

**THE
MISER: A POEM**

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The miser: a poem by Anonymous

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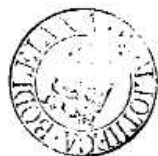
THE MISER:

A POEM.

Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit.

— Quid non mortalia pectora cogis,
Auri sacra fames!

VIRG. ÆN.



LONDON:

BALDWIN AND CRADOCK.

1831.

557.

THE MISER:

A POEM.

AMONG the marv'ulous tales by poets told,
Who yet has sung th' omnipotence of gold?
Prime regulator of all human things,—
The poor man's curse—false confidence of kings,
That oft the humble to a throne has rais'd,
And mighty monarchs in the dust abas'd.
In faithless billows dangers disappear,—
Swift driving storms bring distant treasures near;
Reward impels to dreadful deeds in arms,
With courage firm the coldest bosom warms.
Though poets are accus'd of thirst for praise,
A richer boon adds vigour to their lays:
This plumes for flight high contemplation's wing,
From other worlds intelligence to bring;
Calls genius forth to view great nature's plan,
Well stor'd, to serve the purposes of man;
Whose art tries all on which he lays his hold,
And, Midas-like, converts them into gold:
His restless temper ev'ry scheme contrives,
Now this discards for one that better thrives;
Keen in research, deep hidden treasures drains,
Dissatisfied when aught deludes his pains;

Earth, air, and water, each material rude,
 Are all impress'd into his servitude !
 Gold, emulation gives to ev'ry soul—
 The principle that actuates the whole.
 The ignorant and wise—the fair and brown,
 From the deep statesman to the dullest clown,
 All in submission bend before its shrine,
 And offer honours equal to divine !

A thirst for gold's the curse of polish'd life,
 And man turns wisdom to a source of strife :
 While knowledge should instruct him to despise
 Things he wants not, and to an angel rise,
 He but employs it to enhance their worth,
 And bind him faster to the toys of earth.
 If reason's high pretensions yield such fruit,
 Man has no privilege above a brute ;
 It helps him but his vices to refine,
 And better manage each unfair design.

In getting riches many views conspire ;
 Respect, in general, kindles this desire.
 Each, in his sphere, attempts to be possess'd
 (Though the way to it may not be the best)
 Of earthly good, on purpose to display
 Th' importance of an insect for a day !
 The views of men, how grovelling and low,
 To aim no higher than external show,
 And court the admiration of their kind !
 A poor indulgence to a soul confin'd
 From home a while, but destin'd to enjoy
 Immortal glories that can never cloy.

But first she must be tutor'd for the place ;
Put off the sordid habits that disgrace
The human name, resolv'd to rise above
The world and self, borne on the wings of love.

An independence oft is the pretence :
What's this condition in the soundest sense ?
He's independent that can live alone,
Who needs no more assistance than a stone !
Reason allows—unbiass'd reason grants,
The man is most so who has fewest wants ;
Whose heart's contented with his little store,
Nor envies those that have, nor covets more.
Increase possessions, and you soon will find
That wants run faster than to stay behind.
But few necessities to man belong ;
When rich, he's daily pester'd with a throng,
That for supplies importunately crave,
And leave the master poorer than the slave.
Want seems but banish'd by abundance got ;
It entrance finds by something you have not :
This thing obtain'd will shut it out of doors ;
No, that you cannot do by getting stores.
To-day were all things suited to your taste,
The world itself as you would have it plac'd ;
To-morrow brings an accident unseen,
From which no foresight could th' arrangement screen ;
Another's whim will introduce a change,
And the whole plan of happiness derange.
To be in fashion, you have cards and dice,
T' amuse your friends—perhaps for avarice ;
Politeness prompts you to provide those things,

Though never visited by dukes and kings ;
Such courtly practices are common grown,—
As frequent at the cottage as the throne.
Whate'er the motive, this truth follows clear,
Had you content you would not seek it here.
Fortune may smile ; yet is she never shy
With those that risk a thousand on a die ?
Why risk at all ? attention's kept awake
To ev'ry throw, when something is at stake.
What is your purpose when engag'd at play ?
To send the rest with pockets drain'd away.
When anxiously for gain you are employ'd,
'Tis clear enough amusement is destroy'd.
They that sit down a vacant hour to spend,
Rise not before they have another end.
Some may be anxious but their own to save,
But this is not the law that rules the knave ;
And when you have a sharper to oppose,
'Tis ten to one but you your honour lose,
And money too ; for he that aims at gain
By throwing dice, will not escape a stain.
But loss of money is the least of all :
If virtue's lost, disgraceful is the fall.
When pastime players for a stake contest,
Upright intentions hardly rule the best ;
Disputes proceed to acrimonious words,
And not unfrequent an appeal to swords.
Thus reason tamely yields to passion's sway,
And brutal deeds prove what is sought in play.
Respect you want, but gaming profits give
No reputation ; creditably live :
Unpractis'd youth without remorse you peel ;

To cheat is much genteeler than to steal.
 A bold highwayman robs the first he meets,
 And some poor fam'ly's only hope defeats;
 This desperado risks more from his peer,
 For a less prize, than gamblers have to fear.
 Which of two crimes in villainy is worse,
 To filch by shuffling, or to seize a purse?
 Law's here unmindful of its public trust,
 Guilt should in all receive a sentence just.
 True satisfaction cannot be supply'd,
 Till ev'ry vain desire is laid aside;
 Both wealth and greatness are in worth too low;
 'Tis found in virtue only—not in show,—
 The virtue of the heart: no outward form
 Can brave unshaken each conflicting storm.
 Man's independence, then, is in the mind,
 In motive pure, with nothing base combin'd.

Who for himself alone would wealth possess,
 Mistakes the road to human happiness.
 When means enable, and occasions call,
 To give's a pleasure, though the gift be small;
 A duty, too, that each another owes,
 Which from their mutual dependence grows;
 This to withhold betrays a niggard mind,
 Dispos'd to take, but not return in kind.
 Form'd is the soul for friendly intercourse,
 Contracted tempers dry the social source;
 Unkind affections, cherish'd and caress'd,
 Like serpents vile, corrode the fost'ring breast:
 When sorrows swell, the heart obtains relief
 In kind attempts to ease another's grief;

The tenderness of pity softens woe,
 As genial warmth consumes the harden'd snow.
 Within his little sphere a sun he glows,
 Who, unconstrain'd, his favours round bestows;
 Each smiling countenance the boon returns,
 With gratitude there's not a heart but burns;
 Age teaches childhood to pronounce his name,
 And ev'ry cottage echoes with his fame.
 The meanest labourer affords a share
 Of comfort to the op'lent by his care;
 When sickness or old age arrests his hand,
 He has upon the rich a just demand.
 Who's most dependent—who receives the most,
 The man that works, or he that pays the cost?
 The cost is small, when balanc'd with the good
 By toil bestow'd—convenience and food
 On the employer, and the world at large,
 Which merits well reward, miscall'd a charge.

What generous bosom overlooks reward?
 'Tis affectation to pretend regard
 But to the public welfare, not his own,
 When one appears to lay advantage down.
 A shorter way to aggrandize his name;
 Wealth safely rides upon the back of fame.

The empty name a soldier earns in fight,
 Is for his solid services too light;
 A prize unequal to the dangers run,
 And no proportion bears to battles won;
 The recompence that on a breath depends,
 For all his prowess makes but poor amends;