

Frances Maria Cowper, "Love of Solitude"

Description

[FRANCES MARIA COWPER]

Love of Solitude  
Vanity of Worldly Pleasure

While others, lost in pleasure's guilty round,  
Blast the glad season of their fleeting youth,  
Let me in solitary joys abound,  
Fond of the paths of piety and truth:  
Give me in Wisdom's volume to descry  
The mysteries of love and grace divine,  
By Scripture taught, with penetrating eye  
To scan the world aright, and to resign.

Deluded world! infatuated throng!  
To spurn the treasure that no force destroys,  
Nor see the baneful weed that lurks among  
The fairest bloom of your embittered joys.  
Amid the clamours of the loudest mirth,  
Thoughts in unwelcome guise will oft have part,  
Will prompt the wish, th' involuntary sigh,  
"And rouse reflection in the gayest heart."

Bear me, ye guardians of the mind sincere,  
To scenes sequestered from the haunts of men;  
The pensive soul with ev'ry grace prepare,  
Sacred to Virtue and her blissful train:  
With these conversing, and by these renewed,  
Ne'er shall I feel ambition's lawless sway,  
But in the paths my earliest steps pursued,  
In search of Wisdom's pleasures safely stray.

Come, holy Wisdom, favour'd gift of God!  
With thine attendant grace, Humility;  
Descend, bright visitant! and make abode  
Where museful Melancholy waits for thee.  
Ah, what avails fair India's shining store,  
The purple treasures of the gorgeous East?

What joy, to quit the charms of regal power,  
To dwell with thee, thou soul-enlightening guest!

Not the attractive voice of worldly fame,  
Nor syren sound of dullest flattery,  
Could tempt my heart thy labours to disclaim, 35  
Or slight the blessings that belong to thee.

How has my soul in secret wish preferred  
The lonely walk and solitary shade,  
The painted vanities of life abhorred,  
And all the pageantry that pomp displayed! 40

Joyless the gilded equipage I view,  
The dull variety of senseless show;  
The world's gay path without delight pursued,  
Nor felt the transports that from grandeur flow.  
Slave to the wretched world's imposing forms, 45  
See Sacharissa decked in gold brocade;  
She owns that grandeur has no real charms,  
And sighs for virtue in the sylvan shade.

**NOTES:**

**28** *â€ˆmuseful* *â€ˆ*”Absorbed in thought; thoughtful, pensive” (*OED*).

**30** *â€ˆpurple* “Characterized by richness or abundance; splendid, glorious” (*OED*).

**34** *â€ˆsyren* *â€ˆ* Greek mythology creature that lured sailors to their deaths with its enchanting song.

**46** *â€ˆSacharissa* *â€ˆ* Possibly a reference to Lady Dorothy Sidney (1617-1684), the beloved *â€ˆSacharissa* of many love lyrics by Edmund Waller (1606-1687). In one portrait by Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641), she appears as a finely dressed shepherdess.

**Source:** *Original Poems, on Various Occasions. By a Lady* (London 1792), pp.11-13. [\[Google Books\]](#)

*Edited by Grazzia Menendez*