

Oliver Goldsmith (?1730-74)

3 *The Hermit, or Edwin and Angelina*

I.

“Turn, gentle Hermit of the dale,  
And guide my lonely way,  
To where yon taper cheers the vale  
With hospitable ray.

II.

“For here forlorn and lost I tread, 5  
With fainting steps and slow;  
Where wilds, immeasurably spread,  
Seem length’ning as I go.”

III.

“Forbear, my son,” the Hermit cries, 10  
“To tempt the dang’rous gloom;  
For yonder faithless phantom flies  
To lure thee to thy doom.

IV.

“Here to the houseless child of want  
My door is open still;  
And though my portion is but scant, 15  
I give it with good will.

V.

“Then turn to-night, and freely share  
Whate’er my cell bestows;  
My rushy couch and frugal fare,  
My blessing and repose. 20

VI.

“No flocks that range the valley free

To slaughter I condemn;  
Taught by that Power that pities me,  
I learn to pity them:

VII.

“But from the mountain’s grassy side 25  
A guiltless feast I bring;  
A scrip with herbs and fruits supplied,  
And water from the spring.

VIII.

“Then, pilgrim, turn, thy cares forego; 30  
All earth-born cares are wrong;  
Man wants but little here below,  
Nor wants that little long.”

IX.

Soft as the dew from Heaven descends, 35  
His gentle accents fell:  
The modest stranger lowly bends,  
And follows to the cell.

X.

Far in a wilderness obscure 40  
The lonely mansion lay,  
A refuge to the neighb’ring poor  
And strangers led astray.

XI.

No stores beneath its humble thatch  
Required a master’s care;  
The wicket, op’ning with a latch,  
Receiv’d the harmless pair.

XII.

And now, when busy crowds retire 45  
To take their ev’ning rest,

The Hermit trimm'd his little fire,  
And cheer'd his pensive guest:

XIII.

And spread his vegetable store,  
And gayly press'd, and smil'd; 50  
And skill'd in legendary lore,  
The ling'ring hours beguil'd.

XIV.

Around in sympathetic mirth  
Its tricks the kitten tries,  
The cricket chirrups in the hearth, 55  
The crackling faggot flies.

XV.

But nothing could a charm impart  
To sooth the stranger's woe;  
For grief was heavy at his heart,  
And tears began to flow. 60

XVI.

His rising cares the Hermit spied,  
With answ'ring care opprest:  
"And whence, unhappy youth," he cried,  
"The sorrows of thy breast?"

XVII.

"From better habitations spurn'd, 65  
Reluctant dost thou rove?  
Or grieve for friendship unreturn'd,  
Or unregarded love?"

XVIII.

"Alas! the joys that fortune brings  
Are trifling, and decay; 70  
And those who prize the paltry things,

More trifling still than they.

XIX.

“And what is friendship but a name,  
A charm that lulls to sleep;  
A shade that follows wealth or fame, 75  
But leaves the wretch to weep?”

XX.

“And love is still an emptier sound,  
The modern fair-one’s jest;  
On earth unseen, or only found  
To warm the turtle’s nest. 80

XXI.

“For shame, fond youth, thy sorrows hush,  
And spurn the sex,” he said:  
But while he spoke, a rising blush  
His love-lorn guest betray’d.

XXII.

Surpris’d he sees new beauties rise, 85  
Swift mantling to the view;  
Like colours o’er the morning skies,  
As bright, as transient too.

XXIII.

The bashful look, the rising breast,  
Alternate spread alarms: 90  
The lovely stranger stands confest  
A maid in all her charms.

XXIV.

“And ah! forgive a stranger rude,  
A wretch forlorn,” she cried;  
“Whose feet unhallow’d thus intrude 95  
Where Heaven and you reside.”

XXV.

“But let a maid thy pity share,  
Whom love has taught to stray;  
Who seeks for rest, but finds despair  
Companion of her way. 100

XXVI.

“My father liv’d beside the Tyne,  
A wealthy lord was he;  
And all his wealth was mark’d as mine,  
He had but only me.

XXVII.

“To win me from his tender arms, 105  
Unnumber’d suitors came;  
Who prais’d me for imputed charms,  
And felt, or feign’d a flame.

XXVIII.

“Each hour a mercenary crowd  
With richest proffers strove; 110  
Among the rest young Edwin bow’d,  
But never talk’d of love.

XXIX.

“In humble, simplest habit clad,  
No wealth nor power had he;  
Wisdom and worth were all he had, 115  
But these were all to me.

XXX.

“And when, beside me in the dale,  
He carol’d lays of love,  
His breath lent fragrance to the gale,  
And music to the grove. 120

XXXI.

“The blossom opening to the day,  
The dews of Heaven refin’d,  
Could nought of purity display  
To emulate his mind.

XXXII.

“The dew, the blossom on the tree, 125  
With charms inconstant shine;  
Their charms were his, but wo to me,  
Their constancy was mine.

XXXIII.

“For still I tried each fickle art, 130  
Importunate and vain;  
And while his passion touch’d my heart,  
I triumph’d in his pain.

XXXIV.

“Till quite dejected with my scorn, 135  
He left me to my pride;  
And sought a solitude forlorn,  
In secret, where he died.

XXXV.

“But mine the sorrow, mine the fault, 140  
And well my life shall pay;  
I’ll seek the solitude he sought,  
And stretch me where he lay.

XXXVI.

“And there forlorn, despairing, hid,  
I’ll lay me down and die;  
’Twas so for me that Edwin did,  
And so for him will I.”

XXXVII.

“Forbid it, Heaven!” the Hermit cried, 145  
And clasp’d her to his breast:  
The wond’ring fair one turn’d to chide —  
’Twas Edwin’s self that prest.

XXXVIII.

“Turn, Angelina, ever dear!  
My charmer, turn to see 150  
Thy own, thy long-lost Edwin here,  
Restor’d to love and thee.

XXXIX.

“Thus let me hold thee to my heart,  
And every care resign:  
And shall we never, never part, 155  
My life — my all that’s mine?”

XL.

No, never from this hour to part,  
We’ll live and love so true;  
The sigh that rends thy constant heart,  
Shall break thy Edwin’s too.” 160

*c. 1761*

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