

**THE
WEED: A POEM**

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The Weed: A Poem by Charles Walter Palmer

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CHARLES WALTER PALMER

**THE
WEED: A POEM**

THE WEED:

A POEM.

BY

CHARLES WALTER PALMER.

'A cloud of smoke,
Wreathed, fragrant, from the pipe.'

THOMSON.

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LONDON:

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1880.
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PART THE FIRST.

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ALL joys, all pleasures, known to mortal men
Have furnished topics to the poet's pen :
'Pleasures of Hope' and 'Memory' have been sung,
And even Melancholy's harp is strung ;
But none as yet of all the rhyming tribe
Have dared, my Theme, thy pleasures to describe.
Oh base ingratitude ! the scribbling crew,
When writhing underneath the sharp review,
All fly to thee for comfort, counsel, aid ;
'Tis at thy footstool all their woes are laid ;
But if at last they make themselves a name,
Or raise a sign-post in the street of Fame,
They bow their judgments to a canting age,
Nor dare to give thy worth a single page ;
Hence I, unknown, unskilful, take the field
In thy behalf a maiden pen to wield ;
And humbly of the Muse assistance ask
As one unequal to the mighty task.

I dare not trouble all the tuneful Nine
Who on Parnassus dwell, for aid divine :
August Calliope but once an age
Fires Homer's song or Milton's awful page :
But once Melpomene's refulgent charms
A Shakspeare lure from sweet Thalia's arms ;
Till from their wild ecstatic loves are born
Othello's rage, wronged Timon's bitter scorn,
Macbeth's foul treason, Katharine's piteous woe,
False Richard's bloody rise and overthrow.
Not unto these dread queens of highest song
Dare I approach ; far off amid the throng
I loiter at the temple's outer gate,
And there the laughter-loving Muse await
Who with such wit adorned quaint Butler's rhyme,
That doggerel, in his hands, became sublime :
Who, long before, Parnassian heights forsook
And on a pilgrimage old Chaucer took,
What time that harbinger of dawning day
Dispelled the night of ages with his lay,
Thrilled England's heart-strings with a mighty song,
And to an infant nation gave a tongue.

Hush ! the bright goddess comes, she draweth nigh,
Mirth on her lips and mischief in her eye :
Earth dons her best the jocund dame to greet,

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And strews the sward with flowers to kiss her feet :
Black Care, alarmed, in haste her coming flies ;
Mute Melancholy's victims, rescued, rise ;
Dulness and Folly fall, by Laughter slain ;
And Sorrow, smiling, half forgets her pain.
O thou who erst a Dryden's force supplied,
A Goldsmith's ease, my errant Fancy guide :
Make keen my vision hidden truths to spy,
My quiver with satiric shafts supply,
With flowing numbers round my halting verse,
My frail conceits to strength and beauty nurse.
Sage Clio ! thou Fame's blazoned scroll should'st bring,
And, clarion-voiced, a hero's praises sing,
Who paying homage due to all the Nine,
By life and letters both, was doubly thine ;
That duly honoured in my lay may be
The matchless Raleigh. Of all courtiers, he
The best and wisest, spurns ignoble ease
To plough with daring keel the western seas,
And off Columbia's shores, in many a gale,
Doth hoist on high his bold adventurous sail.
First Briton he, great Weed, thy worth to own,
And make thy unregarded virtues known.
Far better had 'the rude imperious surge'
O'er a wild ocean howled his funeral dirge ;
Far better had some high tumultuous wave

Closed o'er his honoured, though untimely grave :
Not then his hapless lot had been to feel
The galling fetter or the headsman's steel.
The motley king who virtues found in Carr,
Who took a Villiers for his guiding star,
Could not discern true merit such as thine,
By Nature framed in court or camp to shine ;
But on a pretext frivolous and unjust,
His noblest subject in a dungeon thrust.
For thee, true heart, 'stone walls no prison made,
Nor iron bars a cage ;' e'en there displayed
To men unborn, thy genius took its flight,
And only stooped to set in endless night.
Thy mournful tale must not my page prolong,
Th' ethereal joys of smoking are my song :
Preached at in vain, maligned, and written down,
They laugh to scorn the puritanic frown ;
And spite of all that bigots do or say,
Have still maintained, and ever will, their sway.

Let bookworms still philosophy derive
From ancient sages, who did live and thrive
By launching systems down the sea of Time
When Rome was in her cradle, Greece her prime.
However grand each theory looks in print,
We find, when tried in practice, little in't.

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If by philosophy we mean, to bear
With patience disappointment, pain and care ;
To suffer evil with undaunted soul ;
To keep our passions under calm control ;
Still unsubdued to see our hopes deflowered ;
To bear the shocks of fate with mind unsoured :
If this be Wisdom's true refined gold,
In Greek or Latin hawked about and sold,
Go ransack all, Pythagoras and Plato,
Yea, all from Zoroaster down to Cato ;
Search all that end in S or O at pleasure,
Whose uncouth names defy or rhyme or measure ;
✓ An ounce of ' bird's eye ' and a pipe of clay
Will teach far more philosophy than they.
To treat of this requires an abler pen—
It well deserves the care of learned men,
And as for me, I have but little lore :
I was not reared where Cam and Isis pour
Their classic streams to fertilise the world,
Where Knowledge hath on high her flag unfurled.
O'er the wide ocean 'tis my lot to stray
Where mountain billows, rising, bar the way.
Not Learning here, but Seamanship avails
When Death himself, the mad tempestuous gales
Bestriding, shows his pale terrific form,
And hurtles on the demons of the storm.