

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **William Shenstone**

**- poems -**

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## A Pastoral Ballad

Ye shepherds so cheerful and gay,  
Whose flocks never carelessly roam;  
Should Corydon's happen to stray,  
Oh! call the poor wanderers home.  
Allow me to muse and to sigh,  
Nor talk of the change that ye find;  
None once was so watchful as I;  
I have left my dear Phillis behind.  
Now I know what it is, to have strove  
With the torture of doubt and desire;  
What it is to admire and to love,  
And to leave her we love and admire,  
Ah, lead forth my flock in the morn,  
And the damps of each evening repel;  
Alas! I am faint and forlorn:  
-I have bade my dear Phillis farewell.

Since Phillis vouchsaf'd me a look,  
I never once dreamed of my vine;  
May I lose both my pipe and my crook,  
If I knew of a kid that was mine!  
I priz'd every hour that went by,  
Beyond all that had pleas'd me before;  
But now they are past, and I sigh;  
And I grieve that I priz'd them no more.

But why do I languish in vain;  
Why wander thus pensively here?  
Oh! why did I come from the plain,  
Where I fed on the smiles of my dear?  
They tell me, my favourite maid,  
The pride of that valley, is flown;  
Alas! where with her I have stray'd,  
I could wander with pleasure, alone.

When forc'd the fair nymph to forgo,  
What anguish I felt at my heart!  
Yet I thought-but it might not be so-  
'Twas with pain that she saw me depart.  
She gaz'd, as I slowly withdrew:  
My path I could hardly discern;  
So sweetly she bade me adieu,  
I thought that she bade me return.

The pilgrim that journeys all day  
To visit some far distant shrine,  
If he bear but a relique away,  
Is happy, nor heard to repine.  
Thus widely remov'd from the fair,  
Where my vows, my devotion, I owe,  
Soft hope is the relique I bear,  
And my solace wherever I go.

William Shenstone

## A Pastoral Ballad I: Absence

Arbusta humilesque myricæ. Virg.

Ye shepherds so chearful and gay,  
Whose flocks never carelessly roam;  
Should Corydon's happen to stray,  
Oh! call the poor wanderers home.  
Allow me to muse and to sigh,  
Nor talk of the change that ye find;  
None once was so watchful as I;  
-- I have left my dear Phyllis behind.  
Now I know what it is, to have strove  
With the torture of doubt and desire;

What it is, to admire and to love,  
And to leave her we love and admire.  
Ah lead forth my flock in the morn,  
And the damps of each ev'ning repel;  
Alas! I am faint and forlorn:  
-- I have bade my dear Phyllis farewell.  
Since Phyllis vouchsaf'd me a look,  
I never once dreamt of my vine;  
May I lose both my pipe and my crook,  
If I knew of a kid that was mine.

I priz'd every hour that went by,  
Beyond all that had pleas'd me before;  
But now they are past, and I sigh;  
And I grieve that I priz'd them no more.  
But why do I languish in vain;  
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Alas! where with her I have stray'd,  
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What anguish I felt at my heart!  
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'Twas with pain that she saw me depart.  
She gaz'd, as I slowly withdrew;  
My path I could hardly discern;  
So sweetly she bade me adieu,  
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The pilgrim that journeys all day  
To visit some far-distant shrine,  
If he bear but a relique away,

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Where my vows, my devotion, I owe,  
Soft hope is the relique I bear,  
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William Shenstone

## A Pastoral Ballad II: Hope

My banks they are furnish'd with bees,  
Whose murmur invites one to sleep;  
My grottos are shaded with trees,  
And my hills are white-over with sheep.  
I seldom have met with a loss,  
Such health do my fountains bestow;  
My fountains all border'd with moss,  
Where the hare-bells and violets grow.  
Not a pine in my grove is there seen,  
But with tendrils of woodbine is bound:

Not a beech's more beautiful green,  
But a sweet-briar entwines it around.  
Not my fields, in the prime of the year,  
More charms than my cattle unfold;  
Not a brook that is limpid and clear,  
But it glitters with fishes of gold.  
One would think she might like to retire  
To the bow'r I have labour'd to rear;  
Not a shrub that I heard her admire,  
But I hasted and planted it there.

O how sudden the jessamine strove  
With the lilac to render it gay!  
Already it calls for my love,  
To prune the wild branches away.  
From the plains, from the woodlands and groves,  
What strains of wild melody flow!  
How the nightingales warble their loves  
From thickets of roses that blow!  
And when her bright form shall appear,  
Each bird shall harmoniously join

In a concert so soft and so clear,  
As -- she may not be fond to resign.  
I have found out a gift for my fair;  
I have found where the wood-pigeons breed:  
But let me that plunder forbear,  
She will say 'twas a barbarous deed.  
For he ne'er could be true, she aver'd,  
Who could rob a poor bird of its young:  
And I lov'd her the more, when I heard  
Such tenderness fall from her tongue.

I have heard her with sweetness unfold  
How that pity was due to -- a dove:  
That it ever attended the bold;  
And she call'd it the sister of love.  
But her words such a pleasure convey,  
So much I her accents adore,  
Let her speak, and whatever she say,  
Methinks I should love her the more.

Can a bosom so gentle remain  
Unmov'd, when her Corydon sighs!

Will a nymph that is fond of the plain,  
These plains and this valley despise?  
Dear regions of silence and shade!  
Soft scenes of contentment and ease!  
Where I could have pleasingly stray'd,  
If aught, in her absence, could please.  
But where does my Phyllida stray?  
And where are her grots and her bow'rs?  
Are the groves and the valleys as gay,  
And the shepherds as gentle as ours?

The groves may perhaps be as fair,  
And the face of the valleys as fine;  
The swains may in manners compare,  
But their love is not equal to mine.

William Shenstone

### A Pastoral Ballad III: Solicitude

Why will you my passion reprove?  
Why term it a folly to grieve?  
Ere I shew you the charms of my love,  
She is fairer than you can believe.  
With her mien she enamours the brave;  
With her wit she engages the free;  
With her modesty pleases the grave;  
She is ev'ry way pleasing to me.

O you that have been of her train,  
Come and join in my amorous lays;

I could lay down my life for the swain,  
That will sing but a song in her praise.  
When he sings, may the nymphs of the town  
Come trooping, and listen the while;  
Nay on him let not Phyllida frown;  
-- But I cannot allow her to smile.  
For when Paridel tries in the dance  
Any favour with Phyllis to find,  
O how, with one trivial glance,  
Might she ruin the peace of my mind!

In ringlets he dresses his hair,  
And his crook is be-studded around;  
And his pipe -- oh may Phyllis beware  
Of a magic there is in the sound.  
'Tis his with mock passion to glow;  
'Tis his in smooth tales to unfold,  
`` How her face is as bright as the snow,  
And her bosom, be sure, is as cold?  
How the nightingales labour the strain,  
With the notes of his charmer to vie;

How they vary their accents in vain,  
Repine at her triumphs, and die."  
To the grove or the garden he strays,  
And pillages every sweet;  
Then, suiting the wreath to his lays  
He throws it at Phyllis's feet.  
`` O Phyllis, he whispers, more fair,  
More sweet than the jessamine's flow'r!  
What are pinks, in a morn, to compare?  
What is eglantine, after a show'r?

Then the lily no longer is white;  
Then the rose is depriv'd of its bloom;  
Then the violets die with despight,  
And the wood-bines give up their perfume."  
Thus glide the soft numbers along,  
And he fancies no shepherd his peer;  
-- Yet I never should envy the song,

Were not Phyllis to lend it an ear.  
Let his crook be with hyacinths bound,  
So Phyllis the trophy despise:

Let his forehead with laurels be crown'd,  
So they shine not in Phyllis's eyes.  
The language that flows from the heart  
Is a stranger to Paridel's tongue;  
-- Yet may she beware of his art,  
Or sure I must envy the song.

William Shenstone

## A Pastoral Ballad IV: Disappointment

Ye shepherds give ear to my lay,  
And take no more heed of my sheep:  
They have nothing to do but to stray;  
I have nothing to do but to weep.  
Yet do not my folly reprove;  
She was fair -- and my passion begun;  
She smil'd -- and I could not but love;  
She is faithless -- and I am undone.  
Perhaps I was void of all thought:  
Perhaps it was plain to foresee,  
That a nymph so compleat would be sought  
By a swain more engaging than me.  
Ah! love ev'ry hope can inspire;  
It banishes wisdom the while;  
And the lip of the nymph we admire  
Seems for ever adorn'd with a smile.  
She is faithless, and I am undone;  
Ye that witness the woes I endure;  
Let reason instruct you to shun  
What it cannot instruct you to cure.  
Beware how you loiter in vain  
Amid nymphs of an higher degree:  
It is not for me to explain  
How fair, and how fickle they be.  
Alas! from the day that we met,  
What hope of an end to my woes?  
When I cannot endure to forget  
The glance that undid my repose.  
Yet time may diminish the pain:  
The flow'r, and the shrub, and the tree,

Which I rear'd for her pleasure in vain,  
In time may have comfort for me.  
The sweets of a dew-sprinkled rose,  
The sound of a murmuring stream,  
The peace which from solitude flows,  
Henceforth shall be Corydon's theme.  
High transports are shewn to the sight,  
But we are not to find them our own;  
Fate never bestow'd such delight,  
As I with my Phyllis had known.  
O ye woods, spread your branches apace;  
To your deepest recesses I fly;  
I would hide with the beasts of the chace;  
I would vanish from every eye.  
Yet my reed shall resound thro' the grove  
With the same sad complaint it begun;  
How she smil'd, and I could not but love;  
Was faithless, and I am undone!

William Shenstone

## Ode to a Young Lady

[Somewhat Too Solicitous about Her Manner of Expression]

Survey, my fair! that lucid stream,  
Adown the smiling valley stray;  
Would Art attempt, or Fancy dream,  
To regulate its winding way?

So pleas'd I view thy shining hair  
In loose dishevell'd ringlets flow:  
Not all thy art, not all thy care,  
Can there one single grace bestow.

Survey again that verdant hill,  
With native plants enamell'd o'er;  
Say, can the painter's utmost skill  
Instruct one flower to please us more?

As vain it were, with artful dye  
To change the bloom thy cheeks disclose;  
And oh may Laura, ere she try,  
With fresh vermilion paint the rose.

Hark how the wood-lark's tuneful throat  
Can every study'd grace excel;  
Let Art constrain the rambling note,  
And will she, Laura, please so well?

Oh ever keep thy native ease,  
By no pedantic law confin'd!  
For Laura's voice is form'd to please,  
So Laura's words be not unkind.

William Shenstone

## The Beau to the Virtuosos

Hail curious wights, to whom so fair  
The form of mortal flies is!  
Who deem those grubs beyond compare,  
Which common sense despises.

Whether o'er hill, morass or mound,  
You make your sportsman sallies;  
Or that your prey in gardens found  
Is urg'd thro' walks and alleys,

Yet, in the fury of the chase,  
No slope could e'er retard you;  
Blest, if one fly repay the race,  
Or painted wing reward you.

Fierce as Camilla, o'er the plain,  
Pursu'd the glittering stranger;  
Still ey'd the purple's pleasing stain,  
And knew not fear nor danger.

'Tis you dispense the fav'rite meat  
To nature's filmy people;  
Know what conserves they choose to eat,  
And what liquers, to tipple.

And, if her brood of insects dies,  
You sage assistance lend her;  
Can stoop to pimp for am'rous flies,  
And help 'em to engender.

'Tis you protect their pregnant hour;  
And when the birth's at hand,  
Exerting your obstetric pow'r,  
Prevent a mothless land.

Yet oh! howe'er your tow'ring view  
Above gross objects rises;  
Whate'er refinements you pursue,  
Hear, what a friend advises.

A friend, who, weigh'd with yours, must prize  
Domitian's idle passion;  
That wrought the death of teasing flies,  
But ne'er their propagation.

Let Flavia's eyes more deeply warm,  
Nor thus your hearts determine,  
To slight dame Nature's fairest form,  
And sigh for Nature's vermin.

And speak with some respect of beaux;  
No more, as triflers, treat 'em;

'Tis better learn to save one's clothes,  
Than cherish moths that eat 'em.

William Shenstone

## **The Landskip**

How pleas'd within my native bowers  
Erewhile I pass'd the day!  
Was ever scene so deck'd with flowers?  
Were ever flowers so gay?

How sweetly smil'd the hill, the vale,  
And all the landskip round!  
The river gliding down the dale!  
The hill with beeches crown'd!

But now, when urg'd by tender woes,  
I speed to meet my dear,  
That hill and stream my zeal oppose,  
And check my fond career.

No more, since Daphne was my theme,  
Their wonted charms I see:  
That verdant hill, and silver stream,  
Divide my love and me.

William Shenstone

## The School-mistress. In Imitation of Spenser (excerpt)

Audit & voces, vagitus et ingens, Infantunque anim & flentes in limine primo.  
Virg. ADVERTISEMENT

What particulars in Spenser were imagined 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.

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

In ev'ry 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 sore, 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 task unconn'd, are sorely shent.

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.

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 bliss destroy.

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,  
Lest weakly wights of smaller size should 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.

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 entwin'd,  
With dark distrust, and sad repentance fill'd;  
And stedfast hate, and sharp affliction join'd,  
And fury uncontroul'd, and chastisement unkind.

Few but have kenn'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.

A russet stole was o'er her shoulders thrown;  
A russet kirtle fenc'd the nipping air;  
'Twas simple russet, 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

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 she 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.

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.

...

William Shenstone

## The Speeches of Sloth and Virtue

[Upon the Plan of Xenophen's Judgment of Hercules]

### SLOTH

Hither, dear Boy, direct thy wandring Eyes,  
'Tis here the lovely Vale of Pleasure lies.  
Debate no more -- to me thy self resign;  
Her mossy Caves, her Groves, and all are mine.  
For me the Goddess opes her various Pow'r,  
Springs in a Tree, or blossoms in a Flow'r:  
To please my Ear she breaths celestial Strains:  
To please my Eye, with Lillies strews the Plains:  
To form my Couch in mossy Beds she grows:  
To gratify my Smell she blooms a Rose.  
Oft' in some Nymph the Deity I find,  
Where in one Form the various Sweets are join'd.  
Yield but to me, -- a Choir of Nymphs shall rise,  
And with the blooming Sight regale thy Eyes:  
Their beauteous Cheeks a fairer Rose shall wear,  
A brighter Lilly in their Necks appear:  
Thou on their Breasts thy wearied Head recline,  
Nor at the Swan's less pleasing Nest repine:  
Whilst Philomel in each soft Voice complains,  
And gently lulls thee with her dying Strains:  
Whilst spicy Gums round each fair Bosom glow;  
And in each Accent myrrhy Odours flow.  
For thee with softest Art the Dome shall rise,  
And spiring Turrets glitter thro' the Skies.  
For thee the Robe shall glow with purple Rays;  
The Side-board sparkle, and gilt Chariot blaze.  
In brilliant Mines, be other Hands employ'd,  
So the gay Product be by thine enjoy'd.  
For thee the Poplar shall her Amber drain:  
For thee in clouded Beauty spring the Cane.  
To please thy Taste shall Gallia prune the Vine:  
To swell thy Treasures India sink the Mine.  
For thee each Nations nicer Stores shall grow,  
And ev'ry Wind some lovely Tribute blow.  
Learning shall ne'er molest thy tranquil Reign,  
Nor Science puzzle thy inactive Brain:  
Sometimes perhaps thy Fancy take her Wing  
To grace a Fan, or celebrate a Ring:  
Fix various Dyes to suit each varying Mien:  
Prescribe where Patches shou'd in Crouds be seen:

Or sigh soft Strains along the vocal Grove,  
And tell the Charms, the sweet Effects of Love!  
Or if more specious Ease thy Care shou'd claim,  
And thy Breast glow with faint Desire of Fame,  
Some trivial Science shall thy Thoughts amuse;  
And Learning's Name a solemn Sound diffuse.  
To Thee all Nature's shelly Store I'll bring,

To thee the Sparklings on the Insect's Wing.  
Pleasure in infant Forms shalt thou descry;  
View, in an Ant, or hear her in a Fly;

When near thy Path, as oft as Spring appears,  
The sportive Goddess buzzes round thy Ears:  
Now in some Pebble's curious Vein is seen,  
Or on some Leaf bestows unusual Green.  
Then Sleep shall wrap thee in her downy Arms,  
And round thy weary'd Head diffuse her Charms;  
Lest growing Pride thy peaceful Schemes o'erthrow,  
And Thought succeed, -- my most destructive Foe.  
The watry Nymphs shall tune the tinkling Vales,  
And gentle Zephyrs harmonize their Gales:

For thy repose instruct, with Rival Joy,  
Their Streams to murmur, and their Winds to sigh.  
Thus shalt thou spend the sweetly-flowing Day,  
Till lost in Bliss thou breath thy Soul away:  
How easy a Transition should'st thou find,  
Were to thy Fate Annihilation join'd!

#### VIRTUE.

Fly, fly, fond Youth, the too indulgent Maid,  
Nor err, by such fantastick Scenes betray'd.  
Tho' in my Path the prickly Thorn be seen,  
And the waste Turf produce a fainter Green;

Tho' no gay Rose, or purple Product shine,  
The rugged Surface still conceals the Mine;  
And each unsightly Object can supply  
More lasting Pleasure, more substantial Joy.  
But shou'd those airy glitter'ing Toys allure,  
Yet whence cou'd Sloth the mighty Boon procure?  
Or whence receive, or how those Gifts bestow,  
Which I alone possess -- her greatest Foe?  
I from old Ocean rob the treasur'd Store,  
And hidden Gems thro' ev'ry Realm explore:

'Twas I the rugged Brilliant first reveal'd,  
By tenfold Strata in the Earth conceal'd:  
'Tis I the shapeless Surface still refine,  
And teach the rugged Brilliant how to shine.  
Where blooms the Rose, where spires the shapely Tree,  
Where smiles the Grape, without fair Industry?  
But grant we Sloth the Scene herself has drawn,  
The mossy Grotto, and the flow'ry Lawn:  
Let Frankincense with ev'ry Wind exhale,  
And Philomela breath in ev'ry Gale:

Let Brilliants sparkle, (dear Machines of Pride!)  
And from the Poplar flow the Amber Tide:  
Let gay Pomona, quitting all around,  
For choicest Fruits select the hallow'd Ground;  
To tread the favour'd Soil shou'd Virtue cease,  
Nor mossy Grotts, nor flow'ry Lawns cou'd please:  
Nor ought Pomona's luscious Gifts avail:  
The Sound harmonious; or the spicy Gale.  
See'st thou those Rocks in dreadful Pomp arise,  
And barren Cliffs that sweep the vaulted Skies?

Those Fields whence Phoebus all their Moisture drains,  
And, too profusely kind, disrobes the Plains?  
When I vouchsafe to tread the lonely Soil,  
Those Rocks seem lovely, and those Desarts smile;  
Oft' on those pathless Wilds as I appear,  
(With Converse sweet his lonely Steps to chear)  
Those Cliffs the Exile has with Pleasure view'd,  
And call'd that Desert, ` ` Blissful Solitude!  
Known by its airy Height and tow'ring Spires,  
Behind that Scene Fame's lofty Dome retires.

Steep the Ascent by which to Fame we rise,  
Yet equal to the Labour is the Prize:  
From thence you gain an earthly Crown;  
From thence -- you reach the Skies.  
Far, far below the downy Throne is seen  
That lulls to Rest Ignavia's softer Queen:

Thence to Fame's Turrets oft' She lifts her Eyes,  
Desirous still, still impotent to rise.  
Oft', when resolv'd to gain those shining Tow'rs,  
The pensive Queen the dire Ascent explores;

Comes onward, wafted by the gummy Trees,  
Some Sylvan Musick, or some scented Breeze;  
She turns her Head; her own gay Realm she spies,  
And all the airy Resolution dies.  
Thus still in vain these gilded Visions please  
The Wretch of Glory, whilst the Slave of Ease;  
Doom'd ever in ignoble State to pine,  
Boast her own Scenes, and languish after mine.

William Shenstone

## **Written at an Inn at Henley**

To thee, fair Freedom! I retire,  
From flattery, cards, and dice, and din;  
Nor art thou found in mansions higher  
Than the low cot, or humble inn.

'Tis here with boundless power I reign,  
And every health which I begin,  
Converts dull port to bright champagne;  
Such Freedom crowns it, at an inn.

I fly from pomp, I fly from plate,  
I fly from Falsehood's specious grin;  
Freedom I love, and form I hate,  
And choose my lodgings, at an inn.

Here, waiter! take my sordid ore,  
Which lackeys else might hope to win;  
It buys what courts have not in store,  
It buys me Freedom, at an inn.

Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,  
Where'er his stages may have been,  
May sigh to think he still has found  
The warmest welcome -- at an inn.

William Shenstone