

THE COURSE OF TIME: A POEM

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The Course of Time: A Poem by Robert Pollok

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ROBERT POLLOK

**THE COURSE OF
TIME: A POEM**

THE
COURSE OF TIME:

A POEM.

BY ROBERT POLLOK, A.M.

WITH

A COPIOUS INDEX,

AND AN

ANALYSIS PREFIXED TO EACH BOOK.

NEW YORK:
CLARK, AUSTIN & SMITH,

3 PARK ROW & 3 ANN-STREET.

1855.

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A SKETCH
OF THE
LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

FROM THE 'CHRISTIAN REVIEW.'

THE Rev. ROBERT POLLOK, was born at Muirhouse, parish of Eaglesham, in North Britain, October 19, 1798. His father still occupies the same farm, and is esteemed by his neighbours as a very worthy and intelligent person. Robert was the youngest of the family; and his early days were spent on the farm with his father, in such labours as the seasons called for. He was always fond of reading; and the winter's evenings were employed in this manner, when his companions were perhaps engaged in some trifling amusement. He is not known to have made any attempts at poetry when very young. At fourteen years of age, he commenced the study of the Latin language; and, a few months after this, he produced the first poem which he is known to have committed to paper. In October, 1815, when seventeen years of age, he

entered the University of Glasgow, where he studied five years; at the end of which time he obtained the degree of Master of Arts. While at college, he was a very diligent and exemplary student, and distinguished himself so far as to have several prizes awarded him by the suffrage of his fellows: besides the regular exercises, he composed a number for his own pleasure and improvement, and several of these were poetical. Before he had finished his *curriculum*, his health was considerably impaired.

In the autumn of 1822, he entered the United Secession Divinity Hall, under the care of Dr. Dick. Here his discourses attracted considerable notice, and called forth some severe criticisms from his fellow-students. A mind like his could not submit to the trammels of common divisions: the form of an essay suited better the impetuosity of his genius; and he occasionally indulged in lofty descriptions, both of character and external nature. In May, 1827, he received license to preach, from the United Secession Presbytery of Edinburgh. During his previous trials, he was employ'd in superintending the printing of his poem. His first public discourse is said to have produced a powerful sensation on the audience. The text was, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Some descriptive parts, respecting those who

serve Baal rather than God, are said to have been awfully grand. He preached only three other times, when he was obliged to retire from public service. His labours had been too great for his constitution, in which the seeds of consumption had long before been sown. By some medical gentlemen of eminence in Edinburgh, he was advised to try the effects of a warmer climate: Italy was his intended retreat; and, after providing himself with letters of introduction to some learned men on the continent, he set out, accompanied by a sister. He had got as far as the neighbourhood of Southampton, when, overpowered with the fatigues of travelling, he was compelled to desist. He here fevered, and after a few days expired, far from the scenes of his birth and his studies. It is comforting to learn, that Mr. Pollok's death was that of a true saint; his last moments being characterized by patience, resignation, and faith.

Mr. Pollok's mind was certainly of a very superior character; of this there need no other proof be given than the encomiums which his "Course of Time" has called forth—encomiums, many of them penned before his death was known, but which did not appear till after he had gone beyond the reach of earthly applause. His habits were those of a close student: his reading was extensive: he could converse on almost every subject: he had great facility in

composition; in confirmation of which, he is said to have written nearly a thousand lines weekly of the last four books of the "Course of Time." The poem, as a whole, was, however, no hasty performance: it had engaged his attention long. His college acquaintances could perceive that his mind was not wholly devoted to the business of the classes; he was constantly writing or reading on other subjects. Having his time wholly to himself, he amassed a prodigious store of ideas. It was his custom to commit to the flames, every now and then, a great number of papers. He had projected a prose work of some magnitude—a review of Literature in all ages—designed to show that literature must stand or fall in proportion as it harmonizes with Scripture Revelation. But death has put an end to this, as to many other projects.

THE
COURSE OF TIME.

BOOK I.

ETERNAL Spirit! God of truth! to whom
All things seem as they are; thou who of old
The prophet's eye unscaled, that nightly saw,
While heavy sleep fell down on other men,
In holy vision tranced, the future pass
Before him, and to Judah's harp attuned
Bardons which made the pagan mountains shake
And Zion's cedars bow—inspire my song;
My eye unscale; me what is substance teach,
And shadow what, while I of things to come,
As past, rehearsing, sing the Course of Time,
The second Birth, and final Doom of man.

The muse, that soft and sickly woos the ear
Of love, or chanting loud in windy rhyme
Of fabled hero, raves through gaudy tale
Not overfraught with sense, I ask not; such
A strain befits not argument so high.
Me thought, and phrase, severely sifting out
The whole idea, grant—uttering as 'tis
The essential truth—Time gone, the Righteous saved,
The Wicked damned, and Providence approved.

Hold my right hand, Almighty! and me teach
To strike the lyre, but seldom struck, to notes
Harmonious with the morning stars, and pure
As those by sainted bards, and angels sung
Which wake the echoes of eternity—