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The DESERTED
VILLAGE



BY OLIVER GOLDSMITH



THE DESERTED VILLAGE

BY
DR. OLIVER GOLDSMITH



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**THE DESERTED
VILLAGE**

SWEET Auburn, loveliest village of
the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered
the laboring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms
delayed—
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth when every sport could
please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topped the neighbor-
ing hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the
shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made!
How often have I blest the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labor free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,

While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went
round:

And still, as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown
By holding out to tire each other down;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter tittered round the place;
The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks
reprove.

These were thy charms, sweet village! sports
like these,

With sweet succession, taught even toil to
please;

These round thy bowers their cheerful influ-
ence shed;

These were thy charms—but all these charms
are fled.

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,

Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms with-
drawn;

Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:

One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain.

No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But choked with sedges, works its weary way;

Along thy glades, a solitary guest,

The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;

Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,

And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.

Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,

And the long grass o'ertops the moldering
wall;

And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's
hand,

Far, far away, thy children leave the land.

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,

Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;

Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade—

A breath can make them, as a breath has
made:

But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.



A TIME there was, ere England's griefs
began,
When every rood of ground main-
tained its man;
For him light labor spread her wholesome
store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no
more:
His best companions, innocence and health,
And his best riches ignorance of wealth.
But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain:
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose;
And every want to luxury allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peace-
ful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the
green,
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
Here, as I take my solitary rounds,
Amidst thy tangling walks and ruined
grounds,

And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn
grew,

Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to
pain.

In all my wand'rings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my
share—

I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned
skill,

Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
And, as a hare, when hounds and horns pursue,

Pants to the place from whence at first she
flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last.

O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care, that never must be mine!
How blest is he who crowns, in shades like
these,
A youth of labor with an age of ease;
Who quits a world where strong temptations
try,
And, since 't is hard to combat, learns to fly!
For him no wretches born to work and weep,
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous
deep;
No surly porter stands, in guilty state,
To turn imploring famine from the gate;
But on he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending virtue's friend;
Sinks to the grave with unperceived decay,
While resignation gently slopes the way;
And, all his prospects brightening to the last,
His heaven commences ere the world be past!

Sweet was the sound when oft at evening's
close

Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
There, as I passed with careless steps and slow,
The mingling notes came softened from below;
The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young;
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school;
The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whis-
pering wind,

And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant
mind;

These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
And filled each pause the nightingale had
made.

But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate the vale,
No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,
For all the blooming flush of life is fled.
All but yon widowed, solitary thing,
That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;
She, wretched matron, forced in age for bread,

To strip the brook with mantling cresses
spread,
To pick her wintry fagots from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn—
She only left of all the harmless train,
The sad historian of the pensive plain!



NEAR yonder copse, where once the
garden smiled,
And still where many a garden-flower
grows wild;

There, where a few torn shrubs the place
disclose,

The village preacher's modest mansion rose.

A man he was to all the country dear,

And passing rich with forty pounds a year;

Remote from towns he ran his godly race,

Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change
his place;

Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,

By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;

Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,

More skilled to raise the wretched than to
rise.

His house was known to all the vagrant train,

He chid their wanderings, but relieved their
pain;

The long-remembered beggar was his guest,

Whose beard descending swept his aged
breast;

The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,

Claimed kindred there and had his claims
allowed;

The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire and talked the night away,
Went o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow
done,

Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields
were won.

Pleased with his guests, the good man learned
to glow,

And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side:
But in his duty, prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for
all;

And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the
skies,

He tried each art, reproved each dull delay.
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dis-
mayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the tumbling wretch to
raise,
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.
At Church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place:
Truth from his lips prevailed with double
sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With ready zeal, each honest rustic ran:
E'en children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good
man's smile:
His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed,
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares
distressed;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were
given,
But all his serious thought had rest in heaven;

As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway cleaves the
storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds
are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.



BESIDE yon straggling fence that
skirts the way
With blossomed furze unprofitably
gay—

There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school:
A man severe he was, and stern to view,
I knew him well, and every truant knew;
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disaster in his morning face:
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned:
Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault.
The village all declared how much he knew;
'T was certain he could write and cipher too:
Lands he could measure, terms and tides
presage,
And even the story ran that he could gauge.
In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill,
For e'en though vanquished, he could argue
still;

While words of learned strength and thun-
d'ring sound,
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around,
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew.
But past is all his fame. The very spot,
Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot.

Near yonder thorn that lifts its head on high,
Where once the sign-post caught the passing
eye,
Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts
inspired,
Where gray-beard mirth and smiling toil
retired,
Where village statesmen talked with looks
profound,
And news much older than their ale went
round.
Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlor-splendors of that festive place:
The white-washed wall, the nicely sanded
floor,

The varnished clock that clicked behind the
door;
The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day;
The pictures placed for ornament and use,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of
goose;
The hearth, except when winter chilled the
day,
With aspen-boughs, and flowers and fennel
gay;
While broken teacups, wisely kept for show,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.

Vain transitory splendors! could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall?
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's
heart;
Thither no more the peasant shall repair
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,

Relax his ponderous strength and lean to
hear;

The host himself no longer shall be found
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be pressed,
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train,
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art;
Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born
sway:

Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined.
But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed,
In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
And, even while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy.

GE Friends to truth, ye statesmen who
survey

The rich man's power increase, the
poor's decay,

'T is yours to judge how wide the limits
stand

Between a splendid and a happy land.

Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted
ore,

And shouting Folly hails them from her
shore;

Hoards even beyond the miser's wish abound,
And rich men flock from all the world around.

Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a
name

That leaves our useful products still the same.

Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride

Takes up a place that many poor supplied;

Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,

Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;

The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth

Has robbed the neighboring fields of half
their growth:

His seat where solitary spots are seen,

Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;
Around the world each needful product flies
For all the luxuries the world supplies:
While thus the land, adorned for pleasure, all
In barren splendor feebly waits the fall.

As some fair female, unadorned and plain,
Secure to please while youth confirms her
reign,
Slights every borrowed charm that dress
supplies,
Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes:
But when these charms are past, for charms
are frail,
When time advances, and when lovers fail,
She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,
In all the glaring impotence of dress;
Thus fares the land, by luxury betrayed:
In nature's simplest charms at first arrayed,
But verging to decline, its splendors rise,
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise;
While, scourged by famine, from the smiling
land
The mournful peasant leads his humble band;

And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms—a garden and a grave.



WHERE then, ah! where shall poverty
reside,
To 'scape the pressure of contiguous
pride?

If to some common's fenceless limits strayed
He drives his flocks to pick the scanty blade,
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
And e'en the bare-worn common is denied.
If to the city sped—what waits him there?
To see profusion that he must not share;
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury, and thin mankind;
To see each joy the sons of pleasure know,
Extorted from his fellow-creature's woe;
Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There, the pale artist plies the sickly trade;
Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps
display,
There, the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
The dome where pleasure holds her midnight
reign,
Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous
train;

Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing
square,
The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy;
Sure these denote one universal joy!
Are these thy serious thoughts?—Ah! turn
thine eyes
Where the poor houseless shivering female
lies.
She once, perhaps, in village plenty blessed,
Has wept at tales of innocence distressed;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the
thorn;
Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head—
And, pinched with cold, and shrinking from
the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

DO Thine, sweet Auburn! thine the
loveliest train,
Do thy fair tribes participate her
pain?

E'en now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread.
Ah, no! To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they
go,

Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe.
Far different there from all that charmed
before,

The various terrors of that horrid shore;
Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely shed intolerable day;
Those matted woods where birds forget to
sing;

But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling;
Those poisonous fields with rank luxuriance
crowned,

Where the dark scorpion gathers death
around;

Where at each step the stranger fears to wake

The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;
Where crouching tigers wait their hapless
prey,
And savage men more murderous still than
they;
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landscape with the
skies.
Far different these from every former scene,
The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green,
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
That only sheltered thefts of harmless love.

Good Heaven! what sorrows gloomed that
parting day,
That called them from their native walks
away;
When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round the bowers, and fondly looked
their last—
And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main—
And, shuddering still to face the distant deep,
Returned and wept, and still returned to weep.

The good old sire the first prepared to go
To new-found worlds, and wept for others'
woe;

But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
He only wished for worlds beyond the grave.

His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpless years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.

With louder plaints the mother spoke her
woes,

And blessed the cot where every pleasure rose,
And kissed her thoughtless babes with many
a tear,

And clasped them close, in sorrow doubly
dear;

Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief
In all the silent manliness of grief.

O LUXURY; thou curst by Heaven's
decreed,
How ill exchanged are things like
these for thee;

How do thy potions, with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!
Kingdoms, by thee to sickly greatness grown,
Boast of a florid vigor not their own;
At every draught more large and large they
grow,
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe;
Till, sapped their strength, and every part
unsound,
Down, down, they sank, and spread a ruin
round.

Even now the devastation is begun,
And half the business of destruction done;
Even now, methinks, as pondering here I
stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land.
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the
sail
That idly waiting flaps with every gale,

Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
Contented toil, and hospitable care,
And kind connubial tenderness are there,
And piety with wishes placed above,
And steady loyalty, and faithful love.
And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;
Unfit, in these degenerate times of shame,
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
Thou found'st me poor at first, and keep'st
me so;

Thou guide, by which the noble arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!
Farewell; and oh! where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
Whether where equinoctial fervors glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigors of the inclement clime;
Aid slighted Truth with thy persuasive strain;

Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
Teach him, that states of native strength
 possessed,
Though very poor, may still be very blest;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift
 decay,
As ocean sweeps the labored mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

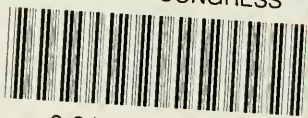


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