

THE

CHIMNEY-SWEEPER'S
COMPLAINT;

A POETIC TALE.

By the Author of The PEASANT'S FATE, &c.

ILLUSTRATED WITH ENGRAVINGS.

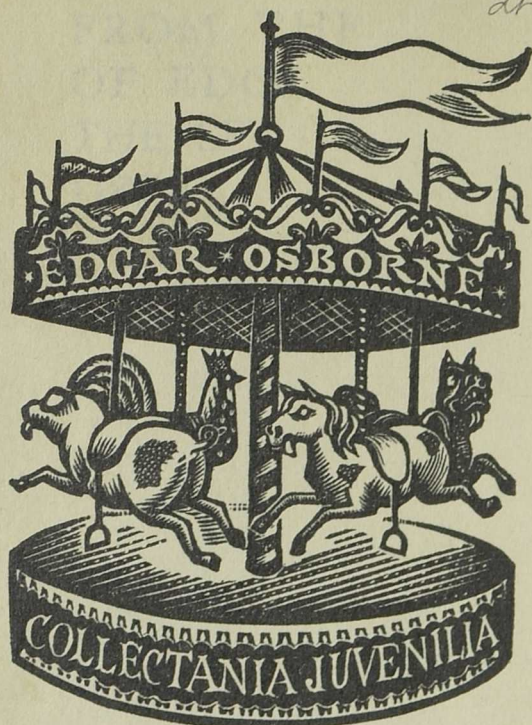
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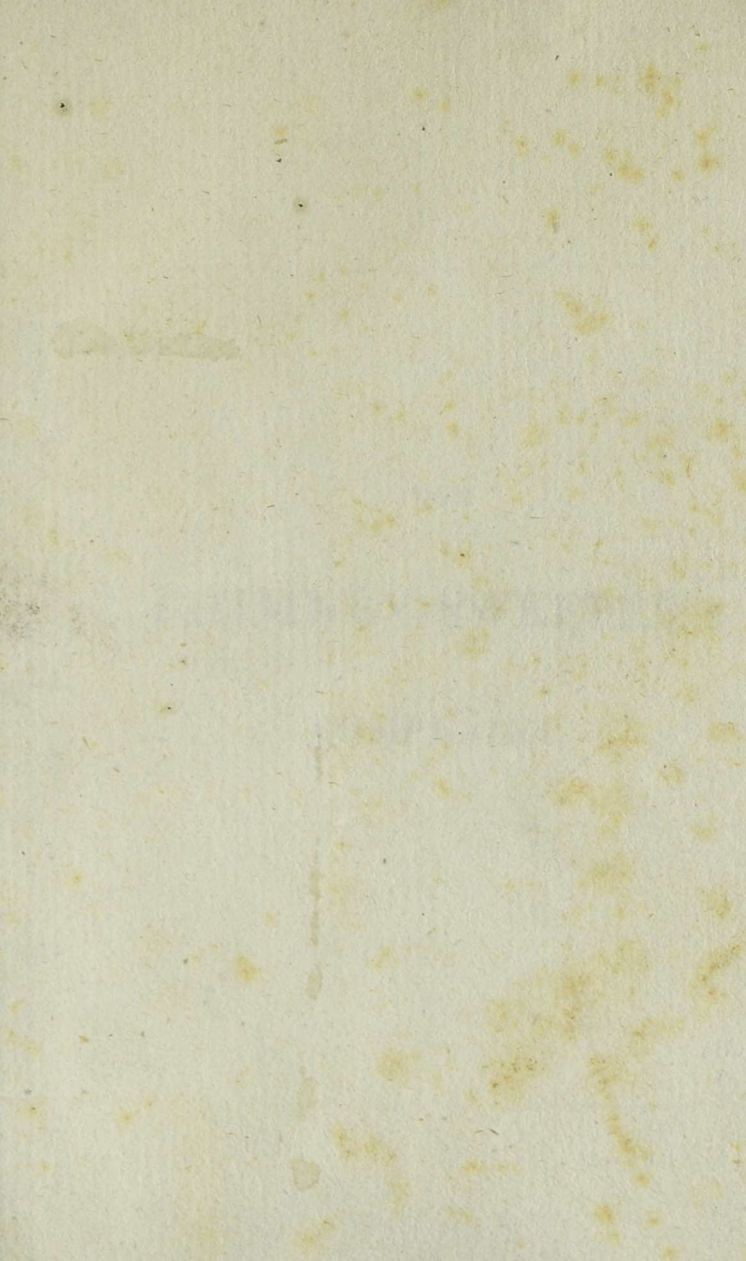


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THE
CHIMNEY-SWEEPER'S
COMPLAINT.

Swan and Son, Printers, 76, Fleet Street.



Published Oct. 10. 1766, by J. Harris corner of St. Paul's Church Yard.

THE
CHIMNEY-SWEEPER'S
COMPLAINT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE PEASANT'S FATE, SCENES OF
YOUTH, &c.

“To smite the poor is treason against God.”
COWPER.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. HARRIS, SUCCESSOR TO E. NEWBERRY
CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD.

1806.

COMPANY

BY THE ACTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE COMPANY

"To enable the Board to provide for the
needs of the Company"

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. HARRIS, SOLE PROPRIETOR OF THE
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1898

THE
Chimney-Sweeper's Complaint.

PART I.

PASSENGER.

WHY hangs that tear upon thy cheek,

My little sooty boy?

Nor dost thou, with a free good will,

The May-day sports enjoy!

Oft, in the streets, at early hour,

Thy shrilly voice I hear;

Or see thee, shiv'ring, creep along,

Oppress'd with cold and care.

The Boy's Tale.

I pity thee—Dismiss thy fears,
And tell a friend thy tale:
If aught of comfort he can give,
That comfort shall prevail.

BOY.

How can I join the May-day sports,
When all my little gains,
At evening, shall be swept away,
And pleasures changed to pains!

For, Sir! the master I obey,
Is cruel and unkind!
Nor prayers nor tears can move his heart,
Nor work upon his mind:

Recollections of early Happiness.

Hungry, and cold, and wet, and sore,

I to my cellar creep,

Soon as the dismal night shuts in,

To cry myself to sleep;

And there I think upon the time

When with my sisters gay,

And little brothers, how we spent

This cheerful holiday.

We lived at home a happy life—

As happy as could be!

And by our neighbours we were called

The happy family.

Maternal Advice.

Our tender mother taught us still
At night and morn to pray;
To mind our book, and church, and keep
Holy the sabbath day.

For God, she said, would ever bless
The dutiful and good;
While those who griev'd their parents' heart,
By base ingratitude,
Would feel, too late, the wrath of Heav'n
Fall heavy on their head,
When brothers, sisters, friends, were gone,
And kind relations dead.

Early Misfortunes.

She told us too, the time may come
When *we* a friend should need;
And when I think how true she spoke,
Oft does my bosom bleed.

My father died when we were young—
My mother's means were small;
And we were scattered far and wide,
At chance or friendship's call.

The youngest I, her trials shar'd,—
Her comforts and her pains;
We glean'd the fields at harvest time,
And toil'd for scanty gains.

Youthful Employments.

In winter to the woods we went,
For brush-wood, fern, or broom,
To heap our little evening fire,
And cheer the tedious gloom.

Yet still much happiness I knew;
For dearly did I love
My native spot; nor ever felt
My heart inclin'd to rove.

Books were my joy; and much I read,
With pleasure and with pride;
And still our neighbours' humble shelves
The daily feast supplied.

Sensations of Childhood.

To market, wake, review, or fair,
As oft I cross'd the downs,
My heart danc'd lightly as the fawn
That through the thicket bounds;

The linnet singing in the furze,
The soaring lark on high,
Rejoiced not in their freedom more,
Or knew less care than I.

Where on the heath the wild broom wav'd
Around dark clumps of trees;
And foxes in the banks beneath,
Deep-burrowing, lurk'd at ease,

The Gipsies.

Full often *Stanley's* gipsy-gang—

Old PETER* was their king,

A swarthy, hardy, raw-bon'd man,—

Would form a festive ring.

Unpannier'd asses browse the while,

And tawny children play

Round the low tents, that screen'd their sleep

From rains, or scorching day.

I envied them their jovial life,

And much they tempted me

To leave my home, and stroll with them,

To taste variety.

* A well-known character in the western counties, who lately died at Affpuddle, in Dorsetshire, at the advanced age of ninety.

The Elopement from Home.

One night I stay'd, and would no more,

But how could I return?

I fear'd the rod; I fear'd the shame;

And left my friends to mourn.

We cross'd the country with the morn,

And travell'd many a mile;

And still they kept my spirits up,

And cheer'd me with a smile.

A winding lane, with maples green,

And ashes, overhung,

Receiv'd us next; and there we stay'd,

And danc'd, carous'd, and sung.

Gipsy's Manners of Life. The Visitor.

The roost and fold the pilfering tribe
Supplied with flesh and fowl,
When all were silent through the vale,
Save the loud hooting owl.

The fields were plunder'd, hedges broke,
Orchards, and gardens, round,
Robb'd of their stores—but not a trace
At morning light was found.

One night, upon the common's side,
We entertain'd a 'SQUIRE,
Who push'd the bowl, in frolic mood,
Full briskly round our fire:

Fortune-Telling.

I serv'd—and much he prais'd my skill,
And strok'd my frizzled hair;
And questions ask'd, which I, alas!
To answer did not dare.

Oft to our camp, from farm or hall,
Would lads and lasses hie,
To learn their fortune, and to pay
For many a ready lie;

For well our dames, when cross'd their hands
With silver, could declare
The *secrets they were told before*,
And speak enquirers fair.

Fortune-telling.

By cards, or tea-cup, book, or glass,
They show'd, with wondrous art,
What lady, swain, or servant girl,
Had lost or found a heart.

Eastward we travell'd onwards still,
O'er river, heath, and moor;
At times we fed luxuriously,
Now begg'd from door to door.

But 'twas a very wicked life,
And soon I thought so too;
When, for the folly of my youth,
My heart was taught to rue!



THE
Chimney-Sweeper's Complaint.

PART II.

THE

Chimney-Sweeper's Complaint,

PART II.

'T WAS when the harvest fields were brown
With rustling wheat and rye,
In a snug nook we pitch'd our tents,
A shady hedge-row by.

The moon was down; the night was dark,
No voice was heard, or tread;
The cottage lights were all put out,
The farm-house folks abed,

Secret Remorse.

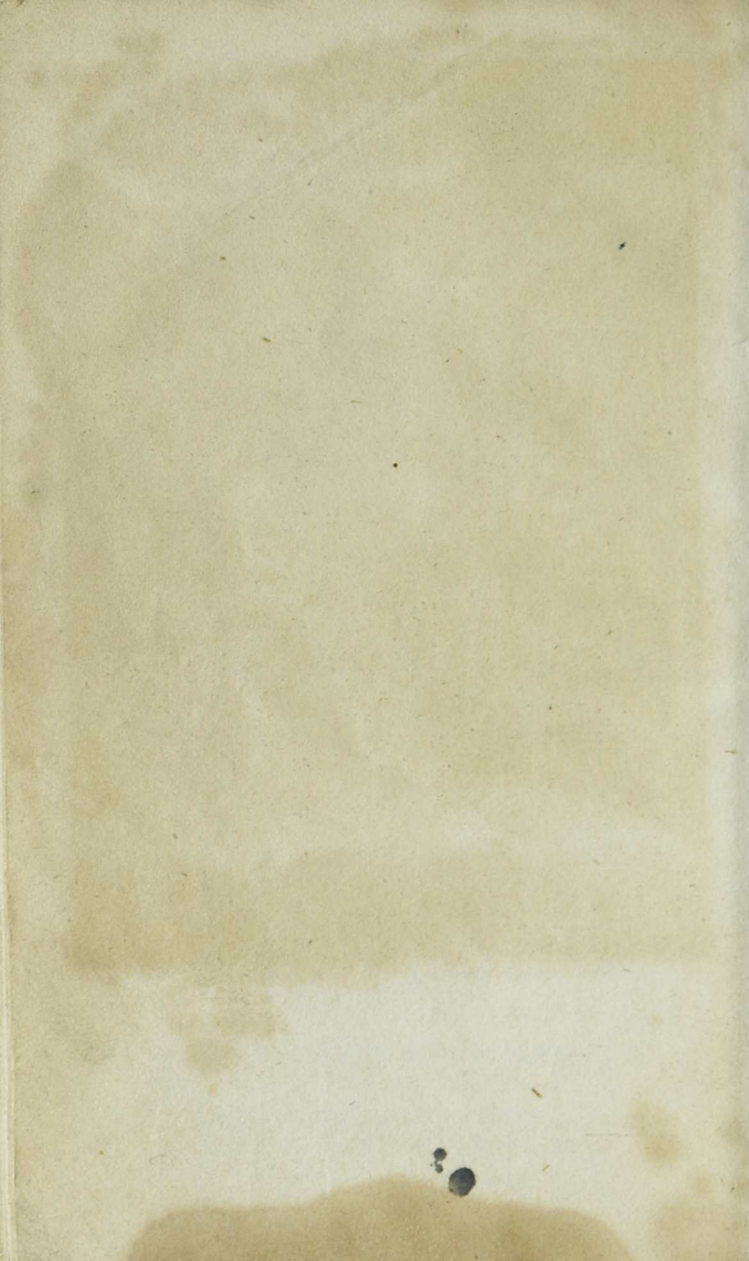
When I was doom'd to trudge away,
With bag on shoulder thrown,
To rob a roost, unwillingly,
Unpractis'd, and alone.

I knew 'twas wrong, but how could I
Resist a master's will,
Who knew no good, but taught the wrong
By bold example still?

With silent steps, and tearful eyes,
Starting at every breeze
That wav'd the rushes of the brook,
And sigh'd among the trees,



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The Apparition.

I pass'd the meadow and the lawn,
And near the farm-yard drew;
When o'er the gate two saucer-eyes
Glar'd fearfully in view,

Set in a visage, ghostly pale,
That own'd a grisly beard,
And mighty horns, that, to my sight,
Full six feet high appear'd!

For now the stars gave feeble light,
As through the clouds they broke;
And, at the crowing of the cock,
The roaring sheep-dog woke.

The Attempt frustrated.

My guilty heart went pit-a-pat,
For fear of God and man;
And, fast as fear would give me leave,
I turn'd me back, and ran;

But ran not far, nor heedfully;
For right across the way,
By me unnoticed, or unseen,
Another *monster* lay!

I stumbled o'er it, in my haste—
It started, with a bound—
Lifted me high upon its back,
Then dash'd me to the ground!

Cause of Alarm.

Half dead, I rose, and limp'd away,
Though path I none could find—
Thro' brake and bush, and quick-thorn hedge,
Nor once dar'd look behind.

I reach'd the tent, and told my tale;
And solemnly declar'd,
That Satan and his imps, that night,
Had bodily appear'd.

My swarthy masters stamp'd and swore,
And, laughing oft between,
Yet vow'd their bidding I should do,
Whatever might be seen.

Explanation.

“For why,” they said, “the *first* grim fiend
“Was but an *aged* goat;
“The next some *heath-colt*, stretch’d along,
With rough and ragged coat.”

It might be so: but still I felt
My punishment was just;
And firmly in my mind resolv’d
Ne’er to discharge my trust.

No, no! “I’ll leave this wicked life,
“And wicked crew,”—I thought—
“The opportunity is fair;
“I’ll use it, as I ought.”

Desertion from the Gipsies.

They urged me long : at length I feign'd

To yield to their demand.

Again *I left, to join no more,*

The vagrant gipsy band.

Bye-roads I sought, and untrod ways,

When day began to break;

Till fearless of pursuit I grew,

Though hungry, faint, and weak.

Yet still I never ceas'd to think

Upon the friendly 'SQUIRE,

That push'd the bowl, in frolic mood,

So briskly round our fire;

Friendly Promise recollected.

And how he said to London, soon,
He meant his course to bend;
Where, should I ever find my way,
I still should find a friend.

So thitherward my steps I turn'd,
Resolv'd to find him out:
His promise kept my courage up,
And silenc'd many a doubt.

A cottage dame reliev'd my wants,
And bade me rest awhile;
And warn'd me, when I told my tale,
'Gainst London trick and guile.



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Reception in Town.

I travell'd hard, and hardly far'd,
For many a weary day;
A-nights, in hay-mow, barn, or shed,
With aching limbs I lay.

At length St Paul's proud dome appear'd;
I reach'd my journey's end;
From street to street I wander'd long,
But sought in vain my friend.

At last, by great good luck, unsought,
In crowds of busy men;
A long-lost relative I found—
An uncle took me in.

Workhouse. Apprenticeship.

Two years he kindly treated me,
And all my wants supplied;
But ere the third—alas! too soon—
My benefactor died.

His kindness in the hour of need
Will never be forgot:
Left by his death all destitute,
A workhouse was my lot!

From hence, the wretched orphan's fate
In little time I found;
And to this miserable trade,
Apprentic'd slave! was bound.

Hardships he endures.

Ah! little, Sir! do thousands know

The hardships we endure,

And what calamities await

The friendless infant poor!

Now never do I read or pray,

Nor psalm nor sermon hear,

Or church or chapel e'er attend,

Throughout the live-long year!

Full fifteen months have I pursued,

Unpitied, this employ;

And never harder master serv'd,

A poor unhappy boy!

Mrs. Montague's Fête.

In all this time, one holiday

Is all I ever knew—

That given by the Sweeper's friend—

Good MADAM MONTAGUE.

But she is dead!—and times are chang'd,

For all things have their turn ;

And for her loss full long must I,

And all my brethren, mourn.

Your great folks now look down with scorn

Whene'er we meet their view ;

Nor ever shall we know again

Another MONTAGUE!

Comfort to the afflicted.

PASSENGER.

Come, dry those tears that trickle so,

My little injur'd boy;

Thou yet hast friends, and so have all

Thy brethren in employ.

If Truth and Innocence demand

A friend in time of grief,

There still are men of gen'rous hearts

To give the kind relief;

Yes! there are men of wealth and power,

To join their hands have prest;

And vow'd the wretched sweeper's wrongs

Shall shortly be redrest*.

* Alluding to the Association for the relief of infant Chimney-Sweepers.

The Discovery.

For ye have souls, and feelings too,
 Whatever Pride might say;
And those who wrong them, or abuse,
 God's judgments will repay.

Be not surpris'd if I am he
 You sought in vain so long,—
Who join'd, upon the common wild,
 The jovial gipsy throng.

Nor came I there without an aim,
 Which one day will be known:
No idle freak seduc'd my feet,
 But charity alone.

Conclusion.

Benevolence is still at home,
And finds, in every place,
Some fair occasion to befriend
Misfortune's mourning race!

THE END.

Conclusion.

Generous is still at home,

And finds in every place,

Some fair occasion to defend

Milton's mounting race.

THE END.

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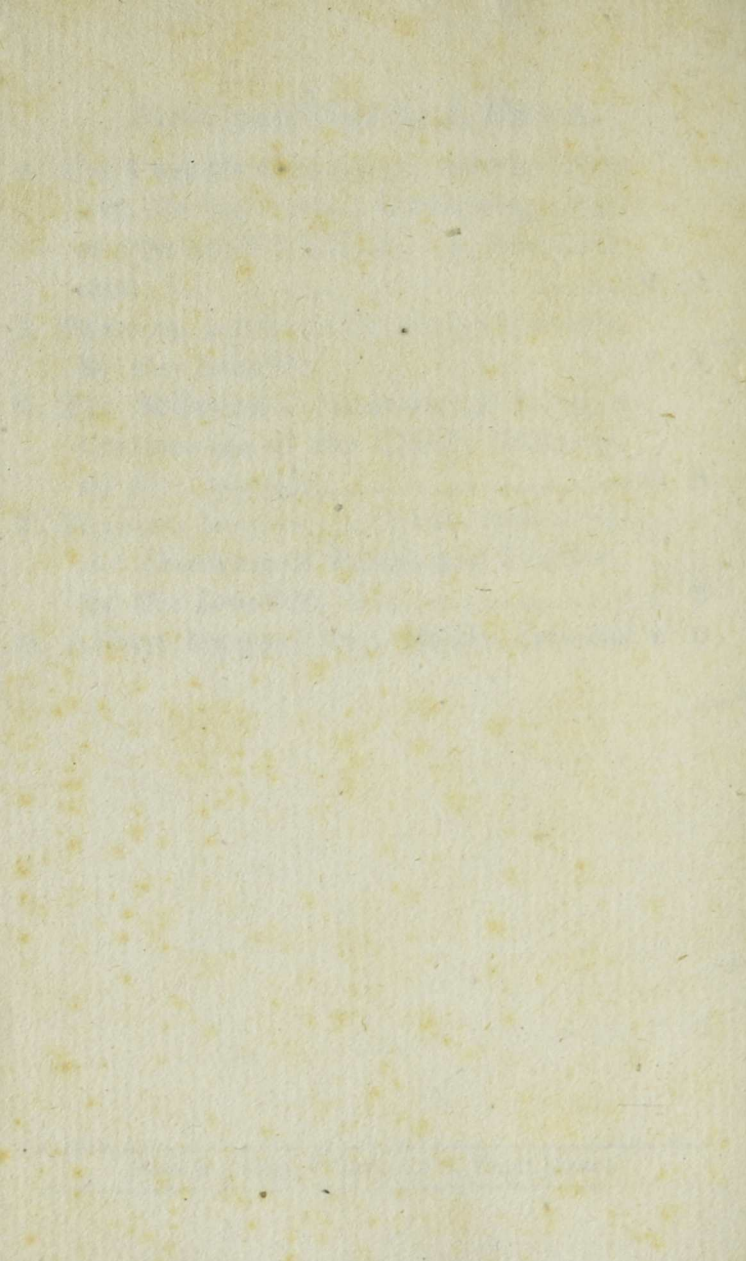
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