

ODE ON THE PRESENT TIMES. 27TH JANUARY 1795.

Lo! Winter drives his horrors round;
Wide o'er the rugged soil they fly;
In their cold spells each stream is bound,
While at the magic of their eye 4
Each sign of Spring's gay beauty fades,
And one white wild the aching sight invades.
It is the time for Woe to reign,
And hark! she bids her haggard train, 8
Pale poverty and want, appear,
Disease, their darling child, draw near,
And, grateful for the favouring hour,
They feel, they seize, they riot, in their power, 12
But Winter! not to thee alone
Their heart-appalling sway they owe,
For they to war's despotic throne
As tributary subjects bow; 16
WAR, who bids trembling Europe gasp,
With wild convulsions in his bloody grasp.
Whence yonder groans? O wretched land!
Poland, from thee, alas! they came, 20
A despot speaks, and lo! a band,

Blaspheming pure Religion's name,
Bid cold deliberate murder live,
And death's dread stroke to helpless thousands give. 24
And see, on Belgia's reeking plain,
Alternate horrors rise and reign!
What mingled sounds affright the ear!
Now, we the song of victory hear, 28
And now, despair's appalling tone,
And now, of *death* the deep sepulchral groan.
Freedom! for whose dear sake I'd dare
Each various ill that tortures life, 32
Though I thy matchless victories share,
While towering 'midst the bloody strife,
I see thy form sublime, acquire
New power to charm, new beauty to inspire; 36
I cannot smile; I cannot join
The song of triumph; tho' thy foes,
Celestial power! are also mine;
And tho' I weep for all thy woes, 40
Yet I thy *triumphs* too must weep,
And in my tears thy bloody laurels steep.
For who are they that madly bear
Against thy sons the venal spear? 44

Are they not men?--then say, what power

Can bid my bosom mourn no more;

O where's the fiend-delighting ban

Forbidding MAN to weep for SLAUGHTERED MAN! 48

E'en victory, when reflection's voice

Breathes in her ear 'thy brothers die,'

Shall bid her sons no more rejoice,

But change her shouts for pity's sigh; 52

She will her breast in anguish beat,

And wear the sombrous aspect of *defeat*.

O Britain! ill-starred land! no more

Must peace to thee her olive bear, 56

But on thy once-triumphant shore,

Must we behold the form of fear

Expecting, on the swelling tide,

To see the FOE in proud defiance ride! 60

Avert the threatening, awful ill;

For, fraught with power, and fraught with will

To make thy hardiest veterans die,

A lurking fiend alas! is nigh, 64

Who threatens on thy sons to pour

The fatal cloud thou bad'st on GALLIA lower.

Lo! FAMINE spreads her banners wide:

She come arrayed in horrid state; 68
But, not to humble Gallia's pride,
And on the rear of *victory* wait;
She comes the *humbled* to subdue,
And twine round *fading* wreaths, deaths baleful yew. 72
She comes to Britain!--at the thought,
Winter! thy scene with horrors fraught,
Fades from my sight--the present ill
Appears to lose its power to kill: 76
To *future* scenes pale Fancy flies,
Lifts her dim tearful eyes to heaven, and dies.