

The Emigrants, a Poem

Charlotte Turner Smith

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- TO WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.
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TO WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

THERE is, I hope, some propriety in my addressing a Composition to you, which would never perhaps have existed, had I not, amid the heavy pressure of many sorrows, derived infinite consolation from your Poetry, and some degree of animation and of confidence from your esteem.

The following performance is far from aspiring to be considered as an imitation of your inimitable Poem, "THE TASK;" I am perfectly sensible, that it belongs not to a feeble and feminine hand to draw the Bow of Ulysses.

*The force, clearness, and sublimity of your admirable Poem; the felicity, almost peculiar to your genius, of giving to the most familiar objects dignity and effect, I could never hope to reach; yet, having read "The Task" almost incessantly from its first publication to the present time, I felt that kind of enchantment described by Milton, when he says, "The Angel ended, and in Adam's ear
"So charming left his voice, that he awhile
"Thought him still speaking."*

And from the force of this impression, I was gradually led to attempt, in Blank Verse, a delineation of those interesting objects which happened to excite my attention, and which even pressed upon an heart, that has learned, perhaps from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though unavailing compassion, the calamity of others.

A Dedication usually consists of praises and of apologies; my praise can add nothing to the unanimous and loud applause of your country. She regards you with pride, as one of the few, who, at the present period, rescue her from the imputation of having degenerated in Poetical talents; but in the form of Apology, I should have much to say, if I again dared to plead the pressure of evils, aggravated by their long continuance, as an excuse for the defects of this attempt.

Whatever may be the faults of its execution, let me vindicate myself from those, that may be imputed to the design. In speaking of the Emigrant Clergy, I beg to be understood as feeling the utmost respect for the integrity of their principles; and it is with pleasure I add my suffrage to that of those, who have had a similar opportunity of witnessing the conduct of the Emigrants of all descriptions during their exile in England; which has been such as does honour to their nation, and ought to secure to them in ours the esteem of every liberal mind.

The Emigrants, a Poem

Your philanthropy, dear Sir, will induce you, I am persuaded, to join with me in hoping, that this painful exile may finally lead to the extirpation of that reciprocal hatred so unworthy of great and enlightened nations; that it may tend to humanize both countries, by convincing each, that good qualities exist in the other; and at length annihilate the prejudices that have so long existed to the injury of both.

*Yet it is unfortunately but too true, that with the body of the English, this national aversion has acquired new force by the dreadful scenes which have been acted in France during the last summer even those who are the victims of the Revolution, have not escaped the odium, which the undistinguishing multitude annex to all the natives of a country where such horrors have been acted: nor is this the worst effect those events have had on the minds of the English; by confounding the original cause with the wretched catastrophes that have followed its ill management; the attempts of public virtue, with the outrages that guilt and folly have committed in its disguise, the very name of Liberty has not only lost the charm it used to have in British ears, but many, who have written, or spoken, in its defence, have been stigmatized as promoters of Anarchy, and enemies to the prosperity of their country. Perhaps even the Author of "The Task," with all his goodness and tenderness of heart, is in the catalogue of those, who are reckoned to have been too warm in a cause, which it was once the glory of Englishmen to avow and defend The exquisite Poem, indeed, in which you have honoured Liberty, by a tribute highly gratifying to her sincerest friends, was published some years before the demolition of regal despotism in France, which, in the fifth book, it seems to foretell All the truth and energy of the passage to which I allude, must have been strongly felt, when, in the Parliament of England, the greatest Orator of our time quoted the sublimest of our Poets when the eloquence of Fox did justice to the genius of Cowper. I am, dear SIR, With the most perfect esteem,
Your obliged and obedient servant,
CHARLOTTE SMITH. Brighthelmstone, May 10, 1793.*

THE EMIGRANTS. BOOK THE FIRST.

BOOK I.

*SCENE, on the Cliffs to the Eastward of the Town of
Brighthelmstone in Sussex. TIME, a Morning in November, 1792.*

SLOW in the Wintry Morn, the struggling light
Throws a faint gleam upon the troubled waves;
Their foaming tops, as they approach the shore
And the broad surf that never ceasing breaks
On the innumerable pebbles, catch the beams
Of the pale Sun, that with reluctance gives
To this cold northern Isle, its shorten'd day.
Alas! how few the morning wakes to joy!
How many murmur at oblivious night
For leaving them so soon; for bearing thus
Their fancied bliss (the only bliss they taste!),
On her black wings away! Changing the dreams
That sooth'd their sorrows, for calamities
(And every day brings its own sad proportion)
For doubts, diseases, abject dread of Death,
And faithless friends, and fame and fortune lost;
Fancied or real wants; and wounded pride,
That views the day star, but to curse his beams.

The Emigrants, a Poem

Yet He, whose Spirit into being call'd
This wond'rous World of Waters; He who bids
The wild wind lift them till they dash the clouds,
And speaks to them in thunder; or whose breath,
Low murmuring, o'er the gently heaving tides,
When the fair Moon, in summer night serene,
Irradiates with long trembling lines of light
Their undulating surface; that great Power,
Who, governing the Planets, also knows
If but a Sea-Mew falls, whose nest is hid
In these incumbent cliffs; He surely means
To us, his reasoning Creatures, whom He bids
Acknowledge and revere his awful hand,
Nothing but good: Yet Man, misguided Man,
Mars the fair work that he was bid enjoy,
And makes himself the evil he deploras.
How often, when my weary soul recoils
From proud oppression, and from legal crimes
(For such are in this Land, where the vain boast
Of equal Law is mockery, while the cost
Of seeking for redress is sure to plunge
Th' already injur'd to more certain ruin
And the wretch starves, before his Counsel pleads)
How often do I half abjure Society,
And sigh for some lone Cottage, deep embower'd
In the green woods, that these steep chalky Hills
Guard from the strong South West; where round their base
The Beach wide flourishes, and the light Ash
With slender leaf half hides the thymy turf!
There do I wish to hide me; well content
If on the short grass, strewn with fairy flowers,
I might repose thus shelter'd; or when Eve
In Orient crimson lingers in the west,
Gain the high mound, and mark these waves remote
(Lucid tho' distant), blushing with the rays
Of the far-flaming Orb, that sinks beneath them;
For I have thought, that I should then behold
The beauteous works of God, unspoil'd by Man
And less affected then, by human woes
I witness'd not; might better learn to bear
Those that injustice, and duplicity
And faithlessness and folly, fix on me:
For never yet could I derive relief,
When my swol'n heart was bursting with its sorrows,
From the sad thought, that others like myself
Live but to swell affliction's countless tribes!
Tranquil seclusion I have vainly sought;
Peace, who delights solitary shade,
No more will spread for me her downy wings,
But, like the fabled Danaïds or the wretch,
Who ceaseless, up the steep acclivity,

The Emigrants, a Poem

Was doom'd to heave the still rebounding rock,
Onward I labour; as the baffled wave,
Which yon rough beach repulses, that returns
With the next breath of wind, to fail again.
Ah! Mourner cease these wailings: cease and learn,
That not the Cot sequester'd, where the briar
And wood-bine wild, embrace the mossy thatch,
(Scarce seen amid the forest gloom obscure!)
Or more substantial farm, well fenced and warm,
Where the full barn, and cattle fodder'd round
Speak rustic plenty; nor the statelier dome
By dark firs shaded, or the aspiring pine,
Close by the village Church (with care conceal'd
By verdant foliage, lest the poor man's grave
Should mar the smiling prospect of his Lord),
Where offices well rang'd, or dove-cote stock'd,
Declare manorial residence; not these
Or any of the buildings, new and trim
With windows circling towards the restless Sea,
Which ranged in rows, now terminate my walk,
Can shut out for an hour the spectre Care,
That from the dawn of reason, follows still
Unhappy Mortals, 'till the friendly grave
(Our sole secure asylum) "ends the chace ."

Behold, in witness of this mournful truth,
A group approach me, whose dejected looks,
Sad Heralds of distress! proclaim them Men
Banish'd for ever and for conscience sake
From their distracted Country, whence the name
Of Freedom misapplied, and much abus'd
By lawless Anarchy, has driven them far
To wander; with the prejudice they learn'd
From Bigotry (the Tut'ress of the blind),
Thro' the wide World unshelter'd; their sole hope,
That German spoilers, thro' that pleasant land
May carry wide the desolating scourge
Of War and Vengeance; yet unhappy Men,
Whate'er your errors, I lament your fate:
And, as disconsolate and sad ye hang
Upon the barrier of the rock, and seem
To murmur your despondence, waiting long
Some fortunate reverse that never comes;
Methinks in each expressive face, I see
Discriminated anguish; there droops one,
Who in a moping cloister long consum'd
This life inactive, to obtain a better,
And thought that meagre abstinence, to wake
From his hard pallet with the midnight bell,
To live on eleemosynary bread,
And to renounce God's works, would please that God.
And now the poor pale wretch receives, amaz'd,

The Emigrants, a Poem

The pity, strangers give to his distress,
Because these Strangers are, by his dark creed,
Condemn'd as Heretics and with sick heart
Regrets his pious prison, and his beads.
Another, of more haughty port, declines
The aid he needs not; while in mute despair
His high indignant thoughts go back to France,
Dwelling on all he lost the Gothic dome,
That vied with splendid palaces ; the beds
Of silk and down, the silver chalices,
Vestments with gold enwrought for blazing altars;
Where, amid clouds of incense, he held forth
To kneeling crowds the imaginary bones
Of Saints suppos'd, in pearl and gold enchas'd,
And still with more than living Monarchs' pomp
Surrounded; was believ'd by mumbling bigots
To hold the keys of Heaven, and to admit
Whom he thought good to share it Now alas!
He, to whose daring soul and high ambition
The World seem'd circumscrib'd; who, wont to dream,
Of Fleuri, Richelieu, Alberoni, men
Who trod on Empire, and whose politics
Were not beyond the grasp of his vast mind,
Is, in a Land once hostile, still prophan'd
By disbelief, and rites un-orthodox,
The object of compassion At his side,
Lighter of heart than these, but heavier far
Than he was wont, another victim comes,
An Abbé who with less contracted brow
Still smiles and flatters, and still talks of Hope;
Which, sanguine as he is, he does not feel,
And so he cheats the sad and weighty pressure
Of evils present; Still, as Men misled
By early prejudice (so hard to break),
I mourn your sorrows; for I too have known
Involuntary exile; and while yet
England had charms for me, have felt how sad
It is to look across the dim cold sea,
That melancholy rolls its refluent tides
Between us and the dear regretted land
We call our own as now ye pensive wait
On this bleak morning, gazing on the waves
That seem to leave your shore; from whence the wind
Is loaded to your ears, with the deep groans
Of martyr'd Saints and suffering Royalty,
While to your eyes the avenging power of Heaven
Appears in awful anger to prepare
The storm of vengeance, fraught with plagues and death.
Even he of milder heart, who was indeed
The simple shepherd in a rustic scene,
And, 'mid the vine-clad hills of Languedoc,

The Emigrants, a Poem

Taught to the bare-foot peasant, whose hard hands
Produc'd the nectar he could seldom taste,
Submission to the Lord for whom he toil'd;
He, or his brethren, who to Neustria's sons
Enforc'd religious patience, when, at times,
On their indignant hearts Power's iron hand
Too strongly struck; eliciting some sparks
Of the bold spirit of their native North;
Even these Parochial Priests, these humbled men;
Whose lowly undistinguish'd cottages
Witness'd a life of purest piety,
While the meek tenants were, perhaps, unknown
Each to the haughty Lord of his domain,
Who mark'd them not; the Noble scorning still
The poor and pious Priest, as with slow pace
He glided thro' the dim arch'd avenue
Which to the Castle led; hoping to cheer
The last sad hour of some laborious life
That hasten'd to its close even such a Man
Becomes an exile; staying not to try
By temperate zeal to check his madd'ning flock,
Who, at the novel sound of Liberty
(Ah! most intoxicating sound to slaves!),
Start into licence Lo! dejected now,
The wandering Pastor mourns, with bleeding heart,
His erring people, weeps and prays for them,
And trembles for the account that he must give
To Heaven for souls entrusted to his care.
Where the cliff, hollow'd by the wintry storm,
Affords a seat with matted sea-weed strewn,
A softer form reclines; around her run,
On the rough shingles, or the chalky bourn,
Her gay unconscious children, soon amus'd;
Who pick the fretted stone, or glossy shell,
Or crimson plant marine: or they contrive
The fairy vessel, with its ribband sail
And gilded paper pennant: in the pool,
Left by the salt wave on the yielding sands,
They launch the mimic navy Happy age!
Unmindful of the miseries of Man!
Alas! too long a victim to distress,
Their Mother, lost in melancholy thought,
Lull'd for a moment by the murmurs low
Of sullen billows, wearied by the task
Of having here, with swol'n and aching eyes
Fix'd on the grey horizon, since the dawn
Solicitously watch'd the weekly sail
From her dear native land, now yields awhile
To kind forgetfulness, while Fancy brings,
In waking dreams, that native land again!
Versailles appears its painted galleries,

The Emigrants, a Poem

And rooms of regal splendour, rich with gold,
Where, by long mirrors multiply'd, the crowd
Paid willing homage and, united there,
Beauty gave charms to empire Ah! too soon
From the gay visionary pageant rous'd,
See the sad mourner start! and, drooping, look
With tearful eyes and heaving bosom round
On drear reality where dark'ning waves,
Urg'd by the rising wind, unheeded foam
Near her cold rugged seat: To call her thence
A fellow-sufferer comes: dejection deep
Checks, but conceals not quite, the martial air,
And that high consciousness of noble blood,
Which he has learn'd from infancy to think
Exalts him o'er the race of common men:
Nurs'd in the velvet lap of luxury,
And fed by adulation could *he* learn,
That worth alone is true Nobility?
And that *the peasant* who, "amid the sons
"Of Reason, Valour, Liberty, and Virtue,
"Displays distinguish'd merit, is a Noble
"Of Nature's own creation!" If even here,
If in this land of highly vaunted Freedom,
Even Britons controvert the unwelcome truth,
Can it be relish'd by the sons of France?
Men, who derive their boasted ancestry
From the fierce leaders of religious wars,
The first in Chivalry's emblazon'd page;
Who reckon Gueslin, Bayard, or De Foix,
Among their brave Progenitors? *Their* eyes,
Accustom'd to regard the splendid trophies
Of Heraldry (that with fantastic hand
Mingles, like images in feverish dreams,
"Gorgons and Hydras, and Chimeras dire,"
With painted puns, and visionary shapes;),
See not the simple dignity of Virtue,
But hold all base, whom honours such as these
Exalt not from the crowd As one, who long
Has dwelt amid the artificial scenes
Of populous City, deems that splendid shows,
The Theatre, and pageant pomp of Courts,
Are only worth regard; forgets all taste
For Nature's genuine beauty; in the lapse
Of gushing waters hears no soothing sound,
Nor listens with delight to sighing winds,
That, on their fragrant pinions, waft the notes
Of birds rejoicing in the trangled copse;
Nor gazes pleas'd on Ocean's silver breast,
While lightly o'er it sails the summer clouds
Reflected in the wave, that, hardly heard,
Flows on the yellow sands: so to *his* mind,

The Emigrants, a Poem

That long has liv'd where Despotism hides
His features harsh, beneath the diadem
Of worldly grandeur, abject Slavery seems,
If by that power impos'd, slavery no more:
For luxury wreathes with silk the iron bonds,
And hides the ugly rivets with her flowers,
Till the degenerate triflers, while they love
The glitter of the chains, forget their weight.
But more the Men, whose ill acquir'd wealth
Was wrung from plunder'd myriads, by the means
Too often legaliz'd by power abus'd,
Feel all the horrors of the fatal change,
When their ephemeral greatness, marr'd at once
(As a vain toy that Fortune's childish hand
Equally joy'd to fashion or to crush),
Leaves them expos'd to universal scorn
For having nothing else; not even the claim
To honour, which respect for Heroes past
Allows to ancient titles; Men, like these,
Sink even beneath the level, whence base arts
Alone had rais'd them; unlamented sink,
And know that they deserve the woes they feel.

Poor wand'ring wretches! whosoe'er ye are,
That hopeless, houseless, friendless, travel wide
O'er these bleak russet downs; where, dimly seen,
The solitary Shepherd shiv'ring tends
His dun discolour'd flock (Shepherd, unlike
Him, whom in song the Poet's fancy crowns
With garlands, and his crook with vi'lets binds);
Poor vagrant wretches! outcasts of the world!
Whom no abode receives, no parish owns;
Roving, like Nature's commoners, the land
That boasts such general plenty: if the sight
Of wide-extended misery softens yours
Awhile, suspend your murmurs! here behold
The strange vicissitudes of fate while thus
The exil'd Nobles, from their country driven,
Whose richest luxuries were their's, must feel
More poignant anguish, than the lowest poor,
Who, born to indigence, have learn'd to brave
Rigid Adversity's depressing breath!
Ah! rather Fortune's worthless favourites!
Who feed on England's vitals Pensioners
Of base corruption, who, in quick ascent
To opulence unmerited, become
Giddy with pride, and as ye rise, forgetting
The dust ye lately left, with scorn look down
On those beneath ye (tho' your *equals* once
In fortune, and *in worth superior still*,
They view the eminence, on which ye stand,
With wonder, not with envy; for they know

The Emigrants, a Poem

The means, by which ye reach'd it, have been such
As, in all honest eyes, degrade ye far
Beneath the poor dependent, whose sad heart
Reluctant pleads for what your pride denies);
Ye venal, worthless hirelings of a Court!
Ye pamper'd Parasites! whom Britons pay
For forging fetters for them; rather here
Study a lesson that concerns ye much;
And, trembling, learn, that if oppress'd too long,
The raging multitude, to madness stung,
Will turn on their oppressors; and, no more
By sounding titles and parading forms
Bound like tame victims, will redress themselves!
Then swept away by the resistless torrent,
Not only all your pomp may disappear,
But, in the tempest lost, fair Order sink
Her decent head, and lawless Anarchy
O'erturn celestial Freedom's radiant throne;
As now in Gallia; where Confusion, born
Of party rage and selfish love of rule,
Sully the noblest cause that ever warm'd
The heart of Patriot Virtue There arise
The infernal passions; Vengeance, seeking blood,
And Avarice; and Envy's harpy fangs
Pollute the immortal shrine of Liberty,
Dismay her votaries, and disgrace her name.
Respect is due to principle; and they,
Who suffer for their conscience, have a claim,
Whate'er that principle may be, to praise.
These ill-starr'd Exiles then, who, bound by ties,
To them the bonds of honour; who resign'd
Their country to preserve them, and now seek
In England an asylum well deserve
To find that (every prejudice forgot,
Which pride and ignorance teaches), we for them
Feel as our brethren; and that English hearts,
Of just compassion ever own the sway,
As truly as our element, the deep,
Obeys the mild dominion of the Moon
This they *have* found; and may they find it still!
Thus may'st thou, Britain, triumph! May thy foes,
By Reason's gen'rous potency subdued,
Learn, that the God thou worshipp'st, delights
In acts of pure humanity! May thine
Be still such bloodless laurels! nobler far
Than those acquir'd at Cressy or Poitiers,
Or of more recent growth, those well bestow'd
On him who stood on Calpe's blazing height
Amid the thunder of a warring world,
Illustrious rather from the crowds he sav'd
From flood and fire, than from the ranks who fell

The Emigrants, a Poem

Beneath his valour! Actions such as these,
Like incense rising to the Throne of Heaven,
Far better justify the pride, that swells
In British bosoms, than the deafening roar
Of Victory from a thousand brazen throats,
That tell with what success wide-wasting War
Has by our brave Compatriots thinned the world.

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK THE SECOND.

*Quippe ubi fas versum atque nefas: tot bella per orbem
Tam multæ scelerum facies; non ullus aratro
Dignus honos: squalent abductis arva colonis,
Et curva rigidum falces conflantur in ensem
Hinc movet Euphrates, illinc Germania bellum
Vicinæ ruptis inter se legibus urbes
Arma ferunt: sævit toto Mars impius orbe.*

GEOR. lib. i.

BOOK II.

*SCENE, on an Eminence on one of those Downs, which
afford to the South a view of the Sea; to the North of
the Weald of Sussex. TIME, an Afternoon in April, 1793.*

LONG wintry months are past; the Moon that now
Lights her pale crescent even at noon, has made
Four times her revolution; since with step,
Mournful and slow, along the wave-worn cliff,
Pensive I took my solitary way,
Lost in despondence, while contemplating
Not my own wayward destiny alone,
(Hard as it is, and difficult to bear!)
But in beholding the unhappy lot
Of the lorn Exiles; who, amid the storms
Of wild disastrous Anarchy, are thrown,
Like shipwreck'd sufferers, on England's coast,
To see, perhaps, no more their native land,
Where Desolation riots: They, like me,
From fairer hopes and happier prospects driven,
Shrink from the future, and regret the past.
But on this Upland scene, while April comes,
With fragrant airs, to fan my throbbing breast,
Fain would I snatch an interval from Care,
That weighs my wearied spirit down to earth;
Courting, once more, the influence of Hope
(For "Hope" still waits upon the flowery prime)
As here I mark Spring's humid hand unfold
The early leaves that fear capricious winds,
While, even on shelter'd banks, the timid flowers

BOOK THE SECOND.

The Emigrants, a Poem

Give, half reluctantly, their warmer hues
To mingle with the primroses' pale stars.
No shade the leafless copses yet afford,
Nor hide the mossy labours of the Thrush,
That, startled, darts across the narrow path;
But quickly re-assur'd, resumes his talk,
Or adds his louder notes to those that rise
From yonder tufted brake; where the white buds
Of the first thorn are mingled with the leaves
Of that which blossoms on the brow of May.

Ah! 'twill not be: So many years have pass'd,
Since, on my native hills, I learn'd to gaze
On these delightful landscapes; and those years
Have taught me so much sorrow, that my soul
Feels not the joy reviving Nature brings;
But, in dark retrospect, dejected dwells
On human follies, and on human woes.
What is the promise of the infant year,
The lively verdure, or the bursting blooms,
To those, who shrink from horrors such as War
Spreads o'er the affrighted world? With swimming eye,
Back on the past they throw their mournful looks,
And see the Temple, which they fondly hop'd
Reason would raise to Liberty, destroy'd
By ruffian hands; while, on the ruin'd mass,
Flush'd with hot blood, the Fiend of Discord sits
In savage triumph; mocking every plea
Of policy and justice, as she shews
The headless corse of one, whose only crime
Was being born a Monarch Mercy turns,
From spectacle so dire, her swol'n eyes;
And Liberty, with calm, unruffled brow
Magnanimous, as conscious of her strength
In Reason's panoply, scorns to distain
Her righteous cause with carnage, and resigns
To Fraud and Anarchy the infuriate crowd.

What is the promise of the infant year
To those, who (while the poor but peaceful hind
Pens, unmolested, the encreasing flock
Of his rich master in this sea-fenc'd isle)
Survey, in neighbouring countries, scenes that make
The sick heart shudder; and the Man, who thinks,
Blush for his species? *There* the trumpet's voice
Drowns the soft warbling of the woodland choir;
And violets, lurking in their turfy beds
Beneath the flow'ring thorn, are stain'd with blood.
There fall, at once, the spoiler and the spoil'd;
While War, wide-ravaging, annihilates
The hope of cultivation; gives to Fiends,
The meagre, ghastly Fiends of Want and Woe,
The blasted land *There*, taunting in the van

The Emigrants, a Poem

Of vengeance—breathing armies, Insult stalks;
And, in the ranks, "Famine, and Sword, and Fire,
"Crouch for employment." Lo! the suffering world,
Torn by the fearful conflict, shrinks, amaz'd,
From Freedom's name, usurp'd and misapplied,
And, cow'ring to the purple Tyrant's rod,
Deems *that* the lesser ill Deluded Men!
Ere ye prophane her ever—glorious name,
Or catalogue the thousands that have bled
Resisting her; or those, who greatly died
Martyrs to *Liberty* revert awhile
To the black scroll, that tells of regal crimes
Committed to destroy her; rather count
The hecatombs of victims, who have fallen
Beneath a single despot; or who gave
Their wasted lives for some disputed claim
Between anointed robbers: Monsters both!
"Oh! Polish'd perturbation golden care!"
So strangely coveted by feeble Man
To lift him o'er his fellows; Toy, for which
Such showers of blood have drench'd th' affrighted earth
Unfortunate *his* lot, whose luckless head
Thy jewel'd circlet, lin'd with thorns, has bound;
And who, by custom's laws, obtains from thee
Hereditary right to rule, uncheck'd,
Submissive myriads: for untemper'd power,
Like steel ill form'd, injures the hand
It promis'd to protect Unhappy France!
If e'er thy lilies, trampled now in dust,
And blood—bespotted, shall again revive
In silver splendour, may the wreath be wov'n
By voluntary hands; and Freemen, such
As England's self might boast, unite to place
The guarded diadem on *his* fair brow,
Where Loyalty may join with Liberty
To fix it firmly. In the rugged school
Of stern Adversity so early train'd,
His future life, perchance, may emulate
That of the brave Bernois, so justly call'd
The darling of his people; who rever'd
The Warrior less, than they ador'd the Man!
But ne'er may Party Rage, perverse and blind,
And base Venality, prevail to raise
To public trust, a wretch, whose private vice
Makes even the wildest profligate recoil;
And who, with hireling ruffians leagu'd, has burst
The laws of Nature and Humanity!
Wading, beneath the Patriot's specious mask,
And in Equality's illusive name,
To empire thro' a stream of kindred blood
Innocent prisoner! most unhappy heir

The Emigrants, a Poem

Of fatal greatness, who art suffering now
For all the crimes and follies of thy race;
Better for thee, if o'er thy baby brow
The regal mischief never had been held:
Then, in an humble sphere, perhaps content,
Thou hadst been free and joyous on the heights
Of Pyrennean mountains, shagg'd with woods
Of chesnut, pine, and oak: as on these hills
Is yonder little thoughtless shepherd lad,
Who, on the slope abrupt of downy turf
Reclin'd in playful indolence, sends off
The chalky ball, quick bounding far below;
While, half forgetful of his simple task,
Hardly his length'ning shadow, or the bells'
Slow tinkling of his flock, that supping tend
To the brown fallows in the vale beneath,
Where nightly it is folded, from his sport
Recal the happy idler. While I gaze
On his gay vacant countenance, my thoughts
Compare with his obscure, laborious lot,
Thine, most unfortunate, imperial Boy!
Who round thy sullen prison daily hear'st
The savage howl of Murder, as it seeks
Thy unoffending life: while sad within
Thy wretched Mother, petrified with grief,
Views thee with stony eyes, and cannot weep!
Ah! much I mourn thy sorrows, hapless Queen!
And deem thy expiation made to Heaven
For every fault, to which Prosperity
Betray'd thee, when it plac'd thee on a throne
Where boundless power was thine, and thou wert rais'd
High (as it seem'd) above the envious reach
Of destiny! Whate'er thy errors were,
Be they no more remember'd; tho' the rage
Of Party swell'd them to such crimes, as bade
Compassion stifle every sigh that rose
For thy disastrous lot More than enough
Thou hast endur'd; and every English heart,
Ev'n those, that highest beat in Freedom's cause,
Disclaim as base, and of that cause unworthy,
The Vengeance, or the Fear, that makes thee still
A miserable prisoner! Ah! who knows,
From sad experience, more than I, to feel
For thy desponding spirit, as it sinks
Beneath procrastinated fears for those
More dear to thee than life! But eminence
Of misery is thine, as once of joy;
And, as we view the strange vicissitude,
We ask anew, where happiness is found?
Alas! in rural life, where youthful dreams
See the Arcadia that Romance describes,

The Emigrants, a Poem

Not even Content resides! In yon low hut
Of clay and thatch, where rises the grey smoke
Of smold'ring turf, cut from the adjoining moor,
The labourer, its inhabitant, who toils
From the first dawn of twilight, till the Sun
Sinks in the rosy waters of the West,
Finds that with poverty it cannot dwell;
For bread, and scanty bread, is all he earns
For him and for his household Should Disease,
Born of chill wintry rains, arrest his arm,
Then, thro' his patch'd and straw-stuff'd casement, peeps
The squalid figure of extremest Want;
And from the Parish the reluctant dole,
Dealt by th' unfeeling farmer, hardly saves
The ling'ring spark of life from cold extinction:
Then the bright Sun of Spring, that smiling bids
All other animals rejoice, beholds,
Crept from his pallet, the emaciate wretch
Attempt, with feeble effort, to resume
Some heavy task, above his wasted strength,
Turning his wistful looks (how much in vain!)
To the deserted mansion, where no more
The owner (gone to gayer scenes) resides,
Who made even luxury, Virtue; while he gave
The scatter'd crumbs to honest Poverty.
But, tho' the landscape be too oft deform'd
By figures such as these, yet Peace is here,
And o'er our vallies, cloath'd with springing corn,
No hostile hoof shall trample, nor fierce flames
Wither the wood's young verdure, ere it form
Gradual the laughing May's luxuriant shade;
For, by the rude sea guarded, we are safe,
And feel not evils such as with deep sighs
The Emigrants deplore, as, they recal
The Summer past, when Nature seem'd to lose
Her course in wild distemperature, and aid,
With seasons all revers'd, destructive War.

Shuddering, I view the pictures they have drawn
Of desolated countries, where the ground,
Stripp'd of its unripe produce, was thick strewn
With various Death the war-horse falling there
By famine, and his rider by the sword.
The moping clouds sail'd heavy charg'd with rain,
And bursting o'er the mountains misty brow,
Deluged, as with an inland sea, the vales ;
Where, thro' the sullen evening's lurid gloom,
Rising, like columns of volcanic fire,
The flames of burning villages illum'd
The waste of water; and the wind, that howl'd
Along its troubled surface, brought the groans
Of plunder'd peasants, and the frantic shrieks

The Emigrants, a Poem

Of mothers for their children; while the brave,
To pity still alive, listen'd aghast
To these dire echoes, hopeless to prevent
The evils they beheld, or check the rage,
Which ever, as the people of one land
Meet in contention, fires the human heart
With savage thirst of kindred blood, and makes
Man lose his nature; rendering him more fierce
Than the gaunt monsters of the howling waste.

Oft have I heard the melancholy tale,
Which, all their native gaiety forgot,
These Exiles tell How Hope impell'd them on,
Reckless of tempest, hunger, or the sword,
Till order'd to retreat, they knew not why,
From all their flattering prospects, they became
The prey of dark suspicion and regret :
Then, in despondence, sunk the unnerv'd arm
Of gallant Loyalty At every turn
Shame and disgrace appear'd, and seem'd to mock
Their scatter'd squadrons; which the warlike youth,
Unable to endure 7

[There is no note for this duplicate reference 7.]

, often implor'd,
As the last act of friendship, from the hand
Of some brave comrade, to receive the blow
That freed the indignant spirit from its pain.
To a wild mountain, whose bare summit hides
Its broken eminence in clouds; whose steeps
Are dark with woods; where the receding rocks
Are worn by torrents of dissolving snow,
A wretched Woman, pale and breathless, flies!
And, gazing round her, listens to the sound
Of hostile footsteps No! it dies away:
Nor noise remains, but of the cataract,
Or surly breeze of night, that mutters low
Among the thickets, where she trembling seeks
A temporary shelter clasping close
To her hard-heaving heart, her sleeping child,
All she could rescue of the innocent groupe
That yesterday surrounded her Escap'd
Almost by miracle! Fear, frantic Fear,
Wing'd her weak feet: yet, half repentant now
Her headlong haste, she wishes she had staid
To die with those affrighted Fancy paints
The lawless soldier's victims Hark! again
The driving tempest bears the cry of Death,
And, with deep sudden thunder, the dread sound
Of cannon vibrates on the tremulous earth;
While, bursting in the air, the murderous bomb

The Emigrants, a Poem

Glares o'er her mansion. Where the splinters fall,
Like scatter'd comets, its destructive path
Is mark'd by wreaths of flame! Then, overwhelm'd
Beneath accumulated horror, sinks
The desolate mourner; yet, in Death itself,
True to maternal tenderness, she tries
To save the unconscious infant from the storm
In which she perishes; and to protect
This last dear object of her ruin'd hopes
From prowling monsters, that from other hills,
More inaccessible, and wilder wastes,
Lur'd by the scent of slaughter, follow fierce
Contending hosts, and to polluted fields
Add dire increase of horrors But alas!
The Mother and the Infant perish both!

The feudal Chief, whose Gothic battlements
Frown on the plain beneath, returning home
From distant lands, alone and in disguise,
Gains at the fall of night his Castle walls,
But, at the vacant gate, no Porter sits
To wait his Lord's admittance! In the courts
All is drear silence! Guessing but too well
The fatal truth, he shudders as he goes
Thro' the mute hall; where, by the blunted light
That the dim moon thro' painted casements lends,
He sees that devastation has been there:
Then, while each hideous image to his mind
Rises terrific, o'er a bleeding corpse
Stumbling he falls; another interrupts
His staggering feet all, all who us'd to rush
With joy to meet him all his family
Lie murder'd in his way! And the day dawns
On a wild raving Maniac, whom a fate
So sudden and calamitous has robb'd
Of reason; and who round his vacant walls
Screams unregarded, and reproaches Heaven!
Such are thy dreadful trophies, savage War!
And evils such as these, or yet more dire,
Which the pain'd mind recoils from, all are thine
The purple Pestilence, that to the grave
Sends whom the sword has spar'd, is thine; and thine
The Widow's anguish and the Orphan's tears!
Woes such as these does Man inflict on Man;
And by the closet murderers, whom we style
Wise Politicians; are the schemes prepar'd,
Which, to keep Europe's wavering balance even,
Depopulate her kingdoms, and consign
To tears and anguish half a bleeding world!

Oh! could the time return, when thoughts like these
Spoil'd not that gay delight, which vernal Suns,
Illuminating hills, and woods, and fields,

The Emigrants, a Poem

Gave to my infant spirits Memory come!
And from distracting cares, that now deprive
Such scenes of all their beauty, kindly bear
My fancy to those hours of simple joy,
When, on the banks of Arun, which I see
Make its irriguous course thro' yonder meads,
I play'd; unconscious then of future ill!
There (where, from hollows fring'd with yellow broom,
The birch with silver rind, and fairy leaf,
Aslant the low stream trembles) I have stood,
And meditated how to venture best
Into the shallow current, to procure
The willow herb of glowing purple spikes,
Or flags, whose sword-like leaves conceal'd the tide,
Startling the timid reed-bird from her nest,
As with aquatic flowers I wove the wreath,
Such as, collected by the shepherd girls,
Deck in the villages the turfy shrine,
And mark the arrival of propitious May.
How little dream'd I then the time would come,
When the bright Sun of that delicious month
Should, from disturb'd and artificial sleep,
Awaken me to never-ending toil,
To terror and to tears! Attempting still,
With feeble hands and cold desponding heart,
To save my children from the o'erwhelming wrongs,
That have for ten long years been heap'd on me!
The fearful spectres of chicane and fraud
Have, Proteus like, still chang'd their hideous forms
(As the Law lent its plausible disguise),
Pursuing my faint steps; and I have seen
Friendship's sweet bonds (which were so early form'd,)
And once I fondly thought of amaranth
Inwove with silver seven times tried) give way,
And fail; as these green fan-like leaves of fern
Will wither at the touch of Autumn's frost.
Yet there *are those*, whose patient pity still
Hears my long murmurs; who, unwearied, try
With lenient hands to bind up every wound
My wearied spirit feels, and bid me go
"Right onward " a calm votary of the Nymph,
Who, from her adamantine rock, points out
To conscious rectitude the rugged path,
That leads at length to Peace! Ah! yes, my friends
Peace will at last be mine; for in the Grave
Is Peace and pass a few short years, perchance
A few short months, and all the various pain
I now endure shall be forgotten there,
And no memorial shall remain of me,
Save in your bosoms; while even *your* regret
Shall lose its poignancy, as ye reflect

The Emigrants, a Poem

What complicated woes that grave conceals!
But, if the little praise, that may await
The Mother's efforts, should provoke the spleen
Of Priest or Levite; and they then arraign
The dust that cannot hear them; be it yours
To vindicate my humble fame; to say,
That, not in selfish sufferings absorb'd,
"I gave to misery all I had, my tears ."
And if, where regulated sanctity
Pours her long orisons to Heaven, my voice
Was seldom heard, that yet *my prayer* was made
To him who hears even silence; not in domes
Of human architecture, fill'd with crowds,
But on these hills, where boundless, yet distinct,
Even as a map, beneath are spread the fields
His bounty cloaths; divided here by woods,
And there by commons rude, or winding brooks,
While I might breathe the air perfum'd with flowers,
Or the fresh odours of the mountain turf;
And gaze on clouds above me, as they sail'd
Majestic: or remark the reddening north,
When bickering arrows of electric fire
Flash on the evening sky I made my prayer
In unison with murmuring waves that now
Swell with dark tempests, now are mild and blue,
As the bright arch above; for all to me
Declare omniscient goodness; nor need I
Declamatory essays to incite
My wonder or my praise, when every leaf
That Spring unfolds, and every simple bud,
More forcibly impresses on my heart
His power and wisdom Ah! while I adore
That goodness, which design'd to all that lives
Some taste of happiness, my soul is pain'd
By the variety of woes that Man
For Man creates his blessings often turn'd
To plagues and curses: Saint-like Piety,
Misled by Superstition, has destroy'd
More than Ambition; and the sacred flame
Of Liberty becomes a raging fire,
When Licence and Confusion bid it blaze.
From thy high throne, above yon radiant stars,
O Power Omnipotent! with mercy view
This suffering globe, and cause thy creatures cease,
With savage fangs, to tear her bleeding breast:
Refrain that rage for power, that bids a Man,
Himself a worm, desire unbounded rule
O'er beings like himself: Teach the hard hearts
Of rulers, that the poorest hind, who dies
For their unrighteous quarrels, in thy sight
Is equal to the imperious Lord, that leads

The Emigrants, a Poem

His disciplin'd destroyers to the field.
May lovely Freedom, in her genuine charms,
Aided by stern but equal Justice, drive
From the ensanguin'd earth the hell-born fiends
Of Pride, Oppression, Avarice, and Revenge,
That ruin what thy mercy made so fair!
Then shall these ill-starr'd wanderers, whose sad fate
These desultory lines lament, regain
Their native country; private vengeance then
To public virtue yield; and the fierce feuds,
That long have torn their desolated land,
May (even as storms, that agitate the air,
Drive noxious vapours from the blighted earth)
Serve, all tremendous as they are, to fix
The reign of Reason, Liberty, and Peace!

