

The General Biographical Dictionary By Alexander Chalmers 1817

YALDEN (THOMAS), a divine and poet, the sixth son of Mr. John Yalden, of Sussex, was born at Exeter in 1671. Having been educated in the grammar-school belonging to Magdalen college, Oxford, he was, in 1690, at the age of nineteen, admitted commoner of Magdalen Hall, under the tuition of Josiah Pullen, a man whose name is still remembered in the university. He became next year one of the scholars of Magdalen college, where he was distinguished by a declamation, which Dr. Hough, the president, happening to attend, thought too good to be the speaker's. Some time after, the doctor, finding him a little irregularly busy in the library, set him an exercise, for punishment; and, that he might not be deceived by any artifice, locked the door. Yalden, as it happened, had been lately reading on the subject given, and produced with little difficulty a composition which so pleased the president that he told him his former suspicions, and promised to favour him. Among his contemporaries in the college were Addison and Sacheverell, men who were in those times friends, and who both adopted Yalden to their intimacy. Yalden continued throughout his life to think, as probably he thought at first, yet did not lose the friendship of Addison. When Namur was taken by king William, Yalden made an ode *. He wrote another poem, on the death of the duke of Gloucester. In 1700 he became fellow of the college, and next year entering into orders, was presented by the society with the living of **Willoughby, in Warwickshire**, consistent with his fellowship, and chosen lecturer of moral philosophy, a very honourable office. On the accession of queen Anne he wrote another poem; and is said, by the author of the "Biographia," to have declared himself one of the party who had the distinction of high-churchmen. In 1706 he was received into the family of the duke of Beaufort. Next year he became D. D. and soon after he resigned his fellowship and lecture; and, as a token of his gratitude, gave the college a picture of their founder. The duke made him rector, of dial ton and Cleanville, two adjoining towns and benefices in Hertiorrshire; and he had the prebends, or sinecures, of Deans, Hains, and Pendles, in Devonshire. In 1713 he was chosen preacher of Bridewell Hospital, upon the resignation of Dr. Atterbury. From this time he seems to have led a quiet and inoffensive life, till the clamour was raised about Atterbury's plot. Every loyal eye was on the watch for abettors or partakers of the horrid conspiracy; and Dr. Yalden, having some acquaintance with the hishop, and being familiarly conversant with Kelly his secretary, fell under suspicion, and was taken into custody. Upon his examination he was charged with a dangerous correspondence with KeUy. The correspond, ence he acknowledged; but maintained that it had no treasonable tendency. His papers were seized; bnt nothing was found that could fix a crime upon him, except two words in his pockei-book, "thorough-paced doctrine." This expression the imagination of his examiners had impregnated with treason; and the doctor was enjoined to explain them. Thus pressed, he told them that the words had lain unheeded in his pocket-book from the time of queen Anne, and that he was ashamed to give an account of them; but the truth was, that he had gratified his cu- riosity one day by bearing Daniel Burgess in the pulpit, and these words were a memorial hint of a remarkable sentence by which he warned his-congregation to "beware of thorough-paced doctrine, that doctrine; which, coming in at one ear, paces through the head, ami goes out at the other." Nothing worse than this appearing in his papers, and no evidence arising against him, he was set at liberty. It will not be supposed that a man of this character attained high dignities in the church; But he stili retained the friendship, and frequented the conversation of a very numerous and splendid body of acquaintance. He died July 16, 1736, in the sixty-sixth year of his age. Of his poems which have been admitted into Dr. Johnson's collection,

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his "Hymn to Darkness" seems to be his best performance, and is, for the most part, imagined with great vigour, and expressed with great propriety. His "Hymn to Light" is not equal to the other. On his other poems it is sufficient to say that they deserve perusal, though they are not always exactly polished, though the rhymes are sometimes very ill sorted, and though his faults seem rather the omissions of idleness than the negligences of enthusiasm. '

*" Of this ode mention is made in But the lut was an impudent thing :
a humourous poem of that time, called Yet what he had itol'n wai 10 little
' The Oxford Laureat;' in which, af- worth stealing,
ter many claims had been made and They forgave him the damage and
rejected, Yalden is represented as de- cost;
manding the laurel, and as heing called Had he ta'en the whole ode, as he took
to his trial, instead of receiving a re- it piece-mealing,
ward. They bad fin'd him but ten-pence at
His crime was for being a felon in verse, most.
&nd presenting hi* theft to the king; The poet whom be was charged
The first was a trick not uncommon or with robbing was Congreve."—John*
scarce, *ton?** Lives.