

**THOMSON'S WINTER,
BEING A REPRODUCTION
OF THE FIRST EDITION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649295647

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WILLIAM WILLIS & JAMES THOMSON

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THOMSON'S WINTER,

BEING A REPRODUCTION OF THE

FIRST EDITION,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY WILLIAM WILLIS, Q.C., B.A., LL.D.



LONDON:

W. H. BARTLETT & Co.,
9, SALISBURY SQUARE, FLEET STREET.

1900.

(Price One Shilling, nett.)

INTRODUCTION.

AT the close of Dr. Johnson's 'Life of Thomson,' there are a few sentences, the full meaning of which can scarcely be realized by a reader of the present day, unless he has devoted a considerable time to the study of the early editions of 'The Seasons.' "These poems," says Dr. Johnson, "with which I was acquainted at their first appearance, I have since found altered and enlarged by subsequent revisals, as the author supposed his judgment to grow more exact, and as books or conversation extended his knowledge and opened his prospects. They are, I think, improved in general; yet I know not whether they have not lost part of what Temple calls their *race*; a word which, applied to wines, in its primitive sense, means the flavour of the soil." Mr. Logie Robertson has justly said that the changes which Thomson made in the text of the Seasons, especially in the later editions, were very numerous. "Here he introduced, there he struck out; this he condensed, that he expanded; he was never done substituting a new word or phrase for an old one, and he carried his passion for correcting, or rather for altering, so far as to shift whole passages from one Season to another." An instance of this 'passion' for altering, and one which has led Mr. Logie Robertson into a slight inaccuracy, may be seen in the Poet's treatment of Algernon Sidney. In the editions of 'The Seasons' of 1744, 1746, Algernon Sidney, in the list of Britain's Sons of Glory given in 'Summer,' is styled the 'British Cassius.' Not finding 'the British Cassius' in the previous editions, Mr. Robertson states that Algernon Sidney does not appear in the list of 'British Worthies' until *after* the edition of 1738. This statement is not correct. Algernon Sidney appears in the edition of 1730 and in the edition of 1738. In these editions, however, he is styled 'The British Brutus.'

In order to show, to some extent, the many alterations in, and many additions to, the Original Text of 'The Seasons,' it may at once be stated that the original text of the Four Seasons consisted of three thousand nine hundred and two lines. The edition of 'The Seasons' published in 1746, two years before the Poet's death and the last that received his revision, consists of five thousand four hundred and twenty-three lines. It should be remembered that in making this comparison, the text of the Quarto Edition of 1730, published by subscription, does not represent the Original Text of 'The Seasons,' with the exception of 'Autumn.' 'Autumn' appeared for the first time in the Subscription Volume and constitutes its original text. I think the Earl of Buchan, Mr. Robertson, and Mr. Tovey, the editor of the last Aldine Edition of the Poet's works, have regarded the text of the Subscription Volume 1730 as representing the original Text of all 'The Seasons.' Although aware of the Editions earlier than 1730, Mr. Robertson and Mr. Tovey do not seem to me to have studied or become in any degree acquainted with their text. If they have, some inaccuracies observable in their editions must be due to considerable want of care. The Subscription Volume contains four hundred and forty-one lines more than the original texts of 'Winter,' 'Summer,' and 'Spring.' In the preparation of the Subscription Volume, many lines of the original text were omitted. The first edition of 'Winter,' which was published in March, 1726, contained only four hundred and five lines; in the Subscription Volume, 'Winter' contains seven hundred and eighty-one. The value of the first edition of 'Winter' will be more fully appreciated, when it is known, that nearly one-third of the original text is not found in the text of 'Winter' in the Subscription Volume. The first edition of 'Summer,' which appeared in 1727, contained eleven hundred and forty-six lines; in the Subscription Volume, 'Summer' contains twelve hundred and six lines, one hundred and forty lines of the first edition being omitted, and two hundred new lines added. The first edition of 'Spring,' which was published in 1728, contained ten hundred and eighty-two lines; in the Subscription Volume, 'Spring' contains ten hundred and eighty-seven. This addition of five lines is the result of many omissions and additions. 'The Hymn,' which is found in all Modern Editions at the end of 'Winter,' first appeared

in the Subscription Volume, and consisted of one hundred and twenty-one lines. In the edition of 1746 it numbers only one hundred and eighteen. The principal additions, which are found in the edition of 1746, first appeared in the edition of 1744. The variations of the editions of 1744 and 1746 are very slight. The difference between the number of lines of 'The Seasons' in the Subscription Volume and the edition of 1746 is a thousand and eighty lines. In examining this statement, the reader must be careful to make for himself, an independent addition of the lines in the Subscription Volume. The Earl of Buchan apparently not having done this, and taking the figures in the Subscription Volume to be correct, has stated the lines added to 'The Seasons' after that edition, as nine hundred and sixty-eight. The Subscription Volume gives the lines of 'Winter,' contained in that edition, as eight hundred and eighty-one; the correct number is seven hundred and eighty-one; 'Summer,' twelve hundred and five, should be twelve hundred and six; 'Autumn,' twelve hundred and seventy-five, should be twelve hundred and sixty-nine. The Subscription Volume does not contain the name of any printer or publisher, and was published apparently for Thomson's own benefit. Mr. Bell, in his edition of the Poet's Works, says it was published by Millar. At the time of its publication Millan had the copyright in 'Winter,' 'Summer,' 'Autumn,' and the 'Hymn,' and Millar the copyright in 'Spring.' Mr. Bayne, in his life of Thomson, says that the Subscription Volume was dedicated to Speaker Onslow. 'Autumn' only was inscribed to him. Mr. Seccombe, in his life of Thomson in the "National Dictionary of Biography," says that "to the Subscription Volume was appended a patriotic Poem of considerable length, which had passed through two editions during 1729, 'Britannia a Poem.'" Mr. Seccombe, although supported by M. Morel, is, I think, in error. This poem was not appended to the Subscription Volume. In the proposals for printing 'The Seasons' by subscription, it is said "to which will be added a Poem sacred to the memory of Sir Isaac Newton." Nothing is said of 'Britannia' being added. I have two copies of the Subscription Volume, in neither of which is 'Britannia' found. There is, moreover, Millan's express statement to the contrary. Millan published 'Lyttleton's Persian Letters,' and in the third edition of this work, published in 1735, I find, at the end of

it, a list of Books printed for J. Millan, near the Admiralty Office. I give the following extract: "3. Thomson's Four Seasons and other Poems, printed upon a fine Royal Paper in 4to. N.B. Britania is now added *more than was to the Subscribers' Books.*" I do not think Mr. Seccombe is correct in saying that two editions of 'Britannia' appeared in 1729. When the Subscription Volume was being published, Millan brought out an edition of 'Britannia' in Quarto, in order, apparently, to allow the subscribers, if they thought fit, to add 'Britannia' to the Subscription Volume. This edition of 'Britannia' in quarto (printed for Millan, price one shilling) is entitled the *second* Edition, under date of 1730, and is sometimes found bound up with the Subscription Volume. In the same year, appeared the third edition of 'Britannia' in Octavo.

'Spring' continued to appear under the name of Millar, and 'Summer,' 'Autumn,' 'Winter,' and the 'Hymn' under the name of Millan. Millar and Millan, doubtless, co-operated in the publication and sale of the separate editions. I am not aware that Millar and Millan ever became partners, as Mr. Bayne says they did. On the 16th June, 1738, Millan assigned his copyright in 'Summer,' 'Autumn,' and 'Winter,' the 'Hymn,' the 'Poem to Newton,' and 'Britannia' to Millar. I do not think the sale of the separate editions of 'The Seasons,' with the exception of 'Winter,' was very rapid. After the Subscription Volume was delivered to the subscribers, Octavo volumes were published, having a title page bearing the joint names of Millar and Millan. Each 'Season' had its separate paging, and separate title page, the name of Millar or Millan appearing, according as the copyright was vested in one or the other. In 1730 and onwards 'Winter,' the 'Hymn,' and 'Poem to Newton,' were printed together, with continuous paging, and always under the name of Millan. After the Subscription Volume 'Autumn' appeared in Octavo form, published by Millan, entitled second edition, under date 1730, the first edition, I assume, being that which appeared in the Subscription Volume. How Mr. Bell came to deny that 'Autumn' was published by Millan I cannot understand. I have nine or ten copies of 'Autumn' published by Millan, and in my search for various editions I have never seen a separate edition of 'Autumn' under the name of any other publisher. Until 1738, I cannot find any later edition of 'Autumn' than the second, 1730.

It was published at the price of eighteen pence. Mr. Seccombe says it was published at a shilling. I remember that great judge, Sir James Shaw Willes, saying to counsel, "The evidence to which you are referring is quite irrelevant to the issue we have to try. But if you *must* quote it, at least quote it correctly." So I would say to Mr. Seccombe, if it is necessary to state, in a Dictionary of Biography, the price of a book, please state it correctly. I have not, prior to 1738, met with a later edition of 'Spring' than one dated 1731, entitled the second edition, containing ten hundred and eighty-seven lines. In a volume appearing in 1735, entitled the "Four Seasons" and other poems, and said to be printed for Millan and Millar, 'Spring' is a copy of the first edition, 1728. In 1730, I find a separate edition of 'Summer,' entitled the third edition, with additions, printed and published after the Subscription Volume. In 1735, there appeared the fourth separate edition of 'Summer,' published by Millan, bound up with the second edition of 'Spring,' 1731; the second edition of 'Autumn,' 1730, and a separate edition of 'Winter,' the 'Hymn,' 'Poem to Newton,' and 'Britannia,' under date of 1734. These last have a continuous paging, and were, doubtless, printed together.

Separate editions of 'The Seasons' continued to be sold down to the year 1738. In that year, two Octavo volumes appeared, entitled 'The Works of Mr. Thomson,' printed for A. Millar, who, by this time, had acquired the copyright in the whole of 'The Seasons.' Millan had parted with his interest therein. After 1738 a separate edition of any of 'The Seasons,' except as a school edition, is rarely met with. It is sometimes said that Thomson paid only a slight attention to 'The Seasons' between 1730 and 1738. The fact is, he paid none. If the Subscription Volume be compared with the edition of 1738, they will be found exactly alike, with the exception of six additional lines in 'Winter' in the edition of 1738; these six lines were not written by Thomson between 1730 and 1738 and are not new lines. They appeared for the first time in the second edition of 'Winter,' 1726. Mr. Logie Robertson has, with great taste and judgment, if I may be permitted to say so, called attention to the chief Beauties of 'The Seasons'; among others, to the lines in 'Winter' describing the visit of the redbreast. The description

occupies ten lines in the second and third editions of 'Winter,' and as I conjecture in the other separate editions of that Poem prior to 1730. In the Subscription Volume only four lines of this description are taken; and six lines, perhaps the most beautiful portion, are omitted. I cannot state why these six lines were omitted from the Subscription Volume. Whatever be the reason, in the sixth Octavo separate edition of the 'Winter,' published in the same year as, and after, the Subscription Volume, the whole ten lines appear. Thus 'Winter' in 1730 appears in 787 lines—the very same number as in the edition of 1738. It may, I think, be confidently stated that between 1730 and 1738 not a line was added to or an alteration made by the Poet in the text of 'The Seasons.'

During that time, Thomson was fully engaged, and his thoughts were employed, on other subjects. Towards the close of the year 1730, he left England as the travelling companion of Mr. Charles Richard Talbot, the eldest son of the Solicitor-General, Mr. Charles Talbot, who became Lord Chancellor of England, in November, 1733. Mr. Charles Richard Talbot is often spoken of in the Biographies of Thomson as the Honourable Charles Richard Talbot. He never was 'the Honourable,' as he died before his father became a Peer. Sometimes he is spoken of, by Mr. Logie Robertson, Sir Harris Nicolas, and others, as the son of Sir Charles Talbot. His father, although Solicitor-General, "escaped knighthood," to use Lord Campbell's phrase, and continued Mr. Talbot until he received the Great Seal.

Thomson stayed abroad, spending a considerable time in Paris and in Rome, until the close of the year 1731. Mr. Bayne says he returned at Christmas, 1732. On his return he spent nearly three years in composing and preparing for the Press, his great work in Blank verse, entitled "Liberty." It appeared in five parts; the first part appeared (according to Sir Harris Nicolas, on December 27th, 1734) in 1735, with a dedication to Frederick Prince of Wales; the date on the title-page is 1735. The second part appeared in 1735, with the contents of Part one and two. The third part appeared at the close of 1735; the fourth and fifth parts in 1736. Mr. Bayne says "that 'Liberty,' if not a literary success, was *followed* by an exceptional stroke of