posited the money on the table, and took his departure, leaving the imprisoned bard full of gratitude and amaze­ment.

Thomson’s poetical labours were now agreeably inter­rupted by an invitation to attend the eldest son of Lord Talbot upon his travels. For this advantageous opportunity of extending his experience, he was indebted to the friend­ship of Dr Rundle. Upon his return to England, he was made secretary of briefs ; the profits of which appointment were fully adequate to all his wants and desires. When in Italy, he conceived the idea of wτiting the poem of *Liberty,* which was afterwards completed in five parts, successively published in quarto ; the first, second, and third in 1735, the fourth and fifth in 1736. This poem he dedicated to the prince of Wales. One who has read the achievements of the masters of the world, and seen their posterity sunk in slavery and vice, is apt to imagine that he can say some­thing that is new on the blessings of freedom and the hor­rors of oppression. But his sensations, which have been felt by all, have been described by many ; and in the fer­vour of composition, mistaking the children of memory for the offspring of fancy, a great writer may produce, upon such an impracticable theme, nothing but a tissue of com­mon-places, when he dreams that he has been making an invaluable addition to the treasures of knowledge. No man, whether sane or otherwise, prefers darkness and chains to light and the free range of creation ; and when Thomson proved, by a multiplicity of examples drawn from the history of every age and nation, that the former were to be shunned and the latter pursued, the reader was neither amused nor instructed. By a species of infatua­tion not uncommon among authors, Thomson considered this poem the best of all his productions. It was coldly re­ceived by the public when it first appeared ; and after the poet’s death, when Sir George Lyttelton was collecting his works for the press, he thought the best way of consulting the reputation of his deceased friend was to abridge it ; a strange and unwarrantable proceeding, which no motives can justify. In the mutilated condition to which it was re­duced by Lyttelton, it now appears.

The mortification of finding the public opinion of his poem opposed to bis own, was followed by the death of Lord Talbot, an event which deprived Thomson of his place. The new chancellor, Lord Hardwicke, kept it va­cant for some time, in order to afford him an opportunity of applying, in the usual form, to be reinstated ; but no such application was made, and his lordship bestowed it upon another person. The silence of Thomson probably pro­ceeded from an incurable habit of neglecting his own affairs ; for his experience was sufficient to inform him, that the dignity of a needy man who expects to be loaded with un­solicited benefits, will soon be his sole possession. His great friends, however, did not desert him ; and soon after he had ceased to be a placeman, he was introduced to the prince of Wales, who, among other modes of courting po­pularity, professed himself a friend to men of letters. Be­ing questioned by the prince on the state of his affairs, Thomson informed his royal highness that “ they were in a more poetical posture than formerly.” This gay reply produced what might have been denied to a tedious cata­logue of grievances, a pension of one hundred pounds a year. This allowance, well-timed as it was, being insuf­ficient to support him in his former mode of living, he again had recourse to his pen. In 1738 his tragedy of Agamem­non was acted at Drury Lane. The performance was graced by the presence of Pope, who, on his entering the theatre, received from the audience nearly all the applause

of the evening ; for although supported by the acting of Quin in the hero, the play, to use the words of Johnson, “ had the fate which commonly attends mythological stories, and was only endured, but not favoured.” Being still compelled to write for the stage, Thomson next produced Ed­ward and Eleanora, to the first edition of which is pre­fixed the following advertisement : “ The representation of this tragedy on the stage was prohibited in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-nine.” Brooke’s Gus­tavus Vasa was the first, and Thomson’s the second, play prohibited by the operation of the new act for licensing dramatic performances. In both cases this act seems to have been exercised with very superfluous rigour. The following lines, however, which occur near the beginning of Thomson’s tragedy, may perhaps have arrested the eye of authority, and sealed its fate.

In times like these, Disturb’d and low'ring with unsettled freedom. One step to lawless power, one old attempt Renew’d, the least infringement of our charters. Would burl the giddy nation into tempest.

In conjunction with Mallet, he afterwards wrote the masque of Alfred, which was played before the prince of Wales. To the favour of that illustrious personage, who was on bad terms with the court, it is probable that he owed, in some degree, the prohibition of his former drama. The tragedy of Tancred and Sigismunda, taken from the novel in Gil Blas, was performed at Drury Lane in 1745. It was the most successful of his dramatic efforts, and kept posses­sion of the stage until a recent period. This tragedy was fol­lowed by the Castle of Indolence, the last of his works that was published in his life-time, and, in the opinion of many, the most brilliant effort of his genius. The frequent recur­rence of the rhyme in the Spenserian measure occasionally produces a redundance both of sentiment and expression ; but this objection scarcely applies to any one stanza of the first canto of this poem. Every line breathes the spirit of seductive languor, to which every new image lends addi­tional force, until the mind is steeped in luxurious lethargy. In the second canto the obvious reasoning of Sir Industry is a feeble antidote to the eloquent sophistry of the wizard Indolence in the first The necessity for further literary exertion was removed by his appointment to the office of surveyor-general of the Leeward Islands, which was pro­cured for him by the influence of Lyttelton. His clear emoluments amounted to about three hundred pounds a year, and the duties of his office he was suffered to perform by deputy.@@1

Thomson had now every prospect of enjoying many years of learned ease ; but he had scarcely ceased to be the sport of fortune, when he was suddenly removed from the scene. A cold caught upon the river between London and Kew, was succeeded by a fever, of which he had partly recover­ed, when imprudent exposure to the evening dews induced a recurrence of his malady, and terminated his life on the 27th of August 1748. His remains were interred in the church of Richmond in Surrey ; and in 1762 a monument was erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey. The expense of this memorial was defrayed by an edition of his works, published during that year, in two volumes quarto. The king subscribed one hundred pounds. A life of the author was prefixed by his intimate friend Dr Murdoch. But the noblest tribute to the memory of Thomson is the beautiful ode of Collins, beginning,

In yonder grave a Druid lies, Where slowly winds the stealing wave ;

The year’s best sweets shall duteous rise To deck its poet's sylvan grave.

@@@1 His friend Paterson, the author of the tragedy of Arminius, which was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain soon after Edward and

Eleanora had met a similar fate, was Thompson's deputy, and lived to succeed him in his office.