

# OLIVER GOLDSMITH

THE DESERTED  
VILLAGE

Oliver Goldsmith

**The Deserted Village**

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# Oliver Goldsmith

## The Deserted Village

### THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,  
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,  
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,  
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd.

Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,  
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,  
How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,  
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene!  
How often have I paused on every charm,  
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,  
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,  
The decent church that topt the neighbouring hill,  
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,  
For talking age and whispering lovers made!  
How often have I blest the coming day,  
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,

And all the village train, from labour free,  
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;  
While many a pastime circled in the shade,  
The young contending as the old survey'd;  
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,  
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round;

And still, as each repeated pleasure tired,  
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired:  
The dancing pair that simply sought renown,  
By holding out to tire each other down;  
The swain mistrustless of his smutt'd face,  
While secret laughter titter'd round the place;  
The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,  
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove;  
These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like these,  
With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please;  
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,  
These were thy charms – but all these charms are fled.  
Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn!  
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;

Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,

And desolation saddens all thy green:  
One only master grasps the whole domain,  
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain:  
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,  
But choked with sedges works its weedy way;  
Along thy glades a solitary guest,  
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;  
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,  
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.  
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,  
And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;  
And trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,  
Far, far away thy children leave the land.

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:  
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;  
A breath can make them, as a breath has made:  
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.  
A time there was, ere England's griefs began,  
When every rood of ground maintain'd its man;  
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,  
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:  
His best companions, innocence and health;  
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.  
But times are alter'd; trade's unfeeling train  
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain;  
Along the lawn, where scatter'd hamlets rose,  
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose;  
And every want to luxury allied,  
And every pang that folly pays to pride.  
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,  
Those calm desires that ask'd but little room,  
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,  
Lived in each look, and brighten'd all the green;

These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,  
And rural mirth and manners are no more.  
Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour,  
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.  
Here, as I take my solitary rounds  
Amidst thy tangling walks and ruin'd grounds,  
And, many a year elapsed, return to view  
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,  
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,  
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

In all my wanderings round this world of care,

In all my griefs – and God has given my share —  
To husband out life's taper at the close,  
And keep the flame from wasting by repose:  
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown, Amidst these humble bowers  
to lay me down;  
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,  
Amidst the swains to show my book-learn'd skill,

Around my fire an evening group to draw,  
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;  
And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,  
Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,  
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,  
Here to return – and die at home at last.  
O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,  
Retreats from care, that never must be mine:  
How blest is he who crowns, in shades like these,  
A youth of labour with an age of ease;

Who quits a world where strong temptations try,  
And since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!  
For him no wretches, born to work and weep,  
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;  
No surly porter stands, in guilty state,  
To spurn imploring famine from the gate —  
But on he moves to meet his latter end,  
Angels around befriending virtue's friend;

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