William Thomas Fitzgerald, â??An Address to the Company assembled at Freemasonâ??s Hall, on the Anniversary of the Literary Fund, May 2 1799â?•

Description

[WILLIAM THOMAS FITZGERALD, ESQ.]

â??An Address to the Company assembled at Freemasonâ??s Hall, on the Anniversary of the Literary Fund, May 2 1799â?•

Is there a sight the heart can hold more dear,
Than what Humanity contemplates here?
Pure the delight that animates the breast,
To see you throng to succour the distressâ??d.
Manes of Butler, Otway, Dryden, rise!
Behold an object grateful to your eyes;
England, at last atoning for her crimeâ??
England, that starvâ??d the witty and sublime,
With contrite feeling opes her ample store,
And bids the Sons of Genius starve no more.
â??Tis said, that some to Poesy are foes,
And think that Literature engenders woes:
Such would bring back a barbâ??rous age again;
For none but Vandals persecute the pen!
Though some profane the Museâ??s gift divine,
And bow at Avarice of Ambitionâ??s shrine;
Though some illiberal Satireâ??s pen employ,
And mingle hemlock in the cup of joy;
Pierce the recesses of domestic life,
Expose the husband, or defame the wife;
The tale of scandal bring to public eye,
And in smooth numbers circulate the lieâ??
The Museâ??s happier office is, to prove
The bond of Friendship, and the lamp of Love;
To harmonize the passions of the Mind,
To please, instruct, and meliorate Mankind.
By her the selfish feelings are suppressâ??d,
And social virtues kindle in the breast;
She points to Natureâ??s wise and genâ??rous plan,
And shews how strongly man depends on man;
This sacred truth the thatch-roofâ??d Peasant owns,
And erminâ??d Monarchs feel it on their thrones!
A loyal zeal for Freedom she inspires,
And nerves to energy the Patriotâ??s firesâ??
Is there a man so base, so lost to shame,

Who does not venerate the Patriotâ??s name!
Not the proud leader of the servile crew,
Who grind the many, to enrich the few;
But he who, active in his Countryâ??s cause,
Asserts her liberties, maintains her laws;
Whose upright mind pursues no private end,
At once the Monarchâ??s, and the Peopleâ??s friend!
Who stems Oppression, which much oftâ??ner springs
From Tyrant Factions than from Tyrant Kings;
Arms for his Sovereign, to his standard flies;
For Freedom conquers, or for Freedom dies:
Not for that Fiend, detested by the good,
That bathâ??d unhappy France with kindred blood;
That brutalizâ??d a Nation once humane,
Whose sire is Discord, and whose offspring Pain!
That drinks the tears despairing orphans shed,
Tortures the living, and insults the dead!
That leads from crime to crime, from bad to worse,
The Princeâ??s tyrant, and the Peopleâ??s curse!
Which, like a torrent bursting evâ??ry mound,
Destroys the harvest, desolates the ground;
Saps the foundation of the loftiest towâ??r,
And whelms the work of ages in an hour!
This Gallic Daemon, hated by the wise,
Shuns the keen searching of the Patriotâ??s eyes:
â??Tis not for her his countryâ??s foes he braves,
In burning climes, or on the stormy waves;
But for that Freedom, native of our soil,
That dignifies command, and sweetens toil!
Whose graceful form, unbent by time, appears,
Blooming as youth, though sanctified by years!
For British Libertyâ??that draws the line,
â??Twixt wild Democracy, and Right Divine;
With equal zeal the Monarchâ??s powers maintains,
And guards the Subject from despotic chains:
The slave who once imbibes the English air,
Freed from his fetters, owns the Goddess there!
Where Heaven these words, in voice of thunder spoke,
The Tree of Freedom is the British Oak!

Excuse the warmth with which my Muse expressâ??d
The subject nearest, dearest to my breast;
But, when the foes of earth and heaven conspire,
To desolate the world with sword, and fire,
Each honest manâ??s a patriot at the heart,
And burns to take his Kingâ??s and Countryâ??s part.
When Time has swept the present race away,
And friends to Science celebrate this day;

Remembrance shall with more than pleasure name
And give your liberal patronage to Fameâ??
To rival Geniusâ??mutual Envy pastâ??
Succeeding ages shall be just at last;
And He, who first this noble fabric raisâ??d,
Shall with no common gratitude be praised:
Time, that destroys the Heroâ??s trophied bust,
Shall spare the bay that blossoms oâ??er his dust.

NOTES:

Title *The Literary Fund* Now, â??The Royal Literary Fund.â?• Founded in 1790 by Rev. David Williams, the fund aims to support writers in pursing their work in times of financial hardship. The fund has aided well-known writers like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence, and James Joyce, as well as countless other lesser-known authors.

5 *Manes of Butler, Otway, Dryden* Summoning the souls of poets Samuel Butler (1612-1680), Thomas Otway (1652-1685), and John Dryden (1631-1700).

9 *opes* Opens, provides opportunity.

11 *Poesy* Poetry.

17 *illiberal* â??Unscholarly, not refinedâ?• (*OED*).

18 *hemlock* â??The common name of *Conium maculatum*, a poisonous umbelliferous plant, having a stout branched stem with purplish spots, finely divided leaves, and small white flowers; it is used medicinally as a powerful sedativeâ?• (*OED*).

32 *erminâ??d â??*Cloaked in ermine fur; garmentedâ?• (*OED*).

36 *venerate* â??To regard with feelings of respect and reverenceâ?• (*OED*).

60 *Gallic Daemon* References the French version of â??freedom,â?• or â??libertÃ©,â?• one of the rallying cries of the French Revolution (1789-99).

69 *Right Divine* A reference to the divine right of kings, which asserted that a kingâ??s absolute power was sanctioned by God.

75 *British Oak* An emblem of British nationalism.

88 *He, who first this noble fabric raisâ??d* Rev. David Williams (1738-1816), Welsh minster and philosopher who founded the Literary Fund.

91 *the bay* Or, laurel; â??Leaves or sprigs of this tree, *esp.* as woven into a wreath or garland to reward a conqueror or poetâ?• (*OED*).

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