

**JAMES
THOMSON**

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James Thomson by G. C. Macaulay

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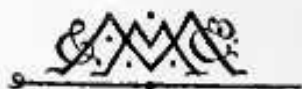
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G. C. MACAULAY

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THOMSON**

ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS

JAMES THOMSON



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JAMES THOMSON

BY

G. C. MACAULAY

LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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PREFATORY NOTE

IN this book an attempt is made to present the subject as a chapter of the history of English Literature, and to bring out the part played by Thomson in the development of the poetry of the eighteenth century. Partly with a view to this, a distinct line has been drawn between biography and literary criticism, though the relation between the life and the writings has not been ignored.

For the biography of Thomson fairly good materials are available, thanks to the labours of a series of investigators devoted to the memory of the poet. The present writer gladly acknowledges obligation to those by whom these materials have been contributed or elucidated. After the first biographers, Shiels, Murdoch and Johnson, we are indebted in the eighteenth century especially to the eleventh Earl of Buchan, by whose enthusiasm many memorials were preserved, which would otherwise have perished, and in the first half of the nineteenth century to Harris Nicolas, Bolton Corney and Peter Cunningham. In more recent times useful work has been done especially by M. Léon Morel, whose book on Thomson is a monument of praiseworthy industry, by Mr. Tovey, as editor of the new Aldine edition of Thomson, by Mr. Seacombe in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and by Dr. Birkbeck Hill in his notes on Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. The present writer has contributed

some facts, especially with regard to the production of Thomson's plays, his relations with Lyttelton, and the tenure of his posts, which have not appeared in any previous biography.

The due estimation of Thomson's literary work involves a careful collation of the early editions of *The Seasons*, since there is as yet no full information published with regard to their important variations of text. Mr. Tovey's critical notes are useful, but incomplete; and, moreover, he takes no account of any edition earlier than 1730. In general it may be said that all information given in this book about variations is derived from original sources.

With regard to other parts of the work, acknowledgments are especially due to Mr. J. L. Robertson, whose excellent annotated edition of *The Seasons* and *The Castle of Indolence* has been frequently useful, to M. Morel again, and (with reference to the influence of other poets upon *Winter*) to Dr. Otto Zippel, from whom a complete critical edition of *The Seasons* is to be expected.

The discussion on the revision of the text of *The Seasons* has been, with some hesitation, relegated to an appendix, not because the subject is unimportant or uninteresting, but because it is of a somewhat controversial character.

I am unwilling to pass over without notice the useful reprint, by Judge Willis, of the very rare first edition of *Winter*, with a preface in which the mistakes of editors and biographers are faithfully pointed out. I did not make acquaintance with this book until my own was already finished; but I hope that by a careful following of original texts I have been preserved from such errors as are there denounced.

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