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POEMS
ON
VARIOUS SUBJECTS,
RELIGIOUS AND MORAL.
BY
PHILLIS WHEATLEY,
NEGRO SERVANT TO MR. JOHN WHEATLEY,
of Boston, in NEW ENGLAND.

LONDON:
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Entered at Stationers Hall.
DEDICATION.

To the Right Honourable the
COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON,

THE FOLLOWING

POEMS

Are most respectfully

Inscribed,

By her much obliged,

Very humble,

And devoted Servant,

Phillis Wheatley.

Boston, June 12, 1773.
THE following Poems were written originally for the Amusement of the Author, as they were the Products of her leisure Moments. She had no Intention ever to have published them; nor would they now have made their Appearance, but at the Importunity of many of her best, and most generous Friends; to whom she considers herself, as under the greatest Obligations.

As her Attempts in Poetry are now sent into the World, it is hoped the Critic will not severely censure their Defects; and we presume they have too much Merit to
to be cast aside with Contempt, as worthless and trifling Effusions.

As to the Disadvantages she has laboured under, with Regard to Learning, nothing needs to be offered, as her Master’s Letter in the following Page will sufficiently shew the Difficulties in this Respect she had to encounter.

With all their Imperfections, the Poems are now humbly submitted to the Perusal of the Public.
The following is a Copy of a Letter sent by the Author's Master to the Publisher.

PHILLIS was brought from Africa to America, in the Year 1761, between Seven and Eight Years of Age. Without any Assistance from School Education, and by only what she was taught in the Family, she, in sixteen Months Time from her Arrival, attained the English Language, to which she was an utter Stranger before, to such a Degree, as to read any, the most difficult Parts of the Sacred Writings, to the great Astonishment of all who heard her.

As to her Writing, her own Curiosity led her to it; and this she learnt in so short a Time, that in the Year 1765, she wrote a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Cocom, the Indian Minister, while in England.

She has a great Inclination to learn the Latin Tongue, and has made some Progress in it. This Relation is given by her Master who bought her, and with whom she now lives.

JOHN WHEATLEY.

Essex, Nov. 14, 1772.
To the P U B L I C K.

As it has been repeatedly suggested to the Publisher, by Persons, who have seen the Manuscript, that Numbers would be ready to suspect they were not really the Writings of PHILLIS, he has procured the following Attestation, from the most respectable Characters in Boston, that none might have the least Ground for disputing their Original.

WE whose Names are under-written, do assure the World, that the Poems specified in the following Page, * were (as we verily believe) written by PHILLIS, a young Negro Girl, who was but a few Years since, brought an uncultivated Barbarian from Africa, and has ever since been, and now is, under the Disadvantage of serving as a Slave in a Family in this Town. She has been examined by some of the best Judges, and is thought qualified to write them.

His Excelency THOMAS HUTCHINSON, Governor,
The Hon. ANDREW OLIVER, Lieutenant-Governor.

The Hon. Thomas Hubbard, The Hon. John Erving,
The Hon. James Pitts, The Hon. Harrison Gray,
The Hon. James Bowdoin, John Hancock, Esq;
Joseph Green, Esq; Richard Carey, Esq;

The Rev. Samuel Cooper, D. D. The Rev. Mr. Samuel Mather,
The Rev. Mr. John Moorhead, Mr. John Wheatley, her Master.

N. B. The original Attestation, signed by the above Gentlemen, may be seen by applying to Archibald Bell, Bookseller, No. 8, Aldgate-Street.

* The Words "following Page," allude to the Contents of the Manuscript Copy, which are wrote at the Back of the above Attestation.
POEMS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

To MÆCENAS:

MÆCENAS, you, beneath the myrtle shade,
Read o'er what poets sung, and shepherds play'd,
What felt those poets but you feel the same?
Does not your soul possess the sacred flame?
Their noble strains your equal genius shares
In softer language, and diviner airs.

While Homer paints lo! circumsus'd in air,
Celestial Gods in mortal forms appear.

B Swift
Swift as they move hear each recells rebound,
Heav’n quakes, earth trembles, and the shores re-
found.

Great Sire of verse, before my mortal eyes,
The lightnings blaze across the vaulted skies,
And, as the thunder shakes the heav’nly plains,
A deep-felt horror thrills through all my veins.

When gentler strains demand thy graceful song,
The length’ning line moves languishing along.

When great Patroclus courts Achilles’ aid,
The grateful tribute of my tears is paid;
Prone on the shore he feels the pangs of love,
And stern Pelides tend’rest passions move.

Great Mæro’s strain in heav’nly numbers flows,
The Nine inspire, and all the bosom glows.

O could I rival thine and Virgil’s page,
Or claim the Muses with the Mantuan Sage;

Soon the same beauties should my mind adorn,
And the same ardors in my soul should burn:
Then should my song in bolder notes arise,
And all my numbers pleasingly surprize;

But
But here I sit, and mourn a grov’ling mind,
That fain would mount, and ride upon the wind.

Not you, my friend, these plaintive strains become,
Not you, whose bosom is the Muses home;
When they from tow’ring Helicon retire,
They fan in you the bright immortal fire,
But I less happy, cannot raise the song,
The fault’ring music dies upon my tongue.

The happier Terence * all the choir inspir’d,
His soul replenish’d, and his bosom fir’d;
But say, ye Muses, why this partial grace,
To one alone of Afric’s fable race;
From age to age transmitting thus his name
With the first glory in the rolls of fame?

Thy virtues, great Mæcenas! shall be sung
In praise of him, from whom those virtues sprung:

* He was an African by birth.
While blooming wreaths around thy temples spread,
I'll snatch a laurel from thine honour'd head,
While you indulgent smile upon the deed.

As long as Thames in streams majestic flows,
Or Naiads in their oozy beds repose,
While Phoebus reigns above the starry train,
While bright Aurora purples o'er the main,
So long, great Sir, the muse thy praise shall sing,
So long thy praise shall make Parnassus ring:
Then grant, Maevnas, thy paternal rays,
Hear me propitious, and defend my lays.
ON VIRTUE.

O Thou bright jewel in my aim I strive
To comprehend thee. Thine own words declare
Wisdom is higher than a fool can reach.

I cease to wonder, and no more attempt
Thine height t' explore, or fathom thy profound.
But, O my soul, sink not into despair,

Virtue is near thee, and with gentle hand
Would now embrace thee, hovers o'er thine head.
Fain would the heav'n-born soul with her converse,
Then seek, then court her for her promis'd bliss.

Auspicious queen, thine heav'nly pinions spread,
And lead celestial Chastity along;
Lo! now her sacred retinue descends,
Array'd in glory from the orbs above.

Attend me, Virtue, thro' my youthful years!

O leave me not to the false joys of time!
But guide my steps to endless life and bliss.

Greene,
POEMS ON

Greatness, or Goodness, say what I shall call thee,
To give an higher appellation still,
Teach me a better strain, a nobler lay,
O thou, enthron'd with Cherubs in the realms of day!

To
To the University of Cambridge, in New-England.

While an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,
The muses promise to assist my pen;
'Twas not long since I left my native shore
The land of errors, and Egyptian gloom:
Father of mercy, 'twas thy gracious hand
Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.

Students, to you 'tis given to scan the heights
Above, to traverse the ethereal space,
And mark the systems of revolving worlds.
Still more, ye sons of science ye receive
The blissful news by messengers from heav'n,
How Jesus' blood for your redemption flows.
See him with hands out-stretched upon the cross,
Immense compassion in his bosom glows;
He hears revilers, nor relents their scorn:
What matchless mercy in the Son of God!
When the whole human race by sin had fall'n,
He deign'd to die that they might rise again,  
And share with him in the sublimest skies,  
Life without death, and glory without end.  

Improve your privileges while they stay,  
Ye pupils, and each hour redeem, that bears  
Or good or bad report of you to heav'n.  
Let sin, that baneful evil to the soul,  
By you bespenn'd, nor once remit your guard;  
Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg.  
Ye blooming plants of human race divine,  
An Ethiopian tells you 'tis your greatest foe;  
Its transient sweetness turns to endless pain,  
And in immense perdition sinks the soul.

To
To the K I N G's Most Excellent Majesty.
1768.

Y O U R subjects hope, dread Sire—
The crown upon your brows may flourish long,
And that your arm may in your God be strong!
O may your sceptre num'rous nations sway,
And all with love and readiness obey!

But how shall we the Britiʃh king reward?
Rule thou in peace, our father, and our lord!
Midst the remembrance of thy favours past,
The meanest peasants most admire the last.
May George, belov'd by all the nations round,
Live with heav'n's choicest constant blessings crown'd!

Great God, direct, and guard him from on high,
And from his head let ev'ry evil fly!
And may each clime with equal gladness see
A monarch's smile can set his subjects free!

* The Repeal of the Stamp Act.
On being brought from AFRICA to AMERICA.

Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too;
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die."
Remember, Christians, Negros, black as Cain,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

On
On the Death of the Rev. Dr. Sewell.
1769.

 Ere yet the morn its lovely blushes spread,
See Sewell number'd with the happy dead.
Hail, holy man, arriv'd th' immortal shore,
Though we shall hear thy warning voice no more.
Come, let us all behold with wishful eyes
The saint ascending to his native skies;
From hence the prophet wing'd his rapt'rous way
To the blest mansions in eternal day.
Then begging for the Spirit of our God,
And panting eager for the same abode,
Come, let us all with the same vigour rise,
And take a prospect of the blissful skies;
While on our minds Christ's image is imprest,
And the dear Saviour glows in ev'ry breast.
Thrice happy saint! to find thy heav'n at last,
What compensation for the evils past!

C 2

Great
Great God, incomprehensible, unknown
By sense, we bow at thine exalted throne.
O, while we beg thine excellence to feel,
Thy sacred Spirit to our hearts reveal,
And give us of that mercy to partake,
Which thou hast promis'd for the Saviour's sake!

"Sewell is dead." Swift-pinion'd Fame thus cry'd.

"Is Sewell dead," my trembling tongue reply'd,
O what a blessing in his flight deny'd!
How oft for us the holy prophet pray'd!
How oft to us the Word of Life convey'd!
By duty urg'd my mournful verse to close,
I for his tomb this epitaph compose.

"Lo, here a man, redeem'd by Jesus' blood,
A sinner once, but now a saint with God;
Behold ye rich, ye poor, ye fools, ye wise,
Nor let his monument your heart surprize;
'Twill tell you what this holy man has done,
Which gives him brighter lustre than the sun.

"Listen,
VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

"Listen, ye happy, from your seats above.
"I speak sincerely, while I speak and love,
"He sought the paths of piety and truth,
"By these made happy from his early youth!
"In blooming years that grace divine he felt,
"Which rescues sinners from the chains of guilt.
"Mourn him, ye indigent, whom he has fed,
"And henceforth seek, like him, for living bread;
"Ev'n Christ, the bread descending from above,
"And ask an interest in his saving love.
"Mourn him, ye youth, to whom he oft has told
"God's gracious wonders from the times of old.
"I, too have cause this mighty loss to mourn,
"For he my monitor will not return.
"O when shall we to his blest state arrive?
"When the same graces in our bosoms thrive."
HAIL, happy saint, on thine immortal throne,
Possess of glory, life, and bliss unknown;
We hear no more the music of thy tongue,
Thy wonted auditories cease to throng.
Thy sermons in unequall'd accents flow'd,
And ev'ry bosom with devotion glow'd;
Thou didst in strains of eloquence refin'd
Inflame the heart, and captivat: the mind.
Unhappy we the setting sun deplore,
So glorious once, but ah! it shines no more.

Behold the prophet in his tow'ring flight!
He leaves the earth for heav'n's unmeasur'd height,
And worlds unknown receive him from our sight.
There Whitefield wings with rapid course his way,
And sails to Zion through vast seas of day.
Thy pray'rs, great saint, and thine incessant cries
Have pierc'd the bosom of thy native skies.

Thou
Thou moon hast seen, and all the stars of light,
How he has wrestled with his God by night.
He pray'd that grace in ev'ry heart might dwell,
He long'd to see America excel;
He charg'd its youth that ev'ry grace divine
Should with full luster in their conduct shine;
That Saviour, which his soul did first receive,
The greatest gift that ev'n a God can give,
He freely offer'd to the num'rous throng,
That on his lips with lift'ning pleasure hung.

"Take him, ye wretched, for your only good,
"Take him ye starving sinners, for your food;
"Ye thirsty, come to this life-giving stream,
"Ye preachers, take him for your joyful theme;
"Take him my dear Americans, he said,
"Be your complaints on his kind bosom laid:
"Take him, ye Africans, he longs for you,
"Impartial Saviour is his title due:
"Wash'd in the fountain of redeeming blood,
"You shall be sons, and kings, and priests to God."
Great Countess, * we Americans revere
Thy name, and mingle in thy grief sincere;
New England deeply feels, the Orphans mourn,
Their more than father will no more return.

But, though arrested by the hand of death,
Whitefield no more exerts his lab’ring breath,
Yet let us view him in th’ eternal skies,
Let ev’ry heart to this bright vision rise;
While the tomb safe retains its sacred trust,
Till life divine re-animates his dust.

* The Countess of Huntingdon, to whom Mr. Whitefield was Chaplain.