

The Traveller.

Oliver Goldsmith.

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THE
TRAVELLER,
OR A
PROSPECT of SOCIETY.
A
P O E M.

INSCRIBED TO THE
REV. MR. HENRY GOLDSMITH.

BY
OLIVER GOLDSMITH, M.B.

L O N D O N :

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T O THE
REV. HENRY GOLDSMITH.

Dear Sir,

I AM sensible that the friendship between us can acquire no new force from the ceremonies of a Dedication; and perhaps it demands an excuse thus to prefix your name to my attempts, which you decline giving with your own. But as a part of this Poem was formerly written to you from Switzerland, the whole can now, with propriety, be only inscribed to you. It will also throw a light upon many parts of it, when the reader understands that it is addressed to a man, who, despising Fame and Fortune, has retired early to Happiness and Obscurity, with an income of forty pounds a year.

I now perceive, my dear brother, the wisdom of your humble choice. You have entered upon a sacred office, where the harvest is great, and the labourers are but few; while you have left the field of Ambition, where the labourers are many, and the harvest not worth carrying away. But of all kinds of ambition, as things are now circumstanced, perhaps that which pursues poetical fame, is the wildest. What from the increased refinement of the times, from the diversity of judgements produced by opposing systems of criticism, and from the more prevalent divisions of opinion influenced by party, the strongest and happiest efforts can expect to please but in a very narrow circle. Though the poet were as sure of his aim as the imperial archer of antiquity, who boasted that he never missed the heart; yet would many of his shafts now fly at random, for the heart is too often in the wrong place.

Poetry makes a principal amusement among unpolished nations; but in a country verging to the extremes of refinement, Painting and Music come in for a share. And as they offer the feeble mind a less laborious entertainment, they engross all favour to themselves, and though but younger sisters, seize upon the elder's birth-right.

Yet, however this art may be neglected by the powerful, it is still in greater danger from the mistaken efforts of the learned to improve it. What

criticisms have we not heard of late in favour of blank verse, and Pindaric odes, chorusses, anapests and iambics, alliterative care, and happy negligence. Every absurdity has now a champion to defend it, and as he is generally much in the wrong, so he has always much to say.

But there is an enemy to this art still more dangerous, I mean party. Party entirely distorts the judgment, and destroys the taste. A mind capable of relishing general beauty, when once infected with this disease, can only find pleasure in what contributes to encrease the distemper. Like the tyger, that seldom desists from pursuing man after once having preyed upon human flesh, the reader, who has once gratified his appetite with calumny, makes, ever after, the most agreeable feast upon murdered reputation. Such readers generally admire some half-witted thing, who wants to be thought a bold man, having lost the character of a wise one. Him they dignify with the name of poet; his lampoons are called satires, his turbulence is said to be force, and his phrenzy fire.

What reception a Poem may find, which has neither abuse, party, nor blank verse to support it, I cannot tell, nor am I much solicitous to know. My aims are right. Without espousing the cause of any party, I have attempted to moderate the rage of all. I have endeavoured to shew, that there may be equal happiness in other states, though differently governed from our own; that each state has a peculiar principle of happiness, and that this principle in each state, and in our own in particular, may be carried to a mischievous excess. There are few can judge, better than you[r]self, How far these positions are illustrated in this Poem.

I am, Sir,

Your most affectionate Brother,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

THE
TRAVELLE

R,
OR A
PROSPECT of
SOCIETY.

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 expanded to the skies.
Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart untravell'd 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 chearful 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 where mirth and peace
abound,
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 destin'd such delights to share,
My prime of life in wand'ring spent and care:
Impell'd 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;
And find no spot of all the world my own.

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

When thus Creation's charms around
combine,
Amidst the store, 'twere thankless to repine.
'Twere affectation all, and school-taught pride,
To spurn the splendid things by heaven
supply'd.
Let school-taught pride dissemble all it can,
These 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
crown'd,
Ye fields, where summer spreads profusion
round,
Ye lakes, whose vessels catch the busy gale,
Ye bending swains, that dress the flow'ry 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,
Pleas'd with each good that heaven to man
supplies:
Yet oft a sigh prevails, and sorrows fall,
To see the sum of human bliss so small;
And oft I wish, amidst the scene, to find
Some spot to real happiness consign'd,
Where my worn soul, each wand'ring hope at
rest
May gather bliss to see my fellows blest.

Yet, where to find that happiest spot below,
Who can direct, when all pretend to know?
The shudd'ring tenant of the frigid zone
Boldly asserts that country for his own,
Extols the treasure of his stormy seas,
And live-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.
Nor less the patriot's boast, where'er we roam,
His first best country is at home.

And yet, perhaps, if states with states we
scan,
Or estimate their bliss on Reason's plan,
Though patriots flatter, and though fools
contend,
We still shall find uncertainty suspend,
Find that each good, by Art or Nature given,
To these or those, but makes the balance even:
Find that the bliss of all is much the same,
And patriotic boasting reason's shame.

Nature, a mother kind alike to all,
Still grants her bliss at Labour's earnest call;
And though rough rocks or gloomy summits
frown,
These rocks, by custom, turn to beds of down.

From Art more various are the blessings sent;
Wealth, splendours, honor, liberty, content:
Yet these each other's power so strong contest,
That either seems destructive of the rest.
Hence every state, to one lov'd 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 view these truths with closer eyes,

And trace them through the prospect as it lies:
Here for a while my proper cares resign'd,
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 Appennine ascends,
Bright as the summer, Italy extends;
Her uplands sloping deck the mountains side,
Woods over woods, in gay theatrics pride;
While oft some temple's mould'ring top
between,
With venerable grandeur marks the scene.

Could Nature's bounty satisfy the breast,
The sons of Italy were surely blest.
Whatever fruits in diferent climes are 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 from the smiling land.

But small the bliss that sense alone bestows,
And sensual bliss is all this nation knows.
In florid beauty groves and fields appear,
Men seem the only growth that dwindles here.
Contrasted faults through all their 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 remov'd the date,
When commerce proudly flourish'd through the
state:
At her command the palace learnt to rise,

Again the long-fall'n column sought the skies;
The canvas glow'd beyond even Nature warm,
The pregnant quarry teem'd with human form.
But, more unsteady than the southern gale,
Soon Commerce turn'd on other shores her sail;
And late the nation found, with fruitless skill,
Their former strength was now plethoric ill.

Yet, though to fortune lost, here still abide
Some splendid arts, the wrecks of former pride;
From which the feeble heart and long-fall'n
mind
An easy compensation seem to find.
Here may be seen, in bloodless pomp array'd,
The paste-board triumph and the cavalcade;
Processions form'd for piety and love,
A mistress or a saint in every grove.
By sports like these are all their cares beguil'd,
The sports of children satisfy the child;
At sports like these, while foreign arms
advance,
In passive ease they leave the world to chance.

When struggling Virtue stinks by long
controul,
She leaves at last, or feebly mans the soul;
While low delights, succeeding fast behind,
In happier meanness occupy the mind;
And in those domes, where Cæsars once bore
sway,
Defac'd by time and tottering in decay,
Amidst the ruin, heedless of the dead,
The shelter-seeking peasant builds his shed,
And, wond'ring 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 mansions
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 zepher fondly soothes 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 feasts
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 loath his vegetable meal;
But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,
Each wish contracting, fits him to the soil.
Chearful as morn he wakes from short repose,
Breasts the keen air, and carrols as he goes;
With patient angle trolls the finny deep,
Or drives his vent'rous plow-share 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 chearful fire, and round surveys
His childrens looks, that brighten at the blaze:
While his lov'd partner boastful of her hoard,
Displays the 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.
Dear is that shed to which his soul conforms,
And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms;
And as a babe, 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.

These are the charms to barren states

assign'd;
Their wants are few, their wishes all confin'd.
Yet let then only share the praises due,
If few their wants, their pleasures are but few;
Since every want, that stimulates the breast,
Becomes a source of pleasure when redrest.
Hence from such lands each pleasing science
flies,
That first excites desire, 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 smould'ring fire,
Nor quench'd by want, nor fan'd 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.
Some sterner virtues o'er the mountain's breast
May sit, like falcons cowl'd on the nest;
But all the gentler morals, such as play
Through life's more cultur'd walks, and charm
our way,
These far dispers'd, on timorous pinions fly,
To sport and flutter in a kinder sky.

To kinder skies, where gentler manners reign,
We turn; and France displays her bright
domain.
Gay sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
Pleas'd 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 freshen'd from the wave the Zephyr flew;
And haply, tho' my harsh touch faltering still,

But mock'd all tune, and marr'd the dancer's
skill;
Yet would the village praise my won'drous
power,
And dance, forgetful of the noon-tide hour.
Alike all ages. Dames of ancient days
Have led their children through the mirthful
maze,
And the gay grandsire, skill'd in gestic lore,
Has frisk'd 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 pleas'd, they give to get
esteem,
Till, seeming blest, they grow to what they
seem.

But while this softer art their bliss supplies,
It gives their follies also room to rise;
For praise too dearly lov'd, 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 frize 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,
Enbosom'd 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,
That spreads its arms amidst the watry roar,
Scoops out an empire, and usurps the shore.
Onward methinks, and diligently slow
The firm connected bulwark seems to go;
While ocean pent, and rising o'er the pile,
Sees an amphibious world beneath him smile.
The slow canal, the yellow blossom'd vale,
The willow tufted bank, the gliding sail,
The crowded mart, the cultivated plain,
A new creation rescu'd from his reign.

Thus, while around, the wave-subjected soil
Impels the native to repeated toil,
Industrious habits in each breast obtain,
And industry begets a love of gain.
Hence all the good from opulence that springs,
With all those ills superfluous treasure brings,
Are here display'd. Their much-lov'd wealth
imparts
Convenience, plenty, elegance, and arts;
But view them closer, craft and fraud appear,
Even liberty itself is barter'd 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 sleep beneath 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!

Fir'd at the sound, my genius spreads her
wing,
And flies where Britain broods the western

spring;
Where lawns extend that scorn Arcadian pride,
And brighter streams than fam'd Hydaspis
glide,
There all around the gentlest breezes stray,
There gentle music melts on every spray;
Creation's mildest charms are there combin'd,
Extremes are only in the master's mind;
Stern o'er each bosom reason holds her state.
With daring aims, irregularly great,
I see the lords of human kind pass by
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
By forms unfashion'd, fresh from Nature's
hand;
Fierce in a native hardiness of soul,
True to imagin'd right above controul,
While even the peasant boasts these rights to
scan,
And learns to venerate himself as man.

Thine, freedom, thine the blessings pictur'd
here,
Thine are those charms that dazzle and endear;
Too blest indeed, were such without alloy,
But foster'd even by Freedom ills annoy:
That independence Britons prize too high,
Keeps man from man, and breaks the social tie;
See, though by circling deeps together held,
Minds combat minds, repelling and repell'd;
Ferments arise, imprison'd factions roar,
Represt ambition struggles round her shore,
Whilst over-wrought, the general system feels
Its motions stopt, or phrenzy fires the wheels.

Nor this the worst. As social bonds 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, stript of all her
charms,

That land of scholars, and that nurse of arms;
Where noble stems transmit the patriot flame,
And monarchs toil, and poets pant for fame;
One sink of level avarice shall lie,
And scholars, soldiers, kings unhonour'd die.

Yet think not thus, when Freedom's ills I
state,
I mean to flatter kings thus, or court the great;
Perish the wish; for, inly satisfy'd,
Above their pomps I hold my ragged pride.
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,
Pillag'd 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 exchange'd 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 scatter'd 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 decay'd,
The modest matron, and the blushing maid,
Forc'd from their homes, a melancholy train,
To traverse climes beyond the western main;
Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps
around,
And Niagara stuns with thund'ring sound?

Even now, perhaps, as there some pilgrim
strays
Through tangled forests, and through
dangerous ways;
Where beasts with man divided empire claims,
And the brown Indian takes a deadly 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 fond look where England's glories
shine,
And bids his bosom sympathize with mine.

Vain, very vain, my weary search to find
That bliss which only centers in the mind:
Why have I stray'd, 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 consign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find:
With secret course, which no loud storms
annoy,
Glides the smooth current of domestic joy.
The lifted ax, the agonizing wheel,
Luke's iron crown, and Damien's bed of steel,
To men remote from power but rsarely known,
Leave reason, faith and conscience all our own.

THE END.

