

Classic Poetry Series

Thomas Godfrey
- poems -

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Thomas Godfrey(1736 - 1763)

Son of Thomas Godfrey (1704–1749), a Philadelphia glazier and member of Benjamin Franklin's Junto Club, Godfrey produced some significant work in his short life.

Well known in literary circles in Philadelphia, he was a close friend of the poet Nathaniel Evans and the college provost William Smith. In 1758 he left Philadelphia for Wilmington, North Carolina, to enter business.

In 1762 he published the long poem *The Court of Fancy* and also published occasional pieces in local magazines. His most memorable work is a blank-verse play, *The Prince of Parthia, A Tragedy*, which appeared in a posthumous volume, *Juvenile Poems on Various Subjects*, that Evans published in 1765, which also included elegies from Evans and J Green.

The play, which echoes Shakespeare's political tragedies, was first staged in 1767. Critic Moses Coit Tyler remarked that "Thomas Godfrey is a true poet, and 'The Prince of Parthia' is a noble beginning of dramatic literature in America."

The Invitation

DAMON.

Haste! Sylvia! haste, my charming Maid!
Let's leave these fashionable toys;
Let's seek the shelter of some shade,
And revel in ne'er fading joys.
See spring in liv'ry gay appears,
And winter's chilly blasts are fled;
Each grove its leafy honours rears,
And meads their lovely verdure spread!

SYLVIA.

Yes Damon, glad I'll quit the town,
Its gaities now languid seem;
Then sweets to luxury unknown
We'll taste, and sip th' untainted stream.
In Summer's sultry noon-tide heat,
I'll lead thee to the shady grove;
There hush thy cares, or pleas'd repeat
Those vows that won my soul to love.

DAMON.

When o'er the mountain peeps the dawn,
And round her ruddy beauties play,
I'll wake my Love to view the lawn,
Or hear the warblers hall the day.
But, without thee, the rising morn
In vain awakes the cooling breeze,
In vain does nature's face adorn;
Without my Sylvia nought can please.

SYLVIA.

At night, when universal gloom

Hides the bright prospect from our view,
When the gay groves give up their bloom,
And verdant meads their lovely hue;
Tho' fleeting spectres round me move,
When in thy circling arms I'm prest,
I'll hush my rising fears with love,
And sink in slumber on thy breast.

DAMON.

The new-blown rose, whilst on its leaves
Yet the bright scented dew-drops found,
Pleas'd on thy bosom, whilst it heaves,
Shall shake its heav'nly fragrance round.
Then mingled sweets the sense shall raise,
Then mingled beauties catch the eye;
What pleasure on such charms to gaze!
What rapture mid such sweets to lie!

SYLVIA.

How sweet thy words!--but, Damon cease,
Nor strive to fix me ever here;
Too well you know these accents please,
That oft have fill'd my ravish'd ear.
Come, lead me to these promis'd joys,
That dwelt so lately on thy tongue;
Direct me by thy well known voice,
And calm my transports with thy song!

Thomas Godfrey

Verses Occasioned By A Young Lady's Asking The Author, What Was A Cure For Love?

From me, my Dear, O seek not to receive
What e'en deep-read Experience cannot give.
We may, indeed, from the Physician's skill
Some Med'cine find to cure the body's ill.
But who e'er found the physic for the soul,
Or made th' affections bend to his controul?
When thro' the blaze of passion objects show
How dark 's the shade! how bright the colours glow!
All the rous'd soul with transport's overcome,
And the mind's surly Monitor is dumb.

In vain the sages turn their volumes o'er,
And on the musty page incessant pore,
Still mighty Love triumphant rules the heart,
Baffles their labour, and eludes their art.

Say what is science, what is reason's force
To stop the passions wild ungovern'd course?
Reason, 'tis true, may point the rocky shore,
And shew the danger, but can serve no more,
From wave to wave the wretched wreck is tost,
And reason 's in th' impetuous torrent lost.

In vain we strive, when urg'd by cold neglect,
By various means our freedom to effect,
Tho' like the bee from sweet to sweet we rove,
And search for ease in the vast sound of Love,
Tho' in each Nymph we meet a kind return,
Still in the firstfond hopeless flame we burn,
That dear idea still our thoughts employs,
And blest variety itself e'en cloys.
So exiles banish'd from their native home
Are met with pity wheresoe'er they come,
Yet still their native soil employs their care,

And death were ease to lay their ashes there.

Thomas Godfrey