

Winter: A Poem (1726).

James Thomson.

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W I N T E R.
A
P O E M.

By *JAMES THOMSON*, A.M.

—————*Rapidus Sol*
Nondum Hyemem contingit Equis. Jam præterit æstas.

———*Glacialis Hyems canos hirsuta Capillos.*

V I R G.



L O N D O N :

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T O

The R I G H T H O N O U R A B L E

Sir *S P E N C E R C O M P T O N*.

S I R,

The Author of the following P O E M begs Leave to inscribe this his first Performance to your Name, and Patronage. Unknown Himself, and only introduced by the *Muse*, He yet ventures to approach You, with a modest Cheerfulness: For, whoever attempts to excel in any Generous Art, tho' he comes alone, and unregarded by the World, may hope for your Notice, and Esteem. Happy! if I can, in any Degree, merit this Good Fortune: as every Ornament, and Grace of polite Learning is yours, your single Approbation will be my Fame.

I D A R E not indulge my Heart, by dwelling on your *Public* Character; on that exalted Honour, and Integrity which distinguish You, in that *August Assembly*, where You preside; that unshaken Loyalty to your *Sovereign*, that disinterested Concern for his *People*, which shine out, united, in all your Behaviour, and finish the *Patriot*. I am conscious of my Want of Strength, and Skill for so delicate an Undertaking: And yet, as the Shepherd, in his Cottage, may feel and acknowledge the

Influence of the Sun with as lively a Gratitude, as the Great Man, in his Palace, *even I* may be allowed to publish *my Sense* of those Blessings, which from so many powerful Vertues, are derived to the Nation they adorn.

I conclude with saying, that your fine Discernment and Humanity, in your *Private* Capacity, are so conspicuous, that, if this Address is not received with some Indulgence, it will be a severe Conviction, that what I have written has not the least Share of Merit.

I am,

With the profoundest Respect,

S I R,

Your most devoted,

and most faithful,

Humble Servant,

James Thomson.

W I N T E R.

A

P O E M.



SEE! W I N T E R comes, to rule the varied Year,
Sullen, and sad; with all his rising Train,
Vapours, and *Clouds*, and *Storms*: Be these my Theme,
These, that exalt the Soul to solemn Thought,
And heavenly musing. Welcome kindred Glooms!
Wish'd, wint'ry, Horrors, hail!---With frequent Foot,

Pleas'd, have I, in my cheerful Morn of Life,
When, nurs'd by careless *Solitude*, I liv'd,

And sung of Nature with unceasing Joy,
 Pleas'd, have I wander'd thro' your rough Domains;
 Trod the pure, virgin, Snows, my self as pure:
 Heard the Winds roar, and the big Torrent burst:
 Or seen the deep, fermenting, Tempest brew'd,
 In the red, evening, Sky.— Thus pass'd the Time,
 Till, thro' the opening, Chambers of the South,
 Look'd out the joyous *Spring*, look'd out, and smil'd.

T H E E too, Inspirer of the toiling Swain!
 Fair A U T U M N, yellow rob'd! I'll sing of thee,
 Of thy last, temper'd, Days, and sunny Calms;
 When all the golden *Hours* are on the Wing,
 Attending thy Retreat, and round thy Wain,
 Slow-rolling, onward to the Southern Sky.

B E H O L D! the well-pos'd *Hornet*, hovering, hangs,
 With quivering Pinions, in the genial Blaze;
 Flys off, in airy Circles: then returns,
 And hums, and dances to the beating Ray.
 Nor shall the Man, that, musing, walks alone,
 And, heedless, strays within his radiant Lists,
 Go unchastis'd away.--- Sometimes, a Fleece
 Of Clouds, wide-scattering, with a lucid Veil,
 Soft, shadow o'er th'unruffled Face of Heaven;
 And, thro' their dewy Sluices, shed the Sun,
 With temper'd Influence down. Then is the Time,
 For those, whom *Wisdom*, and whom *Nature* charm,
 To steal themselves from the degenerate Croud,
 And soar above this *little* Scene of Things:
 To tread low-thoughted *Vice* beneath their Feet:
 To lay their Passions in a gentle Calm,
 And woo lone *Quiet*, in her silent *Walks*.

NOW, solitary, and in pensive Guise,
 Oft, let me wander o'er the russet Mead,
 Or thro' the pining Grove; where scarce is heard
 One dying Strain, to cheer the *Woodman's* Toil:
 Sad *Philomel*, perchance, pours forth her Plaint,
 Far, thro' the withering Copse. Mean while, the Leaves,
 That, late, the Forest clad with lively Green,
 Nipt by the drizzly Night, and Sallow-hu'd,

Fall, wavering thor' the Air; or shower amain,
 Urg'd by the Breeze, that sobs amid the Boughs.
 Then list'ning *Hares* forsake the rustling Woods,
 And, starting at the frequent Noise, escape
 To the rough Stubble, and the rushy Fen.
 Then *Woodcocks*, o'er the fluctuating Main,
 That glimmers to the Glimpses of the Moon,
 Stretch their long Voyage to the woodland Glade:
 Where, wheeling with uncertain Flight, they mock
 The nimble *Fowler's* Aim.— Now *Nature* droops;
 Languish the living Herbs, with pale Decay:
 And all the *various Family* of Flowers
 Their sunny Robes resign. The falling Fruits,
 Thro' the still Night, forsake the Parent-Bough,
 That, in the first, grey, Glances of the Dawn,
 Looks wild, and wonders at the wintry Waste.

T H E *Year*, yet pleasing, but declining fast,
 Soft, o'er the secret Soul, in gentle Gales,
 A Philosophic Melancholly breathes,
 And bears the swelling Thought aloft to Heaven.
 Then forming Fancy rouses to conceive,
 What never mingled with the Vulgar's Dream:
 Then wake the tender *Pang*, the pitying *Tear*,
 The *Sigh* for suffering Worth, the *Wish* prefer'd
 For Humankind, the *Joy* to see them bless'd,
 And all the *Social Off-spring* of the Heart!

O H! Bear me then to high, embowering, Shades,
 To twilight Groves, and visionary Vales;
 To weeping Grottos, and to hoary Caves;
 Where Angel-Forms are seen, and Voices heard,
 Sigh'd in low Whispers, that abstract the Soul,
 From outward Sense, far into Worlds remote.

N O W, when the Western Sun withdraws the Day,
 And humid *Evening*, gliding o'er the Sky,
 In her chill Progress, checks the stragglng Beams,
 And robs them of their gather'd, vapoury, Prey,
 Where Marshes stagnate, and where Rivers wind,
 Cluster the rolling *Fogs*, and swim along
 The dusky-mantled Lawn: then slow descend,

Once more to mingle with their *Watry Friends*.
 The vivid Stars shine out, in radiant Files,
 And boundless *Ether* glows, till the fair Moon
 Shows her broad Visage, in the crimson'd East;
 Now, stooping, seems to kiss the passing Cloud:
 Now, o'er the pure *Cerulean*, rides sublime.
 Wide the pale Deluge floats, with silver Waves,
 O'er the sky'd Mountain, to the low-laid Vale;
 From the white Rocks, with dim Reflexion, gleams,
 And faintly glitters thro' the waving Shades.

A L L Night, abundant Dews, unnoted, fall;
 And, at Return of Morning, silver o'er
 The Face of Mother-Earth; from every Branch
 Depending, tremble the translucent Gems,
 And, quivering, seem to fall away, yet cling,
 And sparkle in the Sun, whose rising Eye,
 With Fogs bedim'd, portends a beauteous Day.

N O W, giddy Youth, who headlong Passions fire,
 Rouse the wild Game, and stain the guiltless Grove,
 With Violence, and Death; yet call it Sport,
 To scatter Ruin thro' the Realms of *Love*,
 And *Peace*, that thinks no Ill: But These, the *Muse*,
 Whose Charity, unlimited, extends
 As wide as *Nature* works, disdains to sing,
 Returning to her nobler Theme in view —

F O R, see! where *Winter* comes, himself, confest,
 Striding the gloomy Blast. First Rains obscure
 Drive thro' the mingling Skies, with Tempest foul;
 Beat on the Mountain's Brow, and shake the Woods,
 That, sounding, wave below. The dreary Plain
 Lies overwhelm'd, and lost. The bellying Clouds
 Combine, and deepening into Night, shut up
 The Day's fair Face. The Wanderers of Heaven,
 Each to his Home, retire; save those that love
 To take their Pastime in the troubled Air,
 And, skimming, stutter round the dimply Flood.
 The Cattle, from th'untasted Fields, return,
 And ask, with Meaning low, their wonted Stalls;
 Or ruminat in the contiguous Shade:

Thither, the household, feathery, People croud,
 The crested Cock, with all his female Train,
 Pensive, and wet. Mean while, the Cottage-Swain
 Hangs o'er the enlivening Blaze, and, taleful, there,
 Recounts his simple Frolic: Much he talks,
 And much he laughs, nor recks the Storm that blows
 Without, and rattles on his humble Roof.

A T last, the muddy Deluge pours along,
 Resistless, roaring; dreadful down it comes
 From the chapt Mountain, and the mossy Wild,
 Tumbling thro' Rocks abrupt, and sounding far:
 Then o'er the sanded Valley, floating, spreads,
 Calm, sluggish, silent; till again constrain'd,
 Betwixt two meeting Hills, it bursts a Way,
 Where Rocks, and Woods o'erhang the turbid Stream.
 There gathering triple Force, rapid, and deep,
 It boils, and wheels, and foams, and thunders thro'.

N A T U R E! great Parent! whose directing Hand
 Rolls round the Seasons of the changeful Year,
 How mighty! how majestick are thy Works!
 With what a pleasing Dread they swell the Soul,
 That sees, atonish'd! and, astonish'd sings!
 You too, ye *Winds!* that now begin to blow,
 With boisterous Sweep, I raise my Voice to you.
 Where are your Stores, ye viewless *Beings!* say?
 Where your aerial Magazines reserv'd,
 Against the Day of Tempest perilous?
 In what untravel'd Country of the Air,
 Hush'd in still Silence, sleep you, when 'tis calm?

L A T E, in the louring Sky, red, fiery, Streaks,
 Begin to flush about; the reeling Clouds
 Stagger with dizzy Aim, as doubting yet
 Which Master to obey: while rising, slow,
 Sad, in the Leaden-colour'd East, the Moon
 Wears a [bleak] Circle round her sully'd Orb.
 Then issues forth the Storm, with loud Control,
 And the thin Fabrick of the pillar'd Air
 O'erturns, at once. Prone, on th'uncertain Main,
 Decends th' Etherial Force, and plows its Waves,

With dreadful [Rift]: from the mid-Deep, appears,
 Surge after Surge, the rising, wat'ry, War.
 Whitening, the angry Billows rowl immense,
 And roar their Terrors, thro' the shuddering Soul
 Of feeble Man, amidst their Fury caught,
 And, dash'd upon his Fate: Then, o'er the Cliff,
 Where dwells the *Sea-Mew*, unconfin'd, they fly,
 And, hurrying, swallow up the steril Shore.

T H E Mountain growls; and all its sturdy *Sons*
 Stoop to the Bottom of the Rocks they shade:
 Lone, on its Midnight-Side, and all aghast,
 The dark, way-faring, *Stranger*, breathless, toils,
 And climbs against the Blast —
 Low, waves the rooted Forest, vex'd, and sheds
 What of its leafy Honours yet remains.
 Thus, struggling thro' the disipated Grove,
 The whirling Tempest raves along the Plain;
 And, on the Cottage thacht, or lordly Dome,
 Keen-fastening, shakes 'em to the solid Base.
Sleep, frighted, flies; the hollow Chimney howls,
 The Windows rattle, and the Hinges creak.

T H E N, too, they say, thro' all the burthen'd Air,
 Long Groans are heard, shrill Sounds, and distant Sighs,
 That, murmur'd by the *Demon* of the Night,
 Warn the devoted *Wretch* of Woe, and Death!
 Wild Uproar lords it wide: the Clouds commixt,
 With Stars, swift-gliding, sweep along the Sky.
 All Nature reels.—But hark! the *Almighty* speaks:
 Instant, the chidden Storm begins to pant,
 And dies, at once, into a noiseless Calm.

A S yet, 'tis Midnight's Reign; the weary Clouds,
 Slow-meeting, mingle into solid Gloom;
 Now, while the drousy World lies lost in Sleep,
 Let me associate with the low-brow'd *Night*,
 And *Contemplation*, her sedate Compeer;
 Let me shake off th'intrusive Cares of Day,
 And lay the meddling Senses all aside.

A N D now, ye lying *Vanities* of Life!

You ever-tempting, ever-cheating Train!
 Where are you now? and what is your Amount?
 Vexation, Disappointment, and Remorse.
 Sad, sickening, Thought! and yet, deluded Man,
 A Scene of wild, disjointed, Visions past,
 And broken Slumbers, rises, still resolv'd,
 With new-flush'd Hopes, to run your giddy Round.

F A T H E R of Light, and Life! Thou *Good Supreme!*
 O! teach me what is Good! teach me thy self!
 Save me from Folly, Vanity, and Vice,
 From every low Pursuit! and feed my Soul,
 With Knowledge, conscious Peace, and Vertue pure,
 Sacred, substantial, never-fading Bliss!

L O! from the livid East, or piercing North,
 Thick Clouds ascend, in whose capacious Womb,
 A vapoury Deluge lies, to Snow congeal'd:
 Heavy, they roll their fleecy World along;
 And the Sky saddens with th'impending Storm.
 Thro' the hush'd Air, the whitening Shower descends,
 At first, thin-wavering; till, at last, the Flakes
 Fall broad, and wide, and fast, dimming the Day,
 With a continual Flow. See! sudden, hoar'd,
 The Woods beneath the stainless Burden bow,
 Blackning, along the mazy Stream it melts;
 Earth's universal Face, deep-hid, and chill,
 Is all one, dazzling, Waste. The Labourer-Ox
 Stands cover'd o'er with Snow, and then demands
 The Fruit of all his Toil. The Fowls of Heaven,
 Tam'd by the cruel Season, croud around
 The winnowing Store, and claim the little Boon,
 That *Providence* allows. The foodless Wilds
 Pour forth their brown *Inhabitants*; the Hare,
 Tho' timorous of Heart, and hard beset
 By Death, in various Forms, dark Snares, and Dogs,
 And more un pitying Men, the Garden seeks,
 Urg'd on by *fearless* Want. The bleating Kind
 Eye the bleak Heavens, and next, the glistening Earth,
 With Looks of dumb Despair; then sad, dispers'd,
 Dig, for the wither'd Herb, thro' Heaps of Snow.

N O W, *Shepherds*, to your helpless Charge be kind;
 Baffle the raging Year, and fill their Penns
 With Food, at will: lodge them below the Blast,
 And wach them strict; for from the bellowing East,
 In this dire Season, oft the Whirlwind's Wing
 Sweeps up the Burthen of whole wintry Plains,
 In one fierce Blast, and o'er th' unhappy Flocks,
 Lodg'd in the Hollow of two neighbouring Hills,
 The billowy Tempest whelm; till, upwards urg'd,
 The Valley to a shining Mountain swells,
 That curls its Wreaths amid the freezing Sky.

N OW, all amid the Rigours of the Year,
 In the wild Depth of Winter, while without
 The ceaseless Winds blow keen, be my Retreat
 A rural, shelter'd, solitary, Scene;
 Where ruddy Fire, and beaming Tapers join
 To chase the chearless Gloom: there let me sit,
 And hold high Converse with the mighty Dead,
Sages of ancient Time, as Gods rever'd,
 As Gods beneficent, who blest Mankind,
 With Arts, and Arms, and humaniz'd a World.
 Rous'd at th' [inspiring] Thought — I throw aside
 The long-liv'd Volume, and, deep-musing, hail
 The sacred *Shades*, that, slowly-rising, pass
 Before my wondering Eyes — First, *Socrates*,
 Truth's early Champion, Martyr for his God:
Solon, the next, who built his Commonweal,
 On Equity's firm Base: *Lycurgus*, then,
 Severely good, and him of rugged *Rome*,
Numa, who soften'd her rapacious *Sons*.
Cimon sweet-soul'd, and *Aristides* just.
 Unconquer'd *Cato*, virtuous in Extreme;
 With that attemper'd * Heroe, mild, and firm,
 Who wept her Brother, while the Tyrant bled.
Scipio, the humane Warriour, gently brave,
 Fair Learning's Friend; who early sought the Shade,
 To dwell, with *Innocence*, and *Truth*, retir'd.
 And, equal to the best, the *Theban*, *He*
 Who, *single*, rais'd his Country into Fame.
 Thousands behind, the Boast of *Greece* and *Rome*,
 Whom *Vertue* owns, the Tribute of a Verse

**Timoleon*

Demand, but who can count the Stars of Heaven?
 Who sing their Influence on this lower World?
 But see who yonder comes! nor comes alone,
 With *sober* State, and of *majestic* Mein,
 The Sister-Muses in his Train — 'Tis He!
Maro! the best of Poets, and of Men!
 Great *Homer* too appears, of *daring* Wing!
Parent of Song! and, *equal*, by his Side,
 The *British Muse*, join'd Hand in Hand, they walk,
Darkling, nor miss their Way to Fame's Ascent.

Society divine! Immortal Minds!
 Still visit thus my Nights, for *you* reserv'd,
 And mount my soaring Soul to Deeds like yours.
Silence! thou lonely *Power!* the Door be thine:
 See, on the hallow'd Hour, that none intrude,
 Save *Lycidas*, the Friend, with Sense refin'd,
 Learning digested well, exalted Faith,
 Unstudy'd Wit, and Humour ever gay.

C L E A R Frost succeeds, and thro' the blew Serene,
 For Sight too fine, the Ætherial Nitre flies,
 To bake the Glebe, and bind the slip'ry Flood.
 This of the wintry Season is the Prime;
 Pure are the Days, and lustrous are the Nights,
 Brighten'd with starry Worlds, till then unseen.
 Mean while, the Orient, darkly red, breathes forth
 An Icy Gale, that, in its mid Career,
 Arrests the bickering Stream. The nightly Sky,
 And all her glowing Constellations pour
 Their rigid Influence down: It freezes on
 Till Morn, late-rising, o'er the drooping World,
 Lifts her pale Eye, unjoyous: then appears
 The various Labour of the silent Night,
 The pendant Isicle, the Frost-Work fair,
 Where thousand Figures rise, the crusted Snow,
 Tho' white, made whiter, by the fining North.
 On blithsome Frolics bent, the youthful Swains,
 While every Work of Man is laid at Rest,
 Rush o'er the watry Plains, and, shuddering, view
 The fearful Deeps below: or with the Gun,
 And faithful Spaniel, range the ravag'd Fields,

And, adding to the Ruin of the Year,
Distress the Feathery, or the Footed *Game*.

B U T hark! the nightly Winds, with hollow Voice,
Blow, blustering, from the South— the Frost subdu'd,
Gradual, resolves into a weeping Thaw.
Spotted, the Mountains shine: loose Sleet descends,
And floods the Country round: the Rivers swell,
Impatient for the Day.--- Those sullen Seas,
That wash th'ungenial Pole, will rest no more,
Beneath the Shackles of the mighty North;
But, rousing all their Waves, resistless heave,—
And hark!--the length'ning Roar, continuous, runs
Athwart the rifted Main; at once, it bursts,
And piles a thousand Mountains to the Clouds!
Ill fares the Bark, the Wretches' last Resort,
That, last amid the floating Fragments, moors
Beneath the Shelter of an Icy Isle;
While Night o'erwhelms the Sea, and Horror looks
More horrible. Can human Hearts endure
Th'assembled *Mischiefs*, that besiege them round:
Unlist'ning *Hunger*, fainting *Weariness*,
The *Roar* of Winds, and Waves, the *Crush* of Ice,
Now, ceasing, now, renew'd, with louder Rage,
And bellowing round the Main: Nations remote,
Shook from their Midnight-Slumbers, deem they hear
Portentous Thunder, in the troubled Sky.
More to embroil the Deep, Leviathan,
And his unwieldy Train, in horrid Sport,
Tempest the loosen'd Brine; while, thro' the Gloom,
Far, from the dire, unhospitable Shore,
The Lyon's Rage, the World's sad Howl is heard,
And all the fell Society of Night.
Yet, *Providence*, that ever-waking *Eye*
Looks down, with Pity, on the fruitless Toil
Of Mortals, lost to Hope, and *Lights* them safe,
Thro' all this dreary Labyrinth of Fate.

'Tis done!-- Dread W I N T E R has subdu'd the Year,
And reigns, tremendous, o'er the desert Plains!
How dead the Vegetable Kingdom lies!
How dumb the Tuneful! *Horror* wide extends

His solitary Empire.— Now, fond *Man!*
 Behold thy pictur'd Life: pass some few Years,
 Thy flow'ring S P R I N G, thy short-liv'd S U M M E R's Strength,
 Thy sober AUTUMN, fading [into] Age,
 And pale concluding, W I N T E R shuts thy Scene,
 And shrouds *Thee* in the Grave— where now, are fled
 Those Dreams of Greatness? those unsolid Hopes
 Of Happiness? those Longings after Fame?
 Those restless Cares? those busy, bustling Days?
 Those Nights of secret Guilt? those veering Thoughts,
 Flutt'ring 'twixt Good, and Ill, that shar'd thy Life?
 All, now, are vanish'd! *Vertue*, sole, survives,
 Immortal, Mankind's never-failing Friend,
 His Guide to Happiness on high— and see!
 'Tis come, the Glorious *Morn!* the second Birth
 Of Heaven, and Earth!— awakening Nature heard
 Th'Almighty Trumpet's Voice, and starts to Life
 Renew'd, unfading. Now, th' Eternal *Scheme*,
 That Dark Perplexity, that Mystic Maze,
 Which Sight cou'd never trace, nor Heart conceive,
 To *Reason's* Eye, refin'd, clears up apace.
 Angels, and Men, astonish'd, pause— and dread
 To travel tho' the Depth of Providence,
 Untry'd. unbounded. Ye vain *Learned!* see,
 And, prostrate in the Dust, adore that *Power*,
 And *Goodness*, oft arraigned. See now the Cause,
 Why conscious *Worth*, oppress'd, in secret long
 Mourn'd, unregaded: Why the *Good Man's* Share,
 In Life, was Gall, and bitterness of Soul:
 Why the lone *Widow*, and her *Orphans*, pin'd
 In starving Solitude, while *Luxury*,
 In Palaces, lay prompting her low Thought,
 To form unreal Wants: why Heaven-born *Faith*,
 And *Charity*, prime Grace! wore the *red* Marks
 Of *Persecution's* Scourge: why licens'd *Pain*,
 That cruel *Spoiler*, that embosom' *Foe*,
 Imbitter'd all our Bliss. Ye Good *Ditrest!*
 Ye Noble *Few!* that, here, unbending, stand
 Beneath Life's Pressures-- yet a little while,
 And all your Woes are past. *Time* swiftly fleets,
 And wish'd *Eternity*, approaching, brings
 Life undecaying, Love without Allay,
 Pure flowing Joy, and Happiness sincere.

The E N D.

