

Metamorphoses



Ovid

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Book The First

The Creation, the Ages of Mankind, the flood, Deucalion and Pyrrha, Apollo and Daphne, Io, Phaëton.

OF bodies chang'd to various forms, I sing:
Ye Gods, from whom these miracles did spring,
Inspire my numbers with celestial heat;
'Till I my long laborious work compleat:
And add perpetual tenour to my rhimes,
Deduc'd from Nature's birth, to Caesar's times.

The Creation of the World

Before the seas, and this terrestrial ball,
And Heav'n's high canopy, that covers all,
One was the face of Nature; if a face:
Rather a rude and indigested mass:
A lifeless lump, unfashion'd, and unfram'd,
Of jarring seeds; and justly Chaos nam'd.

No sun was lighted up, the world to view;
No moon did yet her blunted horns renew:
Nor yet was Earth suspended in the sky,
Nor pois'd, did on her own foundations lye:
Nor seas about the shores their arms had thrown;
But earth, and air, and water, were in one.

Thus air was void of light, and earth unstable,
And water's dark abyss unnavigable.

No certain form on any was imprest;
All were confus'd, and each disturb'd the rest.

For hot and cold were in one body fixt;
And soft with hard, and light with heavy mixt.

But God, or Nature, while they thus contend,
To these intestine discords put an end:
Then earth from air, and seas from earth were driv'n,
And grosser air sunk from aethereal Heav'n.

Thus disembroil'd, they take their proper place;

The next of kin, contiguously embrace;
And foes are sunder'd, by a larger space.

The force of fire ascended first on high,
And took its dwelling in the vaulted sky:
Then air succeeds, in lightness next to fire;
Whose atoms from unactive earth retire.

Earth sinks beneath, and draws a num'rous throng
Of pondrous, thick, unwieldy seeds along.

About her coasts, unruly waters roar;
And rising, on a ridge, insult the shore.

Thus when the God, whatever God was he,
Had form'd the whole, and made the parts agree,
That no unequal portions might be found,
He moulded Earth into a spacious round:
Then with a breath, he gave the winds to blow;
And bad the congregated waters flow.

He adds the running springs, and standing lakes;
And bounding banks for winding rivers makes.

Some part, in Earth are swallow'd up, the most
In ample oceans, disembogu'd, are lost.

He shades the woods, the vallies he restrains
With rocky mountains, and extends the plains.

And as five zones th' aetherial regions bind,
Five, correspondent, are to Earth assign'd:
The sun with rays, directly darting down,
Fires all beneath, and fries the middle zone:
The two beneath the distant poles, complain
Of endless winter, and perpetual rain.

Betwixt th' extreems, two happier climates hold
The temper that partakes of hot, and cold.

The fields of liquid air, inclosing all,
Surround the compass of this earthly ball:
The lighter parts lye next the fires above;
The grosser near the watry surface move:
Thick clouds are spread, and storms engender there,

And thunder's voice, which wretched mortals fear,
And winds that on their wings cold winter bear.

Nor were those blustering brethren left at large,
On seas, and shores, their fury to discharge:
Bound as they are, and circumscrib'd in place,
They rend the world, resistless, where they pass;
And mighty marks of mischief leave behind;
Such is the rage of their tempestuous kind.

First Eurus to the rising morn is sent
(The regions of the balmy continent);
And Eastern realms, where early Persians run,
To greet the blest appearance of the sun.

Westward, the wanton Zephyr wings his flight;
Pleas'd with the remnants of departing light:
Fierce Boreas, with his off-spring, issues forth
T' invade the frozen waggon of the North.

While frowning Auster seeks the Southern sphere;
And rots, with endless rain, th' unwholsom year.

High o'er the clouds, and empty realms of wind,
The God a clearer space for Heav'n design'd;
Where fields of light, and liquid aether flow;
Purg'd from the pondrous dregs of Earth below.

Scarce had the Pow'r distinguish'd these, when streight
The stars, no longer overlaid with weight,
Exert their heads, from underneath the mass;
And upward shoot, and kindle as they pass,
And with diffusive light adorn their heav'nly place.

Then, every void of Nature to supply,
With forms of Gods he fills the vacant sky:
New herds of beasts he sends, the plains to share:
New colonies of birds, to people air:
And to their oozy beds, the finny fish repair.

A creature of a more exalted kind
Was wanting yet, and then was Man design'd:
Conscious of thought, of more capacious breast,
For empire form'd, and fit to rule the rest:
Whether with particles of heav'nly fire

The God of Nature did his soul inspire,
Or Earth, but new divided from the sky,
And, pliant, still retain'd th' aetherial energy:
Which wise Prometheus temper'd into paste,
And, mixt with living streams, the godlike image cast.

Thus, while the mute creation downward bend
Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,
Man looks aloft; and with erected eyes
Beholds his own hereditary skies.

From such rude principles our form began;
And earth was metamorphos'd into Man.

The Golden Age

The golden age was first; when Man yet new,
No rule but uncorrupted reason knew:
And, with a native bent, did good pursue.

Unforc'd by punishment, un-aw'd by fear,
His words were simple, and his soul sincere;
Needless was written law, where none opprest:
The law of Man was written in his breast:
No suppliant crowds before the judge appear'd,
No court erected yet, nor cause was heard:
But all was safe, for conscience was their guard.

The mountain-trees in distant prospect please,
E're yet the pine descended to the seas:
E're sails were spread, new oceans to explore:
And happy mortals, unconcern'd for more,
Confin'd their wishes to their native shore.

No walls were yet; nor fence, nor mote, nor mound,
Nor drum was heard, nor trumpet's angry sound:
Nor swords were forg'd; but void of care and crime,
The soft creation slept away their time.

The teeming Earth, yet guiltless of the plough,
And unprovok'd, did fruitful stores allow:
Content with food, which Nature freely bred,
On wildings and on strawberries they fed;
Cornels and bramble-berries gave the rest,
And falling acorns furnish'd out a feast.

The flow'rs unsown, in fields and meadows reign'd:
And Western winds immortal spring maintain'd.

In following years, the bearded corn ensu'd
From Earth unask'd, nor was that Earth renew'd.

From veins of vallies, milk and nectar broke;
And honey sweating through the pores of oak.

The Silver Age

But when good Saturn, banish'd from above,
Was driv'n to Hell, the world was under Jove.

Succeeding times a silver age behold,
Excelling brass, but more excell'd by gold.

Then summer, autumn, winter did appear:
And spring was but a season of the year.

The sun his annual course obliquely made,
Good days contracted, and enlarg'd the bad.

Then air with sultry heats began to glow;
The wings of winds were clogg'd with ice and snow;
And shivering mortals, into houses driv'n,
Sought shelter from th' inclemency of Heav'n.

Those houses, then, were caves, or homely sheds;
With twining oziars fenc'd; and moss their beds.

Then ploughs, for seed, the fruitful furrows broke,
And oxen labour'd first beneath the yoke.

The Brazen Age

To this came next in course, the brazen age:
A warlike offspring, prompt to bloody rage,
Not impious yet . . .

The Iron Age

Hard steel succeeded then:
And stubborn as the metal, were the men.

Truth, modesty, and shame, the world forsook:
Fraud, avarice, and force, their places took.

Then sails were spread, to every wind that blew.

Raw were the sailors, and the depths were new:
Trees, rudely hollow'd, did the waves sustain;
E're ships in triumph plough'd the watry plain.

Then land-marks limited to each his right:
For all before was common as the light.

Nor was the ground alone requir'd to bear
Her annual income to the crooked share,
But greedy mortals, rummaging her store,
Digg'd from her entrails first the precious oar;
Which next to Hell, the prudent Gods had laid;
And that alluring ill, to sight display'd.

Thus cursed steel, and more accursed gold,
Gave mischief birth, and made that mischief bold:
And double death did wretched Man invade,
By steel assaulted, and by gold betray'd,
Now (brandish'd weapons glittering in their hands)
Mankind is broken loose from moral bands;
No rights of hospitality remain:
The guest, by him who harbour'd him, is slain,
The son-in-law pursues the father's life;
The wife her husband murders, he the wife.

The step-dame poyson for the son prepares;
The son inquires into his father's years.

Faith flies, and piety in exile mourns;
And justice, here opprest, to Heav'n returns.

The Giants' War

Nor were the Gods themselves more safe above;
Against beleaguer'd Heav'n the giants move.

Hills pil'd on hills, on mountains mountains lie,
To make their mad approaches to the skie.

'Till Jove, no longer patient, took his time
T' avenge with thunder their audacious crime:
Red light'ning plaid along the firmament,
And their demolish'd works to pieces rent.

Sing'd with the flames, and with the bolts transfixt,
With native Earth, their blood the monsters mixt;
The blood, indu'd with animating heat,
Did in th' impregnant Earth new sons beget:
They, like the seed from which they sprung, accurst,
Against the Gods immortal hatred nurst,
An impious, arrogant, and cruel brood;
Expressing their original from blood.

Which when the king of Gods beheld from high
(Withal revolving in his memory,
What he himself had found on Earth of late,
Lycaon's guilt, and his inhumane treat),
He sigh'd; nor longer with his pity strove;
But kindled to a wrath becoming Jove:
Then call'd a general council of the Gods;
Who summon'd, issue from their blest abodes,
And fill th' assembly with a shining train.

A way there is, in Heav'n's expanded plain,
Which, when the skies are clear, is seen below,
And mortals, by the name of Milky, know.

The ground-work is of stars; through which the road
Lyes open to the Thunderer's abode:
The Gods of greater nations dwell around,
And, on the right and left, the palace bound;
The commons where they can: the nobler sort
With winding-doors wide open, front the court.

This place, as far as Earth with Heav'n may vie,
I dare to call the Louvre of the skie.

When all were plac'd, in seats distinctly known,
And he, their father, had assum'd the throne,
Upon his iv'ry sceptre first he leant,
Then shook his head, that shook the firmament:
Air, Earth, and seas, obey'd th' almighty nod;
And, with a gen'ral fear, confess'd the God.

At length, with indignation, thus he broke
His awful silence, and the Pow'rs bespoke.

I was not more concern'd in that debate
Of empire, when our universal state
Was put to hazard, and the giant race
Our captive skies were ready to imbrace:
For tho' the foe was fierce, the seeds of all
Rebellion, sprung from one original;
Now, wheresoever ambient waters glide,
All are corrupt, and all must be destroy'd.

Let me this holy protestation make,
By Hell, and Hell's inviolable lake,
I try'd whatever in the godhead lay:
But gangren'd members must be lopt away,
Before the nobler parts are tainted to decay.

There dwells below, a race of demi-gods,
Of nymphs in waters, and of fawns in woods:
Who, tho' not worthy yet, in Heav'n to live,
Let 'em, at least, enjoy that Earth we give.

Can these be thought securely lodg'd below,
When I my self, who no superior know,
I, who have Heav'n and Earth at my command,
Have been attempted by Lycaon's hand?
At this a murmur through the synod went,
And with one voice they vote his punishment.

Thus, when conspiring traytors dar'd to doom
The fall of Caesar, and in him of Rome,
The nations trembled with a pious fear;
All anxious for their earthly Thunderer:
Nor was their care, o Caesar, less esteem'd
By thee, than that of Heav'n for Jove was deem'd:
Who with his hand, and voice, did first restrain
Their murmurs, then resum'd his speech again.

The Gods to silence were compos'd, and sate
With reverence, due to his superior state.

Cancel your pious cares; already he
Has paid his debt to justice, and to me.

Yet what his crimes, and what my judgments were,
Remains for me thus briefly to declare.

The clamours of this vile degenerate age,
The cries of orphans, and th' oppressor's rage,
Had reach'd the stars: I will descend, said I,
In hope to prove this loud complaint a lye.

Disguis'd in humane shape, I travell'd round
The world, and more than what I heard, I found.

O'er Maenalus I took my steepy way,
By caverns infamous for beasts of prey:
Then cross'd Cyllene, and the piny shade
More infamous, by curst Lycaon made:
Dark night had cover'd Heaven, and Earth, before
I enter'd his unhospitable door.

Just at my entrance, I display'd the sign
That somewhat was approaching of divine.

The prostrate people pray; the tyrant grins;
And, adding prophanation to his sins,
I'll try, said he, and if a God appear,
To prove his deity shall cost him dear.

'Twas late; the graceless wretch my death prepares,
When I shou'd soundly sleep, opprest with cares:
This dire experiment he chose, to prove
If I were mortal, or undoubted Jove:
But first he had resolv'd to taste my pow'r;
Not long before, but in a luckless hour,
Some legates, sent from the Molossian state,
Were on a peaceful errand come to treat:
Of these he murders one, he boils the flesh;
And lays the mangled morsels in a dish:
Some part he roasts; then serves it up, so drest,
And bids me welcome to this humane feast.

Mov'd with disdain, the table I o'er-turn'd;
And with avenging flames, the palace burn'd.

The tyrant in a fright, for shelter gains
The neighb'ring fields, and scours along the plains.

Howling he fled, and fain he wou'd have spoke;
But humane voice his brutal tongue forsook.

About his lips the gather'd foam he churns,
And, breathing slaughters, still with rage he burns,
But on the bleating flock his fury turns.

His mantle, now his hide, with rugged hairs
Cleaves to his back; a famish'd face he bears;
His arms descend, his shoulders sink away
To multiply his legs for chase of prey.

He grows a wolf, his hoariness remains,
And the same rage in other members reigns.

His eyes still sparkle in a narr'wer space:
His jaws retain the grin, and violence of his face
This was a single ruin, but not one
Deserves so just a punishment alone.

Mankind's a monster, and th' ungodly times
Confed'rate into guilt, are sworn to crimes.

All are alike involv'd in ill, and all
Must by the same relentless fury fall.

Thus ended he; the greater Gods assent;
By clamours urging his severe intent;
The less fill up the cry for punishment.

Yet still with pity they remember Man;
And mourn as much as heav'nly spirits can.

They ask, when those were lost of humane birth,
What he wou'd do with all this waste of Earth:
If his dispeopl'd world he would resign
To beasts, a mute, and more ignoble line;
Neglected altars must no longer smoke,
If none were left to worship, and invoke.

To whom the Father of the Gods reply'd,
Lay that unnecessary fear aside:
Mine be the care, new people to provide.

I will from wondrous principles ordain

A race unlike the first, and try my skill again.

Already had he toss'd the flaming brand;
And roll'd the thunder in his spacious hand;
Preparing to discharge on seas and land:
But stopt, for fear, thus violently driv'n,
The sparks should catch his axle-tree of Heav'n.

Remembring in the fates, a time when fire
Shou'd to the battlements of Heaven aspire,
And all his blazing worlds above shou'd burn;
And all th' inferior globe to cinders turn.

His dire artill'ry thus dismiss, he bent
His thoughts to some securer punishment:
Concludes to pour a watry deluge down;
And what he durst not burn, resolves to drown.

The northern breath, that freezes floods, he binds;
With all the race of cloud-dispelling winds:
The south he loos'd, who night and horror brings;
And foggs are shaken from his flaggy wings.

From his divided beard two streams he pours,
His head, and rheumy eyes distill in show'rs,
With rain his robe, and heavy mantle flow:
And lazy mists are lowring on his brow;
Still as he swept along, with his clench'd fist
He squeez'd the clouds, th' imprison'd clouds resist:
The skies, from pole to pole, with peals resound;
And show'rs inlarg'd, come pouring on the ground.

Then, clad in colours of a various dye,
Junonian Iris breeds a new supply
To feed the clouds: impetuous rain descends;
The bearded corn beneath the burden bends:
Defrauded clowns deplore their perish'd grain;
And the long labours of the year are vain.

Nor from his patrimonial Heaven alone
Is Jove content to pour his vengeance down;
Aid from his brother of the seas he craves,
To help him with auxiliary waves.

The watry tyrant calls his brooks and floods,

Who rowl from mossie caves (their moist abodes);
And with perpetual urns his palace fill:
To whom in brief, he thus imparts his will.

Small exhortation needs; your pow'rs employ:
And this bad world, so Jove requires, destroy.

Let loose the reins to all your watry store:
Bear down the damms, and open ev'ry door.

The floods, by Nature enemies to land,
And proudly swelling with their new command,
Remove the living stones, that stopt their way,
And gushing from their source, augment the sea.

Then, with his mace, their monarch struck the ground;
With inward trembling Earth receiv'd the wound;
And rising streams a ready passage found.

Th' expanded waters gather on the plain:
They float the fields, and over-top the grain;
Then rushing onwards, with a sweepy sway,
Bear flocks, and folds, and lab'ring hinds away.

Nor safe their dwellings were, for, sap'd by floods,
Their houses fell upon their houshold Gods.

The solid piles, too strongly built to fall,
High o'er their heads, behold a watry wall:
Now seas and Earth were in confusion lost;
A world of waters, and without a coast.

One climbs a cliff; one in his boat is born:
And ploughs above, where late he sow'd his corn.

Others o'er chimney-tops and turrets row,
And drop their anchors on the meads below:
Or downward driv'n, they bruise the tender vine,
Or tost aloft, are knock'd against a pine.

And where of late the kids had cropt the grass,
The monsters of the deep now take their place.

Insulting Nereids on the cities ride,
And wond'ring dolphins o'er the palace glide.

On leaves, and masts of mighty oaks they brouze;
And their broad fins entangle in the boughs.

The frighted wolf now swims amongst the sheep;
The yellow lion wanders in the deep:
His rapid force no longer helps the boar:
The stag swims faster, than he ran before.

The fowls, long beating on their wings in vain,
Despair of land, and drop into the main.

Now hills, and vales no more distinction know;
And levell'd Nature lies oppress'd below.

The most of mortals perish in the flood:
The small remainder dies for want of food.

A mountain of stupendous height there stands
Betwixt th' Athenian and Boeotian lands,
The bound of fruitful fields, while fields they were,
But then a field of waters did appear:
Parnassus is its name; whose forky rise
Mounts thro' the clouds, and mates the lofty skies.

High on the summit of this dubious cliff,
Deucalion wafting, moor'd his little skiff.

He with his wife were only left behind
Of perish'd Man; they two were human kind.

The mountain nymphs, and Themis they adore,
And from her oracles relief implore.

The most upright of mortal men was he;
The most sincere, and holy woman, she.

When Jupiter, surveying Earth from high,
Beheld it in a lake of water lie,
That where so many millions lately liv'd,
But two, the best of either sex, surviv'd;
He loos'd the northern wind; fierce Boreas flies
To puff away the clouds, and purge the skies:
Serenely, while he blows, the vapours driv'n,
Discover Heav'n to Earth, and Earth to Heav'n.

The billows fall, while Neptune lays his mace
On the rough sea, and smooths its furrow'd face.

Already Triton, at his call, appears
Above the waves; a Tyrian robe he wears;
And in his hand a crooked trumpet bears.

The sovereign bids him peaceful sounds inspire,
And give the waves the signal to retire.

His writhen shell he takes; whose narrow vent
Grows by degrees into a large extent,
Then gives it breath; the blast with doubling sound,
Runs the wide circuit of the world around:
The sun first heard it, in his early east,
And met the rattling ecchos in the west.

The waters, listning to the trumpet's roar,
Obey the summons, and forsake the shore.

A thin circumference of land appears;
And Earth, but not at once, her visage rears,
And peeps upon the seas from upper grounds;
The streams, but just contain'd within their bounds,
By slow degrees into their channels crawl;
And Earth increases, as the waters fall.

In longer time the tops of trees appear,
Which mud on their dishonour'd branches bear.

At length the world was all restor'd to view;
But desolate, and of a sickly hue:
Nature beheld her self, and stood aghast,
A dismal desert, and a silent waste.

Which when Deucalion, with a piteous look
Beheld, he wept, and thus to Pyrrha spoke:
Oh wife, oh sister, oh of all thy kind
The best, and only creature left behind,
By kindred, love, and now by dangers joyn'd;
Of multitudes, who breath'd the common air,
We two remain; a species in a pair:
The rest the seas have swallow'd; nor have we
Ev'n of this wretched life a certainty.

The clouds are still above; and, while I speak,
A second deluge o'er our heads may break.

Shou'd I be snatcht from hence, and thou remain,
Without relief, or partner of thy pain,
How cou'dst thou such a wretched life sustain?
Shou'd I be left, and thou be lost, the sea
That bury'd her I lov'd, shou'd bury me.

Oh cou'd our father his old arts inspire,
And make me heir of his informing fire,
That so I might abolisht Man retrieve,
And perisht people in new souls might live.

But Heav'n is pleas'd, nor ought we to complain,
That we, th' examples of mankind, remain.

He said; the careful couple joyn their tears:
And then invoke the Gods, with pious prayers.

Thus, in devotion having eas'd their grief,
From sacred oracles they seek relief;
And to Cephysus' brook their way pursue:
The stream was troubled, but the ford they knew;
With living waters, in the fountain bred,
They sprinkle first their garments, and their head,
Then took the way, which to the temple led.

The roofs were all defil'd with moss, and mire,
The desart altars void of solemn fire.

Before the gradual, prostrate they ador'd;
The pavement kiss'd; and thus the saint implor'd.

O righteous Themis, if the Pow'rs above
By pray'rs are bent to pity, and to love;
If humane miseries can move their mind;
If yet they can forgive, and yet be kind;
Tell how we may restore, by second birth,
Mankind, and people desolated Earth.

Then thus the gracious Goddess, nodding, said;
Depart, and with your vestments veil your head:
And stooping lowly down, with losen'd zones,

Throw each behind your backs, your mighty mother's bones.

Amaz'd the pair, and mute with wonder stand,
'Till Pyrrha first refus'd the dire command.

Forbid it Heav'n, said she, that I shou'd tear
Those holy reliques from the sepulcher.

They ponder'd the mysterious words again,
For some new sense; and long they sought in vain:
At length Deucalion clear'd his cloudy brow,
And said, the dark Aenigma will allow
A meaning, which, if well I understand,
From sacrilege will free the God's command:
This Earth our mighty mother is, the stones
In her capacious body, are her bones:
These we must cast behind. With hope, and fear,
The woman did the new solution hear:
The man diffides in his own augury,
And doubts the Gods; yet both resolve to try.

Descending from the mount, they first unbind
Their vests, and veil'd, they cast the stones behind:
The stones (a miracle to mortal view,
But long tradition makes it pass for true)
Did first the rigour of their kind expel,
And suppl'd into softness, as they fell;
Then swell'd, and swelling, by degrees grew warm;
And took the rudiments of human form.

Imperfect shapes: in marble such are seen,
When the rude chizzel does the man begin;
While yet the roughness of the stone remains,
Without the rising muscles, and the veins.

The sappy parts, and next resembling juice,
Were turn'd to moisture, for the body's use:
Supplying humours, blood, and nourishment;
The rest, too solid to receive a bent,
Converts to bones; and what was once a vein,
Its former name and Nature did retain.

By help of pow'r divine, in little space,
What the man threw, assum'd a manly face;
And what the wife, renew'd the female race.

Hence we derive our nature; born to bear
Laborious life; and harden'd into care.

The rest of animals, from teeming Earth
Produc'd, in various forms receiv'd their birth.

The native moisture, in its close retreat,
Digested by the sun's aetherial heat,
As in a kindly womb, began to breed:
Then swell'd, and quicken'd by the vital seed.

And some in less, and some in longer space,
Were ripen'd into form, and took a sev'ral face.

Thus when the Nile from Pharian fields is fled,
And seeks, with ebbing tides, his ancient bed,
The fat manure with heav'nly fire is warm'd;
And crusted creatures, as in wombs, are form'd;
These, when they turn the glebe, the peasants find;
Some rude, and yet unfinish'd in their kind:
Short of their limbs, a lame imperfect birth:
One half alive; and one of lifeless earth.

For heat, and moisture, when in bodies join'd,
The temper that results from either kind
Conception makes; and fighting 'till they mix,
Their mingled atoms in each other fix.

Thus Nature's hand the genial bed prepares
With friendly discord, and with fruitful wars.

From hence the surface of the ground, with mud
And slime besmear'd (the faeces of the flood),
Receiv'd the rays of Heav'n: and sucking in
The seeds of heat, new creatures did begin:
Some were of sev'ral sorts produc'd before,
But of new monsters, Earth created more.

Unwillingly, but yet she brought to light
Thee, Python too, the wondring world to fright,
And the new nations, with so dire a sight:
So monstrous was his bulk, so large a space
Did his vast body, and long train embrace.

Whom Phoebus basking on a bank espy'd;
E're now the God his arrows had not try'd
But on the trembling deer, or mountain goat;
At this new quarry he prepares to shoot.

Though ev'ry shaft took place, he spent the store
Of his full quiver; and 'twas long before
Th' expiring serpent wallow'd in his gore.

Then, to preserve the fame of such a deed,
For Python slain, he Pythian games decreed.

Where noble youths for mastership shou'd strive,
To quoit, to run, and steeds, and chariots drive.

The prize was fame: in witness of renown
An oaken garland did the victor crown.

The laurel was not yet for triumphs born;
But every green alike by Phoebus worn,
Did, with promiscuous grace, his flowing locks adorn.

The Transformation of Daphne into a Lawrel

The first and fairest of his loves, was she
Whom not blind fortune, but the dire decree
Of angry Cupid forc'd him to desire:
Daphne her name, and Peneus was her sire.

Swell'd with the pride, that new success attends,
He sees the stripling, while his bow he bends,
And thus insults him: Thou lascivious boy,
Are arms like these for children to employ?
Know, such atchievements are my proper claim;
Due to my vigour, and unerring aim:
Resistless are my shafts, and Python late
In such a feather'd death, has found his fate.

Take up the torch (and lay my weapons by),
With that the feeble souls of lovers fry.

To whom the son of Venus thus reply'd,
Phoebus, thy shafts are sure on all beside,
But mine of Phoebus, mine the fame shall be
Of all thy conquests, when I conquer thee.

He said, and soaring, swiftly wing'd his flight:
Nor stopt but on Parnassus' airy height.

Two diff'rent shafts he from his quiver draws;
One to repel desire, and one to cause.

One shaft is pointed with refulgent gold:
To bribe the love, and make the lover bold:
One blunt, and tipt with lead, whose base allay
Provokes disdain, and drives desire away.

The blunted bolt against the nymph he drest:
But with the sharp transfixt Apollo's breast.

Th' enamour'd deity pursues the chace;
The scornful damsel shuns his loath'd embrace:
In hunting beasts of prey, her youth employs;
And Phoebe rivals in her rural joys.

With naked neck she goes, and shoulders bare;
And with a fillet binds her flowing hair.

By many suitors sought, she mocks their pains,
And still her vow'd virginity maintains.

Impatient of a yoke, the name of bride
She shuns, and hates the joys, she never try'd.

On wilds, and woods, she fixes her desire:
Nor knows what youth, and kindly love, inspire.

Her father chides her oft: Thou ow'st, says he,
A husband to thy self, a son to me.

She, like a crime, abhors the nuptial bed:
She glows with blushes, and she hangs her head.

Then casting round his neck her tender arms,
Sooths him with blandishments, and filial charms:
Give me, my Lord, she said, to live, and die,
A spotless maid, without the marriage tye.

'Tis but a small request; I beg no more
Than what Diana's father gave before.

The good old sire was soften'd to consent;
But said her wish wou'd prove her punishment:
For so much youth, and so much beauty join'd,
Oppos'd the state, which her desires design'd.

The God of light, aspiring to her bed,
Hopes what he seeks, with flattering fancies fed;
And is, by his own oracles, mis-led.

And as in empty fields the stubble burns,
Or nightly travellers, when day returns,
Their useless torches on dry hedges throw,
That catch the flames, and kindle all the row;
So burns the God, consuming in desire,
And feeding in his breast a fruitless fire:
Her well-turn'd neck he view'd (her neck was bare)
And on her shoulders her dishevel'd hair;
Oh were it comb'd, said he, with what a grace
Wou'd every waving curl become her face!
He view'd her eyes, like heav'nly lamps that shone,
He view'd her lips, too sweet to view alone,
Her taper fingers, and her panting breast;
He praises all he sees, and for the rest
Believes the beauties yet unseen are best:
Swift as the wind, the damsel fled away,
Nor did for these alluring speeches stay:
Stay Nymph, he cry'd, I follow, not a foe.

Thus from the lyon trips the trembling doe;
Thus from the wolf the frighten'd lamb removes,
And, from pursuing falcons, fearful doves;
Thou shunn'st a God, and shunn'st a God, that loves.

Ah, lest some thorn shou'd pierce thy tender foot,
Or thou shou'dst fall in flying my pursuit!
To sharp uneven ways thy steps decline;
Abate thy speed, and I will bate of mine.

Yet think from whom thou dost so rashly fly;
Nor basely born, nor shepherd's swain am I.

Perhaps thou know'st not my superior state;
And from that ignorance proceeds thy hate.

Me Claros, Delphi, Tenedos obey;
These hands the Patareian scepter sway.

The King of Gods begot me: what shall be,
Or is, or ever was, in Fate, I see.

Mine is th' invention of the charming lyre;
Sweet notes, and heav'nly numbers, I inspire.

Sure is my bow, unerring is my dart;
But ah! more deadly his, who pierc'd my heart.

Med'cine is mine; what herbs and simples grow
In fields, and forrests, all their pow'rs I know;
And am the great physician call'd, below.

Alas that fields and forrests can afford.

No remedies to heal their love-sick lord!
To cure the pains of love, no plant avails:
And his own physick, the physician falls.

She heard not half; so furiously she flies;
And on her ear th' imperfect accent dies,
Fear gave her wings; and as she fled, the wind
Increasing, spread her flowing hair behind;
And left her legs and thighs expos'd to view:
Which made the God more eager to pursue.

The God was young, and was too hotly bent
To lose his time in empty compliment:
But led by love, and fir'd with such a sight,
Impetuously pursu'd his near delight.

As when th' impatient greyhound slipt from far,
Bounds o'er the glebe to course the fearful hare,
She in her speed does all her safety lay;
And he with double speed pursues the prey;
O'er-runs her at the sitting turn, and licks
His chaps in vain, and blows upon the flix:
She scapes, and for the neighb'ring covert strives,
And gaining shelter, doubts if yet she lives:
If little things with great we may compare,
Such was the God, and such the flying fair,
She urg'd by fear, her feet did swiftly move,

But he more swiftly, who was urg'd by love.

He gathers ground upon her in the chace:
Now breathes upon her hair, with nearer pace;
And just is fast'ning on the wish'd embrace.

The nymph grew pale, and in a mortal fright,
Spent with the labour of so long a flight;
And now despairing, cast a mournful look
Upon the streams of her paternal brook;
Oh help, she cry'd, in this extreamest need!
If water Gods are deities indeed:
Gape Earth, and this unhappy wretch intomb;
Or change my form, whence all my sorrows come.

Scarce had she finish'd, when her feet she found
Benumb'd with cold, and fasten'd to the ground:
A filmy rind about her body grows;
Her hair to leaves, her arms extend to boughs:
The nymph is all into a lawrel gone;
The smoothness of her skin remains alone.

Yet Phoebus loves her still, and casting round
Her bole, his arms, some little warmth he found.

The tree still panted in th' unfinish'd part:
Not wholly vegetive, and heav'd her heart.

He fixt his lips upon the trembling rind;
It swerv'd aside, and his embrace declin'd.

To whom the God, Because thou canst not be
My mistress, I espouse thee for my tree:
Be thou the prize of honour, and renown;
The deathless poet, and the poem, crown.

Thou shalt the Roman festivals adorn,
And, after poets, be by victors worn.

Thou shalt returning Caesar's triumph grace;
When poms shall in a long procession pass.

Wreath'd on the posts before his palace wait;
And be the sacred guardian of the gate.

Secure from thunder, and unharm'd by Jove,
Unfading as th' immortal Pow'rs above:
And as the locks of Phoebus are unshorn,
So shall perpetual green thy boughs adorn.

The grateful tree was pleas'd with what he said;
And shook the shady honours of her head.

The Transformation of Io into a Heyfer

An ancient forest in Thessalia grows;
Which Tempe's pleasing valley does inclose:
Through this the rapid Peneus take his course;
From Pindus rolling with impetuous force;
Mists from the river's mighty fall arise:
And deadly damps inclose the cloudy skies:
Perpetual fogs are hanging o'er the wood;
And sounds of waters deaf the neighbourhood.

Deep, in a rocky cave, he makes abode
(A mansion proper for a mourning God).

Here he gives audience; issuing out decrees
To rivers, his dependant deities.

On this occasion hither they resort;
To pay their homage, and to make their court.

All doubtful, whether to congratulate
His daughter's honour, or lament her fate.

Sperchaeus, crown'd with poplar, first appears;
Then old Apidanus came crown'd with years:
Enipeus turbulent, Amphrysos tame;
And Aëas last with lagging waters came.

Then, of his kindred brooks, a num'rous throng
Condole his loss; and bring their urns along.

Not one was wanting of the wat'ry train,
That fill'd his flood, or mingled with the main:
But Inachus, who in his cave, alone,
Wept not another's losses, but his own,
For his dear Io, whether stray'd, or dead,
To him uncertain, doubtful tears he shed.

He sought her through the world; but sought in vain;
And no where finding, rather fear'd her slain.

Her, just returning from her father's brook,
Jove had beheld, with a desiring look:
And, Oh fair daughter of the flood, he said,
Worthy alone of Jove's imperial bed,
Happy whoever shall those charms possess;
The king of Gods (nor is thy lover less)
Invites thee to yon cooler shades; to shun
The scorching rays of the meridian sun.

Nor shalt thou tempt the dangers of the grove
Alone, without a guide; thy guide is Jove.

No puny Pow'r, but he whose high command
Is unconfin'd, who rules the seas and land;
And tempers thunder in his awful hand,
Oh fly not: for she fled from his embrace
O'er Lerna's pastures: he pursu'd the chace
Along the shades of the Lyrcaean plain;
At length the God, who never asks in vain,
Involv'd with vapours, imitating night,
Both Air, and Earth; and then suppress'd her flight,
And mingling force with love, enjoy'd the full delight.

Mean-time the jealous Juno, from on high,
Survey'd the fruitful fields of Arcady;
And wonder'd that the mist shou'd over-run
The face of day-light, and obscure the sun.

No nat'ral cause she found, from brooks, or bogs,
Or marshy lowlands, to produce the fogs;
Then round the skies she sought for Jupiter,
Her faithless husband; but no Jove was there:
Suspecting now the worst, Or I, she said,
Am much mistaken, or am much betray'd.

With fury she precipitates her flight:
Dispels the shadows of dissembled night;
And to the day restores his native light.

Th' Almighty Leacher, careful to prevent
The consequence, foreseeing her descent,

Transforms his mistress in a trice; and now
In Io's place appears a lovely cow.

So sleek her skin, so faultless was her make,
Ev'n Juno did unwilling pleasure take
To see so fair a rival of her love;
And what she was, and whence, enquir'd of Jove:
Of what fair herd, and from what pedigree?
The God, half caught, was forc'd upon a lye:
And said she sprung from Earth. She took the word,
And begg'd the beauteous heyfer of her lord.

What should he do? 'twas equal shame to Jove
Or to relinquish, or betray his love:
Yet to refuse so slight a gift, wou'd be
But more t' increase his consort's jealousy:
Thus fear, and love, by turns, his heart assail'd;
And stronger love had sure, at length, prevail'd:
But some faint hope remain'd, his jealous queen
Had not the mistress through the heyfer seen.

The cautious Goddess, of her gift possest,
Yet harbour'd anxious thoughts within her breast;
As she who knew the falshood of her Jove;
And justly fear'd some new relapse of love.

Which to prevent, and to secure her care,
To trusty Argus she commits the fair.

The head of Argus (as with stars the skies)
Was compass'd round, and wore an hundred eyes.

But two by turns their lids in slumber steep;
The rest on duty still their station keep;
Nor cou'd the total constellation sleep.

Thus, ever present, to his eyes, and mind,
His charge was still before him, tho' behind.

In fields he suffer'd her to feed by Day,
But when the setting sun to night gave way,
The captive cow he summon'd with a call;
And drove her back, and ty'd her to the stall.

On leaves of trees, and bitter herbs she fed,

Heav'n was her canopy, bare earth her bed:
So hardly lodg'd, and to digest her food,
She drank from troubled streams, defil'd with mud.

Her woeful story fain she wou'd have told,
With hands upheld, but had no hands to hold.

Her head to her ungentle keeper bow'd,
She strove to speak, she spoke not, but she low'd:
Affrighted with the noise, she look'd around,
And seem'd t' inquire the author of the sound.

Once on the banks where often she had play'd
(Her father's banks), she came, and there survey'd
Her alter'd visage, and her branching head;
And starting, from her self she wou'd have fled.

Her fellow nymphs, familiar to her eyes,
Beheld, but knew her not in this disguise.

Ev'n Inachus himself was ignorant;
And in his daughter, did his daughter want.

She follow'd where her fellows went, as she
Were still a partner of the company:
They stroak her neck; the gentle heyfer stands,
And her neck offers to their stroaking hands.

Her father gave her grass; the grass she took;
And lick'd his palms, and cast a piteous look;
And in the language of her eyes, she spoke.

She wou'd have told her name, and ask'd relief,
But wanting words, in tears she tells her grief.

Which, with her foot she makes him understand;
And prints the name of Io in the sand.

Ah wretched me! her mournful father cry'd;
She, with a sigh, to wretched me reply'd:
About her milk-white neck, his arms he threw;
And wept, and then these tender words ensue.

And art thou she, whom I have sought around
The world, and have at length so sadly found?

So found, is worse than lost: with mutual words
Thou answer'st not, no voice thy tongue affords:
But sighs are deeply drawn from out thy breast;
And speech deny'd, by lowing is express'd.

Unknowing, I prepar'd thy bridal bed;
With empty hopes of happy issue fed.

But now the husband of a herd must be
Thy mate, and bell'wing sons thy progeny.

Oh, were I mortal, death might bring relief:
But now my God-head but extends my grief:
Prolongs my woes, of which no end I see,
And makes me curse my immortality!
More had he said, but fearful of her stay,
The starry guardian drove his charge away,
To some fresh pasture; on a hilly height
He sate himself, and kept her still in sight.

The Eyes of Argus transform'd into a Peacock's Train

Now Jove no longer cou'd her suff'rings bear;
But call'd in haste his airy messenger,
The son of Maia, with severe decree
To kill the keeper, and to set her free.

With all his harness soon the God was sped,
His flying hat was fastned on his head,
Wings on his heels were hung, and in his hand
He holds the vertue of the snaky wand.

The liquid air his moving pinions wound,
And, in the moment, shoot him on the ground.

Before he came in sight, the crafty God
His wings dismiss'd, but still retain'd his rod:
That sleep-procuring wand wise Hermes took,
But made it seem to sight a sherpherd's hook.

With this, he did a herd of goats controul;
Which by the way he met, and slily stole.

Clad like a country swain, he pip'd, and sung;
And playing, drove his jolly troop along.