

**THE EMIGRANTS; A
POEM IN
TWO BOOKS**

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The emigrants; a poem in two books by Charlotte Smith

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EMIGRANTS,

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BY CHARLOTTE SMITH.

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T O

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ;

DEAR SIR,

THERE is, I hope, some propriety in my addressing a Composition to you, which would never perhaps have existed, had I not, amid the heavy pressure of many sorrows, derived infinite consolation from your Poetry, and some degree of animation and of confidence from your esteem.

The following performance is far from aspiring to be considered as an imitation of your inimitable Poem, "THE "TASK;" I am perfectly sensible, that it belongs not to a feeble and feminine hand to draw the Bow of Ulysses.

The force, clearness, and sublimity of your admirable Poem; the felicity, almost peculiar to your genius, of giving to the most familiar objects dignity and effect, I could never hope to

reach; yet, having read "The Task" almost incessantly from its first publication to the present time, I felt that kind of enchantment described by Milton, when he says,

"The Angel ended, and in Adam's ear
 "So charming left his voice, that he awhile
 "Thought him still speaking."—

And from the force of this impression, I was gradually led to attempt, in *Blank Verse*, a delineation of those interesting objects which happened to excite my attention, and which even pressed upon an heart, that has learned, perhaps from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though unavailing compassion, the calamity of others.

A Dedication usually consists of praises and of apologies; my praise can add nothing to the unanimous and loud applause of your country. She regards you with pride, as one of the few, who, at the present period, rescue her from the imputation of having degenerated in Poetical talents; but in the form of Apology, I should have much to say, if I again dared to plead the pressure of evils, aggravated by their long continuance, as an excuse for the defects of this attempt.

Whatever

Whatever may be the faults of its execution, let me vindicate myself from those, that may be imputed to the design.— In speaking of the Emigrant Clergy, I beg to be understood as feeling the utmost respect for the integrity of their principles; and it is with pleasure I add my suffrage to that of those, who have had a similar opportunity of witnessing the conduct of the Emigrants of all descriptions during their exile in England; which has been such as does honour to their nation, and ought to secure to them in ours the esteem of every liberal mind.

Your philanthropy, dear Sir, will induce you, I am persuaded, to join with me in hoping, that this painful exile may finally lead to the extirpation of that reciprocal hatred so unworthy of great and enlightened nations; that it may tend to humanize both countries, by convincing each, that good qualities exist in the other; and at length annihilate the prejudices that have so long existed to the injury of both.

Yet it is unfortunately but too true, that with the body of the English, this national aversion has acquired new force by the dreadful scenes which have been acted in France during

the last summer—even those who are the victims of the Revolution, have not escaped the odium, which the undistinguishing multitude annex to all the natives of a country where such horrors have been acted: nor is this the worst effect those events have had on the minds of the English; by confounding the original cause with the wretched catastrophes that have followed its ill management; the attempts of public virtue, with the outrages that guilt and folly have committed in its disguise, the very name of Liberty has not only lost the charm it used to have in British ears, but many, who have written, or spoken, in its defence, have been stigmatized as promoters of Anarchy, and enemies to the prosperity of their country. Perhaps even the Author of "The Task," with all his goodness and tenderness of heart, is in the catalogue of those, who are reckoned to have been too warm in a cause, which it was once the glory of Englishmen to avow and defend—The exquisite Poem, indeed, in which you have honoured Liberty, by a tribute highly gratifying to her sincerest friends, was published some years before the demolition of regal despotism in France, which, in the fifth book, it seems

to foretell—All the truth and energy of the passage to which I allude, must have been strongly felt, when, in the Parliament of England, the greatest Orator of our time quoted the sublimest of our Poets—when the eloquence of Fox did justice to the genius of Cowper.

I am, dear SIR,

With the most perfect esteem,

Your obliged and obedient servant,

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

Brightelmston, May 10, 1793.