

ENVY AND AVARICE.

("L'Avarice et l'Envie.")

[LE CONSERVATEUR LITTÉRAIRE, 1820.]

Envy and Avarice, one summer day,
 Sauntering abroad
 In quest of the abode
Of some poor wretch or fool who lived that way--
You--or myself, perhaps--I cannot say--
Along the road, scarce heeding where it tended,
Their way in sullen, sulky silence wended;

For, though twin sisters, these two charming creatures,
Rivals in hideousness of form and features,
Wasted no love between them as they went.

 Pale Avarice,
 With gloating eyes,
And back and shoulders almost double bent,
Was hugging close that fatal box
 For which she's ever on the watch
 Some glance to catch
Suspiciously directed to its locks;
And Envy, too, no doubt with silent winking

At her green, greedy orbs, no single minute
Withdrawn from it, was hard a-thinking
Of all the shining dollars in it.

The only words that Avarice could utter,
Her constant doom, in a low, frightened mutter,
"There's not enough, enough, yet in my store!"
While Envy, as she scanned the glittering sight,
Groaned as she gnashed her yellow teeth with spite,
"She's more than me, more, still forever more!"

Thus, each in her own fashion, as they wandered,
Upon the coffer's precious contents pondered,
When suddenly, to their surprise,
The God Desire stood before their eyes.
Desire, that courteous deity who grants
All wishes, prayers, and wants;
Said he to the two sisters: "Beauteous ladies,
As I'm a gentleman, my task and trade is
To be the slave of your behest--
Choose therefore at your own sweet will and pleasure,
Honors or treasure!
Or in one word, whatever you'd like best.
But, let us understand each other--she
Who speaks the first, her prayer shall certainly
Receive--the other, the same boon redoubled!"

Imagine how our amiable pair,
At this proposal, all so frank and fair,
 Were mutually troubled!
Misers and enviers, of our human race,
Say, what would you have done in such a case?
Each of the sisters murmured, sad and low
 "What boots it, oh, Desire, to me to have
 Crowns, treasures, all the goods that heart can crave,
Or power divine bestow,
Since still another must have always more?"

So each, lest she should speak before
The other, hesitating slow and long
Till the god lost all patience, held her tongue.
 He was enraged, in such a way,
 To be kept waiting there all day,
With two such beauties in the public road;
 Scarce able to be civil even,
 He wished them both--well, not in heaven.

Envy at last the silence broke,
 And smiling, with malignant sneer,
 Upon her sister dear,
 Who stood in expectation by,
Ever implacable and cruel, spoke

"I would be blinded of one eye!"

American Keepsake