 And ~~crisp'd~~ *coupled*, ~~with~~ *with* love, truth.

Unlike the dames of modern days,  
 Who general homage claim,  
 Who court ~~court~~ the universal gaze,  
 And pant for public fame,

Then beauty on merit smil'd,  
 Nor were her chaste smiles sold;  
 No venal father gave his child  
 For grandeur, or for gold.



The ardour of young Eldred's flame  
 But ill cou'd brook delay,  
 And oft he pres'd the maid to name  
 A speedy nuptial day.

The fond impatience of his breast  
 'Twas all in vain to hide,  
 But she his eager suit repress  
 With modest, maiden pride.

When oft Sir Eldred press'd the day  
 Which was to crown his truth,  
 The thoughtful sire would sigh and say,  
 ' O happy State of youth!

It little reeks the woes which wait  
 ' To scare its dreams of joy,  
 Nor thinks to-morrow's alter'd fate  
 ' May all those dreams destroy.



- ‘ And tho’ the flatterer, hope, deceives,  
‘ And painted prospect shews ;  
‘ Yet man, still cheated, still believes  
‘ Till death the bright scene close.
- ‘ So look’d my bride, so sweetly mild  
‘ On me her beauty’s slave  
‘ But whilst she look’d, and whilst she  
smil’d ;  
‘ She sunk into the grave.
- ‘ Yet, O forgive an old man’s care,  
‘ Forgive a father’s zeal ;  
‘ Who fondly loves must greatly fear,  
‘ Who fears must greatly feel.
- ‘ Once more in soft and sacred bands  
‘ Shall Love and Hymen meet ;  
‘ To-morrow shall unite your hands,  
‘ And—be your bliss complete !’



The rising sun inflam'd the sky,  
The golden orient blush'd ;  
But Birtha's cheeks, a sweeter dye,  
A brighter crimson flush'd.

The Priest, in milk-white vestments clad,  
Perform'd the mystic rite ;  
Love lit the hallow'd torch that led  
To Hymen's chaste delight.

How feeble language were to speak  
Th' immeasurable joy  
That fir'd Sir Eldred's ardent cheek,  
And triumph'd in his eye !

Sir Ardolph's pleasure stood confest,  
A pleasure all his own ;  
The guarded rapture of a breast  
Which many a grief had known.



'Twas such a sober sense of joy  
As Angels well might keep ;  
A joy chastis'd by piety,  
A joy prepar'd to weep.

To recollect her scatter'd thought,  
And shun the noon-tide hour,  
The lovely bride in secret sought  
The coolness of her bower.

Long she remain'd—th' enamour'd knight,  
Impatient at her stay,  
And all unfit to taste delight  
When Birtha was away ;

Betakes him to the secret bower ;  
His footsteps softly move ;  
Impell'd by every tender power,  
He steals upon his love.



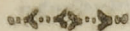


O, horror! horror! blasting sight!  
 He sees his Birtha's charms  
 Reclin'd with melting, fond delight,  
 Within a stranger's arms.

Wild frenzy fires his frantic hand—  
 Distracted at the sight,  
 He flies to where the lovers stand,  
 And stabs the stranger knight.

Die, traitor, die; thy guilty flames  
 'Demand th' avenging steel'—  
 It is my brother,' she exclaims,  
 ' 'Tis Edwy—Oh, farewell!'

An aged peasant, Edwy's guide,  
 The good old Ardolph sought;  
 He told him that his bosom's pride,  
 His Edwy, he had brought.



O how the father's feelings melt!  
How faint, and how revive!  
Just so the Hebrew Patriarch felt,  
To find his son alive.

‘ Let me behold my darling's face,  
‘ And bless him ere I die!’  
Then with a swift and vigorous pace,  
He to the Bower did hie.

O sad reverse!—sunk on the ground  
His slaughter'd son he view'd,  
And dying Birtha close he found  
In brother's blood imbru'd.

Cold, speechless, senseless, Eldred near  
Gaz'd on the deed he had done;  
Like the blank statue of Despair,  
Or madness grav'd in stone.



The father saw—so Jephthah stood,  
So turn'd his woe-fraught eye  
When the dear destin'd child he view'd,  
His zeal had doom'd to die.

He look'd the woe he could not speak,  
And on the pale corse prest  
His wan, discolour'd, dying cheek,  
And, silent, sunk to rest.

Then Birtha faintly rais'd her eye,  
Which long had ceas'd to stream,  
On Eldred fix'd, with many a sigh,  
Its dim, departing beam.

The cold, cold dews of hastening death  
Upon her pale face stand;  
And quick and short her failing breath,  
And tremulous her hand.

The cold, cold dews of hastening death,  
The dim, departing eye,  
The quivering hand, the short quick breath,  
He view'd—and did not die.

He saw her spirit mount in air,  
Its kindred skies to seek !  
His heart its anguish could not bear,  
And yet it wou'd not break.

The mournful muse forbid to tell  
How wretched Eldred died :  
She draws the Grecian painter's veil,  
The vast distress to hide.

Yet Heaven's decrees are just and wise,  
And man is born to bear :  
Joy is the portion of the skies—  
Beneath them—all is care.



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