

William Thomas Fitzgerald, “An Address to the Company assembled at Freemason’s Hall, on the Anniversary of the Literary Fund, May 2 1799”

Description

[WILLIAM THOMAS FITZGERALD, ESQ.]

“An Address to the Company assembled at Freemason’s Hall, on the Anniversary of the Literary Fund, May 2 1799”

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! Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 5
Behold an object grateful to your eyes;
England, at last atoning for her crime—
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 Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 10
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, Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 15
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; Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 20
The tale of scandal bring to public eye,
And in smooth numbers circulate the lie—
The Museâ€™s happier office is, to prove
The bond of Friendship, and the lamp of Love;
To harmonize the passions of the Mind, Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 25
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; Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 30
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 fires—
Is there a man so base, so lost to shame, Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 35

To desolate the world with sword, and fire,
Each honest manâ€™s a patriot at the heart, 80

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 Fame— 85

To rival Genius—mutual Envy past—

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, 90

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 pursuing 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€™(QED).

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€™(QED).

32 *erminâ€™d* â€™Cloaked in ermine fur; garmentedâ€™(QED).

36 *venerate* â€™To regard with feelings of respect and reverenceâ€™(QED).

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 minister 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€™(QED).

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