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JOHN MILTON.

From the Miniature by Samuel Cooper in the Victoria and Albert Museum.
MILTON'S EARLIER POEMS

INCLUDING

THE TRANSLATIONS BY

WILLIAM COWPER

OF THOSE WRITTEN IN LATIN

AND ITALIAN

With an Introduction by

HENRY MORLEY

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INTRODUCTION.

John Milton was born in the City of London on the 9th of December, 1608. His father, also a John Milton, came of a family in Oxfordshire, and had been liberally educated in his youth. Change to the side of the Reformers in religion obliged him to depend upon his own resources, and he went into business as a scrivener, in Bread Street, Cheapside; there he prospered and married. Of his children only three, Anne, John, and Christopher, outlived their childhood. Anne was some years older than John; and Christopher was seven years younger. John Milton, the father, had a genius for music. He took part with recognised musicians of his day in writing Madrigals and Psalms. He first provided for the education of his son John, by placing him under the care of Thomas Young, of Lencarty in Perthshire, who was about twenty years old at the time of the poet’s birth. Milton was sent to St. Paul’s School in the year 1620, and Thomas Young went a year or two later to be chaplain to the English merchants at Hamburg. Milton has preserved none of
his school exercises in verse except two metrical versions of Psalms, which stand first in this volume. The volume will endeavour to trace the course of Milton's genius by giving his Earlier Poems as far as possible in the order of their production, and including his Latin poems, since the matter of them, at least, can pass pleasantly into the reader's mind through the translations of William Cowper. Cowper, towards the close of his life, had planned an edition of Milton, and in preparation for that, with his friend Hayley, he made translations of Milton's Latin and Italian verse. Cowper's translations from Milton's Latin are distinguished in this volume from Milton's own English, by being printed in italics.

From school, where he had formed a close friendship with a school-fellow, Charles Diodati, Milton passed to Christ's College, Cambridge, when in his seventeenth year. It was in the year 1625, and just at the time of the death of James I. and the accession of Charles I. to the throne. His sister Anne had been married, in 1624, to Mr. Edward Philips of the Crown Office. The life of their first child, a girl, was nipped by the cold winter of 1625–6, and Milton's earliest original verse that has come down to us, was written to console his sister for her loss. It was not placed among Milton's poems, when he first published a collection of them, in 1645. It was not until nearly fifty years
INTRODUCTION.

afterwards, when, within a year of his death, Milton collected his poems for a second edition, in 1673, that he printed lines which could then recall old tenderness without renewing an old grief. Under some ban of blind Authority, Milton also wrote Latin verse to his dearest friend Charles Diodati. Two brothers Giovanni and Theodore Diodati had been driven from Italy by their acceptance of the Reformation in the Church. Giovanni had settled at Geneva, where he preached, taught theology, was Hebrew Professor, and translated the Bible into Italian. Theodore settled in London as a physician, prospered, and sent his son Charles Diodati to St. Paul’s School, where the closest friendship sprang up between him and John Milton. Charles Diodati was to be trained in his father’s profession, and went to Trinity College, Oxford, in February, 1622. At Oxford he proceeded to M.A. in July, 1628.

It was a custom of the Universities to pay honour to their dead with tributes of verse in Greek, Latin, or English, that might be laid, as we lay flowers, on the pall. They were sometimes collected into little volumes. Richard Ridding, M.A., of St. John’s College, Senior Esquire Bedel, died in November, 1626; and Launcelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester, who had been a Cambridge man, and Master of Pembroke Hall, had died on the 21st of September in the same year. Andrewes had earned himself a lasting place in English litera-
ture, and was not more known for learning than for simple piety. On Bishop Andrewes, therefore, and on the Esquire Bedel of the University, Milton wrote Latin elegies.

Milton’s English lines at a vacation exercise, written in 1627, need no comment. In the same year he wrote a letter in Latin verse to his old teacher, Thomas Young, then at Hamburg. In March, 1628, Young came again to England, and entered into occupation of the united vicarages of St. Peter and St. Mary in Stowmarket, cures which he held till his death in 1655. At Stowmarket they show a mulberry tree which, they say, Milton planted in his friend’s garden. To the same year in which Milton wrote his Latin letter to Thomas Young, belongs the Elegy expressing thoughts of youth in its May.

A youth of one-and-twenty—his birthday was on the 9th of December—Milton was up betimes on Christmas morning, and beginning his noble hymn on the Morning of the Nativity, in a pure spirit of aspiration.

“See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:
O, run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet.
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel quire
From out His secret altar touched with hallowed fire.”
In another Latin poem to his friend Diodati, written about this time, Milton speaks of his work on the Christmas Ode; and the pieces on "The Circumcision" and "The Passion" indicate a design to continue celebrations of the great Church festivals, until, dissatisfied with his attempt to sing the death of Christ, he ceased from an endeavour that he felt to be beyond his power.

The little poem "On Time" was written to be set upon a clock-case. The lines "on Shakespeare" were dated by Milton himself, 1630, and finding their way to the editors of the 1623 folio of Shakespeare's Plays, were published in the second edition of that folio, in 1632, and thus became the earliest verse of Milton's that was printed.

The two pieces on Hobson the Carrier, are examples of a form of writing, character writing, with which people in those days amused themselves. Such pieces were chiefly written in sententious and conceited prose. Ben Jonson's "Every Man Out of his Humour" was so contrived as to abound in bits of character writing; Sir Thomas Overbury's Characters, and Earle's Microcosmography, are examples of the fashion. Samuel Butler, the author of "Hudibras," wrote also a collection of "Characters" that are printed in his "Remains." Thomas Hobson, born in 1544, died on the 1st of January, 1631, at the age of eighty-six. He
had made a large fortune as carrier between Cambridge and London, and by a stable of horses for hire to the students, who were directed in their choice always to the horse next the stable door as fittest to go out, and so made for themselves and the world a proverb out of Hobson's choice. Thomas Hobson to the last journeyed between London and Cambridge with his waggon, till the Plague caused traffic to be stopped some months before his death.

In the "Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester" Milton joined his lament to the laments of Ben Jonson and other poets for the death of Jane, wife of John Paulet, fifth Marquis of Winchester. She died on the 15th of April, 1631. A news-letter from London, written six days afterwards by John Pory to Sir Thomas Puckering in Warwickshire, reports that "the Lady Marquis of Winchester, daughter of the Lord Viscount Savage, had an imposthume upon her cheek lanced; the humour fell down into her throat, and quickly despatched her, being big with child: whose death is lamented, as well in respect of other her virtues as that she was inclining to become a Protestant." Ben Jonson said of her in his lament upon her death:

"She was the Lady Jane, and Marchioness
Of Winchester, the heralds can tell this,
Earl Rivers' grandchild. Serve not forms, good Fame,
Sound thou her Virtues; give her Soul a name."
Milton’s sonnet to the Nightingale, upon the country superstition that one will be fortunate in love if one hears the note of the nightingale in spring before that of the cuckoo, again has in it the music of youth. The sonnet on reaching the Age of Twenty-three is Milton’s sonnet of Self-dedication, grace before the work of life:

“All is, if I have grace to use it so,  
As ever in my great Taskmaster’s eye.”

This brings us to the 9th of December, 1631. Milton had graduated B.A. on the 26th of March, 1629. He proceeded to M.A. in July, 1632, and having completed the full course of training, he thanked his father for the generous care to which he owed it all, in a Latin poem, next in the series, which included reference to the question between them as to his future course in life. He had been unwilling to take orders in the Church, as his father had planned for him, and he desired yet a few years’ more leisure for the cultivation of the talent which he humbly believed had been entrusted to him. His sonnet on reaching the Age of Twenty-three shows how far he was from counting himself to have attained, but he wished earnestly to press forward to what he believed to be the mark of his high calling, and to qualify himself more fully as servant of God among the poets. The poem to his Father has lines of affectionate persuasion that must
have been sweet in his father's ear. The father also was religious, and between father and son the Parable of the Talents was no doubt the most persuasive argument. Milton's father had then retired from business, and was living at Horton, within two or three miles of Eton and Windsor. Milton left college to continue studies in his father's house at Horton. Arcades, Comus, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and Lycidas were written there.

"Arcades" was a light domestic entertainment, written to be presented at Harefield by the younger members of her family to the Dowager Countess of Derby, then an old lady of about seventy-two. She had been Alice, youngest daughter of Sir John Spenser of Althorpe, when Spenser the poet, who claimed kindred, dedicated to her his "Tears of the Muses." Thus she was honoured in her youth by Spenser, in her age by Milton. She was first married to Ferdinando Stanley, who became fifth Earl of Derby, and died in 1594, leaving her with three daughters. Six years afterwards she married Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal to Queen Elizabeth; and a year after the marriage, the estate of Harefield, about three miles from Uxbridge, was bought. Sir Thomas Egerton became in 1603 Baron Ellesmere, and in 1616 Viscount Brackley. He died in March, 1617, and his widow, retaining as Countess of Derby
the higher title given by her first husband, lived at Harefield until her death in January, 1637. The second daughter of her first marriage, Lady Frances Stanley, had married John, a son of Sir Thomas Egerton, by one of his two former marriages. John Egerton, receiving in May, 1617, soon after his father's death, an Earldom that had been intended for his father, became Earl of Bridgewater. The old lady at Harefield, as his wife's mother, was his mother-in-law, and as his father's wife was his step-mother. The family connection was close. The Earl of Bridgewater had a house at Ashridge, about sixteen miles from Harefield, and a family of ten children living, when the young people paid honour to their grandmother with the masque called Arcades. The simple name implied only that they put on shepherds' cloaks and hats to dance and sing, and pay their homage through words written by Milton, and music composed by Henry Lawes.

In June, 1631, the Earl of Bridgewater was named Lord President of Wales. He did not go into residence until October, 1633. His office was like that of an Irish Lord Lieutenant. Ludlow Castle was the seat of Government, and as representative of the sovereign the Lord President had to show stately hospitality. This led to the production of a masque as part of a state entertainment on the 29th of September, 1634.
Milton was true in "Comus" to the highest sense of his vocation as a poet, while he satisfied all accidental demands on his skill. The masque must include music—with a special song for Lady Alice—dances, and entertaining masquerade. The rout of Comus disguised in heads of divers animals, provided masquerade in plenty. The masque must appeal to local feeling, and did that by bringing in Sabrina, the nymph of the Severn; must refer, also, with direct compliment, to the new Lord President, and must provide fit parts for the three youngest children of the family, the Lady Alice, and her brothers John and Thomas, aged from fifteen to twelve. William Prynne had been pilloried, and was then in prison for his "Histriomastix," produced only two years before. Richard Baxter, two years before, had been a youth of seventeen, living in Ludlow Castle as private attendant upon Mr. Wicksted, the chaplain, when the presidency was in commission, and Baxter told afterwards of the corrupting influences of the place. He knew, he said, one pious youth whom it had made a confirmed drunkard and a scoffer. Something of this Milton may have known when he made his masque a poet's lesson against riot and excess. The reverence due to youth Milton maintained by causing his children-actors to appear in no stage disguise, but simply as themselves. There was on the stage a mimic
wood, through which the children passed on the way to their father and mother, who sat in front, and to whom, at the close of the masque, they were presented. As they traversed this wood of the world, typical adventures rose about them, and gave rise to dialogue, in which the part given to Lady Alice made the girl—still speaking in no person but her own—the opposite to Comus—a type of holy innocence and purity.

In 1635 Milton was incorporated as M.A. at Oxford. On the 3rd of April, 1637, his mother died. On the 10th of August, 1637, the son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland, Edward King, a young man who was a Fellow of Milton's own college at Cambridge, who was three or four years younger than Milton, and had been destined for the Church, was drowned when on his way home for the long vacation. The ship in which he sailed from Chester for Dublin, struck on a rock in a calm sea near the Welsh coast, and went down with all on board. When the next college session began, a little book of memorial verse, in Latin, Greek, and English, was planned, and this appeared at the beginning of 1638, as "Obsequies to the Memorie of Mr. Edward King." It contained twenty-three pieces in Latin and Greek, and thirteen in English, of which thirteen the last was Milton's *Lycidas*, written in November, 1637.

At that time Milton was preparing to add to his
course of education two years or more of travel in Italy and Greece. As a poet he did not count himself to have attained, but still pressed forward. In a letter to his friend, Charles Diodati, he had written on the 23rd of September: "As to other points, what God may have determined for me I know not; but this I know, that if He ever instilled an intense love of moral beauty into the breast of any man, He has instilled it into mine: Ceres, in the fable, pursued not her daughter with a greater keenness of inquiry than I, day and night, the idea of perfection. Hence, whenever I find a man despising the false estimates of the vulgar, and daring to aspire in sentiment, language, and conduct, to what the highest wisdom, through every age, has taught us as most excellent, to him I unite myself by a sort of necessary attachment; and if I am so influenced by nature or destiny, that by no exertion or labours of my own I may exalt myself to this summit of worth and honour, yet no powers of heaven or earth will hinder me from looking with reverence and affection upon those who have thoroughly attained this glory, or appear engaged in the successful pursuit of it. You inquire with a kind of solicitude even into my thoughts. Hear, then, Diodati, but let me whisper in your ear, that I may not blush at my reply—I think (so help me, Heaven!) of immortality. You inquire also what I am about? I nurse my
wings and meditate a flight; but my Pegasus rises as yet on very tender pinions. Let us be humbly wise."

The opening lines of Milton's *Lycidas* repeat this modest sense of the unripeness of his laurel, the rudeness of his hands, that when they sought to pluck the laurel branch, could only "shatter its leaves before the mellowing year."

The first lines of *Lycidas* connected Milton's strain of love with his immediate past. Its last line glances on to his immediate future. Milton was preparing for his travel to Italy and Greece: "To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

Milton's foreign travel was determined upon after his mother's death, in April, 1637. Her health had long been delicate, and love for her had, doubtless, been the reason why he had postponed beyond the usual period the time of travelling abroad. He reproached himself afterwards for having been abroad when Diodati died.

In April, 1638, Milton, attended by one man-servant, left Horton for his travel on the Continent. His younger brother, Christopher, married about that time, and seems then to have lived at Horton with his father. Milton went to Paris with letters to the English Ambassador there, Lord Sendamore, by whom he was introduced to Hugo Grotius, then ambassador at the French court for the Queen of Sweden. From Paris,
Milton went to Nice, from Nice by sea to Genoa; he visited Leghorn and Pisa, stayed two months at Florence, then, by way of Siena, went to Rome. At Rome he remained two months, and while there enjoyed and praised in Latin epigrams the singing of the then famous vocalist, Leonora Baroni. There also he wrote his Italian sonnets. From Rome, Milton, aged thirty, went to Naples, where he was kindly received by Manso, Marquis of Villa, then an old man of seventy-eight, the friend and biographer of Tasso. At his departure he paid his respect to Manso in a Latin poem addressed to him. Milton was about to pass on through Sicily to Greece when, as he wrote afterwards in his "Second Defence of the People of England," "the melancholy intelligence which I received of the civil commotions in England made me alter my purpose; for I thought it base to be travelling for amusement abroad while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home."

The news that caused Milton to retrace his steps told of an imminent peril of Civil War that was for the time averted. Milton returned at leisure, not as a great man whom his country needed, but as a citizen who must be at his post, wherever it might be, in any time of peril to his country. Milton's place could be only in the intellectual combat; when the time came he would take his part, whatever it might be worth,
in the free exchange and conflict of opinion. He was met on his way back by news of the death of his friend Charles Diodati, and after his return he built for him, with loving hand, a little shrine among his works in the beautiful *Epitaphium Damonis*, noticeable not only for the tenderness that was a part of Milton's nature (his 'austerity' is a vain superstition), but for the passage that fixes the time of his first resolve upon the subject of the epic he hoped now to write. Milton thought to follow Virgil by shaping his epic upon the mythical founder of Britain, as Virgil's was shaped on the mythical founder of Rome.

Meanwhile there was a profession to be chosen. Milton's age was thirty-one. He lodged for a time with a tailor in Bride Court, Fleet Street, while the books collected in Italy were arriving from Venice, and a suitable house was being found in which to carry out his plan of a school. The house taken was a garden house in Aldersgate Street, and there the school was opened.

H. M.
Milton's Earlier Poems.

A Paraphrase on Psalm CXIV.

This and the following Psalm were done by the author at fifteen years old.

When the bless'd seed of Terah's faithful son,
After long toil, their liberty had won,
And passed from Pharian fields to Canaan land.
Led by the strength of the Almighty's hand,
Jehovah's wonders were in Israel shown,
His praise and glory was in Israel known.
That saw the troubled Sea, and, shivering, fled.
And sought to hide his froth-becurléd head
Low in the earth; Jordan's clear streams recoil,
As a faint host that hath received the foil.
The high huge-bellied mountains skip, like rams
Amongst their ewes; the little hills, like lambs.
Why fled the ocean? And why skipped the mountains?
Why turnéd Jordan toward his crystal fountains?
Shake, earth! and at the presence be aghast
Of Him that ever was, and aye shall last;
That glassy floods from rugged rocks can crush,
And make soft rills from fiery flint-stones gush.
1623-4.

PSALM CXXXVI.

Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for he is kind;
For his mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.
Let us blaze his name abroad,
For of gods, he is the God;
For his, &c.
Oh, let us his praises tell,
Who doth the wrathful tyrants quell;
For his, &c.
Who, with his miracles, doth make
Amazéd heaven and earth to shake;
For his, &c.
Who, by his wisdom, did create
The painted heavens so full of state;
For his, &c.
Who did the solid earth ordain
To rise above the watery plain;
For his, &c.
Who, by his all-commanding might,
Did fill the new-made world with light;
For his, &c.
And caused the golden-tressed sun
All the day long his course to run;
For his, &c.
The hornéd moon to shine by night.
Amongst her spangled sisters bright;
For his, &c.
He, with his thunder-clasping hand,
Smote the first-born of Egypt land;
For his, &c.
And, in despite of Pharaoh fell,
He brought from thence his Israel;
For his, &c.
The ruddy waves he cleft in twain
Of the Erythraean main;
For his, &c.
The floods stood still, like walls of glass,
While the Hebrew bands did pass;
For his, &c.
But full soon they did devour
The tawny king with all his power;
For his, &c.
His chosen people he did bless
In the wasteful wilderness;
For his, &c.
In bloody battle he brought down
Kings of prowess and renown;
For his, &c.
He foiled bold Seon and his host,
That ruled the Amorrean coast;
   For his, &c.
And large-limbed Og he did subdue,
With all his over-hardy crew;
   For his, &c.
And, to his servant Israel,
He gave their land therein to dwell;
   For his, &c.
He hath, with a piteous eye,
Beheld us in our misery;
   For his, &c.
And freed us from the slavery
Of the invading enemy;
   For his, &c.
All living creatures he doth feed,
And with full hand supplies their need;
   For his, &c.
Let us, therefore, warble forth
His mighty majesty and worth;
   For his, &c.
That his mansion hath on high,
Above the reach of mortal eye;
   For his mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

1623-4.
ON THE DEATH OF A FAIR INFANT DYING OF A COUGH.

O fairest flower, no sooner blown but blasted,
Soft silken primrose fading timelessly,
Summer's chief honour, if thou hadst out-lasted
Bleak Winter's force that made thy blossom dry;
For he, being amorous on that lovely dye
That did thy cheek envermeil, thought to kiss,
But killed, alas! and then bewailed his fatal bliss.

For since grim Aquilo, his charioteer,
By boisterous rape the Athenian damsel got,
He thought it touched his deity full near,
If likewise he some fair one wedded not,
Thereby to wipe away the infamous blot
Of long uncoupled bed and childless eld,
Which, 'mongst the wanton gods, a foul reproach was held.

So, mounting up in icy-pearled car,
Through middle empire of the freezing air
He wandered long, till thee he spied from far;
There ended was his quest, there ceased his care:
Down he descended from his snow-soft chair,

But, all unwares, with his cold, kind embrace,
Unhoused thy virgin soul from her fair biding-place.
Yet thou art not inglorious in thy fate;
For so Apollo, with unwee ting hand,
Whilom did slay his dearly-loved mate,
Young Hyacinth, born on Eurotas' strand,
Young Hyacinth, the pride of Spartan land;

But then transformed him to a purple flower:
Alack, that so to change thee Winter had no power!

Yet can I not persuade me thou art dead,
Or that thy corse corrupts in earth's dark womb,
Or that thy beauties lie in wormy bed,
Hid from the world in a low-delvéd tomb;
Could Heaven, for pity, thee so strictly doom?

Oh, no! for something in thy face did shine
Above mortality, that showed thou wast divine.

Resolve me, then, O soul most surely blest,
(If so it be that thou these plaints dost hear!)
Tell me, bright spirit, where'er thou hoverest,
Whether above that high first-moving sphere,
Or in the Elysian fields (if such there were);

Oh, say me true, if thou wert mortal wight,
And why from us so quickly thou didst take thy flight?

Wert thou some star which from the ruined roof
Of shaked Olympus by mischance didst fall;
Which careful Jove in nature's true behoof
Took up, and in fit place did reinstal?

Or did of late Earth's sons besiege the wall
Of sheeny heaven, and thou, some goddess, fled
Amongst us here below to hide thy nectared head?
Or wert thou that just maid, who once before
Forsook the hated earth, oh, tell me sooth,
And camest again to visit us once more?
Or wert thou that sweet-smiling youth?
Or that crowned matron sage, white-robéd Truth?
Or any other of that heavenly brood
Let down in cloudy throne to do the world some good?
Or wert thou of the golden-wingéd host,
Who, having clad thyself in human weed,
To earth from thy prefixed seat didst post,
And after short abode fly back with speed,
As if to show what creatures heaven doth breed;
Thereby to set the hearts of men on fire
To scorn the sordid world, and unto heaven aspire?
But, oh! why didst thou not stay here below
To bless us with thy heaven-loved innocence,
To slake His wrath whom sin hath made our foe,
To turn swift-rushing black perdition hence,
Or drive away the slaughtering pestilence,
To stand 'twixt us and our deserved smart?
But thou canst best perform that office where thou art.
Then thou, the mother of so sweet a child,
Her false-imagined loss cease to lament,
And wisely learn to curb thy sorrows wild;
Think what a present thou to God hast sent,
And render Him with patience what He lent:
This if thou do, He will an offspring give,
That till the world's last end shall make thy name to live.

1626.

ELEGY I.

TO CHARLES DIODATI.

At length, my friend, the far-sent letters come,
Charged with thy kindness, to their destined home,
They come, at length, from Deva's western side,
Where prone she seeks the salt Vergivian tide.
Trust me, my joy is great that thou shouldst be,
Though born of foreign race, yet born for me,
And that my sprightly friend, now free to roam,
Must seek again so soon his wonted home.
I well content, where Thames with refluent tide
My native city laves, meantime reside,
Nor zeal nor duty, now, my steps impel
To reedy Cam, and my forbidden cell;
Nor aught of pleasure in those fields have I,
That, to the musing bard, all shade deny.
'Tis time that I a pedant's threats disdain,
And fly from wrongs my soul will ne'er sustain.
If peaceful days, in lettered leisure spent,
Beneath my father's roof, be banishment,
Then call me banished, I will ne'er refuse
A name expressive of the lot I choose.
I would that, exiled to the Pontic shore,
Rome's hapless bard had suffered nothing more,
He then had equalled even Homer's lays,
And Virgil! thou hadst won but second praise;
For here I woo the Muse, with no control,
And here my books—my life—absorb me whole.
Here too I visit, or to smile or weep,
The winding theatre's majestic sweep;
The grave or gay colloquial scene recruits
My spirits, spent in learning's long pursuits;
Whether some senior shrewd, or spendthrift heir,
Suitor, or soldier, now unarmed, be there,
Or some coifed brooder o'er a ten years' cause,
Thunder the Norman gibb'rish of the laws.
The lacquey, there, oft dupes the wary sire,
And, artful, speeds th' enamoured son's desire.
There, virgins oft, unconscious what they prove,
What love is, know not, yet, unknowing, love.
Or, if impassioned Tragedy wield high
The bloody sceptre, give her locks to fly
Wild as the winds, and roll her haggard eye,
I gaze, and grieve, still cherishing my grief;
At times, e'en bitter tears yield sweet relief.
As when from bliss untasted torn away,
Some youth dies, hapless, on his bridal day,
Or when the ghost, sent back from shades below,
Fills the assassin’s heart with vengeful woe;
When Troy, or Argos, the dire scene affords,
Or Creon’s hall laments its guilty lords.
Nor always city-pent, or pent at home,
I dwell; but, when spring calls me forth to roam,
Expatiate in our proud suburban shades
Of branching elm, that never sun pervades.
Here many a virgin troop I may descry,
Like stars of mildest influence, gliding by.
Oh forms divine! Oh looks that might inspire
E’en Jove himself, grown old, with young desire!
Oft have I gazed on gem-surpassing eyes,
Out-sparkling every star that gilds the skies;
Necks whiter than the ivory arm bestowed
By Jove on Pelops, or the milky road;
Bright locks, Love’s golden snare; these falling low,
Those playing wanton o’er the graceful brow;
Cheeks, too, more winning sweet than after shower
Adonis turned to Flora’s fav’rite flower.
Yield, heroines, yield, and ye who shared the em-
brace
Of Jupiter in ancient times, give place!
Give place, ye turbaned fair of Persia’s coast!
And ye, not less renowned, Assyria’s boast!
Submit, ye nymphs of Greece, ye, once the bloom
Of Ilion, and all ye, of haughty Rome,
Who swept, of old, her theatre with trains
Redundant, and still live in classic strains:
To British damsels beauty’s palm is due,
Aliens, to follow them is fame for you.
Oh city, founded by Dardanian hands,
Whose towering front the circling realm commands,
Too blest abode, no loveliness we see
In all the earth, but it abounds in thee.
The virgin multitude that daily meets.
Radiant with gold and beauty, in thy streets.
Outnumbers all her train of starry fires
With which Diana gilds thy lofty spires.
Fame says, that wafted hither by her doves,
With all her host of quiver-bearing loves,
Venus, preferring Paphian scenes no more,
Has fixed her empire on thy nobler shore.
But lest the sightless boy enforce my stay,
I leave these happy walls, while yet I may.
Immortal Moly shall secure my heart
From all the sorcery of Circean art,
And I will e’en repass Cam’s reedy pools
To face once more the warfare of the schools.
Meantime accept this trifle. rhymes though few,
Yet such as prove thy friends’ remembrance true.
1626?
Elegy II.

On the Death of the University Bedel at Cambridge.

Composed by Milton in the 17th year of his age.

Thee, whose refulgent staff and summons clear
Minerva's flock long time was wont to obey,
Although thyself an herald famous here,
The last of heralds, Death, has snatched away.

He calls on all alike, nor even deigns
To spare the office that himself sustains.

Thy locks are whiter than the plumes displayed
By Leda's paramour in ancient time,
But thou wast worthy ne'er to have decayed,
Or Æson-like to know a second prime,

Worthy for whom some goddess should have won
New life, oft kneeling to Apollo's son.

Commissioned to convene, with hasty call,

The gowned tribes, how graceful wouldst thou stand!
So stood Cyllenius erst in Priam's hall,
Wing-footed messenger of Jove's command!
And so Eurybates, when he addressed
To Peleus' son Atrides' proud behest.

Dread queen of sepulchres, whose rigorous laws
And watchful eyes, run through the realms below,
Oh, oft too adverse to Minerva's cause,
Too often to the Muse not less a foe,
Choose meaner marks, and with more equal aim
Pierce useless drones, earth's burthen and its shame!
Flow, therefore, tears for him from every eye,
All ye disciples of the Muses, weep!
Assembling all in robes of sable dye
Around his bier, lament his endless sleep!
And let complaining elegy rehearse
In every school, her sweetest, saddest verse.
1626.

ELEGY III.
ON THE DEATH OF THE BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.
Composed in the Author's 17th year.

Silent I sat, dejected, and alone,
Making, in thought, the public woes my own,
When, first, arose the image in my breast
Of England's suffering by that scourge, the Pest;
How Death, his funeral torch and scythe in hand,
Entering the lordliest mansions of the land,
Has laid the gem-illumined palace low,
And levelled tribes of nobles at a blow.
I, next, deplored the famed paternal pair,
Too soon to ashes turned, and empty air!

B—70
The heroes next whom snatched into the skies
All Belgia saw, and followed with her sighs:
But thee far most I mourned, regretted most,
Winton's chief shepherd, and her worthiest boast.
Poured out in tears I thus complaining said:
"Death, next in power to Him who rules the dead,
Is 't not enough that all the woodlands yield
To thy fell force, and every verdant field;
That lilies, at one noisome blast of thine,
And even the Cyprian queen's own roses, pine;
That oaks themselves, although the running rill
Suckle their roots, must wither at thy will;
That all the wingéd nations, even those
Whose heaven-directed flight the future shows;
And all the beasts, that in dark forests stray,
And all the herds of Proteus are thy prey?
Ah envious, armed with powers so unconfined,
Why stain thy hands with blood of human kind?
Why take delight, with darts that never roam,
To chase a heaven-born spirit from her home?"

While thus I mourned, the star of evening stood
Now newly risen above the western flood,
And Phoebus from his morning-goal again
Had reached the gulfs of the Iberian main.
I wished repose, and on my couch reclined
Took early rest, to night and sleep resigned:
When—Oh for words to paint what I beheld!
I seemed to wander in a spacious field,
Where all the champaign glowed with purple light
Like that of sunrise on the mountain height;
Flowers over all the field, of every hue
That ever Iris wore, luxuriant grew,
Nor Chloris, with whom amorous Zephyrs play,
E'er dressed Alcinous' garden half too gay.
A silver current, like the Tagus, rolled
O'er golden sands, but sands of purer gold;
With dewy airs Favonius fanned the flowers,
With airs awakened under rosy bowers.
Such, poets feign, irradiated all o'er
The sun's abode on India's utmost shore.

While I the splendour and the mingled shade
Of fruitful vines, with wonder fixed surveyed,
At once, with looks that beamed celestial grace,
The seer of Winton stood before my face.
His snowy vesture's hem descending low
His golden sandals swept, and pure as snow
New-fallen, shone the mitre on his brow.
Where'er he trod a tremulous sweet sound
Of gladness shook the flow'ry scene around:
Attendant angels clap their starry wings,
The trumpet shakes the sky, all ether rings,
Each chants his welcome, folds him to his breast,
And thus a sweeter voice than all the rest:
"Ascend, my son, thy father's kingdom share:
My son, henceforth be freed from every care!"

So spake the voice, and at its tender close
With psaltry's sound the angelic band arose.
Then night retired, and chased by dawning day
The visionary bliss passed all away.
I mourned my banished sleep, with fond concern:
Frequent to me may dreams like this return!
1626.

ANNO ÆTATIS XIX.

As a Vacation Exercise in the College, part Latin,
part English. The Latin Speeches ended, the
English thus began:

HAIL, native language, that by sinews weak
Didst move my first-endeavouring tongue to speak,
And madest imperfect words, with childish trips,
Half unpronounced, slide through my infant lips,
Driving dumb silence from the portal door,
Where he had mutely sat two years before:
Here I salute thee, and thy pardon ask,
That now I use thee in my latter task:
Small loss it is that thence can come unto thee,
I know my tongue but little grace can do thee.
Thou need'st not be ambitious to be first;
Believe me, I have thither packed the worst:
And, if it happen as I did forecast,
The daintiest dishes shall be served up last.
I pray thee then deny me not thy aid,
For this same small neglect that I have made:
But haste thee straight to do me once a pleasure,
And from thy wardrobe bring thy chiefest treasure;
Not those new-fangled toys and trimming slight
Which take our late fantastics with delight;
But cull those richest robes and gayest attire,
Which deepest spirits and choicest wits desire:
I have some naked thoughts that rove about,
And loudly knock to have their passage out;
And, weary of their place, do only stay
Till thou hast decked them in thy best array,
That so they may, without suspect or fears,
Fly swiftly to this fair assembly's ears.
Yet I had rather, if I were to choose,
Thy service in some graver subject use,
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound:
Such where the deep-transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles, and at heaven's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity,
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,
Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings
To the touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings
Immortal nectar to her kingly sire;
Then passing through the spheres of watchful fire,
And misty regions of wide air next under,
And hills of snow, and lofts of piléd thunder,
May tell at length how green-eyed Neptune raves,
In heaven's defiance mustering all his waves;
Then sing of secret things that came to pass
When beldame Nature in her cradle was;
And last of kings, and queens, and heroes old,
Such as the wise Demodocus once told
In solemn songs at king Alcinous' feast,
While sad Ulysses' soul, and all the rest,
Are held, with his melodious harmony,
In willing chains and sweet captivity.
But fie, my wandering muse, how dost thou stray!
Expectance calls thee now another way;
Thou know'st it must be now thy only bent
To keep in compass of thy predicament:
Then quick about thy purposed business come,
That to the next I may resign my room.

Then Ens is represented as father of the Predicaments,
his ten sons; whereof the eldest stood for Substance, with his canons, which Ens, thus speaking, explains:

Good luck befriend thee, son; for, at thy birth,
The faëry ladies danced upon the hearth;
Thy drowsy nurse hath sworn she did them spy
Come tripping to the room where thou didst lie,
And, sweetly singing round about thy bed,
Strew all their blessings on thy sleeping head.
She heard them give thee this, that thou shouldst still
From eyes of mortals walk invisible:
Yet there is something that doth force my fear;
For once it was my dismal hap to hear
A sibyl old, bow-bent with crooked age,
That far events full wisely could presage,
And, in time's long and dark prospective glass,
Foresaw what future days should bring to pass;
"Your son," said she, "(nor can you it prevent)
Shall subject be to many an accident.
O'er all his brethren he shall reign as king,
Yet every one shall make him underling;
And those, that cannot live from him asunder,
Ungratefully shall strive to keep him under:
In worth and excellence he shall outgo them;
Yet, being above them, he shall be below them;
From others he shall stand in need of nothing,
Yet on his brothers shall depend for clothing.
To find a foe it shall not be his hap,
And peace shall lull him in her flowery lap:
Yet shall he live in strife; and, at his door,
Devouring war shall never cease to roar:
Yea, it shall be his natural property
To harbour those that are at enmity.
What power, what force, what mighty spell, if not
Your learned hands can loose this Gordian knot?"

The next, Quantity and Quality, spake in prose: then
Relation was called by his name.

Rivers, arise: whether thou be the son
Of utmost Tweed, or Ouse, or gulfy Dun,
Or Trent, who, like some earth-born giant, spreads
His thirsty arms along the indented meads;
Or sullen Mole, that runneth underneath;
Or Severn swift, guilty of maiden’s death;
Or rocky Avon, or of sedgy Lee,
Or coaly Tyne, or ancient hallowed Dee;
Or Humber loud, that keeps the Scythian’s name;
Or Medway smooth, or royal-towered Thame.

[The rest was prose.]

1627.

ELEGY IV.

TO HIS TUTOR, THOMAS YOUNG,
CHAPELAIN TO THE ENGLISH FACTORY AT HAMBURG.
Written in the Author’s 18th year.

Hence my epistle—skim the deep—fly o’er
Yon smooth expanse to the Teutonic shore;
Haste—lest a friend should grieve for thy delay—
And the gods grant, that nothing thwart thy way.
I will myself invoke the king, who binds
In his Sicanian echoing vault the winds,
With Doris and her nymphs, and all the throng
Of azure gods, to speed thee safe along.
But rather, to insure thy happier haste,
Ascend Medea's chariot, if thou may'st;
Or that, whence young Triptolemus of yore
Descended, welcome on the Scythian shore.
The sands, that line the German coast, descried,
To opulent Hamburga turn aside;
So called, if legendary fame be true,
From Hama, whom a club-armed Cimbrian slew;
There lives, deep-learned and primitively just,
A faithful steward of his Christian trust,
My friend, and favourite inmate of my heart,
That now is forced to want its better part.
What mountains now, and seas, alas, how wide,
From me this other dearer self divide,
Dear, as the sage renowned for moral truth
To the prime spirit of the Attic youth,
Dear, as the Stagyrite to Ammon's son,
His pupil, who disdained the world he won;
Nor so did Chiron, or so Phœnix shine
In young Achilles' eyes, as he in mine.
First led by him thro' sweet Aonian shade
Each sacred haunt of Pindus I surveyed;
And favoured by the Muse, whom I implored,
Thrice on my lip the hallowed stream I poured;
But thrice the sun's resplendent chariot, rolled
To Aries, has new tinged his fleece with gold.
And Chloris twice has dressed the meadows gay,
And twice has summer parched their bloom away,
Since last delighted on his looks I hung,
Or my ear drank the music of his tongue.

Fly, therefore, and surpass the tempest's speed;
Aware thyself, that there is urgent need.

Him, entering, thou shalt haply seated see
Beside his spouse, his infants on his knee;

Or turning, page by page, with studious look,
Some bulky father, or God's holy book.

Or minist'ring (which is his weightiest care)
To Christ's assembled flock their heavenly fare.

Give him, whatever his employment be,
Such gratulation as he claims from me;
And, with a downcast eye, and carriage meek,
Addressing him, forget not thus to speak:

"If, compassed round with arms thou canst attend
To verse, verse greets thee from a distant friend.
Long due, and late, I left the English shore;
But make me welcome for that cause the more.
Such from Ulysses, his chaste wife to cheer,
The slow epistle came, though late, sincere."
But wherefore this? why palliate I the deed,  
For which the culprit's self could hardly plead?  
Self - changed, and self - condemned, his proper part  
He feels neglected, with an aching heart;  
But thou forgive—delinquents who confess  
And pray forgiveness merit anger less;  
From timid foes the lion turns away,  
Nor yawns upon or rends a crouching prey,  
Even pike-wielding Thracians learn to spare,  
Won by soft influence of a suppliant prayer;  
And heaven's dread thunderbolt arrested stands  
By a cheap victim, and uplifted hands.  
Long had he wished to write, but was withheld,  
And, writes at last, by love alone compelled.  
For fame, too often true, when she alarms,  
Reports thy neighbouring fields a scene of arms;  
Thy city against fierce besiegers barred,  
And all the Saxon chiefs for fight prepared.  
Enyo wastes thy country wide around,  
And saturates with blood the tainted ground;  
Mars rests contented in his Thrace no more,  
But goads his steeds to fields of German gore.  
The ever-verdant olive fades and dies;  
And Peace the trumpet-hating goddess flies.  
Flies from that earth which justice long had left,  
And leaves the world of its last guard bereft.
Thus horror girds thee round. Meantime alone
Thou dwell'st, and helpless in a soil unknown;
Poor, and receiving from a foreign hand
The aid denied thee in thy native land.
Oh, ruthless country, and unfeeling more
Than thy own billow-beaten chalky shore,
Leav'st thou to foreign care the worthies, given
By Providence, to guide thy steps to heaven,
His ministers, commissioned to proclaim
Eternal blessings in a Saviour's name!
Ah then most worthy, with a soul unfed,
In Stygian night to lie for ever dead.
So once the venerable Tishbite strayed
An exiled fugitive from shade to shade,
When, flying Ahab and his fury wife,
In lone Arabian wilds he sheltered life;
So, from Philippi, wandered forth forlorn
Cilician Paul, with sounding scourges torn;
And Christ himself, so left and trod no more
The thankless Gergesene's forbidden shore.

But thou take courage, strive against despair;
Quake not with dread, nor nourish anxious care.
Grim war indeed on every side appears,
And thou art menaced by a thousand spears;
Yet none shall drink thy blood, or shall offend
Even the defenceless bosom of my friend.
For thee the Ægis of thy God shall hide,
Jehovah's self shall combat on thy side.
The same who vanquished under Sion's towers
At silent midnight all Assyria's powers;
The same who overthrew in ages past
Damascus' sons that laid Samaria waste.
Their king he filled and them with fatal fears
By mimic sounds of clarions in their ears,
Of hoofs, and wheels, and neighings from afar
Of clashing armour, and the din of war.

Thou, therefore, as the most afflicted may,
Still hope, and triumph, o'er thy evil day:
Look forth, expecting happier times to come,
And to enjoy, once more, thy native home."

1627.

ELEGY VII.
Composed in the Author's 19th year.

As yet a stranger to the gentle fires,
That Amathusia's smiling queen inspires,
Not seldom I derided Cupid's darts,
And scorned his claim to rule all human hearts.
"Go, child," I said, "transfix the timorous dove,
An easy conquest suits an infant love;
Enslave the sparrow, for such prize shall be
Sufficient triumph to a chief like thee!
Why aim thine idle arms at human kind?  
Thy shafts prevail not 'gainst the noble mind."

The Cyprian heard, and, kindling into ire,  
( None kindles sooner) burned with double fire.

It was the spring, and newly-risen day  
Peeped o'er the hamlets on the first of May;  
My eyes, too tender for the blaze of light,  
Still sought the shelter of retiring night,  
When Love approached, in painted plumes arrayed;  
The insidious god his rattling darts betrayed,  
Nor less his infant features, and the sly  
Sweet intimations of his threatening eye.

Such the Sigeian boy is seen above,  
Filling the goblet for imperial Jove;  
Such he, on whom the nymphs bestowed their charms,  
Hylas, who perished in a Naiad's arms.  
Angry he seemed, yet graceful in his ire,  
And added threats, not destitute of fire:  
"My power," he said, "by others' pain alone,  
'Twere best to learn; now learn it by thy own.  
With those, who feel my power, that power attest,  
And in thy anguish be my sway confess.  
I vanquished Phæbus, though returning vain  
From his new triumph o'er the Python slain,  
And, when he thinks on Daphne, even he  
Will yield the prize of archery to me.
A dart less true the Parthian horseman sped,
Behind him killed and conquered as he fled:
Less true the expert Cydonian, and less true
The youth whose shaft his latent Procris slew.
Vanquished by me see huge Orion bend,
By me Alcides, and Alcides' friend.
At me should Jove himself a bolt design,
His bosom first should bleed transfixed by mine.
But all thy doubts this shaft will best explain,
Nor shall it reach thee with a trivial pain.
Thy Muse, vain youth, shall not thy peace ensure,
Nor Phæbus' serpent yield thy wound a cure."

He spoke, and, waving a bright shaft in air,
Sought the warm bosom of the Cyprian fair.

That thus a child should bluster in my ear,
Provoked my laughter, more than moved my fear.
I shunned not, therefore, public haunts, but strayed
Careless in city, or suburban shade;
And passing, and repassing, nymphs, that moved
With grace divine beheld where'er I roved.
Bright shone the vernal day, with double blaze,
As beauty gave new force to Phæbus' rays.
By no grave scruples checked, I freely eyed
The dangerous show, rash youth my only guide,
And many a look of many a fair unknown
Met full, unable to control my own.
But one I marked (then peace forsook my breast)
One—Oh how far superior to the rest!
What lovely features! such the Cyprian queen
Herself might wish, and Juno wish her mien.
The very nymph was she, whom when I dared
His arrows, Love had even then prepared.
Nor was himself remote, nor unsupplied
With torch well-trimmed, and quiver at his side;
Now to her lips he clung, her eyelids now,
Then settled on her cheeks, or on her brow.
And with a thousand wounds from every part,
Pierced and transpierced my undefended heart.
A fever, new to me, of fierce desire,
Now seized my soul, and I was all on fire,
But she, the while, whom only I adore,
Was gone, and vanished, to appear no more.
In silent sadness I pursue my way;
I pause, I turn, proceed, yet wish to stay,
And while I follow her in thought, bemoan
With tears, my soul's delight so quickly flown.
When Jove had hurled him to the Lemnian coast,
So Vulcan sorrowed for Olympus lost,
And so Oeclides, sinking into night,
From the deep gulf looked up to distant light.

Wretch that I am, what hopes for me remain,
Who cannot cease to love, yet love in vain?
Oh could I once, once more behold the fair,
Speak to her, tell her, of the pangs I bear,  
Perhaps she is not adamant, would show  
Perhaps some pity at my tale of woe.  
Oh inauspicious flame—'tis mine to prove  
A matchless instance of disastrous love.  
Ah spare me, gentle power!—If such thou be,  
Let not thy deeds and nature disagree.  
Spare me, and I will worship at no shrine  
With vow and sacrifice, save only thine.  
Now I revere thy fires, thy bow, thy darts:  
Now own thee sovereign of all human hearts.  
Remove, no—grant me still this raging woe!  
Sweet is the wretchedness, that lovers know:  
But pierce hereafter (should I chance to see  
One destined mine) at once both her, and me.

Such were the trophies, that in earlier days,  
By vanity seduced, I toiled to raise,  
Studious, yet indolent, and urged by youth,  
That worst of teachers, from the ways of truth;  
Till learning taught me, in the shady bower,  
To quit love's servile yoke, and spurn his power.  
Then, on a sudden, the fierce flame supprest,  
A frost continual settled on my breast,  
Whence Cupid fears his flames extinct to see,  
And Venus dreads a Diomede in me.  
1627.
Ah, now the human mind wearies herself
With her own wanderings, and, involved in gloom
Impenetrable, speculates amiss!
Measuring, in her folly, things divine
By human; laws inscribed on adamant
By laws of man's device, and counsels fixed
For ever, by the hours that pass and die.

How?—shall the face of nature then be ploughed
Into deep wrinkles, and shall years at last
On the great Parent fix a sterile curse?
Shall even she confess old age, and halt
And, palsy-smitten, shake her starry brows?
Shall foul Antiquity with rust and drought,
And famine, vex the radiant worlds above?
Shall Time's unsated maw crave and ingulf
The very Heavens, that regulate his flight?
And was the Sire of all able to fence
His works, and to uphold the circling worlds,
But, through improvident and heedless haste,
Let slip the occasion?—so then—all is lost—
And in some future evil hour, yon arch
Shall crumble, and come thund'ring down, the poles
Jar in collision, the Olympian king
Fall with his throne, and Pallas, holding forth
The terrors of the Gorgon shield in vain,
Shall rush to the abyss, like Vulcan hurled
Down into Lemnos, through the gate of Heaven.
Thou also, with precipitated wheels,
Phæbus, thy own son's fall shalt imitate,
With hideous ruin shalt impress the deep
Suddenly, and the flood shall reek and hiss
At the extinction of the lamp of day.
Then, too, shall Harmus, cloven to his base,
Be shattered, and the huge Ceramnian hills,
Once weapons of Tartarcan Dis, immersed
In Erebus, shall fill himself with fear.

No. The Almighty Father surer laid
His deep foundations, and providing well
For the event of all, the Scales of Fate
 Suspended, in just equipoise, and bade
His universal works, from age to age,
One tenor hold, perpetual, undisturbed.

Hence the prime mover wheels itself about
Continual, day by day, and with it bears
In social measure swift the heavens around.
Not tardier now is Saturn than of old,
Nor radiant less the burning casque of Mars.
Phæbus, his vigour unimpaired, still shows
The effulgence of his youth, nor needs the god
A downward course, that he may warm the vales:
But, ever rich in influence, runs his road,
Sign after sign, through all the heavenly zone.
Beautiful, as at first, ascends the star
From odoriferous Ind, whose office is
To gather home betimes the ethereal flock,
To pour them o'er the skies again at eve,
And to discriminate the night and day.
Still Cynthia's changeful horn waxes and wanes,
Alternate, and with arms extended still,
She welcomes to her breast her brother's beams.
Nor have the elements deserted yet
Their functions, thunder with as loud a stroke
As erst, smites through the rocks, and scatters them.
The east still howls, still the relentless north
Invades the shuddering Scythian, still he breathes
The winter, and still rolls the storm along.
The king of ocean, with his wonted force
Beats on Pelorus, o'er the deep is heard
The hoarse alarm of Triton's sounding shell,
Nor swim the monsters of the Ægean sea
In shallows, or beneath diminished waves.
Thou, too, thy ancient vegetative power
Enjoyest, O Earth, Narcissus still is sweet.
And, Phœbus, still thy favourite, and still
Thy favourite, Cytherea, both retain
Their beauty, nor the mountains, ore-enriched
For punishment of man, with purer gold
Teemed ever, or with brighter gems the deep.
THE PLATONIC IDEA.

Thus, in unbroken series all proceeds;
And shall, till wide involving either pole,
And the immensity of yonder heaven,
The final flames of destiny absorb
The world, consumed in one enormous pyre.

1628.

ON THE PLATONIC IDEA,
AS IT WAS UNDERSTOOD BY ARISTOTLE.

Ye sister powers, who o'er the sacred groves,
Preside, and thou, fair mother of them all,
Mnemosyne, and thou, who in thy grot
Immense reclined at leisure, hast in charge
The archives, and the ordinances of Jove,
And dost record the festivals of heaven,
Eternity,—Inform us who is He,
That great original by Nature chosen
To be the archetype of human kind,
Unchangeable, immortal, with the poles
Themselves coeval, one, yet everywhere,
An image of the God, who gave him being?
Twin-brother of the goddess born from Jove,
He dwells not in his father's mind, but though
Of common nature with ourselves, exists
Apart, and occupies a local home.
Whether, companion of the stars, he spend
Eternal ages, roaming at his will
From sphere to sphere the tenfold heavens, or dwell
On the moon's side that nearest neighbours earth,
Or torpid on the banks of Lethe sit
Among the multitude of souls ordained
To flesh and blood, or whether (as may chance)
That vast and giant model of our kind
In some far distant region of this globe
Sequestered stalk, with lifted head on high
O'er towering Atlas, on whose shoulders rest
The stars, terrific even to the gods.
Never the Theban seer, whose blindness proved
His best illumination, him beheld
In secret vision; never him the son
Of Pleione, amid the noiseless night
Descending, to the prophet-choir revealed;
Him never knew the Assyrian priest, who yet
The ancestry of Ninus chronicles,
And Belus, and Osiris far-renowned;
Nor even thrice great Hermes, although skilled
So deep in mystery, to the worshippers
Of Isis showed a prodigy like him.

And thou, who hast immortalised the shades
Of Academus, if the schools received
This monster of the fancy first from thee,
Either recall at once the banished bards
To thy republic, or thyself evinced
A wilder fabulist, go also forth.

1628

ELEGY V.
ON THE APPROACH OF SPRING.
Written in the Author's 20th year.

Time, never wandering from his annual round,
Bids Zephyr breathe the spring, and thaw the ground;
Bleak winter flies, new verdure clothes the plain,
And earth assumes her transient youth again.
Dream I, or also to the spring belong
Increase of genius, and new powers of song?
Spring gives them, and, how strange soe'er it seems,
Impels me now to some harmonious themes,
Castalia's fountain, and the forked hill
By day, by night, my raptured fancy fill,
My bosom burns and heaves, I hear within
A sacred sound, that prompts me to begin.
Lo, Phæbus comes, with his bright hair he blends
The radiant laurel wreath, Phæbus descends;
I mount, and, undepressed by cumbrous clay,
Through cloudy regions win my easy way;
Rapt through poetic shadowy haunts I fly.
The shrines all open to my dauntless eye;
My spirit searches all the realms of light,
And no Tartarean gulfs elude my sight.
But this ecstatic trance—this glorious storm
Of inspiration—what will it perform?
Spring claims the verse, that with his influence glows,
And shall be paid with what himself bestows.

Thou, veiled with opening foliage, lead'st the throng
Of feathered minstrels, Philomel, in song;
Let us, in concert, to the season sing,
Civic and sylvan heralds of the Spring.

With notes triumphant Spring's approach declare
To Spring, ye Muses, annual tribute bear!
The Orient left, and Ethiopia's plains,
The sun now northward turns his golden reins;
Night creeps not now, yet rules with gentle sway,
And drives her dusky horrors swift away;
Now less fatigued, on his ethereal plain
Boötes follows his celestial wain;
And now the radiant sentinels above,
Less numerous, watch around the courts of Jove,
For, with the night, force, ambush, slaughter fly,
And no gigantic guilt alarms the sky.
Now haply says some shepherd, while he views,
Recumbent on a rock, the reddening dews,
This night, this surely, Phæbus missed the fair
Who stops his chariot by her amorous care.
Cynthia, delighted by the morning's glow,
Speeds to the woodland, and resumes her bow;
Resigns her beams, and, glad to disappear,
Blesses his aid, who shortens her career.
Come—Phæbus cries—Aurora come—too late
Thou lingerest, slumb'ring, with thy withered mate:
Leave him, and to Hymettus' top repair,
Thy darling Cephalus expects thee there.
The goddess with a blush her love betrays,
But mounts and driving rapidly obeys.
Earth now desires thee, Phæbus, and to engage
Thy warm embrace, casts off the guise of age;
Desires thee, and deserves; for who so sweet,
When her rich bosom courts thy genial heat?
Her breath imparts to every breeze that blows
Arabia's harvest and the Paphian rose.
Her lofty front she diadems around
With sacred pines, like Ops on Ida crowned;
Her dewy locks, with various flowers new blown,
She interweaves, various, and all her own.
For Proserpine, in such a wreath attired,
Taenarian Dis himself with love inspired.
Fear not, lest, cold and coy, the nymph refuse;
Herself, with all her sighing Zephyrs, sues;
Each courts thee, fanning soft his scented wing,
And all her groves with warbled wishes ring.
Nor, unendowed and indigent, aspires
The amorous Earth to engage thy warm desires,
But, rich in balmy drugs, assists thy claim,
Divine Physician, to that glorious name.
If splendid recompense, if gifts can move
Desire in thee (gifts often purchase love),
She offers all the wealth her mountains hide,
And all that rests beneath the boundless tide.
How oft, when headlong from the heavenly steep,
She sees thee playing in the western deep,
How oft she cries—"Ah Phæbus, why repair
Thy wasted force, why seek refreshment there?
Can Tethys win thee? wherefore shouldst thou love
A face so fair in her unpleasant wave?
Come, seek my green retreats, and rather choose
To cool thy tresses in my crystal dews,
The grassy turf shall yield thee sweeter rest;
Come, lay thy evening glories on my breast,
And breathing fresh, through many a humid rose,
Soft whispering airs shall lull thee to repose.
No fears I feel like Semele to die,
Nor let thy burning wheels approach too nigh,
For thou canst govern them, here therefore rest,
And lay thy evening glories on my breast!"

Thus breathes the wanton earth her amorous flame,
And all her countless offspring feel the same;
THE APPROACH OF SPRING.

For Cupid now through every region strays,
Brightening his faded fires with solar rays,
His new-strung bow sends forth a deadlier sound,
And his new pointed shafts more deeply wound;
Nor Dian's self escapes him now untried,
Nor even Vesta at her altar-side;
His mother, too, repairs her beauty's wane,
And seems sprung newly from the deep again.
Exulting youths the Hymeneal sing,
With Hymen's name roofs, rocks, and valleys ring;
He, new-attired, and by the season drest,
Proceeds, all fragrant, in his saffron vest.
Now, many a golden-cinctured virgin roves
To taste the pleasures of the fields and groves,
All wish, and each alike, some favourite youth
Hers, in the bonds of Hymeneal truth.
Now pipes the shepherd through his reeds again,
Nor Phillis wants a song that suits the strain;
With songs the seaman hails the starry sphere,
And dolphins rise from the abyss to hear;
Jove feels, himself, the season, sports again
With his fair spouse, and banquets all his train.
Now, too, the Satyrs, in the dusk of eve,
Their mazy dance through flowery meadows weave,
And neither god nor goat, but both in kind,
Sylvanus, wreathed with cypress, skips behind.
The Dryads leave their hollow sylvan cells
To roam the banks and solitary dells;
Pan riots now; and from his amorous chase
Ceres and Cybele seem hardly safe,
And Faunus, all on fire to reach the prize,
In chase of some enticing Oread, flies:
She bounds before, but fears too swift a bound,
And hidden lies, but wishes to be found.
Our shades entice the Immortals from above,
And some kind power presides o'er every grove;
And long, ye powers, o'er every grove preside,
For all is safe, and blest, where ye abide!
Return, O Jove! the age of gold restore—
Why choose to dwell where storms and thunder roar?
At least, thou, Phæbus, moderate thy speed:
Let not the vernal hours too swift proceed;
Command rough Winter back, nor yield the pole
Too soon to night's encroaching long control.
1629.

ODE ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's Eternal King,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That He our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious form, that light insufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty
Wherewith He wont at Heaven's high council-table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside, and here with us to be,

Forsook the courts of everlasting day
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say, heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
To welcome Him to this His new abode,
Now while the heaven, by the sun's team untrod,

Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled hosts keep watch in squadrons bright?

See, how from far, upon the eastern road,
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:
O, run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,

And join thy voice unto the angel-choir,
From out His secret altar touched with hallowed fire.
THE HYMN.

It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born Child
   All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature, in awe to Him,
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
   With her great Master so to sympathise:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun her lusty paramour.

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle air
   To hide her guilty front with innocent snow;
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
   The saintly veil of maiden white to throw:
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

But He, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;
   She, crowned with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
   With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.
No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high up hung:
The hookéd chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the arméd throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovereign Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began:
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence;
And will not take their flight
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warned them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until the Lord himself bespake and bid them go.

And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The sun himself withheld his wonted speed
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
The new-enlightened world no more should need:
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning axletree could bear.
The shepherds on the lawn,
Or e'er the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row:
Full little thought they then
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below:
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep,
When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal finger strook;
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringéd noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.
Nature, that heard such sound,
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.
At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shamefaced night arrayed;
The helmed cherubim
And sworded seraphim
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping, in loud and solemn choir
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-born Heir.
Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,
And east the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.
Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow;
    c—70
And, with your ninefold harmony,
Make up full concert to the angelic symphony.
For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long
   Time will run back and fetch the age of gold;
And speckled vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
   And leprous sin will melt from earthly mould;
And hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.
Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
   Orbed in a rainbow and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen,
   With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.
But wisest Fate says No,
This must not yet be so;
   The Babe yet lies in smiling infancy
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss,
   So both Himself and us to glorify:
Yet first, to those ychained in sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the
With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang
While the red fire and smouldering clouds outbrake:
The aged earth, aghast
With terror of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the centre shake;
When, at the world's last session,
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread His throne.

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins; for, from this happy day,
The old Dragon, under ground
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurped sway;
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swinges the sealy horror of his folded tail.

The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the archéd roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.
The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring and dale,
Edged with poplar pale,
The parting genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn,
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.
In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
In urns and altars round
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar power foregoes his wonted seat.
Peor and Baälim
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-battered god of Palestine;
And moonèd Ashtaroth,
Heaven's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn,
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn.
And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain, with cymbals' ring,
They call the grisly king,
   In dismal dance about the furnace blue;
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
   Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud:
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest,
   Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud;
In vain, with timbrelled anthems dark,
The sable-stoléd sorcerers bear his worshipped ark.

He feels from Juda's land
The dreaded Infant's hand,
   The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyne;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,
   Nor Typhon huge ending in snaky twine;
Our Babe, to show His Godhead true,
Can in His swaddling bands control the damned crew.

So, when the sun in bed,
Curtained with cloudy red,
   Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
   Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave;
And the yellow-skirted fays
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.

But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest;
Time is, our tedious song should here have ending:
Heaven’s youngest-teeméd star
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending:
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable,
Christmas, 1629.

ELEGY VI.
TO CHARLES DIODATI.

Who, while he spent his Christmas in the country, sent the author a poetical epistle, in which he requested that his verses, if not so good as usual, might be excused on account of the many feasts to which his friends invited him, and which would not allow him leisure to finish them as he wished.

With no rich viands overcharged, I send
Health, which perchance you want, my pampered friend,
But wherefore should thy Muse tempt mine away
From what she loves, from darkness into day?
Art thou desirous to be told how well
I love thee, and in verse? Verse cannot tell.
TO CHARLES DIODATI.

For verse has bounds, and must in measure move;
But neither bounds nor measure knows my love.
How pleasant, in thy lines described, appear
December's harmless sports, and rural cheer!
French spirits kindling with cerulean fires,
And all such gambols as the time inspires.

Think not that wine against good verse offends;
The Muse and Bacchus have been always friends,
Nor Phœbus blushes sometimes to be found
With ivy rather than with laurel crowned.
The Nine themselves ofttimes have joined the song
And revels of the Bacchanalian throng;
Not even Ovid could in Scythian air
Sing sweetly—why? no vine would flourish there.
What in brief numbers sang Anacreon's Muse?
Wine, and the rose that sparkling wine bedews.
Pindar with Bacchus glows—his every line
Breathes the rich fragrance of inspiring wine,
While, with loud crash o'erturned, the chariot lies,
And brown with dust the fiery courser flies.
The Roman lyrist steeped in wine his lays
So sweet in Glycera's and Chloe's praise.
Now too the plenteous feast, and mantling bowl
Nourish the vigour of thy sprightly soul;
The flowing goblet makes thy numbers flow,
And casks not wine alone, but verse, bestow.
Thus Phoebus favours, and the arts attend
Whom Bacchus, and whom Ceres, both befriend.
What wonder, then, thy verses are so sweet,
In which these triple powers so kindly meet.
The lute now also sounds, with gold inwrought,
And, touched with flying fingers nicely taught,
In tapestried halls high roofed the sprightly lyre
Directs the dancers of the virgin choir.
If dull repletion fright the Muse away,
Sights gay as these may more invite her stay;
And, trust me, while the ivory keys resound,
Fair damsels sport, and perfumes steam around,
Apollo's influence, like ethereal flame,
Shall animate, at once, thy glowing frame,
And all the Muse shall rush into thy breast,
By love and music's blended powers posset.
For numerous powers light Elegy befriend,
Hear her sweet voice, and at her call attend;
Her, Bacchus, Ceres, Venus, all approve,
And, with his blushing mother, gentle Love.
Hence to such bards we grant the copious use
Of banquets, and the vine's delicious juice.
But they, who demi-gods and heroes praise,
And feats performed in Jove's more uscful days,
Who now the counsels of high heaven explore,
Now shades, that echo the Cerberean roar,
Simply let these, like him of Samos live,
Let herbs to them a bloodless banquet give;  
In beechen goblets let their beverage shine,  
Cool from the crystal spring their sober wine.  
Their youth should pass in innocence secure  
From stain licentious, and in manners pure,  
Pure as the priest, when robed in white he stands,  
The fresh lustration ready in his hands.  
Thus Linus lived, and thus, as poets write,  
Tiresias, wiser for his loss of sight.  
Thus exiled Chalcas, thus the bard of Thrace,  
Melodious tamer of the savage race.  
Thus trained by temperance, Homer led of yore  
His chief of Ithaca from shore to shore,  
Through magic Circe's monster-peopled reign  
And shoals insidious with the siren train;  
And through the realms, where grizzly spectres dwell,  
Whose tribes he fettered in a gory spell;  
For these are sacred bards, and from above,  
Drink large infusions from the mind of Jove.

Wouldst thou (perhaps 'tis hardly worth thine ear),  
Wouldst thou be told my occupation here?  
The promised King of Peace employs my pen,  
The eternal covenant made for guilty men,  
The new-born Deity with infant cries,  
Filling the sordid hovel where he lies;  
The hymning angels, and the herald star
That led the wise who sought him from afar,
And idols on their own unhallowed shore
Dashed at his birth, to be revered no more!

This theme on reeds of Albion I rehearse:
The dawn of that blest day inspired the verse;
Verse, that, reserved in secret, shall attend
Thy candid voice, my critic, and my friend!

January, 1630.

UPON THE CIRCUMCISION.

Ye flaming powers, and wingéd warriors bright,
That erst with music and triumphant song,
First heard by happy watchful shepherds' ear,
So sweetly sung your joy the clouds along
Through the soft silence of the listening night;
Now mourn; and if, sad share with us to bear,
Your fiery essence can distil no tear,
Burn in your sighs, and borrow
Seas wept from our deep sorrow:
He, who with all heaven's heraldry whilere
Entered the world, now bleeds to give us ease.
Alas, how soon our sin
Sore doth begin
His infancy to seize!
O more exceeding love, or law more just:
Just law, indeed, but more exceeding love!
For we, by rightful doom remediless,
Were lost in death, till He, that dwelt above.
High-throned in secret bliss, for us frail dust
Emptied His glory, even to nakedness,
And that great covenant, which we still transgress,
Entirely satisfied,
And the full wrath beside
Of vengeful justice bore for our excess:
And seals obedience first, with wounding smart,
This day; but, O, ere long,
Huge pangs and strong
Will pierce more near His heart.

January, 1630.

THE PASSION.

EREWHILE of music, and ethereal mirth,
Wherewith the stage of air and earth did ring,
And joyous news of heavenly Infant’s birth,
My muse with angels did divide to sing;
But headlong joy is ever on the wing,
In wintry solstice, like the shortened light,
Soon swallowed up in dark and long outliving night.

For now to sorrow must I tune my song,
And set my harp to notes of saddest woe
Which on our dearest Lord did seize ere long,
Dangers, and snares, and wrongs, and worse than so,
Which He for us did freely undergo:
Most perfect hero, tried in heaviest plight
Of labours huge and hard, too hard for human wight!

He, sovereign priest, stooping His regal head,
That dropt with odorous oil down His fair eyes,
Poor fleshly tabernacle enteréd,
His starry front low-roofed beneath the skies:
O, what a mask was there—what a disguise!
Yet more; the stroke of death He must abide,
Then lies Him meekly down fast by His brethren's side.

These latest scenes confine my roving verse;
To this horizon is my Phœbus bound:
His godlike acts, and His temptations fierce,
And former sufferings, other-where are found;
Loud o'er the rest Cremona's trump doth sound;
Me softer airs befit, and softer strings
Of lute, or viol still more apt for mournful things.

Befriend me, Night, best patroness of grief:
Over the pole thy thickest mantle throw,
And work my flattered fancy to belief
That heaven and earth are coloured with my woe;
My sorrows are too dark for day to know:
The leaves should all be black whereon I write,
And letters, where my tears have washed, a wannish white
See, see the chariot, and those rushing wheels,
That whirled the prophet up at Chebar flood;
My spirit some transporting cherub feels,
To bear me where the towers of Salem stood,
Once glorious towers, now sunk in guiltless blood;
There doth my soul in holy vision sit,
In pensive trance, and anguish, and ecstatic fit.

Mine eye hath found that sad sepulchral rock
That was the casket of Heaven's richest store,
And here, though grief my feeble hands up-lock,
Yet on the softened quarry would I score
My plaining verse as lively as before;
For sure so well instructed are my tears,
That they would fitly fall in ordered characters.

Or should I thence, hurried on viewless wing,
Take up a weeping on the mountains wild,
The gentle neighbourhood of grove and spring
Would soon unbosom all their echoes mild;
And I (for grief is easily beguiled)
Might think the infection of my sorrows loud
Had got a race of mourners on some pregnant cloud.

This subject the author finding to be above the years
he had when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied
with what was begun, left it unfinished.

Easter, 1630.
FLY, envious Time, till thou run out thy race!
Call on the lazy leaden-stepping Hours,
Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace,
And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,
Which is no more than what is false and vain
And merely mortal dross;
So little is our loss,
So little is thy gain!
For whenas each thing bad thou hast entombed,
And, last of all, thy greedy self consumed,
Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss.
And joy shall overtake us as a flood
When everything that is sincerely good
And perfectly divine,
With Truth, and Peace, and Love, shall ever shine
About the supreme throne
Of Him, to whose happy-making sight alone
When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb
Then, all this earthly grossness quit,
Attired with stars we shall for ever sit,
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee,
O, Time!

1630?
AT A SOLEMN MUSIC.

Blest pair of sirens, pledges of heaven's joy,
Sphere-born, harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ,
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce;
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbéd song of pure concert
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee,
Where the bright seraphim, in burning row,
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow,
And the cherubic host, in thousand choirs,
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly:
That we on earth, with undiscording voice,
May rightly answer that melodious noise,
As once we did, till disproportioned sin
Jarred against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.
Oh, may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with heaven, till God, ere long,
To His celestial concert us unite,
To live with Him and sing in endless morn of light!

1630

SONG ON MAY MORNING.

Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.
Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire
Mirth, and youth, and warm desire;
Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
Hill and dale both boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early song,
And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

1630
AN EPITAPH ON THE ADMIRABLE DRAMATIC POET, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

What needs my Shakespeare, for his honoured bones,
The labour of an age in pilé stones?
Or that his hallow'd relics should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou, in our wonder and astonishment,
Hast built thyself a livelong monument.
For whilst, to the shame of slow-endeavouring art,
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath, from the leaves of thy unvalued book,
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took;
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;
And, so sepulchred, in such pomp dost lie,
That kings, for such a tomb, would wish to die.
1630.
ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER,

Who sickened in the Time of his Vacancy; being forbid to go to London, by reason of the Plague.

Here lies old Hobson; death hath broke his girt,
And here, alas, hath laid him in the dirt;
Or else the ways being foul, twenty to one
He's here stuck in a slough, and overthrown.
'Twas such a shifter, that, if truth were known,
Death was half-glad when he had got him down;
For he had, any time this ten years full,
Dodged with him betwixt Cambridge and The Bull.
And surely Death could never have prevailed,
Had not his weekly course of carriage failed:
But lately, finding him so long at home
And thinking now his journey's end was come,
And that he had ta'en up his latest inn,
In the kind office of a chamberlain
Shewed him his room where he might lodge that night,
Pulled off his boots, and took away the light:
If any ask for him, it shall be said,
"Hobson has supped, and 's newly gone to bed."

January, 1631.
ANOTHER ON THE SAME.

Here lieth one, who did most truly prove
That he could never die while he could move;
So hung his destiny, never to rot
While he might still jog on and keep his trot;
Made of sphere metal, never to decay
Until his resolution was at stay.
Time numbers motion, yet (without a crime
'Gainst old truth) motion numbered out his time:
And, like an engine moved with wheel and weight,
His principles being ceased, he ended straight.
Rest, that gives all men life, gave him his death,
And too much breathing put him out of breath;
Nor were it contradiction to affirm,
Too long vacation hastened on his term.
Merely to drive the time away he sickened,
Fainted, and died, nor would with ale be quickened,
"Nay," quoth he, on his swooning bed outstretched,
"If I mayn't carry, sure I'll ne'er be fetched;
But vow, though the cross doctors all stood hearers,
For one carrier put down to make six bearers."
Ease was his chief disease; and, to judge right,
He died for heaviness that his cart went light:
His leisure told him that his time was come,
And lack of load made his life burdensome,
That even to his last breath (there be that say't)
As he were pressed to death, he cried, "More weight."
But, had his doings lasted as they were,
He had been an immortal carrier.
Obedient to the moon he spent his date
In course reciprocal, and had his fate
Linked to the mutual flowing of the seas;
Yet (strange to think) his wain was his increase.
His letters are delivered all, and gone,
Only remains this superscription.

January, 1631.

AN EPITAPH ON THE MARCHIONESS OF WINCHESTER.

This rich marble doth inter
The honoured wife of Winchester,
A viscount's daughter, an earl's heir,
Besides what her virtues fair
Added to her noble birth,
More than she could own from earth.
Summers three times eight save one
She has told; alas, too soon,
After so short time of breath,
To house with darkness, and with death.
Yet had the number of her days
Been as complete as was her praise.
Nature and fate had had no strife
In giving limit to her life.

Her high birth and her graces sweet
Quickly found a lover meet;
The virgin choir for her request
The god that sits at marriage feast:
He at their invoking came,
But with a scarce well-lighted flame,
And in his garland, as he stood,
Ye might discern a cypress-bud.
Once had the early matrons run
To greet her of a lovely son,
And now with second hope she goes,
And calls Lucina to her throes,
But, whether by mischance or blame,
Atropos for Lucina came,
And with remorseless cruelty
Spoiled at once both fruit and tree.
The hapless babe, before his birth,
Had burial, yet not laid in earth:
And the languished mother’s womb
Was not long a living tomb.

So have I seen some tender slip,
Saved with care from winter's nip,
The pride of her carnation train,
Plucked up by some unheedy swain,
Who only thought to crop the flower,
New shot up from vernal shower;
But the fair blossom hangs the head
Sideways, as on a dying bed,
And those pearls of dew she wears
Prove to be presaging tears,
Which the sad morn had let fall
On her hastening funeral.

Gentle lady, may thy grave
Peace and quiet ever have;
After this thy travail sore,
Sweet rest seize thee evermore,
That, to give the world increase,
Shortened hast thy own life's lease.
Here, besides the sorrowing
That thy noble house doth bring,
Here be tears of perfect moan
Wept for thee in Helicon;
And some flowers, and some bays,
For thy hearse, to strew the ways,
Sent thee from the banks of Came,
Devoted to thy virtuous name;
Whilst thou, bright saint, high sitt'st in glory,
Next her, much like to thee in story,
That fair Syrian shepherdess
Who, after years of barrenness,
The highly favoured Joseph bore
To him that served for her before,
And, at her next birth, much like thee,
Through pangs fled to felicity,
Far within the bosom bright
Of blazing Majesty and Light:
There with thee, new welcome saint,
Like fortunes may her soul acquaintance
With thee there clad in radiant sheen,
No marchioness, but now a queen.

April, 1631.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

O NIGHTINGALE, that on yon bloomy spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still;
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly hours lead on propitious May.
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love; O, if Jove's will
Have linked that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom in some grove nigh;
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why:
Whether the Muse, or Love, call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

ON HIS BEING ARRIVED TO THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in-strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

December, 1631.
THE FIFTH ODE OF HORACE, LIB. I.

What slender youth, bedewed with liquid odours,
Courts thee on roses in some pleasant cave,
Pyrrha? For whom bind'st thou
In wreaths thy golden hair,
Plain in thy neatness? Oh, how oft shalt he
On faith and changed gods complain; and seas
Rough with black winds and storms
Unwonted shall admire,
Who now enjoys thee credulous, all gold,
Who, always vacant, always amiable,
Hopes thee, of flattering gales
Unmindful! Hapless they,
To whom thou, untried, seem'st fair! Me, in my vowed
Picture, the sacred wall declares to have hung
My dank and dropping weeds
To the stern god of sea.
FROM GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH.

Brutus thus addresses Diana in the Country of Leogecia.

Goddess of shades, and huntress, who at will
Walk'st on the rolling spheres, and through the deep;
On thy third reign, the earth, look now and tell
What land, what seat of rest thou bidd'st me seek,
What certain seat, where I may worship thee
For aye, with temples vowed and virgin quires.

To whom, sleeping before the altar, Diana answers in a vision the same night.

Brutus, far to the west, in the ocean wide,
Beyond the realm of Gaul, a land there lies,
Sea-girt it lies, where giants dwelt of old,
Now void; it fits thy people: thither bend
Thy course; there shalt thou find a lasting seat;
There to thy sons another Troy shall rise,
And kings be born of thee, whose dreadful might
Shall awe the world, and conquer nations bold.
FROM DANTE.

Ah, Constantine, of how much ill was cause,  
Not thy conversion, but those rich domains  
That the first wealthy pope received of thee!

Founded in chaste and humble poverty,  
'Gainst them that raised thee dost thou lift thy horn?  
Impudent whore, where hast thou placed thy hope?  
In thy adulterers, or thy ill-got wealth?  
Another Constantine comes not in haste.

FROM ARIOSTO.

Then passed he to a flowery mountain, green,  
Which once smelt sweet, now stinks as odiously:  
This was the gift, if you the truth will have,  
That Constantine to good Sylvester gave.

FROM HORACE.

Whom do we count a good man? Whom but he  
Who keeps the laws and statutes of the senate,  
Who judges in great suits and controversies,  
Whose witness and opinion wins the cause,  
But his own house, and the whole neighbourhood,  
Sees his foul inside through his whited skin,
FROM EURIPIDES.
This is true liberty, when freeborn men,
Having to advise the public, may speak free;
Which he who can, and will, deserves high praise;
Who neither can, nor will, may hold his peace:
What can be juster in a state like this?

FROM HORACE.
—Laughing to teach the truth
What hinders? As some teachers give to boys
Junkets and knacks that they may learn apace.

FROM HORACE.
—Joking decides great things,
Stronger and better, oft, than earnest can.

FROM SOPHOCLES.
'Tis you that say it, not I. You do the deeds,
And your ungodly deeds find me the words.

FROM SENECA.
—There can be slain
No sacrifice to God more acceptable,
Than an unjust and wicked king.
TO HIS FATHER.

Oh that Pieria's spring would through my breast
Pour its inspiring influence, and rush
No rill, but rather an o'erflowing flood,
That, for my venerable Father's sake
All meaner themes renounced, my Muse, on wings
Of duty borne, might reach a loftier strain.
For thee, my Father, howsoe'er it please,
She frames this slender work, nor know I aught,
That may thy gifts more suitably requite;
Though to requite them suitably would ask,
Returns much nobler, and surpassing far
The meagre stores of verbal gratitude:
But, such as I possess, I send thee all.
This page presents thee in their full amount
With thy son's treasures, and the sum is naught;
Naught, save the riches that from airy dream
In secret grottoes and in laurel bowers
I have, by golden Clio's gift, acquired.

Verse is a work divine; despise not thou
Verse therefore; which evinces (nothing more)
Man's heavenly source, and which, retaining still
Some scintillations of Promethean fire,
Bespeaks him animated from above.
The gods love verse; the infernal powers them-
selves
Confess the influence of verse, which stirs
The lowest deep, and binds in triple chains
Of adamant both Pluto and the Shades.
In verse the Delphic priestess, and the pale Tremulous Sybil, make the future known,
And he who sacrifices, on the shrine
Hangs verse, both when he smites the threatening bull
And when he spreads his reeking entrails wide
To scrutinise the Fates enveloped there.
We too, ourselves, what time we seek again
Our native skies, and one eternal now
Shall be the only measure of our being,
Crowned all with gold, and chanting to the lyre Harmonious verse, shall range the courts above,
And make the starry firmament resound.
And even now, the fiery spirit pure
That wheels yon circling orbs, directs, himself,
Their mazy dance, with melody of verse
Unutterable, immortal, hearing which
Huge Ophiuchus holds his hiss suppressed,
Orion softened, drops his ardent blade,
And Atlas stands unconscious of his load.
Verse graced of old the feasts of kings, ere yet
Luxurious dainties, destined to the gulf
Immense of gluttony, were known, and ere
Lyæus deluged yet the temperate board.
Then sat the bard a customary guest
To share the banquet, and, his length of locks
With beechen honours bound, proposed in verse
The characters of heroes and their deeds
To imitation, sang of Chaos old,
Of Nature's birth, of gods that crept in search
Of acorns fall'n, and of the thunderbolt
Not yet produced from Etna's fiery cave.
And what avails, at last, tune without voice,
Devoid of matter? Such may suit perhaps
The rural dance, but such was ne'er the song
Of Orpheus, whom the streams stood still to hear
And the oaks followed. Not by chords alone
Well touched, but by resistless accents more.
To sympathetic tears the ghosts themselves
He moved: these praises to his verse he owes.

Nor thou persist, I pray thee, still to slight
The sacred Nine, and to imagine vain
And useless, powers, by whom inspired? Thyself
Art skilful to associate verse with airs
Harmonious, and to give the human voice
A thousand modulations, heir by right
Indisputable of Arion's fame.
Now say, what wonder is it, if a son
Of thine delight in verse; if so conjoined
In close affinity, we sympathise
In social arts, and kindred studies sweet?
Such distribution of himself to us
Was Phæbus' choice; thou hast thy gift, and I
Mine also, and between us we receive,
Father and son, the whole inspiring God.

No, howso'ever the semblance thou assume
Of hate, thou hatest not the gentle Muse,
My Father, for thou never bad'st me tread
The beaten path and broad, that leads right on
To opulence, nor did'st condemn thy son
To the insipid clamours of the bar,
To laws voluminous and ill observed;
But wishing to enrich me more, to fill
My mind with treasure, led'st me far away
From city-din to deep retreats, to banks
And streams Aonian, and with free consent
Didst place me happy at Apollo's side.
I speak not now, on more important themes
Intent, of common benefits, and such
As nature bids, but of thy larger gifts,
My Father, who, when I had opened once
The stores of Roman rhetoric, and learned
TO HIS FATHER.

The full-toned language of the eloquent Greeks,
Whose lofty music graced the lips of Jove,
Thyself didst counsel me to add the flowers
That Gallia boasts, those too with which the smooth
Italian his degenerate speech adorns,
That witnesses his mixture with the Goth;
And Palestine's prophetic songs divine.
To sum the whole, whate'er the heaven contains,
The earth beneath it, and the air between,
The rivers and the restless deep, may all
Prove intellectual gain to me, my wish
Concurring with thy will; science herself,
All cloud removed, inclines her beauteous head,
And offers me the lip, if, dull of heart,
I shrink not, and decline her gracious boon.

Go now, and gather dross, ye sordid minds
That covet it; what could my Father more?
What more could Jove himself, unless he gave
His own abode, the heaven in which he reigns?
More eligible gifts than these were not
Apollo's to his son, had they been safe
As they were insecure, who made the boy
The world's vice-luminary, bade him rule
The radiant chariot of the day, and bind
To his young brows his own all-dazzling wreath.
I therefore, although last and least, my place
Among the learned in the laurel grove
Will hold, and where the conqu’ror’s ivy twines,
Henceforth exempt from the unlettered throng
Profane, nor even to be seen by such.
Away then, sleepless Care, Complaint, away,
And Envy, with thy “jealous leer malign,”
Nor let the monster Calumny shoot forth
Her venomed tongue at me. Detested foes,
Ye all are impotent against my peace,
For I am privileged, and bear my breast
Safe, and too high for your viperian wound.

But thou, my Father, since to render thanks
Equivalent, and to requite by deeds
Thy liberality, exceeds my power,
Suffice it that I thus record thy gifts,
And bear them treasured in a grateful mind.
Ye too, the favourite pastime of my youth,
My voluntary numbers, if ye dare
To hope longevity, and to survive
Your master’s funeral, not soon absorbed
In the oblivious Lethean gulf,
Shall to futurity perhaps convey
This theme, and by these praises of my sire
Improve the fathers of a distant age.

1632.
ARCADES.

The Characters appear on the Scene in pastoral habit, moving towards the seat of state, with this song:

I. SONG.

Look, nymphs and shepherds, look,
What sudden blaze of majesty
Is that which we from hence descry,
Too divine to be mistook?

This, this is she
To whom our vows and wishes bend:
Here our solemn search hath end.

Fame, that, her high worth to raise,
Seemed erst so lavish and profuse,
We may justly now accuse
Of detraction from her praise;

Less than half we find expressed,

Envy bid conceal the rest.

Mark, what radiant state she spreads
In circle round her shining throne,
Shooting her beams like silver threads;
This, this is she alone,
    Sitting like a goddess bright
    In the centre of her light.

Might she the wise Latona be,
Or the towered Cybele,
Mother of a hundred gods?
Juno dares not give her odds.
    Who had thought this clime had held
    A deity so unparalleled?

As they come forward, the Genius of the Wood appears, and, turning towards them, speaks:

Gen. Stay, gentle swains, for, though in this disguise,
I see bright honour sparkle through your eyes;
Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung
Of that renowned flood, so often sung,
Divine Alpheus, who, by secret sluice,
Stole under seas to meet his Arethuse;
And ye, the breathing roses of the wood,
Fair silver-buskined nymphs, as great and good,
I know this quest of yours, and free intent,
Was all in honour and devotion meant
To the great mistress of yon princely shrine,
Whom with low reverence I adore as mine,
And, with all helpful service, will comply
To further this night's glad solemnity;
And lead ye where ye may more near behold
What shallow-searching Fame hath left untold,
Which I full oft, amidst these shades alone,
Have sat to wonder at, and gaze upon.
For know, by lot from Jove, I am the power
Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower,
To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove
With ringlets quaint, and wanton windings wove.
And all my plants I save from nightly ill
Of noisome winds, and blasting vapours chill,
And from the boughs brush off the evil dew,
And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,
Or what the cross dire-looking planet smites,
Or hurtful worm with cankered venom bites.
When evening grey doth rise, I fetch my round
Over the mount, and all this hallowed ground;
And early, ere the odorous breath of morn
Awakes the slumbering leaves, or tasselled horn
Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,
Number my ranks, and visit every sprout
With puissant words, and murmurs made to bless.
But else, in deep of night, when drowsiness
Hath locked up mortal sense, then listen I
To the celestial Syrens' harmony,
That sit upon the nine enfolded spheres,
And sing to those that hold the vital shears
And turn the adamantine spindle round
On which the fate of gods and men is wound.
Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie,
To lull the daughters of necessity,
And keep unsteady Nature to her law,
And the low world in measured motion draw
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear
Of human mould, with gross unpurgéd ear.
And yet such music worthiest were to blaze
The peerless height of her immortal praise,
Whose lustre leads us, and for her most fit,
If my inferior hand or voice could hit
Inimitable sounds: yet, as we go,
Whate'er the skill of lesser gods can show,
I will essay, her worth to celebrate,
And so attend ye toward her glittering state;
Where ye may all, that are of noble stem,
Approach, and kiss her sacred vesture's hem.

II. SONG.

O'er the smooth enamelled green,
Where no print of step hath been,
Follow me, as I sing
And touch the warbled string,
Under the shady roof
Of branching elm, star-proof,
Follow me:
I will bring you where she sits
Clad in splendour as befits
Her deity.
Such a rural queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

III. SONG.

Nymphs and shepherds, dance no more
By sandy Ladon's lilied banks:
On old Lyceus, or Cyllene hoar.
Trip no more in twilight ranks;
Though Erymanth your loss deplore,
A better soil shall give ye thanks.

From the stony Manalus
Bring your flocks, and live with us;
Here ye shall have greater grace,
To serve the Lady of this place.
Though Syrinx your Pan's mistress were,
Yet Syrinx well might wait on her.
Such a rural queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

1633.
The First Scene discovers a Wild Wood. The attendant Spirit descends or enters.

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aërial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air;
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call earth, and, with low-thoughted care,
Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants,
Amongst the enthronéd gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that, by due steps, aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity:
To such my errand is: and but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot, 'twixt high and nether Jove,
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep;
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
And wield their little tridents: but this isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-haired deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun,
A noble peer, of mickle trust and power,
Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-entrusted sceptre. But their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;
D*—70
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that, by quick command from sovereign Jove,
I was despatched for their defence and guard.
And listen why; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe’s island fell. Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charméd cup
Whoever tasted, lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?
This nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom, therefore, she brought up, and Comus named:
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And, in thick shelter of black shades embowered,
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering, to every weary traveller,
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drought of Phoebus; which as they taste—
For most do taste, through fond intemperate thirst—
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore, when any favoured of high Jove
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from heaven to give him safe convoy,
As now I do. But first I must put off
These my sky-robes, spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.
Comus enters with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering; they come in, making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream,
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,
And Advice, with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And, on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only daylight that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto! to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame,
That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom
And makes one blot of all the air;
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecate, and befriend
Us, thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice morn, on the Indian steep,
From her cabined loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale sun desery
Our concealed solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

[The Measure].

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds, within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright. Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains: I shall, ere long,
Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course.
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glazing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside.
And hearken, if I may, her business here.

The Lady enters.

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now: methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe,
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,
When, for their teeming flocks, and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth
To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
Of such late wassailers; yet, O, where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket-side,
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then when the grey-hooded even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts; 'tis likeliest
They had engaged their wandering steps too far;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me, else, O thievish night.
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.—
What might this be?—A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And aéry tongues that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, conscience.
O, welcome, pure-eyed faith, white-handed hope,
Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemished form of chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistening guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassailed.—
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.
I cannot halloo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture; for my new-enlivened spirits
Prompt me; and they, perhaps, are not far off.

SONG.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy aëry shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well:
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere!
So mayst thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all heaven's harmonies.

Enter Comus.

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven-down
Of darkness, till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe, with the Syrens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sang, would take the prisoner soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen. Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed.
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan, by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

Lady. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise
That is addressed to unattending ears;
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my severed company,
Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Comus. What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?

Lady. Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.

Comus. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?

Lady. They left me, weary, on a grassy turf.

Comus. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

Lady. To seek, i' the valley, some cool friendly spring.

Comus. And left your fair side all unguarded, lady?

Lady. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.

Comus. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit!

Comus. Imports there loss, beside the present need?

Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

Comus. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?
Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.

Comus. Two such I saw, what time the laboured ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinked hedger at his supper sat;
I saw them under a green mantling vine
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port was more than human, as they stood:
I took it for a fairy vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
And, as I passed, I worshipped. If those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to heaven
To help you find them.

Lady. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?

Comus. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

Lady. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.

Comus. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
And if your stray attendants be yet lodged,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake or the low roosted lark
From her thatched pallet rouse; if otherwise,
I can conduct you, lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.

Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters than in tapestry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was named
And yet is most pretended: in a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.—
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportioned strength. Shepherd, lead on.

[Exeunt.

Enter the Two Brothers.

First Br. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou, fair moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benison.
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit chaos that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite dammed up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long-levelled rule of streaming light,
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian cynosure.

Sec. Br. Or, if our eyes
Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks penned in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet; some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs.
But, O, that hapless virgin, our lost sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, among rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillowed head, fraught with sad fears.
What, if in wild amazement and affright,
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?

First Br. Peace, brother, be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils:
For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestal his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in virtue's book.
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what virtue would,
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retir'd solitude.
Where, with her best nurse, contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That, in the various bustle of resort,
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impaired.
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.

Sec. Br. 'Tis most true,
That musing meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds.
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds, 
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish, 
Or do his grey hairs any violence?
But beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree, 
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard 
Of dragon-watch, with unenchanted eye, 
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit 
From the rash hand of bold incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps 
Of miser’s treasure by an outlaw’s den, 
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope 
Danger will wink on opportunity, 
And let a single helpless maiden pass 
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste. 
Of night, or loneliness, it recks me not; 
I fear the dread events that dog them both, 
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person 
Of our unowned sister.

First Br. I do not, brother, 
Infer as if I thought my sister’s state 
Secure without all doubt or controversy; 
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear 
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is 
That I incline to hope, rather than fear, 
And gladly banish squint suspicion. 
My sister is not so defenceless left 
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength,
Which you remember not.

Sec. Br. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

First Br. I mean that, too, but yet a hidden strength
Which, if Heaven give it, may be termed her own:
'Tis chastity, my brother; chastity:
She that has that is clad in complete steel,
And, like a quivered nymph, with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharboured heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds,
Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea, there, where very desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblenched majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin, or swart fairy of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece,
To testify the arms of chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.

What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity
And noble grace, that dashed brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?

So dear to Heaven is saintly Chastity,
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it, by degrees, to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal. But when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Embodies, and embrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself, by carnal sensuality,
To a degenerate and degraded state.

Sec. Br. How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

First Br. List! list! I hear
Some far-off halloo break the silent air.

Sec. Br. Methought so, too; what should it be?

First Br. For certain,
Either some one, like us, night-foundered here,
Or else some neighbour woodman; or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.

Sec. Br. Heaven keep my sister. Again! again!

and near.
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

First Br. I'll halloo:
If he be friendly, he comes well: if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us.

Enter the attendant Spirit, habited like a Shepherd.
That halloo I should know; what are you? speak;
Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else.

*Spir.* What voice is that? my young lord? speak again.

*Sec. Br.* O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd, sure.

*First Br.* Thyrsis? whose artful strains have oft delayed
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale?
How camest thou here, good swain? Hath any ram
Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook?

*Spir.* O, my loved master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, O my virgin lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?

*First Br.* To tell thee sadly, shepherd, without blame
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

*Spir.* Ah me unhappy! then my fears are true.

*First Br.* What fears, good Thyrsis? Prithee briefly show.
COMUS.

*Spir.* I'll tell ye; 'tis not vain or fabulous
(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by the Heavenly Muse,
Storied of old, in high immortal verse,
Of dire chimeras, and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.

Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells.
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries;
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
Charactered in the face. This have I learned
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts
That brow this bottom-glade whence, night by night,
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl,
Like stabled wolves or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits and guileful spells,
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unwitting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill; but, ere a close,
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And filled the air with barbarous dissonance:
At which I ceased, and listened them awhile,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtained sleep.
At last, a soft and solemn breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes
And stole upon the air, that even silence
Was took ere she was 'ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature and be never more,
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of death. But, O, ere long,
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honoured lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear,
And, O poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place
Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew), had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey,
Who gently asked if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.

Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprang
Into swift flight, till I had found you here;
But further know I not.

Sec. Br. O night, and shades!
How are ye joined with hell in triple knot
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?

First. Br. Yes, and keep it still;
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call chance, this I hold firm:
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt;
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled;
Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness; when, at last,
Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed, and self-consumèd. If this fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on
Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But for that damned magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and hydoras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to return his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.

Spir. Alas! good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead.
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms:
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

First Br. Why, prithee, shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this relation?

Spir. Care, and utmost shifts

How to secure the Lady from surprisal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled
In every virtuous plant and healing herb
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray.
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing,
Which, when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy;
And, in requital, ope his leathern scrip
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Amongst the rest, a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out;
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon:
And yet more medicinal is it than that moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.
He called it hæmony, and gave it me
And bade me keep it as of sovereign use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew, blast, or damp,
Or ghastly furies' apparition.
I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compelled:
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised,
Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off. If you have this about you
(As I will give you when we go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer’s hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,
And brandished blade, rush on him, break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground.
But seize his wand; though he and his cursed crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or, like the sons of Vulcan, vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire if he but shrink.

First Br. Thyrsis, lead on apace, I’ll follow thee:—
And some good angel bear a shield before us.

The scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all
manner of deliciousness; soft music, tables spread
with all dainties. **Comus** appears with his rabble,
and the **Lady**, set in an enchanted chair, to whom
he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes
about to rise.

**Comus.** Nay, Lady, sit: if I but wave this wand
Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster,
And you a statue; or, as Daphne was,
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.
Lady. 

Fool, do not boast;
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporeal rind
Thou hast immanacled, while Heaven sees good.

Comus. Why are you vexed, Lady? Why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns nor danger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.
And first behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed
Not that Nepenthes, which the wife of Thone,
In Egypt, gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms;
Scorning the unexempt condition
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tired all day without repast,  
And timely rest have wanted: but, fair virgin,  
This will restore all soon.

Lady.  
'Twill not, false traitor!  
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty  
That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.  
Was this the cottage and the safe abode  
Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,  
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!  
Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!  
Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence  
With visored falsehood and base forgery,  
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here  
With liquorish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?  
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,  
I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none,  
But such as are good men, can give good things;  
And that which is not good is not delicious  
To a well-governed and wise appetite.

Comus. O foolishness of men, that lend their ears  
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,  
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,  
Praising the lean and sallow abstinence!  
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth  
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,  
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,  
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutch'd the all-worshipped ore and precious gems,
To store her children with. If all the world
Should, in a pet of temperance, feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,
Not half His riches known, and yet despised;
And we should serve Him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility;
The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their lords,
The sea, o'erfraught, would swell, and the unsought diamonds
Would so imblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, lady; be not coy, and be not cozened
With that same vaunted name, virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
 Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself.
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose,
It withers on the stalk with languished head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship:
It is for homely features to keep home,
They had their name thence; coarse complexions,
And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the housewife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advised; you are but young yet.

Lady. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules pranked in Reason's garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance; she, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare temperance.
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumbered with her store:
And then the giver would be better thanked,
His praise due paid; for swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to heaven amidst his gorgeous feast.
But, with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enough? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of chastity;
Fain would I something say; yet to what end?
Thou hast nor ear nor soul to apprehend
The sublime notion and high mystery
That must be uttered to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of virginity:
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced:
Yet, should I try, the uncontroëled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be moved to sympathise,
And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake
Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

Comus. She fables not. I feel that I do fear
Her words, set off by some superior power;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more;
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon-laws of our foundation;
I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood:
But this will cure all straight. One sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight,
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.

The Brothers rush in with swords drawn, wrest his
glass out of his hand, and break it against the
ground: his rout make sign of resistance, but are
all driven in. The attendant Spirit comes in.

Spir. What, have you let the false enchanter 'scape?
O ye mistook, ye should have snatched his wand,
And bound him fast. Without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed, and motionless.
Yet stay, be not disturbed; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be used;
Which once of Meliboeus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.
   There is a gentle nymph, not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream,
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdame, Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood
That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,
Held up her pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall,
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectar'd lavers, strewed with asphodel;
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made goddess of the river. Still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vialled liquors heals:
For which the shepherds, at their festivals,
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream,
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invoked in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need. This will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG.

Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen, for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen, and save.
Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus;
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace;
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wizard's hook;
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old soothsaying Glauceus' spell;
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands;
By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,
And the songs of Syrens sweet;
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance:
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answered have.

Listen and save.

Sabrina rises, attended by water-nymphs, and sings.
By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grow the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azure sheen
Of turkis blue and emerald green
   That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
   That bends not as I tread.
Gentle swain at thy request,
I am here.

*Spir.* Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charméd band
Of true virgin here distressed
Through the force and through the wile
Of unblessed enchanter vile.

*Sabr.* Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnared chastity.
Brightest Lady, look on me:
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next this marble venomed seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms, moist and cold:
Now the spell has lost his hold;
And I must haste, ere morning hour,
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

**SABRINA descends, and the LADY rises out of her seat.**

_Spir._ Virgin, daughter of Loerine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimméd waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills.
Summer drought, or singéd air,
Never scorch thy tresses fair.
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crowned
With many a tower and terrace round.
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

Come, lady, while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground.
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide,
And not many furlongs thence
Is your father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wished presence; and beside
All the swains, that there abide,
With jigs and rural dance resort.
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer:
Come, let us haste, the stars grow high,
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the President's castle; then come in country dancers; after them the attendant Spirit, with the two Brothers and the Lady.

SONG.

Spir. Back, shepherds, back; enough your play
Till next sunshine holiday.
Here be, without duck or nod,
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise
With the mincing Dryades,
On the lawns, and on the leas.

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble lord, and lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight:
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own;
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here, through hard assays,
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual folly and intemperance.

The dances being ended, the Spirit epilogises.

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky.
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree.
Along the crispéd shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring,
The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours
Thither all their bounties bring.
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west-winds, with musky wing,
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there, with humid bow,
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can show;
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.
But far above in spangled sheen,
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,
After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride.
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.
But now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly or I can run
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend,
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.

Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue: she alone is free.
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

1634.
L'ALLEGRO.

Hence, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born
In Stygian cave forlorn,
'Ventong horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy:
Find out some uncouth cell
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings
And the night raven sings,
There, under ebon shades and low-browed rocks
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come, thou goddess fair and free,
In heaven ycleped Euphrosyne,
And by men heart-easing Mirth
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore:
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr, with Aurora playing
As he met her once a-Maying,
There, on beds of violets blue
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.

Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful jollity,
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it, as you go
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;
And, if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free:—

To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine,
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before;
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill;
Some time walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great sun begins his state
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight,
While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures.
Whilst the landscape round it measures:
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim, with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where, perhaps, some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.

Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two agéd oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs, and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses,
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestyli to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead.

Sometimes, with secure delight,
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid
Dancing in the checkered shade,
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holyday,
Till the livelong daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat;
How fairy Mab the junkets eat;
She was pinched, and pulled, she said;
And he, by friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When, in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end;
Then lies him down the lubber fiend,
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And, crop-full, out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.

Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trodden stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy’s child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning.
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head,
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

1635?
Hence, vain deluding joys,
The brood of Folly, without father bred,
How little you bested,
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys:
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,
Or likest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But, hail! thou goddess sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy,
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And, therefore, to our weaker view,
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might be seem,
Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The sea-nymphs, and their powers offended:
Yet thou art higher far descended.
Thee bright-haired Vesta, long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she; in Saturn's reign
Such mixture was not held a stain:
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of cypress lawn
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait,
And looks commércing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till,
With a sad leaden downward cast,
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet
And hears the Muses, in a ring,
Aye round about Jove's altar sing.
And add to these retiréd Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure.
But first, and chiepest, with thee bring,
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeléd throne,
The cherub Contemplation;
And the mute silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustomed oak.
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy,
Thee, chantress, oft, the woods among,
I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
    Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound
Over some wide watered shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar;
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still, removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom;
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm
To bless the doors from nightly harm.

Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook.
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or underground,
Whose power hath a true consent,
With planet or with element.
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy,
In sceptred pall, come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine,
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.
But, O, sad virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower;
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made hell grant what love did seek;
Or call up him that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife
That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass,
On which the Tartar king did ride;
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.

Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not tricked and frounced as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kerchiefed in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud;
Or ushered with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute drops from off the eaves.
And, when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves.
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heavéd stroke
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
There in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee, with honied thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such concert as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feathered sleep;
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings, in airy stream
Of lively portraiture displayed,
Softly on my eyelids laid.
And, as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen genius of the wood.

But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters' pale,
And love the high embowered roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light:
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced quire below
In service high and anthems clear
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.

These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

1635?
LYCIDAS.

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come, to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
Compels me to disturb your season due:
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:
Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Begin, then, sisters of the sacred well
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string;
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse:
So may some gentle muse
With lucky words favour my destined urn,
And, as he passes, turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.

Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Tempered to the oaten flute;
Rough satyrs danced, and fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long:
And old Damoëtas loved to hear our song.

But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone and never must return!
Thee, shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes, mourn:
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.
Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream:
Ah me! I fondly dream,
Had ye been there: for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son
Whom universal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?
Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Næra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble minds)
To scorn delights and live laborious days:
F—70
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"
Phoebus replied, and touched my trembling ears;
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove:
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven except thy meed."

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood:
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the herald of the sea
That came in Neptune's plea;
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
And questioned every gust, of rugged wings,
That blows from off each beaked promontory:
They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed,
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next, Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge
Inwrought with figures dim and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.

"Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge!"

Last came, and last did go,
The pilot of the Galilean lake.
Two massy keys he bore, of metals twain,
The golden opes, the iron shuts amain,
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake;

"How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as, for their bellies' sake,
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!
Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearsers' feast
And shove away the worthy bidden guest;
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learned ought else the least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped,
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw:
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf, with privy paw,
Daily devours apace, and nothing said:
But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."—

Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past,
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so, to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise:
Ah me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled,
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou, perhaps under the whelming tide,
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namaneos and Bayona's hold:
Look homeward, angel, now, and melt with ruth;
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean-bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and, with new spangled ore,
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies
That sing, and, singing, in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals gray;
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay:
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.

November, 1637.
SONNET.

Fair Lady! whose harmonious name the Rhine,
Through all his grassy vale, delights to hear,
Base were indeed the wretch, who could forbear
To love a spirit elegant as thine,
That manifests a sweetness all divine,
Nor knows a thousand winning acts to spare,
And graces, which Love's bow and arrows are,
Tempering thy virtues to a softer shine.

When gracefully thou speak'st, or singest gay
Such strains as might the senseless forest move,
Ah then—turn each his eyes and ears away
Who feels himself unworthy of thy love!
Grace can alone preserve him, ere the dart
Of fond desire yet reach his inmost heart.

SONNET.

As on a hill-top rude, when closing day
Imbrowns the scene, some pastoral maiden fair
Waters a lovely foreign plant with care,
Borne from its native genial airs away,
That scarcely can its tender bud display,
So, on my tongue these accents, new and rare,
Are flowers exotic, which Love waters there,
While thus, O sweetly scornful, I essay
Thy praise, in verse to British ears unknown,
And Thames exchange for Arno's fair domain;
So Love has willed, and ofttimes Love has shown
That what he wills, he never wills in vain.
Oh, that this hard and sterile breast might be
To him who plants from Heaven a soil as free!

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CANZONE.

They mock my toil—the nymphs and amorous swains—
And whence this fond attempt to write, they cry,
Love songs in language that thou little know'st?
How dar'st thou risk to sing these foreign strains?
Say truly. Find'st not oft thy purpose crossed,
And that thy fairest flowers herefade and die?
Then with pretence of admiration high—
Thee other shores expect and other tides,
Rivers on whose grassy sides
Her deathless laurel leaf, with which to bind
Thy flowing locks, already Fame provides;
Why then this burthen, better far declined?
Speak, Muse, for me.—The fair one said, who guides
My willing heart and all my fancy’s flights,
"This is the language in which Love delights."

Charles—and I say it wondering—thou must know
That I, who once assumed a scornful air,
That scoffed at love, am fallen in his snare
(Full many an upright man has fallen so).
Yet think me not thus dazzled by the flow
Of golden locks, or damask cheek; more rare
The heart-felt beauties of my foreign fair;
A mien majestic, with dark brows, that show
The tranquil lustre of a lofty mind;
Words exquisite, of idioms more than one,
And song, whose fascinating power might bind,
And from her sphere draw down the labouring Moon,
With such fire-darting eyes, that should I fill
My ears with wax, she would enchant me still.

Lady, it cannot be, but that thine eyes
Must be my sun, such radiance they display,
And strike me even as Phæbus him, whose way
Through torrid Lybia's sandy desert lies.
Meantime, on that side steamy vapours rise
Where most I suffer. Of what kind are they,
New as to me they are, I cannot say,
But deem them, in the lover's language—sighs.
Some, though with pain, my bosom close conceals,
Which, if in part escaping thence, they tend
To soften thine, thy coldness soon congeals.
While others to my tearful eyes ascend,
Whence my sad nights in showers are ever drowned,
Till my Aurora comes, her brow with roses bound.

SONNET.

Enamoured, artless, young, on foreign ground,
Uncertain whither from myself to fly,
To thee, dear Lady, with an humble sigh
Let me devote my heart, which I have found
By certain proofs, not few, intrepid, sound,
Good, and addicted to conceptions high:
When tempests shake the world, and fire the sky,
It rests in adamant self-wrapt around,
As safe from envy, and from outrage rude,
From hopes and fears, that vulgar minds abuse,
TO LEONORA SINGING AT ROME.

As fond of genius and fixed fortitude,
Of the resounding lyre, and every Muse.
Weak you will find it in one only part,
Now pierced by Love’s immedicable dart.
1638-39.

TO LEONORA SINGING AT ROME.*

Another Leonora once inspired
Tasso, with fatal love to frenzy fired,
But how much happier lived he now were he
Pierced with whatever pangs for love of thee!
Since could he hear that heavenly voice of thine,
With Adriana’s lute of sound divine,
Fiercer than Pentheus’ though his eye might roll,
Or idiot apathy benumb his soul,
You still with medicinal sounds might cheer
His senses wandering in a blind career;
And sweetly breathing through his wounded breast,
Charm, with soul-soothing song, his thoughts to rest.

* I have translated only two of the three poetical compliments addressed to Leonora, as they appear to me far superior to what I have omitted.—Cowper’s Note.
TO THE SAME.

Naples, too credulous, ah, boast no more,
The sweet-voiced siren buried on thy shore,
That, when Parthenope deceased, she gave
Her sacred dust to a Chalcidic grave,
For still she lives, but has exchanged the hoarse
Pausilipo for Tiber’s placid course,
Where, idol of all Rome, she now in chains
Of magic song both gods and men detains.
1638-39.

TO SALSILLUS,
A ROMAN POET, MUCH INDISPOSED.

The original is written in a measure called Scazon, which signifies limping, and the measure is so denominated, because, though in other respects Iambic, it terminates with a Spondee, and has consequently a more tardy movement.

The reader will immediately see that this property of the Latin verse cannot be imitated in English.

_My halting Muse, that dragg’st by choice along_
_Thy slow, slow step, in melancholy song,_
_And lik’st that pace, expressive of thy cares,_
_Not less than Diopeia’s sprightlier airs_
_When in the dance she beats with measured tread_
_Heaven’s floor in front of Juno’s golden bed;_
Salute Salsillus, who to verse divine
Prefers, with partial love, such lays as mine.
Thus writes that Milton then, who wafted o'er
From his own nest on Albion's stormy shore,
Where Eurus, fiercest of the Æolian band,
Sweeps with ungoverned rage the blasted land,
Of late to more serene Ausonia came
To view her cities of illustrious name,
To prove himself a witness of the truth,
How wise her elders, and how learn'd her youth.
Much good, Salsillus, and a body free
From all disease, that Milton asks for thee,
Who now endur'st the languor and the pains
That bile inflicts, diffused through all thy veins;
Relentless malady, not moved to spare
By thy sweet Roman voice, and Lesbian air.

Health, Hebe's sister, sent us from the skies,
And thou, Apollo, whom all sickness flies,
Pythius, or Pæan, or what name divine
Soo'er thou choose, haste, heal a priest of thine!
Ye groves of Faunus, and ye hills, that melt
With vinous dews, where meek Evander dwelt,
If aught salubrious in your confines grow,
Strive which shall soonest heal your poet's woe.
That, rendered to the Muse he loves, again
He may enchant the meadows with his strain.
Numa, reclined in everlasting ease,
Amid the shade of dark embowering trees,
Viewing with eyes of unabated fire
His loved Ægeria, shall that strain admire:
So soothed, the tumid Tiber shall revere
The tombs of kings, nor desolate the year,
Shall curb his waters with a friendly rein,
And guide them harmless till they meet the main,
1638-39.

TO GIOVANNI BATTISTA MANSO, MARQUIS OF VILLA.

MILTON'S ACCOUNT OF MANSO.

Giovanni Battista Manso, Marquis of Villa, is an Italian nobleman of the highest estimation among his countrymen, for genius, literature, and military accomplishments. To him Torquato Tasso addressed his Dialogues on Friendship, for he was much the friend of Tasso, who has also celebrated him among the other princes of his country, in his poem entitled "Gerusalemme Conquistata," Book xx.

Fra cavalieri magnanimi e cortesi,
Risplende il Manso.

During the Author's stay at Naples, he received at the hands of the Marquis a thousand kind offices and civilities, and, desirous not to appear ungrateful, sent him this poem a short time before his departure from that city.

These verses also to thy praise the Nine,
O Manso, happy in that theme, design,
For, Gallus and Mæcenas gone, they see
None such besides, or whom they love as thee,
And if my verse may give the meed of fame,
Thine too shall prove an everlasting name.
Already such, it shines in Tasso's page
(For thou wast Tasso's friend) from age to age,
And, next, the Muse consigned (not unaware
How high the charge) Marino to thy care.
Who, singing to the nymphs Adonis' praise,
Boasts thee the patron of his copious lays.
To thee alone the poet would entrust
His latest vows, to thee alone his dust;
And thou with punctual piety hast paid,
In laboured brass, thy tribute to his shade.
Nor this contented thee—but lest the grave
Should aught absorb of theirs which thou could'st save,
All future ages thou hast deigned to teach
The life, lot, genius, character of each.
Eloquent as the Carian sage who, true
To his great theme, the life of Homer drew.

I, therefore, though a stranger youth, who come
Chilled by rude blasts that freeze my Northern home,
Thee dear to Clio, confident proclaim,
And thine, for Phæbus' sake, a deathless name.
Nor thou, so kind, wilt view with scornful eye
A muse scarce reared beneath our sullen sky,
Who fears not, indiscreet as she is young,
To seek in Latium hearers of her song.
We too, where Thames with his unsullied waves
The tresses of the blue-haired Ocean laves,
Hear oft by night, or, slumbering, seem to hear,
O'er his wide stream, the swan's voice warbling clear,
And we could boast a Tityrus of yore,
Who trod, a welcome guest, your happy shore.

Yes—dreary as we own our Northern clime,
E'en we to Phæbus raise the polished rhyme.
We too serve Phæbus; Phæbus has received
(If legends old may claim to be believed)
No sordid gifts from us, the golden ear,
The burnished apple, ruddiest of the year,
The fragrant crocus, and to grace his fane,
Fair damsels chosen from the Druid train;
Druids, our native bards in ancient time,
Who gods and heroes praised in hallowed rhyme!
Hence, often as the maids of Greece surround
Apollo's shrine with hymns of festive sound,
They name the virgins who arrived of yore
With British offerings on the Delian shore,
Loxo, from giant Corineus sprung,
Upis, on whose blest lips the future hung,
And Hecaerge, with the golden hair,
All decked with Pictish hues, and all with bosoms bare.

Thou, therefore, happy sage, whatever clime
Shall ring with Tasso's praise in after-time,
Or with Marino's, shalt be known their friend,
And with an equal flight to fame ascend.
The world shall hear how Phoebus, and the Nine,
Were inmates once, and willing guests of thine.
Yet Phoebus, when of old constrained to roam
The earth, an exile from his heavenly home,
Entered, no willing guest, Admetus' door,
Though Hercules had ventured there before;
But gentle Chiron's cave was near, a scene
Of rural peace, clothed with perpetual green,
And thither, oft as respite he required
From rustic clamours loud, the god retired;
There, many a time, on Peneus' bank reclined
At some oak's root, with ivy thick entwined,
Won by his hospitable friend's desire,
He soothed his pains of exile with the lyre.
Then shook the hills, then trembled Peneus' shore,
Nor Oeta felt his load of forests more;
The upland elms descended to the plain,
And softened lynxes wondered at the strain.
Well may we think, O dear to all above!
Thy birth distinguished by the smile of Jove,
And that Apollo shed his kindliest power,
And Maia's son, on that propitious hour,
Since only minds so born can comprehend
A poet's worth, or yield that worth a friend.
Hence, on thy yet unfaded cheek appears
The ling'ring freshness of thy greener years,
Hence, in thy front, and features, we admire
Nature unwithered, and a mind entire.
Oh, might so true a friend to me belong,
So skilled to grace the votaries of song,
Should I recall hereafter into rhyme
The kings and heroes of my native clime,
Arthur the chief, who even now prepares,
In subterraneous being, future wars,
With all his martial knights, to be restored
Each to his seat, around the federal board,
And oh, if spirit fail me not, disperse
Our Saxon plunderers, in triumphant verse.
Then, after all, when with the past content,
A life I finish not in silence spent,
Should he, kind mourner, o'er my death-bed bend,
I shall but need to say—"Be yet my friend!"
He, too, perhaps, shall bid the marble breathe
To honour me, and with the graceful wreath
Or of Parnassus, or the Paphian isle,
Shall bind my brows—but I shall rest the while.
Then also, if the fruits of Faith endure,
And Virtue's promised recompense be sure,
Born to those seats, to which the blest aspire
By purity of soul and virtuous fire,
These rites, as Fate permits, I shall survey
With eyes illumined by celestial day,
And, every cloud from my pure spirit driven,
Joy in the bright beatitude of Heaven!

1638-39.

ON THE DEATH OF DAMON.

THE ARGUMENT.

Thyrsis and Damon, shepherds and neighbours, had always pursued the same studies, and had, from their earliest days, been united in the closest friendship. Thyrsis, while travelling for improvement, received intelligence of the death of Damon, and after a time, returning and finding it true, deprecates himself and his solitary condition in this poem.

By Damon is to be understood Charles Diodati, connected with the Italian city of Lucca by his father's side, in other respects an Englishman: a youth of uncommon genius, erudition, and virtue.

Ye nymphs of Himera (for ye have shed
Erewhile for Daphnis, and for Hylas dead,
And over Bion's long-lamented bier,
The fruitless meed of many a sacred tear)
Now through the villas laved by Thames, rehearse
The woes of Thyrsis in Sicilian verse,
What sighs he heaved, and how with groans profound
He made the woods and hollow rocks resound,
Young Damon dead; nor even ceased to pour
His lonely sorrows at the midnight hour.

The green wheat twice had nodded in the ear,
And golden harvest twice enriched the year,
Since Damon's lips had gasped for vital air
The last, last time, nor Thyrsis yet was there;
For he, enamoured of the Muse, remained
In Tuscan Fiorenza long detained,
But, stored at length with all he wished to learn,
For his flock's sake now hasted to return,
And when the shepherd had resumed his seat
At the elm's root, within his old retreat,
Then 'twas his lot, then all his loss to know,
And, from his burthened heart, he vented thus his woe.

"Go, seek your home, my lambs; my thoughts are due
To other cares than those of feeding you.
Alas, what deities shall I suppose
In heaven or earth, concerned for human woes,
Since, O my Damon, this severe decree
So soon condemns me to regret of thee!"
Depart'st thou thus, thy virtues unrepaid
With fame and honour, like a vulgar shade?
Let him forbid it, whose bright rod controls
And separates sordid from illustrious souls,
Drive far the rabble, and to thee assign
A happier lot, with spirits worthy thine!

"Go, seek your home, my lambs; my thoughts are due
To other cares than those of feeding you.
Whate'er befall, unless by cruel chance
The wolf first give me a forbidding glance,
Thou shalt not moulder undeeplored, but long
Thy praise shall dwell on every shepherd's tongue;
To Daphnis first they shall delight to pay,
And, after him, to thee the votive lay,
While Pales shall the flocks and pastures love,
Or Faunus to frequent the field or grove;
At least, if ancient piety and truth,
With all the learned labours of thy youth,
May serve thee aught, or to have left behind
A sorrowing friend, and of the tuneful kind.

"Go, seek your home, my lambs; my thoughts are due
To other cares than those of feeding you.
Yes, Damon, such thy sure reward shall be;
But ah, what doom awaits unhappy me?
Who, now, my pains and perils shall divide,
As thou wast wont, for ever at my side.
Both when the rugged frost annoyed our feet,
And when the herbage all was parched with heat;
Whether the grim wolf's ravage to prevent,
Or the huge lion's, armed with darts we went?
Whose converse, now, shall calm my stormy day
With charming song, who now beguile my way?

"Go, seek your home, my lambs; my thoughts are due
To other cares than those of feeding you.
In whom shall I confide? Whose counsel find
A balmy medicine for my troubled mind?
Or whose discourse with innocent delight
Shall fill me now, and cheat the wintry night,
While hisses on my hearth the pulpy pear,
And blackening chestnuts start and crackle there,
While storms abroad the dreary meadows whelm,
And the wind thunders through the neighbouring elm.

"Go, seek your home, my lambs; my thoughts are due
To other cares than those of feeding you.
Or who, when summer suns their summit reach,
And Pan sleeps hidden by the sheltering beech,
When shepherds disappear, nymphs seek the sedge,
And the stretched rustic snores beneath the hedge,
Who then shall render me thy pleasant vein
Of Attic wit, thy jests, thy smiles again?

"Go, seek your home, my lambs; my thoughts are
due
To other cares than those of feeding you.
Where glens and vales are thickest overgrown
With tangled boughs, I wander now alone,
Till night descend, while blustering wind and shower
Beat on my temples through the shattered bower.

"Go, seek your home, my lambs; my thoughts are
due
To other cares than those of feeding you.
Alas, my rampant weeds now shame my fields,
And what a mildewed crop the furrow yields!
My rambling vines, unwedded to the trees,
Bear shrivelled grapes, my myrtles fail to please,
Nor please me more my flocks; they, slighted, turn
Their unavailing looks on me, and mourn.

"Go, seek your home, my lambs; my thoughts are
due
To other cares than those of feeding you.
Ægon invites me to the hazel grove,
Amyntas, on the river's bank to rove,
And young Alphesiboeus to a seat
Where branching elms exclude the mid-day heat.
'Here fountains spring—here mossy hillocks rise:'
'Here Zephyr whispers, and the stream replies.'—
Thus each persuades, but, deaf to every call,
I gain the thickets and escape them all.

"Go, seek your home my lambs; my thoughts are due
To other cares than those of feeding you.
Then Mopsus said (the same who reads so well
The voice of birds, and what the stars foretell,
For he by chance has noticed my return),
'What means thy sullen mood, this deep concern?
Ah, Thryssis, thou art either crazed with love,
Or some sinister influence from above;
Dull Saturn's influence oft the shepherds rue;
His leaden shaft oblique has pierced thee through.'

"Go, go, my lambs, unpastured as ye are,
My thoughts are all now due to other care.
The nymphs amazed, my melancholy see,
And, 'Thyris! cry—' what will become of thee?
What would'st thou, Thyris? Such should not appear
The brow of youth, stern, gloomy, and severe;
Brisk youth should laugh and love—ah, shun the fate
Of those, twice wretched mopes, who love too late!

"Go, go, my lambs, unpastured as ye are,
My thoughts are all now due to other care.
Ægle with Hyas came, to soothe my pain,
And Baucis' daughter, Dryope the vain,
Fair Dryope, for voice and finger neat
Known far and near, and for her self-conceit;
Chloris too came, whose cottage on the lands
That skirt the Idumanian current stands;
But all in vain they came, and but to see
Kind words and comfortable lost on me.

"Go, go, my lambs, unpastured as ye are,
My thoughts are all now due to other care.
Ah, blest indifference of the playful herd,
None by his fellow chosen or preferred!
No bonds of amity the flocks enthrall,
But each associates and is pleased with all;
So graze the dappled deer in numerous droves,
And all his kind alike the zebra loves;
The same law governs where the billows roar,
And Proteus' shoals o'erspread the desert shore;
The sparrow, meanest of the feathered race,
His fit companion finds in every place,
With whom he picks the grain that suits him best,
Flirts here and there, and late returns to rest;
And whom if chance the falcon make his prey,
Or hedger with his well-aimed arrow slay,
For no such loss the gay survivor grieves,
New love he seeks, and new delight receives.
We only, an obdurate kind, rejoice,
Scorning all others, in a single choice,
We scarce in thousands meet one kindred mind,
And if the long-sought good at last we find,
When least we fear it, Death our treasure steals,
And gives our heart a wound that nothing heals.

"Go, go, my lambs, unpastured as ye are,
My thoughts are all now due to other care.
Ah, what delusion lured me from my flocks,
To traverse Alpine snows, and rugged rocks!
What need so great had I to visit Rome,
Now sunk in ruins and herself a tomb?
Or, had she flourished still as when, of old,
For her sake Tityrus forsook his fold,
What need so great had I to incur a pause
Of thy sweet intercourse for such a cause,
For such a cause to place the roaring sea,
Rocks, mountains, woods, between my friend and me?"
Else, had I grasped thy feeble hand, composed
Thy decent limbs, thy drooping eyelids closed,
And, at the last, had said—'Farewell—ascend-
Nor even in the skies forget thy friend!'

"Go, go, my lambs, untended homeward fare,
My thoughts are all now due to other care.
Although well-pleased, ye tuneful Tuscan swains,
My mind the memory of your worth retains,
Yet not your worth can teach me less to mourn
My Damon lost.—He too was Tuscan born,
Born in your Lucca, city of renown!
And wit possessed, and genius, like your own.
Oh, how elate was I, when stretched beside
The murmuring course of Arno's breezy tide,
Beneath the poplar grove I passed my hours,
Now cropping myrtles, and now vernal flowers,
And hearing, as I lay at ease along,
Your swains contending for the prize of song!
I also dared attempt (and, as it seems,
Not much displeased attempting) various themes,
For even I can presents boast from you,
The shepherd's pipe, and ozier basket too,
And Dati and Francini both have made
My name familiar to the beechen shade,
And they are learned, and each in every place
Renowned for song, and both of Lydian race.
"Go, go, my lambs, untended homeward fare,
My thoughts are all now due to other care.
While bright the dewy grass with moonbeams shone,
And I stood hurdling in my kids alone,
How often have I said (but thou hadst found
Ere then thy dark cold lodgment under ground)
Now Damon sings, or springes sets for hares,
Or wicker work for various use prepares.
How oft, indulging fancy, have I planned
New scenes of pleasure, that I hoped at hand,
Called thee abroad as I was wont, and cried—
What hoa! my friend—come, lay thy task aside,
Haste, let us forth together, and beguile
The heat, beneath you whispering shades awhile,
Or on the margin stray of Colne's clear flood,
Or where Cassibelan's grey turrets stood;
There thou shalt cull me simples, and shalt teach
Thy friend the name and healing powers of each,
From the tall blue-bell to the dwarfish weed,
What the dry land, and what the marshes breed,
For all their kinds alike to thee are known,
And the whole art of Galen is thy own.
Ah, perish Galen's art, and withered be
The useless herbs, that gave not health to thee!
Twelve evenings since, as in poetic dream
I meditating sat some statelier theme,
The reeds no sooner touched my lip, though new.
And unassayed before, than wide they flew,
Bursting their waxen bands, nor could sustain
The deep-toned music of the solemn strain;
And I am vain perhaps, but I will tell
How proud a theme I choose—ye groves farewell!

"Go, go, my lambs, untended homeward fare,
My thoughts are all now due to other care.
Of Brutus, Dardan chief, my song shall be,
How with his barks he ploughed the British sea,
First from Rutupia’s towering headland seen;
And of his consort’s reign, fair Imogen;
Of Brennus, and Belinus, brothers bold,
And of Arviragus, and how of old
Our hardy sires the Armorican controlled;
And of the wife of Gorlois, who, surprised
By Uther, in her husband’s form disguised
(Such was the force of Merlin’s art), became
Pregnant with Arthur of heroic fame.
These themes I now revolve—and oh—if Fate
Proportion to these themes my lengthened date,
Adieu my shepherd’s reed—yon pine-tree bough
Shall be thy future home, there dangle thou
Forgotten and disused, unless ere long
Thou change thy Latian for a British song.
A British?—even so—the powers of man
Are bounded; little is the most he can;
And it shall well suffice me, and shall be
Fame, and proud recompense enough for me,
If Usa, golden-haired, my verse may learn,
If Alain bending o'er his crystal urn,
Swift-whirling Abra, Trent's o'ershadowed stream,
Thames, lovelier far than all in my esteem,
Tamar's ore-tinctured flood, and, after these,
The wave-worn shores of utmost Orcades.

"Go, go, my lambs, untended homeward fare,
My thoughts are all now due to other care.
All this I kept in leaves of laurel-rind
Enfolded safe, and for thy view designed,
This—and a gift from Manso's hand beside
(Manso, not least his native city's pride)
Two cups, that radiant as their giver shone,
Adorned by sculpture with a double zone.
The spring was graven there; here slowly wind
The Red-sea shores with groves of spices lined;
Her plumes of various hues amid the boughs
The sacred, solitary Phænix shows,
And watchful of the dawn, reverts her head,
To see Aurora leave her watery bed.
In other part, the expansive vault above,
And there too, even there, the god of love;
With quiver armed he mounts, his torch displays
A vivid light, his gem-tipped arrows blaze,
Around his bright and fiery eyes he rolls,
Nor aims at vulgar minds or little souls,
Nor deigns one look below, but aiming high
Sends every arrow to the lofty sky,
Hence forms divine, and minds immortal learn
The power of Cupid, and enamoured burn.

“Thou also Damon (neither need I fear
That hope delusive), thou art also there;
For whither should simplicity like thine
Retire, where else such spotless virtue shine?
Thou dwell'st not (thought profane) in shades below,
Nor tears suit thee—cease then my tears to flow!
Away with grief on Damon ill bestowed,
Who, pure himself, has found a pure abode;
Has passed the showery arch, henceforth resides
With saints and heroes, and from flowing tides
Quaffs copious immortality and joy
With hallowed lips.—Oh, blest without alloy,
And now enriched with all that faith can claim,
Look down, entreated by whatever name,
If Damon please thee most (that rural sound
Shall oft with echoes fill the groves around)
Or if Diodatus, by which alone
In those ethereal mansions thou art known.
Thy blush was maiden; and thy youth the taste
Of wedded bliss knew never, pure and chaste,
The honours, therefore, by divine decree
The lot of virgin worth, are given to thee.
Thy brows encircled with a radiant band,
And the green palm-branch waving in thy hand,
Thou in immortal nuptials shalt rejoice,
And join with seraphs thy according voice
Where rapture reigns, and the ecstatic lyre
Guides the blest orgies of the blazing quire."

1639.