

Ode read at the centenary dinner of the Royal Medical Society, February 17th, 1837.

Contributors

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To — Perry Esq.
From the Author
W. H.

ODE,

READ AT THE CENTENARY DINNER

OF THE

ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY,

FEBRUARY 17th, 1837.

[Faint, illegible handwriting]

O. D. R.

READ AT THE CENTINARI DINNER

ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 1901

ODE.

1.

Had I, O Bard of Tyne, ⁽¹⁾ thy might
To wake again the Attic lyre,
My youthful muse
Should now in loftiest thought unite
Stern reason with poetic fire,
And in the strain her soul infuse.

2.

O'er wild Northumbria's heathy hills,
Through rugged scenes we joyed to rove ;
And oft, like thee,
By limpid Wensbeck's mossy rills
Unseen, I've listened in the grove,
Entranced by Nature's melody.

3.

When brightly dawned this mental Sun,
Now throned with pride in genial skies, ⁽²⁾
Cheered by its light,
Thy eager Genius just begun
To trust its pinions, dared to rise,
And struggled into envied sight. ⁽³⁾

4.

See varied Nature's wondrous plan
One tie of love and radiance bind,
Nor rashly deem,

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In deepest paths her scheme to scan,
And move her works, the searching mind
Should view unroused the glowing theme.

5.

In ancient days the world adored
One power of Med'cine and of Song ;
The healing art
Knew for its source the glorious Lord
Of light, and sought to pour along
The soothing lay, and touch the heart.

6.

Our art drew birth where summer skies
For ever deck the gliding year ;
There festive Life
O'er Pleasure's arrowy waters flies,
And man may sip, nor yet appear
The ills elsewhere so deadly rife.

7.

There Death, unwont with lingering pain
By slow degrees to waste his prey,
Disdaining wiles,
With bold force snaps the vital chain
And bears his blooming spoil away,
Nor mocks the victim with his smiles.

8.

Disease there felt the Muses' charms,
And melted by the Poet's prayer,
E'en Proserpine
Consented to his longing arms,
Again to yield her subject fair :
Ah Bard ! a transient joy was thine !

9.

Here in a clime of wintry rage
Full oft the heavens unkindly lour,
With suffering fraught,
And ruder frames our help engage ;
Whence to her aid the healing power
More solid arms from far hath sought.

10.

Thus we've traced Chemia to her grot,
And bowed before the glittering throne,
To win her lore ;
And mid the splendour of the spot,
Where purple gems and minerals shone,
Asked but to swell our healthsome store.

11.

And thou, sweet Goddess of the year,
Rich Flora ! we have worshipped thee,
Where'er thy seat ;
And in deep woods, on mountains drear,
Or by the margin of the sea,
Thy treasures culled with foresight meet.

12.

And minds by each sage pursuit fired,
One ardent impulse to the goal
Together draws,
Happ'ly with chastened zeal inspired,
Their fiercer fancies to controul,
By " rigid Verulamian laws."

13.

Lo ! plagues, 'mid elemental strife
 And slime and darkness erewhile bred,
 By Phœbus slain,⁽⁴⁾
 Mankind awoke anew to life,
 Industry cheerful raised her head,
 And Plenty, smiling, owned her reign.

14.

Then from his arduous deeds reposing,
 The Godhead seized his golden lute ;
 Then rose the sound ;
 As when the gates of morn unclosing,
 While Earth's gay music yet is mute,
 His orient beams he pours around,

15.

And breaks once more Creation's night ;
 Then, when the streamlets fresher flowing,
 His rays rejoice,
 The birds begin their warbling flight,
 And 'mid the breezes softer blowing,
 One gladsome hymn returns his voice.

16.

Thus Io-Pæans answering wide,
 Proclaimed how monstrous Python fell ;
 The Earth now freed
 From dread of Pest's devouring stride,
 Her rapture strove in sound to tell,
 And mortal tongues extolled the deed.

17.

So suffering man, by Science' aid
 Sees gloomy Sickness chased away,

And health draw near,
In morning's blushing tints arrayed,
And call him to the scenes of day, —
Each step new music to the ear.

18.

And heroes of the art divine,
Apoll^o-like, awhile should cease
Their godlike toil,
Enjoy the meed of nectared wine,
As patriot soldiers welcome peace,
And triumph o'er the honest spoil.

19.

Serene and glad be their ovation !
Nor banners torn, nor captive foe,
Their deeds have won ; —
Their proudest trophy — an oblation
From thankful hearts for lightened woe ; —
And Misery's smile their dearest guerdon.

20.

Long may the cherished ties endure,
That with firm step and measured tread,
Combining hands,
Through Nature's realms to conquest pure
Our intellectual warriors led !
May glory ever crown those bands !

NOTES.

THE peculiar nature of the subject which the Author of the above composition was called on to treat poetically, may warrant a few brief explanations of allusions made in the poem.

(1.) Akenside is addressed, because he was one of the earliest Members of the Society, and especially the Poet of Science; and although there is at present a Newcastle gentleman, whose elegant productions might entitle him to the epithet by which the author of "The Pleasures of Imagination" is designated above, yet this has been consecrated to the latter in the lines of Scott:

"What goddess form descends in air?
The Grecian muse, severely fair!
What sage is he to whom she deigns
Her lyre of elevated strains?
The BARD OF TYNE!"

(2.) The simile used in the first, and pursued in the following lines of the third stanza, may appear perhaps not improper, if the influence of such institutions as the Medical Society on the energies of the cultivators of science be considered.

(3.) Dugald Stewart has noticed, in the Notes to the third volume of his Lectures, that the classical attainments of Akenside became first eminently remarkable in the debates of the Medical Society.

(4.) Apollo's victory over the Python is regarded as typical of the power of Medicine over Disease; and this view might be elucidated on Lord Bacon's plan of explaining the fables of the ancient mythology.

FINIS.