

EDWARD YOUNG
Night Thoughts



Part 1. Nights 1 to 4

A Modern Edition by John Uebersax

EDWARD YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS

Part 1: The First, Second, Third,
and Fourth Nights

New Edition with Introduction and Notes for Modern Readers

BY JOHN UEBERSAX

First Edition: June 2015

El Camino Real eBooks
San Luis Obispo, California

Copyright John S. Uebersax
John Uebersax Enterprises LLC
www.john-uebersax.com

Vive pro Eternitate

INTRODUCTION

NIGHT THOUGHTS by Edward Young is the greatest work of English literature to appear in the last 300 years. Indeed, in the *entire* history of this exalted literary tradition, only Shakespeare and Milton's *Paradise Lost* surpass it in excellence.

The work, published in installments from 1742–1744, enjoyed immense popularity for a century afterward. Not only a literary masterpiece but a sublime philosophical and Christian devotional work, it held a respected place alongside the family Bible on Christian bookshelves. Writing to his cousin, Ralph Waldo Emerson ranked *Night Thoughts* together with à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* only after the Bible as recommended reading.

The work should be on every Great Books list, and ought to be required reading in liberal arts education. Yet, strangely, it is unknown today. In producing this new edition for modern readers, the hope is to draw renewed attention to this treasure, that it may once more enrich individual lives and society generally with its wisdom and beauty.

Night Thoughts is a collection of extended poetic meditations in nine parts, ostensibly taking place on nine nights. Young published these incrementally, beginning with Night 1 in 1742. After completing four Nights, he hinted he might continue (which he did), but nonetheless left it clear that these four constituted a distinct and coherent unit. We supply Nights 1 through 4 here. One reason for not including the subsequent Nights is to encourage the widest readership, knowing that a longer work might dissuade some modern readers.

The Man

Edward Young was born in Upton, Winchester, his father a learned and well respected minister, in 1683. Our author studied at Oxford, gaining a doctorate in law. Though a diligent student, he also associated with friends of questionable morals, including Philip Wharton, who later became the infamous Duke Wharton.

Brilliant and eccentric, Young early showed signs of literary excellence, and even while at college produced works of merit. As his career advanced, his various poems, plays and satires became well-known and appreciated by the public and *literati* of the time.

Over time he became disillusioned with the vanities of life as a literary celebrity-courtier. At the mature age of 47, then, he took holy orders and became an Anglican priest. His college (with which he was still connected) appointed him rector of

Welwyn parish. A dedicated pastor, he performed his duties well and was known as a powerful preacher. He never, however, gained a bishopric or advanced along the clerical *cursus honorum* usual for the times. The reasons for non-advancement are not clear. Possibilities are unfavorable political alliances, and perhaps a reputation as too strict a moralist.

He married in 1731 a widow, Lady Lee, with whom he had a son, and perhaps other children. From 1736–1741 he suffered the deaths of three family members: first his step-daughter under tragic circumstances, then his son-in-law, and last his wife. At least one other friend also died about the same time. These combined losses he bore heavily, yet, responded to them in a positive way by producing the magnificent work we have here.¹

Night Thoughts was widely read and greatly appreciated, and secured his contemporary fame. When came time for him to publish his collected works, by his choosing the title page bore not his name, but "from the author of *Night Thoughts*."

He remained faithfully performing his duties at Welwyn until his death in 1765, and produced further writings of good quality, though nothing as great as *Night Thoughts*.

The Work

As already stated, *Night Thoughts* consists of poetic meditations ostensibly taking place on nine different nights. Of these, the first three Nights collectively constitute the *Complaint*: they set forth the problems of life. In the fourth Night the *Complaint*: life, despite difficulties and trials, is good, or can be good, but only for the morally reformed soul, made so by the acquisition of an authentic religious sentiment and philosophical orientation.

Each of the first four Nights were, following the custom of the time, dedicated to some high ranking official or influential friend. What would seem shamelessly mercenary today was ordinary then. It must be admitted Young was more judicious in exercise of this practice than many, at least not canonizing scoundrels, as was sometimes the case! The dedications were to: "Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons" (Night 1); "The Earl of Wilmington" (Spencer Compton, later Prime Minister, 1742–3, Night 2); "The Duchess of Portland" (Margaret Harley Bentinck, Night 3); and "Mr. Yorke" (Philip Yorke, the future 2nd Earl of Hardwicke, Night 4).

Young's poignant statement in the *Complaint* of the vanity of human life echoes themes of the Book of Job and Ecclesiastes. In Night Four he makes perhaps his most original contributions as he ventures into practical theology: an essential ingredient of

¹ Cicero similarly produced his great philosophical works in response to the death of his beloved daughter, Tullia. Young likely knew this precedent.

moral salvation, as he presents matters, is the salutary effects of Faith, brought on by meditation on God's love as made evident by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

He sees Faith and Reason as both involved in moral salvation, but his attempt to explain their exact relationship is not fully convincing at a logical level. Does meditation on the logical implications of the sacrifice of Christ, truly, as Young suggests, yield a spontaneous feeling of immense gratitude and devotion? Here Young's theology, taken literally, may strike some modern readers as 'old school': the *penal substitution* theory of Christ's death. Yet, in Young's hands, Christ's sacrifice is not so much necessitated (as with Calvin) by man's *innate depravity*, but by man's innate dignity. That God would sacrifice his Son for man is not grounds to curse wretched man for requiring it, but rather for celebration. Man, loved by God, made in His image, has a nature so glorious that God would pay such a price.

Ultimately, we must acknowledge that this is a poem, not an theological treatise. Complete logical consistency is not required. Indeed, poetry's advantage here is that it does not require strict consistency. As art, the poem communicates at levels beyond literal words. It raises deep issues concerning the relationship of Reason and Faith. Strict logic, notwithstanding, Night 4 does succeed in directing readers' minds to greater awareness of the Dignity of Man. Like a Socratic dialogue, it is not the purported answers, but the inquiry itself that most illuminates.

The comments above, however, should not be taken to mean that *Night Thoughts* is of interest only to Christian readers. That is most definitely not the case. The work addresses issues of universal human concern.

Persons

Night Thoughts has the form of a long recitation in first-person voice by an anonymous speaker, whom we take to be Young himself. It is mainly addressed to another figure named Lorenzo. Overall the poem is an exhortation to Lorenzo to virtue, or a *protrepticus* declaiming the vanities of the world and the greatness of the examined, philosophical, religious life.

In the course of the poem two other figures, deceased individuals, Philander and Narcissa are mentioned, and sometimes addressed rhetorically.

The usual view is that all three named figures correspond to actual people in Young's life, and, in some case, the details of the narrative make this view plausible.

Narcissa. The most readily identifiable figure is Narcissa, the primary subject of Night 3. Narcissa is generally understood to be Young's step-daughter, Elizabeth, who died tragically at age 18 in 1736, not long after her marriage to Henry Temple. She had contracted consumption and was gravely ill. The story is sad, with a

desperate Young trying to take his step-daughter to sunnier climes, Nice, in France, only for her to die enroute, in Lyons.

Philander. There are two common theories as to the identity of Philander, who is principally addressed in Nights 1 and 2. One is that Philander is the husband of Young's step-daughter, Henry Temple. The second candidate is an old friend of Young's, Thomas Tickell. Both died shortly before Young commenced writing *Night Thoughts*.

Lorenzo. There are also two main suggestions as to the identity of Lorenzo. One is that he represents Young's son, Frederick. This is arguably made somewhat less plausible by the fact that, at the time *Night Thoughts* was written, his son was still a boy — and, at the age of 10 years old, neither in need of serious moral reform, nor likely to profit much from the sophisticated reflections on ethics and religion.

A more likely candidate for the worldly Lorenzo, therefore, might be Young's friend and sometimes patron, Duke Philip Wharton. Though Wharton died young, in 1731, Young could easily in his imagination have been addressing his friend in a posthumous, retrospective way. Wharton would be an ideal candidate for such advice. He almost epitomizes the type of the wealthy playboy of the times: an aristocrat, born into wealth and privilege, intellectually brilliant but without matching morals, squandering his inheritance, alcoholic, dissipated, and debt-ridden. Nevertheless he remained Young's faithful friend.

However, clearly in a broader sense through Lorenzo Young addresses each of his readers. He is exhorting *us* to moral reformation. Philander and Narcissa likewise are composite figures. The effect of the poem depends on our ability to identify with all these characters. It represents an inner dialogue each reader has amongst these figures as they exist as inner representations and elements of one's own personality and psyche.

Composition

It would appear that Young began writing *Night Thoughts* within a few weeks or months following the death of his wife in January, 1741. Clearly the cumulative impact of so many deaths within a few years, and the cluster of losses in 1740–1741, would have left a heavy mark on Young. It is said that, in certain respects, he never fully recovered from his wife's death.

It should also be noted, however, that whatever catalyzing effect these deaths had on the writing of *Night Thoughts*, the theme of eternal vs. earthly happiness was of long-standing concern. Already by 1727, 15 years before the first installment of *Night Thoughts*, he published his first theological work, a treatise, expanded from a homily, titled, *A Vindication of Providence: or, a True Estimate of Human Life* (Shelley,

1914, p. 95). This was effectively a long commentary on Colossians 3:2, *Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.*

As for the manner of composition, we can easily imagine Young quelling his sorrow, and easing sleepless nights peering out his window, and writing lonely lines to the taper's glow. Yet Gilfillan (1853), in his excellent introductory essay, informs us that this "marvellous poem" was sometimes composed:

... when riding on horseback—an exercise, by the way, which gives a sense of mastery and confidence, stirs the blood, elevates the animal spirits, and has been felt by many to be eminently favourable to thought and mental composition. (Gilfillan, xv)

Young's was also fond of gardening, and doubtless received inspiration communing with nature by that means, too. Regardless of the means of composition, however, one is left with the distinct impression that Young many times approached the fountain of pure inspiration, and left, cup full.

Theme

What are the topics of *Night Thoughts*? As Gilfillan put it:

Its subjects are as varied as they are important. They are—Man—the World—Ambition—Pleasure —Infidelity—Immortality—Death—Judgment—Heaven—Hell—the Stars—Eternity. (Ibid., xxiv)

But the work is no mere patchwork of disconnected thoughts, stray musings or *pensées*. There is a grand, unifying purpose to it — explicit, and fully evident to the reader. The theme is *ethics* — in ancient sense of that term which addresses the question, what is the good life? The answers which the collective wisdom of humanity have found to this question is the *perennial philosophy*. It is so called because we see, across times, places, and cultures, the same answers being given to the enduring problems of human life.

What, then, *is* the perennial philosophy? It defies exact rationalistic expression, yet is itself simple and familiar. It is encapsulated in the Delphic maxim, *Know Thyself*, and even more succinctly in another inscription on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi: the Greek letter *E* — pronounced "Ei", and which may be taken to mean "BE!" And it is expressed by the true meaning of the word philosophy or *philosophia*: the love of Wisdom.

Hence there is a clear connection between *Night Thoughts* and the ethical principles of Socrates, who himself taught and exemplified those Delphic principles from which the great philosophical schools of antiquity developed. To fully appreciate *Night Thoughts*, one ought to read Plato's dialogue, *Phaedo*, which relates Socrates' last

conversations in the face of death. *Night Thoughts* could even be thought of as a prolonged and powerful commentary on the *Phaedo*. Though Young never mentions the *Phaedo* by name, he does refer to Socrates several times, and this famous dialogue, which has been so influential in shaping western concepts of the immortal soul, always looms in the background.

The *perennial philosophy* teaches the achievement of happiness and removal of misery by a reformation of the human mind and character, changing one's personality from an immature, disordered, and fallen state — egoism — to rebirth into a higher and fuller manner of thought, feeling, and life. It asserts that the human soul is immortal and divine, a living image of God. And that the life of the soul is moral and intellectual. Therefore our happiness involves the effort to cultivate our *divine* nature, such that we grow morally and intellectually.

A main component of the requisite moral reformation is learning to forsake a certain 'natural' tendency to seek worldly and lower pleasures in life: money, fame, food and drink, romance, sensual pleasure and so on — and instead to set one's heart earnestly on higher, finer things. It is these higher goods which bring happiness, and which are consistent with our dignity as beings with lofty intellects and immortal souls.

In brief, the message of the perennial philosophy, elegantly and persuasively expressed in *Night Thoughts*, is this: if you set your heart on material goods, then you will find happiness neither in this life nor the next. But if one's yearning is for spiritual goods, one will gain whatever true happiness is attainable in this life, and will be better suited, with soul enlarged, for far greater happiness in the next.

By placing our divinity and eternal destiny at the fore of interest and attention, our experience of the world is divinized. We see God at work in nature around us. The world comes to life, then, by our 'death' to it. We no longer sully the beauty and miraculousness of the world by clinging desperately to it. With the doors of perception cleansed, the world is experienced as transfigured, spiritualized, even magical.

Setting one's sights on the Eternal doesn't mean, as is often wrongly assumed, a life of ascetical self-denial or legalistic moralism. It is not the view that life is mere a vale of tears, or a body-denying dualistic rejection of the world. Rather, it is an *integral* world-view, in that it recognizes and affirms the unity of this life *and* eternity, and asserts the possibility of happiness in both. Precisely by not yearning for or clinging to the pleasures of this life, one may experience them with greater purity and true enjoyment.

The idea is not to hate the world, but to be indifferent to it. Not to have contempt for the world *per se*, but to condemn *attachment* and bondage to it. The philosopher accepts what pleasures cross one's path, but without yearning for or clinging to them;

and so enjoys orderly pleasures, without their being tainted by admixture of attachment and egoism.

This moral reformation and renewal also finds expression in universal religious and mythic motifs of death followed by rebirth in a divine, immortal form. (Uebersax, 2014) It is the symbolic, ethical meaning of the fall of Adam and Eve; of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; of Plato's Chariot Allegory and the descent of the soul in Plotinus; the Mystery Religions; the symbolic meaning of resurrection and reincarnation; of the Egyptian *Book of Coming Into Day* (mistakenly called the *Book of the Dead*).

It is also the essence of Christian ethics and moral salvation: dying to this life to attain life eternal; putting off the old and putting on the new man; the crucifixion of the fleshly and egoistic will to attain the new, truer, fuller life for which we are meant and destined. This is the Christianity that *Night Thoughts* proclaims. This is the "news that is good."

Although the perennial philosophy has been expressed many times and in many ways, rarely has it been done with such grace, elegance, and beauty as this work displays. Part of the work's uniqueness it is that it avails itself of the inspiration of Night. The inspiration is not only from Apollo, the sun god, god of Delphi, but also from his sister, Artemis, goddess of the moon. This integration of the lunar, the feminine, into the traditionally *solar* tradition of western philosophy and ethics is itself not without historical significance.

Night Thoughts is sometimes considered melancholy, but this is a superficial assessment. The message is emphatically one of hope, joy, and life. The writer's sadness and loss has been transmuted into something magnificent. Death — death to the *false allures* of the world — is the gateway to Life.

Significance

Night Thoughts is a work of major importance. Such was readily acknowledged from the time of its publication through the next roughly one hundred years following, whence it enjoyed numerous editions and reprintings. Its interest peaked in the 1850's when several major new editions appeared almost simultaneously. Then suddenly the work lost popularity. It was reprinted only a few more times in the second half of the 19th century, and by the 20th century became virtually unknown.

Why the work lost popularity, and so precipitously, is an enigma. It shows how radically the cultural worldview has changed since 1860.²

² The publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 coincided with a huge shift in western man's self-image and religious views; but whether this was the cause, or merely a manifestation of some more fundamental cultural change is not obvious.

We might even take its neglect for the last 160 years as evidence of its greatness. Unable to refute the evidence which the very existence of such divine poetry supplies, the only option of the materialist, atheistic order has been to deny its existence.

Nevertheless, this temporary disappearance is not without advantages — and we might even suspect the hand of Providence at work. Had *Night Thoughts* remained in the foreground of 20th literary criticism, it may have been subjected to excessive revisionist interpretation, picked to parts, and subjected to so much historical and rationalistic analysis that its true import and meaning would be lost even more than if it were simply ignored. The advantage is we may now approach it as something new and fresh — with enthusiasm and the appreciation one has of 'the lost coin now found'.

Genius and the Sublime

The mark of poetry of Genius — as *Night Thoughts* surely is — is that, reading the words, we are struck with a singular quality which is recognized, yet has no distinct name except perhaps the *sublime*. The work has a certain otherworldliness. Certain phrases and lines strike us simultaneously as startling new, yet timelessly familiar. Our own, inner Genius reads them with delight. We are edified and exalted, reminded of the greatness of our nature. Sight is regained, some reminder and *anamnesis*, of the soul's divinity and immortality. A poet such as Young writes from the Ages to the Ages.

Proof of the exalted and inspired nature of the content and sublime quality is an uncanny excellence of expression. That same perfection of phrase that delights us so much in Shakespeare is found in abundance here — as though the pure essence of a thought or moral principle has been stated once and for all.

Young's Genius reveals our own Genius. And the deeper one peers into Genius, the more one begins to suspect its limitlessness: an image (our higher soul) of an infinite God must itself be infinite and vast beyond all powers of rational comprehension. Thus *Night Thoughts* is more than a work *on* philosophy. It *is* philosophy — philosophy in practice. To witness its sublimity edifies us. There is a transcendent synergy when the ablest intellect, the noblest theme, and the purest motives coincide, as in this work. To wax Platonic, one might say the True, the Beautiful, and the Moral unite, and together draw us still higher, giving glimpses of Goodness Supreme.

Pitirim Sorokin (1954/2002) called the source of great works of Genius the *supraconscious*. He also noted the connection of supraconscious creation of works of art with the inspiring energies of divine Love. Young's life testifies that he was possessed of this Love. A devout and dedicated priest, who had learned from bitter experience to hold in contempt the false pleasures of this world, he strove to edify and

direct to eternal life others' souls. He was, after all, a dedicated preacher and moralist — earnestly concerned for the moral welfare of others. A well known anecdote relates how, unable to move the hearts of his listeners, he was wept unabashed at the pulpit. In his conscious effort to help others he became open to inspiring energies greater than himself.

Some Appraisals

One commenter (Boyd, 1856) recommended the routine reading of *Night Thoughts* in school education as an aid to moral formation of youth, noting that:

It furnishes a great number of pithy sentences, easily remembered, and pregnant with the most important meaning, which, if lodged early in the mind, must exert a salutary influence in securing a wise improvement of time, a proper choice of objects of pursuit, a restraint upon the appetites and passions, an upward direction to the reason and affections, and a powerful auxiliary to the practice of the duties of religion. (Boyd, 1856, p. 4)

To this he added a benefit relevant to readers of any age:

The earnest effort to understand, and comprehend, and criticize a work so condensed and profound and vast in its conceptions, must powerfully serve to enlarge and invigorate all the intellectual powers. (Ibid. p. 4)

Gilfillan's (1853), essay not lacking in wit or insight, in its entirety will reward reading by those with a particular interest in English literature or intellectual history. For the rest we offer some choice passages:

In his domestic character he was amiable as he was venerable in the Christian. His politeness was such as I never saw equaled. (quoting an anonymous author in *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1782; Gilfillan, p. xiv)

Young was subject to fits of inspiration, which stupid people confounded with madness. At times his poetry rushed upon him like a whirlwind, and caught him up

“Like swift Ezekiel, by his lock of hair”—

and when he came down he seemed weak, panting, and powerless. (Gilfillan, xix)

Night had never before found a worthy laureate. Its profound silence, as if it were listening to catch the accents of some supernal voice—the shadowy grandeur and mysterious newness it gives to objects on the earth—the divine hues into which its moon discolours all things—the deep sleep which then

falleth upon men, and changes the world into one hushed grave—the supernatural shapes and mystic sounds which have been supposed to walk in its darkness, or to echo through its depths—the voices scarce less solemn, which often break its silence, of howling winds, and wailing rivers, and shrieking tempests, and groaning thunders, and the wild cries of human misery and despair—and last and highest, its withdrawal of the bright mist and mantle of day from the starry universe, and the pomp with which it unrolls and exhibits its “great map” of suns and systems—its silvery satellites—its meek planets, each shining in its own degree of reflected splendour—its oceans of original and ever-burning fire called suns—its comets, those serpents of the sky, trailing their vast volumes of deadly glory through the shuddering system—its fantastic and magnificent shapes and collocations of stars, the constellations—its firmaments rising above firmaments, like rounds in a ladder, at the top of which is the throne of God—and those two awful arms into which its Milky Way diverges, and which seem uplifted to heaven in silent prayer, or in some deep and dread protest,—all these elements of interest and grandeur had existed from the beginning of the world in Night, and yet had never, till Young arose, awakened any consecutive and lofty strain of poetic adoration. Many beautiful and many sublime sentiments had been uttered by poets about particular features of Night, but there had been no attempt to represent it as a whole. There were many single thoughts, but no large and sounding Hymn. (Ibid. xix–xx)

His soul kindles, triumphs, exults under the midnight canopy. As the Tartar horse when led forth from his stable to the free steppes and free firmament of the desert, bounds, prances, and caracoles for joy, so does Young, in the last part of his poem. (Ibid. xxi)

He has brought out, better than any other poet, the religion of the stars. (xxi)

You always feel yourself in contact with a new, native, overflowing mind—with a mind which has read nature through man, and man through nature. There is to Young’s genius nothing common or unclean in the material universe. All points up to God, and looks round significantly to man. His imagination has no limits, and, when he is thoroughly roused, like the war-horse of Job, the “glory of his nostrils is terrible;” it is the fury of power, the revel of conscious wealth, the “prancing of a mighty one;” not the dance of mere fancy, but the earnestness and energy of one treading a winepress alone. (xxiii–xxiv)

There is more thought in Young’s poem—more sharp, clear, original reflection—more of that matter which leaves stings behind it—more moral sublimity—than in any poem which has appeared since in Britain. (xxiv)

His pages literally sparkle with maxims, and that, next perhaps to Shakspeare, no poet has been so often quoted. (xxiv)

As already noted, an avid interest in gardening supported his connection with nature:

He was very fond of a garden, and inscribed on the wall of his summer-house the words, *Ambulantes in horto audiebant vocem Dei* (Walking in the garden, they heard the voice of God; *ibid.*, xv)

A passage from another of his works elaborates the theme, and connects it with his moral philosophy:

A garden has ever had the praise and affection of the wise. What is requisite to make a wise and happy man. but reflection and peace? and both are the natural growth of a garden. Nor is a garden only a promoter of a good man's happiness, but a picture of it; and, in some sort, shows him to himself. Its culture, order, fruitfulness, and seclusion from the world, compared to the weeds, wildness, and exposure of a common field, is no bad emblem of a good man, compared to the multitude. A garden weeds the mind: it weeds it of worldly thoughts, and sows celestial seed in their stead. For what see we there, but what awakens in us our gratitude to Heaven? A garden to the virtuous is a Paradise still extant, a Paradise unlost. What a rich present from heaven of sweet incense to man was wafted in that breeze! ... Here are no objects that fire the passions ; none that do not instruct the understanding, and better the heart, while they delight the sense; but not the sense of these [morally dissolute] men. To them the tulip has no colours, the rose no scent. Their palate for pleasure is so deadened and burnt out, by the violent stroke of higher tastes, as leaves no sensibility for the softer impressions of these; much less for the relish of those philosophic or moral sentiments, which the verdant walk, clear stream, embowering shade, pendant fruit, or rising flower,—those speechless, not powerless, orators, ever praising their Great Author,—inspire: much less still for their religious inspirations. Who cannot look on a flower till he frightens himself out of infidelity? Religion is the natural growth of the works of God, and infidelity, of the inventions of men. (Young, *The Centaur Not Fabulous*, Letter 2, On Pleasure; Complete Works, pp. 446–447)

And a last word by Gilfillan:

Finally, his genius, with all its compass and daring, was reverent and religious. He gloried in the universe; he swam, as it were, and circled like a strong swimmer, in that starry sea; but he bent before the Cross, and, instead of looking up, looked down, and cried out, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” (Gilfillan, xxviii)

A Note on Style and Reading

Subtitles have been added (from Nichols, 1854) to help alert readers to the topic being addressed in various sections. Note that the original poem did not have these; each *Night* was a continuous, interrupted poem.

Night Thoughts is a poem, written in unrhymed iambic pentameter (*blank* verse), a style less familiar to readers today than 150 years ago. Iambic pentameter means that each line consists of five units, each unit a pair of syllables, the first unaccented and the second accented. Thus, the pattern of emphasis is:

ta-dah' ta-dah' ta-dah' ta-dah' ta-dah'

Well known examples of iambic pentameter verse are Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. Hence his famous line:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (Sonnet 18)

To make the meter work liberties are sometimes taken in spelling and pronunciation. For example, contractions may be used to shorten words by one syllable to fit the iamb. Hence, either "until" or "till" may be used, as the line's rhythm requires. Some of the contractions in the original version of *Night Thoughts* were removed in later editions. The result is that the reader must sometimes creatively imagine them as being there. More generally, the effort to parse the words of a line such that one discovers how they fit the prescribed meter aids attention and comprehension.

In any case, as this is a poem, each line requires more thoughtful reading than in the case of prose. It can't be merely skimmed through. One must read it carefully, focusing attention on each line, words and rhythm, to grasp the meaning. One way to do this is to read it out loud. Go outside and read it to nature! Or merely say the words silently to yourself.

The blank verse definitely enhances the experience of reading the poem. At times it may even produce a trance-like meditative state. The rhythm and unrhymedness also gives it a kind of forward momentum, such that after each line one is always looking forward to the next to rhyme, and this pleasant tension is never relaxed.

Iambic pentameter suits Young's purposes perfectly, contributing an air of stateliness or antiquity. The long poem reads like a cascade of finely crafted aphorisms, timeless and wise. Had Young been born in ancient Greece, two-hundred of his aphorisms might have been recorded and passed reverently to posterity, immortalized, as those of Heraclitus or Pythagoras. Many of his turns of phrase have, in fact, found their way into common English usage.

Enjoy, then, and profit from this great literary treasure, written by one who truly ranks among the

*Olympian bards who sung
Divine ideas below,
Which always find us young
And always keep us so.*

Illustrations

Night in the Churchyard (detail); 1749; artist unknown.

Night; c.1853; artist unknown.

Deathbed of the Christian; c.1853; artist unknown.

Contemplation; c.1853; artist unknown.

Credits

The text of *Night Thoughts* used is from Gilfillan (1853), but with line numbers regularized.

Explanatory notes are mostly adapted from Boyd (1856).

Night in the Churchyard (detail) is from Young's own 8th edition of 1749. The other illustrations (Night, Deathbed of the Christian, Contemplation) are from Nichols (1865; artist unknown)..

Bibliography

Editions of Young's Works (listed in chronological order)

Young, Edward. *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death & Immortality. Night the First*. London, 1742. (Subsequent 'Nights' were published through 1745).

Ed. Edwards, Richard. Illustrator, William Blake. *Edward Young, Night Thoughts*. With 43 etched prints, hand colored. London, 1797.

Ed. Unknown. *Night Thoughts by Edward Young*. With the Life of the Author. Illustrations by Thomas Stothard. London, 1798. "Printed by C. Whittingham for T. Heptinstall."

Ed. Gilfillan, George. *Young's Night Thoughts* (With introductory essay, On the Life and Poetic Genius of Edward Young.) Edinburgh, 1853.

Young, Edward. The Centaur Not Fabulous. Ed. James Nichols. *The Complete Works, Poetry and Prose, of Rev. Edward Young*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. London, 1854.

Ed. Boyd, James R. *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality, by Edward Young*. (With a Memoir of the Author, a Critical View of His Writings, and Explanatory Notes.) 4th edition, revised. New York, 1856.

Ed. Nichols, James. *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality, by Rev. Edward Young*. (With a Life of the Author, by John Doran.) London, 1853. 4th. ed. 1865.

Ed. Mitford, John. *The Poetical Works of Edward Young*. (2 vols. combined.) With Life. Boston, 1879 (orig. edition, 2 vols., 1833).

Ed. Cornford, Stephen. *Edward Young: Night Thoughts*. Cambridge, 1989 (repr. 2008).

Other Works

Shelley, Henry C. *The Life and Letters of Edward Young*. London, 1914.

Sorokin, Pitirim A. *The Ways and Power of Love*. 1954 (repr. 2002).

Uebersax, John S. The Monomyth of Fall and Salvation. Christian Platonism website. 10 December 2014. Web. 1 June 2015.

NIGHT THOUGHTS
ON LIFE, DEATH, AND IMMORTALITY.

Rev. Edward Young



Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt. —Virgil

PREFACE

As the occasion of this Poem was real, not fictitious; so the method pursued in it was rather imposed by what spontaneously arose in the Author's mind on that occasion, than meditated or designed. Which will appear very probable from the nature of it. For it differs from the common mode of poetry, which is, from long narrations to draw short morals. Here, on the contrary, the narrative is short, and the morality arising from it makes the bulk of the Poem. The reason of it is, that the facts mentioned did naturally pour these moral reflections on the thought of the Writer.

NIGHT FIRST
ON LIFE, DEATH, AND IMMORTALITY

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
ARTHUR ONSLOW, ESQ.,
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

TIRED Nature's sweet restorer, balmy Sleep!
He, like the world, his ready visit pays
Where Fortune smiles; the wretched he forsakes;
Swift on his downy pinion flies from woe,
And lights on lids unsullied with a tear.

From short (as usual) and disturb'd repose,
I wake: how happy they, who wake no more!
Yet that were vain, if dreams infest the grave.
I wake, emerging from a sea of dreams
Tumultuous; where my wreck'd desponding thought 10
From wave to wave of fancied misery
At random drove, her helm of Reason lost.
Though now restored, 'tis only change of pain,
(A bitter change!) severer for severe:
The day too short for my distress; and night,
Even in the zenith of her dark domain,
Is sunshine to the colour of my fate.

THE REIGN OF NIGHT

Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty, now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumbering world. 20
Silence, how dead! and darkness, how profound!
Nor eye, nor listening ear, an object finds;
Creation sleeps. 'Tis as the general pulse
Of life stood still, and Nature made a pause;
An awful pause! prophetic of her end.
And let her prophecy be soon fulfill'd;
Fate! drop the curtain; I can lose no more.



*Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty, now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumbering world*
(Night 1, 18).

Silence and darkness: solemn sisters! twins
From ancient Night, who nurse the tender thought
To reason, and on Reason build resolve 30
(That column of true majesty in man),
Assist me: I will thank you in the grave;
The grave, your kingdom: there this frame shall fall
A victim sacred to your dreary shrine.
But what are ye?—

ADDRESS TO THE AUTHOR OF LIGHT

Thou, who didst put to flight
Primeval Silence, when the morning stars,³
Exulting, shouted o'er the rising ball;
O Thou, whose word from solid darkness struck
That spark, the sun; strike wisdom from my soul; 40
My soul, which flies to thee, her trust, her treasure,
As misers to their gold, while others rest.

³ 37. *morning stars*: A reference to the sublime description of the creation in Job 38:7—
"when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

Through this opaque of Nature, and of soul,
 This double night, transmit one pitying ray,
 To lighten, and to cheer. O lead my mind,
 (A mind that fain would wander from its woe),
 Lead it through various scenes of life and death;
 And from each scene the noblest truths inspire.
 Nor less inspire my conduct, than my song;
 Teach my best reason, Reason; my best will 50
 Teach rectitude; and fix my firm resolve
 Wisdom to wed, and pay her long arrear:
 Nor let the phial of thy vengeance, pour'd
 On this devoted head, be pour'd in vain.

MY DEPARTED HOURS

The bell strikes one. We take no note of time
 But from its loss. To give it then a tongue
 Is wise in man. As if an angel spoke,
 I feel the solemn sound. If heard aright,
 It is the knell of my departed hours:
 Where are they? With the years beyond the flood. 60
 It is the signal that demands despatch:
 How much is to be done? My hopes and fears
 Start up alarm'd, and o'er life's narrow verge
 Look down—on what? a fathomless abyss;
 A dread eternity! how surely mine!
 And can eternity belong to me,
 Poor pensioner on the bounties of an hour?

CONTRASTS IN MAN

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
 How complicate, how wonderful, is man! 70
 How passing wonder He who made him such!
 Who centred in our make such strange extremes!
 From different natures marvellously mix'd,
 Connexion exquisite of distant worlds!
 Distinguish'd link in being's endless chain!
 Midway from nothing to the Deity!
 A beam ethereal, sullied and absorb'd!
 Though sullied and dishonour'd, still divine!
 Dim miniature of greatness absolute!
 An heir of glory! a frail child of dust!
 Helpless immortal! insect infinite! 80

A worm! a god!—I tremble at myself,
 And in myself am lost! At home a stranger,
 Thought wanders up and down, surprised, aghast,
 And wondering at her own: how Reason reels!
 O what a miracle to man is man,
 Triumphantly distress'd! what joy, what dread!
 Alternately transported and alarm'd!
 What can preserve my life, or what destroy?
 An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave;
 Legions of angels can't confine me there. 90

NIGHT PROCLAIMS THE SOUL IMMORTAL

'Tis past conjecture; all things rise in proof:
 While o'er my limbs sleep's soft dominion spread,
 What though my soul fantastic measures trod
 O'er fairy fields; or mourn'd along the gloom
 Of pathless woods; or down the craggy steep
 Hurl'd headlong, swam with pain the mantled pool;
 Or scaled the cliff; or danced on hollow winds,
 With antic shapes, wild natives of the brain?
 Her ceaseless flight, though devious, speaks her nature
 Of subtler essence than the trodden clod; 100
 Active, aërial, towering, unconfined,
 Unfetter'd with her gross companion's fall.
 Even silent night proclaims my soul immortal:
 Even silent night proclaims eternal day.
 For human weal, Heaven husbands all events;
 Dull sleep instructs, nor sport vain dreams in vain.

THE BURIED LIVE

Why then their loss deplore that are not lost?
 Why wanders wretched thought their tombs around,
 In infidel distress? Are angels there?
 Slumbers, raked up in dust, ethereal fire? 110
 They live! they greatly live a life on earth
 Unkindled, unconceived; and from an eye
 Of tenderness let heavenly pity fall
 On me, more justly number'd with the dead.
 This is the desert, this the solitude:
 How populous, how vital, is the grave!
 This is creation's melancholy vault,
 The vale funereal, the sad cypress gloom;
 The land of apparitions, empty shades!

All, all on earth, is shadow, all beyond 120
 Is substance; the reverse is Folly's creed:
 How solid all, where change shall be no more!

THIS LIFE, ONLY THE COMMENCEMENT OF BEING

This is the bud of being,⁴ the dim dawn,
 The twilight of our day, the vestibule;
 Life's theatre as yet is shut, and death,
 Strong death, alone can heave the massy bar,
 This gross impediment of clay remove,
 And make us embryos of existence free.
 From real life, but little more remote
 Is he, not yet a candidate for light, 130
 The future embryo, slumbering in his sire.
 Embryos we must be, till we burst the shell,
 Yon ambient azure shell, and spring to life,
 The life of gods, O transport! and of man.

THE BURIAL OF CELESTIAL HOPES

Yet man, fool man! here buries all his thoughts;
 Inters celestial hopes without one sigh.
 Prisoner of earth, and pent beneath the moon,
 Here pinions all his wishes; wing'd by heaven
 To fly at infinite; and reach it there, 140
 Where seraphs gather immortality,
 On life's fair tree, fast by the throne of God.
 What golden joys ambrosial clustering glow
 In His full beam, and ripen for the just,
 Where momentary ages are no more!
 Where time, and pain, and chance, and death, expire!
 And is it in the flight of threescore years
 To push eternity from human thought,
 And smother souls immortal in the dust?
 A soul immortal, spending all her fires,
 Wasting her strength in strenuous idleness 150
 Thrown into tumult, raptured, or alarm'd,
 At aught this scene can threaten or indulge,
 Resembles ocean into tempest wrought,
 To waft a feather, or to drown a fly.

⁴ 123. *bud of being*: The author employs a great variety of figures to convey forcibly the idea that in this life we have scarcely begun to live; that our principal career lies beyond the present scene of things.

Where falls this censure? It o'erwhelms myself;
 How was my heart encrusted by the world!
 O how self-fetter'd was my grovelling soul!
 How, like a worm, was I wrapt round and round
 In silken thought, which reptile fancy spun,
 Till darken'd Reason lay quite clouded o'er 160
 With soft conceit of endless comfort here,
 Nor yet put forth her wings to reach the skies!

WAKING DREAMS FATAL

Night-visions may befriend (as sung above):
 Our waking dreams are fatal. How I dream'd
 Of things impossible! (could sleep do more?)
 Of joys perpetual in perpetual change!
 Of stable pleasures on the tossing wave!
 Eternal sunshine in the storms of life!
 How richly were my noontide trances hung
 With gorgeous tapestries of pictured joys! 170
 Joy behind joy, in endless perspective!
 Till at death's toll, whose restless iron tongue
 Calls daily for his millions at a meal,
 Starting I woke, and found myself undone.
 Where now my phrensy's pompous furniture?
 The cobwebb'd cottage, with its ragged wall
 Of mouldering mud, is royalty to me!
 The spider's most attenuated thread
 Is cord, is cable, to man's tender tie
 On earthly bliss; it breaks at every breeze. 180

PERPETUITY ESSENTIAL TO BLISS

O ye blest scenes of permanent delight!
 Full above measure! lasting beyond bound!
 A perpetuity of bliss is bliss.
 Could you, so rich in rapture, fear an end,
 That ghastly thought would drink up all your joy,
 And quite unparadise the realms of light.
 Safe are you lodged above these rolling spheres;
 The baleful influence of whose giddy dance
 Sheds sad vicissitude on all beneath.
 Here teems with revolutions every hour; 190
 And rarely for the better; or the best,
 More mortal than the common births of fate.

Each moment has its sickle, emulous
 Of Time's enormous scythe, whose ample sweep
 Strikes empires from the root; each moment plays
 His little weapon in the narrower sphere
 Of sweet domestic comfort, and cuts down
 The fairest bloom of sublunary bliss.

Bliss! sublunary bliss!—proud words, and vain!
 Implicit treason to divine decree! 200
 A bold invasion of the rights of Heaven!
 I clasp'd the phantoms, and I found them air.
 Oh! had I weigh'd it ere my fond embrace,
 What darts of agony had miss'd my heart!

DOMESTIC GRIEFS

Death! great proprietor of all! 'tis thine
 To tread out empire, and to quench the stars.
 The sun himself by thy permission shines;
 And, one day, thou shalt pluck him from his sphere.
 Amid such mighty plunder, why exhaust
 Thy partial quiver on a mark so mean? 210
 Why thy peculiar rancour wreak'd on me?
 Insatiate archer! could not one suffice?
 Thy shaft flew thrice;⁵ and thrice my peace was slain;
 And thrice, ere thrice yon moon had fill'd her horn.
 O Cynthia!⁶ why so pale? dost thou lament
 Thy wretched neighbour? grieve to see thy wheel
 Of ceaseless change outwhirl'd in human life?
 How wanes my borrow'd bliss! from fortune's smile,
 Precarious courtesy! not virtue's sure,
 Self-given, solar ray of sound delight. 220

THE PAST CONTRASTED WITH THE PRESENT

In every varied posture, place, and hour,
 How widow'd every thought of every joy!
 Thought, busy thought! too busy for my peace!
 Through the dark postern of time long lapsed,
 Led softly, by the stillness of the night,
 Led, like a murderer, (and such it proves!)

⁵ 213. *thrice*: Referring to three personal losses the author suffered. See Introduction.

⁶ 215. *O Cynthia*: He addresses the moon, which received the name of Cynthia from the Latin poets (from Mount Cynthus on the island of Delos).

Strays (wretched rover!) o'er the pleasing past;
 In quest of wretchedness perversely strays;
 And finds all desert now; and meets the ghosts
 Of my departed joys; a numerous train! 230
 I rue the riches of my former fate;
 Sweet comfort's blasted clusters I lament;
 I tremble at the blessings once so dear;
 And every pleasure pains me to the heart.

Yet why complain? or why complain for one?
 Hangs out the sun his lustre but for me,
 The single man? Are angels all beside?
 I mourn for millions: 'tis the common lot;
 In this shape, or in that, has fate entail'd 240
 The mother's throes on all of woman born,
 Not more the children, than sure heirs, of pain.

EVILS THAT BESIEGE MANKIND

War, famine, pest, volcano, storm, and fire,
 Intestine broils, oppression, with her heart
 Wrapt up in triple brass, besiege mankind.
 God's image disinherited of day,
 Here, plunged in mines, forgets a sun was made.
 There, beings deathless as their haughty lord,
 Are hammer'd to the galling oar for life;
 And plough the winter's wave, and reap despair. 250
 Some, for hard masters, broken under arms,
 In battle lopp'd away, with half their limbs,
 Beg bitter bread through realms their valour saved,
 If so the tyrant, or his minion, doom.
 Want and incurable disease (fell pair!)
 On hopeless multitudes remorseless seize
 At once; and make a refuge of the grave.
 How groaning hospitals eject their dead!
 What numbers groan for sad admission there!
 What numbers, once in fortune's lap high-fed,
 Solicit the cold hand of charity! 260
 To shock us more, solicit it in vain!
 Ye silken sons of pleasure! since in pains
 Ye rue more modish visits, visit here,
 And breathe from your debauch: give, and reduce
 Surfeit's dominion o'er you: but so great
 Your impudence, you blush at what is right.

DISEASE AND DEATH ARE UNDISCRIMINATING.

Happy, did sorrow seize on such alone!
 Not prudence can defend, or virtue save;
 Disease invades the chastest temperance;
 And punishment the guiltless; and alarm, 270
 Through thickest shades pursues the fond of peace.
 Man's caution often into danger turns,
 And his guard falling, crushes him to death.
 Not happiness itself makes good her name!
 Our very wishes give us not our wish.
 How distant oft the thing we doat on most,
 From that for which we doat, felicity!
 The smoothest course of Nature has its pains;
 And truest friends, through error, wound our rest.
 Without misfortune, what calamities! 280
 And what hostilities, without a foe!
 Nor are foes wanting to the best on earth.
 But endless is the list of human ills,
 And sighs might sooner fail, than cause to sigh.

THE MAP OF EARTH, A TRUE MAP OF MAN

A part how small of the terraqueous globe
 Is tenanted by man! the rest a waste,
 Rocks, deserts, frozen seas, and burning sands:
 Wild haunts of monsters, poisons, stings, and death.
 Such is earth's melancholy map! But, far
 More sad! this earth is a true map of man. 290
 So bounded are its haughty lord's delights
 To woe's wide empire; where deep troubles toss,
 Loud sorrows howl, envenom'd passions bite,
 Ravenous calamities our vitals seize,
 And threatening fate wide opens to devour.

HUMAN HAPPINESS TRANSIENT

What then am I, who sorrow for myself?
 In age, in infancy, from others' aid
 Is all our hope; to teach us to be kind.
 That, Nature's first, last lesson to mankind;
 The selfish heart deserves the pain it feels; 300
 More generous sorrow, while it sinks, exalts;
 And conscious virtue mitigates the pang.
 Nor virtue, more than prudence, bids me give

Swoln thought a second channel; who divide,
 They weaken, too, the torrent of their grief.
 Take then, O world! thy much-indebted tear:
 How sad a sight is human happiness,
 To those whose thought can pierce beyond an hour!
 O thou! whate'er thou art, whose heart exults!
 Would'st thou I should congratulate thy fate? 310
 I know thou would'st; thy pride demands it from me.
 Let thy pride pardon, what thy nature needs,
 The salutary censure of a friend.
 Thou happy wretch! by blindness thou art blest;
 By dotage dandled to perpetual smiles.
 Know, smiler! at thy peril art thou pleased;
 Thy pleasure is the promise of thy pain.
 Misfortune, like a creditor severe,
 But rises in demand for her delay;
 She makes a scourge of past prosperity, 320
 To sting thee more, and double thy distress.

THE FAVOURS OF FORTUNE MAY JUSTLY CAUSE ALARM

Lorenzo, Fortune makes her court to thee,
 Thy fond heart dances, while the syren sings.
 Dear is thy welfare; think me not unkind;
 I would not damp, but to secure thy joys.
 Think not that fear is sacred to the storm:
 Stand on thy guard against the smiles of fate.
 Is Heaven tremendous in its frowns? Most sure;
 And in its favours formidable too:
 Its favours here are trials, not rewards; 330
 A call to duty, not discharge from care;
 And should alarm us, full as much as woes;
 Awake us to their cause, and consequence;
 O'er our scann'd conduct give a jealous eye,
 And make us tremble, weigh'd with our desert;
 Awe Nature's tumult, and chastise her joys,
 Lest, while we clasp, we kill them; nay, invert
 To worse than simple misery, their charms.
 Revolted joys, like foes in civil war,
 Like bosom friendships to resentment sour'd, 340
 With rage envenom'd rise against our peace.
 Beware what earth calls happiness; beware
 All joys, but joys that never can expire.
 Who builds on less than an immortal base,
 Fond as he seems, condemns his joys to death.

DEATH OF PHILANDER

Mine died with thee, Philander! thy last sigh
 Dissolved the charm; the disenchanting earth
 Lost all her lustre. Where her glittering towers?
 Her golden mountains, where? all darken'd down
 To naked waste; a dreary vale of tears: 350
 The great magician's dead! Thou poor, pale piece
 Of outcast earth, in darkness! what a change
 From yesterday! Thy darling hope so near
 (Long-labour'd prize!), O how ambition flush'd
 Thy glowing cheek! ambition truly great,
 Of virtuous praise. Death's subtle seed within
 (Sly, treacherous miner!), working in the dark,
 Smiled at thy well-concerted scheme, and beckon'd
 The worm to riot on that rose so red,
 Unfaded ere it fell; one moment's prey! 360

Man's foresight is conditionally wise;
 Lorenzo! wisdom into folly turns
 Oft, the first instant, its idea fair
 To labouring thought is born. How dim our eye!
 The present moment terminates our sight;
 Clouds thick as those on doomsday, drown the next;
 We penetrate, we prophesy in vain.
 Time is dealt out by particles; and each,
 Ere mingled with the streaming sands of life,
 By fate's inviolable oath is sworn 370
 Deep silence, "where eternity begins."

DANGER OF PROCRASTINATION

By Nature's law, what may be, may be now;
 There's no prerogative in human hours.
 In human hearts what bolder thought can rise,
 Than man's presumption on to-morrow's dawn!
 Where is to-morrow? In another world.
 For numbers this is certain; the reverse
 Is sure to none; and yet on this perhaps,
 This peradventure, infamous for lies,
 As on a rock of adamant, we build 380
 Our mountain hopes; spin out eternal schemes,
 As we the fatal sisters could out-spin,
 And, big with life's futurities, expire.

Not even Philander had bespoke his shroud;
 Nor had he cause; a warning was denied.
 How many fall as sudden, not as safe!
 As sudden, though for years admonish'd home.
 Of human ills the last extreme beware,
 Beware, Lorenzo! a slow sudden death.
 How dreadful that deliberate surprise! 390
 Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer;
 Next day the fatal precedent will plead;
 Thus on, till wisdom is push'd out of life.
 Procrastination is the thief of time;
 Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
 And to the mercies of a moment leaves
 The vast concerns of an eternal scene.
 If not so frequent, would not this be strange?
 That 'tis so frequent, this is stranger still.

DELUSIVE PROMISES OF REFORMATION

Of man's miraculous mistakes, this bears 400
 The palm, "That all men are about to live,"
 For ever on the brink of being born.
 All pay themselves the compliment to think
 They one day shall not drivel: and their pride
 On this reversion takes up ready praise;
 At least, their own; their future selves applaud;
 How excellent that life they ne'er will lead!
 Time lodged in their own hands is folly's vails;
 That lodged in fate's, to wisdom they consign;
 The thing they can't but purpose, they postpone; 410
 'Tis not in folly, not to scorn a fool;
 And scarce in human wisdom to do more.
 All promise is poor dilatory man,
 And that through every stage: when young, indeed,
 In full content we, sometimes, nobly rest,
 Unanxious for ourselves; and only wish,
 As duteous sons, our fathers were more wise.
 At thirty, man suspects himself a fool;
 Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan;
 At fifty, chides his infamous delay, 420
 Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve;
 In all the magnanimity of thought
 Resolves; and re-resolves; then dies the same.

ALL MEN ARE THOUGHT MORTAL BUT OURSELVES

And why? Because he thinks himself immortal.
 All men think all men mortal, but themselves:
 Themselves, when some alarming shock of fate
 Strikes through their wounded hearts the sudden dread;
 But their hearts wounded, like the wounded air,
 Soon close; where pass'd the shaft, no trace is found.
 As from the wing no scar the sky retains; 430
 The parted wave no furrow from the keel;
 So dies in human hearts the thought of death.
 Even with the tender tear which Nature sheds
 O'er those we love, we drop it in their grave.
 Can I forget Philander? That were strange!
 O my full heart!—But should I give it vent,
 The longest night, though longer far, would fail,
 And the lark listen to my midnight song.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE POETS

The sprightly lark's shrill matin wakes the morn;
 Grief's sharpest thorn hard pressing on my breast, 440
 I strive, with wakeful melody, to cheer
 The sullen gloom, sweet Philomel! like thee,
 And call the stars to listen: every star
 Is deaf to mine, enamour'd of thy lay.
 Yet be not vain; there are, who thine excel,
 And charm through distant ages: wrapt in shade,
 Prisoner of darkness! to the silent hours,
 How often I repeat their rage divine,
 To lull my griefs, and steal my heart from woe!
 I roll their raptures, but not catch their fire. 450
 Dark, though not blind, like thee, Mæonides!⁷
 Or, Milton! thee; ah, could I reach your strain!
 Or his, who made Mæonides our own.⁸
 Man too he sung: immortal man I sing;
 Oft bursts my song beyond the bounds of life;
 What, now, but immortality, can please?
 O had he press'd his theme, pursued the track,
 Which opens out of darkness into day!
 O had he, mounted on his wing of fire,

⁷ 451. *Mæonides!*: A name for Homer.

⁸ 453. *his, who made*: Alexander Pope, who translated Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey* into English.

Soar'd where I sink, and sung immortal man!
How had it bless'd mankind, and rescued me!

460

NIGHT SECOND
ON TIME, DEATH, AND FRIENDSHIP

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF WILMINGTON

“WHEN the cock crew, he wept”⁹—smote by that eye
Which looks on me, on all: that Power, who bids
This midnight sentinel, with clarion shrill
(Emblem of that which shall awake the dead),
Rouse souls from slumber, into thoughts of heaven.
Shall I too weep? Where then is fortitude?
And, fortitude abandon’d, where is man?
I know the terms on which he sees the light;
He that is born, is listed; life is war;
Eternal war with woe. Who bears it best, 10
Deserves it least.—On other themes I’ll dwell.
Lorenzo! let me turn my thoughts on thee,
And thine, on themes may profit; profit there,
Where most thy need; themes, too, the genuine growth
Of dear Philander’s dust. He thus, though dead,
May still befriend—what themes? Time’s wondrous price,
Death, friendship, and Philander’s final scene.

AVARICE OF TIME

So could I touch these themes, as might obtain
Thine ear, nor leave thy heart quite disengaged, 20
The good deed would delight me; half impress
On my dark cloud an Iris; and from grief
Call glory.—Dost thou mourn Philander’s fate?
I know thou say’st it: says thy life the same?
He mourns the dead, who lives as they desire.
Where is that thrift, that avarice of time,
(O glorious avarice!) thought of death inspires,
As rumour’d robberies endear our gold?
O time! than gold more sacred; more a load
Than lead to fools; and fools reputed wise.
What moment granted man without account? 30
What years are squander’d, wisdom’s debt unpaid!
Our wealth in days, all due to that discharge.

⁹ 1. "When the cock crew, he wept": From Luke 22:60–62, Peter's denial and remorse.

Haste, haste, he lies in wait, he's at the door,
 Insidious Death! should his strong hand arrest,
 No composition sets the prisoner free.
 Eternity's inexorable chain
 Fast binds; and vengeance claims the full arrear.

How late I shudder'd on the brink! how late
 Life call'd for her last refuge in despair!
 That time is mine, O Mead! to thee I owe; 40
 Fain would I pay thee with eternity.
 But ill my genius answers my desire;
 My sickly song is mortal, past thy cure.
 Accept the will;—that dies not with my strain.

For what calls thy disease, Lorenzo? not
 For Esculapian,¹⁰ but for moral aid.
 Thou think'st it folly to be wise too soon.
 Youth is not rich in time, it may be poor;
 Part with it as with money, sparing; pay
 No moment, but in purchase of its worth; 50
 And what its worth, ask death-beds; they can tell.
 Part with it as with life, reluctant; big
 With holy hope of nobler time to come;
 Time higher aim'd, still nearer the great mark
 Of men and angels; virtue more divine.

AMUSEMENT, THE UNIVERSAL DEMAND

Is this our duty, wisdom, glory, gain?
 (These Heaven benign in vital union binds)
 And sport we like the natives of the bough,
 When vernal suns inspire? Amusement reigns
 Man's great demand: to trifle, is to live: 60
 And is it then a trifle, too, to die?

Thou say'st I preach, Lorenzo! 'tis confess'd.
 What, if for once, I preach thee quite awake?
 Who wants amusement in the flame of battle?
 Is it not treason to the soul immortal,
 Her foes in arms, eternity the prize?
 Will toys amuse, when medicines cannot cure?
 When spirits ebb, when life's enchanting scenes

¹⁰ 46. *Esculapian*: Medical—a term borrowed from the name of the fabled god of medicine, Esculapius, or Aesculapius.

Their lustre lose, and lessen in our sight,
 As lands, and cities with their glittering spires, 70
 To the poor shatter'd bark, by sudden storm
 Thrown off to sea, and soon to perish there?
 Will toys amuse? No: thrones will then be toys,
 And earth and skies seem dust upon the scale.

LORENZO'S APOLOGY FOR A LIFE OF AMUSEMENT

Redeem we time?—its loss we dearly buy.
 What pleads Lorenzo for his high-prized sports?
 He pleads time's numerous blanks; he loudly pleads
 The straw-like trifles on life's common stream.
 From whom those blanks and trifles, but from thee?
 No blank, no trifle, Nature made, or meant. 80
 Virtue, or purposed virtue, still be thine;
 This cancels thy complaint at once, this leaves
 In act no trifle, and no blank in time.
 This greatens, fills, immortalizes all;
 This, the bless'd art of turning all to gold;
 This, the good heart's prerogative to raise
 A royal tribute from the poorest hours;
 Immense revenue! every moment pays.
 If nothing more than purpose in thy power;
 Thy purpose firm, is equal to the deed: 90
 Who does the best his circumstance allows,
 Does well, acts nobly; angels could no more.
 Our outward act, indeed, admits restraint;
 'Tis not in things o'er thought to domineer;
 Guard well thy thought; our thoughts are heard in heaven.

THE VAST IMPORTANCE OF TIME

On all-important time, through every age,
 Though much, and warm, the wise have urged; the man
 Is yet unborn, who duly weighs an hour.
 "I've lost a day"—the prince who nobly cried
 Had been an emperor without his crown; 100
 Of Rome? say, rather, lord of human race:
 He spoke, as if deputed by mankind.
 So should all speak; so Reason speaks in all:
 From the soft whispers of that God in man,
 Why fly to folly, why to phrensy fly,
 For rescue from the blessing we possess?
 Time the supreme!—Time is eternity;

Pregnant with all eternity can give;
 Pregnant with all that makes archangels smile.
 Who murders time, he crushes in the birth 110
 A power ethereal, only not adored.

PRODIGAL WASTE OF TIME

Ah! how unjust to Nature, and himself,
 Is thoughtless, thankless, inconsistent man!
 Like children babbling nonsense in their sports,
 We censure Nature for a span too short;
 That span too short, we tax as tedious too;
 Torture invention, all expedients tire,
 To lash the lingering moments into speed,
 And whirl us (happy riddance!) from ourselves.
 Art, brainless Art! our furious charioteer 120
 (For Nature's voice unstifled would recall),
 Drives headlong towards the precipice of death;
 Death, most our dread; death thus more dreadful made:
 Oh, what a riddle of absurdity!
 Leisure is pain; takes off our chariot wheels;¹¹
 How heavily we drag the load of life!
 Blest leisure is our curse; like that of Cain,
 It makes us wander; wander earth around,
 To fly that tyrant, thought. As Atlas groan'd
 The world beneath, we groan beneath an hour. 130
 We cry for mercy to the next amusement;
 The next amusement mortgages our fields;
 Slight inconvenience! prisons hardly frown,
 From hateful time if prisons set us free.
 Yet when Death kindly tenders us relief,
 We call him cruel; years to moments shrink,
 Ages to years. The telescope is turn'd.
 To man's false optics (from his folly false),
 Time, in advance, behind him hides his wings,
 And seems to creep, decrepit with his age; 140
 Behold him, when pass'd by; what then is seen,
 But his broad pinions swifter than the winds?
 And all mankind, in contradiction strong,
 Rueful, aghast! cry out on his career.

¹¹ 125. *Takes off our chariot-wheels*: An expression borrowed from Exodus 14:24-5. "And it came to pass that in the morning watch the Lord looked into the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels that they drove them heavily."

CAUSE AND CURE OF THE COMPLAINTS AGAINST TIME

Leave to thy foes these errors and these ills;
 To Nature just, their cause and cure explore.
 Not short Heaven's bounty, boundless our expence;
 No niggard, Nature; men are prodigals.
 We waste, not use our time; we breathe, not live.
 Time wasted is existence, used is life. 150
 And bare existence, man, to live ordain'd,
 Wrings, and oppresses with enormous weight.
 And why? since time was given for use, not waste,
 Enjoin'd to fly; with tempest, tide, and stars,
 To keep his speed, nor ever wait for man;
 Time's use was doom'd a pleasure: waste, a pain;
 That man might feel his error, if unseen:
 And, feeling, fly to labour for his cure;
 Not, blundering, split on idleness for ease.
 Life's cares are comforts; such by Heaven design'd; 160
 He that has none, must make them, or be wretched.
 Cares are employments; and without employ
 The soul is on a rack; the rack of rest,
 To souls most adverse; action all their joy.

Here then, the riddle, mark'd above, unfolds;
 Then time turns torment, when man turns a fool.
 We rave, we wrestle, with great Nature's plan;
 We thwart the Deity; and 'tis decreed,
 Who thwart his will shall contradict their own.
 Hence our unnatural quarrels with ourselves; 170
 Our thoughts at enmity; our bosom-broils;
 We push Time from us, and we wish him back;
 Lavish of lustrums, and yet fond of life;
 Life we think long, and short; death seek, and shun;
 Body and soul, like peevish man and wife,
 United jar, and yet are loth to part.

Oh the dark days of vanity! while here,
 How tasteless! and how terrible, when gone!
 Gone! they ne'er go; when past, they haunt us still;
 The spirit walks of every day deceased; 180
 And smiles an angel, or a fury frowns.
 Nor death, nor life delight us. If time past,
 And time possess'd, both pain us, what can please?
 That which the Deity to please ordain'd,
 Time used. The man who consecrates his hours

By vigorous effort, and an honest aim,
 At once he draws the sting of life and death;
 He walks with Nature; and her paths are peace.

TIME ITS NATURE, ORIGIN, AND SPEED

Our error's cause and cure are seen: see next
 Time's nature, origin, importance, speed; 190
 And thy great gain from urging his career.—
 All-sensual man, because untouch'd, unseen,
 He looks on time as nothing. Nothing else
 Is truly man's; 'tis fortune's.—Time's a god.
 Hast thou ne'er heard of Time's omnipotence?
 For, or against, what wonders he can do,
 And will? To stand blank neuter he disdains.
 Not on those terms was Time (Heaven's stranger!) sent
 On his important embassy to man.
 Lorenzo! no: on the long-destined hour, 200
 From everlasting ages growing ripe,
 That memorable hour of wondrous birth,
 When the Dread Sire, on emanation bent,
 And big with Nature, rising in his might,
 Call'd forth creation (for then Time was born),
 By Godhead streaming through a thousand worlds;
 Not on those terms, from the great days of heaven,
 From old Eternity's mysterious orb,
 Was Time cut off, and cast beneath the skies;
 The skies, which watch him in his new abode, 210
 Measuring his motions by revolving spheres;
 That horologe¹² machinery divine.
 Hours, days, and months, and years, his children play,
 Like numerous wings around him, as he flies:
 Or, rather, as unequal plumes, they shape
 His ample pinions, swift as darted flame,
 To gain his goal, to reach his ancient rest,
 And join anew Eternity his sire;
 In his immutability to nest,
 When worlds, that count his circles now, unhinged 220
 (Fate the loud signal sounding), headlong rush
 To timeless night and chaos, whence they rose.

Why spur the speedy? why with levities

¹² 212. *horologe*: Referring to machines, sometimes elaborate, for indicating time or planetary and zodiacal positions.

New wing thy short, short day's too rapid flight?
 Know'st thou, or what thou dost, or what is done?
 Man flies from time, and time from man; too soon
 In sad divorce this double flight must end:
 And then where are we? where, Lorenzo! then
 Thy sports? thy pomps?—I grant thee, in a state
 Not unambitious; in the ruffled shroud, 230
 Thy Parian tomb's triumphant arch beneath.
 Has Death his fopperies? Then well may life
 Put on her plume, and in her rainbow shine.

THE LORENZOS OF THE AGE

Ye well-array'd! ye lilies of our land!¹³
 Ye lilies male! who neither toil nor spin
 (As sister lilies might), if not so wise
 As Solomon, more sumptuous to the sight!
 Ye delicate! who nothing can support,
 Yourselves most insupportable! for whom
 The winter rose must blow, the sun put on 240
 A brighter beam in Leo; silky-soft
 Favonius¹⁴ breathe still softer, or be chid;
 And other worlds send odours, sauce, and song,
 And robes, and notions, framed in foreign looms!
 O ye Lorenzos of our age! who deem
 One moment unamused, a misery
 Not made for feeble man! who call aloud
 For every bauble drivell'd o'er by sense;
 For rattles, and conceits of every cast,
 For change of follies, and relays of joy, 250
 To drag your patient through the tedious length
 Of a short winter's day—say, sages! say,
 Wit's oracles! say, dreamers of gay dreams!
 How will you weather an eternal night,
 Where such expedients fail?

THE OPERATIONS OF CONSCIENCE

O treacherous Conscience! while she seems to sleep
 On rose and myrtle, lull'd with syren song;

¹³ 234. *lilies of our land*: From Matthew 6:28, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin."

¹⁴ 242. *Favonius*: The west wind which prevailed at the coming of spring. Also called *Zephyrus*, or *Zephyr*.

While she seems, nodding o'er her charge, to drop
 On headlong appetite the slacken'd rein,
 And give us up to licence, unrecall'd, 260
 Unmark'd;—see, from behind her secret stand,
 The sly informer minutes every fault,
 And her dread diary with horror fills.
 Not the gross act alone employs her pen;
 She reconnoitres fancy's airy band,
 A watchful foe! the formidable spy,
 Listening, o'erhears the whispers of our camp:
 Our dawning purposes of heart explores,
 And steals our embryos of iniquity.
 As all-rapacious usurers conceal 270
 Their doomsday-book from all-consuming heirs;
 Thus, with indulgence most severe, she treats
 Us spendthrifts of inestimable time;
 Unnoted, notes each moment misapplied;
 In leaves more durable than leaves of brass,
 Writes our whole history; which Death shall read
 In every pale delinquent's private ear;
 And Judgment publish; publish to more worlds
 Than this; and endless age in groans resound.
 Lorenzo, such that sleeper in thy breast! 280
 Such is her slumber; and her vengeance such
 For slighted counsel; such thy future peace!
 And think'st thou still thou canst be wise too soon?

TIME'S MOMENTOUS VALUE

But why on Time so lavish is my song?
 On this great theme kind Nature keeps a school,
 To teach her sons herself. Each night we die,
 Each morn are born anew: each day, a life!
 And shall we kill each day? If trifling kills;
 Sure vice must butcher. Oh, what heaps of slain
 Cry out for vengeance on us! Time destroy'd 290
 Is suicide, where more than blood is spilt.
 Time flies, Death urges, knells call, Heaven invites,
 Hell threatens: all exerts; in effort, all;
 More than creation labours!—labours more?
 And is there in creation what, amidst
 This tumult universal, wing'd despatch,
 And ardent energy, supinely yawns?—
 Man sleeps; and man alone; and man, whose fate,
 Fate irreversible, entire, extreme,

Endless, hair-hung, breeze-shaken, o'er the gulf 300
 A moment trembles; drops! and man, for whom
 All else is in alarm! man, the sole cause
 Of this surrounding storm! and yet he sleeps,
 As the storm rock'd to rest.—Throw years away?
 Throw empires, and be blameless. Moments seize;
 Heaven's on their wing: a moment we may wish,
 When worlds want wealth to buy. Bid Day stand still,
 Bid him drive back his car, and re-import
 The period past, re-give the given hour.
 Lorenzo, more than miracles we want; 310
 Lorenzo—O for yesterdays to come!

Such is the language of the man awake;
 His ardour such, for what oppresses thee.
 And is his ardour vain, Lorenzo? No;
 That more than miracle the gods indulge;
 To-day is yesterday return'd; return'd
 Full power'd to cancel, expiate, raise, adorn,
 And reinstate us on the rock of peace.
 Let it not share its predecessor's fate;
 Nor, like its elder sisters, die a fool. 320
 Shall it evaporate in fume? fly off
 Fuliginous, and stain us deeper still?
 Shall we be poorer for the plenty pour'd?
 More wretched for the clemencies of Heaven?

SMILING YESTERDAYS

Where shall I find him? Angels! tell me where.
 You know him: he is near you: point him out:
 Shall I see glories beaming from his brow?
 Or trace his footsteps by the rising flowers?
 Your golden wings, now hovering o'er him, shed
 Protection; now, are waving in applause 330
 To that bless'd son of foresight! lord of fate!
 That awful independent on to-morrow!
 Whose work is done; who triumphs in the past;
 Whose yesterdays look backwards with a smile;
 Nor, like the Parthian,¹⁵ wound him as they fly;
 That common but opprobrious lot! past hours,
 If not by guilt, yet wound us by their flight,

¹⁵ 335. *Parthian*: Ancient Parthian (Persian) cavalry were trained to shoot arrows at pursuing enemies during retreat.

If folly bounds our prospect by the grave,
 All feeling of futurity benumb'd;
 All god-like passion for eternals quench'd; 340
 All relish of realities expired;
 Renounced all correspondence with the skies;
 Our freedom chain'd; quite wingless our desire;
 In sense dark-prison'd all that ought to soar;
 Prone to the centre; crawling in the dust;
 Dismounted every great and glorious aim;
 Embruted every faculty divine;
 Heart-buried in the rubbish of the world.
 The world, that gulf of souls, immortal souls,
 Souls elevate, angelic, wing'd with fire 350
 To reach the distant skies, and triumph there
 On thrones, which shall not mourn their masters changed,
 Though we from earth; ethereal, they that fell.
 Such veneration due, O man, to man.

CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD

Who venerate themselves, the world despise.
 For what, gay friend! is this escutcheon'd world,¹⁶
 Which hangs out death in one eternal night?
 A night, that glooms us in the noontide ray,
 And wraps our thought, at banquets, in the shroud.
 Life's little stage is a small eminence, 360
 Inch-high the grave above; that home of man,
 Where dwells the multitude: we gaze around;
 We read their monuments; we sigh; and while
 We sigh, we sink; and are what we deplored;
 Lamenting, or lamented, all our lot!

PAST HOURS

Is Death at distance? No: he has been on thee;
 And given sure earnest of his final blow.
 These hours that lately smiled, where are they now?
 Pallid to thought, and ghastly! drown'd, all drown'd
 In that great deep, which nothing disembogues! 370
 And, dying, they bequeathed thee small renown.
 The rest are on the wing: how fleet their flight!

¹⁶ 356. *escutcheon'd world*: Gay, ornamented world. In the days of chivalry knights were distinguished from each other by the emblems or devices imprinted on their escutcheon (shield).

Already has the fatal train took fire;
 A moment, and the world's blown up to thee;
 The sun is darkness, and the stars are dust.

'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours;
 And ask them, what report they bore to heaven;
 And how they might have borne more welcome news.
 Their answers form what men experience call;
 If Wisdom's friend, her best; if not, worst foe. 380
 "Oh, reconcile them!" kind Experience cries;
 "There's nothing here, but what as nothing weighs;
 The more our joy, the more we know it vain;
 And by success are tutor'd to despair."
 Nor is it only thus, but must be so.
 Who knows not this, though grey, is still a child.
 Loose then from earth the grasp of fond desire,
 Weigh anchor, and some happier clime explore.

THE SUN-DIAL ADMONISHES

Art thou so moor'd thou canst not disengage,
 Nor give thy thoughts a ply to future scenes? 390
 Since, by life's passing breath, blown up from earth,
 Light as the summer's dust, we take in air
 A moment's giddy flight, and fall again;
 Join the dull mass, increase the trodden soil,
 And sleep, till earth herself shall be no more;
 Since then (as emmets, their small world o'erthrown)
 We, sore-amazed, from out earth's ruins crawl,
 And rise to fate extreme of foul or fair,
 As man's own choice (controller of the skies!)
 As man's despotic will, perhaps one hour 400
 (O how omnipotent is time!) decrees;
 Should not each warning give a strong alarm?
 Warning, far less than that of bosom torn
 From bosom, bleeding o'er the sacred dead!
 Should not each dial strike us as we pass,
 Portentous, as the written wall, which struck,
 O'er midnight bowls, the proud Assyrian pale,¹⁷
 Erewhile high-flush'd, with insolence, and wine?
 Like that, the dial speaks; and points to thee,
 Lorenzo! loth to break thy banquet up: 410
 "O man, thy kingdom is departing from thee;

¹⁷ 407. *proud Assyrian pale*: The Assyrian monarch, Belshazzar.

And, while it lasts, is emptier than my shade.”
 Its silent language such: nor need'st thou call
 Thy Magi, to decipher what it means.
 Know, like the Median, fate is in thy walls:
 Dost ask, How? Whence? Belshazzar-like, amazed?
 Man's make encloses the sure seeds of death;
 Life feeds the murderer: ingrate! he thrives
 On her own meal, and then his nurse devours.

ALL MISTAKE THEIR TIME OF DAY

But, here, Lorenzo, the delusion lies; 420
 That solar shadow, as it measures life,
 It life resembles too: life speeds away
 From point to point, though seeming to stand still.
 The cunning fugitive is swift by stealth:
 Too subtle is the movement to be seen;
 Yet soon man's hour is up, and we are gone.
 Warnings point out our danger; gnomons,¹⁸ time:
 As these are useless when the sun is set:
 So those, but when more glorious Reason shines.
 Reason should judge in all; in Reason's eye, 430
 That sedentary shadow travels hard.
 But such our gravitation to the wrong,
 So prone our hearts to whisper what we wish,
 'Tis later with the wise than he's aware:
 A Wilmington goes slower than the sun:
 And all mankind mistake their time of day;
 Even age itself. Fresh hopes are hourly sown
 In furrow'd brows. To gentle life's descent
 We shut our eyes, and think it is a plain.
 We take fair days in winter, for the spring; 440
 And turn our blessings into bane. Since oft
 Man must compute that age he cannot feel,
 He scarce believes he's older for his years.
 Thus, at life's latest eve, we keep in store
 One disappointment sure, to crown the rest;
 The disappointment of a promised hour.

¹⁸ 427. *gnomons*: The gnomon is the index or pin which casts a shadow on the sun-dial.

UTILITY OF RATIONAL CONVERSATION

On this, or similar, Philander! thou,
 Whose mind was moral, as the preacher's tongue;
 And strong, to wield all science, worth the name;
 How often we talk'd down the summer's sun, 450
 And cool'd our passions by the breezy stream!
 How often thaw'd and shorten'd winter's eve,
 By conflict kind, that struck out latent truth,
 Best found, so sought; to the recluse more coy!
 Thoughts disentangle passing o'er the lip;
 Clean runs the thread; if not, 'tis thrown away,
 Or kept to tie up nonsense for a song;
 Song, fashionably fruitless; such as stains
 The fancy, and unhallow'd passion fires;
 Chiming her saints to Cytherea's fane.¹⁹ 460

Know'st thou, Lorenzo! what a friend contains?
 As bees mix'd nectar draw from fragrant flowers,
 So men from friendship, wisdom and delight;
 Twins tied by Nature, if they part, they die.
 Hast thou no friend to set thy mind abroad?
 Good sense will stagnate. Thoughts shut up, want air,
 And spoil, like bales unopen'd to the sun.
 Had thought been all, sweet speech had been denied;
 Speech, thought's canal! speech, thought's criterion too!
 Thought in the mine, may come forth gold, or dross; 470
 When coin'd in words, we know its real worth.
 If sterling, store it for thy future use;
 'Twill buy thee benefit; perhaps, renown.
 Thought, too, deliver'd, is the more possess'd;
 Teaching, we learn; and, giving, we retain
 The births of intellect; when dumb, forgot.
 Speech ventilates our intellectual fire;
 Speech burnishes our mental magazine;
 Brightens, for ornament; and whets, for use.
 What numbers, sheathed in erudition, lie, 480
 Plunged to the hilts in venerable tomes,
 And rusted in; who might have borne an edge,
 And play'd a sprightly beam, if born to speech;
 If born bless'd heirs of half their mother's tongue!
 'Tis thought's exchange, which, like th' alternate push

¹⁹ 460 *Cytherea*: Aphrodite (Venus), from Cythera, one of the Ionian Islands, where she was worshipped. *fane*. archaic term for a temple or shrine

Of waves conflicting, breaks the learned scum,
And defecates the student's standing pool.

In contemplation is his proud resource?
'Tis poor, as proud, by converse unsustain'd.
Rude thought runs wild in contemplation's field; 490
Converse, the menage, breaks it to the bit
Of due restraint; and emulation's spur
Gives graceful energy, by rivals awed.
'Tis converse qualifies for solitude;
As exercise, for salutary rest.
By that untutor'd, contemplation raves;
And Nature's fool, by wisdom is undone.

FRIENDSHIP

Wisdom, though richer than Peruvian mines,
And sweeter than the sweet ambrosial hive,
What is she, but the means of happiness? 500
That unobtain'd, than folly more a fool;
A melancholy fool, without her bells.
Friendship, the means of wisdom, richly gives
The precious end, which makes our wisdom wise.
Nature, in zeal for human amity,
Denies, or damps, an undivided joy.
Joy is an import; joy is an exchange;
Joy flies monopolists: it calls for two;
Rich fruit! heaven-planted! never pluck'd by one.
Needful auxiliars are our friends, to give 510
To social man true relish of himself.
Full on ourselves, descending in a line,
Pleasure's bright beam is feeble in delight:
Delight intense, is taken by rebound;
Reverberated pleasures fire the breast.

Celestial happiness, whene'er she stoops
To visit earth, one shrine the goddess finds,
And one alone, to make her sweet amends
For absent heaven—the bosom of a friend;
Where heart meets heart, reciprocally soft, 520
Each other's pillow to repose divine.
Beware the counterfeit: in passion's flame
Hearts melt, but melt like ice, soon harder froze.
True love strikes root in Reason; passion's foe:
Virtue alone entenders us for life:

I wrong her much—entenders us for ever:
 Of friendship's fairest fruits, the fruit most fair
 Is virtue kindling at a rival fire,
 And, emulously, rapid in her race.
 O the soft enmity! endearing strife! 530
 This carries friendship to her noontide point,
 And gives the rivet of eternity.

From friendship, which outlives my former themes,
 Glorious survivor of old time and death;
 From friendship, thus, that flower of heavenly seed,
 The wise extract earth's most Hyblean bliss,
 Superior wisdom, crown'd with smiling joy.

But for whom blossoms this Elysian flower?
 Abroad they find, who cherish it at home.
 Lorenzo! pardon what my love extorts, 540
 An honest love, and not afraid to frown.
 Though choice of follies fasten on the great,
 None clings more obstinate, than fancy, fond
 That sacred friendship is their easy prey;
 Caught by the wafture of a golden lure,
 Or fascination of a high-born smile.
 Their smiles, the great, and the coquette, throw out
 For others' hearts, tenacious of their own;
 And we no less of ours, when such the bait.
 Ye fortune's cofferers! ye powers of wealth! 550
 Can gold gain friendship? Impudence of hope!
 As well mere man an angel might beget.
 Love, and love only, is the loan for love.
 Lorenzo! pride repress; nor hope to find
 A friend, but what has found a friend in thee.
 All like the purchase; few the price will pay;
 And this makes friends such miracles below.

What if (since daring on so nice a theme)
 I show thee friendship delicate, as dear,
 Of tender violations apt to die? 560
 Reserve will wound it; and distrust, destroy.
 Deliberate on all things with thy friend.
 But since friends grow not thick on every bough,
 Nor every friend unrotten at the core;
 First, on thy friend, deliberate with thyself;
 Pause, ponder, sift; not eager in the choice,
 Nor jealous of the chosen; fixing, fix;

Judge before friendship, then confide till death.
 Well, for thy friend; but nobler far for thee;
 How gallant danger for earth's highest prize! 570
 A friend is worth all hazards we can run.
 "Poor is the friendless master of a world:
 A world in purchase for a friend is gain."

So sung he (angels hear that angel sing!
 Angels from friendship gather half their joy),
 So sung Philander, as his friend went round
 In the rich ichor, in the generous blood
 Of Bacchus, purple god of joyous wit,
 A brow solute, and ever-laughing eye. 580
 He drank long health, and virtue, to his friend;
 His friend, who warm'd him more, who more inspired.
 Friendship's the wine of life; but friendship new
 (Not such was his) is neither strong, nor pure.
 O for the bright complexion, cordial warmth,
 And elevating spirit, of a friend,
 For twenty summers ripening by my side;
 All feculence of falsehood long thrown down;
 All social virtues rising in his soul;
 As crystal clear; and smiling, as they rise! 590
 Here nectar flows; it sparkles in our sight;
 Rich to the taste, and genuine from the heart.
 High-flavour'd bliss for gods! on earth how rare!
 On earth how lost!—Philander is no more.

Think'st thou the theme intoxicates my song?
 Am I too warm?—Too warm I cannot be.
 I loved him much; but now I love him more.
 Like birds, whose beauties languish, half-conceal'd, 597
 Till, mounted on the wing, their glossy plumes
 Expanded shine with azure, green, and gold;
 How blessings brighten as they take their flight! 600
 His flight Philander took; his upward flight,
 If ever soul ascended. Had he dropp'd
 (That eagle genius!), oh! had he let fall
 One feather as he flew; I, then, had wrote,
 What friends might flatter; prudent foes forbear;
 Rivals scarce damn; and Zoilus reprieve.
 Yet what I can, I must: it were profane
 To quench a glory lighted at the skies,
 And cast in shadows his illustrious close.
 Strange! the theme most affecting, most sublime, 610

Momentous most to man, should sleep unsung!
 And yet it sleeps, by genius unawaked,
 Paynim or Christian; to the blush of wit.
 Man's highest triumph! man's profoundest fall!
 The death-bed of the just! is yet undrawn
 By mortal hand; it merits a divine:
 Angels should paint it, angels ever there;
 There, on a post of honour, and of joy.

DEATHBED OF THE JUST

Dare I presume, then? But Philander bids;
 And glory tempts, and inclination calls— 620
 Yet am I struck; as struck the soul, beneath
 Aërial groves' impenetrable gloom;
 Or, in some mighty ruin's solemn shade;
 Or, gazing by pale lamps on high-born dust,
 In vaults; thin courts of poor unflatter'd kings;
 Or, at the midnight altar's hallow'd flame.
 Is it religion to proceed? I pause—
 And enter, awed, the temple of my theme.
 Is it his death-bed? No: it is his shrine:
 Behold him, there, just rising to a god. 630

The chamber where the good man meets his fate,
 Is privileged beyond the common walk
 Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven.

Fly, ye profane! if not, draw near with awe,
 Receive the blessing, and adore the chance,
 That threw in this Bethesda your disease;
 If unrestored by this, despair your cure.
 For here, resistless demonstration dwells;
 A death-bed's a detector of the heart.
 Here tired Dissimulation drops her mask, 640
 Through life's grimace, that mistress of the scene!
 Here real and apparent are the same.
 You see the man; you see his hold on heaven;
 If sound his virtue; as Philander's, sound.
 Heaven waits not the last moment; owns her friends
 On this side death; and points them out to men,
 A lecture, silent, but of sovereign power!
 To vice, confusion; and to virtue, peace.



*The chamber where the good man meets his fate,
Is privileged beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven.*

(Night 2, 631)

Whatever farce the boastful hero plays,
Virtue alone has majesty in death; 650
And greater still, the more the tyrant frowns.
Philander! he severely frown'd on thee.
"No warning given! Unceremonious fate!
A sudden rush from life's meridian joy!
A wrench from all we love! from all we are!
A restless bed of pain! a plunge opaque
Beyond conjecture! feeble Nature's dread!
Strong Reason's shudder at the dark unknown!
A sun extinguish'd! a just opening grave!
And, oh! the last, last, what? (can words express? 660
Thought reach it?)—the last—silence of a friend!"
Where are those horrors, that amazement, where,
This hideous group of ills, which singly shock,
Demand from man?—I thought him man till now.

Through Nature's wreck, through vanquish'd agonies

(Like the stars struggling through this midnight gloom),
What gleams of joy! what more than human peace!
Where, the frail mortal? the poor abject worm?
No, not in death, the mortal to be found.
His conduct is a legacy for all; 670
Richer than Mammon's for his single heir.
His comforters he comforts; great in ruin,
With unreluctant grandeur, gives, not yields,
His soul sublime; and closes with his fate.

How our hearts burn'd within us at the scene!
Whence this brave bound o'er limits fix'd to man?
His God sustains him in his final hour!
His final hour brings glory to his God!
Man's glory Heaven vouchsafes to call her own.
We gaze, we weep; mix'd tears of grief and joy! 680
Amazement strikes! devotion bursts to flame!
Christians adore! and infidels believe!

As some tall tower, or lofty mountain's brow,
Detains the sun, illustrious, from its height;
While rising vapours, and descending shades,
With damps, and darkness, drown the spacious vale;
Undamp'd by doubt, undarken'd by despair,
Philander, thus, augustly rears his head,
At that black hour, which general horror sheds
On the low level of th' inglorious throng: 690
Sweet peace, and heavenly hope, and humble joy,
Divinely beam on his exalted soul;
Destruction gild, and crown him for the skies,
With incommunicable lustre, bright.

Thou, who didst lately borrow Cynthia's form,²¹
 And modestly forego thine own! O thou, 30
 Who didst thyself at midnight hours inspire!
 Say, why not Cynthia patroness of song?
 As thou her crescent, she thy character
 Assumes; still more a goddess by the change.

Are there demurring wits, who dare dispute
 This revolution in the world inspired?
 Ye train Pierian!²² to the lunar sphere,
 In silent hour address your ardent call
 For aid immortal; less her brother's right.
 She, with the spheres harmonious, nightly leads 40
 The mazy dance, and hears their matchless strain;
 A strain for gods, denied to mortal ear.
 Transmit it heard, thou silver Queen of Heaven!
 What title, or what name, endears thee most?
 Cynthia! Cyllene! Phœbe!—or dost hear
 With higher gust, fair P——d of the skies?
 Is that the soft enchantment calls thee down,
 More powerful than of old Circean²³ charm?
 Come; but from heavenly banquets with thee bring
 The soul of song, and whisper in my ear 50
 The theft divine; or in propitious dreams
 (For dreams are thine) transfuse it through the breast
 Of thy first votary—but not thy last;
 If, like thy namesake, thou art ever kind.

DEATH OF NARCISSA

And kind thou wilt be; kind on such a theme;
 A theme so like thee, a quite lunar theme,
 Soft, modest, melancholy, female, fair!
 A theme that rose all pale, and told my soul,
 'Twas Night; on her fond hopes perpetual night;
 A night which struck a damp, a deadlier damp, 60
 Than that which smote me from Philander's tomb.
 Narcissa follows, ere his tomb is closed.
 Woes cluster; rare are solitary woes;

²¹ 29. *Cynthia's form*: The Duchess of Portland, to whom this "Night" is dedicated, is said to have attended the Duke of Norfolk's masquerade as the moon goddess, Artemis.

²² 37. *Ye train Pierian*: The nine Muses. They were associated with the Pierian Spring of Macedonia.

²³ 48. *Circean*: Referring to Circe, the sorceress of the *Odyssey*.

They love a train, they tread each other's heel;
 Her death invades his mournful right, and claims
 The grief that started from my lids for him:
 Seizes the faithless, alienated tear,
 Or shares it, ere it falls. So frequent Death,
 Sorrow he more than causes, he confounds;
 For human sighs his rival strokes contend, 70
 And make distress, distraction. Oh, Philander!
 What was thy fate? A double fate to me;
 Portent, and pain! a menace, and a blow!
 Like the black raven hovering o'er my peace,
 Not less a bird of omen, than of prey.
 It call'd Narcissa long before her hour;
 It call'd her tender soul, by break of bliss,
 From the first blossom, from the buds of joy;
 Those few our noxious fate unblasted leaves
 In this inclement clime of human life. 80

Sweet harmonist! and beautiful as sweet!
 And young as beautiful! and soft as young!
 And gay as soft! and innocent as gay!
 And happy (if aught happy here) as good!
 For fortune fond had built her nest on high.
 Like birds quite exquisite of note and plume,
 Transfix'd by fate (who loves a lofty mark),
 How from the summit of the grove she fell,
 And left it unharmonious! all its charms
 Extinguish'd in the wonders of her song! 90
 Her song still vibrates in my ravish'd ear,
 Still melting there, and with voluptuous pain
 (O to forget her!) thrilling through my heart!

Song, beauty, youth, love, virtue, joy! this group
 Of bright ideas, flowers of paradise,
 As yet unforfeit! in one blaze we bind,
 Kneel, and present it to the skies; as all
 We guess of heaven: and these were all her own.
 And she was mine; and I was—was!—most blest!—
 Gay title of the deepest misery! 100
 As bodies grow more ponderous, robb'd of life;
 Good lost weighs more in grief, than gain'd, in joy.
 Like blossom'd trees o'erturn'd by vernal storm,
 Lovely in death the beauteous ruin lay;
 And if in death still lovely, lovelier there;
 Far lovelier! pity swells the tide of love.

And will not the severe excuse a sigh?
 Scorn the proud man that is ashamed to weep;
 Our tears indulged, indeed deserve our shame.
 Ye that e'er lost an angel! pity me. 110

Soon as the lustre languish'd in her eye,
 Dawning a dimmer day on human sight;
 And on her cheek, the residence of spring,
 Pale omen sat; and scatter'd fears around
 On all that saw; (and who would cease to gaze,
 That once had seen?) with haste, parental haste,
 I flew, I snatch'd her from the rigid north,
 Her native bed, on which bleak Boreas blew,
 And bore her nearer to the sun;²⁴ the sun
 (As if the sun could envy) check'd his beam, 120
 Denied his wonted succour; nor with more
 Regret beheld her drooping, than the bells
 Of lilies; fairest lilies, not so fair!

Queen lilies! and ye painted populace!
 Who dwell in fields, and lead ambrosial lives;
 In morn and evening dew your beauties bathe,
 And drink the sun; which gives your cheeks to glow,
 And out-blush (mine excepted) every fair;
 You gladlier grew, ambitious of her hand,
 Which often cropp'd your odours, incense meet 130
 To thought so pure! Ye lovely fugitives!
 Coeval race with man! for man you smile;
 Why not smile at him too? You share indeed
 His sudden pass; but not his constant pain.

So man is made, nought ministers delight,
 By what his glowing passions can engage;
 And glowing passions, bent on aught below,
 Must, soon or late, with anguish turn the scale;
 And anguish, after rapture, how severe!
 Rapture? Bold man! who tempts the wrath divine, 140
 By plucking fruit denied to mortal taste,
 While here, presuming on the rights of heaven.
 For transport dost thou call on every hour,
 Lorenzo? At thy friend's expense be wise;
 Lean not on earth; 'twill pierce thee to the heart;

²⁴ 19. *Nearer to the sun*: The author accompanied his ill step-daughter on a journey to Nice, France; she died enroute, in Lyons.

A broken reed, at best; but, oft, a spear;
On its sharp point peace bleeds, and hope expires.

THE BURIAL OF NARCISSA

Turn, hopeless thought! turn from her:—thought repell'd
Resenting rallies, and wakes every woe.
Snatch'd ere thy prime! and in thy bridal hour! 150
And when kind fortune, with thy lover, smiled!
And when high flavour'd thy fresh opening joys!
And when blind man pronounced thy bliss complete!
And on a foreign shore; where strangers wept!
Strangers to thee; and, more surprising still,
Strangers to kindness, wept: their eyes let fall
Inhuman tears: strange tears! that trickled down
From marble hearts! obdurate tenderness!
A tenderness that call'd them more severe;
In spite of Nature's soft persuasion, steel'd; 160
While Nature melted, superstition raved;
That mourn'd the dead; and this denied a grave.

Their sighs incensed; sighs foreign to the will!
Their will the tiger suck'd, outraged the storm.
For oh! the cursed ungodliness of zeal!
While sinful flesh relented, spirit nursed
In blind infallibility's embrace,
The sainted spirit petrified the breast;
Denied the charity of dust, to spread
O'er dust! a charity their dogs enjoy. 170
What could I do? what succour? what resource?
With pious sacrilege, a grave I stole;
With impious piety, that grave I wrong'd;
Short in my duty; coward in my grief!
More like her murderer, than friend, I crept,
With soft-suspended step, and muffled deep
In midnight darkness, whisper'd my last sigh.
I whisper'd what should echo through their realms;
Nor writ her name, whose tomb should pierce the skies.
Presumptuous fear! How durst I dread her foes, 180
While Nature's loudest dictates I obey'd?
Pardon necessity, bless'd shade! of grief
And indignation rival bursts I pour'd;
Half execration mingled with my prayer;
Kindled at man, while I his God adored;
Sore grudged the savage land her sacred dust;

Stamp'd the cursed soil; and with humanity
(Denied Narcissa) wish'd them all a grave.

Glows my resentment into guilt? What guilt
Can equal violations of the dead? 190
The dead how sacred! Sacred is the dust
Of this heaven-labour'd form, erect, divine!
This heaven-assumed majestic robe of earth,
He deign'd to wear, who hung the vast expanse
With azure bright, and clothed the sun in gold.
When every passion sleeps that can offend;
When strikes us every motive that can melt;
When man can wreak his rancour uncontroll'd,
That strongest curb on insult and ill-will;
Then, spleen to dust? the dust of innocence? 200
An angel's dust?—This Lucifer transcends;
When he contended for the patriarch's bones,
'Twas not the strife of malice, but of pride;
The strife of pontiff pride, not pontiff gall.

MAN, TO MAN THE SOREST ILL

Far less than this is shocking in a race
Most wretched, but from streams of mutual love;
And uncreated, but for love divine;
And, but for love divine, this moment, lost,
By fate resorb'd, and sunk in endless night. 210
Man hard of heart to man! of horrid things
Most horrid! 'mid stupendous, highly strange!
Yet oft his courtesies are smoother wrongs;
Pride brandishes the favours He confers,
And contumelious his humanity:
What then his vengeance? Hear it not, ye stars!
And thou, pale moon! turn paler at the sound;
Man is to man the sorest, surest ill.
A previous blast foretells the rising storm;
O'erwhelming turrets threaten ere they fall;
Volcanos bellow ere they disembogue; 220
Earth trembles ere her yawning jaws devour;
And smoke betrays the wide-consuming fire:
Ruin from man is most conceal'd when near,
And sends the dreadful tidings in the blow.
Is this the flight of fancy? Would it were!
Heaven's Sovereign saves all beings, but himself,
That hideous sight, a naked human heart.

Fired is the Muse? And let the Muse be fired:
 Who not inflamed, when what he speaks, he feels,
 And in the nerve most tender, in his friends? 230
 Shame to mankind! Philander had his foes;
 He felt the truths I sing, and I in him.
 But he, nor I, feel more: past ills, Narcissa!
 Are sunk in thee, thou recent wound of heart!
 Which bleeds with other cares, with other pangs;
 Pangs numerous, as the numerous ills that swarm'd
 O'er thy distinguish'd fate, and, clustering there
 Thick as the locusts on the land of Nile,
 Made death more deadly, and more dark the grave.
 Reflect (if not forgot my touching tale) 240
 How was each circumstance with aspics arm'd?
 An aspic, each! and all, a hydra woe:
 What strong Herculean virtue could suffice?—
 Or is it virtue to be conquer'd here?
 This hoary cheek a train of tears bedews;
 And each tear mourns its own distinct distress;
 And each distress, distinctly mourn'd, demands
 Of grief still more, as heighten'd by the whole.
 A grief like this proprietors excludes:
 Not friends alone such obsequies deplore; 250
 They make mankind the mourner; carry sighs
 Far as the fatal fame can wing her way;
 And turn the gayest thought of gayest age,
 Down their right channel, through the vale of death.

THE VALE OF DEATH

The vale of death! that hush'd Cimmerian vale,
 Where darkness, brooding o'er unfinish'd fates
 With raven wing incumbent, waits the day
 (Dread day!) that interdicts all future change!
 That subterranean world, that land of ruin!
 Fit walk, Lorenzo, for proud human thought! 260
 There let my thought expatiate, and explore
 Balsamic truths, and healing sentiments,
 Of all most wanted, and most welcome, here.
 For gay Lorenzo's sake, and for thy own,
 My soul! "the fruits of dying friends survey;
 Expose the vain of life; weigh life and death;
 Give death his eulogy; thy fear subdue;
 And labour that first palm of noble minds,

A manly scorn of terror from the tomb.”

HARVEST GATHERED FROM THE GRAVE

This harvest reap from thy Narcissa's grave. 270
 As poets feign'd from Ajax' streaming blood²⁵
 Arose, with grief inscribed, a mournful flower;
 Let wisdom blossom from my mortal wound.
 And first, of dying friends; what fruit from these?
 It brings us more than triple aid; an aid
 To chase our thoughtlessness, fear, pride, and guilt.

Our dying friends come o'er us like a cloud,
 To damp our brainless ardours; and abate
 That glare of life, which often blinds the wise.
 Our dying friends are pioneers, to smooth 280
 Our rugged pass to death; to break those bars
 Of terror, and abhorrence, Nature throws
 Cross our obstructed way; and, thus to make
 Welcome, as safe, our port from every storm.
 Each friend by fate snatch'd from us, is a plume
 Pluck'd from the wing of human vanity,
 Which makes us stoop from our aërial heights,
 And, damp'd with omen of our own decease,
 On drooping pinions of ambition lower'd,
 Just skim earth's surface, ere we break it up, 290
 O'er putrid earth to scratch a little dust,
 And save the world a nuisance. Smitten friends
 Are angels sent on errands full of love;
 For us they languish, and for us they die:
 And shall they languish, shall they die, in vain?
 Ungrateful, shall we grieve their hovering shades,
 Which wait the revolution in our hearts?
 Shall we disdain their silent soft address;
 Their posthumous advice, and pious prayer?
 Senseless, as herds that graze their hallow'd graves, 300
 Tread under foot their agonies and groans;
 Frustrate their anguish, and destroy their deaths?

Lorenzo! no; the thought of death indulge;

²⁵ 271. *from Ajax' streaming blood*: Next to Achilles, Ajax was the bravest and most impetuous of the Greeks engaged in the Trojan war. He committed suicide by stabbing himself in the heart. The blood that flowed from the wound is fabled to have produced the flower hyacinthus, of a red color.

Give it its wholesome empire! let it reign,
 That kind chastiser of thy soul in joy!
 Its reign will spread thy glorious conquests far,
 And still the tumults of thy ruffled breast:
 Auspicious era! golden days, begin!
 The thought of death shall, like a god, inspire.
 And why not think on death? Is life the theme 310
 Of every thought? and wish of every hour?
 And song of every joy? Surprising truth!
 The beaten spaniel's fondness not so strange.
 To wave the numerous ills that seize on life
 As their own property, their lawful prey;
 Ere man has measured half his weary stage,
 His luxuries have left him no reserve,
 No maiden relishes, unbroach'd delights;
 On cold served repetitions he subsists,
 And in the tasteless present chews the past; 320
 Disgusted chews, and scarce can swallow down.
 Like lavish ancestors, his earlier years
 Have disinherited his future hours,
 Which starve on orts, and glean their former field.

ON THE THOUGHT OF LIVING ALWAYS ON EARTH

Live ever here, Lorenzo?—shocking thought!
 So shocking, they who wish, disown it too;
 Disown from shame what they from folly crave.
 Live ever in the womb, nor see the light?
 For what live ever here?—With labouring step 330
 To tread our former footsteps? pace the round
 Eternal? to climb life's worn, heavy wheel,
 Which draws up nothing new? to beat, and beat
 The beaten track? to bid each wretched day
 The former mock? to surfeit on the same,
 And yawn our joys? or thank a misery
 For change, though sad? to see what we have seen?
 Hear, till unheard, the same old slabber'd tale?
 To taste the tasted, and at each return
 Less tasteful? o'er our palates to decant 340
 Another vintage? strain a flatter year,
 Through loaded vessels, and a laxer tone?
 Crazy machines to grind earth's wasted fruits!
 Ill-ground, and worse concocted! load, not life!
 The rational foul kennels of excess!
 Still-streaming thoroughfares of dull debauch!

Trembling each gulp, lest death should snatch the bowl.

Such of our fine ones is the wish refined!
 So would they have it: elegant desire!
 Why not invite the bellowing stalls, and wilds?
 But such examples might their riot awe. 350
 Through want of virtue, that is, want of thought
 (Though on bright thought they father all their flights),
 To what are they reduced? To love, and hate,
 The same vain world; to censure, and espouse,
 This painted shrew of life, who calls them fool
 Each moment of each day; to flatter bad
 Through dread of worse; to cling to this rude rock,
 Barren, to them, of good, and sharp with ills,
 And hourly blacken'd with impending storms,
 And infamous for wrecks of human hope— 360
 Scared at the gloomy gulf, that yawns beneath,
 Such are their triumphs! such their pangs of joy!

'Tis time, high time, to shift this dismal scene.
 This hugg'd, this hideous state, what art can cure?
 One only; but that one, what all may reach;
 Virtue—she, wonder-working goddess! charms
 That rock to bloom; and tames the painted shrew;
 And what will more surprise, Lorenzo! gives
 To life's sick, nauseous iteration, change;
 And straightens Nature's circle to a line. 370
 Believest thou this, Lorenzo? lend an ear,
 A patient ear, thou'lt blush to disbelieve.

A languid, leaden iteration reigns,
 And ever must, o'er those, whose joys are joys
 Of sight, smell, taste: the cuckoo-seasons sing
 The same dull note to such as nothing prize,
 But what those seasons, from the teeming earth,
 To doating sense indulge. But nobler minds,
 Which relish fruits unripen'd by the sun,
 Make their days various; various as the dyes 380
 On the dove's neck, which wanton in his rays.
 On minds of dove-like innocence possess'd,
 On lighten'd minds, that bask in virtue's beams,
 Nothing hangs tedious, nothing old revolves
 In that for which they long, for which they live.
 Their glorious efforts, wing'd with heavenly hope,
 Each rising morning sees still higher rise;

Each bounteous dawn its novelty presents
 To worth maturing, new strength, lustre, fame;
 While Nature's circle, like a chariot-wheel 390
 Rolling beneath their elevated aims,
 Makes their fair prospect fairer every hour;
 Advancing virtue, in a line to bliss;
 Virtue, which Christian motives best inspire!
 And bliss, which Christian schemes alone ensure!

LIFE VALUABLE AS A MEANS; NOT AS AN END

And shall we then, for virtue's sake, commence
 Apostates, and turn infidels for joy?
 A truth it is, few doubt, but fewer trust,
 "He sins against this life, who slights the next."
 What is this life? How few their favourite know! 400
 Fond in the dark, and blind in our embrace,
 By passionately loving life, we make
 Loved life unlovely; hugging her to death.
 We give to time eternity's regard;
 And, dreaming, take our passage for our port.
 Life has no value as an end, but means;
 An end deplorable! a means divine!
 When 'tis our all, 'tis nothing; worse than nought;
 A nest of pains: when held as nothing, much:
 Like some fair humorists, life is most enjoy'd, 410
 When courted least; most worth, when disesteem'd;
 Then 'tis the seat of comfort, rich in peace;
 In prospect richer far; important! awful!
 Not to be mention'd, but with shouts of praise!
 Not to be thought on, but with tides of joy!
 The mighty basis of eternal bliss!
 Where now the barren rock? the painted shrew?

Where now, Lorenzo! life's eternal round?
 Have I not made my triple promise good?
 Vain is the world; but only to the vain. 420
 To what compare we then this varying scene,
 Whose worth ambiguous rises, and declines?
 Waxes, and wanes? (In all propitious, night
 Assists me here) compare it to the moon;
 Dark in herself, and indigent; but rich
 In borrow'd lustre from a higher sphere.
 When gross guilt interposes, labouring earth,
 O'ershadow'd, mourns a deep eclipse of joy;

Her joys, at brightest, pallid, to that font
Of full effulgent glory, whence they flow. 430

LIFE AND DEATH COMPARED

Nor is that glory distant: Oh, Lorenzo!
A good man, and an angel! these between
How thin the barrier! What divides their fate?
Perhaps a moment, or perhaps a year:
Or, if an age, it is a moment still;
A moment, or eternity's forgot.
Then be, what once they were, who now are gods;
Be what Philander was, and claim the skies.
Starts timid Nature at the gloomy pass?
The soft transition call it; and be cheer'd: 440
Such it is often, and why not to thee?
To hope the best, is pious, brave, and wise;
And may itself procure, what it presumes.
Life is much flatter'd, death is much traduced;
Compare the rivals, and the kinder crown.
"Strange competition!"—True, Lorenzo! strange!
So little life can cast into the scale.

Life makes the soul dependent on the dust;
Death gives her wings to mount above the spheres. 450
Through chinks, styl'd organs, dim life peeps at light;
Death bursts th' involving cloud, and all is day;
All eye, all ear, the disembodied power.
Death has feign'd evils, Nature shall not feel;
Life, ills substantial, wisdom cannot shun.
Is not the mighty mind, that son of heaven!
By tyrant life dethroned, imprison'd, pain'd?
By death enlarged, ennobled, deified?
Death but entombs the body; life the soul.

"Is Death then guiltless? How he marks his way
With dreadful waste of what deserves to shine! 460
Art, genius, fortune, elevated power!
With various lustres these light up the world,
Which Death puts out, and darkens human race."
I grant, Lorenzo! this indictment just:
The sage, peer, potentate, king, conqueror!
Death humbles these; more barbarous life, the man.
Life is the triumph of our mouldering clay;
Death, of the spirit infinite! divine!

Death has no dread, but what frail life imparts;
Nor life true joy, but what kind death improves. 470
No bliss has life to boast, till death can give
Far greater; life's a debtor to the grave,
Dark lattice! letting in eternal day.

Lorenzo! blush at fondness for a life,
Which sends celestial souls on errands vile,
To cater for the sense; and serve at boards,
Where every ranger of the wilds, perhaps
Each reptile, justly claims our upper hand.
Luxurious feast! a soul, a soul immortal, 480
In all the dainties of a brute bemired!
Lorenzo! blush at terror for a death,
Which gives thee to repose in festive bowers,
Where nectars sparkle, angels minister,
And more than angels share, and raise, and crown,
And eternize, the birth, bloom, bursts of bliss.
What need I more? O Death, the palm is thine.

Then welcome, Death! thy dreaded harbingers,
Age and disease; disease, though long my guest;
That plucks my nerves, those tender strings of life;
Which, pluck'd a little more, will toll the bell, 490
That calls my few friends to my funeral;
Where feeble Nature drops, perhaps, a tear,
While Reason and religion, better taught,
Congratulate the dead, and crown his tomb
With wreath triumphant. Death is victory;
It binds in chains the raging ills of life:
Lust and ambition, wrath and avarice,
Dragg'd at his chariot-wheel, applaud his power.
That ills corrosive, cares importunate, 500
Are not immortal too, O Death! is thine.
Our day of dissolution!—name it right;
'Tis our great pay-day; 'tis our harvest, rich
And ripe: what though the sickle, sometimes keen,
Just scars us as we reap the golden grain?
More than thy balm, O Gilead! heals the wound.
Birth's feeble cry, and death's deep dismal groan,
Are slender tributes low-tax'd Nature pays
For mighty gain: the gain of each, a life!
But O! the last the former so transcends, 510
Life dies, compared; life lives beyond the grave.

EULOGY ON DEATH

And feel I, Death! no joy from thought of thee?
Death, the great counsellor, who man inspires
With every nobler thought, and fairer deed!
Death, the deliverer, who rescues man!
Death, the rewarder, who the rescued crowns!
Death, that absolves my birth; a curse without it!
Rich death, that realises all my cares,
Toils, virtues, hopes; without it a chimera!
Death, of all pain the period, not of joy;
Joy's source, and subject, still subsist unhurt; 520
One, in my soul; and one, in her great Sire;
Though the four winds were warring for my dust.
Yes, and from winds, and waves, and central night,
Though prison'd there, my dust too I reclaim
(To dust when drop proud Nature's proudest spheres),
And live entire. Death is the crown of life:
Were death denied, poor man would live in vain;
Were death denied, to live would not be life;
Were death denied, even fools would wish to die.
Death wounds to cure: we fall; we rise; we reign! 530
Spring from our fetters; fasten in the skies;
Where blooming Eden withers in our sight:
Death gives us more than was in Eden lost.
This king of terrors is the prince of peace.
When shall I die to vanity, pain, death?
When shall I die?—When shall I live for ever?

**THE
CHRISTIAN TRIUMPH:
CONTAINING
OUR ONLY CURE FOR THE FEAR OF DEATH;
AND
PROPER SENTIMENTS OF HEART ON THAT
INESTIMABLE BLESSING**

TO THE
HONOURABLE MR YORKE.

PREFACE

It is evident from the First Night, where three deaths are mentioned, that the plan is not yet completed; for two only of those three have yet been sung. But, since this Fourth Night finishes one principal and important theme, naturally arising from all three, namely, the subduing our fear of death, it will be a proper pausing-place for the reader, and the writer too. And it is uncertain whether Providence, or inclination, will permit him to go any farther.

I say “inclination,” for this thing was entered on purely as a refuge under uneasiness, when more proper studies wanted sufficient relish to detain the writer's attention to them. And that reason (thanks be to Heaven) ceasing, the writer has no farther occasion—I should rather say “excuse”— for giving-in so much to the amusements, amid the duties, of life.

NIGHT FOURTH
THE CHRISTIAN TRIUMPH

A MUCH-INDEBTED muse, O Yorke! intrudes.
Amid the smiles of fortune, and of youth,
Thine ear is patient of a serious song.
How deep implanted in the breast of man
The dread of death! I sing its sovereign cure.

CURE FOR THE FEAR OF DEATH

Why start at Death? Where is he? Death arrived,
Is past; not come, or gone, he's never here.
Ere hope, sensation fails; black-boding man
Receives, not suffers, Death's tremendous blow.
The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave; 10

The deep damp vault, the darkness, and the worm;
 These are the bugbears of a winter's eve,
 The terrors of the living, not the dead.
 Imagination's fool, and error's wretch,
 Man makes a death, which Nature never made;
 Then on the point of his own fancy falls;
 And feels a thousand deaths, in fearing one.

But were death frightful, what has age to fear?
 If prudent, age should meet the friendly foe,
 And shelter in his hospitable gloom. 20
 I scarce can meet a monument, but holds
 My younger; every date cries—"Come away."
 And what recalls me? Look the world around,
 And tell me what: the wisest cannot tell.
 Should any born of woman give his thought
 Full range, on just dislike's unbounded field;
 Of things, the vanity; of men, the flaws;
 Flaws in the best; the many, flaw all o'er;
 As leopards, spotted, or, as Ethiops, dark;
 Vivacious ill; good dying immature; 30
 (How immature, Narcissa's marble tells!)
 And at his death bequeathing endless pain;
 His heart, though bold, would sicken at the sight,
 And spend itself in sighs, for future scenes.

DISADVANTAGES OF LIVING TOO LONG

But grant to life (and just it is to grant
 To lucky life) some perquisites of joy;
 A time there is, when, like a thrice-told tale,
 Long-rifled life of sweet can yield no more,
 But from our comment on the comedy,
 Pleasing reflections on parts well sustain'd, 40
 Or purpos'd emendations where we fail'd,
 Or hopes of plaudits from our candid Judge,
 When, on their exit, souls are bid unrobe,
 Toss fortune back her tinsel, and her plume,
 And drop this mask of flesh behind the scene.

With me, that time is come; my world is dead;
 A new world rises, and new manners reign:
 Foreign comedians, a spruce band! arrive,
 To push me from the scene, or hiss me there.
 What a pert race starts up! the strangers gaze, 50

And I at them; my neighbour is unknown;
 Nor that the worst: ah me! the dire effect
 Of loitering here, of Death defrauded long;
 Of old so gracious (and let that suffice),
 My g very master knows me not.—

Shall I dare say, peculiar is the fate?
 I've been so long remember'd, I'm forgot.
 An object ever pressing dims the sight,
 And hides behind its ardour to be seen.
 When in his courtiers' ears I pour my plaint, 60
 They drink it as the nectar of the great;
 And squeeze my hand, and beg me come to-morrow.
 Refusal! canst thou wear a smoother form?

Indulge me, nor conceive I drop my theme:
 Who cheapens life, abates the fear of death:
 Twice told the period spent on stubborn Troy,
 Court favour, yet untaken, I besiege;
 Ambition's ill-judged effort to be rich.
 Alas! ambition makes my little less;
 Embittering the possess'd: Why wish for more? 70
 Wishing, of all employments, is the worst;
 Philosophy's reverse; and health's decay!
 Were I as plump as stall'd theology,
 Wishing would waste me to this shade again.
 Were I as wealthy as a South Sea dream,²⁶
 Wishing is an expedient to be poor.
 Wishing, that constant hectic of a fool;
 Caught at a court; purged off by purer air,
 And simpler diet; gifts of rural life!

Bless'd be that hand divine, which gently laid 80
 My heart at rest, beneath this humble shed.
 The world's a stately bark, on dangerous seas,
 With pleasure seen, but boarded at our peril;
 Here, on a single plank, thrown safe ashore,
 I hear the tumult of the distant throng,
 As that of seas remote, or dying storms:
 And meditate on scenes, more silent still;
 Pursue my theme, and fight the fear of death.
 Here, like a shepherd gazing from his hut,

²⁶ 75. *A South-sea dream*: The South-Sea Company investment bubble (1719–1721). The author's friend, Philip Wharton, lost a vast sum and was ruined financially.

Touching his reed, or leaning on his staff, 90
 Eager ambition's fiery chace I see;
 I see the circling hunt, of noisy men,
 Burst law's enclosure, leap the mounds of right,
 Pursuing, and pursued, each other's prey;
 As wolves, for rapine; as the fox, for wiles;
 Till Death, that mighty hunter, earths them all.

Why all this toil for triumphs of an hour?
 What though we wade in wealth, or soar in fame?
 Earth's highest station ends in "Here he lies:"
 And "Dust to dust" concludes her noblest song. 100
 If this song lives, posterity shall know
 One, though in Britain born, with courtiers bred,
 Who thought even gold might come a day too late;
 Nor on his subtle death-bed plann'd his scheme
 For future vacancies in Church or State;
 Some avocation deeming it—to die,
 Unbit by rage canine of dying rich;
 Guilt's blunder! and the loudest laugh of hell.

ADDRESS TO THE AGED

O my coevals! remnants of yourselves!
 Poor human ruins, tottering o'er the grave! 110
 Shall we, shall aged men, like aged trees,
 Strike deeper their vile root, and closer cling,
 Still more enamour'd of this wretched soil?
 Shall our pale, wither'd hands, be still stretch'd out,
 Trembling, at once, with eagerness and age?
 With avarice, and convulsions, grasping hard?
 Grasping at air! for what has earth beside?
 Man wants but little; nor that little, long;
 How soon must he resign his very dust,
 Which frugal Nature lent him for an hour! 120
 Years unexperienced rush on numerous ills;
 And soon as man, expert from time, has found
 The key of life, it opes the gates of death.

When in this vale of years I backward look,
 And miss such numbers, numbers too of such,
 Firmer in health, and greener in their age,
 And stricter on their guard, and fitter far
 To play life's subtle game, I scarce believe
 I still survive: and am I fond of life,

Who scarce can think it possible, I live? 130
 Alive by miracle! or, what is next,
 Alive by Mead! if I am still alive,
 Who long have buried what gives life to live,
 Firmness of nerve, and energy of thought.
 Life's lee is not more shallow, than impure,
 And vapid; sense and Reason show the door,
 Call for my bier, and point me to the dust.

RESIGNATION TO THE GREAT ARBITER OF LIFE AND DEATH

O thou great arbiter of life and death!
 Nature's immortal, immaterial Sun!
 Whose all-prolific beam late call'd me forth 140
 From darkness, teeming darkness, where I lay
 The worm's inferior, and, in rank, beneath
 The dust I tread on, high to bear my brow,
 To drink the spirit of the golden day,
 And triumph in existence; and could know
 No motive, but my bliss; and hast ordain'd
 A rise in blessing! with the patriarch's joy,
 Thy call I follow to the land unknown;
 I trust in thee, and know in whom I trust;
 Or life, or death, is equal; neither weighs: 150
 All weight in this—O let me live to thee!

Though Nature's terrors thus may be repress'd;
 Still frowns grim Death; guilt points the tyrant's spear.
 And whence all human guilt? From death forgot.
 Ah me! too long I set at nought the swarm
 Of friendly warnings, which around me flew;
 And smiled, unsmitten: small my cause to smile!
 Death's admonitions, like shafts upwards shot,
 More dreadful by delay, the longer ere
 They strike our hearts, the deeper is their wound; 160
 O think how deep, Lorenzo! here it stings:
 Who can appease its anguish? How it burns!
 What hand the barb'd, envenom'd thought can draw?
 What healing hand can pour the balm of peace?
 And turn my sight undaunted on the tomb?

THE REDEEMER ON THE CROSS

With joy,—with grief, that healing hand I see;
 Ah! too conspicuous! it is fix'd on high.

On high?—What means my phrensy? I blaspheme;
 Alas! how low! how far beneath the skies!
 The skies it form'd; and now it bleeds for me— 170
 But bleeds the balm I want—yet still it bleeds;
 Draw the dire steel—ah, no! the dreadful blessing
 What heart or can sustain, or dares forego?
 There hangs all human hope: that nail supports
 The falling universe: that gone, we drop;
 Horror receives us, and the dismal wish
 Creation had been smother'd in her birth—
 Darkness his curtain, and his bed the dust;
 When stars and sun are dust beneath his throne!
 In heav'n itself can such indulgence dwell? 180
 Oh, what a groan was there! a groan not his.
 He seized our dreadful right; the load sustained;
 And heaved the mountain from a guilty world.
 A thousand worlds, so bought, were bought too dear;
 Sensations new in angels' bosoms rise;
 Suspend their song; and make a pause in bliss.

O for their song, to reach my lofty theme!
 Inspire me, Night! with all thy tuneful spheres; [note]
 Whilst I with seraphs share seraphic themes,
 And show to men the dignity of man; 190
 Lest I blaspheme my subject with my song.
 Shall Pagan pages glow celestial flame,
 And Christian languish? On our hearts, not heads,
 Falls the foul infamy: my heart! awake.
 What can awake thee, unawaked by this,
 “Expended deity on human weal?”
 Feel the great truths, which burst the tenfold night
 Of heathen error, with a golden flood
 Of endless day: to feel, is to be fired;
 And to believe, Lorenzo! is to feel. 200

THE JUSTICE AND THE LOVE OF GOD

Thou most indulgent, most tremendous Power!
 Still more tremendous, for thy wondrous love!
 That arms, with awe more awful, thy commands;
 And foul transgression dips in sevenfold night;
 How our hearts tremble at thy love immense!
 In love immense, inviolably just!
 Thou, rather than thy justice should be stain'd,
 Didst stain the cross; and work of wonders far

The greatest, that thy dearest far might bleed.

Bold thought! shall I dare speak it, or repress? 210
 Should man more execrate, or boast, the guilt
 Which roused such vengeance? which such love inflamed?
 O'er guilt (how mountainous!), with outstretch'd arms,
 Stern justice, and soft-smiling love embrace,
 Supporting, in full majesty, thy throne,
 When seem'd its majesty to need support,
 Or that, or man, inevitably lost:
 What, but the fathomless of thought divine,
 Could labour such expedient from despair,
 And rescue both? Both rescue! both exalt! 220
 Oh, how are both exalted by the deed!
 The wondrous deed! or shall I call it more?
 A wonder in omnipotence itself! 223
 A mystery no less to gods than men!

A GOD ALL MERCY IS A GOD UNJUST

Not, thus, our infidels th' Eternal draw,
 A God all o'er, consummate, absolute,
 Full-orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete:
 They set at odds Heaven's jarring attributes;
 And, with one excellence, another wound;
 Maim Heaven's perfection, break its equal beams, 230
 Bid mercy triumph over—God himself,
 Undeified by their opprobrious praise:
 A God all mercy, is a God unjust.

Ye brainless wits! ye baptized infidels!
 Ye worse for mending! wash'd to fouler stains!
 The ransom was paid down; the fund of heaven,
 Heaven's inexhaustible, exhausted fund,
 Amazing, and amazed, pour'd forth the price,
 All price beyond: though curious to compute,
 Archangels fail'd to cast the mighty sum: 240
 Its value vast, ungrasp'd by minds create,
 For ever hides, and glows, in the Supreme.

And was the ransom paid? It was: and paid
 (What can exalt the bounty more?) for you.
 The sun beheld it—No! the shocking scene,
 Drove back his chariot: midnight veil'd his face;
 Not such as this; not such as Nature makes;

A midnight Nature shudder'd to behold;
 A midnight new! a dread eclipse (without
 Opposing spheres) from her Creator's frown! 250
 Sun! didst thou fly thy Maker's pain? or start
 At that enormous load of human guilt,
 Which bow'd His blessed head; o'erwhelm'd His cross;
 Made groan the centre; burst earth's marble womb,
 With pangs, strange pangs! deliver'd of her dead?
 Hell howl'd; and heaven that hour let fall a tear;
 Heaven wept, that men might smile! Heaven bled, that man
 Might never die!—

THE TRIUMPHANT RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

And is devotion virtue? 'Tis compell'd.
 What heart of stone but glows at thoughts like these? 260
 Such contemplations mount us; and should mount
 The mind still higher; nor ever glance on man,
 Unraptured, uninflamed.—Where roll my thoughts
 To rest from wonders? Other wonders rise;
 And strike where'er they roll: my soul is caught:
 Heaven's sovereign blessings, clustering from the cross,
 Rush on her, in a throng, and close her round,
 The prisoner of amaze!—In his bless'd life,
 I see the path, and, in his death, the price,
 And in his great ascent, the proof supreme 270
 Of immortality.—And did he rise?
 Hear, O ye nations! hear it, O ye dead!
 He rose! he rose! he burst the bars of death.
 Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates!
 And give the King of Glory to come in.
 Who is the King of Glory? He who left
 His throne of glory, for the pang of death:
 Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates!
 And give the King of Glory to come in.
 Who is the King of Glory? He who slew 280
 The ravenous foe, that gorged all human race!
 The King of glory, he whose glory fill'd
 Heaven with amazement at his love to man;
 And with divine complacency beheld
 Powers most illumined, wilder'd in the theme.

HUMAN NATURE, THROUGH CHRIST, TRIUMPHANT

The theme, the joy, how then shall man sustain?

O the burst gates! crush'd sting! demolish'd throne!
 Last gasp of vanquish'd Death! Shout earth and heaven!
 This sum of good to man. Whose nature then
 Took wing, and mounted with him from the tomb! 290
 Then, then, I rose; then first humanity
 Triumphant pass'd the crystal ports of light
 (Stupendous guest!), and seized eternal youth,
 Seized in our name. E'er since, 'tis blasphemous
 To call man mortal. Man's mortality
 Was then transferr'd to death; and heaven's duration
 Unalienably seal'd to this frail frame,
 This child of dust—Man, all-immortal! hail;
 Hail, Heaven! all lavish of strange gifts to man!
 Thine all the glory; man's the boundless bliss. 300

Where am I rapt by this triumphant theme?
 On Christian joy's exulting wing, above
 Th' Aonian mount?—Alas! small cause for joy!
 What if to pain immortal? if extent
 Of being, to preclude a close of woe?
 Where, then, my boast of immortality?
 I boast it still, though cover'd o'er with guilt;
 For guilt, not innocence, his life he pour'd;
 'Tis guilt alone can justify his death;
 Nor that, unless his death can justify 310
 Relenting guilt in Heaven's indulgent sight.
 If, sick of folly, I relent; he writes
 My name in heaven with that inverted spear
 (A spear deep-dipp'd in blood!) which pierced his side,
 And open'd there a font for all mankind,
 Who strive, who combat crimes, to drink, and live:
 This, only this, subdues the fear of death.

THE WONDERS OF PARDONING MERCY

And what is this?—Survey the wondrous cure:
 And at each step, let higher wonder rise!
 "Pardon for infinite offence! and pardon 320
 Through means that speak its value infinite!
 A pardon bought with blood! with blood divine!
 With blood divine of Him I made my foe!
 Persisted to provoke! though woo'd and awed,
 Bless'd and chastised, a flagrant rebel still!
 A rebel, 'midst the thunders of his throne!
 Nor I alone! a rebel universe!

My species up in arms! not one exempt!
 Yet for the foulest of the foul, he dies,
 Most joy'd, for the redeem'd from deepest guilt! 330
 As if our race were held of highest rank;
 And Godhead dearer, as more kind to man!"

Bound, every heart! and every bosom, burn!
 O what a scale of miracles is here!
 Its lowest round, high planted on the skies;
 Its towering summit lost beyond the thought
 Of man or angel! O that I could climb
 The wonderful ascent, with equal praise!
 Praise! flow for ever (if astonishment
 Will give thee leave) my praise! for ever flow; 340
 Praise ardent, cordial, constant, to high Heaven
 More fragrant, than Arabia sacrificed,
 And all her spicy mountains in a flame.

APOSTATE PRAISE CALLED BACK TO GOD

So dear, so due to Heaven, shall praise descend,
 With her soft plume (from plausible angel's wing
 First pluck'd by man) to tickle mortal ears,
 Thus diving in the pockets of the great?
 Is praise the perquisite of every paw,
 Though black as hell, that grapples well for gold?
 O love of gold! thou meanest of amours! 350
 Shall praise her odours waste on Virtue's dead,
 Embalm the base, perfume the stench of guilt,
 Earn dirty bread by washing Æthiops fair,
 Removing filth, or sinking it from sight,
 A scavenger in scenes, where vacant posts,
 Like gibbets yet untenanted, expect
 Their future ornaments? From courts and thrones,
 Return, apostate praise! thou vagabond!
 Thou prostitute! to thy first love return,
 Thy first, thy greatest, once unrivall'd theme. 360

There flow redundant; like Meander flow,
 Back to thy fountain; to that parent Power,
 Who gives the tongue to sound, the thought to soar,
 The soul to be. Men homage pay to men,
 Thoughtless beneath whose dreadful eye they bow
 In mutual awe profound, of clay to clay,
 Of guilt to guilt; and turn their back on thee,

Great Sire! whom Thrones celestial²⁷ ceaseless sing;
 To prostrate angels, an amazing scene!
 O the presumption of man's awe for man!— 370
 Man's author! end! restorer! law! and judge!
 Thine, all; day thine, and thine this gloom of night,
 With all her wealth, with all her radiant worlds:
 What, night eternal, but a frown from thee?
 What, heaven's meridian glory, but thy smile?
 And shall not praise be thine? not human praise?
 While heaven's high host on hallelujahs live?

ADORATION AND PRAISE TO THE CREATOR

O may I breathe no longer, than I breathe
 My soul in praise to Him, who gave my soul,
 And all her infinite of prospect fair, 380
 Cut through the shades of hell great Love! by thee
 O most adorable! most unadored!
 Where shall that praise begin, which ne'er should end?
 Where'er I turn, what claim on all applause!
 How is night's sable mantle labour'd o'er,
 How richly wrought with attributes divine!
 What wisdom shines! what love! This midnight pomp,
 This gorgeous arch, with golden worlds inlaid!
 Built with divine ambition! nought to thee;
 For others this profusion: Thou, apart, 390
 Above! beyond! O tell me, mighty Mind!
 Where art thou? Shall I dive into the deep,
 Call to the sun, or ask the roaring winds,
 For their Creator? Shall I question loud
 The thunder, if in that th' Almighty dwells?
 Or holds He furious storms in straiten'd reins,
 And bids fierce whirlwinds wheel his rapid car?

²⁷ 368. *Thrones celestial*: Thrones are an order of angels. Colossians 1:16—"whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."



*I send it through the boundless vault of stars!
 The stars, though rich, what dross their gold to thee,
 Great, good, wise, wonderful, eternal King!*
 (Night 4, 427)

What mean these questions?—Trembling I retract;
 My prostrate soul adores the present God:
 Praise I a distant deity? He tunes 400
 My voice (if tuned); the nerve, that writes, sustains:
 Wrapp'd in his being, I resound his praise:
 But though past all diffused, without a shore,
 His essence; local is his throne (as meet),
 To gather the dispersed (as standards call
 The listed from afar): to fix a point,
 A central point, collective of his sons,
 Since finite every nature but his own.

The nameless He, whose nod is Nature's birth;
 And Nature's shield, the shadow of his hand; 410
 Her dissolution, his suspended smile!
 The great First-Last! pavilion'd high he sits,
 In darkness from excessive splendour borne,
 By gods unseen, unless through lustre lost.

His glory, to created glory, bright,
 As that to central horrors; he looks down
 On all that soars; and spans immensity.

Though night unnumber'd worlds unfolds to view,
 Boundless creation! what art thou? A beam,
 A mere effluvium of his majesty: 420
 And shall an atom of this atom-world
 Mutter, in dust and sin, the theme of heaven?
 Down to the centre should I send my thought
 Through beds of glittering ore, and glowing gems,
 Their beggar'd blaze wants lustre for my lay;
 Goes out in darkness: if, on towering wing,
 I send it through the boundless vault of stars!
 The stars, though rich, what dross their gold to thee,
 Great, good, wise, wonderful, eternal King!
 If to those conscious stars thy throne around, 430
 Praise ever-pouring, and imbibing bliss;
 And ask their strain; they want it, more they want,
 Poor their abundance, humble their sublime,
 Languid their energy, their ardour cold,
 Indebted still, their highest rapture burns;
 Short of its mark, defective, though divine.

THE PRAISE OF REDEMPTION MORE APPROPRIATE TO MAN
 THAN TO ANGELS

Still more—this theme is man's, and man's alone;
 Their vast appointments reach it not: they see
 On earth a bounty not indulged on high;
 And downward look for heaven's superior praise! 440
 First-born of ether! high in fields of light!
 View man, to see the glory of your God!
 Could angels envy, they had envied here;
 And some did envy; and the rest, though gods,
 Yet still gods unredeem'd (their triumphs man,
 Tempted to weigh the dust against the skies),
 They less would feel, though more adorn, my theme.
 They sung creation (for in that they shared);
 How rose in melody, that child of love!
 Creation's great superior, man! is thine; 450
 Thine is redemption; they just gave the key:
 'Tis thine to raise, and eternize, the song;
 Though human, yet divine; for should not this
 Raise man o'er man, and kindle seraphs here?

Redemption! 'twas creation more sublime;
 Redemption! 'twas the labour of the skies;
 Far more than labour—it was death in heaven.
 A truth so strange! 'twere bold to think it true;
 If not far bolder still to disbelieve.

Here pause, and ponder—Was there death in heaven? 460
 What then on earth? on earth, which struck the blow?
 Who struck it? Who?—O how is man enlarged,
 Seen through this medium! How the pigmy towers!
 How counterpoised his origin from dust!
 How counterpoised to dust his sad return!
 How voided his vast distance from the skies!
 How near he presses on the seraph's wing!
 Which is the seraph? Which the born of clay?
 How this demonstrates, through the thickest cloud
 Of guilt, and clay condensed, the son of heaven! 470
 The double son; the made, and the re-made!
 And shall heaven's double property be lost?
 Man's double madness only can destroy.
 To man the bleeding cross has promised all;
 The bleeding cross has sworn eternal grace;
 Who gave his life, what grace shall he deny?
 O ye who, from this Rock of Ages, leap,
 Apostates, plunging headlong in the deep!
 What cordial joy, what consolation strong,
 Whatever winds arise, or billows roll, 480
 Our interest in the Master of the storm!
 Cling there, and in wreck'd Nature's ruins smile;
 While vile apostates tremble in a calm.

THE GRANDEUR OF HUMAN NATURE

Man! know thyself. All wisdom centres there;
 To none man seems ignoble, but to man;
 Angels that grandeur, men o'erlook, admire:
 How long shall human nature be their book,
 Degenerate mortal! and unread by thee?
 The beam dim Reason sheds shows wonders there;
 What high contents! illustrious faculties! 490
 But the grand comment, which displays at full
 Our human height, scarce sever'd from divine,
 By heaven composed, was publish'd on the Cross.

Who looks on that, and sees not in himself

An awful stranger, a terrestrial god?
 A glorious partner with the Deity
 In that high attribute, immortal life?
 If a god bleeds, he bleeds not for a worm:
 I gaze, and, as I gaze, my mounting soul
 Catches strange fire, eternity! at thee; 500
 And drops the world—or rather, more enjoys:
 How changed the face of Nature! how improved!
 What seem'd a chaos, shines a glorious world,
 Or, what a world, an Eden; heighten'd all!
 It is another scene! another self!
 And still another, as time rolls along;
 And that a self far more illustrious still.
 Beyond long ages, yet roll'd up in shades
 Unpierced by bold conjecture's keenest ray,
 What evolutions of surprising fate! 510
 How Nature opens, and receives my soul
 In boundless walks of raptur'd thought! where gods
 Encounter and embrace me! What new births
 Of strange adventure, foreign to the sun,
 Where what now charms, perhaps, whate'er exists,
 Old time, and fair creation, are forgot!

Is this extravagant? Of man we form
 Extravagant conception, to be just:
 Conception unconfined wants wings to reach him:
 Beyond its reach, the Godhead only, more. 520
 He, the great Father! kindled at one flame
 The world of rationals; one spirit pour'd
 From spirit's awful fountain; pour'd himself
 Through all their souls; but not in equal stream,
 Profuse, or frugal, of th' inspiring God,
 As his wise plan demanded; and when past
 Their various trials, in their various spheres,
 If they continue rational, as made,
 Resorbs them all into himself again;
 His throne their centre, and his smile their crown. 530

ANGELS AND MEN COMPARED

Why doubt we, then, the glorious truth to sing,
 Though yet unsung, as deem'd, perhaps, too bold?
 Angels are men of a superior kind;
 Angels are men in lighter habit clad,
 High o'er celestial mountains wing'd in flight;

And men are angels, loaded for an hour,
 Who wade this miry vale, and climb with pain,
 And slippery step, the bottom of the steep.
 Angels their failings, mortals have their praise;
 While here, of corps ethereal, such enroll'd, 540
 And summon'd to the glorious standard soon,
 Which flames eternal crimson through the skies.
 Nor are our brothers thoughtless of their kin,
 Yet absent; but not absent from their love.
 Michael has fought our battles; Raphael sung
 Our triumphs; Gabriel on our errands flown,
 Sent by the Sovereign: and are these, O Man!
 Thy friends, thy warm allies? and thou (shame burn
 The cheek to cinder!) rival to the brute?

RELIGION'S ALL

Religion's all. Descending from the skies 550
 To wretched man, the goddess, in her left,
 Holds out this world, and, in her right, the next;
 Religion! the sole voucher man is man;
 Supporter sole of man above himself;
 Even in this night of frailty, change, and death,
 She gives the soul a soul that acts a god.
 Religion! Providence! an After-state!
 Here is firm footing; here is solid rock!
 This can support us; all is sea besides;
 Sinks under us; bestorms, and then devours. 560
 His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
 And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl.

As when a wretch, from thick polluted air,
 Darkness, and stench, and suffocating damps,
 And dungeon horrors, by kind fate, discharged,
 Climbs some fair eminence, where ether pure
 Surrounds him, and Elysian prospects rise,
 His heart exults, his spirits cast their load;
 As if new-born, he triumphs in the change;
 So joys the soul, when, from inglorious aims, 570
 And sordid sweets, from feculence and froth
 Of ties terrestrial, set at large, she mounts
 To Reason's region, her own element,
 Breathes hopes immortal, and affects the skies.

DEVOUT ADDRESS TO THE REDEEMER

Religion! thou the soul of happiness;
 And, groaning Calvary, of thee! there shine
 The noblest truths; there strongest motives sting;
 There sacred violence assaults the soul;
 There, nothing but compulsion is forborne.
 Can love allure us? or can terror awe? 580
 He weeps!—the falling drop puts out the sun;
 He sighs—the sigh earth's deep foundation shakes.
 If in his love so terrible, what then
 His wrath inflamed? his tenderness on fire?
 Like soft, smooth oil, outblazing other fires?
 Can prayer, can praise avert it?—Thou, my all!
 My theme! my inspiration! and my crown!
 My strength in age! my rise in low estate!
 My soul's ambition, pleasure, wealth!—my world!
 My light in darkness! and my life in death! 590
 My boast through time! bliss through eternity!
 Eternity, too short to speak thy praise!
 Or fathom thy profound of love to man!
 To man of men the meanest, even to me;
 My sacrifice! my God!—what things are these!

What then art THOU? by what name shall I call thee?—
 Knew I the name devout archangels use,
 Devout archangels should the name enjoy,
 By me unrivall'd; thousands more sublime,
 None half so dear as that which, though unspoke, 600
 Still glows at heart: O how omnipotence
 Is lost in love! Thou great Philanthropist!
 Father of angels! but the friend of man!
 Like Jacob, fondest of the younger born!
 Thou, who didst save him, snatch the smoking brand
 From out the flames, and quench it in thy blood!
 How art thou pleased, by bounty to distress!
 To make us groan beneath our gratitude,
 Too big for birth! to favour, and confound;
 To challenge, and to distance all return! 610
 Of lavish love stupendous heights to soar,
 And leave praise panting in the distant vale!
 Thy right, too great, defrauds thee of thy due;
 And sacrilegious our sublimest song.
 But since the naked will obtains thy smile,
 Beneath this monument of praise unpaid,

And future life symphonious to my strain,
 (That noblest hymn to heaven!) for ever lie
 Entomb'd my fear of death! and every fear,
 The dread of every evil, but thy frown. 620

LUKEWARM DEVOTION, UNDEVOUT

Whom see I yonder, so demurely smile?
 Laughter a labour, and might break their rest.
 Ye quietists, in homage to the skies!
 Serene! of soft address! who mildly make
 An unobtrusive tender of your hearts,
 Abhorring violence! who halt indeed;
 But, for the blessing, wrestle not with Heaven!
 Think you my song too turbulent? too warm?
 Are passions, then, the Pagans of the soul?
 Reason alone baptized? alone ordain'd 630
 To touch things sacred? Oh for warmer still!
 Guilt chills my zeal, and age benumbs my powers;
 Oh for an humbler heart, and prouder song!
 Thou, my much-injured theme! with that soft eye,
 Which melted o'er doom'd Salem, deign to look
 Compassion to the coldness of my breast;
 And pardon to the winter in my strain.

O ye cold-hearted, frozen, formalists!
 On such a theme, 'tis impious to be calm;
 Passion is Reason, transport temper, here. 640
 Shall Heaven, which gave us ardour, and has shown
 Her own for man so strongly, not disdain
 What smooth emollients in theology,
 Recumbent virtue's downy doctors preach,
 That prose of piety, a lukewarm praise?
 Rise odours sweet from incense uninflamed?
 Devotion, when lukewarm, is undevout;
 But when it glows, its heat is struck to heaven;
 To human hearts her golden harps are strung;
 High heaven's orchestra chants amen to man. 650

LONGING FOR HEAVEN

Hear I, or dream I hear, their distant strain,
 Sweet to the soul, and tasting strong of heaven,
 Soft-wafted on celestial pity's plume,
 Through the vast spaces of the universe,

To cheer me in this melancholy gloom?
 Oh, when will death (now stingless), like a friend,
 Admit me of their choir? Oh, when will death
 This mouldering, old, partition-wall throw down?
 Give beings, one in nature, one abode?
 O Death divine! that givest us to the skies! 660
 Great future! glorious patron of the past,
 And present! when shall I thy shrine adore?
 From Nature's continent, immensely wide,
 Immensely bless'd, this little isle of life,
 This dark, incarcerating colony,
 Divides us. Happy day! that breaks our chain;
 That manumits;²⁸ that calls from exile home;
 That leads to Nature's great metropolis,
 And re-admits us, through the guardian hand 670
 Of elder brothers, to our Father's throne;
 Who hears our Advocate, and, through his wounds
 Beholding man, allows that tender name.
 'Tis this makes Christian triumph a command:
 'Tis this makes joy a duty to the wise;
 'Tis impious in a good man to be sad.

THE TOUCH OF THE CROSS

Seest thou, Lorenzo! where hangs all our hope?
 Touch'd by the Cross, we live; or, more than die;
 That touch which touch'd not angels; more divine
 Than that which touch'd confusion into form,
 And darkness into glory; partial touch! 680
 Ineffably pre-eminent regard!
 Sacred to man, and sovereign through the whole
 Long golden chain of miracles, which hangs
 From heaven through all duration, and supports
 In one illustrious and amazing plan,
 Thy welfare, Nature! and thy God's renown.
 That touch, with charm celestial, heals the soul
 Diseased, drives pain from guilt, lights life in death,
 Turns earth to heaven, to heavenly thrones transforms
 The ghastly ruins of the mouldering tomb. 690

²⁸ 667. *manumits*: Emancipates.

THE SECOND ADVENT

Dost ask me when? When He who died returns;
Returns, how changed! Where then the man of woe?
In glory's terrors all the Godhead burns;
And all his courts, exhausted by the tide
Of deities triumphant in his train,
Leave a stupendous solitude in heaven;
Replenish'd soon, replenish'd with increase
Of pomp, and multitude; a radiant band
Of angels new; of angels from the tomb.

Is this by fancy thrown remote? and rise 700
Dark doubts between the promise and event?
I send thee not to volumes for thy cure;
Read Nature; Nature is a friend to truth;
Nature is Christian; preaches to mankind;
And bids dead matter aid us in our creed.
Hast thou ne'er seen the comet's flaming flight?
Th' illustrious stranger passing, terror sheds
On gazing nations; from his fiery train
Of length enormous, takes his ample round 710
Through depths of ether; coasts unnumber'd worlds,
Of more than solar glory; doubles wide
Heaven's mighty cape; and then revisits earth,
From the long travel of a thousand years.
Thus, at the destined period, shall return
He, once on earth, who bids the comet blaze:
And, with him, all our triumph o'er the tomb.

Nature is dumb on this important point;
Or hope precarious in low whisper breathes;
Faith speaks aloud, distinct; even adders hear;
But turn, and dart into the dark again. 720
Faith builds a bridge across the gulf of death,
To break the shock blind Nature cannot shun,
And lands thought smoothly on the farther shore.
Death's terror is the mountain Faith removes;
That mountain barrier between man and peace.
'Tis Faith disarms destruction; and absolves
From every clamorous charge, the guiltless tomb.

THE CHRISTIAN'S FAITH IS RATIONAL

Why disbelieve? Lorenzo!—"Reason bids,
 All-sacred Reason."—Hold her sacred still;
 Nor shalt thou want a rival in thy flame: 730
 All-sacred Reason! source, and soul, of all
 Demanding praise, on earth, or earth above!
 My heart is thine: deep in its inmost folds,
 Live thou with life; live dearer of the two.
 Wear I the blessed cross, by fortune stamp'd
 On passive Nature, before thought was born?
 My birth's blind bigot! fired with local zeal!
 No; Reason re-baptized me when adult;
 Weigh'd true, and false, in her impartial scale;
 My heart became the convert of my head; 740
 And made that choice, which once was but my fate.
 "On argument alone my faith is built:"
 Reason pursued is Faith; and, unpursued
 Where proof invites, 'tis Reason, then, no more:
 And such our proof, that, or our Faith is right,
 Or Reason lies, and Heaven design'd it wrong:
 Absolve we this? What, then, is blasphemy?

Fond as we are, and justly fond, of Faith,
 Reason, we grant, demands our first regard;
 The mother honour'd, as the daughter dear. 750
 Reason the root, fair Faith is but the flower;
 The fading flower shall die; but Reason lives
 Immortal, as her Father in the skies.
 When Faith is virtue, Reason makes it so.
 Wrong not the Christian; think not Reason yours:
 'Tis Reason our great Master holds so dear;
 'Tis Reason's injured rights his wrath resents;
 'Tis Reason's voice obey'd his glories crown;
 To give lost Reason life, he pour'd his own:
 Believe, and show the Reason of a man; 760
 Believe, and taste the pleasure of a God;
 Believe, and look with triumph on the tomb:
 Through Reason's wounds alone thy Faith can die;
 Which dying, tenfold terror gives to death,
 And dips in venom his twice-mortal sting.

FALSE PRETENSIONS OF PHILOSOPHIC INFIDELITY

Learn hence what honours, what loud pæans, due

To those, who push our antidote aside;
 Those boasted friends to Reason, and to man,
 Whose fatal love stabs every joy, and leaves
 Death's terror heighten'd, gnawing on his heart. 770
 Those pompous sons of Reason idolized
 And vilified at once; of Reason dead,
 Then deified, as monarchs were of old;
 What conduct plants proud laurels on their brow?
 While love of truth through all their camp resounds,
 They draw pride's curtain o'er the noontide ray,
 Spike up their inch of Reason, on the point
 Of philosophic wit, call'd argument;
 And then, exulting in their taper, cry,
 "Behold the sun!" and, Indian-like, adore. 780

Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love!
 Thou Maker of new morals to mankind!
 The grand morality is love of thee.
 As wise as Socrates, if such they were
 (Nor will they 'bate of that sublime renown),
 As wise as Socrates, might justly stand
 The definition of a modern fool.

A CHRISTIAN is the highest style of man:
 And is there, who the blessed cross wipes off,
 As a foul blot from his dishonour'd brow? 790
 If angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight:
 The wretch they quit, desponding of their charge,
 More struck with grief or wonder, who can tell?

Ye sold to sense! ye citizens of earth!
 (For such alone the Christian banner fly)
 Know ye how wise your choice, how great your gain?
 Behold the picture of earth's happiest man:
 "He calls his wish, it comes; he sends it back,
 And says, he call'd another; that arrives,
 Meets the same welcome; yet he still calls on; 800
 Till one calls him, who varies not his call,
 But holds him fast, in chains of darkness bound,
 Till Nature dies, and judgment sets him free;
 A freedom far less welcome than his chain."

But grant man happy; grant him happy long;
 Add to life's highest prize her latest hour;
 That hour, so late, is nimble in approach,

That, like a post, comes on in full career:
 How swift the shuttle flies that weaves thy shroud!
 Where is the fable of thy former years? 810
 Thrown down the gulf of time; as far from thee
 As they had ne'er been thine; the day in hand,
 Like a bird struggling to get loose, is going;
 Scarce now possess'd, so suddenly 'tis gone;
 And each swift moment fled, is death advanced
 By strides as swift. Eternity is all;
 And whose eternity? Who triumphs there?
 Bathing for ever in the font of bliss!
 For ever basking in the Deity!
 Lorenzo! who?—Thy conscience shall reply. 820

THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE MUST BE HEARD

O give it leave to speak! 'twill speak ere long,
 Thy leave unask'd; Lorenzo! hear it now,
 While useful its advice, its accents mild.
 By the great edict, the divine decree,
 Truth is deposited with man's last hour;
 An honest hour, and faithful to her trust;
 Truth, eldest daughter of the Deity;
 Truth, of his council, when he made the worlds;
 Nor less, when he shall judge the worlds he made;
 Though silent long, and sleeping ne'er so sound, 830
 Smother'd with errors, and oppress'd with toys,
 That heaven-commission'd hour no sooner calls,
 But from her cavern in the soul's abyss,
 Like him they fable under Ætna whelm'd,
 The goddess bursts in thunder, and in flame;
 Loudly convinces, and severely pains.
 Dark demons I discharge, and hydra-stings;
 The keen vibration of bright truth—is hell:
 Just definition! though by schools untaught.
 Ye deaf to truth! peruse this parson'd page, 840
 And trust, for once, a prophet, and a priest;
 "Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die."

