

THE
EMIGRANT;

A
POEM.

By the Honourable HENRY ERSKINE.

To which is added,

DR. SMOLLET'S

ODE,

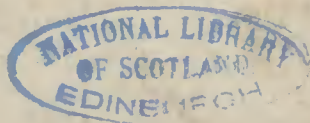
TO

LEVEN WATER.

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1796.



THE

J. M. I. C. R. A. M. T.

NO. 1.

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF

THE

COMMISSIONERS

OF THE

1851

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following very beautiful and pathetic Poem, the production of the Honourable HENRY ERSKINE, was written upon occasion of the frequent emigrations from Scotland, more especially from the Highlands.

That the publication of it may tend to heighten and to diffuse that spirit of benevolence and humanity, towards our distressed countrymen, which seems at present to be awakened, is the design of its present publication.—And it is earnestly to be wished, that it may promote the good end for which it is now presented to the public.

Copies of it appeared some time ago in a mutilated form; the present is printed from that done with permission of the amiable and distinguished author, and it will afford the reader more pleasure, when he is assured that it is entire.

THE EMIGRANT.

“Nos patriae fines, et dulcia linquimus arva,

“Nos patriam fugimus—”

VIRGIL.

“We leave our country and our native plains.”

Fast by the margin of a mossy rill,
That wander'd, gurgling, down a heath-clad hill,
An ancient shepherd stood, oppress'd with woe,
And ey'd the ocean's flood that foam'd below;
Where gently rocking on the rising tide,
A ship's unwonted form was seen to ride.
Unwonted, well I ween; for ne'er before,
Had touch'd one keel, the solitary shore;
Nor had the swain's rude footsteps ever stray'd,
Beyond the shelter of his native shade.
His few remaining hairs were silver grey,
And his rough face had seen a better day.

Around him, bleating, stray'd a scanty flock,
 And a few goats o'erhung the neighb'ring rock.
 One faithful dog his sorrows seem'd to share,
 And thro' with many a trick to ease his care.
 While o'er his furrow'd cheeks, the salt drops ran,
 He tun'd his rustic reed, and thus began :

“ Farewel ! farewell ! dear Caledonia's strand,
 “ Rough though thou be, yet still my native land,
 “ Exil'd from thee I seek a foreign shore,
 “ Friends, kindred, country, to behold no more :
 “ By hard Oppression driv'n, my helpless age,
 “ That should ere now have left Life's bustling
 “ itage,
 “ Is forc'd the ocean's boist'rous breast to brave,
 “ In a far foreign land to seek a grave.

“ And must I leave thee then my little cot !
 “ Mine and my father's poor, but happy, lot,
 “ Where I have pass'd in innocence away,
 “ Year after year, till Age has turn'd me grey ?

“ Thou, dear companion of my happier life,
 “ Now to the grave gone down, my virtuous wife,
 “ 'Twas here you rear'd with fond maternal pride,
 “ Five comely sons: three for their country died !
 “ Two still remain, sad remnant of the wars,
 “ Without one mark of honour but their scars ;
 “ They live to see their sire deny'd a grave,
 “ In lands his much lov'd children died to save :
 “ Yet still in peace and safety did we live,
 “ In peace and safety more than wealth can give.

“ My two remaining boys, with sturdy hands,
 “ Rear’d the scant produce of our niggard lands:
 “ Scant as it was, no more our hearts desir’d,
 “ No more from us our gen’rous lord requir’d.

“ But ah, sad change! those blessed days are o’er,
 “ And Peace, Content, and Safety charm no more.
 “ Another lord now rules those wide domains,
 “ The avaricious tyrant of the plains,
 “ Far, far from hence he revels life away,
 “ In guilty pleasures, our poor means must pay.
 “ The mossy plains, the mountain’s barren brow,
 “ Must now be tortur’d by the rearing plough,
 “ And, spite of nature, crops be taught to rise,
 “ Which to these northern climes wise Heav’n de-
 “ nies.

“ In vain, with sweating brow and weary hands,
 “ We strive to earn the gold our lord demands,
 “ While cold and hunger, and the dungeon’s gloom,
 “ Await our failure as its certain doom.

“ To shun these ills that threat my hoary head,
 “ I seek in foreign lands precarious bread;
 “ Forc’d, tho’ my helpless age from guilt be pure,
 “ The pangs of banish’d felons to endure;
 “ And all because these hands have vainly try’d
 “ To force from art what nature has deny’d;
 “ Because my little all will not suffice
 “ To pay th’ insatiate claims of Avarice.

“ In vain, of richer climates I am told,
 “ Whose hills are rich in gems, whose streams are
 “ gold,

" I am contented here, I ne'er have seen
 " A vale more fertile, nor a hill more green,
 " Nor would I leave this sweet, though humble cot,
 " To share the richest monarch's envied lot.
 " O! would to Heaven the alternative were mine,
 " Abroad to thrive, or here in want to pine,
 " Soon would I chuse: but ere to-morrow's sun
 " Has o'er my head his radiant journey run,
 " I shall be robb'd, by what they JUSTICE call,
 " By legal ruffians, of my little all:
 " Driv'n out to Hunger, Nakedness and Grief,
 " Without one pitying hand to bring relief.
 " Then come, oh! sad alternative to chuse,
 " Come, Banishment, I will no more refuse.
 " Go where I may, nor billows, rocks, nor wind,
 " Can add of horror to my tortur'd mind;
 " On whatsoever coast I may be thrown,
 " No lord can use me harder than my own;
 " Even they who tear the limbs and drink the gore,
 " Of helpless strangers, what can they do more?

" For thee, insatiate chief; whose ruthless hand
 " For ever drives me from my native land:
 " For thee I leave no greater curse behind,
 " Than the fell bodings of a guilty mind;
 " Or what were harder to a soul like thine,
 " To find from avarice thy wealth decline.

" For you, my friends, and neighbours, of the vale,
 " Who now with kindly tears my fate bewail,
 " Soon may your king, whose breast paternal glows,
 " With tenderest feelings for his peoples woes,

" Soon may the rulers of this mighty land,
 " To ease your sorrows stretch the helping hand,
 " Else soon, too soon, your hapless fate shall be,
 " Like me to suffer, to depart like me.

" On your dear native land, from whence I part,
 " Rest the best blessing of a broken heart.
 " If in some future hour, the foe should land
 " His hostile legions on Britannia's strand,
 " May she not then th' alarm sound in vain,
 " Nor miss her banished thousands on the plain.

" Feed on, my sheep, for though depriv'd of me,
 " My cruel foes shall your protectors be,
 " For their own sakes, shall pen your straggling flocks,
 " And save your lambkins from the rav'ning fox.

" Feed on, my goats, another now shall drain
 " Your streams that heal disease and soften pain;
 " No streams alas! can ever, ever flow,
 " To heal your master's heart, or soothe his woe.

" Feed on, my flocks, ye harmless people, feed,
 " The worst that ye can suffer is to bleed.
 " O! that the murderer's steel were all my fear!
 " How fondly would I stay to perish here -
 " But, hark! My sons loud call me from the vale,
 " And, lo! the vessel spreads the swelling sail.
 " Farewel! farewel!" A while his hands he wrung,
 " And o'er his crook in speechless sorrow hung,
 " Then casting many a ling'ring look behind,
 " Down the steep mountain's brow began to wind.

O D E
 To LEVEN WATER.

ON Leven's banks, while free to rove,
 And tune the rural pipe to love,
 I envy'd not the happiest swain
 That ever trod th' Arcadian plain.
 Pure stream! in whose transparent wave
 My youthful limbs I wont to lave;
 No torrents stain thy limpid source,
 No rocks impede thy dimpling course,
 That sweetly warbles o'er its bed,
 With white, round, polish'd pebbles spread:
 While, lightly pois'd, the scaly brood
 In myriads cleave thy crystal flood.
 The springing trout, in speckl'd pride;
 The salmon, monarch of the tyde;
 The ruthless pike, intent on war;
 The silver eel and mottley'd par,
 Devolving from thy parent lake,
 A charming maze thy waters make,
 By bow'rs of birch, and groves of pine,
 And hedges, flow'r'd with eglantine.
 Still on thy banks, so gaily green,
 May num'rous herds and flocks be seen;
 And lasses, chanting o'er the pail;
 And shepherds, piping in the dale;
 And ancient faith, that knows no guile,
 And industry imbrown'd with toil;
 And hearts resolv'd, and hands prepar'd;
 The blessings they enjoy to guard!

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