

**POEMS; THE
SUMMER'S
EVE; A POEM**

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Poems; The Summer's Eve; a poem by Thomas Townshend & John Bidlake

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THOMAS TOWNSHEND & JOHN BIDLAKE

**POEMS; THE
SUMMER'S
EVE; A POEM**

POEMS.

BY

THOMAS TOWNSHEND, *Esq.*

OF GRAY'S INN.

Μετράν Ἰνυατέρες ἀοιδῶν— PINDAR.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY T. BENSLEY,

FOR E. AND S. HARDING, PALL MALL.

1796.



PR
5671
T45A17

TO THE

HON. SOMERSET LOWRY CORRY.

MY DEAR SIR,

It is almost unnecessary to observe, that the Poems which compose this volume, bear internal evidences of having been produced at intervals remote from each other. The spirit of several of them is dissimilar; and the want of uniformity in their manner and structure, may possibly convey to some, stronger significations of negligence than of diligence. Whatever credit suspicions of this colour may wear, yet I must observe, that I have taken some pains to mitigate the incorrectness of their original state; and principally with a view to render them more worthy of their present distinction in being ornamented with your name. I shall not enter into any circumstances connected with their production,

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which may be interpreted into palliatives, intending to invite the moderation of criticism. Bad poetry cannot be preserved from oblivion by any stratagems of prefatory excuse; and good poetry wants not the aid of so common-place an auxiliary. I shall not therefore incline to excuse, farther than to say, that the greater part of the contents of this volume has been written at an earlier period of life, when the eagerness of imagination is not always restrained by the controul of the judgment. Of the few Odes of the abstract sort which follow, I confess that I do not encourage any expectation of seeing them become popular. Of the mass who read, there are but a very few indeed who possess any very keen relish for abstract poetry; whose minds can intuitively accede to remote allusions, and whose imaginations can warmly receive that imagery which is not obvious. I am the more confirmed in the fate of poetry of this order, when I reflect how few comparatively can be ranked among its admirers. It is in the regions of the Muse as in those of material nature: various sorts of scenery have their several advocates; and the gross bulk of those who gaze upon them generally prefer the

sober features of trim culture, to the rude grandeur and rough magnificence of unornamented greatness. The admirers of Shenstone very far out-number those of Gray and Collins.

There is a species of enthusiasm almost as necessary to the perusal as to the composition of the Ode. Those who possess this fine quality are alone capable of entering with appropriate ardour into all the diversities of imagery, of seizing sentiment even while the mind is most rapidly on the wing, and of wresting from a sketch that full effect, which others could only seek for from a circumstantial picture. They catch comprehensively the mixed varieties of the subject; they are not subdued by that auricular bondage which deems the suspension of the rhimes an outrage against all the ordinances of criticism; their progress is not impeded by irritable precision or frivolous pertinacity, but they pass along with a generous zeal through a wider range of expansive though irregular fertility. Their pleasures do not spring from a detail examination of each passage as isolated by frigid inquiry; but from the general result of all

the component parts, as they are blended together in a liberal assimilation.

It would be travelling beyond the necessity within which I should limit myself, if I were to enter into discussions upon the faculty requisite to give the genuine relish for the higher efforts of lyric poetry. The succeeding pages cannot hope to summon this gift of the imagination; and a tamer temper of mind may perhaps be better adapted to their perusal. But in any case I have no intention of writing a preface to them. I inscribe them as a very humble, though a very sincere tribute to your qualities of disposition and mind; to talents from which, in their high qualification for public life, every thing may be expected which can produce honour to yourself, and utility to your country.

Few men are so little gratified with open panegyric as those who deserve it most; and therefore I shall not enumerate many fine traits of character which I have been accustomed to admire, nor those manly sentiments of patriotism, which I know you

will exert, and from the exertion of which must arise an important accession to the public good. In bespeaking you for the public service I should claim a subordinate merit, if I were not aware that you must feel the force of your talents; and if I did not know, that under this consciousness it is your highest sense of virtue, and a noble and just sense it is, to bestow them on your country.

I have the honour to be,
With the truest respect and regard,
My dear Sir, your sincere friend,
And obedient servant,

LONDON,
March 1, 1798.

THOMAS TOWNSHEND.