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Advantage of Misfortune



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THE
ADVANTAGE OF MISFORTUNE:

A
P O E M.

“ Whatever is, is right.”

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. RIDLEY, in ST. JAMES'S STREET.

MDCCLXXIII.

[Price One Shilling.]

ADVANTAGE OF MISFORTUNE

THE

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77 9-21-53

TO

EDWARD JERNINGHAM, ESQ.

THIS POEM

IS INSCRIBED

BY HIS OBEDIENT HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

726569

But, judging still the future by the past,
 Believ'd the momentary blifs should last.
 Attendant on his state the fervile train
 By flatt'ry fought their Monarch's love to gain ;
 Till swell'd with pride, with dignity elate, 15
 He deem'd himself beyond the reach of Fate.
 Unhappy wretch! condemn'd ere long to prove
 The just resentment of the Pow'rs above ;
 To know, that man was destin'd still to bear,
 And life a scene of vanity and care ; 20
 To feel, that Grandeur's but an empty name,
 And only Virtue merits lasting fame.
 His only Son, the darling of his age,
 One that might well a Parent's love engage ;
 For whom he toil'd by day, and watch'd by night, 25
 Joy of his soul, and source of his delight ;
 Meets in the chace an arrow wing'd with death,
 And in his Father's arms resigns his breath.
 Struck dumb with horror, frantic with despair,
 BOZALDAB smote his breast, and tore his hair. 30
 To sooth his anguish in this dreadful hour,
 His numerous train exert their little pow'r :

To them, in accents terrible and wild,
He answer'd, gazing on his breathless Child,

“ Hence, idle flatterers! that vainly call 35
“ BOZALDAB Lord and Monarch over all;
“ Who say that life depends upon his breath,
“ And call his frown more terrible than death.
“ Behold the object of my tend'rest cares,
“ The promis'd comfort of declining years! 40
“ Say, can this boasted pow'r my Child restore?
“ Then talk of Empire, and of Crowns, no more.
“ Thus snatch'd away, ere half his course was run,
“ Unhappy hour!—alas, my Son! my Son!”

The Monarch ceas'd, and prostrate on the ground, 45
Embrac'd his child, and kiss the ghastly wound;
Then starting up, distraction in his look,
The trembling train with eager haste forsook,
And to the gloomy grotto bent his way,
Where roll'd in dust, oppress'd with grief he lay. 50
Night now approach'd; no noise was heard around,
Save the sad screech-owl's melancholy sound :

But

But peace, nor rest, the wretched Parent knew ;
 His tears the bosom of the earth bedew ;
 Unable longer to contain his grief, 55
 He sought, in vain complaints, to find relief.

“ Perish ! ” he cried, “ the pow’r that could not save
 “ My only Son, my darling, from the grave.
 “ Was it for this, thro’ many tedious years
 “ I brav’d such dangers ? bore such toils and cares ? 60
 “ Was it for this I labour’d to extend
 “ An Empire that shall ne’er to him descend ?
 “ And can that God be merciful and just,
 “ Who lays our fondest wishes in the dust ?
 “ A Being really good, and truly wise, 65
 “ Beholds his creatures with paternal eyes ;
 “ Nor thus delights with tears their cup to fill,
 “ To please his humour, his capricious will.
 “ This wretched life I can no longer bear :
 “ Welcome, oh Death ! thou kind release from care ! ”

He spoke—and rais’d the dagger to his breast,
 When, lo, to view an Angel stood confest !

Thick

Thick flash'd the light'ning, loud the thunder roar'd ;
 BOZALDAB saw, fell prostrate, and ador'd.

“ Rise,” said the Angel, “ fear not, but obey ; 75

“ Intrepid follow where I lead the way.”

Together they ascend the mountain's brow,

Whose height commands the vast expanse below.

“ Turn hence thine eyes, exclaim'd the heav'nly guide ;

“ No longer doubt, be humble, and confide.” 80

BOZALDAB now perceiv'd a desert isle,

Where niggard Nature never deign'd to smile.

On this inhospitable shore was cast

A wretch, whose ev'ry breath still seem'd the last :

Pale Famine in his meagre look appear'd ; 85

To Heav'n in speechless agony he rear'd

His trembling hands,—and begg'd some small relief,

Some little comfort in this hour of grief.

The distant howl of beasts affright his ear ;

Each moment brings the dreaded danger near. 90

A casket, held within his feeble hand,

He now indignant cast upon the sand.

“ Ye glitt'ring gems,” he cried, “ so lately priz'd,

“ Well do ye merit to be thus despis'd ;

" Deceitful riches!—your delusive pow'r 95
 " Has wrought the dreadful mis'ry of this hour.
 " Now, now, I feel the bitterness of want,
 " And need that pity I refus'd to grant.
 " Alas! had my inhospitable door,
 " When Fortune smil'd, been open to the poor; 100
 " Had I to Sorrow lent a pitying ear,
 " Heav'n would not thus reject my ardent pray'r."

He ceas'd, and once more rais'd his dying eyes
 O'er the vast Ocean, and from far descries
 A vessel swift advancing to the view, 105
 And near the barren shore ere long it drew.
 A ray of hope now darted on his mind;
 " From men," he cried, " I sure shall pity find:"
 Then to the crew he offers half his store,
 If they would land him on some happier shore. 110
 They hear relentless, but with greedy eyes
 Behold, and eager view the glitt'ring prize:
 At length, by fordid avarice impell'd,
 They seize the part the trembling wretch with-held:
 Reproaches, tears, were all employ'd in vain; 115
 Regardless of his pray'rs, the ship they gain.
 " Inhabitant

" Inhabitant of Heav'n !" BOZALDAB cries,
 " Canst thou behold, with calm, with tranquil eyes,
 " Crimes thus unpunish'd? mis'ry thus oppress?
 " Has Heav'n no pity then for man distress?" 120

To him replied the Minister of Peace,
 " Let all thy doubts, unhappy murmur'er, cease.
 " Mistaken Monarch! ignorant and vain,
 " No more the ways of Providence arraign.
 " Behold that ship, short-sighted as thou art, 125
 " In which the wretched Merchant wish'd to part;
 " See it the sport of waves, by tempests tost,
 " Dash'd on that rock, and in a moment lost!
 " Dost thou not hear the sinking sailors' cries?
 " Tho' thou art blind, acknowledge God is wise. 130
 " Presume no more thy Maker to direct;
 " Adore his justice, his decrees respect.
 " The man thy pity wishes to relieve,
 " When Heav'n sees fit, shall succour still receive;
 " Taught by this useful lesson, he shall know 135
 " To feel compassion for another's woe;
 " Misfortune

“ Misfortune shall enlarge his narrow heart,
 “ No longer shall he fear with wealth to part ;
 “ By fordid avarice no more misled,
 “ By him the poor be cloath'd, the hungry fed. 140
 “ Another scene attention now commands,
 “ An object dearer far thine eye demands.”

BOZALDAB look'd, and to his ravish'd eyes
 Instant a stately Palace seem'd to rise :
 The walls were polish'd ivory and gold, 145
 Enrich'd with gems, resplendent to behold ;
 Adorn'd with statues of his noble line,
 Of jasper form'd, and wrought with skill divine.
 Here on a throne, by prostrate slaves ador'd,
 BOZALDAB saw his Son, so much deplor'd ; 150
 The lost ABORAM—seated by his side,
 In splendid majesty, his blooming Bride.

“ It is, it is my son !” BOZALDAB cried,
 “ No longer to his wretched Sire denied ;
 “ Oh let me once more clasp him to my heart! 155
 “ My lov'd ABORAM, we will never part !”

“ Refrain

“ Reftrain thyfelf,” the beauteous Angel faid,
 “ Thou canft not grasp an unubftantial fhade.
 “ Thou fee’ft, had Heav’n allow’d a longer date,
 “ What would have been thy lov’d ABORAM’s fate.”

“ And why,” the Monarch eagerly replies,
 “ Why was this blifs refus’d a Parent’s eyes ?”
 “ Once more obferve,” rejoin’d the heavenly guide,
 “ View the laft fcene, and let thy heart decide.”

But fcarce BOZALDAB could the picture know: 165
 That face, where vivid health was wont to glow,
 Deform’d with paffion, dreadfully exprest
 The rage, the fury, lurking in his breaft.
 Of what he was, no likenefs now remain’d ;
 His frame convuls’d—his hands with blood werestain’d.
 The fplendid palace levell’d with the ground,
 ABORAM feiz’d, and in a dungeon bound ;
 On the cold ground depriv’d of fight he lay,
 For ever barr’d the chearful light of day :
 His flaves, the abject creatures of his pow’r, 175
 Infult his mis’ry in this dreadful hour ;

D

And

And she, who should in ev'ry grief have shar'd,
 Now for her Lord the poison'd bowl prepar'd.
 He takes the fatal draught,—the scene was o'er,
 'Twas finish'd now—and ABORAM no more. 180

“ Eternal Wisdom ! humbly thus I bow,”
 BOZALDAB cried, “ I feel thy goodness now :
 “ Thou didst exert thy pow'r, my Child to save
 “ From guilt, from mis'ry, by an early grave ;
 “ Crown'd him on earth with never-dying fame, 185
 “ Preserv'd, immortaliz'd, his much-lov'd name.
 “ I own my error, humbled in the dust ;
 “ Thy works are good, and all thy ways are just.”

“ Thrice happy he,” th' angelic form replies,
 “ Whose erring mind Affliction renders wise. 190
 “ Now cast the fatal dagger from thy breast,
 “ And own, what Heav'n ordains is ever best ;
 “ Hereafter by this useful lesson learn,
 “ Man sees in part, nor can the whole discern.
 “ And shall he then, self-confident and vain, 195
 “ Presume his great Creator to arraign ?

“ Say,

- “ Say, can the reason, that to man is lent,
“ Of perfect knowledge measure the extent ?
“ In Him who clearly sees, then place thy trust ;
“ Doubt not, though thou art frail, that God is just.
“ On Him rely—complain, repine no more,
“ Enough for thee to tremble and adore.”

The Angel spoke, and instant wing'd his flight
To the pure regions of eternal light.

The E N D.

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