

**THE SCEPTIC, A POEM.
STANZAS
TO THE MEMORY
OF THE LATE KING**

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The Sceptic, a Poem. Stanzas to the Memory of the Late King by Mrs. Hemans

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MRS. HEMANS

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LONDON:
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THE SCEPTIC,

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TO THE

MEMORY OF THE LATE KING.

Alicia Dorothy Brown
BY MRS. HEMANS.

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1821.

THE
SCEPTIC.

“ Leur raison, qu'ils prennent pour guide, ne présente à leur esprit que des conjectures et des embarras ; les absurdités où ils tombent en niant la Religion deviennent plus insoutenables que les vérités dont la hauteur les étonne ; et pour ne vouloir pas croire des mystères incompréhensibles, ils suivent l'une après l'autre d'incompréhensibles erreurs.”

Bosuet, Oraison funèbre.

THE
SCEPTIC.

WHEN the young Eagle, with exulting eye,
Has learn'd to dare the splendor of the sky,
And leave the Alps beneath him in his course,
To bathe his crest in morn's empyreal source,
Will his free wing, from that majestic height,
Descend to follow some wild meteor's light,
Which far below, with evanescent fire,
Shines to delude, and dazzles to expire?

No! still thro' clouds he wins his upward way,
And proudly claims his heritage of day!
—And shall the spirit, on whose ardent gaze,
The day-spring from on high hath pour'd its blaze,

Turn from that pure effulgence, to the beam
Of earth-born light, that sheds a treacherous gleam,
Luring the wanderer, from the star of faith,
To the deep valley of the shades of death?
What bright exchange, what treasure shall be given,
For the high birth-right of its hope in Heaven?
If lost the gem which empires could not buy,
What yet remains?—a dark eternity!

Is earth still Eden?—might a Seraph guest,
Still, midst its chosen bowers delighted rest?
Is all so cloudless and so calm below,
We seek no fairer scenes than *life* can show?
That the cold Sceptic, in his pride elate,
Rejects the promise of a brighter state,
And leaves the rock, no tempest shall displace,
To rear his dwelling on the quicksand's base?

Votary of doubt! then join the festal throng,
Bask in the sunbeam, listen to the song,

Spread the rich board, and fill the wine-cup high,
And bind the wreath ere yet the roses die !
'Tis well, thine eye is yet undimm'd by time,
And thy heart bounds, exulting in its prime ;
Smile then unmoved at Wisdom's warning voice,
And, in the glory of thy strength, rejoice !

But life hath sterner tasks; e'en youth's brief hours
Survive the beauty of their loveliest flowers ;
The founts of joy, where pilgrims rest from toil,
Are few and distant on the desert soil ;
The soul's pure flame the breath of storms must fan,
And pain and sorrow claim their nursing—Man !
Earth's noblest sons the bitter cup have shared—
Proud child of reason! how art *thou* prepared ?
When years, with silent might, thy frame have bow'd,
And o'er thy spirit cast their wintry cloud,
Will Memory soothe thee on thy bed of pain,
With the bright images of pleasure's train ?