

Thomson's "Castle of Indolence."

There is a tendency in the modern mind to under-estimate the value of the literature of the eighteenth century. It is indeed difficult to value correctly such men as Johnson, Swift, Addison and Steele. To the poets of this era it may be easier to accord the appreciation due their merits, but even here our admiration often has originated from a sense of duty. In regard to ages more remote, the charm of antiquity tempts us to entertain for great men and deeds a respect too often exceeding their due. But the century immediately preceding our own is not far enough distant to be revered as classic, yet sufficiently distant to have caused diversities in opinion, in sentiment, and in taste, so great as to render us incapable of sympathizing readily with its characteristics.

The poets of the eighteenth century, it must be admitted, suffer deterioration when contrasted with the brilliant galaxy of the nineteenth. As candles seem but dim lights in the splendor of noon-day, but far from insignificant when the sun is absent, so it is only when viewed by way of comparison that these lesser lights of literature appear dim.

Among the most prominent poets of this era stands Thomson, who, not far from the middle of the century, gave to the world that "magnificent specimen of verse," to quote Montgomery, known as the "Castle of Indolence." The student of literature, searching the rich mine of English poetry for gems of special worth, will not be likely to overlook so valuable a view of poetic wealth as this of Thomson's.

The "Castle of Indolence" is an allegory of the highest order, ranking in importance perhaps next to Spencer's "Fairy Queen" and "Pilgrim's Progress." Whatever charms may be in allegory, in melody of rhythm, in brilliant description, are found in this noble example of narrative verse.

The plan of his poem is not complex. Indolence, an arch-enchanted, sits before his castle gates, and entices unwary passers-by within its doors. To a lute of sweetest tones he sings melodiously a magic song, well adapted to produce the desired effect upon susceptible man. He sings the careless joys of bird and bee, and contrasts the weary toilsome lot of man, and commiserates him upon being the only creature of Nature's that must live a life of labor. Upon this he invites the weary toilers to come and find rest within his castle walls. He draws a pleasing picture of the enchanted Land of Indolence, where care, work, and sorrow never enter, and where