

POEMS

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS,
RELIGIOUS AND MORAL.

By Phillis Wheatley

(Negro Servant To Mr. John Wheatley, Of
Boston, In New-England)

1771

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE

COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON,

THE FOLLOWING

P O E M S

ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

BY HER MUCH OBLIGED,

VERY HUMBLE

AND DEVOTED SERVANT.

PHILLIS WHEATLEY.

Boston, June 12, 1771.

PREFACE.

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 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 show 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. OCCOM, 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.

Boston, Nov. 14, 1772.

TO THE PUBLIC.

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 Excellency THOMAS HUTCHINSON, Governor.

The Hon. ANDREW OLIVER, Lieutenant-Governor.

The Hon. Thomas Hubbard, | The Rev. Charles Chauncey, D. D.

The Hon. John Erving, | The Rev. Mather Byles, D. D.

The Hon. James Pitts, | The Rev. Ed. Pemberton, D. D.

The Hon. Harrison Gray, | The Rev. Andrew Elliot, D. D.

The Hon. James Bowdoin, | The Rev. Samuel Cooper, D. D.

John Hancock, Esq; | The Rev. Mr. Saumel Mather,

Joseph Green, Esq; | The Rev. Mr. John Moorhead,

Richard Carey, Esq; | 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.