

Goldsmith's Traveller

Introductions and Notes.

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Life & Introduction

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OLIVER GOLDSMITH, like Swift and Steele in the preceding generation, Edmund Burke among his contemporaries, and R. B. Sheridan among his successors, was an Irishman; for his family, though of Saxon extraction, had been for some generations settled in Ireland. He was born on November 29, 1728, in an unpretending parsonage at Pallas, an out-of-the-way and almost inaccessible hamlet in the county of Longford. His father, Charles Goldsmith, was a clergyman of the then Established Church ; his mother, Anne, was daughter of the Rev. Oliver Jones, master of the Diocesan School at Elphin. Oliver Goldsmith was the second son in a family consisting of four sons and two daughters. Of his strong family affection we have ample proofs. Seldom has a son left a picture of a father drawn with such fond fidelity as that of the village preacher in the *Deserted Village* ; and his correspondence shows how warmly he was attached to his brothers, and especially to his eldest brother, Henry, to whom *The Traveller* is dedicated.

When Oliver was two years old, his father was made rector of Lissoy, or Lishoy, in Westmeath ; here the young poet's education began at the hands of a maid-servant, Elizabeth Delap, by whom he was taught his letters, and pronounced " impenetrably stupid." In his seventh year he was promoted to the village school ; for the limited income of his father, already strained to the utmost in providing for the education of his eldest son, could ill bear any increased expenditure : his new instructor—one Thomas Byrne, of aboriginal Irish descent, an enthusiastic admirer and, in his own way, an imitator of the ancient Irish bards—had been quarter-master in the army, and had seen service in the war of the Succession in Spain ; and he probably formed the mind of his young pupil more by wonderful legends of banshees and rapparees, and no less marvellous narratives of his own adventures, than by direct instruction in the rudiments of learning. Yet the boy, even at eight years, shewed precocious signs of poetical genius—" he lisped in numbers, for the numbers came."

It had been originally determined that Oliver should be put to a trade when comparatively young, for the small income and large family of his father seemed to make it impossible for him to receive as thorough an education as his elder brother ; but soon after this time the entreaties of his mother produced a change in the family plans, and Oliver was removed from the village school, first to Elphin, then to Athlone, and lastly to Edgeworthstown, that he might be prepared for the University. As a school-boy he was quick and clever, though certainly not too industrious ; but he gave sufficient promise of future excellence to induce some wealthy friends and kinsmen—among whom may be mentioned especially the Rev. Thomas Contarine—to contribute largely to the expenses of his education.

On June 11, 1744, he was admitted as a sizar to Trinity College, Dublin ; but his career was not to be as successful as his friends had fondly hoped. The tutor under whom he was placed was harsh, violent, and unsympathetic ; the pupil was thoughtless, eccentric, and irregular : he neglected his legitimate studies to write street-ballads, which he sold for five shillings apiece, and then broke the college-rules by stealing out of gates at night to hear them sung. On one occasion, to celebrate his success in gaining an exhibition of the value of

thirty shillings, he gave a dance in his attics to some gay friends in the city. Hence we find him, after receiving some perhaps unnecessarily stem chastisement from his tutor, selling books and clothes, intending to embark at Cork to try his luck in foreign parts ; but spending his last shilling in Dublin, and finally, through his brother's intercession, sullenly consenting to a reconciliation with his tutor, and returning to college. Indolent, though occasionally brilliant, he did not graduate till 1749 ; and then followed two years of idleness, vagrancy, and thoughtlessness. No profession could be found for which he was fitted ; the church and the bar were both attempted, but without success—a pair of scarlet breeches is said to have excluded him from the one, and an imprudent fit of gambling from the other—and his perpetual escapades and adventures must have seriously embarrassed his widowed mother, and tried to the utmost the long-suffering affection of that paragon of uncles, good Mr. Contarine.

At the end of the year 1752, Goldsmith was sent to Edinburgh to study medicine, but ‘caelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt ;’ and his Scotch career was characterized by the same heedlessness, good nature, and desultoriness which had marked all his previous life. Though his attendance in the class-rooms of the professors had been by no means regular—for he had tried a tutorship with the Duke of Hamilton, travelled on pony-back in the Highlands, and gambled and sung his hours away—in a year or two's time he thought himself sufficiently advanced in medical science to ask for his uncle's consent to a sojourn at Leyden to complete his studies. Thither accordingly he set out, embarking in a Scotch ship bound for Bordeaux, choosing a somewhat circuitous route to his journey's end. But by a fortunate mistake Goldsmith, with some others of the ship's company, was detained in gaol at Newcastle, while the ship proceeded on her voyage, and was lost with all hands at the mouth of the Garonne ; and Goldsmith reached Leyden, *viâ* Rotterdam. Here he resided about a year, devoting some of his time and energy to the lectures of the medical professors, and more to the pleasures of the gaming-table. Then he determined to leave Holland for the purpose of extending his foreign travels ; but of the money lent to him for that object, he squandered the greater part in play, spent all the rest in a present of the rarest and most costly flower-roots for his uncle in Ireland, and started on his European tour a penniless pedestrian, with one clean shirt and his flute ; but with a good constitution, a light heart, and abundance of animal spirits.

An extract from *The Vicar of Wakefield*, put into the mouth of the wanderer, George Primrose, is said to furnish a tolerably accurate account of Goldsmith's ordinary mode of providing the necessaries of life during his travels : “ I had some knowledge of music, with a tolerable voice, and now turned what was my amusement into a present means of subsistence. I passed among the harmless peasants of Flanders, and among such of the French as were poor enough to be very merry, for I ever found them sprightly in proportion to their wants. Whenever I approached a peasant's house towards nightfall I played one of my most merry tunes, and that procured me not only a lodging, but subsistence for the next day..... In all the foreign universities and convents there are upon certain days philosophical theses maintained against every adventitious disputant, for which, if the champion opposes with any dexterity, he can claim a gratuity in money, a dinner, and a bed for one night. In this manner therefore I fought my way towards England, walked along from city to city, examined mankind more nearly, and, if I may so express it, saw both sides of the picture.” He travelled through Flanders, parts of France and Germany, through Switzerland and the north of Italy, taking an uncongenial tutorship at Geneva, and abandoning it at Marseilles, staying for six months and perhaps graduating in medicine at Padua, visiting Verona, Florence, and Venice ; and finally, after the death of his good uncle, who had probably contributed in part to his maintenance, landing at Dover in 1756.

The poet arrived in London, as he himself says, “without friends, recommendation, money, or impudence.” His plain face, shabby dress, Irish brogue, and eccentric antecedents, made it difficult for him to get employment. He first became an assistant master in a school, but it is uncertain how long his flighty genius endured the irksome monotony of such an occupation. He is next found helping in a chemist’s laboratory near Fish Street Hill ; and soon after, through the kind assistance of Dr. Sleigh, an old Edinburgh fellow-student, he set up as an independent physician, at first at Bankside, Southwark, and afterwards in the Temple. But his medical skill was but small ; the fact of his degree in medicine is very doubtful ; the only patient whom we know that he doctored, he killed, and that was himself ; and Beauclerk’s witticism is well known ; “I do not practise,” said Goldsmith ; “I make it a rule to prescribe only for my friends.” “Pray, dear doctor,” was the reply, “alter your rule, and prescribe only for your enemies.” His patients, by his own account, were numerous, but unremunerative, and he began to practise literature as a second string to his bow. Thus he became a literary hack, or, in his own words, “a regular Swiss in the service of the booksellers ;” and so “with very little practice as a physician, and very little reputation as a poet, he made a shift to live.”

But though Goldsmith had now touched the outer circles of the literary world, no one seems at present to have guessed the genius of the young *littérateur*, nor was he himself conscious that poetry and literary composition was to be henceforth his main employment. Indeed for some time he returned to the profession which he had found so disagreeable, and became, for £20 a year, superintendent of a school at Peckham ; and in 1758 he was appointed physician to a factory in India. The chief obstacle that prevented him from at once setting sail to amass untold wealth in the East, on a salary of £100 a year, was that he had not money enough to pay for his outfit and passage. He had previously published works of minor importance—a “catch-penny” *Life of Voltaire*, completed in four weeks, for twenty pounds ; and *The Memoirs of a Protestant condemned to the Gallies of France for his Religion*, for which he received the same sum—but now he was to venture something greater. Accordingly all his friends in England and Ireland were importuned to circulate proposals for the publication by subscription of an *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Literature in Europe*. This work did more for its author than raise a sum sufficient for his Indian outfit ; it raised his value in the eyes of the booksellers, and as their patronage increased, his visions of Oriental riches waned. He published *The Bee*, contributed criticisms to various reviews and newspapers, wrote regularly for the *Monthly Review* for half a year, was regularly retained by Newbery, the publisher, at a salary of £100 a year, made the acquaintance of Smollett and other literary friends, and advanced from squalid and ill-, or almost un-furnished, lodgings in Green Arbour Court, Old Bailey, to a more respectable habitation in Wine-office Court, Fleet Street. During his residence here he first met Dr. Johnson, who was then the king, not to say the tyrant, of the literary world. About twenty years older than Goldsmith, he had himself known what it was to fight his way through difficulty and disappointment to eminence and fame in the world of letters. The fortitude with which he had borne his troubles had not hardened his heart, nor was his real nature less warm and sympathetic because his manners were brusque and his exterior rough. With these two acquaintance soon ripened into friendship, and friendship became intimacy. Here also Goldsmith wrote *The Vicar of Wakefield* ; but no sooner was this work finished than his landlady arrested him for arrears of debt. Goldsmith, in extremities, sent off to Johnson, who came at once, and took the manuscript to Newbery, to whom he sold it for sixty pounds, and thus obtained the freedom of his friend. The book, however, was not published for two or three years, not indeed till Goldsmith had gained reputation by the publication of *The Traveller*, which was even at that moment lying finished in his desk.

During the years 1762, 1763, and 1764 he was engaged in literary work of a miscellaneous character : history, biography, criticism, essay-writing, occupied him in turn. His works include a *Life of Beau Nash*, an *Art of Poetry*, *Letters on English History*, and especially a series of letters reprinted from *The Ledger*, and republished under the title of *The Citizen of the World*. He was also gradually advancing, in spite of much recklessness and imprudence, to an important position in the literary society of the time. His friends were now more numerous and influential, and his first-floor apartments at No. 2, Brick Court, in the Temple, were furnished in a manner suitable to the distinguished society whom he used to entertain there. In 1764 began the meetings of that celebrated Literary Club, which the pages of Boswell have rendered so familiar. It was originally proposed by Sir Joshua Reynolds to Johnson and Burke, and Goldsmith was at once admitted as one of the original nine who met for supper and conversation on Fridays at the Turk's Head, in Gerard Street, Soho.

In 1765 *The Traveller* was published. Part of it had been written by him during his travels in Switzerland ; but the poem had arrived very slowly at completion. For two years or more, encouraged by the approval of Dr. Johnson, it had been the delight of Goldsmith's few leisure hours to polish and prune this his masterpiece. The effect produced by its publication was soon visible : four editions were required within eight months, and Goldsmith rose from the position of a comparatively obscure essayist to that of the first poet of the age. Very soon after this *The Vicar of Wakefield* appeared ; and the ballad of *The Hermit*, which is inserted in the novel, and also was printed separately, confirmed the author's reputation as a poet.

The Traveller

Oliver Goldsmith

1765

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REMOTE, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
Or by the lazy Scheld, or wandering Po ;
Or onward, where the rude Carinthian boor
Against the houseless stranger shuts the door ;
Or where Campania's plain forsaken lies,
A weary waste expanding to the skies ;
Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see.
My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee ;
Still to my brother turns, with ceaseless pain.
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain.

Eternal blessings crown my earliest friend,
And round his dwelling guardian saints attend :
Blest be that spot, where cheerful guests retire
To pause from toil, and trim their evening fire :
Blest that abode, where want and pain repair,
And every stranger finds a ready chair :
Blest be those feasts with simple plenty crowned,
Where all the ruddy family around
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale ;

Or press the bashful stranger to his food,
And learn the luxury of doing good.

But me, not destined such delights to share,
My prime of life in wandering spent and care :
Impelled with steps unceasing to pursue
Some fleeting good, that mocks me with the view ;
That, like the circle bounding earth and skies,
Allures from far, yet, as I follow, flies ;
My fortune leads to traverse realms alone.
And find no spot of all the world my own.

E'en now, where Alpine solitudes ascend,
I sit me down a pensive hour to spend ;
And, placed on high above the storm's career,
Look downward where a hundred realms appear—
Lakes, forests, cities, plains extending wide,
The pomp of kings, the shepherd's humbler pride.

When thus creation's charms around combine.
Amidst the store should thankless pride repine ?
Say, should the philosophic mind disdain
That good which makes each humbler bosom vain ?
Let school-taught pride dissemble all it can,
These little things are great to little man ;
And wiser he whose sympathetic mind
Exults in all the good of all mankind.
Ye glittering towns with wealth and splendour crowned ;
Ye fields where summer spreads profusion round ;
Ye lakes whose vessels catch the busy gale ;
Ye bending swains that dress the flowery vale ;
For me your tributary stores combine :
Creation's heir, the world, the world is mine !

As some lone miser, visiting his store,
Bends at his treasure, counts, recounts it o'er ;
Hoards after hoards his rising raptures fill,
Yet still he sighs, for hoards are wanting still :
Thus to my breast alternate passions rise,
Pleased with each good that Heaven to man supplies :
Yet oft a sigh prevails, and sorrows fall,
To see the hoard of human bliss so small ;
And oft I wish, amidst the scene, to find
Some spot to real happiness consigned,
Where my worn soul, each wandering hope at rest.
May gather bliss, to see my fellows blest.

But, where to find that happiest spot below,
Who can direct, when all pretend to know ?
The shuddering tenant of the frigid zone
Boldly proclaims that happiest spot his own ;
Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,

And his long nights of revelry and ease ;
The naked negro, panting at the line,
Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine,
Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
And thanks his gods for all the good they gave.

Such is the patriot's boast, where'er we roam.
His first, best country, ever is at home. ,
And yet, perhaps, if countries we compare,
And estimate the blessings which they share,
Though patriots flatter, still shall wisdom find
An equal portion dealt to all mankind ;
As different good, by art or nature given.
To different nations makes their blessings even.

Nature, a mother kind alike to all,
Still grants her bliss at labour's earnest call ;
With food as well the peasant is supplied
On Idra's cliff as Arno's shelvy side ;
And though the rocky-crested summits frown,
These rocks, by custom, turn to beds of down.
From art more various are the blessings sent—
Wealth, commerce, honour, liberty, content.
Yet these each other's power so strong contest,
That either seems destructive of the rest.
Where wealth and freedom reign, contentment fails.
And honour sinks where commerce long prevails.
Hence every state, to one loved blessing prone,
Conforms and models life to that alone.
Each to the favourite happiness attends ;
And spurns the plan that aims at other ends ;
Till, carried to excess in each domain.
This favourite good begets peculiar pain.

But let us try these truths with closer eyes.
And trace them through the prospect as it lies :
Here, for a while my proper cares resigned,
Here let me sit in sorrow for mankind ;
Like yon neglected shrub, at random cast.
That shades the steep, and sighs at every blast.

Far to the right, where Apennine ascends,
Bright as the summer, Italy extends :
Its uplands sloping deck the mountain's side,
Woods over woods in gay theatric pride ;
While oft some temple's mouldering tops between
With venerable grandeur mark the scene.

Could nature's bounty satisfy the breast,
The sons of Italy were surely blest.
Whatever fruits in different climes were found,
That proudly rise, or humbly court the ground ;

Whatever blooms in torrid tracts appear,
Whose bright succession decks the varied year ;
Whatever sweets salute the northern sky
With vernal lives, that blossom but to die ;
These here disporting own the kindred soil,
Nor ask luxuriance from the planter's toil ;
While sea-born gales their gelid wings expand
To winnow fragrance round the smiling land.

But small the bliss that sense alone bestows,
And sensual bliss is all the nation knows.
In florid beauty groves and fields appear,
Man seems the only growth that dwindles here.
Contrasted faults through all his manners reign :
Though poor, luxurious : though submissive, vain ;
Though grave, yet trifling ; zealous, yet untrue ;
And even in penance planning sins anew.
All evils here contaminate the mind,
That opulence departed leaves behind ;
For wealth was theirs, not far removed the date.
When commerce proudly flourished through the state ;
At her command the palace learned to rise,
Again the long-fallen column sought the skies,
The canvas glowed, beyond e'en nature warm.
The pregnant quarry teemed with human form ;
Till, more unsteady than the southern gale,
Commerce on other shores displayed her sail ;
While nought remained of all that riches gave.
But towns unmanned and lords without a slave :
And late the nation found with fruitless skill
Its former strength was but plethoric ill.

Yet still the loss of wealth is here supplied
By arts, the splendid wrecks of former pride :
From these the feeble heart and long-fallen mind
An easy compensation seem to find.
Here may be seen, in bloodless pomp arrayed,
The pasteboard triumph and the cavalcade :
Processions formed for piety and love,
A mistress or a saint in every grove :
By sports like these are all their cares beguiled ;
The sports of children satisfy the child ;
Each nobler aim, repress'd by long control,
Now sinks at last, or feebly mans the soul ;
While low delights, succeeding fast behind,
In happier meanness occupy the mind :
As in those domes, where Cæsars once bore sway,
Defaced by time and tottering in decay,
There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,
The shelter-seeking peasant builds his shed ;
And, wondering man could want the larger pile,
Exults, and owns his cottage with a smile.

My soul, turn from them, turn we to survey
Where rougher climes a nobler race display,
Where the bleak Swiss their stormy mansion tread,
And force a churlish soil for scanty bread ;
No product here the barren hills afford
But man and steel, the soldier and his sword ;
No vernal blooms their torpid rocks array,
But winter lingering chills the lap of May ;
No zephyr fondly sues the mountain's breast,
But meteors glare, and stormy glooms invest.

Yet still, even here, content can spread a charm,
Redress the clime, and all its rage disarm.
Though poor the peasant's hut, his feast though small,
He sees his little lot the lot of all ;
Sees no contiguous palace rear its head.
To shame the meanness of his humble shed ;
No costly lord the sumptuous banquet deal,
To make him loathe his vegetable meal ;
But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,
Each wish contracting, fits him to the soil.
Cheerful at morn, he wakes from short repose,
Breathes the keen air, and carols as he goes ;
With patient angle trolls the finny deep ;
Or drives his venturous ploughshare to the steep ;
Or seeks the den where snow-tracks mark the way,
And drags the struggling savage into day,
At night returning, every labour sped,
He sits him down the monarch of a shed ;
Smiles by his cheerful fire, and round surveys
His children's looks, that brighten at the blaze ;
While his loved partner, boastful of her hoard,
Displays her cleanly platter on the board :
And haply too some pilgrim, thither led,
With many a tale repays the nightly bed.

Thus every good his native wilds impart
Imprints the patriot passion on his heart ;
And e'en those hills, that round his mansion rise,
Enhance the bliss his scanty fund supplies.
Dear is that shed to which his soul conforms,
And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms ;
And as a child, when scaring sounds molest,
Clings close and closer to the mother's breast,
So the loud torrent, and the whirlwind's roar.
But bind him to his native mountains more.

Such are the charms to barren states assigned ;
Their wants but few, their wishes all confined.
Yet let them only share the praises due,
If few their wants, their pleasures are but few ;
For every want that stimulates the breast

Becomes a source of pleasure when redrest.
Whence from such lands each pleasing science flies,
That first excites desires, and then supplies ;
Unknown to them, when sensual pleasures cloy.
To fill the languid pause with finer joy ;
Unknown those powers that raise the soul to flame,
Catch every nerve and vibrate through the frame.
Their level life is but a smouldering fire,
Unquenched by want, unfanned by strong desire ;
Unfit for raptures, or, if raptures cheer
On some high festival of once a year.
In wild excess the vulgar breast takes fire,
Till, buried in debauch, the bliss expire.
But not their joys alone thus coarsely flow :
Their morals, like their pleasures, are but low ;
For, as refinement stops, from sire to son,
Unaltered, unimproved, the manners run ;
And love's and friendship's finely-pointed dart
Fall, blunted, from each indurated heart.
Some sterner virtues o'er the mountain's breast
May sit, like falcons cowering on the nest ;
But all the gentler morals, such as play
Through life's more cultured walks, and charm the way,
These, far dispersed, on timorous pinions fly,
To sport and flutter in a kinder sky.

To kinder skies, where gentler manners reign,
I turn ; and France displays her bright domain.
Gay sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
Pleased with thyself, whom all the world can please.
How often have I led thy sportive choir,
With tuneless pipe, beside the murmuring Loire !
Where shading elms along the margin grew,
And freshened from the wave the zephyr flew ;
And haply, though my harsh touch faltering still,
But mocked all tune, and marred the dancer's skill ;
Yet would the village praise my wondrous power,
And dance, forgetful of the noontide hour.
Alike all ages. Dames of ancient days
Have led their children through the mirthful maze,
And the gay grandsire, skilled in gestic lore,
Has frisked beneath the burden of threescore.

So blest a life these thoughtless realms display ;
Thus idly busy rolls their world away.
Theirs are those arts that mind to mind endear,
For honour forms the social temper here ;
Honour, that praise which real merit gains,
Or even imaginary worth obtains,
Here passes current ; paid from hand to hand.
It shifts in splendid traffic round the land :
From courts to camps, to cottages it strays,

And all are taught an avarice of praise ;
They please, are pleased, they give to get esteem,
Till, seeming blest, they grow to what they seem.

But while this softer heart their bliss supplies,
It gives their follies also room to rise ;
For praise too dearly loved, or warmly sought,
Enfeebles all internal strength of thought :
And the weak soul, within itself unblest
Leans for all pleasure on another's breast,
Hence ostentation here, with tawdry art,
Pants for the vulgar praise which fools impart ;
Here vanity assumes her pert grimace,
And trims her robes of frieze with copper lace ;
Here beggar pride defrauds her daily cheer,
To boast one splendid banquet once a year :
The mind still turns where shifting fashion draws,
Nor weighs the solid worth of self-applause.

To men of other minds my fancy flies,
Embosomed in the deep where Holland lies.
Methinks her patient sons before me stand,
Where the broad ocean leans against the land ;
And, sedulous to stop the coming tide,
Lift the tall *rampire's* artificial pride. [*rampart*
Onward, methinks, and diligently slow,
The firm connected bulwark seems to grow,
Spreads its long arms amidst the watery roar,
Scoops out an empire, and usurps the shore—
While the pent ocean, rising o'er the pile,
Sees an amphibious world beneath him smile ;
The slow canal, the yellow blossomed vale.
The willow-tufted bank, the gliding sail.
The crowded mart, the cultivated plain—
A new creation rescued from his reign.

Thus, while around the wave-subjected soil
Impels the native to repeated toil,
Industrious habits in each bosom reign,
And industry begets a love of gain.
Hence all the good from opulence that springs,
With all those ills superfluous treasure brings,
Are here displayed. Their much-loved wealth imparts
Convenience, plenty, elegance, and arts ;
But view them closer, craft and fraud appear,
Even liberty itself is bartered here.
At gold's superior charms all freedom flies ;
The needy sell it, and the rich man buys :
A land of tyrants, and a den of slaves,
Here wretches seek dishonourable graves,
And, calmly bent, to servitude conform,
Dull as their lakes that slumber in the storm.

Heavens ! how unlike their Belgic sires of old—
Rough, poor, content, ungovernably bold,
War in each breast, and freedom on each brow ;
How much unlike the sons of Britain now !

Fired at the sound, my genius spreads her wing,
And flies where Britain courts the western spring ;
Where lawns extend that scorn Arcadian pride.
And brighter streams than famed Hydaspes glide.
There, all around, the gentlest breezes stray ;
There gentlest music melts on ev'ry spray ;
Creation's mildest charms are there combined :
Extremes are only in the master's mind.
Stern o'er each bosom Reason holds her state,
With daring aims irregularly great.
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by,
Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
By forms unfashioned, fresh from nature's hand,
Fierce in their native hardiness of soul,
True to imagined right, above control ;
While even the peasant boasts these rights to scan.
And learns to venerate himself as man.

Thine, freedom, thine the blessings pictured here,
Thine are those charms that dazzle and endear ;
Too blest, indeed, were such without alloy,
But fostered e'en by freedom, ills annoy ;
That independence Britons prize too high,
Keeps man from man, and breaks the social tie :
The self-dependent lordlings stand alone,
All claims that bind and sweeten life unknown.
Here, by the bonds of nature feebly held,
Minds combat minds, repelling and repelled ;
Ferments arise, imprisoned factions roar,
Repressed ambition struggles round her shore.
Till, overwrought, the general system feels
Its motions stopped, or frenzy fire the wheels.

Nor this the worst. As nature's ties decay,
As duty, love, and honour fail to sway,
Fictitious bonds, the bonds of wealth and law,
Still gather strength, and force unwilling awe.
Hence all obedience bows to these alone.
And talent sinks, and merit weeps unknown ;
Till time may come, when, stripped of all her charms,
The land of scholars, and the nurse of arms,
Where noble stems transmit the patriot flame,
Where kings have toiled, and poets wrote for fame,
One sink of level avarice shall lie,
And scholars, soldiers, kings, unhonoured die.

Yet think not, thus when freedom's ills I state,
I mean to flatter kings, or court the great.
Ye powers of truth, that bid my soul aspire,
Far from my bosom drive the low desire !
And thou, fair freedom, taught alike to feel
The rabble's rage, and tyrant's angry steel ;
Thou transitory flower, alike undone
By proud contempt, or favour's fostering sun.
Still may thy blooms the changeful clime endure !
I only would repress them to secure ;
For just experience tells in ev'ry soil,
That those who think must govern those that toil ;
And all that freedom's highest aims can reach
Is but to lay proportioned loads on each.
Hence, should one order disproportioned grow,
Its double weight must ruin all below.

O then how blind to all that truth requires,
Who think it freedom when a part aspires !
Calm is my soul, nor apt to rise in arms,
Except when fast approaching danger warms ;
But, when contending chiefs blockade the throne,
Contracting regal power to stretch their own.
When I behold a factious band agree
To call it freedom when themselves are free ;
Each wanton judge new penal statutes draw,
Laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the law ;
The wealth of climes, where savage nations roam.
Pillaged from slaves to purchase slaves at home ;
Fear, pity, justice, indignation start,
Tear off reserve, and bare my swelling heart ;
Till half a patriot, half a coward grown,
I fly from petty tyrants to the throne.

Yes, brother ! curse with me that baleful hour
When first ambition struck at regal power ;
And, thus polluting honour in its source,
Gave wealth to sway the mind with double force.
Have we not seen, round Britain's peopled shore,
Her useful sons exchanged for useless ore ?
Seen all her triumphs but destruction haste.
Like flaring tapers brightening as they waste.
Seen opulence, her grandeur to maintain.
Lead stern depopulation in her train,
And over fields where scattered hamlets rose,
In barren solitary pomp repose ?
Have we not seen, at pleasure's lordly call,
The smiling, long-frequented village fall ?
Beheld the duteous son, the sire decayed.
The modest matron, and the blushing maid,
Forced from their homes, a melancholy train,
To traverse climes beyond the western main;

Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,
And Niagara stuns with thundering sound ?

Even now, perhaps, as there some pilgrim strays
Through tangled forests and through dang'rous ways.
Where beasts with man divided empire claim,
And the brown Indian marks with murderous aim ;
There, while above the giddy tempest flies,
And all around distressful yells arise,
The pensive exile, bending with his woe.
To stop too fearful, and too faint to go,
Casts a long look where England's glories shine,
And bids his bosom sympathise with mine.

Vain, very vain, my weary search to find
That bliss which only centres in the mind.
Why have I strayed from pleasure and repose,
To seek a good each government bestows ?
In every government, though terrors reign,
Though tyrant kings or tyrant laws restrain,
How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure !
Still to ourselves in every place consigned,
Our own felicity we make or find.
With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,
Glides the smooth current of domestic joy ;
The lifted axe, the agonising wheel,
Luke's iron crown, and Damiens' bed of steel.
To men remote from power but rarely known,
Leave reason, faith, and conscience, all our own.



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