

**POEMS ON
SERIOUS AND
SACRED SUBJECTS**

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Poems on Serious and Sacred Subjects by William Hayley

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WILLIAM HAYLEY

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POEMS
ON
Serious and Sacred Subjects,

PRINTED ONLY

AS PRIVATE TOKENS OF

BEGARD,

FOR THE PARTICULAR FRIENDS OF
THE AUTHOR.



....nec pia cessant
In tumultu officia.

MILTONI MANUSC.

A Christian's kindness ends not in the tomb.



Chichester :

PRINTED AT THE PRIVATE PRESS OF W. MASON.



1818.



ON

The Fear of Death :



AN EPISTLE TO A LADY.

1768.

B



ON

THE FEAR OF DEATH.



THOU ! whose superior, and aspiring mind
Can leave the weakness of thy sex behind ;
Above its follies, and its fears can rise,
Quit the low earth, and gain the distant skies :
Whom strength of soul and innocence have taught
To think of death, nor shudder at the thought ;
Say ! whence the dread, that can alike engage
Vain thoughtless youth, and deep-reflecting age ;
Can shake the feeble, and appal the strong ;
Say ! whence the terrors, that to death belong ?

Guilt must be fearful : but the guiltless too
Start from the grave, and tremble at the view.
The blood-stained pirate, who in neighbouring climes,
Might fear, lest justice should o'ertake his crimes,
Wisely may bear the sea's tempestuous roar,
And rather wait the storm, than make the shore ;
But can the mariner, who sailed in vain
In search of fancy'd treasure on the main,
By hope deceiv'd, by endless whirlwinds tost,
His strength exhausted, and his viands lost,
When land invites him to receive at last
A full reward for every danger past :
Can he then wish his labours to renew,
And fly the port just opening to his view ?
Not less the folly of the timorous mind,
Which dreads that peace, it ever longs to find ;
Which worn with age, and tost in endless strife
On this rough ocean, this tempestuous life,

Still covets pain, and shakes with abject fear,
When sickness points to death, and shews the haven near.
The love of life, it yet must be confest,
Was fixed by Nature in the human breast ;
And Heaven thought fit that fondness to employ,
To teach us to preserve the brittle toy.
But why, when knowledge has improv'd our thought,
Years undeceived us, and affliction taught ;
Why do we strive to grasp with eager hand,
And stop the course of life's quick-ebbing sand ?
Why vainly covet, what we can't sustain ?
Why, dead to pleasure, would we live to pain ?
What is this sentence, from which all would fly ?
Oh ! what this horrible decree—to die ?
'Tis but to quit, what hourly we despise
A fretful dream, that tortures as it flies.—
But hold my pen !—nor let a picture stand
Thus darkly coloured by this gloomy hand :