

**WORTH AND
WEALTH: A POEM**

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WORTH AND WEALTH: A POEM by Samuel Tomkins

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A Poem,

BY

SAMUEL TOMKINS,

TRYBULL, STAFFORDSHIRE.



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WORTH AND WEALTH.

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Part First.
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In a sweet English village, quite removed
From the rough bustle and the din of towns,
Down at the bottom of a lovely vale,
With lofty hills all round, down whose steep sides
The traveller descended ere he saw
A single cottage, or the rustic church ;
And winding round those lofty hills there ran,
Right through the vale, a willow-margined stream—
A brook, wide as a river in its flow.
In this small hamlet dwelt both rich and poor.
Though hidden from the view of all the world,
Yet still the fashions of the world were there,
With social grades, and servile nods and bows.
A wealthy man there was : and one, whose lot
Was neither rich nor poor ; his skill
Earned raiment, food, and what he far more prized,
Good education for the growing folk
That gathered round his hearth. Widely diverse
Were these two men—the rich and him not rich—

In disposition and desires : diverse
In mental calibre and moral worth.
The early struggles of the poorer man
Had much developed an extensive brain,
And sole dependence on his God had made
Him deeply thoughtful ; while he blessed that Hand
Which scattered daily mercies in his way,
He picked them up with thankful heart, and found
Provision all-sufficient for his wants.
Of all good things he was conservative ;
From evil things his spirit turned away
With thoughts abhorrent : but with charity
He measured all his neighbours in the vale ;
For well he knew frail man hath narrow views—
Oft makes mistakes ; thro' different coloured glass
Beholds his own and other people's deeds.
Of strict religious views, and fervent mind,
He loved to pray to God and sing His praise ;
Faustical he was not, for a chord
Of common sense, uncommon, intertwined
The fibres of his mind, and reinèd in
The soaring fancy and each fervent thought.
He saw God's hand in all things, and believed :
But yet he wrought with diligence for bread,
And every gift he duly occupied.

All through an even life of fifty years
He dwelt within the vale, and paid his way,
By all regarded as an honest man :
Yet were there those who liked him not, because

He by his better life reproved their sins
And set them on a thinking, which disturbed
The self-complaisant feelings of their minds.
They could not call him "Methodist" in scorn,
Who never wandered from his parish church,
But in the tavern, merry o'er their cups,
They called him a "Psalm-singer" in reproach.

The richer man, unto possession born
Of wealth abundant, had no fear of want ;
His fortune so secure, he felt no need
Of trust in Him who is alone the trust
Of humbler mortals, and whose generous care
Supplies the sparrows and the poor with food.
Anticipated all his wants, he put
Not forth his talents to some useful work.
He seldom knelt in prayer—or when he did
It was with form of words repeated o'er
From childhood, thoughtlessly, and never felt.
He knew not want, then wherefore should he pray ?
Endowed with health and vigorous appetite,
He at his best lived as an animal,
With this distinction, that he could forecast
To please his appetite with studied art
From cellar and from larder richly stored.
Incarnate Goodness saw the snares of wealth,
And spoke in earnest language unto men.
The life of men is not what they possess,
But that immortal mind that in them thinks—
That moral sense that gives them power to know

And love and worship Him, who lends them breath
To work His will while it is called "to-day."
The world outside the valley knew the wealth
Of the rich man, and duly flattered him :
The pastor feared him, and rich neighbours smiled ;
He moved in good society, and walked
Abroad as one whom foolish men had taught
That God had chiefly made the world for him.
He passed his neighbour with a sickly nod,
Or haughty or severe, just as his mood
Was at the moment ; for he truly felt
A gulf impassable was fixed of right
Between their social spheres. One man is formed
To labour for his bread ; another formed
But to enjoy the wealth he earned not,
And to receive the homage of the poor.
There was no common bond between these two,
Near neighbours as they were : this mattered not :
The rich man had his pleasures, and the man
Who was not rich or poor, constant employ,
To earn his bread and cultivate his mind.

They both had children born within the vale—
Young romping boys and maidens—and these grew
In stature and in age both night and day ;
And while their parents thought them still so young
Their hearts were troubled with the verb "to love,"—
A plaintive voice—they knew not whence—was heard
To speak within. Spontaneously there grew
A power that Nature planted in the heart :

And artificial pride, by luxury bred,
Hath tried, with fitful efforts, every age,
To kill fair Nature in the soul: but she,
Akin to gods immortal, cannot die.
Wounded and bruised, beneath the proud man's foot,
Still doth she rise again, with strength renewed;
And taught by her—the else untutored eye
Discovers treasures by herself bestowed.
Oft in the humbler ranks of life there grow
Those truer beauties which enchant the mind.
A manly form—a maiden's lovely grace—
Which art can never copy, nor wealth buy:
A mighty intellect—mysterious gifts,
That show themselves in acts and outward form.
The lofty brow—the eye that with its glance
Speaks through the outward senses to the soul;
Shines with intelligence, which feebler minds
In mansion or in cottage ever lack.

These neighbours' children, all were passing fair—
The maidens beautiful, the young men strong;
Yet of the two—it happeneth so sometimes
In every clime,—the poorer folk excelled
In gifts and graces, both of form and mind;
And in acquired knowledge, pressing need
Had caused the poorer children to put forth
Their energies, good talents to improve.
They sought for knowledge which to them was bread;
Their daily mercies, under God, were hung
Upon their fathers' labours. Hoarded gold

They had but little of ; sickness or death
Of him their chief bread winner, would dissolve
The atmosphere of comfort which they breathed.
Yet still they prized knowledge more than gold,
Trusting to God and it—if He should please
To take their father from them—to supply
Their daily wants.

These children marvelled not
That they should all the hamlets' beauties share,
Live in the lovely vale, and breathe alike
The country air, and yet as strangers be
To those from whom barely a furlong's space
Divides their dwellings. Yet they were apart,
Not by inferior natures, but by gold,
Or chiefly that. In all the eye could see
The poorer folk were richer ; and their minds
In book lore, talents, and scholastic wealth,
Far better stored ; their feelings better trained ;
But, lacking wealth, they met and made no sign,
And passed as strangers.

On the Sabbath day
They met together in the house of prayer ;
But when the service ended, the rich folk
Sat in their pews till all beside themselves
Had homeward gone. All that great care could do
Was done, that children of the wealthy man
Should quite ignore their neighbour's gifted folk.
But there are instincts in the human heart—