

**WUNNISSOO: OR, THE
VALE OF HOOSATUNNUK,
A POEM, WITH NOTES**

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Wunnissoo: or, The vale of Hoosatunnuk, a poem, with notes by William Allen

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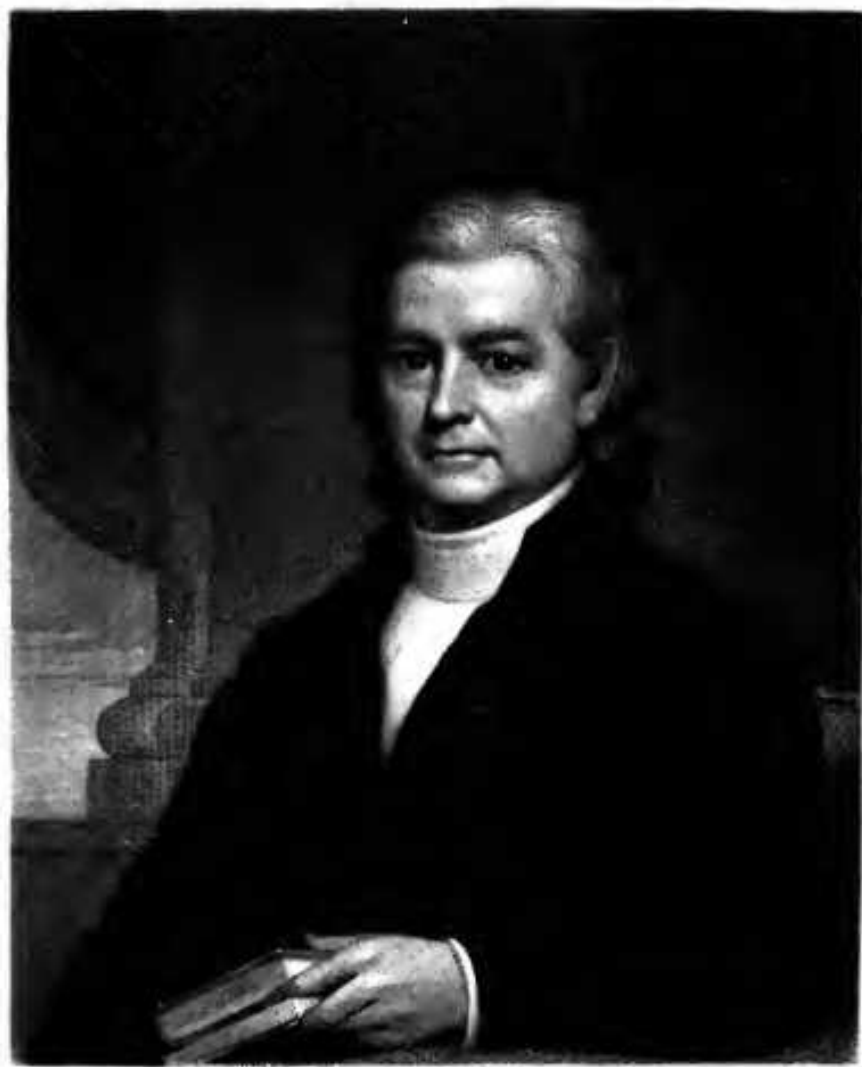
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WILLIAM ALLEN

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Wm Allen

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A POEM, WITH NOTES.

By **WILLIAM ALLEN, D.D.,**

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P R E F A C E.

IN the following poem it has been the aim of the writer to utter truths and sentiments, which are calculated to enlarge and improve the heart and to ennoble the character. He could not deem himself innocent, if his leisure hours were given to idle, unprofitable minstrelsy; but, if his harp be so attuned to pure and heavenly strains, as that any should listen with interest and benefit, he would be shielded from self-reproach.

In the present unusual culture of a literary taste in this country he conceived, that poetry might be made, as it should be, the handmaid of religion. Among the principles of our nature that of fancy has a most important influence upon our happiness; and, if not occupied in idle musings, but wisely directed, it may lend illustration and enforce-

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ment to the weightiest and sublimest truths. The author, it will be seen, has adopted the form of a narrative, wishing to make the story the vehicle of truth and emotion. But the narrative is founded on real events, and never surpasses the bounds of possibility; it has also, as he thinks, the necessary verisimilitude, so as not to awaken a painful feeling of doubt and mistrust. He might have produced a philosophical, moral, religious poem, destitute of a story and barren of incidents; but there would have been wanting a common bond to link the different stanzas into one piece;—there would have been wanting also the power of sympathy, by which the concerns of a fellow-being seize strongly upon our heart, perhaps more strongly than all that is beautiful and grand in nature.

To those scrupulous minds, that revolt at every thing in the garb of fiction, he would say, that they can hardly have reflected on the multitude of parables or fictitious stories, scattered throughout the Holy Scriptures, and which were uttered by Him, who is the Truth. When the aim is to instruct, and not to deceive and delude, who ought to object to a

parable, or story? Indeed, instead of calling instruction thus communicated a fiction, it might be more proper to call it truth in the array of fancy, and to consider it as the visit of an angel in the form of a man.

He has been accustomed to think, that the interest and value of poetry depend much upon its being the expression of the deep conviction and strong feeling of the writer. Therefore he has uttered nothing but what he thoroughly believes; nothing but what he has felt. To most of the scenes described he has not been a stranger. He speaks from knowledge; and he cherishes the hope, that this little book will find a welcome in many a pious heart.

The writer has ever thought, that simplicity in writing is a great excellence; but he intends by it, not a childishness of thought, expressed in childishness of language, but natural, and it may be rich and affecting sentiments, presented in pure Saxon, in the most perspicuous manner possible, as one of our clear, northern lakes reveals through its transparent waters the objects lying at the bottom. Any peculiarities of style, which obscure the

thought or divert attention from it, he deems a defect; and such a defect, as if the lake was frozen, and as if the ice was formed, when the flood was unquiet, or with intermingled sleet, so that nothing can be seen below, and the eye is confined to the hues and shapes of the mantle, thrown over the clear waters. When the thought is of no value and there is a poverty of conception, we may allow a gorgeousness of diction and an inversion and obscurity of style.

The author is persuaded, that the stanza of Spenser is altogether preferable to any other measure for a poem of the kind, which is here given to the public. It has the advantage of partition into distinct portions of nine lines; whereas the solid mass of the common heroic verse is rather terrifying to the reader. It has the higher advantage of variety in the pauses. It combines much of the freedom and dignity of blank verse with the pleasures of rhyme. There is also a degree of elevation and magnificence in the lengthened, closing line of each stanza.

Yet to the unpractised reader of poetry it may at first appear somewhat perplexed, al-