ed by some small critics of the city, upon what ground it is unnecessary to inquire. That his youthful productions were not without their faults, it is very easy to conceive, and these were pointed out with laborious minuteness ; but their beauties, of which it is improbable that they were en­tirely destitute, passed unobserved. Finding that his coun­trymen had formed a standard of composition, both in prose and verse, which he was unable to reach, Thomson resolv­ed to submit his productions to a tribunal of strangers. But although the former were insensible to his merits when their favour might have been of some use to him, they did not fail to praise him when their praise was of little value ; nor did they neglect the accustomed tribute of lamentation when all tears were vain. Long after the tomb had closed over his remains, a society of gentlemen in the Scotish metropolis was formed for the purpose of celebrating his birth-day by a musical entertainment. These tuneful associates, who continued their union for several years, were pleased to call themselves the Knights Companions of the Cape.

Thomson now repaired to London, carrying with him letters of recommendation to various individuals of influ­ence ; but of these credentials he had the misfortune to be robbed. They were tied up in a handkerchief, and when he was staring at the wonders of the metropolis, he was eased of bis bundle by a pickpocket, who was probably as much chagrined by what he had gained, as Thomson was by what he had lost. To London it is said that he was allured by the hopes excited in him by Lady Grizzel Bail­lie, who promised much, and performed nothing. For the supply of his numerous wants, and among others that of a pair of shoes, his sole dependence was upon bis poem of Winter, which the booksellers manifested little eagerness to purchase. At last he sold it for a trifling sum, but it was ong in finding admirers, and the publisher, “ J. Millan, at Locke’s Head in Shug-Lane,” had some misgivings that his parsimony savoured of rashness. It however fell in thc way of some pcrsons of taste and discernment, who spread its fame, and it was finally received with very general ap­plause. It appeared in 1726, with a prose dedication to Sir Spencer Compton.@@' At this period of his history, the indigent bard was much indebted to the friendship of Mal­let, who was then tutor to the sons of the duke of Montrose. Mallet was a man of consummate dexterity, and very well qualified to enlighten his countryman in the art of pushing his fortune. In his zeal for the dignity of letters, Dr John­son remarks that Thomson at this time “ obtained the no­tice of Aaron Hill, whom, being friendless and indigent, and glad of kindness, he courted with every expression of servile adulation.” Hyperbolical encomium can expect little sympathy from those who have never been obliged, anymore than raving resentment from those who have never been injured ; but surely the eloquence of gratitude is not so frequently heard as to create disgust. It appears from thc interchange of high-flown compliments in the corre­spondence between Hill and Richardson, that flattery seldom came amiss to either ; yet Hill was an ingenious and bene­volent man, upon whom much praise could be conscienti­ously bestowed. He was also a man of spirit, as Pope had occasion to ascertain, when he provided him with a niche in the Dunciad. A proof of all these qualities now appear­ed in his conduct to the young poet. Of the dedication Sir Spencer Compton took no notice, until there appeared in the newspapers a copy of complimentary verses, address­ed by Hill to Thomson, lamenting the miseries of genius, and condemning the paltry Maecenases of the age. The result of this memento was an interview with Thomson, in which Sir Spencer, with much of the grace and delicacy of one bestowing alms upon a mendicant, made the poet a present of twenty guineas. The successful author of the present day has reason to be thankful that the multiplicity of readers has placed him above dependence upon any other patronage, whether private or political. A second impres­sion of *Winter* was now called for, and the author’s friends began rapidly to increase. Among these was Dr Rundle, afterwards bishop of Derry, who introduced him to the Lord Chancellor Talbot. In 1727 appeared *Summer,* which was followed by “ A Poem sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton." To this production he was enabled, by the in­struction of his friend Mr Gray, to impart a philosophic spirit, worthy of the departed sage. This year also produced *Britannia,* in which was echoed the general cry against the ministry for remissness in vindicating the national honour, which had been insulted by the maritime depredations of the Spaniards. In 1728 was published *Spring,* dedicated to the countess of Hertford, afterwards duchess of Somerset, by whom the poet was invited to pass some time at the family-seat. The countess was herself addicted to the muses, and regaled her visitor by reciting to him many of her poeti­cal lucubrations. This species of pastime, however, Thom­son found somewhat insipid, and sought relief so frequently in the jovial company which surrounded his lordship’s table, that he forfeited the favour of his learned hostess, and this invitation to become her guest, which was the first, was also the last that he ever received. In 1729, the tragedy of Sophonisba was acted at Drury Lane ; and in the following year, by the addition of *Autumn,* the plan of “ The Seasons” was completed, and they were combined in a quarto volume. The success of the play was much more moderate than was anticipated by the author’s numerous and powerful friends. The feeble verse,

O, Sophonisba, Sophonisba. O!

and the parody to which it gave rise,

O, Jemmy Thomson, Jemmy Thomson, O!

are still remembered ; a fate which has attended few of his other tragic lines. His genius does not seem to have been dramatic : he is often flat, and when he rises, he seldom rises above rant ; even his declamation, into which his dia­logue too often degenerates, is not splendid, and his pa­thos is not affecting. In this, and in all his other plays, there is a perpetual repetition of the word glory, which argues great poverty of sentiment ; and Hurd did him little injustice when he applied to his palpable and laborious art in tragedy the words of Horace, *promissus grandia turget.* Nor does he display any skill in depicting character, being *a* more diligent observer of external nature, than of the qualities of men. His heroine hates the Romans, and, with little variation of expression, she says so every time she ap­pears upon the scene. Syphax is only another Bajazet, and his rival Masinissa a common tragic lover, with whose rap­tures and lamentations no one has much sympathy.

About this time, Thomson is said to have been under great obligations to the eccentric generosity of Quin, the celebrated actor, who, as the story goes, relieved him from a spιmging-house in Holborn. After the publication of his Seasons, one of his creditors had him arrested, judging that a likely time to procure payment. the amount of the debt was not forthcoming, and Thomson had every pro­spect of a lengthened sojourn in his involuntary retirement, w hen he was visited by Quin, with whom he had no per­sonal acquaintance. The comedian gracefully apologized for his intrusion, to which Thomson was easily reconciled. The additional liberty of ordering supper was also taken in good part. After they bad supped luxuriously and drunk freely, Quin informed his new associate that he was in­debted to him in the sum of one hundred pounds for plea­sure received in the perusal of the Seasons. He then de-

@@@, Winter; a Poem. By James Thomson, A. Μ. Lond. 1726, fol.