

chiefly oaks of noble size, that rise, at various levels, on the lower slopes of the park. The clear sunshine imparted to them this day exquisite variegations of fleecy light and shadow. They formed a billowy ocean of green, that seemed as if wrought in floss silk. Far beyond — for the nearer fields of the level country are hidden by the oaks — lies a blue labyrinth of hedge-rows, stuck over with trees, and so crowded together in the distance, that they present, as has already been said, a forest-like appearance; while, still further beyond, there stretches along the horizon a continuous purple screen, composed of the distant highlands of Cambria.

Such is the landscape which Thomson loved. And here he used to saunter, the laziest and best-natured of mortal men, with an imagination full of many-colored conceptions, by far the larger part of them never to be realized, and a quiet eye, that took in without effort, and stamped on the memory, every meteoric effect of a changeful climate, which threw its tints of gloom or of gladness over the diversified prospect. The images sunk into the quiescent mind as the silent shower sinks into the crannies and fissures of the soil, to come gushing out, at some future day, in those springs of poetry which so sparkle in the "Seasons," or that glide in such quiet yet lustrous beauty through that most finished of English poems, the "Castle of Indolence." Never before or since was there a man of genius wrought out of such mild and sluggish elements as the bard of the "Seasons." A listless man was James Thomson; kindly-hearted; much loved by all his friends; little given to think of himself; who "loathed much to write, ne cared to repeat."* And to Hagley he used to come, as Shenstone tells us, in "a

* The stanza in the "Castle of Indolence," "by another hand," which portrays so happily the character of Thomson, was written by Lyttelton; and there are perhaps more of those felicities of phrase which sink into