

**Classic Poetry Series**

**William Warner**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2004

**Publisher:**

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## William Warner(1558 - 1609)

William Warner was born in London about 1558. He was educated at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, but left the university without taking a degree. He practised in London as an attorney, and gained a great reputation among his contemporaries as a poet. Warner died suddenly at Amwell in Hertfordshire on 9 March 1609.

His chief work is a long poem in fourteen-syllabled verse, entitled *Albion's England* (1586), and dedicated to Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon. His history of his country begins with Noah, and is brought down to Warner's own time including the beheading of Mary, Queen of Scots. The chronicle is by no means continuous, and is varied by fictitious episodes, the best known of which is the idyll in the fourth book of the loves of Argentine, the daughter of the king of Deira, and the Danish prince, Curan. Here Warner's simple art shows itself at its best. His book, perhaps on account of its patriotic subject, was very popular, but it is difficult to understand how Francis Meres came to rank him with Spenser as the chief heroical poets of the day, and to institute a comparison between him and Euripides.

His other works are *Pan his Syrinx, or Pipe*, *Compact of Seven Reedes* (1584), a collection of prose tales; and a translation of the *Menæchmi* of Plautus (1595). *Albion's England* consisted originally of four "books," but the number was increased in successive issues, and a posthumous edition (1612) contains sixteen books. It was reprinted (1810) in Alexander Chalmers's *English Poets*.

## Argentile And Curan. - Albion's England (Excerpt)

The Brutons thus departed hence, seven kingdoms here begun,--  
Where diversely in divers broils the Saxons lost and won,--  
King Edel and king Adelbright in Diria jointly reign;  
In loyal concord during life these kingly friends remain.  
When Adelbright should leave his life, to Edel thus he says:  
'By those same bonds of happy love, that held us friends always,  
By our bi-parted crown, of which the moiety is mine,  
By God, to whom my soul must pass, and so in time may thine,  
I pray thee, nay I conjure thee, to nourish as thine own  
Thy niece, my daughter Argentile, till she to age be grown;  
And then, as thou receivest it, resign to her my throne.'  
A promise had for this bequest, the testator he dies;  
But all that Edel undertook, he afterward denies.  
Yet well he fosters for a time the damsel, that was grown  
The fairest lady under Heaven; whose beauty being known,  
A many princes seek her love, but none might her obtain:  
For gripple Edel to himself her kingdom sought to gain,  
And for that cause from sight of such he did his ward restrain.  
By chance one Curan, son unto a prince in Danske, did see  
The maid, with whom he fell in love as much as one might be.  
Unhappy youth, what should he do? his saint was kept in mew,  
Nor he, nor any noble man admitted to her view.  
One while in melancholy fits he pines himself away,  
Anon he thought by force of arms to win her, if he may,  
And still against the king's restraint did secretly inveigh.  
At length the high controller Love, whom none may disobey,  
Imbated him from lordliness, unto a kitchen drudge:  
That so at least of life or death she might become his judge.  
Access so had to see, and speak, he did his love bewray,  
And tells his birth: her answer was she husbandless would stay.  
Meanwhile the king did beat his brains his booty to achieve,  
Nor caring what became of her, so he by her might thrive.  
At last his resolution was some peasant should her wive.  
And (which was working to his wish) he did observe with joy  
How Curan, whom he thought a drudge, scap'd many an amorous toy.  
The king, perceiving such his vein, promotes his vassal still,  
Lest that the baseness of the man should let, perhaps, his will.  
Assured therefore of his love, but not suspecting who  
The lover was, the king himself in his behalf did woo.

The lady, resolute from love, unkindly takes that he  
Should bar the noble, and unto so base a match agree;  
And therefore shifting out of doors, departed thence by stealth,  
Preferring poverty before a dangerous life in wealth.  
When Curan heard of her escape, the anguish in his heart  
Was more than much, and after her from court he did depart:  
Forgetful of himself, his birth, his country, friends, and all,  
And only minding (whom he miss'd) the foundress of his thrall.  
Nor means he after to frequent or court or stately towns,  
But solitarily to live amongst the country grounds.  
A brace of years he lived thus, well pleased so to live,  
And shepherd-like to feed a flock himself did wholly give.  
So wasting love, by work, and want, grew almost to the wane;  
But then began a second love, the worsen of the twain.  
A country wench, a neatherd's maid, where Curan kept his sheep,  
Did feed her drove: and now on her was all the shepherd's keep.  
He borrow'd on the working days his holy russets oft;  
And of the bacon's fat, to make his startops black and soft;  
And lest his tarbox should offend he left it at the fold;  
Sweet grout, or whig, his bottle had as much as it might hold;  
A sheave of bread as brown as nut, and cheese as white as snow;  
And wildings or the season's fruit he did in scrip bestow.  
And whilst his pie-bald cur did sleep, and sheep-hook lay him by,  
On hollow quills of oaten straw he piped melody;  
But when he spied her, his saint, he wip'd his greasy shoes,  
And clear'd the drivel from his beard and thus the shepherd woos:  
'I have, sweet wench, a piece of cheese, as good as tooth may chaw,  
And bread and wildings souling well' and therewithal did draw  
His lardry.

...

'Thou art too elvish, faith thou art too elvish, and too coy;  
Am I (I pray thee) beggarly, that such a flock enjoy?  
I know I am not; yet that thou dost hold me in disdain  
Is brim abroad, and made a gibe to all that keep this plain.  
There be as quaint (at least that think themselves as quaint) that crave  
The match, that thou (I know not why) mayst, but mislik'st to have.

...

'Then choose a shepherd. With the Sun he doth his flock unfold,  
And all the day on hill or plain he merry chat can hold;  
And with the Sun doth fold again; then jogging home betime,  
He turns a crab, or tunes a round, or sings some merry rhyme.  
Nor lacks he gleeful tales to tell, whilst round the bowl doth trot;

And sitteth singing care away, till he to bed hath got.  
 There sleeps he soundly all the night, forgetting morrow cares,  
 Nor fears he blasting of his corn nor uttering of his wares,  
 Or storms by seas, or stirs on land, or crack of credit lost,  
 Not spending franklier than his flock shall still defray the cost.  
 Well know I, sooth they say that say, 'More quiet nights and days  
 The shepherd sleeps and wakes than he whose cattle he doth graze.'  
 Believe me, lass, a king is but a man, and so am I;  
 Content is worth a monarchy, and mischiefs hit the high;  
 As late it did a king and his, not dwelling far from hence,  
 Who left a daughter, (save thyself) for fair a matchless wench.'--  
 Here did he pause, as if his tongue had done his heart offence.--  
 The neatress, longing for the rest, did egg him on to tell  
 How fair she was, and who she was. 'She bore,' quoth he, 'the bell  
 For beauty. Though I clownish am, I know what beauty is;  
 Or did I not, yet seeing thee, I senseless were to miss.  
 Suppose her beauty Helen's-like, or Helen's somewhat less,  
 And every star consorting to a pure complexion guess.  
 Her stature comely tall, her gait well graced, and her wit  
 To marvel at, not meddle with, as matchless I omit.  
 A globe-like head, a gold-like hair, a forehead smooth and high,  
 An even nose, on either side did shine a greyish eye;  
 Two rosy cheeks, round ruddy lips, white just-set teeth within;  
 A mouth in mean, and underneath a round and dimpled chin;  
 Her snowish neck with blueish veins stood bolt upright upon  
 Her portly shoulders; beating balls, her veined breasts, anon  
 Add more to beauty; wand like was her middle;  
 ...  
 'And more, her long and limber arms had white and azure wrists;  
 And slender fingers answer to her smooth and lily fists.  
 A leg in print, a pretty foot: conjecture of the rest,  
 For amorous eyes, observing form, think parts obscured best.  
 'With these (O thing divine) with these, her tongue of speech was spare;  
 But speaking, Venus seem'd to speak, the ball from Ide to bear.  
 With Ph{oe}be, Juno, and with both, herself contends in face;  
 Where equal mixture did not want of mild and stately grace.  
 Her smiles were sober, and her looks were cheerful unto all;  
 And such as neither wanton seem, nor wayward, mell, nor gall.  
 A quiet mind, a patient mood, and not disdainng any;  
 Not gibing, gadding, gaudy, and her faculties were many.  
 A nymph, no tongue, no heart, no eye, might praise, might wish, might see  
 For life, for love, for form, more good, more worth, more fair than she.

Yea such a one, as such was none, save only she was such.  
Of Argentile to say the most, were to be silent much.'  
'I knew the lady very well, but worthless of such praise,'  
The neatress said; 'and muse I do, a shepherd thus should blaze  
The coat of beauty. Credit me, thy latter speech betrays  
Thy clownish shape a coined show. But wherefore dost thou weep?'  
The shepherd wept, and she was woe, and both doth silence keep.  
'In truth,' quoth he, 'I am not such as seeming I profess:  
But then for her, and now for thee, I from myself digress.  
Her loved I,--wretch that I am and recreant to be!--  
I loved her, that hated love. But now I die for thee.  
At Kirkland is my father's court, and Curan is my name,  
In Edel's court sometimes in pomp, till love controll'd the same;  
But now--What now? Dear heart, how now? What ailest thou to weep?'  
The damsel wept, and he was woe, and both did silence keep.  
'I grant,' quoth she, 'it was too much, that you did love so much;  
But whom your former could not move, your second love doth touch.  
The twice beloved Argentile submitteth her to thee;  
And for thy double love presents herself, a single fee;  
In passion, not in person chang'd, and I, my lord, am she.'  
They sweetly surfeiting in joy, and silent for a space,  
Whenas the ecstasy had end did tenderly embrace,  
And for their wedding, and their wish got fitting time and place.  
Not England (for of Hengest then was named so this land)  
Than Curan had an hardier knight, his force could none withstand;  
Whose sheep-hook laid apart, he then had higher things in hand,  
First, making known his lawful claim in Argentile her right,  
He warr'd in Diria, and he won Brenitia too in fight;  
And so from treacherous Edel took at once his life and crown,  
And of Northumberland was king, long reigning in renown.

...

William Warner

# How Our Religion Is Authentically Of The Chief Points Wherein We Dissent From The Papists

Chap. Lii. of the Ninth Booke.

Upon the onely Scriptures doth  
Our Church foundation lay,  
Let patriarchs, prophets, gospell, and  
The apostles for us say;  
For soule and body we affirme,  
And all- sufficient thay;  
Yet ye adde canons, part corrupt,  
Some books ye quite deny.  
We by the Hebrew, and the Greeke  
(Their primer penes) expound  
Each Scripture, by the eldest clarks,  
Whom doubtful textes be found,  
Not by the Latin onely, as  
Ye would that all weare bound:  
So far forth yeat the Fathers and  
The councels we approve,  
As doe their expositions tende  
To sincere faith and love.  
Els fully Scriptures, in themselves,  
Explain themselves, say we,  
If searched with the humble spirit  
By which they written be:  
Through which is ofte from littall speech  
A spirituall sence set free,  
Upon which sence the Catholic Church  
Did, doth, and must agree.  
Nor doth our Church admit, at least  
Allow of those in her  
That teach not faith sincerely, winne  
To heaven, from hell deter.  
That with new glozes tante the text,  
Or such as be unready  
In that sweete promise of the seed  
Should brooze the serpent's head—

The Alpha and Omega of  
All Scriptures, and whereby  
Of grace, through faith in Christ, our soles  
Revive, and sinne doth die:  
Our Church affects, how so effects,  
Such pure theologies  
And guides, and to our naturall prince  
Grants sole supremacie.  
God's cov'nant with the patriarchs,  
And extending to the seede,  
Us Gentiles to coequall, is  
A primate in our creede;  
And Christ we know the end of it;  
In circumcision's place  
Is baptisme ; and intirely we  
The tables two imbrace,  
Which God himselfe in Synia wrote,  
And gave to Moses then,  
To publish to the people, two  
Commandements in ten:  
Scriptures' idaea, crouched in  
Our love to God and men. .  
Th' Apostles', Athanasian, Nice,  
And Bizain Creeds we hold  
Authentic, by the Holy Spirit  
In sacred Writ enrolld.  
One Godhead of Three Persons,  
In coequall Maiestie,  
Doe we beleeve ; of whom the Sonne  
Did for beleevers die,  
The onely ransome that redeemes  
From Sathan's tyrannie;  
Even Christ, the Way, the Truth, the Life,  
Not crooked, glozed, fraile,  
But right for rule, in promise firme,  
Guerdon near to faile;  
Who to reprove the bad, approve  
The good, and to assure  
The wav'ring, and against the divell  
Our safetie to procure,  
Did guiltless die, that we, lost soules,  
Might live, naught els did make,



That he, his Deitie adorn'd,  
Did humaine nature take.  
Nor, glorifide, disclaimes he us,  
Unlesse we him forsake.  
And what is fruitles faith, but such  
Apostasie? and what  
Ensues apostasie, but to  
Be doomed dam'd for that?  
No doctrine or traditions we  
Hold currant, save the same  
The Gospell, or the Apostles' Acts,  
Or penes include or name.  
Baptisme, incorporating us  
In Christ, and us in one,  
Christ's misticall last Supper, whearein  
Signe his death is knowne,  
Be sacraments, except which twaine  
Doe we accept of none.  
By only Christ our advocate  
We to the Father pray,  
Nor think we saints deceased can  
Our sutes to him convay;  
Howbeit, still most reuerently  
Of saints we thinke and say.  
Vnnecessarie burthens on  
Our Christian freedome laide,  
Contrarie thest, that beleefe and  
Vertuous life perswaide;  
Yea, only faith doth iustice,  
Say we, of God's free grace  
By Christ: nor faith is idle, but  
Doth charitie imbrace.  
Who may, but will not helpe, doth hurt,  
We know ; and curious thay  
That, dribling almes by art, disband  
Wel-meant from wel-don's pay:  
And he that questions one's distresse,  
And doth not helpe indeavour,  
Than he that sees, and nothing sayes  
Or eares, is less deceivour.  
Then hope we health when sinne is felt  
Repentantly in heart;

Adde then new life, and we to God,  
God doth to us conuart.  
Thus Peter vsed his keyes, nor thus  
Play popes S. Peters part.  
For cleargie-men and laye our Church  
Hath godly discipline,  
Lawes worthie better than sometimes  
Are those the lawes define.  
Our princes in their policies  
And lawes do wre obey;  
Though God his cause they seeke to crosse,  
Yeat we for them do pray  
In patience, not peruerse attempts;  
For better times we stay.  
Not as denide, but as devout,  
We doe and should abstaine  
From meates euen meet, the prouder flesh  
From sinne's excess to waine;  
Which should we skant, and yet bee dronke  
With lust, or like, were vaine.  
Saue also publique pollicie doth  
Publique sparing craue,  
In feast or differences of meates,  
No other keepe we have.  
Almes-deeds are workes of charitie  
We practively professe,  
And follow saints as they did Christ,  
And leave wheare they transgresse.  
Such and so much, as said, are we;  
Forgive vs, God, if lesse.  
For godly though religion, prince  
And policie they are,  
Yet things, that of themselves be good,  
Abuse brings out of square ;  
And sundrie faultes in sundrie folks  
We sometimes must forbear;  
Howbeit with best-gouerned states  
Our state may now compare.

William Warner

# The Patient Countess. - Extracted From Albion's England

Impatience chaungeth smoke to flame, but jealousie is hell;  
Some wives by patience have reduc'd ill husbands to live well:  
As did the ladie of an earle, of whom I now shall tell.  
An earle 'there was' had wedded, lov'd; was lov'd, and lived long  
Full true to his fayre countesse; yet at last he did her wrong.  
Once hunted he untill the chace, long fasting, and the heat  
Did house him in a peakish graunge within a forest great.  
Where knowne and welcom'd (as the place and persons might afforde)  
Browne bread, whig, bacon, curds and milke were set him on the borde.  
A cushion made of lists, a stoole halfe backed with a hoope  
Were brought him, and he sitteth down besides a sorry coupe  
The poore old couple wisht their bread were wheat, their whig were perry,  
Their bacon beefe, their milke and curds were creame, to make him merry.  
Mean while (in russet neatly clad, with linen white as swanne,  
Herlselfe more white, save rosie where the ruddy colour ranne:  
Whom naked nature, not the aydes of arte made to excell)  
The good man's daughter sturres to see that all were feat and well.  
The earle did marke her and admire such beautie there to dwell.  
Yet fals he to their homely fare and held him at a feast;  
But as his hunger slaked, so an amorous heat increast.  
When this repast was past and thanks and welcome too, he sayd  
Unto his host and hostesse, in the hearing of the mayd,  
'Yee know,' quoth he, 'that I am lord of this, and many townes;  
I also know that you be poore, and I can spare you pownes.  
'Soe will I, so yee will consent, that yonder lasse and I  
May bargaine for her love; at least doe give leave to trye.  
Who needs to know it? nay who dares into my doings pry?'  
First they mislike, yet at the length for lucre were misled;  
And then the gamesome earle did wowe the damsell for his bed.  
He took her in his armes, as yet so coyish to be kist,  
As mayds that know themselves belov'd, and yieldingly resist.  
In few, his offers were so large she lastly did consent;  
With whom he lodged all that night, and early home he went.  
He tooke occasion oftentimes in such a sort to hunt.  
Whom when his lady often mist, contrary to his wont,  
And lastly was informed of his amorous haunt elsewhere;  
It greev'd her not a little, though she seem'd it well to beare.

And thus she reasons with herself, 'Some fault perhaps in me;  
 Somewhat is done, that soe he doth: alas! what may it be?  
 'How may I winne him to myself? He is a man, and men  
 Have imperfections; it behooves me pardon nature then.  
 'To checke him were to make him checke, although hee now were chaste:  
 A man controuled of his wife, to her makes lesser haste.  
 'If duty then, or daliance may prevayle to alter him;  
 I will be dutifull and make my self for daliance trim.'  
 So was she, and so lovingly did entertaine her lord,  
 As fairer or more faultles none could be for bed or bord.  
 Yet still he loves his leiman and did still pursue that game,  
 Suspecting nothing less, than that his lady knew the same:  
 Wherefore to make him know she knew, she this device did frame:  
 When long she had been wrong'd, and sought the forsayd meanes in vaine,  
 She rideth to the simple graunge with bud a slender traine.  
 She lighteth, entreth, greets them well, and then did looke about her;  
 The guiltie household knowing her, did wish themselves without her;  
 Yet, for she looked merily, the lesse they did misdoubt her.  
 When she had seen the beauteous wench, (then blushing fairnes fairer),  
 Such beauty made the countesse hold them both excus'd the rather.  
 Who would not bite at such a bait? thought she: and who (though loth)  
 So poore a wench, but gold might tempt? sweet errors led them both.  
 Scarce one in twenty that had bragg'd of proffer'd gold denied,  
 Or of such yeelding beautie baulkt, but tenne to one, had lied.  
 Thus thought she: and she thus declares her cause of coming thether:  
 'My Lord, oft hunting in these partes, through travel, night, or wether,  
 'Hath often lodged in your house; I thanke you for the same;  
 For why? it doth him jolly ease to lie so neare his game.  
 'But, for you have not furniture beseeming such a guest,  
 I bring his owne, and come myselfe to see his lodging drest.'  
 With that two sumpters were discharg'd, in which were hangings brave,  
 Silke coverings, curtens, carpets, plate, and al such turn should have.  
 When all was handsomly dispos'd, she prayes them to have care  
 That nothing hap in their default, that might his health impair.  
 'And, damsell,' quoth shee, 'for it seemes this household is but three,  
 And for thy parents age, that this small chiefly rest on thee;  
 'Do me that good, else would to God he hither comes no more.'  
 So tooke she horse, and ere she went bestowed Gould good store.  
 Full little thought the countie that his countesse had done so,  
 Who, now return'd from far affaires, did to his sweet-heart go.  
 No sooner sat he foote within the late deformed cote,  
 But that the formall change of things his wondring eies did note.

But when he knew those goods to be his proper goods; though late,  
Scarce taking leave, he home returns the matter to debate.  
The countesse was a-bed, and he with her his lodging tooke.  
'Sir, welcome home' (quoth shee), 'this night for you I did not looke.'  
Then did he question her of such his stuffe bestowed soe.  
'Forsooth,' quoth she, 'because I did your love and lodging knowe:  
'Your love to be a proper wench, your lodging nothing lesse;  
I held it for your health, the house more decently to dresse.  
'Well wot I, notwithstanding her, your Lordship loveth me;  
And greater hope to hold you such by quiet, then brawles, 'you' see.  
'Then for my duty, your delight, and to retaine your favour,  
All done I did, and patiently expect your wonted 'haviour.'  
Her patience witte, and answer wrought his gentle teares to fall:  
When (kissing her a score of times), he said, and did it: 'so each wife her  
husband may' recall.

William Warner