

**POEMS.
VOLUME I**

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Poems. Volume I by William Cowper

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WILLIAM COWPER

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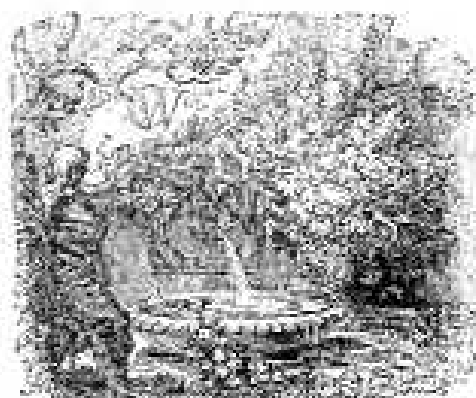
POEMS.

BY

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

OF THE INNER TEMPLE.

VOL. I.



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POEMS.

TABLE TALK.

*Si te fortè non gravis nec sarcina chartæ,
Abjicitur——* *Hor. Lib. 4. Epist. 13.*

A. YOU told me, I remember, glory, built
On selfish principles, is shame and guilt;
The deeds that men admire as half divine,
Stark naught, because corrupt in their design.
Strange doctrine this! that without scruple tears
The laurel that the very lightning spares;
Brings down the warrior's trophy to the dust,
And eats into his bloody sword like rust.

B. I grant that, men continuing what they are,
Fierce, avaricious, proud, there must be war;
And never meant the rule should be applied
To him that fights with justice on his side.

Let laurels, drench'd in pure Parnassian dews,
Reward his memory, dear to every Muse,
Who, with a courage of unshaken root,
In Honour's field advancing his firm foot,
Plants it upon the line that Justice draws,
And will prevail or perish in her cause.
'Tis to the virtues of such men, man owes
His portion in the good, that Heaven bestows.

And when recording History displays
 Feats of renown, though wrought in ancient days,
 Tells of a few stout hearts, that fought and died,
 Where duty placed them, at their country's side ;
 The man, that is not moved with what he reads,
 That takes not fire at their heroic deeds,
 Unworthy of the blessings of the brave,
 Is base in kind, and born to be a slave.

But let eternal infamy pursue
 The wretch to nought but his ambition true,
 Who, for the sake of filling with one blast
 The post-horns of all Europe, lays her waste,
 Think yourself station'd on a towering rock,
 To see a people scatter'd like a flock,
 Some royal mastiff panting at their heels,
 With all the savage thirst a tiger feels ;
 Then view him self-proclaim'd in a gazette
 Chief monster, that has plagued the nations yet ;
 The globe and sceptre in such hands misplaced,
 Those ensigns of dominion, how disgraced !
 The glass, that bids man mark the fleeting hour,
 And Death's own scythe would better speak his power :
 Then grace the hoary phantom in their stead
 With the king's shoulder-knot and gay cockade ;
 Clothe the twin brethren in each other's dress,
 The same their occupation and success.

A. 'Tis your belief the world was made for man ;
 Kings do but reason on the self-same plan :
 Maintaining yours, you cannot theirs condemn,
 Who think, or seem to think, man made for them.

B. Seldom, alas ! the power of logic reigns
 With much sufficiency in royal brains ;
 Such reasoning falls like an inverted cone,
 Wanting its proper base to stand upon.
 Man made for kings ! those optics are but dim,
 That tell you so—say, rather, they for him.
 That were indeed a king-enobling thought,
 Could they, or would they, reason as they ought.

The diadem, with mighty projects lined
 To catch renown by ruining mankind,
 Is worth, with all its gold and glittering store,
 Just what the toy will sell for, and no more.
 Oh! bright occasions of dispensing good,
 How seldom used, how little understood!
 To pour in Virtue's lap her just reward;
 Keep Vice restrain'd behind a double guard;
 To quell the faction, that affronts the throne,
 By silent magnanimity alone;
 To nurse with tender care the thriving arts;
 Watch every beam Philosophy imparts;
 To give Religion her unbridled scope,
 Nor judge by statute a believer's hope;
 With close fidelity and love unfeign'd
 To keep the matrimonial bond unstain'd;
 Cautious only of a virtuous praise;
 His life a lesson to the land he sways;
 To touch the sword with conscientious awe,
 Nor draw it but when duty bids him draw;
 To sheath it in the peace-restoring close
 With joy beyond what victory bestows;
 Bless'd country, where these kingly glories shine!
 Bless'd England, if this happiness be thine!

A. Guard what you say; the patriotic tribe
 Will sneer, and charge you with a bribe. — *B.* A bribe?
 The worth of his three kingdoms I defy,
 To lure me to the baseness of a lie:
 And, of all lies (be that one poet's boast),
 The lie that flatters I abhor the most.
 Those arts be theirs who hate his gentle reign,
 But he that loves him has no need to feign.

A. Your smooth eulogium to one crown address'd
 Seems to imply a censure on the rest.

B. Quevedo, as he tells his sober tale,
 Ask'd, when in Hell, to see the royal gaol;
 Approved their method in all other things;
 'But where, good sir, do you confine your kings?'