# COWPER'S TEXT; A POEM

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Cowper's text; a poem by James Mason



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JAMES MASON

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A

# POEM.

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BY JAMES MASON,

OF SHREWSBURY.

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Shrewsbury:

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1827.

TO

# MRS. JONES,

DAUGHTER OF BENJAMIN HEYWOOD,

OF STANLEY HALL, YORKSHIRE,

AND NIECE OF BRIDGET HEYWOOD, OF LIVERPOOL,

BOTH DECEASED,

FOR THEIR SAKES AND HER OWN,

THE FOLLOWING

## POEM

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY HER COUSIN AND FRIEND,

*JAMES MASON.*

*St. John's Hill, Shrewsbury,*
*Jan. 1st*, 1827.

# COWPER'S TEXT.

"I was a stricken deer that left the herd
Long since—with many an arrow deep impress'd
My panting side was charg'd; and I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades:
Here I was found by one, who had himself
Been hurt by th' archers: in his side he bore
And in his hands and feet the cruel scars:
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and heal'd, and bade me live."

Yes! thou wast stricken, ere thy rank was known,
Thyself least knowing it of all the herd:
Restor'd, the wound declaredst thou from heav'n,
And therefore nursedst it to a relapse:
So came thy fiftieth year—when thy career
Lean'd bright on temp'ral glory, though it still
Held its strong wheeling on th' eternal goal:
Faith, hope, and charity baptiz'd thy course,
And stern expostulation, and a talk
Thy table best might bear, and a review

With'ring to modern discipline at schools,
The iron still tighten'd of thy splendid curb:
And yet at times right cheerily it shook,
E'en innocently jingling from its hold,
As when the train-band hero rode so fast
By wife and child and bell and balcony,
Boasted at Ware, and then rode back as fast:
'Twas thine own levity, of many one,
Simple, unspotted, guileless, graceful all:
And now the fair impos'd on thee a theme,
Soft, 'twas the sofa—fair, 'twas from the fair,
But, if sublime, sublime as Cowper's Task:
And 'tis sublime—sofas were not for thee,
And the mere name took a repulsive power,
And urg'd thee thro' the fields of earth and heav'n,
As vast proprietor, by truth made free.
Thy home was in the vale—thy morning air
Drugg'd from the market-place of wretched town,
But from that dwelling-place could walk with thee,
A kindred guardian of a mind that claim'd
A kindred guardian in a still small voice:
And ye would walk together, save when clouds
Were harsh upon this weather-house, our world,
And suffered but the man to brave the toy:
Then as no pangs arthritic plagu'd thy step,
In masculine dignity thou wouldst alone

Th' inanimate and animate explore,
Applaud the respite of th' umbrageous arch,
Own the privations of the peasant's nest,
Ascending or descending toil, slip, smile,
Admire the common's vegetable gold
With sympathy for her that wand'rer there,
Or those dependants on the double theft,
From highest eminence through all its plain
Trace Ouse by glassy line or verdant bank,
Then mindful of each novelty regain
Thy parlour, and thy Mary, and thy God:
Such was thy state to meet the softest theme,
Noise and a market-place and purest love,
A scanty competence and every charm
In nature that e'er charm'd thee, reach'd with toil,
A body in the noblest sequels wrapt,
A spirit that through all its harmony,
Its comprehensive harmony, could jar
But by that touch, at which the mountains smoke:
'Twas thus encount'redst thou the ladies' theme,
And having balanc'd in its gentle name
And thine own music, peasant, sage, and saint,
Country and town, the outlaw and the craz'd,
Op'nedst thy second book, with pealing time:
Oh! what a sadd'ning yet tremendous pow'r
Thy first touch gives that time-piece! what a tone

Claims for the sable slave the common God.
The sun had slept in fog, a tideless sea
Voraciously had fed on man and tow'r,
Earth had been as the wave, when holy bard
From Olney with his summons shuts the scene,
And brethren in calamity bids love:
A chime succeeds, but of cathedral depth,
That stirs the earth o'er Wolfe and Chatham dead,
Wolfe laurell'd on the heights of victory,
And Chatham as he lifted hand and voice
Against a peace that merg'd that victory:
True—our apparent glory was not there,
But Lansdowne's wisdom reigned, and shall that peace
By its example more advance mankind,
Than any conquest any Cæsar boasts?
Else who is Washington? Who Philip's son?
But Chatham found dismemberment and shame,
And Olney's poet from his market-place
Ill reconcil'd the coxcomb and the brave,
And deem'd us borrowers too minute from France:
Yet perfumes he had pardon'd, pardon'd dress,
But when he finds the sacramental cup
Mid the same lilies that enwreath'd the sword,
He arms his rage but with the master-sound,
And church and college seem (but seem!) to reel.