



THE  
SCHOOL-MISTRESS.  
A POEM,

In Imitation of SPENSER.

By WILLIAM SHENSTONE, Esq;

*Auditæ voces, vagitus & ingens,  
Infantumque animæ flentes in Limine primo.* VIRG.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

*What particulars in Spenser were imagin'd most proper for the Author's imitation on this occasion, are his language, his simplicity, his manner of description, and a peculiar tenderness of sentiment remarkable throughout his works.*

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I.  
**A**H me! full sorely is my heart forlorn,  
To think how modest worth neglected lies;  
While partial fame doth with her blasts adorn  
Such deeds alone, as pride and pomp disguise;

Vot. I.

Q

Deeds

Deeds of ill fort, and mischievous emprize !  
 Lend me thy clarion, goddess ! let me try  
 To found the praise of merit, ere it dies ;  
 Such as I oft have chaunced to espy,  
 Lost in the dreary shades of dull obscurity.

## II.

In every village mark'd with little spire,  
 Embow'r'd in trees, and hardly known to Fame,  
 There dwells, in lowly shed, and mean attire,  
 A matron old whom we school-mistress name ;  
 Who boasts unruly brats with birch to tame.  
 They grieven fore, in piteous durance pent,  
 Aw'd by the pow'r of this relentless dame ;  
 And oft-times on vagaries idly bent,  
 For unkempt hair, or talk unconn'd, are forely shent.

## III.

And all in sight doth rise a birchen tree,  
 Which Learning near her little dome did stowe ;  
 Whilom a twig of small regard to see,  
 Tho' now so wide its waving branches flow ;  
 And work the simple vassals mickle woe ;  
 For not a wind might curl the leaves that blew,  
 But their limbs shudder'd, and their pulse beat low ;  
 And, as they look'd, they found their horror grew,  
 And shap'd it into rods, and tingled at the view.

## IV. So

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So have I seen (who has not, may conceive,)  
 A lifeless phantom near a garden plac'd :  
 So doth it wanton birds of peace bereave,  
 Of sport, of song; of pleasure, of repast ;  
 They start, they stare, they wheel, they look aghast :  
 Sad servitude ! such comfortless annoy  
 May no bold Briton's riper age e'er taste !  
 Ne Superstition clog his dance of joy,  
 Ne vision empty, vain, his native blifs destroy.

## V.

Near to this dome is found a patch so green,  
 On which the tribe their gambols do display ;  
 And at the door impris'ning board is seen,  
 Left weakly wights of smaller size shou'd stray ;  
 Eager, perdie, to bask in sunny day !  
 The noises intermix'd, which thence resound,  
 Do Learning's little tenement betray :  
 Where sits the dame, disguis'd in look profound,  
 And eyes her fairy throng, and turns her wheel around.

## VI.

Her cap, far whiter than the driven snow,  
 Emblem right meet of decency does yield :  
 Her apron dy'd in grain, as blue, I trowe,  
 As is the Hare-bell that adorns the field :

And in her hand, for scepter, she does wield  
 Tway birchen sprays ; with anxious Fear entwinn'd,  
 With dark Distrust, and sad Repentance fill'd ;  
 And stedfast Hate, and sharp Affliction join'd,  
 And Fury uncontroll'd, and Chastisement unkind.

## VII.

Few but have ken'd, in semblance meet pourtray'd,  
 The childish faces of old Eol's train ;  
*Libs, Notus, Auster* : these in frowns array'd,  
 How then would fare or earth, or sky, or main,  
 Were the stern god to give his slaves the rein ?  
 And were not she rebellious breasts to quell,  
 And were not she her statutes to maintain,  
 The cott no more, I ween, were deem'd the cell,  
 Where comely peace of mind, and decent order dwell.

## VIII.

A ruffet stole was o'er her shoulders thrown ;  
 A ruffet kirtle fenc'd the nipping air ;  
 'Twas simple ruffet, but it was her own ;  
 'Twas her own country bred the flock so fair ;  
 'Twas her own labour did the fleece prepare ;  
 And sooth to say, her pupils, rang'd around,  
 Thro' pious awe, did term it passing rare ;  
 For they in gaping wonderment abound,  
 And think, no doubt, she been the greatest wight on ground.

## IX. Albeit

## IX.

Albeit ne flatt'ry did corrupt her truth,  
 Ne pompous title did debauch her ear;  
 Goody, good-woman, gossip, n'aunt, forsooth,  
 Or dame, the sole additions she did hear;  
 Yet these he challeng'd, these she held right dear:  
 Ne would esteem him act as mought behove,  
 Who should not honour'd eld with these revere:  
 For never title yet so mean could prove,  
 But there was eke a Mind which did that title love.

## X.

One ancient hen she took delight to feed,  
 The plodding pattern of the busy dame;  
 Which, ever and anon, impell'd by need,  
 Into her school, begirt with chickens, came;  
 Such favour did her past deportment claim:  
 And, if Neglect had lavish'd on the ground  
 Fragment of bread, she would collect the same;  
 For well she knew, and quaintly could expound,  
 What sin it were to waste the smallest crumb she found.

## XI.

Herbs too she knew, and well of each could speak  
 That in her garden sipp'd the silv'ry dew;  
 Where no vain flow'r disclos'd a gaudy streak;  
 But herbs for use, and physick, not a few,

Of grey renown, within those borders grew :  
 The tufted Basil, pun-provoking Thyme,  
 Fresh Baum, and Mary-gold of cheerful hue ;  
 The lowly Gill that never dares to climb ;  
 And more I fain would sing, disdain'g here to rhyme.

## XII.

Yet Euphrasy may not be left un Sung,  
 That gives dim eyes to wander leagues around ;  
 And pungent Radish, biting infant's tongue ;  
 And Plantain ribb'd that heals the reaper's wound ;  
 And Marj'ram sweet, in shepherd's posie found ;  
 And Lavender, whose spikes of azure bloom  
 Shall be, ere-while, in arid bundles bound,  
 To lurk amidst the labours of her loom,  
 And crown her kerchiefs clean, with mickle rare perfume.

## XIII.

And here trim Rosmarine, that whilom crown'd  
 The dantiest garden of the proudest peer ;  
 Ere, driven, from its envy'd site, it found  
 A sacred shelter for its branches here ;  
 Where edg'd with gold its glitt'ring skirts appear.  
 Oh wassel days ; O customs meet and well !  
 Ere this was banish'd from its lofty sphere :  
 Simplicity then sought this humble cell,  
 Nor ever would She more with thane and lordling dwell.

XIV. Here

## XIV.

Here oft the dame, on Sabbath's decent eve,  
 Hymned such psalms as Sternhold forth did mete,  
 If winter 'twere, she to her hearth did cleave ;  
 But in her garden found a summer seat :  
 Sweet melody ! to hear her then repeat  
 How Israel's sons, beneath a foreign king,  
 While taunting foe-men did a song intreat,  
 All, for the Nonce, untuning ev'ry string,  
 Up hung their useles lyres—small heart had they to sing.

## XV.

For she was just, and friend too virtuous lore,  
 And pass'd much time in truly virtuous deed ;  
 And, in those Elfins ears, would oft deplore  
 The times, when Truth by Popish rage did bleed ;  
 And tortious death was true devotion's meed ;  
 And simple Faith in iron chains did mourn,  
 That would on wooden image place her creed ;  
 And lawny faints in mould'ring flames did burn :  
 Ah ! dearest Lord, forefend, thilk days should e'er return.

## XVI.

In elbow chair, like that of Scottish stem  
 By the sharp tooth of cank'ring eld defac'd,  
 In which, when he receives his diadem,  
 Our soveraign prince and liefest liege is plac'd,

The matron fate ; and some with rank she grac'd,  
 (The source of children's and of courtier's pride!)  
 Redress'd affronts, for vile affronts there pass'd ;  
 And warn'd them not the fretful to deride,  
 But love each other dear, whatever them betide.

## XVII.

Right well she knew each temper to descry ;  
 To thwart the proud, and the submits to raise ;  
 Some with vile copper prize exalt on high,  
 And some entice with pittance small of praise ;  
 And other some with baleful sprig she 'frays ;  
 Ev'n absent, she the reins of pow'r doth hold,  
 While with quaint arts the giddy crowd she sways ;  
 Forewarn'd, if little bird their pranks behold,  
 'Twill whisper in her ear, and all the scene unfold.

## XVIII.

Lo now with state she utters the command !  
 Eftsoons the urchins to their tasks repair ;  
 Their books of stature small they take in hand,  
 Which with pellucid horn secured are ;  
 To save from finger wet the letters fair :  
 The work so gay, that on their back is seen,  
 St. George's high achievements does declare ;  
 On which thilk wight that has y-gazing been,  
 Kens the forth-coming rod, unpleasing sight, I ween !

XIX. Ah



## XIX.

Ah luckless he, and born beneath the beam  
 Of evil star! it irks me whilst I write!  
 As erst the <sup>a</sup> bard by Mulla's silver stream,  
 Oft, as he told of deadly dolorous plight,  
 Sigh'd as he sung, and did in tears indite.  
 For brandishing the rod, she doth begin  
 To loose the brogues, the stripling's late delight!  
 And down they drop; appears his dainty skin,  
 Fair as the furry coat of whitest Ermilin.

## XX.

O ruthless scene! when from a nook obscure,  
 His little sister doth his peril see:  
 All playful as she fate, she grows demure;  
 She finds full soon her wonted spirits flee;  
 She meditates a pray'r to set him free:  
 Nor gentle pardon could this dame deny,  
 (If gentle pardon could with dames agree)  
 To her sad grief that swells in either eye,  
 And wrings her so that all for pity she could dye.

## XXI.

Nor longer can she now her shrieks command;  
 And hardly she forbears, thro' awful fear,  
 To rushen forth, and, with presumptuous hand,  
 To stay harsh justice in its mid career.

On thee she calls, on thee her parent dear !  
 (Ah ! too remote to ward the shameful blow !)  
 She sees no kind domestick visage near,  
 And soon a flood of tears begins to flow ;  
 And gives a loose at last to unavailing woe.

## XXII.

But ah ! what pen his piteous plight may trace ?  
 Or what device his loud laments explain ?  
 The form uncouth of his disguised face ?  
 The pallid hue that dyes his looks amain ?  
 The plenteous show'r that does his cheek distain ?  
 When he, in abject wise, implores the dame,  
 Ne hopeth ought of sweet reprieve to gain ;  
 Or when from high she levels well her aim,  
 And, thro' the thatch, his cries each falling stroke proclaim.

## XXIII.

The other tribe, aghast, with fore dismay,  
 Attend, and conn their tasks with mickle care :  
 By turns, astony'd, ev'ry twig survey,  
 And, from their fellow's hateful wounds, beware ;  
 Knowing, I wist, how each the fame may share ;  
 Till Fear has taught them a performance meet,  
 And to the well-known chest the dame repair ;  
 Whence oft with sugar'd cates she doth 'em greet,  
 And ginger-bread y-rare ; now, certes, doubly sweet !

XXIV. See

## XXIV.

See to their seats they hie with merry glee,  
 And in befeemly order fitten there ;  
 All but the wight of bum y-galled, he  
 Abhorreth bench and stool, and fourm, and chair ;  
 (This hand in mouth y-fix'd, that rends his hair ;)  
 And eke with snubs profound, and heaving breast,  
 Convulsions intermitting ! does declare  
 His grievous wrong ; his dame's unjust behest ;  
 And scorns her offer'd love, and shuns to be carefs'd.

## XXV.

His face besprent with liquid crystal shines,  
 His blooming face that seems a purple flow'r,  
 Which low to earth its drooping head declines,  
 All smear'd and sully'd by a vernal show'r.  
 O the hard bosoms of despotick pow'r !  
 All, all, but she, the author of his shame,  
 All, all, but she, regret this mournful hour :  
 Yet hence the youth, and hence the flow'r, shall claim,  
 If so I deem aright, transcending worth and fame.

## XXVI.

Behind some door, in melancholy thought,  
 Mindless of food, he, dreary caitiff ! pines ;  
 Ne for his fellow's joyaunce careth ought,  
 But to the wind all merriment resigns ;

And

And deems it shame, if he to peace inclines ;  
 And many a fullen look ascance is sent,  
 Which for his dame's annoyance he designs ;  
 And still the more to pleasure him she's bent,  
 The more doth he, perverse, her haviour past resent.

## XXVII.

Ah me ! how much I fear lest pride it be !  
 But if that pride it be, which thus inspires,  
 Beware, ye dames, with nice discernment see,  
 Ye quench not too the sparks of nobler fires :  
 Ah ! better far than all the Muses' lyres,  
 All coward arts, is valour's gen'rous heat ;  
 The firm fixt breast which Fit and Right requires,  
 Like Vernon's patriot soul ; more justly great  
 Than craft that pimps for ill, or flow'ry false deceit.

## XXVIII.

Yet nurs'd with skill, what dazling fruits appear !  
 Ev'n now sagacious Foresight points to show  
 A little bench of heedless bishops here,  
 And there a chancellour in embryo,  
 Or bard sublime, if bard may e'er be so,  
 As Milton, Shakespeare, names that ne'er shall dye !  
 Tho' now he crawl along the ground so low,  
 Nor weeting how the Muse shou'd soar on high,  
 Wiseth, poor starving elf ! his paper-kite may fly.

XXIX. And

## XXIX.

And this perhaps, who, cens'ring the design,  
 Low lays the house which that of cards doth build,  
 Shall Dennis be ! if rigid fates incline,  
 And many an Epick to his rage shall yield ;  
 And many a poet quit th' Aonian field ;  
 And, four'd by age, profound he shall appear,  
 As he who now with 'fdainful fury thrill'd  
 Surveys mine work ; and levels many a sneer,  
 And furls his wrinkly front, and cries "What stuff is here?"

## XXX.

But now Dan Phœbus gains the middle skie,  
 And Liberty unbars their prison-door ;  
 And like a rushing torrent out they fly,  
 And now the grassy cirque han cover'd o'er  
 With boist'rous revel-rout and wild uproar ;  
 A thousand ways in wanton rings they run,  
 Heav'n shield their short-liv'd pastimes, I implore !  
 For well may Freedom, erst so dearly won,  
 Appear to British elf more gladsome than the sun.

## XXXI.

Enjoy, poor imps ! enjoy your sportive trade ;  
 And chase gay flies, and cull the fairest flow'rs ;  
 For when my bones in grass-green sods are laid ;  
 For never may ye taste more careles hours

In knightly castles, or in ladies bow'rs.  
 O vain to seek delight in earthly thing !  
 But most in courts where proud Ambition tow'rs ;  
 Deluded wight ! who weens fair peace can spring  
 Beneath the pompous dome of kefar or of king.

## XXXII.

See in each sprite some various bent appear !  
 These rudely carol most incondite lay ;  
 Those faunt'ring on the green, with jocund leer  
 Salute the stranger passing on his way ;  
 Some building fragile tenements of clay ;  
 Some to the standing lake their courses bend,  
 With pebbles smooth at duck and drake to play ;  
 Thilk to the huxter's fav'ry cottage tend,  
 In pastry kings and queens th' allotted mite to spend.

## XXXIII.

Here, as each season yields a different store,  
 Each season's stores in order ranged been ;  
 Apples with cabbage-net y-cover'd o'er,  
 Gallig full fore th' unmoney'd wight are seen ;  
 And goose-b'rie clad in liv'ry red or green ;  
 And here of lovely dye, the Cath'rine pear,  
 Fine pear ! as lovely for thy juice, I ween :  
 O may no wight e'er penny-less come there,  
 Left smit with ardent love he pine with hopeless care !

XXXIV. See !

## XXXIV.

See! cherries here, ere cherries yet abound,  
 With thread so white in tempting posies ty'd,  
 Scatt'ring like blooming maid their glances round,  
 With pamper'd look draw little eyes aside;  
 And must be bought though penury betide.  
 The plumb all azure and the nut all brown,  
 And here each season, do those cakes abide,  
 Whose honour'd names th' inventive city own,  
 Rend'ring thro' Britain's isle Salopia's praises known.<sup>b</sup>

## XXXV.

Admir'd Salopia! that with venial pride  
 Eyes her bright form in Severn's ambient wave,  
 Fam'd for her loyal cares in perils tried,  
 Her daughters lovely, and her striplings brave;  
 Ah! 'midst the rest, may flowers adorn his grave,  
 Whose art did first these dulcet cates display!  
 A motive fair to Learning's imps he gave,  
 Who cheerless o'er her darkling region stray;  
 'Till reason's morn arise, and light them on their way.

<sup>b</sup> *Shrewsbury cakes.*

