

**THE LIFE AND
UNCOLLECTED POEMS
OF THOMAS FLATMAN**

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UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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BY
FREDERIC ANTHONY CHILD

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN
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THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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University of Pennsylvania

- This study of Thomas Flatman was undertaken at the suggestion of Professor Felix E. Schelling and completed under his inspiration.

I have been enabled to add a number of biographical details, the most important being the Flatman-Sancroft letters. No additional poems of particular merit are added though the bulk is considerable if those taken from "Heracitus Ridens" are actually his, as I believe they are.

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Thomas Flatman was born in London on Michaelmas Day, September 29th, 1637. This was the year Prynne, Burton and Bastwick were stood in the pillory, deprived of their ears and fined £5000 each and sentenced to be imprisoned for life. Thus we see at the birth of the future Royalist poet the clouds of the Puritan Revolution were gathering. He was born on Red Cross Street in the Parish of St. Giles, Cripple Gate. Flatman's father was Robert Flatman who according to his will was "of the Parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, in the country of Middlesex, gentleman," a native of Mendham, Norfolk. Anthony à Wood says he was a clerk in the chancery. He outlived his more illustrious son, dying between the 5th and the 21st of August, 1689 leaving a considerable sum of money and some real estate. One other son, Richard, had died before him, for it was in the third edition of Flatman's Poems, printed in 1682, that a "Pindaric Ode on the Death of my dear Brother" first appeared. Two children outlived Robert, Robert who died March 24th, 1692 and a daughter, Franck, of whose death I find no record.

On September 22nd, 1649, Flatman was admitted as Scholar at Winchester College, founded by William of Wykeham who also founded New College, Oxford. So it was most appropriate that after spending five years at Winchester, Flatman should in due course of events make his way to New College. Wood has it that Flatman was "elected a fellow in 1654." It is hardly likely that a fellowship would be offered at this time, Wood probably confusing the word "fellow" with "scholar." According to the "Dictionary of National Biography," he

was admitted on September 11th. of the same year. He did not matriculate, however, until the next year, for in Joseph Foster's "Alumni Oxoniensis" we read, "Flatman, Thomas, pleb. New College, matric. 25th July, 1655." Presumably the word "pleb" here used meant the son of a tradesman or clerk. His home address was given as Aldersgate Street. In 1656 he was still a student, a fellow by this time, for in this year he contributed to "Affectuum decidua, or due expression in honour of the truly noble C. Capell, Esq." printed in 1656 at Oxford.

Flatman was entered at the Inner Temple in 1656. This, of course, means nothing more than that his name was entered, for as we have seen, he was still a student at Oxford in 1656. Certainly by 1658 he had taken up his residence at the Temple for his poems prefaced to William Sanderson's "Graphice," printed that same year, where written from the Inner Temple. Here he was joined in 1659 by a former college-mate, Samuel Woodford, and we are told that they were chamber-fellows. Both of these young men contributed in 1658 to "Naps upon Parnassus" by Sam Austin. Wood gives an amusing account of Austin and the publication of this book. Says Wood of Austin, "he fell into the hands of the satyrical wits of the University, who having easily got some of his prose and poetry and published them under these titles: 'Naps upon Parnassus. A Sleepy Muse nipt and pincht, though not awakened &c. London 1658.'"

A manuscript book in the handwriting of Flatman gives us the date of May 13th, 1659 as the time of the composition of the poem entitled "Thoughts" and from this time poetry must have engrossed no little of his time.

This manuscript book is in the possession of the University of Pennsylvania Library. Its principal value lies in the fact that it contains twenty-four poems endorsed as follows: "Mis-

cellanies of Thomas Flatman, ex Interiori Templo, Londini, sic imperantibus fatis, Nov. 9, 1661, 13 Carioli 2." The handwriting is Flatman's. Three of the poems, "Mrs S. W.," "Job 27," and the song beginning "O no, O no" do not appear in any of the four editions and are therefore printed here with the rest of Flatman's uncollected poems. Besides the poems, there are thirty-four pages filled with very fine script, apparently Flatman's, of what seem to be abbreviated notes on sermons.

Other activities beside poetry must have occupied him for two of his extant miniatures are dated but two years later, 1661. No mention has been found where and under whom Flatman studied the art of miniature painting, but from his own to our time his work has been highly commended and more than one critic has stated that his work is second only to that of Cooper the most noted miniature painter of his time. Some fifteen portraits of prominent persons of his time are still preserved in various collections in England.

Wood attributes to Flatman in the year 1660, "Virtus rediviva" addressed to Charles I with the statement that "whether Thom. Flatman was the author of these poems I cannot justly tell." Wood apparently forgot that he had previously ascribed this volume to its rightful author, Thomas Ford.

Our next reference to Flatman is the statement that he was the author of the "Montelion Almanacks for the year 1661 and 1662." It is my belief, despite this statement in "Athenae Oxonienses" that John Phillips, the nephew of John Milton, was their author. William Godwin in his "Lives of Edward and John Phillips" dismisses Wood's statement as unworthy of consideration. Certainly Flatman's reputation would gain nothing by having these writings fastened on him. He may have written them but they are so foreign to the rest of his