A Magnum Opus Ladderword Puzzle

ACROSS
1. Part of verb to be
3. Scorch
5. Gaze fixedly
6. Transgression
7. Whirl
8. Thorn
9. Become firm
10. The Orient
11. Garden flower
12. 7th letter of the Greek alphabet
13. Poker stake
14. Cave
15. Indian dish
16. Clock face
17. Greek epic poem
18. Deranged
19. Alcoholic drink of fermented honey
20. Dropsy
21. Help
22. No clue
23. Landed proprietor of Scotland

DOWN
2. Sporting dog
4. Small dog