

**THE POETICAL WORKS OF
GEORGE LORD LYTTELTON WITH
ADDITIONS: TO WHICH PREFIXED
AN ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE**

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The Poetical Works of George Lord Lyttelton with Additions: To Which Prefixed an Account of His Life by George Lyttelton

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SKETCH OF THE LIFE
OF
GEORGE LORD LYTTTELTON.

GEORGE LYTTTELTON, the son of Sir Thomas Lyttelton, of Hagley, in Worcestershire, was born in 1709. He was educated at Eton, where he was so much distinguished, that his exercises were recommended as models to his school-fellows.

From Eton he went to Christ-church, where he retained the same reputation of superiority, and displayed his abilities to the public in a poem on "Blenheim."

He was a very early writer, both in verse and prose. His "Progress of Love," and his "Persian Letters," were both written when he was very young.

He staid not long at Oxford; for in 1728 he began his travels, and saw France and Italy. When he returned, he obtained a seat in parliament, and soon distinguished himself among the most eager opponents of Sir Robert Walpole,

though his father, who was commissioner of the admiralty, always voted with the court.

For many years the name of George Lyttelton was seen in every account of every debate in the house of commons. He opposed the standing army; he opposed the excise; he supported the motion for petitioning the king to remove Walpole. His zeal was considered by the courtiers not only as violent, but as acrimonious and malignant; and when Walpole was at last hunted from his places, every effort was made by his friends, and many friends he had, to exclude Lyttelton from the secret committee.

The Prince of Wales, being (1737) driven from St. James's, kept a separate court, and opened his arms to the opponents of the ministry. Mr. Lyttelton became his secretary, and was supposed to have great influence in the direction of his conduct. He persuaded his master, whose business it was now to be popular, that he would advance his character by patronage. Mallet was made under-secretary, with 200*l.* and Thomson had a pension of 100*l.* a year. For Thomson, Lyttelton always retained his kindness, and was able at last to place him at ease.

Moore courted his favour by an apologetical poem, called "The Trial of Selim;" for this he was paid with kind words, which, as is common, raised great hopes, that were at last disappointed.

Lyttelton now stood in the first rank of opposition; and Pope, who was incited, it is not easy

v

to say how, to increase the clamour against the ministry, commended him among the other patriots. This drew upon him the reproaches of Fox, who, in the house, imputed to him as a crime his intimacy with a lampooner so unjust and licentious. Lyttelton supported his friend, and replied, that he thought it an honour to be received into the familiarity of so great a poet.

While he was thus conspicuous, he married (1741) Miss Lucy Fortescue of Devonshire, by whom he had a son, the late Lord Lyttelton, and two daughters, and with whom he appears to have lived in the highest degree of connubial felicity: but human pleasures are short; she died in childbed about five years afterwards, and he solaced his grief by writing a long poem to her memory.

He did not, however, condemn himself to perpetual solitude and sorrow; for, after awhile, he was content to seek happiness again, by a second marriage with the daughter of Sir Robert Rich; but the experiment was unsuccessful.

At length, after a long struggle, Walpole gave way, and honour and profit were distributed among his conquerors. Lyttelton was made (1744) one of the lords of the treasury; and from that time was engaged in supporting the schemes of the ministry.

Politics did not, however, so much engage him as to withhold his thoughts from things of more importance. He had, in the pride of juvenile

structive account has been given by his physician, which will spare me the task of his moral character.

“ On Sunday evening the symptoms of his lordship's disorder, which for a week past had alarmed us, put on a fatal appearance, and his lordship believed himself to be a dying man. From this time he suffered by restlessness rather than pain; though his nerves were apparently much fluttered, his mental faculties never seemed stronger, when he was thoroughly awake.

“ His lordship's bilious and hepatic complaints seemed alone not equal to the expected mournful event; his long want of sleep, whether the consequence of the irritation in the bowels, or, which is more probable, of causes of a different kind, accounts for his loss of strength, and for his death, very sufficiently.

“ Though his lordship wished his approaching dissolution not to be lingering, he waited for it with resignation. He said, ‘ It is a folly, a keeping me in misery, now to attempt to prolong life;’ yet he was easily persuaded, for the satisfaction of others, to do or take any thing thought proper for him. On Saturday he had been remarkably better, and we were not without some hopes of his recovery.

“ On Sunday, about eleven in the forenoon, his lordship sent for me, and said he felt a great hurry, and wished to have a little conversation with me in order to divert it. He then pro-

ceeded to open the fountain of that heart, from whence goodness had so long flowed, as from a copious spring. 'Doctor,' said he, 'you shall be my confessor: when I first set out in the world, I had friends who endeavoured to shake my belief in the christian religion. I saw difficulties which staggered me; but I kept my mind open to conviction. The evidences and doctrines of christianity, studied with attention, made me a most firm and persuaded believer of the christian religion. I have made it the rule of my life, and it is the ground of my future hopes. I have erred and sinned; but have repented, and never indulged any vicious habit. In politics and public life, I have made public good the rule of my conduct. I never gave counsels which I did not, at the time, think the best. I have seen that I was sometimes in the wrong, but I did not err designedly. I have endeavoured, in private life, to do all the good in my power, and never for a moment could indulge malicious or unjust designs upon any person whatsoever.'

"At another time he said, 'I must leave my soul in the same state it was in before this illness; I find this a very inconvenient time for solicitude about any thing.'

"On the evening when the symptoms of death came on, he said, 'I shall die; but it will not be your fault.' When lord and lady Valentia came to see his lordship, he gave them his solemn benediction, and said, 'Be good, be virtuous, my

lord; you must come to this.' Thus he continued giving his dying benediction to all around him. On Monday morning a lucid interval gave some small hopes, but these vanished in the evening; and he continued dying, but with very little uneasiness, till Tuesday morning, Aug. 22, when between seven and eight o'clock he expired, almost without a groan."

His lordship was buried at Hagley; and the following inscription is cut on the side of his lady's monument:

This unadorned stone was placed here
By the particular desire and express
Directions of the Right Honourable
GEORGE Lord LYTTLTON,
Who died August 22, 1773, aged 64.

The character of George Lord Lyttelton was held in universal estimation during his life, and his memory has been revered ever since his death. In the several characters of a judicious critic, an entertaining traveller, a wise and upright statesman, and a good man, his reputation is so decisively fixed, and so firmly established, that it can receive little additional lustre from encomium or panegyric; and is in no danger of suffering from the attacks of criticism or censure.

CONTENTS.

	Page
SOLILOQUY of a Beauty in the Country ...	3
The Progress of Love:	
Uncertainty	6
Hope	11
Jealousy	17
Possession	22
Blenheim	26
To the Rev. Dr. Ascough, at Oxford ...	34
To Mr. Poyntz	41
To be written under a Picture of Mr. Poyntz	46
An Epistle to Mr. Pope	48
To Lord Hervey	52
Advice to a Lady	56
Song. Written in the year 1732	63
Song. Written in the year 1733	65
Damon and Delia	67
Ode in imitation of Pastor Fido	70
Parts of an Elegy of Tibullus	72
Song. Written in the year 1732	75
Verses written at Mr. Pope's house	76
Epigram	77