

Classic Poetry Series

William Cowper
- poems -

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William Cowper(26 November 1731 – 25 April 1800)

an English poet and hymnodist. One of the most popular poets of his time, Cowper changed the direction of 18th century nature poetry by writing of everyday life and scenes of the English countryside. In many ways, he was one of the forerunners of Romantic poetry. Samuel Taylor Coleridge called him "the best modern poet", whilst William Wordsworth particularly admired his poem *Yardley-Oak*. He was a nephew of the poet Judith Madan.

While Cowper found refuge in a fervent evangelical Christianity, the inspiration behind his much-loved hymns, he often experienced doubt and feared that he was doomed to eternal damnation. His religious sentiment and association with John Newton (who wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace") led to much of the poetry for which he is best remembered. His poem "Light Shining out of Darkness" gave the English language the idiom "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform."

Life

He was born in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, England where his father John Cowper was rector of the Church of St Peter. After education at Westminster School, he was articled to Mr. Chapman, solicitor, of Ely Place, Holborn, in order to be trained for a career in law. During this time, he spent his leisure at the home of his uncle Ashley Cowper, and there fell in love with his cousin Theodora, whom he wished to marry. But as James Croft, who in 1825 first published the poems Cowper addressed to Theodora, wrote, "her father, from an idea that the union of persons so nearly related was improper, refused to accede to the wishes of his daughter and nephew." This refusal left Cowper distraught.

In 1763 he was offered a Clerkship of Journals in the House of Lords, but broke under the strain of the approaching examination and experienced a period of insanity. At this time he tried three times to commit suicide and was sent to Nathaniel Cotton's asylum at St. Albans for recovery. His poem beginning "Hatred and vengeance, my eternal portions" (sometimes referred to as "Sapphics") was written in the aftermath of his suicide attempt.

After recovering, he settled at Huntingdon with a retired clergyman named Morley Unwin and his wife Mary. Cowper grew to be on such good terms with the Unwin family that he went to live in their house, and moved with them to Olney, where John Newton, a former slave trader who had repented and devoted his life to the gospel, was curate. Not long afterwards, Morley Unwin was killed in a fall

from his horse, but Cowper continued to live in the Unwin home and became extremely attached to Mary Unwin.

At Olney, Newton invited Cowper to contribute to a hymnbook that Newton was compiling. The resulting volume known as Olney Hymns was not published until 1779 but includes hymns such as "Praise for the Fountain Opened" (beginning "There is a fountain fill'd with blood") and "Light Shining out of Darkness" (beginning "God moves in a mysterious way") which remain some of Cowper's most familiar verses. Several of Cowper's hymns, as well as others originally published in the "Olney Hymns," are today preserved in the Sacred Harp.

In 1773, Cowper, experienced an attack of insanity, imagining not only that he was condemned to hell eternally, but that God was commanding him to make a sacrifice of his own life. Mary Unwin took care of him with great devotion and after a year he began again to recover. In 1779, after Newton had left Olney to go to London, Cowper started to write further poetry. Mary Unwin, wanting to keep Cowper's mind occupied, suggested that he write on the subject of The Progress of Error, and after writing his satire of this name he wrote seven others. All of them were published in 1782 under the title Poems by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, Esq..

Crazy Kate, illustration for Cowper's The Task by Henry Fuseli (1806–1807).

The year before this publication, Cowper met a sophisticated and charming widow named Lady Austen who served as a new impetus to his poetry. Cowper himself tells of the genesis of what some have considered his most substantial work, The Task, in his "Advertisement" to the original edition of 1785:

"...a lady, fond of blank verse, demanded a poem of that kind from the author, and gave him the SOFA for a subject. He obeyed; and, having much leisure, connected another subject with it; and, pursuing the train of thought to which his situation and turn of mind led him, brought forth at length, instead of the trifle which he at first intended, a serious affair—a Volume!"

In the same volume Cowper also printed "The Diverting History of John Gilpin", a notable piece of comic verse. John Gilpin was later looked back on as almost saving Cowper from turning insane.

Cowper and Mary Unwin moved to Weston in 1786 and shortly before this became close with his cousin Harriet (Theodora's sister), now Lady Hesketh. During this period he started his translations of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey into blank verse, and his versions (published in 1791) were the most significant

English renderings of these epic poems since those of Alexander Pope earlier in the century, although later critics have faulted Cowper's Homer for being too much in the mold of John Milton.

In 1795 Cowper moved with Mary to Norfolk. They originally stayed at North Tuddenham, then at Dunham Lodge near Swaffham and then Mundesley before finally settling in East Dereham.

Mary Unwin died in 1796, plunging Cowper into a gloom from which he never fully recovered. He did, however, continue revising his Homer for a second edition of his translation, and, aside from writing the powerful and bleak poem "The Castaway", penned some English translations of Greek verse and turned some of the Fables of John Gay into Latin.

Cowper was seized with dropsy in the spring of 1800 and died. He is buried in the chapel of St. Thomas of Canterbury, St. Nicholas Church, East Dereham. A window in Westminster Abbey honours him.

A Child Of God Longing To See Him Beloved

There's not an echo round me,
But I am glad should learn,
How pure a fire has found me,
The love with which I burn.
For none attends with pleasure
To what I would reveal;
They slight me out of measure,
And laugh at all I feel.

The rocks receive less proudly
The story of my flame;
When I approach, they loudly
Reverberate his name.
I speak to them of sadness,
And comforts at a stand;
They bid me look for gladness,
And better days at hand.

Far from all habitation,
I heard a happy sound;
Big with the consolation,
That I have often found.
I said, 'My lot is sorrow,
My grief has no alloy;
The rocks replied--'Tomorrow,
Tomorrow brings thee joy.'

These sweet and sacred tidings,
What bliss it is to hear!
For, spite of all my chidings,
My weakness and my fear,
No sooner I receive them,
Than I forget my pain,
And, happy to believe them,
I love as much again.

I fly to scenes romantic,
Where never men resort;
For in an age so frantic

Impiety is sport.
For riot and confusion
They barter things above;
Condemning, as delusion,
The joy of perfect love.

In this sequestered corner,
None hears what I express;
Delivered from the scorner,
What peace do I possess!
Beneath the boughs reclining,
Or roving o'er the wild,
I live as undesigning
And harmless as a child.

No troubles here surprise me,
I innocently play,
While Providence supplies me,
And guards me all the day:
My dear and kind defender
Preserves me safely here,
From men of pomp and splendour,
Who fill a child with fear.

William Cowper

A Comparison

The lapse of time and rivers is the same,
Both speed their journey with a restless stream;
The silent pace, with which they steal away,
No wealth can bribe, no prayers persuade to stay;
Alike irrevocable both when past,
And a wide ocean swallows both at last.
Though each resemble each in every part,
A difference strikes at length the musing heart;
Streams never flow in vain; where streams abound,
How laughs the land with various plenty crown'd!
But time, that should enrich the nobler mind,
Neglected, leaves a dreary waste behind.

William Cowper

A Comparison. Addressed To A Young Lady

Sweet stream that winds through yonder glade,
Apt emblem of a virtuous maid
Silent and chaste she steals along,
Far from the world's gay busy throng:
With gentle yet prevailing force,
Intent upon her destined course;
Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing and blest where'er she goes;
Pure-bosom'd as that watery glass,
And Heaven reflected in her face.

William Cowper

A Fable

A raven, while with glossy breast
Her new-laid eggs she fondly press'd,
And, on her wicker-work high mounted,
Her chickens prematurely counted
(A fault philosophers might blame,
If quite exempted from the same),
Enjoy'd at ease the genial day;
'Twas April, as the bumpkins say,
The legislature call'd it May.
But suddenly a wind, as high
As ever swept a winter sky,
Shook the young leaves about her ears,
And fill'd her with a thousand fears,
Lest the rude blast should snap the bough,
And spread her golden hopes below.
But just at eve the blowing weather
And all her fears were hush'd together:
And now, quoth poor unthinking Ralph.
'Tis over, and the brood is safe;
(For ravens, though, as birds of omen,
They teach both conjurors and old women
To tell us what is to befall,
Can't prophesy themselves at all.)
The morning came, when neighbour Hodge,
Who long had mark'd her airy lodge,
And destined all the treasure there
A gift to his expecting fair,
Climb'd like a squirrel to his dray,
And bore the worthless prize away.

Moral:

'Tis Providence alone secures
In every change both mine and yours:
Safety consists not in escape
From dangers of a frightful shape;
An earthquake may be bid to spare
The man that's strangled by a hair.
Fate steals along with silent tread,
Found oft'nest in what least we dread,

Frowns in the storm with angry brow,
But in the sunshine strikes the blow.

William Cowper

A Figurative Description Of The Procedure Of Divine Love

'Twas my purpose, on a day,
To embark, and sail away.
As I climbed the vessel's side,
Love was sporting in the tide;
'Come,' he said, 'ascend—make haste,
Launch into the boundless waste.'

Many mariners were there,
Having each his separate care;
They that rowed us held their eyes
Fixed upon the starry skies;
Others steered, or turned the sails,
To receive the shifting gales.

Love, with power divine supplied,
Suddenly my courage tried;
In a moment it was night,
Ship and skies were out of sight;
On the briny wave I lay,
Floating rushes all my stay.

Did I with resentment burn
At this unexpected turn?
Did I wish myself on shore,
Never to forsake it more?
No--'My soul,' I cried, 'be still;
If I must be lost, I will.'

Next he hastened to convey
Both my frail supports away;
Seized my rushes; bade the waves
Yawn into a thousand graves:
Down I went, and sunk as lead,
Ocean closing o'er my head.

Still, however, life was safe;
And I saw him turn and laugh:

'Friend,' he cried, 'adieu! lie low,
While the wintry storms shall blow;
When the spring has calmed the main,
You shall rise and float again.'

Soon I saw him, with dismay,
Spread his plumes, and soar away;
Now I mark his rapid flight;
Now he leaves my aching sight;
He is gone whom I adore,
'Tis in vain to seek him more.

How I trembled then and feared,
When my love had disappeared!
'Wilt thou leave me thus,' I cried,
'Whelmed beneath the rolling tide?'
Vain attempt to reach his ear!
Love was gone, and would not hear.

Ah! return, and love me still;
See me subject to thy will;
Frown with wrath, or smile with grace,
Only let me see thy face!
Evil I have none to fear,
All is good, if thou art near.

Yet he leaves me--cruel fate!
Leaves me in my lost estate--
Have I sinned? Oh, say wherein;
Tell me, and forgive my sin!
King, and Lord, whom I adore,
Shall I see thy face no more?

Be not angry; I resign,
Henceforth, all my will to thine:
I consent that thou depart,
Though thine absence breaks my heart;
Go then, and for ever too:
All is right that thou wilt do.

This was just what Love intended;
He was now no more offended;

Soon as I became a child,
Love returned to me and smiled:
Never strife shall more betide
'Twixt the bridegroom and his bride.

William Cowper

A Manual, More Ancient Than The Art Of Printing, And Not To Be Found In Any Catalogue

There is a book, which we may call
(Its excellence is such)
Alone a library, though small;
The ladies thumb it much.

Words none, things numerous it contains:
And thing with words compared,
Who needs be told, that has his brains,
Which merits most regard?

Ofttimes its leaves of scarlet hue
A golden edging boast;
And open'd, it displays to view
Twelve pages at the most.

Nor name, nor title, stamp'd behind,
Adorns its outer part;
But all within 'tis richly lined,
A magazine of art.

The whitest hands that secret hoard
Oft visit: and the fair
Preserve it in their bosoms stored,
As with a miser's care.

Thence implements of every size,
And form'd for various use
(They need but to consult their eyes),
They readily produce.

The largest and the longest kind
Possess the foremost page;
A sort most needed by the blind,
Or nearly such, from age.

The full charged leaf which next ensues,
Presents in bright array

The smaller sort, which matrons use,
Not quite so blind as they.

The third, the fourth, the fifth supply
What their occasions ask,
Who with a more discerning eye
Perform a nicer task.

But still with regular decrease,
From size to size they fall,
In every leaf grow less and less;
The last are least of all.

Oh! what a fund of genius, pent
In narrow space is here!
This volume's method and intent
How luminous and clear!

It leaves no reader at a loss
Or posed, whoever reads:
No commentator's tedious gloss,
Nor even index needs.

Search Bodley's many thousands o'er!
No book is treasured there,
Nor yet in Granta's numerous store,
That may with this compare.

No!—rival none in either host
Of this was ever seen,
Or, that contents could justly boast,
So brilliant and so keen.

William Cowper

A Poetical Epistle To Lady Austen

Dear Anna, -- Between friend and friend,
Prose answers every common end;
Serves, in a plain and homely way,
To express the occurrence of the day;
Our health, the weather, and the news,
What walks we take, what books we choose,
And all the floating thoughts we find
Upon the surface of the mind.
But when a poet takes the pen,
Far more alive than other men,
He feels a gentle tingling come
Down to his finger and his thumb,
Derived from nature's noblest part,
The centre of a glowing heart:
And this is what the world, who knows
No flights above the pitch of prose,
His more sublime vagaries slighting,
Denominates an itch for writing.
No wonder I, who scribble rhyme
To catch the triflers of the time,
And tell them truths divine and clear,
Which, couched in prose, they will not hear;
Who laboured hard to allure and draw
The loiterers I never saw,
Should feel that itching and that tingling
With all my purpose intermingling,
To your intrinsic merit true,
When called to address myself to you.
Mysterious are His ways, whose power
Brings forth that unexpected hour,
When minds, that never met before,
Shall meet, unite, and part no more;
It is the allotment of the skies,
The hand of the Supremely Wise,
That guides and governs our affections,
And plans and orders our connections:
Directs us in our distant road,
And marks the bounds of our abode.
Thus we were settled when you found us,

Peasants and children all around us,
Not dreaming of so dear a friend,
Deep in the abyss of Silver-End.
Thus Martha, even against her will,
Perched on the top of yonder hill;
And you, though you must needs prefer
The fairer scenes of sweet Sancerre,
Are come from distant Loire, to choose
A cottage on the banks of Ouse.
This page of Providence quite new,
And now just opening to our view,
Employs our present thoughts and pains
To guess, and spell, what it contains:
But day by day, and year by year,
Will make the dark enigma clear;
And furnish us, perhaps, at last,
Like other scenes already past,
With proof, that we, and our affairs,
Are part of a Jehovah's cares:
For God unfolds, by slow degrees,
The purport of his deep decrees,
Sheds every hour a clearer light
In aid of our defective sight;
And spreads, at length, before the soul
A beautiful and perfect whole,
Which busy man's inventive brain
Toils to anticipate, in vain.
Say, Anna, had you never grown
The beauties of a rose full blown,
Could you, though luminous your eye,
By looking on the bud descry,
Or guess, with a prophetic power,
The future splendour of the flower?
Just so, the Omnipotent, who turns
The system of a world's concerns,
From mere minutiae can educe
Events of most important use,
And bid a dawning sky display
The blaze of a meridian day.
The works of man tend, one and all,
As needs they must, from great to small;
And vanity absorbs at length

The monuments of human strength.
But who can tell how vast the plan
Which this day's incident began?
Too small, perhaps, the slight occasion
For our dim-sighted observation;
It passed unnoticed, as the bird
That cleaves the yielding air unheard,
And yet may prove, when understood,
A harbinger of endless good.
Not that I deem, or mean to call
Friendship a blessing cheap or small;
But merely to remark, that ours,
Like some of nature's sweetest flowers,
Rose from a seed of tiny size,
That seemed to promise no such prize;
A transient visit intervening,
And made almost without a meaning,
(Hardly the effect of inclination),
Produced a friendship, then begun,
That has cemented us in one;
And placed it in our power to prove,
By long fidelity and love,
That Solomon has wisely spoken,--
'A threefold cord is not soon broken.'

William Cowper

A Riddle

I am just two and two, I am warm, I am cold,
And the parent of numbers that cannot be told.
I am lawful, unlawful -- a duty, a fault,
I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought;
An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
And yielded with pleasure when taken by force.

William Cowper

A Song : On The Green Margin

On the green margin of the brook,
Despairing Phyllida reclined,
Whilst every sigh, and every look,
Declared the anguish of her mind.

Am I less lovely then? (she cries,
And in the waves her form surveyed);
Oh yes, I see my languid eyes,
My faded cheek, my colour fled:
These eyes no more like lightning pierced,
These cheeks grew pale, when Damon first
His Phyllida betrayed.

The rose he in his bosom wore,
How oft upon my breast was seen!
And when I kissed the drooping flower,
Behold, he cried, it blooms again!
The wreaths that bound my braided hair,
Himself next day was proud to wear
At church, or on the green.

While thus sad Phyllida lamented,
Chance brought unlucky Thyrsis on;
Unwillingly the nymph consented,
But Damon first the cheat begun.
She wiped the fallen tears away,
Then sighed and blushed, as who would say
Ah! Thyrsis, I am won.

William Cowper

A Song : The Sparkling Eye

The sparkling eye, the mantling cheek,
The polished front, the snowy neck,
How seldom we behold in one!
Glossy locks, and brow serene,
Venus' smiles, Diana's mien,
All meet in you, and you alone.

Beauty, like other powers, maintains
Her empire, and by union reigns;
Each single feature faintly warms:
But where at once we view displayed
Unblemished grace, the perfect maid
Our eyes, our ears, our heart alarms.

So when on earth the god of day
Obliquely sheds his tempered ray,
Through convex orbs the beams transmit,
The beams that gently warmed before,
Collected, gently warm no more,
But glow with more prevailing heat.

William Cowper

A Tale, Founded On A Fact, Which Happened In January, 1779

Where Humber pours his rich commercial stream,
There dwelt a wretch, who breathed but to blaspheme.
In subterraneous caves his life he led,
Black as the mine, in which he wrought for bread.
When on a day, emerging from the deep,
A Sabbath-day, (such Sabbaths thousands keep!)
The wages of his weekly toil he bore
To buy a cock -- whose blood might win him more;
As if the noblest of the feathered kind
Were but for battle and for death designed;
As if the consecrated hours were meant
For sport, to minds on cruelty intent.
It changed, (such chances Providence obey,)
He met a fellow-labourer on the way,
Whose heart the same desires had once inflamed,
But now the savage temper was reclaimed.
Persuasion on his lips had taken place;
For all plead well who plead the cause of grace.
His iron-heart with Scripture he assailed,
Wooed him to hear a sermon, and prevailed.
His faithful bow the mighty preacher drew,
Swift as the lightning-glimpse the arrow flew.
He wept; he trembled; cast his eyes around,
To find a worse than he; but none he found.
He felt his sins, and wondered he should feel.
Grace made the wound, and grace alone could heal.
Now farewell oaths, and blasphemies, and lies!
He quits the sinner's for the martyr's prize.
That holy day was washed with many a tear,
Gilded with hope, yet shaded too by fear.
The next his swarthy brethren of the mine
Learned by his altered speech, the change divine,
Laughed when they should have wept, and swore the day
Was nigh when he would swear as fast as they.
'No,' said the penitent: 'such words shall share
This breath no more; devoted now to prayer.
Oh! if thou seest, (thine eye the future sees,)

That I shall yet again blaspheme, like these,
Now strike me to the ground, on which I kneel,
Ere yet this heart relapses into steel;
Now take me to that heaven I once defied,
Thy presence, thy embrace!' -- He spoke, and died!

William Cowper

A Tale. June 1793

In Scotland's realm, where trees are few
Nor even shrubs abound;
But where, however bleak the view
Some better things are found;

For husband there and wife may boast
Their union undefiled,
And false ones are as rare almost
As hedge-rows in the wild;

In Scotland's realm forlorn and bare
The history chanced of late,--
This history of a wedded pair,
A chaffinch and his mate,.

The spring drew near, each felt a breast
With genial instinct filled;
They paired, and would have built a nest,
But found not where to build.

The heaths uncovered and the moors
Except with snow and sleet,
Sea-beaten rocks and naked shores
Could yield them no retreat.

Long time a breeding-place they sought,
Till both grew vexed and tired;
At length a ship arriving brought
The good so long desired.

A ship? -- could such a restless thing
Afford them place of rest?
Or was the merchant charged to bring
The homeless birds a nest?

Hush! -- silent hearers profit most,--
This racer of the sea
Proved kinder to them than the coast,
It served them with a tree.

But such a tree! 'twas shaven deal,
The tree they call a mast,
And had a hollow with a wheel
Through which the tackle passed.

Within that cavity aloft
Their roofless home they fixed,
Formed with materials neat and soft,
Bents, wool, and feathers mixed.

Four ivory eggs soon pave its floor,
With russet specks bedight;
The vessel weighs, forsakes the shore,
And lessens to the sight.

The mother-bird is gone to sea,
As she had changed her kind;
But goes the male? Far wiser he
Is doubtless left behind.

No;-- soon as from ashore he saw
The winged mansion move,
He flew to reach it, by a law
Of never-failing love.

Then perching at his consort's side,
Was briskly borne along,
The billows and the blast defied,
And cheered her with a song.

The seaman with sincere delight
His feathered shipmates eyes,
Scarce less exulting in the sight
Than when he tows a prize.

For seamen much believe in signs,
And from a chance so new
Each some approaching good divines,
And may his hope be true!

Hail, honoured land! a desert where

Not even birds can hide,
Yet parent of this loving pair
Whom nothing could divide.

And ye who, rather than resign
Your matrimonial plan,
Were not afraid to plough the brine
In company with man;

For whose lean country much disdain
We English often show,
Yet from a richer nothing gain
But wantonness and woe;

Be it your fortune, year by year,
The same resource to prove,
And may ye, sometimes landing here,
Instruct us how to love!

William Cowper

Abuse Of The Gospel

Too many, Lord, abuse Thy grace
In this licentious day,
And while they boast they see Thy face,
They turn their own away.

Thy book displays a gracious light
That can the blind restore;
But these are dazzled by the sight,
And blinded still the more.

The pardon such presume upon,
They do not beg but steal;
And when they plead it at Thy throne,
Oh! where's the Spirit's seal?

Was it for this, ye lawless tribe,
The dear Redeemer bled?
Is this the grace the saints imbibe
From Christ the living head?

Ah, Lord, we know Thy chosen few
Are fed with heavenly fare;
But these, -- the wretched husks they chew,
Proclaim them what they are.

The liberty our hearts implore
Is not to live in sin;
But still to wait at Wisdom's door,
Till Mercy calls us in.

William Cowper

Adam: A Sacred Drama. Act 1.

CHORUS OF ANGELS, Singing the Glory of God.

To Heaven's bright lyre let Iris be the bow,
Adapt the spheres for chords, for notes the stars;
Let new-born gales discriminate the bars,
Nor let old Time to measure times be slow.
Hence to new Music of the eternal Lyre
Add richer harmony and praise to praise;
For him who now his wondrous might displays,
And shows the Universe its awful Sire.
O Thou who ere the World or Heaven was made,
Didst in thyself, that World, that Heaven enjoy,
How does thy bounty all its powers employ;
What inexpressive good hast thou displayed!
O Thou of sovereign love almighty source,
Who knowest to make thy works thy love express,
Let pure devotion's fire the soul possess,
And give the heart and hand a kindred force.
Then shalt thou hear how, when the world began,
Thy life-producing voice gave myriads birth,
Called forth from nothing all in Heaven and Earth
Blessed in thy light Eagles in the Sun.

ACT I.

Scene I. -- God The Father. -- Chorus of Angels.

Raise from this dark abyss thy horrid visage,
O Lucifer! aggrieved by light so potent,
Shrink from the blaze of these refulgent planets
And pant beneath the rays of no fierce sun;
Read in the sacred volumes of the sky,
The mighty wonders of a hand divine.
Behold, thou frantic rebel,
How easy is the task,
To the great Sire of Worlds,
To raise his his empyrean seat sublime:
Lifting humility
Thither whence pride hath fallen.
From thence with bitter grief,

Inhabitant of fire, and mole of darkness,
Let the perverse behold,
Despairing his escape and my compassion,
His own perdition in another's good,
And Heaven now closed to him, to others opened;
And sighing from the bottom of his heart,
Let him in homage to my power exclaim,
Ah, this creative Sire,
(Wretch as I am) I see,
Hath need of nothing but himself alone
To re-establish all.

The Seraphim Sing.

O scene worth heavenly musing,
With sun and moon their glorious light diffusing;
Where to angelic voices,
Sphere circling sphere rejoices,
How dost thou rise, exciting
Man to fond contemplation
Of his benign creation!

The Cherubim Sing.

The volume of the stars,
The sovereign Author planned,
Inscribing it with his eternal hand,
And his benignant aim
Their beams in lucid characters proclaim;
And man in these delighting,
Feels their bright beams inviting,
And seems, though prisoned in these mortal bars,
Walking on earth to mingle with the stars.

God The Father.

Angels, desert your Heaven! with you to Earth,
That Power descends, whom Heaven accompanies;
Let each spectator of these works sublime
Behold, with meek devotion,
Earth into flesh transformed, and clay to man,
Man to a sovereign lord,

And souls to seraphim.

The Seraphim Sing.

Now let us cleave the sky with wings of gold,
The world be paradise,
Since to its fruitful breast
Now the great Sovereign of our quire descends;
Now let us cleave the sky with wings of gold;
Strew yourselves flowers beneath the step divine,
Ye rivals of the stars!
Summoned from every sphere
Ye gems of heaven, heaven's radiant wealth appear;
Now let us cleave the sky with wings of gold!

God The Father.

Behold, ye springing herbs and new-born flowers,
The step that used to press the stars alone
And the sun's spacious road,
This day begins, along the sylvan scene,
To leave its grand impression;
To low materials now I stretch my hand,
To form a work sublime.

The Angels Sing.

Lament, lament in anguish,
Angel to God rebellious!
See, on a sudden rise
The creature doomed to fill thy radiant seat!
Foolish thy pride took fire
Contemplating thy birth;
But he o'er pride shall triumph,
Acknowledging he sprung from humble dust.
From hence he shall acquire
As much as thou hast lost;
Since he supreme Inhabitant of Heaven
Receives the humble, and dethrones the proud.

God The Father.

Adam, arise, since I do thee impart
A spirit warm from my benignant breath:
Arise, arise, first man,
And joyous let the world
Embrace its living miniature in thee!

Adam. O marvels new, O hallowed, O divine,
Eternal object of the angel host:
Why do I not possess tongues numerous
As now the stars in heaven?
Now then, before
A thing of earth so mean,
See I the great Artificer divine?
Mighty Ruler supernal,
If 'tis denied this tongue
To match my obligation with my thanks,
Behold my heart's affection,
And hear it speaking clearer than my tongue,
And to thee bending lower
Than this my humble knee.
Now, now, O Lord, in ecstasy devout,
Let my mind mount, and passing all the clouds,
Passing each sphere, even up to heaven ascend,
And there behold the stars, a seat for man!
Thou Lord, who all the fire of genuine love
Convertest to thyself,
Transform me into thee, that I a part
Even of thyself, may thus acquire the power
To offer praises not unworthy thee.

The Angels Sing.

To smile in paradise,
Great demigod of earth, direct thy step;
There like the tuneful spheres,
Circle the murmuring rills
Of limpid water bright;
There the melodious birds
Rival angelic quires;
There lovely flowers profuse
Appear as vivid stars;
The snow rose is there,

A silver moon, the heliotrope a sun:
What more can be desired,
By earth's new lord in fair corporeal vest,
Than in the midst of earth to find a heaven?

Adam. O ye harmonious birds!
Bright scene of lovely flowers.
But what delightful slumber
Falls on my closing eyes?
I lay me down, adieu
Unclouded light of day, sweet air adieu!

God The Father.

Adam, behold I come,
Son dear to me, thou son
Of an indulgent sire;
Behold the hand that never works in vain;
Behold the hand that joined the elements,
That added heaven to heavens,
That filled the stars with light,
Gave lustre to the moon,
Prescribed the sun his course,
And now supports the world,
And forms a solid stage for thy firm step.
Now sleeping, Adam from thy opened side
The substance I will take
That shall have woman's name, and lovely form.

The Angels Sing.

Immortal works of an immortal Maker!
Ye high and blessed seats
Of this delightful world,
Ye starry seats of heaven,
Trophies divine, productions pre-ordained;
O power! O energy!
Which out of shadowy horror formed the Sun!

Eve. What heavenly melody pervades my heart,
Ere yet the sound my ear! inviting me
To gaze on wonders, what do I behold,

What transformations new;
Is earth become the heaven?
Do I behold his light
Whose splendour dazzles the meridian sun?
Am I the creature of that plastic hand,
Who formed of nought the angels and the heavens?
Thou sovereign Lord! whom lowly I adore,
A love so tender penetrates my heart,
That while my tongue ventures on utterance,
The words with difficulty
Find passage from my lips;
For in a tide of tears,
(That sighs have caused to flow) they seem absorbed.
Thou pure celestial love
Of the benignant power,
Who pleased to manifest on earth his glory,
Now to this world descends,
To draw from abject clay
The governor of all created things:
Lord of the hallowed and concealed affection.
Thou in whom love glows with such fervent flame,
Inspirit even my tongue
With suitable reply, that these dear vales
And sylvan scenes may hear
Thanks, that to thee I should devote, my Sire,
But if my tongue be mute, speak thou, my heart.

God The Father.

Adam, awake! and cease
To meditate in rapturous trance profound
Things holy and abstruse,
And the deep secrets of the Trinal Lord.

Adam. Where am I? where have I been? what Sun
Of triple influence that dims the day
Now from my eye withdraws, where is he vanished?
O hallowed miracles
Of this imperial seat,
Of these resplendent suns,
Which though divided, form
A single ray of light immeasurable,

Embellishing all Heaven,
And giving grace and lustre
To every winged Seraph;
Divine mysterious light,
Flowing from sovereign Good,
To him alone thou art known,
Who mounts to thee an eagle in his faith.
What rose of snowy hue and sacred form,
In these celestial bowers,
Wet with Empyreal dews, have I beheld
Opening its bosom to the suns! or rather
One of these suns making the rose its Heaven;
And in a moment's space,
(O marvels most sublime,)
With deluges of light,
And in a lily's form,
Rise from that lovely virgin bosom blest.
Can suns be lilies then,
And lilies children of the maiden rose?

God The Father.

The Heaven's too lofty, and too low the world;
Suffice it that in vain
Man's humble intellect
Attempts to sound the depths of deeds divine:
Press in the fond embraces of thy heart
The consort of thy bosom,
And let her name be Eve.

Adam. O my beloved companion,
Support my existence,
My glory and my power,
Flesh of my flesh, and of my bone the bone,
Behold I clasp thy bosom
In plenitude of pure and hallowed love.

God The Father.

I leave you now, my children; rest in peace,
Receive my blessing, and so fruitful prove
That for your offspring earth may scarce suffice:

Man, be thou lord of all that now the sun
Warms or the ocean laves; impose a name
On every thing that flies, or runs, or swims.
Now through the ear descending to your soul
Receive the immutable decree; hear, Adam,
Let thy companion hear, and in your hearts
Made abode of love,
Cherish the mighty word!
Of fruits whatever from a spreading branch
Each copious tree may offer to your hands,
Of dainty viands whatsoe'er abound
In this delightful garden,
This paradise of flowers,
The gay delight of man,
The treasure of the earth,
The wonder of the world, the work of God,
These, O my son, these thou art free to taste:
But of the Tree comprising Good and Evil
Under the pain of dying
To him who knows not death,
Be now the fruit forbidden!
I leave ye now, and through my airy road,
Departing from the world, return to Heaven.

The Seraphim Sing.

Let every airy cloud on earth descend,
And luminous and light
Repose with God upon this glowing sphere!
Then let the stars descend,
Descend the moon and sun,
Forming bright steps to the empyreal world,
And each rejoice that the supreme Creator
Has deigned to visit what his hand produced.

Adam. O scene of splendour, viewing which I see
The glories of my God in lovelier light,
How through my eyes do you console my heart!
See, at a single nod of our great Sire,
(Dear partner of my life,)
Fire bursting forth with elemental power!
The Sea, Heaven, Earth, their properties assume,

And air grows air, although there were before
Nor fire, nor heaven, nor air, nor earth, nor sea.
Behold the azure sky, in which ofttimes
The lovely glittering star
Shall wake the dawn, attired in heavenly light,
The herald of the morn,
To spread the boundless lustre of the day;
Then shall the radiant sun,
To gladden all the world,
Diffuse abroad his energy of light;
And when his eye is weary of the earth,
The pure and silvery moon
And the minuter stars
Shall form the pomp of night.
Behold where fire o'er every element,
Lucid and light, assumes its lofty seat!
Behold the simple field of spotless air
Made the support of variegated birds,
That with their tuneful notes
Guide the delightful hours!
See the great bosom of the fertile earth
With flowers embellished and with fruits mature!
See on her verdant brow she seems to bear
Hills as her crown, and as her sceptre trees!
Behold the ocean's fair cerulean plain,
That 'midst its humid sands and vales profound,
And 'midst its silent and its scaly tribes,
Rolls over buried gold and precious pearl,
And crimson coral raising to the sky
Its wavy head with herbs and amber crowned!
Stupendous all proclaim
Their Maker's power and glory.

Eve. All manifest thy might,
Or Architect divine!
Adam. Dear partner, let us go
Where to invite our step
God's other wonders shine, a countless tribe.

SCENE II.

Lucifer. Who from my dark abyss

Calls me to gaze on this excess of light?
What miracles unseen
Showest thou to me, O God?
Art thou then tired of residence in heaven?
Why hast thou formed on earth
This lovely paradise?
And wherefore place in it
Two earthly demi-gods of human mould?
Say thou vile architect,
Forming thy work of dust,
What will befall this naked, helpless man,
The sole inhabitant of glens and woods?
Does he then dream of treading on the stars?
Heaven is impoverished, and I, alone
The cause, enjoy the ruin I produced.
Let him unite above
Star upon star, moon, sun,
And let his Godhead toil
To re-adorn and re-illumine his Heaven!
Since in the end derision
Shall prove his works, and all his efforts vain:
For Lucifer alone was that full light
Which scattered radiance o'er the plains of heaven.
But these his present fires, are shade and smoke,
Base counterfeits of my more potent beams.
I reckon not what he means to make his heaven,
Nor care I what his creature man may be.
Too obstinate and firm
Is my undaunted thought,
In proving that I am implacable
'Gainst Heaven, 'gainst Man, the Angels, and their God.

SCENE III. -- Satan, Beelzebub, and Lucifer.

Satan. To light, to light to raise the embattled brows,
A symbol of the firm and generous heart
That ardent dwells in the unconquered breast.
Must we then suffer such excessive wrong?
And shall we not with hands, thus talon-armed,
Tear out the stars from their celestial seat;
And as our sign of conquest,
Down in our dark abyss

Shall we not force the sun, and moon to blaze,
Since we are those, who in dread feats of arms
Warring amongst the stars,
Made the bright face of Heaven turn pale with fear.
To arms! to arms! redoubted Beelzebub!
Ere yet 'tis heard around,
To our great wrong and memorable shame,
That by the race of man (mean child of clay)
The stars expect a new sublimity.

Beelzebub. I burn with such fierce flame,
Such stormy venom deluges my soul,
That with intestine rage
My groans like thunder sound, my looks are lightning,
And my extorted tears are fiery showers!
'Tis needful therefore from my brow to shake
The hissing sperents that o'erstrade my visage,
To gaze upon these mighty works of Heaven,
And the new demi-gods.
Silent be he, who thinks
(Now that this man is formed,)
To imitate his voice and thus exclaim,
Distressful Satan, ye unhappy spirits,
How wretched is your lot, from being first,
Fallen and degenerate, lost as ye are;
Heaven was your station once, your seat the stars,
And your great Maker God!
Now abject wretches, having lost for ever,
Eternal morn and each celestial light,
Heaven calls you now the denizens of woe
Instead of moving in the solar road,
You press the plains of everlasting night;
And for your golden tresses,
And looks angelical,
Your locks are snaky, and your glance malign,
Your burning lips a murky vapour breathe,
And every tongue now teems with blasphemy,
And all blaspheming raise
A cloud sulphureous of foam and fire
Armed with the eagle's talon, feet of goat,
And dragon's wing, your residence in fire,
Profoundest Tartarus unblest and dark,

The theatre of anguish,
That shuts itself against the beams of day,
Since that dread angel, born to brook no law,
To desolate the sky
And raise the powers of Hell,
Ought to breathe sanguine fire, and on his brow
Display the ensign of sublimest horror.

Satan. Though armed with talons keen, and eagle beak,
Snaky our tresses, and our aspect fierce,
Cloven our feet, our frames with horror plumed,
And though our deep abode
Be fixed in shadowy scenes of darkest night,
Let us be angels still in dignity;
As far surpassing others as the Lord
Of highest power, his low and humble slaves.
If far from heaven our pennons we expand,
Let us remember still
That we alone are lords, and they are slaves;
And that resigning meaner seats in heaven,
We in their stead have raised a royal throne
Immense and massy, where the mighty chief
Of all our legions hither lifts his brow,
Than the proud mountain that upholds your heaven;
And there with heaven still waging endless war,
Threatening the stars, our adversaries ever,
Bears a dread sceptre kindling into flame,
That while he wheels it round, darts forth a blaze
More dazzling than the sun's meridian ray.

Lucifer. 'Tis time to show my power, my brave compeers,
Magnanimous and mighty
Angels endowed with martial potency,
I know the grief that gives you living death,
Is to see man exalted
To stations so sublime,
That all created things to him submit;
Since ye already doubt,
That to those lofty seats of flaming glory,
(Our treasure once and pride, but now renounced,)
This pair shall one day rise
With all the numerous train

Of their posterity.

Satan. Great Lord of the infernal deep abyss,
To thee I bow, and speak
The anguish of my soul,
That for this man, grows hourly more severe,
Fearing the Incarnation of the Word.

Lucifer. Can it be true, that from so little dust
A deity shall rise!
That flesh, that deity, that lofty power,
That chains us to the deep?
To this vile clod of earth,
He who himself yet claims to be adored?
Shall angels then do homage thus to men?
And can then flesh impure
Give to angelic nature higher powers?
Can it be true, and to devise the mode
Escape our intellect, ours who so dear
Have bought the boast of wisdom?
I yet am He, I am,
Who would not suffer that above in heaven,
Your lofty nature should submit to outrage,
When that insensate wish
Possessed the tyrant of the starry throne,
That you should prostrate fall,
Before the Incarnate Word:
I am that Spirit, I, who for your sake
Collecting dauntless courage to the north
Led you far distant from the senseless will,
Of him who boasts to have created heaven.
And ye are those, your ardour speaks you well,
And your bold hearts that o'er the host of heaven
Gave me assurance of proud victory.
Arise! let glory's glame
Blaze in your breast, nor be it ever heard,
That him whom ye disdain
To worship in the sky,
Ye stoop to worship in the depth of hell!
Such were your oaths to me,
By your inestimable worth in arms,
Your worth, alas, so great

That heaven itself deserved not to enjoy it.
Oh, 'twere an outrage and a shame too great,
Were we not ready to revenge it all;
I see already flaming in your looks,
The matchless valour of your ardent hearts;
Already see your pinions spread in air,
To overwhelm the world and highest heaven.
That, all creation sunk in the abyss,
This mortal may be found
Instantly crushed, and buried in his birth.

Satan. At length pronounce thy orders!
Say what thou wilt, and with a hundred tongues
Speak, speak! that instant in a hundred works
Satan may toil, and Hell strain all her powers.

Lucifer. Behold, to smooth the rough and arduous way
By which they deem they may ascend to glory,
Behold a God assumes
A human form in vain!
A mode too prompt and easy,
To crush the race of mortals,
The ancient God affords to new-born man.
Nature herself too much inclines, or rather
Forces this creature, to support his life,
Frequent to feed on various viands; hence
Since on delicious dainties
His bitter fall depends,
He may be tempted now to fruit forbidden,
And by the paths of death,
As he was nothing once, return to nothing.

Beelzebub. Great Angel! greatly thought!

Lucifer. Rather the noble spirit
Of higher towering thought prompts me to speak,
That God perchance indignant that his hands
Have stooped to stain themselves in abject clay,
Seeing how different angel is from man,
Repenting of his work,
Forbad him to support his frail existence
Upon this sweet allurements; hence to sin

Prompted by natural motives, though tyrannic,
He should himself the earth's destroyer prove,
Converting his vile clay to dust again;
And plucking up again
The rooted world, thus to the highest heaven
Open a faithful passage,
Repenting of his wrong to us of old
Its ornaments sublime!

Satan. Pardon, O pardon, if my humble thought
Aspiring by my tongue
Too high, perhaps offend your sovereign ear!
Long as this man shall rest
Alive, and breathe on earth,
Exhausted we must bear
Fierce war, in endless terror of the Word.

Lucifer. Man yet shall rest alive, he yet shall breathe
And sinning even to death,
This new-made race of mortals
Shall cover all the earth,
And reign o'er all its creatures;
His soul shall prove eternal,
The image of his God.
Yet shall the Incarnate Word, I trust, be foiled.

Beelzebub. Oh! precious tidings to angelic ears,
That heal the wounds of all our shattered host.

Lucifer. Let man exist to sin, since he by sinning
Shall make the weight of sin his heritage,
Which shall be in his race
Proclaimed original:
So that mankind existing but to sin,
And sinning still to death,
And still to error born,
In evil hour the Word
Will wear the sinner's form, if rightly deemed
The enemy of sin.
Now rise, ye Spirits, from the dark abyss,
You who would rest assured
That man the sinner is now doomed to death.

SCENE IV. -- Melecano, Lurcone, Lucifer, Satan, and Beelzebub.

Melecano. Command us, mighty Lord; what are thy wishes?
Wouldst thou extinguish the new-risen sun?
Behold what stores I bring
Of darkness and of fire!
Alas! with fury Melecano burns.

Lurcone. Behold Lurcone, thou supreme of Hell,
Who 'gainst the highest heaven
Pants to direct his rage, whence light of limb,
Though loaded deep with wrath,
He stands with threatening aspect in thy presence.

Lucifer. Thou, Melecan, assume the name of Pride;
Lurcone, thou of Envy; both united,
(Since power combined with power
Acquires new force) to man direct your way;
Nor him alone essay, it is my will
That woman also mourn;
Contrive that she may murmur at her God,
Because in birth not prior to the man;
Since every future man is now ordained
To draw his life from woman, with such thoughts
Let her wax envious, that she cannot soar
Above the man, as high as now below him.
Hence, Lurcon, be it thine to make her proud;
Let her give law to her Creator God,
Wishing o'er man priority of birth.

Melecano. Behold, where Melecan, a dog in fierceness,
The savage dog of hell,
Darts growling to his prey!
He flies, and he returns
All covered and all drenched with human gore.

Lurcone. I rapid too depart,
And on a swifter wing
Than through the cloudless air
Darts the keen eagle to his earthly prey.
Behold, I too return,

My beak with carnage filled, and talons full.

Lucifer. Haste, Arfarat and Ruspican, rise all,
Rise from the centre to survey the earth!

SCENE V. -- Ruspican, Arfarat, Lucifer, Satan, and Beelzebub.

Ruspican. Soon as I heard the name of Ruspican,
With rapid pinions spread, I sought the skies,
To bend before the great Tartarean chief,
And aggravate the woes
Of this new mortal blest with air and light.

Arfarat. Scarce had thy mighty voice
Re-echoed through the deep,
When the Tartarean fires
Flying I left for this serener sky,
Forth from my lips, and heart,
Breathing fierce rancour 'gainst the life of man.

Lucifer. Fly, Ruspican, with all your force and fury!
Since now I call thee by the name of Anger,
Find Eve, and tell her that the fair endowment
Of her free will, deserves not she should live
In vassalage to man;
That she alone in value far exceeds
All that the sun in his bright circle warms;
That she from flesh, man from the meaner dust
Arose to life, in the fair garden she
Created pure, he in the baser field.

Ruspican. I joy to change the name of Ruspican
For Anger, dark and deadly:
Hence now by my tremendous aid, destructive
And deadly be this day!
Behold I go with all my force and fury;
Behold I now transfuse
My anger all into the breast of woman!

Lucifer. Of Avarice I give,
O Arfarat, to thee the name and works;
Go, see, contend, and conquer!

Contrive that wandering Eve,
With down-cast eyes, may in the fruitful garden
Search with solicitude for hidden treasure:
Then stimulate her heart,
To wish no other Lord,
Except herself, of Eden and the world.

Arfarat. See me already plumed
With wings of gems and gold;
See with an eye of sapphire
I gaze upon the fair.
Behold to her I speak,
With lips that emulate the ruby's lustre.
Receive now as thy own
(Thus I accost her) all the world's vast wealth!
If she reject my gift
Then will I tempt her with a shower of pearls,
A fashion yet unknown;
Thus will she melt, and thus I hope at last
In chains of gold to drag her to destruction.

Lucifer. Rise, Gular, Dulciato, and Maltia!
To make the band of enemies complete,
That, like a deadly Hydra,
Shall dart against this man
Your seven crests portentous and terrific.

SCENE VI. -- Maltia, Dulciato, Gular, Lucifer, Satan, and Beelzebub.

Behold! we come with emulation fierce
To your severe command,
In prompt obedience let us rise to heaven;
Let us with wrath assail
This human enemy of abject clay.

Lucifer. Maltia, thou shalt take the name of Sloth:
Sudden invest thyself with drowsy charms
And mischievous repose;
Now wait on Eve, in slothfulness absorbed,
Let all this pomp of flowers,
And all these tuneful birds
Be held by her in scorn:

And from her consort flying,
Now let her feel no wishes but for death.

Maltia. What shall I say? shall I, to others mute,
Announce to thee my sanguinary works?
Savage and silent, I
Would be loquacious in my deed alone.

Lucifer. Thee, Dulciato, we name Luxury;
Haste thee to Eve, and fill her with desires
To decorate her fragile form with flowers,
To bind her tresses with a golden fillet,
With various vain devices to allure
A new-found paramour;
And to her heart suggest,
That to exchange her love may prove delightful.

Dulciato. Can Lord so mighty, from his humble slave,
Demand no higher task?
The way to purchase honour
Now will I teach all Hell,
By the completion of my glorious triumph.
Already Eve beside a crystal fount
Exults to vanquish the vermilion rose
With cheeks of sweeter bloom,
And to exceed the lily
By her yet whiter bosom;
Now beauteous threads of gold
She thinks her tresses floating in the air;
Now amorous and charming,
Her radiant eyes she reckons suns of love,
Fit to inflame the very coldest heart.

Lucifer. Guliar, be thou called Gluttony: now go
Reveal to Eve that the forbidden fruit
Is manna all within,
And that such food in heaven
Forms the repast of angels and of God.

Guliar. Of all the powerful foes
Leagued against man, Guliar is only he
Who can induce him to oppose his Maker;

Hence rapidly I fly
To work the woe of mortals.

Satan. To arms, to arms! to ruin and to blood
Yes, now to blood, infernal leeches all!
Again, again proclaiming war to Heaven,
And let us put to flight
Every audacious foe
That ventures to disturb our ancient peace.

Beelzebub. Now, now, great chief, with feet
That testify thy triumph,
I see thee crush the sun,
The moon, and all the stars;
For where thy radiance shines,
O Lucifer! all other beams are blind.

Lucifer. Away. Heaven shudders at the mighty ruin
That threatens it from our infernal host:
Already I behold the moon opaque,
And light-supplying sun,
The wandering stars, and fixt,
With terror pale, and sinking in eclipse.

William Cowper

Adam: A Sacred Drama. Act 2.

SCENE I. -- CHORUS OF ANGELS Singing.

Now let us garlands weave
Of all the fairest flowers,
Now at this early dawn,
For new-made man, and his companion dear;
Let all with festive joy,
And with melodious song,
Of the great Architect
Applaud this noblest work,
And speak the joyous sound,
Man is the wonder both of Earth and Heaven.

FIRST Angel.

Your warbling now suspend,
You pure angelic progeny of God,
Behold the labour emulous of Heaven!
Behold the woody scene,
Decked with a thousand flowers of grace divine;
Here man resides, here ought he to enjoy
In his fair mate eternity of bliss.

SECOND Angel.

How exquisitely sweet
This rich display of flowers,
This airy wild of fragrance,
So lovely to the eye,
And to the sense so sweet.

THIRD Angel.

O the sublime Creator,
How marvellous his works, and more his power!
Such is the sacred flame
Of his celestial love,
Not able to confine it in himself,
He breathed, as fruitful sparks

From his creative breast,
The Angels, Heaven, Man, Woman, and the World.

FOURTH Angel.

Yes, mighty Lord! yes, hallowed love divine!
Who, ever in thyself completely blest,
Unconscious of a want,
Who from thyself alone, and at thy will,
Bright with beignant flames,
Without the aid of matter or of form,
By efficacious power
Hast of mere nothing formed
The whole angelic host
With potency endowed,
And that momentous gift,
Either by sin to fall,
Or by volition stand.

FIFTH Angel.

Hence, our Almighty Maker,
To render us more worthy of his Heaven,
And to confirm us in eternal grace,
Presented to our homage
The pure Incarnate Word;
That as a recompense for hallowed toil
So worthily achieved,
We might adore him humble;
For there's a written law
In the records of Heaven,
That not a work of God that breathes and lives,
And is endowed with reason,
Shall hold a seat in Heaven,
If it incline not first with holy zeal,
In tender adoration to the Word.

SIXTH Angel.

Justly each Spirit in the realms above,
And all of mortal race,
And every foe to Heaven,

Should bow the knee in reverence of the Word;
Since this is he whom from eternity
God in the awful depth
Of his sublime and fruitful mind produced;
He is not accident, but substance true,
As rare as perfect, and as truly great
As his high Author holy and divine.

SEVENTH Angel

This living Word, image express of God,
Is a resemblance of his mighty substance;
Whence he is called the Son, the Son of God,
Even as the Father, God;
The generated Word
By generation yields not unto time,
Since from eternity the eternal Father
Produced his Son, whence he rejoices there,
Great offspring of great Father there for ever!
For ever he is born,
There he is fed, and fostered
With plenitude of grace
Imparted by his Sire:
There was the Father ever, and the Son
Was ever at his side, or in the Father;
Nor younger is the Son
Than his Almighty Sire,
Nor elder is the Father
Than his eternal Son.

EIGHTH Angel.

O Son, O Sire, O God, O Man, O Word,
Let all with bended knee,
With humble adoration reverence you!

NINTH Angel.

O Lucifer, now doomed to endless pain,
Hadst thou been joined with us
In worship of the Word,
How hadst thou now been blessed in thy God!

But thou in pride alone, yes, thou alone
In thy great wisdom foolish,
Hast scorned the Paragon,
And wouldst not reverence the Incarnate God;
Whence by thy folly thou hast fallen as far
As thy proud soul expected to ascend.

TENTH Angel.

Monster of fierceness, dwell
In thy obscure recess!
And for thy weighty crime
Incessant feel and infinite thy pain,
For infinite has been thy vast offence.

ELEVENTH Angel.

Reside for ever in the deep abyss,
For well the world's eternal Master knows
Again to fill those high celestial seats,
That by your ruin you have vacant left;
Behold man fashioned from the earth, who lives,
Like plants that vegetate;
See in a moment's space
How the pure breath of life,
Breathed on his visage by the power divine,
Endows the wondrous creature with a soul,
A pure immortal soul,
That graced, and lovely with exalted powers,
Shines the great faithful image of its God.
Behold it has the gift to merit highly,
The option to deserve or heaven or hell,
In free will perfect, as the first of angels.

TWELFTH Angel.

Yes, man alone was formed in just derision
Of all the infernal host,
As lord of this fair world and all that lives,
The ornament of all,
The miracle of nature,
The perfect heir of heaven,

Related to the angels,
Adopted son of God,
And semblance of the Holy Trinity;
What couldst thou hope for more, what more attain,
Creature miraculous,
In whom the eternal Lord
Has now vouchsafed in signalise his power?

THIRTEENTH Angel.

How singular and worthy is his form,
Upright in stature, meek in dignity;
Well fashioned are his limbs, and his complexion
Well tempered, with a high majestic brow,
A brow turned upward to his native sky;
In language eloquent, in thought sublime,
For contemplation of his Maker formed.

FOURTEENTH Angel.

Placed in a state of innocence is man;
Primeval justice is his blessed gift,
Hence are his senses to his reason subject,
His body to his mind,
Enjoying reason as his prime endowment.

FIFTEENTH Angel.

Supernal love held him too highly dear,
To let him dwell alone;
And thence of lovely woman
(Fair faithful aid) bestowed on man the gift,
Adam, 'tis thine alone
To keep thy duty to thy Lord unstained;
In his command of the forbidden fruit,
Thy gift of freedom keep inviolate;
And though he fashioned thee without thy aid,
Think not without thy aid he means to save thee!
But since, descending from the heights of heaven,
We come as kind attendants upon man,
Now let us haste to Eden's flowery banks.

ALL THE ANGELS SING.

Now take we happy flight
To Paradise, adorned with fairest flowers;
There let us almost worship
The mighty lord of this transcendent world,
And joyous let us sing
This flowery heaven, and Adam as its God.

SCENE II.

Adam. O mighty Lord of mighty things sublime?
O my supreme Creator!
O bounteous in thy love
To me thy humble servant, such rare blessings
With liberal hand thou givest,
Where'er I turn my eyes,
I see myself revered.
Approach ye animals that range the field!
And ye now close your variegated wings,
Ye pleasing birds! in me you look on Adam,
On him ordained to name
All things that gracious God has made for man;
And praise, with justice praise
Him who created me, who made you all,
And in his bounteous love with me rejoice.
But what do I behold? blest that I am,
My dear, my sweet companion!
Who comes to hail me with a gift of flowers,
And with these sylvan honours crown my brow.
Go! stately lion, go! and thou with scales
Impenetrable armed
Rhinoceros, whose pride can strike to earth
The unconquered elephant!
Thou fiery courser bound along the fields,
And with thy neighing shake the echoing vale;
Thou camel, and all here, or beast, or bird,
Retire, in homage to approaching Eve!

Eve. Oh what delight more dear,
Than that, which Adam in my sight enjoys,
Draws him far off from me? Ye tender flowers,

Where may I find on you
The traces of his step?

Lurcone. See man and woman! hide thyself and watch!

Adam. No more fatigue my eyes,
Nor with thy animated glances dart
Such radiance lightning round:
Turn the clear Heaven of thy serener face
To him who loves its light;
See thy beloved Adam,
Behold him, my sweet love;
O thou, who art alone
Joy of the world, and dear delight of man!

Lurcone. Dread the approach of evil!

Guliar. Dread the deceit of hell!

Eve. By sovereign content
I feel my tongue enchained;
But though my voice be mute,
My countenance may seem more eloquent,
Expressing, though in silence, all my joy.

Adam. O my companion dear!

Lurcone. And soon perchance thy foe!

Adam. O thou my sweetest life!

Guliar. Perchance thy bitter death!

Eve. Take, gentle Adam, from my hand these flowers;
With these, my gift, let me entwine thy locks.

Adam. Ye lilies, and ye shrubs of showy hue,
Jasmine as ivory pure,
Ye spotless graces of the shining field;
And thou most lovely rose
Of tint most delicate,
Fair consort of the morn,

Delighted to imbibe
The genial dew of Heaven,
Rich vegetation's vermil-tinctured gem,
April's enchanting herald,
Thou flower supremely blest,
And queen of all the flowers,
Thou form'st around my locks
A garland of such fragrance,
That up to Heaven itself
Thy balmy sweets ascend.
Let us in pure embraces
So twine ourselves, my love,
That we may seem united,
One well-compact, and intricate acanthus.

Lurcone. Soon shall the fetters of infernal toil
So spread around ye both,
The indissoluble bond,
No mortal effort shall have power to break!

Eve. Now, that with flowers so lovely
We have adorned our tresses,
Here let us both with humble reverence kneel,
And praise our mighty Maker.
From this my thirsting heart
No longer can refrain.

Adam. At thy engaging words,
And thy pure heart's desire,
On these pure herbs and flowers,
I bend my willing knee in hallowed bliss.

Lurcone. Away! far off must I
From act so meekly just
Furious depart and leave the light of day.

Guliar. I must partake thy flight,
And follow thee, alas, surcharged with grief.

Adam. Now that these herbs and flowers to our bent knees
Such easy rest afford,
Let us with zealous ardour raise our eyes,

Contemplating with praise our mighty Maker!
First then, devout and favoured Eve, do thou
With sacred notes invite
To deeds so fair thy Adam.

Eve. My Lord Omnipotent,
In his celestial essence
Is first, supreme, unlimited, alone,
Eternal, uncompounded,
He no beginning had, no end will have.

Adam. My sovereign Lord, so great
Is irresistible, terrific, just,
Gracious, benign, indulgent,
Divine, unspotted, holy, loving, good,
In justice most revered,
Ancient of days, in his sublimest court.

Eve. He rests in highest Heaven,
Yet more exalted in his boundless self;
Thence his all-searching eye looks down on all;
Nought is from him concealed,
Since all exists in him:
Without him nothing could retain existence,
Nor is there aught that he
For his perfection needs,
Except himself alone.

Adam. He every place pervades,
But is confined in none:
In him the limits of all grandeur lie,
But he exists unlimited by space.

Eve. Above the universe himself he raised,
Yet he behind it rests;
The whole he now encircles, now pervades,
Now dwells apart from all,
So great, the universe
To comprehend him fails.

Adam. If he to all inclines,
In his just balance all he justly weighs:

From him if all things flow,
All things in him acknowledge their support,
But he on nothing rests.

Eve. To time my great director is not subject,
For time in him sees no vicissitude:
In awful and sublime eternity
One being stands for ever;
For ever stands one instant,
And hence this power assumes the name of God.

Adam. It is indeed a truth,
That my eternal mighty Lord is God;
This deity incomprehensible
That, ere the heaven was made,
Dwelt only in himself, and heaven in him.
Eve, let us joyous rise; in other scenes,
With admiration of celestial splendour
And of this lovely world,
With notes of hallowed bliss
Let us again make the glad air resound.

Eve. Lead on, my faithful guide;
Quick is my willing foot to follow thee,
Since my fond soul believes
That I in praising heaven to heaven ascend,
So my pure bosom feels
Full of divine content.

Adam. To speak on every theme
Our mighty Maker made thee eloquent,
So that in praising heaven thou seemest there.
My fair associate! treasure of my life!
Upon the wings of this exalted praise
Devotion soars so high, that if her feet
Rest on the earth, her spirit reaches heaven.

SCENE III. -- The Serpent, Satan, Spirits.

Serpent. To arms, to battle, O ye sons of power!
Ye warring spirits of the infernal field!
A new and wondrous war

Awaits you now, within the lists of earth;
Most strange indeed the mode
Of warring there, if triumph, war's great end,
Proves its beginning now.
Behold the sun himself turn pale with terror,
Behold the day obscured!
Behold each rapid bird directs his flight
Where thickest foliage spreads,
But shelter seeks in vain;
The leaves of every bough,
As with a palsy struck,
Affright him more, and urge his wings to flight.
I would not as a warrior take the field
Against the demi-goddess girt with angels,
Since she has now been used
To gaze on spirits tender and benign,
Not such as I, of semblance rough and fierce,
For battles born to subjugate the sky.
In human form I would not
Defy her to a great important conflict,
The world she knows contains one only man.
Nor would I of the tiger
Or the imperious lion
Or other animal assume the shape;
For well she knows they could not reason with her,
Who are of reason void.
To make her knowledge vain,
That I exist to the eternal Maker,
A source of endless fear,
Wrapt in the painted serpent's scaly folds,
Part of myself I hide, giving the rest
A human semblance and a damsel's face.
Great things I tell thee, and behold I see
My adversary prompt to parley with me.
Of novelty to hear
How eager woman is!
Now, now I loose my tongue,
And shall entangle her in many a snare.

Satan. But what discordant sound
Rises from hell, where all was lately concord?
Why do hoarse trumpets bellow through the deep?

SCENE IV. -- Volan, the Serpent, Spirits, Satan.

Volan. Great Lord, ordained to found infernal realms,
And look with scorn upon the pomp of heaven,
Behold thy Volan fly
To pay his homage at thy scaly feet!
The chieftains of Avernus,
The prime infernal powers
To rise in rivalship
Of heaven in all, as in that lofty seat,
The Word to us revealed,
The source of such great strife,
They wish, that on the Earth
A goddess should prepare a throne for man,
And lead him to contemn
His own Almighty Maker:
Yet more the inhabitants of fire now wish
That having conquered Man,
And with such triumph gay,
To the great realms of deep and endless flames
Ye both with exultation may descend:
Then shall I see around
Hell dart its rays, and hold the sun in scorn
But if this man resist,
Then losing every hope
Of farther victory,
They wish that on the throne
Of triumph he may as a victor sit,
Who teaches it to move,
And thou perform the office
With an afflicted partner,
With him, who labours to conduct the car;
That clothed in horrid pomp
The region of Avernus,
May speak itself the seat of endless pain,
And at the sound of inauspicious trumpets
The heavens may shake, the universe re-echo.

SCENE V. -- Vain Glory drawn by a Giant, Volan, the Serpent, Satan, and Spirits.

Vain Glory. King of Avernus, at this harp's glad sound

I weave a starry garland for thy locks,
For well I see thy lovely scales portend
Honour to me, ruin and shame to man.
I am Vain Glory, and I sit on high,
Exulting Victress of the Mighty Giant:
He has his front in heaven, on earth his feet,
A faithful image of man's mighty worth:
But shake not thou with fear! strong as he is
So brittle is the crown of glass he wears
That at my breath, which drives him fiercely on,
Man loses power, and falls a prey to Death.

Serpent. Angel, or Goddess, from thy lofty triumph
Descend with me at the desire of Hell!
Haste to a human conflict;
You all so light and quick,
That by your movement not a leaf is shaken
In all these woods around,
Your mighty triumphs now together hide;
Now that in silence we may pass unseen,
Quick let us enter neighbouring Paradise.

Vain Glory. Wherefore delay? Point out the path we go;
Since prompt to follow thee,
Full as I am of haughtiness and pride,
With expeditious foot
I will advance
Among these herbs and flowers,
And let infernal laurels
Circle thy towering crest and circle mine!

Serpent. What tribes of beauteous flowers,
And plants how new and vivid!
How desolate shall I
Soon make these verdant scenes of plant and flower!
Behold! how with my foot
I now as much depress them,
As they shoot forth with pride to rear their heads:
Behold! their humid life
I wither with my step of blasting fire.
How I enjoy, as I advance through these
Fair bowers of rapid growth,

To poison with my breath the leaf and flower,
Embittering all these sweet and blooming fruits.
We are arrived, behold the lovely tree
Prohibited by heaven,
There mount, and be embowered
In the thick foliage of a wood so fair!

Vain Glory. See, I prepare to climb:
I am already high,
And in the leaves concealed.
Climb thou, great chief, and rapidly encircle,
And with thy scaly serpent train ascend
The tree; be quick, since now arising higher
I can discern where lonely Eve advances.

Serpent. Behold, enraged I twine around the trunk
With these my painted and empoisoned folds;
Behold, I breathe towards this woman, love,
Though hate is in my heart:
Behold me now; more beautiful than ever,
Though now of each pestiferous cruel monster
In poison and in rage, I am the model;
Now I behold her, now
In silence I conceal my gift of speech,
Among these leaves embowered.

SCENE VI. -- Eve, Serpent, and Vain Glory.

Eve. I ought, the servant of a Mighty Lord,
A servant low and humble,
With reverential knee bending to earth,
I ought to praise the boundless love of him,
Since he has made me queen
Of all the sun delights to view on earth.
But if to heaven I raise my eyes and heart,
Clearly can Eve not see
She was created for these great, eternal,
Celestial miracles?
So that in spirit or in mortal frame,
She ever must enjoy or earth or heaven.
Hence this fair flowering tree
Wreathing abroad its widely branching arms,

As if desirous to contend with heaven,
Seems willing in my locks
To spread a shining heaven of verdant leaves;
And if I pass among the herbs and flowers,
Those, I behold, that by my step are pressed,
Arise more beautiful; the very buds
Expand, to form festoons
To decorate the grassy scene around.
Other new flowers with freshest beauty fair,
That stand from me sequestered,
Formed into groups or scattered in the vale,
Seem with delight to view me, and to say
The neighbouring flowers rejoice
To give thy foot support,
But we, aspiring Eagles,
From far behold thy visage,
Mild portraiture of the Almighty form.
While other plants and flowers,
Wishing that I may form my seat among them,
Above their native growth
So seem to raise themselves, that of sweet flowers
A fragrant hedge they form;
And others in a thousand tender ties,
Form on the ground so intricate a snare,
That the incautious hand which aims to free
The captive foot, must be itself ensnared.
If food I wish, or draught,
Lo! various fruit, lo! honey, milk, and manna;
Behold, from many a fount and many a rill,
The crystal beauty of the cooling stream.
If melody, behold the tuneful birds,
Behold angelic bands!
If welcome day,
Or mild and wished-for night,
Behold the sun, behold the moon and stars!
If I a friend require,
Adam, sweet friend, replies;
And if my God in heaven, the Eternal Maker
Dwells not unmindful, but regards my speech,
If creatures subject to my will I wish,
Lo! at my side all subject to my will.
What more can I desire, what more obtain?

Now nothing more, my Sovereign,
Eve is with honour loaded.
But what's before me? do I wake or dream?
Among these boughs I see
A human visage fair; what! are there then
More than myself and Adam,
Who view the glorious sun?
O marvellous, though I am distant far,
I yet discern the truth; with arms, with hands,
A human breast it has,
The rest is serpent all:
Oh, how the sun, emblazing with his rays
These gorgeous scales with glowing colours bright,
O'erwhelms my dazzled eyes!
I would approach it.

Serpent. Now, then, at length you see
I have precisely ta'en the semblance fit,
To overcome this woman.

Eve. The nearer I approach, more and more lovely
His semblance seems of emerald and sapphire,
Now ruby and now amethyst, and now
Of jasper, pearl, and flaming chrysolite
Each fold it waving forms around the trunk
Of this fair flowering tree!

Serpent. I will assail my foe.
Come to survey me better,
Thou dazzler of the eye,
Enchantress of the soul,
Soft idol of the heart,
Fair nymph, approach! Lo, I display myself,
Survey me all; now satisfy thine eyes;
View me attentive, paragon of beauty,
Thou noblest ornament of all the world,
Thou lovely pomp of nature,
Thou little paradise,
To whom all things do homage!
Where lonely from thy friend, thy Adam, far
Where art thou? now advancing where
The numerous bands of Angels

Become such fond admirers of thy beauty?
Happy I deem myself, supremely happy,
Since, 'tis my blessed lot,
With two fond eyes alone to gaze on that,
Which with unnumbered eyes, heaven scarce surveys.
Trust me if all the loveliness of heaven
Would wrap itself within a human veil,
Nought but thy beauteous bosom
Could form a mansion worthy such a guest.
How well I see, full well
That she above with thy light agile feet,
Imprints her step in heaven, and there she smiles
With thy enchanting lip,
To scatter joy around those blessed spheres;
Yes, with thy lips above,
She breathes, she speaks, she pauses,
And with thine eyes communicates a lustre
To all that's fair in heaven or fair on earth.

Eve. And who art thou, so eager
To lavish praise on me?
Yet never did mine eyes see form like thine.

Serpent. Can I be silent now?
Too much, too much, I pant
To please the lovely model of all grace.
Know when the world was fashioned out of nought
And this most fruitful garden,
I was ordained to dwell a gardener here,
By him who cultivates
The fair celestials fields:
Here joyful I ascend,
To watch that no voracious bird may seize
On such delicious fruit;
Here it is my delight,
Though all be marvellously fair around,
Lily to blend with lily, rose with rose,
And now the fragrant hedge
To form, and now between the groups of flowers,
And o'er the tender herb
To guide the current of the crystal stream.
Oh, what sweet scenes to captivate the eye

Of such a lovely virgin,
Will I disclose around;
Thou, if thou canst return
To this alluring spot,
And ever with fresh myrtle and new flowers,
More beauteous thou shalt find it;
This wondrous faculty I boast infused
By thy supernal Maker,
To guard in plant and flower their life and fragrance.

Eve. Since I have found thee courteous
No less than wise, reveal to me thy name;
Speak it to me, unless
I seek to know too much.

Serpent. Wisdom, I name myself,
Sometimes I Life am called,
For this my double nature, since I am
One part a serpent and the other human.

Eve. Strange things this day I hear; but tell me why
Thou serpent art combined with human form?

Serpent. I will inform thee; when the sovereign God
On nothing resting, yet gave force to all.
To balance all things in an even scale
The sage of heaven desired,
And not from opposite extremities
To pass without a medium justly founded:
Hence 'tween the brute and man
It pleased him to create this serpent kind;
And even this participates in reason,
And with a human face has human speech.
But what can fail to honour with submission,
The demi-god of earth?
Oh! if proportioned to thy charms, or equal
To the desert of man,
You had high knowledge, doubt not but in all
Ye would be reckoned as immortal gods;
Since the prime power of lofty science is
One of the first and greatest
Of attributes divine: Oh, could this be,

Descending from the base
Of this engaging plant,
How as a goddess should I here adore thee!

Eve. What, dost thou think so little then the sum
Of knowledge given to man? does he not know
Of every living herb and flower and plant,
Of minerals and of unnumbered gems,
Of fish, of fowl, and every animal,
In water or n earth, of fire, of air,
Of this fair starry heaven,
And of the moon and sun,
The virtues most concealed?

Serpent. Ah, this is nothing; since it only serves
To make the common things of nature known;
And I, although I am
Greatly inferior in my rank to man,
Yet, one by one, even I can number these,
More worthy it would be
To know both good and ill;
This, this is the supreme
Intelligence, and mysteries most high,
That on the earth would make you like to God.

Eve. That which hath power sufficient to import
This knowledge so sublime of good and ill,
(But mixt with mortal anguish,)
Is this forbidden tree, on which thou sittest.

Serpent. And tell me why a law
So bitter rises from a fruit so sweet?
Where then, where is the sense
That you so lately boasted as sublime?
Observe, if it be just,
That man so brave, so lovely, man that rules
The world with skilful hand, man that so much
Pleased his creating God, when power almighty
Fashioned the wonders both of earth and heaven,
That man at last a little fruit should crush,
And all be formed for nothing, or at best
But for a moment's space?

No, no, far from thee, far be such a doubt!
Let colour to thy cheek, and to thy lip
The banished rose return!
Say, -- but I know -- thy heart
Within thee speaks the language that I speak!

Eve. The Lord commanded me I should not taste
This fruit; and to obey him is my joy.

Serpent. If 'tis forbidden thee
To taste a fruit so fair,
Heaven does not choose that man should be a God,
But thou with courtesy, to my kind voice
Lend an attentive ear: say, if your Maker
Required such strict obedience, that you might
Depend but on his word to move and guard you;
Was there not power sufficient in the laws
Sublime of hope, of faith, and charity
Why then, fair creature, why, without occasion
Thus should he multiply his laws for man,
For ever outraging with such a yoke
Your precious liberty, and of great lords
Making you slaves, nay, in one point inferior
Even to the savage beasts,
Whom he would not reduce to any law?
Who does not know that loading you so much
With precepts, he has lessened the great blessing
Of joyous being, that your God first gave you?
Perchance he dreaded that ye soon might grow
His equals both, in knowledge, and be Gods?
No, for though like to God you might become
By such experiment, the difference still
Between you must be great, since this your knowledge,
And acquisition of divinity,
Could be but imitation, and effect
Of the first cause divine that dwells above.
And can it then be true,
That such a vital hand
Can do a deadly deed?
Oh, hadst thou tasted this, how wouldst thou gain
Advantage of the Lord, how then with him
Would thy conversing tongue,

Accuse the latent mysteries of heaven!
For other flowers and other plants, and fields,
And elements, and spheres,
Far different suns, and different moons, and stars
There are above, from those thou viewest here
Buried below these; all to thee are near,
Observe how near! but at the very distance
This apple is from thee. Extend thy hand,
Boldly extend it, -- ah! why dost thou pause?

Eve. What should I do? Who counsels me, O God?
Hope bids me live, and fear at once destroys me.
But say, how art thou able
To know such glorious things exist above,
And that on earth, one thus may equal God,
By feeding on this apple,
If thou in heaven wert never,
And ne'er permitted of the fruit to taste?

Serpent. Ah! is there ought I can deny to her
Whose happiness I wish? Now listen to me.
When of this garden I was made the keeper,
By him who fashioned thee,
All he has said to thee, to me he said;
And opening to me heaven's eternal bosom,
With all his infinite celestial pomp,
He satiated my eyes, and then thus spake:
Thy paradise thou hast enjoyed, O Serpent,
No more thou shalt behold it; now retain
Memory of heaven on earth,
Which thou mayst do by feeding on such fruit.
A heavenly seat alone is fit for man,
For that's the seat of beauty;
Since thou art partly man, and partly brute,
'Tis just thou dwell on earth;
The world was made for various beasts to dwell in,
He added, nor canst thou esteem it hard,
Serpent and man, to dwell on earth for ever,
Since thou already in thy human portion
Most fully hast enjoyed thy bliss above.
Thus I eternal live,
Forming my banquet of this savoury fruit,

And Paradise is open to my eyes,
By the intelligence, through me transfused
From this delicious viand.

Eve. Alas! what should I do? to whom apply?
My heart, what is thy counsel?

Serpent. 'Tis true, thy sovereign has imposed upon thee,
Under the pain of death,
To taste not of this fruit;
And to secure from thee
A dainty so delightful,
The watchful guard he made me
Of this forbidden tree;
So that if I consent, both man and thou,
His beautiful companion,
May rise to equal God in happiness.
'Tis but too true that to participate
In food and beverage with savage beasts,
Gives us in this similitude to them;
It is not just you both,
Works of a mighty Maker,
Great offspring of a great God,
Should in a base condition,
Among these groves and woods,
Lead a life equal to the lowest beast.

Eve. Ah! why art thou so eager
That I should taste of this forbidden food?

Serpent. Wouldst thou that I should tell?

Eve. 'Tis all my wish.

Serpent. Now lend thine ear, now arch
With silent wonder, both thy beauteous brows!
For two proud joys of mine,
Not for thy good alone, I wish to make thee
This liberal overture, and swear to keep
Silence while thou shalt seize the fruit denied.
First to avenge that high unworthy wrong
Done me by God, in fashioning my shape;

For I was deemed the refuse of his heaven,
For these my scaly parts,
That ever like a snake I trail behind;
And then, because he should to me alone
Have given this world, and o'er the numerous beasts
Have made me lord, not wholly of their kind;
But this my empire mighty and supreme,
O'er all these living things,
While man is doomed
To breathe on vital air,
Must seem but low and servile vassalage;
Since man, and only man
Was chosen high and mighty lord of all
This wondrous scene, and he thus raised to grandeur
Was newly formed of nought.
But when the fairest of all Eden's fruits
Is snatched and tasted, when you rise to Gods,
'Tis just that both ascending from this world,
Should reach the higher spheres
So that on earth to make me
Of every creature lord,
Of human error I my virtue make:
Know, that command is grateful even to God,
Grateful to man, and grateful to the serpent.

Eve. I yield obedience, ah! what is't I do?

Serpent. Rather what do you not? Ah, boldly taste,
Make me a god on earth, thyself in heaven.

Eve. Alas, how I perceive
A chilling tremour wander through my bones,
That turns my heart to ice!

Serpent. It is thy mortal part that now begins
To languish, as o'ercome by the divine,
Which o'er its lowly partner
In excellence ascends.
Behold the pleasant plant,
More lovely and more rich
Than if it raised to heaven branches of gold,
And bore the beauteous emerald as leaves,

With roots of coral and a trunk of silver.
Behold this jewelled fruit,
That gives enjoyment of a state divine!
How fair it is, and how
It takes new colours from the solar rays,
Bright as the splendid train
Of the gay peacock, when he whirls it round
Full in the sun, and lights his thousand eyes!
Behold how it invites!
'Tis all delicious, it is sweetness all;
Its charms are not deceitful,
Thine eye can view them well.
Now take it! Now I watch
In any angel spy thee! Dost thou pause?
Up! for once more I am thy guide; at last
The victory is thine!

Eve. At length behold me the exalted mistress
Of this most lovely fruit!
But why, alas, does my cold brow distil
These drops that overwhelm me?

Serpent. Lovely Virgin,
Will not our reason tell us
Supreme felicity is bought with pain?
Who from my brow will wipe
These drops of keener pain?
Who dissipate the dread that loads my heart?

Eve. Tell me what wouldst thou? tell me who afflicts thee?

Serpent. The terror of thy Lord; and hence I pray thee?
That when thou hast enjoyed
That sweet forbidden fruit,
When both of you become eternal gods,
That you would guard me from the wrath of heaven;
Since well indeed may he,
Whom we call God, kindle his wrath against me
Having to you imparted
Taste of this fruit against his high command.
But tell him, my desire
To make me lord of this inferior world,

Like man a god in heaven,
Rendered me mute while Eve attained the apple.

Eve. The gift I owe thee, Serpent, well deserves
That I should ne'er forget thee.

Serpent. Now in these verdant leaves I hide myself
Till thou with sounds of joy
Shalt call and re-assure me.

Eve. Now then conceal thyself, I promise thee
To be thy shield against the wrath of God.
O what delicious odour! 'tis so sweet
That I can well believe
That all the lovely flowers
From this derive their fragrance.
These dewy leaves to my conception seem
Moistened with manna, rather than with dew.
Ah, it was surely right
That fruit so exquisite
Should flourish to impart new life to man,
Not waste its sweets upon the wind and sun.
Nothing for any ill
To man could spring from God's creative hand:
Since he for man assuredly has felt
Such warmth of love unbounded, I will taste it.
How sweet it is! how far
Surpassing all the fruits of every kind,
Assembled in this soil!
But where is Adam now? Oh, Adam! Adam!
He answers not; then thou with speed depart
To find him; but among these flowers and leaves
Conceal this lovely apple, lest the angels,
Descrying it, forbid.
Adam to taste its sweets,
And so from man be made a mighty God.

Serpent. Extinguish in the waves thy rays, O sun!
No more distribute life!
Thus Lucifer ordains, and thus the apple!
Man, man is now subdued!

Vain Glory. O joyous day! O day
To Hell of triumph, and of shame to Heaven!
Eve has enjoyed the apple,
And now contrives that man may taste it too.
Now see by direst fate
Life is exchanged for death!
Now I exulting sing,
And hence depart with pride,
Since man's high boast is crushed,
And his bright day now turned to hideous night!

William Cowper

Adam: A Sacred Drama. Act 3.

SCENE I.-- Adam and Eve.

Oh, my beloved companion!
Oh thou of my existence,
The very heart and soul!
Hast thou, with such excess of tender haste,
With ceaseless pilgrimage,
To find again thy Adam,
Thus solitary wandered?
Behold him! Speak! what are thy gentle orders?
Why dost thou pause? what ask of God? what dost thou?

Eve. Adam, my best beloved!
My guardian and my guide!
Thou source of all my comfort, all my joy!
Thee, thee alone I wish,
And in these pleasing shades
Thee only have I sought.

Adam. Since thou hast called thy Adam,
(Most beautiful companion),
The source and happy fountain of thy joy;
Eve, if to walk with me
It now may please thee, I will show thee love,
A sight thou hast not seen;
A sight so lovely, that in wonder thou
Wilt arch thy graceful brow.
Look thou, my gentle bride, towards that path,
Of this so intricate and verdant grove,
Where sit the birds embowered;
Just there, where now, with soft and snowy plumes,
Two social doves have spread their wings for flight,
Just there, thou shalt behold, (oh pleasing wonder),
Springing amid the flowers,
A living stream, that with a winding course
Flies rapidly away;
And as it flies, allures
And tempts you to exclaim, sweet river, stay!
Hence eager in pursuit

You follow, and the stream, as it it had
Desire to sport with you,
Through many a florid, many a grassy way,
Well known to him, in soft concealment flies:
But when at length he hears,
You are afflicted to have lost his sight,
He rears his watery locks, and seems to say,
Gay with a gurgling smile,
'Follow! ah, follow still my placid course!
If thou art pleased with me, with thee I sport.
And thus with sweet deceit he leads you on
To the extremest bound
Of a fair flowery meadow; then at once
With quick impediment,
Says, 'Stop! Adieu! for now, yes, now I leave you:'
Then down a rock descends:
There, as no human foot can follow further,
The eye alone must follow him, and there,
In little space you see a mass of water
Collected in a deep and fruitful vale,
With laurel crowned and olive,
With cypress, orange and lofty pines.
The limpid water in the sun's bright ray
A perfect crystal seems;
Hence in its deep recess,
In the translucent wave,
You see a precious glittering sand of gold,
And bright as moving silver
Innumerable fish;
Here with melodious notes
The snowy swans upon the shining streams
Form their sweet residence;
And seem in warbling to the wind to say,
'Here let those rest who wish for perfect joy!'
So that, my dear companion,
To walk with me will please thee.

Eve. So well thy language to my sight has brought
What thou desirest to show me,
I see thy flying river as it sports,
And hear it as it murmurs.
And beauteous also is this scene, where now

Pleased we sojourn, and here, perhaps, even here
The lily whitens with the purest lustre,
And the rose reddens with the richest hue.
Here also bathed in dew
Plants of minutest growth
Are painted all with flowers.
Here trees of amplest leaf
Extend their rival shades,
And stately rise to heaven.

Adam. Now by these cooling shades,
The beauty of these plants,
By these delightful meadows,
These variegated flowers,
By the soft music of the rills and birds,
Let us sit down in joy!

Eve. Behold then I am seated!
How I rejoice in viewing not alone
These flowers, these herbs, these high and graceful plants.
But Adam, thou, my lover,
Thou, thou art he, by whom the meadows seem
More beautiful to me,
The fruit more blooming, and the streams more clear.

Adam. The decorated fields
With all their flowery tribute cannot equal
Those lovelier flowers, that with delight I view
In the fair garden of your beauteous face.
Be pacified, you flowers,
My words are not untrue;
You shine besprinkled with ethereal dew,
You give the humble earth to glow with joy
At one bright sparkle of the blazing sun;
But with the falling sun ye also fall:
But these more living flowers
Of my dear beauteous Eve
Seem freshened every hour
By soft devotion's dew,
That she with pleasure sheds
Praising her mighty Maker:
And by the rays of two terrestrial suns

In that pure heaven, her face,
They rise, and not to fall,
Decking the Paradise
Of an enchanting visage.

Eve. Dear Adam, do not seek
With tuneful eloquence
To soothe my ear by speaking of thy love!
The heart is confident,
That fondly flames with pure and hallowed ardour.
In sweet exchange accept, my gentle love,
This vermeil-tinctured gift, you know it well;
This is the fruit forbidden,
This is the blessed apple.

Adam. Alas! what see I! ah! what hast thou done,
Invader of the fruit,
Forbidden by thy God?

Eve. It would be long to tell thee
The reason that induced me
To make this fruit my prey: let it suffice,
I gained thee wings to raise thy flight to Heaven.

Adam. Ne'er be it true, ah never
That to obtain thy favour,
I prove to Heaven rebellious and ungrateful.
And to obey a woman,
So disobey my Maker and my God!
Then did not death denounced
With terror's icy paleness blanch thy cheek?

Eve. And thinkest thou, if the apple
Were but the food of death,
The great producer would have raised it there,
Where being is eternal?
Thinkest thou, that if of error
This fruit-tree were the cause,
In man's delighted eye
So fertile and so fair,
He would have formed it flourishing in air:
Ah, were it so, he would indeed have given

A cause of high offence,
Since nature has ordained,
(A monarch sagacious),
That to support his being, man must eat,
And trust in what looks fair, as just and good.

Adam. If the celestial tiller,
Who the fair face of Heaven
His thickly sown with stars,
Amidst so many plants fruitful and fair,
Placed the forbidden apple,
The fairest and most sweet,
'Twas to make proof of man,
As a wise keeper of his heavenly law,
And to afford him scope for high desert;
For he alone may gain the name of brave,
Who rules himself and all his own desires.
Man might indeed find some excuse for sin,
If scantily with fruits
This garden were supplied;
But this abounding in so many sweets,
Man ought not to renounce
The clear command of Heaven.

Eve. And is it thus you love me?
Ne'er be it true, ah never,
That I address you as my heart, my life!
From you I'll only wander,
Bathed in my tears, and sighing,
And hating even myself,
I'll hide me from the sun.

Adam. Dear Eve! my sweetest love!
My spirit and my heart!
Oh, haste to dry thine eyes!
For mine are all these tears
That bathe thy cheek, and stream upon thy bosom.

Eve. Ah, my unhappy state!
I that so much have said, so much have done
To elevate this man
Above the highest Heaven, and now so little

Can he or trust or love me!

Adam. Ah, do not grieve, my life!
Too much it wounds my soul
To see thee in affliction.

Eve. I know your sole desire
Is to be witness to my sighs and tears;
Hence to the winds and seas
I pay this bitter tribute.

Adam. Alas! my heart is splitting.
What can I do? When I look up to heaven,
I feel an icy tremour
Even to my bones oppress me,
Anxious alone to guard the heavenly precept:
If I survey my partner,
I share her tears and echo back her sighs.
'Tis torture and distraction
To wound her with refusal: my kind heart
Would teach my opening hand to seize the apple,
But in my doubtful breast
My spirit bids it close.
Adam! thou wretch! how many
Various desires besiege thy trembling heart!
One prompts thee now to sigh,
Another to rejoice; nor canst thou know
Which shall incline thee most,
Or sighs, or joyous favour,
From woman, or from God.

Eve. Yet he reflects, and wishes
That Eve should now forsake
Her hope of being happy
In elevating man,
Even while I hold the fruit of exaltation!

Adam. Though mute, yet eloquent
Are all your looks, my love!
Alas! whate'er you ask
You're certain to obtain;
And my heart grants, before your tongue can speak,

Eyes, that to me are suns,
The Heaven of that sweet face
No more, no more obscure!
Return! alas! return
To scatter radiance o'er that cloudy cheek!
Lift up, O lift thy brow
From that soft mass of gold that curls around it,
Locks like the solar rays,
Chains to my heart and lightning to my eyes!
O let thy lovely tresses,
Now light and unconfined,
Sport in the air and all thy face disclose.
That paradise, that speaks a heart divine!
I yield thee full obedience;
Thy prayers are all commands:
Dry, dry thy streaming eyes, and on thy lips
Let tender smiles like harmless lightning play.

Eve. Ah, misbelieving Adam,
Be now a kind receiver
Of this delightful fruit!
Hasten, now hasten to extend thy hand
To press this banquet of beatitude!

Adam. Oh, my most sweet companion,
Behold thy ardent lover!
Now banish from his heart
The whirlpool of affliction, turned to him
His dearest guide, his radiant polar star!
Show me that lovely apple,
Which 'midst thy flowers and fruits,
Ingenious plunderer, thou hidest from me!

Eve. Adam, behold the apple!
What sayest thou? I have tasted, and yet live.
Ah, 'twill insure our lives,
And make us equal to our God in Heaven.
But first the fruit entire
We must between us eat,
And when we have enjoyed it,
Then to a radiant throne, a throne of stars,
Exalting Angels will direct our flight.

Adam. Give me the pilfered fruit,
Thou courteous pilferer!
Give me the fruit that charms thee,
And let me yield to her,
Who to make me a God has toiled and wept!
Alas! what have I done?
How sharp a thorn is piercing to my heart
With instantaneous anguish!
How am I o'erwhelmed
In a vast flood of sorrow!

Eve. Alas! what do I see?
Oh, bitter knowledge! unexpected sight!
All is prepared for human misery.

Adam. O precious liberty! where art thou fled?

Eve. O precious liberty! O dire enthrallment!

Adam. Is this the fruit so sweet,
The source of so much bitter?
Say why wouldst thou betray me?
Ah why of heaven deprive me!
Why make me forfeit thus
My state of innocence,
Where cheerful I enjoy a blissful life?
Why make me thus a slave
To the fierce arms of death,
Thou, whom I deemed my life?

Eve. I have been blind to good,
Quick-sighted but to evil,
An enemy to Adam,
A rebel to my God,
For daring to exalt me
To the high gates of heaven,
I fall presumptuous to the depths of hell.

Adam. Alas, what dart divine appears in heaven,
Blazing in circling flame?

Eve. What punishment,
Wretch that I am, hangs o'er me? Am I naked!
And speaking still to Adam?

Adam. Am I too naked? hide me! hence!

Eve. I fly.

SCENE II.

Volano. Thou'rt fallen, at length thou'rt fallen, O thou presuming
With new support from the resplendent stars,
To mount to seats sublime!
Adam, at length thou'rt fallen to the deep,
As far as thy ambition hoped to soar;
Now see thou hast attained
To learn the distance between heaven and hell.
Now let Avernus echo,
To the hoarse sound of the funereal trumpet!
Joyful arise to light,
And pay your homage to the prince of hell!

SCENE III. -- Satan, Volano, CHORUS OF SPIRITS, with their flags flying, and
infernal instruments.

Volano. Man is subdued, subdued!
Palms of eternal glory!
Why pause ye now? to your infernal reeds
And pipes of hoarsest sound, with pitch cemented,
And various instruments of discord,
Now let the hand and lip be quick applied!
Behold how triumph now to us returns,
As rightly he foretold
Our Stygian Emperor! Spread to the wind
Your fluttering banners! Oh, thou festive day,
To Hell of glory, and to Heaven of shame!

SCENE IV. -- Serpent, Vain Glory, Satan, Volano, and Spirits.

Serpent. To pleasures and to joys,
Ye formidable dark sulphureous warriors!
Let Fame to heaven now on her raven plumes

Direct her rapid flight,
Of man's completed crime
The mournful messenger.

Satan. Behold, again expanded in the air
The insignia of hell!
Hear now the sounds of triumph,
And voices without number
That raise to heaven the shout of victory?

Serpent. Lo, I return, ye Spirits of Avernus,
And as I promised, a proud conqueror!
Lo, to these deep infernal realms of darkness
I bring transcendent light, transcendent joy;
Thanks to my fortitude, which from that giant
Now wretched, and in tears,
Forced his aspiring crown of fragile glass;
And thanks to her, this martial heroine,
Vain Glory, whom to my proud heart I press.

Satan. The torrent hastes not to the sea so rapid,
Nor yet so rapid in the realm of fire
Flashes kindle and die,
As the quick circling hours
Of good are joined to evil
In life's corrupted state;
The work of my great Lord, nor less the work
Of thee, great Goddess of the scene condemned;
Up, up with homage quick
To show ourselves of both the blest adorers!

Serpent. Now, from their bended knees let all arise,
And to increase our joys
Let thy glad song, Canoro,
Now memorise the prosperous toil of hell.

Canoro. Happy Canoro, raised to matchless bliss,
Since 'tis thy lot to speak
The prosperous exploits of Lucifer!
Behold I bend the knee,
And sing thy triumph in a joyous strain;
Behold the glorious triumph

Of that unconquered power,
Who every power surpasses,
The mighty monarch of the deadly realm!
Now raise the tumid form,
Avernus, banish grief;
Man is involved in snares,
And Death is glutted with his frail existence.
This is the potent, brave,
And ancient enemy
Of man, the dauntless foe,
And dread destroyer of the starry court.
No more contentment dwell
In the terrestrial seat:
Thou moon, and sun, be darkened,
And every element to chaos turn!
Man is at length subdued.
From a corrupted source,
A weak and hapless offspring,
Thanks to the fruit, his progeny shall prove.
To that exalted seat
By destiny our due,
Can Death's vile prey ascend,
Who now lies prostrate at the feet of Hell?

Serpent. Silence, no more! Now in superior joys
Ye quick and fluttering spirits,
Now, now, your wings expand,
And active in your pleasure,
Weave a delightful dance!

SCENE V. -- A CHORUS of Sprites in the shape of Antics, Serpent, Satan, Volan, Canoro, Vain Glory, and Spirits.

To thee behold us flying,
Round thee behold us sporting,
O monarch of Avernus!
To recreate thy heart in joyous dance.
Come, let us dance, happy and light,
Ye little Sprites;
Man was of flesh, now all of dust,
Such is the will of hideous Death;
A blessed lot

No more is his, wretched in all.
Now let us weave, joyous and dancing,
Ties as many,
As now Hell's prosperous chieftain
Spreads around man, who weeps and wails
And now lifeless,
Is almost rendered by his anguish
Enjoy, enjoy in fragile vesture,
Man, O heaven;
Stygian Serpent has o'erwhelmed him,
Wherefore let each dance in triumph,
Full of glory,
Since our king has proved victorious.
But, what thinkst thou Heaven in sorrow:
On the sudden,
He will spring to scenes celestial;
And he there will weak his vengeance
On the Godhead,
That is now in heaven so troubled.

Serpent. Ah, what lofty sounding trumpets
Through the extensive fields of heaven rebellow?

Vain Glory. Ah, from my triumph now I fall to hell,
Through subterraneous scenes exhaling fire,
With all my fatal pomp at once I sink!

Serpent. And I alas, am plunging
With thee to deepest horror!

Satan. Avoid, avoid, companions,
This unexpected lustre,
That brings, alas, to us a night of horror!

Volano. Alas, why should we tarry?
Fly all, O fly with speed
This inimical splendour,
These dread and deadly accents,
The utterance of God!

SCENE VI. -- God the Father, Angels, Adam, and Eve.

God The Father.

And is it thus you keep the law of heaven,
Adam and Eve? O ye too faithless found,
Ye children of a truly tender father!
Thou most unhappy, how much hast thou lost,
And in a moment, Adam!
Fool, to regard the Serpent more than God.
Ah, could repentance e'er belong to Him
Who cannot err, then might I well repent me
Of having made this man.
Now, Adam, thou hast tasted
The apple, thou hast sinned,
Thou hast corrupted God's exalted bounty:
The elements, the heavens,
The stars, the moon, the sun, and whatsoever
Has been for man created,
Now seems by man abhorred, and as unworthy
Now to retain existence,
To his destruction he solicits death.
But since 'tis just that I, who had proportioned
Reward to merit, should now make chastisement
Keep pace with guilt, contemplating myself,
I view Astrea, in whose righteous stroke
Lo, I myself descend, for I am justice.
Why pausest thou, O sinner, in his presence,
Who on a starry throne,
As an offended judge prepares thy sentence?
Appear! to whom do I address me? Adam,
Adam, where art thou? say! dost thou not hear?

Adam. Great Sovereign of heaven! if to those accents,
Of which one single one formed earth and heaven,
My God, if to that voice,
That called on Adam, a deaf asp I seemed,
It was terror struck me dumb:
Since to my great confusion,
I was constrained, naked, to come before thee.

God The Father.

And who with nakedness has made acquainted

Him, who although he was created naked,
With innocence was clothed?

Adam. Of knowledge the dread fruit that I have tasted;
The fault of my companion!

Eve. Too true it is, that the malignant serpent,
Made me so lightly think of thy injunction,
That the supreme forbiddance
Little or nought I valued.

God The Father.

Adam, thou sinner! O thou bud corrupted
By the vile worm of error!
Though eager to ascend celestial seats,
An angel in thy pride, thy feeble wings
Left thee to fall into the depths of hell.
By thy disdain of life,
Death is thy acquisition;
Unworthy now of favour,
I strip thee of thy honours;
And soon thou shalt behold the herbs and flowers
Turned into thorns and thistles,
The earth itself this day by me accurst.
Then shalt thou utter sighs in want of food,
And from thy altered brow thou shalt distil
Streams of laborious sweat,
A suppliant for bread;
Nor ever shall the strife of man have end,
Till, as he rose from dust, to dust he turn.
And thou, first author of the first offence,
With pain thou shalt produce the human birth,
As thou hast taught, with anguish infinite,
The world this fatal day to bring forth sin.
Thee, cruel Serpent, I pronounce accursed;
Be it henceforth thy destiny to creep
Prone on the ground, and on the dust to see
Eternal strife between thee and the woman,
Strife barbarous and deadly,
This day do I denounce:
If one has fallen, the other, yet victorious,

Shall live to bruise thy formidable head.
Now, midst the starry spheres,
Myself I will seclude from human sight.

SCENE VII. -- An Angel, Adam, and Eve.

Angel. Ah, Eve, what hast thou lost,
Of thy dread Sovereign slighting the commands!
Thou Adam, thou hast sinned;
And Eve too sinning with thee,
Ye have together, of the highest heaven
Shut fast the gates, and opened those of hell!
In seeking sweeter life,
Ye prove a bitter death;
And for a short delight
A thousand tedious sufferings.
How much it had been better for this man
To say, I have offended, pardon, Lord!
Than to accuse his partner, she the serpent:
Hence let these skins of beasts, thrown over both,
Become your humble clothing;
And hence let each be taught
That God approves the humble,
And God in anger punishes the proud.

Adam. O man! O dust! O my frail destiny!
O my offence! O death!

Eve. O woman! O of evil
Sole gluttonous producer!
O fruit! my sin! O serpent! O deceit!

Angel. Now let these skins that you support upon you,
Tell you the grievous troubles
That you have to sustain;
Rude vestments are these skins,
From whence you may perceive
That much of misery must be endured
Now in the field of life,
Till death shall reap ye both.
Now, now lament and weep,
From him solicit mercy,

For still your mighty Maker may be found
Gracious in heaven, indulgent to the world,
Most merciful to man,
If equal to the pride
That made him err, his penitence will weep.

Adam. Ah, whither art thou fled?
Where lonely dost thou leave me?
Oh, too disgusting apple,
If thou canst render man to angels hateful.
Alas, my dread destruction
Springs from a source so high,
That it will find no end.
Most miserable Adam! if thou fallest,
Ah, who will raise thee up?
If those eternal hands
That should uphold the heaven, the world, and man,
Closed for thy good, are open for thy ill,
How much shouldst thou express! but tears and grief
Fetter the tongue and overwhelm the heart!
O sin! O agony!

Eve. Adam, my Adam, I will call thee mine,
Although I may have lost thee!
Unhappy Eve acknowledges her error,
She weeps, and she laments it.
She sees thee in great anguish:
O could her tears wash out the grievous stain
Thou hast upon thy visage!
Adam! alas, thou answerest not, and I
Suffer in seeing thee so pale and pensive,
Thy hands united in the folds of pain!
But if through deed of mine thou hast occasion
For endless shame and silence,
Wilt thou reply to me? do I deserve it?
I merit only woe by being woman;
Eve has invented weeping,
Eve has discovered anguish,
Labour and lassitude,
Distraction and affright;
Eve, Eve has ministered to death and hell!

Adam. Enjoy, enjoy, O woman,
My anguish, my perdition, and my death;
Banish me hence for loving thee too well?
Ah, if thou wert desirous of my tears,
Now, now extend thy hands, receive these streams
That I must pour abundant from mine eyes;
If thou didst wish my sighs, lo, sighs I give thee;
If anguish, view it; if my blood, 'tis thine;
Rather my death, it will be easy to thee
Now to procure my death,
If thou hast rendered me of life unworthy.

SCENE VIII. -- The Archangel Michael, Adam, and Eve.

Michael. Why this delay? come on, be quick, depart,
Corrupted branches, from this fair and beauteous
Terrestrial paradise! Are ye so bold,
Ye putrid worms? come on, be quick, depart,
Since with a scourge of fire I thus command you.

Adam. Alas! I am destroyed
By the fierce blow of this severe avenger!

Eve. Now sunk in vital power
I feel my sad existence,
E'en at the menace from this scourge of fire.

Michael. These stony plains now must thy naked foot
Press, in the stead of sweet and beauteous flowers,
Since thy erroneous folly
Forbids thy dwelling in this pleasant garden.
Behold in me the punisher of those
Who against their God rebel, and hence I bear
These radiant arms that with tremendous power
Make me invincible. I was the spirit
Who, in the mighty conflict,
Advancing to the north,
Struck down great Lucifer, the haughty leader
Of wicked angels, so that into hell
They plunged precipitate and all subdued;
And thus it has seemed good to my tremendous
Celestial chief, that I shall also drive

Man, rebel to his God, with this my sword
Of ever-blazing fire,
Drive him for ever from this seat of bliss.
You angels all depart, and now with me
Expand your plumes for heaven;
As it has been your lot,
Like mine, on earth here to rejoice with man,
Man once a demi-god and now but dust,
Here soon with falchions armed,
Falchions that blaze with fire,
As guardians of these once delightful gates
The brave and active Cherubim shall aid you.

SCENE IX. -- CHORUS OF Angels that sing, Archangel, Adam, and Eve.

Adieu, remain in peace!
O thou that livest in war!
Alas, how much it grieves us,
Great sinner, to behold thee now but dust.
Weep! weep! indulge thy sighs,
And view thy lost possession now behind thee,
Weep! weep! for all thy sorrow
Thou yet mayst see exchanged for songs of joy.
This promise to the sinner Heaven affords
Who contrite turns to Heaven with holy zeal.

William Cowper

Addressed To Miss Macartney, Afterwards Mrs. Greville, On Reading The Prayer For Indifference

And dwells there in a female heart,
By bounteous heaven design'd
The choicest raptures to impact,
To feel the most refined;

Dwells there a wish in such a breast
Its nature to forego,
To smother in ignoble rest
At once both bliss and woe?

Far be the thought, and far the strain,
Which breathes the low desire.
How sweet soe'er the verse complain,
Though Phoebus string the lyre.

Come then, fair maid (in nature wise),
Who, knowing them, can tell
From generous sympathy what joys
The glowing bosom swell;

In justice to the various powers
Of pleasing, which you share,
Join me, amid your silent hours,
To form the better prayer.

With lenient balm may Oberon hence
To fairy land be driven,
With every herb that blunts the sense
Mankind received from heaven.

'Oh! if my Soverign Author please,
Far be it from my fate,
To live unblest in torpid ease,
And slumber on in state;

Each tender tie of life defied,
Whence social pleasures spring:

Unmoved with all the world beside,
A solitary thing.'

Some Alpine mountain wrapt in snow,
Thus braves the whirling blast,
Eternal winter doomed to know,
No genial spring to taste;

In vain warm suns their influence shed,
The zephyrs sport in vain,
He rears unchanged his barren head,
Whilst beauty decks the plain.

What though in scaly armour dress'd,
Indifference may repel
The shafts of woe, in such a breast
No joy can ever dwell.

'Tis woven in the world's great plan,
And fix'd by Heaven's decree,
That all the true delights of man
Should spring from Sympathy.

'Tis nature bids, and whilst the laws
Of nature we retain,
Our self-approving bosom draws
A pleasure from its pain.

Thus grief itself has comforts dear,
The sordid never know;
And ecstasy attends the tear,
When virtue bids it flow.

For when it streams from that pure source,
No bribes the heart can win,
To check, or alter from its course
The luxury within.

Peace to the phlegm of sullen elves,
Who, if from labour eased,
Extend no care beyond themselves,
Unpleasing and unpleased.

Let no low thought suggest the prayer!
Oh! grant, kind Heaven, to me,
Long as I draw ethereal air,
Sweet Sensibility!

Where'er the heavenly nymph is seen,
With lustre-beaming eye,
A train, attendant on their queen,
(Her rosy chorus) fly.

The jocund Loves in Hymen's band,
With torches ever bright,
And generous Friendship hand in hand,
With Pity's watery sight.

The gentler virtues too are join'd,
In youth immortal warm,
The soft relations which combined
Give life her every charm.

The Arts come smiling in the close,
And lend celestial fire;
The marble breathes, the canvas glows,
The Muses sweep the lyre.

'Still may my melting bosom cleave
To sufferings not my own;
And still the sigh responsive heave,
Where'er is heard a groan.

So Pity shall take Virtue's part,
Her natural ally,
And fashioning my softened heart,
Prepare it for the sky.'

This artless vow may Heaven receive,
And you, fond maid, approve:
So may your guiding angel give
Whate'er you wish or love.

So may the rosy-fingered hours

Lead on the various year,
And every joy, which now is yours,
Extend a larger sphere.

And suns to come, as round they wheel,
Your golden moments bless,
With all a tender heart can feel,
Or lively fancy guess.

William Cowper

Afflictions Sanctified By The Word

Oh how I love Thy holy Word,
Thy gracious covenant, O Lord!
It guides me in the peaceful way;
I think upon it all the day.

What are the mines of shining wealth,
The strength of youth, the bloom of health!
What are all joys compared with those
Thine everlasting Word bestows!

Long unafflicted, undismay'd,
In pleasure's path secure I stray'd;
Thou mad'st me feel thy chast'ning rod,
And straight I turned unto my God.

What though it pierced my fainting heart,
I bless'd Thine hand that caused the smart:
It taught my tears awhile to flow,
But saved me from eternal woe.

Oh! hadst Thou left me unchastised,
Thy precepts I had still despised;
And still the snare in secret laid
Had my unwary feet betray'd.

I love Thee, therefore, O my God,
And breathe towards Thy dear abode;
Where, in Thy presence fully blest,
Thy chosen saints for ever rest.

William Cowper

An Apology For Not Showing Her What I Had Wrote

Did not my Muse (what can she less?)
Perceive her own unworthiness,
Could she by some well-chosen theme,
But hope to merit your esteem,
She would not thus conceal her lays,
Ambitious to deserve your praise.
But should my Delia take offence,
And frown on her impertinence,
In silence, sorrowing and forlorn,
Would the despairing trifler mourn,
Curse her ill-tuned, unpleasing lute,
Then sigh and sit for ever mute.
In secret therefore let her play,
Squandering her idle notes away
In secret as she chants along,
Cheerful and careless in her song;
Nor heeds she whether harsh or clear
Free from each terror, every fear,
From that, of all most dreaded, free,
The terror of offending thee.

William Cowper

An Attempt At The Manner Of Waller

Did not thy reason, and thy sense,
With most persuasive eloquence,
Convince me that obedience due
None may so justly claim as you,
By right of beauty you would be
Mistress o'er my heart and me.

Then fear not I should e'er rebel,
My gentle love! I might as well
A forward peevishness put on,
And quarrel with the mid-day sun;
Or question who gave him a right
To be so fiery and so bright.

Nay, this were less absurd and vain
Than disobedience to thy reign;
His beams are oft too severe;
But thou art mild, as thou art fair;
First from necessity we own your sway,
Then scorn our freedom, and by choice obey.

William Cowper

An Enigma

A needle, small as small can be,
In bulk and use surpasses me,
Nor is my purchase dear;
For little, and almost for nought
As many of my kind are bought
As days are in the year.

Yet though but little use we boast,
And are procured at little cost,
The labour is not light;
Nor few artificers it asks,
All skilful in their several tasks,
To fashion us aright,

One fuses metal o'er the fire,
A second draws it into wire,
The shears another plies;
Who clips in length the brazen thread
From him who, chafing every shred,
Gives all an equal size.

A fifth prepares, exact and round,
The knob with which it must be crown'd;
His follower makes it fast;
And with his mallet and his file
To shape the point, employs awhile
The seventh and the last.

Now, therefore, Ædipus! declare
What creature, wonderful, and rare,
A process that obtains
Its purpose with so much ado
At last produces!—tell me true,
And take me for your pains!

William Cowper

An Epigram From Homer

Pay me my price, potters! and I will sing.
Attend, O Pallas! and with lifted arm
Protect their oven; let the cups and all
The sacred vessels black well, and, baked
With good success, yield them both fair renown
And profit, whether in the market sold
Or streets, and let no strife ensue between us.
But, oh ye potters! if with shameless front
Ye falsify your promise, then I leave
No mischief uninvoked to avenge the wrong.
Come, Syntrips, Smaragus, Sabactes, come,
And Asbetus, nor let your direst dread,
Omodamus, delay! Fire seize your house,
May neither house nor vestibule escape,
May ye lament to see confusion mar
And mingle the whole labor of your hands,
And may a sound fill all your oven, such
As of a horse grinding his provender,
While all your pots and flagons bounce within.
Come hither, also, daughter of the sun,
Circe the sorceress, and with thy drugs
Poison themselves, and all that they have made
Of centaurs, as well those who died beneath
The club of Hercules, as who escaped,
And stamp their crockery to dust; down fall
Their chimney; let them see it with their eyes
And howl to see the ruin of their art,
While I rejoice; and if a potter stoop
To peep into his furnace, may the fire
Flash in his face and scorch it, that all men
Observe, thenceforth, equity and good faith.

William Cowper

An Epistle To Joseph Hill, Esq.

Dear Joseph,-- five and twenty years ago--
Alas! how time escapes -- 'tis even so!--
With frequent intercourse and always sweet
And always friendly we were wont to cheat
A tedious hour, -- and now we never meet,
As some grave gentleman in Terence says,
('Twas therefore much the same in ancient days,)
Good lack, we know not what to-morrow brings,--
Strange fluctuation of all human things!
True. Changes will befall, and friends may part,
But distance only cannot change the heart:
And were I called to prove the assertion true,
One proof should serve, a reference to you.
Whence comes it then, that in the wane of life,
Though nothing have occurred to kindle strife,
We find the friends we fancied we had won,
Though numerous once, reduced to few or none?
Can gold grow worthless that has stood the touch?
No. Gold they seemed, but they were never such.
Horatio's servant once, with bow and cringe
Swinging the parlour door upon its hinge,
Dreading a negative, and overawed
Lest he should trespass, begged to go abroad.
Go, fellow! -- whither? -- turning short about--
Nay. Stay at home ;-- you're always going out.
'Tis but a step, sir, just at the street's end.--
For what? -- An please you, sir, to see a friend.
A friend? Horatio cried, and seemed to start,--
Yea marry shalt thou, and with all my heart--
And fetch my cloak, for though the night be raw
I'll see him too -- the first I ever saw.
I knew the man, and knew his nature mild,
And was his plaything often when a child;
But somewhat at that moment pinched him close,
Else he was seldom bitter or morose:
Perhaps his confidence just then betrayed,
His grief might prompt him with the speech he made;
Perhaps 'twas mere good humour gave it birth,
The harmless play of pleasantry and mirth.

Howe'er it was, his language in my mind
Bespoke at least a man that knew mankind.
But not to moralise too much, and strain
To prove an evil of which all complain,
(I hate long arguments, verbosely spun,)
One story more, dear Hill, and I have done.
Once on a time, an Emperor, a wise man,
No matter where, in China or Japan,
Decreed that whosoever should offend
Against the well-known duties of a friend,
Convicted once, should ever after wear
But half a coat, and show his bosom bare;
The punishment importing this, no doubt,
That all was naught within, and all found out.
Oh happy Britain! we have not to fear
Such hard and arbitrary measures here;
Else could a law like that which I relate,
Once have the sanction of our triple state,
Some few that I have known in days of old
Would run most dreadful risk of catching cold.
While you, my friend, whatever mind should blow,
Might traverse England safely to and fro,
An honest man, close-buttoned to the chin,
Broad-cloth without, and a warm heart within.

William Cowper

An Epistle To Robert Lloyd, Esq.

'Tis not that I design to rob
Thee of thy birthright, gentle Bob,--
For thou art born sole heir and single
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle;
Nor that I mean, while thus I knit
My threadbare sentiments together,
To show my genius or my wit,
When God and you know I have neither,
Or such, as might be better shown
By letting poetry alone.
'Tis not with either of these views,
That I presume to address the Muse:
But to divert a fierce banditti,
(Sworn foes to everything that's witty),
That, with a black infernal train,
Make cruel inroads in my brain,
And daily threaten to drive thence
My little garrison of sense:
The fierce banditti which I mean,
Are gloomy thoughts led on by spleen.
Then there's another reason yet,
Which is, that I may fairly quit
The debt which justly became due
The moment when I heard from you:
And you might grumble, crony mine,
If paid in any other coin;
Since twenty sheets of lead, God knows,
(I would say twenty sheets of prose),
Can ne'er be deemed worth half so much
As one of gold, and yours was such.
Thus the preliminaries settled,
I fairly find myself pitch-kettled;
And cannot see, though few see better,
How I shall hammer out a letter.
First, for a thought -- since all agree--
A thought -- I have it -- let me see--
'Tis gone again -- plague on't! I thought
I had it -- but I have it not.
Dame Gurton thus and Hodge her son

That useful thing, her needle, gone,
Rake well the cinders, sweep the floor,
And sift the dust behind the door;
While eager Hodge beholds the prize
In old grimalkin's glaring eyes;
And Gammar finds it on her knees
In every shining straw she sees.
This simile were apt enough,
But I've another, critic-proof.
The virtuoso thus at noon,
Broiling beneath a July sun,
The gilded butterfly pursues
O'er hedge and ditch, through gaps and mews,
And after many a vain essay
To captivate the tempting prey,
Gives him at length the lucky pat,
And has him safe beneath his hat:
Then lifts it gently from the ground,
But ah! 'tis lost as soon as found;
Culprit his liberty regains;
Flits out of sight and mocks his pains.
The sense was dark, 'twas therefore (--?)
With simile to illustrate it;
But as too much obscures the sight,
As often as too little light,
We have our similes cut short,
For matters of more grave import.
That Matthew's numbers run with ease
Each man of common sense agrees;
All men of common sense allow,
That Robert's lines are easy too;
Where then the preference shall we place,
Or how do justice in this case?
Matthew (says Fame) with endless pains
Smoothed and refined the meanest strains,
Nor suffered one ill-chosen rhyme
To escape him at the idlest time;
And thus o'er all a lustre cast,
That while the language lives shall last.
An't please your ladyship, (quoth I,
For 'tis my business to reply);
Sure so much labour, so much toil,

Bespeak at least a stubborn soil.
Theirs be the laurel-wreath decreed,
Who both write well and write full speed;
Who throw their Helicon about
As freely as a conduit spout.
Friend Robert, thus like chien scavant,
Lets fall a poem en passant,
Nor needs his genuine ore refine;
'Tis ready polished from the mine.

William Cowper

An Epitaph

Here lies one who never drew
Blood himself, yet many slew;
Gave the gun its aim, and figure
Made in field, yet ne'er pulled trigger.
Armed men have gladly made
Him their guide, and him obeyed;
At his signified desire,
Would advance, present, and fire.
Stout he was, and large of limb,
Scores have fled at sight of him;
And to all his fame he rose
Only following his nose.
Neptune was he called; not he
Who controls the boisterous sea.
But of happier command,
Neptune of the furrowed land;
And, your wonder vain to shorten,
Pointer to Sir John Throckmorton.

William Cowper

An Epitaph (From The Greek)

My name -- my country -- what are they to thee!
What, whether base or proud my pedigree?
Perhaps I far surpass'd all other men--
Perhaps I fell below them all -- what then?
Suffice it, stranger! that thou seest a tomb--
Thou know'st its use -- it hides -- no matter whom.

William Cowper

An Epitaph 2 (From The Greek)

Take to thy bosom, gentle earth, a swain
With much hard labor in thy service worn!
He set the vines that clothe yon ample plain,
And he these olives that the vale adorn.
He fill'd with grain the glebe; the rills he led
Through this green herbage, and those fruitful bowers;
Thou, therefore, earth! lie lightly on his head,
His hoary head, and deck his grave with flowers.

William Cowper

An Epitaph 3 (From The Greek)

Painter, this likeness is too strong,
And we shall mourn the dead too long.

William Cowper

An Epitaph 4 (From The Greek)

At threescore winters' end I died
A cheerless being sole and sad;
The nuptial knot I never tied,
And wish my father never had.

William Cowper

An Ode, On Reading Mr. Richardson's History Of Sir Charles Grandison

Say, ye apostate and profane,
Wretches, who blush not to disdain
Allegiance to your God,--
Did e'er your idly wasted love
Of virtue for her sake remove
And lift you from the crowd?

Would you the race of glory run,
Know, the devout, and they alone,
Are equal to the task:
The labours of the illustrious course
Far other than the unaided force
Of human vigour ask,

To arm against reputed ill
The patient heart too brave to feel
The tortures of despair:
Nor safer yet high-crested pride,
When wealth flows in with every tide
To gain admittance there.

To rescue from the tyrant's sword
The oppress'd; unseen and unimplored,
To cheer the face of woe;
From lawless insult to defend
An orphan's right—a fallen friend,
And a forgiven foe;

These, these distinguish from the crowd,
And these alone, the great and good,
The guardians of mankind;
Whose bosoms with these virtues heave,
O with what matchless speed they leave
The multitude behind!

Then ask ye, from what cause on earth
Virtues like these derive their birth?

Derived from Heaven alone,
Full on that favour'd breast they shine,
Where faith and resignation join
To call the blessing down.

Such is that heart:--but while the muse
Thy theme, O Richardson, pursues,
Her feeble spirits faint;
She cannot reach, and would not wrong,
The subject for an angel's song,
The hero, and the saint!

William Cowper

Annus Memorabilis : Written In Commemoration Of His Majesty's Happy Recovery

I ransack'd for a theme of song,
Much ancient chronicle, and long;
I read of bright embattled fields,
Of trophied helmets, spears, and shields,
Of chiefs, whose single arm could boast
Prowess to dissipate a host;
Through tomes of fable and of dream
I sought an eligible theme,
But none I found, or found them shared
Already by some happier bard.
To modern times, with truth to guide
My busy search, I next applied;
Here cities won, and fleets dispersed,
Urged loud a claim to be rehearsed,
Deeds of unperishing renown,
Our fathers' triumphs and our own.
Thus as the bee, from bank to bower,
Assiduous sips at every flower,
But rests on none till that be found
Where most nectareous sweets abound,
So I, from theme to theme display'd
In many a page historic, stray'd,
Siege after siege, fight after fight,
Contemplating with small delight
(For feats of sanguinary hue
Not always glitter in my view),
Till, settling on the current year,
I found the far-sought treasure near,
A theme for poetry divine,
A theme to ennoble even mine,
In memorable eighty-nine.
The spring of eighty-nine shall be
An æra cherish'd long by me,
Which joyful I will oft record,
And thankful at my frugal board;
For then the clouds of eighty-eight,
That threaten'd England's trembling state

With loss of what she least could spare,
Her sovereign's tutelary care,
One breath of heaven, that cried—Restore!
Chased, never to assemble more:
And for the richest crown on earth,
If valued by its wearer's worth,
The symbol of a righteous reign
Sat fast on George's brows again.
Then peace and joy again possess'd
Our Queen's long-agitated breast;
Such joy and peace as can be known
By sufferers like herself alone,
Who losing, or supposing lost,
The good on earth they valued most,
For that dear sorrow's sake forego
All hope of happiness below,
Then suddenly regain the prize,
And flash thanksgivings to the skies!
O Queen of Albion, queen of isles!
Since all thy tears were changed to smiles,
The eyes, that never saw thee, shine
With joy not unallied to thine;
Transports not chargeable with art
Illumine the land's remotest part,
And strangers to the air of courts,
Both in their toils and at their sports,
The happiness of answer'd prayers,
That gilds thy features, show in theirs.
If they who on thy state attend,
Awe-struck, before thy presence bend,
'Tis but the natural effect
Of grandeur that ensures respect;
But she is something more than queen
Who is beloved where never seen.

William Cowper

Answer To Stanzas Addressed To Lady Hesketh By Miss Catharine Fanshawe, In Returning A Poem

To be remembered thus is fame,
And in the first degree;
And did the few like her the same,
The press might sleep for me.

So Homer, in the memory stored
Of many a Grecian belle,
Was once preserved -- a richer hoard,
But never lodged so well.

William Cowper

Anti-Thelyphthora. A Tale In Verse

Airy del Castro was as bold a knight
As ever earned a lady's love in fight.
Many he sought, but one above the rest
His tender heart victoriously impressed:
In fairy land was born the matchless dame,
The land of dreams, Hypothesis her name.
There fancy nursed her in ideal bowers,
And laid her soft in amaranthine flowers;
Delighted with her babe, the enchantress smiled,
And graced with all her gifts the favourite child.
Her wooed Sir Airy, by meandering streams,
In daily musings and in nightly dreams;
With all the flowers he found, he wove in haste
Wreaths for her brow, and girdles for her waist;
His time, his talents, and his ceaseless care
All consecrated to adorn the fair;
No pastime but with her he deigned to take,
And, -- if he studied, studied for her sake.
And for Hypothesis was somewhat long,
Nor soft enough to suit a lover's tongue,
And graved it on a gem, and wore it next his heart.
But she, inconstant as the beams that play
On rippling waters in an April day,
With many a freakish trick deceived his pains,
To pathless wilds and unfrequented plains
Enticed him from his oaths of knighthood far,
Forgetful of the glorious toils of war.
'Tis thus the tenderness that love inspires
Too oft betrays the votaries of his fires;
Borne far away on elevated wings,
They sport like wanton doves in airy rings,
And laws and duties are neglected things.
Nor he alone addressed the wayward fair;
Full many a knight had been entangled there.
But still, whoever wooed her or embraced,
On every mind some mighty spell she cast.
Some she would teach (for she was wondrous wise,
And made her dupes see all things with her eyes),
That forms material, whatsoe'er we dream,

Are not at all, or are not what they seem;
That substances and modes of every kind
Are mere impressions on the passive mind;
And he that splits his cranium, breaks at most
A fancied head against a fancied post:
Others, that earth, ere sin had drowned it all,
Was smooth and even as an ivory ball;
That all the various beauties we survey,
Hills, valleys, rivers, and the boundless sea,
Are but departures from the first design,
Effects of punishment and wrath divine,
She tutored some in Daedalus's art,
And promised they should act his wildgoose part,
On waxen pinions soar without a fall,
Swift as the proudest gander of them all.
But fate reserved Sir Airy to maintain
The wildest project of her teeming brain;
That wedlock is not rigorous as supposed,
But man, within a wider pale enclosed,
May rove at will, where appetite shall lead,
Free as the lordly bull that ranges o'er the mead;
That forms and rites are tricks of human law,
As idle as the chattering of a daw;
That lewd incontinence, and lawless rape,
Are marriage in its true and proper shape;
That man by faith and truth is made a slave,
The ring a bauble, and the priest a knave.
Fair fall the deed! the knight exulting cried,
Now is the time to make the maid a bride!
'Twas on the noon of an autumnal day,
October hight, but mild and fair as May;
When scarlet fruits the russet hedge adorn,
And floating films envelope every thorn;
When gently as in June, the rivers glide,
And only miss the flowers that graced their side;
The linnet twittered out his parting song,
With many a chorister the woods among;
On southern banks the ruminating sheep
Lay snug and warm;--'Twas summer's farewell peep,
Propitious to his fond intent there grew
An arbour near at hand of thickest yew,
With many a boxen bush, close clipt between,

And philyrea of a gilded green.
But what Old Chaucer's merry page befits,
The chaster muse of modern day omits.
Suffice it then in decent terms to say,
She saw, -- and turned her rosy cheek away.
Small need of prayer-book or of priest, I ween,
Where parties are agreed, retired the scene,
Occasion prompt, and appetite so keen.
Hypothesis (for with such magic power
Fancy endued her in her natal hour,)
From many a streaming lake and reeking bog,
Bade rise in haste a dank and drizzling fog,
That curtained round the scene where they reposed,
And wood and lawn in dusky folds enclosed.
Fear seized the trembling sex; in every grove
They wept the wrongs of honourable love.
In vain, they cried, are hymeneal rites,
Vain our delusive hope of constant knights;
The marriage bond has lost its power to bind,
And flutters loose, the sport of every wind.
The bride, while yet her bride's attire is on,
Shall mourn her absent lord, for he is gone,
Satiated of her, and weary of the same,
To distant wilds in quest of other game.
Ye fair Circassians! all your lutes employ,
Seraglios sing, and harems dance for joy!
For British nymphs whose lords were lately true,
Nymphs quite as fair, and happier once than you,
Honour, esteem, and confidence forgot,
Feel all the meanness of your slavish lot.
Oh curst Hypothesis! your hellish arts
Seduce our husbands, and estrange their hearts.--
Will none arise? no knight who still retains
The blood of ancient worthies in their veins,
To assert the charter of the chaste and fair.
Find out her treacherous heart, and plant a dagger there!
A knight -- (can he that serves the fair do less?)
Starts at the call of beauty in distress;
And he that does not, whatsoever occurs,
Is recreant, and unworthy of his spurs.
Full many a champion, bent on hardy deed,
Called for his arms and for his princely steed.

So swarmed the Sabine youth, and grasped the shield,
When Roman rapine, by no laws withheld,
Lest Rome should end with her first founders' lives,
Made half their maids, sans ceremony, wives.
But not the mitred few, the soul their charge,
They left these bodily concerns at large;
Forms or no forms, pluralities or pairs,
Right reverend sirs! was no concern of theirs.
The rest, alert and active as became
A courteous knighthood, caught the generous flame;
Knight of the Silver Moon, Sir Marmadan.
Oft as his patroness, who rules the night,
Hangs out her lamp in yon cerulean height,
His vow was (and he well performed his vow),
Armed at all points, with terror on his brow
To judge the land, to purge atrocious crimes,
And quell the shapeless monsters of the times.
For cedars famed, fair Lebanon supplied
The well-poised lance that quivered at his side;
Truth armed it with a point so keen, so just,
No spell or charm was proof against the thrust.
He couched it firm upon his puissant thigh,
And darting through his helm an eagle's eye,
On all the wings of chivalry advanced
To where the fond Sir Airy lay entranced.
He dreamt not of a foe, or if his fear
Foretold one, dreamt not of a foe so near.
Far other dreams his feverish mind employed,
Of rights restored, variety enjoyed;
Of virtue too well fenced to fear a flaw;
Vice passing current by the stamp of law;
Large population on a liberal plan,
And woman trembling at the foot of man;
How simple wedlock fornication works,
And Christians marrying may convert the Turks.
The trumpet now spoke Marmadan at hand,
A trumpet that was heard through all the land.
His high-bred steed expands his nostrils wide,
And snorts aloud to cast the mist aside;
But he, the virtues of his lance to show,
Struck thrice the point upon his saddle-bow;
Three sparks ensued that chased it all away,

And set the unseemly pair in open day.
'To horse!' he cried, 'or, by this good right hand
And better spear, I smite you where you stand.'
Sir Airy, not a whit dismayed or scared,
Buckled his helm, and to his steed repaired;
Whose bridle, while he cropped the grass below,
Hung not far off upon a myrtle bough.
He mounts at once, -- such confidence infused
The insidious witch that had his wits abused;
And she, regardless of her softer kind,
Seized fast the saddle and sprang up behind.
'Oh shame to knighthood!' his assailant cried;
'Oh shame!' ten thousand echoing nymphs replied.
Placed with advantage at his listening ear,
She whispered still that he had nought to fear;
That he was cased in such enchanted steel,
So polished and compact from head to heel,
'Come ten, come twenty, should an army call
Thee to the field, thou shouldst withstand them all.'
'By Dian's beams,' Sir Marmadan exclaimed,
'The guiltiest still are ever least ashamed!
But guard thee well, expect no feigned attack;
And guard beside the sorceress at thy back.'
He spoke indignant, and his spurs applied,
Though little need, to his good palfrey's side;
The barb sprang forward, and his lord, whose force
Was equal to the swiftness of his horse,
Rushed with a whirlwind's fury on the foe,
And, Phineas-like, transfixed them at a blow.
Then sang the married and the maiden throng,
Love graced the theme, and harmony the song;
The Fauns and Satyrs, a lascivious race,
Shrieked at the sight, and, conscious, fled the place:
And Hymen, trimming his dim torch anew,
His snowy mantle o'er his shoulders threw;
He turned, and viewed it oft on every side,
And reddening with a just and generous pride,
Blessed the glad beams of that propitious day,
The spot he loathed so much for ever cleansed away.

William Cowper

Apology To Delia

This evening, Delia, you and I,
Have managed most delightfully,
For with a frown we parted;
Having contrived some trifle that
We both may be much troubled at,
And sadly disconcerted.

Yet well as each performed their part,
We might perceive it was but art;
And that we both intended
To sacrifice a little ease;
For all such petty flaws as these
Are made but to be mended.

You knew, dissembler! all the while,
How sweet it was to reconcile
After this heavy pelt;
That we should gain by this allay
When next we met, and laugh away
The care we never felt.

Happy! when we but seek to endure
A little pain, then find a cure
By double joy requited;
For friendship, like a severed bone,
Improves and joins a stronger tone
When amply reunited.

William Cowper

Apology To Delia: For Desiring A Lock Of Her Hair

Delia, the unkindest girl on earth,
When I besought the fair,
That favour of intrinsic worth
A ringlet of her hair,

Refused that instant to comply
With my absurd request,
For reasons she could specify,
Some twenty score at least.

Trust me, my dear, however odd
It may appear to say,
I sought it merely to defraud
Thy spoiler of his prey.

Yes! when its sister locks shall fade,
As quickly fade they must,
When all their beauties are decayed,
Their gloss, their colour, lost—

Ah then! if haply to my share
Some slender pittance fall,
If I but gain one single hair,
Nor age usurp them all;—

When you behold it still as sleek,
As lovely to the view,
As when it left thy snowy neck,
That Eden where it grew,

Then shall my Delia's self declare
That I professed the truth,
And have preserved my little share
In everlasting youth.

William Cowper

Aspirations Of The Soul After God

My Spouse! in whose presence I live,
Sole object of all my desires,
Who know'st what a flame I conceive,
And canst easily double its fires!
How pleasant is all that I meet!
From fear of adversity free,
I find even sorrow made sweet;
Because 'tis assigned me by thee.
Transported I see thee display
Thy riches and glory divine;
I have only my life to repay,
Take what I would gladly resign.
Thy will is the treasure I seek,
For thou art as faithful as strong;
There let me, obedient and meek,
Repose myself all the day long.
My spirit and faculties fail;
Oh, finish what love has begun!
Destroy what is sinful and frail,
And dwell in the soul thou hast won!
Dear theme of my wonder and praise,
I cry, who is worthy as thou?
I can only be silent and gaze!
'Tis all that is left to me now.
Oh, glory in which I am lost,
Too deep for the plummet of thought;
On an ocean of Deity tossed,
I am swallowed, I sink into nought.
Yet, lost and absorbed as I seem,
I chant to the praise of my King;
And, though overwhelmed by the theme,
Am happy whenever I sing.

William Cowper

Boadicea. An Ode

When the British warrior queen,
Bleeding from the Roman rods,
Sought, with an indignant mien,
Counsel of her country's gods,

Sage beneath a spreading oak
Sat the Druid, hoary chief;
Every burning word he spoke
Full of rage, and full of grief.

Princess! if our aged eyes
Weep upon thy matchless wrongs,
'Tis because resentment ties
All the terrors of our tongues.

Rome shall perish,--write that word
In the blood that she has spilt;
Perish, hopeless and abhorred,
Deep in ruin as in guilt.

Rome, for empire far renowned,
Tramples on a thousand states;
Soon her pride shall kiss the ground--
Hark! the Gaul is at her gates!

Other Romans shall arise,
Heedless of a soldier's name;
Sounds, not arms, shall win the prize--
Harmony the path to fame.

Then the progeny that springs
From the forests of our land,
Armed with thunder, clad with wings,
Shall a wider world command.

Regions Cæsar never knew
Thy posterity shall sway,
Where his eagles never flew,
None invincible as they.

Such the bard's prophetic words,
Pregnant with celestial fire,
Bending, as he swept the chords
Of his sweet but awful lyre.

She, with all a monarch's pride,
Felt them in her bosom glow;
Rushed to battle, fought, and died;
Dying, hurled them at the foe.

Ruffians, pitiless as proud,
Heaven awards the vengeance due:
Empire is on us bestowed,
Shame and ruin wait for you!

William Cowper

By Callimachus

At morn we placed on his funeral bier
Young Melanippus; and, at eventide,
Unable to sustain a loss so dear,
By her own hand his blooming sister died.
Thus Aristippus mourn'd his noble race,
Annihilated by a double blow,
Nor son could hope nor daughter more to embrace
And all Cyrene sadden'd at his woe.

William Cowper

By Heraclides

In Cnidus born, the consort I became
Of Euphron. Aretimias was my name.
His bed I shared, nor proved a barren bride,
But bore two children at a birth, and died.
One child I leave to solace and uphold
Euphron hereafter, when infirm and old
And one, for his remembrance' sake, I bear
To Pluto's realm, till he shall join me there.

William Cowper

By Moschus

I slept when Venus enter'd: to my bed
A Cupid in her beauteous hand she led,
A bashful seeming boy, and thus she said:
'Shepherd, receive my little one! I bring
An untaught love, whom thou must teach to sing.'
She said, and left him. I, suspecting nought,
Many a sweet strain my subtle pupil taught,
How reed to reed Pan first with osier bound,
How Pallas form'd the pipe of softest sound,
How Hermes gave the lute, and how the quire
Of Phoebus owe to Phoebus' self the lyre.
Such were my themes; my themes nought heeded he
But ditties sang of amorous sort to me.
The pangs that mortals and immortals prove
From Venus' influence and the darts of love.
Thus was the teacher by the pupil taught;
His lessons I retain'd, he mine forgot.

William Cowper

By Philemon

Oft we embrace our ills by discontent,
And give them bulk beyond what nature meant.
A parent, brother, friend deceased, to cry--
'He's dead indeed, but he was born to die'--
Such temperate grief is suited to the size
And burden of the loss; is just and wise.
But to exclaim, 'Ah! wherefore was I born,
Thus to be left forever thus forlorn?'
Who thus laments his loss invites distress,
And magnifies a woe that might be less,
Through dull despondence to his lot resign'd,
And leaving reason's remedy behind.

William Cowper

Catharina

She came--she is gone--we have met--
And meet perhaps never again;
The sun of that moment is set,
And seems to have risen in vain.
Catharina has fled like a dream
(So vanishes pleasure, alas!)--
But has left a regret and esteem
That will not so suddenly pass.

The last evening ramble we made,
Catharina, Maria, and I,
Our progress was often delay'd
By the nightingale warbling nigh.
We paused under many a tree,
And much she was charm'd with a tone,
Less sweet to Maria and me,
Who so lately had witness'd her own.

My numbers that day she had sung,
And gave them a grace so divine,
As only her musical tongue
Could infuse into numbers of mine.
The longer I heard, I esteem'd
The work of my fancy the more,
And e'en to myself never seem'd
So tuneful a poet before.

Though the pleasures of London exceed
In number the days of the year,
Catharina, did nothing impede,
Would feel herself happier here;
For the close-woven arches of limes
On the banks of our river, I know,
Are sweeter to her many times
Than aught that the city can show.

So it is when the mind is endued
With a well-judging taste from above,
Then, whether embellish'd or rude,

'Tis nature alone that we love.
The achievements of art may amuse,
May even our wonder excite;
But groves, hills, and valleys diffuse
A lasting, a sacred delight.

Since then in the rural recess
Catharina alone can rejoice,
May it still be her lot to possess
The scene of her sensible choice!
To inhabit a mansion remote
From the clatter of street-pacing steeds,
And by Philomel's annual note
To measure the life that she leads.

With her book, and her voice, and her lyre,
To wing all her moments at home;
And with scenes that new rapture inspire,
As oft as it suits her to roam;
She will have just the life she prefers,
With little to hope or to fear,
And ours would be pleasant as hers,
Might we view her enjoying it here.

William Cowper

Catharina : The Second Part. On Her Marriage To George Courtenay, Esq.

Believe it or not, as you choose,
The doctrine is certainly true,
That the future is known to the Muse,
And poets are oracles too.
I did but express a desire,
To see Catharina at home,
At the side of my friend George's fire,
And lo -- she is actually come.

Such prophecy some may despise,
But the wish of a poet and friend
Perhaps is approved in the skies,
And therefore attains to its end.
'Twas a wish that flew ardently forth
From a bosom effectually warmed
With the talents, the graces, and worth
Of the person for whom it was formed.

Maria would leave us, I knew,
To the grief and regret of us all,
But less to our grief, could we view
Catharina the queen of the hall.
And therefore I wished as I did,
And therefore this union of hands;
Not a whisper was heard to forbid,
But all cry, Amen! to the bans.

Since therefore I seem to incur
No danger of wishing in vain,
When making good wishes for her,
I will e'en to my wishes again;
With one I have made her a wife,
And now I will try with another,
Which I cannot suppress for my life,
How soon I can make her a mother.

Charity

Fairest and foremost of the train that wait
On man's most dignified and happiest state,
Whether we name thee Charity or Love,
Chief grace below, and all in all above,
Prosper (I press thee with a powerful plea)
A task I venture on, impell'd by thee:
Oh never seen but in thy blest effects,
Or felt but in the soul that Heaven selects;
Who seeks to praise thee, and to make thee known
To other hearts, must have thee in his own.
Come, prompt me with benevolent desires,
Teach me to kindle at thy gentle fires,
And, though disgraced and slighted, to redeem
A poet's name, by making thee the theme.
God, working ever on a social plan,
By various ties attaches man to man:
He made at first, though free and unconfined,
One man the common father of the kind;
That every tribe, though placed as he sees best,
Where seas or deserts part them from the rest,
Differing in language, manners, or in face,
Might feel themselves allied to all the race.
When Cook—lamented, and with tears as just
As ever mingled with heroic dust—
Steer'd Britain's oak into a world unknown,
And in his country's glory sought his own,
Wherever he found man to nature true,
The rights of man were sacred in his view;
He soothed with gifts, and greeted with a smile,
The simple native of the new-found isle;
He spurn'd the wretch that slighted or withstood
The tender argument of kindred blood;
Nor would endure that any should control
His freeborn brethren of the southern pole.
But, though some nobler minds a law respect,
That none shall with impunity neglect,
In baser souls unnumber'd evils meet,
To thwart its influence, and its end defeat.
While Cook is loved for savage lives he saved,

See Cortez odious for a world enslaved!
Where wast thou then, sweet Charity? where then,
Thou tutelary friend of helpless men?
Wast thou in monkish cells and nunneries found,
Or building hospitals on English ground?
No.—Mammon makes the world his legatee
Through fear, not love; and Heaven abhors the fee.
Wherever found (and all men need thy care),
Nor age, nor infancy could find thee there.
The hand that slew till it could slay no more,
Was glued to the sword-hilt with Indian gore.
Their prince, as justly seated on his throne
As vain imperial Philip on his own,
Trick'd out of all his royalty by art,
That stripp'd him bare, and broke his honest heart,
Died, by the sentence of a shaven priest,
For scorning what they taught him to detest.
How dark the veil that intercepts the blaze
Of Heaven's mysterious purposes and ways!
God stood not, though he seem'd to stand, aloof;
And at this hour the conqueror feels the proof:
The wreath he won drew down an instant curse,
The fretting plague is in the public purse,
The canker'd spoil corrodes the pining state,
Starved by that indolence their mines create.
Oh, could their ancient Incas rise again,
How would they take up Israel's taunting strain!
Art thou too fallen, Iberia? Do we see
The robber and the murderer weak as we?
Thou that hast wasted earth, and dared despise
Alike the wrath and mercy of the skies,
Thy pomp is in the grave, thy glory laid
Low in the pits thine avarice has made.
We come with joy from our eternal rest
To see the oppressor in his turn oppress'd.
Art thou the god, the thunder of whose hand
Roll'd over all our desolated land,
Shook principalities and kingdoms down,
And made the mountains tremble at his frown?
The sword shall light upon thy boasted powers,
And waste them, as thy sword has wasted ours.
'Tis thus Omnipotence his law fulfils,

And vengeance executes what justice wills.
Again—the band of commerce was design'd
To associate all the branches of mankind;
And if a boundless plenty be the robe,
Trade is the golden girdle of the globe.
Wise to promote whatever end he means,
God opens fruitful Nature's various scenes:
Each climate needs what other climes produce,
And offers something to the general use;
No land but listens to the common call,
And in return receives supply from all.
This genial intercourse, and mutual aid,
Cheers what were else a universal shade,
Calls nature from her ivy-mantled den,
And softens human rock-work into men.
Ingenious Art, with her expressive face,
Steps forth to fashion and refine the race;
Not only fills necessity's demand,
But overcharges her capacious hand:
Capricious taste itself can crave no more
Than she supplies from her abounding store:
She strikes out all that luxury can ask,
And gains new vigour at her endless task.
Hers is the spacious arch, the shapely spire,
The painter's pencil, and the poet's lyre;
From her the canvas borrows light and shade,
And verse, more lasting, hues that never fade.
She guides the finger o'er the dancing keys,
Gives difficulty all the grace of ease,
And pours a torrent of sweet notes around
Fast as the thirsting ear can drink the sound.
These are the gifts of art; and art thrives most
Where Commerce has enrich'd the busy coast;
He catches all improvements in his flight,
Spreads foreign wonders in his country's sight,
Imports what others have invented well,
And stirs his own to match them, or excel.
'Tis thus, reciprocating each with each,
Alternately the nations learn and teach;
While Providence enjoins to ev'ry soul
A union with the vast terraqueous whole.
Heaven speed the canvas gallantly unfurl'd

To furnish and accommodate a world,
To give the pole the produce of the sun,
And knit the unsocial climates into one.
Soft airs and gentle heavings of the wave
Impel the fleet, whose errand is to save,
To succour wasted regions, and replace
The smile of opulence in sorrow's face.
Let nothing adverse, nothing unforeseen,
Impede the bark that ploughs the deep serene,
Charged with a freight transcending in its worth
The gems of India, Nature's rarest birth,
That flies, like Gabriel on his Lord's commands,
A herald of God's love to pagan lands!
But ah! what wish can prosper, or what prayer,
For merchants rich in cargoes of despair,
Who drive a loathsome traffic, gauge, and span,
And buy the muscles and the bones of man?
The tender ties of father, husband, friend,
All bonds of nature in that moment end;
And each endures, while yet he draws his breath,
A stroke as fatal as the scythe of death.
The sable warrior, frantic with regret
Of her he loves, and never can forget,
Loses in tears the far-receding shore,
But not the thought that they must meet no more;
Deprived of her and freedom at a blow,
What has he left that he can yet forego?
Yes, to deep sadness sullenly resign'd,
He feels his body's bondage in his mind;
Puts off his generous nature, and to suit
His manners with his fate, puts on the brute.
Oh most degrading of all ills that wait
On man, a mourner in his best estate!
All other sorrows virtue may endure,
And find submission more than half a cure;
Grief is itself a medicine, and bestow'd
To improve the fortitude that bears the load;
To teach the wanderer, as his woes increase,
The path of wisdom, all whose paths are peace;
But slavery!—Virtue dreads it as her grave:
Patience itself is meanness in a slave;
Or, if the will and sovereignty of God

Bid suffer it a while, and kiss the rod,
Wait for the dawning of a brighter day,
And snap the chain the moment when you may.
Nature imprints upon whate'er we see,
That has a heart and life in it, Be free!
The beasts are charter'd—neither age nor force
Can quell the love of freedom in a horse:
He breaks the cord that held him at the rack;
And, conscious of an unencumber'd back,
Snuffs up the morning air, forgets the rein;
Loose fly his forelock and his ample mane;
Responsive to the distant neigh, he neighs;
Nor stops, till, overleaping all delays,
He finds the pasture where his fellows graze.
Canst thou, and honour'd with a Christian name,
Buy what is woman-born, and feel no shame?
Trade in the blood of innocence, and plead
Expedience as a warrant for the deed?
So may the wolf, whom famine has made bold
To quit the forest and invade the fold:
So may the ruffian, who with ghostly glide,
Dagger in hand, steals close to your bedside;
Not he, but his emergence forced the door,
He found it inconvenient to be poor.
Has God then given its sweetness to the cane,
Unless his laws be trampled on—in vain?
Built a brave world, which cannot yet subsist,
Unless his right to rule it be dismiss'd?
Impudent blasphemy! So folly pleads,
And, avarice being judge, with ease succeeds.
But grant the plea, and let it stand for just,
That man make man his prey, because he must;
Still there is room for pity to abate
And soothe the sorrows of so sad a state.
A Briton knows, or if he knows it not,
The Scripture placed within his reach, he ought,
That souls have no discriminating hue,
Alike important in their Maker's view;
That none are free from blemish since the fall,
And love divine has paid one price for all.
The wretch that works and weeps without relief
Has One that notices his silent grief.

He, from whose hand alone all power proceeds,
Ranks its abuse among the foulest deeds,
Considers all injustice with a frown;
But marks the man that treads his fellow down.
Begone!—the whip and bell in that hard hand
Are hateful ensigns of usurp'd command.
Not Mexico could purchase kings a claim
To scourge him, weariness his only blame.
Remember, Heaven has an avenging rod,
To smite the poor is treason against God!
Trouble is grudgingly and hardly brook'd,
While life's sublimest joys are overlook'd:
We wander o'er a sunburnt thirsty soil,
Murmuring and weary of our daily toil,
Forget to enjoy the palm-tree's offer'd shade,
Or taste the fountain in the neighbouring glade:
Else who would lose, that had the power to improve
The occasion of transmuting fear to love?
Oh, 'tis a godlike privilege to save!
And he that scorns it is himself a slave.
Inform his mind; one flash of heavenly day
Would heal his heart, and melt his chains away.
"Beauty for ashes" is a gift indeed,
And slaves, by truth enlarged, are doubly freed.
Then would he say, submissive at thy feet,
While gratitude and love made service sweet,
My dear deliverer out of hopeless night,
Whose bounty bought me but to give me light,
I was a bondman on my native plain,
Sin forged, and ignorance made fast, the chain;
Thy lips have shed instruction as the dew,
Taught me what path to shun, and what pursue;
Farewell my former joys! I sigh no more
For Africa's once loved, benighted shore;
Serving a benefactor, I am free;
At my best home, if not exiled from thee.
Some men make gain a fountain whence proceeds
A stream of liberal and heroic deeds;
The swell of pity, not to be confined
Within the scanty limits of the mind,
Disdains the bank, and throws the golden sands,
A rich deposit, on the bordering lands:

These have an ear for his paternal call,
Who make some rich for the supply of all;
God's gift with pleasure in his praise employ;
And Thornton is familiar with the joy.
Oh, could I worship aught beneath the skies
That earth has seen, or fancy can devise,
Thine altar, sacred Liberty, should stand,
Built by no mercenary vulgar hand,
With fragrant turf, and flowers as wild and fair
As ever dress'd a bank, or scented summer air.
Duly, as ever on the mountain's height
The peep of morning shed a dawning light,
Again, when evening in her sober vest
Drew the grey curtain of the fading west,
My soul should yield thee willing thanks and praise
For the chief blessings of my fairest days;
But that were sacrilege—praise is not thine,
But his who gave thee, and preserves thee mine:
Else I would say, and as I spake bid fly
A captive bird into the boundless sky,
This triple realm adores thee—thou art come
From Sparta hither, and art here at home.
We feel thy force still active, at this hour
Enjoy immunity from priestly power,
While conscience, happier than in ancient years,
Owns no superior but the God she fears.
Propitious spirit! yet expunge a wrong
Thy rights have suffer'd, and our land, too long.
Teach mercy to ten thousand hearts, that share
The fears and hopes of a commercial care.
Prisons expect the wicked, and were built
To bind the lawless, and to punish guilt;
But shipwreck, earthquake, battle, fire, and flood,
Are mighty mischiefs, not to be withstood;
And honest merit stands on slippery ground,
Where covert guile and artifice abound.
Let just restraint, for public peace design'd,
Chain up the wolves and tigers of mankind;
The foe of virtue has no claim to thee,
But let insolvent innocence go free.
Patron of else the most despised of men,
Accept the tribute of a stranger's pen;

Verse, like the laurel, its immortal meed,
Should be the guerdon of a noble deed;
I may alarm thee, but I fear the shame
(Charity chosen as my theme and aim)
I must incur, forgetting Howard's name.
Blest with all wealth can give thee, to resign
Joys doubly sweet to feelings quick as thine,
To quit the bliss thy rural scenes bestow,
To seek a nobler amidst scenes of woe,
To traverse seas, range kingdoms, and bring home,
Not the proud monuments of Greece or Rome,
But knowledge such as only dungeons teach,
And only sympathy like thine could reach;
That grief, sequester'd from the public stage,
Might smooth her feathers, and enjoy her cage;
Speaks a divine ambition, and a zeal,
The boldest patriot might be proud to feel.
Oh that the voice of clamour and debate,
That pleads for peace till it disturbs the state,
Were hush'd in favour of thy generous plea,
The poor thy clients, and Heaven's smile thy fee!
Philosophy, that does not dream or stray,
Walks arm in arm with nature all his way;
Compasses earth, dives into it, ascends
Whatever steep inquiry recommends,
Sees planetary wonders smoothly roll
Round other systems under her control,
Drinks wisdom at the milky stream of light,
That cheers the silent journey of the night,
And brings at his return a bosom charged
With rich instruction, and a soul enlarged.
The treasured sweets of the capacious plan,
That Heaven spreads wide before the view of man.
All prompt his pleased pursuit, and to pursue
Still prompt him, with a pleasure always new;
He too has a connecting power, and draws
Man to the centre of the common cause,
Aiding a dubious and deficient sight
With a new medium and a purer light.
All truth is precious, if not all divine;
And what dilates the powers must needs refine.
He reads the skies, and, watching every change,

Provides the faculties an ampler range;
And wins mankind, as his attempts prevail,
A prouder station on the general scale.
But reason still, unless divinely taught,
Whate'er she learns, learns nothing as she ought;
The lamp of revelation only shews,
What human wisdom cannot but oppose,
That man, in nature's richest mantle clad,
And graced with all philosophy can add,
Though fair without, and luminous within,
Is still the progeny and heir of sin.
Thus taught, down falls the plumage of his pride;
He feels his need of an unerring guide,
And knows that falling he shall rise no more,
Unless the power that bade him stand restore.
This is indeed philosophy; this known
Makes wisdom, worthy of the name, his own;
And without this, whatever he discuss;
Whether the space between the stars and us;
Whether he measure earth, compute the sea,
Weigh sunbeams, carve a fly, or spit a flea;
The solemn trifler with his boasted skill
Toils much, and is a solemn trifler still:
Blind was he born, and his misguided eyes
Grown dim in trifling studies, blind he dies.
Self-knowledge truly learn'd of course implies
The rich possession of a nobler prize;
For self to self, and God to man, reveal'd
(Two themes to nature's eye for ever seal'd),
Are taught by rays, that fly with equal pace
From the same centre of enlightening grace.
Here stay thy foot; how copious, and how clear,
The o'erflowing well of Charity springs here!
Hark! 'tis the music of a thousand rills,
Some through the groves, some down the sloping hills,
Winding a secret or an open course,
And all supplied from an eternal source.
The ties of nature do but feebly bind,
And commerce partially reclaims mankind;
Philosophy, without his heavenly guide,
May blow up self-conceit, and nourish pride;
But, while his province is the reasoning part,

Has still a veil of midnight on his heart:
'Tis truth divine, exhibited on earth,
Gives Charity her being and her birth.
Suppose (when thought is warm, and fancy flows,
What will not argument sometimes suppose?)
An isle possess'd by creatures of our kind,
Endued with reason, yet by nature blind.
Let supposition lend her aid once more,
And land some grave optician on the shore:
He claps his lens, if haply they may see,
Close to the part where vision ought to be;
But finds that, though his tubes assist the sight,
They cannot give it, or make darkness light.
He reads wise lectures, and describes aloud
A sense they know not to the wondering crowd;
He talks of light and the prismatic hues,
As men of depth in erudition use;
But all he gains for his harangue is—Well,—
What monstrous lies some travellers will tell!
The soul, whose sight all-quickenning grace renews,
Takes the resemblance of the good she views,
As diamonds, stripp'd of their opaque disguise,
Reflect the noonday glory of the skies.
She speaks of Him, her author, guardian, friend,
Whose love knew no beginning, knows no end,
In language warm as all that love inspires;
And, in the glow of her intense desires,
Pants to communicate her noble fires.
She sees a world stark blind to what employs
Her eager thought, and feeds her flowing joys;
Though wisdom hail them, heedless of her call,
Flies to save some, and feels a pang for all:
Herself as weak as her support is strong,
She feels that frailty she denied so long;
And, from a knowledge of her own disease,
Learns to compassionate the sick she sees.
Here see, acquitted of all vain pretence,
The reign of genuine Charity commence.
Though scorn repay her sympathetic tears,
She still is kind, and still she perseveres;
The truth she loves a sightless world blaspheme,
'Tis childish dotage, a delirious dream!

The danger they discern not they deny;
Laugh at their only remedy, and die.
But still a soul thus touch'd can never cease,
Whoever threatens war, to speak of peace.
Pure in her aim, and in her temper mild,
Her wisdom seems the weakness of a child:
She makes excuses where she might condemn,
Reviled by those that hate her, prays for them;
Suspicion lurks not in her artless breast,
The worst suggested, she believes the best;
Not soon provoked, however stung and teased,
And, if perhaps made angry, soon appeased;
She rather waives than will dispute her right;
And, injured, makes forgiveness her delight.
Such was the portrait an apostle drew,
The bright original was one he knew;
Heaven held his hand, the likeness must be true.
When one, that holds communion with the skies,
Has fill'd his urn where these pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.
So when a ship, well freighted with the stores
The sun matures on India's spicy shores,
Has dropp'd her anchor, and her canvas furl'd,
In some safe haven of our western world,
'Twere vain inquiry to what port she went,
The gale informs us, laden with the scent.
Some seek, when queasy conscience has its qualms,
To lull the painful malady with alms;
But charity not feign'd intends alone
Another's good—theirs centres in their own;
And, too short-lived to reach the realms of peace,
Must cease for ever when the poor shall cease.
Flavia, most tender of her own good name,
Is rather careless of her sister's fame:
Her superfluity the poor supplies,
But, if she touch a character, it dies.
The seeming virtue weigh'd against the vice,
She deems all safe, for she has paid the price:
No charity but alms aught values she,

Except in porcelain on her mantel-tree.
How many deeds, with which the world has rung,
From pride, in league with ignorance, have sprung!
But God o'errules all human follies still,
And bends the tough materials to his will.
A conflagration, or a wintry flood,
Has left some hundreds without home or food:
Extravagance and avarice shall subscribe,
While fame and self-complacence are the bribe.
The brief proclaim'd, it visits every pew,
But first the squire's, a compliment but due:
With slow deliberation he unties
His glittering purse, that envy of all eyes!
And, while the clerk just puzzles out the psalm,
Slides guinea behind guinea in his palm;
Till finding, what he might have found before,
A smaller piece amidst the precious store,
Pinch'd close between his finger and his thumb,
He half exhibits, and then drops the sum.
Gold, to be sure!—Throughout the town 'tis told
How the good squire gives never less than gold.
From motives such as his, though not the best,
Springs in due time supply for the distress'd;
Not less effectual than what love bestows,
Except that office clips it as it goes.
But lest I seem to sin against a friend,
And wound the grace I mean to recommend
(Though vice derided with a just design
Implies no trespass against love divine),
Once more I would adopt the graver style,
A teacher should be sparing of his smile.
Unless a love of virtue light the flame,
Satire is, more than those he brands, to blame:
He hides behind a magisterial air
His own offences, and strips others bare;
Affects indeed a most humane concern,
That men, if gently tutor'd, will not learn;
That mulish folly, not to be reclaim'd
By softer methods, must be made ashamed;
But (I might instance in St. Patrick's dean)
Too often rails to gratify his spleen.
Most satirists are indeed a public scourge;

Their mildest physic is a farrier's purge;
Their acrid temper turns, as soon as stirr'd,
The milk of their good purpose all to curd.
Their zeal begotten, as their works rehearse,
By lean despair upon an empty purse,
The wild assassins start into the street,
Prepared to poniard whomsoe'er they meet,
No skill in swordmanship, however just,
Can be secure against a madman's thrust;
And even virtue, so unfairly match'd,
Although immortal, may be prick'd or scratch'd.
When scandal has new minted an old lie,
Or tax'd invention for a fresh supply,
'Tis call'd a satire, and the world appears
Gathering around it with erected ears:
A thousand names are toss'd into the crowd;
Some whisper'd softly, and some twang'd aloud,
Just as the sapience of an author's brain
Suggests it safe or dangerous to be plain.
Strange! how the frequent interjected dash
Quickens a market, and helps off the trash;
The important letters that include the rest,
Serve as key to those that are suppress'd;
Conjecture gripes the victims in his paw,
The world is charm'd, and Scrib escapes the law.
So, when the cold damp shades of night prevail,
Worms may be caught by either head or tail;
Forcibly drawn from many a close recess,
They meet with little pity, no redress;
Plunged in the stream, they lodge upon the mud,
Food for the famish'd rovers of the flood.
All zeal for a reform, that gives offence
To peace and charity, is mere pretence:
A bold remark; but which, if well applied,
Would humble many a towering poet's pride.
Perhaps the man was in a sportive fit,
And had no other play-place for his wit;
Perhaps, enchanted with the love of fame,
He sought the jewel in his neighbour's shame;
Perhaps—whatever end he might pursue,
The cause of virtue could not be his view.
At every stroke wit flashes in our eyes;

The turns are quick, the polish'd points surprise,
But shine with cruel and tremendous charms,
That, while they please, possess us with alarms;
So have I seen (and hasten'd to the sight
On all the wings of holiday delight),
Where stands that monument of ancient power,
Named with emphatic dignity, the Tower,
Guns, halberts, swords, and pistols, great and small,
In starry forms disposed upon the wall:
We wonder, as we gazing stand below,
That brass and steel should make so fine a show;
But, though we praise the exact designer's skill,
Account them implements of mischief still.
No works shall find acceptance in that day,
When all disguises shall be rent away,
That square not truly with the Scripture plan,
Nor spring from love to God, or love to man.
As he ordains things sordid in their birth
To be resolved into their parent earth;
And, though the soul shall seek superior orbs,
Whate'er this world produces, it absorbs;
So self starts nothing, but what tends apace
Home to the goal, where it began the race.
Such as our motive is our aim must be;
If this be servile, that can ne'er be free:
If self employ us, whatsoe'er is wrought,
We glorify that self, not Him we ought;
Such virtues had need prove their own reward,
The Judge of all men owes them no regard.
True Charity, a plant divinely nursed,
Fed by the love from which it rose at first,
Thrives against hope, and, in the rudest scene,
Storms but enliven its unfading green;
Exuberant is the shadow it supplies,
Its fruit on earth, its growth above the skies.
To look at Him, who form'd us and redeem'd,
So glorious now, though once so disesteem'd;
To see a God stretch forth his human hand,
To uphold the boundless scenes of his command:
To recollect that, in a form like ours,
He bruised beneath his feet the infernal powers,
Captivity led captive, rose to claim

The wreath he won so dearly in our name;
That, throned above all height, he condescends
To call the few that trust in him his friends;
That, in the heaven of heavens, that space he deems
Too scanty for the exertion of his beams,
And shines, as if impatient to bestow
Life and a kingdom upon worms below;
That sight imparts a never-dying flame,
Though feeble in degree, in kind the same.
Like him the soul, thus kindled from above,
Spreads wide her arms of universal love;
And, still enlarged as she receives the grace,
Includes creation in her close embrace.
Behold a Christian!—and without the fires
The Founder of that name alone inspires,
Though all accomplishment, all knowledge meet;
To make the shining prodigy complete,
Whoever boast that name—behold a cheat!
Were love, in these the world's last doting years,
As frequent as the want of it appears,
The churches warm'd, they would no longer hold
Such frozen figures, stiff as they are cold;
Relenting forms would lose their power, or cease;
And e'en the dipp'd and sprinkled live in peace:
Each heart would quit its prison in the breast,
And flow in free communion with the rest.
And statesman, skill'd in projects dark and deep,
Might burn his useless Machiavel, and sleep:
His budget, often fill'd, yet always poor,
Might swing at ease behind his study door,
No longer prey upon our annual rents,
Or scare the nation with its big contents:
Disbanded legions freely might depart,
And slaying man would cease to be an art.
No learned disputants would take the field,
Sure not to conquer, and sure not to yield;
Both sides deceived, if rightly understood,
Pelting each other for the public good.
Did Charity prevail, the press would prove
A vehicle of virtue, truth, and love;
And I might spare myself the pains to shew
What few can learn, and all suppose they know.

Thus have I sought to grace a serious lay
With many a wild, indeed, but flowery spray,
In hopes to gain, what else I must have lost,
The attention pleasure has so much engross'd.
But if unhappily deceived I dream,
And prove too weak for so divine a theme,
Let Charity forgive me a mistake,
That zeal, not vanity, has chanced to make,
And spare the poet for his subject's sake.

William Cowper

Contentment

(Phillipians, iv.11)

Fierce passions discompose the mind,
As tempests vex the sea,
But calm, content and peace we find,
When, Lord, we turn to Thee.

In vain by reason and by rule
We try to bend the will;
For none but in the Saviour's school
Can learn the heavenly skill.

Since at His feet my soul has sate,
His gracious words to hear,
Contented with my present state,
I cast on Him my care.

"Art thou a sinner, soul?" He said,
"Then how canst thou complain?
How light thy troubles here, if weigh'd
With everlasting pain!

"If thou of murmuring wouldst be cured,
Compare thy griefs with mine!
Think what my love for thee endured,
And thou wilt not repine.

"'Tis I appoint thy daily lot,
And I do all things well;
Thou soon shalt leave this wretched spot,
And rise with me to dwell.

"In life my grace shall strength supply,
Proportion'd to thy day;
At death thou still shalt find me nigh,
To wipe thy tears away."

Thus I, who once my wretched days
In vain repinings spent,

Taught in my Saviour's school of grace,
Have learnt to be content.

William Cowper

Conversation

Though nature weigh our talents, and dispense
To every man his modicum of sense,
And Conversation in its better part
May be esteem'd a gift, and not an art,
Yet much depends, as in the tiller's toil,
On culture, and the sowing of the soil.
Words learn'd by rote a parrot may rehearse,
But talking is not always to converse;
Not more distinct from harmony divine,
The constant creaking of a country sign.
As alphabets in ivory employ,
Hour after hour, the yet unletter'd boy,
Sorting and puzzling with a deal of glee
Those seeds of science call'd his a b c;
So language in the mouths of the adult,
Witness its insignificant result,
Too often proves an implement of play,
A toy to sport with, and pass time away.
Collect at evening what the day brought forth,
Compress the sum into its solid worth,
And if it weigh the importance of a fly,
The scales are false, or algebra a lie.
Sacred interpreter of human thought,
How few respect or use thee as they ought!
But all shall give account of every wrong,
Who dare dishonour or defile the tongue;
Who prostitute it in the cause of vice,
Or sell their glory at a market-price;
Who vote for hire, or point it with lampoon,
The dear-bought placeman, and the cheap buffoon.
There is a prurience in the speech of some,
Wrath stays him, or else God would strike them dumb;
His wise forbearance has their end in view,
They fill their measure and receive their due.
The heathen lawgivers of ancient days,
Names almost worthy of a Christian's praise,
Would drive them forth from the resort of men,
And shut up every satyr in his den.
Oh, come not ye near innocence and truth,

Ye worms that eat into the bud of youth!
Infectious as impure, your blighting power
Taints in its rudiments the promised flower;
Its odour perish'd, and its charming hue,
Thenceforth 'tis hateful, for it smells of you.
Not e'en the vigorous and headlong rage
Of adolescence, or a firmer age,
Affords a plea allowable or just
For making speech the pamperer of lust;
But when the breath of age commits the fault,
'Tis nauseous as the vapour of a vault.
So wither'd stumps disgrace the sylvan scene,
No longer fruitful, and no longer green;
The sapless wood, divested of the bark,
Grows fungous, and takes fire at every spark.
Oaths terminate, as Paul observes, all strife—
Some men have surely then a peaceful life!
Whatever subject occupy discourse,
The feats of Vestris, or the naval force,
Asseveration blustering in your face
Makes contradiction such a hopeless case:
In every tale they tell, or false or true,
Well known, or such as no man ever knew,
They fix attention, heedless of your pain,
With oaths like rivets forced into the brain;
And e'en when sober truth prevails throughout,
They swear it, till affirmance breeds a doubt.
A Persian, humble servant of the sun,
Who, though devout, yet bigotry had none,
Hearing a lawyer, grave in his address,
With adjurations every word impress,
Supposed the man a bishop, or at least,
God's name so much upon his lips, a priest;
Bow'd at the close with all his graceful airs,
And begg'd an interest in his frequent prayers.
Go, quit the rank to which ye stood preferr'd,
Henceforth associate in one common herd;
Religion, virtue, reason, common sense,
Pronounce your human form a false pretence:
A mere disguise, in which a devil lurks,
Who yet betrays his secret by his works.
Ye powers who rule the tongue, if such there are,

And make colloquial happiness your care,
Preserve me from the thing I dread and hate,
A duel in the form of a debate.
The clash of arguments and jar of words,
Worse than the mortal brunt of rival swords,
Decide no question with their tedious length,
For opposition gives opinion strength,
Divert the champions prodigal of breath,
And put the peaceably disposed to death.
Oh, thwart me not, Sir Soph, at every turn,
Nor carp at every flaw you may discern;
Though syllogisms hang not on my tongue,
I am not surely always in the wrong;
'Tis hard if all is false that I advance,
A fool must now and then be right by chance.
Not that all freedom of dissent I blame;
No—there I grant the privilege I claim.
A disputable point is no man's ground;
Rove where you please, 'tis common all around.
Discourse may want an animated—No,
To brush the surface, and to make it flow;
But still remember, if you mean to please,
To press your point with modesty and ease.
The mark, at which my juster aim I take,
Is contradiction for its own dear sake.
Set your opinion at whatever pitch,
Knots and impediments make something hitch;
Adopt his own, 'tis equally in vain,
Your thread of argument is snapp'd again;
The wrangler, rather than accord with you,
Will judge himself deceived, and prove it too.
Vociferated logic kills me quite,
A noisy man is always in the right,
I twirl my thumbs, fall back into my chair,
Fix on the wainscot a distressful stare,
And, when I hope his blunders are all out,
Reply discreetly—To be sure—no doubt!
Dubius is such a scrupulous good man—
Yes—you may catch him tripping, if you can.
He would not, with a peremptory tone,
Assert the nose upon his face his own;
With hesitation admirably slow,

He humbly hopes—presumes—it may be so.
His evidence, if he were call'd by law
To swear to some enormity he saw,
For want of prominence and just relief,
Would hang an honest man and save a thief.
Though constant dread of giving truth offence,
He ties up all his hearers in suspense;
Knows what he knows as if he knew it not;
What he remembers seems to have forgot;
His sole opinion, whatso'er befall,
Centring at last in having none at all.
Yet, though he tease and balk your listening ear,
He makes one useful point exceeding clear;
Howe'er ingenious on his darling theme
A sceptic in philosophy may seem,
Reduced to practice, his beloved rule
Would only prove him a consummate fool;
Useless in him alike both brain and speech,
Fate having placed all truth above his reach,
His ambiguities his total sum,
He might as well be blind, and deaf, and dumb.
Where men of judgment creep and feel their way,
The positive pronounce without dismay;
Their want of light and intellect supplied
By sparks absurdity strikes out of pride.
Without the means of knowing right from wrong,
They always are decisive, clear, and strong.
Where others toil with philosophic force,
Their nimble nonsense takes a shorter course;
Flings at your head conviction in the lump,
And gains remote conclusions at a jump:
Their own defect, invisible to them,
Seen in another, they at once condemn;
And, though self-idolised in every case,
Hate their own likeness in a brother's face.
The cause is plain, and not to be denied,
The proud are always most provoked by pride.
Few competitions but engender spite;
And those the most, where neither has a right.
The point of honour has been deem'd of use,
To teach good manners and to curb abuse:
Admit it true, the consequence is clear,

Our polish'd manners are a mask we wear,
And at the bottom barbarous still and rude;
We are restrain'd indeed, but not subdued.
The very remedy, however sure,
Springs from the mischief it intends to cure,
And savage in its principle appears,
Tried, as it should be, by the fruit it bears.
'Tis hard, indeed, if nothing will defend
Mankind from quarrels but their fatal end;
That now and then a hero must decease,
That the surviving world may live in peace.
Perhaps at last close scrutiny may shew
The practice dastardly, and mean, and low;
That men engage in it compell'd by force;
And fear, not courage, is its proper source.
The fear of tyrant custom, and the fear
Lest fops should censure us, and fools should sneer.
At least to trample on our Maker's laws,
And hazard life for any or no cause,
To rush into a fix'd eternal state
Out of the very flames of rage and hate,
Or send another shivering to the bar
With all the guilt of such unnatural war,
Whatever use may urge, or honour plead,
On reason's verdict is a madman's deed.
Am I to set my life upon a throw,
Because a bear is rude and surly? No—
A moral, sensible, and well-bred man
Will not affront me, and no other can.
Were I empower'd to regulate the lists,
They should encounter with well loaded fists;
A Trojan combat would be something new,
Let Dares beat Entellus black and blue;
Then each might shew, to his admiring friends,
In honourable bumps his rich amends,
And carry, in contusions of his skull,
A satisfactory receipt in full.
A story, in which native humour reigns,
Is often useful, always entertains:
A graver fact, enlisted on your side,
May furnish illustration, well applied;
But sedentary weavers of long tales

Give me the fidgets, and my patience fails.
'Tis the most asinine employ on earth,
To hear them tell of parentage and birth,
And echo conversations dull and dry,
Embellish'd with—He said,—and, So said I.
At every interview their route the same,
The repetition makes attention lame:
We bustle up with unsuccessful speed,
And in the saddest part cry—Droll indeed!
The path of narrative with care pursue,
Still making probability your clue;
On all the vestiges of truth attend
And let them guide you to a decent end.
Of all ambitious man may entertain,
The worst that can invade a sickly brain,
Is that which angles hourly for surprise,
And baits its hook with prodigies and lies.
Credulous infancy, or age as weak,
Are fittest auditors for such to seek,
Who to please others will themselves disgrace,
Yet please not, but affront you to your face.
A great retailer of this curious ware,
Having unloaded and made many stare,
Can this be true?—an arch observer cries;
Yes (rather moved), I saw it with these eyes!
Sir! I believe it on that ground alone;
I could not had I seen it with my own.
A tale should be judicious, clear, succinct;
The language plain, the incidents well link'd;
Tell not as new what everybody knows,
And, new or old, still hasten to a close;
There, centring in a focus round and neat,
Let all your rays of information meet.
What neither yields us profit nor delight
Is like a nurse's lullaby at night;
Guy Earl of Warwick and fair Eleanore,
Or giant-killing Jack, would please me more.
The pipe, with solemn interposing puff,
Makes half a sentence at a time enough;
The dozing sages drop the drowsy strain,
Then pause, and puff—and speak, and pause again.
Such often, like the tube they so admire,

Important triflers! have more smoke than fire.
Pernicious weed! whose scent the fair annoys,
Unfriendly to society's chief joys,
Thy worst effect is banishing for hours
The sex whose presence civilizes ours;
Thou art indeed the drug a gardener wants
To poison vermin that infest his plants;
But are we so to wit and beauty blind,
As to despise the glory of our kind,
And shew the softest minds and fairest forms
As little mercy as he grubs and worms?
They dare not wait the riotous abuse
Thy thirst-creating steams at length produce,
When wine has given indecent language birth,
And forced the floodgates of licentious mirth;
For seaborne Venus her attachment shews
Still to that element from which she rose,
And, with a quiet which no fumes disturb,
Sips meek infusions of a milder herb.
The emphatic speaker dearly loves to oppose,
In contact inconvenient, nose to nose,
As if the gnomon on his neighbour's phiz,
Touch'd with the magnet, had attracted his.
His whisper'd theme, dilated and at large,
Proves after all a wind-gun's airy charge,
An extract of his diary—no more,
A tasteless journal of the day before.
He walk'd abroad, o'ertaken in the rain,
Call'd on a friend, drank tea, stepp'd home again,
Resumed his purpose, had a world of talk
With one he stumbled on, and lost his walk.
I interrupt him with a sudden bow,
Adieu, dear sir! lest you should lose it now.
I cannot talk with civet in the room,
A fine puss gentleman that's all perfume;
The sight's enough—no need to smell a beau—
Who thrusts his head into a raree-show?
His odoriferous attempts to please
Perhaps might prosper with a swarm of bees;
But we that make no honey, though we sting,
Poets, are sometimes apt to maul the thing.
'Tis wrong to bring into a mix'd resort,

What makes some sick, and others a-la-mort,
An argument of cogence, we may say,
Why such a one should keep himself away.
A graver coxcomb we may sometimes see,
Quite as absurd, though not so light as he:
A shallow brain behind a serious mask,
An oracle within an empty cask,
The solemn fop; significant and budge;
A fool with judges, amongst fools a judge.
He says but little, and that little said,
Owes all its weight, like loaded dice, to lead.
His wit invites you by his looks to come,
But when you knock, it never is at home:
'Tis like a parcel sent you by the stage,
Some handsome present, as your hopes presage;
'Tis heavy, bulky, and bids fair to prove
An absent friend's fidelity and love,
But when unpack'd, your disappointment groans
To find it stuff'd with brickbats, earth, and stones.
Some men employ their health, an ugly trick,
In making known how oft they have been sick,
And give us, in recitals of disease,
A doctor's trouble, but without the fees;
Relate how many weeks they kept their bed,
How an emetic or cathartic sped;
Nothing is slightly touch'd, much less forgot,
Nose, ears, and eyes, seem present on the spot.
Now the distemper, spite of draught or pill,
Victorious seem'd, and now the doctor's skill;
And now—alas for unforeseen mishaps!
They put on a damp nightcap, and relapse;
They thought they must have died, they were so bad:
Their peevish hearers almost wish they had.
Some fretful tempers wince at every touch,
You always do too little or too much:
You speak with life, in hopes to entertain,
Your elevated voice goes through the brain;
You fall at once into a lower key,
That's worse—the drone-pipe of an humble-bee.
The southern sash admits too strong a light,
You rise and drop the curtain—now 'tis night.
He shakes with cold—you stir the fire and strive

To make blaze—that's roasting him alive.
Serve him with venison, and he wishes fish;
With sole—that's just the sort he would not wish.
He takes what he at first profess'd to loathe,
And in due time feeds heartily on both;
Yet still, o'erclouded with a constant frown,
He does not swallow, but he gulps it down.
Your hope to please him vain on every plan,
Himself should work that wonder if he can—
Alas! his efforts double his distress,
He likes yours little, and his own still less.
Thus always teasing others, always teased,
His only pleasure is to be displeased.
I pity bashful men, who feel the pain
Of fancied scorn and undeserved disdain,
And bear the marks upon a blushing face
Of needless shame and self-imposed disgrace.
Our sensibilities are so acute,
The fear of being silent makes us mute.
We sometimes think we could a speech produce
Much to the purpose, if our tongues were loose;
But, being tried, it dies upon the lip,
Faint as a chicken's note that has the pip:
Our wasted oil unprofitably burns,
Like hidden lamps in old sepulchral urns.
Few Frenchmen of this evil have complain'd;
It seems as if we Britons were ordain'd,
By way of wholesome curb upon our pride,
To fear each other, fearing none beside.
The cause perhaps inquiry may descry,
Self-searching with an introverted eye,
Conceal'd within an unsuspected part,
The vainest corner of our own vain heart:
For ever aiming at the world's esteem,
Our self-importance ruins its own scheme;
In other eyes our talents rarely shewn,
Become at length so splendid in our own,
We dare not risk them into public view,
Lest they miscarry of what seems their due.
True modesty is a discerning grace,
And only blushes in the proper place;
But counterfeit is blind, and skulks through fear,

Where 'tis a shame to be ashamed to appear:
Humility the parent of the first,
The last by vanity produced and nursed.
The circle form'd, we sit in silent state,
Like figures drawn upon a dial-plate;
Yes, ma'am, and No, ma'am, utter'd softly, shew
Every five minutes how the minutes go;
Each individual, suffering a constraint
Poetry may, but colours cannot, paint;
And, if in close committee on the sky,
Reports it hot or cold, or wet or dry;
And finds a changing clime a happy source
Of wise reflection and well-timed discourse.
We next inquire, but softly and by stealth,
Like conservators of the public health,
Of epidemic throats, if such there are,
And coughs, and rheums, and phthisic, and catarrh.
That theme exhausted, a wide chasm ensues,
Fill'd up at last with interesting news;
Who danced with whom, and who are like to wed,
And who is hang'd, and who is brought to bed:
But fear to call a more important cause,
As if 'twere treason against English laws.
The visit paid, with ecstasy we come,
As from a seven years' transportation, home,
And there resume an unembarrass'd brow,
Recovering what we lost, we know not how,
The faculties that seem'd reduced to nought,
Expression and the privilege of thought.
The reeking, roaring hero of the chase,
I give him over as a desperate case.
Physicians write in hopes to work a cure,
Never, if honest ones, when death is sure;
And though the fox he follows may be tamed,
A mere fox-follower never is reclaim'd.
Some farrier should prescribe his proper course,
Whose only fit companion is his horse;
Or if, deserving of a better doom,
The noble beast judge otherwise, his groom.
Yet e'en the rogue that serves him, though he stand
To take his honour's orders, cap in hand,
Prefers his fellow grooms with much good sense,

Their skill a truth, his master's a pretence.
If neither horse nor groom affect the 'squire,
Where can at last his jockeyship retire?
Oh, to the club, the scene of savage joys,
The school of coarse good fellowship and noise;
There, in the sweet society of those
Whose friendship from his boyish years he chose,
Let him improve his talent if he can,
Till none but beasts acknowledge him a man.
Man's heart had been impenetrably seal'd,
Like theirs that cleave the flood or graze the field,
Had not his Maker's all-bestowing hand
Given him a soul, and bade him understand;
The reasoning power vouchsafed, of course inferr'd
The power to clothe that reason with his word;
For all is perfect that God works on earth,
And he that gives conception aids the birh.
If this be plain, 'tis plainly understood,
What uses of his boon the Giver would.
The mind despatch'd upon her busy toil,
Should range where Providence has bless'd the soil;
Visiting every flower with labour meet,
And gathering all her treasures sweet by sweet,
She should imbue the tongue with what she sips,
And shed the balmy blessing on the lips,
That good diffused may more abundant grow,
And speech may praise the power that bids it flow.
Will the sweet warbler of the livelong night,
That fills the listening lover with delight,
Forget his harmony, with rapture heard,
To learn the twittering of a meaner bird?
Or make the parrot's mimicry his choice,
That odious libel on a human voice?
No—nature, unsophisticate by man,
Starts not aside from her Creator's plan;
The melody, that was at first design'd
To cheer the rude forefathers of mankind,
Is note for note deliver'd in our ears,
In the last scene of her six thousand years.
Yet Fashion, leader of a chattering train,
Whom man for his own hurt permits to reign,
Who shifts and changes all things but his shape,

And would degrade her votary to an ape,
The fruitful parent of abuse and wrong,
Holds a usurp'd dominion o'er his tongue;
There sits and prompts him with his own disgrace,
Prescribes the theme, the tone, and the grimace,
And, when accomplish'd in her wayward school,
Calls gentleman whom she has made a fool.
'Tis an unalterable fix'd decree,
That none could frame or ratify but she,
That heaven and hell, and righteousness and sin,
Snares in his path, and foes that lurk within,
God and his attributes (a field of day
Where 'tis an angel's happiness to stray),
Fruits of his love and wonders of his might,
Be never named in ears esteem'd polite;
That he who dares, when she forbids, be grave,
Shall stand proscribed, a madman or a knave,
A close designer not to be believed,
Or, if excused that charge, at least deceived.
Oh, folly worthy of the nurse's lap,
Give it the breast, or stop its mouth with pap!
Is it incredible, or can it seem
A dream to any except those that dream,
That man should love his Maker, and that fire,
Warming his heart, should at his lips transpire?
Know then, and modestly let fall your eyes,
And veil your daring crest that braves the skies;
That air of insolence affronts your God,
You need his pardon, and provoke his rod:
Now, in a posture that becomes you more
Than that heroic strut assumed before,
Know, your arrears with every hour accrue
For mercy shewn, while wrath is justly due.
The time is short, and there are souls on earth,
Though future pain may serve for present mirth,
Acquainted with the woes that fear or shame,
By fashion taught, forbade them once to name,
And, having felt the pangs you deem a jest,
Have proved them truths too big to be express'd.
Go seek on revelation's hallow'd ground,
Sure to succeed, the remedy they found;
Touch'd by that power that you have dared to mock,

That makes seas stable, and dissolves the rock,
Your heart shall yield a life-renewing stream,
That fools, as you have done, shall call a dream.
It happen'd on a solemn eventide,
Soon after He that was our surety died,
Two bosom friends, each pensively inclined,
The scene of all those sorrows left behind,
Sought their own village, busied as they went
In musings worthy of the great event:
They spake of Him they loved, of Him whose life,
Though blameless, had incurr'd perpetual strife,
Whose deeds had left, in spite of hostile arts,
A deep memorial graven on their hearts.
The recollection, like a vein of ore,
The farther traced, enrich'd them still the more;
They thought him, and they justly thought him, one
Sent to do more than he appear'd to have done;
To exalt a people, and to place them high,
Above all else, and wonder'd he should die.
Ere yet they brought their journey to an end,
A stranger join'd them, courteous as a friend,
And ask'd them, with a kind engaging air,
What their affliction was, and begg'd a share.
Inform'd, he gather'd up the broken thread,
And, truth and wisdom gracing all he said,
Explain'd, illustrated, and search'd so well
The tender theme on which they chose to dwell,
That, reaching home, the night, they said, is near,
We must not now be parted, sojourn here—
The new acquaintance soon became a guest,
And, made so welcome at their simple feast,
He bless'd the bread, but vanish'd at the word.
And left them both exclaiming, 'Twas the Lord!
Did not our hearts feel all he deign'd to say,
Did they not burn within us by the way?
Now theirs was converse, such as it behoves
Man to maintain, and such as God approves:
Their views indeed were indistinct and dim,
But yet successful, being aim'd at him.
Christ and his character their only scope,
Their object, and their subject, and their hope,
They felt what it became them much to feel,

And, wanting him to loose the sacred seal,
Found him as prompt as their desire was true,
To spread the new-born glories in their view.
Well—what are ages and the lapse of time
Match'd against truths, as lasting as sublime?
Can length of years on God himself exact?
Or make that fiction which was once a fact?
No—marble and recording brass decay,
And, like the graver's memory, pass away;
The works of man inherit, as is just,
Their author's frailty, and return to dust:
But truth divine for ever stands secure,
Its head is guarded as its base is sure:
Fix'd in the rolling flood of endless years,
The pillar of the eternal plan appears,
The raving storm and dashing wave defies,
Built by that Architect who built the skies.
Hearts may be found, that harbour at this hour
That love of Christ, and all its quickening power;
And lips unstain'd by folly or by strife,
Whose wisdom, drawn from the deep well of life,
Tastes of its healthful origin, and flows
A Jordan for the ablution of our woes.
Oh, days of heaven, and nights of equal praise,
Serene and peaceful as those heavenly days,
When souls drawn upwards in communion sweet
Enjoy the stillness of some close retreat,
Discourse, as if released and safe at home,
Of dangers past, and wonders yet to come,
And spread the sacred treasures of the breast
Upon the lap of covenanted rest!
What, always dreaming over heavenly things,
Like angel-heads in stone with pigeon-wings?
Canting and whining out all day the word,
And half the night?—fanatic and absurd!
Mine be the friend less frequent in his prayers,
Who makes no bustle with his soul's affairs,
Whose wit can brighten up a wintry day,
And chase the splenetic dull hours away;
Content on earth in earthly things to shine,
Who waits for heaven ere he becomes divine,
Leaves saints to enjoy those altitudes they teach,

And plucks the fruit placed more within his reach.
Well spoken, advocate of sin and shame,
Known by thy bleating, Ignorance thy name.
Is sparkling wit the world's exclusive right?
The fix'd fee-simple of the vain and light?
Can hopes of heaven, bright prospects of an hour,
That come to waft us out of sorrow's power,
Obscure or quench a faculty that finds
Its happiest soil in the serenest minds?
Religion curbs indeed its wanton play,
And brings the trifler under rigorous sway,
But gives it usefulness unknown before,
And purifying, makes it shine the more,
A Christian's wit is inoffensive light,
A beam that aids, but never grieves the sight;
Vigorous in age as in the flush of youth;
'Tis always active on the side of truth;
Temperance and peace insure its healthful state,
And make it brightest at its latest date.
Oh, I have seen (nor hope perhaps in vain,
Ere life go down, to see such sights again)
A veteran warrior in the Christian field,
Who never saw the sword he could not wield;
Grave without dulness, learned without pride,
Exact, yet not precise, though meek, keen-eyed;
A man that would have foil'd at their own play
A dozen would-be's of the modern day;
Who, when occasion justified its use,
Had wit as bright as ready to produce,
Could fetch from records of an earlier age,
Or from philosophy's enlighten'd page,
His rich materials, and regale your ear
With strains it was a privilege to hear:
Yet above all his luxury supreme,
And his chief glory, was the gospel theme;
There he was copious as old Greece or Rome,
His happy eloquence seem'd there at home,
Ambitious not to shine or to excel,
But to treat justly what he loved so well.
It moves me more perhaps than folly ought,
When some green heads, as void of wit as thought,
Suppose themselves monopolists of sense,

And wiser men's ability pretence.
Though time will wear us, and we must grow old,
Such men are not forgot as soon as cold,
Their fragrant memory will outlast their tomb,
Embalm'd for ever in its own perfume.
And to say truth, though in its early prime,
And when unstain'd with any grosser crime,
Youth has a sprightliness and fire to boast,
That in the valley of decline are lost,
And virtue with peculiar charms appears,
Crown'd with the garland of life's blooming years;
Yet age, by long experience well inform'd,
Well read, well temper'd, with religion warm'd,
That fire abated which impels rash youth,
Proud of his speed, to overshoot the truth,
As time improves the grape's authentic juice,
Mellows and makes the speech more fit for use,
And claims a reverence in its shortening day,
That 'tis an honour and a joy to pay.
The fruits of age, less fair, are yet more sound,
Than those a brighter season pours around;
And, like the stores autumnal suns mature,
Through wintry rigours unimpair'd endure.
What is fanatic frenzy, scorn'd so much,
And dreaded more than a contagious touch?
I grant it dangerous, and approve your fear,
That fire is catching, if you draw too near;
But sage observers oft mistake the flame,
And give true piety that odious name.
To tremble (as the creature of an hour
Ought at the view of an almighty power)
Before His presence, at whose awful throne
All tremble in all worlds, except our own,
To supplicate his mercy, love his ways,
And prize them above pleasure, wealth, or praise,
Though common sense, allow'd a casting voice,
And free from bias, must approve the choice,
Convicts a man fanatic in the extreme,
And wild as madness in the world's esteem.
But that disease, when soberly defined,
Is the false fire of an o'erheated mind;
It views the truth with a distorted eye,

And either warps or lays it useless by;
'Tis narrow, selfish, arrogant, and draws
Its sordid nourishment from man's applause;
And, while at heart sin unrelinquish'd lies,
Presumes itself chief favourite of the skies.
'Tis such a light as putrefaction breeds
In fly-blown flesh, whereon the maggot feeds,
Shines in the dark, but, usher'd into day,
The stench remains, the lustre dies away.
True bliss, if man may reach it, is composed
Of hearts in union mutually disclosed;
And, farewell else all hope of pure delight,
Those hearts should be reclaim'd, renew'd, upright.
Bad men, profaning friendship's hallow'd name,
Form, in its stead, a covenant of shame.
A dark confederacy against the laws
Of virtue, and religion's glorious cause.
They build each other up with dreadful skill,
As bastions set point-blank against God's will;
Enlarge and fortify the dread redoubt,
Deeply resolved to shut a Saviour out;
Call legions up from hell to back the deed;
And, cursed with conquest, finally succeed.
But souls, that carry on a blest exchange
Of joys they meet with in their heavenly range,
And with a fearless confidence make known
The sorrows sympathy esteems its own,
Daily derive increasing light and force
From such communion in their pleasant course,
Feel less the journey's roughness and its length,
Meet their opposers with united strength,
And, one in heart, in interest, and design,
Gird up each other to the race divine.
But Conversation, choose what theme we may,
And chiefly when religion leads the way,
Should flow, like waters after summer showers,
Not as if raised by mere mechanic powers.
The Christian, in whose soul, though now distress'd,
Lives the dear thought of joys he once possess'd,
When all his glowing language issued forth
With God's deep stamp upon its current worth,
Will speak without disguise, and must impart,

Sad as it is, his undissembling heart,
Abhors constraint, and dares not feign a zeal,
Or seem to boast a fire, he does not feel.
The song of Sion is a tasteless thing,
Unless, when rising on a joyful wing,
The soul can mix with the celestial bands,
And give the strain the compass it demands.
Strange tidings these to tell a world, who treat
All but their own experience as deceit!
Will they believe, though credulous enough
To swallow much upon much weaker proof,
That there are blest inhabitants of earth,
Partakers of a new ethereal birth,
Their hopes, desires, and purposes estranged
From things terrestrial, and divinely changed,
Their very language of a kind that speaks
The soul's sure interest in the good she seeks,
Who deal with Scripture, its importance felt,
As Tully with philosophy once dealt,
And, in the silent watches of the night,
And through the scenes of toil-renewing light,
The social walk, or solitary ride,
Keep still the dear companion at their side?
No—shame upon a self-disgracing age,
God's work may serve an ape upon a stage
With such a jest as fill'd with hellish glee
Certain invisibles as shrewd as he;
But veneration or respect finds none,
Save from the subjects of that work alone.
The World grown old, her deep discernment shews,
Claps spectacles on her sagacious nose,
Peruses closely the true Christian's face,
And finds it a mere mask of sly grimace;
Usurps God's office, lays his bosom bare,
And finds hypocrisy close lurking there;
And, serving God herself through mere constraint,
Concludes his unfeign'd love of him a feint.
And yet, God knows, look human nature through
(And in due time the world shall know it too),
That since the flowers of Eden felt the blast,
That after man's defection laid all waste,
Sincerity towards the heart-searching God

Has made the new-born creature her abode,
Nor shall be found in unregenerate souls
Till the last fire burn all between the poles.
Sincerity! why 'tis his only pride,
Weak and imperfect in all grace beside,
He knows that God demands his heart entire,
And gives him all his just demands require.
Without it, his pretensions were as vain
As, having it, he deems the world's disdain;
That great defect would cost him not alone
Man's favourable judgment, but his own;
His birthright shaken, and no longer clear
Than while his conduct proves his heart sincere.
Retort the charge, and let the world be told
She boasts a confidence she does not hold;
That, conscious of her crimes, she feels instead
A cold misgiving and a killing dread:
That while in health the ground of her support
Is madly to forget that life is short;
That sick she trembles, knowing she must die,
Her hope presumption, and her faith a lie;
That while she dotes and dreams that she believes,
She mocks her Maker and herself deceives,
Her utmost reach, historical assent,
The doctrines warp'd to what they never meant;
That truth itself is in her head as dull
And useless as a candle in a skull,
And all her love of God a groundless claim,
A trick upon the canvas, painted flame.
Tell her again, the sneer upon her face,
And all her censures of the work of grace,
Are insincere, meant only to conceal
A dread she would not, yet is forced to feel;
That in her heart the Christian she reveres,
And, while she seems to scorn him, only fears.
A poet does not work by square or line,
As smiths and joiners perfect a design;
At least we moderns, our attention less,
Beyond the example of our sires digress,
And claim a right to scamper and run wide,
Wherever chance, caprice, or fancy guide.
The world and I fortuitously met;

I owed a trifle, and have paid the debt;
She did me wrong, I recompensed the deed,
And, having struck the balance, now proceed.
Perhaps, however, as some years have pass'd
Since she and I conversed together last,
And I have lived recluse in rural shades,
Which seldom a distinct report pervades,
Great changes and new manners have occur'd,
And blest reforms that I have never heard,
And she may now be as discreet and wise,
As once absurd in all discerning eyes.
Sobriety perhaps may now be found
Where once intoxication press'd the ground;
The subtle and injurious may be just,
And he grown chaste that was the slave of lust;
Arts once esteem'd may be with shame dismiss'd:
Charity may relax the miser's fist;
The gamester may have cast his cards away,
Forgot to curse, and only kneel to pray.
It has indeed been told me (with what weight,
How credibly, 'tis hard for me to state),
That fables old, that seem'd for ever mute,
Revived, are hastening into fresh repute,
And gods and goddesses, discarded long,
Like useless lumber or a stroller's song,
Are bringing into vogue their heathen train,
And Jupiter bids fair to rule again;
That certain feasts are instituted now,
Where Venus hears the lover's tender vow;
That all Olympus through the country roves,
To consecrate our few remaining groves,
And Echo learns politely to repeat
The praise of names for ages obsolete;
That, having proved the weakness, it should seem,
Of revelations ineffectual beam,
To bring the passions under sober sway,
And give the moral springs their proper play,
They mean to try what may at last be done,
By stout substantial gods of wood and stone,
And whether Roman rites may not produce
The virtues of old Rome for English use.
May such success attend the pious plan,

May Mercury once more embellish man.
Grace him again with long-forgotten arts,
Reclaim his taste, and brighten up his parts,
Make him athletic as in days of old,
Learn'd at the bar, in the palaestra bold,
Divest the rougher sex of female airs,
And teach the softer not to copy theirs:
The change shall please, nor shall it matter aught,
Who works the wonder, if it be but wrought.
'Tis time, however, if the case stands thus,
For us plain folks, and all who side with us,
To build our altar, confident and bold,
And say, as stern Elijah said of old,
The strife now stands upon a fair award,
If Israel's Lord be God, then serve the Lord:
If he be silent, faith is all a whim,
Then Baal is the God, and worship him.
Digression is so much in modern use,
Thought is so rare, and fancy so profuse,
Some never seem so wide of their intent,
As when returning to the theme they meant;
As mendicants, whose business is to roam,
Make every parish but their own their home.
Though such continual zig-zags in a book,
Such drunken reelings have an awkward look,
And I had rather creep to what is true,
Than rove and stagger with no mark in view;
Yet to consult a little, seem'd no crime,
The freakish humour of the present time:
But now to gather up what seems dispersed,
And touch the subject I design'd at first,
May prove, though much beside the rules of art,
Best for the public, and my wisest part.
And first, let no man charge me, that I mean
To clothe in sable every social scene,
And give good company a face severe,
As if they met around a father's bier;
For tell some men that, pleasure all their bent,
And laughter all their work, is life misspent,
Their wisdom bursts into this sage reply,
Then mirth is sin, and we should always cry.
To find the medium asks some share of wit,

And therefore 'tis a mark fools never hit.
But though life's valley be a vale of tears,
A brighter scene beyond that vale appears,
Whose glory, with a light that never fades,
Shoots between scatter'd rocks and opening shades,
And, while it shews the land the soul desires,
The language of the land she seeks inspires.
Thus touch'd, the tongue receives a sacred cure
Of all that was absurd, profane, impure;
Held within modest bounds, the tide of speech
Pursues the course that truth and nature teach;
No longer labours merely to produce
The pomp of sound, or tinkle without use:
Where'er it winds, the salutary stream,
Sprightly and fresh, enriches every theme,
While all the happy man possess'd before,
The gift of nature, or the classic store,
Is made subservient to the grand design,
For which Heaven form'd the faculty divine.
So, should an idiot, while at large he strays,
Find the sweet lyre on which an artist plays,
With rash and awkward force the chords he shakes,
And grins with wonder at the jar he makes;
But let the wise and well-instructed hand
Once take the shell beneath his just command,
In gentle sounds it seems as it complain'd
Of the rude injuries it late sustain'd,
Till, tuned at length to some immortal song,
It sounds Jehovah's name, and pours his praise along.

William Cowper

Denner's Old Woman

In this mimic form of a matron in years,
How plainly the pencil of Denner appears!
The matron herself, in whose old age we see
Not a trace of decline, what a wonder is she!
No dimness of eye, and no cheek hanging low,
No wrinkle, or deep-furrow'd frown on the brow!
Her forehead indeed is here circled around
With locks like the ribbon with which they are bound;
While glossy and smooth, and as soft as the skin
Of a delicate peach, is the down of her chin;
But nothing unpleasant, or sad, or severe,
Or that indicates life in its winter—is here.
Yet all is express'd with fidelity due,
Nor a pimple or freckle conceal'd from the view.
Many fond of new sights, or who cherish a taste
For the labours of art, to the spectacle haste.
The youths all agree, that, could old age inspire
The passion of love, hers would kindle the fire,
And the matrons with pleasure confess that they see
Ridiculous nothing or hideous in thee.
The nymphs for themselves scarcely hope a decline,
O wonderful woman! as placid as thine.
Strange magic of art! which the youth can engage
To peruse, half enamour'd, the features of age;
And force from the virgin a sigh of despair,
That she when as old shall be equally fair!
How great is the glory that Denner has gain'd,
Since Apelles not more for his Venus obtain'd.

William Cowper

Dependence

To keep the lamp alive,
With oil we fill the bowl;
'Tis water makes the willow thrive,
And grace that feeds the soul.

The Lord's unsparing hand
Supplies the living stream;
It is not at our own command,
But still derived from Him.

Beware of Peter's word,
Nor confidently say,
"I never will deny Thee, Lord," --
But, -- "Grant I never may."

Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And e'en an angel would be weak,
Who trusted in his own.

Retreat beneath his wings,
And in His gace confide!
This more exalts the King of kings
Than all your works beside.

In Jesus is our store,
Grace issues from His throne;
Whoever says, "I want no more,"
Confesses he has done.

William Cowper

Divine Justice Amiable

Thou hast no lightnings, O thou Just!
Or I their force should know;
And, if thou strike me into dust,
My soul approves the blow.

The heart, that values less its ease
Than it adores thy ways,
In thine avenging anger sees
A subject of its praise.

Pleased I could lie, concealed and lost,
In shades of central night;
Not to avoid thy wrath, thou know'st,
But lest I grieve thy sight.

Smite me, O thou, whom I provoke!
And I will love thee still:
The well deserved and righteous stroke
Shall please me, though it kill.

Am I not worthy to sustain
The worst thou canst devise;
And dare I seek thy throne again,
And meet thy sacred eyes?

Far from afflicting, thou art kind;
And, in my saddest hours,
An unction of thy grace I find,
Pervading all my powers.

Alas! thou sparest me yet again;
And, when thy wrath should move,
Too gentle to endure my pain,
Thou soothest me with thy love.

I have no punishment to fear;
But, ah! that smile from thee
Imparts a pang far more severe
Than woe itself would be.

William Cowper

Divine Love Endures No Rival

Love is the Lord whom I obey,
Whose will transported I perform;
The centre of my rest, my stay,
Love's all in all to me, myself a worm.

For uncreated charms I burn,
Oppressed by slavish fear no more,
For One in whom I may discern,
E'en when he frowns, a sweetness I adore.

He little loves him who complains,
And finds him rigorous and severe;
His heart is sordid, and he feigns,
Though loud in boasting of a soul sincere.

Love causes grief, but 'tis to move
And stimulate the slumbering mind;
And he has never tasted love
Who shuns a plan so graciously designed.

Sweet is the cross, above all sweets,
To souls enamoured with thy smiles;
The keenest woe life ever meets,
Love strips of all its terrors, and beguiles.

'Tis just that God should not be dear
Where self engrosses all the thought,
And groans and murmurs make it clear,
Whatever else is loved, the Lord is not.

The love of thee flows just as much
As that of ebbing self subsides;
Our hearts, their scantiness is such,
Bear not the conflict of two rival tides.

Both cannot govern in one soul;
Then let self-love be dispossessed;
The love of God deserves the whole,
And will not dwell with so despised a guest.

William Cowper

Elegy I. To Charles Deodati (Translated From Milton)

At length, my friend, the far-sent letters come,
Charged with thy kindness, to their destin'd 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 impell
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 letter'd leisure spent
Beneath my father's roof, be banishment,
Then call me banish'd, I will ne'er refuse
A name expressive of the lot I chuse.
I would that exiled to the Pontic shore,
Rome's hapless bard had suffer'd nothing more!
He then had equall'd 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,
Wooer, or soldier, now unarm'd, be there,
Or some coif'd 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'enamour'd son's desire.
There, virgins oft, unconscious what they prove,
What love is, know not, yet, unknowing, love.
Or, if impassion'd 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,
Outsparkling every star that gilds the skies.
Necks whiter than the iv'ry arm bestow'd
By Jove on Pelops, or the Milky Road!
Bright locks, Love's golden snares, these falling low,
Those playing wanton o'er the graceful brow!
Cheeks too, more winning sweet than after show'r,
Adonis turn'd to Flora's fav'rite flow'r!
Yield, Heroines, yield, and ye who shar'd th'embrace
Of Jupiter in ancient times, give place;
Give place ye turban'd Fair of Persia's coast,
And ye, not less renown'd, 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 theatres 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 fix'd her empire on thy nobler shore.
But lest the sightless boy inforce my stay,
I leave these happy walls, while yet I may.
Immortal Moly shall secure my heart
From all the sorc'ry of Circaean 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 friend's remembrance true.

William Cowper

Elegy Ii. On The Death Of The University Beadle At Cambridge (Translated From Milton)

Thee, whose refulgent staff and summons clear,
Minerva's flock longtime was wont t'obey,
Although thyself an herald, famous here,
The last of heralds, Death, has snatch'd away.
He calls on all alike, nor even deigns
To spare the office that himself sustains.

Thy locks were whiter than the plumes display'd
By Leda's paramour in ancient time,
But thou wast worthy ne'er to have decay'd,
Or, Aeson-like, to know a second prime,
Worthy for whom some Goddess should have won
New life, oft kneeling to Apollo's son.

Commission'd 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 address'd
To Peleus' son Atrides' proud behest.

Dread Queen of sepulchres! whose rig'rous 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,
Chose meaner marks, and with more equal aim
Pierce useless drones, earth's burthen and its shame!

Flow, therefore, tears for Him from ev'ry 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.

William Cowper

Elegy Iii. Anno Aet. 17. On The Death Of The Bishop Of Winchester (Translated From Milton)

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 sufferings by that scourge, the pest.
How death, his fun'ral torch and scythe in hand,
Ent'ring the lordliest mansions of the land,
Has laid the gem-illumin'd palace low,
And level'd tribes of Nobles at a blow.
I, next, deplor'd the famed fraternal pair
Too soon to ashes turn'd and empty air,
The Heroes next, whom snatch'd into the skies
All Belgia saw, and follow'd with her sighs;
But Thee far most I mourn'd, regretted most,
Winton's chief shepherd and her worthiest boast;
Pour'd out in tears I thus complaining said--
Death, next in pow'r to Him who rules the Dead!
Is't not enough that all the woodlands yield
To thy fell force, and ev'ry verdant field,
That lilies, at one noisome blast of thine,
And ev'n 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 winged nations, even those
Whose heav'n-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! arm'd with pow'rs so unconfined
Why stain thy hands with blood of Human kind?
Why take delight, with darts that never roam,
To chase a heav'n-born spirit from her home?
While thus I mourn'd, the star of evening stood,
Now newly ris'n, above the western flood,
And Phoebus from his morning-goal again
Had reach'd the gulphs of the Iberian main.
I wish'd repose, and, on my couch reclined
Took early rest, to night and sleep resign'd,
When--Oh for words to paint what I beheld!

I seem'd to wander in a spacious field,
Where all the champain glow'd with purple light
Like that of sun-rise on the mountain height;
Flow'rs over all the field, of ev'ry hue
That ever Iris wore, luxuriant grew,
Nor Chloris, with whom amtrous Zephyrs play,
E'er dress'd Alcinous' gardens half so gay.
A silver current, like the Tagus, roll'd
O'er golden sands, but sands of purer gold,
With dewy airs Favonius fann'd the flow'rs,
With airs awaken'd under rosy bow'rs.
Such poets feign, irradiated all o'er
The sun's abode on India's utmost shore.
While I, that splendour and the mingled shade
Of fruitful vines, with wonder fixt survey'd,
At once, with looks that beam'd 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 aether rings,
Each chaunts 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 free'd from ev'ry care.'
So spake the voice, and at its tender close
With psaltry's sound th'Angelic band arose.
Then night retired, and chased by dawning day
The visionary bliss pass'd all away.
I mourn'd my banish'd sleep with fond concern,
Frequent, to me may dreams like this return.

William Cowper

Elegy Iv. Anno Aet. 18. To My Tutor, Thomas Young, Chaplain Of The English Merchants Resident At Hamburg (Translated From Milton)

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 Hamburg turn aside,
So call'd, if legendary fame be true,
From Hama, whom a club-arm'd Cimbrian slew.
There lives, deep-learn'd and primitively just,
A faithful steward of his Christian trust,
My friend, and favorite 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 renown'd for moral truth
To the prime spirit of the Attic youth!
Dear, as the Stagyrte to Ammon's son,
His pupil, who disdain'd the world he won!
Nor so did Chiron, or so Phoenix shine
In young Achilles' eyes, as He in mine.
First led by him thro' sweet Aonian shade
Each sacred haunt of Pindus I survey'd;
And favor'd by the muse, whom I implor'd,
Thrice on my lip the hallow'd stream I pour'd.
But thrice the Sun's resplendent chariot roll'd
To Aries, has new ting'd his fleece with gold,
And Chloris twice has dress'd the meadows gay,
And twice has Summer parch'd 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, ent'ring, 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 heav'nly fare.
Give him, whatever his employment be,
Such gratulation as he claims from me,
And with a down-cast eye and carriage meek
Addressing him, forget not thus to speak.
If, compass'd 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, tho' late, sincere.
But wherefore This? why palliate I a deed,
For which the culprit's self could hardly plead?
Self-charged and self-condemn'd, 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's prayer;
And heav'n's dread thunderbolt arrested stands
By a cheap victim and uplifted hands.
Long had he wish'd to write, but was withheld,
And writes at last, by love alone compell'd,
For Fame, too often true when she alarms,
Reports thy neighbouring-fields a scene of arms;
Thy city against fierce besiegers barr'd,
And all the Saxon Chiefs for fight prepar'd.
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 giv'n
By providence, to guide thy steps to Heav'n?
His ministers, commission'd 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 stray'd
An exil'd fugitive from shade to shade,
When, flying Ahab and his Fury wife,
In lone Arabian wilds he shelter'd life;
So, from Philippi wander'd forth forlorn
Cilician Paul, with sounding scourges torn;
And Christ himself so left and trod no more
The thankless Gergesenes' forbidden shore.
But thou take courage, strive against despair,
Quake not with dread, nor nourish anxious care.
Grim war indeed on ev'ry side appears,
And thou art menac'd by a thousand spears,
Yet none shall drink thy blood, or shall offend
Ev'n the defenceless bosom of my friend;
For thee the Aegis of thy God shall hide,
Jehova's self shall combat on thy side,
The same, who vanquish'd under Sion's tow'rs
At silent midnight all Assyria's pow'rs,
The same who overthrew in ages past,
Damascus' sons that lay'd Samaria waste;
Their King he fill'd and them with fatal fears
By mimic sounds of clarions in their ears,
Of hoofs and wheels and neighings from afar
Of clanging 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!

William Cowper

Elegy V. Anno Aet. 20. On The Approach Of Spring (Translated From Milton)

Time, never wand'ring 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 pow'rs of song?
Spring gives them, and, how strange soere it seem,
Impels me now to some harmonious theme.
Castalia's fountain and the forked hill
By day, by night, my raptur'd fancy fill,
My bosom burns and heaves, I hear within
A sacred sound that prompts me to begin,
Lo! Phoebus comes, with his bright hair he blends
The radiant laurel wreath; Phoebus descends;
I mount, and, undepress'd by cumb'rous 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 gulphs 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, veil'd with op'ning foliage, lead'st the throng
Of feather'd 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 Aethiopia'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 aetherial plain
Bootes follows his celestial wain;
And now the radiant centinels above

Less num'rous 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 redd'ning dews,
This night, this surely, Phoebus miss'd the fair,
Who stops his chariot by her am'rous 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--Phoebus cries--Aurora come--too late
Thou linger'st slumb'ring with thy wither'd 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, Phoebus! and, t'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 ev'ry breeze that blows
Arabia's harvest and the Paphian rose.
Her lofty front she diadems around
With sacred pines, like Ops on Ida crown'd,
Her dewy locks with various flow'rs 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, unendow'd and indigent, aspires
Th'am'rous 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 heav'nly steep

She sees thee plunging in the Western Deep
How oft she cries--Ah Phoebus! why repair
Thy wasted force, why seek refreshment there?
Can Tethys win thee? wherefore should'st thou lave
A face so fair in her unpleasant wave?
Come, seek my green retreats, and rather chuse
To cool thy tresses in my chrystal dew,
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 whisp'ring airs shall lull thee to repose.
No fears I feel like Semele to die,
Nor lest thy burning wheels approach too nigh,
For thou can'st govern them. Here therefore rest,
And lay thy evening glories on my breast.
Thus breathes the wanton Earth her am'rous flame,
And all her countless offspring feel the same;
For Cupid now through every region strays
Bright'ning 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 Hymenaeal sing,
With Hymen's name roofs, rocks, and valleys ring;
He, new attired and by the season dress'd
Proceeds all fragrant in his saffron vest.
Now, many a golden-cinctur'd virgin roves
To taste the pleasures of the fields and groves,
All wish, and each alike, some fav'rite youth
Hers in the bonds of Hymenaeal truth.
Now pipes the shepherd through his reeds again,
Nor Phyllis 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 flow'ry meadows weave,
And neither God nor goat, but both in kind,

Sylvanus, wreath'd with cypress, skips behind.
The Dryads leave the hollow sylvan cells
To roam the banks, and solitary dells;
Pan riots now; and from his amorous chafe
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 th'Immortals from above,
And some kind Pow'r presides o'er ev'ry grove,
And long ye Pow'rs o'er ev'ry grove preside,
For all is safe and blest where ye abide!
Return O Jove! the age of gold restore--
Why chose to dwell where storms and thunders roar?
At least, thou, Phoebus! 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.

William Cowper

Elegy Vi. To Charles Diodati, When He Was Visiting In The Country (Translated From Milton)

With no rich viands overcharg'd, I send
Health, which perchance you want, my pamper'd 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.
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 caerulean 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 Phoebus blushes sometimes to be found
With Ivy, rather than with Laurel, crown'd.
The Nine themselves oftimes have join'd 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'erturn'd, the chariot lies
And brown with dust the fiery courser flies.
The Roman lyrist steep'd 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 touch'd with flying Fingers nicely taught,
In tap'stried halls high-roof'd 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 iv'ry 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 pow'rs possest.
For num'rous pow'rs 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 Demigods and Heroes praise
And feats perform'd in Jove's more youthful days,
Who now the counsels of high heav'n 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 bev'rage shine,
Cool from the chrystal spring, their sober wine!
Their youth should pass, in innocence, secure
From stain licentious, and in manners pure,
Pure as the priest's, when robed in white he stands
The fresh lustration ready in his hands.
Thus Linus liv'd, and thus, as poets write,
Tiresias, wiser for his loss of sight,
Thus exil'd Chalcas, thus the bard of Thrace,
Melodious tamer of the savage race!
Thus train'd by temp'rance, 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 griesly spectres dwell,
Whose tribes he fetter'd in a gory spell;
For these are sacred bards, and, from above,
Drink large infusions from the mind of Jove.
Would'st thou (perhaps 'tis hardly worth thine ear)

Would'st thou be told my occupation here?
The promised King of peace employs my pen,
Th'eternal cov'nant 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 unhallow'd floor
Dash'd 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, reserv'd in secret, shall attend
Thy candid voice, my Critic and my Friend!

William Cowper

Elegy VII. Anno Aetates Undevigesimo (Translated From Milton)

As yet a stranger to the gentle fires
That Amathusia's smiling Queen inspires,
Not seldom I derided Cupid's darts,
And scorn'd his claim to rule all human hearts.
Go, child, I said, transfix the tim'rous 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 thy idle arms at human kind?
Thy shafts prevail not 'gainst the noble mind.
The Cyprian heard, and, kindling into ire,
(None kindles sooner) burn'd with double fire.
It was the Spring, and newly risen day
Peep'd 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 approach'd, in painted plumes arrayed;
Th'insidious god his rattling darts betray'd,
Nor less his infant features, and the sly
Sweet intimations of his threat'ning eye.
Such the Sigeian boy is seen above,
Filling the goblet for imperial Jove;
Such he, on whom the nymphs bestow'd their charms,
Hylas, who perish'd in a Naiad's arms.
Angry he seem'd, 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 pow'r attest!
And in thy anguish be my sway confest!
I vanquish'd Phoebus, 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 kill'd, and conquer'd as he fled,
Less true th'expert Cydonian, and less true

The youth, whose shaft his latent Procris slew.
Vanquish'd by me see huge Orion bend,
By me Alcides, and Alcides's friend.
At me should Jove himself a bolt design,
His bosom first should bleed transfix'd by mine.
But all thy doubts this shaft will best explain,
Nor shall it teach thee with a trivial pain,
Thy Muse, vain youth! shall not thy peace ensure,
Nor Phoebus' 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
Provok'd my laughter more than mov'd my fear.
I shun'd not, therefore, public haunts, but stray'd
Careless in city, or suburban shade,
And passing and repassing nymphs that mov'd
With grace divine, beheld where'er I rov'd.
Bright shone the vernal day, with double blaze,
As beauty gave new force to Phoebus' rays.
By no grave scruples check'd I freely eyed
The dang'rous 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 mark'd (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 dar'd
His arrows, Love had even then prepar'd.
Nor was himself remote, nor unsupplied
With torch well-trimm'd and quiver at his side;
Now to her lips he clung, her eye-lids now,
Then settled on her cheeks or on her brow.
And with a thousand wounds from ev'ry part
Pierced and transpierced my undefended heart.
A fever, new to me, of fierce desire
Now seiz'd my soul, and I was all on fire,
But she, the while, whom only I adore,
Was gone, and vanish'd 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 hurl'd him to the Lemnian coast
So Vulcan sorrow'd for Olympus lost,
And so Oeclides, sinking into night,
From the deep gulph look'd 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 Pow'r!--If such thou be
Let not thy deeds, and nature disagree.
Now I revere thy fires, thy bow, thy darts:
Now own thee sov'reign of all human hearts.
Spare me, and I will worship at no shrine
With vow and sacrifice, save only thine.
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 toil'd to raise,
Studious yet indolent, and urg'd by youth,
That worst of teachers, from the ways of Truth;
Till learning taught me, in his shady bow'r,
To quit love's servile yoke, and spurn his pow'r.
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 Diomed¹⁵ in me.

William Cowper

Ephraim Repenting

(Jeremiah, xxxi. 18-20)

My God, till I received Thy stroke,
How like a beast was I!
So unaccustom'd to the yoke,
So backward to comply.

With grief my just reproach I hear;
Shame fills me at the thought,
How frequent my rebellions were,
What wickedness I wrought.

Thy merciful restraint I scorn'd,
And left the pleasant road;
Yet turn me, and I shall be turn'd;
Thou art the Lord my God.

"Is Ephraim banish'd from my thoughts,
Or vile in my esteem?
No," saith the Lord, "with all his faults,
I still remember him.

"Is he a dear and pleasant child?
Yes, dear and pleasant still;
Though sin his foolish heart beguiled,
And he withstood my will.

"My sharp rebuke has laid him low,
He seeks my face again;
My pity kindles at his woe,
He shall not seek in vain."

William Cowper

Epigram

To purify their wine some people bleed
A lamb into the barrel, and succeed;
No nostrum, planters say, is half so good
To make fine sugar, as a negro's blood.
Now lambs and negroes both are harmless things,
And thence perhaps this wondrous virtue springs.
'Tis in the blood of innocence alone--
Good cause why planters never try their own.

William Cowper

Epigram : On The Inventor Of Gunpowder (Translated From Milton)

Praise in old time the sage Prometheus won,
Who stole ethereal radiance from the sun;
But greater he, whose bold invention strove
To emulate the fiery bolts of Jove.

William Cowper

Epigram : The Cottager And His Landlord. A Fable (Translated From Milton)

A Peasant to his lord yearly court,
Presenting pippins of so rich a sort
That he, displeas'd to have a part alone,
Removed the tree, that all might be his own.
The tree, too old to travel, though before
So fruitful, wither'd, and would yield no more.
The squire, perceiving all his labour void,
Curs'd his own pains, so foolishly employ'd,
And 'Oh,' he cried, 'that I had liv'd content
With tribute, small indeed, but kindly meant!
My avarice has expensive prov'd to me,
Has cost me both my pippins and my tree.'

William Cowper

Epigram : To Christina, Queen Of Sweden, With Cromwell's Picture (Translation)

Christina, maiden of heroic mien!
Star of the North! of northern stars the queen!
Behold, what wrinkles I have earn'd, and how
The iron cask still chafes my vet'ran brow,
While following fate's dark footsteps, I fulfill
The dictates of a hardy people's will.
But soften'd, in thy sight, my looks appear,
Not to all Queens or Kings alike severe.

William Cowper

Epigram : To Leonora Singing At Rome (Translated From Milton)

Another Leonora once inspir'd
Tasso, with fatal love to frenzy fir'd,
But how much happier, liv'd 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' tho' 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 thro' his wounded breast,
Charm, with soul-soothing song, his thoughts to rest.

William Cowper

Epigram : To Leonora Singing At Rome 2 (Translated From Milton)

Naples, too credulous, ah! boast no more
The sweet-voiced Siren buried on thy shore,
That, when Parthenope deceas'd, 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.

William Cowper

Epitaph On A Free But Tame Redbreast, A Favourite Of Miss Sally Hurdis

These are not dew-drops, these are tears,
And tears by Sally shed
For absent Robin, who she fears
With too much cause, is dead.

One morn he came not to her hand
As he was wont to come,
And, on her finger perched, to stand
Picking his breakfast-crumb.

Alarmed she called him, and perplex
She sought him, but in vain;
That day he came not, nor the next,
Nor ever came again.

She therefore raised him here a tomb,
Though where he fell, or how,
None knows, so secret was his doom,
Nor where he moulders now.

Had half a score of coxcombs died
In social Robin's stead,
Poor Sally's tears had soon been dried,
Or haply never shed.

But Bob was neither rudely bold
Nor spiritlessly tame,
Nor was, like theirs, his bosom cold,
But always in a flame.

William Cowper

Epitaph On A Hare

Here lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue,
Nor swiftewd greyhound follow,
Whose foot ne'er tainted morning dew,
Nor ear heard huntsman's hallo',

Old Tiney, surliest of his kind,
Who, nurs'd with tender care,
And to domestic bounds confin'd,
Was still a wild Jack-hare.

Though duly from my hand he took
His pittance ev'ry night,
He did it with a jealous look,
And, when he could, would bite.

His diet was of wheaten bread,
And milk, and oats, and straw,
Thistles, or lettuces instead,
With sand to scour his maw.

On twigs of hawthorn he regal'd,
On pippins' russet peel;
And, when his juicy salads fail'd,
Slic'd carrot pleas'd him well.

A Turkey carpet was his lawn,
Whereon he lov'd to bound,
To skip and gambol like a fawn,
And swing his rump around.

His frisking wa at evening hours,
For then he lost his fear;
But most before approaching show'rs,
Or when a storm drew near.

Eight years and five round rolling moons
He thus saw steal away,
Dozing out all his idle noons,
And ev'ry night at play.

I kept him for his humour's sake,
For he would oft beguile
My heart of thoughts that made it ache,
And force me to a smile.

But now, beneath this walnut-shade
He finds his long, last home,
And waits in snug concealment laid,
'Till gentler puss shall come.

He, still more aged, feels the shocks
From which no care can save,
And, partner once of Tiney's box,
Must soon partake his grave.

William Cowper

Epitaph On Fop, A Dog Belonging To Lady Throckmorton

Though once a puppy, and though Fop by name,
Here moulders one whose bones some honour claim;
No sycophant, although of spaniel race,
And though no hound, a martyr to the chase.
Ye squirrels, rabbits, leverets, rejoice!
Your haunts no longer echo to his voice;
This record of his fate exulting view,
He died worn out with vain pursuit of you.
'Yes' -- the indignant shade of Fop replies--
'And worn with vain pursuit man also dies.'

William Cowper

Epitaph On Johnson

Here Johnson lies, a sage by all allowed,
Whom to have bred, may well make England proud;
Whose prose was eloquence, by wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought;
Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song;
Who many a noble gift from Heaven possessed,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth, by glory in the skies!

William Cowper

Epitaph On Mr. Chester Of Chicheley

Tears flow, and cease not, where the good man lies,
Till all who know him follow to the skies.
Tears therefore fall where Chester's ashes sleep;
Him wife, friends, brothers, children, servants, weep;
And justly -- few shall ever him transcend
As husband, parent, brother, master, friend.

William Cowper

Epitaphium Alterum

Hic etiam jacet,
Qui totum novennium vixit,
Puss.
Siste paulisper,
Qui præteriturus es,
Et tecum sic reputa--
Hunc neque canis venaticus,
Nec plumbum missile,
Nec laqueus,
Nec imbres nimii,
Confecêre:
Tamen mortuus est--
Et moriar ego.

William Cowper

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William Cowper

Exhortation To Prayer

What various hindrances we meet
In coming to a mercy seat!
Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there?

Prayer makes the darken'd cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above.

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when through weariness they fail'd,
That moment Amalek prevail'd.

Have you no words? Ah, think again,
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow-creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.

Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
"Hear what the Lord has done for me."

William Cowper

Expostulation

Why weeps the muse for England? What appears
In England's case to move the muse to tears?
From side to side of her delightful isle
Is she not clothed with a perpetual smile?
Can Nature add a charm, or Art confer
A new-found luxury, not seen in her?
Where under heaven is pleasure more pursued
Or where does cold reflection less intrude?
Her fields a rich expanse of wavy corn,
Pour'd out from Plenty's overflowing horn;
Ambrosial gardens, in which art supplies
The fervor and the force of Indian skies:
Her peaceful shores, where busy Commerce waits
To pour his golden tide through all her gates;
Whom fiery suns, that scorch the russet spice
Of eastern groves, and oceans floor'd with ice
Forbid in vain to push his daring way
To darker climes, or climes of brighter day;
Whom the winds waft where'er the billows roll
From the World's girdle to the frozen pole;
The chariots bounding in her wheel-worn streets,
Her vaults below, where every vintage meets;
Her theatres, her revels, and her sports;
The scenes to which not youth alone resorts,
But age, in spite of weakness and of pain,
Still haunts, in hope to dream of youth again;
All speak her happy; let the muse look round
From East to West, no sorrow can be found;
Or only what, in cottages confined,
Sighs unregarded to the passing wind.
Then wherefore weep for England? What appears
In England's case to move the muse to tears?
The prophet wept for Israel; wish'd his eyes
Were fountains fed with infinite supplies;
For Israel dealt in robbery and wrong;
There were the scorner's and the slanderer's tongue;
Oaths, used as playthings or convenient tools,
As interest biass'd knaves, or fashion fools;
Adultery, neighing at his neighbor's door;

Oppression laboring hard to grind the poor;
The partial balance and deceitful weight;
The treacherous smile, a mask for secret hate;
Hypocrisy, formality in prayer,
And the dull service of the lip were there.
Her women, insolent and self-caress'd,
By Vanity's unwearied finger dress'd,
Forgot the blush that virgin fears impart
To modest cheeks, and borrow'd one from art;
Were just trifles, without worth or use,
As silly pride and idleness produce;
Curl'd, scented, furbelow'd, and flounced around,
With feet too delicate to touch the ground,
They stretch'd the neck, and roll'd the wanton eye,
And sigh'd for every fool that flutter'd by.
He saw his people slaves to every lust,
Lewd, avaricious, arrogant, unjust;
He heard the wheels of an avenging God
Groan heavily along the distant road;
Saw Babylon set wide her two-leaved brass
To let the military deluge pass;
Jerusalem a prey, her glory soil'd,
Her princes captive, and her treasures spoil'd;
Wept till all Israel heard his bitter cry,
Stamp'd with his foot, and smote upon his thigh;
But wept, and stamp'd, and smote his thigh in vain,
Pleasure is deaf when told of future pain,
And sounds prophetic are too rough to suit
Ears long accusom'd to the pleasing lute:
They scorn'd his inspiration and his theme,
Pronounc'd him frantic, and his fears a dream;
With self-indulgence wing'd the fleeting hours,
Till the foe found them, and down fell the towers.
Long time Assyria bound them in her chain,
Till penitence had purged the public stain,
And Cyrus with relenting pity moved,
Return'd them happy to the land they loved;
There, proof against prosperity, awhile
They stood the test of her ensnaring smile,
And had the grace in scenes of peace to show
The virtue they had learn'd in scenes of woe.
But man is frail, and can but ill sustain

A long immunity from grief and pain;
And, after all the joys that Plenty leads,
With tiptoe step Vice silently succeeds.
When he that ruled them with a shepherd's rod,
In form a man, in dignity a God,
Came, not expected in that humble guise,
To sift and search them with unerring eyes,
He found, conceal'd beneath a fair outside,
The filth of rottenness and worm of pride;
Their piety a system of deceit,
Scripture employ'd to sanctify the cheat;
The Pharisee the dupe of his own art,
Self-idolized, and yet a knave at heart.
When nations are to perish in their sins,
'Tis in the Church the leprosy begins:
The priest whose office is, with zeal sincere,
To watch the fountain, and preserve it clear,
Carelessly nods and sleeps upon the brink,
While other poison what the flock must drink:
Or, waking at the call of lust alone,
Infuses lies and errors of his own:
His unsuspecting sheep believe it pure,
And, tainted by the very means of cure,
Catch from each other a contagious spot,
The foul forerunner of a general rot.
Then truth is hush'd, that Heresy may preach;
And all is trash that reason cannot reach;
Then God's own image on the soul impress'd
Becomes a mockery, and a standing jest;
And faith the root whence only can arise
The graces of a life that wins the skies,
Loses at once all value and esteem,
Pronounced by graybeards a pernicious dream:
Then Ceremony leads her bigots forth,
Prepared to fight for shadows of no worth;
While truths, on which eternal things depend,
Find not, or hardly find, a single friend:
As soldiers watch the signal of command,
They learn to bow, to kneel, to sit, to stand;
Happy to fill religion's vacant place;
With hollow form, and gesture, and grimace.
Such, when the Teacher of his church was there,

People and priest, the sons of Israel were;
Stiff in the letter, lax in the design
And import of their oracles divine;
Their learning legendary, false, absurd,
And yet exalted above God's own word;
They drew a curse from an intended good,
Puff'd up with gifts they never understood.
He judg'd them with as terrible a frown,
As if not love, but wrath, had brought him down.
Yet he was gentle as soft summer airs,
Had grace for others' sins, but none for theirs;
Through all he spoke a noble plainness ran--
Rhetoric is artifice, the work of man;
And tricks and turns that fancy may devise,
Are far too mean for Him that rules the skies.
The astonish'd vulgar trembled while he tore
The mask from faces never seen before;
He stripp'd the impostors in the noonday sun,
Show'd that they follow'd all they seem'd to shun;
Their prayers made public, their excesses kept
As private as the chambers where they slept;
The temple and its holy rites profaned
By mummeries He that dwelt in it disdain'd;
Uplifted hands, that at convenient times
Could act extortion and the worst of crimes,
Wash'd with a neatness scrupulously nice,
And free from every taint but that of vice.
Judgement, however tardy, mends her pace
When obstinacy once has conquered grace.
They saw distemper heal'd, and life restor'd,
In answer to the fiat of his word;
Confessed the wonder, and with daring tongue
Blasphemed the authority from which it sprung.
They knew, by sure prognostics seen on high,
The future tone and temper of the sky;
But, grave dissemblers! could not understand
That sin let loose speaks punishment at hand.
Ask now of history's authentic page,
And call up evidence from every age;
Display with busy and laborious hand
The blessings of the most indebted land;
What nation will you find whose annals prove

So rich an interest in Almighty love?
Where dwell they now, where dwelt in ancient day
A people planted, water'd, blest as they?
Let Egypt's plagues and Canaan's woes proclaim
The favors pour'd upon the Jewish name;
Their freedom purchased for them at the cost
Of all their hard oppressors valued most:
Their title to a country not their own
Made sure by prodigies till then unknown;
For them the states they left made waste and void;
For them the states to which they went destroy'd;
A cloud to measure out their march by day,
By night a fire to cheer the gloomy way;
That moving signal summoning, when best,
Their host to move, and, when it stay'd, to rest.
For them the rocks dissolved into a flood,
The dews condensed into angelic food,
Their very garments sacred, old yet new,
And Time forbid to touch them as he flew;
Streams, swell'd above the bank, enjoin'd to stand
While they pass'd through to their appointed land;
Their leader arm'd with meekness, zeal, and love,
And graced with clear credentials from above;
Themselves secured beneath the Almighty wing;
Their God their captain, lawgiver, and king;
Crown'd with a thousand victories, and at last
Lords of the conquer'd soil, there rooted fast,
In peace possessing what they won by war,
Their name far publish'd, and reverend as far;
Where will you find a race like theirs, endow'd
With all that man e'er wish'd, or Heaven bestow'd?
They, and they only, amongst all mankind,
Received the transcript of the Eternal Mind:
Were trusted with his own engraven laws,
And constituted guardians of his cause;
Theirs were the prophets, theirs the priestly call,
And theirs by birth the Saviour of us all.
In vain the nations that had seen them rise
With fierce and envious, yet admiring eyes,
Had sought to crush them, guarded as they were
By power divine and skill that could not err.
Had they maintain'd allegiance firm and sure,

And kept the faith immaculate and pure,
Then the proud eagles of all-conquering Rome
Had found one city not to be o'ercome;
And the twelve standards of the tribes unfurl'd
Had bid defiance to the warring world.
But grace abused brings forth the foulest deeds,
As richest soil the most luxuriant weeds.
Cured of the golden calves, their fathers' sin,
They set up self, that idol god within;
View'd a Deliverer with disdain and hate,
Who left them still a tributary state;
Seized fast his hand, held out to set them free
From a worse yoke, and nail'd it to the tree:
There was the consummation and the crown,
The flower of Israel's infamy full blown;
Thence date their sad declension, and their fall,
Their woes, not yet repeal'd, thence date them all.
Thus fell the best instructed in her day,
And the most favor'd land, look where we may.
Philosophy indeed on Grecian eyes
Had pour'd the day, and clear'd the Roman skies
In other climes perhaps creative art,
With power surpassing theirs, perform'd her part;
Might give more life to marble, or might fill
The glowing tablets with a juster skill,
With all the embroidery of poetic dreams;
'Twas theirs alone to dive into the plan
That truth and mercy had reveal'd to man;
And, while the world beside, that plan unknown
Deified useless wood or senseless stone,
They breathed in faith their well-directed prayers
And the true God, the God of truth, was theirs.
Their glory faded, and their race dispersed,
The last of nations now, though once the first,
They warn and teach the proudest, would they learn--
Keep wisdom, or meet vengeance in your turn:
If we escaped not, if Heaven spared not us,
Peel'd, scatter'd and exterminated thus;
If vice received her retribution due,
When we were visited, what hope for you?
When God arises with an awful frown,
To punish lust, or pluck presumption down,

When gifts perverted, or not duly prized,
Pleasure o'ervalued, and his grace despised,
Provoke the vengeance of his righteous hand,
To pour down wrath upon a thankless land
He will be found impartially severe,
Too just to wink, or speak the guilty clear.
Oh Israel, of all nations most undone!
Thy diadem displaced, thy sceptre gone;
Thy temple, once thy glory, fallen and rased,
And thou a worshipper e'en where thou mayst:
Thy services, once holy without spot,
Mere shadows now, their ancient pomp forgot
Thy Levites, once a consecrated host,
No longer Levites, and their lineage lost,
And thou thyself o'er every country sown,
Will none on earth that thou canst call thine own;
Cry aloud, thou that sittest in the dust,
Cry to the proud, the cruel, and unjust;
Knock at the gates of nations, rouse their fears;
Say wrath is coming, and the storm appears;
But raise the shrillest cry in British ears.
What ails thee, restless as the waves that roar
And fling their foam against thy chalky shore?
Mistress, at least while Providence shall please,
And trident-bearing queen of the wide seas--
Why, having kept good faith, and often shown
Friendship and truth to others, find'st thou none
Thou that hast set the persecuted free,
None interposes now to succor thee.
Countries indebted to thy power, that shine
With light derived from thee, would smother thine
Thy very children watch for thy disgrace,
A lawless brood, and curse thee to thy face.
Thy rulers load thy credit year by year,
With sums Peruvian mines could never clear;
As if, like arches built with skilful hand
The more 'twere press'd, the firmer it would stand.
The cry in all thy ships is still the same,
Speed us away to battle and to fame.
Thy mariners explore the wild expanse,
Impatient to descry the flags of France:
But though they fight, as thine have ever fought

Return ashamed without the wreaths they sought
Thy senate is a scene of civil jar,
Chaos of contrarities at war;
Where sharp and solid, phlegmatic and light
Discordant atoms meet, ferment and fight:
Where obstinacy takes his sturdy stand,
In disconcert what policy has plann'd;
Where policy is busied all night long
In settling right what faction has set wrong;
Where flails of oratory thresh the floor,
That yields them chaff and dust, and nothing more.
Thy rack'd inhabitants repine, complain.
Tax'd till the brow of labor sweats in vain;
War lays a burden on the reeling state,
And peace does nothing to relieve the weight;
Successive loads succeeding broils impose,
And sighing millions prophecy the close.
In adverse Providence, when ponder'd well,
So dimly writ, or difficult to spell,
Thou canst not read with readiness and ease
Providence adverse in events like these?
Know then that heavenly wisdom on this ball
Creates, gives birth to, guides, consummates all;
That, while laborious and quick-thoughted man
Snuffs up the praise of what he seems to plan,
He first conceives, then perfects his design,
As a mere instrument in hands divine:
Blind to the working of that secret power,
That balances the wings of every hour,
The busy trifler dreams himself alone,
Frames many a purpose, and God works his own.
States thrive or wither, as moons wax and wane,
E'en as his will and his decrees ordain;
While honor, virtue, piety bear sway,
They flourish; and, as these decline, decay:
In just resentment of his injured laws,
He pours contempt on them and on their cause;
Strikes the rough thread of error right athwart
The web of every scheme they have at heart;
Bids rottenness invade and bring to dust
The pillars of support in which they trust,
Ad do his errand of disgrace and shame

On the chief strength and glory of the frame.
None ever yet impeded what he wrought,
None bars him out from his most secret thought;
Darkness itself before his eye is light,
And hell's close mischief naked in his sight.
Stand now and judge thyself -- Hast thou incurr'd
His anger who can waste thee with a word,
Who poises and proportions sea and land,
Weighing them in the hollow of his hand,
And in whose awful sight all nations seem
As grasshoppers, as dust, a drop, a dream?
Hast thou (a sacrilege his soul abhors)
Claim'd all the glory of thy prosperous wars?
Proud of thy fleets and armies, stolen the gem
Of his just praise to lavish it on them?
Hast thou not learn'd, what thou art often told,
A truth still sacred, and believed of old,
That no success attends on spears and swords
Unblest, and that the battle is the Lord's?
That courage is his creature; and dismay
Ghastly in feature, and his stammering tongue
With doleful rumor and sad presage hung,
To quell the valor of the stoutest heart,
And teach the combatant a woman's part?
That he bids thousands fly when none pursue,
Saves as he will by many or by few,
And claims forever, as his royal right,
The event and sure design of the fight?
Hast thou, though suckled at fair freedom's breast,
Exported slavery to the conquer'd East?
Pull'd down the tyrants India served with dread,
And raised thyself, a greater, in their stead?
Gone thither, arm'd and hungry, return'd full,
Fed from the richest veins of the Mogul,
A despot big with power, obtain'd by wealth,
And that obtain'd rapine and by stealth?
With Asiatic vices stored thy mind,
But left their virtues and thine own behind?
And, having truck'd thy soul, brought home the fee,
To tempt the poor to sell himself to thee?
Hast thou by statute shoved from its design,
The Saviour's feast, his own blest bread and wine,

And made the symbols of atoning grace
An office-key, a picklock to a place,
That infidels may prove their title good
By an oath dipp'd in sacramental blood?
A blot that will be still a blot, in spite
Of all that grave apologists may write;
And though a bishop toil to cleanse the stain,
He wipes and scours the silver cup in vain.
And hast thou sworn on every slight pretence,
Till perjuries are common as bad pence,
While thousands, careless of the damning sin,
Kiss the book's outside, who ne'er look within?
Hast thou admitted with a blind, fond trust,
The lie that burned thy fathers' bones to dust,
That first adjudged them heretics, then sent
Their souls to heaven, and cursed them as they went?
The lie that Scripture strips of its disguise,
And execrates above all other lies,
The lie that claps a lock on mercy's plan,
And gives the key to yon infirm old man,
Who once ensconced in apostolic chair
Is deified, and sits omniscient there;
The lie that knows no kindred, owns no friend
But him that makes its progress his chief end,
That having spilt much blood, makes that a boast,
And canonises him that sheds the most?
Away with charity that soothes a lie,
And thrusts the truth with scorn and danger by!
Shame on the candour and the gracious smile
Bestowed on them that light the martyr's pile,
While insolent disdain in frowns expressed
Attends the tenets that endured that test!
Grant them the rights of men, and while they cease
To vex the peace of others, grant them peace;
But trusting bigots whose false zeal has made
Treachery their duty, thou art self-betrayed.
Hast thou, when Heaven has clothed thee with disgrace,
And, long-provoked, repaid thee to thy face,
(For thou hast known eclipses, and endured
Dimness and anguish, all thy beams obscured,
When sin has shed dishonor on thy brow;
And never of a sabler hue than now,)

Hast thou, with heart perverse and conscience sear'd,
Despising all rebuke, still persevered,
And having chosen evil, scorn'd the voice
That cried, Repent! -- and gloried in thy choice?
Thy fastings, when calamity at last
Suggests the expedient of a yearly fast,
What mean they? Canst thou dream there is a power
In lighter diet at a later hour,
To charm to sleep the threatening of the skies,
And hide past folly from all-seeing eyes?
The fast that wins deliverance, and suspends
The stroke that a vindictive God intends
Is to renounce hypocrisy; to draw
Thy life wupon the pattern of the law;
To war with pleasure, idolized before;
To vanquish lust, and wear its yoke no more.
All fasting else, whate'er be the pretence,
Is wooing mercy by renew'd offence.
Hast thou within thee sin, that in old time
Brought fire from heaven, the sex-abusing crime,
Whose horrid penetration stamps disgrace,
Baboons are free from, upon human race?
Think on the fruitful and well-water'd spot
That fed the flocks and herds of wealthy Lot,
Where Paradise seem'd still vouchsafed on earth,
Burning and scorch'd into perpetual dearth
Or, in his words who damn'd the base desire,
Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire:
Then nature, injured, scandalized, defiled,
Unveil'd her blushing cheek, looked on, and smiled;
Beheld with joy the lovely scene defac'd,
And praised the wrath that laid her beauties waste.
Far be the thought from any verse of mine,
And farther still the form'd and fix'd design,
To thrust the charge of deeds that I detest
Against an innocent, unconscious breast;
The man that dares traduce, because he can
With safety to himself, is not a man:
An individual is a sacred mark,
Not to be pierced in play, or in the dark;
But public censure speaks a public foe,
Unless a zeal for virtue guide the blow.

The priestly brotherhood, devout, sincere,
 From mean self-interest, and ambition clear,
 Their hope in heaven, servility their scorn,
 Prompt to persuade, expostulate, and warn,
 Their wisdom pure, and given them from above,
 Their usefulness ensured by zeal and love.
 As meek as the man Moses, and withal
 As bold as in Agrippa's presence Paul,
 Should fly the world's contaminating touch,
 Holy and unpolluted :-- are thine such?
 Except a few with Eli's spirit blest,
 Hophni and Phineas may describe the rest.
 Where shall a teacher look, in days like these,
 For ears and hearts that he can hope to please?
 Look to the poor, the simple and the plain
 Will hear perhaps thy salutary strain:
 Humility is gentle, apt to learn,
 Speak but the word, will listen and return.
 Alas, not so! the poorest of the flock
 Are proud, and set their faces as a rock;
 Denied that earthly opulence they choose,
 God's better gift they scoff at and refuse.
 The rich, the produce of a nobler stem,
 Are more intelligent, at least -- try them.
 Oh vain inquiry! they without remorse
 Are altogether gone a devious course;
 Where beckoning, pleasure leads them, wildly stray;
 Have burst the bands, and cast the yoke away.
 Now borne upon the wings of truth sublime,
 Review thy dim original and prime.
 This island, spot of unreclaim'd rude earth,
 The cradle that received thee at thy birth,
 Was rock'd by many a rough Norwegian blast,
 And Danish howlings scared thee as they pass'd;
 For thou wast born amid the din of arms,
 And suck'd a breast that panted with alarms
 While yet thou wast a grovelling, puling chit,
 Thy bones not fashion'd, and thy joints not knit,
 The Roman taught thy stubborn knee to bow,
 Though twice a Caesar could not bend thee now.
 Hist victory was that of orient light,
 When the sun's shafts disperse the gloom of night.

Thy language at this distant moment shows
How much the country to the conqueror owes;
Expressive, energetic, and refined,
In sparkles with the gems he left behind;
He brought thy land a blessing when he came,
He found thee savage, and he left thee tame;
Taught thee to clothe thy pink'd and painted hide,
And grac'd the figure with a soldier's pride;
He sow'd the seeds of order where he went,
Improv'd thee far beyond his own intent,
And, while he ruled thee by his sword alone,
Made thee at last a warrior like his own.
Religion, if in heavenly truths attired,
Needs only to be seen to be admired;
But thine, as dark as witcheries of the night,
Was form'd to harden hearts and shock the sight;
Thy druids struck the well-hung harps they bore
With fingers deeply dyed in human gore;
And while the victim slowly bled to death,
Upon the rolling chords rung out his dying breath.
Who brought the lamp that with awaking beams
Dispell'd thy gloom, and broke away thy dreams,
Tradition, now decrepit and worn out
Babbler of ancient fables, leaves a doubt:
But still light reach'd thee; and those gods of thine,
Woden and Thor, each tottering in his shrine,
Fell broken and defaced at their own door,
As Dagon in Philistia long before.
But Rome with sorceries and magic wand
Soon raised a cloud that darken'd every land,
And thine was smother'd in the stench and fog
Of Tiber's marshes and the papal bog.
Then priests with bulls and briefs and shaven crowns
And griping fists, and unrelenting frowns
Legates and delegates with powers from hell,
Though heavenly in pretension fleeced thee well
And to this hour to keep it fresh in mind,
Some twigs of that old scourge are left behind.
Thy soldiery, the pope's well managed pack,
Were train'd beneath his lash, and knew the smack,
And, when he laid them on the scent of blood,
Would hunt a Saracen through fire and flood.

Lavish of life, to win an empty tomb,
That proved a mint of wealth, a mine to Rome.
They left their bones beneath unfriendly skies,
His worthless absolution all the prize.
Thou wast the veriest slave in days of yore
That ever dragg'd a chain or tugg'd an oar;
Thy monarchs arbitrary, fierce, unjust,
Themselves the slaves of bigotry or lust,
Disdain'd thy counsels, only in distress
Found thee a goodly sponge for power to press
Thy chiefs, the lords of many a petty fee,
Provoked and harass'd, in return plagued thee;
Call'd thee away from peaceable employ,
Domestic happiness and rural joy,
To waste thy life in arms, or lay it down
In causeless feuds and bickerings of their own.
Thy parliaments adored, on bended knees.
The sovereignty they were convened to please;
Whate'er was ask'd, too timid to resist,
Complied with, and were graciously dismiss'd;
And if some Spartan soul a doubt express'd,
And, blushing at the tameness of the rest,
Dared to suppose the subject had a choice,
He was a traitor by the general voice.
Oh slave! with powers thou didst not dare exert,
Verse cannot stoop so low as thy desert;
It shakes the sides of splenetic disdain,
Thou self-entitled ruler of the main,
To trace thee to the date, when yon fair sea,
That clips thy shores, had no such charms for thee;
When other nations flew from coast to coast,
And thou hadst neither fleet nor flag to boast.
Kneel now, and lay thy forehead in the dust;
Blush if thou canst; not petrified, thou must;
Act but an honest and a faithful part;
Compare what then thou wast with what thou art;
And God's disposing providence confess'd,
Obduracy itself must yield the rest.--
Then thou art bound to serve him, and to prove,
Hour after hour, thy gratitude and love.
Has he not hid thee and thy favor'd land,
For ages, safe beneath his sheltering hand,

Given thee his blessing on the clearest proof,
Bid nations leagued against thee stand aloof,
And charged hostility and hate to roar
Where else they would, but not upon thy shore?
His power secured thee, when presumptuous Spain
Baptized her fleet invincible in vain;
Her gloomy monarch, doubtful and resign'd
To every pang that racks an anxious mind,
Ask'd of the waves that broke upon his coast,
What tidings? and the surge replied -- All lost!
And when the Stuart, leaning on the Scot,
Then too much fear'd, and now too much forgot
Pierced to the very centre of the realm,
And hoped to seize his abdicated helm,
'Twas but to prove how quickly, with a frown,
He that had raised thee could have pluck'd thee down.
Peculiar is the grace by thee possess'd,
Thy foes implacable, thy land at rest;
Thy thunders travel over earth and seas,
And all at home is pleasure, wealth, and ease.
'Tis thus, extending his temptestuous arm,
Thy Maker fills the nations with alarm,
While his own heaven surveys the troubled scene,
And feels no change, unshaken and serene.
Freedom, in other lands scarce known to shine,
Pours out a flood of splendor upon thine;
Thou hast as bright an interest in her rays
As ever Roman had in Rome's best days.
True freedom is where no restraint is known
That Scripture, justice, and good sense disown;
Where only vice and injury are tied,
And all from shore to shore is free beside.
Such freedom is -- and Windsor's hoary towers
Stood trembling at the boldness of thy powers,
That won a nymph on that immortal plain,
Like her the fabled Phoebus wooed in vain:
He found the laurel only -- happier you
The unfading laurel, and the virgin too!
Now think, if pleasure have a thought to spare;
If God himself be not beneath her care;
If business, constant as the wheels of time,
Can pause an hour to read a serious rhyme;

If the new mail thy merchants now receive,
Or expectation of the next give leave;
Oh think, if chargeable with deep arrears
For such indulgence gilding all thy years,
How much, though long neglected, shining yet,
The beams of heavenly truth have swell'd the debt.
When persecuting zeal made royal sport
With tortured innocence in Mary's court,
And Bonner, blithe as shepherd at a wake,
Enjoyed the show, and danced about the stake,
The sacred book, its value understood,
Received the seal of martyrdom in blood.
Those holy men, so full of truth and grace,
Seem to reflection of a different race,
Meek, modest, venerable, wise, sincere,
In such a cause they could not dare to fear;
They could not purchase earth with such a prize,
Or spare a life too short to reach the skies.
For them to thee conveyed along the tide,
Their streaming hearts pour'd freely when they died;
Those truths, which neither use nor years impair,
Invite thee, woo thee, to the bliss they share.
What dotage will not vanity maintain?
What web too weak to catch a modern brain?
The moles and bats in full assembly find,
On special search, the keen-eyed eagle blind.
And did they dream, and art thou wiser now?
Prove it -- if better, I submit and bow.
Wisdom and goodness are twin-born, one heart
Must hold both sisters, never seen apart.
So then -- as darkness overspread the deep,
Ere nature rose from her eternal sleep,
And this delightful earth, and that fair sky,
Leap'd out of nothing, call'd by the Most High;
By such a change thy darkness is made light,
Thy chaos order, and thy weakness might;
And He, whose power mere nullity obeys,
Who found thee nothing, form'd thee for his praise.
To praise him is to serve him, and fulfil,
Doing and suffering, his unquestioned will;
'Tis to believe what men inspired of old,
Faithful, and faithfully informed, unfold;

Candid and just, with no false aim in view,
To take for truth what cannot but be true;
To learn in God's own school the Christian part
And bind the task assigned thee to thine heart:
Happy the man there seeking and there found;
Happy the nation where such men abound!
How shall a verse impress thee? by what name
Shall I adjure thee not to court thy shame?
By theirs whose bright example, unimpeached,
Directs thee to that eminence they reached,
Heroes and worthies of days past, thy sires?
Or his, who touch'd their hearts with hallow'd fires?
Their names, alas! in vain reproach an age,
Whom all the vanities they scorn'd engage;
And his, that seraphs tremble at, is hung
Disgracefully on every trifler's tongue,
Or serves the champion in forensic war
To flourish and parade with at the bar.
Pleasure herself perhaps suggests a plea,
If interest move thee, to persuade e'en thee;
By every charm that smiles upon her face,
By joys possess'd and joys still held in chase,
If dear society be worth a thought,
And if the feast of freedom cloy thee not,
Reflect that these, and all that seems thine own
Held by the tenure of his will alone,
Like angels in the service of their Lord,
Remain with thee, or leave thee at his word;
That gratitude, and temperance in our use
Of what he gives, unsparing and profuse,
Secure the favor, and enhance the joy,
That thankless waste and wild abuse destroy.
But above all reflect on how cheap soe'er
Those rights, that millions envy thee, appear,
And though resolved to risk them, and swim down
The tide of pleasure, heedless of his frown,
That blessings truly sacred, and when given
Mark'd with the signature and stamp of Heaven,
The word of prophecy, those truths devine,
Which make that heaven if thou desire it, thine,
(Awful alternative! believed, beloved,
Thy glory and thy shame if unimproved,)

Are never long vouchsafed, if push'd aside
With cold disgust or philosophic pride;
And that judicially withdrawn, disgrace,
Error and darkness, occupy their place.
A world is up in arms, and thou, a spot
Not quickly found, if negligently sought,
Thy soul as ample as thy bounds are small,
Endur'st the brunt, and dar'st defy them all;
And wilt thou join to this bold enterprise
A bolder still, a contest with the skies?
Remember, if He guard thee and secure,
Whoe'er assails thee, thy success is sure;
But if He leave thee, though the skill and pow'r
Of nations, sworn to spoil thee and devour,
Were all collected in thy single arm,
And thou couldst laugh away the fear of harm,
That strength would fail, opposed against the push
And feeble onset of a pigmy rush.
Say not (and if the thought of such defence
Should spring within thy bosom, drive it thence),
What nation amongst all my foes is free
From crimes as base as any charged on me?
Their measure fill'd, they too shall pay the debt,
Which God, though long forbore, will not forget.
But know that wrath divine, when most severe,
Makes justice still the guide of his career,
And will not punish, in one mingled crowd,
Them without light, and thee without a cloud.
Muse, hang his harp upon yon aged beech,
Still murmuring with the solemn truths I teach;
And, while at intervals a cold blast sings
Through the dry leaves, and pants upon the strings,
My soul shall sigh in secret, and lament
A nation scourged, yet tardy to repent.
I know the warning song is sung in vain;
That few will hear, and fewer heed the strain;
But if a sweeter voice, and one design'd
A blessing to my country and mankind.
Reclaim the wandering thousands, and bring home
A flock so scatter'd and so wont to roam,
Then place it once again between my knees;
The sound of truth will then be sure to please,

And truth alone, where'er my life be cast,
In scenes of plenty, or the pining waste,
Shall be my chosen theme, my glory to the last.

William Cowper

Familiarity Dangerous

As in her ancient mistress' lap
The youthful tabby lay,
They gave each other many a tap,
Alike disposed to play.

But strife ensues. Puss waxes warm,
And with protruded claws
Ploughs all the length of Lydia's arm,
Mere wantonness the cause.

At once, resentful of the deed,
She shakes her to the ground
With many a threat that she shall bleed
With still a deeper wound.

But, Lydia, bid thy fury rest:
It was a venial stroke:
For she that will with kittens jest
Should bear a kitten's joke.

William Cowper

For The Poor

When Hagar found the bottle spent
And wept o'er Ishmael,
A message from the Lord was sent
To guide her to a well.

Should not Elijah's cake and cruse
Convince us at this day,
A gracious God will not refuse
Provisions by the way?

His saints and servants shall be fed,
The promise is secure;
"Bread shall be given them," as He said,
"Their water shall be sure."

Repasts far richer they shall prove,
Than all earth's dainties are;
'Tis sweet to taste a Saviour's love,
Though in the meanest fare.

To Jesus then your trouble bring,
Nor murmur at your lot;
While you are poor and He is King,
You shall not be forgot.

William Cowper

Friendship

What virtue, or what mental grace
But men unqualified and base
Will boast it their possession?
Profusion apes the noble part
Of liberality of heart,
And dulness of discretion.

If every polish'd gem we find,
Illuminating heart or mind,
Provoke to imitation;
No wonder friendship does the same,
That jewel of the purest flame,
Or rather constellation.

No knave but boldly will pretend
The requisites that form a friend,
A real and a sound one;
Nor any fool, he would deceive,
But prove as ready to believe,
And dream that he had found one.

Candid, and generous, and just,
Boys care but little whom they trust,
An error soon corrected—
For who but learns in riper years
That man, when smoothest he appears,
Is most to be suspected?

But here again a danger lies,
Lest, having misapplied our eyes,
And taken trash for treasure,
We should unwarily conclude
Friendship a false ideal good,
A mere Utopian pleasure.

An acquisition rather rare
Is yet no subject of despair;
Nor is it wise complaining,
If, either on forbidden ground,

Or where it was not to be found,
We sought without attaining.

No friendship will abide the test,
That stands on sordid interest,
Or mean self-love erected;
Nor such as may awhile subsist
Between the sot and sensualist,
For vicious ends connected.

Who seek a friend should come dispos'd
To exhibit, in full bloom disclos'd,
The graces and the beauties
That form the character he seeks,
For 'tis a union that bespeaks
Reciprocated duties.

Mutual attention is implied,
And equal truth on either side,
And constantly supported;
'Tis senseless arrogance to accuse
Another of sinister views,
Our own as much distorted.

But will sincerity suffice?
It is indeed above all price,
And must be made the basis;
But every virtue of the soul
Must constitute the charming whole,
All shining in their places.

A fretful temper will divide
The closest knot that may be tied,
By ceaseless sharp corrosion;
A temper passionate and fierce
May suddenly your joys disperse
At one immense explosion.

In vain the talkative unite
In hopes of permanent delight—
The secret just committed,
Forgetting its important weight,

They drop through mere desire to prate,
And by themselves outwitted.

How bright soe'er the prospect seems,
All thoughts of friendship are but dreams,
If envy chance to creep in;
An envious man, if you succeed,
May prove a dangerous foe indeed,
But not a friend worth keeping.

As envy pines at good possess'd,
So jealousy looks forth distress'd
On good that seems approaching;
And, if success his steps attend,
Discerns a rival in a friend,
And hates him for encroaching.

Hence authors of illustrious name,
Unless belied by common fame,
Are sadly prone to quarrel,
To deem the wit a friend displays
A tax upon their own just praise,
And pluck each other's laurel.

A man renown'd for repartee
Will seldom scruple to make free
With friendship's finest feeling,
Will thrust a dagger at your breast,
And say he wounded you in jest,
By way of balm for healing.

Whoever keeps an open ear
For tattlers will be sure to hear
The trumpet of contention;
Aspersions is the babblers' trade,
To listen is to lend him aid,
And rush into dissension.

A friendship that in frequent fits
Of controversial rage emits
The sparks of disputation,
Like hand-in-hand insurance-plates,

Most unavoidably creates
The thought of conflagration.

Some fickle creatures boast a soul
True as a needle to the pole,
Their humour yet so various—
They manifest their whole life through
The needle's deviations too,
Their love is so precarious.

The great and small but rarely meet
On terms of amity complete;
Plebeians must surrender,
And yield so much to noble folk,
It is combining fire with smoke,
Obscurity with splendour.

Some are so placid and serene
(As Irish bogs are always green),
They sleep secure from waking;
And are indeed a bog, that bears
Your unparticipated cares
Unmoved and without quaking.

Courtier and patriot cannot mix
Their heterogeneous politics
Without an effervescence,
Like that of salts with lemon juice,
Which does not yet like that produce
A friendly coalescence.

Religion should extinguish strife,
And make a calm of human life;
But friends that chance to differ
On points which God has left at large,
How freely will they meet and charge!
No combatants are stiffer.

To prove at last my main intent
Needs no expense of argument,
No cutting and contriving—
Seeking a real friend, we seem

To adopt the chemist's golden dream,
With still less hope of thriving.

Sometimes the fault is all our own,
Some blemish in due time made known
By trespass or omission;
Sometimes occasion brings to light
Our friend's defect, long hid from sight,
And even from suspicion.

Then judge yourself, and prove your man
As circumspectly as you can,
And, having made election,
Beware no negligence of yours,
Such as a friend but ill endures,
Enfeeble his affection.

That secrets are a sacred trust,
That friends should be sincere and just,
That constancy befits them,
Are observations on the case,
That savour much of commonplace,
And all the world admits them.

But 'tis not timber, lead, and stone,
An architect requires alone
To finish a fine building—
The palace were but half complete,
If he could possibly forget
The carving and the gilding.

The man that hails you Tom or Jack,
And proves by thumps upon your back
How he esteems your merit,
Is such a friend, that one had need
Be very much his friend indeed
To pardon or to bear it.

As similarity of mind,
Or something not to be defined,
First fixes our attention;
So manners decent and polite,

The same we practised at first sight,
Must save it from declension.

Some act upon this prudent plan,
"Say little, and hear all you can."
Safe policy, but hateful—
So barren sands imbibe the shower,
But render neither fruit nor flower,
Unpleasant and ungrateful.

The man I trust, if shy to me,
Shall find me as reserved as he,
No subterfuge or pleading
Shall win my confidence again;
I will by no means entertain
A spy on my proceeding.

These samples—for, alas! at last
These are but samples, and a taste
Of evils yet unmention'd—
May prove the task a task indeed,
In which 'tis much if we succeed,
However well intention'd.

Pursue the search, and you will find
Good sense and knowledge of mankind
To be at least expedient,
And, after summing all the rest,
Religion ruling in the breast
A principal ingredient.

The noblest Friendship ever shown
The Saviour's history makes known,
Though some have turn'd and turn'd it;
And, whether being crazed or blind,
Or seeking with a biass'd mind,
Have not, it seems, discern'd it.

O Friendship! if my soul forego
Thy dear delights while here below,
To mortify and grieve me,
May I myself at last appear

Unworthy, base, and insincere,
Or may my friend deceive me!

William Cowper

From Menander

Fond youth! who dream'st that hoarded gold
Is needful not alone to pay
For all thy various items sold,
To serve the wants of every day;

Bread, vinegar, and oil, and meat,
For savory viands season'd high;
But somewhat more important yet--
I tell thee what it cannot buy.

No treasure hadst thou more amass'd
Than fame to Tantalus assign'd,
Would save thee from a tomb at last,
But thou must leave it all behind.

I give thee, therefore, counsel wise;
Confide not vainly in thy store,
However large -- much less despise
Others comparatively poor;

But in thy more exalted state
A just and equal temper show
That all who see thee rich and great,
May deem thee worthy to be so.

William Cowper

From The Greek Of Julianus

A Spartan, his companion slain,
Alone from battle fled;
His mother, kindling with disdain
That she had borne him, struck him dead;
For courage, and not birth alone,
In Sparta, testifies a son!

William Cowper

Glory To God Alone

Oh loved! but not enough--though dearer far
Than self and its most loved enjoyments are;
None duly loves thee, but who, nobly free
From sensual objects, finds his all in thee.

Glory of God! thou stranger here below,
Whom man nor knows, nor feels a wish to know;
Our faith and reason are both shocked to find
Man in the post of honour—Thee behind.

Reason exclaims--'Let every creature fall,
Ashamed, abased, before the Lord of all;'
And faith, o'erwhelmed with such a dazzling blaze,
Feebly describes the beauty she surveys.

Yet man, dim-sighted man, and rash as blind,
Deaf to the dictates of his better mind,
In frantic competition dares the skies,
And claims precedence of the Only wise.

Oh, lost in vanity, till once self-known!
Nothing is great, or good, but God alone;
When thou shalt stand before his awful face,
Then, at the last, thy pride shall know his place.

Glorious, Almighty, First, and without end!
When wilt thou melt the mountains and descend?
When wilt thou shoot abroad thy conquering rays,
And teach these atoms, thou hast made, thy praise?

Thy glory is the sweetest heaven I feel;
And, if I seek it with too fierce a zeal,
Thy love, triumphant o'er a selfish will,
Taught me the passion, and inspires it still.

My reason, all my faculties, unite,
To make thy glory their supreme delight:
Forbid it, fountain of my brightest days,
That I should rob thee, and usurp thy praise!

My soul! rest happy in thy low estate,
Nor hope, nor wish, to be esteemed or great,
To take the impression of a will divine,
Be that thy glory, and those riches thine.

Confess him righteous in his just decrees,
Love what he loves, and let his pleasure please;
Die daily; from the touch of sin recede;
Then thou hast crowned him, and he reigns indeed.

William Cowper

God Hides His People

To lay the soul that loves him low,
Becomes the Only-wise:
To hide beneath a veil of woe,
The children of the skies.

Man, though a worm, would yet be great;
Though feeble, would seem strong;
Assumes an independent state,
By sacrilege and wrong.

Strange the reverse, which, once abased,
The haughty creature proves!
He feels his soul a barren waste,
Nor dares affirm he loves.

Scorned by the thoughtless and the vain,
To God he presses near;
Superior to the world's disdain,
And happy in its sneer.

Oh welcome, in his heart he says,
Humility and shame!
Farewell the wish for human praise,
The music of a name!

But will not scandal mar the good
That I might else perform?
And can God work it, if he would,
By so despised a worm?

Ah, vainly anxious!—leave the Lord
To rule thee, and dispose;
Sweet is the mandate of his word,
And gracious all he does.

He draws from human littleness
His grandeur and renown;
And generous hearts with joy confess
The triumph all his own.

Down, then, with self-exalting thoughts;
Thy faith and hope employ,
To welcome all that he allots,
And suffer shame with joy.

No longer, then, thou wilt encroach
On his eternal right;
And he shall smile at thy approach,
And make thee his delight.

William Cowper

God Moves In A Mysterious Way

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

William Cowper

God Neither Known Nor Loved By The World

Ye linnets, let us try, beneath this grove,
Which shall be loudest in our Maker's praise!
In quest of some forlorn retreat I rove,
For all the world is blind, and wanders from his ways.

That God alone should prop the sinking soul,
Fills them with rage against his empire now:
I traverse earth in vain from pole to pole,
To seek one simple heart, set free from all below.

They speak of love, yet little feel its sway,
While in their bosom many an idol lurks;
Their base desires, well satisfied, obey,
Leave the Creator's hand, and lean upon his works.

'Tis therefore I can dwell with man no more;
Your fellowship, ye warblers! suits me best:
Pure love has lost its price, though prized of yore,
Profaned by modern tongues, and slighted as a jest.

My God, who formed you for his praise alone,
Beholds his purpose well fulfilled in you;
Come, let us join the choir before his throne,
Partaking in his praise with spirits just and true.

Yes, I will always love; and, as I ought,
Tune to the praise of love my ceaseless voice;
Preferring love too vast for human thought,
In spite of erring men, who cavil at my choice.

Why have I not a thousand thousand hearts,
Lord of my soul! that they might all be thine?
If thou approve—the zeal thy smile imparts,
How should it ever fail! can such a fire decline?

Love, pure and holy, is a deathless fire;
Its object heavenly, it must ever blaze:
Eternal love a God must needs inspire,
When once he wins the heart, and fits it for his praise.

Self-love dismissed—'tis then we live indeed—
In her embrace, death, only death is found:
Come, then, one noble effort, and succeed,
Cast off the chain of self with which thy soul is bound.

Oh! I could cry, that all the world might hear,
Ye self-tormentors, love your God alone;
Let his unequalled excellence be dear,
Dear to your inmost souls, and make him all your own!

They hear me not—alas! how fond to rove
In endless chase of folly's specious lure!
'Tis here alone, beneath this shady grove,
I taste the sweets of truth—here only am secure.

William Cowper

Grace And Providence

Almighty King! whose wondrous hand
Supports the weight of sea and land;
Whose grace is such a boundless store,
No heart shall break that sighs for more.

Thy providence supplies my food,
And 'tis Thy blessing makes it good;
My soul is nourish'd by Thy Word,
Let soul and body praise the Lord!

My streams of outward comfort came
From Him who built this earthly frame;
Whate'er I want His bounty gives,
By whom my soul forever lives.

Either His hand preserves from pain,
Or, if I feel it, heals again;
From Satan's malice shields my breast,
Or overrules it for the best.

Forgive the song that falls so low
Beneath the gratitude I owe!
It means Thy praise: however poor,
An angel's song can do no more.

William Cowper

Gratitude And Love To God

All are indebted much to thee,
But I far more than all,
From many a deadly snare set free,
And raised from many a fall.
Overwhelm me, from above,
Daily, with thy boundless love.

What bonds of gratitude I feel
No language can declare;
Beneath the oppressive weight I reel,
'Tis more than I can bear:
When shall I that blessing prove,
To return thee love for love?

Spirit of charity, dispense
Thy grace to every heart;
Expel all other spirits thence,
Drive self from every part;
Charity divine, draw nigh,
Break the chains in which we lie!

All selfish souls, whate'er they feign,
Have still a slavish lot;
They boast of liberty in vain,
Of love, and feel it not.
He whose bosom glows with thee,
He, and he alone, is free.

Oh blessedness, all bliss above,
When thy pure fires prevail!
Love only teaches what is love:
All other lessons fail:
We learn its name, but not its powers,
Experience only makes it ours.

William Cowper

Gratitude, Addressed To Lady Hesketh

This cap, that so stately appears,
With ribbon-bound tassel on high,
Which seems by the crest that it rears
Ambitious of brushing the sky;
This cap to my Cousin I owe,
She gave it, and gave me beside,
Wreathed into an elegant bow,
The ribbon with which it was tied.

This wheel-footed studying chair,
Contrived both for toil and repose,
Wide-elbowed, and wadded with air,
In which I both scribble and doze,
Bright-studded to dazzle the eyes,
And rival in lustre of that
In which, or astronomy lies,
Fair Cassiopeia sat:

These carpets, so soft to the foot,
Caledonia's traffic and pride,
O spare them, ye knights of the boot,
Escaped from a cross-country ride!
This table and mirror within,
Secure from collision and dust,
At which I oft shave cheek and chin,
And periwig nicely adjust:

This moveable structure of shelves,
For its beauty admired and its use,
And charged with octavos and twelves.
The gayest I had to produce;
Where, flaming in scarlet and gold,
My poems enchanted I view,
And hope, in due time, to behold
My Iliad and Odyssey too:

This china, that decks the alcove,
Which here people call a buffet,
But what the gods call it above,

Has ne'er been revealed to us yet:
These curtains, that keep the room warm
Or cool as the season demands,
Those stoves that for pattern and form
Seem the labour of Mulciber's hands:

All these are not half that I owe
To One, from our earliest youth
To me ever ready to show
Benignity, friendship, and truth;
For time, the destroyer declared
And foe of our perishing kind,
If even her face he has spared,
Much less could he alter her mind.

Thus compassed about with the goods
And chattels of leisure and ease,
I indulge my poetical moods
In many such fancies as these;
And fancies I fear they will seem--
Poets' goods are not often so fine;
The poets will swear that I dream,
When I sing of the splendour of mine.

William Cowper

Happy Solitude--Unhappy Men

My heart is easy, and my burden light;
I smile, though sad, when thou art in my sight:
The more my woes in secret I deplore,
I taste thy goodness, and I love thee more.

There, while a solemn stillness reigns around,
Faith, love, and hope within my soul abound;
And, while the world suppose me lost in care,
The joys of angels, unperceived, I share.

Thy creatures wrong thee, O thou sovereign good!
Thou art not loved, because not understood;
This grieves me most, that vain pursuits beguile
Ungrateful men, regardless of thy smile.

Frail beauty and false honour are adored;
While Thee they scorn, and trifle with thy Word;
Pass, unconcerned, a Saviour's sorrows by;
And hunt their ruin with a zeal to die.

William Cowper

Hatred And Vengeance, My Eternal Portion

Hatred and vengeance, my eternal portion,
Scarce can endure delay of execution,
Wait, with impatient readiness, to seize my
Soul in a moment.

Damned below Judas: more abhorred than he was,
Who for a few pence sold his holy Master.
Twice betrayed Jesus me, this last delinquent,
Deems the profanest.

Man disavows, and Deity disowns me:
Hell might afford my miseries a shelter;
Therefore hell keeps her ever hungry mouths all
Belted against me.

Hard lot! encompassed with a thousand dangers;
Weary, faint, trembling with a thousand terrors;
I'm called, if vanquished, to receive a sentence
Worse than Abiram's.

Him the vindictive rod of angry justice
Sent quick and howling to the center headlong;
I, fed with judgment, in a fleshly tomb, am
Buried above ground.

William Cowper

Hatred Of Sin

Holy Lord God! I love Thy truth,
Nor dare Thy least commandment slight;
Yet pierced by sin the serpent's tooth,
I mourn the anguish of the bite.

But though the poison lurks within,
Hope bids me still with patience wait;
Till death shall set me free from sin,
Free from the only thing I hate.

Had I a throne above the rest,
Where angels and archangels dwell,
One sin, unslain, within my breast,
Would make that heaven as dark as hell.

The prisoner sent to breathe fresh air,
And blest with liberty again,
Would mourn were he condemn'd to wear
One link of all his former chain.

But, oh! no foe invades the bliss,
When glory crowns the Christian's head;
One look at Jesus as He is
Will strike all sin forever dead.

William Cowper

Heroism

There was a time when Ætna's silent fire
Slept unperceived, the mountain yet entire;
When, conscious of no danger from below,
She tower'd a cloud-capt pyramid of snow.
No thunders shook with deep intestine sound
The blooming groves that girdled her around.
Her unctuous olives, and her purple vines
(Unfelt the fury of those bursting mines)
The peasant's hopes, and not in vain, assured,
In peace upon her sloping sides matured.
When on a day, like that of the last doom,
A conflagration labouring in her womb,
She teem'd and heaved with an infernal birth,
That shook the circling seas and solid earth.
Dark and voluminous the vapours rise,
And hang their horrors in the neighbouring skies,
While through the Stygian veil, that blots the day,
In dazzling streaks the vivid lightnings play.
But oh! what muse, and in what powers of song,
Can trace the torrent as it burns along?
Havoc and devastation in the van,
It marches o'er the prostrate works of man;
Vines, olives, herbage, forests disappear,
And all the charms of a Sicilian year.
Revolving seasons, fruitless as they pass,
See it an uninform'd and idle mass;
Without a soil to invite the tiller's care,
Or blade that might redeem it from despair.
Yet time at length (what will not time achieve?)
Clothes it with earth, and bids the produce live.
Once more the spiry myrtle crowns the glade,
And ruminating flocks enjoy the shade.
O bliss precarious, and unsafe retreats,
O charming Paradise of shortlived sweets!
The self-same gale that wafts the fragrance round
Brings to the distant ear a sullen sound:
Again the mountain feels the imprison'd foe,
Again pours ruin on the vale below.
Ten thousand swains the wasted scene deplore,

That only future ages can restore.
Ye monarchs, whom the lure of honour draws,
Who write in blood the merits of your cause,
Who strike the blow, then plead your own defence,
Glory your aim, but justice your pretence;
Behold in AEtna's emblematic fires
The mischiefs your ambitious pride inspires!
Fast by the stream that bounds your just domain,
And tells you where you have a right to reign,
A nation dwells, not envious of your throne,
Studious of peace, their neighbour's and their own.
Ill-fated race! how deeply must they rue
Their only crime, vicinity to you!
The trumpet sounds, your legions swarm abroad,
Through the ripe harvest lies their destined road;
At every step beneath their feet they tread
The life of multitudes, a nation's bread!
Earth seems a garden in its loveliest dress
Before them, and behind a wilderness.
Famine, and Pestilence, her firstborn son,
Attend to finish what the sword begun;
And echoing praises, such as fiends might earn,
And folly pays, resound at your return.
A calm succeeds—but Plenty, with her train
Of heartfelt joys, succeeds not soon again:
And years of pining indigence must show
What scourges are the gods that rule below.
Yet man, laborious man, by slow degrees
(Such is his thirst of opulence and ease),
Plies all the sinews of industrious toil,
Gleans up the refuse of the general spoil,
Rebuilds the towers that smoked upon the plain,
And the sun gilds the shining spires again.
Increasing commerce and reviving art
Renew the quarrel on the conqueror's part;
And the sad lesson must be learn'd once more,
That wealth within is ruin at the door.
What are ye, monarchs, laurell'd heroes, say,
But Ætnas of the suffering world ye sway?
Sweet Nature, stripp'd of her embroider'd robe,
Deplores the wasted regions of her globe;
And stands a witness at Truth's awful bar,

To prove you there destroyers as ye are.
O place me in some heaven-protected isle,
Where Peace, and Equity, and Freedom smile;
Where no volcano pours his fiery flood,
No crested warrior dips his plume in blood;
Where Power secures what Industry has won:
Where to succeed is not to be undone;
A land that distant tyrants hate in vain,
In Britain's isle, beneath a George's reign.

William Cowper

Hope, Like The Short-Lived Ray That Gleams Awhile

Hope, like the short-lived ray that gleams awhile
Through wintry skies, upon the frozen waste,
Cheers e'en the face of misery to a smile;
But soon the momentary pleasure's past.

How oft, my Delia, since our last farewell,
(Years that have rolled since that distressful hour),
Grieved I have said, when most our hopes prevail,
Our promised happiness is least secure.

Oft I have thought the scene of troubles closed,
And hoped once more to gaze upon your charms;
As oft some dire mischance has interposed,
And snatched the expected blessing from my arms.

The seaman thus, his shattered vessel lost,
Still vainly strives to shun the threatening death;
And while he thinks to gain the friendly coast,
And drops his feet, and feels the sands beneath,

Borne by the wave steep-sloping from the shore,
Back to the inclement deep, again he beats
The surge aside, and seems to treat secure;
And now the refluent wave his baffled toil defeats.

Had you, my love, forbade me to pursue
My fond attempt, disdainfully retired,
And with proud scorn compelled me to subdue
The ill-fated passion by yourself inspired;

Then haply to some distant spot removed,
Hopeless to gain, unwilling to molest
With fond entreaties whom I dearly loved,
Despair or absense had redeemed my rest.

But now, sole partner in my Delia's heart,
Yet doomed far off in exile to complain,
Eternal absence cannot ease my smart,
And hope subsists but to prolong my pain.

Oh, then, kind Heaven, be this my latest breath!
Here end my life, or make it worth my care;
Absence from whom we love is worse than death,
And frustrate hope severer than dismay.

William Cowper

Horace, Book I. Ode IX.

Seest thou yon mountain laden with deep snow,
The groves beneath their fleecy burden bow,
The streams congeal'd, forget to flow,
Come, thaw the cold, and lay a cheerful pile
Of fuel on the hearth;
Broach the best cask and make old winter smile
With seasonable mirth.

This be our part -- let Heaven dispose the rest;
If Jove command, the winds shall sleep,
That now wage war upon the foamy deep,
And gentle gales spring from the balmy west.

E'en let us shift to-morrow as we may,
When to-morrow's passed away,
We at least shall have to say,
We have lived another day;
Your auburn locks will soon be silver'd o'er,
Old age is at our heels, and youth returns no more.

William Cowper

Horace, Book I. Ode Xxxviii.

Boy, I hate their empty shows,
Persian garlands I detest,
Bring not me the late-blown rose,
Lingering after all the rest.
Plainer myrtle pleases me,
Thus outstretch'd beneath my vine;
Myrtle more becoming thee,
Waiting with thy master's wine.

William Cowper

Horace, Book I. Ode Xxxviii. (2)

Boy! I detest all Persian fopperies,
Fillet-bound garlands are to me disgusting;
Task not thyself with any search, I charge thee,
Where latest roses linger.

Bring me alone (for thou wilt find that readily)
Plain myrtle. Myrtle neither will disparage
Thee occupied to serve me, or me drinking
Beneath my vine's cool shelter.

William Cowper

Horace, Book II. Ode XVI.

Ease is the weary merchant's prayer,
Who ploughs by night the Ægean flood,
When neither moon nor stars appear,
Or faintly glimmer through the cloud.

For ease the Mede with quiver graced,
For ease the Thracian hero sighs,
Delightful ease all pant to taste,
A blessing which no treasure buys.

For neither gold can lull to rest,
Nor all a Consul's guard beat off
The tumults of a troubled breast,
The cares that haunt a gilded roof.

Happy the man whose table shows
A few clean ounces of old plate,
Nor fear intrudes on his repose,
Nor sordid wishes to be great.

Poor short-lived things, what plans we lay
Ah, why forsake our native home?
To distant climates speed away;
For self sticks close where'er we roam.

Care follows hard, and soon o'ertakes
The well-rigg'd ship, the warlike steed;
Her destined quarry ne'er forsakes --
Not the wind flies with half her speed.

From anxious fears of future ill
Guard well the cheerful, happy now;
Gild e'en your sorrows with a smile,
No blessing is unmix'd below.

Thy neighing steeds and lowing herds,
Thy numerous flocks around thee graze,
And the best purple Tyre affords
Thy robe magnificent displays.

One me indulgent Heaven bestow'd
A rural mansion, neat and small;
This lyre; -- and as for yonder crowd,
The happiness to hate them all.

William Cowper

Horace. Book II. Ode X.

Receive, dear friend, the truths I teach,
So shalt thou live beyond the reach
Of adverse fortune's power;
Not always tempt the distant deep,
Nor always timorously creep
Along the treacherous shore.

He that holds fast the golden mean,
And lives contentedly between
The little and the great,
Feels not the wants that pinch the poor,
Nor plagues that haunt the rich man's door,
Imbittering all his state.

The tallest pines feels most the power
Of wintry blast, the loftiest tower
Comes heaviest to the ground;
The bolts that spare the mountain's side,
His cloud-clapt eminence divide
And spread the ruin round.

The well-informed philosopher
Rejoices with a wholesome fear,
And hopes in spite of pain;
If winter bellow from the north,
Soon the sweet spring comes dancing forth,
And nature laughs again.

What if thine heaven be overcast,
The dark appearance will not last,
Expect a brighter sky;
The God that strings the silver bow
Awakes sometimes the muses too,
And lays his arrows by.

If hindrances obstruct thy way,
Thy magnanimity display,
And let thy strength be seen;
But oh! if Fortune fill thy sail

With more than a propitious gale,
Take half thy canvas in!

A REFLECTION ON THE FOREGOING ODE.

And is this all? Can reason do no more
Than bid me shun the deep and dread the shore?
Sweet moralist! afloat on life's rough sea
The Christian has an art unknown to thee;
He holds no parley with unmanly fears,
Where duty bids he confidently steers,
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,
And trusting in his God, surmount's them all.

William Cowper

Human Frailty

Weak and irresolute is man;
The purpose of to-day,
Woven with pains into his plan,
To-morrow rends away.

The bow well bent, and smart the spring,
Vice seems already slain;
But passion rudely snaps the string,
And it revives again.

Some foe to his upright intent
Finds out his weaker part;
Virtue engages his assent,
But Pleasure wins his heart.

'Tis here the folly of the wise
Through all his art we view;
And, while his tongue the charge denies,
His conscience owns it true.

Bound on a voyage of awful length
And dangers little known,
A stranger to superior strength,
Man vainly trusts his own.

But oars alone can ne'er prevail
To reach the distant coast;
The breath of Heaven must swell the sail,
Or all the toil is lost.

William Cowper

Hymn For The Use Of The Sunday School At Olney

Hear, Lord, the song of praise and prayer,
In heaven thy dwelling-place,
From infants, made the public care,
And taught to seek thy face!

Thanks for thy word and for thy day;
And grant us, we implore,
Never to waste in sinful play
Thy holy Sabbaths more.

Thanks that we hear,--but oh! impart
To each desires sincere,
That we may listen with our heart,
And learn as well as hear.

For if vain thoughts the minds engage
Of elder far than we,
What hope that at our heedless age
Our minds should e'er be free?

Much hope, if thou our spirits take
Under thy gracious sway,
Who canst the wisest wiser make,
And babes as wise as they.

Wisdom and bliss thy word bestows,
A sun that ne'er declines;
And be thy mercies showered on those
Who placed us where it shines.

William Cowper

I Will Praise The Lord At All Times

Winter has a joy for me,
While the Saviour's charms I read,
Lowly, meek, from blemish free,
In the snowdrop's pensive head.

Spring returns, and brings along
Life-invigorating suns:
Hark! the turtle's plaintive song
Seems to speak His dying groans!

Summer has a thousand charms,
All expressive of His worth;
'Tis His sun that lights and warms,
His the air the cools the earth.

What! has autumn left to say
Nothing of a Saviour's grace?
Yes, the beams of milder day
Tell me of his smiling face.

Light appears with early dawn,
While the sun makes haste to rise;
See His bleeding beauties drawn
On the blushes of the skies.

Evening with a silent pace,
Slowly moving in the west,
Shews an emblem of His grace,
Points to an eternal rest.

William Cowper

Idem Latine Redditum

Heu inimicitias quoties parit æmula forma,
Quam raro pulchrae, pulchra placere potest!
Sed fines ultrà solitos discordia tendit,
Cum flores ipsos bilis et ira movent.

Hortus ubi dulces præbet tacitosque recessûs,

Se rapit in partes gens animosa duas,
Hic sibi regales Amaryllis candida cultûs,

Illic purpureo vindicat ore Rosa.

Ira Rosam et meritis quæsita superbia tangunt,
Multaque ferventi vix cohibenda sinû,

Dum sibi fautorum ciet undique nomina vatûm,

Iusque suum, multo carmine fulta, probat.

Altior emicat illa, et celso vertice nutat,
Ceum flores inter non habitura parem,
Fastiditque alios, et nata videtur in usûs,

Imperii, sceptrum, Flora quod ipsa gerat.

Nec Dea non sensit civilis murmura rixæ,

Cui curæ est pictas pandere ruris opes.
Deliciasque suas nunquam non prompta tueri,
Dum licet et locus est, ut tueatur, adest.

Et tibi forma datur procerior omnibus, inquit,
Et tibi, principibus qui solet esse, color,
Et donec vincat quædam formosior ambas,
Et tibi reginæ nomen, et esto tibi.

His ubi sedatus furor est, petit utraque nympham
Qualem inter Veneres Anglia sola parit;
Hanc penes imperium est, nihil optant amplius, hujus

Regnant in nitidis, et sine lite, genis.

William Cowper

In A Letter To C. P. Esq. Ill With The Rheumatism

Grant me the Muse, ye gods! whose humble flight
Seeks not the mountain-top's pernicious height:
Who can the tall Parnassian cliff forsake,
To visit oft the still Lethean lake;
Now her slow pinions brush the silent shore,
Now gently skim the unwrinkled waters o'er,
There dips her downy plumes, thence upward flies,
And sheds soft slumbers on her votary's eyes.

William Cowper

In A Letter To C. P. Esq. In Imitation Of Shakspeare

Trust me the meed of praise, dealt thriftily
From the nice scale of judgement, honours more
Than does the lavish and o'erbearing tide
Of profuse courtesy. Not all the gems
Of India's richest soil at random spread
O'er the gay vesture of some glittering dame,
Give such alluring vantage to the person,
As the scant lustre of a few, with choice
And comely guise of ornament disposed.

William Cowper

In Memory Of The Late John Thornton, Esq.

Poets attempt the noblest task they can,
Praising the Author of all good in man,
And, next, commemorating Worthies lost,
The dead in whom that good abounded most.
Thee, therefore, of commercial fame, but more
Famed for thy probity from shore to shore;
Thee, Thornton! worthy in some page to shine,
As honest and more eloquent than mine,
I mourn; or, since thrice happy thou must be,
The world, no longer thy abode, not thee.
Thee to deplore were grief misspent indeed;
It were to weep that goodness has its meed,
That there is bliss prepared in yonder sky,
And glory for the virtuous, when they die.
What pleasure can the miser's fondled hoard,
Or spendthrift's prodigal excess afford,
Sweet as the privilege of healing woe
By virtue suffered combating below?
That privilege was thine; Heaven gave thee means
To illuminate with delight the saddest scenes,
Till thy appearance chased the gloom, forlorn
As midnight, and despairing of a morn.
Thou hadst an industry in doing good,
Restless as his who toils and sweats for food;
Avarice, in thee, was the desire of wealth
By rust unperishable or by stealth;
And if the genuine worth of gold depend
On application to its noblest end,
Thine had a value in the scales of Heaven,
Surpassing all that mine or mint had given.
And, though God made thee of a nature prone
To distribution boundless of thy own,
And still by motives of religious force
Impelled the more to that heroic course,
Yet was thy liberality discreet,
Nice in its choice, and of a tempered heat,
And though in act unwearied, secret still,
As in some solitude the summer rill
Refreshes, where it winds, the faded green,

And cheers the drooping flowers, unheard, unseen.
Such was thy charity; no sudden start,
After long sleep, of passion in the heart,
But steadfast principle, and, in its kind,
Of close relation to the eternal mind,
Traced easily to its true source above,
To Him, whose works bespeak his nature, love.
Thy bounties all were Christian, and I make
This record of thee for the gospel's sake;
That the incredulous themselves may see
Its use and power exemplified in thee.

William Cowper

In Seditionem Horrendam, Corruptelis Gallicus Ut Fertue, Londini Nuper Exortam

Perfida, crudelis, victa et lymphata furore,
Non armis, laurum Gallia fraude petit.
Venalem pretio plebem conducit, et urit
Undique privatas patriciasque domos.
Nequicquam conata suâ, fœdissima sperat
Posse tamen nostrâ nos superare manu.
Gallia, vana struis! Precibus nunc utere! Vinces,
Nam mites timidis supplicibusque sumus.

TRANSLATION.

False, cruel, disappointed, stung to the heart,
France quits the warrior's for the assassin's part,
To dirty hands a dirty bribe conveys,
Bids the low street and lofty palace blaze.
Her sons, too weak to vanquish us alone,
She hires the worst and basest of our own.
Kneel, France! a suppliant conquers us with ease,
We always spare a coward on his knees.

William Cowper

Inscription For A Hermitage In The Author's Garden

This cabin, Mary, in my sight appears,
Built as it has been in our waning years,
A rest afforded to our weary feet,
Preliminary to--the last retreat.

William Cowper

Inscription For A Moss-House In The Shrubbery At Weston

Here, free from riot's hated noise,
Be mine, ye calmer, purer joys,
A book or friend bestows;
Far from the storms that shake the great,
Contentment's gale shall fan my seat,
And sweeten my repose.

William Cowper

Inscription For A Stone Erected At The Sowing Of A Grove Of Oaks At Chillington, Anno 1790

Other stones the era tell,
When some feeble mortal fell;
I stand here to date the birth
Of these hardy sons of earth.
Which shall longest brave the sky,
Storm and frost -- these oaks or I?
Pass an age or two away,
I must moulder and decay;
But the years that crumble me
Shall invigorate the tree,
Spread its branch, dilate its size,
Lift its summit to the skies.
Cherish honour, virtue, truth,
So shalt thou prolong thy youth.
Wanting these, however fast
Man be fixed, and formed to last,
He is lifeless even now,
Stone at heart, and cannot grow.

William Cowper

Inscription For A Stone Erected At The Sowing Of A Grove Of Oaks At Chillington, Anno 1791

Reader! behold a monument
That asks no sigh or tear,
Though it perpetuate the event
Of a great burial here.

William Cowper

Inscription For The Tomb Of Mr. Hamilton

Pause here, and think; a monitory rhyme
Demands one moment of thy fleeting time.
Consult life's silent clock, thy bounding vein;
Seems it to say --'Health here has long to reign?'
Hast thou the vigour of thy youth? an eye
That beams delight? a heart untaught to sigh?
Yet fear! Youth ofttimes healthful and at ease,
Anticipates a day it never sees;
And many a tomb, like Hamilton's, aloud
Exclaims, 'Prepare thee for an early shroud!'

William Cowper

Invitation To The Redbreast

Sweet bird, whom the winter constrains--
And seldom another it can--
To seek a retreat while he reigns
In the well-shelter'd dwellings of man,
Who never can seem to intrude,
Though in all places equally free,
Come oft as the season is rude,
Thou art sure to be welcome to me.

At sight of the first feeble ray
That pierces the clouds of the east,
To inveigle thee every day
My windows shall show thee a feast.
For, taught by experience, I know,
Thee mindful of benefit long;
And that, thankful for all I bestow,
Thou wilt pay me with many a song.

Then, soon as the swell of the buds
Bespeaks the renewal of spring,
Fly hence, if thou wilt to the woods,
Or where it shall please thee to sing:
And shouldst thou, compell'd by a frost,
Come again to my window or door,
Doubt not an affectionate host,
Only pay as thou paid'st me before.

This music must needs be confess'd
To flow from a fountain above;
Else how should it work in the breast
Unchangeable friendship and love?
And who on the globe can be found,
Save your generation and ours,
That can be delighted by sound,
Or boasts any musical powers?

William Cowper

Jehovah Jesus

My song shall bless the Lord of all,
My praise shall climb to His abode;
Thee, Saviour, by that name I call,
The great Supreme, the mighty God.

Without beginning or decline,
Object of faith and not of sense;
Eternal ages saw Him shine,
He shines eternal ages hence.

As much when in the manger laid,
Almighty Ruler of the sky,
As when the six days' work He made,
Fill'd all the morning stars with joy.

Of all the crowns Jehovah bears,
Salvation is His dearest claim;
That gracious sound well pleased He hears
And owns Emmanuel for His name.

A cheerful confidence I feel,
My well placed hopes with joy I see;
My bosom glows with heavenly zeal,
To worship Him who died for me.

As man He pities my complaint,
His power and truth are all divine;
He will not fail, He cannot faint;
Salvation's sure, and must be mine.

William Cowper

Jehovah Our Righteousness

(Jeremiah, xxiii.6)

My God, how perfect are Thy ways!
But mine polluted are;
Sin twines itself about my praise,
And slides into my prayer.

When I would speak what Thou hast done
To save me from my sin,
I cannot make Thy mercies known,
But self-applause creeps in.

Divine desire, that holy flame
Thy grace creates in me;
Alas! impatience is its name,
When it returns to Thee.

This heart, a fountain of vile thoughts.
How does it overflow,
While self upon the surface floats,
Still bubbling from below.

Let others in the gaudy dress
Of fancied merit shine;
The Lord shall be my righteousness,
The Lord forever mine.

William Cowper

Jehovah-Jireh. The Lord Will Provide

(Genesis, xxii.14)

The saints should never be dismay'd,
Nor sink in hopeless fear;
For when they least expect His aid,
The Saviour will appear.

This Abraham found: he raised the knife;
God saw, and said, "Forbear!
Yon ram shall yield his meaner life;
Behold the victim there."

Once David seem'd Saul's certain prey;
But hark! the foe's at hand;
Saul turns his arms another way,
To save the invaded land.

When Jonah sunk beneath the wave,
He thought to rise no more;
But God prepared a fish to save,
And bear him to the shore.

Blest proofs of power and grace divine,
That meet us in His word!
May every deep-felt care of mine
Be trusted with the Lord.

Wait for His seasonable aid,
And though it tarry, wait:
The promise may be long delay'd,
But cannot come too late.

William Cowper

Jehovah-Nissi. The Lord My Banner

(Exodus, xvii.15)

By whom was David taught
To aim the deadly blow,
When he Goliath fought,
And laid the Gittite low?
Nor sword nor spear the stripling took,
But chose a pebble from the brook.

'Twas Israel's God and King
Who sent him to the fight;
Who gave him strength to sling,
And skill to aim aright.
Ye feeble saints, your strength endures,
Because young David's God is yours.

Who order'd Gideon forth,
To storm the invaders' camp.
With arms of little worth,
A pitcher and a lamp?
The trumpets made his coming known
And all the host was overthrown.

Oh! I have seen the day,
When with a single word,
God helping me to say,
"My trust is in the Lord,"
My soul hath quell'd a thousand foes
Fearless of all that could oppose.

But unbelief, self-will,
Self-righteousness, and pride,
How often do they steal
My weapon from my side!
Yet David's Lord, and Gideon's friend,
Will help his servant to the end.

William Cowper

Jehovah-Rophi. I Am The Lord That Healeth Thee

(Exodus, xv.26)

Heal us, Emmanuel! here we are,
Waiting to feel Thy touch:
Deep-wounded souls to Thee repair
And, Saviour, we are such.

Our faith is feeble, we confess,
We faintly trust Thy word;
But wilt Thou pity us the less?
Be that far from Thee, Lord!

Remember him who once applied,
With trembling, for relief;
"Lord, I believe," with tears he cried,
"Oh, help my unbelief!"

She too, who touch'd Thee in the press,
And healing virtue stole,
Was answer'd, "Daughter, go in peace,
Thy faith hath made thee whole."

Conceal'd amid the gathering throng,
She would have shunn'd Thy view;
And if her faith was firm and strong,
Had strong misgivings too.

Like her, with hopes and fears we come,
To touch Thee, if we may;
Oh! send us not despairing home,
Send none unheal'd away!

William Cowper

Jehovah-Shalom. The Lord Send Peace

(Judges, vi.25)

Jesus! whose blood so freely stream'd
To satisfy the law's demand;
By Thee from guilt and wrath redeem'd,
Before the Father's face I stand.

To reconcile offending man,
Make Justice drop her angry rod;
What creature could have form'd the plan,
Or who fulfil it but a God?

No drop remains of all the curse,
For wretches who deserved the whole;
No arrows dipt in wrath to pierce
The guilty, but returning soul.

Peace by such means so dearly bought,
What rebel could have hoped to see?
Peace by his injured Sovereign wrought,
His Sovereign fasten'd to a tree.

Now, Lord, Thy feeble worm prepare!
For strife with earth and hell begins;
Conform and gird me for the war;
They hate the soul that hates his sins.

Let them in horrid league agree!
They may assault, they may distress;
But cannot quench Thy love to me,
Nor rob me of the Lord my peace.

William Cowper

Jehovah-Shammah

(Ezekiel, xlvi.35)

As birds their infant brood protect,
And spread their wings to shelter them,
Thus saith the Lord to His elect,
"So will I guard Jerusalem."

And what then is Jerusalem,
This darling object of His cares?
Where is its worth in God's esteem?
Who built it? who inhabits there?

Jehovah founded it in blood,
The blood of His incarnate Son;
There dwell the saints, once foes to God
The sinners whom He calls His own.

There, though besieged on every side,
Yet much beloved and guarded well,
From age to age they have defied
The utmost force of earth and hell.

Let earth repent, and hell despair,
This city has a sure defence;
Her name is call'd, "The Lord is there,"
And who has power to drive him hence?

William Cowper

Jesus Hasting To Suffer

The Saviour, what a noble flame
Was kindled in his breast,
When hasting to Jerusalem,
He march'd before the rest.

Good will to men, and zeal for God,
His every thought engross;
He longs to be baptized with blood,
He pants to reach the cross!

With all His suffering full in view,
And woes to us unknown,
Forth to the task His spirit flew,
'Twas love that urged Him on.

Lord, we return Thee what we can:
Our hearts shall sound abroad,
Salvation to the dying Man,
And to the rising God!

And while Thy bleeding glories here
Engage our wondering eyes,
We learn our lighter cross to bear,
And hasten to the skies.

William Cowper

Joy And Peace In Believing

Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings;
It is the Lord who rises
With healing on His wings;
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining,
To cheer it after rain.

In holy contemplation
We sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation,
And find it ever new;
Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say,
E'en let the unknown to-morrow
Bring with it what it may!

It can bring with it nothing,
But He will bear us through;
Who gives the lilies clothing,
Will clothe His people too;
Beneath the spreading heavens
No creature but is fed;
And He who feeds the ravens
Will give His children bread.

Though vine nor fig tree neither
Their wonted fruit shall bear,
Though all the field should wither,
Nor flocks nor herds be there:
Yet God the same abiding,
His praise shall tune my voice;
For, while in Him confiding,
I cannot but rejoice.

William Cowper

Joy In Martyrdom

Sweet tenants of this grove!
Who sing without design,
A song of artless love,
In unison with mine:
These echoing shades return
Full many a note of ours,
That wise ones cannot learn,
With all their boasted powers.

O thou! whose sacred charms
These hearts so seldom love,
Although thy beauty warms
And blesses all above;
How slow are human things,
To choose their happiest lot!
All-glorious King of kings,
Say why we love thee not?

This heart, that cannot rest,
Shall thine for ever prove;
Though bleeding and distressed,
Yet joyful in thy love:
'Tis happy though it breaks
Beneath thy chastening hand;
And speechless, yet it speaks,
What thou canst understand.

William Cowper

Light Shining Out Of Darkness

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain:
God is His own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

William Cowper

Lines Addressed To Dr. Darwin, Author Of The 'Botanic Garden.'

Two Poets, (poets, by report,
Not oft so well agree,)
Sweet harmonist of Flora's court!
Conspire to honour thee.

They best can judge a poet's worth,
Who oft themselves have known
The pangs of a poetic birth
By labours of their own.

We therefore pleased extol thy song,
Though various yet complete,
Rich in embellishment as strong,
And learned as 'tis sweet.

No envy mingles with our praise;
Though, could our hearts repine
At any poet's happier lays,
They would -- they must at thine.

But we, in mutual bondage knit
Of friendship's closest tie,
Can gaze on even Darwin's wit
With an unjaundiced eye;

And deem the Bard, whoe'er he be,
And howsoever known,
Who would not twine a wreath for thee,
Unworthy of his own.

William Cowper

Lines Addressed To Miss Theodora Jane Cowper, On Himself

William was once a bashful youth,
His modesty was such,
That one might say, to say the truth,
He rather had too much.

Some said that it was want of sense,
And others, want of spirit
(So blest a thing is impudence),
While others could not bear it.

But some a different notion had,
And, at each other winking,
Observed that though he little said,
He paid it off with thinking.

Howe'er, it happen'd, by degrees,
He mended, and grew perter,
In company was more at ease,
And dress'd a little smarter;

Nay, now and then, could look quite gay,
As other people do;
And sometimes said, or tried to say,
A witty thing or so.

He eyed the women, and made free
To comment on their shapes,
So that there was, or seem'd to be,
No fear of a relapse.

The women said, who thought him rough,
But now no longer foolish,
"The creature may do well enough,
But wants a deal of polish."

At length improved from head to heel,
'Twere scarce too much to say,

No dancing beau was so genteel
Or half so
dégagé.

Now that a miracle so strange
May not in vain be shown,
Let the dear maid who wrought the change
E'en claim him for her own!

William Cowper

Lines On The Death Of Sir William Russel

Doomed, as I am, in solitude to waste
The present moments, and regret the past,
Deprived of every joy I valued most,
My friend torn from me, and my mistress lost,
Call not this gloom I wear, this anxious mien,
The dull effect of humor, or of spleen!
Still, still I mourn, with each returning day,
Him snatch'd by fate in early youth away;
And her -- thro' tedious years of doubt and pain,
Fix'd in her choice, and faithful -- but in vain!
O prone to pity, generous, and sincere,
Whose eye ne'er yet refus'd the wretch a tear;
Whose heart the real claim of friendship knows
Nor thinks a lover's are but fancied woes;
See me -- ere yet my destin'd course half done,
Cast forth a wand'rer on a world unknown!
See me neglected on the world's rude coast,
Each dear companion of my voyage lost!
Nor ask why clouds of sorrow shade my brow,
And ready tears wait only leave to flow!
Why all that soothes a heart from anguish free
All that delights the happy -- palls with me!

William Cowper

Lines Written During A Period Of Insanity

Hatred and vengeance—my eternal portion
Scarce can endure delay of execution—
Wait with impatient readiness to seize my
Soul in a moment.

Damned below Judas; more abhorred than he was,
Who for a few pence sold his holy Master!
Twice betrayed, Jesus me, the last delinquent,
Deems the profanest.

Man disavows, and Deity disowns me:
Hell might afford my miseries a shelter;
Therefore Hell keeps her ever-hungry mouths all
Bolted against me.

Hard lot! encompassed with a thousand dangers;
Weary, faint, trembling with a thousand terrors,
I'm called, if vanquished, to receive a sentence
Worse than Abiram's.

Him the vindictive rod of angry Justice
Sent quick and howling to the centre headlong;
I, fed with judgment, in a fleshy tomb am
Buried above ground.

William Cowper

Lines Written For Insertion In A Collection Of Handwritings And Signatures Made By Miss Patty

In vain to live from age to age
While modern bards endeavour,
I write my name in Patty's page,
And gain my point for ever.

William Cowper

Lines, Composed For A Memorial Of Ashley Cowper, Esq.

Farewell! endued with all that could engage
All hearts to love thee, both in youth and age!
In prime of life, for sprightliness enrolled
Among the gay, yet virtuous as the old;

In life's last stage, (O blessings rarely found!)
Pleasant as youth with all its blossoms crowned!
Through every period of this changeful state
Unchanged thyself -- wise, good, affectionate!

Marble may flatter, and lest this should seem
O'ercharged with praises on so dear a theme,
Although thy worth be more than half suppress'd,
Love shall be satisfied, and veil the rest.

William Cowper

Lines. Oh! To Some Distant Scene

Oh! to some distant scene, a willing exile
From the wild roar of this busy world,
Were it my fate with Delia to retire,
With her to wander through the sylvan shade,
Each morn, or o'er the moss-embrowned turf,
Where, blest as the prime parents of mankind
In their own Eden, we should envy none,
But, greatly pitying whom the world calls happy
Gently spin out the silken thread of life!

William Cowper

Lively Hope And Gracious Fear

I was a grovelling creature once,
And basely cleaved to earth:
I wanted spirit to renounce
The clod that gave me birth.

But God hath breathed upon a worm,
And sent me from above
Wings such as clothe an angel's form,
The wings of joy and love.

With these to Pisgah's top I fly
And there delighted stand,
To view, beneath a shining sky,
The spacious promised land.

The Lord of all the vast domain
Has promised it to me,
The length and breadth of all the plain
As far as faith can see.

How glorious is my privilege!
To Thee for help I call;
I stand upon a mountain's edge,
O save me, lest I fall!

Though much exalted in the Lord,
My strength is not my own;
Then let me tremble at His word,
And none shall cast me down.

William Cowper

Living And A Dead Faith

The Lord receives his highest praise
From humble minds and hearts sincere;
While all the loud professor says
Offends the righteous Judge's ear.

To walk as children of the day,
To mark the precepts' holy light,
To wage the warfare, watch, and pray,
Show who are pleasing in His sight.

Not words alone it cost the Lord,
To purchase pardon for His own;
Nor will a soul by grace restored
Return the Saviour words alone.

With golden bells, the priestly vest,
And rich pomegranates border'd round,
The need of holiness expressed,
And called for fruit as well as sound.

Easy indeed it were to reach
A mansion in the courts above,
If swelling words and fluent speech
Might serve instead of faith and love.

But none shall gain the blissful place,
Or God's unclouded glory see,
Who talks of free and sovereign grace,
Unless that grace has made him free!

William Cowper

Living Water

The fountain in its source,
No drought of summer fears;
The farther it pursues its course,
The nobler it appears.
But shallow cisterns yield
A scanty short supply;
The morning sees them amply filled,
At evening they are dry.

William Cowper

Longing To Be With Christ

To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone;
O bear me, ye cherubim, up,
And waft me away to His throne!

My Saviour, whom absent I love,
Whom, not having seen I adore;
Whose name is exalted above
All glory, dominion, and power;

Dissolve thou these bonds that detain
My soul from her portion in thee.
Ah! strike off this adamant chain,
And make me eternally free.

When that happy era begins,
When arrayed in Thy glories I shine,
Nor grieve any more, by my sins,
The bosom on which I recline.

Oh then shall the veil be removed,
And round me Thy brightness be pour'd,
I shall meet Him whom absent I loved,
Shall see Him whom unseen I adored.

And then, never more shall the fears,
The trials, temptation, and woes,
Which darken this valley of tears,
Intrude on my blissful repose.

Or, if yet remember'd above,
Remembrance no sadness shall raise,
They will be but new signs of Thy love,
New themes for my wonder and praise.

Thus the strokes which from sin and from pain
Shall set me eternally free,
Will but strengthen and rivet the chain
Which binds me, my Saviour, to Thee.

William Cowper

Looking Upwards In A Storm

God of my life, to Thee I call,
Afflicted at Thy feet I fall;
When the great water-floods prevail,
Leave not my trembling heart to fail!

Friend of the friendless and the faint,
Where should I lodge my deep complaint,
Where but with Thee, whose open door
Invites the helpless and the poor!

Did ever mourner plead with Thee,
And Thou refuse the mourner's plea?
Does not the word still fix'd remain,
That none shall seek Thy face in vain?

That were a grief I could not bear,
Didst Thou not hear and answer prayer:
But a prayer-hearing, answering God
Supports me under every load.

Fair is the lot that's cast for me;
I have an Advocate with Thee;
They whom the world caresses most
Have no such privilege to boast.

Poor though I am, despised, forgot,
Yet God, my God, forgets me not:
And he is safe, and must succeed,
For whom the Lord vouchsafes to plead.

William Cowper

Love Abused

What is there in the vale of life
Half so delighted as a wife,
When friendship, love, and peace combine
To stamp the marriage bond divine?
The stream of pure and genuine love
Derive its current from above;
And earth a second Eden shows,
Where'er the healing water flows;
But ah, if from the dikes and drains
Of sensual Nature's feverish veins,
Lust, like a lawless headstrong flood,
Impregnated with ooze and mud,
Descending fast on every side
Once mingles with the sacred tide,
Farewell the soul-enlivening scene!
The banks that wore a smiling green,
With rank defilement overspread,
Bewail their flowery beauties dead;
The stream polluted, dark, and dull,
Diffused into a Stygian pool,
Through life's last melancholy years
Is fed with overflowing tears,
Complaints supply the zephyr's part,
And sighs that heave a breaking heart.

William Cowper

Love Constrained To Obedience

No strength of nature can suffice
To serve the Lord aright:
And what she has she misapplies,
For want of clearer light.

How long beneath the law I lay
In bondage and distress;
I toll'd the precept to obey,
But toil'd without success.

Then, to abstain from outward sin
Was more than I could do;
Now, if I feel its power within,
I feel I hate it too.

Then all my servile works were done
A righteousness to raise;
Now, freely chosen in the Son,
I freely choose His ways.

"What shall I do," was then the word,
"That I may worthier grow?"
"What shall I render to the Lord?"
Is my inquiry now.

To see the law by Christ fulfilled
And hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.

William Cowper

Love Faithful In The Absence Of The Beloved

In vain ye woo me to your harmless joys,
Ye pleasant bowers, remote from strife and noise;
Your shades, the witnesses of many a vow,
Breathed forth in happier days, are irksome now;
Denied that smile 'twas once my heaven to see,
Such scenes, such pleasures, are all past with me.

In vain he leaves me, I shall love him still;
And, though I mourn, not murmur at his will;
I have no cause—an object all divine,
Might well grow weary of a soul like mine;
Yet pity me, great God! forlorn, alone,
Heartless and hopeless, life and love all gone.

William Cowper

Love Increased By Suffering

'I love the Lord,' is still the strain
This heart delights to sing:
But I reply--your thoughts are vain,
Perhaps 'tis no such thing.

Before the power of love divine
Creation fades away;
Till only God is seen to shine
In all that we survey.

In gulfs of awful night we find
The God of our desires;
'Tis there he stamps the yielding mind,
And doubles all its fires.

Flames of encircling love invest,
And pierce it sweetly through;
'Tis filled with sacred joy, yet pressed
With sacred sorrow too.

Ah love! my heart is in the right--
Amidst a thousand woes,
To thee, its ever new delight,
And all its peace it owes.

Fresh causes of distress occur
Where'er I look or move;
The comforts I to all prefer
Are solitude and love.

Nor exile I nor prison fear;
Love makes my courage great;
I find a Saviour every where,
His grace in every state.

Nor castle walls, nor dungeons deep,
Exclude his quickening beams;
There I can sit, and sing, and weep,
And dwell on heavenly themes.

There sorrow, for his sake, is found
A joy beyond compare;
There no presumptuous thoughts abound,
No pride can enter there.

A Saviour doubles all my joys,
And sweetens all my pains,
His strength in my defence employs,
Consoles me and sustains.

I fear no ill, resent no wrong;
Nor feel a passion move,
When malice whets her slanderous tongue;
Such patience is in love.

William Cowper

Love Pure And Fervent

Jealous, and with love o'erflowing,
God demands a fervent heart;
Grace and bounty still bestowing,
Calls us to a grateful part.

Oh, then, with supreme affection
His paternal will regard!
If it cost us some dejection,
Every sigh has its reward.

Perfect love has power to soften
Cares that might our peace destroy,
Nay, does more—transforms them often,
Changing sorrow into joy.

Sovereign Love appoints the measure,
And the number of our pains;
And is pleased when we find pleasure
In the trials he ordains.

William Cowper

Lovest Thou Me?

(John, xxi.16)

Hark my soul! it is the Lord;
'Tis Thy Saviour, hear His word;
Jesus speaks and speaks to thee,
"Say poor sinner, lovst thou me?"

"I deliver'd thee when bound,
And when bleeding, heal'd thy wound;
Sought thee wandering, set thee right,
Turn'd thy darkness into light.

"Can a woman's tender care
Cease towards the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
Yet will I remember thee.

"Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above,
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.

"Thou shalt see my glory soon,
When the work of grace is done;
Partner of my throne shalt be;
Say, poor sinner, lovst thou me?"

Lord it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love Thee and adore, --
Oh! for grace to love Thee more!

William Cowper

Mary And John

If John marries Mary, and Mary alone,
'Tis a very good match between Mary and John.
Should John wed a score, oh, the claws and the scratches!
It can't be a match :-- 'tis a bundle of matches.

William Cowper

Monumental Inscription To William Northcot

Farewell! 'But not for ever,' Hope replies,
Trace but his steps and meet him in the skies!
There nothing shall renew our parting pain,
Thou shalt not wither nor I weep again.

William Cowper

Mortals! Around Your Destined Heads

Mortals! around your destined heads
Thick fly the shafts of death,
And lo! the savage spoiler spreads
A thousand toils beneath.

In vain we trifle with our fate,
Try every art in vain;
At best we but prolong the date,
And lengthen out our pain.

Fondly we think all danger fled,
For death is ever nigh;
Outstrips our unavailing speed,
Or meets us as we fly.

Thus the wrecked mariner may strive
Some desert shore to gain,
Secure of life, if he survive
The fury of the main.

But there, to famine doomed a prey,
Finds the mistaken wretch
He but escaped the troubled sea,
To perish on the beach.

Since then in vain we strive to guard
Our frailty from the foe,
Lord, let me live not unprepared
To meet the fatal blow!

William Cowper

Mourning And Longing

The Saviour hides His face;
My spirit thirsts to prove
Renew'd supplies of pardoning grace,
And never-fading love.

The favor'd souls who know
What glories shine in Him,
Pant for His presence as the roe
Pants for the living stream.

What trifles tease me now!
They swarm like summer flies!
They cleave to everything I do,
And swim before my eyes.

How dull the Sabbath day,
Without the Sabbath's Lord!
How toilsome then to sing and pray,
And wait upon the Word!

Of all the truths I hear,
How few delight my taste!
I glean a berry here and there,
But mourn the vintage past.

Yet let me (as I ought)
Still hope to be supplied;
No pleasure else is worth a thought,
Nor shall I be denied.

Though I am but a worm,
Unworthy of His care,
The Lord will my desire perform,
And grant me all my prayer.

William Cowper

Mutual Forbearance : Necessary To The Happiness Of The Married State

The lady thus address'd her spouse--
What a mere dungeon is this house!
By no means large enough; and was it,
Yet this dull room, and that dark closet,
Those hangings with their worn-out graces,
Long beards, long noses, and pale faces,
Are such an antiquated scene,
They overwhelm me with the spleen.
Sir Humphrey, shooting in the dark,
Makes answer quite beside the mark:
No doubt, my dear, I bade him come,
Engaged myself to be at home,
And shall expect him at the door
Precisely when the clock strikes four.
You are so deaf, the lady cried
(And raised her voice, and frown'd beside),
You are so sadly deaf, my dear,
What shall I do to make you hear?
Dismiss poor Harry! he replies;
Some people are more nice than wise:
For one slight trespass all this stir?
What if he did ride whip and spur,
'Twas but a mile—your favourite horse
Will never look one hair the worse.
Well, I protest 'tis past all bearing—
Child! I am rather hard of hearing—
Yes, truly—one must scream and bawl:
I tell you, you can't hear at all!
Then, with a voice exceeding low,
No matter if you hear or no.
Alas! and is domestic strife,
That sorest ill of human life,
A plague so little to be fear'd,
As to be wantonly incurr'd,
To gratify a fretful passion,
On every trivial provocation?
The kindest and the happiest pair

Will find occasion to forbear;
And something every day they live
To pity, and perhaps forgive.
But if infirmities, that fall
In common to the lot of all,
A blemish or a sense impair'd,
Are crimes so little to be spared,
Then farewell all that must create
The comfort of the wedded state;
Instead of harmony, 'tis jar,
And tumult, and intestine war.
The love that cheers life's latest stage,
Proof against sickness and old age,
Preserved by virtue from declension,
Becomes not weary of attention;
But lives, when that exterior grace,
Which first inspired the flame, decays.
'Tis gentle, delicate, and kind,
To faults compassionate or blind,
And will with sympathy endure
Those evils it would gladly cure:
But angry, coarse, and harsh expression,
Shows love to be a mere profession;
Proves that the heart is none of his,
Or soon expels him if it is.

William Cowper

My Soul Thirsteth For God

I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.

It was the sight of Thy dear cross
First wean'd my soul from earthly things;
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

I want that grace that springs from Thee,
That quickens all things where it flows,
And makes a wretched thorn like me
Bloom as the myrtle, or the rose.

Dear fountain of delight unknown!
No longer sink below the brim;
But overflow, and pour me down
A living and life-giving stream!

For sure of all the plants that share
The notice of thy Father's eye,
None proves less grateful to His care,
Or yields him meaner fruit than I.

William Cowper

No Sorrow Peculiar To The Sufferer

The lover, in melodious verses,
His singular distress rehearses;
Still closing with a rueful cry,
'Was ever such a wretch as I!'
Yes! thousands have endured before
All thy distress; some, haply, more.
Unnumber'd Corydons complain,
And Strephons, of the like disdain;
And if thy Chloe be of steel,
Too deaf to hear, too hard to feel;
Not her alone that censure fits,
Nor thou alone hast lost thy wits.

William Cowper

Not Works

Grace, triumphant in the throne,
Scorns a rival, reigns alone;
Come and bow beneath her sway;
Cast your idol works away!
Works of man, when made his plea,
Never shall accepted be;
Fruits of pride (vainglorious worm!)
Are the best he can perform.

Self, the god his soul adores,
Influences all his powers;
Jesus is a slighted name,
Self-advancement all his aim:
But when God the Judge shall come,
To pronounce the final doom,
Then for rocks and hills to hide
All his works and all his pride!

Still the boasting heart replies,
What the worthy and the wise,
Friends to temperance and peace,
Have not these a righteousness?
Banish every vain pretence
Built on human excellence;
Perish everything in man,
But the grace that never can.

William Cowper

O Lord, I Will Praise Thee

(Isaiah, xii.1)

I will praise Thee every day
Now Thine anger's turn'd away;
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice.

Here, in the fair gospel-field,
Wells of free salvation yield
Stream of life, a plenteous store,
And my soul shall thirst no more.

Jesus is become at length
My salvation and my strength;
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.

Praise ye, then, His glorious name,
Publish His exalted fame!
Still His worth your praise exceeds;
Excellent are all His deeds.

Raise again the joyful sound.
Let the nations roll it round!
Zion, shout! for this is He;
God the Saviour dwells in thee.

William Cowper

Ode On The Death Of A Lady, Who Lived One Hundred Years, And Died On Her Birthday, 1728 (Translation)

Ancient dame, how wide and vast
To a race like ours appears,
Rounded to an orb at last,
All thy multitude of years!

We, the herd of human kind,
Frailer and of feebler powers;
We, to narrow bounds confined,
Soon exhaust the sum of ours.

Death's delicious banquet—we
Perish even from the womb,
Swifter than a shadow flee,
Nourish'd but to feed the tomb.

Seeds of merciless disease
Lurk in all that we enjoy;
Some that waste us by degrees,
Some that suddenly destroy.

And, if life o'erleap the bourn
Common to the sons of men,
What remains, but that we mourn,
Dream, and dote, and drivell then?

Fast as moons can wax and wane
Sorrow comes; and, while we groan,
Pant with anguish, and complain,
Half our years are fled and gone.

If a few (to few 'tis given),
Lingering on this earthly stage,
Creep and halt with steps uneven
To the period of an age,

Wherefore live they, but to see
Cunning, arrogance, and force,

Sights lamented much by thee,
Holding their accustom'd course?

Oft was seen, in ages past,
All that we with wonder view;
Often shall be to the last;
Earth produces nothing new.

Thee we gratulate, content
Should propitious Heaven design
Life for us as calmly spent,
Though but half the length of thine.

William Cowper

Ode To Apollo. On An Inkglass Almost Dried In The Sun

Patron of all those luckless brains,
That, to the wrong side leaning,
Indite much metre with much pains,
And little or no meaning;
Ah why, since oceans, rivers, streams,
That water all the nations,
Pay tribute to thy glorious beams,
In constant exhalations;
Why, stooping from the noon of day,
Too covetous of drink,
Apollo, hast thou stolen away
A poet's drop of ink?
Upborne into the viewless air,
It floats a vapour now,
Impell'd through regions dense and rare,
By all the winds that blow.
Ordain'd perhaps, ere summer flies,
Combined with millions more,
To form an iris in the skies,
Though black and foul before.
Illustrious drop! and happy then
Beyond the happiest lot,
Of all that ever pass'd my pen,
So soon to be forgot!
Phœbus, if such be thy design,
To place it in thy bow,
Give wit, that what is left may shine
With equal grace below.

William Cowper

Ode To Peace

Come, peace of mind, delightful guest!
Return and make thy downy nest
Once more in this sad heart:
Nor riches I, nor power pursue,
Nor hold forbidden joys in view,
We therefore need not part.

Where wilt thou dwell if not with me,
From avarice and ambition free,
And pleasure's fatal wiles?
For whom, alas! dost thou prepare
The sweets that I was wont to share,
The banquet of thy smiles?

The great, the gay, shall they partake
The heaven that thou alone canst make;
And wilt thou quit the stream
That murmurs through the dewy mead,
The grove and the sequestered shed,
To be a guest with them?

For thee I panted, thee I prized,
For thee I gladly sacrificed
Whate'er I loved before;
And shall I see thee start away,
And helpless, hopeless, hear thee say--
Farewell! we meet no more?

William Cowper

Ode. Supposed To Be Written On The Marriage Of A Friend

Thou magic lyre, whose fascinating sound
Seduced the savage monsters from their cave,
Drew rocks and trees, and forms uncouth around,
And bade wild Hebrus hush his listening wave;
No more thy undulating warblings flow
O'er Thracian wilds of everlasting snow!

Awake to sweeter sounds, thou magic lyre,
And paint a lover's bliss -- a lover's pain!
Far nobler triumphs now thy notes inspire,
For see, Eurydice attends thy strain;
Her smile, a prize beyond the conjuror's aim,
Superior to the cancelled breath of fame.

From her sweet brow to chase the gloom of care,
To check the tear that dims the beaming eye,
To bid her heart the rising sigh forbear,
And flush her orient cheek with brighter joy,
In that dear breast soft sympathy to move,
And touch the springs of rapture and of love.

Ah me! how long bewildered and astray,
Lost and benighted, did my footsteps rove,
Till sent by heaven to cheer my pathless ray,
A star arose -- the radiant star of love.
The God propitious joined our willing hands,
And Hymen wreathed us in his rosy bands.

Yet not the beaming eye, or placid brow,
Or golden tresses, hid the subtle dart;
To charms superior far than those I bow,
And nobler worth enslaves my vanquished heart;
The beauty, elegance, and grace combined,
Which beam transcendent from that angel mind.

While vulgar passions, meteors of a day,
Expire before the chilling blasts of age,

Our holy flame with pure and steady ray,
Its glooms shall brighten, and its pangs assuage;
By virtue (sacred vestal) fed, shall shine,
And warm our fainting souls with energy divine.

William Cowper

Of Himself

William was once a bashful youth;
His modesty was such,
That one might say (to say the truth)
He rather had too much.

Some said that it was want of sense,
And others want of spirit,
(So blest a thing is impudence),
While others could not bear it.

But some a different notion had,
And at each other winking,
Observed, that though he little said,
He paid it off with thinking.

Howe'er, it happened, by degrees,
He mended and grew perter;
In company was more at ease,
And dressed a little smarter;

Nay, now and then would look quite gay,
As other people do;
And sometimes said, or tried to say,
A witty thing or so.

He eyed the women, and made free
To comment on their shapes;
So that there was, or seemed to be,
No fear of a relapse.

The women said, who thought him rough,
But now no longer foolish,
'The creature may do well enough,
But wants a deal of polish.'

At length, improved from head to heel,
'Twere scarce too much to say,
No dancing bear was so genteel,
Or half so dégagé.

Now that a miracle so strange
May not in vain be shown,
Let the dear maid who wrought the change
E'er claim him for her own.

William Cowper

Old Testament Gospel

(Hebrews, iv.2)

Israel in ancient days
Not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze,
But learn'd the Gospel too;
The types and figures were a glass,
In which thy saw a Saviour's face.

The paschal sacrifice
And blood-besprinkled door,
Seen with enlighten'd eyes,
And once applied with power,
Would teach the need of other blood,
To reconcile an angry God.

The Lamb, the Dove, set forth
His perfect innocence,
Whose blood of matchless worth
Would be the soul's defence;
For he who can for sin atone,
Must have no failings of His own.

The scape-goat on his head
The people's trespass bore,
And to the desert led,
Was to be seen no more:
In him our surety seem'd to say,
"Behold, I bear your sins away."

Dipt in his fellow's blood,
The living bird went free;
The type, well understood,
Express'd the sinner's plea;
Described a guilty soul enlarged,
And by a Saviour's death discharged.

Jesus, I love to trace,
Throughout the sacred page,

The footsteps of Thy grace,
The same in every age!
Oh, grant that I may faithful be
To clearer light vouchsafed to me!

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 1: Walking With God

Oh! for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.

Return, O holy Dove, return!
Sweet the messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made thee mourn
And drove thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 10: The Future Peace And Glory Of The Church

Hear what God the Lord hath spoken,
'O my people, faint and few,
Comfortless, afflicted, broken,
Fair abodes I build for you.
Thorns of heartfelt tribulation
Shall no more perplex your ways;
You shall name your walls, Salvation,
And your gates shall all be Praise.

'There, like streams that feed the garden,
Pleasures without end shall flow,
For the Lord, your faith rewarding,
All His bounty shall bestow;
Still in undisturb'd possession
Peace and righteousness shall reign;
Never shall you feel oppression,
Hear the voice of war again.

'Ye no more your suns descending,
Waning moons no more shall see;
But your griefs forever ending,
Find eternal noon in me:
God shall rise, and shining o'er ye,
Change to day the gloom of night;
He, the Lord, shall be your glory,
God your everlasting light.'

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 11: Jehovah Our Righteousness

My God, how perfect are Thy ways!
But mine polluted are;
Sin twines itself about my praise,
And slides into my prayer.

When I would speak what Thou hast done
To save me from my sin,
I cannot make Thy mercies known,
But self-applause creeps in.

Divine desire, that holy flame
Thy grace creates in me;
Alas! impatience is its name,
When it returns to Thee.

This heart, a fountain of vile thoughts.
How does it overflow,
While self upon the surface floats,
Still bubbling from below.

Let others in the gaudy dress
Of fancied merit shine;
The Lord shall be my righteousness,
The Lord forever mine.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 12: Ephraim Repenting

My God, till I received Thy stroke,
How like a beast was I!
So unaccustom'd to the yoke,
So backward to comply.

With grief my just reproach I hear;
Shame fills me at the thought,
How frequent my rebellions were,
What wickedness I wrought.

Thy merciful restraint I scorn'd,
And left the pleasant road;
Yet turn me, and I shall be turn'd;
Thou art the Lord my God.

'Is Ephraim banish'd from my thoughts,
Or vile in my esteem?
No,' saith the Lord, 'with all his faults,
I still remember him.

'Is he a dear and pleasant child?
Yes, dear and pleasant still;
Though sin his foolish heart beguiled,
And he withstood my will.

'My sharp rebuke has laid him low,
He seeks my face again;
My pity kindles at his woe,
He shall not seek in vain.'

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 13: The Covenant

The Lord proclaims His grace abroad!
'Behold, I change your hearts of stone;
Each shall renounce his idol-god,
And serve, henceforth, the Lord alone.

'My grace, a flowing stream, proceeds
To wash your filthiness away;
Ye shall abhor your former deeds,
And learn my statutes to obey.

'My truth the great design ensures,
I give myself away to you;
You shall be mine, I will be yours,
Your God unalterably true.

'Yet not unsought or unimplored,
The plenteous grace I shall confer;
No - your whole hearts shall seek the Lord,
I'll put a praying spirit there.

'From the first breath of life divine
Down to the last expiring hour,
The gracious work shall all be mine,
Begun and ended in my power.'

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 14: Jehovah-Shammah

As birds their infant brood protect,
And spread their wings to shelter them,
Thus saith the Lord to His elect,
'So will I guard Jerusalem.'

And what then is Jerusalem,
This darling object of His cares?
Where is its worth in God's esteem?
Who built it? who inhabits there?

Jehovah founded it in blood,
The blood of His incarnate Son;
There dwell the saints, once foes to God
The sinners whom He calls His own.

There, though besieged on every side,
Yet much beloved and guarded well,
From age to age they have defied
The utmost force of earth and hell.

Let earth repent, and hell despair,
This city has a sure defence;
Her name is call'd, 'The Lord is there,'
And who has power to drive him hence?

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 15: Praise For The Fountain Opened

There is a fountain fill'd with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, as vile as he,
Wash'd all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransom'd church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save;
When this poor lisping stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave.

Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared
(Unworthy though I be)
For me a blood-bought free reward,
A golden harp for me!

'Tis strung and tuned for endless years,
And form'd by power divine,
To sound in God the Father's ears
No other name but Thine.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 16: The Sower

Ye sons of earth prepare the plough,
Break up your fallow ground;
The sower is gone forth to sow,
And scatter blessings round.

The seed that finds a stony soil
Shoots forth a hasty blade;
But ill repays the sower's toil,
Soon wither'd, scorch'd, and dead.

The thorny ground is sure to balk
All hopes of harvest there;
We find a tall and sickly stalk,
But not the fruitful ear.

The beaten path and highway side,
Receive the trust in vain;
The watchful birds the spoil divide,
And pick up all the grain.

But where the Lord of grace and power
Has bless'd the happy field,
How plenteous is the golden store
The deep-wrought furrows yield!

Father of mercies, we have need
Of thy preparing grace;
Let the same Hand that give me seed
Provide a fruitful place!

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 17: The House Of Prayer

Thy mansion is the Christian's heart,
O Lord, Thy dwelling place secure!
Bid the unruly throng depart,
And leave the consecrated door.

Devoted as it is to Thee,
A thievish swarm frequents the place,
They steal away my hopes from me,
And rob my Saviour of His praise.

There, too, a sharp designing trade
Sin, Satan, and the World maintain;
Nor cease to press me, and persuade
To part with ease, and purchase pain.

I know them, and I hate their din;
And weary of the bustling crowd;
But while their voice is heard within,
I cannot serve Thee as I would.

Oh! for the joy thy presence gives,
What peace shall reign when Thou art there;
Thy presence makes this den of thieves
A calm delightful house of prayer.

And if Thou make Thy temple shine,
Yet self-abased, will I adore;
The gold and silver are not mine;
I give Thee what was Thine before.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 18: Lovest Thou Me?

Hark my soul! it is the Lord;
'Tis Thy Saviour, hear His word;
Jesus speaks and speaks to thee,
'Say poor sinner, lovst thou me?

'I deliver'd thee when bound,
And when bleeding, heal'd thy wound;
Sought thee wandering, set thee right,
Turn'd thy darkness into light.

'Can a woman's tender care
Cease towards the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
Yet will I remember thee.

'Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above,
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.

'Thou shalt see my glory soon,
When the work of grace is done;
Partner of my throne shalt be;
Say, poor sinner, lovst thou me?'

Lord it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love Thee and adore, -
Oh! for grace to love Thee more!

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 19: Contentment

Fierce passions discompose the mind,
As tempests vex the sea,
But calm, content and peace we find,
When, Lord, we turn to Thee.

In vain by reason and by rule
We try to bend the will;
For none but in the Saviour's school
Can learn the heavenly skill.

Since at His feet my soul has sate,
His gracious words to hear,
Contented with my present state,
I cast on Him my care.

'Art thou a sinner, soul?' He said,
'Then how canst thou complain?
How light thy troubles here, if weigh'd
With everlasting pain!

'If thou of murmuring wouldst be cured,
Compare thy griefs with mine!
Think what my love for thee endured,
And thou wilt not repine.

'Tis I appoint thy daily lot,
And I do all things well;
Thou soon shalt leave this wretched spot,
And rise with me to dwell.

'In life my grace shall strength supply,
Proportion'd to thy day;
At death thou still shalt find me nigh,
To wipe thy tears away.'

Thus I, who once my wretched days
In vain repinings spent,
Taught in my Saviour's school of grace,
Have learnt to be content.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 2: Jehovah-Jireh: The Lord Will Provide

The saints should never be dismay'd,
Nor sink in hopeless fear;
For when they least expect His aid,
The Saviour will appear.

This Abraham found: he raised the knife;
God saw, and said, 'Forbear!
Yon ram shall yield his meaner life;
Behold the victim there.'

Once David seem'd Saul's certain prey;
But hark! the foe's at hand;
Saul turns his arms another way,
To save the invaded land.

When Jonah sunk beneath the wave,
He thought to rise no more;
But God prepared a fish to save,
And bear him to the shore.

Blest proofs of power and grace divine,
That meet us in His word!
May every deep-felt care of mine
Be trusted with the Lord.

Wait for His seasonable aid,
And though it tarry, wait:
The promise may be long delay'd,
But cannot come too late.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 20: Old Testament Gospel

Israel in ancient days
Not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze,
But learn'd the Gospel too;
The types and figures were a glass,
In which thy saw a Saviour's face.

The paschal sacrifice
And blood-besprinkled door,
Seen with enlighten'd eyes,
And once applied with power,
Would teach the need of other blood,
To reconcile an angry God.

The Lamb, the Dove, set forth
His perfect innocence,
Whose blood of matchless worth
Would be the soul's defence;
For he who can for sin atone,
Must have no failings of His own.

The scape-goat on his head
The people's trespass bore,
And to the desert led,
Was to be seen no more:
In him our surety seem'd to say,
'Behold, I bear your sins away.'

Dipt in his fellow's blood,
The living bird went free;
The type, well understood,
Express'd the sinner's plea;
Described a guilty soul enlarged,
And by a Saviour's death discharged.

Jesus, I love to trace,
Throughout the sacred page,
The footsteps of Thy grace,
The same in every age!

Oh, grant that I may faithful be
To clearer light vouchsafed to me!

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 21: Sardis

'Write to Sardis,' saith the Lord,
'And write what He declares,
He whose Spirit, and whose word,
Upholds the seven stars:
All thy works and ways I search,
Find thy zeal and love decay'd;
Thou art call'd a living church,
But thou art cold and dead.

'Watch, remember, seek, and strive,
Exert thy former pains;
Let thy timely care revive,
And strengthen what remains;
Cleanse thine heart, thy works amend,
Former times to mind recall,
Lest my sudden stroke descend,
And smite thee once for all.

'Yet I number now in thee
A few that are upright;
These my Father's face shall see,
And walk with me in white.
When in judgment I appear,
They for mine shall be confess'd;
Let my faithful servants hear, -
And woe be to the rest!'

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 22: Prayer For A Blessing In The Young

Bestow, dear Lord, upon our youth
The gift of saving grace;
And let the seed of sacred truth
Fall in a fruitful place.

Grace is a plant, where'er it grows,
Of pure and heav'nly root;
But fairest in the youngest shows,
And yields the sweetest fruit;

Ye careless ones, O hear betimes
The voice of sovereign love!
Your youth is stained with many crimes,
But mercy reigns above.

True, you are young, but there's a stone
Within the youngest breast;
Or half the crimes which you have done.
Would rob you of your rest.

For you the public prayer is made,
O! join the public prayer!
For you the secret tear is shed,
O shed yourselves a tear.

We pray that you may early prove
The Spirit's power to teach;
You cannot be too young to love
That Jesus whom we preach.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 23: Pleading For And With Youth

Sin has undone our wretched race;
But Jesus has restored,
And brought the sinner face to face
With his forgiving Lord.

This we repeat from year to year
And press upon our youth;
Lord, give them an attentive ear,
Lord, save them by Thy truth!

Blessings upon the rising race!
Make this a happy hour,
According to Thy richest grace,
And thine Almighty power.

We feel for your unhappy state
(May you regard it too),
And would a while ourselves forget
To pour our prayer for you.

We see, though you perceive it not,
The approaching awful doom;
Oh tremble at the solemn thought,
And flee the wrath to come!

Dear Saviour, let this new-born year
Spread an alarm abroad;
And cry in every careless ear,
'Prepare to meet thy God!'

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 24: Prayer For Children

Gracious Lord, our children see,
By Thy mercy we are free;
But shall these, alas! remain
Subjects still of Satan's reign?
Israel's young ones, when of old
Pharaoh threaten'd to withhold,
Then Thy messenger said, 'No;
Let the children also go!'

When the angel of the Lord,
Drawing forth his dreadful sword,
Slew with an avenging hand,
All the first-born of the land;
Then Thy people's door he pass'd,
Where the bloody sign was placed:
Hear us, now, upon our knees,
Plead the blood of Christ for these!

Lord, we tremble, for we know
How the fierce malicious foe,
Wheeling round his watchful flight,
Keeps them ever in his sight:
Spread Thy pinions, King of kings!
Hide them safe beneath Thy wings;
Lest the ravenous bird of prey
Stoop and bear the brood away.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 25: Jehovah Jesus

My song shall bless the Lord of all,
My praise shall climb to His abode;
Thee, Saviour, by that name I call,
The great Supreme, the mighty God.

Without beginning or decline,
Object of faith and not of sense;
Eternal ages saw Him shine,
He shines eternal ages hence.

As much when in the manger laid,
Almighty Ruler of the sky,
As when the six days' work He made,
Fill'd all the morning stars with joy.

Of all the crowns Jehovah bears,
Salvation is His dearest claim;
That gracious sound well pleased He hears
And owns Emmanuel for His name.

A cheerful confidence I feel,
My well placed hopes with joy I see;
My bosom glows with heavenly zeal,
To worship Him who died for me.

As man He pities my complaint,
His power and truth are all divine;
He will not fail, He cannot faint;
Salvation's sure, and must be mine.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 26: On Opening A Place For Social Prayer

Jesus! where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy seat;
Where'er they seek Thee, Thou art found,
And every place is hallow'd ground.

For Thou, within no walls confined,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring Thee where they come
And going, take Thee to their home.

Dear Shepherd of Thy chosen few!
Thy former mercies here renew;
Her to our waiting hearts proclaim
The sweetness of Thy saving name.

Here may we prove the power of prayer,
To strengthen faith, and sweeten care;
To teach our faint desires to rise,
And bring all Heaven before our eyes.

Behold, at Thy commanding word
We stretch the curtain and the cord;
Come Thou, and fill this wider space,
And bless us with a large increase.

Lord, we are few, but Thou art near:
Nor short Thine arm, nor deaf Thine ear;
Oh rend the heavens, come quickly down,
And make a thousand hearts Thine own.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 27: Welcome To The Table

This is the feast of heavenly wine,
And God invites to sup;
The juices of the living Vine
Were press'd to fill the cup.

Oh! bless the Saviour, ye that eat,
With royal dainties fed;
Not heaven affords a costlier treat,
For Jesus is the bread.

The vile, the lost, He calls to them;
Ye trembling souls, appear!
The righteous in their own esteem
Have no acceptance here.

Approach, ye poor, nor dare refuse
The banquet spread for you;
Dear Saviour, this is welcome news,
Then I may venture too.

If guilt and sin afford a plea,
And may obtain a place,
Surely the Lord will welcome me,
And I shall see his face.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 28: Jesus Hasting To Suffer

The Saviour, what a noble flame
Was kindled in his breast,
When hasting to Jerusalem,
He march'd before the rest.

Good will to men, and zeal for God,
His every thought engross;
He longs to be baptized with blood,
He pants to reach the cross!

With all His suffering full in view,
And woes to us unknown,
Forth to the task His spirit flew,
'Twas love that urged Him on.

Lord, we return Thee what we can:
Our hearts shall sound abroad,
Salvation to the dying Man,
And to the rising God!

And while Thy bleeding glories here
Engage our wondering eyes,
We learn our lighter cross to bear,
And hasten to the skies.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 29: Exhortation To Prayer

What various hindrances we meet
In coming to a mercy seat!
Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there?

Prayer makes the darken'd cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above.

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when through weariness they fail'd,
That moment Amalek prevail'd.

Have you no words? Ah, think again,
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow-creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.

Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
'Hear what the Lord has done for me.'

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 3: Jehovah-Rophi: I Am The Lord That Healeth Thee

Heal us, Emmanuel! here we are,
Waiting to feel Thy touch:
Deep-wounded souls to Thee repair
And, Saviour, we are such.

Our faith is feeble, we confess,
We faintly trust Thy word;
But wilt Thou pity us the less?
Be that far from Thee, Lord!

Remember him who once applied,
With trembling, for relief;
'Lord, I believe,' with tears he cried,
'Oh, help my unbelief!'

She too, who touch'd Thee in the press,
And healing virtue stole,
Was answer'd, 'Daughter, go in peace,
Thy faith hath made thee whole.'

Conceal'd amid the gathering throng,
She would have shunn'd Thy view;
And if her faith was firm and strong,
Had strong misgivings too.

Like her, with hopes and fears we come,
To touch Thee, if we may;
Oh! send us not despairing home,
Send none unheal'd away!

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 30: The Light And Glory Of The Word

The Spirit breathes upon the word,
And brings the truth to sight;
Precepts and promises afford
A sanctifying light.

A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun;
It gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none.

The hand that gave it still supplies
The gracious light and heat;
His truths upon the nations rise,
They rise, but never set.

Let everlasting thanks be thine,
For such a bright display,
As makes a world of darkness shine
With beams of heavenly day.

My soul rejoices to pursue
The steps of Him I love,
Till glory break upon my view
In brighter worlds above.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 31: On The Death Of A Minister

His master taken from his head,
Elisha saw him go;
And in desponding accents said,
'Ah, what must Israel do?'

But he forgot the Lord who lifts
The beggar to the throne;
Nor knew that all Elijah's gifts
Would soon be made his own.

What! when a Paul has run his course,
Or when Apollos dies,
Is Israel left without resource,
And have we no supplies?

Yes, while the dear Redeemer lives,
We have a boundless store,
And shall be fed with what He gives,
Who lives for evermore.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 32: The Shining Light

My former hopes are fled,
My terror now begins;
I feel, alas! that I am dead
In trespasses and sins.

Ah, whither shall I fly?
I hear the thunder roar;
The Law proclaims Destruction nigh,
And Vengeance at the door.

When I review my ways,
I dread impending doom:
But sure a friendly whisper says,
'Flee from the wrath to come.'

I see, or think I see,
A glimmering from afar;
A beam of day, that shines for me,
To save me from despair.

Forerunner of the sun,
It marks the pilgrim's way;
I'll gaze upon it while I run,
And watch the rising day.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 33: Seeking The Beloved

To those who love the Lord I speak;
Is my Beloved near?
The Bridegroom of my soul I seek,
Oh! when will He appear?

Though once a man of grief and shame,
Yet now He fills a throne,
And bears the greatest, sweetest name,
That earth or heaven have known.

Grace flies before, and love attends
His steps wheree'er he goes;
Though none can see Him but His friends,
And they were once his foes.

He speaks; - obedient to His call
Our warm affections move:
Did He but shine alike on all,
Then all alike would love.

Then love in every heart would reign,
And war would cease to roar;
And cruel and bloodthirsty men
Would thirst for blood no more.

Such Jesus is, and such His grace;
Oh, may He shine on you!
And tell him, when you see His face,
I long to see Him, too.

William Cowper

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Oh, may He shine on you!
And tell him, when you see His face,
I long to see Him, too.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 34: The Waiting Soul

Breathe from the gentle south, O Lord,
And cheer me from the north;
Blow on the treasures of thy word,
And call the spices forth!

I wish, Thou knowest, to be resign'd,
And wait with patient hope;
But hope delay'd fatigues the mind,
And drinks the spirits up.

Help me to reach the distant goal;
Confirm my feeble knee;
Pity the sickness of a soul
That faints for love of Thee!

Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
Yet, since I feel it so,
It yields some hope of life divine
Within, however low.

I seem forsaken and alone,
I hear the lion roar;
And every door is shut but one,
And that is Mercy's door.

There, till the dear Deliverer come,
I'll wait with humble prayer;
And when He calls His exile home,
The Lord shall find him there.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 35: Welcome Cross

'Tis my happiness below
Not to live without the cross,
But the Saviour's power to know,
Sanctifying every loss;
Trials must and will befall;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me.

God in Israel sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil;
These spring up and choke the weeds
Which would else o'erspread the soil:
Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.

Did I meet no trials here,
No chastisement by the way,
Might I not with reason fear
I should prove a castaway?
Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not - would not, if he might.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 36: Afflictions Sanctified By The Word

Oh how I love Thy holy Word,
Thy gracious covenant, O Lord!
It guides me in the peaceful way;
I think upon it all the day.

What are the mines of shining wealth,
The strength of youth, the bloom of health!
What are all joys compared with those
Thine everlasting Word bestows!

Long unafflicted, undismay'd,
In pleasure's path secure I stray'd;
Thou mad'st me feel thy chast'ning rod,
And straight I turned unto my God.

What though it pierced my fainting heart,
I bless'd Thine hand that caused the smart:
It taught my tears awhile to flow,
But saved me from eternal woe.

Oh! hadst Thou left me unchastised,
Thy precepts I had still despised;
And still the snare in secret laid
Had my unwary feet betray'd.

I love Thee, therefore, O my God,
And breathe towards Thy dear abode;
Where, in Thy presence fully blest,
Thy chosen saints for ever rest.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 37: Temptation

The billows swell, the winds are high,
Clouds overcast my wintry sky;
Out of the depths to Thee I call, -
My fears are great, my strength is small.

O Lord, the pilot's part perform,
And guard and guide me through the storm;
Defend me from each threatening ill,
Control the waves, - say, 'Peace! be still.'

Amidst the roaring of the sea
My soul still hangs her hope on Thee;
Thy constant love, thy faithful care,
Is all that saves me from despair.

Dangers of every shape and name
Attend the followers of the Lamb,
Who leave the world's deceitful shore,
And leave it to return no more.

Though tempest-toss'd and half a wreck,
My Saviour through the floods I seek;
Let neither winds nor stormy main
Force back my shatter'd bark again.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 38: Looking Upwards In A Storm

God of my life, to Thee I call,
Afflicted at Thy feet I fall;
When the great water-floods prevail,
Leave not my trembling heart to fail!

Friend of the friendless and the faint,
Where should I lodge my deep complaint,
Where but with Thee, whose open door
Invites the helpless and the poor!

Did ever mourner plead with Thee,
And Thou refuse the mourner's plea?
Does not the word still fix'd remain,
That none shall seek Thy face in vain?

That were a grief I could not bear,
Didst Thou not hear and answer prayer:
But a prayer-hearing, answering God
Supports me under every load.

Fair is the lot that's cast for me;
I have an Advocate with Thee;
They whom the world caresses most
Have no such privilege to boast.

Poor though I am, despised, forgot,
Yet God, my God, forgets me not:
And he is safe, and must succeed,
For whom the Lord vouchsafes to plead.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 39: The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death

My soul is sad, and much dismay'd;
See, Lord, what legions of my foes,
With fierce Apollyon at their head,
My heavenly pilgrimage oppose.

See, from the ever-burning lake,
How like a smoky cloud they rise!
With horrid blasts my soul they shake,
With storms of blasphemies and lies.

Their fiery arrows reach the mark,
My throbbing heart with anguish tear;
Each lights upon a kindred spark,
And finds abundant fuel there.

I hate the thought that wrongs the Lord;
Oh! I would drive it from my breast,
With Thy own sharp two-edged sword,
Far as the east is from the west.

Come, then, and chase the cruel host,
Heal the deep wounds I have received!
Nor let the power of darkness boast
That I am foil'd, and Thou art grieved!

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 4: Jehovah-Nissi: The Lord My Banner

By whom was David taught
To aim the deadly blow,
When he Goliath fought,
And laid the Gittite low?
Nor sword nor spear the stripling took,
But chose a pebble from the brook.

'Twas Israel's God and King
Who sent him to the fight;
Who gave him strength to sling,
And skill to aim aright.
Ye feeble saints, your strength endures,
Because young David's God is yours.

Who order'd Gideon forth,
To storm the invaders' camp.
With arms of little worth,
A pitcher and a lamp?
The trumpets made his coming known
And all the host was overthrown.

Oh! I have seen the day,
When with a single word,
God helping me to say,
'My trust is in the Lord,'
My soul hath quell'd a thousand foes
Fearless of all that could oppose.

But unbelief, self-will,
Self-righteousness, and pride,
How often do they steal
My weapon from my side!
Yet David's Lord, and Gideon's friend,
Will help his servant to the end.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 40: Peace After A Storm

When darkness long has veil'd my mind,
And smiling day once more appears,
Then, my Redeemer, then I find
The folly of my doubts and fears.

Straight I upbraid my wandering heart,
And blush that I should ever be
Thus prone to act so base a part,
Or harbour one hard thought of Thee!

Oh! let me then at length be taught
What I am still so slow to learn,
That God is love, and changes not,
Nor knows the shadow of a turn.

Sweet truth, and easy to repeat!
But when my faith is sharply tried,
I find myself a learner yet,
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide.

But, O my Lord, one look from Thee
Subdues the disobedient will,
Drives doubt and discontent away,
And Thy rebellious worm is still.

Thou art as ready to forgive
As I am ready to repine;
Thou, therefore, all the praise receive;
Be shame and self-abhorrence mine.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 42: Self-Acquaintance

Dear Lord! accept a sinful heart,
Which of itself complains,
And mourns, with much and frequent smart,
The evil it contains.

There fiery seeds of anger lurk,
Which often hurt my frame;
And wait but for the tempter's work,
To fan them to a flame.

Legality holds out a bribe
To purchase life from Thee;
And Discontent would fain prescribe
How Thou shalt deal with me.

While Unbelief withstands Thy grace,
And puts the mercy by,
Presumption, with a brow of brass,
Says, 'Give me, or I die!'

How eager are my thoughts to roam,
In quest of what they love!
But ah! when duty calls them home,
How heavily they move!

Oh, cleanse me in a Saviour's blood,
Transform me by Thy power,
And make me Thy beloved abode,
And let me roam no more.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 43: Prayer For Patience

Lord, who hast suffer'd all for me,
My peace and pardon to procure,
The lighter cross I bear for Thee,
Help me with patience to endure.

The storm of loud repining hush;
I would in humble silence mourn;
Why should the unburnt, though burning bush,
Be angry as the crackling thorn?

Man should not faint at Thy rebuke,
Like Joshua falling on his face,
When the cursed thing that Achan took
Brought Israel into just disgrace.

Perhaps some golden wedge suppress'd,
Some secret sin offends my God;
Perhaps that Babylonish vest,
Self-righteousness, provokes the rod.

Ah! were I buffeted all day,
Mock'd, crown'd with thorns and spit upon,
I yet should have no right to say,
My great distress is mine alone.

Let me not angrily declare
No pain was ever sharp like mine,
Nor murmur at the cross I bear,
But rather weep, remembering Thine.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 44: Submission

O Lord, my best desire fulfil,
And help me to resign
Life, health, and comfort to Thy will,
And make Thy pleasure mine.

Why would I shrink at Thy command,
Whose love forbids my fears?
Or tremble at the gracious hand
That wipes away my tears?

No, rather let me freely yield
What most I prize to Thee;
Who never hast a good withheld,
Or wilt withhold, from me.

Thy favor, all my journey through,
Thou art engaged to grant;
What else I want, or think I do,
'Tis better still to want.

Wisdom and mercy guide my way,
Shall I resist them both?
A poor blind creature of day,
And crush'd before the moth!

But ah! my inward spirit cries,
Still binds me to Thy sway;
Else the next cloud that veils the skies
Drives all these thoughts away.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 45: The Happy Change

How bless'd Thy creature is, O God,
When with a single eye,
He views the lustre of Thy Word,
The dayspring from on high!

Through all the storms that veil the skies
And frown on earthly things,
The Sun of Righteousness he eyes,
With healing on His wings.

Struck by that light, the human heart,
A barren soil no more,
Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad,
Where serpents lurk'd before.

The soul, a dreary province once
Of Satan's dark domain,
Feels a new empire form'd within,
And owns a heavenly reign.

The glorious orb whose golden beams
The fruitful year control,
Since first obedient to Thy Word,
He started from the goal,

Has cheer'd the nations with the joys
His orient rays impart;
But, Jesus, 'tis Thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 46: Retirement

Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,
From strife and tumult far;
From scenes where Satan wages still
His most successful war.

The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree;
And seem, by Thy sweet bounty made,
For those who follow Thee.

There if Thy Spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
Oh, with what peace, and joy, and love,
She communes with her God!

There like the nightingale she pours
Her solitary lays;
Nor asks a witness of her song,
Nor thirsts for human praise.

Author and Guardian of my life,
Sweet source of light Divine,
And, - all harmonious names in one, -
My Saviour! Thou art mine.

What thanks I owe Thee, and what love,
A boundless, endless store,
Shall echo through the realms above,
When time shall be no more.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 47: The Hidden Life

To tell the Saviour all my wants,
How pleasing is the task!
Nor less to praise Him when He grants
Beyond what I can ask.

My laboring spirit vainly seeks
To tell but half the joy,
With how much tenderness He speaks,
And helps me to reply.

Nor were it wise, nor should I choose,
Such secrets to declare;
Like precious wines their taste they lose,
Exposed to open air.

But this with boldness I proclaim,
Nor care if thousands hear,
Sweet is the ointment of His name,
Not life is half so dear.

And can you frown, my former friends,
Who knew what once I was,
And blame the song that thus commends
The Man who bore the cross?

Trust me, I draw the likeness true,
And not as fancy paints;
Such honor may He give to you,
For such have all His saints.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 48: Joy And Peace In Believing

Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings;
It is the Lord who rises
With healing on His wings;
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining,
To cheer it after rain.

In holy contemplation
We sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation,
And find it ever new;
Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say,
E'en let the unknown to-morrow
Bring with it what it may!

It can bring with it nothing,
But He will bear us through;
Who gives the lilies clothing,
Will clothe His people too;
Beneath the spreading heavens
No creature but is fed;
And He who feeds the ravens
Will give His children bread.

Though vine nor fig tree neither
Their wonted fruit shall bear,
Though all the field should wither,
Nor flocks nor herds be there:
Yet God the same abiding,
His praise shall tune my voice;
For, while in Him confiding,
I cannot but rejoice.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 49: True Pleasures

Lord, my soul with pleasure springs
When Jesu's name I hear:
And when God the Spirit brings
The word of promise near:
Beauties too, in holiness,
Still delighted I perceive;
Nor have words that can express
The joys Thy precepts give.

Clothed in sanctity and grace,
How sweet it is to see
Those who love Thee as they pass,
Or when they wait on Thee.
Pleasant too to sit and tell
What we owe to love Divine;
Till our bosoms grateful swell,
And eyes begin to shine.

Those the comforts I possess,
Which God shall still increase,
All His ways are pleasantness,
And all His paths are peace.
Nothing Jesus did or spoke,
Henceforth let me ever slight;
For I love His easy yoke,
And find His burden light.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 5: Jehovah-Shalom: The Lord Send Peace

Jesus! whose blood so freely stream'd
To satisfy the law's demand;
By Thee from guilt and wrath redeem'd,
Before the Father's face I stand.

To reconcile offending man,
Make Justice drop her angry rod;
What creature could have form'd the plan,
Or who fulfil it but a God?

No drop remains of all the curse,
For wretches who deserved the whole;
No arrows dipt in wrath to pierce
The guilty, but returning soul.

Peace by such means so dearly bought,
What rebel could have hoped to see?
Peace by his injured Sovereign wrought,
His Sovereign fasten'd to a tree.

Now, Lord, Thy feeble worm prepare!
For strife with earth and hell begins;
Conform and gird me for the war;
They hate the soul that hates his sins.

Let them in horrid league agree!
They may assault, they may distress;
But cannot quench Thy love to me,
Nor rob me of the Lord my peace.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 50: The Christian

Honor and happiness unite
To make the Christian's name a praise;
How fair the scene, how clear the light,
That fills the remnant of His days!

A kingly character He bears,
No change His priestly office knows;
Unfading is the crown He wears,
His joys can never reach a close.

Adorn'd with glory from on high,
Salvation shines upon His face;
His robe is of the ethereal dye,
His steps are dignity and grace.

Inferior honors He disdains,
Nor stoops to take applause from earth;
The King of kings Himself maintains
The expenses of His heavenly birth.

The noblest creature seen below,
Ordain'd to fill a throne above;
God gives him all He can bestow,
His kingdom of eternal love!

My soul is ravished at the thought!
Methinks from earth I see Him rise!
Angels congratulate His lot,
And shout Him welcome to the skies.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 51: Lively Hope And Gracious Fear

I was a grovelling creature once,
And basely cleaved to earth:
I wanted spirit to renounce
The clod that gave me birth.

But God hath breathed upon a worm,
And sent me from above
Wings such as clothe an angel's form,
The wings of joy and love.

With these to Pisgah's top I fly
And there delighted stand,
To view, beneath a shining sky,
The spacious promised land.

The Lord of all the vast domain
Has promised it to me,
The length and breadth of all the plain
As far as faith can see.

How glorious is my privilege!
To Thee for help I call;
I stand upon a mountain's edge,
O save me, lest I fall!

Though much exalted in the Lord,
My strength is not my own;
Then let me tremble at His word,
And none shall cast me down.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 52: For The Poor

When Hagar found the bottle spent
And wept o'er Ishmael,
A message from the Lord was sent
To guide her to a well.

Should not Elijah's cake and cruse
Convince us at this day,
A gracious God will not refuse
Provisions by the way?

His saints and servants shall be fed,
The promise is secure;
'Bread shall be given them,' as He said,
'Their water shall be sure.'

Repasts far richer they shall prove,
Than all earth's dainties are;
'Tis sweet to taste a Saviour's love,
Though in the meanest fare.

To Jesus then your trouble bring,
Nor murmur at your lot;
While you are poor and He is King,
You shall not be forgot.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 53: My Soul Thirsteth For God

I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.

It was the sight of Thy dear cross
First wean'd my soul from earthly things;
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

I want that grace that springs from Thee,
That quickens all things where it flows,
And makes a wretched thorn like me
Bloom as the myrtle, or the rose.

Dear fountain of delight unknown!
No longer sink below the brim;
But overflow, and pour me down
A living and life-giving stream!

For sure of all the plants that share
The notice of thy Father's eye,
None proves less grateful to His care,
Or yields him meaner fruit than I.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 54: Love Constraining To Obedience

No strength of nature can suffice
To serve the Lord aright:
And what she has she misapplies,
For want of clearer light.

How long beneath the law I lay
In bondage and distress;
I toll'd the precept to obey,
But toil'd without success.

Then, to abstain from outward sin
Was more than I could do;
Now, if I feel its power within,
I feel I hate it too.

Then all my servile works were done
A righteousness to raise;
Now, freely chosen in the Son,
I freely choose His ways.

'What shall I do,' was then the word,
'That I may worthier grow?'
'What shall I render to the Lord?'
Is my inquiry now.

To see the law by Christ fulfilled
And hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 55: The Heart Healed And Changed By Mercy

Sin enslaved me many years,
And led me bound and blind;
Till at length a thousand fears
Came swarming o'er my mind.
'Where,' said I, in deep distress,
'Will these sinful pleasures end?
How shall I secure my peace
And make the Lord my friend?'

Friends and ministers said much
The gospel to enforce;
But my blindness still was such,
I chose a legal course:
Much I fasted, watch'd, and strove,
Scarce would shew my face abroad,
Fear'd almost to speak or move,
A stranger still to God.

Thus afraid to trust His grace,
Long time did I rebel;
Till despairing of my case,
Down at His feet I fell:
Then my stubborn heart He broke,
And subdued me to His sway;
By a simple word He spoke,
'Thy sins are done away.'

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 56: Hatred Of Sin

Holy Lord God! I love Thy truth,
Nor dare Thy least commandment slight;
Yet pierced by sin the serpent's tooth,
I mourn the anguish of the bite.

But though the poison lurks within,
Hope bids me still with patience wait;
Till death shall set me free from sin,
Free from the only thing I hate.

Had I a throne above the rest,
Where angels and archangels dwell,
One sin, unslain, within my breast,
Would make that heaven as dark as hell.

The prisoner sent to breathe fresh air,
And blest with liberty again,
Would mourn were he condemn'd to wear
One link of all his former chain.

But, oh! no foe invades the bliss,
When glory crowns the Christian's head;
One look at Jesus as He is
Will strike all sin forever dead.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 57: The New Convert

The new-born child of gospel grace,
Like some fair tree when summer's nigh,
Beneath Emmanuel's shining face
Lifts up his blooming branch on high.

No fears he feels, he sees no foes,
No conflict yet his faith employs,
Nor has he learnt to whom he owes
The strength and peace his soul enjoys.

But sin soon darts its cruel sting,
And comforts sinking day by day,
What seem'd his own, a self-fed spring,
Proves but a brook that glides away.

When Gideon arm'd his numerous host,
The Lord soon made his numbers less;
And said, 'Lest Israel vainly boast,
My arm procured me this success!'

Thus will He bring our spirits down,
And draw our ebbing comforts low,
That saved by grace, but not our own,
We may not claim the praise we owe.

William Cowper

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That saved by grace, but not our own,
We may not claim the praise we owe.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 58: True And False Comforts

O God, whose favorable eye,
The sin-sick soul revives,
Holy and heavenly is the joy
Thy shining presence gives.

Not such as hypocrites suppose,
Who with a graceless heart
Taste not of Thee, but drink a dose,
Prepared by Satan's art.

Intoxicating joys are theirs,
Who while they boast their light,
And seem to soar above the stars,
Are plunging into night.

Lull'd in a soft and fatal sleep,
They sin and yet rejoice;
Were they indeed the Saviour's sheep,
Would they not hear His voice?

Be mine the comforts that reclaim
The soul from Satan's power;
That make me blush for what I am,
And hate my sin the more.

'Tis joy enough, my All in All,
At Thy dear feet to lie;
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
And none can higher fly.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 59: A Living And A Dead Faith

The Lord receives his highest praise
From humble minds and hearts sincere;
While all the loud professor says
Offends the righteous Judge's ear.

To walk as children of the day,
To mark the precepts' holy light,
To wage the warfare, watch, and pray,
Show who are pleasing in His sight.

Not words alone it cost the Lord,
To purchase pardon for His own;
Nor will a soul by grace restored
Return the Saviour words alone.

With golden bells, the priestly vest,
And rich pomegranates border'd round,
The need of holiness expressed,
And called for fruit as well as sound.

Easy indeed it were to reach
A mansion in the courts above,
If swelling words and fluent speech
Might serve instead of faith and love.

But none shall gain the blissful place,
Or God's unclouded glory see,
Who talks of free and sovereign grace,
Unless that grace has made him free!

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 6: Wisdom

'Ere God had built the mountains,
Or raised the fruitful hills;
Before he fill'd the fountains
That feed the running rills;
In me from everlasting,
The wonderful I am,
Found pleasures never wasting,
And Wisdom is my name.

'When, like a tent to dwell in,
He spread the skies abroad,
And swathed about the swelling
Of Ocean's mighty flood;
He wrought by weight and measure,
And I was with Him then:
Myself the Father's pleasure,
And mine, the sons of men.'

Thus Wisdom's words discover
Thy glory and Thy grace,
Thou everlasting lover
Of our unworthy race!
Thy gracious eye survey'd us
Ere stars were seen above;
In wisdom thou hast made us,
And died for us in love.

And couldst thou be delighted
With creatures such as we,
Who, when we saw Thee, slighted,
And nail'd Thee to a tree?
Unfathomable wonder,
And mystery divine!
The voice that speaks in thunder,
Says, 'Sinner, I am thine!'

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 60: Abuse Of The Gospel

Too many, Lord, abuse Thy grace
In this licentious day,
And while they boast they see Thy face,
They turn their own away.

Thy book displays a gracious light
That can the blind restore;
But these are dazzled by the sight,
And blinded still the more.

The pardon such presume upon,
They do not beg but steal;
And when they plead it at Thy throne,
Oh! where's the Spirit's seal?

Was it for this, ye lawless tribe,
The dear Redeemer bled?
Is this the grace the saints imbibe
From Christ the living head?

Ah, Lord, we know Thy chosen few
Are fed with heavenly fare;
But these, - the wretched husks they chew,
Proclaim them what they are.

The liberty our hearts implore
Is not to live in sin;
But still to wait at Wisdom's door,
Till Mercy calls us in.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 61: The Narrow Way

What thousands never knew the road!
What thousands hate it when 'tis known!
None but the chosen tribes of God
Will seek or choose it for their own.

A thousand ways in ruin end,
One only leads to joys on high;
By that my willing steps ascend,
Pleased with a journey to the sky.

No more I ask or hope to find
Delight or happiness below;
Sorrow may well possess the mind
That feeds where thorns and thistles grow.

The joy that fades is not for me,
I seek immortal joys above;
There glory without end shall be
The bright reward of faith and love.

Cleave to the world, ye sordid worms,
Contented lick your native dust!
But God shall fight with all his storms,
Against the idol of your trust.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 62: Dependence

To keep the lamp alive,
With oil we fill the bowl;
'Tis water makes the willow thrive,
And grace that feeds the soul.

The Lord's unsparing hand
Supplies the living stream;
It is not at our own command,
But still derived from Him.

Beware of Peter's word,
Nor confidently say,
'I never will deny Thee, Lord,'--
But,--'Grant I never may.'

Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And e'en an angel would be weak,
Who trusted in his own.

Retreat beneath his wings,
And in His gace confide!
This more exalts the King of kings
Than all your works beside.

In Jesus is our store,
Grace issues from His throne;
Whoever says, 'I want no more,'
Confesses he has done.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 63: Not Of Works

Grace, triumphant in the throne,
Scorns a rival, reigns alone;
Come and bow beneath her sway;
Cast your idol works away!
Works of man, when made his plea,
Never shall accepted be;
Fruits of pride (vainglorious worm!)
Are the best he can perform.

Self, the god his soul adores,
Influences all his powers;
Jesus is a slighted name,
Self-advancement all his aim:
But when God the Judge shall come,
To pronounce the final doom,
Then for rocks and hills to hide
All his works and all his pride!

Still the boasting heart replies,
What the worthy and the wise,
Friends to temperance and peace,
Have not these a righteousness?
Banish every vain pretence
Built on human excellence;
Perish everything in man,
But the grace that never can.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 64: Praise For Faith

Of all the gifts Thine hand bestows,
Thou Giver of all good!
Not heaven itself a richer knows
Than my Redeemer's blood.

Faith too, the blood-receiving grace,
From the same hand we gain;
Else, sweetly as it suits our case,
That gift had been in vain.

Till Thou Thy teaching power apply,
Our hearts refuse to see,
And weak, as a distemper'd eye,
Shut out the view of Thee.

Blind to the merits of Thy Son,
What misery we endure!
Yet fly that Hand from which alone
We could expect a cure.

We praise Thee, and would praise Thee more,
To Thee our all we owe:
The precious Saviour, and the power
That makes Him precious too.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 65: Grace And Providence

Almighty King! whose wondrous hand
Supports the weight of sea and land;
Whose grace is such a boundless store,
No heart shall break that sighs for more.

Thy providence supplies my food,
And 'tis Thy blessing makes it good;
My soul is nourish'd by Thy Word,
Let soul and body praise the Lord!

My streams of outward comfort came
From Him who built this earthly frame;
Whate'er I want His bounty gives,
By whom my soul forever lives.

Either His hand preserves from pain,
Or, if I feel it, heals again;
From Satan's malice shields my breast,
Or overrules it for the best.

Forgive the song that falls so low
Beneath the gratitude I owe!
It means Thy praise: however poor,
An angel's song can do no more.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 66: I Will Praise The Lord At All Times

Winter has a joy for me,
While the Saviour's charms I read,
Lowly, meek, from blemish free,
In the snowdrop's pensive head.

Spring returns, and brings along
Life-invigorating suns:
Hark! the turtle's plaintive song
Seems to speak His dying groans!

Summer has a thousand charms,
All expressive of His worth;
'Tis His sun that lights and warms,
His the air the cools the earth.

What! has autumn left to say
Nothing of a Saviour's grace?
Yes, the beams of milder day
Tell me of his smiling face.

Light appears with early dawn,
While the sun makes haste to rise;
See His bleeding beauties drawn
On the blushes of the skies.

Evening with a silent pace,
Slowly moving in the west,
Shews an emblem of His grace,
Points to an eternal rest.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 67: Longing To Be With Christ

To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone;
O bear me, ye cherubim, up,
And waft me away to His throne!

My Saviour, whom absent I love,
Whom, not having seen I adore;
Whose name is exalted above
All glory, dominion, and power;

Dissolve thou these bonds that detain
My soul from her portion in thee.
Ah! strike off this adamant chain,
And make me eternally free.

When that happy era begins,
When arrayed in Thy glories I shine,
Nor grieve any more, by my sins,
The bosom on which I recline.

Oh then shall the veil be removed,
And round me Thy brightness be pour'd,
I shall meet Him whom absent I loved,
Shall see Him whom unseen I adored.

And then, never more shall the fears,
The trials, temptation, and woes,
Which darken this valley of tears,
Intrude on my blissful repose.

Or, if yet remember'd above,
Remembrance no sadness shall raise,
They will be but new signs of Thy love,
New themes for my wonder and praise.

Thus the strokes which from sin and from pain
Shall set me eternally free,
Will but strengthen and rivet the chain
Which binds me, my Saviour, to Thee.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 68: Light Shining Out Of Darkness

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding ev'ry hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 7: Vanity Of The World

God gives his mercies to be spent;
Your hoard will do your soul no good.
Gold is a blessing only lent,
Repaid by giving others food.

The world's esteem is but a bribe,
To buy their peace you sell your own;
The slave of a vainglorious tribe,
Who hate you while they make you known.

The joy that vain amusements give,
Oh! sad conclusion that it brings!
The honey of a crowded hive,
Defended by a thousand stings.

'Tis thus the world rewards the fools
That live upon her treacherous smiles:
She leads them blindfold by her rules,
And ruins all whom she beguiles.

God knows the thousands who go down
From pleasure into endless woe;
And with a long despairing groan
Blaspheme the Maker as they go.

Oh fearful thought! be timely wise;
Delight but in a Saviour's charms,
And God shall take you to the skies,
Embraced in everlasting arms.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 8: O Lord, I Will Praise Thee

I will praise Thee every day
Now Thine anger's turn'd away;
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice.

Here, in the fair gospel-field,
Wells of free salvation yield
Stream of life, a plenteous store,
And my soul shall thirst no more.

Jesus is become at length
My salvation and my strength;
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.

Praise ye, then, His glorious name,
Publish His exalted fame!
Still His worth your praise exceeds;
Excellent are all His deeds.

Raise again the joyful sound.
Let the nations roll it round!
Zion, shout! for this is He;
God the Saviour dwells in thee.

William Cowper

Olney Hymn 9: The Contrite Heart

The Lord will happiness divine
On contrite hearts bestow;
Then tell me, gracious God, is mine
A contrite heart or no?

I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel;
If aught is felt, 'tis only pain,
To find I cannot feel.

I sometimes think myself inclined
To love Thee if I could;
But often feel another mind,
Averse to all that's good.

My best desires are faint and few,
I fain would strive for more;
But when I cry, 'My strength renew!'
Seem weaker than before.

Thy saints are comforted, I know,
And love Thy house of prayer;
I therefore go where others go,
But find no comfort there.

Oh make this heart rejoice or ache;
Decide this doubt for me;
And if it be not broken, break -
And heal it, if it be.

William Cowper

On A Bath, By Plato

Did Cytherea to the skies
From this pellucid lymph arise?
Or was it Cytherea's touch,
When bathing here, that made it such?

William Cowper

On A Battered Beauty (From The Greek)

Hair, wax, rouge, honey, teeth you buy,
A multifarious store!
A mask at once would all supply
Nor would it cost you more.

William Cowper

On A Fowler, By Isidorus

With seeds and birdlime, from the desert air,
Eumelus gather'd free, though scanty fare.
No lordly patron's hand he deign'd to kiss
Nor luxury knew, save liberty, nor bliss.
Thrice thirty years he lived, and to his heirs
His seeds bequeath'd, his birdlime, and his snares.

William Cowper

On A Goldfinch, Starved To Death In His Cage

Time was when I was free as air,
The thistle's downy seed my fare,
My drink the morning dew;
I perch'd at will on every spray,
My form genteel, my plumage gay,
My strains for ever new.
But gaudy plumage, sprightly strain,
And form genteel were all in vain,
And of a transient date;
For, caught and caged, and starved to death,
In dying sighs my little breath
Soon pass'd the wiry grate.
Thanks, gentle swain, for all my woes,
And thanks for this effectual close
And cure of every ill!
More cruelty could none express;
And I, if you had shown me less,
Had been your prisoner still.

William Cowper

On A Good Man (From The Greek)

Traveller, regret not me; for thou shalt find
Just cause of sorrow none in my decease,
Who, dying, children's children left behind,
And with one wife lived many a year in peace;
Three virtuous youths espoused my daughters three,
And oft their infants in my bosom lay,
Nor saw I one of all derived from me,
Touch'd with disease, or torn by death away.
Their duteous hands my funeral rites bestow'd,
And me, by blameless manners fitted well
To seek it, sent to the serene abode
Where shades of pious men forever dwell.

William Cowper

On A Mischievous Bull, Which The Owner Him Sold At The Author's Instance

Go--thou art all unfit to share
The pleasures of this place
With such as its old tenants are,
Creatures of gentler race.
The squirrel here his hoard provides,
Aware of wintry storms,
And woodpeckers explore the sides
Of rugged oaks for worms.
The sheep here smooths the knotted thorn
With frictions of her fleece;
And here I wander eve and morn,
Like her, a friend to peace.
Ah!--I could pity thee exiled
From this secure retreat--
I would not lose it to be styled
The happiest of the great.
But thou canst taste no calm delight;
Thy pleasure is to show
Thy magnanimity in fight,
Thy prowess--therefore, go--
I care not whether east or north,
So I no more may find thee;
The angry muse thus sings thee forth,
And claps the gate behind thee.

William Cowper

On A Miser (From The Greek)

They call thee rich -- I deem thee poor,
Since, if thou darest not use thy store,
But savest only for thine heirs,
The treasure is not thine, but theirs.

William Cowper

On A Miser, 2 (From The Greek)

A miser traversing his house,
Espied, unusual there, a mouse,
And thus his uninvited guest
Briskly inquisitive address'd:
'Tell me, my dear, to what cause is't
I owe this unexpected visit?'
The mouse her host obliquely eyed,
And, smiling, pleasantly replied:
'Fear not, good fellow, for your hoard!
I come to lodge, and not to board.'

William Cowper

On A Miser, 3 (From The Greek)

Art thou some individual of a kind
Long-lived by nature as the rook or hind?
Heap treasure, then, for if thy need be such,
Thou hast excuse, and scarce canst heap too much.
But man thou seem'st, clear therefore from thy breast
This lust of treasure -- folly at thy best!
For why shouldst thou go wasted to the tomb,
To fatten with thy spoils thou know'st not whom?

William Cowper

On A Mistake In His Translation Of Homer

Cowper had sinned with some excuse,
If, bound in rhyming tethers,
He had committed this abuse
Of changing ewes for wethers;

But, male for female is a trope,
Or rather bold misnomer,
That would have startled even Pope,
When he translated Homer.

William Cowper

On A Plant Of Virgin's-Bower, Designed To Cover A Garden-Seat

Thrive, gentle plant! and weave a bower
For Mary and for me,
And deck with many a splendid flower
Thy foliage large and free.

Thou camest from Eartham, and wilt shade,
(If truly I divine,)
Some future day the illustrious head
Of him who made thee mine.

Should Daphne show a jealous frown,
And Envy seize the Bay,
Affirming none so fit to crown
Such honoured brows as they.

Thy cause with zeal we shall defend,
And with convincing power!
For why should not the Virgin's friend
Be crowned with Virgin's Bower?

William Cowper

On A Similar Character (From The Greek)

You give your cheeks a rosy stain,
With washes dye your hair;
But paint and washes both are vain
To give a youthful air.

Those wrinkles mock your daily toil,
No labor will efface 'em,
You wear a mask of smoothest oil,
Yet still with ease we trace 'em.

An art so fruitless then forsake,
Which though you much excel in,
You never can contrive to make
Old Hecuba young Helen.

William Cowper

On A Spaniel, Called Beau, Killing A Young Bird

A spaniel, Beau, that fares like you,
Well fed, and at his ease,
Should wiser be than to pursue
Each trifle that he sees.

But you have killed a tiny bird,
Which flew not till to-day,
Against my orders, whom you heard
Forbidding you the prey.

Nor did you kill that you might eat,
And ease a doggish pain,
For him, though chased with furious heat,
You left where he was slain.

Nor was he of the theivish sort,
Or one whom blood allures,
But innocent was all his sport
Whom you have torn for yours.

My dog! what remedy remains,
Since, teach you all I can,
I see you, after all my pains,
So much resemble man!

BEAU'S REPLY.

Sir, when I flew to seize the bird
In spite of your command,
A louder voice than yours I heard,
And harder to withstand.

You cried -- forbear! -- but in my breast
A mightier cried -- proceed!--
'Twas nature, sir, whose strong behest
Impelled me to the deed.

Yet much as nature I respect,
I ventured once to break

(As you perhaps may recollect)
Her precept for your sake;

And when your linnet on a day,
Passing his prison door,
Had fluttered all his strength away,
And panting pressed the floor;

Well knowing him a sacred thing,
Not destined to my tooth,
I only kissed his ruffled wing,
And licked the feathers smooth.

Let my obedience then excuse
My disobedience now,
Nor some reproof yourself refuse
From your aggrieved bow-wow;

If killing birds be such a crime,
(Which I can hardly see,)
What think you, sir, of killing time
With verse addressed to me?

William Cowper

On A Thief (From The Greek)

When Aulus, the nocturnal thief, made prize
Of Hermes, swift-wing'd envoy of the skies,
Hermes, Arcadia's king, the thief divine,
Who when an infant stole Apollo's kine,
And whom, as arbiter and overseer
Of our gymnastic sports, we planted here;
'Hermes,' he cried, 'you meet no new disaster
Ofttimes the pupil goes beyond the master.'

William Cowper

On A True Friend (From The Greek)

Hast thou a friend? thou hast indeed
A rich and large supply.
Treasure to serve your every need,
Well managed, till you die.

William Cowper

On An Infant (From The Greek)

Bewail not much, my parents! me, the prey
Of ruthless Ades, and sepulchred here.
An infant, in my fifth scarce finish'd year,
He found all sportive, innocent, and gay,
Your young Callimachus; and if I knew
Not many joys, my griefs were also few.

William Cowper

On An Old Woman (From The Greek)

Mycilla dyes her locks, 'tis said:
But 'tis a foul aspersion;
She buys them black; they therefore need
No subsequent immersion.

William Cowper

On An Ugly Fellow (From The Greek)

Beware, my friend! of crystal brook,
Or fountain, lest that hideous hook,
Thy nose, thou chance to see;
Narcissus' fate would then be thine,
And self-detested thou wouldst pine,
As self-enamour'd he.

William Cowper

On Delia (Bid Adieu, My Sad Heart)

Bid adieu, my sad heart, bid adieu to thy peace!
Thy pleasure is past, and thy sorrows increase;
See the shadows of evening how far they extend,
And a long night is coming, that never may end;
For the sun is now set that enlivened the scene,
And an age must be past ere it rises again.

Already deprived of its splendour and heat,
I feel thee more slowly, more heavily beat;
Perhaps overstrained with the quick pulse of pleasure,
Thou art glad of this respite to beat at thy leisure;
But the sigh of distress shall now weary thee more
Than the flutter and tumult of passion before.

The heart of a lover is never at rest,
With joy overwhelmed, or with sorrow oppressed:
When Delia is near, all is ecstasy then,
And I even forget I must lose her again:
When absent, as wretched as happy before,
Despairing I cry, I shall see her no more!

William Cowper

On Envy (From The Greek)

Pity, says the Theban bard,
From my wishes I discard;
Envy, let me rather be,
Rather far, a theme for thee.
Pity to distress is shown.
Envy to the great alone--
So the Theban -- But to shine
Less conspicuous be mine!
I prefer the golden mean,
Pomp and penury between;
For alarm and peril wait
Ever on the loftiest state
And the lowest to the end
Obloquy and scorn attend.

William Cowper

On Female Inconstancy (From The Greek)

Rich, thou hadst many lovers -- poor, hast none,
So surely want extinguishes the flame,
And she who call'd thee once her pretty one,
And her Adonis, now inquires thy name.

Where wast thou born, Socicrates, and where,
In what strange country can thy parents live,
Who seem'st, by thy complaints, not yet aware
That want's a crime no woman can forgive?

William Cowper

On Flatteries (From The Greek)

No mischief worthier of our fear
In nature can be found
Than friendship, in ostent sincere,
But hollow and unsound,
For lull'd into a dangerous dream
We close infold a foe,
Who strikes, when most secure we seem,
The inevitable blow.

William Cowper

On Flaxman's Penelope

The suitors sinned, but with a fair excuse,
Whom all this elegance might well seduce;
Nor can our censure on the husband fall,
Who, for a wife so lovely, slew them all.

William Cowper

On Hermocratia (From The Greek)

Hermocratia named -- save only one --
Twice fifteen births I bore, and buried none;
For neither Phoebus pierced my thriving joys,
Nor Dian -- she my girls, or he my boys.
But Dian rather, when my daughters lay
In parturition, chased their pangs away.
And all my sons, by Phoebus' bounty, shared
A vigorous youth, by sickness unimpair'd.
O Niobe! far less prolific! see
Thy hoast against Latona shamed by me!

William Cowper

On Invalids (From The Greek)

Far happier are the dead, methinks, than they
Who look for death, and fear it every day.

William Cowper

On Late Acquired Wealth (From The Greek)

Poor in my youth, and in life's later scenes
Rich to no end, I curse my natal hour,
Who nought enjoy'd while young, denied the means;
And nought when old enjoy'd, denied the power.

William Cowper

On Miltiades

Miltiades! thy valor best
(Although in every region known)
The men of Persia can attest,
Taught by thyself at Marathon.

William Cowper

On Mrs. Montague's Feather Hangings

The Birds put off their every hue,
To dress a room for Montagu.
The peacock sends his heavenly dyes,
His rainbows and his starry eyes;
The pheasant plumes, which round enfold
His mantling neck with downy gold;
The cock his arch'd tail's azure show;
And, river-blanch'd, the swan his snow.
All tribes beside of Indian name,
That glossy shine, or vivid flame,
Where rises, and where sets the day,
Whate'er they boast of rich and gay,
Contribute to the gorgeous plan,
Proud to advance it all they can.
This plumage neither dashing shower,
Nor blasts, that shake the dripping bower,
Shall drench again or discompose,
But, screen'd from every storm that blows,
It boasts a splendour ever new,
Safe with protecting Montagu.
To the same patroness resort,
Secure of favour at her court,
Strong Genius, from whose forge of thought
Forms rise, to quick perfection wrought,
Which, though new-born, with vigour move,
Like Pallas springing arm'd from Jove--
Imagination scattering round
Wild roses over furrow'd ground,
Which Labour of his frown beguile,
And teach Philosophy a smile--
Wit flashing on Religion's side,
Whose fires, to sacred truth applied,
The gem, though luminous before,
Obtrude on human notice more,
Like sunbeams on the golden height
Of some tall temple playing bright--
Well tutor'd Learning, from his books
Dismiss'd with grave, not haughty, looks,
Their order on his shelves exact,

Not more harmonious or compact
Than that to which he keeps confined
The various treasures of his mind--
All these to Montagu's repair,
Ambitious of a shelter there.
There Genius, Learning, Fancy, Wit,
Their ruffled plumage calm refit
(For stormy troubles loudest roar
Around their flight who highest soar),
And in her eye, and by her aid,
Shine safe without a fear to fade.
She thus maintains divided sway
With yon bright regent of the day;
The Plume and Poet both we know
Their lustre to his influence owe;
And she the works of Phœbus aiding,
Both Poet saves and Plume from fading.

William Cowper

On Niobe (From The Greek)

Charon! receive a family on board
Itself sufficient for thy crazy yawl,
Apollo and Diana, for a word
By me too proudly spoken, slew us all.

William Cowper

On Observing Some Names Of Little Note Recorded In The Biographia Britannica

Oh fond attempt to give a deathless lot,
To names ignoble, born to be forgot!
In vain recorded in historic page,
They court the notice of a future age,
Those twinkling tiny lustres of the land
Drop one by one from fame's neglecting hand,
Lethean gulfs receive them as they fall,
And dark oblivion soon absorbs them all.
So when a child, as playful children use,
Has burnt to tinder a stale last year's news,
The flame extinct, he views the roving fire,
There goes my lady, and there goes the squire;
There goes the parson, oh! illustrious spark,
And there, scarce less illustrious, goes the clerk.

William Cowper

On One Ignorant And Arrogant (Translated From Owen)

Thou mayst of double ignorance boast,
Who know'st not that thou nothing know'st.

William Cowper

On Opening A Place For Social Prayer

Jesus! where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy seat;
Where'er they seek Thee, Thou art found,
And every place is hallow'd ground.

For Thou, within no walls confined,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring Thee where they come
And going, take Thee to their home.

Dear Shepherd of Thy chosen few!
Thy former mercies here renew;
Her to our waiting hearts proclaim
The sweetness of Thy saving name.

Here may we prove the power of prayer,
To strengthen faith, and sweeten care;
To teach our faint desires to rise,
And bring all Heaven before our eyes.

Behold, at Thy commanding word
We stretch the curtain and the cord;
Come Thou, and fill this wider space,
And bless us with a large increase.

Lord, we are few, but Thou art near:
Nor short Thine arm, nor deaf Thine ear;
Oh rend the heavens, come quickly down,
And make a thousand hearts Thine own.

William Cowper

On Pallas Bathing, From A Hymn Of Callimachus

Nor oils of balmy scene produce,
Nor mirror for Minerva's use,
Ye nymphs who lave her; she, array'd
In genuine beauty, scorns their aid.
Not even when they left the skies,
To seek on Ida's head the prize
From Paris' hand, did Juno deign,
Or Pallas in the crystal plain
Of Simois' stream her locks to trace,
Or in the mirror's polished face,
Though Venus oft with anxious care
Adjusted twice a single hair.

William Cowper

On Pedigree. From Epicharmus

My mother! if thou love me, name no more
My noble birth! Sounding at every breath
My noble birth, thou kill'st me. Thither fly,
As to their only refuge, all from whom
Nature withholds all good besides; they boast
Their noble birth, conduct us to the tombs
Of their forefathers, and, from age to age
Ascending, trumpet their illustrious race:
But whom hast thou beheld, or canst thou name,
Derived from no forefathers? Such a man
Lives not; for how could such be born at all?
And, if it chance that, native of a land
Far distant, or in infancy deprived
Of all his kindred, one, who cannot trace
His origin, exist, why deem him sprung
From baser ancestry than theirs who can?
My mother! he whom nature at his birth
Endow'd with virtuous qualities, although
An Æthiop and a slave, is nobly born.

William Cowper

On Receipt Of My Mother's Picture

Oh that those lips had language! Life has pass'd
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine- thy own sweet smiles I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me;
Voice only fails, else, how distinct they say,
'Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away! '
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
(Blest be the art that can immortalize,
The art that baffles time's tyrannic claim
To quench it) here shines on me still the same.

Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,
Oh welcome guest, though unexpected, here!
Who bidd'st me honour with an artless song,
Affectionate, a mother lost so long,
I will obey, not willingly alone,
But gladly, as the precept were her own;
And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief-
Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,
A momentary dream, that thou art she.

My mother! when I learn'd that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hover'd thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unseen, a kiss;
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss-
Ah that maternal smile! it answers- Yes.
I heard the bell toll'd on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nurs'ry window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such? - It was.- Where thou art gone
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting sound shall pass my lips no more!
Thy maidens griev'd themselves at my concern,
Oft gave me promise of a quick return.

What ardently I wish'd, I long believ'd,
And, disappointed still, was still deceiv'd;
By disappointment every day beguill'd,
Dupe of to-morrow even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,
I learn'd at last submission to my lot;
But, though I less deplor'd thee, ne'er forgot.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nurs'ry floor;
And where the gard'ner Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,
Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapt
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capt,
'Tis now become a history little known,
That once we call'd the past'ral house our own.
Short-liv'd possession! but the record fair
That mem'ry keeps of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm that has effac'd
A thousand other themes less deeply trac'd.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou might'st know me safe and warmly laid;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionary plum;
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestow'd
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glow'd;
All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughen'd by those cataracts and brakes
That humour interpos'd too often makes;
All this still legible in mem'ry's page,
And still to be so, to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honours to thee as my numbers may;
Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
Not scorn'd in heav'n, though little notic'd here.

Could time, his flight revers'd, restore the hours,
When, playing with thy vesture's tissued flow'rs,
The violet, the pink, and jessamine,
I prick'd them into paper with a pin,

(And thou wast happier than myself the while,
Would'st softly speak, and stroke my head and smile)
Could those few pleasant hours again appear,
Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?
I would not trust my heart- the dear delight
Seems so to be desir'd, perhaps I might.-
But no- what here we call our life is such,
So little to be lov'd, and thou so much,
That I should ill requite thee to constrain
Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast
(The storms all weather'd and the ocean cross'd)
Shoots into port at some well-haven'd isle,
Where spices breathe and brighter seasons smile,
There sits quiescent on the floods that show
Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
While airs impregnated with incense play
Around her, fanning light her streamers gay;
So thou, with sails how swift! hast reach'd the shore
'Where tempests never beat nor billows roar,'
And thy lov'd consort on the dang'rous tide
Of life, long since, has anchor'd at thy side.
But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
Always from port withheld, always distress'd-
Me howling winds drive devious, tempest toss'd,
Sails ript, seams op'ning wide, and compass lost,
And day by day some current's thwarting force
Sets me more distant from a prosp'rous course.
But oh the thought, that thou art safe, and he!
That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.
My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthron'd, and rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise-
The son of parents pass'd into the skies.
And now, farewell- time, unrevok'd, has run
His wonted course, yet what I wish'd is done.
By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,
I seem t' have liv'd my childhood o'er again;
To have renew'd the joys that once were mine,
Without the sin of violating thine:
And, while the wings of fancy still are free,

And I can view this mimic shew of thee,
Time has but half succeeded in his theft-
Thyself remov'd, thy power to sooth me left.

William Cowper

On Receiving Hayley's Picture

In language warm as could be breathed or penned
Thy picture speaks the original my friend,
Not by those looks that indicate thy mind,
They only speak thee friend of all mankind;
Expression here more soothing still I see,
That friend of all, a partial friend to me.

William Cowper

On Receiving Heyne's Virgil From Mr. Hayley

I should have deemed it once an effort vain
To sweeten more sweet Maro's matchless strain,
But from that error now behold me free,
Since I received him as a gift from thee.

William Cowper

On The Astrologers (From The Greek)

The astrologers did all alike presage
My uncle's dying in extreme old age;
One only disagreed. But he was wise,
And spoke not till he heard the funeral cries.

William Cowper

On The Author Of Letters On Literature

The genius of the Augustan age
His head among Rome's ruins reared,
And bursting with heroic rage,
When literary Heron appeared,

Thou hast, he cried, like him of old
Who set the Ephesian dome on fir
By being scandalously bold,
Attained the mark of thy desire.

And for traducing Virgil's name
Shalt share his merited reward;
A perpetuity of fame,
That rots, and stinks, and is abhorred.

William Cowper

On The Benefit Received By His Majesty From Sea-Bathing, In The Year 1789

O sovereign of an isle renowned
For undisputed sway
Wherever o'er yon gulf profound
Her navies wing their way;

With juster claims she builds at length
Her empire on the sea,
And well may boast the waves her strength
Which strength restored to thee.

William Cowper

On The Burning Of Lord Mansfield's Library

On the Burning of Lord Mansfield's Library, Together with his MSS. by the Mob, in the Month of June 1780.

So then - the Vandals of our isle,
Sworn foes to sense and law,
Have burnt to dust a nobler pile
Than ever Roman saw!

And Murray sighs o'er Pope and Swift,
And many a treasure more,
The well-judged purchase and the gift
That graced his lettered store.

Their
pages mangled, burnt, and torn,
The loss was
his alone;

But ages yet to come shall mourn
The burning of
his own.

William Cowper

On The Death Of A Minister

His master taken from his head,
Elisha saw him go;
And in desponding accents said,
"Ah, what must Israel do?"

But he forgot the Lord who lifts
The beggar to the throne;
Nor knew that all Elijah's gifts
Would soon be made his own.

What! when a Paul has run his course,
Or when Apollos dies,
Is Israel left without resource,
And have we no supplies?

Yes, while the dear Redeemer lives,
We have a boundless store,
And shall be fed with what He gives,
Who lives for evermore.

William Cowper

On The Death Of Damon. (Translated From Milton)

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 heav'd, 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 enrich'd the year,
Since Damon's lips had gasp'd for vital air
The last, last time, nor Thyrsis yet was there;
For he, enamour'd of the Muse, remain'd
In Tuscan Fiorenza long detain'd,
But, stored at length with all he wish'd 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 burthen'd 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 heav'n or earth concern'd for human woes,
Since, Oh my Damon! their 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 sep'rates 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 undeplor'd, but long

Thy praise shall dwell on ev'ry 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 antient 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 annoy'd our feet,
 And when the herbage all was parch'd with heat,
 Whether the grim wolf's ravage to prevent
 Or the huge lion's, arm'd 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 med'cine for my troubled mind?
 Or whose discourse with innocent delight
 Shall fill me now, and cheat the wint'ry night,
 While hisses on my hearth the pulpy pear,
 And black'ning chesnuts start and crackle there,
 While storms abroad the dreary meadows whelm,
 And the wind thunders thro' the neighb'ring 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 shelt'ring beech,
 When shepherds disappear, Nymphs seek the sedge,
 And the stretch'd 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 blust'ring wind and show'r
 Beat on my temples through the shatter'd bow'r.
 Go, seek your home, my lambs; my thoughts are due
 To other cares than those of feeding you.
 Alas, what rampant weeds now shame my fields,
 And what a mildew'd crop the furrow yields!
 My rambling vines unwedded to the trees
 Bear shrivel'd 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.
 Aegon invites me to the hazel grove,
 Amyntas, on the river's bank to rove,
 And young Alpheisiboeus to a seat
 Where branching elms exclude the midday heat--
 'Here fountains spring--here mossy hillocks rise--'
 'Here Zephyr whispers and the stream replies--'
 Thus each persuades, but deaf to ev'ry 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 had noticed my return)
 What means thy sullen mood, this deep concern?
 Ah Thyrsis! thou art either crazed with love,
 Or some sinister influence from above,
 Dull Saturn's influence oft the shepherd rue,
 His leaden shaft oblique has pierced thee through.
 Go, go, my lambs, unpastur'd as ye are,
 My thoughts are all now due to other care.
 The Nymphs amazed my melancholy see,
 And, Thyrsis! cry--what will become of thee?
 What would'st thou, Thyrsis? 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, unpastur'd as ye are,
 My thoughts are all now due to other care.
 Aegle with Hyas came, to sooth my pain,

And Baucis' daughter, Dryope the vain,
Fair Dryope, for voice and finger neat
Known far and near, and for her self-conceit,
Came Chloris too, 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, unpastur'd as ye are,
My thoughts are all now due to other care.
Ah blest indiff'rence of the playful herd,
None by his fellow chosen or preferr'd!
No bonds of amity the flocks enthral,
But each associates and is pleased with all;
So graze the dappled deer in num'rous 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 feather'd race,
His fit companion finds in ev'ry place,
With whom he picks the grain that suits him best,
Flits here and there, and late returns to rest,
And whom if chance the falcon make his prey,
Or Hedger with his well-aim'd 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, unpastur'd 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 flourish'd still as when, of old
For her sake Tityrus forsook his fold,
What need so great had I t'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, I had grasp'd thy feeble hand, composed
 Thy decent limbs, thy drooping eye-lids 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-pleas'd, ye tuneful Tuscan swains!
 My mind the mem'ry 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 possess'd and Genius like your own.
 Oh how elate was I, when, stretch'd beside
 The murm'ring course of Arno's breezy tide,
 Beneath the poplar-grove I pass'd my hours,
 Now cropping myrtles, and now vernal flow'rs,
 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 displeas'd attempting) various themes,
 For even I can presents boast from you,
 The shepherd's pipe and osier basket too,
 And Dati and Francini both have made
 My name familiar to the beechen shade,
 And they are learn'd, and each in ev'ry place
 Renown'd 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 moon-beams shone,
 And I stood hurdling in my kids alone,
 How often have I said (but thou had'st 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 plann'd
 New scenes of pleasure, that I hop'd at hand,
 Call'd 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 yon whisp'ring shades awhile,
 Or on the margin stray of Colne's clear flood,

Or where Cassivelaun's grey turrets stood!
 There thou shalt cull me simples, and shalt teach
 Thy friend the name and healing pow'rs 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 wither'd 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 touch'd my lip, though new
 And unassay'd before, than wide they flew,
 Bursting their waxen bands, nor could sustain
 The deep-ton'd music of the solemn strain;
 And I am vain perhaps, but 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 plough'd the British sea,
 First from Rutupia's tow'ring 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 th'Armorican controll'd,
 And 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 lengthen'd date,
 Adieu my shepherd's-reed--yon pine-tree bough
 Shall be thy future home, there dangle Thou
 Forgotten and disus'd, unless ere long
 Thou change thy Latin for a British song.
 A British?--even so--the pow'rs 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-hair'd my verse may learn,
 If Alain, bending o'er his chrystal urn,

Swift-whirling Abra, Trent's o'ershadow'd stream,
Thames, lovelier far than all in my esteem
Tamar's ore-tinctur'd 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 design'd,
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,
Adorn'd 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 Phoenix shows,
And, watchful of the dawn, reverts her head
To see Aurora leave her wat'ry bed.
In other part, th'expansive vault above,
And there too, even there, the God of love;
With quiver arm'd he mounts, his torch displays
A vivid light, his gem-tip'd 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 pow'r of Cupid, and enamour'd 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-bestow'd,
Who, pure himself, has found a pure abode,
Has pass'd the show'ry arch, henceforth resides
With saints and heroes, and from flowing tides
Quaffs copious immortality and joy
With hallow'd lips. Oh! blest without alloy,
And now enrich'd with all that faith can claim,
Look down entreated by whatever name,

If Damon please thee most (that rural sound)
Shall oft with ecchoes 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 giv'n to thee;
Thy brows encircled with a radiant band,
And the green palm-branch waving in thy hand
Thou 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.

William Cowper

On The Death Of Mrs. Throckmorton's Bullfinch

Ye Nymphs, if e'er your eyes were red
With tears o'er hapless favourites shed,
Oh, share Maria's grief!
Her favourite, even in his cage,
(What will not hunger's cruel rage?)
Assassined by a thief.

Where Rhenus strays his vines among,
The egg was laid from which he sprung,
And though by nature mute
Or only with a whistle blessed,
Well-taught he all the sounds expressed
Of flageolet or flute.

The honours of his ebon poll
Were brighter than the sleekest mole,
His bosom of the hue
With which Aurora decks the skies,
When piping winds shall soon arise
To sweep away the dew.

Above, below, in all the house,
Dire foe alike of bird and mouse,
No cat had leave to dwell;
And Bully's cage supported stood
On props of smoothest-shaven wood,
Large built and latticed well.

Well latticed,-- but the grate, alas!
Not rough with wire of steel or brass,
For Bully's plumage sake,
But smooth with wands from Ouse's side,
With which, when neatly peeled and dried,
The swains their baskets make.

Night veiled the pole: all seemed secure:
When, led by instinct sharp and sure,
Subsistence to provide,
A beast forth sallied on the scout,

Long backed, long tailed, with whiskered snout,
And badger-coloured hide.

He, entering at the study door,
Its ample area 'gan explore;
And something in the wind
Conjectured, sniffing round and round,
Better than all the books he found,
Food chiefly for the mind.

Just then, by adverse fate impressed,
A dream disturbed poor Bully's rest;
In sleep he seemed to view
A rat fast clinging to the cage,
And, screaming at the sad presage,
Awoke and found it true.

For, aided both by ear and scent,
Right to his mark the monster went,--
Ah, Muse! forbear to speak
Minute the horrors that ensued;
His teeth were strong, the cage was wood--
He left poor Bully's beak.

Oh, he had made that too his prey!
That beak, whence issued many a lay
Of such mellifluous tone,
Might have repaid him well, I wote,
For silencing so sweet a throat,
Fast struck within his own.

Maria weeps, -- the Muses mourn;--
So, when by Bacchanalians torn,
On Thracian Hebrus' side
The tree-enchanted Orpheus fell,
His head alone remained to tell
The cruel death he died.

William Cowper

On The Death Of The Bishop Of Ely. Anno Aet. 17. (Translated From Milton)

My lids with grief were tumid yet,
And still my sullied cheek was wet
With briny dews profusely shed
For venerable Winton dead,
When Fame, whose tales of saddest sound
Alas! are ever truest found,
The news through all our cities spread
Of yet another mitred head
By ruthless Fate to Death consign'd,
Ely, the honour of his kind.
At once, a storm of passion heav'd
My boiling bosom, much I grieved
But more I raged, at ev'ry breath
Devoting Death himself to death.
With less revenge did Naso teem
When hated Ibis was his theme;
With less, Archilochus, denied
The lovely Greek, his promis'd bride.
But lo! while thus I execrate,
Incens'd, the Minister of Fate,
Wondrous accents, soft, yet clear,
Wafted on the gale I hear.
Ah, much deluded! lay aside
Thy threats and anger misapplied.
Art not afraid with sounds like these
T'offend whom thou canst not appease?
Death is not (wherefore dream'st thou thus?)
The son of Night and Erebus,
Nor was of fell Erynnis born
In gulphs, where Chaos rules forlorn,
But sent from God, his presence leaves,
To gather home his ripen'd sheaves,
To call encumber'd souls away
From fleshly bonds to boundless day,
(As when the winged Hours excite,
And summon forth the Morning-light)
And each to convoy to her place

Before th'Eternal Father's face.
But not the wicked-Them, severe
Yet just, from all their pleasures here
He hurries to the realms below,
Terrific realms of penal woe!
Myself no sooner heard his call
Than, scaping through my prison-wall,
I bade adieu to bolts and bars,
And soar'd with angels to the stars,
Like Him of old, to whom 'twas giv'n
To mount, on fiery wheels, to heav'n.
Bootes' wagon, slow with cold
Appall'd me not, nor to behold
The sword that vast Orion draws,
Or ev'n the Scorpion's horrid claws.
Beyond the Sun's bright orb I fly,
And far beneath my feet descry
Night's dread goddess, seen with awe,
Whom her winged dragons draw.
Thus, ever wond'ring at my speed
Augmented still as I proceed,
I pass the Planetary sphere,
The Milky Way--and now appear
Heav'ns crystal battlements, her door
Of massy pearl, and em'rald floor.
But here I cease. For never can
The tongue of once a mortal man
In suitable description trace
The pleasures of that happy place,
Suffice it that those joys divine
Are all, and all for ever, mine.

William Cowper

On The Death Of The Vice-Chancellor, A Physician (Translated From Milton)

Learn ye nations of the earth
The condition of your birth,
Now be taught your feeble state,
Know, that all must yield to Fate!

If the mournful Rover, Death,
Say but once-resign your breath-
Vainly of escape you dream,
You must pass the Stygian stream.

Could the stoutest overcome
Death's assault, and baffle Doom,
Hercules had both withstood
Undiseas'd by Nessus' blood.

Ne'er had Hector press'd the plain
By a trick of Pallas slain,
Nor the Chief to Jove allied
By Achilles' phantom died.

Could enchantments life prolong,
Circe, saved by magic song,
Still had liv'd, and equal skill
Had preserv'd Medea still.

Dwelt in herbs and drugs a pow'r
To avert Man's destin'd hour,
Learn'd Machaon should have known
Doubtless to avert his own.

Chiron had survived the smart
Of the Hydra-tainted dart,
And Jove's bolt had been with ease
Foil'd by Asclepiades.

Thou too, Sage! of whom forlorn
Helicon and Cirrha mourn,

Still had'st filled thy princely place,
Regent of the gowned race,

Had'st advanc'd to higher fame
Still, thy much-ennobled name,
Nor in Charon's skiff explored
The Tartarean gulph abhorr'd.

But resentful Proserpine,
Jealous of thy skill divine,
Snapping short thy vital thread
Thee too number'd with the Dead.

Wise and good! untroubled be
The green turf that covers thee,
Thence in gay profusion grow
All the sweetest flow'rs that blow!

Pluto's Consort bid thee rest!
Oeacus pronounce thee blest!
To her home thy shade consign,
Make Elysium ever thine!

William Cowper

On The Grasshopper (From The Greek)

Happy songster, perch'd above,
On the summit of the grove,
Whom a dewdrop cheers to sing
With the freedom of a king,
From thy perch survey the fields
Where prolific nature yields
Nough that, willingly as she,
Man surrenders not to thee.
For hostility or hate
None thy pleasures can create.
Thee it satisfies to sing
Sweetly the return of spring,
Herald of the genial hours,
Harming neither herbs nor flowers.
Therefore man thy voice attends
Gladly -- thou and he are friends;
Nor thy never-ceasing strains,
Phoebus or the muse disdains
As too simple or too long,
For themselves inspire the song.
Earth-born, bloodless, undecaying,
Ever singing, sporting, playing
What has nature else to show
Godlike in its kind as thou?

William Cowper

On The High Price Of Fish

Cocoa-nut naught,
Fish too dear,
None must be bought,
For us that are here:

No lobster on earth,
That ever I saw,
To me would be worth
Sixpence a claw.

So dear madam, wait
Till fish can be got
At a reas'nable rate
Whether lobster or not;

Till the French and the Dutch
Have quitted the seas,
And then send as much
And as oft as you please.

William Cowper

On The Ice Islands Seen Floating In The German Ocean

What portents, from what distant region, ride,
Unseen till now in ours, the astonished tide?
In ages past, old Proteus, with his droves
Of sea-calves, sought the mountains and the groves;
But now, descending whence of late they stood,
Themselves the mountains seem to rove the flood;
Dire times were they, full-charged with human woes;
And these, scarce less calamitous than those.
What view we now? More wondrous still! Behold!
Like burnished brass they shine, or beaten gold;
And all around the pearl's pure splendour show,
And all around the ruby's fiery glow.
Come they from India, where the burning earth,
All bounteous, gives her richest treasures birth;
And where the costly gems, that beam around
The brows of mightiest potentates, are found?
No. Never such a countless dazzling store
Had left, unseen, the Ganges' peopled shore;
Rapacious hands, and ever-watchful eyes,
Should sooner far have marked and seized the prize.
Whence sprang they then? Ejected have they come
From Ves'vius', or from Ætna's burning womb?
Thus shine they self-illumed, or but display
The borrowed splendours of a cloudless day?
With borrowed beams they shine. The gales, that breathe
Now landward, and the current's force beneath,
Have borne them nearer; and the nearer sight,
Advantaged more, contemplates them aright.
Their lofty summits crested high, they show,
With mingled sleet, and long-incumbent snow,
The rest is ice. Far hence, where, most severe,
Bleak winter well-nigh saddens all the year,
Their infant growth began. He bade arise
Their uncouth forms, portentous in our eyes.
Oft as dissolved by transient suns, the snow
Left the tall cliff to join the flood below,
He caught, and curdled with a freezing blast

The current, ere it reached the boundless waste.
By slow degrees uprose the wondrous pile,
And long successive ages rolled the while,
Till, ceaseless in its growth, it claimed to stand
Tall as its rival mountains on the land.
Thus stood, and, unremovable by skill,
Of force of man, had stood the structure still;
But that, though firmly fixt, supplanted yet
By pressure of its own enormous weight,
It left the shelving beach,-- and with a sound
That shook the bellowing waves and rocks around,
Self-launched, and swiftly, to the briny wave,
As if instinct with strong desire to lave,
Down went the ponderous mass. So bards of old,
How Delos swam the Ægean deep, have told.
But not of ice was Delos. She, crowned with laurel, wore
Even under wintry skies, a summer smile;
And Delos was Apollo's favourite isle.
But, horrid wanderers of the deep, to you
He deems Cimmerian darkness only due.
Your hated birth he deigned not to survey,
But, scornful, turned his glorious eyes away.
Hence! Seek your home, nor longer rashly dare
The darts of Phœbus, and a softer air;
Lest ye regret, too late, your native coast,
In no congenial gulf for ever lost!

William Cowper

On The Late Indecent Liberties Taken With The Remains Of Milton

"Me too, perchance, in future days,
The sculptured stone shall show,
With Paphian myrtle or with bays
Parnassian on my brow.

But I, or e'er that season come,
Escaped from every care,
Shall reach my refuge in the tomb,
And sleep securely there."

So sang, in Roman tone and style,
The youthful bard, ere long
Ordained to grace his native isle
With her sublimest song.

Who then but must conceive disdain,
Hearing the deed unblest,
Of wretches who have dared profane
His dread sepulchral rest?

Ill fare the hands that heaved the stones
Where Milton's ashes lay,
That trembled not to grasp his bones
And steal his dust away!

O ill-requited bard! neglect
Thy living worth repaid,
And blind idolatrous respect
As much affronts thee dead.

William Cowper

On The Loss Of The Royal George

Written when the news arrived.

Toll for the brave!
The brave that are no more!
All sunk beneath the wave
Fast by their native shore.

Eight hundred of the brave,
Whose courage well was tried,
Had made the vessel heel,
And laid her on her side.

A land-breeze shook the shrouds,
And she was overset;
Down went the Royal George,
With all her crew complete.

Toll for the brave!
Brave Kempenfelt is gone;
His last sea-fight is fought,
His work of glory done.

It was not in the battle,
No tempest gave the shock,
She sprang no fatal leak,
She ran upon no rock.

His sword was in its sheath,
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down
With twice four hundred men.

Weigh the vessel up,
Once dreaded by our foes;
And mingle with our cup
The tears that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
And she may float again

Full charged with England's thunder,
And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,
His victories are o'er;
And he and his eight hundred
Shall plough the wave no more.

William Cowper

On The Neglect Of Homer

Could Homer come himself, distressed and poor
And tune his harp at Rhedicina's door,
The rich old vixen would exclaim, (I fear,)
'Begone! no tramper gets a farthing here.'

William Cowper

On The Platonic 'Ideal' As It Was Understood By Aristotle. (Translated From Milton)

Ye sister Pow'rs 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 ord'nances of Jove,
And dost record the festivals of heav'n,
Eternity!--Inform us who is He,
That great Original by Nature chos'n
To be the Archetype of Human-kind,
Unchangeable, Immortal, with the poles
Themselves coeval, One, yet ev'rywhere,
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 heav'ns, or dwell
On the moon's side that nearest neighbours Earth,
Or torpid on the banks of Lethe sit
Among the multitude of souls ordair'd
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
Sequester'd stalk, with lifted head on high
O'ertow'ring 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 reveal'd;
Him never knew th' Assyrian priest, who yet
The ancestry of Ninus chronicles,
And Belus, and Osiris far-renown'd;
Nor even Thrice-great Hermes, although skill'd

So deep in myst'ry, to the worshippers
Of Isis show'd a prodigy like Him.
And thou, who hast immortalized the shades
Of Academus, if the school received
This monster of the Fancy first from Thee,
Either recall at once the banish'd bards
To thy Republic, or, thyself evinc'd
A wilder Fabulist, go also forth.

William Cowper

On The Promotion Of Edward Thurlow, Esq. To The Lord High Chancellorship Of England

Round Thurlow's head in early youth,
And in his sportive days,
Fair science poured the light of truth,
And genius shed his rays.

See! with united wonder, cried
The experienced and the sage,
Ambition in a boy supplied
With all the skill of age.

Discernment, eloquence, and grace
Proclaim him born to sway
The balance in the highest place,
And bear the palm away.

The praise bestowed was just and wise;
He sprang impetuous forth,
Secure of conquest, where the prize
Attends the superior worth.

So the best courser on the plain
Ere yet he starts is known,
And does but at the goal obtain
What all had deemed his own.

William Cowper

On The Queen's Visit To London, The Night Of The 17th March 1789

When, long sequestered from his throne,
George took his seat again,
By right of worth, not blood alone
Entitled here to reign;

Then, Loyalty, with all his lamps
New trimmed, a gallant show,
Chasing the darkness and the damps,
Set London in a glow.

'Twas hard to tell of streets or squares,
Which formed the chief display,
These most resembling clustered stars,
Those the long milky way.

Bright shone the roofs, the domes, the spires,
And rockets flew, self-driven,
To hang their momentary fires,
Amid the vault of Heaven.

So, fire with water to compare,
The ocean serves on high
Up-spouted by a whale in air,
To express unwieldly joy.

Had all the pageants of the world
In one procession joined,
And all the banners been unfurled
That heralds e'er designed;

For no such sight had England's Queen
Forsaken her retreat,
Where, George recovered made a scene
Sweet always, doubly sweet.

Yet glad she came that night to prove,
A witness undescried,

How much the object of her love
Was loved by all beside.

Darkness the skies had mantled o'er
In aid of her design,----
Darkness, O Queen! ne'er called before
To veil a deed of thine.

On borrowed wheels away she flies,
Resolved to be unknown,
And gratify no curious eyes
That night, except her own.

Arrived, a night like noon she sees,
And hears the million hum;
As all by instinct, like the bees,
Had known their sovereign come,

Pleased she beheld aloft portrayed
On many a splendid wall,
Emblems of health, and heavenly aid,
And George the theme of all.

Unlike the enigmatic line,
So difficult to spell,
Which shook Belshazzar at his wine,
The night his city fell.

Soon, watery grew her eyes and dim,
But with a joyful tear,
None else, except in prayer for him,
George ever drew from her.

It was a scene in every part
Like those in fable feigned,
And seemed by some magician's art
Created and sustained.

But other magic there, she knew,
Had been exerted none,
To raise such wonders in her view,
Save love of George alone.

That cordial thought her spirits cheered,
And through the cumbrous throng,
Not else unworthy to be feared,
Conveyed her calm along.

So, ancient poets say, serene
The sea-maid rides the waves,
And fearless of the billowy scene
Her peaceful bosom laves.

With more than astronomic eyes
She viewed the sparkling show;
One Georgian star adorns the skies,
She myriads found below.

Yet let the glories of a night
Like that, once seen, suffice;
Heaven grant us no such future sight,
Such previous woe the price!

William Cowper

On The Receipt Of A Hamper. (In The Manner Of Homer)

The straw-stuffed hamper with its ruthless steel
He open'd, cutting sheer th' inserted cords
Which bound the lid and lip secure. Forth came
The rustling package first, bright straw of wheat,
Or oats, or barley; next a bottle green
Throat-full, clear spirits the contents, distill'd
Drop after drop odorous, by the art
Of the fair mother of his friend -- the Rose.

William Cowper

On The Receipt Of My Mother's Picture Out Of Norfolk

Oh that those lips had language! Life has pass'd
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smiles I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me
Voice only fails, else, how distinct they say,
'Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away!'
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
(Blest be the art that can immortalize,
The art that baffles time's tyrannic claim
To quench it) here shines on me still the same.

Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,
Oh welcome guest, though unexpected, here!
Who bidd'st me honor with an artless song,
Affectionate, a mother lost so long,
I will obey, not willingly alone,
But gladly, as the precept were her own;
And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief--
Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,
A momentary dream, that thou art she.

My mother! when I learn'd that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hover'd thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unseen, a kiss;
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss--
Ah that maternal smile! it answers--Yes.
I heard the bell toll'd on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nurs'ry window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such?--It was,--Where thou art gone
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting sound shall pass my lips no more!
Thy maidens griev'd themselves at my concern,
Oft gave me promise of a quick return.

What ardently I wished I long believ'd,
And, disappointed still, was still deceiv'd;
By disappointment every day beguil'd,
Dupe of to-morrow even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,
I learn'd at last submission to my lot;
But, though I less deplor'd thee, ne'er forgot.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nurs'ry floor;
And where the gard'ner Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,
Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapt
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capt,
'Tis now become a history little known,
That once we called the past'ral house our own.
Short-lived possession! but the record fair
That mem'ry keeps of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm that has effac'd
A thousand other themes less deeply trac'd.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou might'st know me safe and warmly laid;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionary plum;
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestow'd
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glow'd;
All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughen'd by those cataracts and brakes
That humour interpos'd too often makes;
All this still legible in mem'ry's page,
And still to be so, to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honours to thee as my numbers may;
Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
Not scorned in Heav'n, though little noticed here.

Could Time, his flight revers'd, restore the hours,
When, playing with thy vesture's tissued flow'rs,
The vi'let, the pink, and jessamine,
I prick'd them into paper with a pin,

(And thou wast happier than myself the while,
Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head, and smile,)
Could those few pleasant days again appear,
Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?
I would not trust my heart; -- the dear delight
Seems so to be desir'd, perhaps I might.--
But no -- what here we call our life is such,
So little to be lov'd, and thou so much,
That I should ill requite thee to constrain
Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast
(The storms all weather'd, and the ocean cross'd)
Shoots into port at some well-haven'd isle,
Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile,
There sits quiescent on the floods, that show
Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
While airs impregnated with incense play
Around her, fanning light her streamers gay;
So thou, with sails how swift! hast reach'd the shore,
'Where tempests never beat nor billows roar;'
And thy lov'd consort on the dangerous tide
Of life long since has anchor'd by thy side.
But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
Always from port withheld, always distress'd,--
Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest-tost,
Sails ripp'd, seams op'ning wide, and compass lost,
And day by day some current's thwarting force
Sets me more distant from a prosp'rous course.
Yet oh, the thought, that thou art safe, and he!
That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.
My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthron'd and rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,--
The son of parents pass'd into the skies.
And now, farewell!-- Time unrevok'd has run
His wonted course, yet what I wish'd is done.
By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,
I seem to have lived my childhood o'er again;
To have renew'd the joys that once were mine
Without the sin of violating thine;
And, while the wings of fancy still are free,

And I can view this mimic show of thee,
Time has but half succeeded in his theft,--
Thyself remov'd, thy power to soothe me left.

William Cowper

On The Reed (From The Greek)

I was of late a barren plant,
Useless, insignificant,
Nor fig, nor grape, nor apple bore,
A native of the marshy shore;
But, gather'd for poetic use,
And plunged into a sable juice,
Of which my modicum I sip
With narrow mouth and slender lip,
At once, although by nature dumb,
All eloquent I have become,
And speak with fluency untired,
As if by Phoebus' self inspired.

William Cowper

On The Same - (On The Burning Of Lord Mansfield's Library)

When wit and genius meet their doom
In all devouring flame,
They tell us of the fate of Rome,
And bid us fear the same.

O'er Murray's loss the Muses wept,
They felt the rude alarm,
Yet blessed the guardian care that kept
His sacred head from harm.

There memory, like the bee that's fed
From Flora's balmy store,
The quintessence of all he read
Had treasured up before.

The lawless herd, with fury blind,
Have done him cruel wrong;
The flowers are gone, - but still we find
The honey on his tongue.

William Cowper

On The Same By Palladas

A Spartan 'scaping from the fight,
His mother met him in his flight,
Upheld a falchion to his breast,
And thus the fugitive address'd:
'Thou canst but live to blot with shame
Indelible thy mother's name,
While every breath that thou shalt draw
Offends against thy country's law;
But if thou perish by this hand,
Myself indeed, throughout the land,
To my dishonor, shall be known
The mother still of such a son;
But Sparta will be safe and free
And that shall serve to comfort me.'

William Cowper

On The Swallow (From The Greek)

Attic maid! with honey fed,
Bear'st thou to thy callow brood
Yonder locust from the mead,
Destined their delicious food?

Ye have kindred voices clear,
Ye alike unfold the wing,
Migrate hither, sojourn here,
Both attendant on the spring!

Ah, for pity drop the prize;
Let it not with truth be said
That a songster gasps and dies,
That a songster may be fed.

William Cowper

Ovid. Trist. Lib. V. Elegy Xii.

You bid me write to amuse the tedious hours,
And save from withering my poetic powers;
Hard is the task, my friend, for verse should flow
From the free mind, not fettered down by woe.
Restless amidst unceasing tempests tossed,
Whoe'er has cause for sorrow, I have most.
Would you bid Priam laugh, his sons all slain;
Or childless Niobe from tears refrain,
Join the gay dance, and lead the festive train?
Does grief or study most befit the mind
To this remote, this barbarous nook confined?
Could you impart to my unshaken breast
The fortitude by Socrates possessed,
Soon would it sink beneath such woes as mine,
For what is human strength to wrath divine?
Wise as he was, and Heaven pronounced him so,
My sufferings would have laid that wisdom low.
Could I forget my country, thee and all,
And e'en the offence to which I owe my fall,
Yet fear alone would freeze the poet's vein,
While hostile troops swarm o'er the dreary plain.
Add that the fatal rust of long disuse
Unfits me for the service of the Muse.
Thistles and weeds are all we can expect
From the best soil impoverished by neglect;
Unexercised, and to his stall confined,
The fleetest racer would be left behind:
The best built bark that cleaves the watery way,
Laid useless by, would moulder and decay,--
No hope remains that time shall me restore,
Mean as I was, to what I was before.
Think how a series of desponding cares
Benumbs the genius and its force impairs.
How oft, as now, on this devoted sheet,
My verse constrained to move with measured feet,
Reluctant and laborious limps along,
And proves itself a wretched exile's song.
What is it tunes the most melodious lays?
'Tis emulation and the thirst of praise,

A noble thirst, and not unknown to me,
While smoothly wafted on a calmer sea.
But can a wretch like Ovid pant for fame?
No, rather let the world forget my name.
Is it because that world approved my strain,
You prompt me to the same pursuit again?
No, let the Nine the ungrateful truth excuse,
I charge my hopeless ruin on the Muse,
And, like Perillus, meet my just desert,
The victim of my own pernicious art;
Fool that I was to be so warned in vain,
And shipwrecked once, to tempt the deep again!
Ill fares the bard in this unlettered land,
None to consult, and none to understand.
The purest verse has no admirers here,
Their own rude language only suits their ear.
Rude as it is, at length familiar grown,
I learn it, and almost unlearn my own;--
Yet to say truth, even here the Muse disdains
Confinement, and attempts her former strains,
But finds the strong desire is not the power,
And what her taste condemns, the flames devour
A part, perhaps, like this, escapes the doom,
And though unworthy, finds a friend at Rome;
But oh the cruel art, that could undo
Its votary thus! would that could perish too!

William Cowper

Peace After A Storm

When darkness long has veil'd my mind,
And smiling day once more appears,
Then, my Redeemer, then I find
The folly of my doubts and fears.

Straight I upbraid my wandering heart,
And blush that I should ever be
Thus prone to act so base a part,
Or harbour one hard thought of Thee!

Oh! let me then at length be taught
What I am still so slow to learn,
That God is love, and changes not,
Nor knows the shadow of a turn.

Sweet truth, and easy to repeat!
But when my faith is sharply tried,
I find myself a learner yet,
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide.

But, O my Lord, one look from Thee
Subdues the disobedient will,
Drives doubt and discontent away,
And Thy rebellious worm is still.

Thou art as ready to forgive
As I am ready to repine;
Thou, therefore, all the praise receive;
Be shame and self-abhorrence mine.

William Cowper

Pernicious Weed!

The pipe, with solemn interposing puff,
Makes half a sentence at a time enough;
The dozing sages drop the drowsy strain,
Then pause and puff, and speak, and pause again.
Such often, like the tube they so admire,
Important triflers! have more smoke than fire.
Pernicious weed! whose scent the fair annoys,
Unfriendly to society's chief joys,
Thy worst effect is banishing for hours
The sex whose presence civilizes ours.

William Cowper

Pity For Poor Africans

I own I am shocked at the purchase of slaves,
And fear those who buy them and sell them are knaves;
What I hear of their hardships, their tortures, and groans
Is almost enough to draw pity from stones.

I pity them greatly, but I must be mum,
For how could we do without sugar and rum?
Especially sugar, so needful we see;
What, give up our desserts, our coffee, and tea?

Besides, if we do, the French, Dutch, and Danes,
Will heartily thank us, no doubt, for our pains:
If we do not buy the poor creatures, they will:
And tortures and groans will be multiplied still.

If foreigners likewise would give up the trade,
Much more in behalf of your wish might be said;
But, while they got riches by purchasing blacks,
Pray tell me why we may not also go snacks?

Your scruples and arguments bring to my mind
A story so pat, you may think it is coined,
On purpose to answer you, out of my mint;
But I can assure you I saw it in print.

A youngster at school, more sedate than the rest,
Had once his integrity put to the test;
His comrades had plotted an orchard to rob,
And asked him to go and assist in the job.

He was shocked, sir, like you, and answered -- 'Oh, no
What! rob our good neighbour? I pray you don't go!
Besides the man's poor, his orchard's his bread;
Then think of his children, for they must be fed.'

'You speak very fine, and you look very grave,
But apples we want, and apples we'll have;
If you will go with us, you shall have a share,
If not, you shall have neither apple nor pear.'

They spoke, and Tom pondered --'I see they will go:
Poor man! what a pity to injure him so!
Poor man! I would save him his fruit if I could,
But staying behind will do him no good.

'If the matter depended alone upon me,
His apples might hang till they dropped from the tree;
But since they will take them, I think I'll go too:
He will lose none by me, though I get a few.'

His scruples thus silenced, Tom felt more at ease,
And went with his comrades the apples to seize;
He blamed and protested, but joined in the plan;
He shared in the plunder, but pitied the man.

William Cowper

Pleading For And With Youth

Sin has undone our wretched race;
But Jesus has restored,
And brought the sinner face to face
With his forgiving Lord.

This we repeat from year to year
And press upon our youth;
Lord, give them an attentive ear,
Lord, save them by Thy truth!

Blessings upon the rising race!
Make this a happy hour,
According to Thy richest grace,
And thine Almighty power.

We feel for your unhappy state
(May you regard it too),
And would a while ourselves forget
To pour our prayer for you.

We see, though you perceive it not,
The approaching awful doom;
Oh tremble at the solemn thought,
And flee the wrath to come!

Dear Saviour, let this new-born year
Spread an alarm abroad;
And cry in every careless ear,
"Prepare to meet thy God!"

William Cowper

Praise For Faith

Of all the gifts Thine hand bestows,
Thou Giver of all good!
Not heaven itself a richer knows
Than my Redeemer's blood.

Faith too, the blood-receiving grace,
From the same hand we gain;
Else, sweetly as it suits our case,
That gift had been in vain.

Till Thou Thy teaching power apply,
Our hearts refuse to see,
And weak, as a distemper'd eye,
Shut out the view of Thee.

Blind to the merits of Thy Son,
What misery we endure!
Yet fly that Hand from which alone
We could expect a cure.

We praise Thee, and would praise Thee more,
To Thee our all we owe:
The precious Saviour, and the power
That makes Him precious too.

William Cowper

Praise For The Fountain Opened

(Zechariah, xiii.1)

There is a fountain fill'd with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, as vile as he,
Wash'd all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransom'd church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save;
When this poor lisp'ing stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave.

Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared
(Unworthy though I be)
For me a blood-bought free reward,
A golden harp for me!

'Tis strung and tuned for endless years,
And form'd by power divine,
To sound in God the Father's ears
No other name but Thine.

William Cowper

Prayer For Children

Gracious Lord, our children see,
By Thy mercy we are free;
But shall these, alas! remain
Subjects still of Satan's reign?
Israel's young ones, when of old
Pharaoh threaten'd to withhold,
Then Thy messenger said, "No;
Let the children also go!"

When the angel of the Lord,
Drawing forth his dreadful sword,
Slew with an avenging hand,
All the first-born of the land;
Then Thy people's door he pass'd,
Where the bloody sign was placed:
Hear us, now, upon our knees,
Plead the blood of Christ for these!

Lord, we tremble, for we know
How the fierce malicious foe,
Wheeling round his watchful flight,
Keeps them ever in his sight:
Spread Thy pinions, King of kings!
Hide them safe beneath Thy wings;
Lest the ravenous bird of prey
Stoop and bear the brood away.

William Cowper

Prayer For Patience

Lord, who hast suffer'd all for me,
My peace and pardon to procure,
The lighter cross I bear for Thee,
Help me with patience to endure.

The storm of loud repining hush;
I would in humble silence mourn;
Why should the unburnt, though burning bush,
Be angry as the crackling thorn?

Man should not faint at Thy rebuke,
Like Joshua falling on his face,
When the cursed thing that Achan took
Brought Israel into just disgrace.

Perhaps some golden wedge suppress'd,
Some secret sin offends my God;
Perhaps that Babylonish vest,
Self-righteousness, provokes the rod.

Ah! were I buffeted all day,
Mock'd, crown'd with thorns and spit upon,
I yet should have no right to say,
My great distress is mine alone.

Let me not angrily declare
No pain was ever sharp like mine,
Nor murmur at the cross I bear,
But rather weep, remembering Thine.

William Cowper

Prudent Simplicity (Translated From Owen)

That thou mayst injure no man, dove-like be,
And serpent-like, that none may injure thee!

William Cowper

R. S. S.

All-worshipped Gold! thou mighty mystery
Say by what name shall I address thee rather,
Our blessing, or our bane? Without thy aid,
The generous pangs of pity but distress
The human heart, that fain would feel the bliss
Of blessing others; and, enslaved by thee,
Far from relieving woes which others feel,
Misers oppress themselves. Our blessings then
With virtue when possessed; without, our bane.
If in my bosom unperceived there lurk
The deep-sown seeds of avarice or ambition,
Blame me, ye great ones, (for I scorn your censure),
But let the generous and the good commend me;
That to my Delia I direct them all,
The worthiest object of a virtuous love.
Oh! to some distant scene, a willing exile
From the wild uproar of this busy world,
Were it my fate with Delia to retire;
With her to wander through the sylvan shade,
Each morn, or o'er the moss-embrowned turf,
Where, blessed as the prime parents of mankind
In their own Eden, we should envy none;
But, greatly pitying whom the world calls happy,
Gently spin out the silken thread of life;
While from her lips attentive I receive
The tenderest dictates of the purest flame,
And from her eyes (where soft complacence sits
Illumined with the radiant beams of sense),
Tranquility beyond a monarch's reach.
Forgive me, Heaven, this only avarice
My soul indulges; I confess the crime,
(If to esteem, to covet such perfection
Be criminal,) oh, grant me Delia! grant me wealth;
Wealth to alleviate, not increase my wants;
And grant me virtue, without which nor wealth
Nor Delia can avail to make me blessed.

William Cowper

Reciprocal Kindness The Primary Law Of Nature

Androcles, from his injured lord, in dread
Of instant death, to Lybia's desert fled,
Tired with his toilsome flight, and parch'd with heat,
He spied at length a cavern's cool retreat;
But scarce had given to rest his weary frame,
When, hugest of his kind, a lion came:
He roar'd approaching: but the savage din
To plaintive murmurs changed -- arrived within,
And with expressive looks, his lifted paw
Presenting, and implored from whom he saw.
The fugitive, through terror at a stand,
Dared not awhile afford his trembling hand;
But bolder grown, at length inherent found
A pointed thorn, and drew it from the wound.
The cure was wrought; he wiped the sanious blood,
And firm and free from pain the lion stood.
Again he seeks the wilds, and day by day
Regales his inmate with the parted prey.
Nor he disdains the dole, though unprepared,
Spread on the ground, and with a lion shared.
But thus to live -- still lost -- sequester'd still --
Scarce seem'd his lord's revenge a heavier ill.
Home! native home! O might he but repair!
He must -- he will, though death attends him there.
He goes, and, doom'd to perish, on the sands
Of the full theatre unpitied stands:
When lo! the selfsame lion from his cage
Flies to devour him, famish'd into rage.
He flies, but viewing in his purposed prey
The man, his healer, pauses on his way,
And, soften'd by remembrance into sweet
And kind composure, crouches at his feet.
Mute with astonishment, the assembly gaze:
But why, ye Romans? Whence your mute amaze?
All this is natural: nature bade him rend
An enemy: she bids him spare a friend.

William Cowper

Report Of An Adjudged Case

Between Nose and Eyes a strange contest arose,
The spectacles set them unhappily wrong;
The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,
To which the said spectacles ought to belong.

So the Tongue was the Lawyer and argued the cause
With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning,
While chief baron Ear sat to balance the laws,
So famed for his talent in nicely discerning.

In behalf of the Nose, it will quickly appear,
And your lordship, he said, will undoubtedly find,
That the Nose has had spectacles always in wear,
Which amounts to possession time out of mind.

Then holding the spectacles up to the court, -
Your lordship observes they are made with a straddle,
As wide as the ridge of the Nose is, in short,
Designed to sit close to it, just like a saddle.

Again, would your lordship a moment suppose
('Tis a case that has happened and may be again),
That the visage or countenance had not a Nose,
Pray who would or who could wear spectacles then?

On the whole it appears, and my argument shows
With a reasoning the court will never condemn,
That the spectacles plainly were made for the Nose,
And the Nose was as plainly intended for them.

Then shifting his side, as a lawyer knows how,
He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes,
But what were his arguments few people know,
For the court did not think they were equally wise.

So his lordship decreed, with a grave solemn tone,
Decisive and clear, without on if or but, -
That whenever the Nose put his spectacles on,
By daylight or candlelight - Eyes should be shut.

William Cowper

Repose In God

Blest! who, far from all mankind
This world's shadows left behind,
Hears from heaven a gentle strain
Whispering love, and loves again.

Blest! who, free from self-esteem,
Dives into the great Supreme.
All desire beside discards,
Joys inferior none regards.

Blest! who in thy bosom seeks
Rest that nothing earthly breaks,
Dead to self and worldly things,
Lost in thee, thou King of kings!

Ye that know my secret fire,
Softly speak and soon retire;
Favour my divine repose,
Spare the sleep a God bestows.

William Cowper

Retaliation

The works of ancient bards divine,
Aulus, thou scorn'st to read;
And should posterity read thine,
It would be strange indeed!

When little more than boy in age,
I deem'd myself almost a sage:
But now seem worthier to be styled
For ignorance, almost a child.

William Cowper

Retirement

Hackney'd in business, wearied at that oar,
Which thousands, once fast chain'd to, quit no more,
But which, when life at ebb runs weak and low,
All wish, or seem to wish, they could forego;
The statesman, lawyer, merchant, man of trade,
Pants for the refuge of some rural shade,
Where, all his long anxieties forgot
Amid the charms of a sequester'd spot,
Or recollected only to gild o'er
And add a smile to what was sweet before,
He may possess the joys he thinks he sees,
Lay his old age upon the lap of ease,
Improve the remnant of his wasted span,
And, having lived a trifler, die a man.
Thus conscience pleads her cause within the breast,
Though long rebell'd against, not yet suppress'd,
And calls a creature form'd for God alone,
For Heaven's high purposes, and not his own,
Calls him away from selfish ends and aims,
From what debilitates and what inflames,
From cities humming with a restless crowd,
Sordid as active, ignorant as loud,
Whose highest praise is that they live in vain,
The dupes of pleasure, or the slaves of gain,
Where works of man are cluster'd close around,
And works of God are hardly to be found,
To regions where, in spite of sin and woe,
Traces of Eden are still seen below,
Where mountain, river, forest, field, and grove,
Remind him of his Maker's power and love.
'Tis well, if look'd for at so late a day,
In the last scene of such a senseless play,
True wisdom will attend his feeble call,
And grace his action ere the curtain fall.
Souls, that have long despised their heavenly birth,
Their wishes all impregnated with earth,
For threescore years employ'd with ceaseless care,
In catching smoke, and feeding upon air,
Conversant only with the ways of men,

Rarely redeem the short remaining ten.
Inveterate habits choke the unfruitful heart,
Their fibres penetrate its tenderest part,
And, draining its nutritious power to feed
Their noxious growth, starve every better seed.
Happy, if full of days—but happier far,
If, ere we yet discern life's evening star,
Sick of the service of a world that feeds
Its patient drudges with dry chaff and weeds,
We can escape from custom's idiot sway,
To serve the sovereign we were born to obey.
Then sweet to muse upon his skill display'd
(Infinite skill) in all that he has made!
To trace in nature's most minute design
The signature and stamp of power divine,
Contrivance intricate, express'd with ease,
Where unassisted sight no beauty sees,
The shapely limb and lubricated joint,
Within the small dimensions of a point,
Muscle and nerve miraculously spun,
His mighty work, who speaks and it is done,
The invisible in things scarce seen reveal'd,
To whom an atom is an ample field:
To wonder at a thousand insect forms,
These hatch'd, and those resuscitated worms.
New life ordain'd, and brighter scenes to share,
Once prone on earth, now buoyant upon air,
Whose shape would make them, had they bulk and size,
More hideous foes than fancy can devise;
With helmet-heads and dragon-scales adorn'd,
The mighty myriads, now securely scorn'd,
Would mock the majesty of man's high birth,
Despise his bulwarks, and unpeople earth:
Then with a glance of fancy to survey,
Far as the faculty can stretch away,
Ten thousand rivers pour'd at his command,
From urns that never fail, through every land;
These like a deluge with impetuous force,
Those winding modestly a silent course;
The cloud-surmounting Alps, the fruitful vales;
Seas, on which every nation spreads her sails;
The sun, a world whence other worlds drink light,

The crescent moon, the diadem of night:
Stars countless, each in his appointed place,
Fast anchor'd in the deep abyss of space—
At such a sight to catch the poet's flame,
And with a rapture like his own exclaim
These are thy glorious works, thou Source of Good,
How dimly seen, how faintly understood!
Thine, and upheld by thy paternal care,
This universal frame, thus wondrous fair;
Thy power divine, and bounty beyond thought,
Adored and praised in all that thou has wrought.
Absorb'd in that immensity I see,
I shrink abased, and yet aspire to thee;
Instruct me, guide me to that heavenly day
Thy words more clearly than thy works display,
That, while thy truths my grosser thoughts refine,
I may resemble thee, and call thee mine.
O blest proficiency! surpassing all
That men erroneously their glory call,
The recompence that arts or arms can yield,
The bar, the senate, or the tented field.
Compared with this sublimest life below,
Ye kings and rulers, what have courts to shew?
Thus studied, used, and consecrated thus,
On earth what is, seems form'd indeed for us;
Not as the plaything of a froward child,
Fretful unless diverted and beguiled,
Much less to feed and fan the fatal fires
Of pride, ambition, or impure desires;
But as a scale, by which the soul ascends
From mighty means to more important ends,
Securely, though by steps but rarely trod,
Mounts from inferior beings up to God,
And sees, by no fallacious light or dim,
Earth made for man, and man himself for him.
Not that I mean to approve, or would enforce,
A superstitious and monastic course:
Truth is not local, God alike pervades
And fills the world of traffic and the shades,
And may be fear'd amidst the busiest scenes,
Or scorn'd where business never intervenes.
But, 'tis not easy, with a mind like ours,

Conscious of weakness in its noblest powers,
And in a world where, other ills apart,
The roving eye misleads the careless heart,
To limit thought, by nature prone to stray
Wherever freakish fancy points the way;
To bid the pleadings of self-love be still,
Resign our own and seek our Maker's will;
To spread the page of Scripture, and compare
Our conduct with the laws engraven there;
To measure all that passes in the breast,
Faithfully, fairly, by that sacred test;
To dive into the secret deeps within,
To spare no passion and no favourite sin,
And search the themes, important above all,
Ourselves, and our recovery from our fall.
But leisure, silence, and a mind released
From anxious thoughts how wealth may be increased,
How to secure, in some propitious hour
The point of interest or the post of power,
A soul serene, and equally retired
From objects too much dreaded or desired,
Safe from the clamours of perverse dispute,
At least are friendly to the great pursuit.
Opening the map of God's extensive plan,
We find a little isle, this life of man;
Eternity's unknown expanse appears
Circling around and limiting his years.
The busy race examine and explore
Each creek and cavern of the dangerous shore,
With care collect what in their eyes excels,
Some shining pebbles, and some weeds and shells;
Thus laden, dream that they are rich and great,
And happiest he that groans beneath his weight.
The waves o'er take them in their serious play,
And every hour sweeps multitudes away;
They shriek and sink, survivors start and weep,
Pursue their sport, and follow to the deep.
A few forsake the throng; with lifted eyes
Ask wealth of Heaven, and gain a real prize,
Truth, wisdom, grace, and peace like that above,
Seal'd with his signet whom they serve and love;
Scorn'd by the rest, with patient hope they wait

A kind release from their imperfect state,
And unregretted are soon snatch'd away
From scenes of sorrow into glorious day.
Nor these alone prefer a life recluse,
Who seek retirement for its proper use;
The love of change, that lives in every breast,
Genius, and temper, and desire of rest,
Discordant motives in one centre meet,
And each inclines its votary to retreat.
Some minds by nature are averse to noise,
And hate the tumult half the world enjoys,
The lure of avarice, or the pompous prize
That courts display before ambitious eyes;
The fruits that hang on pleasure's flowery stem,
Whate'er enchants them, are no snares to them.
To them the deep recess of dusky groves,
Or forest, where the deer securely roves,
The fall of waters, and the song of birds,
And hills that echo to the distant herds,
Are luxuries excelling all the glare
The world can boast, and her chief favourites share.
With eager step, and carelessly array'd,
For such a cause the poet seeks the shade,
From all he sees he catches new delight,
Pleased Fancy claps her pinions at the sight,
The rising or the setting orb of day,
The clouds that flit, or slowly float away,
Nature in all the various shapes she wears,
Frowning in storms, or breathing gentle airs,
The snowy robe her wintry state assumes,
Her summer heats, her fruits, and her perfumes,
All, all alike transport the glowing bard,
Success in rhyme his glory and reward.
O Nature! whose Elysian scenes disclose
His bright perfections at whose word they rose,
Next to that power who form'd thee, and sustains,
Be thou the great inspirer of my strains.
Still, as I touch the lyre, do thou expand
Thy genuine charms, and guide an artless hand,
That I may catch a fire but rarely known,
Give useful light, though I should miss renown.
And, poring on thy page, whose every line

Bears proof of an intelligence divine,
May feel a heart enrich'd by what it pays,
That builds its glory on its Maker's praise.
Woe to the man whose wit disclaims its use,
Glittering in vain, or only to seduce,
Who studies nature with a wanton eye,
Admires the work, but slips the lesson by;
His hours of leisure and recess employs
In drawing pictures of forbidden joys,
Retires to blazon his own worthless name,
Or shoot the careless with a surer aim.
The lover too shuns business and alarms,
Tender idolater of absent charms.
Saints offer nothing in their warmest prayers
That he devotes not with a zeal like theirs;
'Tis consecration of his heart, soul, time,
And every thought that wanders is a crime.
In sighs he worships his supremely fair,
And weeps a sad libation in despair;
Adores a creature, and, devout in vain,
Wins in return an answer of disdain.
As woodbine weds the plant within her reach,
Rough elm, or smooth-grain'd ash, or glossy beech
In spiral rings ascends the trunk, and lays
Her golden tassels on the leafy sprays,
But does a mischief while she lends a grace,
Straitening its growth by such a strict embrace;
So love, that clings around the noblest minds,
Forbids the advancement of the soul he binds;
The suitor's air, indeed, he soon improves,
And forms it to the taste of her he loves,
Teaches his eyes a language, and no less
Refines his speech, and fashions his address;
But farewell promises of happier fruits,
Manly designs, and learning's grave pursuits;
Girt with a chain he cannot wish to break,
His only bliss is sorrow for her sake;
Who will may pant for glory and excel,
Her smile his aim, all higher aims farewell!
Thyrsis, Alexis, or whatever name
May least offend against so pure a flame,
Though sage advice of friends the most sincere

Sounds harshly in so delicate an ear,
And lovers, of all creatures, tame or wild,
Can least brook management, however mild,
Yet let a poet (poetry disarms
The fiercest animals with magic charms)
Risk an intrusion on thy pensive mood,
And woo and win thee to thy proper good.
Pastoral images and still retreats,
Umbrageous walks and solitary seats,
Sweet birds in concert with harmonious streams,
Soft airs, nocturnal vigils, and day-dreams,
Are all enchantments in a case like thine,
Conspire against thy peace with one design,
Soothe thee to make thee but a surer prey,
And feed the fire that wastes thy powers away.
Up—God has form'd thee with a wiser view,
Not to be led in chains, but to subdue;
Calls thee to cope with enemies, and first
Points out a conflict with thyself, the worst.
Woman, indeed, a gift he would bestow
When he design'd a Paradise below,
The richest earthly boon his hands afford,
Deserves to be beloved, but not adored.
Post away swiftly to more active scenes,
Collect the scatter'd truth that study gleans,
Mix with the world, but with its wiser part,
No longer give an image all thine heart;
Its empire is not hers, nor is it thine,
'Tis God's just claim, prerogative divine.
Virtuous and faithful Heberden, whose skill
Attempts no task it cannot well fulfil,
Gives melancholy up to nature's care,
And sends the patient into purer air.
Look where he comes—in this embower'd alcove
Stand close conceal'd, and see a statue move:
Lips busy, and eyes fix'd, foot falling slow,
Arms hanging idly down, hands clasp'd below,
Interpret to the marking eye distress,
Such as its symptoms can alone express.
That tongue is silent now; that silent tongue
Could argue once, could jest, or join the song,
Could give advice, could censure or commend,

Or charm the sorrows of a drooping friend.
Renounced alike its office and its sport,
Its brisker and its graver strains fall short;
Both fail beneath a fever's secret sway,
And like a summer-brook are past away.
This is a sight for pity to peruse,
Till she resembles faintly what she views,
Till sympathy contract a kindred pain,
Pierced with the woes that she laments in vain.
This, of all maladies that man infest,
Claims most compassion, and receives the least;
Job felt it, when he groan'd beneath the rod
And the barb'd arrows of a frowning God;
And such emollients as his friends could spare,
Friends such as his for modern Jobs prepare.
Blest, rather curst, with hearts that never feel,
Kept snug in caskets of close-hammer'd steel,
With mouths made only to grin wide and eat,
And minds that deem derided pain a treat,
With limbs of British oak, and nerves of wire,
And wit that puppet prompters might inspire,
Their sovereign nostrum is a clumsy joke
On pangs enforced with God's severest stroke.
But, with a soul that ever felt the sting
Of sorrow, sorrow is a sacred thing:
Not to molest, or irritate, or raise
A laugh at his expense, is slender praise;
He that has not usurp'd the name of man
Does all, and deems too little all, he can,
To assuage the throbbings of the fester'd part,
And staunch the bleedings of a broken heart.
'Tis not, as heads that never ache suppose,
Forgery of fancy, and a dream of woes;
Man is a harp, whose chords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony disposed aright;
The screws reversed (a task which, if he please,
God in a moment executes with ease),
Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose,
Lost, till he tune them, all their power and use.
Then neither heathy wilds, nor scenes as fair
As ever recompensed the peasant's care,
Nor soft declivities with tufted hills,

Nor view of waters turning busy mills,
Parks in which art preceptress nature weds,
Nor gardens interspersed with flowery beds,
Nor gales, that catch the scent of blooming groves,
And waft it to the mourner as he roves,
Can call up life into his faded eye,
That passes all he sees unheeded by;
No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels,
No cure for such, till God who makes them heals.
And thou, sad sufferer under nameless ill
That yields not to the touch of human skill,
Improve the kind occasion, understand
A Father's frown, and kiss his chastening hand.
To thee the day-spring, and the blaze of noon,
The purple evening and resplendent moon,
The stars that, sprinkled o'er the vault of night,
Seem drops descending in a shower of light,
Shine not, or undesired and hated shine,
Seen through the medium of a cloud like thine:
Yet seek him, in his favour life is found,
All bliss beside—a shadow or a sound:
Then heaven, eclipsed so long, and this dull earth,
Shall seem to start into a second birth;
Nature, assuming a more lovely face,
Borrowing a beauty from the works of grace,
Shall be despised and overlook'd no more,
Shall fill thee with delights unfelt before,
Impart to things inanimate a voice,
And bid her mountains and her hills rejoice;
The sound shall run along the winding vales,
And thou enjoy an Eden ere it fails.
Ye groves (the statesman at his desk exclaims,
Sick of a thousand disappointed aims),
My patrimonial treasure and my pride,
Beneath your shades your grey possessor hide,
Receive me, languishing for that repose
The servant of the public never knows.
Ye saw me once (ah, those regretted days,
When boyish innocence was all my praise!)
Hour after hour delightfully allot
To studies then familiar, since forgot,
And cultivate a taste for ancient song,

Catching its ardour as I mused along;
Nor seldom, as propitious Heaven might send,
What once I valued and could boast, a friend,
Were witnesses how cordially I press'd
His undissembling virtue to my breast;
Receive me now, not uncorrupt as then,
Nor guiltless of corrupting other men,
But versed in arts that, while they seem to stay
A falling empire, hasten its decay.
To the fair haven of my native home,
The wreck of what I was, fatigued, I come;
For once I can approve the patriot's voice,
And make the course he recommends my choice:
We meet at last in one sincere desire,
His wish and mine both prompt me to retire.
'Tis done—he steps into the welcome chaise,
Lolls at his ease behind four handsome bays,
That whirl away from business and debate
The disencumber'd Atlas of the state.
Ask not the boy, who, when the breeze of morn
First shakes the glittering drops from every thorn,
Unfolds his flock, then under bank or bush
Sits linking cherry-stones, or plating rush,
How fair is Freedom?—he was always free:
To carve his rustic name upon a tree,
To snare the mole, or with ill-fashion'd hook
To draw the incautious minnow from the brook,
Are life's prime pleasures in his simple view,
His flock the chief concern he ever knew;
She shines but little in his heedless eyes,
The good we never miss we rarely prize:
But ask the noble drudge in state affairs,
Escaped from office and its constant cares,
What charms he sees in Freedom's smile express'd,
In freedom lost so long, now repossess'd;
The tongue whose strains were cogent as commands,
Revered at home, and felt in foreign lands,
Shall own itself a stammerer in that cause,
Or plead its silence as its best applause.
He knows indeed that, whether dress'd or rude,
Wild without art, or artfully subdued,
Nature in every form inspires delight,

But never mark'd her with so just a sight.
Her hedge-row shrubs, a variegated store,
With woodbine and wild roses mantled o'er,
Green balks and furrow'd lands, the stream that spreads
Its cooling vapour o'er the dewy meads,
Downs, that almost escape the inquiring eye,
That melt and fade into the distant sky,
Beauties he lately slighted as he pass'd,
Seem all created since he travell'd last.
Master of all the enjoyments he design'd,
No rough annoyance rankling in his mind,
What early philosophic hours he keeps,
How regular his meals, how sound he sleeps!
Not sounder he that on the mainmast head,
While morning kindles with a windy red,
Begins a long look-out for distant land,
Nor quits till evening watch his giddy stand,
Then, swift descending with a seaman's haste,
Slips to his hammock, and forgets the blast.
He chooses company, but not the squire's,
Whose wit is rudeness, whose good-breeding tires,
Nor yet the parson's, who would gladly come,
Obsequious when abroad, though proud at home;
Nor can he much affect the neighbouring peer,
Whose toe of emulation treads too near;
But wisely seeks a more convenient friend,
With whom, dismissing forms, he may unbend.
A man, whom marks of condescending grace
Teach, while they flatter him, his proper place;
Who comes when call'd, and at a word withdraws,
Speaks with reserve, and listens with applause;
Some plain mechanic, who, without pretence
To birth or wit, nor gives nor takes offence;
On whom he rest well pleased his weary powers,
And talks and laughs away his vacant hours.
The tide of life, swift always in its course,
May run in cities with a brisker force,
But nowhere with a current so serene,
Or half so clear, as in the rural scene.
Yet how fallacious is all earthly bliss,
What obvious truths the wisest heads may miss!
Some pleasures live a month, and some a year,

But short the date of all we gather here;
No happiness is felt, except the true,
That does not charm thee more for being new.
This observation, as it chanced, not made,
Or, if the thought occur'd, not duly weigh'd,
He sighs—for after all by slow degrees
The spot he loved has lost the power to please;
To cross his ambling pony day by day
Seems at the best but dreaming life away;
The prospect, such as might enchant despair,
He views it not, or sees no beauty there;
With aching heart, and discontented looks,
Returns at noon to billiards or to books,
But feels, while grasping at his faded joys,
A secret thirst of his renounced employs.
He chides the tardiness of every post,
Pants to be told of battles won or lost,
Blames his own indolence, observes, though late,
'Tis criminal to leave a sinking state,
Flies to the levee, and, received with grace,
Kneels, kisses hands, and shines again in place.
Suburban villas, highway-side retreats,
That dread the encroachment of our growing streets,
Tight boxes neatly sash'd, and in a blaze
With all a July sun's collected rays,
Delight the citizen, who, gasping there,
Breathes clouds of dust, and calls it country air.
O sweet retirement! who would balk the thought
That could afford retirement or could not?
'Tis such an easy walk, so smooth and straight,
The second milestone fronts the garden gate;
A step if fair, and, if a shower approach,
They find safe shelter in the next stage-coach.
There, prison'd in a parlour snug and small,
Like bottled wasps upon a southern wall,
The man of business and his friends compress'd,
Forget their labours, and yet find no rest;
But still 'tis rural—trees are to be seen
From every window, and the fields are green;
Ducks paddle in the pond before the door,
And what could a remoter scene shew more?
A sense of elegance we rarely find

The portion of a mean or vulgar mind,
And ignorance of better things makes man,
Who cannot much, rejoice in what he can;
And he, that deems his leisure well bestow'd,
In contemplation of a turnpike-road,
Is occupied as well, employs his hours
As wisely, and as much improves his powers,
As he that slumbers in pavilions graced
With all the charms of an accomplish'd taste.
Yet hence, alas! insolvencies; and hence
The unpitied victim of ill-judged expense,
From all his wearisome engagements freed,
Shakes hands with business, and retires indeed.
Your prudent grandmamas, ye modern belles,
Content with Bristol, Bath, and Tunbridge Wells,
When health required it, would consent to roam,
Else more attach'd to pleasures found at home;
But now alike, gay widow, virgin, wife,
Ingenious to diversify dull life,
In coaches, chaises, caravans, and hoys,
Fly to the coast for daily, nightly joys,
And all, impatient of dry land, agree
With one consent to rush into the sea.
Ocean exhibits, fathomless and broad,
Much of the power and majesty of God.
He swathes about the swelling of the deep,
That shines and rests, as infants smile and sleep;
Vast as it is, it answers as it flows
The breathings of the lightest air that blows;
Curling and whitening over all the waste,
The rising waves obey the increasing blast,
Abrupt and horrid as the tempest roars,
Thunder and flash upon the steadfast shores,
Till he that rides the whirlwind checks the rein,
Then all the world of waters sleeps again.
Nereids or Dryads, as the fashion leads,
Now in the floods, now panting in the meads,
Votaries of pleasure still, where'er she dwells,
Near barren rocks, in palaces, or cells,
Oh, grant a poet leave to recommend
(A poet fond of nature, and your friend)
Her slighted works to your admiring view;

Her works must needs excel, who fashion'd you.
Would ye, when rambling in your morning ride,
With some unmeaning coxcomb at your side,
Condemn the prattler for his idle pains,
To waste unheard the music of his strains,
And, deaf to all the impertinence of tongue,
That, while it courts, affronts and does you wrong,
Mark well the finish'd plan without a fault,
The seas globose and huge, the o'er-arching vault,
Earth's millions daily fed, a world employ'd
In gathering plenty yet to be enjoy'd,
Till gratitude grew vocal in the praise
Of God, beneficent in all his ways;
Graced with such wisdom, how would beauty shine!
Ye want but that to seem indeed divine.
Anticipated rents and bills unpaid,
Force many a shining youth into the shade,
Not to redeem his time, but his estate,
And play the fool, but at a cheaper rate.
There, hid in loathed obscurity, removed
From pleasures left, but never more beloved,
He just endures, and with a sickly spleen
Sighs o'er the beauties of the charming scene.
Nature indeed looks prettily in rhyme;
Streams tinkle sweetly in poetic chime:
The warblings of the blackbird, clear and strong,
Are musical enough in Thomson's song;
And Cobham's groves, and Windsor's green retreats,
When Pope describes them, have a thousand sweets;
He likes the country, but in truth must own,
Most likes it when he studies it in town.
Poor Jack—no matter who—for when I blame,
I pity, and must therefore sink the name,
Lived in his saddle, loved the chase, the course,
And always, ere he mounted, kiss'd his horse.
The estate, his sires had own'd in ancient years,
Was quickly distanced, match'd against a peer's.
Jack vanish'd, was regretted, and forgot;
'Tis wild good-nature's never failing lot.
At length, when all had long supposed him dead,
By cold submersion, razor, rope, or lead,
My lord, alighting at his usual place,

The Crown, took notice of an ostler's face.
Jack knew his friend, but hoped in that disguise
He might escape the most observing eyes,
And whistling, as if unconcern'd and gay,
Curried his nag and look'd another way;
Convinced at last, upon a nearer view,
'Twas he, the same, the very Jack he knew,
O'erwhelm'd at once with wonder, grief, and joy,
He press'd him much to quit his base employ;
His countenance, his purse, his heart, his hand,
Influence and power, were all at his command:
Peers are not always generous as well-bred,
But Granby was, meant truly what he said.
Jack bow'd, and was obliged—confess'd 'twas strange,
That so retired he should not wish a change,
But knew no medium between guzzling beer,
And his old stint—three thousand pounds a year.
Thus some retire to nourish hopeless woe;
Some seeking happiness not found below;
Some to comply with humour, and a mind
To social scenes by nature disinclined;
Some sway'd by fashion, some by deep disgust;
Some self-impoverish'd, and because they must;
But few, that court Retirement, are aware
Of half the toils they must encounter there.
Lucrative offices are seldom lost
For want of powers proportion'd to the post:
Give e'en a dunce the employment he desires,
And he soon finds the talents it requires;
A business with an income at its heels
Furnishes always oil for its own wheels.
But in his arduous enterprise to close
His active years with indolent repose,
He finds the labours of that state exceed
His utmost faculties, severe indeed.
'Tis easy to resign a toilsome place,
But not to manage leisure with a grace;
Absence of occupation is not rest,
A mind quite vacant is a mind distress'd,
The veteran steed, excused his task at length,
In kind compassion of his failing strength,
And turn'd into the park or mead to graze,

Exempt from future service all his days,
There feels a pleasure perfect in its kind,
Ranges at liberty, and snuffs the wind:
But when his lord would quit the busy road,
To taste a joy like that he has bestow'd,
He proves, less happy than his favour'd brute,
A life of ease a difficult pursuit.
Thought, to the man that never thinks, may seem
As natural as when asleep to dream:
But reveries (for human minds will act),
Specious in show, impossible in fact,
Those flimsy webs, that break as soon as wrought,
Attain not to the dignity of thought:
Nor yet the swarms that occupy the brain,
Where dreams of dress, intrigue, and pleasure reign;
Nor such as useless conversation breeds,
Or lust engenders, and indulgence feeds.
Whence, and what are we? to what end ordain'd?
What means the drama by the world sustain'd?
Business or vain amusement, care or mirth,
Divide the frail inhabitants of earth.
Is duty a mere sport, or an employ?
Life an entrusted talent, or a toy?
Is there, as reason, conscience, Scripture say,
Cause to provide for a great future day,
When, earth's assign'd duration at an end,
Man shall be summon'd, and the dead attend?
The trumpet—will it sound? the curtain rise?
And shew the august tribunal of the skies,
Where no prevarication shall avail,
Where eloquence and artifice shall fail,
The pride of arrogant distinctions fall,
And conscience and our conduct judge us all?
Pardon me, ye that give the midnight oil
To learned cares or philosophic toil;
Though I revere your honourable names,
Your useful labours, and important aims,
And hold the world indebted to your aid,
Enrich'd with the discoveries ye have made;
Yet let me stand excused, if I esteem
A mind employ'd on so sublime a theme,
Pushing her bold inquiry to the date

And outline of the present transient state,
And, after poising her adventurous wings,
Settling at last upon eternal things,
Far more intelligent, and better taught
The strenuous use of profitable thought,
Than ye, when happiest, and enlighten'd most,
And highest in renown, can justly boast.
A mind unnerved, or indisposed to bear
The weight of subjects worthiest of her care,
Whatever hopes a change of scene inspires,
Must change her nature, or in vain retires.
An idler is a watch that wants both hands;
As useless if it goes as when it stands.
Books, therefore, not the scandal of the shelves,
In which lewd sensualists print out themselves;
Nor those, in which the stage gives vice a blow,
With what success let modern manners shew;
Nor his who, for the bane of thousands born,
Built God a church, and laugh'd his Word to scorn,
Skilful alike to seem devout and just,
And stab religion with a sly side-thrust;
Nor those of learn'd philologists, who chase
A panting syllable through time and space,
Start it at home, and hunt it in the dark,
To Gaul, to Greece, and into Noah's ark;
But such as learning, without false pretence,
The friend of truth, the associate of sound sense,
And such as, in the zeal of good design,
Strong judgment labouring in the Scripture mine,
All such as manly and great souls produce,
Worthy to live, and of eternal use:
Behold in these what leisure hours demand,
Amusement and true knowledge hand in hand.
Luxury gives the mind a childish cast,
And, while she polishes, perverts the taste;
Habits of close attention, thinking heads,
Become more rare as dissipation spreads,
Till authors hear at length one general cry,
Tickle and entertain us, or we die.
The loud demand, from year to year the same,
Beggars invention, and makes fancy lame;
Till farce itself, most mournfully jejune,

Calls for the kind assistance of a tune;
And novels (witness every month's review)
Belie their name, and offer nothing new.
The mind, relaxing into needful sport,
Should turn to writers of an abler sort,
Whose wit well managed, and whose classic style,
Give truth a lustre, and make wisdom smile.
Friends (for I cannot stint, as some have done,
Too rigid in my view, that name to one;
Though one, I grant it, in the generous breast
Will stand advanced a step above the rest;
Flowers by that name promiscuously we call,
But one, the rose, the regent of them all)—
Friends, not adopted with a schoolboy's haste,
But chosen with a nice discerning taste,
Well born, well disciplined, who, placed apart
From vulgar minds, have honour much at heart,
And, though the world may think the ingredients odd,
The love of virtue, and the fear of God!
Such friends prevent what else would soon succeed,
A temper rustic as the life we lead,
And keep the polish of the manners clean,
As theirs who bustle in the busiest scene;
For solitude, however some may rave,
Seeming a sanctuary, proves a grave,
A sepulchre, in which the living lie,
Where all good qualities grow sick and die.
I praise the Frenchman, his remark was shrewd,
How sweet, how passing sweet is solitude!
But grant me still a friend in my retreat,
Whom I may whisper—Solitude is sweet.
Yet neither these delights, nor aught beside,
That appetite can ask, or wealth provide,
Can save us always from a tedious day,
Or shine the dulness of still life away;
Divine communion, carefully enjoy'd,
Or sought with energy, must fill the void.
Oh, sacred art! to which alone life owes
Its happiest seasons, and a peaceful close,
Scorn'd in a world, indebted to that scorn
For evils daily felt and hardly borne,
Not knowing thee, we reap, with bleeding hands,

Flowers of rank odour upon thorny lands,
And, while experience cautions us in vain,
Grasp seeming happiness, and find it pain.
Despondence, self-deserted in her grief,
Lost by abandoning her own relief,
Murmuring and ungrateful discontent,
That scorns afflictions mercifully meant,
Those humours, tart as wines upon the fret,
Which idleness and weariness beget;
These, and a thousand plagues that haunt the breast,
Fond of the phantom of an earthly rest,
Divine communion chases, as the day
Drives to their dens the obedient beasts of prey.
See Judah's promised king, bereft of all,
Driven out an exile from the face of Saul,
To distant caves the lonely wanderer flies,
To seek that peace a tyrant's frown denies.
Hear the sweet accents of his tuneful voice,
Hear him o'erwhelm'd with sorrow, yet rejoice;
No womanish or wailing grief has part,
No, not a moment, in his royal heart;
'Tis manly music, such as martyrs make,
Suffering with gladness for a Saviour's sake.
His soul exults, hope animates his lays,
The sense of mercy kindles into praise,
And wilds, familiar with a lion's roar,
Ring with ecstatic sounds unheard before;
'Tis love like his that can alone defeat
The foes of man, or make a desert sweet.
Religion does not censure or exclude
Unnumber'd pleasures harmlessly pursued;
To study culture, and with artful toil
To meliorate and tame the stubborn soil;
To give dissimilar yet fruitful lands
The grain, or herb, or plant that each demands;
To cherish virtue in an humble state,
And share the joys your bounty may create;
To mark the matchless workings of the power
That shuts within its seed the future flower,
Bids these in elegance of form excel,
In colour these, and those delight the smell,
Sends Nature forth the daughter of the skies,

To dance on earth, and charm all human eyes;
To teach the canvas innocent deceit,
Or lay the landscape on the snowy sheet—
These, these are arts pursued without a crime,
That leave no stain upon the wing of time.
Me poetry (or, rather, notes that aim
Feebly and vainly at poetic fame)
Employs, shut out from more important views,
Fast by the banks of the slow-winding Ouse;
Content if, thus sequester'd, I may raise
A monitor's, though not a poet's, praise,
And, while I teach an art too little known,
To close life wisely, may not waste my own.

William Cowper

Retirement

Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,
From strife and tumult far;
From scenes where Satan wages still
His most successful war.

The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree;
And seem, by Thy sweet bounty made,
For those who follow Thee.

There if Thy Spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
Oh, with what peace, and joy, and love,
She communes with her God!

There like the nightingale she pours
Her solitary lays;
Nor asks a witness of her song,
Nor thirsts for human praise.

Author and Guardian of my life,
Sweet source of light Divine,
And, -- all harmonious names in one, --
My Saviour! Thou art mine.

What thanks I owe Thee, and what love,
A boundless, endless store,
Shall echo through the realms above,
When time shall be no more.

William Cowper

Sardis

(Revelations, iii. 1-6)

"Write to Sardis," saith the Lord,
"And write what He declares,
He whose Spirit, and whose word,
Upholds the seven stars:
All thy works and ways I search,
Find thy zeal and love decay'd;
Thou art call'd a living church,
But thou art cold and dead.

"Watch, remember, seek, and strive,
Exert thy former pains;
Let thy timely care revive,
And strengthen what remains;
Cleanse thine heart, thy works amend,
Former times to mind recall,
Lest my sudden stroke descend,
And smite thee once for all.

"Yet I number now in thee
A few that are upright;
These my Father's face shall see,
And walk with me in white.
When in judgment I appear,
They for mine shall be confess'd;
Let my faithful servants hear, --
And woe be to the rest!"

William Cowper

Scenes Favourable To Meditation

Wilds horrid and dark with o'er shadowing trees,
Rocks that ivy and briars infold,
Scenes nature with dread and astonishment sees,
But I with a pleasure untold;

Though awfully silent, and shaggy, and rude,
I am charmed with the peace ye afford;
Your shades are a temple where none will intrude,
The abode of my lover and Lord.

I am sick of thy splendour, O fountain of day,
And here I am hid from its beams,
Here safely contemplate a brighter display
Of the noblest and holiest of themes.

Ye forests, that yield me my sweetest repose,
Where stillness and solitude reign,
To you I securely and boldly disclose
The dear anguish of which I complain.

Here, sweetly forgetting and wholly forgot
By the world and its turbulent throng,
The birds and the streams lend me many a note
That aids meditation and song.

Here, wandering in scenes that are sacred to night,
Love wears me and wastes me away,
And often the sun has spent much of his light
Ere yet I perceive it is day.

While a mantle of darkness envelops the sphere,
My sorrows are sadly rehearsed,
To me the dark hours are all equally dear,
And the last is as sweet as the first.

Here I and the beasts of the deserts agree,
Mankind are the wolves that I fear,
They grudge me my natural right to be free,
But nobody questions it here.

Though little is found in this dreary abode
That appetite wishes to find,
My spirit is soothed by the presence of God,
And appetite wholly resigned.

Ye desolate scenes, to your solitude led,
My life I in praises employ,
And scarce know the source of the tears that I shed,
Proceed they from sorrow or joy.

There's nothing I seem to have skill to discern,
I feel out my way in the dark,
Love reigns in my bosom, I constantly burn,
Yet hardly distinguish the spark.

I live, yet I seem to myself to be dead,
Such a riddle is not to be found,
I am nourished without knowing how I am fed,
I have nothing, and yet I abound.

Oh, love! who in darkness art pleased to abide,
Though dimly, yet surely I see
That these contrarities only reside
In the soul that is chosen of thee.

Ah! send me not back to the race of mankind,
Perversely by folly beguiled,
For where, in the crowds I have left, shall I find
The spirit and heart of a child?

Here let me, though fixed in a desert, be free;
A little one whom they despise,
Though lost to the world, if in union with thee,
Shall be holy, and happy, and wise.

William Cowper

See Where The Thames, The Purest Stream

See where the Thames, the purest stream
That wavers to the noon-day beam,
Divides the vale below;
While like a vein of liquid ore
His waves enrich the happy shore,
Still shining as they flow.

Nor yet, my Delia, to the main
Runs the sweet tide without a stain
Unsullied as it seems;
Thy nymphs of many a sable flood
Deform with streaks of oozy mud
The bosom of the Thames.

Some idle rivulets, that feed
And suckle every noisome weed,
A sandy bottom boast;
For ever bright, for ever clear,
Tho trifling shallow rills appear
In their own channel lost.

Thus fares it with the human soul,
Where copious floods of passion roll,
By genuine love supplied;
Fair in itself the current shows,
But ah! a thousand anxious woes
Pollute the noble tide.

These are emotions known to few;
For where at most a vapoury dew
Surrounds the tranquil heart,
Then as the triflers never prove
The glad excess of real love,
They never prove the smart.

O then my life, at last relent!
Though cruel the reproach I sent,
My sorrow was unfeigned:
Your passion, had I loved you not,

You might have scorned, renounced, forgot,
And I had ne'er complained.

While you indulge a groundless fear,
The imaginary woes you bear
Are real woes to me:
But thou art kind, and good thou art,
Nor wilt, by wronging thine own heart,
Unjustly punish me.

How blessed the youth whom fate ordains
A kind relief from all his pains,
In some admired fair;
Whose tenderest wishes find expressed
Their own resemblance in her breast,
Exactly copied there!

What good soe'er the gods dispense,
The enjoyment of its influence
Still on her love depends;
Her love the shield that guards his heart,
Or wards the blow, or blunts the dart
That peevish fortune sends.

Thus, Delia, while thy love endures,
The flame my happy breast secures
From fortune's fickle power;
Change as she list, she may increase,
But not abate my happiness,
Confirmed by thee before.

Thus while I share her smiles with thee,
Welcome, my love, shall ever be
The favours she bestows;
Yet not on those I found my bliss,
But in the noble ecstasies
The faithful bosom knows.

And when she prunes her wings for flight,
And flutters nimbly from my sight,
Contented I resign
Whate'er she gave; thy love alone

I can securely call my own,
Happy while that is mine.

William Cowper

Seeking The Beloved

To those who love the Lord I speak;
Is my Beloved near?
The Bridegroom of my soul I seek,
Oh! when will He appear?

Though once a man of grief and shame,
Yet now He fills a throne,
And bears the greatest, sweetest name,
That earth or heaven have known.

Grace flies before, and love attends
His steps wheree'er he goes;
Though none can see Him but His friends,
And they were once his foes.

He speaks; -- obedient to His call
Our warm affections move:
Did He but shine alike on all,
Then all alike would love.

Then love in every heart would reign,
And war would cease to roar;
And cruel and bloodthirsty men
Would thirst for blood no more.

Such Jesus is, and such His grace;
Oh, may He shine on you!
And tell him, when you see His face,
I long to see Him, too.

William Cowper

Self-Acquaintance

Dear Lord! accept a sinful heart,
Which of itself complains,
And mourns, with much and frequent smart,
The evil it contains.

There fiery seeds of anger lurk,
Which often hurt my frame;
And wait but for the tempter's work,
To fan them to a flame.

Legality holds out a bribe
To purchase life from Thee;
And Discontent would fain prescribe
How Thou shalt deal with me.

While Unbelief withstands Thy grace,
And puts the mercy by,
Presumption, with a brow of brass,
Says, "Give me, or I die!"

How eager are my thoughts to roam,
In quest of what they love!
But ah! when duty calls them home,
How heavily they move!

Oh, cleanse me in a Saviour's blood,
Transform me by Thy power,
And make me Thy beloved abode,
And let me roam no more.

William Cowper

Self-diffidence

Source of love, and light of day,
Tear me from myself away;
Every view and thought of mine
Cast into the mould of thine;
Teach, O teach this faithless heart
A consistent constant part;
Or, if it must live to grow
More rebellious, break it now!

Is it thus that I requite
Grace and goodness infinite?
Every trace of every boon
Cancelled and erased so soon!
Can I grieve thee, whom I love;
Thee, in whom I live and move?
If my sorrow touch thee still,
Save me from so great an ill!

Oh! the oppressive, irksome weight,
Felt in an uncertain state;
Comfort, peace, and rest, adieu,
Should I prove at last untrue!
Still I choose thee, follow still
Every notice of thy will;
But, unstable, strangely weak,
Still let slip the good I seek.

Self-confiding wretch, I thought
I could serve thee as I ought,
Win thee, and deserve to feel
All the love thou canst reveal;
Trusting self, a bruised reed,
Is to be deceived indeed:
Save me from this harm and loss,
Lest my gold turn all to dross!

Self is earthly—faith alone
Makes an unseen world our own;
Faith relinquished, how we roam,

Feel our way, and leave our home!
Spurious gems our hopes entice,
While we scorn the pearl of price;
And, preferring servants' pay,
Cast the children's bread away.

William Cowper

Self-love And Truth Incompatible

From thorny wilds a monster came,
That filled my soul with fear and shame;
The birds, forgetful of their mirth,
Drooped at the sight, and fell to earth;
When thus a sage addressed mine ear,
Himself unconscious of a fear:
'Whence all this terror and surprise,
Distracted looks and streaming eyes?
Far from the world and its affairs,
The joy it boasts, the pain it shares,
Surrender, without guile or art,
To God an undivided heart;
The savage form, so feared before,
Shall scare your trembling soul no more;
For, loathsome as the sight may be,
'Tis but the love of self you see.
Fix all your love on God alone,
Choose but his will, and hate your own:
No fear shall in your path be found,
The dreary waste shall bloom around,
And you, through all your happy days,
Shall bless his name, and sing his praise.'
Oh lovely solitude, how sweet
The silence of this calm retreat!
Here truth, the fair whom I pursue,
Gives all her beauty to my view;
The simple, unadorned display
Charms every pain and fear away.
O Truth, whom millions proudly slight;
O Truth, my treasure and delight;
Accept this tribute to thy name,
And this poor heart from which it came!

William Cowper

Simple Trust

Still, still, without ceasing,
I feel it increasing,
This fervour of holy desire;
And often exclaim,
Let me die in the flame
Of a love that can never expire!

Had I words to explain
What she must sustain
Who dies to the world and its ways;
How joy and affright,
Distress and delight,
Alternately chequer her days:

Thou, sweetly severe!
I would make thee appear,
In all thou art pleased to award.
Not more in the sweet
Than the bitter I meet
My tender and merciful Lord.

This faith, in the dark,
Pursuing its mark,
Through many sharp trials of love,
Is the sorrowful waste
That is to be passed
On the way to the Canaan above.

William Cowper

Song

No more shall hapless Celia's ears
Be flattered with the cries
Of lovers drowned in floods of tears,
Or murdered by her eyes;
No serenades to break her rest,
Nor songs her slumbers to molest,
With my fa, la, la.

The fragrant flowers that once would bloom
And flourish in her hair,
Since she no longer breathes perfume
Their odours to repair,
Must fade, alas! and wither now
As placed on any common brow,
With my fa, la, la.

Her lip, so winning and so meek,
No longer has its charms;
As well she might by whistling seek
To lure us to her arms;
Affected once, 'tis real now,
As her forsaken gums may show,
With my fa, la, la.

The down that on her chin so smooth
So lovely once appeared,
That, too, has left her with her youth,
Or sprouts into a beard;
As fields, so green when newly sown,
With stubble stiff are overgrown,
With my fa, la, la.

Then, Celia, leave your apish tricks,
And change your girlish airs,
For ombre, snuff, and politics,
Those joys that suit your years;
No patches can lost youth recall,
Nor whitewash prop a tumbling wall,
With my fa, la, la.

William Cowper

Song On Peace

No longer I follow a sound;
No longer a dream I pursue;
Oh happiness! not to be found,
Unattainable treasure, adieu!

I have sought thee in splendour and dress,
In the regions of pelasure and taste;
I have sought thee, and seemed to possess,
But have proved thee a vision at last.

A humble ambition and hope
The voice of true wisdom inspires;
'Tis sufficient, if peace be the scope,
And the summit of all our desires.

Peace may be the lot of the mind
That seeks it in meekness and love;
But rapture and bliss are confined
To the glorified spirits above.

William Cowper

Song. Written At The Request Of Lady Austen

When all within is peace,
How nature seems to smile;
Delights that never cease,
The live-long day beguile.
From morn to dewy eve,
With open hand she showers
Fresh blessings to deceive,
And soothe the silent hours.

It is content of heart
Gives nature power to please;
The mind that feels no smart
Enlivens all it sees,
Can make a wintry sky
Seem bright as smiling May,
And evening's closing eye
As peep of early day.

The vast majestic globe,
So beauteously arrayed
In nature's various robe,
With wondrous skill displayed,
Is to a mourner's heart
A dreary wild at best;
It flutters to depart,
And longs to be at rest.

William Cowper

Sonnet Addressed To William Hayley, Esq.

Hayley, thy tenderness fraternal shown
In our first interview, delightful guest!
To Mary and me for her dear sake distressed,
Such as it is has made my heart thy own,
Though heedless now of new engagements grown,
For threescore winters make a wintry breast,
And I had purposed ne'er to go in quest
Of Friendship more, except with God alone.
But thou hast won me; nor is God my foe,
Who, ere this last afflictive scene began,
Sent thee to mitigate the dreadful blow,
My brother, by whose sympathy I know
Thy true deserts infallibly to scan,
Not more to admire the bard than love the man.

William Cowper

Sonnet I. (Translated From Milton)

Fair Lady, whose harmonious name the Rheno
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,
Temp'ring 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, e'er the dart
Of fond desire yet reach his inmost heart.

William Cowper

Sonnet II. (Translated From Milton)

As on a hill-top rude, when closing day
Imbrowns the scene, some past'ral maiden fair
Waters a lovely foreign plant with care,
That scarcely can its tender bud display
Borne from its native genial airs away,
So, on my tongue these accents new and rare
Are flow'rs 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 will'd, and oftimes Love has shown
That what He wills he never wills in vain.
Oh that this hard and steril breast might be
To Him who plants from heav'n, a soil as free.

William Cowper

Sonnet Iii. Canzone. (Translated From Milton)

They mock my toil--the nymphs and am'rous swains--
And whence this fond attempt to write, they cry,
Love-songs in language that thou little know'st?
How dar'st thou risque to sing these foreign strains?
Say truly. Find'st not oft thy purpose cross'd,
And that thy fairest flow'rs, Here, fade 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 declin'd?
Speak, Canzone! 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.'

William Cowper

Sonnet Iv. To Charles Diodati. (Translated From Milton)

Charles--and I say it wond'ring--thou must know
That I who once assum'd a scornful air,
And scoff'd 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 pow'r might bind,
And from her sphere draw down the lab'ring Moon,
With such fire-darting eyes, that should I fill
My ears with wax, she would enchant me still.

William Cowper

Sonnet To A Young Lady On Her Birth-Day

Deem not, sweet rose, that bloom'st 'midst many a thorn,
Thy friend, tho' to a cloister's shade consign'd,
Can e'er forget the charms he left behind,
Or pass unheeded this auspicious morn!
In happier days to brighter prospects born,
O tell thy thoughtless sex, the virtuous mind,
Like thee, content in every state may find,
And look on Folly's pageantry with scorn.
To steer with nicest art betwixt th' extreme
Of idle mirth, and affectation coy;
To blend good sense with elegance and ease;
To bid Affliction's eye no longer stream;
Is thine; best gift, the unfailing source of joy,
The guide to pleasures which can never cease!

William Cowper

Sonnet To George Romney, Esq. On His Picture Of Me In Crayons

Romney, expert infallibly to trace
On chart of canvas, not the form alone
And semblance, but, however faintly shown,
The mind's impression too on every face;
With strokes that time ought never to cease
Thou hast so pencilled mine, that though I own
The subject worthless, I have never known
The artist shining with superior grace.
But this I mark, -- that symptoms none of woe
In thy incomparable work appear.
Well -- I am satisfied it should be so,
Since, on maturer thought, the cause is clear
For in my looks what sorrow couldst thou see,
When I was Hayley's guest, and sat to thee?

William Cowper

Sonnet To Henry Cowper, Esq.

Cowper, whose silver voice, tasked sometimes hard,
Legends prolix delivers in the ears
(Attentive when thou read'st) of England's peers,
Let verse at length yield thee thy just reward.

Thou wast not heard with drowsy disregard,
Expending late on all that length of plea
Thy generous powers, but silence honoured thee,
Mute as e'er gazed on orator or bard.

Thou art not voice alone, but hast beside
Both heart and head; and couldst with music sweet
Of attic phrase and senatorial tone,
Like thy renowned forefathers, far and wide
Thy fame diffuse, praised not for utterance meet
Of others' speech, but magic of thy own.

William Cowper

Sonnet To William Wilberforce, Esq.

Thy country, Wilberforce, with just disdain,
Hears thee, by cruel men and impious, call'd
Fanatic, for thy zeal to loose th' enthral'd
From exile, public sale, and slav'ry's chain.
Friend of the poor, the wrong'd, the fetter-gall'd,
Fear not lest labour such as thine be vain!
Thou hast achiev'd a part; hast gain'd the ear
Of Britain's senate to thy glorious cause;
Hope smiles, joy springs, and tho' cold caution pause
And weave delay, the better hour is near,
That shall remunerate thy toils severe
By peace for Afric, fenc'd with British laws.
Enjoy what thou hast won, esteem and love
From all the just on earth, and all the blest above!

William Cowper

Sonnet V. (Translated From Milton)

Lady! It cannot be, but that thine eyes
Must be my sun, such radiance they display
And strike me ev'n as Phoebus him, whose way
Through torrid Libya'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, they coldness soon congeals.
While others to my tearful eyes ascend,
Whence my sad nights in show'rs are ever drown'd,
'Till my Aurora comes, her brow with roses bound.

William Cowper

Sonnet Vi. (Translated From Milton)

Enamour'd, 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,
As fond of genius, and fix'd fortitude,
Of the resounding lyre, and every Muse.
Weak you will find it in one only part,
Now pierc'd by Love's immedicable dart.

William Cowper

Sparrows Self-Domesticated In Trinity College, Cambridge

None ever shared the social feast,
Or as an inmate or a guest,
Beneath the celebrated dome
Where once Sir Isaac had his home,
Who saw not (and with some delight
Perhaps he view'd the novel sight)
How numerous, at the tables there,
The sparrows beg their daily fare.
For there, in every nook and cell
Where such a family may dwell,
Sure as the vernal season comes
Their nest they weave in hope of crumbs,
Which kindly given, may serve with food
Convenient their unfeather'd brood;
And oft as with its summons clear
The warning bell salutes their ear,
Sagacious listeners to the sound,
They flock from all the fields around;
To reach the hospitable hall,
None more attentive to the call.
Arrived, the pensionary band,
Hopping and chirping, close at hand,
Solicit what they soon receive:
The sprinkled, plenteous donative.
Thus is a multitude, though large,
Supported at a trivial charge;
A single doit would overpay
The expenditure of every day,
And who can grudge so small a grace
To suppliants, natives of the place.

William Cowper

Stanzas On The Late Indecent Liberties Taken With The Remains Of The Great Milton

'Me too, perchance, in future days,
The sculptured stone shall show,
With Paphian myrtle or with bays
Parnassian on my brow.

'But I, or e'er that season come,
Escaped from every care,
Shall reach my refuge in the tomb,
And sleep securely there.'

So sang, in Roman tone and style,
The youthful bard, ere long
Ordained to grace his native isle
With her sublimest song.

Who then but must conceive disdain,
Hearing the deed unblest,
Of wretches who have dared profane
His dread sepulchral rest?

Ill fare the hands that heaved the stones
Where Milton's ashes lay,
That trembled not to grasp his bones
And steal his dust away!

O ill-requited bard! neglect
Thy living worth repaid,
And blind idolatrous respect
As much affronts thee dead.

William Cowper

Stanzas Subjoined To The Yearly Bill Of Mortality Of The Parish Of All-Saints, Northampton. Anno Domini 1787

While thirteen moons saw smoothly run
The Nen's barge-laden wave,
All these, life's rambling journey done,
Have found their home, the grave.

Was man (frail always) made more frail
Than in foregoing years?
Did famine or did plague prevail,
That so much death appears?

No; these were vigorous as their sires,
Nor plague nor famine came;
This annual tribute Death requires,
And never waives his claim.

Like crowded forest-trees we stand,
And some are marked to fall;
The axe will smite at God's command,
And soon shall smite us all.

Green as the bay tree, ever green,
With its new foliage on,
The gay, the thoughtless, have I seen,
I passed, -- and they were gone.

Read, ye that run, the awful truth
With which I charge my page!
A worm is in the bud of youth,
And at the root of age.

No present health can health insure
For yet an hour to come;
No meicine, though it oft can cure
Can always balk the tomb.

And oh! that humble as my lot,

And scorned as is my strain,
These truths, though known, too much forgot,
I may not teach in vain.

So prays your Clerk with all his heart,
And, ere he quits the pen,
Begs you for once to take his part,
And answer all -- Amen!

William Cowper

Stanzas Subjoined To The Yearly Bill Of Mortality Of The Parish Of All-Saints, Northampton. Anno Domini 1788

Could I, from Heaven inspired, as sure presage
To whom the rising year shall prove his last,
As I can number in my punctual page,
And item down the victims of the past;

How each would trembling wait the mournful sheet
On which the press might stamp him next to die;
And, reading here his sentence, how replete
With anxious meaning, heavenward turn his eye!

Time then would seem more precious than the joys
In which he sports away the treasure now;
And prayer more seasonable than the noise
Of drunkards, or the music-drawing bow.

Then doubtless many a trifler, on the brink
Of this world's hazardous and headlong shore,
Forced to a pause, would feel it good to think,
Told that his setting sun must rise no more.

Ah self-deceived! Could I prophetic say
Who next is fated, and who next to fall,
The rest might then seem privileged to play;
But, naming none, the voice now speaks to all.

Observe the dappled foresters, how light
They bound and airy o'er the sunny glade;
One falls -- the rest, wide scattered with affright,
Vanish at one into the darkest shade.

Had we their wisdom, should we, often warned,
Still need repeated warnings, and at last,
A thousand awful admonitions scorned,
Die self-accused of life run all to waste?

Sad waste! for which no after-thrift atones!

The grave admits no cure for guilt or sin;
Dewdrops may deck the turf that hides the bones,
But tears of godly grief ne'er flow within.

Learn then, ye living! by the mouths be taught
Of all those sepulchres, instructors true,
That, soon or late, death also is your lot,
And the next opening grave may yawn for you.

William Cowper

Stanzas Subjoined To The Yearly Bill Of Mortality Of The Parish Of All-Saints, Northampton. Anno Domini 1789

'Oh most delightful hour by man
Experienced here below,
The hour that terminates his span,
His folly and his woe!

'Worlds should not bribe me back to tread
Again life's dreary waste,
To see again my day o'erspread
With all the gloomy past.

'My home henceforth is in the skies,
Earth, seas, and sun, adieu!
All heaven unfolded to my eyes,
I have no sight for you.'

So spake Aspasio, firm possessed
Of faith's supporting rod,
Then breathed his soul into its rest,
The bosom of his God.

He was a man among the few
Sincere on virtue's side;
And all his strength from Scripture drew,
To hourly use applied.

That rule he prized, by that he feared,
He hated, hoped, and loved;
Nor ever frowned, or sad appeared,
But when his heart had roved.

For he was frail as thou or I,
And evil felt within:
But when he felt it, heaved a sigh,
And loathed the thought of sin.

Such lived Aspasio; and at last

Called up from earth to heaven,
The gulf of death triumphant passed,
By gales of blessing driven.

His joys be mine, each reader cries,
When my last hour arrives;
They shall be yours, my verse replies,
Such only be your lives.

William Cowper

Stanzas Subjoined To The Yearly Bill Of Mortality Of The Parish Of All-Saints, Northampton. Anno Domini 1790

He who sits from day to day
Where the prisoned lark is hung,
Heedless of his loudest lay,
Hardly knows that he has sung.

Where the watchman in his round
Nightly lifts his voice on high,
None accustomed to the sound,
Wakes the sooner for his cry.

So your verse man I, and clerk,
Yearly in my song proclaim
Death at hand -- yourselves his mark--
And the foe's unerring aim.

Duly at my time I come,
Publishing to all aloud,--
Soon the grave must be your home,
And your only suit a shroud.

But the monitory strain,
Oft repeated in your ears,
Seems to sound too much in vain,
Wins no notice, wakes no fears.

Can a truth, by all confessed
Of such magnitude and weight,
Grow, by being oft impressed,
Trivial as a parrot's prate?

Pleasure's call attention wins,
Hear it often as we may;
New as ever seem our sins,
Though committed every day.

Death and judgement, heaven and hell--

These alone, so often heard,
No more move us than the bell
When some stranger is interred.

Oh then, ere the turf or tomb
Cover us from every eye,
Spirit of instruction! come,
Make us learn that we must die.

William Cowper

Stanzas Subjoined To The Yearly Bill Of Mortality Of The Parish Of All-Saints, Northampton. Anno Domini 1792

Thankless for favours from on high,
Man thinks he fades too soon;
Though 'tis his privilege to die,
Would he improve the boon.

But he, not wise enough to scan
His blest concerns aright,
Would gladly stretch life's little span
To ages, if he might;

To ages in a world of pain,
To ages, where he goes
Galled by affliction's heavy chain,
And hopeless of repose.

Strange fondness of the human heart,
Enamoured of its harm!
Strange world, that costs it so much smart,
And still has power to charm.

Whence has the world her magic power?
Why deem we death a foe?
Recoil from weary life's best hour,
And covet longer woe?

The cause is Conscience :-- Conscience oft
Her tale of guilt renews;
Her voice is terrible though soft,
And dread of death ensues.

Then anxious to be longer spared,
Man mourns his fleeting breath:
All evils then seem light compared
With the approach of Death.

'Tis judgement shakes him; there's the fear

That prompts the wish to stay:
He has incurred a long arrear,
And must despair to pay.

Pay? --follow Christ, and all is paid;
His death your peace ensures;
Think on the grave where he was laid,
And calm descend to yours.

William Cowper

Stanzas Subjoined To The Yearly Bill Of Mortality Of The Parish Of All-Saints, Northampton. Anno Domini 1793

He lives who lives to God alone,
And all are dead beside;
For other source than God is none
Whence life can be supplied.

To live to God is to requite
His love as best we may;
To make his precepts our delight,
His promises our stay.

But lite, within a narrow ring
Of giddy joys comprised,
Is falsely named, and no such thing,
But rather death disguised.

Can life in them deserve the name,
Who only live to prove
For what poor toys they can disclaim
An endless life above?

Who, much diseased, yet nothing feel;
Much menaced, nothing dread;
Have wounds which only God can heal,
Yet never ask his aid?

Who deem his house a useless place,
Faith, want of common sense;
And ardour in the Christian race,
A hypocrite's pretence?

Who trample order; and the day
Which God asserts his own
Dishonour with unhallowed play,
And worship chance alone?

If scorn of God's commands, impressed

On word and deed, imply
The better part of man unblessed
With life that cannot die;

Such want it, and that want, uncured
Till man resigns his breath,
Speaks him a criminal, assured
Of everlasting death.

Sad period to a pleasant course!
Yet so will God repay
Sabbaths profaned without remorse
And mercy cast away.

William Cowper

Strada's Nightingale

The shepherd touch'd his reed; sweet Philomel
Essay'd, and oft essay'd to catch the strain,
And treasuring, as on her ear they fell,
The numbers, echo'd note for note again.

The peevish youth, who ne'er had found before
A rival of his skill, indignant heard,
And soon (for various was his tuneful store)
In loftier tones defied the simple bird.

She dared the task, and, rising as he rose,
With all the force that passion gives inspired,
Return'd the sounds awhile, but in the close
Exhausted fell, and at his feet expired.

Thus strength, not skill prevail'd. O fatal strife,
By thee, poor songstress, playfully begun;
And, O sad victory, which cost thy life,
And he may wish that he had never won!

William Cowper

Submission

O Lord, my best desire fulfil,
And help me to resign
Life, health, and comfort to Thy will,
And make Thy pleasure mine.

Why should I shrink at Thy command,
Whose love forbids my fears?
Or tremble at the gracious hand
That wipes away my tears?

No, rather let me freely yield
What most I prize to Thee;
Who never hast a good withheld,
Or wilt withhold, from me.

Thy favor, all my journey through,
Thou art engaged to grant;
What else I want, or think I do,
'Tis better still to want.

Wisdom and mercy guide my way,
Shall I resist them both?
A poor blind creature of day,
And crush'd before the moth!

But ah! my inward spirit cries,
Still binds me to Thy sway;
Else the next cloud that veils the skies
Drives all these thoughts away.

William Cowper

Sunset And Sunrise (Translated From Owen)

Contemplate, when the sun declines,
Thy death with deep reflection!
And when again he rising shines,
The day of resurrection!

William Cowper

Sweet Meat Has Sour Sauce; Or, The Slave-Trader In The Dumps

A trader I am to the African shore,
But since that my trading is like to be o'er,
I'll sing you a song that you ne'er heard before,
Which nobody can deny, deny,
Which nobody can deny.
When I first heard the news it gave me a shock,
Much like what they call an electrical knock,
And now I am going to sell off my stock,
Which nobody, &c.

Tis a curious assortment of dainty regales,
To tickle the Negroes with when the ship sails,
Fine chains for the neck, and a cat with nine tails,
Which nobody, &c.

Here's supple-jack plenty and store of rat-tan,
That will wind itself round the sides of a man,
As close as a hoop round a bucket or can,
Which nobody, &c.

Here's padlocks and bolts, and screws for the thumbs,
That squeeze them so lovingly till the blood comes,
They sweeten the temper like comfits or plums,
Which nobody, &c.

When a Negro his head from his victuals withdraws,
And clenches his teeth and thrusts out his paws,
Here's a notable engine to open his jaws,
Which nobody, &c.

Thus going to market, we kindly prepare
A pretty black cargo of African ware,
For what they must meet with when they get there,
Which nobody, &c.

'Twould do your heart good to see 'em below,
Lie flat on their backs all the way as we go,

Like sprats on a gridiron, scores in a row,
Which nobody, &c.

But ah! if in vain I have studied an art
So gainful to me, all boasting apart,
I think it will break my compassionate heart,
Which nobody, &c.

For oh! how it enters my soul like an awl!
This pity, which some people self-pity call,
Is sure the most heart-piercing pity of all,
Which nobody, &c.

So this is my song, as I told you before;
Come, buy off my stock, for I must no more
Carry Caesars and Pompeys to Sugar-cane shore,
Which nobody can deny, deny,
Which nobody can deny.

William Cowper

Table Talk

A. You told me, I remember, glory, built
On selfish principles, is shame and guilt;
The deeds that men admire as half divine,
Stark naught, because corrupt in their design.
Strange doctrine this! that without scruple tears
The laurel that the very lightning spares;
Brings down the warrior's trophy to the dust,
And eats into his bloody sword like rust.

B. I grant that, men continuing what they are,
Fierce, avaricious, proud, there must be war,
And never meant the rule should be applied
To him that fights with justice on his side.
Let laurels drench'd in pure Parnassian dews
Reward his memory, dear to every muse,
Who, with a courage of unshaken root,
In honour's field advancing his firm foot,
Plants it upon the line that Justice draws,
And will prevail or perish in her cause.
'Tis to the virtues of such men man owes
His portion in the good that Heaven bestows.
And, when recording History displays
Feats of renown, though wrought in ancient days,
Tells of a few stout hearts, that fought and died,
Where duty placed them, at their country's side;
The man that is not moved with what he reads,
That takes not fire at their heroic deeds,
Unworthy of the blessings of the brave,
Is base in kind, and born to be a slave.
But let eternal infamy pursue
The wretch to nought but his ambition true,
Who, for the sake of filling with one blast
The post-horns of all Europe, lays her waste.
Think yourself station'd on a towering rock,
To see a people scatter'd like a flock,
Some royal mastiff panting at their heels,
With all the savage thirst a tiger feels;
Then view him self-proclaim'd in a gazette
Chief monster that has plagued the nations yet.
The globe and sceptre in such hands misplaced,

Those ensigns of dominion how disgraced!
The glass, that bids man mark the fleeting hour,
And Death's own scythe, would better speak his power;
Then grace the bony phantom in their stead
With the king's shoulder-knot and gay cockade;
Clothe the twin brethren in each other's dress,
The same their occupation and success.

A. 'Tis your belief the world was made for man;
Kings do but reason on the self-same plan:
Maintaining yours, you cannot theirs condemn,
Who think, or seem to think, man made for them.

B. Seldom, alas! the power of logic reigns
With much sufficiency in royal brains;
Such reasoning falls like an inverted cone,
Wanting its proper base to stand upon.
Man made for kings! those optics are but dim
That tell you so—say, rather, they for him.
That were indeed a king-ennobling thought,
Could they, or would they, reason as they ought.

The diadem, with mighty projects lined,
To catch renown by ruining mankind,
Is worth, with all its gold and glittering store,
Just what the toy will sell for, and no more.
Oh! bright occasions of dispensing good,
How seldom used, how little understood!
To pour in Virtue's lap her just reward;
Keep Vice restrain'd behind a double guard;
To quell the faction that affronts the throne
By silent magnanimity alone;
To nurse with tender care the thriving arts;
Watch every beam Philosophy imparts;
To give religion her unbridled scope,
Nor judge by statute a believer's hope;
With close fidelity and love unfeign'd
To keep the matrimonial bond unstain'd;
Covetous only of a virtuous praise;
His life a lesson to the land he sways;
To touch the sword with conscientious awe,
Nor draw it but when duty bids him draw;
To sheath it in the peace-restoring close
With joy beyond what victory bestows—
Blest country, where these kingly glories shine!

Blest England, if this happiness be thine!
 A. Guard what you say: the patriotic tribe
 Will sneer, and charge you with a bribe.—B. A bribe
 The worth of his three kingdoms I defy,
 To lure me to the baseness of a lie;
 And, of all lies (be that one poet's boast),
 The lie that flatters I abhor the most.
 Those arts be theirs who hate his gentle reign,
 But he that loves him has no need to feign.
 A. Your smooth eulogium, to one crown address'd,
 Seems to imply a censure on the rest.
 B. Quevedo, as he tells his sober tale,
 Ask'd, when in hell, to see the royal jail;
 Approved their method in all other things;
 But where, good sir, do you confine your kings?
 There—said his guide—the group is in full view.
 Indeed!—replied the don—there are but few.
 His black interpreter the charge disdain'd—
 Few, fellow?—there are all that ever reign'd.
 Wit, undistinguishing, is apt to strike
 The guilty and not guilty both alike:
 I grant the sarcasm is too severe,
 And we can readily refute it here;
 While Alfred's name, the father of his age,
 And the Sixth Edward's grace the historic page.
 A. Kings, then, at last have but the lot of all:
 By their own conduct they must stand or fall.
 B. True. While they live, the courtly laureate pays
 His quitrent ode, his peppercorn of praise,
 And many a dunce, whose fingers itch to write,
 Adds, as he can, his tributary mite:
 A subject's faults a subject may proclaim,
 A monarch's errors are forbidden game!
 Thus, free from censure, overawed by fear,
 And praised for virtues that they scorn to wear,
 The fleeting forms of majesty engage
 Respect, while stalking o'er life's narrow stage:
 Then leave their crimes for history to scan,
 And ask, with busy scorn, Was this the man?
 I pity kings, whom worship waits upon,
 Obsequious from the cradle to the throne;
 Before whose infant eyes the flatterer bows,

And binds a wreath about their baby brows:
Whom education stiffens into state,
And death awakens from that dream too late.
Oh! if servility with supple knees,
Whose trade it is to smile, to crouch, to please;
If smooth dissimulation skill'd to grace
A devil's purpose with an angel's face;
If smiling peeresses and simpering peers,
Encompassing his throne a few short years;
If the gilt carriage and the pamper'd steed,
That wants no driving, and disdains the lead;
If guards, mechanically form'd in ranks,
Playing, at beat of drum, their martial pranks,
Shouldering and standing as if stuck to stone,
While condescending majesty looks on—
If monarchy consist in such base things,
Sighing, I say again, I pity kings!
To be suspected, thwarted, and withstood,
E'en when he labours for his country's good;
To see a band call'd patriot for no cause,
But that they catch at popular applause,
Careless of all the anxiety he feels,
Hook disappointment on the public wheels;
With all their flippant fluency of tongue,
Most confident, when palpably most wrong—
If this be kingly, then farewell for me
All kingship, and may I be poor and free!
To be the Table Talk of clubs up-stairs,
To which the unwash'd artificer repairs,
To indulge his genius after long fatigue,
By diving into cabinet intrigue—
(For what kings deem a toil, as well they may,
To him is relaxation, and mere play);
To win no praise when well-wrought plans prevail,
But to be rudely censured when they fail;
To doubt the love his favourites may pretend,
And in reality to find no friend;
If he indulge a cultivated taste,
His galleries with the works of art well graced,
To hear it call'd extravagance and waste;—
If these attendants, and if such as these,
Must follow royalty, then welcome ease;

However humble and confined the sphere,
 Happy the state that has not these to fear!
 A. Thus men, whose thoughts contemplative have dwelt
 On situations that they never felt,
 Start up sagacious, cover'd with the dust
 Of dreaming study and pedantic rust,
 And prate and preach about what others prove,
 As if the world and they were hand and glove.
 Leave kingly backs to cope with kingly cares;
 They have their weight to carry, subjects theirs;
 Poets, of all men, ever least regret
 Increasing taxes and the nation's debt.
 Could you contrive the payment, and rehearse
 The mighty plan, oracular, in verse,
 No bard, howe'er majestic, old or new,
 Should claim my fix'd attention more than you.

B. Not Brindley nor Bridgewater would essay
 To turn the course of Helicon that way:
 Nor would the Nine consent the sacred tide
 Should purl amidst the traffic of Cheapside,
 Or tinkle in 'Change Alley, to amuse
 The leathern ears of stockjobbers and Jews.

A. Vouchsafe, at least, to pitch the key of rhyme
 To themes more pertinent, if less sublime.
 When ministers and ministerial arts;
 Patriots, who love good places at their hearts;
 When admirals, extoll'd for standing still,
 Or doing nothing with a deal of skill;
 Generals, who will not conquer when they may,
 Firm friends to peace, to pleasure, and good pay;
 When Freedom, wounded almost to despair,
 Though discontent alone can find out where—
 When themes like these employ the poet's tongue,
 I hear as mute as if a syren sung.
 Or tell me, if you can, what power maintains
 A Briton's scorn of arbitrary chains?
 That were a theme might animate the dead,
 And move the lips of poets cast in lead.

B. The cause, though worth the search, may yet elude
 Conjecture and remark, however shrewd.
 They take, perhaps, a well-directed aim,
 Who seek it in his climate and his frame.

Liberal in all things else, yet Nature here
With stern severity deals out the year.
Winter invades the spring, and often pours
A chilling flood on summer's drooping flowers;
Unwelcome vapours quench autumnal beams,
Ungential blasts attending curl the streams:
The peasants urge their harvest, ply the fork
With double toil, and shiver at their work:
Thus with a rigour, for his good design'd,
She rears her favourite man of all mankind.
His form robust, and of elastic tone,
Proportion'd well, half muscle and half bone,
Supplies with warm activity and force
A mind well lodged, and masculine of course.
Hence Liberty, sweet Liberty inspires
And keeps alive his fierce but noble fires.
Patient of constitutional control,
He bears it with meek manliness of soul;
But, if authority grow wanton, woe
To him that treads upon his free-born toe!
One step beyond the boundary of the laws,
Fires him at once in Freedom's glorious cause.
Thus proud Prerogative, not much revered,
Is seldom felt, though sometimes seen and heard;
And in his cage, like parrot fine and gay,
Is kept to strut, look big, and talk away.
Born in a climate softer far than ours,
Nor form'd like us, with such Herculean powers,
The Frenchman, easy, debonair, and brisk,
Give him his lass, his fiddle, and his frisk,
Is always happy, reign whoever may,
And laughs the sense of misery far away:
He drinks his simple beverage with a gust;
And, feasting on an onion and a crust,
We never feel the alacrity and joy
With which he shouts and carols, Vive le Roi!
Fill'd with as much true merriment and glee
As if he heard his king say—Slave, be free.
Thus happiness depends, as Nature shews,
Less on exterior things than most suppose.
Vigilant over all that he has made,
Kind Providence attends with gracious aid;

Bids equity throughout his works prevail,
And weighs the nations in an even scale;
He can encourage slavery to a smile,
And fill with discontent a British isle.

A. Freeman and slave, then, if the case be such,
Stand on a level; and you prove too much:

If all men indiscriminately share
His fostering power, and tutelary care,
As well be yoked by Despotism's hand,
As dwell at large in Britain's charter'd land.

B. No. Freedom has a thousand charms to shew,
That slaves, howe'er contented, never know.

The mind attains beneath her happy reign
The growth that Nature meant she should attain;

The varied fields of science, ever new,
Opening and wider opening on her view,
She ventures onward with a prosperous force,
While no base fear impedes her in her course:

Religion, richest favour of the skies,
Stands most reveal'd before the freeman's eyes;

No shades of superstition blot the day,
Liberty chases all that gloom away.

The soul, emancipated, unoppress'd,
Free to prove all things and hold fast the best,
Learns much; and to a thousand list'ning minds

Communicates with joy the good she finds;
Courage in arms, and ever prompt to shew

His manly forehead to the fiercest foe;
Glorious in war, but for the sake of peace,

His spirits rising as his toils increase,
Guards well what arts and industry have won,
And Freedom claims him for her first-born son.

Slaves fight for what were better cast away—
The chain that binds them, and a tyrant's sway;

But they that fight for freedom undertake
The noblest cause mankind can have at stake:

Religion, virtue, truth, whate'er we call
A blessing—freedom is the pledge of all.

O Liberty! the prisoner's pleasing dream,
The poet's muse, his passion, and his theme;

Genius is thine, and thou art Fancy's nurse;
Lost without thee the ennobling powers of verse;

Heroic song from thy free touch acquires
 Its clearest tone, the rapture it inspires.
 Place me where Winter breathes his keenest air,
 And I will sing, if Liberty be there;
 And I will sing at Liberty's dear feet,
 In Afric's torrid clime, or India's fiercest heat.
 A. Sing where you please; in such a cause I grant
 An English poet's privilege to rant;
 But is not freedom—at least, is not ours
 Too apt to play the wanton with her powers,
 Grow freakish, and o'erleaping every mound,
 Spread anarchy and terror all around?
 B. Agreed. But would you sell or slay your horse
 For bounding and curveting in his course?
 Or if, when ridden with a careless rein,
 He break away, and seek the distant plain?
 No. His high mettle, under good control,
 Gives him Olympic speed, and shoots him to the goal.
 Let Discipline employ her wholesome arts;
 Let magistrates alert perform their parts,
 Not skulk or put on a prudential mask,
 As if their duty were a desperate task;
 Let active laws apply the needful curb,
 To guard the peace that riot would disturb;
 And Liberty, preserved from wild excess,
 Shall raise no feuds for armies to suppress.
 When Tumult lately burst his prison-door,
 And set plebeian thousands in a roar;
 When he usurp'd authority's just place,
 And dared to look his master in the face;
 When the rude rabble's watchword was—Destroy,
 And blazing London seem'd a second Troy;
 Liberty blush'd, and hung her drooping head,
 Beheld their progress with the deepest dread;
 Blush'd that effects like these she should produce,
 Worse than the deeds of galley-slaves broke loose.
 She loses in such storms her very name,
 And fierce licentiousness should bear the blame.
 Incomparable gem! thy worth untold:
 Cheap, though blood-bought, and thrown away when sold;
 May no foes ravish thee, and no false friend
 Betray thee, while professing to defend!

Prize it, ye ministers; ye monarchs, spare;
 Ye patriots, guard it with a miser's care.
 A. Patriots, alas! the few that have been found,
 Where most they flourish, upon English ground,
 The country's need have scantily supplied,
 And the last left the scene when Chatham died.
 B. Not so—the virtue still adorns our age,
 Though the chief actor died upon the stage.
 In him Demosthenes was heard again;
 Liberty taught him her Athenian strain;
 She clothed him with authority and awe,
 Spoke from his lips, and in his looks gave law.
 His speech, his form, his action, full of grace,
 And all his country beaming in his face,
 He stood, as some inimitable hand
 Would strive to make a Paul or Tully stand.
 No sycophant or slave, that dared oppose
 Her sacred cause, but trembled when he rose;
 And every venal stickler for the yoke
 Felt himself crush'd at the first word he spoke.
 Such men are raised to station and command,
 When Providence means mercy to a land.
 He speaks, and they appear; to him they owe
 Skill to direct, and strength to strike the blow;
 To manage with address, to seize with power
 The crisis of a dark decisive hour.
 So Gideon earn'd a victory not his own;
 Subserviency his praise, and that alone.
 Poor England! thou art a devoted deer,
 Beset with every ill but that of fear.
 The nations hunt; all mark thee for a prey;
 They swarm around thee, and thou stand'st at bay:
 Undaunted still, though wearied and perplex'd,
 Once Chatham saved thee; but who saves thee next?
 Alas! the tide of pleasure sweeps along
 All that should be the boast of British song.
 'Tis not the wreath that once adorn'd thy brow,
 The prize of happier times, will serve thee now.
 Our ancestry, a gallant Christian race,
 Patterns of every virtue, every grace,
 Confess'd a God; they kneel'd before they fought,
 And praised him in the victories he wrought.

Now from the dust of ancient days bring forth
 Their sober zeal, integrity, and worth;
 Courage, ungraced by these, affronts the skies,
 Is but the fire without the sacrifice.
 The stream that feeds the wellspring of the heart
 Not more invigorates life's noblest part,
 Than virtue quickens with a warmth divine
 The powers that sin has brought to a decline.

A. The inestimable estimate of Brown
 Rose like a paper-kite, and charm'd the town;
 But measures, plann'd and executed well,
 Shifted the wind that raised it, and it fell.
 He trod the very selfsame ground you tread,
 And victory refuted all he said.

B. And yet his judgment was not framed amiss;
 Its error, if it err'd, was merely this—
 He thought the dying hour already come,
 And a complete recovery struck him dumb.
 But that effeminacy, folly, lust,
 Enervate and enfeeble, and needs must;
 And that a nation shamefully debased
 Will be despised and trampled on at last,
 Unless sweet penitence her powers renew,
 Is truth, if history itself be true.

There is a time, and justice marks the date,
 For long forbearing clemency to wait;
 That hour elapsed, the incurable revolt
 Is punish'd, and down comes the thunderbolt.
 If Mercy then put by the threatening blow,
 Must she perform the same kind office now?
 May she! and if offended Heaven be still
 Accessible, and prayer prevail, she will.
 'Tis not, however, insolence and noise,
 The tempest of tumultuary joys,
 Nor is it yet despondence and dismay
 Will win her visits or engage her stay;
 Prayer only, and the penitential tear,
 Can call her smiling down, and fix her here.
 But when a country (one that I could name)
 In prostitution sinks the sense of shame;
 When infamous venality, grown bold,
 Writes on his bosom, To be let or sold;

When perjury, that Heaven-defying vice,
Sells oaths by tale, and at the lowest price,
Stamps God's own name upon a lie just made,
To turn a penny in the way of trade;
When avarice starves (and never hides his face)
Two or three millions of the human race,
And not a tongue inquires how, where, or when,
Though conscience will have twinges now and then
When profanation of the sacred cause
In all its parts, times, ministry, and laws,
Bespeaks a land, once Christian, fallen and lost,
In all that wars against that title most;
What follows next let cities of great name,
And regions long since desolate proclaim.
Nineveh, Babylon, and ancient Rome,
Speak to the present times and times to come;
They cry aloud in every careless ear,
Stop, while ye may; suspend your mad career;
O learn, from our example and our fate,
Learn wisdom and repentance ere too late!
Not only Vice disposes and prepares
The mind that slumbers sweetly in her snares,
To stoop to tyranny's usurp'd command,
And bend her polish'd neck beneath his hand
(A dire effect by one of Nature's laws
Unchangeably connected with its cause);
But Providence himself will intervene,
To throw his dark displeasure o'er the scene.
All are his instruments; each form of war,
What burns at home, or threatens from afar,
Nature in arms, her elements at strife,
The storms that upset the joys of life,
Are but his rods to scourge a guilty land,
And waste it at the bidding of his hand.
He gives the word, and mutiny soon roars
In all her gates, and shakes her distant shores;
The standards of all nations are unfurl'd;
She has one foe, and that one foe the world.
And if he doom that people with a frown,
And mark them with a seal of wrath press'd down,
Obduracy takes place; callous and tough,
The reprobated race grows judgment-proof:

Earth shakes beneath them, and Heaven roars above,
 But nothing scares them from the course they love.
 To the lascivious pipe and wanton song,
 That charm down fear, they frolic it along,
 With mad rapidity and unconcern,
 Down to the gulf from which is no return.
 They trust in navies, and their navies fail—
 God's curse can cast away ten thousand sail!
 They trust in armies, and their courage dies;
 In wisdom, wealth, in fortune, and in lies;
 But all they trust in withers, as it must,
 When He commands in whom they place no trust.
 Vengeance at last pours down upon their coast
 A long despised, but now victorious, host;
 Tyranny sends the chain that must abridge
 The noble sweep of all their privilege;
 Gives liberty the last, the mortal, shock;
 Slips the slave's collar on, and snaps the lock.
 A. Such lofty strains embellish what you teach,
 Mean you to prophesy, or but to preach?
 B. I know the mind that feels indeed the fire
 The Muse imparts, and can command the lyre,
 Acts with a force, and kindles with a zeal,
 Whate'er the theme, that others never feel.
 If human woes her soft attention claim,
 A tender sympathy pervades the frame,
 She pours a sensibility divine
 Along the nerve of every feeling line.
 But if a deed not tamely to be borne
 Fire indignation and a sense of scorn,
 The strings are swept with such a power, so loud,
 The storm of music shakes the astonish'd crowd.
 So, when remote futurity is brought
 Before the keen inquiry of her thought,
 A terrible sagacity informs
 The poet's heart; he looks to distant storms;
 He hears the thunder ere the tempest lowers!
 And, arm'd with strength surpassing human powers,
 Seizes events as yet unknown to man,
 And darts his soul into the dawning plan
 Hence, in a Roman mouth, the graceful name
 Of prophet and of poet was the same;

Hence British poets too the priesthood shared,
 And every hallow'd druid was a bard.
 But no prophetic fires to me belong;
 I play with syllables, and sport in song.
 A. At Westminster, where little poets strive
 To set a distich upon six and five,
 Where Discipline helps opening buds of sense
 And makes his pupils proud with silver pence,
 I was a poet too; but modern taste
 Is so refined, and delicate, and chaste,
 That verse, whatever fire the fancy warms,
 Without a creamy smoothness has no charms.
 Thus all success depending on an ear,
 And thinking I might purchase it too dear,
 If sentiment were sacrificed to sound,
 And truth cut short to make a period round,
 I judged a man of sense could scarce do worse
 Than caper in the morris-dance of verse.
 B. Thus reputation is a spur to wit,
 And some wits flag through fear of losing it.
 Give me the line that ploughs its stately course,
 Like a proud swan, conquering the stream by force;
 That, like some cottage beauty, strikes the heart,
 Quite unindebted to the tricks of art.
 When labour and when dulness, club in hand,
 Like the two figures at St. Dunstan's stand,
 Beating alternately, in measured time,
 The clockwork tintinnabulum of rhyme,
 Exact and regular the sounds will be;
 But such mere quarter-strokes are not for me.
 From him who rears a poem lank and long,
 To him who strains his all into a song;
 Perhaps some bonny Caledonian air,
 All birks and braes, though he was never there;
 Or, having whelp'd a prologue with great pains,
 Feels himself spent, and fumbles for his brains;
 A prologue interdash'd with many a stroke—
 An art contrived to advertise a joke,
 So that the jest is clearly to be seen,
 Not in the words—but in the gap between;
 Manner is all in all, whate'er is writ,
 The substitute for genius, sense, and wit.

To dally much with subject mean and low
 Proves that the mind is weak, or makes it so.
 Neglected talents rust into decay,
 And every effort ends in pushpin play.
 The man that means success should soar above
 A soldier's feather, or a lady's glove;
 Else, summoning the muse to such a theme,
 The fruit of all her labour is whipp'd cream.
 As if an eagle flew aloft, and then—
 Stoop'd from its highest pitch to pounce a wren.
 As if the poet, purposing to wed,
 Should carve himself a wife in gingerbread.
 Ages elapsed ere Homer's lamp appear'd,
 And ages ere the Mantuan swan was heard;
 To carry nature lengths unknown before,
 To give a Milton birth, ask'd ages more.
 Thus genius rose and set at order'd times,
 And shot a day-spring into distant climes,
 Ennobling every region that he chose;
 He sunk in Greece, in Italy he rose;
 And, tedious years of Gothic darkness pass'd,
 Emerged all splendour in our isle at last.
 Thus lovely halcyons dive into the main,
 Then shew far off their shining plumes again.
 A. Is genius only found in epic lays?
 Prove this, and forfeit all pretence to praise.
 Make their heroic powers your own at once,
 Or candidly confess yourself a dunce.
 B. These were the chief; each interval of night
 Was graced with many an undulating light
 In less illustrious bards his beauty shone
 A meteor, or a star; in these, the sun.
 The nightingale may claim the topmost bough,
 While the poor grasshopper must chirp below.
 Like him unnoticed, I, and such as I,
 Spread little wings, and rather skip than fly;
 Perch'd on the meagre produce of the land,
 An ell or two of prospect we command;
 But never peep beyond the thorny bound,
 Or oaken fence, that hems the paddock round.
 In Eden, ere yet innocence of heart
 Had faded, poetry was not an art;

Language, above all teaching, or if taught,
Only by gratitude and glowing thought,
Elegant as simplicity, and warm
As ecstasy, unmanacled by form,
Not prompted, as in our degenerate days,
By low ambition and the thirst of praise,
Was natural as is the flowing stream,
And yet magnificent—a God the theme!
That theme on earth exhausted, though above
'Tis found as everlasting as his love,
Man lavish'd all his thoughts on human things—
The feats of heroes and the wrath of kings;
But still, while virtue kindled his delight,
The song was moral, and so far was right.
'Twas thus till luxury seduced the mind
To joys less innocent, as less refined;
Then Genius danced a bacchanal; he crown'd
The brimming goblet, seized the thyrsus, bound
His brows with ivy, rush'd into the field
Of wild imagination, and there reel'd,
The victim of his own lascivious fires,
And, dizzy with delight, profaned the sacred wires:
Anacreon, Horace, play'd in Greece and Rome
This bedlam part; and others nearer home.
When Cromwell fought for power, and while he reign'd
The proud protector of the power he gain'd,
Religion, harsh, intolerant, austere,
Parent of manners like herself severe,
Drew a rough copy of the Christian face,
Without the smile, the sweetness, or the grace;
The dark and sullen humour of the time
Judged every effort of the muse a crime;
Verse, in the finest mould of fancy cast,
Was lumber in an age so void of taste
But when the second Charles assumed the sway,
And arts revived beneath a softer day,
Then, like a bow long forced into a curve,
The mind, released from too constrain'd a nerve,
Flew to its first position with a spring,
That made the vaulted roofs of pleasure ring.
His court, the dissolute and hateful school
Of wantonness, where vice was taught by rule,

Swarm'd with a scribbling herd, as deep inlaid
 With brutal lust as ever Circe made.
 From these a long succession, in the rage
 Of rank obscenity, debauch'd their age:
 Nor ceased till, ever anxious to redress
 The abuses of her sacred charge, the press,
 The Muse instructed a well-nurtured train
 Of abler votaries to cleanse the stain,
 And claim the palm for purity of song,
 That lewdness had usurp'd and worn so long.
 Then decent pleasantry and sterling sense,
 That neither gave nor would endure offence,
 Whipp'd out of sight, with satire just and keen,
 The puppy pack that had defiled the scene.
 In front of these came Addison. In him
 Humour in holiday and sightly trim,
 Sublimity and Attic taste combined,
 To polish, furnish, and delight the mind.
 Then Pope, as harmony itself exact,
 In verse well-disciplined, complete, compact,
 Gave virtue and morality a grace,
 That, quite eclipsing pleasure's painted face,
 Levied a tax of wonder and applause,
 E'en on the fools that trampled on their laws.
 But he (his musical finesse was such,
 So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)
 Made poetry a mere mechanic art;
 And every warbler has his tune by heart.
 Nature imparting her satiric gift,
 Her serious mirth, to Arbuthnot and Swift,
 With droll sobriety they raised a smile
 At folly's cost, themselves unmoved the while.
 That constellation set, the world in vain
 Must hope to look upon their like again.
 A. Are we then left?—B. Not wholly in the dark;
 Wit now and then, struck smartly, shews a spark,
 Sufficient to redeem the modern race
 From total night and absolute disgrace.
 While servile trick and imitative knack
 Confine the million in the beaten track,
 Perhaps some courser, who disdains the road,
 Snuffs up the wind, and flings himself abroad.

Contemporaries all surpass'd, see one;
Short his career indeed, but ably run;
Churchill, himself unconscious of his powers,
In penury consumed his idle hours;
And, like a scatter'd seed at random sown,
Was left to spring by vigour of his own.
Lifted at length, by dignity of thought
And dint of genius, to an affluent lot,
He laid his head in luxury's soft lap,
And took, too often, there his easy nap.
If brighter beams than all he threw not forth,
'Twas negligence in him, not want of worth.
Surly and slovenly, and bold and coarse,
Too proud for art, and trusting in mere force,
Spendthrift alike of money and of wit,
Always at speed, and never drawing bit,
He struck the lyre in such a careless mood,
And so disdain'd the rules he understood,
The laurel seem'd to wait on his command;
He snatch'd it rudely from the muses' hand.
Nature, exerting an unwearied power,
Forms, opens, and gives scent to every flower;
Spreads the fresh verdure of the field, and leads
The dancing Naiads through the dewy meads;
She fills profuse ten thousand little throats
With music, modulating all their notes;
And charms the woodland scenes and wilds unknown,
With artless airs and concerts of her own;
But seldom (as if fearful of expense)
Vouchsafes to man a poet's just pretence—
Fervency, freedom, fluency of thought,
Harmony, strength, words exquisitely sought;
Fancy, that from the bow that spans the sky
Brings colours, dipp'd in heaven, that never die;
A soul exalted above earth, a mind
Skill'd in the characters that form mankind;
And, as the sun, in rising beauty dress'd,
Looks to the westward from the dappled east,
And marks, whatever clouds may interpose,
Ere yet his race begins, its glorious close;
An eye like his to catch the distant goal;
Or, ere the wheels of verse begin to roll,

Like his to shed illuminating rays
On every scene and subject it surveys;
Thus graced, the man asserts a poet's name,
And the world cheerfully admits the claim.
Pity Religion has so seldom found
A skilful guide into poetic ground!
The flowers would spring where'er she deign'd to stray,
And every muse attend her in her way.
Virtue indeed meets many a rhyming friend,
And many a compliment politely penn'd;
But, unattired in that becoming vest
Religion weaves for her, and half undress'd,
Stands in the desert shivering and forlorn,
A wintry figure, like a wither'd thorn.
The shelves are full, all other themes are sped;
Hackney'd and worn to the last flimsy thread,
Satire has long since done his best; and curst
And loathsome ribaldry has done his worst;
Fancy has sported all her powers away
In tales, in trifles, and in children's play;
And 'tis the sad complaint, and almost true,
Whate'er we write, we bring forth nothing new.
'Twere new indeed to see a bard all fire,
Touch'd with a coal from heaven, assume the lyre.
And tell the world, still kindling as he sung,
With more than mortal music on his tongue,
That He, who died below, and reigns above,
Inspires the song, and that his name is Love.
For, after all, if merely to beguile,
By flowing numbers and a flowery style,
The tedium that the lazy rich endure,
Which now and then sweet poetry may cure;
Or, if to see the name of idol self,
Stamp'd on the well-bound quarto, grace the shelf,
To float a bubble on the breath of fame,
Prompt his endeavour and engage his aim,
Debased to servile purposes of pride,
How are the powers of genius misapplied!
The gift, whose office is the Giver's praise,
To trace him in his word, his works, his ways!
Then spread the rich discovery, and invite
Mankind to share in the divine delight:

Distorted from its use and just design,
To make the pitiful possessor shine,
To purchase at the fool-frequented fair
Of vanity a wreath for self to wear,
Is profanation of the basest kind—
Proof of a trifling and a worthless mind.

A. Hail, Sternhold, then! and, Hopkins, hail!—

B. Amen.

If flattery, folly, lust, employ the pen;
If acrimony, slander, and abuse,
Give it a charge to blacken and traduce;
Though Butler's wit, Pope's numbers, Prior's ease,
With all that fancy can invent to please,
Adorn the polish'd periods as they fall,
One madrigal of theirs is worth them all.

A. 'Twould thin the ranks of the poetic tribe,
To dash the pen through all that you proscribe.

B. No matter—we could shift when they were not;
And should, no doubt, if they were all forgot.

William Cowper

Temptation

The billows swell, the winds are high,
Clouds overcast my wintry sky;
Out of the depths to Thee I call, --
My fears are great, my strength is small.

O Lord, the pilot's part perform,
And guard and guide me through the storm;
Defend me from each threatening ill,
Control the waves, -- say, "Peace! be still."

Amidst the roaring of the sea
My soul still hangs her hope on Thee;
Thy constant love, thy faithful care,
Is all that saves me from despair.

Dangers of every shape and name
Attend the followers of the Lamb,
Who leave the world's deceitful shore,
And leave it to return no more.

Though tempest-toss'd and half a wreck,
My Saviour through the floods I seek;
Let neither winds nor stormy main
Force back my shatter'd bark again.

William Cowper

That Nature Is Not Subject To Decay (Translated From Milton)

Ah, how the Human Mind wearies herself
With her own wand'rings, and, involved in gloom
Impenetrable, speculates amiss!
Measuring, in her folly, things divine
By human, laws inscrib'd on adamant
By laws of Man's device, and counsels fix'd
For ever, by the hours, that pass, and die.
How?--shall the face of Nature then be plow'd
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 engulf
The very heav'ns 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 th'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 her Gorgon shield in vain,
Shall rush to the abyss, like Vulcan hurl'd
Down into Lemnos through the gate of heav'n.
Thou also, with precipitated wheels
Phoebus! 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 Haemus cloven to his base
Be shattered, and the huge Ceraunian hills,
Once weapons of Tartarean Dis, immersed
In Erebus, shall fill Himself with fear.
No. The Almighty Father surer lay'd

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 tenour hold, perpetual, undisturb'd.
Hence the Prime Mover wheels itself about
Continual, day by day, and with it bears
In social measure swift the heav'ns around.
Not tardier now is Saturn than of old,
Nor radiant less the burning casque of Mars.
Phoebus, his vigour unimpair'd, still shows
Th'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 heav'nly zone.
Beautiful as at first ascends the star
From odorif'rous Ind, whose office is
To gather home betimes th'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 shudd'ring Scythian, still he breathes
The Winter, and still rolls the storms 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 th' Aegean sea
In shallows, or beneath diminish'd waves.
Thou too, thy antient vegetative pow'r
Enjoy'st, O Earth! Narcissus still is sweet,
And, Phoebus! still thy Favourite, and still
Thy Fav'rite, Cytherea! both retain
Their beauty, nor the mountains, ore-enrich'd
For punishment of Man, with purer gold
Teem'd ever, or with brighter gems the Deep.
Thus, in unbroken series all proceeds

And shall, till, wide involving either pole,
And the immensity of yonder heav'n,
The final flames of destiny absorb
The world, consum'd in one enormous pyre!

William Cowper

The 5th Satire Of Book I. Of Horace : A Humorous Description Of The Author's Journey From Rome To Brundisium

'Twas a long journey lay before us,
When I and honest Heliodorus,
Who far in point of rhetoric
Surpasses every living Greek,
Each leaving our respective home
Together sallied forth from Rome.
First at Aricia we alight,
And there refresh and pass the night,
Our entertainment rather coarse
Than sumptuous, but I've met with worse.
Thence o'er the causeway soft and fair
To Apii Forum we repair.
But as this road is well supplied
(Temptation strong!) on either side
With inns commodious, snug, and warm,
We split the journey, and perform
In two days' time what's often done
By brisker travellers in one.
Here rather choosing not to sup
Than with bad water mix my cup,
After a warm debate in spite
Of a provoking appetite,
I sturdily resolved at last
To balk it, and pronounce a fast,
And in a moody humour wait,
While my less dainty comrades bait.
Now o'er the spangled hemisphere
Diffused the starry train appear,
When there arose a desperate brawl;
The slaves and bargemen, one and all,
Rending their throats (have mercy on us!)
As if they were resolved to stun us.
'Steer the barge this way to the shore!
I tell you we'll admit no more!
Plague! will you never be content?'
Thus a whole hour at least is spent,

While they receive the several fares,
And kick the mule into his gears.
Happy, these difficulties past,
Could we have fallen asleep at last!
But, what with humming, croaking, biting,
Gnats, frogs, and all their plagues uniting,
These tuneful natives of the lake
Conspired to keep us broad awake.
Besides, to make the concert full,
Two maudlin wights, exceeding dull,
The bargeman and a passenger,
Each in his turn, essayed an air
In honour of his absent fair.
At length the passenger, opprest
With wine, left off, and snored the rest.
The weary bargeman too gave o'er,
And hearing his companion snore,
Seized the occasion, fixed the barge,
Turned out his mule to graze at large,
And slept forgetful of his charge.
And now the sun o'er eastern hill,
Discovered that our barge stood still;
When one, whose anger vexed him sore,
With malice fraught, leaps quick on shore,
Plucks up a stake, with many a thwack
Assails the mule and driver's back.
Then slowly moving on with pain,
At ten Feronia's stream we gain,
And in her pure and glassy wave
Our hands and faces gladly lave.
Climbing three miles, fair Anxur's height
We reach, with stony quarries white.
While here, as was agreed, we wait,
Till, charged with business of the state,
Maecenas and Cocceius come,
The messengers of peace from Rome.
My eyes, by watery humours blear
And sore, I with black balsam smear.
At length they join us, and with them
Our worthy friend Fonteius came;
A man of such complete desert,
Antony loved him at his heart.

At Fundi we refused to bait,
And laughed at vain Aufidius' state,
A praetor now, a scribe before,
The purple-bordered robe he wore,
His slave the smoking censer bore.
Tired at Muraena's we repose,
At Formia sup at Capito's.
With smiles the rising morn we greet,
At Sinuessa pleased to meet
With Plotius, Varius, and the bard
Whom Mantua first with wonder heard.
The world no purer spirits knows;
For none my heart more warmly glows.
Oh! what embraces we bestowed,
And with what joy our breasts o'erflowed!
Sure while my sense is sound and clear,
Long as I live, I shall prefer
A gay, good-natured, easy friend,
To every blessing heaven can send.
At a small village, the next night,
Near the Vulturnus we alight;
Where, as employed on state affairs,
We were supplied by the purveyors
Frankly at once, and without hire,
With food for man and horse, and fire;
Capua next day betimes we reach,
Where Virgil and myself, who each
Laboured with different maladies,
His such a stomach,-- mine such eyes,--
As would not bear strong exercise,
In drowsy mood to sleep resort;
Maecenas to the tennis-court.
Next at Cocceius' farm we're treated,
Above the Caudian tavern seated;
His kind and hospitable board
With choice of wholesome food was stored.
Now, O ye Nine, inspire my lays!
To nobler themes my fancy raise!
Two combatants, who scorn to yield
The noisy, tongue-disputed field,
Sarmentus and Cicirrus, claim
A poet's tribute to their fame;

Cicirrus of true Oscian breed,
Sarmentus, who was never freed,
But ran away. We don't defame him,
His lady lives, and still may claim him.
Thus dignified, in harder fray
These champions their keen wit display,
And first Sarmentus led the way.
'Thy locks, (quoth he), so rough and coarse,
Look like the mane of some wild horse.'
We laugh : Cicirrus undismayed--
'Have at you!' -- cries, and shakes his head.
'Tis well (Sarmentus says) you've lost
That horn your forehead once could boast;
Since maimed and mangled as you are,
You seem to butt.' A hideous scar
Improved ('tis true) with double grace
The native horrors of his face.
Well. After much jocosely said
Of his grim front, so fiery red,
(For carbuncles had blotched it o'er,
As usual on Campania's shore)
'Give us, (he cried), since you're so big,
A sample of the Cyclops' jig!
Your shanks methinks no buskins ask,
Nor does your phiz require a mask.'
To this Cicirrus. 'In return
Of you, sir, now I fain would learn,
When 'twas, no longer deemed a slave,
Your chains you to the Lares gave.
For though a scrivener's right you claim,
Your lady's title is the same.
But what could make you run away,
Since, pigmy as you are, each day
A single pound of bread would quite
O'erpower your puny appetite?'
Thus joked the champions, while we laughed,
And many a cheerful bumper quaffed.
To Beneventum next we steer;
Where our good host by over care
In roasting thrushes lean as mice
Had almost fallen a sacrifice.
The kitchen soon was all on fire,

And to the roof the flames aspire.
There might you see each man and master
Striving, amidst this sad disaster,
To save the supper. Then they came
With speed enough to quench the flame.
From hence we first at distant see
The Apulian hills, well known to me,
Parched by the sultry western blast;
And which we never should have past,
Had not Trivicus by the way
Received us at the close of day.
But each was forced at entering here
To pay the tribute of a tear,
For more of smoke than fire was seen:
The hearth was piled with logs so green.
From hence in chaises we were carried
Miles twenty-four and gladly tarried
At a small town, whose name my verse
(So barbarous is it) can't rehearse.
Know it you may by many a sign,
Water is dearer far than wine.
There bread is deemed such dainty fair,
That every prudent traveller
His wallet loads with many a crust;
For at Canusium, you might just
As well attempt to gnaw a stone
As think to get a morsel down.
That too with scanty streams is fed;
Its founder was brave Diomed.
Good Varius (ah, that friends must part!)
Here left us all with aching heart.
At Rubi we arrived that day,
Well jaded by the length of way,
And sure poor mortals ne'er were wetter.
Next day no weather could be better;
No roads so bad; we scarce could crawl
Along to fishy Barium's wall.
The Ingatians next, who by the rules
Of common sense are knaves or fools,
Made all our sides with laughter heave,
Since we with them must needs believe,
That incense in their temples burns,

And without fire to ashes turns.
To circumcision's bigots tell
Such tales! for me, I know full well,
That in high heaven, unmoved by care,
The gods eternal quiet share:
Nor can I deem their spleen the cause
Why fickle nature breaks her laws.
Brundisium last we reach: and there
Stop short the Muse and Traveller.

William Cowper

The 9th Satire Of Book I. Of Horace : The Description Of An Impertinent. Adapted To The Present Times

Sauntering along the street one day,
On trifles musing by the way,
Up steps a free familiar wight;
(I scarcely knew the man by sight.)
'Carlos (he cried), your hand, my dear!
Gad, I rejoice to meet you here!
Pray heaven I see you well!' 'So, so;
Even well enough as times now go.
The same good wishes, sir, to you.'
'Sir, you have business, I suppose?'
'My business, sir, is quickly done,
'Tis but to make my merit known.
Sir, I have read ---- ' 'O learned sir,
You and your learning I revere.'
Then, sweating with anxiety,
And sadly longing to get free,
Gods, how I scampered, scuffled for't,
Ran, halted, ran again, stopped short,
Beckoned my boy, and pulled him near,
And whispered nothing in his ear.
Teased with his loose unjointed chat,
'What street is this? What house is that?'
O Harlow, how I envied thee
Thy unabashed effrontery,
Who dares a foe with freedom blame,
And call a coxcomb by his name!
When I returned him answer none,
Obligingly the fool ran on,
'I see you're dismally distressed,
Would give the world to be released,
But, by your leave, sir, I shall still
Stick to your skirts, do what you will.
Pray which way does your journey tend?'
'Oh, 'tis a tedious way, my friend,
Across the Thames, the Lord knows where;
I would not trouble you so far.'
'Well, I'm at leisure to attend you.'

'Are you? (thought I) the deil befriend you!'
 No ass with double panniers racked,
 Oppressed, o'erladen, broken-backed,
 E'er looked a thousandth part so dull
 As I, nor half so like a fool.
 'Sir, I know little of myself
 (Proceeds the pert conceited elf),
 If Gray or Mason you will deem
 Than me more worthy your esteem.
 Poems I write by folios,
 As fast as other men write prose.
 Then I can sing so loud, so clear,
 That Beard cannot with me compare.
 In dancing too I all surpass,
 Not Cooke can move with such a grace.'
 Here I made shift, with much ado,
 To interpose a word or two.--
 'Have you no parents, sir, no friends,
 Whose welfare on your own depends?'
 'Parents, relations, say you? No.
 They're all disposed of long ago.'--
 'Happy to be no more perplexed!
 My fate too threatens, I go next.
 Dispatch me, sir, 'tis now too late,
 Alas! to struggle with my fate!
 Well, I'm convinced my time is come.
 When young, a gipsy told my doom;
 The beldame shook her palsied head,
 As she perused my palm, and said,
 'Of poison, pestilence, or war,
 Gout, stone, defluxion, or catarrh,
 You have no reason to beware.
 Beware the coxcomb's idle prate;
 Chiefly, my son, beware of that;
 Be sure, when you behold him, fly
 Out of all earshot, or you dide!'
 To Rufus' Hall we now draw near,
 Where he was summoned to appear,
 Refute the charge the plaintiff brought,
 Or suffer judgment by default.
 'For heaven's sake, if you love me, wait
 One moment! I'll be with you straight.'

Glad of a plausible pretence--
 'Sir, I must beg you to dispense
 With my attendance in the court.
 My legs will surely suffer for't.'--
 'Nay, prithee, Carlos, stop awhile!
 'Faith, sir, in law I have no skill.
 Besides, I have no time to spare,
 I must be going, you know where.'
 'Well, I protest, I'm doubtful now,
 Whether to leave my suit or you!'
 'Me, without scruple! (I reply)
 Me, by all means, sir!' -- 'No, not I.'
 Allons, Monsieur!' 'Twere vain (you know)
 To strive with a victorious foe.
 So I reluctantly obey,
 And follow, where he leads the way.
 'You and Newcastle are so close;
 Still hand and glove, sir, I suppose.'
 'Newcastle (let me tell you, sir,)
 Has not his equal every where.'
 'Well. There indeed your fortune's made!
 Faith, sir, you understand your trade.
 Would you but give me your good word!
 Just introduce me to my lord.
 I should serve charmingly by way
 Of second fiddle, as they say:
 What think you, sir? 'twere a good jest,
 'Slife, we should quickly scout the rest.'--
 'Sir, you mistake the matter far,
 We have no second fiddles there.'
 'Richer than I some folks may be:
 More learned, but it hurts not me.
 Friends though he has of different kind,
 Each has his proper place assigned.'
 'Strange matters these alleged by you!'
 'Strange they may be, but they are true.'--
 'Well, then, I vow, 'tis mighty clever,
 Now I long ten times more than ever
 To be advanced extremely near
 One of his shining character.
 Have but the will -- there wants no more,
 'Tis plain enough you have the power.

His easy temper (that's the worst)
He knows, and is so shy at first.
But such a cavalier as you--
Lord, sir, you'll quickly bring him to!
Well; if I fail in my design,
Sir, it shall be no fault of mine.
If by the saucy servile tribe
Denied, what think you of a bribe?
Shut out to-day, not die with sorrow,
But try my luck again to-morrow.
Never attempt to visit him
But at the most convenient time,
Attend him on each levee day,
And there my humble duty pay.
Labour, like this, our want supplies;
And they must stoop, who mean to rise.'
While thus he wittingly harangued,
For which you'll guess I wished him hanged,
Campley, a friend of mine, came by,
Who knew his humour more than I.
We stop, salute, and -- 'why so fast,
Friend Carlos? Whither all this haste?'
Fired at the thoughts of a reprieve,
I pinch him, pull him, twitch his sleeve,
Nod, beckon, bite my lips, wink, pout,
Do everything but speak plain out:
While he, sad dog, from the beginning
Determined to mistake my meaning,
Instead of pitying my curse,
By jeering made it ten times worse.
'Campley, to what secret (pray!) was that
You wanted to communicate?'
'I recollect. But 'tis no matter.
Carlos, we'll talk of that hereafter.
E'en let the secret rest. 'Twill tell
Another time, sir, just as well.'
Was ever such a dismal day?
Unlucky cur, he steals away,
And leaves me, half bereft of life,
At mercy of the butcher's knife;
When sudden, shouting from afar,
See his antagonist appear!

The bailiff seized him quick as thought.
'Ho, Mr. Scoundrel! Are you caught?
Sir, you are witness to the arrest.'
'Aye, marry, sir, I'll do my best.'
The mob huzaas. Away they trudge,
Culprit and all, before the judge.
Meanwhile I luckily enough
Thanks to Apollo) got clear off.

William Cowper

The Acquiescence Of Pure Love

Love! if thy destined sacrifice am I,
Come, slay thy victim, and prepare thy fires;
Plunged in thy depths of mercy, let me die
The death which every soul that lives desires!

I watch my hours, and see them fleet away;
The time is long that I have languished here;
Yet all my thoughts thy purposes obey,
With no reluctance, cheerful and sincere.

To me 'tis equal, whether love ordain
My life or death, appoint me pain or ease;
My soul perceives no real ill in pain;
In ease or health no real good she sees.

One good she covets, and that good alone,
To choose thy will, from selfish bias free;
And to prefer a cottage to a throne,
And grief to comfort, if it pleases thee.

That we should bear the cross is thy command,
Die to the world and live to self no more;
Suffer, unmoved, beneath the rudest hand,
As pleased when shipwrecked as when safe on shore.

William Cowper

The Cantab

With two spurs or one, and no great matter which,
Boots bought, or boots borrow'd, a whip or a switch,
Five shillings or less for the hire of his beast,
Paid part into hand;--you must wait for the rest.
Thus equipt, Academicus climbs up his horse,
And out they both sally for better or worse;
His heart void of fear, and as light as a feather;
And in violent haste to go not knowing whither.
Through the fields and the towns; (see!) he scampers along:
And is look'd at and laugh'd at by old and by young.
Til, at length overspent, and his sides smear'd with blood,
Down tumbles his horse, man and all in the mud.
In a wagon or chaise, shall he finish his route?
Oh! scandalous fate! he must do it on foot.
Young gentlemen, hear!--I am older than you;
The advice that I give I have proved to be true;
Wherever your journey may be, never doubt it,
The faster you ride, you're the longer about it.

William Cowper

The Castaway

Obscurest night involv'd the sky,
 Th' Atlantic billows roar'd,
When such a destin'd wretch as I,
 Wash'd headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast
 Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast,
 With warmer wishes sent.
He lov'd them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
 Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
 Or courage die away;
But wag'd with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted: nor his friends had fail'd
 To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevail'd,
 That, pitiless perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford;
 And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
 Delay'd not to bestow.
But he (they knew) nor ship, nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seem'd, could he
 Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
 Alone could rescue them;

Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld;
And so long he, with unspent pow'r,
His destiny repell'd;
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried--Adieu!

At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in ev'ry blast,
Could catch the sound no more.
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him: but the page
Of narrative sincere;
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear.
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone;
When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he.

William Cowper

The Cause Won

Two neighbours furiously dispute;
A field--the subject of the suit.
Trivial the spot, yet such the rage
With which the combatants engage,
'Twere hard to tell who covets most
The prize--at whatsoever cost.
The pleadings swell. Words still suffice:
No single word but has its price.
No term but yields some fair pretence
For novel and increased expense.
Defendant thus becomes a name,
Which he that bore it may disclaim,
Since both in one description blended,
Are plaintiffs--when the suit is ended.

William Cowper

The Christian

Honor and happiness unite
To make the Christian's name a praise;
How fair the scene, how clear the light,
That fills the remnant of His days!

A kingly character He bears,
No change His priestly office knows;
Unfading is the crown He wears,
His joys can never reach a close.

Adorn'd with glory from on high,
Salvation shines upon His face;
His robe is of the ethereal dye,
His steps are dignity and grace.

Inferior honors He disdains,
Nor stoops to take applause from earth;
The King of kings Himself maintains
The expenses of His heavenly birth.

The noblest creature seen below,
Ordain'd to fill a throne above;
God gives him all He can bestow,
His kingdom of eternal love!

My soul is ravished at the thought!
Methinks from earth I see Him rise!
Angels congratulate His lot,
And shout Him welcome to the skies.

William Cowper

The Cock-Fighter's Garland

Muse -- hide his name of whom I sing,
Lest his surviving house thou bring
For his sake into scorn,
Nor speak the school from which he drew,
The much or little that he knew,
Nor place where he was born.

That such a man once was, may seem
Worthy of record, (if the theme
Perchance may credit win,)
For proof to man, what man may prove,
If grace depart, and demons move
The source of guilt within.

This man (for since the howling wild
Disclaims him, man he must be styled)
Wanted no good below;
Gentle he was, if gentle birth
Could make him such; and he had worth,
If wealth can worth bestow.

In social talk and ready jest
He shone superior at the feast,
And qualities of mind
Illustrious in the eyes of those
Whose gay society he chose
Possessed of every kind.

Methinks I see him powdered red,
With bushy locks his well-dressed head
Winged broad on either side,
The mossy rose-bud not so sweet;
His steeds superb, his carriage neat
As luxury could provide.

Can such be cruel? Such can be
Cruel as hell, and so was he;
A tyrant entertained
With barbarous sports, whose fell delight

Was to encourage mortal fight
'Twixt birds to battle trained.

One feathered champion he possessed,
His darling far beyond the rest,
Which never knew disgrace,
Nor e'er had fought, but he made flow
The life-blood of his fiercest foe,
The Caesar of his race.

It chanced, at last, when, on a day,
He pushed him to the desperate fray,
His courage drooped, he fled.
The master stormed, the prize was lost,
And, instant, frantic at the cost,
He doomed his favourite dead.

He seized him fast, and from the pit
Flew to the kitchen, snatched the spit,
And, bring me cord, he cried;
The cord was brought, and, at his word,
To that dire implement the bird
Alive and struggling, tied.

The horrid sequel asks a veil,
And all the terrors of the tale
That can be, shall be, sunk.--
Led by the sufferer's screams aright,
His shocked companions view the sight.
And him with fury drunk.

All, suppliant, beg a milder fate
For the old warrior at the grate;
He, deaf to pity's call,
Whirled round him rapid as a wheel
His culinary club of steel,
Death menacing on all.

But vengeance hung not far remote,
For while he stretched his clamorous throat
And heaven and earth defied,
Big with a curse too closely pent,

That struggled vainly for a vent,
He tottered, reeled, and died.

'Tis not for us, with rash surmise,
To point the judgements of the skies;
But judgements plain as this,
That, sent for a man's instruction, bring
A written label on their wing
'Tis hard to read amiss.

William Cowper

The Colubriad

Close by the threshold of a door nailed fast
Three kittens sat; each kitten looked aghast;
I passing swift and inattentive by,
At the three kittens cast a careless eye,
Not much concerned to know what they did there,
Not deeming kittens worth a poet's care.
But presently a loud and furious hiss
Caused me to stop and to exclaim, 'What's this?'
When lo! upon the threshold met my view,
With head erect, and eyes of fiery hue,
A viper, long as Count de Grasse's quoue.
Forth from his head his forked tongue he throws,
Darting it full against a kitten's nose,
Who having never seen, in field or house,
The like, sat still and silent as a mouse;
Only projecting with attention due,
Her whiskered face, she asked him, 'Who are you?'
On to the hall went I, with pace not slow,
But swift as lightning, for a long Dutch hoe,
With which well armed I hastened to the spot,
To find the viper, -- but I found him not;
And turning up the leaves, and shrubs around,
Formed only, that he was not to be found.
But still the kittens, sitting as before,
Sat watching close the bottom of the door.
'I hope,' said I, 'the villain I would kill
Has slipped between the door and the door sill;
And if I make despatch and follow hard,
No doubt but I shall find him in the yard;
For long ere now it should have been rehearsed,
'Twas in the garden that I found him first.
Even there I found him, there the full-grown cat
His head, with velvet paw, did gently pat,
As curious as the kittens erst had been
To learn what this phenomenon might mean,
Filled with heroic ardour at the sight,
And fearing every moment he would bite,
And rob our household of our only cat
That was of age to combat with a rat,

With outstretched hoe I slew him at the door,
And taught him Never To Come There No More.

William Cowper

The Contrite Heart

(Isaiah, lvii.15)

The Lord will happiness divine
On contrite hearts bestow;
Then tell me, gracious God, is mine
A contrite heart or no?

I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel;
If aught is felt, 'tis only pain,
To find I cannot feel.

I sometimes think myself inclined
To love Thee if I could;
But often feel another mind,
Averse to all that's good.

My best desires are faint and few,
I fain would strive for more;
But when I cry, "My strength renew!"
Seem weaker than before.

Thy saints are comforted, I know,
And love Thy house of prayer;
I therefore go where others go,
But find no comfort there.

Oh make this heart rejoice or ache;
Decide this doubt for me;
And if it be not broken, break --
And heal it, if it be.

William Cowper

The Covenant

(Ezekiel, xxxvi. 25-28)

The Lord proclaims His grace abroad!
"Behold, I change your hearts of stone;
Each shall renounce his idol-god,
And serve, henceforth, the Lord alone.

"My grace, a flowing stream, proceeds
To wash your filthiness away;
Ye shall abhor your former deeds,
And learn my statutes to obey.

"My truth the great design ensures,
I give myself away to you;
You shall be mine, I will be yours,
Your God unalterably true.

"Yet not unsought or unimplored,
The plenteous grace I shall confer;
No -- your whole hearts shall seek the Lord,
I'll put a praying spirit there.

"From the first breath of life divine
Down to the last expiring hour,
The gracious work shall all be mine,
Begun and ended in my power."

William Cowper

The Cricket

Little inmate, full of mirth,
Chirping on my kitchen hearth,
Whereso'er be thine abode,
Always harbinger of good,
Pay me for thy warm retreat
With a song more soft and sweet;
In return thou shall receive
Such a strain as I can give.

Thus thy praise shall be express'd,
Inoffensive, welcome guest!
While the rat is on the scout,
And the mouse with curious snout,
With what vermin else infest
Every dish, and spoil the best;
Frisking thus before the fire,
Thou hast all thine heart's desire.

Though in voice and shape they be
Form'd as if akin to thee,
Thou surpassesest, happier far,
Happiest grasshoppers that are;
Theirs is but a summer's song,
Thine endures the winter long,
Unimpaired, and shrill, and clear,
Melody throughout the year.

Neither night nor dawn of day
Puts a period to thy play:
Sing, then -- and extend thy span
Far beyond the date of man.
Wretched man, whose years are spent
In repining discontent,
Lives not, aged though he be,
Half a span, compared with thee.

William Cowper

The Distress'D Travellers; Or, Labour In Vain

I.

I sing of a journey to Clifton,
We would have perform'd if we could,
Without cart or barrow to lift on
Poor Mary and me through the mud;
Slee, sla, slud,
Stuck in the mud,
Oh it is pretty to wade through a flood!

II.

So away we went, slipping and sliding,
Hop, hop, a la mode de deux frogs.
'Tis near as good walking as riding,
When ladies are dress'd in their clogs.
Wheels, no doubt,
Go briskly about,
But they clatter and rattle, and make such a rout!

III.

SHE:

Well! now I protest it is charming;
How finely the weather improves!
That cloud, though, is rather alarming;
How slowly and stately it moves!

HE:

Pshaw! never mind;
'Tis not in the wind;
We are travelling south, and shall leave it behind.

IV.

SHE:

I am glad we are come for an airing,
For folks may be pounded and penn'd,
Until they grow rusty, not caring
To stir half a mile to an end.

HE:

The longer we stay,

The longer we may;
It's a folly to think about weather or way.

V.

SHE:

But now I begin to be frighted:
If I fall, what a way I should roll!
I am glad that the bridge was indicted.--
Stop! stop! I am sunk in a hole!

HE:

Nay, never care!
'Tis a common affair;
You'll not be the last that will set a foot there.

VI.

SHE:

Let me breathe now alittle, and ponder
On what it were better to do.
That terrible lane, I see yonder,
I think we shall never get through!

HE:

So think I;
But, by the bye,
We never shall know, if we never should try.

VII.

SHE:

But should we get there, how shall we get home?
What a terrible deal of bad road we have past,
Slipping and sliding; and if we should come
To a difficult stile, I am ruin'd at last.
Oh this lane!
Now it is plain
That struggling and striving is labour in vain.

VIII.

HE:

Stick fast there, while I go and look.

SHE:

Don't go away, for fear I should fall!

HE:

I have examin'd it every nook,
And what you have here is a sample of all.
Come, wheel round;
The dirt we have found
Would be an estate at a farthing a pound.

IX.

Now, Sister Anne, the guitar you must take;
Set it, and sing it, and make it a song.
I have vari'd the verse for variety sake,
And cut it off short, because it was long.
'Tis hobbling and lame,
Which critics won't blame,
For the sense and the sound, they say, should be the same.

William Cowper

The Diverting History Of John Gilpin, Showing How He Went Farther Than He Intended, And Came Safe Home Again

John Gilpin was a citizen
Of credit and renown,
A trainband captain eke was he
Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear:
Though wedded we have been
These twice ten tedious years, yet we
No holiday have seen.

To-morrow is our wedding-day,
And we will then repair
Unto the Bell at Edmonton
All in a chaise and pair.

My sister, and my sister's child,
Myself, and children three,
Will fill the chaise; so you must ride
On horseback after we.

He soon replied, I do admire
Of womankind but one,
And you are she, my dearest dear,
Therefore it shall be done.

I am a linendraper bold,
As all the world doth know,
And my good friend the calendrer
Will lend his horse to go.

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin, That's well said;
And for that wine is dear,
We will be furnish'd with our own,
Which is both bright and clear.

John Gilpin kiss'd his loving wife;

O'erjoy'd was he to find,
That, though on pleasure she was bent,
She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaise was brought,
But yet was not allow'd
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud.

So three doors off, the chaise was stay'd,
Where they did all get in;
Six precious souls, and all agog
To dash through thick and thin.

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,
Were never folk so glad,
The stones did rattle underneath,
As if Cheapside were mad.

John Gilpin at his horse's side
Seized fast the flowing mane,
And up he got, in haste to ride,
But soon came down again;

For saddletree scarce reach'd had he,
His journey to begin,
When, turning round his head, he saw
Three customers come in.

So down he came; for loss of time,
Although it grieved him sore,
Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,
Would trouble him much more.

'Twas long before the customers
Were suited to their mind,
When Betty screaming came down stairs,
"The wine is left behind!"

Good lack! quoth he—yet bring it me,
My leathern belt likewise,
In which I bear my trusty sword

When I do exercise.

Now mistress Gilpin (careful soul!)
Had two stone bottles found,
To hold the liquor that she loved,
And keep it safe and sound.

Each bottle had a curling ear,
Through which the belt he drew,
And hung a bottle on each side,
To make his balance true.

Then over all, that he might be
Equipp'd from top to toe,
His long red cloak, well brush'd and neat,
He manfully did throw.

Now see him mounted once again
Upon his nimble steed,
Full slowly pacing o'er the stones,
With caution and good heed.

But finding soon a smoother road
Beneath his well shod feet,
The snorting beast began to trot,
Which gall'd him in his seat.

So, fair and softly, John he cried,
But John he cried in vain;
That trot became a gallop soon,
In spite of curb and rein.

So stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright,
He grasp'd the mane with both his hands,
And eke with all his might.

His horse, who never in that sort
Had handled been before,
What thing upon his back had got
Did wonder more and more.

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought;
Away went hat and wig;
He little dreamt, when he set out,
Of running such a rig.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,
Like streamer long and gay,
Till, loop and button failing both,
At last it flew away.

Then might all people well discern
The bottles he had slung;
A bottle swinging at each side,
As hath been said or sung.

The dogs did bark, the children scream'd,
Up flew the windows all;
And every soul cried out, Well done!
As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin—who but he?
His fame soon spread around,
He carries weight! he rides a race!
Tis for a thousand pound!

And still, as fast as he drew near,
'Twas wonderful to view,
How in a trice the turnpike men
Their gates wide open threw.

And now, as he went bowing down
His reeking head full low,
The bottles twain behind his back
Were shatter'd at a blow.

Down ran the wine into the road,
Most piteous to be seen,
Which made his horse's flanks to smoke,
As they had basted been.

But still he seem'd to carry weight,
With leathern girdle braced;

For all might see the bottlenecks
Still dangling at his waist.

Thus all through merry Islington
These gambols he did play,
Until he came unto the Wash
Of Edmonton so gay;

And there he threw the wash about
On both sides of the way,
Just like unto a trundling mop,
Or a wild goose at play.

At Edmonton, his loving wife
From the balcony spied
Her tender husband, wondering much
To see how he did ride.

Stop, stop, John Gilpin!--Here's the house!
They all at once did cry;
The dinner waits, and we are tired:
Said Gilpin--So am I!

But yet his horse was not a whit
Inclined to tarry there;
For why?—his owner had a house
Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like arrow swift he flew,
Shot by an archer strong?
So did he fly—which brings me to
The middle of my song.

Away went Gilpin out of breath,
And sore against his will,
Till at his friend the calendrer's
His horse at last stood still.

The calend'rer, amazed to see
His neighbour in such trim,
Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,
And thus accosted him:

What news? what news? your tidings tell;
Tell me you must and shall—
Say why bareheaded you are come,
Or why you come at all?

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,
And loved a timely joke!
And thus unto the calendrer
In merry guise he spoke:

I came because your horse would come,
And, if I well forebode,
My hat and wig will soon be here,
They are upon the road.

The calendrer, right glad to find
His friend in merry pin,
Return'd him not a single word,
But to the house went in;

Whence straight he came with hat and wig;
A wig that flow'd behind,
A hat not much the worse for wear,
Each comely in its kind.

He held them up, and in his turn
Thus show'd his ready wit:
My head is twice as big as yours,
They therefore needs must fit.

But let me scrape the dirt away
That hangs upon your face;
And stop and eat, for well you may
Be in a hungry case.

Said John, It is my wedding-day,
And all the world would stare,
If wife should dine at Edmonton,
And I should dine at Ware.

So turning to his horse, he said,

I am in haste to dine;
'Twas for your pleasure you came here,
You shall go back for mine.

Ah luckless speech, and bootless boast!
For which he paid full dear;
For, while he spake, a braying bunny
Did sing most loud and clear;

Whereat his horse did snort, as he
Had heard a lion roar,
And gallop'd off with all his might,
As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went Gilpin's hat and wig:
He lost them sooner than at first,
For why?—they were too big.

Now mistress Gilpin, when she saw
Her husband posting down
Into the country far away,
She pull'd out half-a-crown;

And thus unto the youth she said,
That drove them to the Bell,
This shall be yours, when you bring back
My husband safe and well.

The youth did ride, and soon did meet
John coming back amain;
Whom in a trice he tried to stop,
By catching at his rein;

But, not performing what he meant,
And gladly would have done,
The frightened steed he frightened more,
And made him faster run.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went postboy at his heels,
The postboy's horse right glad to miss

The lumbering of the wheels.

Six gentlemen upon the road
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,
With postboy scampering in the rear,
They raised the hue and cry:--

Stop thief! stop thief!--a highwayman!
Not one of them was mute;
And all and each that pass'd that way
Did join in the pursuit.

And now the turnpike gates again
Flew open in short space;
The toll-men thinking as before,
That Gilpin rode a race.

And so he did, and won it too,
For he got first to town;
Nor stopp'd till where he had got up
He did again get down.

Now let us sing, long live the king,
And Gilpin, long live he;
And when he next doth ride abroad,
May I be there to see!

William Cowper

The Dog And The Water Lily. No Fable

The noon was shady, and soft airs
Swept Ouse's silent tide,
When, 'scaped from literary cares,
I wander'd on his side.
My spaniel, prettiest of his race,
And high in pedigree
(Two nymphs adorn'd with every grace
That spaniel found for me),
Now wanton'd lost in flags and reeds,
Now starting into sight,
Pursued the swallow o'er the meads
With scarce a slower flight.
It was the time when Ouse display'd
His lilies newly blown;
Their beauties I intent survey'd,
And one I wish'd my own.
With cane extended far I sought
To steer it close to land;
But still the prize, though nearly caught,
Escaped my eager hand.
Beau mark'd my unsuccessful pains
With fix'd considerate face,
And puzzling set his puppy brains
To comprehend the case.
But with a cherup clear and strong
Dispersing all his dream,
I thence withdrew, and follow'd long
The windings of the stream.
My ramble ended, I return'd;
Beau, trotting far before,
The floating wreath again discern'd,
And plunging, left the shore.
I saw him with that lily cropp'd
Impatient swim to meet
My quick approach, and soon he dropp'd
The treasure at my feet.
Charm'd with the sight, the world, I cried,
Shall hear of this thy deed:
My dog shall mortify the pride

Of man's superior breed:
But chief myself I will enjoin,
Awake at duty's call,
To show a love as prompt as thine
To Him who gives me all.

William Cowper

The Doves

Reasoning at every step he treads,
Man yet mistakes his way,
While meaner things whom instinct leads
Are rarely known to stray.

One silent eve I wandered late,
And heard the voice of love;
The turtle thus addressed her mate,
And soothed the listening dove:

Our mutual bond of faith and truth,
No time shall disengage;
Those blessings of our early youth
Shall cheer our latest age.

While innocence without disguise,
And constancy sincere,
Shall fill the circles of those eyes,
And mine can read them there,

Those ills that wait on all below
Shall ne'er be felt by me,
Or gently felt, or only so,
As being shared with thee.

When lightnings flash among the trees,
Or kites are hovering near,
I fear lest thee alone they seize,
And know no other fear.

'Tis then I feel myself a wife,
And press thy wedded side,
Resolved a union formed for life
Death never shall divide.

But oh! if fickle and unchaste,
(Forgive a transient thought,)
Thou couldst become unkind at last,
And scorn thy present lot.

No need of lightnings from on high,
Or kites with cruel beak,
Denied the endearments of thine eye
This widowed heart would break.

Thus sang the sweet sequestered bird,
Soft as the passing wind,
And I recorded what I heard,
A lesson for mankind.

William Cowper

The Entire Surrender

Peace has unveiled her smiling face,
And woos thy soul to her embrace,
Enjoyed with ease, if thou refrain
From earthly love, else sought in vain;
She dwells with all who truth prefer,
But seeks not them who seek not her.

Yield to the Lord, with simple heart,
All that thou hast, and all thou art;
Renounce all strength but strength divine;
And peace shall be for ever thine:
Behold the path which I have trod,
My path, till I go home to God.

William Cowper

The Flattening-Mill. An Illustration

When a bar of pure silver or ingot of gold
Is sent to be flattened or wrought into length,
It is pass'd between cylinders often, and roll'd
In an engine of utmost mechanical strength.

Thus tortured and squeezed, at last it appears
Like a loose heap of ribbon, a glittering show,
Like music it tinkles and rings in your ears,
And warm'd by the pressure is all in a glow.

This process achiev'd, it is doom'd to sustain
The thump-after-thump of a gold-beater's mallet,
And at last is of service in sickness or pain
To cover a pill from a delicate palate.

Alas for the Poet, who dares undertake
To urge reformation of national ill!
His head and his heart are both likely to ache
With the double employment of mallet and mill.

If he wish to instruct, he must learn to delight,
Smooth, ductile, and even, his fancy must flow,
Must tinkle and glitter like gold to the sight,
And catch in its progress a sensible glow.

After all he must beat it as thin and as fine
As the leaf that enfolds what an invalid swallows,
For truth is unwelcome, however divine,
And unless you adorn it, a nausea follows.

William Cowper

The Four Ages. A Brief Fragment Of An Extensive Projected Poem

'I could be well content, allowed the use
Of past experience, and the wisdom gleaned
From worn-out follies, now acknowledged such,
To recommence life's trial, in the hope
Of fewer errors, on a second proof!'
Thus while gray evening lulled the wind, and called
Fresh odours from the shrubbery at my side,
Taking my lonely winding walk, I mused,
And held accustomed conference with my heart;
When from within it thus a voice replied:
'Couldst thou in truth? and art thou taught at length
This wisdom, and but this, from all the past?
Is not the pardon of thy long arrear,
Time wasted, violated laws, abuse
Of talents, judgements, mercies, better far
Than opportunity vouchsafed to err
With less excuse, and haply, worse effect?'
I heard, and acquiesced: then to and fro
Oft pacing, as the mariner his deck,
My gravelly bounds, from self to human kind
I passed, and next considered, what is man?
Knows he his origin? can he ascend
By reminiscence to his earliest date?
Slept he in Adam? and in those from him
Through numerous generations, till he found
At length his destined moment to be born?
Or was he not, till fashioned in the womb?
Deep mysteries both! which schoolmen must have toiled
To unriddle, and have left them mysteries still.
It is an evil incident to man,
And of the worst, that unexplored he leaves
Truths useful and attainable with ease,
To search forbidden deeps, where mystery lies
Not to be solved, and useless, if it might.
Mysteries are food for angels; they digest
With ease, and find them nutriment; but man,
While yet he dwells below, must stoop to glean

His manna from the ground, or starve and die.

* * * * *

William Cowper

The Future Peace And Glory Of The Church

(Isaiah, ix. 15-20)

Hear what God the Lord hath spoken,
"O my people, faint and few,
Comfortless, afflicted, broken,
Fair abodes I build for you.
Thorns of heartfelt tribulation
Shall no more perplex your ways;
You shall name your walls, Salvation,
And your gates shall all be Praise.

"There, like streams that feed the garden,
Pleasures without end shall flow,
For the Lord, your faith rewarding,
All His bounty shall bestow;
Still in undisturb'd possession
Peace and righteousness shall reign;
Never shall you feel oppression,
Hear the voice of war again.

"Ye no more your suns descending,
Waning moons no more shall see;
But your griefs forever ending,
Find eternal noon in me:
God shall rise, and shining o'er ye,
Change to day the gloom of night;
He, the Lord, shall be your glory,
God your everlasting light."

William Cowper

The Glowworm

Beneath the hedge or near the stream,
A worm is known to stray,
That shows by night a lucid beam,
Which disappears by day.

Disputes have been and still prevail
From whence his rays proceed;
Some give that honour to his tail,
And others to his head.

But this is sure,--the hand of might
That kindles up the skies,
Gives him a modicum of light,
Proportion'd to his size.

Perhaps indulgent Nature meant
By such a lamp bestow'd,
To bid the traveller, as he went,
Be careful where he trod;

Nor crush a worm, whose useful light
Might serve, however small,
To show a stumbling stone by night,
And save him from a fall.

Whate'er she meant, this truth divine
Is legible and plain,
'Tis power Almighty bids him shine,
Nor bids him shine in vain.

Ye proud and wealthy, let this theme
Teach humbler thoughts to you,
Since such a reptile has its gem,
And boasts its splendour, too.

William Cowper

The Happy Change

How bless'd Thy creature is, O God,
When with a single eye,
He views the lustre of Thy Word,
The dayspring from on high!

Through all the storms that veil the skies
And frown on earthly things,
The Sun of Righteousness he eyes,
With healing on His wings.

Struck by that light, the human heart,
A barren soil no more,
Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad,
Where serpents lurk'd before.

The soul, a dreary province once
Of Satan's dark domain,
Feels a new empire form'd within,
And owns a heavenly reign.

The glorious orb whose golden beams
The fruitful year control,
Since first obedient to Thy WOrd,
He started from the goal,

Has cheer'd the nations with the joys
His orient rays impart;
But, Jesus, 'tis Thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart.

William Cowper

The Heart Healed And Changed By Mercy

Sin enslaved me many years,
And led me bound and blind;
Till at length a thousand fears
Came swarming o'er my mind.
"Where," said I, in deep distress,
"Will these sinful pleasures end?
How shall I secure my peace
And make the Lord my friend?"

Friends and ministers said much
The gospel to enforce;
But my blindness still was such,
I chose a legal course:
Much I fasted, watch'd, and strove,
Scarce would shew my face abroad,
Fear'd almost to speak or move,
A stranger still to God.

Thus afraid to trust His grace,
Long time did I rebel;
Till despairing of my case,
Down at His feet I fell:
Then my stubborn heart He broke,
And subdued me to His sway;
By a simple word He spoke,
"Thy sins are done away."

William Cowper

The Hidden Life

To tell the Saviour all my wants,
How pleasing is the task!
Nor less to praise Him when He grants
Beyond what I can ask.

My laboring spirit vainly seeks
To tell but half the joy,
With how much tenderness He speaks,
And helps me to reply.

Nor were it wise, nor should I choose,
Such secrets to declare;
Like precious wines their taste they lose,
Exposed to open air.

But this with boldness I proclaim,
Nor care if thousands hear,
Sweet is the ointment of His name,
Not life is half so dear.

And can you frown, my former friends,
Who knew what once I was,
And blame the song that thus commends
The Man who bore the cross?

Trust me, I draw the likeness true,
And not as fancy paints;
Such honor may He give to you,
For such have all His saints.

William Cowper

The House Of Prayer

(Mark, xi.17)

Thy mansion is the Christian's heart,
O Lord, Thy dwelling place secure!
Bid the unruly throng depart,
And leave the consecrated door.

Devoted as it is to Thee,
A thievish swarm frequents the place,
They steal away my hopes from me,
And rob my Saviour of His praise.

There, too, a sharp designing trade
Sin, Satan, and the World maintain;
Nor cease to press me, and persuade
To part with ease, and purchase pain.

I know them, and I hate their din;
And weary of the bustling crowd;
But while their voice is heard within,
I cannot serve Thee as I would.

Oh! for the joy thy presence gives,
What peace shall reign when Thou art there;
Thy presence makes this den of thieves
A calm delightful house of prayer.

And if Thou make Thy temple shine,
Yet self-abased, will I adore;
The gold and silver are not mine;
I give Thee what was Thine before.

William Cowper

The Ice Palace

Less worthy of applause, though more admired,
Because a novelty, the work of man,
Imperial mistress of the fur-clad Russ,
Thy most magnificent and mighty freak,
The wonder of the North. No forest fell
When thou wouldst build; no quarry sent its stores
To enrich thy walls; but thou didst hew the floods,
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.
Silently as a dream the fabric rose;
No sound of hammer or of saw was there:
Ice upon ice, the well-adjusted parts
Were soon conjoined, nor other cement asked
Than water interfused to make them one.
Lamps gracefully disposed, and of all hues,
Illumined very side: a watery light
Gleamed through the clear transparency, that seemed
Another moon new risen, or meteor fallen
From Heaven to Earth, of lambent flame serene.
So stood the brittle prodigy: though smooth
And slippery the materials, yet frostbound
Firm as a rock. Nor wanted aught within,
That royal residence might well befit,
For grandeur or for use. Long wavy wreaths
Of flowers, that feared no enemy but warmth,
Blushed on the panels. Mirror needed none
Where all was vitreous; but in order due
Convivial table and commodious seat,
(What seemed at least commodious seat,) were there;
Sofa and couch and high-built throne august.
The same lubricity was found in all,
And all was moist to the warm touch; a scene
Of evanescent glory, once a stream,
And soon to slide into a stream again.

William Cowper

The Innocent Thief

Not a flower can be found in the fields,
Or the spot that we till for our pleasure,
From the largest to the least, but it yields
The bee never wearied a treasure.

Scarce any she quits unexplored
With a diligence truly exact;
Yet, steal what she may for her hoard
Leaves evidence none of the fact.

Her lucrative task she pursues,
And pilfers with so much address,
That none of their odour they lose,
Nor charm by their beauty the less.

Not thus inoffensively preys
The cankerworm, in-dwelling foe!
His voracity not thus allays
The sparrow, the finch, or the crow.

The worm, more expensively fed,
The pride of the garden devours;
And birds peck the seed from the bed,
Still less to be spared than the flowers.

But she with such delicate skill
Her pillage so fits for her use,
That the chemist in vain with his still
Would labour the like to produce.

Then grudge not her temperate meals,
Nor a benefit blame as a theft;
Since, stole she not all that she steals,
Neither honey nor wax would be left.

William Cowper

The Jackdaw

There is a bird who, by his coat
And by the hoarseness of his note,
Might be supposed a crow;
A great frequenter of the church,
Where, bishop-like, he finds a perch,
And dormitory too.

Above the steeple shines a plate,
That turns and turns, to indicate
From what point blows the weather.
Look up -- your brains begin to swim,
'Tis in the clouds -- that pleases him,
He chooses it the rather.

Fond of the speculative height,
Thither he wings his airy flight,
And thence securely sees
The bustle and the rareeshow,
That occupy mankind below,
Secure and at his ease.

You think, no doubt, he sits and muses
On future broken bones and bruises,
If he should chance to fall.
No; not a single thought like that
Employs his philosophic pate,
Or troubles it at all.

He sees that this great roundabout,
The world, with all its motley rout,
Church, army, physic, law,
Its customs and its businesses,
Is no concern at all of his,
And says -- what says he? -- Caw.

Thrice happy bird! I too have seen
Much of the vanities of men;
And, sick of having seen 'em,
Would cheerfully these limbs resign

For such a pair of wings as thine
And such a head between 'em.

William Cowper

The Joy Of The Cross

Long plunged in sorrow, I resign
My soul to that dear hand of thine,
Without reserve or fear;
That hand shall wipe my streaming eyes;
Or into smiles of glad surprise
Transform the falling tear.

My sole possession is thy love;
In earth beneath, or heaven above,
I have no other store;
And, though with fervent suit I pray,
And importune thee night and day,
I ask thee nothing more.

My rapid hours pursue the course
Prescribed them by love's sweetest force,
And I thy sovereign will,
Without a wish to escape my doom;
Though still a sufferer from the womb,
And doomed to suffer still.

By thy command, where'er I stray,
Sorrow attends me all my way,
A never-failing friend;
And, if my sufferings may augment
Thy praise, behold me well content--
Let sorrow still attend!

It cost me no regret, that she,
Who followed Christ, should follow me,
And though, where'er she goes,
Thorns spring spontaneous at her feet,
I love her, and extract a sweet
From all my bitter woes.

Adieu! ye vain delights of earth,
Insipid sports, and childish mirth,
I taste no sweets in you;
Unknown delights are in the cross,

All joy beside to me is dross;
And Jesus thought so too.

The cross! Oh, ravishment and bliss--
How grateful e'en its anguish is;
Its bitterness how sweet!
There every sense, and all the mind,
In all her faculties refined,
Tastes happiness complete.

Souls once enabled to disdain
Base sublunary joys, maintain
Their dignity secure;
The fever of desire is passed,
And love has all its genuine taste,
Is delicate and pure.

Self-love no grace in sorrow sees,
Consults her own peculiar ease;
'Tis all the bliss she knows;
But nobler aims true Love employ;
In self-denial is her joy,
In suffering her repose.

Sorrow and love go side by side;
Nor height nor depth can e'er divide
Their heaven-appointed bands;
Those dear associates still are one,
Nor till the race of life is run
Disjoin their wedded hands.

Jesus, avenger of our fall,
Thou faithful lover, above all
The cross has ever borne!
Oh, tell me,--life is in thy voice--
How much afflictions were thy choice,
And sloth and ease thy scorn!

Thy choice and mine shall be the same,
Inspirer of that holy flame
Which must for ever blaze!
To take the cross and follow thee,

Where love and duty lead, shall be
My portion and my praise.

William Cowper

The Judgement Of The Poets

Two nymphs, both nearly of an age,
Of numerous charms possessed,
A warm dispute once chanced to wage,
Whose temper was the best.

The worth of each had been complete,
Had both alike been mild;
But one, although her smile was sweet,
Frowned oftener than she smiled.

And in her humour, when she frowned,
Would raise her voice and roar,
And shake with fury to the ground
The garland that she wore.

The other was of gentler cast,
From all such frenzy clear,
Her frowns were seldom known to last,
And never proved severe.

To poets of renown in song
The nymphs referred the cause,
Who, strange to tell, all judged it wrong,
And gave misplaced applause.

They gentle called, and kind and soft,
The flippant and the scold,
And though she changed her mood so oft,
That failing left untold.

No judges, sure, were e'er so mad,
Or so resolved to err,--
In short, the charms her sister had
They lavished all on her.

Then thus the God whom fondly they
Their great Inspirer call,
Was heard, one genial summer's day,
To reprimand them all.

'Since thus ye have combined,' he said,
'My favourite nymph to slight,
Adorning May, that peevish maid,
With June's undoubted right,

'The minx shall, for your folly's sake,
Still prove herself a shrew,
Shall make your scribbling fingers ache,
And pinch your noses blue.'

William Cowper

The Light And Glory Of The Word

The Spirit breathes upon the word,
And brings the truth to sight;
Precepts and promises afford
A sanctifying light.

A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun;
It gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none.

The hand that gave it still supplies
The gracious light and heat;
His truths upon the nations rise,
They rise, but never set.

Let everlasting thanks be thine,
For such a bright display,
As makes a world of darkness shine
With beams of heavenly day.

My soul rejoices to pursue
The steps of Him I love,
Till glory break upon my view
In brighter worlds above.

William Cowper

The Lily And The Rose

The nymph must lose her female friend
If more admired than she, -
But where will fierce contention end
If flowers can disagree?

Within the garden's peaceful scene
Appeared two lovely foes,
Aspiring to the rank of queen,
The Lily and the Rose.

The Rose soon reddened into rage,
And swelling with disdain,
Appealed to many a poet's page
To prove her right to reign.

The Lily's height bespoke command,
A fair imperial flower,
She seemed designed for Flora's hand,
The sceptre of her power.

This civil bickering and debate
The goddess chanced to hear,
And flew to save, ere yet too late,
The pride of the parterre.

Yours is, she said, the nobler hue,
And yours the statelier mien,
And till a third surpasses you,
Let each be deemed a queen.

Thus soothed and reconciled, each seeks
The fairest British fair,
The seat of empire is her cheeks,
They reign united there.

William Cowper

The Love Of God The End Of Life

Since life in sorrow must be spent,
So be it--I am well content,
And meekly wait my last remove,
Seeking only growth in love.

No bliss I seek, but to fulfil
In life, in death, thy lovely will;
No succours in my woes I want,
Save what thou art pleased to grant.

Our days are numbered, let us spare
Our anxious hearts a needless care:
'Tis thine to number out our days;
Ours to give them to thy praise.

Love is our only business here,
Love, simple, constant, and sincere;
O blessed days, thy servants see,
Spent, O Lord! in pleasing thee!

William Cowper

The Love Of The World Reproved: Or, Hypocrisy Detected

Thus says the prophet of the Turk;
Good musselman, abstain from pork!
There is a part in every swine
No friend or follower of mine
May taste, whate'er his inclination,
On pain of excommunication.
Such Mahomet's mysterious charge,
And thus he left the point at large.
Had he the sinful part expressed,
They might with safety eat the rest;
But for one piece they thought it hard
And set their wit at work to find
What joint the prophet had in mind.

Much controversy straight arose,
These choose the back, the belly those;
By some 'tis confidently said
He meant not to forbid the head,
While others at that doctrine rail,
And piously prefer the tail.
Thus, conscience freed from every clog,
Mahometans eat up the hog.

You laugh! - 'tis well, - the tale applied
May make you laugh on t'other side.
Renounce the world, the preacher cries; -
We do, - a multitude replies,
While one as innocent regards
A snug and friendly game at cards;
And one, whatever you may say,
Can see no evil in a play;
Some love a concert or a race,
And others, shooting and the chase.
Reviled and loved, renounced and followed,
Thus bit by bit the world is swallowed;
Each thinks his neighbour makes too free,
Yet likes a slice as well as he,

With sophistry their sauce they sweeten,
Till quite from tail to snout 'tis eaten.

William Cowper

The Maze

From right to left, and to and fro,
Caught in a labyrinth you go,
And turn, and turn, and turn again,
To solve the mystery, but in vain;
Stand still, and breathe, and take from me
A clue, that soon shall set you free!
Not Ariadne, if you met her,
Herself could serve you with a better.
You enter'd easily--find where--
And make with ease your exit there!

William Cowper

The Modern Patriot

Rebellion is my theme all day,
I only wish 'twould come
(As who knows but perhaps it may)
A little nearer home.

Yon roaring boys who rave and fight
On the other side of the Atlantic,
I always held them in the right,
But most so, when most frantic.

When lawless mobs insult the court,
That man shall be my toast,
If breaking windows be the sport,
Who bravely breaks the most.

But oh! for him my fancy culls
The choicest flowers she bears,
Who constitutionally pulls
Your house about your ears.

Such civil broils are my delight,
Though some folks can't endure 'em
Who may the mob are mad outright,
And that a rope must cure 'em.

A rope! I wish we patriots had
Such strings for all who need 'em,--
What! hang a man for going mad?
Then farewell British freedom.

William Cowper

The Moralizer Corrected. A Tale

A hermit (or if `chance you hold
That title now too trite and old),
A man, once young, who lived retired
As hermit could have well desired,
His hours of study closed at last,
And finish'd his concise repast,
Stopp'd his cruise, replaced his book
Within its customary nook,
And, staff in hand, set forth to share
The sober cordial of sweet air,
Like Isaac, with a mind applied
To serious thought at evening-tide.
Autumnal rains had made it chill,
And from the trees, that fringed his hill,
Shades slanting at the close of day,
Chill'd more his else delightful way.
Distant a little mile he spied
A western bank's still sunny side,
And right toward the favour'd place
Proceeding with his nimblest pace,
In hope to bask a little yet,
Just reach'd it when the sun was set.
Your hermit, young and jovial sirs!
Learns something from whate'er occurs—
And hence, he said, my mind computes
The real worth of man's pursuits.
His object chosen, wealth or fame,
Or other sublunary game,
Imagination to his view
Presents it deck'd with every hue,
That can seduce him not to spare
His powers of best exertion there,
But youth, health, vigour to expend
On so desirable an end.
Ere long approach life's evening shades,
The glow that fancy gave it fades;
And, earn'd too late, it wants the grace
That first engaged him in the chase.
True, answer'd an angelic guide,

Attendant at the senior's side—
But whether all the time it cost
To urge the fruitless chase be lost,
Must be decided by the worth
Of that which call'd his ardour forth.
Trifles pursued, whate'er the event,
Must cause him shame or discontent;
A vicious object still is worse,
Successful there, he wins a curse;
But he, whom e'en in life's last stage
Endeavours laudable engage,
Is paid at least in peace of mind,
And sense of having well design'd;
And if, ere he attain his end,
His sun precipitate descend,
A brighter prize than that he meant
Shall recompense his mere intent.
No virtuous wish can bear a date
Either too early or too late.

William Cowper

The Morning Dream, A Ballad. To The Tune Of 'Tweed Side.'

'Twas in the glad season of spring,
Asleep at the dawn of the day,
I dream'd what I cannot but sing,
So pleasant it seem'd as I lay.
I dream'd that, on ocean afloat,
Far hence to the westward I sail'd,
While the billows high lifted the boat,
And the fresh-blowing breeze never fail'd.

In the steerage a woman I saw,
Such at least was the form that she wore,
Whose beauty impress'd me with awe,
Ne'er taught me by woman before.
She sat, and a shield at her side
Shed light, like a sun on the waves,
And smiling divinely, she cried--
'I go to make freemen of slaves.'

Then, raising her voice to a strain
The sweetest that ear ever heard,
She sung of the slave's broken chain,
Wherever her glory appear'd.
Some clouds, which had over us hung,
Fled, chased by her melody clear,
And methought while she liberty sung,
'Twas liberty only to hear.

Thus swiftly dividing the flood,
To a slave-cultured island we came,
Where a demon, her enemy, stood--
Oppression his terrible name.
In his hand, as the sign of his sway,
A scourge hung with lashes he bore,
And stood looking out for his prey
From Africa's sorrowful shore.

But soon as, approaching the land,

That goddess-like woman he view'd,
The scourge he let fall from his hand,
With blood of his subjects imbrued.
I saw him both sicken and die,
And, the moment the monster expir'd,
Heard shouts, that ascended the sky,
From thousands with rapture inspir'd.

Awaking, how could I but muse
At what such a dream should betide?
But soon my ear caught the glad news,
Which served my weak thought for a guide;
That Britannia, renown'd o'er the waves
For the hatred she ever has shown
To the black-sceptred rulers of slaves,
Resolves to have none of her own.

William Cowper

The Narrow Way

What thousands never knew the road!
What thousands hate it when 'tis known!
None but the chosen tribes of God
Will seek or choose it for their own.

A thousand ways in ruin end,
One only leads to joys on high;
By that my willing steps ascend,
Pleased with a journey to the sky.

No more I ask or hope to find
Delight or happiness below;
Sorrow may well possess the mind
That feeds where thorns and thistles grow.

The joy that fades is not for me,
I seek immortal joys above;
There glory without end shall be
The bright reward of faith and love.

Cleave to the world, ye sordid worms,
Contented lick your native dust!
But God shall fight with all his storms,
Against the idol of your trust.

William Cowper

The Nativity

'Tis folly all--let me no more be told
Of Parian porticos, and roofs of gold;
Delightful views of nature, dressed by art,
Enchant no longer this indifferent heart;
The Lord of all things, in his humble birth,
Makes mean the proud magnificence of earth;
The straw, the manger, and the mouldering wall,
Eclipse its lustre; and I scorn it all.

Canals, and fountains, and delicious vales,
Green slopes and plains, whose plenty never fails;
Deep-rooted groves, whose heads sublimely rise,
Earth-born, and yet ambitious of the skies;
The abundant foliage of whose gloomy shades,
Vainly the sun in all its power invades;
Where warbled airs of sprightly birds resound,
Whose verdure lives while Winter scowls around;
Rocks, lofty mountains, caverns dark and deep,
And torrents raving down the rugged steep;
Smooth downs, whose fragrant herbs the spirits cheer;
Meads crowned with flowers; streams musical and clear,
Whose silver waters, and whose murmurs, join
Their artless charms, to make the scene divine;
The fruitful vineyard, and the furrowed plain,
That seems a rolling sea of golden grain:
All, all have lost the charms they once possessed;
An infant God reigns sovereign in my breast;
From Bethlehem's bosom I no more will rove;
There dwells the Saviour, and there rests my love.
Ye mightier rivers, that, with sounding force,
Urge down the valleys your impetuous course!
Winds clouds, and lightnings! and, ye waves, whose heads,
Curled into monstrous forms, the seaman dreads!
Horrid abyss, where all experience fails,
Spread with the wreck of planks and shattered sails;
On whose broad back grim Death triumphant rides,
While havoc floats on all thy swelling tides,
Thy shores a scene of ruin strewed around
With vessels bulged, and bodies of the drowned!

Ye fish, that sport beneath the boundless waves,
And rest, secure from man, in rocky caves;
Swift-darting sharks, and whales of hideous size,
Whom all the aquatic world with terror eyes!
Had I but faith immoveable and true,
I might defy the fiercest storm, like you:
The world, a more disturbed and boisterous sea,
When Jesus shows a smile, affrights not me;
He hides me, and in vain the billows roar,
Break harmless at my feet, and leave the shore.

Thou azure vault where, through the gloom of night,
Thick sown, we see such countless worlds of light!
Thou moon, whose car, encompassing the skies,
Restores lost nature to our wondering eyes;
Again retiring, when the brighter sun
Begins the course he seems in haste to run!
Behold him where he shines! His rapid rays,
Themselves unmeasured, measure all our days;
Nothing impedes the race he would pursue,
Nothing escapes his penetrating view,
A thousand lands confess his quickening heat,
And all he cheers are fruitful, fair, and sweet.

Far from enjoying what these scenes disclose,
I feel the thorn, alas! but miss the rose:
Too well I know this aching heart requires
More solid gold to fill its vast desires;
In vain they represent his matchless might,
Who called them out of deep primeval night;
Their form and beauty but augment my woe,
I seek the Giver of those charms they show:
Nor, Him beside, throughout the world he made,
Lives there in whom I trust for cure or aid.

Infinite God, thou great unrivalled One!
Whose glory makes a blot of yonder sun;
Compared with thine, how dim his beauty seems,
How quenched the radiance of his golden beams!
Thou art my bliss, the light by which I move;
In thee alone dwells all that I can love.
All darkness flies when thou art pleased to appear,

A sudden spring renews the fading year;
Where'er I turn I see thy power and grace
The watchful guardians of our heedless race;
Thy various creatures in one strain agree,
All, in all times and places, speak of thee;
E'en I, with trembling heart and stammering tongue,
Attempt thy praise, and join the general song.

Almighty Former of this wondrous plan,
Faintly reflected in thine image, man--
Holy and just—the greatness of whose name
Fills and supports this universal frame,
Diffused throughout the infinitude of space,
Who art thyself thine own vast dwelling-place;
Soul of our soul, whom yet no sense of ours
Discerns, eluding our most active powers;
Encircling shades attend thine awful throne,
That veil thy face, and keep thee still unknown;
Unknown, though dwelling in our inmost part,
Lord of the thoughts, and Sovereign of the heart!

Repeat the charming truth that never tires,
No God is like the God my soul desires;
He at whose voice heaven trembles, even He,
Great as he is, knows how to stoop to me--
Lo! there he lies—that smiling infant said,
'Heaven, earth, and sea, exist!'--and they obeyed.
E'en he, whose being swells beyond the skies,
Is born of woman, lives, and mourns, and dies;
Eternal and immortal, seems to cast
That glory from his brows, and breathes his last.
Trivial and vain the works that man has wrought,
How do they shrink and vanish at the thought!

Sweet solitude, and scene of my repose!
This rustic sight assuages all my woes—
That crib contains the Lord, whom I adore;
And earth's a shade that I pursue no more.
He is my firm support, my rock, my tower,
I dwell secure beneath his sheltering power,
And hold this mean retreat for ever dear,
For all I love, my soul's delight is here.

I see the Almighty swathed in infant bands,
Tied helpless down the thunder-bearer's hands!
And, in this shed, that mystery discern,
Which faith and love, and they alone, can learn.

Ye tempests, spare the slumbers of your Lord!
Ye zephyrs, all your whispered sweets afford!
Confess the God, that guides the rolling year;
Heaven, do him homage; and thou, earth, revere!
Ye shepherds, monarchs, sages, hither bring
Your hearts an offering, and adore your King!
Pure be those hearts, and rich in faith and love;
Join, in his praise, the harmonious world above;
To Bethlehem haste, rejoice in his repose,
And praise him there for all that he bestows!

Man, busy man, alas! can ill afford
To obey the summons, and attend the Lord;
Perverted reason revels and runs wild,
By glittering shows of pomp and wealth beguiled;
And, blind to genuine excellence and grace,
Finds not her author in so mean a place.
Ye unbelieving! learn a wiser part,
Distrust your erring sense, and search your heart;
There soon ye shall perceive a kindling flame
Glow for that infant God, from whom it came;
Resist not, quench not, that divine desire,
Melt all your adamant in heavenly fire!

Not so will I requite thee, gentle love!
Yielding and soft this heart shall ever prove;
And every heart beneath thy power should fall,
Glad to submit, could mine contain them all.
But I am poor, oblation I have none,
None for a Saviour, but himself alone:
Whate'er I render thee, from thee it came:
And, if I give my body to the flame,
My patience, love, and energy divine
Of heart, and soul, and spirit, all are thine.
Ah, vain attempt to expunge the mighty score!
The more I pay, I owe thee still the more.

Upon my meanness, poverty, and guilt,
The trophy of thy glory shall be built;
My self-disdain shall be the unshaken base,
And my deformity its fairest grace;
For destitute of good, and rich in ill,
Must be my state and my description still.

And do I grieve at such an humbling lot?
Nay, but I cherish and enjoy the thought—
Vain pageantry and pomp of earth, adieu!
I have no wish, no memory for you;
The more I feel my misery, I adore
The sacred inmate of my soul the more;
Rich in his love, I feel my noblest pride
Spring from the sense of having nought beside.

In thee I find wealth, comfort, virtue, might;
My wanderings prove thy wisdom infinite;
All that I have I give thee; and then see
All contrarieties unite in thee;
For thou hast joined them, taking up our woe,
And pouring out thy bliss on worms below,
By filling with thy grace and love divine
A gulf of evil in this heart of mine.
This is, indeed, to bid the valleys rise,
And the hills sink—'tis matching earth and skies;
I feel my weakness, thank thee and deplore
An aching heart, that throbs to thank thee more;
The more I love thee, I the more reprove
A soul so lifeless, and so slow to love;
Till, on a deluge of thy mercy tossed,
I plunge into that sea, and there am lost.

William Cowper

The Necessity Of Self-abasement

Source of love, my brighter sun,
Thou alone my comfort art;
See, my race is almost run;
Hast thou left this trembling heart?

In my youth thy charming eyes
Drew me from the ways of men;
Then I drank unmingled joys;
Frown of thine saw never then.

Spouse of Christ was then my name;
And, devoted all to thee,
Strangely jealous I became,
Jealous of this self in me.

Thee to love, and none beside,
Was my darling, sole employ;
While alternately I died,
Now of grief, and now of joy.

Through the dark and silent night
On thy radiant smiles I dwelt;
And to see the dawning light
Was the keenest pain I felt.

Thou my gracious teacher wert;
And thine eye, so close applied,
While it watched thy pupil's heart,
Seemed to look at none beside.

Conscious of no evil drift,
This, I cried, is love indeed—
'Tis the giver, not the gift,
Whence the joys I feel proceed.

But, soon humbled and laid low,
Stript of all thou hast conferred,
Nothing left but sin and woe,
I perceived how I had erred.

Oh, the vain conceit of man,
Dreaming of a good his own,
Arrogating all he can,
Though the Lord is good alone!

He the graces thou hast wrought
Makes subservient to his pride;
Ignorant that one such thought
Passes all his sin beside.

Such his folly—proved, at last
By the loss of that repose,
Self-complacence cannot taste,
Only love divine bestows.

'Tis by this reproof severe,
And by this reproof alone,
His defects at last appear,
Man is to himself made known.

Learn, all earth! that feeble man,
Sprung from this terrestrial clod,
Nothing is, and nothing can;
Life and power are all in God.

William Cowper

The Negro's Complaint

Forc'd from home and all its pleasures,
Afric's coast I left forlorn;
To increase a stranger's treasures,
O'er the raging billows borne;
Men from England bought and sold me,
Paid my price in paltry gold;
But though theirs they have enroll'd me
Minds are never to be sold.
Still in thought as free as ever,
What are England's rights, I ask,
Me from my delights to sever,
Me to torture, me to task?
Fleecy locks and black complexion
Cannot forfeit nature's claim;
Skins may differ, but affection
Dwells in white and black the same.
Why did all-creating Nature
Make the plant for which we toil?
Sighs must fan it, tears must water,
Sweat of ours must dress the soil.
Think, ye masters iron-hearted,
Lolling at your jovial boards;
Think, how many backs have smarted
For the sweets your cane affords.
Is there, as ye sometimes tell us,
Is there one who reigns on high?
Has he bid you buy and sell us,
Speaking from his throne, the sky?
Ask him, if your knotted scourges,
Fetters, blood-extorting screws,
Are the means that duty urges
Agents of his will to use?
Strewing yonder sea with wrecks,
Wasting towns, plantations, meadows,
Are the voice with which he speaks.
He, foreseeing what vexations
Afric's sons should undergo,
Fix'd their tyrants' habitations
Where his whirlwinds answer — No.

By our blood in Afric wasted,
Ere our necks receiv'd the chain;
By the mis'ries which we tasted,
Crossing in your barks the main;
By our suff'rings since ye brought us
To the man-degrading mart;
All sustain'd by patience, taught us
Only by a broken heart:
Deem our nation brutes no longer
Till some reason ye shall find
Worthier of regard and stronger
Than the colour of our kind.
Slaves of gold! whose sordid dealings
Tarnish all your boasted pow'rs,
Prove that you have human feelings,
Ere you proudly question ours.

William Cowper

The New Convert

The new-born child of gospel grace,
Like some fair tree when summer's nigh,
Beneath Emmanuel's shining face
Lifts up his blooming branch on high.

No fears he feels, he sees no foes,
No conflict yet his faith employs,
Nor has he learnt to whom he owes
The strength and peace his soul enjoys.

But sin soon darts its cruel sting,
And comforts sinking day by day,
What seem'd his own, a self-fed spring,
Proves but a brook that glides away.

When Gideon arm'd his numerous host,
The Lord soon made his numbers less;
And said, "Lest Israel vainly boast,
My arm procured me this success!"

Thus will He bring our spirits down,
And draw our ebbing comforts low,
That saved by grace, but not our own,
We may not claim the praise we owe.

William Cowper

The Nightingale And Glow-Worm

A Nightingale that all day long
Had cheered the village with his song,
Nor yet at eve his note suspended,
Nor yet when eventide was ended,
Began to feel, as well he might,
The keen demands of appetite;
When looking eagerly around,
He spied, far off upon the ground,
A something shining in the dark,
And knew the glow-worm by his spark;
So stooping down from hawthorn top,
He thought to put him in his crop;
The worm, aware of his intent,
Harangued him thus right eloquent:

'Did you admire my lamp,' quoth he,
'As much as I your minstrelsy,
You would abhor to do me wrong,
As much as I to spoil your song,
For 'twas the self-same power divine
Taught you to sing, and me to shine,
That you with music, I with light,
Might beautify and cheer the night.'
The songster heard his short oration,
And warbling out his approbation,
Released him, as my story tells,
And found a supper somewhere else.

Hence jarring sectaries may learn,
Their real interest to discern:
That brother should not war with brother,
And worry and devour each other,
But sing and shine by sweet consent,
Till life's poor transient night is spent,
Respecting in each other's case
The gifts of nature and of grace.

Those Christians best deserve the name,
Who studiously make peace their aim;

Peace, both the duty and the prize
Of him that creeps and him that flies.

William Cowper

The Parrot

In painted plumes superbly dress'd,
A native of the gorgeous east,
By many a billow toss'd;
Poll gains at length the British shore,
Part of the captain's precious store,
A present to his toast.

Belinda's maids are soon preferr'd,
To teach him now then a word,
As Poll can master it;
But 'tis her own important charge,
To qualify him more at large,
And make him quite a wit.

Sweet Poll! his doting mistress cries,
Sweet Poll! the mimic bird replies,
And calls aloud for sack.
She next instructs him in the kiss;
'Tis now a little one, like Miss,
And now a hearty smack.

At first he aims at what he hears;
And, listening close with both his ears,
Just catches at the sound;
But soon articulate aloud,
Much to the amusement of the crowd,
And stuns the neighbors round.

A querulous old woman's voice
His humorous talent next employs,
He scolds, and gives the lie,
And now he sings, and now is sick,
Here, Sally, Susan, come, come quick,
Poor Poll is like to die!

Belinda and her bird! 'tis rare
To meet with such a well match'd pair,
The language and the tone,
Each character in every part

Sustain'd with so much grace and art,
And both in unison.

When children first begin to spell,
And stammer out a syllable,
We think them tedious creatures;
But difficulties soon abate,
When birds are to be taught to prate,
And women are the teachers.

William Cowper

The Perfect Sacrifice

I place an offering at thy shrine,
From taint and blemish clear,
Simple and pure in its design,
Of all that I hold dear.

I yield thee back thy gifts again,
Thy gifts which most I prize;
Desirous only to retain
The notice of thine eyes.

But if, by thine adored decree,
That blessing be denied;
Resigned and unreluctant, see
My every wish subside.

Thy will in all things I approve,
Exalted or cast down;
Thy will in every state I love,
And even in thy frown.

William Cowper

The Pine-Apple And The Bee

The pine-apples, in triple row,
Were basking hot, and all in blow;
A bee of most discerning taste
Perceived the fragrance as he pass'd,
On eager wing the spoiler came,
And search'd for crannies in the frame,
Urged his attempt on every side,
To every pane his trunk applied;
But still in vain, the frame was tight,
And only pervious to the light;
Thus having wasted half the day,
He trimm'd his flight another way.
Methinks, I said, in thee I find
The sin and madness of mankind.
To joys forbidden man aspires,
Consumes his soul with vain desires;
Folly the spring of his pursuit,
And disappointment all the fruit.
While Cynthio ogles as he passes,
The nymph between two chariot glasses,
She is the pine-apple, and he
The silly unsuccessful bee.
The maid who views with pensive air
The show-glass fraught with glittering ware,
Sees watches, bracelets, rings, and lockets,
But sighs at thought of empty pockets;
Like thine, her appetite is keen,
But ah, the cruel glass between!
Our dear delights are often such,
Exposed to view but not to touch;
The sight our foolish heart inflames,
We long for pine-apples in frames;
With hopeless wish one looks and lingers;
One breaks the glass, and cuts his fingers;
But they whom truth and wisdom lead
Can gather honey from a weed.

William Cowper

The Poet, The Oyster, And Sensitive Plant

An Oyster, cast upon the shore,
Was heard, though never heard before,
Complaining in a speech well worded,
And worthy thus to be recorded:--
Ah, hapless wretch! condemn'd to dwell
For ever in my native shell;
Ordain'd to move when others please,
Not for my own content or ease;
But toss'd and buffeted about,
Now in the water and now out.
'Twere better to be born a stone,
Of ruder shape, and feeling none,
Than with a tenderness like mine,
And sensibilities so fine!
I envy that unfeeling shrub,
Fast rooted against every rub.
The plant he meant grew not far off,
And felt the sneer with scorn enough:
Was hurt, disgusted, mortified,
And with asperity replied
(When, cry the botanists, and stare,
Did plants call'd sensitive grow there?
No matter when—a poet's muse is
To make them grow just where she chooses):--
You shapeless nothing in a dish,
You that are but almost a fish,
I scorn your coarse insinuation,
And have most plentiful occasion
To wish myself the rock I view,
Or such another dolt as you:
For many a grave and learned clerk
And many a gay unletter'd spark,
With curious touch examines me,
If I can feel as well as he;
And when I bend, retire, and shrink,
Says--Well, 'tis more than one would think!
Thus life is spent (oh fie upon't!)
In being touch'd, and crying—Don't!
A poet, in his evening walk,

O'erheard and check'd this idle talk.
And your fine sense, he said, and yours,
Whatever evil it endures,
Deserves not, if so soon offended,
Much to be pitied or commended.
Disputes, though short, are far too long,
Where both alike are in the wrong;
Your feelings in their full amount
Are all upon your own account.
You, in your grotto-work enclosed,
Complain of being thus exposed;
Yet nothing feel in that rough coat,
Save when the knife is at your throat,
Wherever driven by wind or tide,
Exempt from every ill beside.
And as for you, my Lady Squeamish,
Who reckon every touch a blemish,
If all the plants, that can be found
Embellishing the scene around,
Should droop and wither where they grow,
You would not feel at all--not you.
The noblest minds their virtue prove
By pity, sympathy, and love:
These, these are feelings truly fine,
And prove their owner half divine.
His censure reach'd them as he dealt it,
And each by shrinking show'd he felt it.

William Cowper

The Poet's New-Year's Gift. To Mrs. (Afterwards Lady) Throckmorton

Maria! I have every good
For thee wished many a time,
Both sad and in a cheerful mood,
But never yet in rhyme.

To wish thee fairer is no need,
More prudent, or more sprightly,
Or more ingenuous, or more freed
From temper-flaws unsightly.

What favour then not yet possessed
Can I for thee require,
In wedded love already blessed,
To thy whole heart's desire?

None here is happy but in part;
Full bliss is bliss divine;
There dwells some wish in every heart,
And doubtless one in thine.

That wish, on some fair future day
Which Fate shall brightly gild,
('Tis blameless, be it what it may,)
I wish it all fulfilled.

William Cowper

The Poplar Field

The poplars are felled, farewell to the shade
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade:
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elapsed since I first took a view
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew,
And now in the grass behold they are laid,
And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade.

The blackbird has fled to another retreat
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat;
And the scene where his melody charmed me before
Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

My fugitive years are all hasting away,
And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,
With a turf on my breast and a stone at my head,
Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead.

'Tis a sight to engage me, if anything can,
To muse on the perishing pleasures of man;
Short-lived as we are, our enjoyments, I see,
Have a still shorter date, and die sooner than we.

William Cowper

The Retired Cat

A poet's cat, sedate and grave
As poet well could wish to have,
Was much addicted to inquire
For nooks to which she might retire,
And where, secure as mouse in chink,
She might repose, or sit and think.
I know not where she caught the trick--
Nature perhaps herself had cast her
In such a mould [lang f]philosophique[lang e],
Or else she learn'd it of her master.
Sometimes ascending, debonair,
An apple-tree or lofty pear,
Lodg'd with convenience in the fork,
She watch'd the gardener at his work;
Sometimes her ease and solace sought
In an old empty wat'ring-pot;
There, wanting nothing save a fan
To seem some nymph in her sedan,
Apparell'd in exactest sort,
And ready to be borne to court.

But love of change, it seems, has place
Not only in our wiser race;
Cats also feel, as well as we,
That passion's force, and so did she.
Her climbing, she began to find,
Expos'd her too much to the wind,
And the old utensil of tin
Was cold and comfortless within:
She therefore wish'd instead of those
Some place of more serene repose,
Where neither cold might come, nor air
Too rudely wanton with her hair,
And sought it in the likeliest mode
Within her master's snug abode.

A drawer, it chanc'd, at bottom lin'd
With linen of the softest kind,
With such as merchants introduce

From India, for the ladies' use--
A drawer impending o'er the rest,
Half-open in the topmost chest,
Of depth enough, and none to spare,
Invited her to slumber there;
Puss with delight beyond expression
Survey'd the scene, and took possession.
Recumbent at her ease ere long,
And lull'd by her own humdrum song,
She left the cares of life behind,
And slept as she would sleep her last,
When in came, housewifely inclin'd
The chambermaid, and shut it fast;
By no malignity impell'd,
But all unconscious whom it held.

Awaken'd by the shock, cried Puss,
"Was ever cat attended thus!
The open drawer was left, I see,
Merely to prove a nest for me.
For soon as I was well compos'd,
Then came the maid, and it was clos'd.
How smooth these kerchiefs, and how sweet!
Oh, what a delicate retreat!
I will resign myself to rest
Till Sol, declining in the west,
Shall call to supper, when, no doubt,
Susan will come and let me out."

The evening came, the sun descended,
And puss remain'd still unattended.
The night roll'd tardily away
(With her indeed 'twas never day),
The sprightly morn her course renew'd,
The evening gray again ensued,
And puss came into mind no more
Than if entomb'd the day before.
With hunger pinch'd, and pinch'd for room,
She now presag'd approaching doom,
Nor slept a single wink, or purr'd,
Conscious of jeopardy incurr'd.

That night, by chance, the poet watching
Heard an inexplicable scratching;
His noble heart went pit-a-pat
And to himself he said, "What's that?"
He drew the curtain at his side,
And forth he peep'd, but nothing spied;
Yet, by his ear directed, guess'd
Something imprison'd in the chest,
And, doubtful what, with prudent care
Resolv'd it should continue there.
At length a voice which well he knew,
A long and melancholy mew,
Saluting his poetic ears,
Consol'd him, and dispell'd his fears:
He left his bed, he trod the floor,
He 'gan in haste the drawers explore,
The lowest first, and without stop
The rest in order to the top;
For 'tis a truth well known to most,
That whatsoever thing is lost,
We seek it, ere it come to light,
In ev'ry cranny but the right.
Forth skipp'd the cat, not now replete
As erst with airy self-conceit,
Nor in her own fond apprehension
A theme for all the world's attention,
But modest, sober, cured of all
Her notions hyperbolical,
And wishing for a place of rest
Anything rather than a chest.
Then stepp'd the poet into bed,
With this reflection in his head: MORAL

Beware of too sublime a sense
Of your own worth and consequence.
The man who dreams himself so great,
And his importance of such weight,
That all around in all that's done
Must move and act for him alone,
Will learn in school of tribulation
The folly of his expectation.

William Cowper

The Rose

The rose had been washed, just washed in a shower
Which Mary to Anna conveyed;
The plentiful moisture encumbered the flower,
And weighed down its beautiful head.

The cup was all filled, and the leaves were all wet,
And it seemed, to a fanciful view,
To weep for the buds it had left with regret
On the flourishing bush where it grew.

I hastily seized it, unfit as it was
For a nosegay, so dripping and drowned,
And swinging it rudely, too rudely, alas!
I snapped it; it fell to the ground.

And such, I exclaimed, is the pitiless part
Some act by the delicate mind,
Regardless of wringing and breaking a heart
Already to sorrow resigned.

This elegant rose, had I shaken it less,
Might have bloomed with its owner awhile;
And the tear that is wiped with a little address,
May be followed perhaps by a smile.

William Cowper

The Salad. By Virgil

The winter night now well nigh worn away,
The wakeful cock proclaimed approaching day,
When Simulus, poor tenant of a farm
Of narrowest limits, heard the shrill alarm,
Yawned, stretched his limbs, and anxious to provide
Against the pangs of hunger unsupplied,
By slow degrees his tattered bed forsook,
And poking in the dark, explored the nook
Where embers slept with ashes heaped around,
And with burnt fingers'-ends the treasure found.
It chanced that from a brand beneath his nose
Sure proof of latent fire, some smoke arose;
When trimming with a pin the incrusted tow,
And stooping it towards the coals below,
He toils, with cheeks distended, to excite
The lingering flame, and gains at length a light.
With prudent heed he spreads his hand before
The quivering lamp, and opes his granary door.
Small was his stock, but taking for the day,
A measured stint of twice eight pounds away,
With these his mill he seeks. A shelf at hand,
Fixt in the wall, affords his lamp a stand:
Then baring both his arms, a sleeveless coat
He girds, the rough exuviae of a goat;
And with a rubber, for that use designed
Cleansing his mill within, begins to grind;
Each hand has its employ; labouring amain,
This turns the winch, while that supplies the grain.
The stone revolving rapidly, now glows,
And the bruised corn a mealy current flows;
While he, to make his heavy labour light,
Tasks oft his left hand to relieve his right;
And chants with rudest accent, to beguile
His ceaseless toil, as rude a strain the while.
And now, 'Dame Cybale, come forth!' he cries;
But Cybale, still slumbering, nought replies.
From Afric she, the swain's sole serving maid,
Whose face and form alike her birth betrayed;
With woolly locks, lips tumid, sable skin,

Wide bosom, udders flaccid, belly thin,
Legs slender, broad and most misshapen feet,
Chapped into chinks, and parched with solar heat,
Such, summoned oft, she came; at his command
Fresh fuel heaped, the sleeping embers fanned,
And made in haste her simmering skillet steam,
Replenished newly from the neighbouring stream.
The labours of the mill performed, a sieve
The mingled flour and bran must next receive,
Which shaken oft, shoots Ceres through refined,
And better dressed, her husks all left behind.
This done, at once, his future plain repast,
Unleavened, on a shaven board he cast,
The tepid lymph, first largely soaked it all,
Then gathered it with both hands to a ball,
And spreading it again with both hands wide,
With sprinkled salt the stiffened mass supplied;
At length, the stubborn substance, duly wrought,
Takes from his palms impressed the shape it ought,
Becomes an orb, and quartered into shares,
The faithful mark of just division bears.
Last, on his hearth it finds convenient space,
For Cybale before had swept the place,
And there, with tiles and embers overspread,
She leaves it -- reeking in its sultry bed.
Nor Similus, while Vulcan thus, alone,
His part performed, proves heedless of his own,
But sedulous, not merely to subdue
His hunger, but to please his palate too,
Prepares more savoury food. His chimney-side
Could boast no gammon, salted well, and dried,
And hooked behind him; but sufficient store
Of bundled anise, and a cheese it bore;
A broad round cheese, which, through its centre strung
With a tough broom-twig, in the corner hung;
The prudent hero therefore with address,
And quick despatch, now seeks another mess.
Close to his cottage lay a garden-ground,
With reeds and osiers sparely girt around;
Small was the spot, but liberal to produce,
Nor wanted aught that serves a peasant's use;
And sometimes even the rich would borrow thence,

Although its tillage was his sole expense.
For oft, as from his toils abroad he ceased,
Home-bound by weather or some stated feast,
His debt of culture here he duly paid,
And only left the plough to wield the spade.
He knew to give each plant the soil it needs,
To drill the ground, and cover close the seeds;
And could with ease compel the wanton rill
To turn, and wind, obedient to his will.
There flourished star-wort, and the branching beet,
The sorrel acid, and the mallow sweet,
The skirret, and the leek's aspiring kind,
The noxious poppy -- quencher of the mind!
Salubrious sequel of a sumptuous board,
The lettuce, and the long huge-bellied gourd;
But these (for none his appetite controlled
With stricter sway) the thrifty rustic sold;
With broom-twigs neatly bound, each kind apart,
He bore them ever to the public mart;
Whence, laden still, but with a lighter load,
Of each well earned, he took his homeward road,
Expending seldom, ere he quitted Rome,
His gains, in flesh-meat for a feast at home.
There, at no cost, on onions, rank and red,
Or the curled endive's bitter leaf, he fed;
On scallions sliced, or with a sensual gust
On rockets -- foul provocatives of lust;
Nor even shunned, with smarting gums, to press
Nasturtium, pungent face-distorting mess!
Some such regale now also in his thought,
With hasty steps his garden-ground he sought;
There delving with his hands, he first displaced
Four plants of garlick, large, and rooted fast;
The tender tops of parsley next he culls,
Then the old rue-bush shudders as he pulls,
And Coriander last to these succeeds,
That hands on slightest threads her trembling seeds.
Placed near his sprightly fire, he now demands
The mortar at his sable servant's hands;
When stripping all his garlick first, he tore
The exterior coats, and cast them on the floor,
Then cast away with like contempt the skin,

Flimsier concealment of the cloves within.
These searched, and perfect found, he one by one
Rinsed and disposed within the hollow stone;
Salt added, and a lump of salted cheese,
With his injected herbs he covered these,
And tucking with his left his tunic tight,
The garlick bruising first he soon expressed,
And mixed the various juices of the rest.
He grinds, and by degrees his herbs below
Lost in each other their own powers forego,
Nor wholly green appear, nor wholly white.
His nostrils oft the forceful fume resent;
He cursed full oft his dinner for its scent,
Or with wry faces, wiping as he spoke
The trickling tears, cried -- 'Vengeance on the smoke!'
The work proceeds: not roughly turns he now
The pestle, but in circles smoothe and slow;
With cautious hand that grudges what it spills,
Some drops of olive-oil he next instils;
Then vinegar with caution scarcely less;
And gathering to a ball the medley mess,
Last, with two fingers frugally applied,
Sweeps the small remnant from the mortar's side:
And thus complete in figure and in kind,
Obtains at length the Salad he designed.
And now black Cybale before him stands,
The cake drawn newly glowing in her hands;
He glad receives it, chasing far away
All fears of famine for the passing day;
His legs enclosed in buskins, and his head
In its tough casque of leather, forth he led,
And yoked his steers, a dull obedient pair,
Then drove afield, and plunged the pointed share.

William Cowper

The Secrets Of Divine Love Are To Be Kept

Sun! stay thy course, this moment stay--
Suspend the o'er flowing tide of day,
Divulge not such a love as mine,
Ah! hide the mystery divine;
Lest man, who deems my glory shame,
Should learn the secret of my flame.

O night! propitious to my views,
Thy sable awning wide diffuse;
Conceal alike my joy and pain,
Nor draw thy curtain back again,
Though morning, by the tears she shows,
Seems to participate my woes.

Ye stars! whose faint and feeble fires
Express my languishing desires,
Whose slender beams pervade the skies,
As silent as my secret sighs,
Those emanations of a soul,
That darts her fires beyond the Pole;

Your rays, that scarce assist the sight,
That pierce, but not displace the night;
That shine indeed, but nothing shew
Of all those various scenes below,
Bring no disturbance, rather prove
Incentives to a sacred love.

Thou moon! whose never-failing course
Bespeaks a providential force,
Go, tell the tidings of my flame
To Him who calls the stars by name;
Whose absence kills, whose presence cheers;
Who blots, or brightens, all my years.

While, in the blue abyss of space,
Thine orb performs its rapid race;
Still whisper in his listening ears
The language of my sighs and tears;

Tell him, I seek him, far below,
Lost in a wilderness of woe.

Ye thought-composing, silent hours,
Diffusing peace o'er all my powers;
Friends of the pensive, who conceal,
In darkest shades, the flames I feel;
To you I trust, and safely may,
The love that wastes my strength away.

In sylvan scenes and caverns rude,
I taste the sweets of solitude;
Retired indeed, but not alone,
I share them with a spouse unknown,
Who hides me here from envious eyes,
From all intrusion and surprise.

Imbowering shades and dens profound!
Where echo rolls the voice around;
Mountains! whose elevated heads
A moist and misty veil o'erspreads;
Disclose a solitary bride
To him I love--to none beside.

Ye rills, that, murmuring all the way,
Among the polished pebbles stray;
Creep silently along the ground,
Lest, drawn by that harmonious sound,
Some wanderer, whom I would not meet,
Should stumble on my loved retreat.

Enamelled meads, and hillocks green,
And streams that water all the scene,
Ye torrents, loud in distant ears,
Ye fountains, that receive my tears,
Ah! still conceal, with caution due,
A charge I trust with none but you.

If, when my pain and grief increase
I seem to enjoy the sweetest peace,
It is because I find so fair,
The charming object of my care,

That I can sport and pleasure make
Of torment suffered for his sake.

Ye meads and groves, unconscious things!
Ye know not whence my pleasure springs;
Ye know not, and ye cannot know,
The source from which my sorrows flow:
The dear sole cause of all I feel,--
He knows, and understands them well.

Ye deserts, where the wild beasts rove,
Scenes sacred to my hours of love;
Ye forests, in whose shades I stray,
Benighted under burning day;
Ah! whisper not how blest am I,
Nor while I live, nor when I die.

Ye lambs, who sport beneath these shades,
And bound along the mossy glades;
Be taught a salutary fear,
And cease to bleat when I am near:
The wolf may hear your harmless cry,
Whom ye should dread as much as I.

How calm, amid these scenes, my mind;
How perfect is the peace I find!
Oh hush, be still, my every part,
My tongue, my pulse, my beating heart!
That love, aspiring to its cause,
May suffer not a moment's pause.

Ye swift-finned nations, that abide
In seas, as fathomless as wide;
And, unsuspecting of a snare,
Pursue at large your pleasures there;
Poor sportive fools! how soon does man
Your heedless ignorance trepan.

Away! dive deep into the brine,
Where never yet sunk plummet line;
Trust me, the vast leviathan
Is merciful, compared with man;

Avoid his arts, forsake the beach,
And never play within his reach.

My soul her bondage ill endures;
I pant for liberty like yours;
I long for that immense profound,
That knows no bottom and no bound:
Lost in infinity, to prove
The incomprehensible of love.

Ye birds, that lessen as ye fly,
And vanish in the distant sky;
To whom yon airy waste belongs,
Resounding with your cheerful songs;
Haste to escape from human sight;
Fear less the vulture and the kite.

How blest and how secure am I,
When, quitting earth, I soar on high;
When lost, like you I disappear,
And float in a sublimer sphere;
Whence falling, within human view,
I am ensnared and caught like you!

Omniscient God, whose notice deigns,
To try the heart and search the reins,
Compassionate the numerous woes,
I dare not, e'en to thee, disclose;
O save me from the cruel hands
Of men who fear not thy commands!

Love, all-subduing and divine,
Care for a creature truly thine;
Reign in a heart, disposed to own
No sovereign but thyself alone;
Cherish a bride who cannot rove,
Nor quit thee for a meaner love!

William Cowper

The Shining Light

My former hopes are fled,
My terror now begins;
I feel, alas! that I am dead
In trespasses and sins.

Ah, whither shall I fly?
I hear the thunder roar;
The Law proclaims Destruction nigh,
And Vengeance at the door.

When I review my ways,
I dread impending doom:
But sure a friendly whisper says,
"Flee from the wrath to come."

I see, or think I see,
A glimmering from afar;
A beam of day, that shines for me,
To save me from despair.

Forerunner of the sun,
It marks the pilgrim's way;
I'll gaze upon it while I run,
And watch the rising day.

William Cowper

The Shrubbery, Written In A Time Of Affliction

Oh happy shades--to me unblest!

Friendly to peace, but not to me!
How ill the scene that offers rest,
And heart that cannot rest, agree!
This glassy stream, that spreading pine,
Those alders quiv'ring to the breeze,
Might sooth a soul less hurt than mine,
And please, if any thing could please.

But fix'd unalterable care
Foregoes not what she feels within,
Shows the same sadness ev'rywhere,
And slights the season and the scene.

For all that pleas'd in wood or lawn,
While peace possess'd these silent bow'rs,
Her animating smile withdrawn,
Has lost its beauties and its pow'rs.

The saint or moralist should tread
This moss-grown alley, musing, slow;
They seek, like me, the secret shade,
But not, like me, to nourish woe!

Me fruitful scenes and prospects waste
Alike admonish not to roam;
These tell me of enjoyments past,
And those of sorrows yet to come.

William Cowper

The Silkworm

The beams of April, ere it goes,
A worm, scarce visible, disclose;
All winter long content to dwell
The tenant of his native shell.
The same prolific season gives
The sustenance by which he lives,
The mulberry leaf, a simple store,
That serves him—till he needs no more!
For, his dimensions once complete,
Thenceforth none ever sees him eat;
Though till his growing time be past
Scarce ever is he seen to fast.
That hour arrived, his work begins.
He spins and weaves, and weaves and spins;
Till circle upon circle, wound
Careless around him and around,
Conceals him with a veil, though slight,
Impervious to the keenest sight.
Thus self-enclosed, as in a cask,
At length he finishes his task;
And, though a worm when he was lost,
Or caterpillar at the most,
When next we see him, wings he wears,
And in papilio pomp appears;
Becomes oviparous; supplies
With future worms and future flies
The next ensuing year—and dies!
Well were it for the world, if all
Who creep about this earthly ball,
Though shorter-lived than most he be,
Were useful in their kind as he.

William Cowper

The Snail

To grass, or leaf, or fruit, or wall,
The snail sticks close, nor fears to fall,
As if he grew there, house and all
Together.

Within that house secure he hides,
When danger imminent betides
Of storm, or other harm besides
Of weather.

Give but his horns the slightest touch,
His self-collecting power is such,
He shrinks into his house, with much
Displeasure.

Where'er he dwells, he dwells alone,
Except himself has chattels none,
Well satisfied to be his own
Whole treasure.

Thus, hermit-like, his life he leads,
Nor partner of his banquet needs,
And if he meets one, only feeds
The faster.

Who seeks him must be worse than blind,
(He and his house are so combined,)
If, finding it, he fails to find
Its master.

William Cowper

The Soul That Loves God Finds Him Everywhere

O thou, by long experience tried,
Near whom no grief can long abide;
My love! how full of sweet content
I pass my years of banishment!

All scenes alike engaging prove
To souls impressed with sacred love
Where'er they dwell, they dwell in thee;
In heaven, in earth, or on the sea.

To me remains nor place nor time;
My country is in every clime;
I can be calm and free from care
On any shore, since God is there.

While place we seek, or place we shun,
The soul finds happiness in none;
But, with a God to guide our way,
'Tis equal joy to go or stay.

Could I be cast where thou art not,
That were indeed a dreadful lot;
But regions none remote I call,
Secure of finding God in all.

My country, Lord, art thou alone;
Nor other can I claim or own;
The point where all my wishes meet;
My law, my love, life's only sweet!

I hold by nothing here below;
Appoint my journey and I go;
Though pierced by scorn, oppressed by pride,
I feel thee good--feel nought beside.

No frowns of men can hurtful prove
To souls on fire with heavenly love;
Though men and devils both condemn,
No gloomy days arise from them.

Ah, then! to his embrace repair;
My soul, thou art no stranger there;
There love divine shall be thy guard,
And peace and safety thy reward.

William Cowper

The Sower

(Matthew, xiii.3)

Ye sons of earth prepare the plough,
Break up your fallow ground;
The sower is gone forth to sow,
And scatter blessings round.

The seed that finds a stony soil
Shoots forth a hasty blade;
But ill repays the sower's toil,
Soon wither'd, scorch'd, and dead.

The thorny ground is sure to balk
All hopes of harvest there;
We find a tall and sickly stalk,
But not the fruitful ear.

The beaten path and highway side,
Receive the trust in vain;
The watchful birds the spoil divide,
And pick up all the grain.

But where the Lord of grace and power
Has bless'd the happy field,
How plenteous is the golden store
The deep-wrought furrows yield!

Father of mercies, we have need
Of thy preparing grace;
Let the same Hand that give me seed
Provide a fruitful place!

William Cowper

The Swallow

I am fond of the swallow--I learn from her flight,
Had I skill to improve it, a lesson of love:
How seldom on earth do we see her alight!
She dwells in the skies, she is ever above.

It is on the wing that she takes her repose,
Suspended and poised in the regions of air,
'Tis not in our fields that her sustenance grows,
It is winged like herself--'tis ethereal fare.

She comes in the spring, all the summer she stays,
And, dreading the cold, still follows the sun--
So, true to our love, we should covet his rays,
And the place where he shines not immediately shun.

Our light should be love, and our nourishment prayer;
It is dangerous food that we find upon earth;
The fruit of this world is beset with a snare,
In itself it is hurtful, as vile in its birth.

'Tis rarely, if ever, she settles below,
And only when building a nest for her young;
Were it not for her brood, she would never bestow
A thought upon anything filthy as dung.

Let us leave it ourselves ('tis a mortal abode),
To bask every moment in infinite love;
Let us fly the dark winter, and follow the road
That leads to the dayspring appearing above.

William Cowper

The Symptoms Of Love

Would my Delia know if I love, let her take
My last thought at night, and the first when I wake;
With my prayers and best wishes preferred for her sake.

Let her guess what I muse on, when rambling alone
I stride o'er the stubble each day with my gun,
Never ready to shoot till the covey is flown.

Let her think what odd whimsies I have in my brain,
When I read one page over and over again,
And discover at last that I read it in vain.

Let her say why so fixed and so steady my look,
Without ever regarding the person who spoke,
Still affecting to laugh, without hearing the joke.

Or why when the pleasure her praises I hear,
(That sweetest of melody sure to my ear),
I attend, and at once inattentive appear.

And lastly, when summoned to drink to my flame,
Let her guess why I never once mention her name,
Though herself and the woman I love are the same.

William Cowper

The Task: Book I, The Sofa (Excerpts)

...

Thou know'st my praise of nature most sincere,
And that my raptures are not conjur'd up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.
How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While admiration, feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
Thence with what pleasure have we just discern'd
The distant plough slow moving, and beside
His lab'ring team, that swerv'd not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along its sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in his bank,
Stand, never overlook'd, our fav'rite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tow'r,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the list'ning ear,
Groves, heaths and smoking villages remote.
Scenes must be beautiful, which, daily view'd,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years.
Praise justly due to those that I describe....

But though true worth and virtue, in the mild
And genial soil of cultivated life,
Thrive most, and may perhaps thrive only there,

Yet not in cities oft: in proud and gay
And gain-devoted cities. Thither flow,
As to a common and most noisome sewer,
The dregs and feculence of every land.
In cities foul example on most minds
Begets its likeness. Rank abundance breeds
In gross and pamper'd cities sloth and lust,
And wantonness and gluttonous excess.
In cities vice is hidden with most ease,
Or seen with least reproach; and virtue, taught
By frequent lapse, can hope no triumph there
Beyond th' achievement of successful flight.
I do confess them nurseries of the arts,
In which they flourish most; where, in the beams
Of warm encouragement, and in the eye
Of public note, they reach their perfect size.
Such London is, by taste and wealth proclaim'd
The fairest capital of all the world,
By riot and incontinence the worst.
There, touch'd by Reynolds, a dull blank becomes
A lucid mirror, in which Nature sees
All her reflected features. Bacon there
Gives more than female beauty to a stone,
And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips....

God made the country, and man made the town.
What wonder then that health and virtue, gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, should most abound
And least be threaten'd in the fields and groves?
Possess ye therefore, ye who, borne about
In chariots and sedans, know no fatigue
But that of idleness, and taste no scenes
But such as art contrives, possess ye still
Your element; there only ye can shine,
There only minds like yours can do no harm.
Our groves were planted to console at noon
The pensive wand'rer in their shades. At eve
The moonbeam, sliding softly in between
The sleeping leaves, is all the light they wish,
Birds warbling all the music. We can spare

The splendour of your lamps, they but eclipse
Our softer satellite. Your songs confound
Our more harmonious notes: the thrush departs
Scared, and th' offended nightingale is mute.
There is a public mischief in your mirth;
It plagues your country. Folly such as yours,
Grac'd with a sword, and worthier of a fan,
Has made, which enemies could ne'er have done,
Our arch of empire, steadfast but for you,
A mutilated structure, soon to fall.

William Cowper

The Task: Book I. -- The Sofa

I sing the Sofa. I who lately sang
Truth, Hope, and Charity, and touched with awe
The solemn chords, and with a trembling hand,
Escaped with pain from that adventurous flight,
Now seek repose upon an humbler theme;
The theme though humble, yet august and proud
The occasion, - for the fair commands the song.

Time was when clothing, sumptuous or for use,
Save their own painted skins, our sires had none.
As yet black breeches were not, satin smooth,
Or velvet soft, or plush with shaggy pile.
The hardy chief upon the rugged rock
Washed by the sea, or on the gravelly bank
Thrown up by wintry torrents roaring loud,
Fearless of wrong, reposed his weary strength.
Those barbarous ages past, succeeded next
The birthday of invention, weak at first,
Dull in design, and clumsy to perform.
Joint-stools were then created; on three legs
Upborne they stood, - three legs upholding firm
A massy slab, in fashion square or round.
On such a stool immortal Alfred sat,
And swayed the sceptre of his infant realms;
And such in ancient halls and mansions drear
May still be seen, but perforated sore
And drilled in holes the solid oak is found,
By worms voracious eating through and through.

At length a generation more refined
Improved the simple plan, made three legs four,
Gave them a twisted form vermicular,
And o'er the seat with plenteous wadding stuffed
Induced a splendid cover green and blue,
Yellow and red, of tapestry richly wrought
And woven close, or needle-work sublime.
There might ye see the peony spread wide,
The full-blown rose, the shepherd and his lass,
Lap-dog and lambkin with black staring eyes,

And parrots with twin cherries in their beak.

Now came the cane from India, smooth and bright
With Nature's varnish; severed into stripes
That interlaced each other, these supplied
Of texture firm a lattice-work, that braced
The new machine, and it became a chair.
But restless was the chair; the back erect
Distressed the weary loins that felt no ease;
The slippery seat betrayed the sliding part
That pressed it, and the feet hung dangling down,
Anxious in vain to find the distant floor.
These for the rich: the rest, whom fate had placed
In modest mediocrity, content
With base materials, sat on well-tanned hides
Obdurate and unyielding, glassy smooth,
With here and there a tuft of crimson yarn,
Or scarlet crewel in the cushion fixed:
If cushion might be called, what harder seemed
Than the firm oak of which the frame was formed.
No want of timber then was felt or feared
In Albion's happy isle. The lumber stood
Ponderous, and fixed by its own massy weight.
But elbows still were wanting; these, some say,
An Alderman of Cripplegate contrived,
And some ascribe the invention to a priest
Burly and big and studious of his ease.
But rude at first, and not with easy slope
Receding wide, they pressed against the ribs,
And bruised the side, and elevated high
Taught the raised shoulders to invade the ears.
Long time elapsed ere our rugged sires
Complained, though incommoiously pent in,
And ill at ease behind. The ladies first
'Gan murmur, as became the softer sex.
Ingenious fancy, never better pleased
Than when employed to accommodate the fair,
Heard the sweet moan with pity, and devised
The soft settee; one elbow at each end,
And in the midst an elbow, it received
United yet divided, twain at once.
So sit two kings of Brentford on one throne;

And so two citizens who take the air
Close packed and smiling in a chaise and one.
But relaxation of the languid frame
By soft recumbency of outstretched limbs,
Was bliss reserved for happier days; - so slow
The growth of what is excellent, so hard
To attain perfection in this nether world.
Thus first necessity invented stools,
Convenience next suggested elbow chairs,
And luxury the accomplished sofa last.

The nurse sleeps sweetly, hired to watch the sick
Whom snoring she disturbs. As sweetly he
Who quits the coach-box at the midnight hour
To sleep within the carriage more secure,
His legs depending at the open door.
Sweet sleep enjoys the curate in his desk,
The tedious rector drawling o'er his head,
And sweet the clerk below: but neither sleep
Of lazy nurse, who snores the sick man dead,
Nor his who quits the box at midnight hour
To slumber in the carriage more secure,
Nor sleep enjoyed by curate in his desk,
Nor yet the dozings of the clerk are sweet,
Compared with the repose the sofa yields.

Oh may I live exempted (while I live
Guiltless of pampered appetite obscene,)
From pangs arthritic that infest the toe
Of libertine excess. The sofa suits
The gouty limb, 'tis true; but gouty limb,
Though on a sofa, may I never feel:
For I have loved the rural walk through lanes
Of grassy swarth close cropt by nibbling sheep,
And skirted thick with intertexture firm
Of thorny boughs; have loved the rural walk
O'er hills, through valleys, and by river's brink
E'er since a truant boy I passed my bounds
To enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames.
And still remember, nor without regret
Of hours that sorrow since has much endeared,
How oft, my slice of pocket store consumed,

Still hungering penniless and far from home,
I fed on scarlet hips and stony haws,
Or blushing crabs, or berries that emboss
The bramble, black as jet, or sloes austere,
Hard fare! but such as boyish appetite
Disdains not, nor the palate undepraved
By culinary arts unsavoury deems.
No sofa then awaited my return,
Nor sofa then I needed. Youth repairs
His wasted spirits quickly, by long toil
Incurring short fatigue; and though our years,
As life declines, speed rapidly away,
And not a year but pilfers as he goes
Some youthful grace that age would gladly keep,
A tooth or auburn lock, and by degrees
Their length and colour from the locks they spare;
The elastic spring of an unwearied foot
That mounts the stile with ease, or leaps the fence,
That play of lungs inhaling and again
Respiring freely the fresh air, that makes
Swift pace or steep ascent no toil to me,
Mine have not pilfered yet; nor yet impaired
My relish of fair prospect: scenes that soothed
Or charmed me young, no longer young, I find
Still soothing and of power to charm me still.
And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
Fast locked in mine, with pleasure such as love
Confirmed by long experience of thy worth
And well-tried virtues could alone inspire, -
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.
Thou know'st my praise of nature most sincere,
And that my raptures are not conjur'd up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.
How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While admiration, feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
Thence with what pleasure have we just discern'd
The distant plough slow moving, and beside

His lab'ring team, that swerv'd not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along its sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in his bank,
Stand, never overlook'd, our fav'rite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tow'r,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the list'ning ear,
Groves, heaths and smoking villages remote.
Scenes must be beautiful, which, daily view'd,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years.
Praise justly due to those that I describe.

Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid nature. Mighty winds
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of ocean on his winding shore,
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind,
Unnumbered branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast fluttering, all at once
Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighbouring fountain, or of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
In matted grass, that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds,
But animated nature sweeter still
To soothe and satisfy the human ear.
Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one
The livelong night: nor these alone whose notes

Nice-fingered art must emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime
In still repeated circles, screaming loud,
The jay, the pie, and even the boding owl
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me.
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns
And only there, please highly for their sake.

Peace to the artist, whose ingenious thought
Devised the weather-house, that useful toy!
Fearless of humid air and gathering rains
Forth steps the man, an emblem of myself;
More delicate his timorous mate retires.
When winter soaks the fields, and female feet
Too weak to struggle with tenacious clay,
Or ford the the rivulets, are best at home,
The task of new discoveries falls on me.
At such a season and with such a charge
Once went I forth, and found, till then unknown,
A cottage, whither oft we since repair:
'Tis perched upon the green hill-top, but close
Environed with a ring of branching elms
That overhang the thatch, itself unseen,
Peeps at the vale below; so thick beset
With foliage of such dark redundant growth,
I called the low-roofed lodge the
peasant's nest.

And hidden as it is, and far remote
From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear
In village or in town, the bay of curs
Incessant, clinking hammers, grinding wheels,
And infants clamorous whether pleased or pained,
Oft have I wished the peaceful covert mine.
Here, I have said, at least I should possess
The poet's treasure, silence, and indulge
The dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure.
Vain thought! the dweller in that still retreat
Dearly obtains the refuge it affords.
Its elevated site forbids the wretch
To drink sweet waters of the crystal well;

He dips his bowl into the weedy ditch,
And heavy-laden brings his beverage home,
Far-fetched and little worth; nor seldom waits,
Dependent on the baker's punctual call,
To hear his creaking panniers at the door,
Angry and sad, and his last crust consumed.
So farewell envy of the
peasant's nest.

If solitude make scant the means of life,
Society for me! Thou seeming sweet,
Be still a pleasing object in my view,
My visit still, but never mine abode.

Not distant far, a length of colonnade
Invites us: Monument of ancient taste,
Now scorned, but worthy of a better fate.
Our fathers knew the value of a screen
From sultry suns, and in their shaded walks
And long-protracted bowers, enjoyed at noon
The gloom and coolness of declining day.
We bear our shades about us; self-deprived
Of other screen, the thin umbrella spread,
And range an Indian waste without a tree.
Thanks to Benevolus; he spares me yet
These chestnuts ranged in corresponding lines,
And though himself so polished, still relieves
The obsolete prolixity of shade.

Descending now (but cautious, lest too fast,)
A sudden steep, upon a rustic bridge
We pass a gulf in which the willows dip
Their pendent boughs, stooping as if to drink.
Hence ankle-deep in moss and flowery thyme
We mount again, and feel at every step
Our foot half sunk in hillocks green and soft,
Raised by the mole, the miner of the soil.
He not unlike the great ones of mankind,
Disfigures earth, and plotting in the dark
Toils much to earn a monumental pile,
That may record the mischiefs he has done.

The summit gained, behold the proud alcove
That crowns it! yet not all its pride secures
The grant retreat from injuries impressed
By rural carvers, who with knives deface
The panels, leaving an obscure rude name
In characters uncouth, and spelt amiss.
So strong the zeal to immortalise himself
Beats in the breast of man, that even a few
Few transient years won from the abyss abhorred
Of blank oblivion, seem a glorious prize,
And even to a clown. Now roves the eye,
And posted on this speculative height
Exults in its command. The sheep-fold here
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe,
At first progressive as a stream, they seek
The middle field; but scattered by degrees
Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.
There, from the sun-burnt hay-field homeward creeps
The loaded wain, while lightened of its charge
The wain that meets it passes swiftly by,
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team
Vociferous, and impatient of delay.
Nor less attractive is the woodland scene,
Diversified with trees of every growth
Alike yet various. Here the gray smooth trunks
Of ash, or lime, or beech, distinctly shine,
Within the twilight of their distant shades;
There lost behind a rising ground, the wood
Seems sunk, and shortened to its topmost boughs.
No tree in all the grove but has its charms,
Though each its hue peculiar; paler some,
And of a wanish gray; the willow such
And poplar, that with silver lines his leaf,
And ash far-stretching his umbrageous arm;
Of deeper green the elm; and deeper still,
Lord of the woods, the long-surviving oak.
Some glossy-leaved and shining in the sun,
The maple, and the beech of oily nuts
Prolific, and the line at dewy eve
Diffusing odours: nor unnoted pass
The sycamore, capricious in attire,
Now green, now tawny, and ere autumn yet

Have changed the woods, in scarlet honours bright.
O'er these, but far beyond, (a spacious map
Of hill and valley interposed between,)
The Ouse, dividing the well-watered land,
Now glitters in the sun, and now retires,
As bashful, yet impatient to be seen.

Hence the declivity is sharp and short,
And such the re-ascent; between them weeps
A little naiad her impoverished urn
All summer long, which winter fills again.
The folded gates would bar my progress now,
But that the lord of this enclosed demesne,
Communicative of the good he owns,
Admits me to a share: the guiltless eye
Commits no wrong, nor wastes what it enjoys.
Refreshing change! where now the blazing sun?
By short transition we have lost his glare,
And stepped at once into a cooler clime.
Ye fallen avenues! once more I mourn
Your fate unmerited, once more rejoice
That yet a remnant of your race survives.
How airy and how light the graceful arch,
Yet awful as the consecrated roof
Re-echoing pious anthems! while beneath
The chequered earth seems restless as a flood
Brushed by the wind. So sportive is the light
Shot through the boughs, it dances as they dance,
Shadow and sunshine intermingling quick,
And darkening and enlightening, as the leaves
Play wanton, every moment, every spot.

And now with nerves new-braced and spirits cheered
We tread the wilderness, whose well-rolled walks
With curvature of slow and easy sweep, -
Deception innocent, - give ample space
To narrow bounds. The grove receives us next;
Between the upright shafts of whose tall elms
We may discern the thresher at his task.
Thump after thump, resounds the constant flail,
That seems to swing uncertain, and yet falls
Full on the destined ear. Wide flies the chaff,

The rustling straw sends up a frequent mist
Of atoms sparkling in the noonday beam.
Come hither, ye that press your beds of down
And sleep not, - see him sweating o'er his bread
Before he eats it. - 'Tis the primal curse,
But softened into mercy; made the pledge
Of cheerful days, and nights without a groan.

By ceaseless action, all that is subsists.
Constant rotation of the unwearied wheel
That nature rides upon, maintains her health,
Her beauty, her fertility. She dreads
An instant's pause, and lives but while she moves.
Its own resolveny upholds the world.
Winds from all quarters agitate the air,
And fit the limpid elements for use,
Else noxious: oceans, rivers, lakes, and streams
By restless undulation. Even the oak
Thrives by the rude concussion of the storm;
He seems indeed indignant, and to feel
The impression of the blast with proud disdain,
Frowning as if in his unconscious arm
He held the thunder. But the monarch owes
His firm stability to what he scorns,
More fixed below, the more disturbed above.
The law by which all creatures else are bound,
Binds man the lord of all. Himself derives
No mean advantage from a kindred cause,
From strenuous toil his hours of sweetest ease.
The sedentary stretch their lazy length
When custom bids, but no refreshment find,
For none they need: the languid eye, the cheek
Deserted of its bloom, the flaccid, shrunk,
And withered muscle, and the vapid soul,
Reproach their owner with that love of rest
To which he forfeits even the rest he loves.
Not such the alert and active. Measure life
By its true worth, the comforts it affords,
And theirs alone seems worthy of the name
Good health, and its associate in the most,
Good temper; spirits prompt to undertake,
And not soon spent, though in an arduous task;

The powers of fancy and strong thought are theirs;
Even age itself seems privileged in them
With clear exemption from its own defects.
A sparkling eye beneath a wrinkled front
The veteran shows, and gracing a gray beard
With youthful smiles, descends towards the grave
Sprightly, and old almost without decay.

Like a coy maiden, ease, when courted most,
Farthest retires, - an idol, at whose shrine
Who oftenest sacrifice are favoured least.
The love of nature, and the scenes she draws
Is nature's dictate. Strange! there should be found
Who self-imprisoned in their proud saloons,
Renounce the odours of the open field
For the unscented fictions of the loom;
Who satisfied with only pencilled scenes,
Prefer to the performance of a God
The inferior wonders of an artist's hand.
Lovely indeed the mimic works of art,
But nature's works far lovelier. I admire -
None more admires the painter's magic skill,
Who shows me that which I shall never see,
Conveys a distant country into mine,
And throws Italian light on English walls.
But imitative strokes can do no more
Than please the eye, sweet nature every sense.
The air salubrious of her lofty hills,
The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales
And music of her woods, - no works of man
May rival these; these all bespeak a power
Peculiar, and exclusively her own.
Beneath the open sky she spreads the feast;
'Tis free to all, - 'tis every day renewed,
Who scorns it, starves deservedly at home.
He does not scorn it, who imprisoned long
In some unwholesome dungeon, and a prey
To sallow sickness, which the vapours dank
And clammy of his dark abode have bred,
Escapes at last to liberty and light.
His cheek recovers soon its healthful hue,
His eye relumines its extinguished fires,

He walks, he leaps, he runs, - is winged with joy.
And riots in the sweets of every breeze.
He does not scorn it, who has long endured
A fever's agonies, and fed on drugs.
Nor yet the mariner, his blood inflamed
With acrid salts; his very heart athirst
To gaze at nature in her green array.
Upon the ship's tall side he stands, possessed
With visions prompted by intense desire;
Fair fields appear below, such as he left
Far distant, such as he would die to find, -
He seeks them headlong, and is seen no more.

The spleen is seldom felt where Flora reigns;
The lowering eye, the petulance, the frown,
And sullen sadness that o'ershade, distort,
And mar the face of beauty, when no cause
For such immeasurable woe appears,
These Flora banishes, and gives the fair
Sweet smiles and bloom less transient than her own.
It is the constant revolution stale
And tasteless, of the same repeated joys,
That palls and satiates, and makes the languid life
A pedlar's pack, that bows the bearer down.
Health suffers, and the spirits ebb; the heart
Recoils from its own choice, - at the full feast
Is famished, - finds no music in the song,
No smartness in the jest, and wonders why.
Yet thousands still desire to journey on,
Though halt and weary on the path they tread.
The paralytic who can hold her cards
But cannot play them, borrows a friend's hand
To deal and shuffle, to divide and sort
Her mingled suits and sequences, and sits
Spectatress both and spectacle, a sad
And silent cypher, while her proxy plays,
Others are dragged into the crowded room
Between supporters; and once seated, sit
Through downright inability to rise,
Till the stout bearers lift the corpse again.
These speak a loud memento. Yet even these
Themselves love life, and cling to it, as he

That overhangs a torrent to a twig.
They love it, and yet loathe it; fear to die.
Yet scorn the purposes for which they live.
Then wherefore not renounce them? No - the dread,
The slavish dread of solitude that breeds
Reflection and remorse, the fear of shame,
And their inveterate habits, all forbid.

Whom call we gay? That honour has been long
The boast of mere pretenders to the name.
The innocent are gay; - the lark is gay
That dries his feathers saturate with dew
Beneath the rosy cloud, while yet the beams
Of day-spring overshoot his humble nest.
The peasant too, a witness of his song,
Himself a songster, is as gay as he.
But save me from the gaiety of those
Whose headaches nail them to a noon-day bed;
And save me too from theirs whose haggard eyes
Flash desperation, and betray their pangs
For property stripped off by cruel chance;
From gaiety that fills the bones with pain,
The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with woe.

The earth was made so various, that the mind
Of desultory man, studious of change,
And pleased with novelty, might be indulged.
Prospects however lovely may be seen
Till half their beauties fade; the weary sight,
Too well acquainted with their smiles, slides off
Fastidious, seeking less familiar scenes.
Then snug enclosures in the sheltered vale,
Where frequent hedges intercept the eye,
Delight us, happy to renounce a while,
Not senseless of its charms, what still we love,
That such short absence may endear it more.
Then forests, or the savage rock may please,
That hides the sea-mew in his hollow clefts
Above the reach of man: his hoary head
Conspicuous many a league, the marmer
Bound homeward, and in hope already there,
Greeted with three cheers exulting. At his waist

A girdle of half-withered shrubs he shows,
And at his feet the baffled billows die.
The common overgrown with fern, and rough
With prickly goss, that shapeless and deform
And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom
And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
Yields no unpleasing ramble; there the turf
Smells fresh, and rich in odoriferous herbs
And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
With luxury of unexpected sweets.

There often wanders one, whom better days
Saw better clad, in cloak of satin trimmed
With lace, and hat with splendid riband bound.
A serving-maid was she, and fell in love
With one who left her, went to sea and died.
Her fancy followed him through foaming waves
To distant shores, and she would sit and weep
At what a sailor suffers; fancy too,
Delusive most where warmest wishes are,
Would oft anticipate his glad return,
And dream of transports she was not to know.
She heard the doleful tidings of his death,
And never smiled again. And now she roams
The dreary waste; there spends the livelong day.
And there, unless when charity forbids,
The livelong night. A tattered apron hides,
Worn as a cloak, and hardly hides a gown
More tattered still; and both but ill conceal
A bosom heaved with never-ceasing sighs.
She begs an idle pin of all she meets,
And hoards them in her sleeve; but needful food,
Though pressed with hunger oft, or comelier clothes,
Though pinched with cold, asks never. - Kate is crazed.

I see a column of slow-rising smoke
O'ertop the lofty wood that skirts the wild.
A vagabond and useless tribe there eat
Their miserable meal. A kettle slung
Between two poles upon a stick transverse,
Receives the morsel; flesh obscene of dog,
Or vermin, or at best, of cock purloined

From his accustomed perch. Hard-faring race!
They pick their fuel out of every hedge,
Which kindled with dry leaves, just saves unquenched
The spark of life. The sportive wind blows wide
Their fluttering rags, and shows a tawny skin,
The vellum of pedigree they claim.
Great skill have they in palmistry, and more
To conjure clean away the gold they touch,
Conveying worthless dross into its place.
Loud when they beg, dumb only when they steal.
Strange! that a creature rational, and cast
In human mould, should brutalize by choice
His nature, and though capable of arts
By which the world might profit and himself,
Self-banished from society, prefer
Such squalid sloth to honourable toil.
Yet even these, though feigning sickness oft
They swathe the forehead, drag the limping limb
And vex their flesh with artificial sores,
Can change their whine into a mirthful note
When safe occasion offers, and with dance
And music of the bladder and the bag
Beguile their woes and make the woods resound.
Such health and gaiety of heart enjoy
The houseless rovers of the sylvan world;
And breathing wholesome air, and wandering much,
Need other physic none to heal the effects
Of loathsome diet, penury, and cold.

Blest he, though undistinguished from the crowd
By wealth or dignity, who dwells secure
Where man, by nature fierce, has laid aside
His fierceness, having learnt, though slow to learn,
The manners and the arts of civil life.
His wants, indeed, are many: but supply
Is obvious; placed within the easy reach
Of temperate wishes and industrious hands.
Here virtue thrives as in her proper soil;
Not rude and surly, and beset with thorns,
And terrible to sight, as when she springs,
(If e'er she springs spontaneous,) in remote
And barbarous climes, where violence prevails

And strength is lord of all; but gentle, kind.
By culture tamed, by liberty refreshed,
And all her fruits by radiant truth matured.
War and the chase engross the savage whole;
War followed for revenge, or to supplant
The envied tenants of some happier spot,
The chase for sustenance, precarious trust!
His hard condition with severe constraint
Binds all his faculties, forbids all growth
Of wisdom, proves a school in which he learns
Sly circumvention, unrelenting hate,
Mean self-attachment, and scarce aught beside.
Thus fare the shivering natives of the north,
And thus the rangers of the western world
Where it advances far into the deep,
Towards the Antarctic. Even the favoured isles
So lately found, although the constant sun
Cheer all their seasons with a grateful smile,
Can boast but little virtue; and inert
Through plenty, lose in morals what they gain
In manners, victims of luxurious ease.
These therefore I can pity, placed remote
From all that science traces, art invents,
Or inspiration teaches; and enclosed
In boundless oceans never to be passed
By navigators uninformed as they,
Or ploughed perhaps by British bark again
But far beyond the rest, and with most cause,
Thee, gentle savage! whom no love thee
Or thine, but curiosity perhaps,
Or else vain-glory, prompted us to draw
Forth from thy native bowers, to show thee here
With what superior skill we can abuse
The gifts of Providence, and squander life.
The dream is past. And thou hast found again
Thy cocoas and bananas, palms and yams,
And homestall thatched with leaves. But hast thou found
Their former charms? And having seen our state,
Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp
Of equipage, our gardens, and our sports,
And heard our music; are thy simple friends,
Thy simple fair, and all thy plain delights

As dear to thee as once? And have thy joys
Lost nothing by comparison with ours?
Rude as thou art (for we returned thee rude
And ignorant except of outward show,)
I cannot think thee yet so dull of heart
And spiritless, as never to regret
Sweets tasted here, and left as soon as known.
Methinks I see thee straying on the beach,
And asking of the surge that bathes thy foot
If ever it has washed our distant shore.
I see thee weep, and thine are honest tears,
A patriot's for his country. Thou art sad
At thought of her forlorn and abject state,
From which no power of thine can raise her up.
Thus fancy paints thee, and though apt to err,
Perhaps errs little, when she paints thee thus.
She tells me too, that duly every morn
Thou climbst the mountain top, with eager eye
Exploring far and wide the watery waste
For sight of ship from England. Every speck
Seen in the dim horizon, turns thee pale
With conflict of contending hopes and fears,
But comes at last the dull and dusky eve,
And sends thee to thy cabin well-prepared
To dream all night of what the day denied.
Alas! expect it not. We found no bait
To tempt us in thy country. Doing good,
Disinterested good, is not our trade.
We travel far, 'tis true, but not for nought;
And must be bribed to compass earth again
By other hopes and richer fruits than yours.

But though true worth and virtue, in the mild
And genial soil of cultivated life,
Thrive most, and may perhaps thrive only there,
Yet not in cities oft, - in proud and gay
And gain-devoted cities. Thither flow,
As to a common and most noisome sewer,
The dregs and feculence of every land.
In cities foul example on most minds
Begets its likeness. Rank abundance breeds
In gross and pamper'd cities sloth and lust,

And wantonness and gluttonous excess.
In cities vice is hidden with most ease,
Or seen with least reproach; and virtue, taught
By frequent lapse, can hope no triumph there
Beyond th' achievement of successful flight.
I do confess them nurseries of the arts,
In which they flourish most; where, in the beams
Of warm encouragement, and in the eye
Of public note, they reach their perfect size.
Such London is, by taste and wealth proclaim'd
The fairest capital of all the world,
By riot and incontinence the worst.
There, touch'd by Reynolds, a dull blank becomes
A lucid mirror, in which Nature sees
All her reflected features. Bacon there
Gives more than female beauty to a stone,
And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips.
Nor does the chisel occupy alone
The powers of sculpture, but the style as much;
Each province of her heart her equal care.
With nice incision of her guided steel
She ploughs a brazen field, and clothes a soil
So sterile with what charms soe'er she will,
The richest scenery and the loveliest forms.
Where finds philosophy her eagle eye
With which she gazes at yon burning disk
Undazzled, and detects and counts his spots?
In London. Where her implements exact
With which she calculates, computes and scans
All distance, motion, magnitude, and now
Measures an atom, and now girds a world?
In London. Where has commerce such a mart,
So rich, so thronged, so drained, and so supplied
As London, opulent, enlarged and still
Increasing London? Babylon of old
Not more the glory of the earth, than she
A more accomplished world's chief glory now.

She has her praise. Now mark a spot or two
That so much beauty would do well to purge;
And show this queen of cities, that so fair
May yet be foul, so witty, yet not wise.

It is not seemly nor of good report
That she is slack in discipline, - more prompt
To avenge than to prevent the breach of law.
That she is rigid in denouncing death
On petty robbers, and indulges life
And liberty, and oft-times honour too
To peculators of the public gold.
That thieves at home must hang; but he that puts
Into his overgorged and bloated purse
The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes,
Nor is it well, nor can it come to good,
That through profane and infidel contempt
Of holy writ, she has presumed to annul
And abrogate, as roundly as she may,
The total ordinance and will of God;
Advancing fashion to the post of truth,
And centring all authority in modes
And customs of her own, till Sabbath rites
Have dwindled into unrespected forms,
And knees and hassocks are well-nigh divorced.

God made the country, and man made the town.
What wonder then that health and virtue, gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, should most abound
And least be threaten'd in the fields and groves?
Possess ye therefore, ye who, borne about
In chariots and sedans, know no fatigue
But that of idleness, and taste no scenes
But such as art contrives, - possess ye still
Your element; there only ye can shine,
There only minds like yours can do no harm.
Our groves were planted to console at noon
The pensive wand'rer in their shades. At eve
The moonbeam, sliding softly in between
The sleeping leaves, is all the light they wish,
Birds warbling all the music. We can spare
The splendour of your lamps, they but eclipse
Our softer satellite. Your songs confound
Our more harmonious notes: the thrush departs
Scared, and th' offended nightingale is mute.
There is a public mischief in your mirth;

It plagues your country. Folly such as yours,
Grac'd with a sword, and worthier of a fan,
Has made, which enemies could ne'er have done,
Our arch of empire, steadfast but for you,
A mutilated structure, soon to fall.

William Cowper

The Task: Book II, The Time-Piece (Excerpts)

...

England, with all thy faults, I love thee still--
My country! and, while yet a nook is left
Where English minds and manners may be found,
Shall be constrain'd to love thee. Though thy clime
Be fickle, and thy year most part deform'd
With dripping rains, or wither'd by a frost,
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies,
And fields without a flow'r, for warmer France
With all her vines; nor for Ausonia's groves
Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bow'rs.
To shake thy senate, and from heights sublime
Of patriot eloquence to flash down fire
Upon thy foes, was never meant my task:
But I can feel thy fortunes, and partake
Thy joys and sorrows, with as true a heart
As any thund'rer there. And I can feel
Thy follies, too; and with a just disdain
Frown at effeminates, whose very looks
Reflect dishonour on the land I love.
How, in the name of soldiership and sense,
Should England prosper, when such things, as smooth
And tender as a girl, all essenc'd o'er
With odours, and as profligate as sweet;
Who sell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,
And love when they should fight; when such as these
Presume to lay their hand upon the ark
Of her magnificent and awful cause?
Time was when it was praise and boast enough
In ev'ry clime, and travel where we might,
That we were born her children. Praise enough
To fill th' ambition of a private man,
That Chatham's language was his mother tongue,
And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own.
Farewell those honours, and farewell with them
The hope of such hereafter! They have fall'n
Each in his field of glory; one in arms,

And one in council--Wolfe upon the lap
Of smiling victory that moment won,
And Chatham heart-sick of his country's shame!
They made us many soldiers. Chatham, still
Consulting England's happiness at home,
Secur'd it by an unforgiving frown
If any wrong'd her. Wolfe, where'er he fought,
Put so much of his heart into his act,
That his example had a magnet's force,
And all were swift to follow whom all lov'd.
Those suns are set. Oh, rise some other such!
Or all that we have left is empty talk
Of old achievements, and despair of new....

There is a pleasure in poetic pains
Which only poets know. The shifts and turns,
Th' expedients and inventions multiform
To which the mind resorts in chase of terms
Thought apt, yet coy, and difficult to win,
T' arrest the fleeting images that fill
The mirror of the mind, and hold them fast,
And force them sit, till he has pencill'd off
A faithful likeness of the forms he views;
Then to dispose his copies with such art
That each may find its most propitious light,
And shine by situation hardly less
Than by the labour and the skill it cost,
Are occupations of the poet's mind
So pleasing, and that steal away the thought
With such address from themes of sad import,
That, lost in his own musings, happy man!
He feels th' anxieties of life, denied
Their wonted entertainment, all retire.
Such joys has he that sings. But ah! not such,
Or seldom such, the hearers of his song.
Fastidious, or else listless, or perhaps
Aware of nothing arduous in a task
They never undertook, they little note
His dangers or escapes, and haply find
Their least amusement where he found the most.
But is amusement all? Studious of song,

And yet ambitious not to sing in vain,
I would not trifle merely, though the world
Be loudest in their praise who do no more.
Yet what can satire, whether grave or gay?
It may correct a foible, may chastise
The freaks of fashion, regulate the dress,
Retrench a sword-blade, or displace a patch;
But where are its sublimer trophies found?
What vice has it subdu'd? whose heart reclaim'd
By rigour, or whom laugh'd into reform?
Alas! Leviathan is not so tam'd.
Laugh'd at, he laughs again; and, stricken hard,
Turns to the stroke his adamantine scales,
That fear no discipline of human hands.

The pulpit, therefore, (and I name it fill'd
With solemn awe, that bids me well beware
With what intent I touch that holy thing)--
The pulpit (when the satirist has at last,
Strutting and vapouring in an empty school,
Spent all his force, and made no proselyte)--
I say the pulpit (in the sober use
Of its legitimate, peculiar pow'rs)
Must stand acknowledg'd, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament of Virtue's cause.....

William Cowper

The Task: Book II. -- The Time-Piece

Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war
Might never reach me more! My ear is pained,
My soul is sick with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled.
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart,
It does not feel for man. The natural bond
Of brotherhood is severed as the flax
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not coloured like his own, and having power
To enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey.
Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interposed,
Make enemies of nations who had else
Like kindred drops been mingled into one.
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys;
And worse than all, and most to be deplored
As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that mercy with a bleeding heart
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.
Then what is man? And what man seeing this,
And having human feelings, does not blush
And hang his head, to think himself a man?
I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews bought and sold have ever earned.
No: dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Just estimation prized above all price,
I had much rather be myself the slave
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.
We have no slaves at home. - Then why abroad?
And they themselves, once ferried o'er the wave
That parts us, are emancipate and loosed.

Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free,
They touch our country and their shackles fall.
That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it then,
And let it circulate through every vein
Of all your empire! that where Britain's power
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.

Sure there is need of social intercourse,
Benevolence and peace and mutual aid
Between the nations, in a world that seems
To toll the death-bell of its own decease,
And by the voice of all its elements
To preach the general doom. When were the winds
Let slip with such a warrant to destroy?
When did the waves so haughtily o'erleap
Their ancient barriers, deluging the dry?
Fire from beneath, and meteors from above
Portentous, unexampled, unexplained,
Have kindled beacons in the skies; and the old
And crazy earth has had her shaking fits
More frequent, and foregone her usual rest.
Is it a time to wrangle, when the props
And pillars of our planet seem to fail,
And nature with a dim and sickly eye
To wait the close of all? But grant her end
More distant, and that prophecy demands
A longer respite, unaccomplished yet;
Still they are frowning signals, and bespeak
Displeasure in his breast who smites the earth
Or heals it, makes it languish or rejoice.
And 'tis but seemly, that where all deserve
And stand exposed by common peccancy
To what no few have felt, there should be peace,
And brethren in calamity should love.

Alas for Sicily! rude fragments now
Lie scattered where the shapely column stood.
Her palaces are dust. In all her streets
The voice of singing and the sprightly chord
Are silent. Revelry and dance and show

Suffer a syncope and solemn pause,
While God performs upon the trembling stage
Of his own works, his dreadful part alone.
How does the earth receive him? - with what signs
Of gratulation and delight, her king?
Pours she not all her choicest fruits abroad,
Her sweetest flowers, her aromatic gums,
Disclosing paradise where'er he treads?
She quakes at his approach. Her hollow womb
Conceiving thunders, through a thousand deeps
And fiery caverns roars beneath his foot.
The hills move lightly and the mountains smoke,
For He has touched them. From the extremest point
Of elevation down into the abyss,
His wrath is busy and his frown is felt.
The rocks fall headlong and the valleys rise;
The rivers die into offensive pools,
And charged with putrid verdure, breathe a gross
And mortal nuisance into all the air.
What solid was, by transformation strange
Grows fluid; and the fixed and rooted earth
Tormented into billows heaves and swells,
Or with vortiginous and hideous whirl
Sucks down its prey insatiable. Immense
The tumult and the overthrow, the pangs
And agonies of human and of brute
Multitudes, fugitive on every side,
Migrates uplifted, and with all its soil
Alighting in far distant fields, finds out
A new possessor, and survives the change.
Ocean has caught the frenzy, and upwrought
To an enormous and o'erbearing height,
Not by a mighty wind, but by that voice
Which winds and waves obey, invades the shore
Resistless. Never such a sudden flood,
Upridged so high, and sent on such a charge,
Possessed an inland scene. Where now the throng
That pressed the beach, and hasty to depart
Looked to the sea for safety? They are gone,
Gone with the refluent wave into the deep,
A prince with half his people. Ancient towers,
And roofs embattled high, the gloomy scenes

Where beauty oft and lettered worth consume
Life in the unproductive shades of death,
Fall prone; the pale inhabitants come forth,
And happy in their unforeseen release
From all the rigours of restraint, enjoy
The terrors of the day that sets them free.
Who then that has thee, would not hold thee fast,
Freedom! whom they that lose thee, so regret,
That even a judgement making way for thee,
Seems in their eyes, a mercy, for thy sake.

Such evil sin hath wrought; and such a flame
Kindled in heaven, that it burns down to earth,
And in the furious inquest that it makes
On God's behalf, lays waste his fairest works.
The very elements, though each be meant
The minister of man, to serve his wants,
Conspire against him. With his breath, he draws
A plague into his blood, and cannot use
Life's necessary means, but he must die.
Storms rise to o'erwhelm him: or if stormy winds
Rise not, the waters of the deep shall rise,
And needing none assistance of the storm,
Shall roll themselves ashore, and reach him there.
The earth shall shake him out of all his holds,
Or make his house his grave: nor so content,
Shall counterfeit the motions of the flood,
And drown him in her dry and dusty gulfs.
What then, - were they the wicked above all,
And we the righteous, whose fast anchored isle
Moved not, while theirs was rocked like a light skiff,
The sport of every wave? No: none are clear,
And none than we more guilty. But where all
Stand chargeable with guilt, and to the shafts
Or wrath obnoxious, God may choose his mark,
May punish, if he please, the less, to warn
The more malignant. If he spared not them,
Tremble and be amazed at thine escape,
Far guiltier England! lest he spare not thee.

Happy the man who sees a God employ'd
In all the good and ill that chequer life!

Resolving all events, with their effects
And manifold results, into the will
And arbitration wise of the Supreme.
Did not his eye rule all things, and intend
The least of our concerns (since from the least
The greatest oft originate); could chance
Find place in his dominion, or dispose
One lawless particle to thwart his plan;
Then God might be surprised, and unforeseen
Contingence might alarm him, and disturb
The smooth and equal course of his affairs.
This truth Philosophy, though eagle-eyed
In nature's tendencies, oft overlooks;
And, having found his instrument, forgets,
Or disregards, or, more presumptuous still,
Denies the power that wields it. God proclaims
His hot displeasure against foolish men,
That live an atheist life: involves the heaven
In tempests; quits his grasp upon the winds,
And gives them all their fury; bids a plague
Kindle a fiery boil upon the skin,
And putrefy the breath of blooming Health.
He calls for Famine, and the meagre fiend
Blows mildew from between his shrivell'd lips,
And taints the golden ear. He springs his mines,
And desolates a nation at a blast.
Forth steps the spruce philosopher, and tells
Of homogeneal and discordant springs
And principles; of causes, how they work
By necessary laws their sure effects;
Of action and re-action. He has found
The source of the disease that nature feels,
And bids the world take heart and banish fear.
Thou fool! will thy discovery of the cause
Suspend the effect, or heal it? Has not God
Still wrought by means since first he made the world?
And did he not of old employ his means
To drown it? What is his creation less
Than a capacious reservoir of means
Form'd for his use, and ready at his will?
Go, dress thine eyes with eye-salve; ask of him,
Or ask of whosoever he has taught;

And learn, though late, the genuine cause of all.

England, with all thy faults, I love thee still -
My country! and, while yet a nook is left
Where English minds and manners may be found,
Shall be constrain'd to love thee. Though thy clime
Be fickle, and thy year most part deform'd
With dripping rains, or wither'd by a frost,
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies,
And fields without a flower, for warmer France
With all her vines; nor for Ausonia's groves
Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bowers.
To shake thy senate, and from heights sublime
Of patriot eloquence to flash down fire
Upon thy foes, was never meant my task:
But I can feel thy fortunes, and partake
Thy joys and sorrows, with as true a heart
As any thunderer there. And I can feel
Thy follies too; and with a just disdain
Frown at effeminates, whose very looks
Reflect dishonour on the land I love.
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Should England prosper, when such things, as smooth
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And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own.
Farewell those honours, and farewell with them
The hope of such hereafter! They have fallen
Each in his field of glory; one in arms,
And one in council: Wolfe upon the lap
Of smiling Victory that moment won,
And Chatham heart-sick of his country's shame!
They made us many soldiers. Chatham still

Consulting England's happiness at home,
Secured it by an unforgiving frown,
If any wrong'd her. Wolfe, where'er he fought,
Put so much of his heart into his act,
That his example had a magnet's force,
And all were swift to follow whom all loved.
Those suns are set. Oh, rise some other such!
Or all that we have left is empty talk
Of old achievements and despair of new.

Now hoist the sail, and let the streamers float
Upon the wanton breezes. Strew the deck
With lavender, and sprinkle liquid sweets,
That no rude savour maritime invade
The nose of nice nobility! Breathe soft,
Ye clarionets; and softer still, ye flutes;
That winds and waters, lull'd by magic sounds,
May bear us smoothly to the Gallic shore!
True, we have lost an empire - let it pass.
True; we may thank the perfidy of France,
That pick'd the jewel out of England's crown,
With all the cunning of an envious shrew.
And let that pass; 'twas but a trick of state!
A brave man knows no malice, but at once
Forgets in peace the injuries of war,
And gives his direst foe a friend's embrace.
And, shamed as we have been, to the very beard
Braved and defied, and in our own sea proved
Too weak for those decisive blows that once
Ensured us mastery there, we yet retain
Some small pre-eminence; we justly boast
At least superior jockeyship, and claim
The honours of the turf as all our own!
Go then, well worthy of the praise ye seek,
And show the shame ye might conceal at home
In foreign eyes! be grooms and win the plate,
Where once your nobler fathers won a crown!
'Tis generous to communicate your skill
To those that need it! Folly is soon learn'd:
And under such preceptors who can fail!

There is a pleasure in poetic pains

Which only poets know. The shifts and turns,
The expedients and inventions multiform,
To which the mind resorts, in chase of terms
Though apt, yet coy, and difficult to win -
To arrest the fleeting images that fill
The mirror of the mind, and hold them fast,
And force them sit till he has pencill'd off
A faithful likeness of the forms he views:
Then to dispose his copies with such art,
That each may find its most propitious light,
And shine by situation, hardly less
Than by the labour and the skill it cost;
Are occupations of the poet's mind
So pleasing, and that steal away the thought
With such address from themes of sad import,
That, lost in his own musings, happy man!
He feels the anxieties of life denied
Their wonted entertainment, all retire.
Such joys has he that sings. But ah! not such,
Or seldom such, the hearers of his song.
Fastidious, or else listless, or perhaps
Aware of nothing arduous in a task
They never undertook, they little note
His dangers or escapes, and haply find
Their least amusement where he found the most.
But is amusement all? Studios of song,
And yet ambitious not to sing in vain,
I would not trifle merely, though the world
Be loudest in their praise who do no more.
Yet what can satire, whether grave or gay?
It may correct a foible, may chastise
The freaks of fashion, regulate the dress,
Retrench a sword-blade, or displace a patch;
But where are its sublimer trophies found?
What vice has it subdued? whose heart reclaim'd
By rigour? or whom laugh'd into reform?
Alas! Leviathan is not so tamed:
Laugh'd at, he laughs again; and, stricken hard,
Turns to the stroke his adamant scales,
That fear no discipline of human hands.

The pulpit, therefore (and I name it fill'd

With solemn awe, that bids me well beware
With what intent I touch that holy thing)-
The pulpit (when the satirist has at last,
Strutting and vapouring in an empty school,
Spent all his force, and made no proselyte)-
I say the pulpit (in the sober use
Of its legitimate, peculiar powers,)
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament of Virtue's cause.
There stands the messenger of truth: there stands
The legate of the skies! His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.
He 'stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart,
And, arm'd himself in panoply complete
Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms
Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God's elect!
Are all such teachers? - would to heaven all were!
But hark - the doctor's voice! - fast wedged between
Two empirics he stands, and with swoll'n cheeks
Inspires the news, his trumpet. Keener far
Than all invective is his bold harangue,
While through that public organ of report
He hails the clergy; and, defying shame,
Announces to the world his own and theirs!
He teaches those to read, whom schools dismiss'd,
And colleges, untaught; sells accent, tone,
And emphasis in score, and gives to prayer
The adagio and andante it demands.
He grinds divinity of other days
Down into modern use; transforms old print
To zigzag manuscript, and cheats the eyes
Of gallery critics by a thousand arts.
Are there who purchase of the doctor's ware?
Oh, name it not Gath! - it cannot be
That grave and learned clerks should need such aid.

He doubtless is in sport, and does but droll,
Assuming thus a rank unknown before -
Grand caterer and dry-nurse of the church!

I venerate the man whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life,
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause;
To such I render more than mere respect,
Whose actions say that they respect themselves,
But loose in morals, and in manners vain,
In conversation frivolous, in dress
Extreme, at once rapacious and profuse;
Frequent in park with lady at his side,
Ambling and prattling scandal as he goes;
But rare at home, and never at his books,
Or with his pen, save when he scrawls a card;
Constant at routs, familiar with a round
Of ladyships - a stranger to the poor;
Ambitious of preferment for its gold,
And well prepared, by ignorance and sloth,
By infidelity and love of world,
To make God's work a sinecure; a slave
To his own pleasures and his patron's pride:
From such apostles, O ye mitred heads,
Preserve the church! and lay not careless hands
On skulls that cannot teach, and will not learn.

Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own -
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
His master strokes, and draw from his design.
I would express him simple, grave, sincere;
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture; much impress'd
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too; affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men.
Behold the picture! Is it like? Like whom?

The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,
And then skip down again; pronounce a text;
Cry hem; and reading what they never wrote,
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene!

In man or woman, but far most in man,
And most of all in man that ministers
And serves the altar, in my soul I loathe
All affectation. 'Tis my perfect scorn;
Object of my implacable disgust.

What! will a man play tricks? will he indulge
A silly fond conceit of his fair form,
And just proportion, fashionable mien,
And pretty face, in presence of his God?
Or will he seek to dazzle me with tropes,
As with the diamond on his lily hand,
And play his brilliant parts before my eyes,
When I am hungry for the bread of life?
He mocks his Maker, prostitutes and shames
His noble office, and, instead of truth,
Displaying his own beauty, starves his flock!
Therefore, avaunt all attitude, and stare,
And start theatric, practised at the glass
I seek divine simplicity in him
Who handles things divine; and all besides,
Though learn'd with labour, and though much admired
By curious eyes and judgments ill inform'd,
To me is odious as the nasal twang
Heard at conventicle, where worthy men,
Misled by custom, strain celestial themes
Through the press'd nostril, spectacle-bestrid.
Some, decent in demeanour while they preach,
Their task perform'd, relapse into themselves;
And, having spoken wisely, at the close
Grow wanton, and give proof to every eye,
Whoe'er was edified, themselves were not!
Forth comes the pocket mirror. First we stroke
An eyebrow; next compose a straggling lock;
Then with an air most gracefully perform'd
Fall back into our seat, extend an arm,

And lay it at its ease with gentle care,
With handkerchief in hand depending low:
The better hand more busy gives the nose
Its bergamot, or aids the indebted eye,
With opera glass, to watch the moving scene,
And recognise the slow-retiring fair.
Now this is fulsome; and offends me more
Than in a churchman slovenly neglect
And rustic coarseness would. A heavenly mind
May be indifferent to her house of clay,
And slight the hovel as beneath her care;
But how a body so fantastic, trim,
And quaint, in its deportment and attire,
Can lodge a heavenly mind - demands a doubt.

He that negotiates between God and man,
As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitful
To court a grin, when you should woo a soul;
To break a jest, when pity would inspir
Pathetic exhortation; and to address
The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
When sent with God's commission to the heart!
So did not Paul. Direct me to a quip
Or merry turn in all he ever wrote,
And I consent you take it for your text,
Your only one, till sides and benches fail.
No: he was serious in a serious cause,
And understood too well the weighty terms
That he had taken in charge. He would not stoop
To conquer those by jocular exploits
Whom truth and soberness assail'd in vain.

O popular applause! what heart of man
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms?
The wisest and the best feel urgent need
Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales;
But, swell'd into a gust - who then, alas!
With all his canvas set, and inexpert,
And therefore heedless, can withstand thy power?
Praise, from the rivell'd lips of toothless, bald

Decrepitude, and in the looks of lean
And craving Poverty, and in the bow
Respectful of the smutch'd artificer,
Is oft too welcome, and may much disturb
The bias of the purpose. How much more,
Pour'd forth by beauty splendid and polite,
In language soft as Adoration breathes?
Ah, spare your idol! think him human still.
Charms he may have, but he has frailties too!
Dote not too much, nor spoil what ye admire.

All truth is from the sempiternal source
Of light divine. But Egypt, Greece, and Rome
Drew from the stream below. More favour'd, we
Drink, when we choose it, at the fountain-head.
To them it flow'd much mingled and defiled
With hurtful error, prejudice, and dreams
Illusive of philosophy, so call'd,
But falsely. Sages after sages strove
In vain to filter off a crystal draught
Pure from the lees, which often more enhanced
The thirst than slaked it, and not seldom bred
Intoxication and delirium wild.
In vain they push'd inquiry to the birth
And spring-time of the world; ask'd, Whence is man?
Why form'd at all? and wherefore as he is?
Where must he find his Maker? with what rites
Adore him? Will he hear, accept, and bless?
Or does he sit regardless of his works?
Has man within him an immortal seed?
Or does the tomb take all? If he survive
His ashes, where? and in what weal or woe?
Knots worthy of solution, which alone
A Deity could solve. Their answers, vague
And all at random, fabulous and dark,
Left them as dark themselves. Their rules of life,
Defective and unsanction'd, proved too weak
To bind the roving appetite, and lead
Blind nature to a God not yet reveal'd.
'Tis Revelation satisfies all doubts,
Explains all mysteries, except her own,
And so illuminates the path of life

That fools discover it, and stray no more.
Now tell me, dignified and sapient sir,
My man of morals, nurtured in the shades
Of Academus - is this false or true?
Is Christ the abler teacher, or the schools?
If Christ, then why resort at every turn
To Athens or to Rome, for wisdom short
Of man's occasions, when in him reside
Grace, knowledge, comfort -an unfathom'd store?
How oft, when Paul has served us with a text,
Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully preach'd!
Men that, if now alive, would sit content
And humble learners of a Saviour's worth,
Preach it who might. Such was their love of truth,
Their thirst of knowledge, and their candour too!

And thus it is. - The pastor, either vain
By nature, or by flattery made so, taught
To gaze at his own splendour, and to exalt
Absurdly, not his office, but himself;
Or unenlighten'd, and too proud to learn;
Or vicious, and not therefore apt to teach;
Perverting often, by the stress of lewd
And loose example, whom he should instruct;
Exposes, and holds up to broad disgrace
The noblest function, and discredits much
The brightest truths that man has ever seen.
For ghostly counsel - if it either fall
Below the exigence, or be not back'd
With show of love, at least with hopeful proof
Of some sincerity on the giver's part;
Or be dishonour'd in the exterior form
And mode of its conveyance by such tricks
As move derision, or by foppish airs
And histrionic mummary, that let down
The pulpit to the level of the stage.
Drops from the lips a disregarded thing.
The weak perhaps are moved, but are not taught,
While prejudice in men of stronger minds
Takes deeper root, confirm'd by what they see.
A relaxation of religion's hold
Upon the roving and untutor'd heart

Soon follows, and, the curb of conscience snapp'd,
The laity run wild. But do they now?
Note their extravagance, and be convinced.

As nations, ignorant of God, contrive
A wooden one, so we, no longer taught
By monitors that mother church supplies,
Now make our own. Posterity will ask
(If e'er posterity see verse of mine)
Some fifty or a hundred lustrums hence,
What was a monitor in George's days?
My very gentle reader, yet unborn,
Of whom I needs must augur better things,
Since Heaven would sure grow weary of a world
Productive only of a race like ours,
A monitor is wood-plank shaven thin.
We wear it at our backs. There, closely braced
And neatly fitted, it compresses hard
The prominent and most unsightly bones,
And binds the shoulders flat. We prove its use
Sovereign and most effectual to secure
A form, not now gymnastic as of yore,
From rickets and distortion, else our lot.
But, thus admonish'd, we can walk erect.
One proof at least of manhood! while the friend
Sticks close, a Mentor worthy of his charge.
Our habits, costlier than Lucullus wore,
And by caprice as multiplied as his,
Just please us while the fashion is at full,
But change with every moon. The sycophant
Who waits to dress us arbitrates their date;
Surveys his fair reversion with keen eye;
Finds one ill made, another obsolete,
This fits not nicely, that is ill conceived;
And, making prize of all that he condemns,
With our expenditure defrays his own.
Variety's the very spice of life,
That gives it all its flavour. We have run
Through every change that Fancy, at the loom
Exhausted, has had genius to supply;
And, studious of mutation still, discard
A real elegance, a little used,

For monstrous novelty and strange disguise.
We sacrifice to dress, till household joys
And comforts cease. Dress drains our cellar dry,
And keeps our larder lean; puts out our fires;
And introduces hunger, frost, and woe,
Where peace and hospitality might reign.
What man that lives, and that knows how to live,
Would fail to exhibit at the public shows
A form as splendid as the proudest there,
Though appetite raise outcries at the cost?
A man of the town dines late, but soon enough,
With reasonable forecast and despatch,
To ensure a side-box station at half-price.
You think, perhaps, so delicate his dress,
His daily fare as delicate. Alas!
He picks clean teeth, and, busy as he seems
With an old tavern quill, is hungry yet!
The rout is Folly's circle, which she draws
With magic wand. So potent is the spell,
That none, decoy'd into that fatal ring,
Unless by Heaven's peculiar grace, escape.
There we grow early grey, but never wise;
There form connexions, but acquire no friend;
Solicit pleasure, hopeless of success;
Waste youth in occupations only fit
For second childhood, and devote old age
To sports which only childhood could excuse.
There they are happiest who dissemble best
Their weariness; and they the most polite
Who squander time and treasure with a smile,
Though at their own destruction. She that asks
Her dear five hundred friends contemns them all,
And hates their coming. They (what can they less?)
Make just reprisals; and, with cringe and shrug,
And bow obsequious, hide their hate of her.
All catch the frenzy, downward from her grace,
Whose flambeaux flash against the morning skies,
And gild our chamber ceilings as they pass,
To her, who, frugal only that her thrift
May feed excesses she can ill afford,
Is hackney'd home unlackey'd; who, in haste
Alighting, turns the key in her own door,

And, at the watchman's lantern borrowing light,
Finds a cold bed her only comfort left.
Wives beggar husbands, husbands starve their wives,
On Fortune's velvet altar offering up
Their last poor pittance. Fortune, most severe
Of goddesses yet known, and costlier far
Than all that held their routs in Juno's heaven.
So fare we in this prison-house, the world;
And 'tis a fearful spectacle to see
So many maniacs dancing in their chains.
They gaze upon the links that hold them fast
With eyes of anguish, execrate their lot,
Then shake them in despair, and dance again!

Now basket up the family of plagues
That waste our vitals; peculation, sale
Of honour, perjury, corruption, frauds
By forgery, by subterfuge of law,
By tricks and lies as numerous and as keen
As the necessities their authors feel;
Then cast them, closely bundled, every brat
At the right door. Profusion is the sire.
Profusion unrestrain'd, with all that's base
In character, has litter'd all the land,
And bred, within the memory of no few,
A priesthood such as Baal's was of old,
A people such as never was till now.
It is a hungry vice: it eats up all
That gives society its beauty, strength,
Convenience, and security, and use:
Makes men mere vermin, worthy to be trapp'd
And gibbeted, as fast as catchpole claws
Can seize the slippery prey: unties the knot
Of union, and converts the sacred band,
That holds mankind together, to a scourge.
Profusion, deluging a state with lusts
Of grossest nature and of worst effects,
Prepares it for its ruin: hardens, blinds,
And warps the consciences of public men,
Till they can laugh at Virtue; mock the fools
That trust them; and in the end disclose a face
That would have shock'd Credulity herself,

Unmask'd, vouchsafing this their sole excuse
Since all alike are selfish, why not they?
This does Profusion, and the accursed cause
Of such deep mischief has itself a cause.

In colleges and halls, in ancient days,
When learning, virtue, piety, and truth
Were precious and inculcated with care,
There dwelt a sage call'd Discipline. His head,
Not yet by time completely silver'd o'er,
Bespoke him past the bounds of freakish youth,
But strong for service still, and unimpair'd.
His eye was meek and gentle, and a smile
Play'd on his lips; and in his speech was heard
Paternal sweetness, dignity, and love.
The occupation dearest to his heart
Was to encourage goodness. He would stroke
The head of modest and ingenuous worth,
That blush'd at its own praise; and press the youth
Close to his side that pleased him. Learning grew
Beneath his care a thriving vigorous plant;
The mind was well-inform'd, the passions held
Subordinate, and diligence was choice.
If e'er it chanced, as sometimes chance it must,
That one among so many overleap'd
The limits of control, his gentle eye
Grew stern, and darted a severe rebuke:
His frown was full of terror, and his voice
Shook the delinquent with such fits of awe
As left him not, till penitence had won
Lost favour back again, and closed the breach.
But Discipline, a faithful servant long,
Declined at length into the vale of years:
A palsy struck his arm; his sparkling eye
Was quench'd in rheums of age; his voice, unstrung,
Grew tremulous, and moved derision more
Than reverence in perverse rebellious youth.
So colleges and halls neglected much
Their good old friend; and Discipline at length,
O'erlook'd and unemploy'd, fell sick, and died.
Then Study languish'd, Emulation slept,
And Virtue fled. The schools became a scene

Of solemn farce, where ignorance in stilts,
His cap well lined with logic not his own,
With parrot tongue perform'd the scholar's part,
Proceeding soon a graduated dunce.
Then Compromise had place, and Scrutiny
Became stone blind; Precedence went in truck,
And he was competent whose purse was so.
A dissolution of all bonds ensued;
The curbs invented for the mulish mouth
Of headstrong youth were broken; bars and bolts
Grew rusty by disuse; and massy gates
Forgot their office, opening with a touch;
Till gowns at length are found mere masquerade,
The tassell'd cap and the spruce band a jest,
A mockery of the world! What need of these
For gamesters, jockeys, brothellers impure,
Spendthrifts, and booted sportsmen, oftener seen
With belted waist and pointers at their heels
Than in the bounds of duty? What was learn'd,
If aught was learn'd in childhood, is forgot;
And such expense as pinches parents blue,
And mortifies the liberal hand of love,
Is squander'd in pursuit of idle sports
And vicious pleasures; buys the boy a name
That sits a stigma on his father's house,
And cleaves through life inseparably close
To him that wears it. What can after-games
Of riper joys, and commerce with the world,
The lewd vain world, that must receive him soon,
Add to such erudition, thus acquired,
Where science and where virtue are profess'd?
They may confirm his habits, rivet fast
His folly, but to spoil him is a task
That bids defiance to the united powers
Of fashion, dissipation, taverns, stews.
Now blame we most the nurslings or the nurse?
The children, crook'd, and twisted, and deform'd,
Through want of care; or her whose winking eye
And slumbering oscitancy mars the brood?
The nurse, no doubt. Regardless of her charge,
She needs herself correction; needs to learn
That it is dangerous sporting with the world,

With things so sacred as a nation's trust,
The nurture of her youth, her dearest pledge.

All are not such. I had a brother once -
Peace to the memory of a man of worth,
A man of letters, and of manners too!
Of manners sweet as Virtue always wears,
When gay good-nature dresses her in smiles.
He graced a college, in which order yet
Was sacred; and was honour'd, loved, and wept
By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.
Some minds are temper'd happily, and mix'd
With such ingredients of good sense and taste
Of what is excellent in man, they thirst
With such a zeal to be what they approve,
That no restraints can circumscribe them more
Than they themselves by choice, for wisdom's sake.
Nor can example hurt them; what they see
Of vice in others but enhancing more
The charms of virtue in their just esteem.
If such escape contagion, and emerge
Pure from so foul a pool to shine abroad,
And give the world their talents and themselves,
Small thanks to those, whose negligence or sloth
Exposed their inexperience to the snare,
And left them to an undirected choice.

See then the quiver broken and decay'd,
In which are kept our arrows! Rusting there
In wild disorder, and unfit for use,
What wonder, if, discharged into the world,
They shame their shooters with a random flight,
Their points obtuse, and feathers drunk with wine!
Well may the church wage unsuccessful war,
With such artillery arm'd. Vice parries wide
The undreaded volley with a sword of straw,
And stands an impudent and fearless mark.

Have we not track'd the felon home, and found
His birthplace and his dam? The country mourns,
Mourns because every plague that can infest
Society, and that saps and worms the base

Of the edifice that Policy has raised,
Swarms in all quarters; meets the eye, the ear,
And suffocates the breath at every turn.
Profusion breeds them; and the cause itself
Of that calamitous mischief has been found:
Found too where most offensive, in the skirts
Of the robed pedagogue! Else let the arraign'd
Stand up unconscious, and refute the charge.
So when the Jewish leader stretch'd his arm,
And waved his rod divine, a race obscene,
Spawn'd in the muddy beds of Nile, came forth,
Polluting Egypt: gardens, fields, and plains
Were cover'd with the pest; the streets were fill'd;
The croaking nuisance lurk'd in every nook;
Nor palaces, nor even chambers, 'scaped;
And the land stank, so numerous was the fry.

William Cowper

The Task: Book Iii. -- The Garden

As one who, long in thickets and in brakes
Entangled, winds now this way and now that
His devious course uncertain, seeking home;
Or, having long in miry ways been foil'd,
And sore discomfited, from slough to slough
Plunging, and half despairing of escape;
If chance at length he finds a greensward smooth
And faithful to the foot, his spirits rise,
He chirrups brisk his ear-erecting steed,
And winds his way with pleasure and with ease:
So I, designing other themes, and call'd
To adorn the Sofa with eulogium due,
To tell its slumbers, and to paint its dreams,
Have rambled wide. In country, city, seat
Of academic fame (howe'er deserved),
Long held, and scarcely disengaged at last.
But now with pleasant pace a cleanlier road
I mean to tread. I feel myself at large,
Courageous, and refresh'd for future toil,
If toil awaits me, or if dangers new.

Since pulpits fail, and sounding boards reflect
Most part an empty ineffectual sound,
What chance that I, to fame so little known,
Nor conversant with men or manners much,
Should speak to purpose, or with better hope
Crack the satiric thong? 'Twere wiser far
For me, enamour'd of sequester'd scenes,
And charm'd with rural beauty, to repose,
Where chance may throw me, beneath elm or vine,
My languid limbs, when summer sears the plains;
Or, when rough winter rages, on the soft
And shelter'd Sofa, while the nitrous air
Feeds a blue flame, and makes a cheerful hearth;
There, undisturb'd by Folly, and apprised
How great the danger of disturbing her,
To muse in silence, or at least confine
Remarks that gall so many to the few,
My partners in retreat. Disgust conceal'd

Is oftentimes proof of wisdom, when the fault
Is obstinate, and cure beyond our reach.

Domestic Happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has survived the fall!
Though few now taste thee unimpair'd and pure,
Or tasting long enjoy thee! too infirm,
Or too incautious, to preserve thy sweets
Unmix'd with drops of bitter, which neglect
Or temper sheds into thy crystal cup;
Thou art the nurse of Virtue, in thine arms
She smiles, appearing, as in truth she is,
Heaven-born, and destined to the skies again.
Thou art not known where Pleasure is adored,
That reeling goddess with the zoneless waist
And wandering eyes, still leaning on the arm
Of Novelty, her fickle, frail support;
For thou art meek and constant, hating change,
And finding in the calm of truth-tried love
Joys that her stormy raptures never yield.
Forsaking thee, what shipwreck have we made
Of honour, dignity, and fair renown!
Till prostitution elbows us aside
In all our crowded streets; and senates seem
Convened for purposes of empire less
Than to release the adultress from her bond.
The adultress! what a theme for angry verse!
What provocation to the indignant heart,
That feels for injur'd love! but I disdain
The nauseous task, to paint her as she is,
Cruel, abandon'd, glorying in her shame!
No:—let her pass, and, charioted along
In guilty splendour, shake the public ways;
The frequency of crimes has wash'd them white;
And verse of mine shall never brand the wretch,
Whom matrons now, of character unsmirch'd
And chaste themselves, are not ashamed to own.
Virtue and vice had boundaries in old time,
Not to be pass'd: and she, that had renounced
Her sex's honour, was renounced herself
By all that prized it; not for prudery's sake,
But dignity's, resentful of the wrong.

'Twas hard perhaps on here and there a waif,
Desirous to return, and not received;
But was a wholesome rigour in the main,
And taught the unblemish'd to preserve with care
That purity, whose loss was loss of all.
Men too were nice in honour in those days,
And judged offenders well. Then he that sharp'd,
And pocketed a prize by fraud obtain'd,
Was mark'd and shunn'd as odious. He that sold
His country, or was slack when she required
His every nerve in action and at stretch,
Paid, with the blood that he had basely spared,
The price of his default. But now—yes, now
We are become so candid and so fair,
So liberal in construction, and so rich
In Christian charity (good-natured age!),
That they are safe, sinners of either sex,
Transgress what laws they may. Well dress'd, well bred,
Well equipaged, is ticket good enough
To pass us readily through every door.
Hypocrisy, detest her as we may
(And no man's hatred ever wrong'd her yet),
May claim this merit still—that she admits
The worth of what she mimics with such care,
And thus gives virtue indirect applause;
But she has burnt her mask, not needed here,
Where Vice has such allowance, that her shifts
And specious semblances have lost their use.

I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
Long since: with many an arrow deep infix'd
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew,
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by One who had himself
Been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and heal'd, and bade me live.
Since then, with few associates, in remote
And silent woods I wander, far from those
My former partners of the peopled scene;
With few associates, not wishing more.

Here much I ruminatē, as much I may,
With other views of men and manners now
Than once, and others of a life to come.
I see that all are wanderers, gone astray
Each in his own delusions; they are lost
In chase of fancied happiness, still woo'd
And never won. Dream after dream ensues;
And still they dream that they shall still succeed;
And still are disappointed. Rings the world
With the vain stir. I sum up half mankind,
And add two-thirds of the remaining half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears
Dreams, empty dreams. The million flit as gay
As if created only like the fly,
That spreads his motley wings in the eye of noon,
To sport their season, and be seen no more.
The rest are sober dreamers, grave and wise,
And pregnant with discoveries new and rare.
Some write a narrative of wars, and feats
Of heroes little known; and call the rant
A history; describe the man, of whom
His own coevals took but little note;
And paint his person, character, and views,
As they had known him from his mother's womb.
They disentangle from the puzzled skein,
In which obscurity has wrapp'd them up,
The threads of politic and shrewd design,
That ran through all his purposes, and charge
His mind with meanings that he never had,
Or having, kept conceal'd. Some drill and bore
The solid earth, and from the strata there
Extract a register, by which we learn,
That He who made it, and reveal'd its date
To Moses, was mistaken in its age.
Some, more acute, and more industrious still,
Contrive creation; travel nature up
To the sharp peak of her sublimest height,
And tell us whence the stars; why some are fix'd,
And planetary some; what gave them first
Rotation, from what fountain flow'd their light.
Great contest follows, and much learned dust
Involves the combatants; each claiming truth,

And truth disclaiming both. And thus they spend
The little wick of life's poor shallow lamp
In playing tricks with nature, giving laws
To distant worlds, and trifling in their own.
Is't not a pity, now, that tickling rheums
Should ever tease the lungs and blear the sight
Of oracles like these? Great pity too,
That, having wielded the elements, and built
A thousand systems, each in his own way,
They should go out in fume, and be forgot?
Ah! what is life thus spent? and what are they
But frantic who thus spend it? all for smoke—
Eternity for bubbles proves at last
A senseless bargain. When I see such games
Play'd by the creatures of a Power who swears
That he will judge the earth, and call the fool
To a sharp reckoning that has lived in vain;
And when I weigh this seeming wisdom well,
And prove it in the infallible result
So hollow and so false—I feel my heart
Dissolve in pity, and account the learn'd,
If this be learning, most of all deceived.
Great crimes alarm the conscience, but it sleeps
While thoughtful man is plausibly amused.
Defend me therefore, common sense, say I,
From reveries so airy, from the toil
Of dropping buckets into empty wells,
And growing old in drawing nothing up!

'Twere well, says one sage erudite, profound,
Terribly arch'd and aquiline his nose,
And overbuilt with most impending brows,—
'Twere well could you permit the world to live
As the world pleases: what's the world to you?
Much. I was born of woman, and drew milk
As sweet as charity from human breasts.
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How then should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other? Pierce my vein,
Take of the crimson stream meandering there,
And catechise it well: apply thy glass,

Search it, and prove now if it be not blood
Congenial with thine own: and, if it be,
What edge of subtlety canst thou suppose
Keen enough, wise and skilful as thou art,
To cut the link of brotherhood, by which
One common Maker bound me to the kind?
True; I am no proficient, I confess,
In arts like yours. I cannot call the swift
And perilous lightnings from the angry clouds,
And bid them hide themselves in earth beneath;
I cannot analyse the air, nor catch
The parallax of yonder luminous point,
That seems half-quench'd in the immense abyss:
Such powers I boast not—neither can I rest
A silent witness of the headlong rage,
Or heedless folly by which thousands die,
Bone of my bone, and kindred souls to mine.

God never meant that man should scale the heavens
By strides of human wisdom. In his works,
Though wondrous, he commands us in his word
To seek him rather where his mercy shines.
The mind indeed, enlighten'd from above,
Views him in all; ascribes to the grand cause
The grand effect; acknowledges with joy
His manner, and with rapture tastes his style.
But never yet did philosophic tube,
That brings the planets home into the eye
Of Observation, and discovers, else
Not visible, his family of worlds,
Discover him that rules them; such a veil
Hangs over mortal eyes, blind from the birth,
And dark in things divine. Full often too
Our wayward intellect, the more we learn
Of nature overlooks her Author more;
From instrumental causes proud to draw
Conclusions retrograde and mad mistake.
But if his word once teach us, shoot a ray
Through all the heart's dark chambers, and reveal
Truths undiscern'd but by that holy light,
Then all is plain. Philosophy, baptized
In the pure fountain of eternal love,

Has eyes indeed; and, viewing all she sees
As meant to indicate a God to man,
Gives him his praise, and forfeits not her own.
Learning has borne such fruit in other days
On all her branches: piety has found
Friends in the friends of science, and true prayer
Has flow'd from lips wet with Castalian dew.
Such was thy wisdom, Newton, child-like sage!
Sagacious reader of the works of God,
And in his word sagacious. Such, too, thine,
Milton, whose genius had angelic wings,
And fed on manna! And such thine, in whom
Our British Themis gloried with just cause,
Immortal Hale! for deep discernment praised,
And sound integrity, not more than famed
For sanctity of manners undefiled.

All flesh is grass, and all its glory fades
Like the fair flower dishevell'd in the wind;
Riches have wings, and grandeur is a dream.
The man we celebrate must find a tomb,
And we that worship him ignoble graves.
Nothing is proof against the general curse
Of vanity, that seizes all below.
The only amaranthine flower on earth
Is virtue; the only lasting treasure, truth.
But what is truth? 'Twas Pilate's question put
To Truth itself, that deign'd him no reply.
And wherefore? will not God impart his light
To them that ask it?—Freely—'tis his joy,
His glory, and his nature to impart.
But to the proud, uncandid, insincere,
Or negligent inquirer, not a spark.
What's that which brings contempt upon a book,
And him who writes it, though the style be neat,
The method clear, and argument exact?
That makes a minister in holy things
The joy of many and the dread of more,
His name a theme for praise and for reproach?—
That, while it gives us worth in God's account,
Depreciates and undoes us in our own?
What pearl is it that rich men cannot buy,

That learning is too proud to gather up;
But which the poor, and the despised of all,
Seek and obtain, and often find unsought?
Tell me—and I will tell thee what is truth.

O friendly to the best pursuits of man,
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,
Domestic life in rural pleasure pass'd!
Few know thy value, and few taste thy sweets;
Though many boast thy favours, and affect
To understand and choose thee for their own.
But foolish man forgoes his proper bliss,
E'en as his first progenitor, and quits,
Though placed in Paradise (for earth has still
Some traces of her youthful beauty left),
Substantial happiness for transient joy.
Scenes form'd for contemplation, and to nurse
The growing seeds of wisdom; that suggest,
By every pleasing image they present,
Reflections such as meliorate the heart,
Compose the passions, and exalt the mind;
Scenes such as these 'tis his supreme delight
To fill with riot, and defile with blood.
Should some contagion, kind to the poor brutes
We persecute, annihilate the tribes
That draw the sportsman over hill and dale,
Fearless and rapt away from all his cares;
Should never game-fowl hatch her eggs again,
Nor baited hook deceive the fish's eye;
Could pageantry and dance, and feast and song,
Be quell'd in all our summer months' retreat,
How many self-deluded nymphs and swains,
Who dream they have a taste for fields and groves,
Would find them hideous nurseries of the spleen,
And crowd the roads, impatient for the town!
They love the country, and none else, who seek
For their own sake its silence and its shade.
Delights which who would leave, that has a heart
Susceptible of pity, or a mind
Cultured and capable of sober thought,
For all the savage din of the swift pack,
And clamours of the field?—Detested sport,

That owes its pleasures to another's pain;
That feeds upon the sobs and dying shrieks
Of harmless nature, dumb, but yet endued
With eloquence, that agonies inspire
Of silent tears and heart-distending sighs?
Vain tears, alas! and sighs that never find
A corresponding tone in jovial souls!
Well—one at least is safe. One shelter'd hare
Has never heard the sanguinary yell
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes.
Innocent partner of my peaceful home,
Whom ten long years' experience of my care
Has made at last familiar; she has lost
Much of her vigilant instinctive dread,
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine.
Yes—thou mayest eat thy bread, and lick the hand
That feeds thee; thou mayest frolic on the floor
At evening, and at night retire secure
To thy straw couch, and slumber unalarm'd;
For I have gain'd thy confidence, have pledged
All that is human in me to protect
Thine unsuspecting gratitude and love.
If I survive thee, I will dig thy grave;
And, when I place thee in it, sighing say,
"I knew at least one hare that had a friend."

How various his employments whom the world
Calls idle; and who justly in return
Esteems that busy world an idler too!
Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
Delightful industry enjoy'd at home,
And Nature, in her cultivated trim
Dress'd to his taste, inviting him abroad—
Can he want occupation who has these?
Will he be idle who has much to enjoy?
Me, therefore, studious of laborious ease,
Not slothful, happy to deceive the time,
Not waste it, and aware that human life
Is but a loan to be repaid with use,
When He shall call his debtors to account,
From whom are all our blessings, business finds
E'en here: while sedulous I seek to improve,

At least neglect not, or leave unemploy'd,
The mind He gave me; driving it, though slack
Too oft, and much impeded in its work,
By causes not to be divulged in vain,
To its just point—the service of mankind.
He, that attends to his interior self,
That has a heart, and keeps it; has a mind
That hungers, and supplies it; and who seeks
A social, not a dissipated life,
Has business; feels himself engaged to achieve
No unimportant, though a silent, task.
A life all turbulence and noise may seem
To him that leads it, wise, and to be praised;
But wisdom is a pearl with most success
Sought in still water and beneath clear skies.
He that is ever occupied in storms,
Or dives not for it, or brings up instead,
Vainly industrious, a disgraceful prize.

The morning finds the self-sequester'd man
Fresh for his task, intend what task he may.
Whether inclement seasons recommend
His warm but simple home, where he enjoys
With her who shares his pleasures and his heart,
Sweet converse, sipping calm the fragrant lymph
Which neatly she prepares; then to his book
Well chosen, and not sullenly perused
In selfish silence, but imparted oft,
As ought occurs, that she might smile to hear,
Or turn to nourishment, digested well.
Or if the garden, with its many cares,
All well repaid, demand him, he attends
The welcome call, conscious how much the hand
Of lubbard Labour needs his watchful eye.
Oft loitering lazily, if not o'erseen,
Or misapplying his unskilful strength.
Nor does he govern only or direct,
But much performs himself. No works, indeed,
That ask robust, tough sinews, bred to toil,
Servile employ; but such as may amuse,
Not tire, demanding rather skill than force.
Proud of his well-spread walls, he views his trees,

That meet no barren interval between,
With pleasure more than e'en their fruits afford;
Which, save himself who trains them, none can feel.
These therefore are his own peculiar charge;
No meaner hand may discipline the shoots,
None but his steel approach them. What is weak,
Distemper'd, or has lost prolific powers,
Impair'd by age, his unrelenting hand
Dooms to the knife: nor does he spare the soft
And succulent, that feeds its giant growth,
But barren, at the expense of neighbouring twigs
Less ostentatious, and yet studded thick
With hopeful gems. The rest, no portion left
That may disgrace his art, or disappoint
Large expectations, he disposes neat,
At measured distances, that air and sun,
Admitted freely, may afford their aid,
And ventilate and warm the swelling buds.
Hence Summer has her riches, Autumn hence,
And hence e'en Winter fills his wither'd hand
With blushing fruits, and plenty not his own.
Fair recompence of labour well bestow'd,
And wise precaution; which a clime so rude
Makes needful still, whose Spring is but the child
Of churlish Winter, in her froward moods
Discovering much the temper of her sire.
For oft, as if in her the stream of mild
Maternal nature had reversed its course,
She brings her infants forth with many smiles;
But, once deliver'd, kills them with a frown.
He therefore, timely warn'd himself, supplies
Her want of care, screening and keeping warm
The plenteous bloom, that no rough blast may sweep
His garlands from the boughs. Again, as oft
As the sun peeps, and vernal airs breathe mild,
The fence withdrawn, he gives them every beam,
And spreads his hopes before the blaze of day.

To raise the prickly and green-coated gourd,
So grateful to the palate, and when rare
So coveted, else base and disesteem'd—
Food for the vulgar merely—is an art

That toiling ages have but just matured,
And at this moment unassay'd in song.
Yet gnats have had, and frogs and mice, long since,
Their eulogy; those sang the Mantuan bard;
And these the Grecian, in ennobling strains;
And in thy numbers, Phillips, shines for aye,
The solitary shilling. Pardon then,
Ye sage dispensers of poetic fame,
The ambition of one meaner far, whose powers,
Presuming an attempt not less sublime,
Pant for the praise of dressing to the taste
Of critic appetite no sordid fare,
A cucumber, while costly yet and scarce.

The stable yields a stercoraceous heap,
Impregnated with quick fermenting salts,
And potent to resist the freezing blast;
For, ere the beech and elm have cast their leaf
Deciduous, when now November dark
Checks vegetation in the torpid plant
Exposed to his cold breath, the task begins.
Warily therefore, and with prudent heed,
He seeks a favour'd spot; that where he builds
The agglomerated pile his frame may front
The sun's meridian disk, and at the back
Enjoy close shelter, wall, or reeds, or hedge
Impervious to the wind. First he bids spread
Dry fern or litter'd hay, that may imbibe
The ascending damps; then leisurely impose,
And lightly, shaking it with agile hand
From the full fork, the saturated straw.
What longest binds the closest forms secure
The shapely side, that as it rises takes,
By just degrees, an overhanging breadth,
Sheltering the base with its projected eaves;
The uplifted frame, compact at every joint,
And overlaid with clear translucent glass,
He settles next upon the sloping mount,
Whose sharp declivity shoots off secure
From the dash'd pane the deluge as it falls.
He shuts it close, and the first labour ends.
Thrice must the voluble and restless earth

Spin round upon her axle, ere the warmth,
Slow gathering in the midst, through the square mass
Diffused, attain the surface: when, behold!
A pestilent and most corrosive steam,
Like a gross fog Bœotian, rising fast,
And fast condensed upon the dewy sash,
Asks egress; which obtain'd, the overcharged
And drench'd conservatory breathes abroad,
In volumes wheeling slow, the vapour dank;
And, purified, rejoices to have lost
Its foul inhabitant. But to assuage
The impatient fervour, which it first conceives
Within its reeking bosom, threatening death
To his young hopes, requires discreet delay.
Experience, slow preceptress, teaching oft
The way to glory by miscarriage foul,
Must prompt him, and admonish how to catch
The auspicious moment, when the temper'd heat,
Friendly to vital motion, may afford
Soft fomentation, and invite the seed.
The seed, selected wisely, plump, and smooth,
And glossy, he commits to pots of size
Diminutive, well fill'd with well prepared
And fruitful soil, that has been treasured long,
And drunk no moisture from the dripping clouds.
These on the warm and genial earth, that hides
The smoking manure, and o'erspreads it all,
He places lightly, and, as time subdues
The rage of fermentation, plunges deep
In the soft medium, till they stand immersed.
Then rise the tender germs, upstarting quick,
And spreading wide their spongy lobes; at first
Pale, wan, and livid; but assuming soon,
If fann'd by balmy and nutritious air,
Strain'd through the friendly mats, a vivid green.
Two leaves produced, two rough indented leaves,
Cautious he pinches from the second stalk
A pimple, that portends a future sprout,
And interdicts its growth. Thence straight succeed
The branches, sturdy to his utmost wish;
Prolific all, and harbingers of more.
The crowded roots demand enlargement now,

And transplantation in an ampler space.
Indulged in what they wish, they soon supply
Large foliage, overshadowing golden flowers,
Blown on the summit of the apparent fruit.
These have their sexes; and when summer shines,
The bee transports the fertilizing meal
From flower to flower, and e'en the breathing air
Wafts the rich prize to its appointed use.
Not so when winter scowls. Assistant Art
Then acts in Nature's office, brings to pass
The glad espousals, and ensures the crop.

Grudge not, ye rich (since Luxury must have
His dainties, and the World's more numerous half
Lives by contriving delicacies for you),
Grudge not the cost. Ye little know the cares,
The vigilance, the labour, and the skill,
That day and night are exercised, and hang
Upon the ticklish balance of suspense,
That ye may garnish your profuse regales
With summer fruits brought forth by wintry suns.
Ten thousand dangers lie in wait to thwart
The process. Heat, and cold, and wind, and steam,
Moisture, and drought, mice, worms, and swarming flies,
Minute as dust, and numberless, oft work
Dire disappointment, that admits no cure,
And which no care can obviate. It were long,
Too long, to tell the expedients and the shifts
Which he that fights a season so severe
Devises while he guards his tender trust;
And oft at last in vain. The learn'd and wise
Sarcastic would exclaim, and judge the song
Cold as its theme, and like its theme the fruit
Of too much labour, worthless when produced.

Who loves a garden loves a greenhouse too.
Unconscious of a less propitious clime,
There blooms exotic beauty, warm and snug,
While the winds whistle and the snows descend.
The spiry myrtle with unwithering leaf
Shines there, and flourishes. The golden boast
Of Portugal and western India there,

The ruddier orange, and the paler lime,
Peep through their polish'd foliage at the storm,
And seem to smile at what they need not fear.
The amomum there with intermingling flowers
And cherries hangs her twigs. Geranium boasts
Her crimson honours; and the spangled beau,
Ficoides, glitters bright the winter long.
All plants, of every leaf that can endure
The winter's frown, if screen'd from his shrewd bite,
Live there, and prosper. Those Ausonia claims,
Levantine regions these; the Azores send
Their jessamine, her jessamine remote
Caffraria: foreigners from many lands,
They form one social shade, as if convened
By magic summons of the Orphean lyre.
Yet just arrangement, rarely brought to pass
But by a master's hand, disposing well
The gay diversities of leaf and flower,
Must lend its aid to illustrate all their charms,
And dress the regular yet various scene.
Plant behind plant aspiring, in the van
The dwarfish, in the rear retired, but still
Sublime above the rest, the statelier stand.
So once were ranged the sons of ancient Rome,
A noble show! while Roscius trod the stage;
And so, while Garrick, as renown'd as he,
The sons of Albion; fearing each to lose
Some note of Nature's music from his lips,
And covetous of Shakspeare's beauty, seen
In every flash of his far beaming eye.
Nor taste alone and well contrived display
Suffice to give the marshall'd ranks the grace
Of their complete effect. Much yet remains
Unsung, and many cares are yet behind,
And more laborious; cares on which depends
Their vigour, injured soon, not soon restored.
The soil must be renewed, which often wash'd,
Loses its treasure of salubrious salts,
And disappoints the roots; the slender roots
Close interwoven, where they meet the vase,
Must smooth be shorn away; the sapless branch
Must fly before the knife; the wither'd leaf

Must be detach'd, and where it strews the floor
Swept with a woman's neatness, breeding else
Contagion, and disseminating death.

Discharge but these kind offices (and who
Would spare, that loves them, offices like these?)
Well they reward the toil. The sight is pleased,
The scent regaled, each odoriferous leaf,
Each opening blossom freely breathes abroad
Its gratitude, and thanks him with its sweets.

So manifold, all pleasing in their kind,
All healthful, are the employs of rural life,
Reiterated as the wheel of time
Runs round; still ending and beginning still.
Nor are these all. To deck the shapely knoll,
That softly swell'd and gaily dress'd appears
A flowery island, from the dark green lawn
Emerging, must be deem'd a labour due
To no mean hand, and asks the touch of taste.
Here also grateful mixture of well-match'd
And sorted hues (each giving each relief,
And by contrasted beauty shining more)
Is needful. Strength may wield the ponderous spade,
May turn the clod, and wheel the compost home;
But elegance, chief grace the garden shows,
And most attractive, is the fair result
Of thought, the creature of a polish'd mind.
Without it all is gothic as the scene
To which the insipid citizen resorts
Near yonder heath; where Industry misspent,
But proud of his uncouth ill chosen task,
Has made a heaven on earth; with suns and moons
Of close ramm'd stones has charged the encumber'd soil,
And fairly laid the zodiac in the dust.
He therefore, who would see his flowers disposed
Sightly and in just order, ere he gives
The beds the trusted treasure of their seeds,
Forecasts the future whole; that when the scene
Shall break into its preconceived display,
Each for itself, and all as with one voice
Conspiring, may attest his bright design.
Nor even then, dismissing as perform'd

His pleasant work, may he suppose it done.
Few self-supported flowers endure the wind
Uninjured, but expect the upholding aid
Of the smooth shaven prop, and, neatly tied,
Are wedded thus, like beauty to old age,
For interest sake, the living to the dead.
Some clothe the soil that feeds them, far diffused
And lowly creeping, modest and yet fair,
Like virtue, thriving most where little seen;
Some, more aspiring, catch the neighbour shrub
With clasping tendrils, and invest his branch,
Else unadorn'd with many a gay festoon
And fragrant chaplet, recompensing well
The strength they borrow with the grace they lend.
All hate the rank society of weeds,
Noisome, and ever greedy to exhaust
The impoverish'd earth; an overbearing race,
That, like the multitude made faction mad,
Disturb good order, and degrade true worth.

O blest seclusion from a jarring world,
Which he, thus occupied, enjoys! Retreat
Cannot indeed to guilty man restore
Lost innocence, or cancel follies past;
But it has peace, and much secures the mind
From all assaults of evil; proving still
A faithful barrier, not o'erleap'd with ease
By vicious Custom, raging uncontroll'd
Abroad, and desolating public life.
When fierce temptation, seconded within
By traitor Appetite, and arm'd with darts
Temper'd in Hell, invades the throbbing breast,
To combat may be glorious, and success
Perhaps may crown us; but to fly is safe.
Had I the choice of sublunary good,
What could I wish, that I possess not here?
Health, leisure, means to improve it, friendship, peace,
No loose or wanton, though a wandering, muse,
And constant occupation without care.
Thus blest I draw a picture of that bliss;
Hopeless indeed, that dissipated minds,
And profligate abusers of a world

Created fair so much in vain for them,
Should seek the guiltless joys that I describe,
Allured by my report: but sure no less
That self-condemn'd they must neglect the prize,
And what they will not taste must yet approve.
What we admire we praise; and, when we praise,
Advance it into notice, that, its worth
Acknowledged, others may admire it too.
I therefore recommend, though at the risk
Of popular disgust, yet boldly still,
The cause of piety and sacred truth,
And virtue, and those scenes which God ordain'd
Should best secure them and promote them most,
Scenes that I love, and with regret perceive
Forsaken, or through folly not enjoy'd.
Pure is the nymph, though liberal of her smiles,
And chaste, though unconfined, whom I extol.
Not as the prince in Shushan, when he call'd,
Vain-glorious of her charms, his Vashti forth,
To grace the full pavilion. His design
Was but to boast his own peculiar good,
Which all might view with envy, none partake.
My charmer is not mine alone; my sweets,
And she that sweetens all my bitters too,
Nature, enchanting Nature, in whose form
And lineaments divine I trace a hand
That errs not, and finds raptures still renew'd,
Is free to all men—universal prize.
Strange that so fair a creature should yet want
Admirers, and be destined to divide
With meaner objects e'en the few she finds!
Stripp'd of her ornaments, her leaves, and flowers,
She loses all her influence. Cities then
Attract us, and neglected Nature pines,
Abandon'd as unworthy of our love.
But are not wholesome airs, though unperfumed
By roses; and clear suns, though scarcely felt;
And groves, if unharmonious, yet secure
From clamour, and whose very silence charms;
To be preferr'd to smoke, to the eclipse
That metropolitan volcanoes make,
Whose Stygian throats breathe darkness all day long;

And to the stir of Commerce, driving slow,
And thundering loud, with his ten thousand wheels?
They would be, were not madness in the head,
And folly in the heart; were England now
What England was, plain, hospitable, kind,
And undebauch'd. But we have bid farewell
To all the virtues of those better days,
And all their honest pleasures. Mansions once
Knew their own masters; and laborious hinds,
Who had survived the father, served the son.
Now the legitimate and rightful lord
Is but a transient guest, newly arrived,
And soon to be supplanted. He that saw
His patrimonial timber cast its leaf
Sells the last scantling, and transfers the price
To some shrewd sharper, ere it buds again.
Estates are landscapes, gazed upon awhile,
Then advertised, and auctioneer'd away.
The country starves, and they that feed the o'ercharged
And surfeited lewd town with her fair dues,
By a just judgment strip and starve themselves.
The wings, that waft our riches out of sight,
Grow on the gamester's elbows; and the alert
And nimble motion of those restless joints,
That never tire, soon fans them all away.
Improvement too, the idol of the age,
Is fed with many a victim. Lo, he comes!
The omnipotent magician, Brown, appears!
Down falls the venerable pile, the abode
Of our forefathers—a grave whisker'd race,
But tasteless. Springs a palace in its stead,
But in a distant spot; where more exposed
It may enjoy the advantage of the north,
And aguish east, till time shall have transform'd
Those naked acres to a sheltering grove.
He speaks. The lake in front becomes a lawn:
Woods vanish, hills subside, and valleys rise;
And streams, as if created for his use,
Pursue the track of his directing wand,
Sinuous or straight, now rapid and now slow,
Now murmuring soft, now roaring in cascades—
E'en as he bids! The enraptured owner smiles.

'Tis finish'd, and yet, finish'd as it seems,
Still wants a grace, the loveliest it could show,
A mine to satisfy the enormous cost.
Drain'd to the last poor item of his wealth,
He sighs, departs, and leaves the accomplish'd plan,
That he has touch'd, retouch'd, many a long day
Labour'd, and many a night pursued in dreams,
Just when it meets his hopes, and proves the heaven
He wanted, for a wealthier to enjoy!
And now perhaps the glorious hour is come
When, having no stake left, no pledge to endear
Her interests, or that gives her sacred cause
A moment's operation on his love,
He burns with most intense and flagrant zeal,
To serve his country. Ministerial grace
Deals him out money from the public chest;
Or, if that mine be shut, some private purse
Supplies his need with a usurious loan,
To be refunded duly, when his vote
Well managed shall have earn'd its worthy price.
O innocent, compared with arts like these,
Crape, and cock'd pistol, and the whistling ball
Sent through the traveller's temples! He that finds
One drop of Heaven's sweet mercy in his cup,
Can dig, beg, rot, and perish, well content,
So he may wrap himself in honest rags
At his last gasp: but could not for a world
Fish up his dirty and dependent bread
From pools and ditches of the commonwealth,
Sordid and sickening at his own success.

Ambition, avarice, penury incurr'd
By endless riot, vanity, the lust
Of pleasure and variety, despatch,
As duly as the swallows disappear,
The world of wandering knights and squires to town.
London engulfs them all! The shark is there,
And the shark's prey; the spendthrift, and the leech
That sucks him; there the sycophant, and he
Who, with bareheaded and obsequious bows,
Begs a warm office, doom'd to a cold jail
And groat per diem, if his patron frown.

The levee swarms, as if in golden pomp
Were character'd on every statesman's door,
"Batter'd and bankrupt fortunes mended here."
These are the charms that sully and eclipse
The charms of nature. 'Tis the cruel gripe
That lean hard-handed Poverty inflicts,
The hope of better things, the chance to win,
The wish to shine, the thirst to be amused,
That at the sound of Winter's hoary wing
Unpeople all our counties of such herds
Of fluttering, loitering, cringing, begging, loose,
And wanton vagrants, as make London, vast
And boundless as it is, a crowded coop.

O thou, resort and mart of all the earth,
Chequer'd with all complexions of mankind,
And spotted with all crimes; in whom I see
Much that I love, and more that I admire,
And all that I abhor; thou freckled fair,
That pleasest and yet shock'st me, I can laugh,
And I can weep, can hope, and can despond,
Feel wrath and pity, when I think on thee!
Ten righteous would have saved the city once,
And thou hast many righteous.—Well for thee—
That salt preserves thee; more corrupted else,
And therefore more obnoxious, at this hour,
Than Sodom in her day had power to be,
For whom God heard his Abraham plead in vain.

William Cowper

The Task: Book IV, The Winter Evening (Excerpts)

Hark! 'tis the twanging horn! O'er yonder bridge,
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright,
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spatter'd boots, strapp'd waist, and frozen locks;
News from all nations lumb'ring at his back.
True to his charge, the close-pack'd load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destin'd inn:
And, having dropp'd th' expected bag, pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some;
To him indiff'rent whether grief or joy.
Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,
Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet
With tears that trickled down the writer's cheeks
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
Or charg'd with am'rous sighs of absent swains,
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect
His horse and him, unconscious of them all.
But oh th' important budget! usher'd in
With such heart-shaking music, who can say
What are its tidings? have our troops awak'd?
Or do they still, as if with opium drugg'd,
Snore to the murmurs of th' Atlantic wave?
Is India free? and does she wear her plum'd
And jewell'd turban with a smile of peace,
Or do we grind her still? The grand debate,
The popular harangue, the tart reply,
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh--I long to know them all;
I burn to set th' imprison'd wranglers free,
And give them voice and utt'rance once again.
Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And, while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,

That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful ev'ning in.
Not such his ev'ning, who with shining face
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and, squeez'd
And bor'd with elbow-points through both his sides,
Out-scolds the ranting actor on the stage:
Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
Of patriots, bursting with heroic rage,
Or placemen, all tranquility and smiles.
This folio of four pages, happy work!
Which not ev'n critics criticise; that holds
Inquisitive attention, while I read,
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break;
What is it, but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns?...

Oh winter, ruler of th' inverted year,
Thy scatter'd hair with sleet like ashes fill'd,
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fring'd with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapp'd in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urg'd by storms along its slipp'ry way,
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art! Thou hold'st the sun
A pris'ner in the yet undawning east,
Short'ning his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy west; but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gath'ring, at short notice, in one group
The family dispers'd, and fixing thought,
Not less dispers'd by day-light and its cares.
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fire-side enjoyments, home-born happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturb'd retirement, and the hours

Of long uninterrupted ev'ning, know.
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates;
No powder'd pert proficient in the art
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors
Till the street rings; no stationary steeds
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the sound,
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake:
But here the needle plies its busy task,
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flow'r,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully dispos'd,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair;
A wreath that cannot fade, or flow'rs that blow
With most success when all besides decay.
The poet's or historian's page, by one
Made vocal for th' amusement of the rest;
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds
The touch from many a trembling chord shakes out;
And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,
And in the charming strife triumphant still;
Beguile the night, and set a keener edge
On female industry: the threaded steel
Flies swiftly, and, unfelt, the task proceeds.
The volume clos'd, the customary rites
Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal;
Such as the mistress of the world once found
Delicious, when her patriots of high note,
Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
And under an old oak's domestic shade,
Enjoy'd--spare feast!--a radish and an egg!
Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth:
Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
That made them an intruder on their joys,
Start at his awful name, or deem his praise
A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone,
Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
While we retrace with mem'ry's pointing wand,
That calls the past to our exact review,

The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,
The disappointed foe, deliv'rance found
Unlook'd for, life preserv'd and peace restor'd--
Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.
Oh ev'nings worthy of the gods! exclaim'd
The Sabine bard. Oh ev'nings, I reply,
More to be priz'd and coveted than yours,
As more illumin'd, and with nobler truths.
That I, and mine, and those we love, enjoy....

William Cowper

The Task: Book Iv. -- The Winter Evening

Hark! 'tis the twanging horn o'er yonder bridge,
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright;—
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spatter'd boots, strapp'd waist, and frozen locks;
News from all nations lumbering at his back.
True to his charge, the close-pack'd load behind,
Yet, careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn,
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With tears, that trickled down the writer's cheeks
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His horse and him, unconscious of them all.
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And jewell'd turban with a smile of peace,
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The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh—I long to know them all;
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And give them voice and utterance once again.

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Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And, while the bubbling and loud hissing urn

Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
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So let us welcome peaceful evening in.
Not such his evening, who with shining face
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and, squeezed
And bored with elbow points through both his sides,
Outscolds the ranting actor on the stage:
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Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break;
What is it but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns?
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge
That tempts Ambition. On the summit see
The seals of office glitter in his eyes;
He climbs, he pants, he grasps them! At his heels,
Close at his heels, a demagogue ascends,
And with a dexterous jerk soon twists him down,
And wins them, but to lose them in his turn.
Here rills of oily eloquence, in soft
Meanders, lubricate the course they take;
The modest speaker is ashamed and grieved
To engross a moment's notice; and yet begs,
Begs a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,
However trivial all that he conceives.
Sweet bashfulness! it claims at least this praise;
The dearth of information and good sense,
That it foretells us, always comes to pass.
Cataracts of declamation thunder here;
There forests of no meaning spread the page,
In which all comprehension wanders lost;
While fields of pleasantry amuse us there
With merry descants on a nation's woes.
The rest appears a wilderness of strange
But gay confusion; roses for the cheeks
And lilies for the brows of faded age,

Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
Heaven, earth, and ocean, plunder'd of their sweets,
Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
Sermons, and city feasts, and favourite airs,
Æthereal journeys, submarine exploits,
And Katerfelto, with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wondering for his bread.

'Tis pleasant, through the loopholes of retreat,
To peep at such a world; to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd;
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on the uninjured ear.
Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced
To some secure and more than mortal height
That liberates and exempts me from them all.
It turns submitted to my view, turns round
With all its generations; I behold
The tumult and am still. The sound of war
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me;
Grieves, but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
And avarice that make man a wolf to man;
Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats,
By which he speaks the language of his heart,
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flower to flower, so he from land to land;
The manners, customs, policy of all
Pay contribution to the store he gleans;
He sucks intelligence in every clime,
And spreads the honey of his deep research
At his return—a rich repast for me.
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
Discover countries, with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes;
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.

O Winter, ruler of the inverted year,

Thy scatter'd hair with sleet like ashes fill'd,
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapp'd in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way,
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art! Thou hold'st the sun
A prisoner in the yet undawning east,
Shortening his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy west; but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering, at short notice, in one group
The family dispersed, and fixing thought,
Not less dispersed by daylight and its cares.
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturb'd Retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening know.
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates;
No powder'd pert proficient in the art
Of sounding an alarm assaults these doors
Till the street rings; no stationary steeds
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the sound,
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake:
But here the needle plies its busy task,
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flower,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair;
A wreath, that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
With most success when all besides decay.
The poet's or historian's page by one
Made vocal for the amusement of the rest;
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds
The touch from many a trembling chord shakes out;
And the clear voice, symphonious, yet distinct,

And in the charming strife triumphant still,
Beguile the night, and set a keener edge
On female industry: the threaded steel
Flies swiftly, and unfelt the task proceeds.
The volume closed, the customary rites
Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal,
Such as the mistress of the world once found
Delicious, when her patriots of high note,
Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
And under an old oak's domestic shade,
Enjoy'd, spare feast! a radish and an egg!
Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth:
Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
That made them an intruder on their joys,
Start at his awful name, or deem his praise
A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone,
Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
While we retrace with Memory's pointing wand,
That calls the past to our exact review,
The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,
The disappointed foe, deliverance found
Unlook'd for, life preserved, and peace restored,
Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.
O evenings worthy of the gods! exclaim'd
The Sabine bard. O evenings, I reply,
More to be prized and coveted than yours,
As more illumined, and with nobler truths,
That I, and mine, and those we love, enjoy.

Is Winter hideous in a garb like this?
Needs he the tragic fur, the smoke of lamps,
The pent-up breath of an unsavoury throng,
To thaw him into feeling; or the smart
And snappish dialogue, that flippant wits
Call comedy, to prompt him with a smile?
The self-complacent actor, when he views
(Stealing a sidelong glance at a full house)
The slope of faces from the floor to the roof
(As if one master spring controll'd them all),

Relax'd into a universal grin,
Sees not a countenance there that speaks of joy
Half so refined or so sincere as ours.
Cards were superfluous here, with all the tricks
That idleness has ever yet contrived
To fill the void of an unfurnish'd brain,
To palliate dulness, and give time a shove.
Time, as he passes us, has a dove's wing.
Unsoil'd, and swift, and of a silken sound;
But the World's Time is Time in masquerade!
Theirs, should I paint him, has his pinions fledged
With motley plumes; and, where the peacock shows
His azure eyes, is tintured black and red
With spots quadrangular of diamond form,
Ensanguined hearts, clubs typical of strife,
And spades, the emblem of untimely graves.
What should be, and what was an hour-glass once,
Becomes a dice-box, and a billiard mace
Well does the work of his destructive scythe.
Thus deck'd, he charms a world whom Fashion blinds
To his true worth, most pleased when idle most;
Whose only happy are their wasted hours.
E'en misses, at whose age their mothers wore
The backstring and the bib, assume the dress
Of womanhood, fit pupils in the school
Of card-devoted Time, and, night by night
Placed at some vacant corner of the board,
Learn every trick, and soon play all the game.
But truce with censure. Roving as I rove,
Where shall I find an end, or how proceed?
As he that travels far oft turns aside,
To view some rugged rock or mouldering tower,
Which seen delights him not; then, coming home,
Describes and prints it, that the world may know
How far he went for what was nothing worth;
So I, with brush in hand and pallet spread,
With colours mix'd for a far different use,
Paint cards, and dolls, and every idle thing
That Fancy finds in her excursive flights.

Come, Evening, once again, season of peace;
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long!

Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron step slow moving, while the Night
Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employ'd
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charged for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day:
Not sumptuously adorn'd, not needing aid,
Like homely featured Night, of clustering gems;
A star or two, just twinkling on thy brow
Suffices thee; save that the moon is thine
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high
With ostentatious pageantry, but set
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.
Come then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm,
Or make me so. Composure is thy gift:
And, whether I devote thy gentle hours
To books, to music, or the poet's toil;
To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit;
Or twining silken threads round ivory reels,
When they command whom man was born to please;
I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.

Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
With lights, by clear reflection multiplied
From many a mirror, in which he of Gath,
Goliath, might have seen his giant bulk
Whole without stooping, towering crest and all,
My pleasures too begin. But me perhaps
The glowing hearth may satisfy awhile
With faint illumination, that uplifts
The shadows to the ceiling, there by fits
Dancing uncouthly to the quivering flame.
Not undelightful is an hour to me
So spent in parlour twilight: such a gloom
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
The mind contemplative, with some new theme
Pregnant, or indisposed alike to all.
Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial powers,
That never felt a stupor, know no pause,
Nor need one; I am conscious, and confess,
Fearless, a soul that does not always think.

Me oft has Fancy ludicrous and wild
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,
Trees, churches, and strange visages, express'd
In the red cinders, while with poring eye
I gazed, myself creating what I saw.
Nor less amused, have I quiescent watch'd
The sooty films that play upon the bars,
Pendulous and foreboding, in the view
Of superstition, prophesying still,
Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach.
'Tis thus the understanding takes repose
In indolent vacuity of thought,
And sleeps and is refresh'd. Meanwhile the face
Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask
Of deep deliberation, as the man
Were task'd to his full strength, absorb'd and lost.
Thus oft, reclined at ease, I lose an hour
At evening, till at length the freezing blast,
That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
The recollected powers; and, snapping short
The glassy threads with which the fancy weaves
Her brittle toils, restores me to myself.
How calm is my recess; and how the frost,
Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear
The silence and the warmth enjoy'd within!
I saw the woods and fields at close of day
A variegated show; the meadows green,
Though faded; and the lands, where lately waved
The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,
Upturn'd so lately by the forceful share.
I saw far off the weedy fallows smile
With verdure not unprofitable, grazed
By flocks, fast feeding, and selecting each
His favourite herb; while all the leafless groves
That skirt the horizon, wore a sable hue
Scarce noticed in the kindred dusk of eve.
To-morrow brings a change, a total change!
Which even now, though silently perform'd,
And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face
Of universal nature undergoes.
Fast falls a fleecy shower: the downy flakes
Descending, and with never-ceasing lapse,

Softly alighting upon all below,
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives
Gladly the thickening mantle; and the green
And tender blade, that fear'd the chilling blast,
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.

In such a world so thorny, and where none
Finds happiness unblighted; or, if found,
Without some thistly sorrow at its side;
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin
Against the law of love, to measure lots
With less distinguish'd than ourselves; that thus
We may with patience bear our moderate ills,
And sympathise with others suffering more.
Ill fares the traveller now, and he that stalks
In ponderous boots beside his reeking team.
The wain goes heavily, impeded sore
By congregated loads, adhering close
To the clogg'd wheels; and in its sluggish pace
Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow.
The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,
While every breath, by respiration strong
Forced downward, is consolidated soon
Upon their jutting chests. He, form'd to bear
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half-shut eyes, and pucker'd cheeks, and teeth
Presented bare against the storm, plods on.
One hand secures his hat, save when with both
He brandishes his pliant length of whip,
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.
O happy; and, in my account, denied
That sensibility of pain with which
Refinement is endued, thrice happy thou!
Thy frame, robust and hardy, feels indeed
The piercing cold, but feels it unimpair'd.
The learned finger never need explore
Thy vigorous pulse; and the unhealthful east,
That breathes the spleen, and searches every bone
Of the infirm, is wholesome air to thee.
Thy days roll on exempt from household care;
Thy waggon is thy wife, and the poor beasts,
That drag the dull companion to and fro,

Thine helpless charge, dependent on thy care.
Ah, treat them kindly! rude as thou appear'st,
Yet show that thou hast mercy! which the great,
With needless hurry whirl'd from place to place,
Humane as they would seem, not always show.

Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in every feeling heart.
Warm'd, while it lasts, by labour all day long,
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill clad, and fed but sparely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left she nurses well;
And, while her infant race, with outspread hands,
And crowded knees, sit cowering o'er the sparks,
Retires, content to quake, so they be warm'd.
The man feels least, as more inured than she
To winter, and the current in his veins
More briskly moved by his severer toil;
Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs.
The taper soon extinguish'd, which I saw
Dangled along at the cold finger's end
Just when the day declined; and the brown loaf
Lodged on the shelf, half eaten without sauce
Of savoury cheese, or butter, costlier still;
Sleep seems their only refuge: for, alas!
Where penury is felt the thought is chain'd,
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few!
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care,
Ingenious Parsimony takes, but just
Saves the small inventory, bed, and stool,
Skillet, and old carved chest, from public sale.
They live, and live without extorted alms
From grudging hands; but other boast have none
To soothe their honest pride, that scorns to beg,
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,
For ye are worthy; choosing rather far
A dry but independent crust, hard earn'd,

And eaten with a sigh, than to endure
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs
Of knaves in office, partial in the work
Of distribution, liberal of their aid
To clamorous importunity in rags,
But ofttimes deaf to suppliants, who would blush
To wear a tatter'd garb however coarse,
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth:
These ask with painful shyness, and refused
Because deserving, silently retire!
But be ye of good courage! Time itself
Shall much befriend you. Time shall give increase;
And all your numerous progeny, well train'd,
But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,
And labour too. Meanwhile ye shall not want
What, conscious of your virtues, we can spare,
Nor what a wealthier than ourselves may send.
I mean the man who, when the distant poor
Need help, denies them nothing but his name.

But poverty with most, who whimper forth
Their long complaints, is self-inflicted woe;
The effect of laziness or sottish waste.
Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad
For plunder; much solicitous how best
He may compensate for a day of sloth
By works of darkness and nocturnal wrong.
Woe to the gardener's pale, the farmer's hedge,
Plash'd neatly, and secured with driven stakes
Deep in the loamy bank! Uptorn by strength,
Resistless in so bad a cause, but lame
To better deeds, he bundles up the spoil,
An ass's burden, and, when laden most
And heaviest, light of foot steals fast away;
Nor does the boarded hovel better guard
The well-stack'd pile of riven logs and roots
From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave
Unwrench'd the door, however well secured,
Where Chanticleer amidst his harem sleeps
In unsuspecting pomp. Twitch'd from the perch,
He gives the princely bird, with all his wives,
To his voracious bag, struggling in vain,

And loudly wondering at the sudden change.
Nor this to feed his own. 'Twere some excuse,
Did pity of their sufferings warp aside
His principle, and tempt him into sin
For their support, so destitute. But they
Neglected pine at home; themselves, as more
Exposed than others, with less scruple made
His victims, robb'd of their defenceless all.
Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchless thirst
Of ruinous ebriety that prompts
His every action, and imbrutes the man.
O for a law to noose the villain's neck
Who starves his own; who persecutes the blood
He gave them in his children's veins, and hates
And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love!

Pass where we may, through city or through town,
Village, or hamlet, of this merry land,
Though lean and beggar'd, every twentieth pace
Conducts the unguarded nose to such a whiff
Of stale debauch, forth issuing from the styes
That law has licensed, as makes temperance reel.
There sit, involved and lost in curling clouds
Of Indian fume, and guzzling deep, the boor,
The lackey, and the groom: the craftsman there
Takes a Lethean leave of all his toil;
Smith, cobbler, joiner, he that plies the shears,
And he that kneads the dough; all loud alike,
All learned, and all drunk! the fiddle screams
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wail'd
Its wasted tones and harmony unheard:
Fierce the dispute, whate'er the theme; while she,
Fell Discord, arbitress of such debate,
Perch'd on the sign-post, holds with even hand
Her undecisive scales. In this she lays
A weight of ignorance; in that, of pride;
And smiles delighted with the eternal poise.
Dire is the frequent curse, and its twin sound,
The cheek-distending oath, not to be praised
As ornamental, musical, polite,
Like those which modern senators employ,
Whose oath is rhetoric, and who swear for fame!

Behold the schools in which plebeian minds,
Once simple, are initiated in arts,
Which some may practise with politer grace,
But none with readier skill!—'tis here they learn
The road that leads from competence and peace
To indigence and rapine; till at last
Society, grown weary of the load,
Shakes her encumber'd lap, and casts them out.
But censure profits little: vain the attempt
To advertise in verse a public pest,
That, like the filth with which the peasant feeds
His hungry acres, stinks, and is of use.
The excise is fatten'd with the rich result
Of all this riot; and ten thousand casks,
For ever dribbling out their base contents,
Touch'd by the Midas finger of the state,
Bleed gold for ministers to sport away.
Drink, and be mad then; 'tis your country bids!
Gloriously drunk, obey the important call!
Her cause demands the assistance of your throat;—
Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.

Would I had fallen upon those happier days,
That poets celebrate; those golden times,
And those Arcadian scenes, that Maro sings,
And Sidney, warbler of poetic prose.
Nymphs were Dianas then, and swains had hearts
That felt their virtues: Innocence, it seems,
From courts dismiss'd, found shelter in the groves;
The footsteps of Simplicity, impress'd
Upon the yielding herbage (so they sing)
Then were not all effaced: then speech profane
And manners profligate were rarely found,
Observed as prodigies, and soon reclaim'd.
Vain wish! those days were never: airy dreams
Sat for the picture: and the poet's hand,
Imparting substance to an empty shade,
Imposed a gay delirium for a truth.
Grant it:—I still must envy them an age
That favour'd such a dream; in days like these
Impossible, when Virtue is so scarce,
That to suppose a scene where she presides,

Is tramontane, and stumbles all belief.
No: we are polish'd now! The rural lass,
Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,
Her artless manners, and her neat attire,
So dignified, that she was hardly less
Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,
Is seen no more. The character is lost!
Her head, adorn'd with lappets pinn'd aloft,
And ribands streaming gay, superbly raised,
And magnified beyond all human size,
Indebted to some smart wig-weaver's hand
For more than half the tresses it sustains;
Her elbows ruffled, and her tottering form
Ill propp'd upon French heels; she might be deem'd
(But that the basket dangling on her arm
Interprets her more truly) of a rank
Too proud for dairy work, or sale of eggs.
Expect her soon with footboy at her heels,
No longer blushing for her awkward load,
Her train and her umbrella all her care!

The town has tinged the country; and the stain
Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,
The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs
Down into scenes still rural; but, alas!
Scenes rarely graced with rural manners now!
Time was when in the pastoral retreat
The unguarded door was safe; men did not watch
To invade another's right, or guard their own.
Then sleep was undisturb'd by fear, unscared
By drunken howlings; and the chilling tale
Of midnight murder was a wonder heard
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.
But farewell now to unsuspecting nights,
And slumbers unalarm'd! Now, ere you sleep,
See that your polish'd arms be primed with care,
And drop the night bolt;—ruffians are abroad;
And the first 'larum of the cock's shrill throat
May prove a trumpet, summoning your ear
To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.
E'en daylight has its dangers; and the walk
Through pathless wastes and woods, unconscious once

Of other tenants than melodious birds,
Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.
Lamented change! to which full many a cause
Inveterate, hopeless of a cure, conspires.
The course of human things from good to ill,
From ill to worse, is fatal, never fails.
Increase of power begets increase of wealth;
Wealth luxury, and luxury excess;
Excess, the scrofulous and itchy plague,
That seizes first the opulent, descends
To the next rank contagious, and in time
Taints downward all the graduated scale
Of order, from the chariot to the plough.
The rich, and they that have an arm to check
The licence of the lowest in degree,
Desert their office; and themselves, intent
On pleasure, haunt the capital, and thus
To all the violence of lawless hands
Resign the scenes their presence might protect.
Authority herself not seldom sleeps,
Though resident, and witness of the wrong.
The plump convivial parson often bears
The magisterial sword in vain, and lays
His reverence and his worship both to rest
On the same cushion of habitual sloth.
Perhaps timidity restrains his arm;
When he should strike he trembles, and sets free,
Himself enslaved by terror of the band,
The audacious convict, whom he dares not bind.
Perhaps, though by profession ghostly pure,
He too may have his vice, and sometimes prove
Less dainty than becomes his grave outside
In lucrative concerns. Examine well
His milk-white hand; the palm is hardly clean—
But here and there an ugly smutch appears.
Foh! 'twas a bribe that left it: he has touch'd
Corruption! Whoso seeks an audit here
Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fish,
Wildfowl or venison, and his errand speeds.

But faster far, and more than all the rest,
A noble cause, which none who bears a spark

Of public virtue, ever wish'd removed,
Works the deplored and mischievous effect.
'Tis universal soldiership has stabb'd
The heart of merit in the meaner class.
Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage
Of those that bear them, in whatever cause,
Seem most at variance with all moral good,
And incompatible with serious thought.
The clown, the child of nature, without guile,
Blest with an infant's ignorance of all
But his own simple pleasures; now and then
A wrestling-match, a foot-race, or a fair;
Is balloted, and trembles at the news:
Sheepish he doffs his hat, and mumbling swears
A bible-oath to be whate'er they please,
To do he knows not what. The task perform'd,
That instant he becomes the serjeant's care,
His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.
His awkward gait, his introverted toes,
Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,
Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees
Unapt to learn, and form'd of stubborn stuff,
He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,
Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well:
He stands erect; his slouch becomes a walk;
He steps right onward, martial in his air,
His form, and movement; is as smart above
As meal and larded locks can make him; wears
His hat, or his plumed helmet, with a grace;
And, his three years of heroship expired,
Returns indignant to the slighted plough.
He hates the field, in which no fife or drum
Attends him; drives his cattle to a march;
And sighs for the smart comrades he has left.
'Twere well if his exterior change were all—
But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost
His ignorance and harmless manners too.
To swear, to game, to drink; to show at home,
By lewdness, idleness, and Sabbath beach,
The great proficiency he made abroad;
To astonish and to grieve his gazing friends;
To break some maiden's and his mother's heart;

To be a pest where he was useful once;
Are his sole aim, and all his glory now.

Man in society is like a flower
Blown in its native bed: 'tis there alone
His faculties, expanded in full bloom,
Shine out; there only reach their proper use.
But man, associated and leagued with man
By regal warrant, or self-join'd by bond
For interest sake, or swarming into clans
Beneath one head for purposes of war,
Like flowers selected from the rest, and bound
And bundled close to fill some crowded vase,
Fades rapidly, and, by compression marr'd,
Contracts defilement not to be endured.
Hence charter'd burghs are such public plagues;
And burghers, men immaculate perhaps
In all their private functions, once combined,
Become a loathsome body, only fit
For dissolution, hurtful to the main.
Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin
Against the charities of domestic life,
Incorporated, seem at once to lose
Their nature; and, disclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man,
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the sword's point, and dyeing the white robe
Of innocent commercial Justice red.
Hence too the field of glory, as the world
Misdeems it, dazzled by its bright array,
With all its majesty of thundering pomp,
Enchanting music and immortal wreaths,
Is but a school where thoughtlessness is taught
On principle, where foppery atones
For folly, gallantry for every vice.

But slighted as it is, and by the great
Abandon'd, and, which still I more regret,
Infected with the manners and the modes
It knew not once, the country wins me sill.
I never framed a wish, or form'd a plan,
That flatter'd me with hopes of earthly bliss,

But there I laid the scene. There early stray'd
My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
Had found me, or the hope of being free.
My very dreams were rural; rural too
The firstborn efforts of my youthful muse,
Sportive, and jingling her poetic bells
Ere yet her ear was mistress of their powers.
No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned
To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sang,
The rustic throng beneath his favourite beech.
Then Milton had indeed a poet's charms:
New to my taste, his Paradise surpass'd
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue
To speak its excellence. I danced for joy.
I marvell'd much that, at so ripe an age
As twice seven years, his beauties had then first
Engaged my wonder; and admiring still,
And still admiring, with regret supposed
The joy half lost, because not sooner found.
There too, enamour'd of the life I loved,
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit
Determined, and possessing it at last,
With transports, such as favour'd lovers feel,
I studied, prized, and wish'd that I had known
Ingenious Cowley! and, though now reclaim'd
By modern lights from an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools.
I still revere thee, courtly though retired;
Though stretch'd at ease in Chertsey's silent bowers,
Not unemployed; and finding rich amends
For a lost world in solitude and verse.
'Tis born with all: the love of Nature's works
Is an ingredient in the compound man,
Infused at the creation of the kind.
And, though the Almighty Maker has throughout
Discriminated each from each, by strokes
And touches of his hand, with so much art
Diversified, that two were never found
Twins at all points—yet this obtains in all,

That all discern a beauty in his works,
And all can taste them: minds that have been form'd
And tutor'd, with a relish more exact,
But none without some relish, none unmoved.
It is a flame that dies not even there
Where nothing feeds it: neither business, crowds,
Nor habits of luxurious city life,
Whatever else they smother of true worth
In human bosoms, quench it or abate.
The villas with which London stands begirt
Like a swarth Indian with his belt of beads
Prove it. A breath of unadulterate air,
The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer
The citizen, and brace his languid frame!
E'en in the stifling bosom of the town
A garden, in which nothing thrives, has charms
That soothe the rich possessor; much consoled,
That here and there some sprigs of mournful mint,
Of nightshade, or valerian, grace the well
He cultivates. These serve him with a hint
That Nature lives; that sight-refreshing green
Is still the livery she delights to wear,
Though sickly samples of the exuberant whole.
What are the casements lined with creeping herbs,
The prouder sashes fronted with a range
Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed,
The Frenchman's darling? are they not all proofs
That man, immured in cities, still retains
His inborn inextinguishable thirst
Of rural scenes, compensating his loss
By supplemental shifts, the best he may,
The most unfurnish'd with the means of life,
And they that never pass their brick-wall bounds,
To range the fields and treat their lungs with air,
Yet feel the burning instinct: over head
Suspend their crazy boxes, planted thick,
And water'd duly. There the pitcher stands,
A fragment, and the spoutless teapot there;
Sad witnesses how close-pent man regrets
The country, with what ardour he contrives
A peep at Nature, when he can no more.

Hail, therefore, patroness of health and ease,
And contemplation, heart-consoling joys,
And harmless pleasures, in the throng'd abode
Of multitudes unknown! hail, rural life!
Address himself who will to the pursuit
Of honours, or emolument, or fame;
I shall not add myself to such a chase,
Thwart his attempts, or envy his success.
Some must be great. Great offices will have
Great talents. And God gives to every man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordain'd to fill.
To the deliverer of an injured land
He gives a tongue to enlarge upon, a heart
To feel, and courage to redress her wrongs;
To monarchs dignity; to judges sense;
To artists ingenuity and skill;
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wish'd.

William Cowper

The Task: Book V, The Winter Morning Walk (Excerpts)

'Tis morning; and the sun, with ruddy orb
Ascending, fires th' horizon: while the clouds,
That crowd away before the driving wind,
More ardent as the disk emerges more,
Resemble most some city in a blaze,
Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
And, tinging all with his own rosy hue,
From ev'ry herb and ev'ry spiry blade
Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.
Mine, spindling into longitude immense,
In spite of gravity, and sage remark
That I myself am but a fleeting shade,
Provokes me to a smile. With eye askance
I view the muscular proportion'd limb
Transform'd to a lean shank. The shapeless pair,
As they design'd to mock me, at my side
Take step for step; and, as I near approach
The cottage, walk along the plaster'd wall,
Prepost'rous sight! the legs without the man.
The verdure of the plain lies buried deep
Beneath the dazzling deluge; and the bents,
And coarser grass, upspearing o'er the rest,
Of late unsightly and unseen, now shine
Conspicuous, and, in bright apparel clad
And fledg'd with icy feathers, nod superb.
The cattle mourn in corners where the fence
Screens them, and seem half petrified to sleep
In unrecumbent sadness. There they wait
Their wonted fodder; not like hung'ring man,
Fretful if unsupply'd; but silent, meek,
And patient of the slow-pac'd swain's delay.
He from the stack carves out th' accustom'd load,
Deep-plunging, and again deep-plunging oft,
His broad keen knife into the solid mass:
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,
With such undeviating and even force

He severs it away: no needless care,
Lest storms should overset the leaning pile
Deciduous, or its own unbalanc'd weight....

'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,
And we are weeds without it. All constraint,
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,
Is evil; hurts the faculties, impedes
Their progress in the road of science; blinds
The eyesight of discovery, and begets,
In those that suffer it, a sordid mind
Bestial, a meagre intellect, unfit
To be the tenant of man's noble form.
Thee therefore, still, blameworthy as thou art,
With all thy loss of empire, and though squeez'd
By public exigence till annual food
Fails for the craving hunger of the state,
Thee I account still happy, and the chief
Among the nations, seeing thou art free,
My native nook of earth!

But there is yet a liberty unsung
By poets, and by senators unprais'd,
Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the pow'rs
Of earth and hell confederate take away;
A liberty which persecution, fraud,
Oppression, prisons, have no pow'r to bind;
Which whoso tastes can be enslav'd no more.
'Tis liberty of heart, deriv'd from Heav'n,
Bought with his blood who gave it to mankind,
And seal'd with the same token. It is held
By charter, and that charter sanction'd sure
By th' unimpeachable and awful oath
And promise of a God. His other gifts
All bear the royal stamp that speaks them his,
And are august, but this transcends them all.

William Cowper

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Deciduous, or its own unbalanced weight.
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcern'd
The cheerful haunts of man; to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve his solitary task.
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropp'd short, half lurcher and half cur,
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow; and now, with many a frisk
Wide scampering, snatches up the driften snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powder'd coat, and barks for joy.
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark; nor stops for aught,
But now and then with pressure of his thumb
To adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube,
That fumes beneath his nose: the trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.
Now from the roost, or from the neighbouring pale,
Where, diligent to catch the first fair gleam
Of smiling day, they gossipp'd side by side,
Come trooping at the housewife's well-known call
The feather'd tribes domestic. Half on wing,
And half on foot, they brush the fleecy flood,
Conscious, and fearful of too deep a plunge.
The sparrows peep, and quit the sheltering eaves,
To seize the fair occasion: well they eye
The scatter'd grain, and thievishly resolved
To escape the impending famine, often scared
As oft return, a pert voracious kind.
Clean riddance quickly made, one only care
Remains to each, the search of sunny nook,
Or shed impervious to the blast. Resign'd
To sad necessity, the cock foregoes
His wonted strut; and, wading at their head
With well-consider'd steps, seems to resent
His alter'd gait and stateliness retrench'd.
How find the myriads, that in summer cheer
The hills and valleys with their ceaseless songs,
Due sustenance, or where subsist they now?
Earth yields them nought: the imprison'd worm is safe
Beneath the frozen clod; all seeds of herbs

Lie cover'd close; and berry-bearing thorns,
That feed the thrush (whatever some suppose),
Afford the smaller minstrels no supply.
The long protracted rigour of the year
Thins all their numerous flocks. In chinks and holes
Ten thousand seek an unmolested end,
As instinct prompts; self-buried ere they die.
The very rooks and daws forsake the fields,
Where neither grub, nor root, nor earth-nut, now
Repays their labour more; and, perch'd aloft
By the way-side, or stalking in the path,
Lean pensioners upon the traveller's track,
Pick up their nauseous dole, though sweet to them,
Of voided pulse or half-digested grain.
The streams are lost amid the splendid blank,
O'erwhelming all distinction. On the flood,
Indurated and fix'd, the snowy weight
Lies undissolved; while silently beneath,
And unperceived, the current steals away.
Not so where, scornful of a check, it leaps
The mill-dam, dashes on the restless wheel,
And wantons in the pebbly gulf below:
No frost can bind it there; its utmost force
Can but arrest the light and smoky mist
That in its fall the liquid sheet throws wide.
And see where it has hung the embroider'd banks
With forms so various, that no powers of art,
The pencil or the pen, may trace the scene!
Here glittering turrets rise, upbearing high
(Fantastic misarrangement!) on the roof
Large growth of what may seem the sparkling trees
And shrubs of fairy land. The crystal drops
That trickle down the branches, fast congeal'd,
Shoot into pillars of pellucid length,
And prop the pile they but adorn'd before.
Here grotto within grotto safe defies
The sunbeam; there, emboss'd and fretted wild,
The growing wonder takes a thousand shapes
Capricious, in which fancy seeks in vain
The likeness of some object seen before.
Thus Nature works as if to mock at Art,
And in defiance of her rival powers;

By these fortuitous and random strokes
Performing such inimitable feats
As she with all her rules can never reach.
Less worthy of applause though more admired,
Because a novelty, the work of man,
Imperial mistress of the fur-clad Russ!
Thy most magnificent and mighty freak,
The wonder of the North. No forest fell
When thou wouldst build; no quarry sent its stores
To enrich thy walls: but thou didst hew the floods,
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.
In such a palace Aristæus found
Cyrene, when he bore the plaintive tale
Of his lost bees to her maternal ear:
In such a palace Poetry might place
The armoury of Winter; where his troops,
The gloomy clouds, find weapons, arrowy sleet,
Skin-piercing volley, blossom-bruising hail,
And snow, that often blinds the traveller's course,
And wraps him in an unexpected tomb.
Silently as a dream the fabric rose;
No sound of hammer or of saw was there.
Ice upon ice, the well-adjusted parts
Were soon conjoin'd; nor other cement ask'd
Than water interfused to make them one.
Lamps gracefully disposed, and of all hues,
Illumined every side; a watery light
Gleam'd through the clear transparency, that seem'd
Another moon new risen, or meteor fallen
From heaven to earth, of lambent flame serene.
So stood the brittle prodigy; though smooth
And slippery the materials, yet frost-bound
Firm as a rock. Nor wanted aught within,
That royal residence might well befit,
For grandeur or for use. Long wavy wreaths
Of flowers, that fear'd no enemy but warmth,
Blush'd on the panels. Mirror needed none
Where all was vitreous; but in order due
Convivial table and commodious seat
(What seem'd at least commodious seat) were there;
Sofa, and couch, and high-built throne august.
The same lubricity was found in all,

And all was moist to the warm touch; a scene
Of evanescent glory, once a stream,
And soon to slide into a stream again.
Alas! 'twas but a mortifying stroke
Of undesign'd severity, that glanced
(Made by a monarch) on her own estate,
On human grandeur and the courts of kings.
'Twas transient in its nature, as in show
'Twas durable; as worthless, as it seem'd
Intrinsically precious; to the foot
Tracherous and false; it smiled, and it was cold.

Great princes have great playthings. Some have play'd
At hewing mountains into men, and some
At building human wonders mountain high.
Some have amused the dull sad years of life
(Life spent in indolence, and therefore sad)
With schemes of monumental fame; and sought
By pyramids and mausolean pomp,
Short-lived themselves, to immortalize their bones.
Some seek diversion in the tented field,
And make the sorrows of mankind their sport.
But war's a game which, were their subjects wise,
Kings would not play at. Nations would do well
To extort their truncheons from the puny hands
Of heroes, whose infirm and baby minds
Are gratified with mischief, and who spoil,
Because men suffer it, their toy, the World.

When Babel was confounded, and the great
Confederacy of projectors wild and vain
Was split into diversity of tongues,
Then, as a shepherd separates his flock,
These to the upland, to the valley those,
God drave asunder, and assign'd their lot
To all the nations. Ample was the boon
He gave them, in its distribution fair
And equal; and he bade them dwell in peace.
Peace was awhile their care: they plough'd, and sow'd,
And reap'd their plenty without grudge or strife,
But violence can never longer sleep
Than human passions please. In every heart

Are sown the sparks that kindle fiery war;
Occasion needs but fan them, and they blaze.
Cain had already shed a brother's blood;
The deluge wash'd it out; but left unquench'd
The seeds of murder in the breast of man.
Soon by a righteous judgment in the line
Of his descending progeny was found
The first artificer of death; the shrewd
Contriver, who first sweated at the forge,
And forced the blunt and yet unbloodied steel
To a keen edge, and made it bright for war.
Him, Tubal named, the Vulcan of old times,
The sword and falchion their inventor claim;
And the first smith was the first murderer's son.
His art survived the waters; and ere long,
When man was multiplied and spread abroad
In tribes and clans, and had begun to call
These meadows and that range of hills his own,
The tasted sweets of property begat
Desire of more: and industry in some,
To improve and cultivate their just demesne,
Made others covet what they saw so fair.
Thus war began on earth; these fought for spoil,
And those in self-defence. Savage at first
The onset, and irregular. At length
One eminent above the rest for strength,
For stratagem, or courage, or for all,
Was chosen leader; him they served in war,
And him in peace, for sake of warlike deeds,
Reverenced no less. Who could with him compare?
Or who so worthy to control themselves,
As he, whose prowess had subdued their foes?
Thus war, affording field for the display
Of virtue, made one chief, whom times of peace,
Which have their exigencies too, and call
For skill in government, at length made king.
King was a name too proud for man to wear
With modesty and meekness; and the crown,
So dazzling in their eyes who set it on,
Was sure to intoxicate the brows it bound.
It is the abject property of most,
That, being parcel of the common mass,

And destitute of means to raise themselves,
They sink, and settle lower than they need.
They know not what it is to feel within
A comprehensive faculty, that grasps
Great purposes with ease, that turns and wields,
Almost without an effort, plans too vast
For their conception, which they cannot move.
Conscious of impotence, they soon grow drunk
With gazing, when they see an able man
Step forth to notice; and, besotted thus,
Build him a pedestal, and say, "Stand there,
And be our admiration and our praise."
They roll themselves before him in the dust,
Then most deserving in their own account
When most extravagant in his applause,
As if exalting him they raised themselves.
Thus by degrees, self-cheated of their sound
And sober judgment, that he is but man,
They demi-deify and fume him so,
That in due season he forgets it too.
Inflated and astrut with self-conceit,
He gulps the windy diet; and, ere long,
Adopting their mistake, profoundly thinks
The world was made in vain, if not for him.
Thenceforth they are his cattle: drudges, born
To bear his burdens, drawing in his gears,
And sweating in his service, his caprice
Becomes the soul that animates them all.
He deems a thousand, or ten thousand lives,
Spent in the purchase of renown for him,
An easy reckoning; and they think the same.
Thus kings were first invented, and thus kings
Were burnish'd into heroes, and became
The arbiters of this terraqueous swamp;
Storks among frogs, that have but croak'd and died.
Strange, that such folly, as lifts bloated man
To eminence, fit only for a god,
Should ever drivel out of human lips,
E'en in the cradled weakness of the world!
Still stranger much, that, when at length mankind
Had reach'd the sinewy firmness of their youth,
And could discriminate and argue well

On subjects more mysterious, they were yet
Babes in the cause of freedom, and should fear
And quake before the gods themselves had made.
But above measure strange, that neither proof
Of sad experience, nor examples set
By some, whose patriot virtue has prevail'd,
Can even now, when they are grown mature
In wisdom, and with philosophic deeds
Familiar, serve to emancipate the rest!
Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone
To reverence what is ancient, and can plead
A course of long observance for its use,
That even servitude, the worst of ills,
Because deliver'd down from sire to son,
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing!
But is it fit, or can it bear the shock
Of rational discussion, that a man,
Compounded and made up like other men
Of elements tumultuous, in whom lust
And folly in as ample measure meet,
As in the bosoms of the slaves he rules,
Should be a despot absolute, and boast
Himself the only freeman of his land?
Should, when he pleases, and on whom he will,
Wage war, with any or with no pretence
Of provocation given, or wrong sustain'd,
And force the beggarly last doit, by means
That his own humour dictates, from the clutch
Of poverty, that thus he may procure
His thousands, weary of penurious life,
A splendid opportunity to die?
Say ye, who (with less prudence than of old
Jotham ascribed to his assembled trees
In politic convention) put your trust
In the shadow of a bramble, and, reclined
In fancied peace beneath his dangerous branch,
Rejoice in him, and celebrate his sway,
Where find ye passive fortitude? Whence springs
Your self-denying zeal, that holds it good
To stroke the prickly grievance, and to hang
His thorns with streamers of continual praise?
We too are friends to loyalty. We love

The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
And reigns content within them: him we serve
Freely and with delight, who leaves us free:
But, recollecting still that he is man,
We trust him not too far. King though he be,
And king in England too, he may be weak,
And vain enough to be ambitious still;
May exercise amiss his proper powers,
Or covet more than freemen choose to grant:
Beyond that mark is treason. He is ours,
To administer, to guard, to adorn the state,
But not to warp or change it. We are his,
To serve him nobly in the common cause,
True to the death, but not to be his slaves.
Mark now the difference, ye that boast your love
Of kings, between your loyalty and ours.
We love the man, the paltry pageant you:
We the chief patron of the commonwealth,
You the regardless author of its woes:
We for the sake of liberty a king,
You chains and bondage for a tyrant's sake.
Our love is principle, and has its root
In reason, is judicious, manly, free;
Yours, a blind instinct, crouches to the rod,
And licks the foot that treads it in the dust.
Were kingship as true treasure as it seems,
Sterling, and worthy of a wise man's wish,
I would not be a king to be beloved
Causeless, and daub'd with undiscerning praise,
Where love is mere attachment to the throne,
Not to the man who fills it as he ought.

Whose freedom is by sufferance, and at will
Of a superior, he is never free.
Who lives, and is not weary of a life
Exposed to manacles, deserves them well.
The state that strives for liberty, though foil'd,
And forced to abandon what she bravely sought,
Deserves at least applause for her attempt,
And pity for her loss. But that's a cause
Not often unsuccessful: power usurp'd
Is weakness when opposed; conscious of wrong,

'Tis pusillanimous and prone to flight.
But slaves that once conceive the glowing thought
Of freedom, in that hope itself possess
All that the contest calls for; spirit, strength,
The scorn of danger, and united hearts;
The surest presage of the good they seek.

Then shame to manhood, and opprobrious more
To France than all her losses and defeats,
Old or of later date, by sea or land,
Her house of bondage, worse than that of old
Which God avenged on Pharaoh—the Bastille.
Ye horrid towers, the abode of broken hearts;
Ye dungeons, and ye cages of despair,
That monarchs have supplied from age to age
With music, such as suits their sovereign ears,
The sighs and groans of miserable men!
There's not an English heart that would not leap
To hear that ye were fallen at last; to know
That e'en our enemies, so oft employ'd
In forging chains for us, themselves were free.
For he who values Liberty confines
His zeal for her predominance within
No narrow bounds; her cause engages him
Wherever pleaded. 'Tis the cause of man.
There dwell the most forlorn of human kind,
Immured though unaccused, condemn'd untried,
Cruelly spared, and hopeless of escape!
There, like the visionary emblem seen
By him of Babylon, life stands a stump,
And, filleted about with hoops of brass,
Still lives, though all his pleasant boughs are gone.
To count the hour-bell, and expect no change;
And ever, as the sullen sound is heard,
Still to reflect, that, though a joyless note
To him whose moments all have one dull pace,
Ten thousand rovers in the world at large
Account it music; that it summons some
To theatre, or jocund feast, or ball:
The wearied hireling finds it a release
From labour; and the lover, who has chid
Its long delay, feels every welcome stroke

Upon his heart-strings, trembling with delight—
To fly for refuge from distracting thought
To such amusements as ingenious woe
Contrives, hard shifting, and without her tools—
To read engraven on the mouldy walls,
In staggering types, his predecessor's tale,
A sad memorial, and subjoin his own—
To turn purveyor to an overgorged
And bloated spider, till the pamper'd pest
Is made familiar, watches his approach,
Comes at his call, and serves him for a friend—
To wear out time in numbering to and fro
The studs that thick emboss his iron door;
Then downward and then upward, then aslant,
And then alternate; with a sickly hope
By dint of change to give his tasteless task
Some relish; till the sum, exactly found
In all directions, he begins again;—
Oh comfortless existence! hemm'd around
With woes, which who that suffers would not kneel
And beg for exile, or the pangs of death?
That man should thus encroach on fellow-man,
Abridge him of his just and native rights,
Eradicate him, tear him from his hold
Upon the endearments of domestic life
And social, nip his fruitfulness and use,
And doom him for perhaps a heedless word
To barrenness, and solitude, and tears,
Moves indignation, makes the name of king
(Of king whom such prerogative can please)
As dreadful as the Manichean god,
Adored through fear, strong only to destroy.

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Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume;
And we are weeds without it. All constraint,
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,
Is evil; hurts the faculties, impedes
Their progress in the road of science; blinds
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To be the tenant of man's noble form.
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With all thy loss of empire, and though squeezed
By public exigence, till annual food
Fails for the craving hunger of the state,
Thee I account still happy, and the chief
Among the nations, seeing thou art free:
My native nook of earth! Thy clime is rude,
Replete with vapours, and disposes much
All hearts to sadness, and none more than mine:
Thine unadulterate manners are less soft
And plausible than social life requires,
And thou hast need of discipline and art
To give thee what politer France receives
From nature's bounty—that humane address
And sweetness, without which no pleasure is
In converse, either starved by cold reserve,
Or flush'd with fierce dispute, a senseless brawl.
Yet being free, I love thee: for the sake
Of that one feature can be well content,
Disgraced as thou hast been, poor as thou art,
To seek no sublunary rest beside.
But once enslaved, farewell! I could endure
Chains nowhere patiently; and chains at home,
Where I am free by birthright, not at all.
Then what were left of roughness in the grain
Of British natures, wanting its excuse
That it belongs to freemen, would disgust
And shock me. I should then with double pain
Feel all the rigour of thy fickle clime;
And, if I must bewail the blessing lost,
For which our Hampdens and our Sidneys bled,
I would at least bewail it under skies
Milder, among a people less austere;
In scenes which, having never known me free,
Would not reproach me with the loss I felt.
Do I forebode impossible events,
And tremble at vain dreams? Heaven grant I may!
But the age of virtuous politics is past,
And we are deep in that of cold pretence.
Patriots are grown too shrewd to be sincere,
And we too wise to trust them. He that takes

Deep in his soft credulity the stamp
Design'd by loud declaimers on the part
Of liberty, themselves the slaves of lust,
Incurs derision for his easy faith
And lack of knowledge, and with cause enough:
For when was public virtue to be found
Where private was not? Can he love the whole
Who loves not part? He be a nation's friend
Who is, in truth, the friend of no man there?
Can he be strenuous in his country's cause
Who slights the charities for whose dear sake
That country, if at all, must be beloved?

'Tis therefore sober and good men are sad
For England's glory, seeing it wax pale
And sickly, while her champions wear their hearts
So loose to private duty, that no brain,
Healthful and undisturb'd by factious fumes,
Can dream them trusty to the general weal.
Such were not they of old, whose temper'd blades
Dispersed the shackles of usurp'd control,
And hew'd them link from link; then Albion's sons
Were sons indeed; they felt a filial heart
Beat high within them at a mother's wrongs;
And, shining each in his domestic sphere,
Shone brighter still, once call'd to public view.
'Tis therefore many, whose sequester'd lot
Forbids their interference, looking on,
Anticipate perforce some dire event;
And, seeing the old castle of the state,
That promised once more firmness, so assail'd
That all its tempest-beaten turrets shake,
Stand motionless expectants of its fall.
All has its date below; the fatal hour
Was register'd in heaven ere time began.
We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works
Die too: the deep foundations that we lay,
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.
We build with what we deem eternal rock:
A distant age asks where the fabric stood;
And in the dust, sifted and search'd in vain,
The undiscoverable secret sleeps.

But there is yet a liberty, unsung
By poets, and by senators unpraised,
Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the powers
Of earth and hell confederate take away:
A liberty which persecution, fraud,
Oppression, prisons, have no power to bind:
Which whoso tastes can be enslaved no more.
'Tis liberty of heart, derived from Heaven,
Bought with His blood who gave it to mankind,
And seal'd with the same token. It is held
By charter, and that charter sanction'd sure
By the unimpeachable and awful oath
And promise of a God. His other gifts
All bear the royal stamp that speaks them his,
And are august; but this transcends them all.
His other works, the visible display
Of all-creating energy and might,
Are grand, no doubt, and worthy of the word
That, finding an interminable space
Unoccupied, has fill'd the void so well,
And made so sparkling what was dark before.
But these are not his glory. Man, 'tis true,
Smit with the beauty of so fair a scene,
Might well suppose the Artificer divine
Meant it eternal, had he not himself
Pronounced it transient, glorious as it is,
And, still designing a more glorious far,
Doom'd it as insufficient for his praise.
These, therefore, are occasional, and pass;
Form'd for the confutation of the fool,
Whose lying heart disputes against a God;
That office served, they must be swept away.
Not so the labours of his love: they shine
In other heavens than these that we behold,
And fade not. There is paradise that fears
No forfeiture, and of its fruits he sends
Large prelibation oft to saints below.
Of these the first in order, and the pledge
And confident assurance of the rest,
Is liberty: a flight into his arms,
Ere yet mortality's fine threads give way,

A clear escape from tyrannizing lust,
And full immunity from penal woe.

Chains are the portion of revolted man,
Stripes, and a dungeon; and his body serves
The triple purpose. In that sickly, foul,
Opprobrious residence he finds them all.
Propense his heart to idols, he is held
In silly dotage on created things,
Careless of their Creator. And that low
And sordid gravitation of his powers
To a vile clod so draws him, with such force
Resistless from the centre he should seek,
That he at last forgets it. All his hopes
Tend downward; his ambition is to sink,
To reach a depth profounder still, and still
Profounder, in the fathomless abyss
Of folly, plunging in pursuit of death.
But, ere he gain the comfortless repose
He seeks, and acquiescence of his soul,
In heaven-renouncing exile, he endures—
What does he not, from lusts opposed in vain,
And self-reproaching conscience? He foresees
The fatal issue to his health, fame, peace,
Fortune, and dignity; the loss of all
That can ennoble man, and make frail life,
Short as it is, supportable. Still worse,
Far worse than all the plagues, with which his sins
Infect his happiest moments, he forebodes
Ages of hopeless misery. Future death,
And death still future. Not a hasty stroke,
Like that which sends him to the dusty grave:
But unrepealable enduring death.
Scripture is still a trumpet to his fears:
What none can prove a forgery may be true;
What none but bad men wish exploded must.
That scruple checks him. Riot is not loud
Nor drunk enough to drown it. In the midst
Of laughter his compunctions are sincere;
And he abhors the jest by which he shines.
Remorse begets reform. His master-lust
Falls first before his resolute rebuke,

And seems dethroned and vanquish'd. Peace ensues,
But spurious and short-lived; the puny child
Of self-congratulating pride, begot
On fancied innocence. Again he falls,
And fights again; but finds his best essay
A presage ominous, portending still
Its own dishonour by a worse relapse.
Till Nature, unavailing Nature, foil'd
So oft, and wearied in the vain attempt,
Scoffs at her own performance. Reason now
Takes part with appetite, and pleads the cause
Perversely, which of late she so condemn'd;
With shallow shifts and old devices, worn
And tatter'd in the service of debauch,
Covering his shame from his offended sight.

"Hath God indeed given appetites to man,
And stored the earth so plenteously with means
To gratify the hunger of his wish;
And doth he reprobate, and will he damn
The use of his own bounty? making first
So frail a kind, and then enacting laws
So strict, that less than perfect must despair?
Falsehood! which whoso but suspects of truth
Dishonours God, and makes a slave of man.
Do they themselves, who undertake for hire
The teacher's office, and dispense at large
Their weekly dole of edifying strains,
Attend to their own music? have they faith
In what, with such solemnity of tone
And gesture, they propound to our belief?
Nay—conduct hath the loudest tongue. The voice
Is but an instrument, on which the priest
May play what tune he pleases. In the deed,
The unequivocal, authentic deed,
We find sound argument, we read the heart."

Such reasonings (if that name must needs belong
To excuses in which reason has no part)
Serve to compose a spirit well inclined
To live on terms of amity with vice,
And sin without disturbance. Often urged

(As often as libidinous discourse
Exhausted, he resorts to solemn themes
Of theological and grave import),
They gain at last his unreserved assent;
Till harden'd his heart's temper in the forge
Of lust, and on the anvil of despair,
He slights the strokes of conscience. Nothing moves
Or nothing much, his constancy in ill;
Vain tampering has but foster'd his disease;
'Tis desperate, and he sleeps the sleep of death.
Haste now, philosopher, and set him free.
Charm the deaf serpent wisely. Make him hear
Of rectitude and fitness, moral truth
How lovely, and the moral sense how sure,
Consulted and obey'd, to guide his steps
Directly to the first and only fair.
Spare not in such a cause. Spend all the powers
Of rant and rhapsody in virtue's praise:
Be most sublimely good, verbosely grand,
And with poetic trappings grace thy prose,
Till it outmantle all the pride of verse.—
Ah, tinkling cymbal, and high-sounding brass,
Smitten in vain! such music cannot charm
The eclipse that intercepts truth's heavenly beam,
And chills and darkens a wide wandering soul.
The still small voice is wanted. He must speak,
Whose word leaps forth at once to its effect;
Who calls for things that are not, and they come.

Grace makes the slave a freeman. 'Tis a change
That turns to ridicule the turgid speech
And stately tone of moralists, who boast,
As if, like him of fabulous renown,
They had indeed ability to smooth
The shag of savage nature, and were each
An Orpheus, and omnipotent in song.
But transformation of apostate man
From fool to wise, from earthly to divine,
Is work for Him that made him. He alone,
And He by means in philosophic eyes
Trivial and worthy of disdain, achieves
The wonder; humanizing what is brute

In the lost kind, extracting from the lips
Of asps their venom, overpowering strength
By weakness, and hostility by love.

Patriots have toil'd, and in their country's cause
Bled nobly; and their deeds, as they deserve,
Receive proud recompence. We give in charge
Their names to the sweet lyre. The historic muse,
Proud of the treasure, marches with it down
To latest times; and Sculpture, in her turn,
Gives bond in stone and ever-during brass
To guard them, and to immortalize her trust:
But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,
To those who, posted at the shrine of Truth,
Have fallen in her defence. A patriot's blood,
Well spent in such a strife, may earn indeed,
And for a time ensure to his loved land,
The sweets of liberty and equal laws;
But martyrs struggle for a brighter prize,
And win it with more pain. Their blood is shed
In confirmation of the noblest claim—
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,
To walk with God, to be divinely free,
To soar, and to anticipate the skies.
Yet few remember them. They lived unknown
Till persecution dragg'd them into fame,
And chased them up to heaven. Their ashes flew
—No marble tells us whither. With their names
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song:
And history, so warm on meaner themes,
Is cold on this. She execrates indeed
The tyranny that doom'd them to the fire,
But gives the glorious sufferers little praise.

He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside. There's not a chain
That hellish foes, confederate for his harm,
Can wind around him, but he casts it off
With as much ease as Samson his green withes.
He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and, though poor perhaps, compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,

Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his.
And all the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say—"My Father made them all!"
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That plann'd, and built, and still upholds a world
So clothed with beauty for rebellious man?
Yes—ye may fill your garners, ye that reap
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good
In senseless riot; but ye will not find,
In feast or in the chase, in song or dance,
A liberty like his who, unimpeach'd
Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,
Appropriates nature as his Father's work,
And has a richer use of yours than you.
He is indeed a freeman. Free by birth
Of no mean city; plann'd or e'er the hills
Were built, the fountains open'd, or the sea
With all his roaring multitude of waves.
His freedom is the same in every state;
And no condition of this changeful life,
So manifold in cares, whose every day
Brings its own evil with it, makes it less:
For he has wings that neither sickness, pain,
Nor penury, can cripple or confine.
No nook so narrow but he spreads them there
With ease, and is at large. The oppressor holds
His body bound; but knows not what a range
His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain;
And that to bind him is a vain attempt,
Whom God delights in, and in whom he dwells.

Acquaint thyself with God, if thou wouldst taste
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before;

Thine eye shall be instructed; and thine heart,
Made pure, shall relish, with divine delight
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.
Brutes graze the mountain-top, with faces prone,
And eyes intent upon the scanty herb
It yields them; or, recumbent on its brow,
Ruminate heedless of the scene outspread
Beneath, beyond, and stretching far away
From inland regions to the distant main.
Man views it, and admires; but rests content
With what he views. The landscape has his praise,
But not its Author. Unconcern'd who form'd
The paradise he sees, he finds it such,
And, such well pleased to find it, asks no more.
Not so the mind that has been touch'd from Heaven,
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught
To read his wonders, in whose thought the world,
Fair as it is, existed ere it was.
Not for its own sake merely, but for his
Much more who fashion'd it, he gives it praise;
Praise that, from earth resulting, as it ought,
To earth's acknowledged Sovereign, finds at once
Its only just proprietor in Him.
The soul that sees him or receives sublimed
New faculties, or learns at least to employ
More worthily the powers she own'd before,
Discerns in all things what, with stupid gaze
Of ignorance, till then she overlook'd,
A ray of heavenly light, gilding all forms
Terrestrial in the vast and the minute;
The unambiguous footsteps of the God,
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds.
Much conversant with Heaven, she often holds
With those fair ministers of light to man,
That fill the skies nightly with silent pomp,
Sweet conference. Inquires what strains were they
With which Heaven rang, when every star, in haste
To gratulate the new-created earth,
Sent forth a voice, and all the sons of God
Shouted for joy.—"Tell me, ye shining hosts,
That navigate a sea that knows no storms,

Beneath a vault unsullied with a cloud,
If from your elevation, whence ye view
Distinctly scenes invisible to man,
And systems, of whose birth no tidings yet
Have reach'd this nether world, ye spy a race
Favour'd as ours; transgressors from the womb,
And hasting to a grave, yet doom'd to rise,
And to possess a brighter heaven than yours?
As one who long detain'd on foreign shores
Pants to return, and when he sees afar
His country's weather-bleach'd and batter'd rocks,
From the green wave emerging, darts an eye
Radiant with joy towards the happy land;
So I with animated hopes behold,
And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,
That show like beacons in the blue abyss,
Ordain'd to guide the embodied spirit home
From toilsome life to never-ending rest.
Love kindles as I gaze. I feel desires
That give assurance of their own success,
And that, infused from Heaven, must thither tend."

So reads he nature, whom the lamp of truth
Illuminates. Thy lamp, mysterious Word!
Which whoso sees no longer wanders lost,
With intellects bemazed in endless doubt,
But runs the road of wisdom. Thou hast built,
With means that were not till by thee employ'd,
Worlds that had never been hadst thou in strength
Been less, or less benevolent than strong.
They are thy witnesses, who speak thy power
And goodness infinite, but speak in ears
That hear not, or receive not their report.
In vain thy creatures testify of thee,
Till thou proclaim thyself. Theirs is indeed
A teaching voice: but 'tis the praise of thine
That whom it teaches it makes prompt to learn,
And with the boon gives talent for its use.
Till thou art heard, imaginations vain
Possess the heart, and fables false as hell,
Yet deem'd oracular, lure down to death
The uninform'd and heedless souls of men.

We give to chance, blind chance, ourselves as blind,
The glory of thy work; which yet appears
Perfect and unimpeachable of blame,
Challenging human scrutiny, and proved
Then skilful most when most severely judged.
But chance is not; or is not where thou reign'st;
Thy providence forbids that fickle power
(If power she be that works but to confound)
To mix her wild vagaries with thy laws.
Yet thus we dote, refusing while we can
Instruction, and inventing to ourselves
Gods such as guilt makes welcome; gods that sleep,
Or disregard our follies, or that sit
Amused spectators of this bustling stage.
Thee we reject, unable to abide
Thy purity, till pure as thou art pure;
Made such by thee, we love thee for that cause,
For which we shunn'd and hated thee before.
Then we are free. Then liberty, like day,
Breaks on the soul, and by a flash from heaven
Fires all the faculties with glorious joy.
A voice is heard that mortal ears hear not,
Till thou hast touch'd them; 'tis the voice of song,
A loud Hosanna sent from all thy works;
Which he that hears it with a shout repeats,
And adds his rapture to the general praise.
In that blest moment Nature, throwing wide
Her veil opaque, discloses with a smile
The Author of her beauties, who, retired
Behind his own creation, works unseen
By the impure, and hears his power denied.
Thou art the source and centre of all minds,
Their only point of rest, eternal Word!
From thee departing they are lost, and rove
At random without honour, hope, or peace.
From thee is all that soothes the life of man,
His high endeavour, and his glad success,
His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.
But, O thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown!
Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor;
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.

William Cowper

The Task: Book Vi, The Winter Walk At Noon (Excerpts)

Thus heav'nward all things tend. For all were once
Perfect, and all must be at length restor'd.
So God has greatly purpos'd; who would else
In his dishonour'd works himself endure
Dishonour, and be wrong'd without redress.
Haste then, and wheel away a shatter'd world,
Ye slow-revolving seasons! We would see
(A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)
A world that does not dread and hate his laws,
And suffer for its crime: would learn how fair
The creature is that God pronounces good,
How pleasant in itself what pleases him.
Here ev'ry drop of honey hides a sting;
Worms wind themselves into our sweetest flow'rs,
And ev'n the joy, that haply some poor heart
Derives from heav'n, pure as the fountain is,
Is sully'd in the stream; taking a taint
From touch of human lips, at best impure.
Oh for a world in principle as chaste
As this is gross and selfish! over which
Custom and prejudice shall bear no sway,
That govern all things here, should'ring aside
The meek and modest truth, and forcing her
To seek a refuge from the tongue of strife
In nooks obscure, far from the ways of men;
Where violence shall never lift the sword,
Nor cunning justify the proud man's wrong,
Leaving the poor no remedy but tears;
Where he that fills an office shall esteem
The occasion it presents of doing good
More than the perquisite; where law shall speak
Seldom, and never but as wisdom prompts,
And equity; not jealous more to guard
A worthless form, than to decide aright;
Where fashion shall not sanctify abuse,
Nor smooth good-breeding (supplemental grace)
With lean performance ape the work of love....

He is the happy man, whose life ev'n now
Shows somewhat of that happier life to come:
Who, doom'd to an obscure but tranquil state,
Is pleas'd with it, and, were he free to choose,
Would make his fate his choice; whom peace, the fruit
Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,
Prepare for happiness; bespeak him one
Content indeed to sojourn while he must
Below the skies, but having there his home.
The world o'erlooks him in her busy search
Of objects more illustrious in her view;
And occupied as earnestly as she,
Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the world.
She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not;
He seeks not hers, for he has prov'd them vain.
He cannot skim the ground like summer birds
Pursuing gilded flies, and such he deems
Her honours, her emoluments, her joys.
Therefore in contemplation is his bliss,
Whose pow'r is such, that whom she lifts from earth
She makes familiar with a heav'n unseen,
And shows him glories yet to be reveal'd....

So life glides smoothly and by stealth away,
More golden than that age of fabled gold
Renown'd in ancient song; not vex'd with care
Or stain'd with guilt, beneficent, approv'd
Of God and man, and peaceful in its end.
So glide my life away! and so at last
My share of duties decently fulfill'd,
May some disease, not tardy to perform
Its destin'd office, yet with gentle stroke,
Dismiss me weary to a safe retreat,
Beneath a turf that I have often trod.
It shall not grieve me, then, that once, when call'd
To dress a sofa with the flow'rs of verse,
I play'd awhile, obedient to the fair,
With that light task; but soon, to please her more,
Whom flow'rs alone I knew would little please,

Let fall th' unfinish'd wreath, and rov'd for fruit;
Rov'd far, and gather'd much: some harsh, 'tis true,
Pick'd from the thorns and briars of reproof,
But wholesome, well digested; grateful some
To palates that can taste immortal truth,
Insidious else, and sure to be despis'd.
But all is in his hand whose praise I seek.
In vain the poet sings, and the world hears,
If he regard not, though divine the theme.
'Tis not in artful measures, in the chime
And idle tinkling of a minstrel's lyre,
To charm his ear whose eye is on the heart;
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation--prosper ev'n mine.

William Cowper

The Task: Book Vi. -- The Winter Walk At Noon

There is in souls a sympathy with sounds;
And as the mind is pitch'd the ear is pleas'd
With melting airs, or martial, brisk, or grave:
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touch'd within us, and the heart replies.
How soft the music of those village bells,
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet, now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on!
With easy force it opens all the cells
Where Memory slept. Wherever I have heard
A kindred melody, the scene recurs,
And with it all its pleasures and its pains.
Such comprehensive views the spirit takes,
That in a few short moments I retrace
(As in a map the voyager his course)
The windings of my way through many years.
Short as in retrospect the journey seems,
It seem'd not always short; the rugged path,
And prospect oft so dreary and forlorn,
Moved many a sigh at its disheartening length.
Yet, feeling present evils, while the past
Faintly impress the mind, or not at all,
How readily we wish time spent revoked,
That we might try the ground again, where once
(Through inexperience, as we now perceive)
We miss'd that happiness we might have found!
Some friend is gone, perhaps his son's best friend,
A father, whose authority, in show
When most severe, and mustering all its force,
Was but the graver countenance of love:
Whose favour, like the clouds of spring, might lower,
And utter now and then an awful voice,
But had a blessing in its darkest frown,
Threatening at once and nourishing the plant.
We loved, but not enough, the gentle hand
That rear'd us. At a thoughtless age, allured
By every gilded folly, we renounced

His sheltering side, and wilfully forewent
That converse, which we now in vain regret.
How gladly would the man recall to life
The boy's neglected sire! a mother too,
That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,
Might he demand them at the gates of death.
Sorrow has, since they went, subdued and tamed
The playful humour; he could now endure
(Himself grown sober in the vale of tears)
And feel a parent's presence no restraint.
But not to understand a treasure's worth
Till time has stolen away the slighted good,
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the world the wilderness it is.
The few that pray at all pray oft amiss,
And, seeking grace to improve the prize they hold,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

The night was winter in its roughest mood;
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,
The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
Without a cloud, and white without a speck
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale;
And through the trees I view the embattled tower
Whence all the music. I again perceive
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,
And settle in soft musings as I tread
The walk, still verdant under oaks and elms,
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
The roof, though moveable through all its length
As the wind sways it, has yet well sufficed,
And, intercepting in their silent fall
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
The redbreast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes, and more than half suppress'd;
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes

From many a twig the pendant drops of ice,
That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence. Meditation here
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
May give a useful lesson to the head,
And Learning wiser grow without his books.
Knowledge and Wisdom, far from being one,
Have ofttimes no connexion. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which Wisdom builds,
Till smoothed and squared, and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems to enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.
Books are not seldom talismans and spells,
By which the magic art of shrewder wits
Holds an unthinking multitude enthral'd.
Some to the fascination of a name
Surrender judgment hoodwink'd. Some the style
Infatuates, and through labyrinth and wilds
Of error leads them, by a tune entranced.
While sloth seduces more, too weak to bear
The insupportable fatigue of thought,
And swallowing therefore without pause or choice
The total grist unsifted, husks and all.
But trees, and rivulets whose rapid course
Defies the check of winter, haunts of deer,
And sheepwalks populous with bleating lambs,
And lanes in which the primrose ere her time
Peeps through the moss that clothes the hawthorn root,
Deceive no student. Wisdom there, and truth,
Not shy, as in the world, and to be won
By slow solicitation, seize at once
The roving thought, and fix it on themselves.

What prodigies can power divine perform
More grand than it produces year by year,
And all in sight of inattentive man?
Familiar with the effect, we slight the cause,

And, in the constancy of nature's course,
The regular return of genial months,
And renovation of a faded world,
See nought to wonder at. Should God again,
As once in Gibeon, interrupt the race
Of the undeviating and punctual sun,
How would the world admire! but speaks it less
An agency divine to make him know
His moment when to sink and when to rise,
Age after age, than to arrest his course?
All we behold is miracle; but, seen
So duly, all is miracle in vain.
Where now the vital energy that moved,
While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph
Through the imperceptible meandering veins
Of leaf and flower? It sleeps; and the icy touch
Of unprolific winter has impress'd
A cold stagnation on the intestine tide.
But let the months go round, a few short months,
And all shall be restored. These naked shoots,
Barren as lances, among which the wind
Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,
Shall put their graceful foliage on again,
And, more aspiring, and with ampler spread,
Shall boast new charms, and more than they have lost.
Then each, in its peculiar honours clad,
Shall publish, even to the distant eye,
Its family and tribe. Laburnum, rich
In streaming gold; syringa, ivory pure;
The scentless and the scented rose; this red,
And of an humbler growth, the other tall,
And throwing up into the darkest gloom
Of neighbouring cypress, or more sable yew,
Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf
That the wind severs from the broken wave;
The lilac, various in array, now white,
Now sanguine, and her beauteous head now set
With purple spikes pyramidal, as if,
Studious of ornament, yet unresolved
Which hue she most approved, she chose them all:
Copious of flowers the woodbine, pale and wan,
But well compensating her sickly looks

With never-cloying odours, early and late;
Hypericum all bloom, so thick a swarm
Of flowers, like flies clothing her slender rods,
That scarce a leaf appears; mezereon too,
Though leafless, well attired, and thick beset
With blushing wreaths, investing every spray;
Althæa with the purple eye; the broom,
Yellow and bright as bullion unalloy'd,
Her blossoms; and luxuriant above all
The jasmine, throwing wide her elegant sweets,
The deep dark green of whose unvarnish'd leaf
Makes more conspicuous, and illumines more
The bright profusion of her scatter'd stars.—
These have been, and these shall be in their day;
And all this uniform, uncolour'd scene
Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load,
And flush into variety again.

From dearth to plenty, and from death to life,
Is Nature's progress, when she lectures man
In heavenly truth; evincing, as she makes
The grand transition, that there lives and works
A soul in all things, and that soul is God.
The beauties of the wilderness are his,
That makes so gay the solitary place,
Where no eye sees them. And the fairer forms,
That cultivation glories in, are his.
He sets the bright procession on its way,
And marshals all the order of the year;
He marks the bounds which Winter may not pass,
And blunts his pointed fury; in its case,
Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ,
Uninjured, with inimitable art;
And, ere one flowery season fades and dies,
Designs the blooming wonders of the next.

Some say that, in the origin of things,
When all creation started into birth,
The infant elements received a law,
From which they swerve not since; that under force
Of that controlling ordinance they move,
And need not His immediate hand, who first
Prescribed their course, to regulate it now.

Thus dream they, and contrive to save a God
The incumbrance of his own concerns, and spare
The great Artificer of all that moves
The stress of a continual act, the pain
Of unremitted vigilance and care,
As too laborious and severe a task.
So man, the moth, is not afraid, it seems,
To span omnipotence, and measure might,
That knows no measure, by the scanty rule
And standard of his own, that is to-day,
And is not ere to-morrow's sun go down.
But how should matter occupy a charge,
Dull as it is, and satisfy a law
So vast in its demands, unless impell'd
To ceaseless service by a ceaseless force,
And under pressure of some conscious cause?
The Lord of all, himself through all diffused,
Sustains and is the life of all that lives.
Nature is but a name for an effect,
Whose cause is God. He feeds the secret fire,
By which the mighty process is maintain'd,
Who sleeps not, is not weary; in whose sight
Slow circling ages are as transient days;
Whose work is without labour; whose designs
No flaw deforms, no difficulty thwarts;
And whose beneficence no charge exhausts.
Him blind antiquity profaned, not served,
With self-taught rites, and under various names,
Female and male, Pomona, Pales, Pan,
And Flora, and Vertumnus; peopling earth
With tutelary goddesses and gods
That were not; and commending as they would
To each some province, garden, field, or grove.
But all are under one. One spirit, His
Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brows,
Rules universal nature. Not a flower
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
Of his unrivall'd pencil. He inspires
Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
In grains as countless as the seaside sands,
The forms with which he sprinkles all the earth.

Happy who walks with him! whom what he finds
Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower,
Or what he views of beautiful or grand
In nature, from the broad majestic oak
To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
Prompts with remembrance of a present God.
His presence, who made all so fair, perceived
Makes all still fairer. As with him no scene
Is dreary, so with him all seasons please.
Though winter had been none, had man been true,
And earth be punish'd for its tenant's sake,
Yet not in vengeance; as this smiling sky,
So soon succeeding such an angry night,
And these dissolving snows, and this clear stream
Recovering fast its liquid music, prove.

Who then, that has a mind well strung and tuned
To contemplation, and within his reach
A scene so friendly to his favourite task,
Would waste attention at the chequer'd board,
His host of wooden warriors to and fro
Marching and countermarching, with an eye
As fix'd as marble, with a forehead ridged
And furrow'd into storms, and with a hand
Trembling, as if eternity were hung
In balance on his conduct of a pin?
Nor envies he aught more their idle sport,
Who pant with application misapplied
To trivial joys, and pushing ivory balls
Across a velvet level, feel a joy
Akin to rapture, when the bauble finds
Its destined goal of difficult access.
Nor deems he wiser him, who gives his noon
To miss, the mercer's plague, from shop to shop
Wandering, and littering with unfolded silks
The polish'd counter, and approving none,
Or promising with smiles to call again.
Nor him who, by his vanity seduced,
And soothed into a dream that he discerns
The difference of a Guido from a daub,
Frequents the crowded auction: station'd there
As duly as the Langford of the show,

With glass at eye, and catalogue in hand,
And tongue accomplish'd in the fulsome cant
And pedantry that coxcombs learn with ease:
Oft as the price-deciding hammer falls,
He notes it in his book, then raps his box,
Swears 'tis a bargain, rails at his hard fate
That he has let it pass—but never bids.

Here unmolested, through whatever sign
The sun proceeds, I wander. Neither mist,
Nor freezing sky nor sultry, checking me,
Nor stranger intermeddling with my joy.
E'en in the spring and playtime of the year,
That calls the unwonted villager abroad
With all her little ones, a sportive train,
To gather kingcups in the yellow mead,
And prink their hair with daisies, or to pick
A cheap but wholesome salad from the brook,
These shades are all my own. The timorous hare,
Grown so familiar with her frequent guest,
Scarce shuns me; and the stockdove unalarm'd
Sits cooing in the pine-tree, nor suspends
His long love-ditty for my near approach.
Drawn from his refuge in some lonely elm,
That age or injury has hollow'd deep,
Where, on his bed of wool and matted leaves,
He has outslept the winter, ventures forth
To frisk awhile, and bask in the warm sun,
The squirrel, flippant, pert, and full of play:
He sees me, and at once, swift as a bird,
Ascends the neighboring beech; there whisks his brush,
And perks his ears, and stamps, and cries aloud,
With all the prettiness of feign'd alarm,
And anger insignificantly fierce.

The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowship, as being void
Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
To love and friendship both, that is not pleased
With sight of animals enjoying life,
Nor feels their happiness augment his own.
The bounding fawn, that darts across the glade

When none pursues, through mere delight of heart,
And spirits buoyant with excess of glee;
The horse as wanton and almost as fleet,
That skims the spacious meadow at full speed,
Then stops and snorts, and, throwing high his heels,
Starts to the voluntary race again;
The very kine that gambol at high noon,
The total herd receiving first from one
That leads the dance a summons to be gay,
Though wild their strange vagaries and uncouth
Their efforts, yet resolved with one consent
To give such act and utterance as they may
To ecstasy too big to be suppress'd;—
These, and a thousand images of bliss,
With which kind Nature graces every scene,
Where cruel man defeats not her design,
Impart to the benevolent, who wish
All that are capable of pleasure pleased,
A far superior happiness to theirs,
The comfort of a reasonable joy.

Man scarce had risen, obedient to His call
Who form'd him from the dust, his future grave,
When he was crown'd as never king was since.
God set the diadem upon his head,
And angel choirs attended. Wondering stood
The new-made monarch, while before him pass'd,
All happy, and all perfect in their kind,
The creatures, summon'd from their various haunts
To see their sovereign, and confess his sway.
Vast was his empire, absolute his power,
Or bounded only by a law, whose force
'Twas his sublimest privilege to feel
And own, the law of universal love.
He ruled with meekness, they obey'd with joy;
No cruel purpose lurk'd within his heart,
And no distrust of his intent in theirs.
So Eden was a scene of harmless sport,
Where kindness on his part, who ruled the whole,
Begot a tranquil confidence in all,
And fear as yet was not, nor cause for fear,
But sin marr'd all; and the revolt of man,

That source of evils not exhausted yet,
Was punish'd with revolt of his from him.
Garden of God, how terrible the change
Thy groves and lawns then witness'd! Every heart,
Each animal, of every name, conceived
A jealousy and an instinctive fear,
And, conscious of some danger, either fled
Precipitate the loathed abode of man,
Or growl'd defiance in such angry sort,
As taught him too to tremble in his turn.
Thus harmony and family accord
Were driven from Paradise; and in that hour
The seeds of cruelty, that since have swell'd
To such gigantic and enormous growth,
Were sown in human nature's fruitful soil.
Hence date the persecution and the pain
That man inflicts on all inferior kinds,
Regardless of their plaints. To make him sport,
To gratify the frenzy of his wrath,
Or his base gluttony, are causes good
And just in his account, why bird and beast
Should suffer torture, and the streams be dyed
With blood of their inhabitants impaled.
Earth groans beneath the burden of a war
Waged with defenceless innocence, while he,
Not satisfied to prey on all around,
Adds tenfold bitterness to death by pangs
Needless, and first torments ere he devours.
Now happiest they that occupy the scenes
The most remote from his abhorr'd resort,
Whom once, as delegate of God on earth,
They fear'd, and as his perfect image loved.
The wilderness is theirs, with all its caves,
Its hollow glens, its thickets, and its plains,
Unvisited by man. There they are free,
And howl and roar as likes them, uncontroll'd;
Nor ask his leave to slumber or to play.
Woe to the tyrant, if he dare intrude
Within the confines of their wild domain!
The lion tells him—I am monarch here!
And, if he spare him, spares him on the terms
Of royal mercy, and through generous scorn

To rend a victim trembling at his foot.
In measure, as by force of instinct drawn,
Or by necessity constrain'd, they live
Dependent upon man; those in his fields,
These at his crib, and some beneath his roof;
They prove too often at how dear a rate
He sells protection. Witness at his foot
The spaniel dying for some venial fault,
Under dissection of the knotted scourge;
Witness the patient ox, with stripes and yells
Driven to the slaughter, goaded, as he runs,
To madness; while the savage at his heels
Laughs at the frantic sufferer's fury, spent
Upon the guiltless passenger o'erthrown.
He too is witness, noblest of the train
That wait on man, the flight-performing horse:
With unsuspecting readiness he takes
His murderer on his back, and, push'd all day,
With bleeding sides and flanks that heave for life,
To the far-distant goal, arrives and dies.
So little mercy shows who needs so much!
Does law, so jealous in the cause of man,
Denounce no doom on the delinquent? None.
He lives, and o'er his brimming beaker boasts
(As if barbarity were high desert)
The inglorious feat, and clamorous in praise
Of the poor brute, seems wisely to suppose
The honours of his matchless horse his own.
But many a crime deem'd innocent on earth
Is register'd in heaven; and these no doubt
Have each their record, with a curse annex'd.
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,
But God will never. When he charged the Jew
To assist his foe's down-fallen beast to rise;
And when the bush-exploring boy that seized
The young, to let the parent bird go free;
Proved he not plainly that his meaner works
Are yet his care, and have an interest all,
All, in the universal Father's love?
On Noah, and in him on all mankind,
The charter was conferr'd, by which we hold
The flesh of animals in fee, and claim

O'er all we feed on power of life and death.
But read the instrument, and mark it well:
The oppression of a tyrannous control
Can find no warrant there. Feed then, and yield
Thanks for thy food. Carnivorous, through sin,
Feed on the slain, but spare the living brute!

The Governor of all, himself to all
So bountiful, in whose attentive ear
The unfledged raven and the lion's whelp
Plead not in vain for pity on the pangs
Of hunger unassuaged, has interposed,
Not seldom, his avenging arm, to smite
The injurious trampler upon Nature's law,
That claims forbearance even for a brute.
He hates the hardness of a Balaam's heart;
And, prophet as he was, he might not strike
The blameless animal, without rebuke,
On which he rode. Her opportune offence
Saved him, or the unrelenting seer had died.
He sees that human equity is slack
To interfere, though in so just a cause;
And makes the task his own. Inspiring dumb
And helpless victims with a sense so keen
Of injury, with such knowledge of their strength,
And such sagacity to take revenge,
That oft the beast has seem'd to judge the man.
An ancient, not a legendary tale,
By one of sound intelligence rehearsed
(If such who plead for Providence may seem
In modern eyes), shall make the doctrine clear.

Where England, stretch'd towards the setting sun,
Narrow and long, o'erlooks the western wave,
Dwelt young Misagathus; a scorner he
Of God and goodness, atheist in ostent,
Vicious in act, in temper savage-fierce.
He journey'd; and his chance was as he went
To join a traveller, of far different note,
Evander, famed for piety, for years
Deserving honour, but for wisdom more.
Fame had not left the venerable man

A stranger to the manners of the youth,
Whose face too was familiar to his view.
Their way was on the margin of the land,
O'er the green summit of the rocks, whose base
Beats back the roaring surge, scarce heard so high.
The charity that warm'd his heart was moved
At sight of the man monster. With a smile,
Gentle and affable, and full of grace,
As fearful of offending whom he wish'd
Much to persuade, he plied his ear with truths
Not harshly thunder'd forth, or rudely press'd,
But, like his purpose, gracious, kind, and sweet.
"And doest thou dream," the impenetrable man
Exclaimed, "that me the lullabies of age,
And fantasies of dotards such as thou,
Can cheat, or move a moment's fear in me?
Mark now the proof I give thee, that the brave
Need no such aids as superstition lends,
To steel their hearts against the dread of death."
He spoke, and to the precipice at hand
Push'd with a madman's fury. Fancy shrinks,
And the blood thrills and curdles at the thought
Of such a gulf as he design'd his grave.
But though the felon on his back could dare
The dreadful leap, more rational, his steed
Declined the death, and wheeling swiftly round,
Or e'er his hoof had press'd the crumbling verge,
Baffled his rider, saved against his will.
The frenzy of the brain may be redress'd
By medicine well applied, but without grace
The heart's insanity admits no cure.
Enraged the more by what might have reform'd
His horrible intent, again he sought
Destruction, with a zeal to be destroy'd,
With sounding whip, and rowels dyed in blood.
But still in vain. The Providence, that meant
A longer date to the far nobler beast,
Spared yet again the ignobler for his sake.
And now his prowess proved, and his sincere
Incurable obduracy evinced,
His rage grew cool: and pleased perhaps to have earn'd
So cheaply the renown of that attempt,

With looks of some complacence he resumed
His road, deriding much the blank amaze
Of good Evander, still where he was left
Fix'd motionless, and petrified with dread.
So on they fared. Discourse on other themes
Ensuing seem'd to obliterate the past;
And tamer far for so much fury shown
(As in the course of rash and fiery men),
The rude companion smiled, as if transform'd.
But 'twas a transient calm. A storm was near,
An unsuspected storm. His hour was come.
The impious challenger of power divine
Was now to learn that Heaven, though slow to wrath,
Is never with impunity defied.
His horse, as he had caught his master's mood,
Snorting, and starting into sudden rage,
Unbidden, and not now to be controll'd,
Rush'd to the cliff, and, having reach'd it, stood.
At once the shock unseated him: he flew
Sheer o'er the craggy barrier; and, immersed
Deep in the flood, found, when he sought it not,
The death he had deserved, and died alone.
So God wrought double justice; made the fool
The victim of his own tremendous choice,
And taught a brute the way to safe revenge.

I would not enter on my list of friends
(Though graced with polish'd manners and fine sense,
Yet wanting sensibility) the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.
An inadvertent step may crush the snail
That crawls at evening in the public path:
But he that has humanity, forewarn'd,
Will tread aside, and let the reptile live.
The creeping vermin, loathsome to the sight,
And charged perhaps with venom, that intrudes,
A visitor unwelcome, into scenes
Sacred to neatness and repose, the alcove,
The chamber, or refectory, may die:
A necessary act incurs no blame.
Not so when, held within their proper bounds,
And guiltless of offence, they range the air,

Or take their pastime in the spacious field:
There they are privileged; and he that hunts
Or harms them there is guilty of a wrong,
Disturbs the economy of Nature's realm,
Who, when she form'd, design'd them an abode.
The sum is this. If man's convenience, health,
Or safety interfere, his rights and claims
Are paramount, and must extinguish theirs.
Else they are all—the meanest things that are,
As free to live, and to enjoy that life,
As God was free to form them at the first,
Who in his sovereign wisdom made them all.
Ye therefore, who love mercy, teach your sons
To love it too. The spring-time of our years
Is soon dishonour'd and defiled in most
By budding ills, that ask a prudent hand
To check them. But, alas! none sooner shoots,
If unrestrain'd, into luxuriant growth,
Than cruelty, most devilish of them all.
Mercy to him that shows it is the rule
And righteous limitation of its act,
By which Heaven moves in pardoning guilty man;
And he that shows none, being ripe in years,
And conscious of the outrage he commits,
Shall seek it, and not find it, in his turn.

Distinguish'd much by reason, and still more
By our capacity of grace divine,
From creatures that exist but for our sake,
Which, having served us, perish, we are held
Accountable; and God, some future day,
Will reckon with us roundly for the abuse
Of what he deems no mean or trivial trust.
Superior as we are, they yet depend
Not more on human help than we on theirs.
Their strength, or speed, or vigilance, were given
In aid of our defects. In some are found
Such teachable and apprehensive parts,
That man's attainments in his own concerns,
Match'd with the expertness of the brutes in theirs,
Are oftentimes vanquish'd and thrown far behind.
Some show that nice sagacity of smell,

And read with such discernment, in the port
And figure of the man, his secret aim,
That oft we owe our safety to a skill
We could not teach, and must despair to learn.
But learn we might, if not too proud to stoop
To quadruped instructors, many a good
And useful quality, and virtue, too,
Rarely exemplified among ourselves—
Attachment never to be wean'd or changed
By any change of fortune; proof alike
Against unkindness, absence, and neglect;
Fidelity, that neither bribe nor threat
Can move or warp; and gratitude for small
And trivial favours, lasting as the life
And glistening even in the dying eye.

Man praises man. Desert in arts or arms
Wins public honour; and ten thousand sit
Patiently present at a sacred song,
Commemoration -mad; content to hear
(O wonderful effect of music's power!)
Messiah's eulogy for Handel's sake.
But less, methinks, than sacrilege might serve
(For was it less, what heathen would have dared
To strip Jove's statue of his oaken wreath,
And hang it up in honour of a man?)—
Much less might serve, when all that we design
Is but to gratify an itching ear,
And give the day to a musician's praise.
Remember Handel? Who, that was not born
Deaf as the dead to harmony, forgets,
Or can, the more than Homer of his age?
Yes—we remember him; and while we praise
A talent so divine, remember too
That His most holy book, from whom it came,
Was never meant, was never used before,
To buckram out the memory of a man.
But hush!—the muse perhaps is too severe;
And, with a gravity beyond the size
And measure of the offence, rebukes a deed
Less impious than absurd, and owing more
To want of judgment than to wrong design.

So in the chapel of old Ely House,
 When wandering Charles, who meant to be the third,
 Had fled from William, and the news was fresh,
 The simple clerk, but loyal, did announce,
 And eke did rear right merrily, two staves,
 Sung to the praise and glory of King George!
 —Man praises man; and Garrick's memory next,
 When time hath somewhat mellow'd it, and made
 The idol of our worship while he lived
 The god of our idolatry once more,
 Shall have its altar; and the world shall go
 In pilgrimage to bow before his shrine.
 The theatre, too small, shall suffocate
 Its squeezed contents, and more than it admits
 Shall sigh at their exclusion, and return
 Ungratified: for there some noble lord
 Shall stuff his shoulders with king Richard's bunch,
 Or wrap himself in Hamlet's inky cloak,
 And strut, and storm, and straddle, stamp, and stare,
 To show the world how Garrick did not act—
 For Garrick was a worshipper himself;
 He drew the liturgy, and framed the rites
 And solemn ceremonial of the day,
 And call'd the world to worship on the banks
 Of Avon, famed in song. Ah, pleasant proof
 That piety has still in human hearts
 Some place, a spark or two not yet extinct.
 The mulberry-tree was hung with blooming wreaths;
 The mulberry-tree stood centre of the dance;
 The mulberry-tree was hymn'd with dulcet airs;
 And from his touchwood trunk the mulberry-tree
 Supplied such relics as devotion holds
 Still sacred, and preserves with pious care.
 So 'twas a hallow'd time: decorum reign'd,
 And mirth without offence. No few return'd,
 Doubtless much edified, and all refresh'd.
 —Man praises man. The rabble, all alive,
 From tipping benches, cellars, stalls, and styes,
 Swarm in the streets. The statesman of the day,
 A pompous and slow-moving pageant, comes.
 Some shout him, and some hang upon his car,
 To gaze in his eyes, and bless him. Maidens wave

Their kerchiefs, and old women weep for joy;
While others, not so satisfied, unhorse
The gilded equipage, and turning loose
His steeds, usurp a place they well deserve.
Why? what has charm'd them? Hath he saved the state?
No. Doth he purpose its salvation? No.
Enchanting novelty, that moon at full,
That finds out every crevice of the head
That is not sound and perfect, hath in theirs
Wrought this disturbance. But the wane is near,
And his own cattle must suffice him soon.
Thus idly do we waste the breath of praise,
And dedicate a tribute, in its use
And just direction sacred, to a thing
Doom'd to the dust, or lodged already there.
Encomium in old time was poets' work!
But poets, having lavishly long since
Exhausted all materials of the art,
The task now falls into the public hand;
And I, contented with an humble theme,
Have pour'd my stream of panegyric down
The vale of Nature, where it creeps and winds
Among her lovely works with a secure
And unambitious course, reflecting clear,
If not the virtues, yet the worth, of brutes.
And I am recompensed, and deem the toils
Of poetry not lost, if verse of mine
May stand between an animal and woe,
And teach one tyrant pity for his drudge.

The groans of Nature in this nether world,
Which Heaven has heard for ages, have an end.
Foretold by prophets, and by poets sung,
Whose fire was kindled at the prophets' lamp,
The time of rest, the promised Sabbath, comes.
Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh
Fulfill'd their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world; and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of human things
Is merely as the working of a sea
Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest:
For He, whose car the winds are, and the clouds

The dust that waits upon his sultry march,
When sin hath moved him, and his wrath is hot,
Shall visit earth in mercy; shall descend
Propitious in his chariot paved with love;
And what his storms have blasted and defaced
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.

Sweet is the harp of prophecy; too sweet
Not to be wrong'd by a mere mortal touch:
Nor can the wonders it records be sung
To meaner music, and not suffer loss.
But when a poet, or when one like me,
Happy to rove among poetic flowers,
Though poor in skill to rear them, lights at last
On some fair theme, some theme divinely fair,
Such is the impulse and the spur he feels,
To give it praise proportion'd to its worth,
That not to attempt it, arduous as he deems
The labour, were a task more arduous still.

O scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,
Scenes of accomplish'd bliss! which who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refresh'd with foretaste of the joy?
Rivers of gladness water all the earth,
And clothe all climes with beauty; the reproach
Of barrenness is past. The fruitful field
Laughs with abundance; and the land, once lean,
Or fertile only in its own disgrace,
Exults to see its thistly curse repeal'd.
The various seasons woven into one,
And that one season an eternal spring,
The garden fears no blight, and needs no fence,
For there is none to covet, all are full.
The lion, and the libbard, and the bear
Graze with the fearless flocks; all bask at noon
Together, or all gambol in the shade
Of the same grove, and drink one common stream.
Antipathies are none. No foe to man
Lurks in the serpent now: the mother sees,
And smiles to see, her infant's playful hand
Stretch'd forth to dally with the crested worm,

To stroke his azure neck, or to receive
The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.
All creatures worship man, and all mankind
One Lord, one Father. Error has no place;
That creeping pestilence is driven away;
The breath of heaven has chased it. In the heart
No passion touches a discordant string,
But all is harmony and love. Disease
Is not: the pure and uncontaminate blood
Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.
One song employs all nations; and all cry,
"Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!"
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy;
Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosannah round.
Behold the measure of the promise fill'd;
See Salem built, the labour of a God;
Bright as a sun, the sacred city shines;
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light; the glory of all lands
Flows into her; unbounded is her joy,
And endless her increase. Thy rams are there,
Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there;
The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,
And Saba's spicy groves, pay tribute there.
Praise in all her gates: upon her walls,
And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,
Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there
Kneels with the native of the farthest west;
And Æthiopia spreads abroad the hand,
And worships. Her report has travell'd forth
Into all lands. From every clime they come
To see thy beauty and to share thy joy,
O Sion! an assembly such as earth
Saw never, such as Heaven stoops down to see.

Thus heavenward all things tend. For all were once
Perfect, and all must be at length restored.
So God has greatly purposed; who would else
In his dishonour'd works himself endure

Dishonour, and be wrong'd without redress.
Haste, then, and wheel away a shatter'd world,
Ye slow-revolving seasons! we would see
(A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)
A world that does not dread and hate his law
And suffer for its crime; would learn how fair
The creature is that God pronounces good,
How pleasant in itself what pleases him.
Here every drop of honey hides a sting;
Worms wind themselves into our sweetest flowers;
And e'en the joy that haply some poor heart
Derives from heaven, pure as the fountain is,
Is sullied in the stream, taking a taint
From touch of human lips, at best impure.
O for a world in principle as chaste
As this is gross and selfish! over which
Custom and prejudice shall bear no sway,
That govern all things here, shouldering aside
The meek and modest Truth, and forcing her
To seek a refuge from the tongue of Strife
In nooks obscure, far from the ways of men:
Where Violence shall never lift the sword,
Nor Cunning justify the proud man's wrong,
Leaving the poor no remedy but tears:
Where he, that fills an office, shall esteem
The occasion it presents of doing good
More than the perquisite: where Law shall speak
Seldom, and never but as Wisdom prompts
And Equity; not jealous more to guard
A worthless form, than to decide aright:—
Where Fashion shall not sanctify abuse,
Nor smooth Good-breeding (supplemental grace)
With lean performance ape the work of Love!

Come then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy! It was thine
By ancient covenant, ere Nature's birth;
And thou hast made it thine by purchase since,
And overpaid its value with thy blood.
Thy saints proclaim thee king; and in their hearts
Thy title is engraven with a pen

Dipp'd in the fountain of eternal love.
Thy saints proclaim thee king; and thy delay
Gives courage to their foes, who, could they see
The dawn of thy last advent, long desired,
Would creep into the bowels of the hills,
And flee for safety to the falling rocks.
The very spirit of the world is tired
Of its own taunting question, ask'd so long,
"Where is the promise of your Lord's approach?"
The infidel has shot his bolts away,
Till, his exhausted quiver yielding none,
He gleans the blunted shafts that have recoil'd,
And aims them at the shield of Truth again.
The veil is rent, rent too by priestly hands,
That hides divinity from mortal eyes;
And all the mysteries to faith proposed,
Insulted and traduced, are cast aside,
As useless, to the moles and to the bats.
They now are deem'd the faithful, and are praised,
Who, constant only in rejecting thee,
Deny thy Godhead with a martyr's zeal,
And quit their office for their error's sake.
Blind, and in love with darkness! yet e'en these
Worthy, compared with sycophants, who kneel
Thy name adoring, and then preach thee man!
So fares thy church. But how thy church may fare
The world takes little thought. Who will may preach,
And what they will. All pastors are alike
To wandering sheep, resolved to follow none.
Two gods divide them all—Pleasure and Gain:
For these they live, they sacrifice to these,
And in their service wage perpetual war
With Conscience and with thee. Lust in their hearts
And mischief in their hands, they roam the earth
To prey upon each other: stubborn, fierce,
High-minded, foaming out their own disgrace.
Thy prophets speak of such; and, noting down
The features of the last degenerate times,
Exhibit every lineament of these.
Come then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,
Due to thy last and most effectual work,

Thy word fulfill'd, the conquest of a world!

He is the happy man whose life e'en now
Shows somewhat of that happier life to come;
Who, doom'd to an obscure but tranquil state,
Is pleas'd with it, and, were he free to choose,
Would make his fate his choice; whom peace, the fruit
Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,
Prepare for happiness; bespeak him one
Content indeed to sojourn while he must
Below the skies, but having there his home.
The world o'erlooks him in her busy search
Of objects, more illustrious in her view;
And, occupied as earnestly as she,
Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the world.
She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not;
He seeks not hers, for he has proved them vain.
He cannot skim the ground like summer birds
Pursuing gilded flies; and such he deems
Her honours, her emoluments, her joys.
Therefore in Contemplation is his bliss,
Whose power is such, that whom she lifts from earth
She makes familiar with a heaven unseen,
And shows him glories yet to be reveal'd.
Not slothful he, though seeming unemploy'd,
And censured oft as useless. Stillest streams
Oft water fairest meadows, and the bird
That flutters least is longest on the wing.
Ask him, indeed, what trophies he has raised,
Or what achievements of immortal fame
He purposes, and he shall answer—None.
His warfare is within. There, unfatigued,
His fervent spirit labours. There he fights,
And there obtains fresh triumphs o'er himself,
And never-withering wreaths, compared with which
The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds.
Perhaps the self-approving haughty world,
That as she sweeps him with her whistling silks
Scarce deigns to notice him, or, if she see,
Deems him a cipher in the works of God,
Receives advantage from his noiseless hours,
Of which she little dreams. Perhaps she owes

Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring
And plenteous harvest, to the prayer he makes,
When, Isaac-like, the solitary saint
Walks forth to meditate at even-tide,
And think on her who thinks not for herself.
Forgive him, then, thou bustler in concerns
Of little worth, an idler in the best,
If, author of no mischief and some good,
He seek his proper happiness by means
That may advance, but cannot hinder, thine.
Nor, though he tread the secret path of life,
Engage no notice, and enjoy much ease,
Account him an encumbrance on the state,
Receiving benefits, and rendering none.
His sphere, though humble, if that humble sphere
Shine with his fair example, and though small
His influence, if that influence all be spent
In soothing sorrow and in quenching strife,
In aiding helpless indigence, in works
From which at least a grateful few derive
Some taste of comfort in a world of woe;
Then let the supercilious great confess
He serves his country, recompenses well
The state, beneath the shadow of whose vine
He sits secure, and in the scale of life
Holds no ignoble, though a slighted, place.
The man, whose virtues are more felt than seen,
Must drop indeed the hope of public praise;
But he may boast, what few that win it can,
That, if his country stand not by his skill,
At least his follies have not wrought her fall.
Polite Refinement offers him in vain
Her golden tube, through which a sensual world
Draws gross impurity, and likes it well,
The neat conveyance hiding all the offence.
Not that he peevishly rejects a mode
Because that world adopts it. If it bear
The stamp and clear impression of good sense,
And be not costly more than of true worth,
He puts it on, and, for decorum sake,
Can wear it e'en as gracefully as she.
She judges of refinement by the eye,

He by the test of conscience, and a heart
Not soon deceived; aware that what is base
No polish can make sterling; and that vice,
Though well perfumed and elegantly dress'd,
Like an unburied carcass trick'd with flowers
Is but a garnish'd nuisance, fitter far
For cleanly riddance than for fair attire.
So life glides smoothly and by stealth away,
More golden than that age of fabled gold
Renown'd in ancient song; not vex'd with care
Or stain'd with guilt, beneficent, approved
Of God and man, and peaceful in its end.
So glide my life away! and so, at last,
My share of duties decently fulfill'd,
May some disease, not tardy to perform
Its destined office, yet with gentle stroke,
Dismiss me weary to a safe retreat,
Beneath the turf that I have often trod.
It shall not grieve me then that once, when call'd
To dress a Sofa with the flowers of verse,
I play'd awhile, obedient to the fair,
With that light task; but soon, to please her more,
Whom flowers alone I knew would little please,
Let fall the unfinish'd wreath, and roved for fruit;
Roved far, and gather'd much: some harsh, 'tis true,
Pick'd from the thorns and briars of reproof,
But wholesome, well-digested; grateful some
To palates that can taste immortal truth;
Insipid else, and sure to be despised.
But all is in His hand, whose praise I seek.
In vain the poet sings, and the world hears,
If he regard not, though divine the theme.
'Tis not in artful measures, in the chime
And idle tinkling of a minstrel's lyre,
To charm His ear, whose eye is on the heart;
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation — prosper even mine.

William Cowper

The Tears Of A Painter

Apelles, hearing that his boy
Had just expired--his only joy!
Although the sight with anguish tore him,
Bade place his dear remains before him.
He seized his brush, his colours spread;
And--'Oh! my child, accept,'--he said,
'('Tis all that I can now bestow,)
This tribute of a father's woe!
Then, faithful to the twofold part,
Both of his feelings and his art,
He closed his eyes with tender care,
And form'd at once a fellow pair.
His brow with amber locks beset,
And lips he drew not livid yet;
And shaded all that he had done
To a just image of his son.
Thus far is well. But view again
The cause of thy paternal pain!
Thy melancholy task fulfil!
It needs the last, last touches still.
Again his pencil's powers he tries,
For on his lips a smile he spies:
And still his cheek unfaded shows
The deepest damask of the rose.
Then, heedful to the finish'd whole,
With fondest eagerness he stole,
Till scarce himself distinctly knew
The cherub copied from the true.
Now, painter, cease! Thy task is done.
Long lives this image of thy son;
Nor short-lived shall thy glory prove
Or of thy labour or thy love.

William Cowper

The Testimony Of Divine Adoption

How happy are the new-born race,
Partakers of adopting grace!
How pure the bliss they share!
Hid from the world and all its eyes,
Within their heart the blessing lies,
And conscience feels it there.

The moment we believe, 'tis ours;
And if we love with all our powers
The God from whom it came;
And if we serve with hearts sincere,
'Tis still discernible and clear,
An undisputed claim.

But, ah! if foul and wilful sin
Stain and dishonour us within,
Farewell the joy we knew;
Again the slaves of nature's sway,
In labyrinths of our own we stray,
Without a guide or clue.

The chaste and pure, who fear to grieve
The gracious Spirit they receive,
His work distinctly trace;
And, strong in undissembling love,
Boldly assert and clearly prove
Their hearts his dwelling-place.

Oh, messenger of dear delight,
Whose voice dispels the deepest night,
Sweet peace-proclaiming Dove!
With thee at hand, to soothe our pains,
No wish unsatisfied remains,
No task but that of love.

'Tis love unites what sin divides;
The centre, where all bliss resides;
To which the soul once brought,
Reclining on the first great cause,

From his abounding sweetness draws
Peace passing human thought.

Sorrow forgoes its nature there,
And life assumes a tranquil air,
Divested of its woes;
There sovereign goodness soothes the breast,
Till then incapable of rest,
In sacred sure repose.

William Cowper

The Thracian

Thracian parents, at his birth,
Mourn their babe with many a tear,
But, with undissembled mirth,
Place him breathless on his bier.

Greece and Rome, with equal score,
'O the savages!' exclaim,
'Whether they rejoice or mourn,
Well entitled to the name!'

But the cause of this concern
And this pleasure would they trace,
Even they might somewhat learn
From the savages of Thrace.

William Cowper

The Triumph Of Heavenly Love Desired

Ah! reign, wherever man is found!
My spouse, beloved and divine!
Then I am rich, and I abound,
When every human heart is thine.

A thousand sorrows pierce my soul,
To think that all are not thine own:
Ah! be adored from pole to pole;
Where is thy zeal? arise; be known!

All hearts are cold, in every place,
Yet earthly good with warmth pursue;
Dissolve them with a flash of grace,
Thaw these of ice, and give us new!

William Cowper

The Valediction

Farewell, false hearts! whose best affections fail,
Like shallow brooks which summer suns exhale;
Forgetful of the man whom once ye chose,
Cold in his cause, and careless of his woes;
I bid you both a long and last adieu!
Cold in my turn, and unconcerned like you.
First, farewell Niger! whom, now duly proved,
I disregard as much as I have loved.
Your brain well furnished, and your tongue well taught
To press with energy your ardent thought,
Your senatorial dignity of face,
Sound sense, intrepid spirit, manly grace,
Have raised you high as talents can ascend,
Made you a peer, but spoilt you for a friend!
Pretend to all that parts have e'er acquired;
Be great, be feared, be envied, be admired;
To fame as lasting as the earth pretend,
But not hereafter to the name of friend!
I sent you verse, and, as your lordship knows,
Backed with a modest sheet of humble prose,
Not to recall a promise to your mind,
Fulfilled with ease had you been so inclined,
But to comply with feelings, and to give
Proof of an old affection still alive.
Your sullen silence serves at least to tell
Your altered heart; and so, my lord, farewell!
Next, busy actor on a meaner stage,
Amusement-monger of a trifling age,
Illustrious histrionic patentee,
Terentius, once my friend, farewell to thee!
In thee some virtuous qualities combine,
To fit thee for a nobler post than thine,
Who, born a gentleman, hast stooped too low,
To live by buskin, sock and raree-show.
Thy schoolfellow, and partner of thy plays,
When Nichol swung the birch and twined the bays,
And having known thee bearded and full grown,
The weekly censor of a laughing town,
I thought the volume I presumed to send,

Graced with the name of a long-absent friend,
Might prove a welcome gift, and touch thine heart,
Not hard by nature, in a feeling part.
But thou it seems, (what cannot grandeur do,
Though but a dream?) art grown disdainful too;
And strutting in thy school of queens and kings,
Who fret their hour and are forgotten things,
Hast caught the cold distemper of the day,
And, like his lordship, cast thy friend away.
O Friendship! cordial of the human breast!
So little felt, so fervently professed!
Thy blossoms deck our unsuspecting years;
The promise of delicious fruit appears;
We hug the hopes of constancy and truth,
Such is the folly of our dreaming youth;
But soon, alas! detect the rash mistake,
That sanguine inexperience loves to make;
And view with tears the expected harvest lost,
Decayed by time, or withered by a frost.
Whoever undertakes a friend's great part
Should be renewed in nature, pure in heart,
Prepared for martyrdom, and strong to prove
A thousand ways the force of genuine love.
He may be called to give up health and gain,
To exchange content for trouble, ease for pain.
To echo sigh for sigh, and groan for groan,
And wet his cheeks with sorrows not his own.
The heart of man, for such a task too frail,
When most relied on, is most sure to fail;
And, summoned to partake its fellow's woe,
Starts from its office, like a broken bow.
Votaries of business and of pleasure, prove
Faithless alike in friendship and in love.
Retired from all the circles of the gay,
And all the crowds that bustle life away,
To scenes where competition, envy, strife,
Beget no thunder-clouds to trouble life,
Let me, the charge of some good angel, find
One who has known and has escaped mankind;
Polite, yet virtuous, who has brought away
The manners, not the morals, of the day:
With him, perhaps with her, (for men have known

No firmer friendships than the fair have shown,)
Let me enjoy, in some unthought-of spot,
(All former friends forgiven, and forgot,)
Down to the close of life's fast fading scene,
Union of hearts, without a flaw between.
'Tis grace, 'tis bounty, and it calls for praise,
If God give health, that sunshine of our days;
And if he add, a blessing shared by few,
Content of heart, more praises still are due:--
But if he grant a friend, that boon possessed
Indeed is treasure, and crowns all the rest;
And giving one, whose heart is in the skies,
Born from above, and made divinely wise,
He gives, what bankrupt nature never can,
Whose noblest coin is light and brittle man,
Gold, purer far than Ophir ever knew,
A soul, an image of himself, and therefore true.

William Cowper

The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death

My soul is sad, and much dismay'd;
See, Lord, what legions of my foes,
With fierce Apollyon at their head,
My heavenly pilgrimage oppose.

See, from the ever-burning lake,
How like a smoky cloud they rise!
With horrid blasts my soul they shake,
With storms of blasphemies and lies.

Their fiery arrows reach the mark,
My throbbing heart with anguish tear;
Each lights upon a kindred spark,
And finds abundant fuel there.

I hate the thought that wrongs the Lord;
Oh! I would drive it from my breast,
With Thy own sharp two-edged sword,
Far as the east is from the west.

Come, then, and chase the cruel host,
Heal the deep wounds I have received!
Nor let the power of darkness boast
That I am foil'd, and Thou art grieved!

William Cowper

The Vicissitudes Experienced In The Christian Life

I suffer fruitless anguish day by day,
Each moment, as it passes, marks my pain;
Scarce knowing whither, doubtfully I stray,
And see no end of all that I sustain.

The more I strive the more I am withstood;
Anxiety increasing every hour
My spirit finds no rest, performs no good,
And nought remains of all my former power.

My peace of heart is fled, I know not where;
My happy hours, like shadows, passed away;
Their sweet remembrance doubles all my care;
Night darker seems, succeeding such a day.

Dear faded joys and impotent regret,
What profit is there in incessant tears?
Oh thou, whom, once beheld, we ne'er forget,
Reveal thy love, and banish all my fears!

Alas! he flies me--treats me as his foe,
Views not my sorrows, hears not when I plead;
Woe such as mine, despised, neglected woe,
Unless it shortens life, is vain indeed.

Pierced with a thousand wounds, I yet survive;
My pangs are keen, but no complaint transpires
And, while in terrors of thy wrath I live,
Hell seems to loose it less tremendous fires.

Has hell a pain I would not gladly bear,
So thy severe displeasure might subside?
Hopeless of ease, I seem already there,
My life extinguished, and yet death denied.

Is this the joy so promised--this the love,
The unchanging love, so sworn in better days?
Ah! dangerous glories! shewn me, but to prove
How lovely thou, and I how rash to gaze.

Why did I see them? had I still remained
Untaught, still ignorant how fair thou art,
My humbler wishes I had soon obtained,
Nor known the torments of a doubting heart.

Deprived of all, yet feeling no desires,
Whence then, I cry, the pangs that I sustain
Dubious and uninformed, my soul inquires,
Ought she to cherish or shake off her pain?

Suffering, I suffer not--sincerely love,
Yet feel no touch of that enlivening flame;
As chance inclines me, unconcerned I move,
All times, and all events, to me the same.

I search my heart, and not a wish is there
But burns with zeal that hated self may fall;
Such is the sad disquietude I share,
A sea of doubts, and self the source of all.

I ask not life, nor do I wish to die;
And, if thine hand accomplish not my cure,
I would not purchase with a single sigh
A free discharge from all that I endure.

I groan in chains, yet want not a release;
Am sick, and know not the distempered part;
Am just as void of purpose as of peace;
Have neither plan, nor fear, nor hope, nor heart.

My claim to life, though sought with earnest care,
No light within me, or without me, shews;
Once I had faith, but now in self-despair
Find my chief cordial and my best repose.

My soul is a forgotten thing; she sinks,
Sinks and is lost, without a wish to rise;
Feels an indifference she abhors, and thinks
Her name erased for ever from the skies.

Language affords not my distress a name,--

Yet it is real and no sickly dream;
'Tis love inflicts it; though to feel that flame
Is all I know of happiness supreme.

When love departs, a chaos wide and vast,
And dark as hell, is opened in the soul;
When love returns, the gloomy scene is past,
No tempests shake her, and no fears control.

Then tell me why these ages of delay?
Oh love, all-excellent, once more appear;
Disperse the shades, and snatch me into day,
From this abyss of night, these floods of fear!

No--love is angry, will not now endure
A sigh of mine, or suffer a complaint;
He smites me, wounds me, and withholds the cure;
Exhausts my powers, and leaves me sick and faint.

He wounds, and hides the hand that gave the blow;
He flies, he re-appears, and wounds again--
Was ever heart that loved thee treated so?
Yet I adore thee, though it seem in vain.

And wilt thou leave me, whom, when lost and blind,
Thou didst distinguish and vouchsafe to choose,
Before thy laws were written in my mind,
While yet the world had all my thoughts and views?

Now leave me, when, enamoured of thy laws,
I make thy glory my supreme delight?
Now blot me from thy register, and cause
A faithful soul to perish from thy sight?

What can have caused the change which I deplore?
Is it to prove me, if my heart be true?
Permit me then, while prostrate I adore,
To draw, and place its picture in thy view.

'Tis thine without reserve, most simply thine;
So given to thee, that it is not my own;
A willing captive of thy grace divine;

And loves, and seeks thee, for thyself alone.

Pain cannot move it, danger cannot scare;
Pleasure and wealth, in its esteem, are dust;
It loves thee, e'en when least inclined to spare
Its tenderest feelings, and avows thee just.

'Tis all thine own; my spirit is so too,
An undivided offering at thy shrine;
It seeks thy glory with no double view,
Thy glory, with no secret bent to mine.

Love, holy love! and art thou not severe,
To slight me, thus devoted, and thus fixed?
Mine is an everlasting ardour, clear
From all self-bias, generous and unmixed.

But I am silent, seeing what I see--
And fear, with cause, that I am self-deceived,
Not e'en my faith is from suspicion free,
And that I love seems not to be believed.

Live thou, and reign for ever, glorious Lord!
My last, least offering I present thee now—
Renounce me, leave me, and be still adored!
Slay me, my God, and I applaud the blow.

William Cowper

The Waiting Soul

Breathe from the gentle south, O Lord,
And cheer me from the north;
Blow on the treasures of thy word,
And call the spices forth!

I wish, Thou knowest, to be resign'd,
And wait with patient hope;
But hope delay'd fatigues the mind,
And drinks the spirits up.

Help me to reach the distant goal;
Confirm my feeble knee;
Pity the sickness of a soul
That faints for love of Thee!

Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
Yet, since I feel it so,
It yields some hope of life divine
Within, however low.

I seem forsaken and alone,
I hear the lion roar;
And every door is shut but one,
And that is Mercy's door.

There, till the dear Deliverer come,
I'll wait with humble prayer;
And when He calls His exile home,
The Lord shall find him there.

William Cowper

The Winter Nosegay

What Nature, alas! has denied
To the delicate growth of our isle,
Art has in a measure supplied,
And winter is deck'd with a smile.
See, Mary, what beauties I bring
From the shelter of that sunny shed,
Where the flowers have the charms of the spring,
Though abroad they are frozen and dead.

'Tis a bower of Arcadian sweets,
Where Flora is still in her prime,
A fortress to which she retreats
From the cruel assaults of the clime.
While earth wears a mantle of snow,
These pinks are as fresh and as gay
As the fairest and sweetest that blow
On the beautiful bosom of May.

See how they have safely survived
The frowns of a sky so severe;
Such Mary's true love, that has lived
Through many a turbulent year.
The charms of the late-blowing rose
Seem graced with a livelier hue;
And the winter of sorrow best shows
The truth of a friend such as you.

William Cowper

The Yearly Distress; Or, Tithing-Time At Stock In Essex

Come, ponder well, for 'tis no jest,
To laugh it would be wrong;
The troubles of a worthy priest
The burden of my song.

This priest he merry is and blithe
Three quarters of the year,
But oh! it cuts him like a scythe
When tithing time draws near.

He then is full of frights and fears,
As one at point to die,
And long before the day appears
He heaves up many a sigh.

For then the farmers come, jog, jog,
Along the miry road,
Each heart as heavy as a log,
To make their payments good.

In sooth the sorrow of such days
Is not to be expressed,
When he that takes and he that pays
Are both alike distressed.

Now all unwelcome at his gates
The clumsy swains alight,
With rueful faces and bald pates:--
He trembles at the sight.

And well he may, for well he knows
Each bumpkin of the clan,
Instead of paying what he owes,
Will cheat him if he can.

So in they come -- each makes his leg,
And flings his head before,

And looks as if he came to beg,
And not to quit a score.

'And how does miss and madam do,
The little boy and all?'

'All tight and well. And how do you,
Good Mr. What-d'ye-call?'

The dinner comes, and down they sit
Were e'er such hungry folk?
There's little talking, and no wit;
It is no time to joke.

One wipes his nose upon his sleeve,
One spits upon the floor,
Yet not to give offence or grieve,
Holds up the cloth before.

The punch goes round, and they are dull
And lumpish still as ever;
Like barrels with their bellies full,
They only weigh the heavier.

At length the busy time begins,
'Come, neighbours, we must wag.'
The money chinks, down drop their chins,
Each lugging out his bag.

One talks of mildew and of frost,
And one of storms and hail,
And one of pigs that he has lost
By maggots at the tail.

Quoth one, 'A rarer man than you
In pulpit none shall hear;
But yet, methinks, to tell you true,
You sell it plaguey dear.'

Oh, why were farmers made so coarse,
Or clergy made so fine?
A kick that scarce would move a horse,
May kill a sound divine.

Then let the boobies stay at home;
'Twould cost him I dare say,
Less trouble taking twice the sum,
Without the clowns that pay.

William Cowper

There Is A Fountain Filled With Blood

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.
Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.
Washed all my sins away, washed all my sins away;
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.
Be saved, to sin no more, be saved, to sin no more;
Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.
And shall be till I die, and shall be till I die;
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.

Then in a nobler, sweeter song, I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave.
Lies silent in the grave, lies silent in the grave;
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave.

Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared, unworthy though I be,
For me a blood bought free reward, a golden harp for me!
'Tis strung and tuned for endless years, and formed by power divine,
To sound in God the Father's ears no other name but Thine.

William Cowper

Tirocinium; Or, A Review Of Schools

It is not from his form, in which we trace
Strength join'd with beauty, dignity with grace,
That man, the master of this globe, derives
His right of empire over all that lives.
That form, indeed, the associate of a mind
Vast in its powers, ethereal in its kind,
That form, the labour of Almighty skill,
Framed for the service of a freeborn will,
Asserts precedence, and bespeaks control,
But borrows all its grandeur from the soul.
Hers is the state, the splendour, and the throne,
An intellectual kingdom, all her own.
For her the memory fills her ample page
With truths pour'd down from every distant age;
For her amasses an unbounded store,
The wisdom of great nations, now no more;
Though laden, not encumber'd with her spoil;
Laborious, yet unconscious of her toil;
When copiously supplied, then most enlarged;
Still to be fed, and not to be surcharged.
For her the Fancy, roving unconfined,
The present muse of every pensive mind,
Works magic wonders, adds a brighter hue
To Nature's scenes than Nature ever knew.
At her command winds rise and waters roar,
Again she lays them slumbering on the shore;
With flower and fruit the wilderness supplies,
Or bids the rocks in ruder pomp arise.
For her the Judgment, umpire in the strife
That Grace and Nature have to wage through life,
Quick-sighted arbiter of good and ill,
Appointed sage preceptor to the Will,
Condemns, approves, and, with a faithful voice,
Guides the decision of a doubtful choice.
Why did the fiat of a God give birth
To yon fair Sun and his attendant Earth?
And, when descending he resigns the skies,
Why takes the gentler Moon her turn to rise,
Whom Ocean feels through all his countless waves,

And owns her power on every shore he laves?
Why do the seasons still enrich the year,
Fruitful and young as in their first career?
Spring hangs her infant blossoms on the trees,
Rock'd in the cradle of the western breeze:
Summer in haste the thriving charge receives
Beneath the shade of her expanded leaves,
Till Autumn's fiercer heats and plenteous dews
Dye them at last in all their glowing hues.—
'Twere wild profusion all, and bootless waste,
Power misemploy'd, munificence misplaced,
Had not its Author dignified the plan,
And crown'd it with the majesty of man.
Thus form'd, thus placed, intelligent, and taught,
Look where he will, the wonders God has wrought,
The wildest scorner of his Maker's laws
Finds in a sober moment time to pause,
To press the important question on his heart,
"Why form'd at all, and wherefore as thou art?"
If man be what he seems, this hour a slave,
The next mere dust and ashes in the grave;
Endued with reason only to descry
His crimes and follies with an aching eye;
With passions, just that he may prove, with pain,
The force he spends against their fury vain;
And if, soon after having burnt, by turns,
With every lust with which frail Nature burns,
His being end where death dissolves the bond,
The tomb take all, and all be blank beyond;
Then he, of all that Nature has brought forth,
Stands self-impeach'd the creature of least worth,
And, useless while he lives, and when he dies,
Brings into doubt the wisdom of the skies.
Truths that the learn'd pursue with eager thought
Are not important always as dear-bought,
Proving at last, though told in pompous strains,
A childish waste of philosophic pains;
But truths on which depends our main concern,
That 'tis our shame and misery not to learn,
Shine by the side of every path we tread
With such a lustre, he that runs may read.
'Tis true that, if to trifle life away

Down to the sunset of their latest day,
Then perish on futurity's wide shore
Like fleeting exhalations, found no more,
Were all that Heaven required of human kind,
And all the plan their destiny design'd,
What none could reverence all might justly blame,
And man would breathe but for his Maker's shame.
But reason heard, and nature well perused,
At once the dreaming mind is disabused.
If all we find possessing earth, sea, air,
Reflect His attributes who placed them there,
Fulfil the purpose, and appear design'd
Proofs of the wisdom of the all-seeing mind,
'Tis plain the creature, whom he chose to invest
With kingship and dominion o'er the rest,
Received his nobler nature, and was made
Fit for the power in which he stands array'd;
That first, or last, hereafter, if not here,
He too might make his author's wisdom clear,
Praise him on earth, or, obstinately dumb,
Suffer his justice in a world to come.
This once believed, 'twere logic misapplied
To prove a consequence by none denied,
That we are bound to cast the minds of youth
Betimes into the mould of heavenly truth,
That taught of God they may indeed be wise,
Nor ignorantly wandering miss the skies.
In early days the conscience has in most
A quickness, which in later life is lost:
Preserved from guilt by salutary fears,
Or guilty, soon relenting into tears.
Too careless often, as our years proceed,
What friends we sort with, or what books we read,
Our parents yet exert a prudent care
To feed our infant minds with proper fare;
And wisely store the nursery by degrees
With wholesome learning, yet acquired with ease.
Neatly secured from being soil'd or torn
Beneath a pane of thin translucent horn,
A book (to please us at a tender age
'Tis call'd a book, though but a single page)
Presents the prayer the Saviour deign'd to teach,

Which children use, and parsons—when they preach.
Lisping our syllables, we scramble next
Through moral narrative, or sacred text;
And learn with wonder how this world began,
Who made, who marr'd, and who has ransom'd man:
Points which, unless the Scripture made them plain,
The wisest heads might agitate in vain.
O thou, whom, borne on fancy's eager wing
Back to the season of life's happy spring,
I pleased remember, and, while memory yet
Holds fast her office here, can ne'er forget;
Ingenious dreamer, in whose well-told tale
Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail;
Whose humorous vein, strong sense, and simple style,
May teach the gayest, make the gravest smile;
Witty, and well employ'd, and, like thy Lord,
Speaking in parables his slighted word;
I name thee not, lest so despised a name
Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame;
Yet e'en in transitory life's late day,
That mingles all my brown with sober grey,
Revere the man whose Pilgrim marks the road,
And guides the Progress of the soul to God.
'Twere well with most, if books that could engage
Their childhood pleased them at a riper age;
The man, approving what had charm'd the boy,
Would die at last in comfort, peace, and joy,
And not with curses on his heart, who stole
The gem of truth from his unguarded soul.
The stamp of artless piety impress'd
By kind tuition on his yielding breast,
The youth, now bearded and yet pert and raw,
Regards with scorn, though once received with awe;
And, warp'd into the labyrinth of lies,
That babblers, call'd philosophers, devise,
Blasphemes his creed, as founded on a plan
Replete with dreams, unworthy of a man.
Touch but his nature in its ailing part,
Assert the native evil of his heart,
His pride resents the charge, although the proof
Rise in his forehead, and seem rank enough:
Point to the cure, describe a Saviour's cross

As God's expedient to retrieve his loss,
The young apostate sickens at the view,
And hates it with the malice of a Jew.
How weak the barrier of mere nature proves,
Opposed against the pleasures nature loves!
While self-betray'd, and wilfully undone,
She longs to yield, no sooner woo'd than won.
Try now the merits of this blest exchange
Of modest truth for wit's eccentric range.
Time was, he closed as he began the day,
With decent duty, not ashamed to pray;
The practice was a bond upon his heart,
A pledge he gave for a consistent part;
Nor could he dare presumptuously displease
A power confess'd so lately on his knees.
But now farewell all legendary tales,
The shadows fly, philosophy prevails;
Prayer to the winds, and caution to the waves;
Religion makes the free by nature slaves.
Priests have invented, and the world admired
What knavish priests promulgate as inspired;
Till Reason, now no longer overawed,
Resumes her powers, and spurns the clumsy fraud;
And, common sense diffusing real day,
The meteor of the Gospel dies away.
Such rhapsodies our shrewd discerning youth
Learn from expert inquirers after truth;
Whose only care, might truth presume to speak,
Is not to find what they profess to seek.
And thus, well tutor'd only while we share
A mother's lectures and a nurse's care;
And taught at schools much mythologic stuff,
But sound religion sparingly enough;
Our early notices of truth disgraced,
Soon lose their credit, and are all effaced.
Would you your son should be a sot or dunce,
Lascivious, headstrong, or all these at once;
That in good time the stripling's finish'd taste
For loose expense and fashionable waste
Should prove your ruin, and his own at last;
Train him in public with a mob of boys,
Childish in mischief only and in noise,

Else of a mannish growth, and five in ten
In infidelity and lewdness men.
There shall he learn, ere sixteen winters old,
That authors are most useful pawn'd or sold;
That pedantry is all that schools impart,
But taverns teach the knowledge of the heart;
There waiter Dick, with bacchanalian lays,
Shall win his heart, and have his drunken praise,
His counsellor and bosom friend shall prove,
And some street-pacing harlot his first love.
Schools, unless discipline were doubly strong,
Detain their adolescent charge too long;
The management of tyros of eighteen
Is difficult, their punishment obscene.
The stout tall captain, whose superior size
The minor heroes view with envious eyes,
Becomes their pattern, upon whom they fix
Their whole attention, and ape all his tricks.
His pride, that scorns to obey or to submit,
With them is courage; his effrontery wit.
His wild excursions, window-breaking feats,
Robbery of gardens, quarrels in the streets,
His hairbreadth `scapes, and all his daring schemes,
Transport them, and are made their favourite themes.
In little bosoms such achievements strike
A kindred spark: they burn to do the like.
Thus, half accomplish'd ere he yet begin
To show the peeping down upon his chin;
And, as maturity of years comes on,
Made just the adept that you design'd your son;
To ensure the perseverance of his course,
And give your monstrous project all its force,
Send him to college. If he there be tamed,
Or in one article of vice reclaim'd,
Where no regard of ordinances is shown
Or look'd for now, the fault must be his own.
Some sneaking virtue lurks in him, no doubt,
Where neither strumpets' charms, nor drinking bout,
Nor gambling practices can find it out.
Such youths of spirit, and that spirit too,
Ye nurseries of our boys, we owe to you:
Though from ourselves the mischief more proceeds,

For public schools 'tis public folly feeds.
The slaves of custom and establish'd mode,
With packhorse constancy we keep the road,
Crooked or straight, through quags or thorny dells,
True to the jingling of our leader's bells.
To follow foolish precedents, and wink
With both our eyes, is easier than to think;
And such an age as ours balks no expense,
Except of caution and of common sense;
Else sure notorious fact, and proof so plain,
Would turn our steps into a wiser train.
I blame not those who, with what care they can,
O'erwatch the numerous and unruly clan;
Or, if I blame, 'tis only that they dare
Promise a work of which they must despair.
Have ye, ye sage intendants of the whole,
A ubiquarian presence and control,
Elisha's eye, that, when Gehazi stray'd,
Went with him, and saw all the game he play'd?
Yes—ye are conscious; and on all the shelves
Your pupils strike upon have struck yourselves.
Or if, by nature sober, ye had then,
Boys as ye were, the gravity of men,
Ye knew at least, by constant proofs address'd
To ears and eyes, the vices of the rest.
But ye connive at what ye cannot cure,
And evils not to be endured endure,
Lest power exerted, but without success,
Should make the little ye retain still less.
Ye once were justly famed for bringing forth
Undoubted scholarship and genuine worth;
And in the firmament of fame still shines
A glory, bright as that of all the signs,
Of poets raised by you, and statesmen, and divines.
Peace to them all! those brilliant times are fled,
And no such lights are kindling in their stead.
Our striplings shine indeed, but with such rays
As set the midnight riot in a blaze;
And seem, if judged by their expressive looks,
Deeper in none than in their surgeons' books.
Say, muse (for education made the song,
No muse can hesitate, or linger long),

What causes move us, knowing, as we must,
That these ménageries all fail their trust,
To send our sons to scout and scamper there,
While colts and puppies cost us so much care?
Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise,
We love the play-place of our early days;
The scene is touching, and the heart is stone
That feels not at that sight, and feels at none.
The wall on which we tried our graving skill,
The very name we carved subsisting still;
The bench on which we sat while deep employ'd,
Though mangled, hack'd, and hew'd, not yet destroy'd;
The little ones, unbutton'd, glowing hot,
Playing our games, and on the very spot;
As happy as we once, to kneel and draw
The chalky ring, and knuckle down at taw;
To pitch the ball into the grounded hat,
Or drive it devious with a dexterous pat;
The pleasing spectacle at once excites
Such recollection of our own delights,
That, viewing it, we seem almost to obtain
Our innocent sweet simple years again.
This fond attachment to the well-known place,
Whence first we started into life's long race,
Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway,
We feel it e'en in age, and at our latest day.
Hark! how the sire of chits, whose future share
Of classic food begins to be his care,
With his own likeness placed on either knee,
Indulges all a father's heartfelt glee;
And tells them, as he strokes their silver locks,
That they must soon learn Latin, and to box;
Then turning, he regales his listening wife
With all the adventures of his early life;
His skill in coachmanship, or driving chaise,
In bilking tavern-bills, and spouting plays;
What shifts he used, detected in a scrape,
How he was flogg'd, or had the luck to escape;
What sums he lost at play, and how he sold
Watch, seals, and all—till all his pranks are told.
Retracing thus his frolics ('tis a name
That palliates deeds of folly and of shame),

He gives the local bias all its sway;
Resolves that where he play'd his sons shall play,
And destines their bright genius to be shown
Just in the scene where he display'd his own.
The meek and bashful boy will soon be taught
To be as bold and forward as he ought;
The rude will scuffle through with ease enough,
Great schools suit best the sturdy and the rough.
Ah, happy designation, prudent choice,
The event is sure; expect it, and rejoice!
Soon see your wish fulfill'd in either child,
The pert made perter, and the tame made wild.
The great indeed, by titles, riches, birth,
Excused the incumbrance of more solid worth,
Are best disposed of where with most success
They may acquire that confident address,
Those habits of profuse and lewd expense,
That scorn of all delights but those of sense,
Which, though in plain plebeians we condemn,
With so much reason, all expect from them.
But families of less illustrious fame,
Whose chief distinction is their spotless name,
Whose heirs, their honours none, their income small,
Must shine by true desert, or not at all,
What dream they of, that, with so little care
They risk their hopes, their dearest treasure, there?
They dream of little Charles or William graced
With wig prolix, down flowing to his waist;
They see the attentive crowds his talents draw,
They hear him speak—the oracle of law.
The father, who designs his babe a priest,
Dreams him episcopally such at least;
And, while the playful jockey scours the room
Briskly, astride upon the parlour broom,
In fancy sees him more superbly ride
In coach with purple lined, and mitres on its side.
Events improbable and strange as these,
Which only a parental eye foresees,
A public school shall bring to pass with ease.
But how? resides such virtue in that air,
As must create an appetite for prayer?
And will it breathe into him all the zeal

That candidates for such a prize should feel,
 To take the lead and be the foremost still
 In all true worth and literary skill?
 "Ah, blind to bright futurity, untaught
 The knowledge of the World, and dull of thought!
 Church-ladders are not always mounted best
 By learned clerks and Latinists profess'd.
 The exalted prize demands an upward look,
 Not to be found by poring on a book.
 Small skill in Latin, and still less in Greek,
 Is more than adequate to all I seek.
 Let erudition grace him, or not grace,
 I give the bauble but the second place;
 His wealth, fame, honours, all that I intend,
 Subsist and centre in one point—a friend.
 A friend, whate'er he studies or neglects,
 Shall give him consequence, heal all defects.
 His intercourse with peers and sons of peers—
 There dawns the splendour of his future years:
 In that bright quarter his propitious skies
 Shall blush betimes, and there his glory rise.
 Your Lordship, and Your Grace! what school can teach
 A rhetoric equal to those parts of speech?
 What need of Homer's verse or Tully's prose,
 Sweet interjections! if he learn but those?
 Let reverend churls his ignorance rebuke,
 Who starve upon a dog's-ear'd Pentateuch,
 The parson knows enough who knows a duke."
 Egregious purpose! worthily begun
 In barbarous prostitution of your son;
 Press'd on his part by means that would disgrace
 A scrivener's clerk, or footman out of place,
 And ending, if at last its end be gain'd,
 In sacrilege, in God's own house profaned.
 It may succeed; and, if his sins should call
 For more than common punishment, it shall;
 The wretch shall rise, and be the thing on earth
 Least qualified in honour, learning, worth,
 To occupy a sacred, awful post,
 In which the best and worthiest tremble most.
 The royal letters are a thing of course,
 A king, that would, might recommend his horse;

And deans, no doubt, and chapters, with one voice,
As bound in duty, would confirm the choice.
Behold your bishop! well he plays his part,
Christian in name, and infidel in heart,
Ghostly in office, earthly in his plan,
A slave at court, elsewhere a lady's man.
Dumb as a senator, and as a priest
A piece of mere church furniture at best;
To live estranged from God his total scope,
And his end sure, without one glimpse of hope.
But, fair although and feasible it seem,
Depend not much upon your golden dream;
For Providence, that seems concern'd to exempt
The hallow'd bench from absolute contempt,
In spite of all the wrigglers into place,
Still keeps a seat or two for worth and grace;
And therefore 'tis, that, though the sight be rare,
We sometimes see a Lowth or Bagot there.
Besides, school friendships are not always found,
Though fair in promise, permanent and sound;
The most disinterested and virtuous minds,
In early years connected, time unbinds,
New situations give a different cast
Of habit, inclination, temper, taste;
And he, that seem'd our counterpart at first,
Soon shows the strong similitude reversed.
Young heads are giddy, and young hearts are warm,
And make mistakes for manhood to reform.
Boys are, at best, but pretty buds unblown,
Whose scent and hues are rather guess'd than known;
Each dreams that each is just what he appears,
But learns his error in maturer years,
When disposition, like a sail unfurl'd,
Shows all its rents and patches to the world.
If, therefore, e'en when honest in design,
A boyish friendship may so soon decline,
'Twere wiser sure to inspire a little heart
With just abhorrence of so mean a part,
Than set your son to work at a vile trade
For wages so unlikely to be paid.
Our public hives of puerile resort,
That are of chief and most approved report,

To such base hopes, in many a sordid soul,
Owe their repute in part, but not the whole.
A principle, whose proud pretensions pass
Unquestion'd, though the jewel be but glass—
That with a world, not often over-nice,
Ranks as a virtue, and is yet a vice;
Or rather a gross compound, justly tried,
Of envy, hatred, jealousy, and pride—
Contributes most, perhaps, to enhance their fame;
And emulation is its specious name.
Boys, once on fire with that contentious zeal,
Feel all the rage that female rivals feel;
The prize of beauty in a woman's eyes
Not brighter than in theirs the scholar's prize.
The spirit of that competition burns
With all varieties of ill by turns;
Each vainly magnifies his own success,
Resents his fellow's, wishes it were less,
Exults in his miscarriage if he fail,
Deems his reward too great if he prevail,
And labours to surpass him day and night,
Less for improvement than to tickle spite.
The spur is powerful, and I grant its force;
It pricks the genius forward in its course,
Allows short time for play, and none for sloth;
And, felt alike by each, advances both:
But judge, where so much evil intervenes,
The end, though plausible, not worth the means.
Weigh, for a moment, classical desert
Against a heart depraved and temper hurt;
Hurt too perhaps for life; for early wrong
Done to the nobler part affects it long;
And you are staunch indeed in learning's cause,
If you can crown a discipline, that draws
Such mischiefs after it, with much applause.
Connexion form'd for interest, and endear'd
By selfish views, thus censured and cashier'd;
And emulation, as engendering hate,
Doom'd to a no less ignominious fate:
The props of such proud seminaries fall,
The Jachin and the Boaz of them all.
Great schools rejected then, as those that swell

Beyond a size that can be managed well,
Shall royal institutions miss the bays,
And small academies win all the praise?
Force not my drift beyond its just intent,
I praise a school as Pope a government;
So take my judgment in his language dress'd,
"Whate'er is best administer'd is best."
Few boys are born with talents that excel,
But all are capable of living well;
Then ask not, whether limited or large;
But, watch they strictly, or neglect their charge?
If anxious only that their boys may learn,
While morals languish, a despised concern,
The great and small deserve one common blame,
Different in size, but in effect the same.
Much zeal in virtue's cause all teachers boast,
Though motives of mere lucre sway the most;
Therefore in towns and cities they abound,
For there the game they seek is easiest found;
Though there, in spite of all that care can do,
Traps to catch youth are most abundant too.
If shrewd, and of a well-constructed brain,
Keen in pursuit, and vigorous to retain,
Your son come forth a prodigy of skill;
As, wheresoever taught, so form'd, he will;
The pedagogue, with self-complacent air,
Claims more than half the praise as his due share.
But if, with all his genius, he betray,
Not more intelligent than loose and gay,
Such vicious habits as disgrace his name,
Threaten his health, his fortune, and his fame;
Though want of due restraint alone have bred
The symptoms that you see with so much dread;
Unenvied there, he may sustain alone
The whole reproach, the fault was all his own.
Oh! 'tis a sight to be with joy perused,
By all whom sentiment has not abused;
New-fangled sentiment, the boasted grace
Of those who never feel in the right place;
A sight surpass'd by none that we can show,
Though Vestris on one leg still shine below;
A father blest with an ingenuous son,

Father, and friend, and tutor, all in one.
How!—turn again to tales long since forgot,
Aesop, and Phaedrus, and the rest?—Why not?
He will not blush, that has a father's heart,
To take in childish plays a childish part;
But bends his sturdy back to any toy
That youth takes pleasure in, to please his boy:
Then why resign into a stranger's hand
A task as much within your own command,
That God and nature, and your interest too,
Seem with one voice to delegate to you?
Why hire a lodging in a house unknown
For one whose tenderest thoughts all hover round your own?
This second weaning, needless as it is,
How does it lacerate both your heart and his!
The indented stick, that loses day by day,
Notch after notch, till all are smoothed away,
Bears witness, long ere his dismissal come,
With what intense desire he wants his home.
But though the joys he hopes beneath your roof
Bid fair enough to answer in the proof,
Harmless, and safe, and natural, as they are,
A disappointment waits him even there:
Arrived, he feels an unexpected change;
He blushes, hangs his head, is shy and strange
No longer takes, as once, with fearless ease,
His favourite stand between his father's knees,
But seeks the corner of some distant seat,
And eyes the door, and watches a retreat,
And, least familiar where he should be most,
Feels all his happiest privileges lost.
Alas, poor boy!—the natural effect
Of love by absence chill'd into respect.
Say, what accomplishments, at school acquired,
Brings he, to sweeten fruits so undesired?
Thou well deserv'st an alienated son,
Unless thy conscious heart acknowledge—none;
None that, in thy domestic snug recess,
He had not made his own with more address,
Though some, perhaps, that shock thy feeling mind,
And better never learn'd, or left behind.
Add too, that, thus estranged, thou canst obtain

By no kind arts his confidence again;
That here begins with most that long complaint
Of filial frankness lost, and love grown faint,
Which, oft neglected, in life's waning years
A parent pours into regardless ears.
Like caterpillars, dangling under trees
By slender threads, and swinging in the breeze,
Which filthily bewray and sore disgrace
The boughs in which are bred the unseemly race;
While every worm industriously weaves
And winds his web about the rivell'd leaves;
So numerous are the follies that annoy
The mind and heart of every sprightly boy;
Imaginations noxious and perverse,
Which admonition can alone disperse.
The encroaching nuisance asks a faithful hand,
Patient, affectionate, of high command,
To check the procreation of a breed
Sure to exhaust the plant on which they feed.
'Tis not enough that Greek or Roman page,
At stated hours, his freakish thoughts engage;
E'en in his pastimes he requires a friend
To warn, and teach him safely to unbend;
O'er all his pleasures gently to preside,
Watch his emotions, and control their tide;
And levying thus, and with an easy sway,
A tax of profit from his very play,
To impress a value, not to be erased,
On moments squander'd else, and running all to waste.
And seems it nothing in a father's eye
That unimproved those many moments fly?
And is he well content his son should find
No nourishment to feed his growing mind,
But conjugated verbs and nouns declined?
For such is all the mental food purvey'd
By public hackneys in the schooling trade;
Who feed a pupil's intellect with store
Of syntax truly, but with little more;
Dismiss their cares when they dismiss their flock,
Machines themselves, and govern'd by a clock.
Perhaps a father, blest with any brains,
Would deem it no abuse, or waste of pains,

To improve this diet, at no great expense,
With savoury truth and wholesome common sense;
To lead his son, for prospects of delight,
To some not steep, though philosophic, height,
Thence to exhibit to his wondering eyes
Yon circling worlds, their distance and their size,
The moons of Jove, and Saturn's belted ball,
And the harmonious order of them all;
To show him in an insect or a flower
Such microscopic proof of skill and power
As, hid from ages past, God now displays
To combat atheists with in modern days;
To spread the earth before him, and commend,
With designation of the finger's end,
Its various parts to his attentive note,
Thus bringing home to him the most remote;
To teach his heart to glow with generous flame,
Caught from the deeds of men of ancient fame;
And, more than all, with commendation due,
To set some living worthy in his view,
Whose fair example may at once inspire
A wish to copy what he must admire.
Such knowledge, gain'd betimes, and which appears,
Though solid, not too weighty for his years,
Sweet in itself, and not forbidding sport,
When health demands it, of athletic sort,
Would make him—what some lovely boys have been,
And more than one perhaps that I have seen—
An evidence and reprehension both
Of the mere schoolboy's lean and tardy growth.
Art thou a man professionally tied,
With all thy faculties elsewhere applied,
Too busy to intend a meaner care
Than how to enrich thyself, and next thine heir;
Or art thou (as, though rich, perhaps thou art)
But poor in knowledge, having none to impart:—
Behold that figure, neat, though plainly clad;
His sprightly mingled with a shade of sad;
Not of a nimble tongue, though now and then
Heard to articulate like other men;
No jester, and yet lively in discourse,
His phrase well chosen, clear, and full of force;

And his address, if not quite French in ease,
Not English stiff, but frank, and form'd to please;
Low in the world, because he scorns its arts;
A man of letters, manners, morals, parts;
Unpatronised, and therefore little known;
Wise for himself and his few friends alone
In him thy well-appointed proxy see,
Arm'd for a work too difficult for thee;
Prepared by taste, by learning, and true worth,
To form thy son, to strike his genius forth;
Beneath thy roof, beneath thine eye, to prove
The force of discipline when back'd by love;
To double all thy pleasure in thy child,
His mind inform'd, his morals undefiled.
Safe under such a wing, the boy shall show
No spots contracted among grooms below,
Nor taint his speech with meannesses, design'd
By footman Tom for witty and refined.
There, in his commerce with liveried herd,
Lurks the contagion chiefly to be fear'd;
For since (so fashion dictates) all, who claim
A higher than a mere plebeian fame,
Find it expedient, come what mischief may,
To entertain a thief or two in pay
(And they that can afford the expense of more,
Some half a dozen, and some half a score),
Great cause occurs to save him from a band
So sure to spoil him, and so near at hand;
A point secured, if once he be supplied
With some such Mentor always at his side.
Are such men rare? perhaps they would abound
Were occupation easier to be found,
Were education, else so sure to fail,
Conducted on a manageable scale,
And schools, that have outlived all just esteem,
Exchanged for the secure domestic scheme.—
But, having found him, be thou duke or earl,
Show thou hast sense enough to prize the pearl,
And, as thou wouldst the advancement of thine heir
In all good faculties beneath his care,
Respect, as is but rational and just,
A man deem'd worthy of so dear a trust.

Despised by thee, what more can he expect
From youthful folly than the same neglect?
A flat and fatal negative obtains
That instant upon all his future pains;
His lessons tire, his mild rebukes offend,
And all the instructions of thy son's best friend
Are a stream choked, or trickling to no end.
Doom him not then to solitary meals;
But recollect that he has sense, and feels
And that, possessor of a soul refined,
An upright heart, and cultivated mind,
His post not mean, his talents not unknown,
He deems it hard to vegetate alone.
And, if admitted at thy board he sit,
Account him no just mark for idle wit;
Offend not him, whom modesty restrains
From repartee, with jokes that he disdains;
Much less transfix his feelings with an oath;
Nor frown, unless he vanish with the cloth.—
And, trust me, his utility may reach
To more than he is hired or bound to teach;
Much trash unutter'd, and some ills undone,
Through reverence of the censor of thy son.
But, if thy table be indeed unclean,
Foul with excess, and with discourse obscene,
And thou a wretch, whom, following her old plan,
The world accounts an honourable man,
Because forsooth thy courage has been tried,
And stood the test, perhaps on the wrong side;
Though thou hadst never grace enough to prove
That any thing but vice could win thy love;—
Or hast thou a polite, card-playing wife,
Chain'd to the routs that she frequents for life;
Who, just when industry begins to snore,
Flies, wing'd with joy, to some coach-crowded door;
And thrice in every winter throngs thine own
With half the chariots and sedans in town;
Thyself meanwhile e'en shifting as thou may'st;
Not very sober though, nor very chaste;
Or is thine house, though less superb thy rank,
If not a scene of pleasure, a mere blank,
And thou at best, and in thy soberest mood,

A trifler vain, and empty of all good;—
Though mercy for thyself thou canst have none,
Here Nature plead, show mercy to thy son.
Saved from his home, where every day brings forth
Some mischief fatal to his future worth,
Find him a better in a distant spot,
Within some pious pastor's humble cot,
Where vile example (yours I chiefly mean,
The most seducing, and the oftenest seen)
May never more be stamp'd upon his breast,
Not yet perhaps incurably impress'd.
Where early rest makes early rising sure,
Disease or comes not, or finds easy cure,
Prevented much by diet neat and clean;
Or, if it enter, soon starved out again:
Where all the attention of his faithful host,
Discreetly limited to two at most,
May raise such fruits as shall reward his care,
And not at last evaporate in air:
Where, stillness aiding study, and his mind
Serene, and to his duties much inclined,
Not occupied in day dreams, as at home,
Of pleasures past, or follies yet to come,
His virtuous toil may terminate at last
In settled habit and decided taste.—
But whom do I advise? the fashion-led,
The incorrigibly wrong, the deaf, the dead!
Whom care and cool deliberation suit
Not better much than spectacles a brute;
Who if their sons some slight tuition share,
Deem it of no great moment whose, or where;
Too proud to adopt the thoughts of one unknown,
And much too gay to have any of their own.
But courage, man! methought the Muse replied,
Mankind are various, and the world is wide:
The ostrich, silliest of the feather'd kind,
And form'd of God without a parent's mind,
Commits her eggs, incautious, to the dust,
Forgetful that the foot may crush the trust;
And, while on public nurseries they rely,
Not knowing, and too oft not caring, why,
Irrational in what they thus prefer,

No few, that would seem wise, resemble her.
But all are not alike. Thy warning voice
May here and there prevent erroneous choice;
And some perhaps, who, busy as they are,
Yet make their progeny their dearest care
(Whose hearts will ache, once told what ills may reach
Their offspring, left upon so wild a beach),
Will need no stress of argument to enforce
The expedience of a less adventurous course:
The rest will slight thy counsel, or condemn;
But they have human feelings—turn to them.
To you, then, tenants of life's middle state,
Securely placed between the small and great,
Whose character yet undebauch'd, retains
Two-thirds of all the virtue that remains,
Who, wise yourselves, desire your sons should learn
Your wisdom and your ways—to you I turn.
Look round you on a world perversely blind;
See what contempt is fallen on human kind;
See wealth abused, and dignities misplaced,
Great titles, offices, and trusts disgraced,
Long lines of ancestry, renown'd of old,
Their noble qualities all quench'd and cold;
See Bedlam's closeted and handcuff'd charge
Surpass'd in frenzy by the mad at large;
See great commanders making war a trade,
Great lawyers, lawyers without study made;
Churchmen, in whose esteem their best employ
Is odious, and their wages all their joy,
Who, far enough from furnishing their shelves
With Gospel lore, turn infidels themselves;
See womanhood despised, and manhood shamed
With infamy too nauseous to be named,
Fops at all corners, ladylike in mien,
Civeted fellows, smelt ere they are seen,
Else coarse and rude in manners, and their tongue
On fire with curses, and with nonsense hung,
Now flush'd with drunkenness, now with bunnydom pale,
Their breath a sample of last night's regale;
See volunteers in all the vilest arts,
Men well endow'd, of honourable parts,
Design'd by Nature wise, but self-made fools;

All these, and more like these, were bred at schools.
And if it chance, as sometimes chance it will,
That though school-bred the boy be virtuous still;
Such rare exceptions, shining in the dark,
Prove, rather than impeach, the just remark:
As here and there a twinkling star descried
Serves but to show how black is all beside.
Now look on him, whose very voice in tone
Just echoes thine, whose features are thine own,
And stroke his polish'd cheek of purest red,
And lay thine hand upon his flaxen head,
And say, My boy, the unwelcome hour is come,
When thou, transplanted from thy genial home,
Must find a colder soil and bleaker air,
And trust for safety to a stranger's care;
What character, what turn thou wilt assume
From constant converse with I know not whom;
Who there will court thy friendship, with what views,
And, artless as thou art, whom thou wilt choose;
Though much depends on what thy choice shall be,
Is all chance-medley, and unknown to me.
Canst thou, the tear just trembling on thy lids,
And while the dreadful risk foreseen forbids;
Free too, and under no constraining force,
Unless the sway of custom warp thy course;
Lay such a stake upon the losing side,
Merely to gratify so blind a guide?
Thou canst not! Nature, pulling at thine heart,
Condemns the unfatherly, the imprudent part.
Though wouldst not, deaf to Nature's tenderest plea,
Turn him adrift upon a rolling sea,
Nor say, Go thither, conscious that there lay
A brood of asps, or quicksands in his way;
Then, only govern'd by the self-same rule
Of natural pity, send him not to school.
No—guard him better. Is he not thine own,
Thyself in miniature, thy flesh, thy bone?
And hopest thou not ('tis every father's hope)
That, since thy strength must with thy years elope,
And thou wilt need some comfort to assuage
Health's last farewell, a staff of thine old age,
That then, in recompence of all thy cares,

Thy child shall show respect to thy grey hairs,
Befriend thee, of all other friends bereft,
And give thy life its only cordial left?
Aware then how much danger intervenes,
To compass that good end, forecast the means.
His heart, now passive, yields to thy command;
Secure it thine, its key is in thine hand;
If thou desert thy charge, and throw it wide,
Nor heed what guests there enter and abide,
Complain not if attachments lewd and base
Supplant thee in it and usurp thy place.
But, if thou guard its sacred chambers sure
From vicious inmates and delights impure,
Either his gratitude shall hold him fast,
And keep him warm and filial to the last;
Or, if he prove unkind (as who can say
But, being man, and therefore frail, he may?),
One comfort yet shall cheer thine aged heart,
Howe'er he slight thee, thou hast done thy part.
Oh, barbarous! wouldst thou with a Gothic hand
Pull down the schools—what!—all the schools i' th' land;
Or throw them up to livery-nags and grooms,
Or turn them into shops and auction-rooms?
A captious question, sir (and yours is one),
Deserves an answer similar, or none.
Wouldst thou, possessor of a flock, employ
(Apprised that he is such) a careless boy,
And feed him well, and give him handsome pay,
Merely to sleep, and let them run astray?
Survey our schools and colleges, and see
A sight not much unlike my simile.
From education, as the leading cause,
The public character its colour draws;
Thence the prevailing manners take their cast,
Extravagant or sober, loose or chaste.
And though I would not advertise them yet,
Nor write on each— This Building to be Let ,
Unless the world were all prepared to embrace
A plan well worthy to supply their place;
Yet, backward as they are, and long have been,
To cultivate and keep the morals clean
(Forgive the crime), I wish them, I confess,

Or better managed, or encouraged less.

William Cowper

To A Friend In Distress (Translated From Owen)

I wish thy lot, now bad, still worse, my friend;
For when at worst, they say, things always mend.

William Cowper

To A Young Friend, On His Arriving At Cambridge Wet, When No Rain Had Fallen There

If Gideon's fleece, which drenched with dew he found,
White moisture none refreshed the herbs around,
Might fitly represent the Church, endowed
With heavenly gifts to heathens not allowed;
In pledge, perhaps, of favours from on high,
Thy locks were wet when others' locks were dry.
Heaven grant us half the omen,--may we see
Not drought on others, but much dew on thee!

William Cowper

To An Afflicted Protestant Lady In France

Madam,-- A stranger's purpose in these
Is to congratulate and not to praise;
To give the creature the Creator's due
Were sin in me, and an offence to you.
From man to man, or e'en to woman paid,
Praise is the medium of a knavish trade,
A coin by craft for folly's use designed,
Spurious, and only current with the blind.
The path of sorrow, and that path alone
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown:
No traveller ever reached that blessed abode,
Who found not thorns and briers in his road.
The world my dance along the flowery plain,
Cheered as they go by many a sprightly strain;
Where nature has her mossy velvet spread,
With unshot feet they yet securely tread;
Admonished, scorn the caution and the friend,
Bent all on pleasure, heedless of its end.
But He, who knew what human hearts would prove,
How slow to learn the dictates of his love,
That, hard by nature and of stubborn will,
A life of ease would make them harder still,
In pity to the souls of grace designed
To rescue from the ruins of mankind,
Called for a cloud to darken all their years,
And said, 'Go spend them in the vale of tears!'
O balmy gates of soul-reviving air!
O salutary streams that murmur there!
These flowing from the Fount of Grace above,
Those breathed from lips of everlasting love.
The flinty soil indeed their feet annoys,
Chill blasts of trouble nip their springing joys,
An envious world will interpose its frown
To mar delights superior to its own,
And many a pang experienced still within,
Reminds them of their hated inmate, Sin.
But ills of every shape and every name,
Transformed to blessings, miss their cruel aim;
And every moment's calm that soothes the breast

Is given in earnest of eternal rest.
Ah, be not sad, although thy lot be cast
Far from the flock, and in a boundless waste!
No shepherd's tents within thy view appear,
But the chief Shepherd even there is near;
Thy tender sorrows and thy plaintive strain
Flow in a foreign land, but not in vain;
Thy tears all issue from a source divine,
And every drop bespeaks a Saviour thine.
So once in Gideon's fleece the dews were found,
And drought on all the drooping herbs around.

William Cowper

To Delia

Me to whatever state the gods assign,
Believe, my love, whatever state be mine,
Ne'er shall my breast one anxious sorrow know,
Ne'er shall my heart confess a real woe,
If to thy share heaven's choicest blessings fall,
As thou hast virtue to deserve them all.
Yet vain, alas! that idle hope would be
That builds on happiness remote from thee.
Oh! may thy charms, whate'er our fate decrees,
Please, as they must, but let them only please--
Not like the sun with equal influence shine,
Nor warm with transport any heart but mine.
Ye who from wealth the ill-grounded title boast
To claim whatever beauty charms you most;
Ye sons of fortune, who consult alone
Her parents' will, regardless of her own,
Know that a love like ours, a generous flame,
No wealth can purchase, and no power reclaim.
The soul's affection can be only given
Free, unextorted, as the grace of heaven.
Is there whose faithful bosom can endure
Pangs fierce as mine, nor ever hope a cure?
Who sighs in absence of the dear-loved maid?
Nor summons once indifference to his aid?
Who can, like me, the nice resentment prove,
The thousand soft disquietudes of love;
The trivial strifes that cause a real pain;
The real bliss when reconciled again?
Let him alone dispute the real prize,
And read his sentence in my Delia's eyes;
There shall he read all gentleness and truth,
But not himself, the dear distinguished youth;
Pity for him perhaps they may express--
Pity, that will but heighten his distress.
But, wretched rival! he must sigh to see
The sprightlier rays of love directed all to me.
And thou, dear antidote of every pain
Which fortune can inflict, or love ordain,
Since early love has taught thee to despise

What the world's worthless votaries only prize,
Believe, my love! no less the generous god
Rules in my breast, his ever blest abode;
There has he driven each gross desire away,
Directing every wish and every thought to thee!
Then can I ever leave my Delia's arms,
A slave, devoted to inferior charms?
Can e'er my soul her reason so disgrace?
For what blest minister of heavenly race
Would quit that heaven to find a happier place?

William Cowper

To Delia: On Her Endeavouring To Conceal Her Grief At Parting

Ah! wherefore should my weeping maid suppress
Those gentle signs of undissembled woe?
When from soft love proceeds the deep distress,
Ah, why forbid the willing tears to flow?

Since for my sake each dear translucent drop
Breaks forth, best witness of thy truth sincere,
My lips should drink the precious mixture up,
And, ere it falls, receive the trembling tear.

Trust me, these symptoms of thy faithful heart,
In absence shall my dearest hope sustain;
Delia! since such thy sorrow that we part,
Such when we meet thy joy shall be again.

Hard is that heart, and unsubdued by love,
That feels no pain, nor ever heaves a sigh;
Such hearts the fiercest passions only prove,
Or freeze in cold insensibility.

Oh! then indulge thy grief, nor fear to tell
The gentle source from whence thy sorrows flow,
Nor think it weakness when we love to feel,
Nor think it weakness what we feel to show.

William Cowper

To Demosthenes

It flatters and deceives thy view,
This mirror of ill-polish'd ore;
For, were it just, and told thee true,
Thou wouldst consult it never more.

William Cowper

To Dr. Austin, Of Cecil Street, London

Austin, accept a grateful verse from me,
The poet's treasure, no inglorious fee.
Loved by the Muses, thy ingenuous mind
Pleasing requital in my verse may find;
Verse oft has dashed the scythe of Time aside,
Immortalising names which else had died.
And oh, could I command the glittering wealth
With which sick kings are glad to purchase health;
Yet, if extensive fame, and sure to live,
Were in the power of verse like mine to give,
I would not recompense his art with less,
Who, giving Mary health, heals my distress.
Friend of my friend! I love thee, though unknown,
And boldly call thee, being his, my own.

William Cowper

To Giovanni Battista Manso, Marquis Of Villa. (Translated From Milton)

These verses also to thy praise the Nine
Oh Manso! happy in that theme design,
For, Gallus and Maecenas 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 consign'd, not unaware
How high the charge, Marini 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 labour'd brass thy tribute to his shade.
Nor this contented thee-but lest the grave
Should aught absorb of their's, which thou could'st save,
All future ages thou has deign'd 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
Chill'd by rude blasts that freeze my Northern home,
Thee dear to Clio confident proclaim,
And Thine, for Phoebus' sake, a deathless name.
Nor Thou, so kind, wilt view with scornful eye
A Muse scarce rear'd beneath our sullen sky,
Who fears not, indiscrete 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-hair'd Ocean laves,
Hear oft by night, or, slumb'ring, 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 Phoebus raise the polish'd rhyme,
We too serve Phoebus; Phoebus has receiv'd,
(If legends old may claim to be believ'd)
No sordid gifts from us, the golden ear,
The burnish'd 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 prais'd in hallow'd rhyme.
Hence, often as the maids of Greece surround
Apollo's shrine with hymns of festive sound,
They name the virgins who arriv'd of yore
With British off'rings on the Delian shore,
Loxo, from Giant Corineus sprung,
Upis, on whose blest lips the Future hung,
And Hecaerge with the golden hair,
All deck'd with Pic'ish hues, and all with bosoms bare.
Thou therefore, happy Sage, whatever clime
Shall ring with Tasso's praise in after-time,
Or with Marini'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 constrain'd to roam
The earth, an exile from his heav'nly home,
Enter'd, no willing guest, Admetus' door,
Though Hercules had enter'd there before.
But gentle Chiron's cave was near, a scene
Of rural peace, clothed with perpetual green,
And thither, oft as respite he requir'd
From rustic clamours loud, the God retir'd.
There, many a time, on Peneus' bank reclin'd
At some oak's root, with ivy thick entwin'd,
Won by his hospitable friend's desire
He sooth'd 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 soften'd lynxes wonder'd at the strain.
Well may we think, O dear to all above!
Thy birth distinguish'd by the smile of Jove,
And that Apollo shed his kindest pow'r,

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 unwither'd, and a mind entire.
Oh might so true a friend to me belong,
So skill'd 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 restor'd
Each to his seat around the fed'ral board,
And Oh, if spirit fail me not, disperse
Our Saxon plund'ers 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 deathbed bend
I shall but need to say--'Be yet my friend!'
He, faithful to my dust, with kind concern
Shal1 place it gently in a modest urn;
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 promis'd recompense be sure,
Borne 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 illumin'd by celestial day,
And, ev'ry cloud from my pure spirit driv'n,
Joy in the bright beatitude of Heav'n!

William Cowper

To Giovanni Salzilli, A Roman Poet, In His Illness. Scazons (Translated From Milton)

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 measur'd tread
Heav'n'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 th' Aeolian band,
Sweeps with ungovern'd 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 diffus'd through all thy veins,
Relentless malady! not mov'd 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 Paeon, or what name divine
Soe'er thou chuse, 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, render'd to the Muse he loves, again
He may enchant the meadows with his strain.
Numa, reclin'd in everlasting ease
Amid the shade of dark embow'ring trees,
Viewing with eyes of unabated fire
His loved Aegeria, shall that strain admire:
So sooth'd, 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.

William Cowper

To Health (From The Greek)

Eldest born of powers divine!
Bless'd Hygeia! be it mine
To enjoy what thou canst give,
And henceforth with thee to live:
For in power if pleasure be
Wealth or numerous progeny
Or in amorous embrace,
Where no spy infests the place;
Or in aught that Heaven bestows
To alleviate human woes,
When the wearied heart despairs
Of a respite from its cares;
These cold and every true delight
Flourish only in thy sight;
And the sister graces three
Owe, themselves, their youth to thee
Without whom we may possess
Much, but never happiness.

William Cowper

To John Johnson, On His Presenting Me With An Antique Bust Of Homer

Kinsman beloved, and as a son by me!
When I behold this fruit of thy regard,
The sculptured form of my old favourite bard,
I reverence feel for him, and love for thee.
Joy too and grief. Much joy that there should be
Wise men and learned who grudge not to reward
With some applause my bold attempt and hard,
With others scorn: critics by courtesy.
The grief is this, that sunk in Homer's mine,
I lose my precious years now soon to fail,
Handling his gold, which howsoe'er it shine,
Proves dross, when balanced in the Christian scale.
Be wiser thou; -- like our forefather Donne,
Seek heavenly wealth, and work for God alone.

William Cowper

To Mary

The twentieth year is well nigh past
Since first our sky was overcast;—
Ah would that this might be the last!
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow;—
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disused, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou playedst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language uttered in a dream;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

For could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet gently pressed, press gently mine,
My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou prov'st
That now at every step thou mov'st
Upheld by two; yet still thou lov'st,
My Mary!

And still to love, though pressed with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary!

And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!

William Cowper

To Miss C-----, On Her Birthday

How many between east and west,
Disgrace their parent earth,
Whose deeds constrain us to detest
The day that gave them birth!
Not so when Stella's natal morn
Revolving months restore,
We can rejoice that she was born
And wish her born once more!

William Cowper

To Mr. John Rouse, Librarian Of The University Of Oxford. (Translated From Milton)

Strophe I

My two-fold Book! single in show
But double in Contents,
Neat, but not curiously adorn'd
Which in his early youth,
A poet gave, no lofty one in truth
Although an earnest wooer of the Muse--
Say, while in cool Ausonian shades
Or British wilds he roam'd,
Striking by turns his native lyre,
By turns the Daunian lute
And stepp'd almost in air,--

Antistrophe

Say, little book, what furtive hand
Thee from thy fellow books convey'd,
What time, at the repeated suit
Of my most learned Friend,
I sent thee forth an honour'd traveller
From our great city to the source of Thames,
Caerulean sire!
Where rise the fountains and the raptures ring,
Of the Aonian choir,
Durable as yonder spheres,
And through the endless lapse of years
Secure to be admired?

Strophe II

Now what God or Demigod
For Britain's ancient Genius mov'd
(If our afflicted land
Have expiated at length the guilty sloth
Of her degen'rate sons)
Shall terminate our impious feuds,
And discipline, with hallow'd voice, recall?
Recall the Muses too
Driv'n from their antient seats

In Albion, and well-nigh from Albion's shore,
And with keen Phoebean shafts
Piercing th'unseemly birds,
Whose talons menace us
Shall drive the harpy race from Helicon afar?

Antistrophe

But thou, my book, though thou hast stray'd,
Whether by treach'ry lost
Or indolent neglect, thy bearer's fault,
From all thy kindred books,
To some dark cell or cave forlorn,
Where thou endur'st, perhaps,
The chafing of some hard untutor'd hand,
Be comforted--
For lo! again the splendid hope appears
That thou may'st yet escape
The gulphs of Lethe, and on oary wings
Mount to the everlasting courts of Jove,

Strophe III

Since Rouse desires thee, and complains
That, though by promise his,
Thou yet appear'st not in thy place
Among the literary noble stores
Giv'n to his care,
But, absent, leav'st his numbers incomplete.
He, therefore, guardian vigilant
Of that unperishing wealth,
Calls thee to the interior shrine, his charge,
Where he intends a richer treasure far
Than Ion kept--(Ion, Erectheus' son
Illustrious, of the fair Creusa born)--
In the resplendent temple of his God,
Tripods of gold and Delphic gifts divine.

Antistrophe

Haste, then, to the pleasant groves,
The Muses' fav'rite haunt;
Resume thy station in Apollo's dome,
Dearer to him
Than Delos, or the fork'd Parnassian hill.

Exulting go,
Since now a splendid lot is also thine,
And thou art sought by my propitious friend;
For There thou shalt be read
With authors of exalted note,
The ancient glorious Lights of Greece and Rome.

Epode

Ye, then my works, no longer vain
And worthless deem'd by me!
Whate'er this steril genius has produc'd
Expect, at last, the rage of Envy spent,
An unmolested happy home,
Gift of kind Hermes and my watchful friend,
Where never flippant tongue profane
Shall entrance find,
And whence the coarse unletter'd multitude
Shall babble far remote.
Perhaps some future distant age
Less tinged with prejudice and better taught
Shall furnish minds of pow'r
To judge more equally.
Then, malice silenced in the tomb,
Cooler heads and sounder hearts,
Thanks to Rouse, if aught of praise
I merit, shall with candour weigh the claim.

William Cowper

To Mrs. King, On Her Kind Present To The Author, A Patchwork Counterpane Of Her Own Making

The Bard, if e'er he feel at all,
Must sure be quickened by a call
Both on his heart and head,
To pay with tuneful thanks the care
And kindness of a lady fair
Who deigns to deck his bed.

A bed like this, in ancient time,
On Ida's barren top sublime,
(As Homer's Epic shows),
Composed of sweetest vernal flowers,
Without the aid of sun or showers,
For Jove and Juno rose.

Less beautiful, however gay,
Is that which in the scorching day
Receives the weary swain
Who, laying his long scythe aside,
Sleeps on some bank with daisies pied,
Till roused to toil again.

What labours of the loom I see!
Looms numberless have groaned for me!
Should every maiden come
To scramble for the patch that bears
The impress of the robe she wears,
The bell would toll for some.

And oh, what havoc would ensue!
This bright display of every hue
All in a moment fled!
As if a storm should strip the bowers
Of all their tendrils, leaves, and flowers,--
Each pocketing a shred.

Thanks, then, to every gentle Fair,
Who will not come to peck me bare

As bird of borrowed feather,
And thanks to one, above them all,
The gentle Fair of Pertenhall,
Who put the whole together.

William Cowper

To Mrs. Newton

A noble theme demands a noble verse,
In such I thank you for your fine oysters.
The barrel was magnificently large,
But, being sent to Olney at free charge,
Was not inserted in the driver's list,
And therefore overlook'd, forgot, or miss'd;
For, when the messenger whom we despatch'd
Inquir'd for oysters, Hob his noddle scratch'd;
Denying that his wagon or his wain
Did any such commodity contain.
In consequence of which, your welcome boon
Did not arrive till yesterday at noon;
In consequence of which some chanc'd to die,
And some, though very sweet, were very dry.
Now Madam says, (and what she says must still
Deserve attention, say she what she will,)
That what we call the diligence, be-case
It goes to London with a swifter pace,
Would better suit the carriage of your gift,
Returning downward with a pace as swift;
And therefore recommends it with this aim--
To save at least three days, -- the price the same;
For though it will not carry or convey
For less than twelve pence, send whate'er you may,
For oyster bred upon the salt sea-shore,
Pack'd in a barrel, they will charge no more.

News have I none that I can deign to write,
Save that it rain'd prodigiously last night;
And that ourselves were, at the seventh hour,
Caught in the first beginning of the show'r;
But walking, running, and with much ado,
Go home -- just time enough to be wet through,
Yet both are well, and, wond'rous to be told,
Soused as we were, we yet have caught no cold,
And wishing just the same good hap to you,
We say, good Madam, and good Sir, adieu.

To Mrs. Throckmorton, On Her Beautiful Transcript Of Horace's Ode Ad Librum Suum

Maria, could Horace have guessed
What honour awaited his ode
To his little volume addressed,
The honour which you have bestowed,--
Who have traced it in characters here,
So elegant, even, and neat,
He had laughed at the critical sneer
Which he seems to have trembled to meet.

And sneer, if you please, he had said,
A nymph shall hereafter arise
Who shall give me, when you are all dead,
The glory your malice denies;
Shall dignity give to my lay,
Although but a mere bagatelle;
And even a poet shall say,
Nothing ever was written so well.

William Cowper

To Mrs. Unwin

Mary! I want a lyre with other strings,
Such aid from heaven as some have feigned they drew.
An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new
And undebased by praise of meaner things,
That ere through age or woe I shed my wings,
I may record thy worth with honour due,
In verse as musical as thou art true,
And that immortalises whom it sings.
But thou hast little need. There is a book
By seraphs writ with beams of heavenly light
On which the eyes of God not rarely look,
A chronicle of actions just and bright;
There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine;
And, since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine.

William Cowper

To My Cousin, Anne Bodham, On Receiving From Her A Network Purse, Made By Herself

My gentle Anne, whom heretofore,
When I was young, and thou no more
Than plaything for a nurse,
I danced and fondled on my knee,
A kitten both in size and glee,--
I thank thee for my purse.

Gold pays the worth of all things here
But not of love; -- that gem's too dear
For richest rogues to win it;
I, therefore, as a proof of love,
Esteem thy present far above
The best things kept within it.

William Cowper

To My Father (Translated From Milton)

Oh that Pieria's spring would thro' 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 nought;
Naught, save the riches that from airy dreams
In secret grottos and in laurel bow'rs,
I have, by golden Clio's gift, acquir'd.
Verse is a work divine; despise not thou
Verse therefore, which evinces (nothing more)
Man's heav'nly source, and which, retaining still
Some scintillations of Promethean fire,
Bespeaks him animated from above.
The Gods love verse; the infernal Pow'rs themselves
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 threat'ning bull,
And when he spreads his reeking entrails wide
To scrutinize the Fates envelop'd there.
We too, ourselves, what time we seek again
Our native skies, and one eternal Now
Shall be the only measure of our Being,
Crown'd 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
Unutt'able, immortal, hearing which
Huge Ophiuchus holds his hiss suppress'd,
Orion, soften'd, drops his ardent blade,
And Atlas stands unconscious of his load.
Verse graced of old the feasts of kings, ere yet
Luxurious dainties destin'd to the gulph
Immense of gluttony were known, and ere
Lyæus deluged yet the temp'rate 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 produc'd from Aetna'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 follow'd. Not by chords alone
Well-touch'd, but by resistless accents more
To sympathetic tears the Ghosts themselves
He mov'd: 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, Pow'rs by whom inspir'd, thyself
Art skillfill 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 conjoin'd
In close affinity, we sympathize
In social arts and kindred studies sweet?
Such distribution of himself to us
Was Phoebus' choice; thou hast thy gift, and I
Mine also, and between us we receive,
Father and son, the whole inspiring God.

No. Howsoe'er 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 observ'd,
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 open'd once
The stores of Roman rhetoric, and learn'd
The full-ton'd language, of the eloquent Greeks,
Whose lofty music grac'd the lips of Jove,
Thyself did'st counsel me to add the flow'rs
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 Heav'n 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 heav'n 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 th'unletter'd 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 venom'd 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 viperean 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 treasur'd 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 pile, not soon absorb'd
In the oblivious Lethaeon gulph
Shall to Futurity perhaps convey
This theme, and by these praises of my sire
Improve the Fathers of a distant age.

William Cowper

To Sir Joshua Reynolds

Dear President, whose art sublime
Gives perpetuity to time,
And bids transactions of a day,
That fleeting hours would waft away
To dark futurity, survive,
And in unfading beauty live,--
You cannot with a grace decline
A special mandate of the Nine,
Yourself, whatever task you choose,
So much indebted to the Muse.
Thus say the sisterhood :-- We come;
Fix well your pallet on your thumb,
Prepare the pencil and the tints,
We come to furnish you with hints.
French disappointment, British glory,
Must be the subject of the story.
First strike a curve, a graceful bow,
Then slope it to a point below;
Your outline easy, airy, light,
Filled up becomes a paper kite.
Let independence, sanguine, horrid,
Blaze like a meteor in the forehead:
Beneath (but lay aside your graces)
Draw six-and-twenty rueful faces,
Each with a staring, steadfast eye,
Fixed on his great and good ally.
France flies the kite -- 'tis on the wing--
Britannia's lightning cuts the string.
The wind that raised it, ere it ceases,
Just rends it into thirteen pieces,
Takes charge of every fluttering sheet,
And lays them all at George's feet.
Iberia, trembling from afar,
Renounces the confederate war;
Her efforts and her arts o'ercome,
France calls her shattered navies home:
Repenting Holland learns to mourn
The sacred treaties she has torn;
Astonishment and awe profound

Are stamped upon the nations round;
Without one friend, above all foes,
Britannia gives the world repose.

William Cowper

To The Immortal Memory Of The Halibut, On Which I Dined This Day, Monday, April 26, 1784

Where hast thou floated, in what seas pursued
Thy pastime? When wast thou an egg new spawned,
Lost in the immensity of ocean's waste?
Roar as they might, the overbearing winds
That rocked the deep, thy cradle, thou wast safe--
And in thy minikin and embyro state,
Attached to the firm leaf of some salt weed,
Didst outlive tempests, such as wrung and racked
The joints of many a stout and gallant bark,
And whelmed them in the unexplored abyss.
Indebted to no magnet and no chart,
Nor udner guidance of the polar fire,
Thou wast a voyager on many coasts,
Grazing at large in meadows submarine,
Where flat Batavia just emerging peeps
Above the brine,--where Caledonia's rocks
Beat back the surge,--and where Hibernia shoots
Her wondrous causeway far into the main.
--Wherever thou hast fed, thou little thoughtst,
And I not more, that I should feed on thee
Peace, therefore, and good health, and much good fish,
To him who sent thee! -- and success, as oft
As it descends into the billowy gulf,
To the same dreg that caught thee! -- Fare thee well!
Thy lot thy brethren of the slimy fin
Would envy, could they know that thou wast doomed
To feed a bard, and to be praised in verse.

William Cowper

To The Nightingale, Which The Author Heard Sing On New Year's Day

Whence it is, that amazed I hear
From yonder withered spray,
This foremost morn of all the year,
The melody of May?

And why, since thousands would be proud
Of such a favour shown,
Am I selected from the crowd
To witness it alone?

Sing'st thou, sweet Philomel, to me,
For that I also long
Have practised in the groves like thee,
Though not like thee in song?

Or sing'st thou rather under force
Of some divine command,
Commissioned to presage a course
Of happier days at hand?

Thrice welcome then! for many a long
And joyless year have I,
As thou to-day, put forth my song
Beneath a wintry sky.

But Thee no wintry skies can harm,
Who only need'st to sing,
To make even January charm,
And every season Spring.

William Cowper

To The Rev. Mr. Newton : An Invitation Into The Country

The swallows in their torpid state
Compose their useless wing,
And bees in hives as idly wait
The call of early spring.

The keenest frost that binds the stream,
The wildest wind that blows,
Are neither felt nor fear'd by them,
Secure of their repose.

But man, all feeling and awake,
The gloomy scene surveys;
With present ills his heart must ache,
And pant for brighter days.

Old winter, halting o'er the mead,
Bids me and Mary mourn;
But lovely spring peeps o'er his head,
And whispers your return.

Then April, with her sister May,
Shall chase him from the bow'rs,
And weave fresh garlands ev'ry day,
To crown the smiling hours.

And, if a tear, that speaks regret
Of happier times, appear,
A glimpse of joy, that we have met,
Shall shine, and dry the tear.

William Cowper

To The Rev. Mr. Newton, On His Return From Ramsgate

That ocean you have late surveyed,
Those rocks I too have seen;
But I, afflicted and dismayed,
You tranquil and serene.

You from the flood-controlling steep
Saw stretched before your view,
With conscious joy, the threatening deep,
No longer such to you.

To me, the waves that ceaseless broke
Upon the dangerous coast,
Hoarsely and ominously spoke
Of all my treasure lost.

Your sea of troubles you have past,
And found the peaceful shore;
I, tempest-tost, and wrecked at last,
Come home to port no more.

William Cowper

To The Rev. Mr. Newton, Rector Of St. Mary Woolnoth

Says the Pipe to the Snuff-box, 'I can't understand
What the ladies and gentlemen see in your face,
That you are in fashion all over the land,
And I am so much fallen into disgrace.

'Do but see what a pretty contemplative air
I give to the company,—pray do but note 'em,—
You would think that the wise men of Greece were all there,
Or, at least, would suppose them the wise men of Gotham.

'My breath is as sweet as the breath of blown roses,
While you are a nuisance where'er you appear;
There is nothing but snivelling and blowing of noses,
Such a noise as turns any man's stomach to hear.'

Then, lifting his lid in a delicate way,
And opening his mouth with a smile quite engaging.
The Box in reply was heard plainly to say,
'What a silly dispute is this we are Waging!

'If you have a little of merit to claim,
You may thank the sweet-smelling Virginian weed;
And I, if I seem to deserve any blame,
The before-mentioned drug in apology plead.

'Thus neither the praise nor the blame is our own,
No room for a sneer, much less a cachinnus;
We are vehicles, not of tobacco alone,
But of anything else they may choose to put in us.'

William Cowper

To The Rev. William Cawthorne Unwin

Unwin, I should but ill repay
The kindness of a friend,
Whose worth deserves as warm a lay
As ever friendship penned,
Thy name omitted in a page
That would reclaim a vicious age.

An union formed, as mine with thee,
Not rashly or in sport,
May be as fervent in degree,
And faithful in its sort,
And may as rich in comfort prove,
As that of true fraternal love.

The bud inserted in the rind,
The bud of peach or rose,
Adorns, though differing in its kind,
The stock whereon it grows
With flower as sweet or full as fair
As if produced by nature there.

Not rich, I render what I may,
I seize thy name in haste,
And place it in this first essay,
Lest this should prove the last.
'Tis where it should be, in a plan
That holds in view the good of man.

The poet's lyre, to fix his fame,
Should be the poet's heart;
Affection lights a brighter flame
Than ever blazed by art.
No muses on these lines attend
I sink the poet in the friend.

William Cowper

To The Reverend William Bull

My dear friend,
If reading verse be your delight,
'Tis mine as much, or more, to write;
But what we would, so weak is man,
Lies oft remote from what we can.
For instance, at this very time,
I feel a wish, by cheerful rhyme,
To soothe my friend, and had I power,
To cheat him of an anxious hour;
Not meaning (for I must confess,
It were but folly to suppress)
His pleasure or his good alone,
But squinting partly at my own.
But though the sun is flaming high
I' th' centre of yon arch, the sky,
And he had once (and who but he?)
The name for setting genius free;
Yet whether poets of past days
Yielded him undeserved praise,
And he by no uncommon lot
Was famed for virtues he had not;
Or whether, which is like enough,
His Highness may have taken huff,
So seldom sought with invocation,
Since it has been the reigning fashion
To disregard his inspiration,
I seem no brighter in my wits,
For all the radiance he emits,
Than if I saw through midnight vapor
The glimm'ring of a farthing taper.
O for a succedaneum, then,
T' accelerate a creeping pen,
Quod caput, cerebrum, et cranium
Pondere liberet exoso,
Et morbo jam caliginoso!
'Tis here; this oval box well fill'd
With best tobacco, finely mill'd,
Beats all Anticyra's pretences
To disengage the encumber'd senses.

O Nymph of Transatlantic fame,
Where'er thine haunt, whate'er thy name,
Whether reposing on the side
Of Oroonoquo's spacious tide,
Or list'ning with delight not small
To Niagara's distant fall,
'Tis thine to cherish and to feed
The pungent nose-refreshing weed,
Which, whether, pulverized it gain
A speedy passage to the brain,
Or, whether touch'd with fire, it rise
In circling eddies to the skies,
Does thought more quicken and refine
Than all the breath of the Nine--
Forgive the Bard, if Bard be he,
Who once too wantonly made free
To touch with a satiric wipe
That symbol of thy power, the pipe;
So may no blight infest thy plains,
And no unseasonable rains,
And so may smiling Peace once more
Visit America's sad shore;
And thou, secure from all alarms
Of thund'ring drums and glitt'ring arms,
Rove unconfined beneath the shade
Thy wide-expanded leaves have made;
So may thy votaries increase,
And fumigation never cease.
May Newton, with renew'd delights
Perform thine odorif'rous rites,
While clouds of incense half divine
Involve thy disappearing shrine;
And so may smoke-inhaling Bull
Be always filling, never full.

William Cowper

To The Spanish Admiral Count Gravina

My rose, Gravina, blooms anew;
And steeped not now in rain,
But in Castalian streams by you,
Will never fade again.

William Cowper

To Warren Hastings, Esq.

Hastings! I knew thee young, and of a mind
While young humane, conversable, and kind;
Nor can I well believe thee, gentle then,
Now grown a villain, and the worst of men.
But rather some suspect, who have oppressed
And worried thee, as not themselves the best.

William Cowper

To William Hayley, Esq. June 29, 1793.

Dear architect of fine Chateaux in air,
Worthier to stand for ever, if they could,
Than any built of stone, or yet of wood,
For back of royal elephant to bear;
Oh for permission from the skies to share,
Much to my own, though little to thy good,
With thee, (not subject to the jealous mood!)
A partnership of literary ware!
But I am bankrupt now; and doomed henceforth
To drudge, in descant dry, on others' lays;
Bards, I acknowledge, of unequalled worth,
But what is commentator's happiest praise?
That he has furnished lights for other eyes,
Which they who need them use, and then despise.

William Cowper

Translation From Virgil. *Æneid*, Book VIII. Line 18.

Thus Italy was moved -- nor did the chief
Æneas in his mind less tumult feel.
On every side his anxious thought he turns,
Restless, unfix'd, not knowing which to choose.
And as a cistern that in brim of brass
Confines the crystal flood, if chance the sun
Smite on it, or the moon's resplendent orb.
The quivering light now flashes on the walls,
Now leaps uncertain to the vaulted roof:
Such were the wavering motions of his mind.
'Twas night -- and weary nature sunk to rest.
The birds, the bleating flocks, were heard no more.
At length, on the cold ground, beneath the damp
And dewy vault fast by the river's brink,
The father of his country sought repose,
When lo! among the spreading poplar boughs,
Forth from his pleasant stream, propitious rose
The god of Tiber: clear transparent gauze
Infolds his loins, his brows with reeds are crown'd:
And these his gracious words to soothe his care:
'Heaven-born, who bring'st our kindred home again,
Rescued, and givest eternity to Troy,
Long have Laurentum and the Latian plains
Expected thee; behold thy fix'd abode.
Fear not the threats of war, the storm is past,
The gods appeased. For proof that what thou hear'st
Is no vain forgery or delusive dream,
Beneath the grove that borders my green bank,
A milk-white swine, with thirty milk-white young
Shall greet thy wondering eyes. Mark well the place;
For 'tis thy place of rest, there and thy toils:
There, twice ten years elapsed, fair Alba's walls
Shall rise, fair Alba, by Ascanius' hand.
Thus shall it be -- now listen, while I teach
The means to accomplish these events at hand
The Arcadians here, a race from Pallas sprung,
Following Evander's standard and his fate,
High on these mountains, a well chosen spot,
Have built a city, for their grandsire's sake

Named Pallenteum. These perpetual war
Wage with the Latians: join'd in faithful league
And arms confederate, and them to your camp.
Myself between my winding banks will speed
Your well oar'd barks to stem the opposing tide.
Rise, goddess born, arise; and with the first
Declining stars seek Juno in thy prayer,
And vanquish all her wrath with suppliant vows
When conquest crowns thee, then remember me
I am the Tiber, whose cærulean stream
Heaven favors; I with copious flood divide
These grassy banks, and cleave the fruitful meads
My mansion, this -- and lofty cities crown
My fountain head.' -- He spoke and sought the deep,
And plunged his form beneath the closing flood.
Æneas at the morning dawn awoke,
And, rising, with uplifted eye beheld
The orient sun, then dipped his palms, and scoop'd
The brimming stream, and thus address'd the skies:
'Ye nymphs, Laurentian nymphs, who feed the source
Of many a stream, and thou, with thy blest flood,
O Tiber, hear, accept me, and afford,
At length afford, a shelter from my woes.
Where'er in secret cavern under ground
Thy waters sleep, where'er they spring to light,
Since thou hast pity for a wretch like me,
My offerings and my vows shall wait thee still:
Great horned Father of Hesperian floods,
Be gracious now, and ratify thy word.'
He said, and chose two galleys from his fleet,
Fits them with oars, and clothes the crew in arms
When lo! astonishing and pleasing sight,
The milk-white dam, with her unspotted brood,
Lay stretch'd upon the bank, beneath the grove.
To thee, the pious Prince, Juno, to thee
Devotes them all, all on thine altar bleed.
That live-long night old Tiber smooth'd his flood,
And so restrain'd it that it seem'd to stand
Motionless as a pool, or silent lake,
That not a billow might resist their oars.
With cheerful sound of exhortation soon
Their voyage they begin; the pitchy keel

Slides through the gentle deep, the quiet stream
Admires the unwonted burden that it bears,
Well polish'd arms, and vessels painted gay.
Beneath the shade of various trees, between
The umbrageous branches of the spreading groves,
They cut their liquid way, nor day nor night
They slack their course, unwinding as they go
The long meanders of the peaceful tide.
The glowing sun was in meridian height,
When from afar they saw the humble walls,
And the few scatter'd cottages, which now
The Roman power has equall'd with the clouds;
But such was then Evander's scant domain.
They steer to shore, and hasten to the town.
It chanced the Arcadian monarch on that day,
Before the walls, beneath a shady grove,
Was celebrating high, in solemn feast,
Alcides and his tutelary gods.
Pallas, his son, was there, and there the chief
Of all his youth; with these, a worthy tribe,
His poor but venerable senate, burnt
Sweet incense, and their altars smoked with blood.
Soon as they saw the towering masts approach,
Sliding between the trees, while the crew rest
Upon their silent oars, amazed they rose,
Not without fear, and all forsook the feast.
But Pallas undismay'd, his javelin seized,
Rush'd to the bank, and from a rising ground
Forbade them to disturb the sacred rites.
'Ye stranger youth! What prompts you to explore
This untried way? and whither do ye steer?
Whence, and who are you? Bring ye peace or war?'
Æneas from his lofty deck holds forth
The peaceful olive branch, and thus replies:
'Trojans and enemies to the Latian state,
Whom they with unprovoked hostilities
Have driven away, thou seest. We seek Evander
Say this -- and say beside, the Trojan chiefs
Are come, and seek his friendship and his aid.'
Pallas with wonder heard that awful name,
And 'Whosoe'er thou art,' he cried, 'come forth:
Bear thine own tidings to my father's ear,

And be a welcome guest beneath our roof.'
He said, and, press'd the stranger to his breast:
Then led him from the river to the grove,
Where, courteous, thus Æneas greets the king:
'Best of the Grecian race, to whom I bow
(So wills my fortune) suppliant, and stretch forth
In sign of amity this peaceful branch,
I fear'd thee not, although I knew thee well
A Grecian leader, born in Arcady,
And kinsman of the Atridæ. Me my virtue,
That means no wrong to thee -- the Oracles,
Our kindred families allied of old,
And I thy renown diffused through every land,
Have all conspired to bind in friendship to thee,
And send me not unwilling to thy shores.
Dardanas, author of the Trojan state,
(So say the Greeks,) was fair Electra's son;
Electra boasted Atlas for her sire,
Whose shoulders high sustain the ethereal orbs.
Your sire is Mercury, whom Maia bore,
Sweet Maia, on Cylene's hoary top.
Her, if we credit aught tradition old,
Atlas of yore, the self-same Atlas, claim'd
His daughter. Thus united close in blood,
Thy race and ours one common sire confess.
With these credentials fraught, I would not send
Ambassadors with artful phrase to sound
And win thee by degrees -- but came myself --
Me, therefore, me thou seest; my life the stake:
'Tis I, Æneas, who implore thine aid.
Should Daunia, that now aims the blow at thee
Prevail to conquer us, nought then, they think,
Will hinder, but Hesperia must be theirs,
All theirs, from upper to the nether sea.
Take then our friendship, and return us thine.
We too have courage, we have noble minds,
And youth well tried, and exercised arms.'
Thus spoke Æneas. -- He with fix'd regard
Survey'd him speaking, features, form, and mien
Then briefly thus -- 'Thou noblest of thy name,
How gladly do I take thee to my heart,
How gladly thus confess thee for a friend!

In thee I trace Anchises; his thy speech,
Thy voice, thy countenance. For I well remember
Many a day since, when Priam journey'd forth
To Salamis, to see the land where dwelt
Hesione, his sister, he push'd on
E'en to Arcadia's frozen bounds. 'Twas then
The bloom of youth was glowing on my cheek;
Much I admired the Trojan chiefs, and much
Their king, the son of great Laomedon,
But most Anchises, towering o'er them all.
A youthful longing seized me to accost
The hero, and embrace him; I drew near,
And gladly led him to the walls of Pheneus.
Departing, he distinguish'd me with gifts,
A costly quiver stored with Lycian darts,
A robe inwove with hold, with gold imboss'd
Two bridles, those which Pallas uses now.
The friendly league thou hast solicited
I give thee, therefore, and to-morrow all
My chosen youth shall wait on your return.
Meanwhile, since thus in friendship ye are come,
Rejoice with us, and join to celebrate
These annual rites, which may not be delay'd,
And be at once familiar at our board.'
He said, and bade replace the feast removed;
Himself upon a grassy bank disposed
The crew; but for Æneas order'd forth
A couch spread with a lion's tawny shag,
And bade him share the honors of his throne.
The appointed youth with glad alacrity
Assist the laboring priest to load the board
With roasted entrails of the slaughter'd beeves
Well kneaded bread and mantling bowls. We pleased,
Æneas and the Trojan youth regale
On the huge length of a well pastured chine.
Hunger appeased, and tables all despatch'd
Thus spake Evander: 'Superstition here,
In this old solemn feasting, has no part.
No, Trojan friend, from utmost danger saved,
In gratitude this worship we renew.
Behold that rock which nods above the vale,
Thos bulks of broken stone dispersed around,

How desolate the shatter'd cave appears,
And what a ruin spreads the incumber'd plain
Within this pile, but far within, was once
The den of Cacus; dire his hateful form
That shunn'd the day, half monster and half man.
Blood newly shed stream'd ever on the ground
Smoking, and many a visage pale and wan
Nail'd at his gate, hung hideous to the sight.
Vulcan begot the brute: vast was his size,
And from his throat he belch'd his father's fires.
But the day came that brought us what we wish'd,
The assistance and the presence of a God.
Flush'd with his victory, and the spoils he won
From triple-form'd Geryon lately slain,
The great avenger, Hercules, appear'd.
Hither he drove his stately bulls, and pour'd
His herds along the vale. But the sly thief
Cacus, that nothing might escape his hand
Of villainy or fraud, drove from the stalls
Four of the lordliest of his bulls, and four
The fairest of his heifers: by the tail
He dragg'd them to his den, that, there conceal'd,
No footsteps might betray the dark abode.
And now, his herd with provender sufficed,
Alcides would be gone: they as they went
Still bellowing loud, made the deep echoing woods
And distant hills resound: when, hark! one ox,
Imprison'd close within the vast recess,
Lows in return, and frustrates all his hope.
Then fury seized Alcides, and his breast
With indignation heaved; grasping his club
Of knotted oak, swift to the mountain top
He ran, he flew. Then first was Cacus seen
To tremble, and his eyes bespoke his fears.
Swift as an eastern blast, he sought his den,
And dread, increasing, wing'd him as he went.
Drawn up in iron slings above the gate,
A rock was hung enormous. Such his haste,
He burst the chains, and dropp'd it at the door,
Then grappl'd it with iron work within
Of bolts and bars by Vulcan's art contrived.
Scarce was he fast, when, panting for revenge,

Came Hercules; he gnash'd his teeth with rage,
And quick as lightning glanced his eyes around
In quest of entrance. Fiery rod and stung
With indignation, thrice he wheel'd his course
About the mountain; thrice, but thrice in vain,
He strove to force the quarry at the gate,
And thrice sat down, o'erwearied in the vale.
There stood a pointed rock abrupt and rude,
That high o'erlook'd the rest, close at the back
Of the fell monster's den, when birds obscene
Of ominous note resorted, choughs and daws.
This, as it lean'd obliquely to the left,
Threatening with stream below, he from the right
Push'd with his utmost strength, and to and fro
He shook the mass, loosening its lowest base;
Then shoved it from its seat; down fell the pile;
Sky thunder'd at the fall; the banks give way,
The affrighted stream flows upward to his source.
Behold the kennel of the brute exposed,
The gloomy vault laid open. So, if chance
Earth yawning to the centre should disclose
The mansions, the pale mansions of the dead,
Loathed by the gods, such would the gulf appear,
And the ghosts tremble at the sight of day.
The monster braying with unusual din
Within his hollow lair, and sore amazed
To see such sudden inroads of the light,
Alcides press'd him close with what at hand
Lay readiest, stumps of trees, and fragments huge
Of millstone size. He, (for escape was none),
Wondrous to tell! forth from his gorge discharged
A smoky cloud that darken'd all the den;
Wreath after wreath he vomited again,
The smothering vapor mix'd with fiery sparks
No sight could penetrate the veil obscure.
The hero, more provoked, endured not this,
But with a headlong leap he rush'd to where
The thickest cloud enveloped his abode.
There grasp'd he Cacus, spite of all his fires,
Till, crush'd within his arms, the monster show
His bloodless throat, now dry with panting hard,
And his press'd eyeballs start. Soon he tears down

The barricade of rock, the dark abyss
Lies open; and the imprison'd bulls, the theft
He had with oaths dednied, are brought to light;
By the heels the miscreant carcass is dragg'd forth.
His face, his eyes, all terrible, his breast
Beset with bristles, and his sooty jaws
Are view'd with wonder never to be cloy'd.
Hence the celebrity thou seest, and hence
This festal day Potitius first enjoin'd
Posterity: these solemn rites he first,
With those who bear the great Pinarian name,
To Hercules devoted; in the grove
This altar built, deem'd sacred in the highest
By us, and sacred ever to be deem'd.
Come, then, my friends, and bind your youthful brows
In praise of such deliverance, and hold forth
The brimming cup; your deities and ours
Are now the same, then drink, and freely too.'
So saying, he twisted round his reverend locks
A variegated poplar wreath, and fill'd
His right hand with a consecrated bowl.
At once all pour libations on the board,
All offer prayer. And now, the radiant sphere
Of day descending, eventide drew near.
When first Potitius with the priests advanced,
Begirt with skins, and torches in their hands.
High piled with meats of savory taste, they ranged
The chargers, and renew'd the grateful feast.
Then came the Salii, crown'd with poplar too,
Circling the blazing altars; here the youth
Advanced, a choir harmonious, there were heard
The reverend seers responsive; praise they sung,
Much praise in honor of Alcides' deeds;
How first with infant grip two serpents huge
He strangled, sent from Juno; next they sung
How Troja and Æchalia he destroy'd,
Fair cities both, and many a toilsome task
Beneath Eurystheus (so his stepdame will'd)
Achieved victorious. Thou, the cloud-born pair,
Hylæus fierce and Pholus, monstrous twins,
Thou slew'st the minotaur, the plague of Crete,
And the vast lion of the Nemean rock,

Thee hell, and Cerberus, hell's porter, fear'd,
Stretch'd in his den upon his half-gnaw'd bones.
Thee no abhorred form, not e'en the vast
Typhœus could appal, though clad in arms.
Hail, true-born son of Jove, among the gods
At length enroll'd, nor least illustrious thou,
Haste thee propitious, and approve our songs
Thus hymn'd the chorus; above all they sing
The cave of Cacus, and the flames he breathed
The whole grove echoes, and the hills rebound.
The rites perform'd, all hasten to the town.
The king, bending with age, held as he went
Æneas and his Pallas by the hand,
With much variety of pleasing talk
Shortening the way. Æneas, with a smile,
Looks round him, charm'd with the delightful scene,
And many a question asks, and much he learns
Of heroes far renown'd in ancient times.
Then spake Evander. These extensive groves,
Were once inhabited by fauns and nymphs,
Produced beneath their shades, and a rude race
Of men, the progeny uncouth of elms
And knotted oaks. They no refinement knew
Of laws or manners civilized, to yoke
The steer, with forecast provident to store
The hoarded grain, or manage what they had,
But browsed like beasts upon the leafy boughs,
Or fed voracious on their hunted prey.
An exile from Olympus, and expell'd
His native realm by thunder-bearing Jove,
First Saturn came. He from the mountains drew
This herd of men untractable and fierce,
And gave them laws: and call'd his hiding-place,
This growth of forests, Latium. Such the peace
His land possess'd, the golden age was then,
So famed in story; till by slow degrees
Far other times, and of far different hue,
Succeeded, thirst of gold and thirst of blood.
Then came Ausonian bands, and armed hosts
From Sicily, and Latium often changed
Her master and her name. At length arose
Kings, of whom Tybris of gigantic form

Was chief: and we Italians since have call'd
The river by his name: thus Albula
(So was the country call'd in ancient days)
Was quite forgot. Me from my native land
An exile, through the dangerous ocean driven,
Resistless fortune and relentless fate
Placed where thou seest me. Phoebus, and
The nymph Carmentis, with maternal care
Attendant on my wanderings, fix'd me here.

[Ten lines omitted.]

He said, and show'd him the Tarpeian rock,
And the rude spot where now the Capitol
Stands all magnificent and bright with gold,
Then overgrown with thorns. And yet e'en then
The swains beheld that sacred scene with awe;
The grove, the rock, inspired religious fear.
This grove, he said, that crowns the lofty top
Of this fair hill, some deity, we know,
Inhabits, but what deity we doubt.
The Arcadians speak of Jupiter himself
That they have often seen him, shaking here
His gloomy Ægis, while the thunder storms
Came rolling all around him. Turn thine eyes,
Behold that ruin: those dismantled walls,
Where once two towns, Janiculum----,
By Janus this, and that by Saturn built,
Saturnia. Such discourse brought them beneath
The roof of poor Evander; thence they saw,
Where now the proud and stately forum stands,
The grazing herds wide scatter'd o'er the field.
Soon as he enter'd -- Hercules, he said,
Victorious Hercules, on this threshold trod,
These walls contain'd him, humble as they are.
Dare to despise magnificence, my friend,
Prove thy divine descent by worth divine,
Nor view with haughty scorn this mean abode.
So saying, he led Æneas by the hand,
And placed him on a cushion stuff'd with leaves,
Spread with the skin of a Lybistian bear.

[The episode of Venus and Vulcan omitted.]

While thus in Lemnos Vulcan was employ'd,
Awaken'd by the gentle dawn of day,
And the shrill song of birds beneath the eaves
Of his low mansion, old Evander rose.
His tunic, and the sandals on his feet,
And his good sword well girded to his side,
A panther's skin dependent from his left,
And over his right shoulder thrown aslant,
Thus was he clad. Two mastiffs follow'd him,
His whole retinue and his nightly guard.

William Cowper

Translation Of Prior's Chloe And Euphelia

Mercator, vigiles oculos ut fallere possit,
Nomine sub ficto trans mare mittit opes;
Lenè sonat liquidumque meis Euphelia chordis,
Sed solam exoptant te, mea vota, Chloë.

Ad speculum ornabat nitidos Euphelia crines,
Cum dixit mea lux, heus, cane, sume, lyram.
Namque lyram juxta positam cum carmine vidit,
Suave quidem carmen dulcisonamque lyram.

Fila lyræ vocemque paro, suspiria surgunt,
Et miscent numeris mumura mœsta meis,
Dumque tuæ memoro laudes, Euphelia formæ,

Tota anima interea pendet ab ore Chloës.

Subrabet illa pudore, et contrahit altera frontem,
Me torquet mea mens conscia, psallo, tremo;
Atque Cupidineâ dixit Dea cincta coronâ,

Heu! fallendi artem quam didicere parum.

William Cowper

True And False Comforts

O God, whose favorable eye,
The sin-sick soul revives,
Holy and heavenly is the joy
Thy shining presence gives.

Not such as hypocrites suppose,
Who with a graceless heart
Taste not of Thee, but drink a dose,
Prepared by Satan's art.

Intoxicating joys are theirs,
Who while they boast their light,
And seem to soar above the stars,
Are plunging into night.

Lull'd in a soft and fatal sleep,
They sin and yet rejoice;
Were they indeed the Saviour's sheep,
Would they not hear His voice?

Be mine the comforts that reclaim
The soul from Satan's power;
That make me blush for what I am,
And hate my sin the more.

'Tis joy enough, my All in All,
At Thy dear feet to lie;
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
And none can higher fly.

William Cowper

True Pleasures

Lord, my soul with pleasure springs
When Jesu's name I hear:
And when God the Spirit brings
The word of promise near:
Beauties too, in holiness,
Still delighted I perceive;
Nor have words that can express
The joys Thy precepts give.

Clothed in sanctity and grace,
How sweet it is to see
Those who love Thee as they pass,
Or when they wait on Thee.
Pleasant too to sit and tell
What we owe to love Divine;
Till our bosoms grateful swell,
And eyes begin to shine.

Those the comforts I possess,
Which God shall still increase,
All His ways are pleasantness,
And all His paths are peace.
Nothing Jesus did or spoke,
Henceforth let me ever slight;
For I love His easy yoke,
And find His burden light.

William Cowper

Truth

Man, on the dubious waves of error toss'd,
His ship half founder'd, and his compass lost,
Sees, far as human optics may command,
A sleeping fog, and fancies it dry land;
Spreads all his canvas, every sinew plies;
Pants for it, aims at it, enters it, and dies!
Then farewell all self-satisfying schemes,
His well-built systems, philosophic dreams;
Deceitful views of future bliss, farewell!
He reads his sentence at the flames of hell.
Hard lot of man—to toil for the reward
Of virtue, and yet lose it! Wherefore hard?—
He that would win the race must guide his horse
Obedient to the customs of the course;
Else, though unequal'd to the goal he flies,
A meaner than himself shall gain the prize.
Grace leads the right way: if you choose the wrong,
Take it and perish; but restrain your tongue;
Charge not, with light sufficient and left free,
Your wilful suicide on God's decree.
O how unlike the complex works of man,
Heav'n's easy, artless, unencumber'd plan!
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile;
From ostentation, as from weakness, free,
It stands like the cerulian arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal, from afar
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenings words—believe, and live.
Too many, shock'd at what should charm them most,
Despise the plain direction, and are lost.
Heaven on such terms! (they cry with proud disdain)
Incredible, impossible, and vain!—
Rebel, because 'tis easy to obey;
And scorn, for its own sake, the gracious way.
These are the sober, in whose cooler brains
Some thought of immortality remains;

The rest too busy or too gay to wait
On the sad theme, their everlasting state,
Sport for a day, and perish in a night;
The foam upon the waters not so light.
Who judged the Pharisee? What odious cause
Exposed him to the vengeance of the laws?
Had he seduced a virgin, wrong'd a friend,
Or stabb'd a man to serve some private end?
Was blasphemy his sin? Or did he stray
From the strict duties of the sacred day?
Sit long and late at the carousing board?
(Such were the sins with which he charged his Lord.)
No—the man's morals were exact. What then?
'Twas his ambition to be seen of men;
His virtues were his pride; and that one vice
Made all his virtues gewgaws of no price;
He wore them as fine trappings for a show,
A praying, synagogue-frequenting beau.
The self-applauding bird, the peacock, see—
Mark what a sumptuous pharisee is he!
Meridian sunbeams tempt him to unfold
His radiant glories, azure, green, and gold:
He treads as if, some solemn music near,
His measured step were govern'd by his ear;
And seems to say—Ye meaner fowl give place;
I am all splendour, dignity, and grace!
Not so the pheasant on his charms presumes,
Though he, too, has a glory in his plumes.
He, Christian-like, retreats with modest mien
To the close copse or far sequester'd green,
And shines without desiring to be seen.
The plea of works, as arrogant and vain,
Heaven turns from with abhorrence and disdain;
Not more affronted by avow'd neglect,
Than by the mere dissembler's feign'd respect.
What is all righteousness that men devise?
What—but a sordid bargain for the skies!
But Christ as soon would abdicate his own,
As stoop from heaven to sell the proud a throne.
His dwelling a recess in some rude rock;
Book, beads, and maple dish, his meagre stock;
In shirt of hair and weeds of canvas dress'd,

Girt with a bell-rope that the Pope has bless'd;
 Adust with stripes told out for every crime,
 And sore tormented, long before his time;
 His prayer preferr'd to saints that cannot aid,
 His praise postponed, and never to be paid;
 See the sage hermit, by mankind admired,
 With all that bigotry adopts inspired,
 Wearing out life in his religious whim,
 Till his religious whimsy wears out him.
 His works, his abstinence, his zeal allow'd,
 You think him humble—God accounts him proud.
 High in demand, though lowly in pretence,
 Of all his conduct this the genuine sense—
 My penitential stripes, my streaming blood,
 Have purchased heaven, and proved my title good.
 Turn eastward now, and fancy shall apply
 To your weak sight her telescopic eye.
 The Bramin kindles on his own bare head
 The sacred fire, self-torturing his trade!
 His voluntary pains, severe and long,
 Would give a barbarous air to British song;
 No grand inquisitor could worse invent,
 Than he contrives to suffer well content.
 Which is the saintlier worthy of the two?
 Past all dispute, yon anchorite, say you.
 Your sentence and mine differ. What's a name?
 I say the Bramin has the fairer claim.
 If sufferings Scripture nowhere recommends,
 Devised by self, to answer selfish ends,
 Give saintship, then all Europe must agree
 Ten starveling hermits suffer less than he.
 The truth is (if the truth may suit your ear,
 And prejudice have left a passage clear)
 Pride has attain'd a most luxuriant growth,
 And poison'd every virtue in them both.
 Pride may be pamper'd while the flesh grows lean;
 Humility may clothe an English dean;
 That grace was Cowper's—his, confess'd by all—
 Though placed in golden Durham's second stall.
 Not all the plenty of a bishop's board,
 His palace, and his lacqueys, and "My Lord,"
 More nourish pride, that condescending vice,

Than abstinence, and beggary, and lice;
It thrives in misery, and abundant grows:
In misery fools upon themselves impose.
But why before us Protestants produce
An Indian mystic or a French recluse?
Their sin is plain; but what have we to fear,
Reform'd and well instructed? You shall hear.
Yon ancient prude, whose wither'd features shew
She might be young some forty years ago,
Her elbows pinion'd close upon her hips,
Her head erect, her fan upon her lips,
Her eyebrows arch'd, her eyes both gone astray
To watch yon amorous couple in their play,
With bony and unkerchief'd neck defies
The rude inclemency of wintry skies,
And sails with lappet head and mincing airs
Duly at clink of bell to morning prayers.
To thrift and parsimony much inclined,
She yet allows herself that boy behind;
The shivering urchin, bending as he goes,
With slipshod heels and dewdrop at his nose,
His predecessor's coat advanced to wear,
Which future pages yet are doom'd to share,
Carries her Bible tuck'd beneath his arm,
And hides his hands to keep his fingers warm.
She, half an angel in her own account,
Doubts not hereafter with the saints to mount,
Though not a grace appears on strictest search,
But that she fasts, and item, goes to church.
Conscious of age, she recollects her youth,
And tells, not always with an eye to truth,
Who spann'd her waist, and who, where'er he came,
Scrawl'd upon glass Miss Bridget's lovely name;
Who stole her slipper, fill'd it with tokay,
And drank the little bumper every day.
Of temper as envenom'd as an asp,
Censorious, and her every word a wasp;
In faithful memory she records the crimes,
Or real, or fictitious, of the times;
Laughs at the reputations she has torn,
And holds them dangling at arm's length in scorn.
Such are the fruits of sanctimonious pride,

Of malice fed while flesh is mortified:
Take, madam, the reward of all your prayers,
Where hermits and where Bramins meet with theirs;
Your portion is with them.—Nay, never frown,
But, if you please, some fathoms lower down.
Artist, attend—your brushes and your paint—
Produce them—take a chair—now draw a saint.
Oh, sorrowful and sad! the streaming tears
Channel her cheeks—a Niobe appears!
Is this a saint? Throw tints and all away—
True piety is cheerful as the day,
Will weep indeed and heave a pitying groan
For others' woes, but smiles upon her own.
What purpose has the King of saints in view?
Why falls the gospel like a gracious dew?
To call up plenty from the teeming earth,
Or curse the desert with a tenfold dearth?
Is it that Adam's offspring may be saved
From servile fear, or be the more enslaved?
To loose the links that gall'd mankind before.
Or bind them faster on, and add still more?
The freeborn Christian has no chains to prove,
Or, if a chain, the golden one of love:
No fear attends to quench his glowing fires,
What fear he feels his gratitude inspires.
Shall he, for such deliverance freely wrought,
Recompense ill? He trembles at the thought.
His Master's interest and his own combined
Prompt every movement of his heart and mind:
Thought, word, and deed, his liberty evince,
His freedom is the freedom of a prince.
Man's obligations infinite, of course
His life should prove that he perceives their force;
His utmost he can render is but small—
The principle and motive all in all.
You have two servants—Tom, an arch, sly rogue,
From top to toe the Geta now in vogue,
Genteel in figure, easy in address,
Moves without noise, and swift as an express,
Reports a message with a pleasing grace,
Expert in all the duties of his place;
Say, on what hinge does his obedience move?

Has he a world of gratitude and love?
No, not a spark—'tis all mere sharper's play;
He likes your house, your housemaid, and your pay;
Reduce his wages, or get rid of her,
Tom quits you, with—Your most obedient, sir.
The dinner served, Charles takes his usual stand,
Watches your eye, anticipates command;
Sighs, if perhaps your appetite should fail;
And, if he but suspects a frown, turns pale;
Consults all day your interest and your ease,
Richly rewarded if he can but please;
And, proud to make his firm attachment known,
To save your life would nobly risk his own.
Now which stands highest in your serious thought?
Charles, without doubt, say you—and so he ought;
One act, that from a thankful heart proceeds,
Excels ten thousand mercenary deeds.
Thus Heaven approves as honest and sincere
The work of generous love and filial fear;
But with averted eyes the omniscient Judge
Scorns the base hireling and the slavish drudge.
Where dwell these matchless saints? old Curio cries.
E'en at your side, sir, and before your eyes,
The favour'd few—the enthusiasts you despise.
And, pleased at heart because on holy ground,
Sometimes a canting hypocrite is found,
Reproach a people with his single fall,
And cast his filthy raiment at them all.
Attend! an apt similitude shall shew
Whence springs the conduct that offends you so.
See where it smokes along the sounding plain,
Blown all aslant, a driving, dashing rain,
Peal upon peal redoubling all around,
Shakes it again and faster to the ground;
Now flashing wide, now glancing as in play,
Swift beyond thought the lightnings dart away.
Ere yet it came the traveller urged his steed,
And hurried, but with unsuccessful speed;
Now drench'd throughout, and hopeless of his case,
He drops the rein, and leaves him to his pace.
Suppose, unlook'd-for in a scene so rude,
Long hid by interposing hill or wood,

By some kind hospitable heart possess'd,
Offer him warmth, security, and rest;
Think with what pleasure, safe, and at his ease,
He hears the tempest howling in the trees;
What glowing thanks his lips and heart employ,
While danger past is turn'd to present joy.
So fares it with the sinner, when he feels
A growing dread of vengeance at his heels:
His conscience like a glassy lake before,
Lash'd into foaming waves, begins to roar;
The law, grown clamorous, though silent long,
Arraigns him, charges him with every wrong—
Asserts the right of his offended Lord,
And death, or restitution, is the word:
The last impossible, he fears the first,
And, having well deserved, expects the worst.
Then welcome refuge and a peaceful home;
O for a shelter from the wrath to come!
Crush me, ye rocks; ye falling mountains, hide,
Or bury me in ocean's angry tide!—
The scrutiny of those all-seeing eyes
I dare not—And you need not, God replies;
The remedy you want I freely give;
The Book shall teach you—read, believe, and live!
'Tis done—the raging storm is heard no more,
Mercy receives him on her peaceful shore:
And Justice, guardian of the dread command,
Drops the red vengeance from his willing hand.
A soul redeem'd demands a life of praise;
Hence the complexion of his future days,
Hence a demeanour holy and unspeck'd,
And the world's hatred, as its sure effect.
Some lead a life unblameable and just,
Their own dear virtue their unshaken trust:
They never sin—or if (as all offend)
Some trivial slips their daily walk attend,
The poor are near at hand, the charge is small,
A slight gratuity atones for all.
For though the Pope has lost his interest here,
And pardons are not sold as once they were,
No Papist more desirous to compound,
Than some grave sinners upon English ground.

That plea refuted, other quirks they seek—
Mercy is infinite, and man is weak;
The future shall obliterate the past,
And heaven, no doubt, shall be their home at last.
Come, then—a still, small whisper in your ear—
He has no hope who never had a fear;
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late.
The path to bliss abounds with many a snare;
Learning is one, and wit, however rare.
The Frenchman, first in literary fame
(Mention him, if you please. Voltaire?—The same),
With spirit, genius, eloquence, supplied,
Lived long, wrote much, laugh'd heartily, and died;
The Scripture was his jest-book, whence he drew
Bon-mots to gall the Christian and the Jew;
An infidel in health, but what when sick?
Oh—then a text would touch him at the quick;
View him at Paris in his last career,
Surrounding throngs the demi-god revere;
Exalted on his pedestal of pride,
And fumed with frankincense on every side,
He begs their flattery with his latest breath,
And, smother'd in't at last, is praised to death!
Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,
Pillow and bobbins all her little store;
Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,
Shuffling her threads about the live-long day,
Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night
Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light;
She, for her humble sphere by nature fit,
Has little understanding, and no wit,
Receives no praise; but though her lot be such
(Toilsome and indigent), she renders much;
Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes,
Her title to a treasure in the skies.
Oh, happy peasant! Oh, unhappy bard!
His the mere tinsel, hers the rich reward;
He praised perhaps for ages yet to come,
She never heard of half a mile from home:

He, lost in errors, his vain heart prefers,
She, safe in the simplicity of hers.
Not many wise, rich, noble, or profound
In science win one inch of heavenly ground.
And is it not a mortifying thought
The poor should gain it, and the rich should not?
No—the voluptuaries, who ne'er forget
One pleasure lost, lose heaven without regret;
Regret would rouse them, and give birth to prayer,
Prayer would add faith, and faith would fix them there.
Not that the Former of us all in this,
Or aught he does, is govern'd by caprice;
The supposition is replete with sin,
And bears the brand of blasphemy burnt in.
Not so—the silver trumpet's heavenly call
Sounds for the poor, but sounds alike for all:
Kings are invited, and would kings obey,
No slaves on earth more welcome were than they;
But royalty, nobility, and state,
Are such a dead preponderating weight,
That endless bliss (how strange soe'er it seem),
In counterpoise, flies up and kicks the beam.
'Tis open, and ye cannot enter—why?
Because ye will not, Conyers would reply—
And he says much that many may dispute
And cavil at with ease, but none refute.
Oh, bless'd effect of penury and want,
The seed sown there, how vigorous is the plant!
No soil like poverty for growth divine,
As leanest land supplies the richest wine.
Earth gives too little, giving only bread,
To nourish pride, or turn the weakest head:
To them the sounding jargon of the schools
Seems what it is—a cap and bells for fools:
The light they walk by, kindled from above,
Shews them the shortest way to life and love:
They, strangers to the controversial field,
Where deists, always foil'd, yet scorn to yield,
And never check'd by what impedes the wise,
Believe, rush forward, and possess the prize.
Envy, ye great, the dull unletter'd small:
Ye have much cause for envy—but not all.

We boast some rich ones whom the Gospel sways,
And one who wears a coronet, and prays;
Like gleanings of an olive-tree, they shew
Here and there one upon the topmost bough.
How readily, upon the Gospel plan,
That question has its answer—What is man?
Sinful and weak, in every sense a wretch;
An instrument, whose chords, upon the stretch,
And strain'd to the last screw that he can bear,
Yield only discord in his Maker's ear;
Once the blest residence of truth divine,
Glorious as Solyma's interior shrine,
Where, in his own oracular bode,
Dwelt visibly the light-creating God;
But made long since, like Babylon of old,
A den of mischiefs never to be told:
And she, once mistress of the realms around,
Now scatter'd wide and nowhere to be found,
As soon shall rise and re-ascend the throne,
By native power and energy her own,
As nature, at her own peculiar cost,
Restore to man the glories he has lost.
Go—bid the winter cease to chill the year,
Replace the wandering comet in his sphere.
Then boast (but wait for that unhop'd-for hour)
The self-restoring arm of human power.
But what is man in his own proud esteem?
Hear him—himself the poet and the theme:
A monarch clothed with majesty and awe,
His mind his kingdom, and his will his law;
Grace in his mien, and glory in his eyes,
Supreme on earth, and worthy of the skies,
Strength in his heart, dominion in his nod,
And, thunderbolts excepted, quite a God!
So sings he, charm'd with his own mind and form,
The song magnificent—the theme a worm!
Himself so much the source of his delight,
His Maker has no beauty in his sight.
See where he sits, contemplative and fix'd,
Pleasure and wonder in his features mix'd,
His passions tamed and all at his control,
How perfect the composure of his soul!

Complacency has breathed a gentle gale
O'er all his thoughts, and swell'd his easy sail:
His books well trimm'd, and in the gayest style,
Like regimental coxcombs, rank and file,
Adorn his intellects as well as shelves,
And teach him notions splendid as themselves:
The Bible only stands neglected there,
Though that of all most worthy of his care;
And, like an infant troublesome awake,
Is left to sleep for peace and quiet sake.
What shall the man deserve of human kind,
Whose happy skill and industry combined
Shall prove (what argument could never yet)
The Bible an imposture and a cheat?
The praises of the libertine profess'd,
The worst of men, and curses of the best.
Where should the living, weeping o'er his woes;
The dying, trembling at the awful close;
Where the betray'd, forsaken, and oppress'd;
The thousands whom the world forbids to rest;
Where should they find (those comforts at an end,
The Scripture yields), or hope to find, a friend?
Sorrow might muse herself to madness then,
And, seeking exile from the sight of men,
Bury herself in solitude profound,
Grow frantic with her pangs, and bite the ground.
Thus often Unbelief, grown sick of life,
Flies to the tempting pool, or felon knife.
The jury meet, the coroner is short,
And lunacy the verdict of the court.
Reverse the sentence, let the truth be known,
Such lunacy is ignorance alone;
They knew not, what some bishops may not know,
That Scripture is the only cure of woe.
That field of promise how it flings abroad
Its odour o'er the Christian's thorny road!
The soul, reposing on assured relief,
Feels herself happy amidst all her grief,
Forgets her labour as she toils along,
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song.
But the same word, that, like the polish'd share,
Ploughs up the roots of a believer's care,

Kills too the flowery weeds, where'er they grow,
That bind the sinner's Bacchanalian brow.
Oh, that unwelcome voice of heavenly love,
Sad messenger of mercy from above!
How does it grate upon his thankless ear,
Crippling his pleasures with the cramp of fear!
His will and judgment at continual strife,
That civil war embitters all his life;
In vain he points his powers against the skies,
In vain he closes or averts his eyes,
Truth will intrude—she bids him yet beware;
And shakes the sceptic in the scorner's chair.
Though various foes against the Truth combine,
Pride above all opposes her design;
Pride of a growth superior to the rest,
The subtlest serpent with the loftiest crest,
Swells at the thought, and, kindling into rage,
Would hiss the cherub Mercy from the stage.
And is the soul indeed so lost?—she cries,
Fallen from her glory, and too weak to rise?
Torpids and dull, beneath a frozen zone,
Has she no spark that may be deem'd her own?
Grant her indebted to what zealots call
Grace undeserved, yet surely not for all!
Some beams of rectitude she yet displays,
Some love of virtue, and some power to praise;
Can lift herself above corporeal things,
And, soaring on her own unborrow'd wings,
Possess herself of all that's good or true,
Assert the skies, and vindicate her due.
Past indiscretion is a venial crime;
And if the youth, unmellow'd yet by time,
Bore on his branch, luxuriant then and rude,
Fruits of a blighted size, austere and crude,
Maturer years shall happier stores produce,
And meliorate the well-concocted juice.
Then, conscious of her meritorious zeal,
To justice she may make her bold appeal;
And leave to Mercy, with a tranquil mind,
The worthless and unfruitful of mankind,
Hear then how Mercy, slighted and defied,
Retorts the affront against the crown of pride.

Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorr'd,
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord.
The atonement a Redeemer's love has wrought
Is not for you—the righteous need it not.
Seest thou yon harlot, wooing all she meets,
The worn-out nuisance of the public streets,
Herself from morn to night, from night to morn,
Her own abhorrence, and as much your scorn?
The gracious shower, unlimited and free,
Shall fall on her, when Heaven denies it thee.
Of all that wisdom dictates, this the drift—
That man is dead in sin, and life a gift.
Is virtue, then, unless of Christian growth,
Mere fallacy, or foolishness, or both?
Ten thousand sages lost in endless woe,
For ignorance of what they could not know?—
That speech betrays at once a bigot's tongue,
Charge not a God with such outrageous wrong!
Truly, not I—the partial light men have,
My creed persuades me, well employ'd, may save;
While he that scorns the noon-day beam, perverse,
Shall find the blessing, unimproved, a curse.
Let heathen worthies, whose exalted mind
Left sensuality and dross behind,
Possess, for me, their undisputed lot,
And take, unenvied, the reward they sought,
But still in virtue of a Saviour's plea,
Not blind by choice, but destined not to see.
Their fortitude and wisdom were a flame
Celestial, though they knew not whence it came,
Derived from the same source of light and grace,
That guides the Christian in his swifter race;
Their judge was conscience, and her rule their law;
That rule, pursued with reverence and with awe,
Led them, however faltering, faint, and slow,
From what they knew to what they wish'd to know.
But let not him that shares a brighter day
Traduce the splendour of a noontide ray,
Prefer the twilight of a darker time,
And deem his base stupidity no crime;
The wretch, who slights the bounty of the skies,
And sinks, while favour'd with the means to rise,

Shall find them rated at their full amount,
The good he scorn'd all carried to account.
Marshalling all his terrors as he came,
Thunder, and earthquake, and devouring flame,
From Sinai's top Jehovah gave the law—
Life for obedience—death for every flaw.
When the great Sovereign would his will express,
He gives a perfect rule, what can he less?
And guards it with a sanction as severe
As vengeance can inflict, or sinners fear:
Else his own glorious rights he would disclaim,
And man might safely trifle with his name.
He bids him glow with unremitting love
To all on earth, and to himself above;
Condemns the injurious deed, the slanderous tongue,
The thought that meditates a brother's wrong:
Brings not alone the more conspicuous part,
His conduct, to the test, but tries his heart.
Hark! universal nature shook and groan'd,
'Twas the last trumpet—see the Judge enthroned:
Rouse all your courage at your utmost need,
Now summon every virtue, stand and plead.
What! silent? Is your boasting heard no more?
That self-renouncing wisdom, learn'd before,
Had shed immortal glories on your brow,
That all your virtues cannot purchase now.
All joy to the believer! He can speak—
Trembling yet happy, confident yet meek.
Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root,
<I never trusted in an arm but thine,
Nor hoped, but in thy righteousness divine:
My prayers and alms, imperfect and defiled,
Were but the feeble efforts of a child;
Howe'er perform'd, it was their brightest part,
That they proceeded from a grateful heart:
Cleansed in thine own all-purifying blood,
Forgive their evil and accept their good:
I cast them at thy feet—my only plea
Is what it was, dependence upon thee:
While struggling in the vale of tears below,
That never fail'd, nor shall it fail me now.

Angelic gratulations rend the skies,
Pride fall unpitied, never more to rise,
Humility is crown'd, and Faith receives the prize.

William Cowper

Truth And Divine Love Rejected By The World

O love, of pure and heavenly birth!
O simple truth, scarce known on earth!
Whom men resist with stubborn will;
And, more perverse and daring still,
Smother and quench, with reasonings vain,
While error and deception reign.

Whence comes it, that, your power the same
As His on high from whence you came,
Ye rarely find a listening ear,
Or heart that makes you welcome here?—
Because ye bring reproach and pain,
Where'er ye visit, in your train.

The world is proud, and cannot bear
The scorn and calumny ye share;
The praise of men the mark they mean,
They fly the place where ye are seen;
Pure love, with scandal in the rear,
Suits not the vain; it costs too dear.

Then, let the price be what it may,
Though poor, I am prepared to pay;
Come shame, come sorrow; spite of tears,
Weakness, and heart-oppressing fears;
One soul, as least, shall not repine,
To give you room; come, reign in mine!

William Cowper

Upon A Venerable Rival

Full thirty frosts since thou wert young
Have chilled the withered grove,
Thou wretch! and hast thou lived so long,
Nor yet forgot to love?

Ye sages! spite of your pretences
To wisdom, you must own
Your folly frequently commences
When you acknowledge none.

Not that I deem it weak to love,
Or folly to admire;
But ah! the pangs we lovers prove
Far other years require.

Unheeded on the youthful brow
The beams of Phoebus play;
But unsupported age stoops low
Beneath the sultry ray.

For once, then, if untutored youth,
Youth unapproved by years,
May chance to deviate into truth,
When your experience errs;

For once attempt not to despise
What I esteem a rule:
Who early loves, though young, is wise,--
Who old, though gray, a fool.

William Cowper

Vanity Of The World

God gives his mercies to be spent;
Your hoard will do your soul no good.
Gold is a blessing only lent,
Repaid by giving others food.

The world's esteem is but a bribe,
To buy their peace you sell your own;
The slave of a vainglorious tribe,
Who hate you while they make you known.

The joy that vain amusements give,
Oh! sad conclusion that it brings!
The honey of a crowded hive,
Defended by a thousand stings.

'Tis thus the world rewards the fools
That live upon her treacherous smiles:
She leads them blindfold by her rules,
And ruins all whom she beguiles.

God knows the thousands who go down
From pleasure into endless woe;
And with a long despairing groan
Blaspheme the Maker as they go.

Oh fearful thought! be timely wise;
Delight but in a Saviour's charms,
And God shall take you to the skies,
Embraced in everlasting arms.

William Cowper

Verses

I am monarch of all I survey;
My right there is none to dispute;
From the centre all round to the sea
I am lord of the fowl and the brute
O Solitude! where are the charms
That sages have seen in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
Than reign in this horrible place.

I am out of humanity's reach;
I must finish my journey alone;
Never hear the sweet music of speech-
I start at the sound of my own;
The beasts that roam over the plain
My form with indifference see-
They are so unacquainted with man,
Their tameness is shocking to me.

Society, Friendship, and Love
Divinely bestow'd upon man,
Oh had I the wings of a dove
How soon would I taste you again!
My sorrows I then might assuage
In the ways of religion and truth,
Might learn from the wisdom of age,
And be cheer'd by the sallies of youth.

Religion! what treasure untold
Resides in that heavenly word!
More precious than silver and gold,
Or all that this earth can afford.
But the sound of the church-going bell
These valleys and rocks never heard,
Ne'er sighed at the sound of a knell,
Or smiled when a Sabbath appeared.

Ye winds that have made me your sport,
Convey to this desolate shore
Some cordial endearing report

Of a land I shall visit no more.
My friends, do they now and then send
A wish or a thought after me?
O tell me I yet have a friend,
Though a friend I am never to see.

How fleet is a glance of the mind!
Compared with the speed of its flight,
The tempest itself lags behind,
And the swift-wingèd arrows of light.
When I think of my own native land,
In a moment I seem to be there;
But, alas! recollection at hand
Soon hurries me back to despair.

But the sea-fowl is gone to her nest,
The beast is laid down in his lair;
Even here is a season of rest,
And I to my cabin repair.
There's mercy in every place;
And mercy- encouraging thought! -
Gives even affliction a grace,
And reconciles man to his lot.

William Cowper

Verses Printed By Himself On A Flood At Olney

To watch the storms, and hear the sky
Give all our almanacks the lie;
To shake with cold, and see the plains
In autumn drown'd with wintry rains;
'Tis thus I spend my moments here,
And wish myself a Dutch mynheer;
I then should have no need of wit;
For lumpish Hollander unfit!
Nor should I then repine at mud.
Or meadows deluged with a flood;
But in a bog live well content,
And find it just my element;
Should be a clod, and not a man;
Nor wish in vain for Sister Ann,
With charitable aid to drag
My mind out of its proper quag;
Should have the genius of a boor,
And no ambition to have more.

William Cowper

Verses Written At Bath, On Finding The Heel Of A Shoe

Fortune! I thank thee: gentle goddess! thanks!
Not that my muse, though bashful, shall deny
She would have thank'd thee rather hadst thou cast
A treasure in her way; for neither meed
Of early breakfast, to dispel the fumes,
And bowel-racking pains of emptiness,
Nor noontide feast, nor evening's cool repast,
Hopes she from this—presumptuous, though, perhaps,
The cobbler, leather-carving artist! might.
Nathless she thanks thee and accepts thy boon,
Whatever; not as erst the fabled cock,
Vain-glorious fool! unknowing what he found,
Spurn'd the rich gem thou gavest him. Wherefore, ah!
Why not on me that favour (worthier sure!)
Conferr'dst thou, goddess! Thou art blind thou say'st:
Enough!—thy blindness shall excuse the deed.
Nor does my muse no benefit exhale
From this thy scant indulgence!—even here
Hints worthy sage philosophy are found;
Illustrious hints, to moralize my song!
This ponderous heel of perforated hide
Compact, with pegs indented, many a row,
Haply (for such its massy form bespeaks)
The weighty tread of some rude peasant clown
Upbore: on this, supported oft, he stretch'd,
With uncouth strides, along the furrow'd glebe,
Flattening the stubborn clod, till cruel time
(What will not cruel time?) on a wry step
Sever'd the strict cohesion; when, alas!
He, who could erst, with even, equal pace,
Pursue his destined way with symmetry,
And some proportion form'd, now on one side
Curtail'd and maim'd, the sport of vagrant boys,
Cursing his frail supporter, treacherous prop!
With toilsome steps, and difficult, moves on.
Thus fares it oft with other than the feet
Of humble villager—the statesman thus,

Up the steep road where proud ambition leads,
Aspiring, first uninterrupted winds
His prosperous way; nor fears miscarriage foul,
While policy prevails, and friends prove true;
But, that support soon failing, by him left
On whom he most depended, basely left,
Betray'd, deserted; from his airy height
Headlong he falls; and through the rest of life
Drags the dull load of disappointment on.

William Cowper

Walking With God

(Genesis, v.24)

Oh! for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.

Return, O holy Dove, return!
Sweet the messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made thee mourn
And drove thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.

William Cowper

Watching Unto God In The Night Season

Sleep at last has fled these eyes,
Nor do I regret his flight,
More alert my spirits rise,
And my heart is free and light.

Nature silent all around,
Not a single witness near;
God as soon as sought is found;
And the flame of love burns clear.

Interruption, all day long,
Checks the current of my joys;
Creatures press me with a throng,
And perplex me with their noise.

Undisturbed I muse all night,
On the first Eternal Fair;
Nothing there obstructs delight,
Love is renovated there.

Life, with its perpetual stir,
Proves a foe to love and me;
Fresh entanglements occur--
Comes the night, and sets me free.

Never more, sweet sleep, suspend
My enjoyments, always new:
Leave me to possess my friend;
Other eyes and hearts subdue.

Hush the world, that I may wake
To the taste of pure delights;
Oh the pleasures I partake--
God, the partner of my nights!

David, for the selfsame cause,
Night preferred to busy day;
Hearts whom heavenly beauty draws,
Wish the glaring sun away.

Sleep, self-lovers, is for you--
Souls that love celestial know
Fairer scenes by night can view
Than the sun could ever show.

William Cowper

Watching Unto God In The Night Season (2)

Season of my purest pleasure,
Sealer of observing eyes!
When, in larger, freer measure,
I can commune with the skies;
While, beneath thy shade extended,
Weary man forgets his woes,
I, my daily trouble ended,
Find, in watching, my repose.

Silence all around prevailing,
Nature hushed in slumber sweet,
No rude noise mine ears assailing,
Now my God and I can meet:
Universal nature slumbers,
And my soul partakes the calm,
Breathes her ardour out in numbers,
Plaintive song or lofty psalm.

Now my passion, pure and holy,
Shines and burns without restraint;
Which the day's fatigue and folly
Cause to languish, dim and faint:
Charming hours of relaxation!
How I dread the ascending sun!
Surely, idle conversation
Is an evil matched by none.

Worldly prate and babble hurt me;
Unintelligible prove;
Neither teach me nor divert me;
I have ears for none but love.
Me they rude esteem, and foolish,
Hearing my absurd replies;
I have neither art's fine polish,
Nor the knowledge of the wise.

Simple souls, and unpolluted
By conversing with the great,
Have a mind and taste ill suited

To their dignity and state;
All their talking, reading, writing,
Are but talents misapplied;
Infants' prattle I delight in,
Nothing human choose beside.

'Tis the secret fear of sinning
Checks my tongue, or I should say,
When I see the night beginning,
I am glad of parting day:
Love this gentle admonition
Whispers soft within my breast;
'Choice befits not thy condition,
Acquiescence suits thee best.'

Henceforth, the repose and pleasure
Night affords me I resign;
And thy will shall be the measure,
Wisdom infinite! of mine:
Wishing is but inclination
Quarrelling with thy decrees;
Wayward nature finds the occasion--
'Tis her folly and disease.

Night, with its sublime enjoyments,
Now no longer will I choose;
Nor the day, with its employments,
Irk some as they seem, refuse;
Lessons of a God's inspiring
Neither time nor place impedes;
From our wishing and desiring
Our unhappiness proceeds.

William Cowper

Watching Unto God In The Night Season (3)

Night! how I love thy silent shades,
My spirits they compose;
The bliss of heaven my soul pervades,
In spite of all my woes.

While sleep instils her poppy dews
In every slumbering eye,
I watch to meditate and muse,
In blest tranquillity.

And when I feel a God immense
Familiarly impart,
With every proof he can dispense,
His favour to my heart;

My native meanness I lament,
Though most divinely filled
With all the ineffable content
That Deity can yield.

His purpose and his course he keeps;
Treads all my reasonings down;
Commands me out of nature's deeps,
And hides me in his own.

When in the dust, its proper place,
Our pride of heart we lay;
'Tis then a deluge of his grace
Bears all our sins away.

Thou whom I serve, and whose I am,
Whose influence from on high
Refines, and still refines my flame,
And makes my fetters fly;

How wretched is the creature's state
Who thwarts thy gracious power;
Crushed under sin's enormous weight,
Increasing every hour!

The night, when passed entire with thee,
How luminous and clear!
Then sleep has no delights for me,
Lest thou should'st disappear.

My Saviour! occupy me still
In this secure recess;
Let reason slumber if she will,
My joy shall not be less.

Let reason slumber out the night;
But if thou deign to make
My soul the abode of truth and light,
Ah, keep my heart awake!

William Cowper

Welcome Cross

'Tis my happiness below
Not to live without the cross,
But the Saviour's power to know,
Sanctifying every loss;
Trials must and will befall;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me.

God in Israel sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil;
These spring up and choke the weeds
Which would else o'erspread the soil:
Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.

Did I meet no trials here,
No chastisement by the way,
Might I not with reason fear
I should prove a castaway?
Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not -- would not, if he might.

William Cowper

Welcome To The Table

This is the feast of heavenly wine,
And God invites to sup;
The juices of the living Vine
Were press'd to fill the cup.

Oh! bless the Saviour, ye that eat,
With royal dainties fed;
Not heaven affords a costlier treat,
For Jesus is the bread.

The vile, the lost, He calls to them;
Ye trembling souls, appear!
The righteous in their own esteem
Have no acceptance here.

Approach, ye poor, nor dare refuse
The banquet spread for you;
Dear Saviour, this is welcome news,
Then I may venture too.

If guilt and sin afford a plea,
And may obtain a place,
Surely the Lord will welcome me,
And I shall see his face.

William Cowper

Wisdom

(Proverbs, viii. 22-31)

"Ere God had built the mountains,
Or raised the fruitful hills;
Before he fill'd the fountains
That feed the running rills;
In me from everlasting,
The wonderful I am,
Found pleasures never wasting,
And Wisdom is my name.

"When, like a tent to dwell in,
He spread the skies abroad,
And swathed about the swelling
Of Ocean's mighty flood;
He wrought by weight and measure,
And I was with Him then:
Myself the Father's pleasure,
And mine, the sons of men."

Thus Wisdom's words discover
Thy glory and Thy grace,
Thou everlasting lover
Of our unworthy race!
Thy gracious eye survey'd us
Ere stars were seen above;
In wisdom thou hast made us,
And died for us in love.

And couldst thou be delighted
With creatures such as we,
Who, when we saw Thee, slighted,
And nail'd Thee to a tree?
Unfathomable wonder,
And mystery divine!
The voice that speaks in thunder,
Says, "Sinner, I am thine!"

Written After Leaving Her At New Burns

How quick the change from joy to woe!
How chequered is our lot below!
Seldom we view the prospect fair,
Dark clouds of sorrow, pain, and care,
(Some pleasing intervals between),
Scowl over more than half the scene.
Last week with Delia, gentle maid,
Far hence in happier fields I strayed,
While on her dear enchanting tongue
Soft sounds of grateful welcome hung,
For absence had withheld it long.
'Welcome, my long-lost love, she said,
E'er since our adverse fates decreed
That we must part, and I must mourn
Till once more blessed by thy return,
Love, on whose influence I relied
For all the transports I enjoyed,
Has played the cruel tyrant's part
And turned tormentor to my heart,
But let me hold thee to my breast,
Dear partner of my joy and rest,
And not a pain, and not a fear,
Or anxious doubt, shall enter there.'
Happy, thought I, the favoured youth,
Blessed with such undissembled truth!--
Five suns successive rose and set,
And saw no monarch in his state,
Wrapped in the blaze of majesty,
So free from every care as I.--
Next day the scene was overcast;
Such day till then I never passed,--
For on that day, relentless fate!
Delia and I must separate.
Yet ere we looked our last farewell,
From her dear lips this comfort fell:--
'Fear not that time, where'er we rove,
Or absence, shall abate my love.'
And can I doubt, my charming maid,
As unsincere what you have said?

Banished from thee to what I hate,
Dull neighbours and insipid chat,
No joy to cheer me, none in view,
But the dear hope of meeting you;
And that through passion's optic seen,
With ages interposed between;--
Blessed with the kind support you give,
'Tis by your promised truth I live;
How deep my woes, how fierce my flame,
You best may tell, who feel the same.

William Cowper

Written In A Fit Of Illness. R. S. S.

In these sad hours, a prey to ceaseless pain,
While feverish pulses leap in every vein,
When each faint breath the last short effort seems
Of life just parting from my feeble limbs;
How wild soe'er my wandering thoughts may be,
Still, gentle Delia, still they turn on thee!
At length if, slumbering to a short repose,
A sweet oblivion frees me from my woes,
Thy form appears, thy footsteps I pursue,
Through springy vales, and meadows washed in dew;
Thy arm supports me to the fountain's brink,
Where by some secret power forbid to drink,
Gasping with thirst, I view the tempting flood
That flies my touch, or thickens into mud;
Till thine own hand immersed the goblet dips,
And bears it streaming to my burning lips.
There borne aloft on fancy's wing we fly,
Like souls embodied to their native sky;
Now every rock, each mountain, disappears;
And the round earth an even surface wears;
When lo! the force of some resistless weight,
Bears me straight down from that pernicious height;
Parting, in vain our struggling arms we close;
Abhorred forms, dire phantoms interpose;
With trembling voice on thy loved name I call;
And gulfs yawn ready to receive my fall.
From these fallacious visions of distress
I wake; nor are my real sorrows less.
Thy absence, Delia, heightens every ill,
And gives e'en trivial pains the power to kill.
Oh! wert thou near me; yet that wish forbear!
'Twere vain, my love,--'twere vain to wish thee near;
Thy tender heart would heave with anguish too,
And by partaking, but increase my woe.
Alone I'll grieve, till gloomy sorrow past,
Health, like the cheerful day-spring, comes at last,--
Comes fraught with bliss to banish every pain,
Hope, joy, and peace, and Delia in her train!

Written In A Quarrel

Think, Delia, with what cruel haste
Our fleeting pleasures move,
Nor heedless in sorrow waste
The moments due to love;

Be wise, my fair, and gently treat
These few that are our friends;
Think thus abused, what sad regret
Their speedy flight attends!

Sure in those eyes I loved so well,
And wished so long to see,
Anger I thought could never dwell,
Or anger aimed at me.

No bold offence of mine I knew
Should e'er provoke your hate;
And, early taught to think you true,
Still hoped a gentler fate.

With kindness bless the present hour,
Or oh! we meet in vain!
What can we do in absence more
Than suffer and complain?

Fated to ills beyond redress,
We must endure our woe;
The days allowed us to possess,
'Tis madness to forego.

William Cowper

Yardley Oak

Survivor sole, and hardly such, of all
That once lived here, thy brethren, at my birth,
(Since which I number threescore winters past,)
A shattered veteran, hollow-trunked perhaps,
As now, and with excoriate forks deform,
Relics of ages! Could a mind, imbued
With truth from heaven, created thing adore,
I might with reverence kneel, and worship thee.
It seems idolatry, with some excuse,
When our forefather Druids in their oaks
Imagined sanctity. The conscience, yet
Unpurified by an authentic act
Of amnesty, the meed of blood divine,
Loved not the light, but, gloomy, into gloom
Of thickest shades, like Adam after taste
Of fruit proscribed, as to a refuge, fled.
Thou wast a bauble once; a cup and ball,
Which babes might play with; and the thievish jay
Seeking her food, with ease might have purloined
The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down
Thy yet close-folded latitude of boughs
And all thine embryo vastness at a gulp.
But Fate thy growth decreed; autumnal rains
Beneath thy parent tree mellowed the soil,
Designed thy cradle; and a skipping dear,
With pointed hoof dibbling the glebe, prepared
The soft receptacle, in which, secure,
Thy rudiments should sleep the winter through
So Fancy dreams. Disprove it, if ye can,
Ye reasoners broad awake, whose busy search
Of argument, employed too oft amiss,
Sifts half the pleasures of short life away!
Thou fell'st mature; and in the loamy clod
Swelling with vegetative force instinct
Did burst thine egg, as theirs the fabled Twins,
Now stars; two lobes, protruding, paired exact;
A leaf succeeded, and another leaf,
And, all the elements thy puny growth
Fostering propitious, thou becamest a twig.

Who lived when thou wast such? Oh, couldst thou speak
As in Dodona once thy kindred trees
Oracular, I would not curious ask
The future, best unknown, but at thy mouth
Inquisitive, the less ambiguous past.
By thee I might correct, erroneous oft,
The clock of history, facts and events
Timing more punctual, unrecorded facts
Recovering, and misstated setting right --
Desperate attempt, till trees shall speak again!
Time made thee what thou wast, king of the woods:
And Time hath made thee what thou art -- a cave
For owls to roost in. Once thy spreading boughs
O'erhung the champaign; and the numerous flocks,
That grazed it, stood beneath that ample cope
Uncrowded, yet safe-sheltered from the storm.
No flock frequents thee now. Thou hast outlived
Thy popularity, and art become
(Unless verse rescue thee awhile) a thing
Forgotten, as the foliage of thy youth.
While thus through all the stages thou hast pushed
Of treeship -- first a seedling, hid in grass;
Then twig; then sapling; and, as century rolled
Slow after century, a giant-bulk
Of girth enormous, with moss-cushioned root
Upheaved above the soil, and sides embossed
With prominent wens globose, -- till at last
The rottenness, which time is charged to inflict
On other mighty ones, found also thee.
What exhibitions various hath the world
Witnessed of mutability in all
That we account most durable below!
Change is the diet on which all subsist,
Created changeable, and change at last
Destroys them. Skies uncertain now the heat
Transmitting cloudless, and the solar beam
Now quenching in a boundless sea of clouds,--
Calm and alternate storm, moisture and drought,
Invigorate by turns the springs of life
In all that live, plant, animal, and man,
And in conclusion mar them. Nature's threads,
Fine passing thought, e'en in her coarsest works,

Delight in agitation, yet sustain,
The force, that agitates, not unimpaired;
But, worn by frequent impulse, to the cause
Of their best tone their dissolution owe.
Thought cannot spend itself, comparing still
The great and little of thy lot, thy growth
From almost nullity into a state
Of matchless grandeur, and declension thence,
Slow, into such magnificent decay.
Time was, when, settling on thy leaf, a fly
Could shake thee to the root -- and time has been
When tempests could not. At thy firmest age
Thou hadst within thy bole solid contents,
That might have ribbed the sides and planked the deck
Of some flagged admiral; and tortuous arms,
The shipwright's darling treasure, didst present
To the four-quartered winds, robust and bold,
Warped into tough knee-timber, many a load!
But the axe spared thee. In those thriftier days
Oaks fell not, hewn by thousands, to supply
The bottomless demands of contest, waged
For senatorial honours. Thus to Time
The task was left to whittle thee away
With his sly scythe, whose ever-nibbling edge,
Noiseless, an atom and an atom more
Disjoining from the rest, has, unobserved,
Achieved a labour, which had far and wide,
By man performed, made all the forest ring.
Embowelled now, and of thy ancient self
Possessing nought but the scooped rind, that seem
An huge throat, calling to the clouds for drink,
Which it would give in rivulets to thy root,
Thou temptest none, but rather much forbidd'st
The feller's toil, which thou couldst ill requite.
Yet is thy root sincere, sound as the rock,
A quarry of stout spurs, and knotted fangs,
Which, crooked into a thousand whimsies, clasp
The stubborn soil, and hold thee still erect.
So stands a kingdom, whose foundation yet
Fails not, in virtue and in wisdom laid,
Though all the superstructure, by the tooth
Pulverised of venality, a shell

Stands now, and semblance only of itself!
Thine arms have left thee. Winds have rent them off
Long since, and rovers of the forest wild
With bow and shaft, have burnt them. Some have left
A splintered stump, bleached to a snowy white;
And some, memorial none, where once they grew.
Yet life still lingers in thee, and puts forth
Proof not contemptible of what she can,
Even where death predominates. The spring
Finds thee not less alive to her sweet force,
Than yonder upstarts of the neighbouring wood
So much thy juniors, who their birth received
Half a millennium since the date of thine.
But since, although well qualified by age
To teach, no spirit dwells in thee, nor voice
May be expected from thee, seated here
On thy distorted root, with hearers none,
Or prompter, save the scene, I will perform
Myself the oracle, and will discourse
In my own ear such matter as I may.
One man alone, the father of us all,
Drew not his life from woman; never gazed,
With mute unconsciousness of what he saw,
On all around him; learned not by degrees,
Nor owed articulation to his ear;
But, moulded by his Maker into man
At once, upstood intelligent, surveyed
All creatures, with precision understood
Their purport, uses, properties, assigned
To each his name significant, and filled
With love and wisdom, rendered back to Heaven
In praise harmonious the first air he drew.
He was excused the penalties of dull
Minority. No tutor charged his hand
With the thought-tracing quill, or tasked his mind
With problems. History, not wanted yet,
Leaned on her elbow, watching Time, whose course
Eventful, should supply her with a theme.
* * * * *

William Cowper