

**POEMS, BY WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.
TOGETHER WITH HIS POSTHUMOUS
POETRY, AND A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE
BY JOHN JOHNSON, IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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WILLIAM COWPER & JOHN JOHNSON

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P O E M S,
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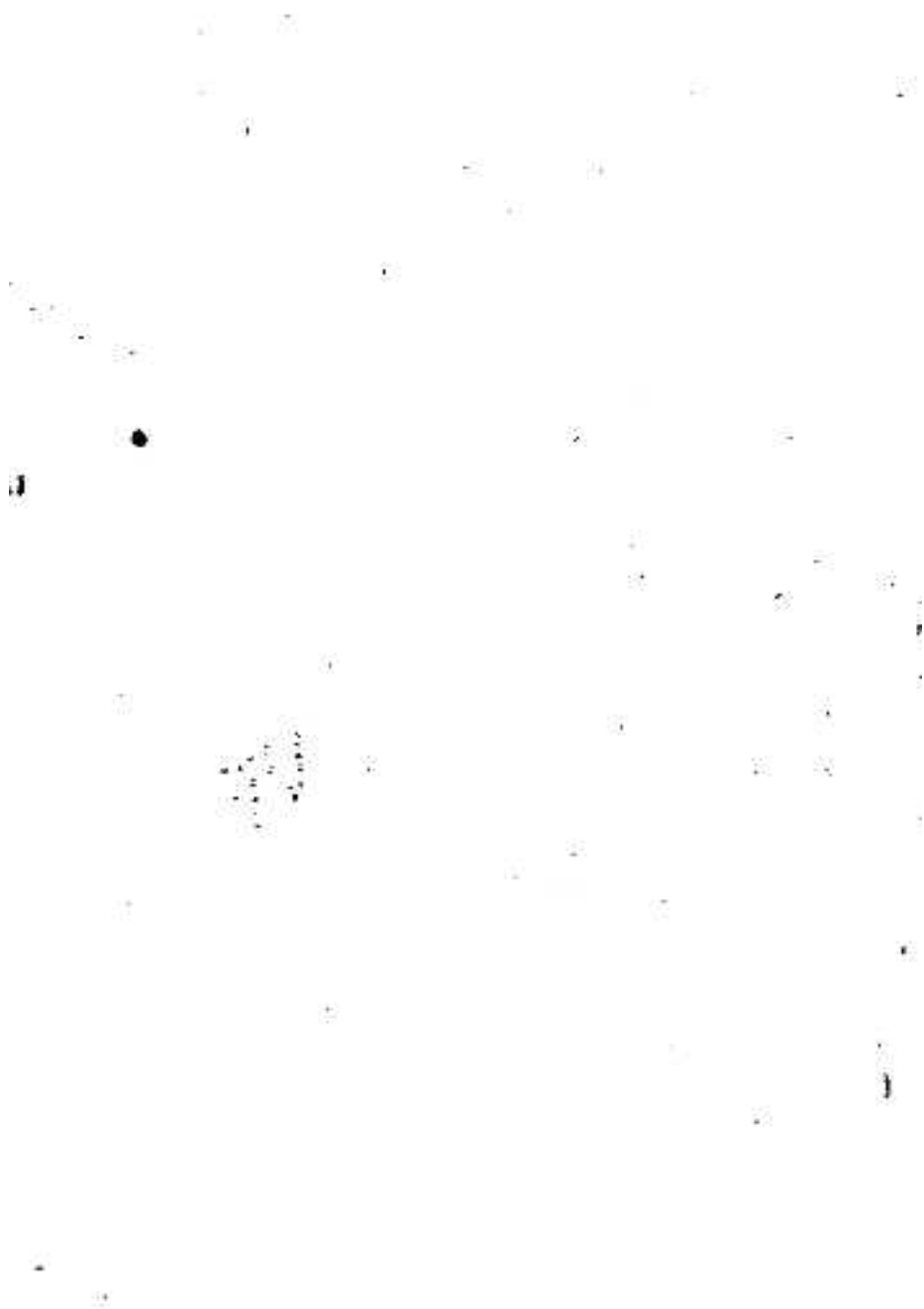
AND
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BY JOHN JOHNSON, LL. D.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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PREFACE

TO

THE FIRST VOLUME.



WHEN an Author, by appearing in print, requests an audience of the publick, and is upon the point of speaking for himself, whoever presumes to step before him with a preface, and to say, "Nay, but hear me first," should have something worthy of attention to offer, or he will be justly deemed officious and impertinent. The judicious reader has, probably upon other occasions, been beforehand with me in this reflection: and I am not very willing it should now be applied to me, however I may seem to expose myself to the danger of it. But the thought of having my own name perpetuated in connexion with the name in the title page, is so pleasing and flattering to the feelings of my heart, that I am content to risk something for the gratification.

This Preface is not designed to commend the Poems to which it is prefixed. My testimony would be insufficient for those who are not qualified to judge properly for themselves, and unnecessary to those who are. Besides, the reasons which render it improper and unseemly for a man to celebrate his own performances, or those of his nearest relatives, will have some

influence in suppressing much of what he might otherwise wish to say in favour of a friend, when that friend is indeed an *alter idem*, and excites almost the same emotions of sensibility and affection as he feels for himself.

It is very probable that these Poems may come into the hands of some persons, in whom the sight of the author's name will awaken a recollection of incidents and scenes, which, through length of time, they had almost forgotten. They will be reminded of one, who was once the companion of their chosen hours, and who set out with them in early life in the paths which lead to literary honours, to influence and affluence, with equal prospects of success. But he was suddenly and powerfully withdrawn from those pursuits, and he left them without regret; yet not till he had sufficient opportunity of counting the cost and of knowing the value of what he gave up. If happiness could have been found in classical attainments, in an elegant taste, in the exertions of wit, fancy, and genius, and in the esteem and converse of such persons as in these respects were most congenial with himself, he would have been happy. But he was not—He wondered (as thousands in a similar situation still do) that he should continue dissatisfied, with all the means apparently conducive to satisfaction within his reach. But in due time the cause of his disappointment was discovered to him; he had lived without God in the world. In a memorable hour the wisdom which is from above visited his heart. Then he felt himself a wanderer, and then he found a guide. Upon this change of views, a change of plan and conduct followed of course. When he saw the busy and the gay world in its true light, he

left it with as little reluctance as a prisoner, when called to liberty, leaves his dungeon. Not that he became a Cynick or an Ascetick—A heart filled with love to God will assuredly breathe benevolence to men. But the turn of his temper inclining him to rural life, he indulged it, and the Providence of God evidently preparing his way and marking out his retreat, he retired into the country. By these steps the good hand of God, unknown to me, was providing for me one of the principal blessings of my life ; a friend and a counsellor, in whose company for almost seven years, though we were seldom seven successive waking hours separated, I always found new pleasure. A friend who was not only a comfort to myself, but a blessing to the affectionate poor people, among whom I then lived.

Some time after inclination had thus removed him from the hurry and bustle of life, he was still more secluded by a long indisposition, and my pleasure was succeeded by a proportionable degree of anxiety and concern. But a hope that the God whom he served would support him under his affliction, and at length vouchsafe him a happy deliverance, never forsook me. The desirable crisis, I trust, is now nearly approaching. The dawn, the presage of returning day, is already arrived. He is again enabled to resume his pen, and some of the first fruits of his recovery are here presented to the publick. In his principal subjects, the same acumen, which distinguished him in the early period of life, is happily employed in illustrating and enforcing the truths of which he received such deep and unalterable impressions in his maturer years. His satire, if it may be called so, is benevolent, (like the operations of the skilful and humane surgeon, who wounds