

Classic Poetry Series

Edmund Waller
- poems -

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Edmund Waller(3 March 1606 – 21 October 1687)

Edmund Waller was an English poet and politician who sat in the House of Commons at various times between 1624 and 1679.

Early Life

Edmund Waller was the eldest son of Robert Waller of Coleshill, Herts, and Anne Hampden, his wife; thus he was first cousin to John Hampden. He was descended from the Waller family of Groombridge Place, Kent. Early in his childhood his father moved the family to Beaconsfield. Of Waller's early education all we know is his own account that he "was bred under several ill, dull and ignorant schoolmasters, until he went to Mr Dobson at Wycombe, who was a good schoolmaster and had been an Eton scholar." Robert Waller died in 1616, and Anne, a lady of rare force of character, sent him to Eton and to the University of Cambridge. He was admitted a fellow-commoner of King's College, Cambridge on 22 March 1620, he left without a degree. As a member of Parliament during the political turmoil of the 1640s, he was arrested for his part in a plot to establish London as a stronghold of the king; by betraying his colleagues and by lavish bribes, he avoided death. He later wrote poetic tributes to both Oliver Cromwell (1655) and Charles II (1660). Rejecting the dense intellectual verse of Metaphysical poetry, he adopted generalizing statement, easy associative development, and urbane social comment. With his emphasis on definitive phrasing through inversion and balance, he prepared the way for the emergence of the heroic couplet. By the end of the 17th century the heroic couplet was the dominant form of English poetry. Waller's lyrics include the well-known "Go, lovely Rose!"

Early Parliamentary Career

In 1624 Waller was elected Member of Parliament for Ilchester after one of the members chose another seat. In 1626 he was elected MP for Chipping Wycombe. He was elected MP for Amersham in 1628 and sat until 1629 when King Charles decided to rule without parliament for eleven years.

Marriage

Waller's first notable action was his surreptitious marriage with a wealthy ward of the Court of Aldermen, in 1631. He was brought before the Star Chamber for this offence, and heavily fined. But his own fortune was large, and all his life Waller was a wealthy man. After bearing him a son and a daughter at Beaconsfield, Mrs

Waller died in 1634. It was about this time that the poet was elected into the "Club" of Lucius Cary, 2nd Viscount Falkland.

In about 1635 he met Lady Dorothy Sidney, eldest daughter of Robert Sidney, 2nd Earl of Leicester, who was then eighteen years of age. He formed a romantic passion for this girl, whom he celebrated under the name of Sacharissa. She rejected him, and married Henry Spencer, 1st Earl of Sunderland in 1639. Disappointment is said to have made Waller temporarily insane. However, he wrote a long, graceful and eminently sober letter to the bride's sister on the occasion of the wedding.

Speeches

In April 1640 Waller was again elected MP for Amersham, in the Short Parliament and made certain speeches which attracted wide attention. He was then elected MP for St Ives in the Long Parliament. Waller had hitherto supported the party of John Pym, but he now left him for the group of Falkland and Hyde. His speeches were much admired, and were separately printed; they are academic exercises very carefully prepared. Clarendon says that Waller spoke "upon all occasions with great sharpness and freedom."

'Waller's Plot'

An extraordinary and obscure conspiracy against Parliament, in favour of the king, which is known as "Waller's Plot," occupied the spring of 1643, but on 30 May he and his friends were arrested. In the terror of discovery, Waller was accused of testifying against the others. He was called before the bar of the House in July, and made an abject speech of recantation. His life was spared and he was committed to the Tower of London, but, on paying a fine of £10,000, he was released and banished from the realm in November 1643.

Banishment

He married a second wife, Mary Bracey of Thame, and went over to Calais, afterwards taking up his residence at Rouen. In 1645 the Poems of Waller were first published in London, in three different editions; there has been much discussion of the order and respective authority of these issues, but nothing is decidedly known. Many of the lyrics were already set to music by Henry Lawes.

In 1646 Waller travelled with John Evelyn in Switzerland and Italy. During the worst period of his exile Waller managed to "keep a table" for the Royalists in Paris, although in order to do so he was obliged to sell his wife's jewels.

Return to England

At the close of 1651 the British House of Commons revoked Waller's sentence of banishment, and he was allowed to return to Beaconsfield, where he lived very quietly until the Restoration. In 1655 he published *A Panegyric to my Lord Protector*, and was made a Commissioner for Trade a month or two later, he followed this, in 1660, with a poem *To the King, upon his Majesty's Happy Return*. Being challenged by Charles II to explain why this latter piece was inferior to the eulogy of Cromwell, the poet smartly replied, "Sir, we poets never succeed so well in writing truth as in fiction".

Waller entered the House of Commons again in 1661, as MP for Hastings, and Burnet has recorded that for the next quarter of a century "it was no House if Waller was not there". His sympathies were tolerant and kindly, and he constantly defended the Nonconformists.

One famous speech of Waller's was: "Let us look to our Government, fleet and trade, 'tis the best advice the oldest Parliament man among you can give you, and so God bless you."

Later Life

After the death of his second wife, in 1677, Waller retired to Hall Barn, the house he had designed and owned in Beaconsfield, and though he returned to London, he became more and more attached to the retirement of his woods, "where," he said, "he found the trees as bare and withered as himself." In 1661 he had published his poem, *St James' Park*; in 1664 he had collected his poetical works; in 1666 appeared his *Instructions to a Painter*; and in 1685 his *Divine Poems*. The final collection of his works is dated 1686, but there were further posthumous additions made in 1690.

Waller bought a cottage at Coleshill, where he was born, meaning to die there; "a stag," he said, "when he is hunted, and near spent, always returns home." He actually died, however, at Hall Barn, with his children and his grandchildren about him, on 21 October 1687, and was buried in woollen (in spite of his expressed wish), in the churchyard of St Mary and All Saints Church, Beaconsfield.

Verse

Waller's lyrics were at one time admired to excess, but with the exception of

"Song"(Go, lovely Rose) and one or two others, they have lost their popularity. He lacked imaginative invention, but resolutely placed himself in the forefront of reaction against the violence and "conceit" into which the baser kind of English poetry was descending.

Waller was regarded by some as the pioneer in introducing the classical couplet into English verse. It is, of course, obvious that Waller could not "introduce" what had been invented, and admirably exemplified, by Geoffrey Chaucer. But those who have pointed to smooth distichs employed by poets earlier than Waller have not given sufficient attention to the fact (exaggerated, doubtless, by critics arguing in the opposite camp) that it was he who earliest made writing in the serried couplet the habit and the fashion. Waller was writing in the regular heroic measure, afterwards carried to so high a perfection by John Dryden and Alexander Pope, perhaps even in 1621.

A Panegyric

[To my Lord Protector, of the Present Greatness, and Joint Interest, of His Highness, and this Nation.]

While with a strong and yet a gentle hand,
You bridle faction, and our hearts command,
Protect us from ourselves, and from the foe,
Make us unite, and make us conquer too;

Let partial spirits still aloud complain,
Think themselves injured that they cannot reign,
And own no liberty but where they may
Without control upon their fellows prey.

Above the waves as Neptune showed his face,
To chide the winds, and save the Trojan race,
So has your Highness, raised above the rest,
Storms of ambition, tossing us, repressed.

Your drooping country, torn with civil hate,
Restored by you, is made a glorious state;
The seat of empire, where the Irish come,
And the unwilling Scotch, to fetch their doom.

The sea's our own; and now all nations greet,
With bending sails, each vessel of our fleet;
Your power extends as far as winds can blow,
Or swelling sails upon the globe may go.

Heaven, (that has placed this island to give law,
To balance Europe, and her states to awe)
In this conjunction does on Britain smile;
The greatest leader, and the greatest isle!

Whether this portion of the world were rent,
By the rude ocean, from the continent;
Or thus created; it was sure designed
To be the sacred refuge of mankind.

Hither the oppressed shall henceforth resort,

Justice to crave, and succour, at your court;
And then your Highness, not for ours alone,
But for the world's protector shall be known.

Fame, swifter than your winged navy, flies
Through every land that near the ocean lies,
Sounding your name, and telling dreadful news
To all that piracy and rapine use.

With such a chief the meanest nation blessed,
Might hope to lift her head above the rest;
What may be thought impossible to do
For us, embraced by the sea and you?

Lords of the world's great waste, the ocean, we
Whole forests send to reign upon the sea,
And every coast may trouble, or relieve;
But none can visit us without your leave.

Angels and we have this prerogative,
That none can at our happy seat arrive;
While we descend at pleasure, to invade
The bad with vengeance, and the good to aid.

Our little world, the image of the great,
Like that, amidst the boundless ocean set,
Of her own growth has all that Nature craves;
And all that's rare, as tribute from the waves.

As Egypt does not on the clouds rely,
But to her Nile owes more than to the sky;
So what our earth, and what our heaven, denies,
Our ever constant friend, the sea, supplies.

The taste of hot Arabia's spice we know,
Free from the scorching sun that makes it grow;
Without the worm, in Persian silks we shine;
And, without planting, drink of every vine.

To dig for wealth we weary not our limbs;
Gold, though the heaviest metal, hither swims;
Ours is the harvest where the Indians mow;

We plough the deep, and reap what others sow.

Things of the noblest kind our own soil breeds;
Stout are our men, and warlike are our steeds;
Rome, though her eagle through the world had flown,
Could never make this island all her own.

Here the Third Edward, and the Black Prince, too,
France-conquering Henry flourished, and now you;
For whom we stayed, as did the Grecian state,
Till Alexander came to urge their fate.

When for more worlds the Macedonian cried,
He wist not Thetis in her lap did hide
Another yet; a world reserved for you,
To make more great than that he did subdue.

He safely might old troops to battle lead,
Against the unwarlike-Persian, and the Mede,
Whose hasty flight did, from the bloodless field,
More spoil than honour to the victor yield.

A race unconquered, by their clime made bold,
The Caledonians, armed with want and cold,
Have, by a fate indulgent to your fame,
Been from all ages kept for you to tame.

Whom the old Roman wall so ill confined,
With a new chain of garrisons you bind;
Here foreign gold no more shall make them come;
Our English iron holds them fast at home.

They, that henceforth must be content to know
No warmer region, than their hills of snow,
May blame the sun, but must extol your grace,
Which in our senate has allowed them place.

Preferred by conquest, happily o'erthrown,
Falling they rise, to be with us made one;
So kind dictators made, when they came home,
Their vanquished foes free citizens of Rome.

Like favour find the Irish, with like fate,
Advanced to be a portion of our state;
While by your valour and your courteous mind,
Nations, divided by the sea, are joined.

Holland, to gain your friendship, is content
To be our outguard on the continent;
She from her fellow-provinces would go,
Rather than hazard to have you her foe.

In our late fight, when cannons did diffuse,
Preventing posts, the terror and the news,
Our neighbour princes trembled at their roar;
But our conjunction makes them tremble more.

Your never-failing sword made war to cease;
And now you heal us with the arts of peace;
Our minds with bounty and with awe engage,
Invite affection, and restrain our rage.

Less pleasure take brave minds in battles won,
Than in restoring such as are undone;
Tigers have courage, and the rugged bear,
But man alone can, whom he conquers, spare.

To pardon willing, and to punish loath,
You strike with one hand, but you heal with both;
Lifting up all that prostrate lie, you grieve
You cannot make the dead again to live.

When fate, or error, had our age misled,
And o'er these nations such confusion spread,
The only cure, which could from Heaven come down,
Was so much power and clemency in one!

One! whose extraction from an ancient line
Gives hope again that well-born men may shine;
The meanest in your nature, mild and good,
The noble rest secured in your blood.

Oft have we wondered how you hid in peace
A mind proportioned to such things as these;

How such a ruling spirit you could restrain,
And practise first over yourself to reign.

Your private life did a just pattern give,
How fathers, husbands, pious sons should live;
Born to command, your princely virtues slept,
Like humble David's, while the flock he kept.

But when your troubled country called you forth,
Your flaming courage, and your matchless worth,
Dazzling the eyes of all that did pretend,
To fierce contention gave a prosperous end.

Still as you rise, the state, exalted too,
Finds no distemper while 'tis changed by you;
Changed like the world's great scene! when, without noise,
The rising sun night's vulgar light destroys.

Had you, some ages past, this race of glory
Run, with amazement we should read your story;
But living virtue, all achievements past,
Meets envy still, to grapple with at last.

This Cæsar found; and that ungrateful age,
With losing him fell back to blood and rage;
Mistaken Brutus thought to break their yoke,
But cut the bond of union with that stroke.

That sun once set, a thousand meaner stars
Gave a dim light to violence, and wars,
To such a tempest as now threatens all,
Did not your mighty arm prevent the fall.

If Rome's great senate could not wield that sword,
Which of the conquered world had made them lord,
What hope had ours, while yet their power was new,
To rule victorious armies, but by you?

You! that had taught them to subdue their foes,
Could order teach, and their high spirits compose;
To every duty could their minds engage,
Provoke their courage, and command their rage.

So when a lion shakes his dreadful mane,
And angry grows, if he that first took pain
To tame his youth approach the haughty beast,
He bends to him, but frights away the rest.

As the vexed world, to find repose, at last
Itself into Augustus' arms did cast;
So England now does, with like toil oppressed,
Her weary head upon your bosom rest.

Then let the Muses, with such notes as these,
Instruct us what belongs unto our peace;
Your battles they hereafter shall indite,
And draw the image of our Mars in fight;

Tell of towns stormed, or armies overrun,
And mighty kingdoms by your conduct won;
How, while you thundered, clouds of dust did choke
Contending troops, and seas lay hid in smoke.

Illustrious acts high raptures do infuse,
And every conqueror creates a muse.
Here, in low strains, your milder deeds we sing;
But there, my lord; we'll bays and olive bring

To crown your head; while you in triumph ride
O'er vanquished nations, and the sea beside;
While all your neighbour-princes unto you,
Like Joseph's sheaves, pay reverence, and bow.

Edmund Waller

At Penshurst

Had Sacharissa lived when mortals made
Choice of their deities, this sacred shade
Had held an alter to her power, that gave
The peace and glory which these alleys have;
Embroidered so with flowers where she stood,
That it became a garden of a wood.
Her presence has such more than human grace
That it can civilize the rudest place;
And beauty too, and order, can impart,
Where nature ne'er intended it, nor art.
The plants acknowledge this, and her admire
No less than those of old did Orpheus' lyre;
If she sit down, with tops all towards her bowed,
They round about her into arbors crowd;
Or if she walk, in even ranks they stand,
Like some well marshaled and obsequious band.
Amphion so made stones and timber leap
Into fair figures from a confused heap;
And in the symmetry of her parts is found
A power like that of harmony in sound.

Ye lofty beeches, tell this matchless dame
That if together ye fed all one flame,
It could not equalize the hundredth part
Of what her eyes have kindled in my heart!
Go, boy, and carve this passion on the bark
Of yonder tree, which stands the sacred mark
Of noble Sidney's birth; when such benign,
Such more than mortal-making stars did shine,
That there they cannot but forever prove
The monument and pledge of humble love;
His humble love whose hopes shall ne'er rise higher
Than for a pardon that he dares admire.

Edmund Waller

Go, Lovely Rose!

Go, lovely rose!
Tell her that wastes her time and me
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts, where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die! that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee;
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair!

Edmund Waller

Of English Verse

Poets may boast, as safely vain,
Their works shall with the world remain;
Both, bound together, live or die,
The verses and the prophecy.

But who can hope his lines should long
Last in a daily changing tongue?
While they are new, envy prevails;
And as that dies, our language fails.

When architects have done their part,
The matter may betray their art;
Time, if we use ill-chosen stone,
Soon brings a well-built palace down.

Poets that lasting marble seek
Must carve in Latin or in Greek;
We write in sand, our language grows,
And, like the tide, our work o'erflows.

Chaucer his sense can only boast,
The glory of his numbers lost!
Years have defaced his matchless strain,
And yet he did not sing in vain.

The beauties which adorned that age,
The shining subjects of his rage,
Hoping they should immortal prove,
Rewarded with success his love.

This was the generous poet's scope,
And all an English pen can hope,
To make the fair approve his flame,
That can so far extend their fame.

Verse, thus designed, has no ill fate
If it arrive but at the date
Of fading beauty; if it prove
But as long-lived as present love.

Edmund Waller

Of My Lady Isabella Playing On The Lute

Such moving sounds from such a careless touch,
So unconcerned herself, and we so much!
What art is this, that with so little pains
Transports us thus, and o'er the spirit reigns?
The trembling strings about her fingers crowd
And tell their joy for every kiss aloud.
Small force there needs to make them tremble so;
Touched by that hand, who would not tremble too?
Here love takes stand, and while she charms the ear,
Empties his quiver on the listening deer:
Music so softens and disarms the mind
That not an arrow does resistance find.
Thus the fair tyrant celebrates the prize,
And acts herself the the triumph of her eyes.
So Nero once with harp in hand surveyed
His flaming Rome, and as it burned he played.

Edmund Waller

Of The Last Verses In The Book

When we for age could neither read nor write,
The subject made us able to indite.
The soul, with nobler resolutions deckt,
The body stooping, does herself erect:
No mortal parts are requisite to raise
Her, that unbodied can her Maker praise.

The seas are quiet, when the winds give o'er,
So calm are we, when passions are no more:
For then we know how vain it was to boast
Of fleeting things, so certain to be lost.
Clouds of affection from our younger eyes
Conceal that emptiness, which age descries.

The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made;
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become
As they draw near to their eternal home:
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
That stand upon the threshold of the new.

Edmund Waller

Old Age

The seas are quiet when the winds give o'er;
So calm are we when passions are no more.
For then we know how vain it was to boast
Of fleeting things, so certain to be lost.
Clouds of affection from our younger eyes
Conceal that emptiness which age descries.

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As they draw near to their eternal home.
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That stand upon the threshold of the new.

Edmund Waller

On A Girdle

That which her slender waist confin'd,
Shall now my joyful temples bind;
No monarch but would give his crown,
His arms might do what this has done.

It was my heaven's extremest sphere,
The pale which held that lovely deer,
My joy, my grief, my hope, my love,
Did all within this circle move.

A narrow compass, and yet there
Dwelt all that's good, and all that's fair;
Give me but what this ribbon bound,
Take all the rest the sun goes round.

Edmund Waller

On Tea

Venus her myrtle, Phoebus has her bays;
Tea both excels, which she vouchsafes to praise.
The best of Queens, and best of herbs, we owe
To that bold nation, which the way did show
To the fair region where the sun doth rise,
Whose rich productions we so justly prize.
The Muse's friend, tea does our fancy aid,
Repress those vapors which the head invade,
And keep the palace of the soul serene,
Fit on her birthday to salute the Queen.

Edmund Waller

On The Friendship Betwixt Two Ladies

Tell me, lovely, loving pair!
Why so kind, and so severe?
Why so careless of our care,
Only to yourselves so dear?

By this cunning change of hearts,
You the power of love control;
While the boy's eluded darts
Can arrive at neither soul.

For in vain to either breast
Still beguiled love does come,
Where he finds a foreign guest,
Neither of your hearts at home.

Debtors thus with like design,
When they never mean to pay,
That they may the law decline,
To some friend make all away.

Not the silver doves that fly,
Yoked in Cytherea's car;
Not the wings that lift so high,
And convey her son so far;

Are so lovely, sweet, and fair,
Or do more ennoble love;
Are so choicely matched a pair,
Or with more consent do move.

Edmund Waller

Song - Say, Lovely Dream

Say, lovely dream, where couldst thou find
Shadows to counterfeit that face?
Colors of this glorious kind
Come not from any mortal place.

In heaven itself thou sure wert drest
With that angel-like disguise;
Thus deluded am I blest,
And see my joy with closed eyes.

But, ah, this image is too kind
To be other than a dream!
Cruel Sacharissa's mind
Never put on that sweet extreme.

Fair dream, if thou intend'st me grace,
Change that heavenly face of thine;
Paint despised love in thy face,
And make it to appear like mine.

Pale, wan, and meager let it look,
With a pity-moving shape,
Such as wander by the brook
Of Lethe, or from graves escape.

Then to that matchless nymph appear,
In whose shape thou shinest so,
Softly in her sleeping ear,
With humble words express my woe.

Perhaps from greatness, state, and pride,
Thus surprised she may fall:
Sleep does disproportion hide,
And, death resembling, equals all.

Edmund Waller

Song - Stay, Phoebus, Stay!

Stay, Phoebus, stay!
The world to which you fly so fast,
Conveying day
From us to them, can pay your haste
With no such object, not salute your rise
With no such wonder, as De Mornay's eyes.

Well does this prove
The error of those antique books,
Which made you move
About the world; her charming looks
Would fix your beams, and make it ever day,
Did not the rolling earth snatch her away.

Edmund Waller

Song: Go, Lovely Rose!

Go, lovely rose!
Tell her that wastes her time and me
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts, where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die! that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee;
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair!

Edmund Waller

The Battle Of The Summer Islands : Canto 1

What fruits they have, and how heaven smiles
Upon those late-discovered isles.

Aid me, Bellona, while the dreadful fight
Betwixt a nation and two whales I write.
Seas stained with gore I sing, adventurous toil,
And how these monsters did disarm an isle.

Bermudas, walled with rocks, who does not know?
That happy island where huge lemons grow,
And orange trees, which golden fruit do bear,
The Hesperian garden boasts of none so fair;
Where shining pearl, coral, and many a pound,
On the rich shore, of ambergris is found.
The lofty cedar, which to heaven aspires,
The prince of trees, is fuel for their fires;
The smoke by which their loaded spits do turn,
For incense might on sacred altars burn;
Their private roofs on odorous timber borne,
Such as might palaces for kings adorn.
The sweet palmettos a new Bacchus yield,
With leaves as ample as the broadest shield,
Under the shadow of whose friendly boughs
They sit, carousing where their liquor grows.
Figs there unplanted through the fields do grow,
Such as fierce Cato did the Romans show,
With the rare fruit inviting them to spoil
Carthage, the mistress of so rich a soil.
The naked rocks are not unfruitful there,
But, at some constant seasons, every year
Their barren tops with luscious food abound,
And with the eggs of various fowls are crowned.
Tobacco is the worst of things which they
To English landlords, as their tribute, pay.
Such is the mold, that the blest tenant feeds
On precious fruits, and pays his rent in weeds.
With candied plantains, and the juicy pine,
On choicer melons, and sweet grapes, they dine,
And with potatoes fat their wanton swine.

Nature these cates with such a lavish hand
Pours out among them, that our coarser land
Tastes of that bounty, and does cloth return,
Which not for warmth but ornament is worn;
For the kind spring, which but salutes us here,
Inhabits there, and courts them all the year.
Ripe fruits and blossoms on the same tress live;
At once they promise what at once they give.
So sweet the air, so moderate the clime,
None sickly lives, or dies before his time.
Heaven sure has kept this spot of earth uncursed
To show how all things were created first.
The tardy plants in our cold orchards placed
Reserve their fruit for the next age's taste.
There a small grain in some few months will be
A firm, a lofty, and a spacious tree.
The palma-christi, and the fair papaw,
Now but a seed, preventing nature's law,
In half the circle of the hasty year
Project a shade, and lovely fruit do wear.
And as their trees, in our dull region set,
But faintly grow, and no perfection get,
So in this northern tract our hoarser throats
Utter unripe and ill-constrained notes,
Where the supporter of the poets' style,
Phoebus, on them eternally does smile.
Oh! how I long my careless limbs to lay
Under the plantain's shade, and all the day
With amorous airs my fancy entertain,
Invoke the Muses, and improve my vein!
No passion there in my free breast should move,
None but the sweet and best of passions, love.
There while I sing, if gentle love be by,
That tunes my lute, and winds the strings so high,
With the sweet sound of Sacharissa's name
I'll make the listening savages grow tame -
But while I do these pleasing dreams indite,
I am diverted from the promised fight.

Edmund Waller

The Dancer

Behold the brand of beauty tossed!
See how the motion does dilate the flame!
Delighted love his spoils does boast,
And triumph in this game.
Fire, to no place confined,
Is both our wonder and our fear;
Moving the mind,
As lightning hurled through air.

High heaven the glory does increase
Of all her shining lamps, this artful way;
The sun in figures, such as these,
Joys with the moon to play.
To the sweet strains they all advance,
Which do result from their own spheres,
As this nymph's dance
Moves with the numbers which she hears.

Edmund Waller

The Self Banished

It is not that I love you less
Than when before your feet I lay,
But to prevent the sad increase
Of hopeless love, I keep away.

In vain (alas!) for everything
Which I have known belong to you,
Your form does to my fancy bring,
And makes my old wounds bleed anew.

Who in the spring from the new sun
Already has a fever got,
Too late begins those shafts to shun,
Which Phœbus through his veins has shot.

Too late he would the pain assuage,
And to thick shadows does retire;
About with him he bears the rage,
And in his tainted blood the fire.

But vow'd I have, and never must
Your banish'd servant trouble you;
For if I break, you may distrust
The vow I made to love you, too.

Edmund Waller

The Story Of Phœbus And Daphne, Applied

Thyrsis, a youth of the inspired train,
Fair Sacharissa lov'd, but lov'd in vain;
Like Phœbus sung the no less amorous boy;
Like Daphne she, as lovely, and as coy;
With numbers he the flying nymph pursues,
With numbers such as Phœbus' self might use;
Such is the chase when Love and Fancy leads,
O'er craggy mountains, and through flow'ry meads;
Invok'd to testify the lover's care,
Or form some image of his cruel fair:
Urg'd with his fury, like a wounded deer,
O'er these he fled; and now approaching near,
Had reach'd the nymph with his harmonious lay,
Whom all his charms could not incline to stay.
Yet what he sung in his immortal strain,
Though unsuccessful, was not sung in vain;
All but the nymph that should redress his wrong,
Attend his passion, and approve his song.
Like Phœbus thus, acquiring unsought praise,
He catch'd at love, and fill'd his arm with bays.

Edmund Waller

To A Lady Singing A Song Of His Composing

Chloris! yourself you so excel,
When you vouchsafe to breathe my thought,
That, like a spirit, with this spell
Of my own teaching, I am taught.

That eagle's fate and mine are one,
Which, on the shaft that made him die,
Espied a feather of his own,
Wherewith he wont to soar so high.

Had Echo, with so sweet a grace,
Narcissus' loud complaints returned,
Not for reflection of his face,
But of his voice, the boy had burned.

Edmund Waller

To A Very Young Lady

Why came I so untimely forth
Into a world which, wanting thee,
Could entertain us with no worth
Or shadow of felicity?
That time should me so far remove
From that which I was born to love.

Yet, fairest blossom, do not slight
That age which you may know so soon;
The rosy morn resigns her light,
And milder glory to the noon:
And then what wonder shall you do,
When dawning beauty warns us so?

Hope waits upon the flowery prime,
And summer, though it be less gay,
Yet is not looked on as a time
Of declination and decay.
For with a full hand that does bring
All that was promised by the spring.

Edmund Waller

To Mr. Henry Lawes, Who Had Then Newly Set A Song Of Mine

Verse makes heroic virtue live;
But you can life to verses give.
As, when in open air we blow,
The breath, though strained, sounds flat and low;
But if a trumpet take the blast,
It lifts it high, and makes it last:
So in your airs and our numbers dressed,
Make a shrill sally from the breast
Of nymphs, who, singing what we penned,
Our passions to themselves commend;
While love, victorious with thy art,
Governs at once their voice and heart.

You, by the help of tune and time,
Can make that song which was but rhyme.
Noy pleading, no man doubts the cause;
Or questions verses set by Lawes.

As a Church window, thick with paint,
Lets in a light but dim and faint,
So others, with division, hide
The light of sense, the poet's pride;
But you alone may truly boast
That not a syllable is lost:
The writer's and the setter's skill
At once the ravished ears do fill.
Let those which only warble long,
And gargle in their throats a song,
Content themselves with
ut, re, mi
:
Let words, and sense, be set by thee.

Edmund Waller

To One Married To An Old Man

Since thou wouldst needs,
Bewitched with some ill charms,
Be buried in those monumental arms,
All we can wish is, may that earth lie light
Upon thy tender limbs, and so goodnight.

Edmund Waller

To Phyllis

Phyllis! why should we delay
Pleasures shorter than the day?
Can we (which we never can)
Stretch our lives beyond their span,
Beauty like a shadow flies,
And our youth before us dies.
Or, would youth and beauty stay,
Love has wings, and will away.
Love has swifter wings than Time;
Change in love to heaven doth climb.
Gods, that never change their state,
Vary oft their love and hate.
Phyllis! to this truth we owe
All the love betwixt us two.
Let not you and I inquire
What has been our past desire;
On what shepherds you have smiled,
Or what nymphs I have beguiled;
Leave it to the planets too,
What we shall hereafter do;
For the joys we now may prove,
Take advice of present love.

Edmund Waller

To The King

[Upon His Majesty's Happy Return.]

The rising sun complies with our weak sight,
First gilds the clouds, then shows his globe of light
At such a distance from our eyes, as though
He knew what harm his hasty beams would do.

But your full majesty at once breaks forth
In the meridian of your reign. Your worth,
Your youth, and all the splendour of your state,
(Wrapped up, till now, in clouds of adverse fate!)
With such a flood of light invade our eyes,
And our spread hearts with so great joy surprise,
That if your grace incline that we should live,
You must not, sir! too hastily forgive.
Our guilt preserves us from the excess of joy,
Which scatters spirits, and would life destroy.
All are obnoxious! and this faulty land,
Like fainting Esther, does before you stand,
Watching your sceptre. The revolted sea
Trembles to think she did your foes obey.

Great Britain, like blind Polypheme, of late,
In a wild rage, became the scorn and hate
Of her proud neighbours, who began to think
She, with the weight of her own force, would sink.
But you are come, and all their hopes are vain;
This giant isle has got her eye again.
Now she might spare the ocean, and oppose
Your conduct to the fiercest of her foes.
Naked, the Graces guarded you from all
Dangers abroad; and now your thunder shall.
Princes that saw you, different passions prove,
For now they dread the object of their love;
Nor without envy can behold his height,
Whose conversation was their late delight.
So Semele, contented with the rape
Of Jove disguised in a mortal shape,
When she beheld his hands with lightning filled,

And his bright rays, was with amazement killed.

And though it be our sorrow, and our crime,
To have accepted life so long a time
Without you here, yet does this absence gain
No small advantage to your present reign;
For, having viewed the persons and the things,
The councils, state, and strength of Europe's kings,
You know your work; ambition to restrain,
And set them bounds, as Heaven does to the main.
We have you now with ruling wisdom fraught,
Not such as books, but such as practice, taught.
So the lost sun, while least by us enjoyed,
Is the whole night for our concern employed;
He ripens spices, fruits, and precious gums,
Which from remotest regions hither comes.

This seat of yours (from the other world removed)
Had Archimedes known, he might have proved
His engine's force fixed here. Your power and skill
Make the world's motion wait upon your will.

Much suffering monarch! the first English born
That has the crown of these three nations worn!
How has your patience, with the barbarous rage
Of your own soil, contended half an age?
Till (your tried virtue, and your sacred word,
At last preventing your unwilling sword)
Armies and fleets which kept you out so long,
Owned their great sovereign, and redressed his wrong.
When straight the people, by no force compelled,
Nor longer from their inclination held,
Break forth at once, like powder set on fire,
And, with a noble rage, their King required;
So the injured sea, which from her wonted course,
To gain some acres, avarice did force,
If the new banks, neglected once, decay,
No longer will from her old channel stay;
Raging, the late got land she overflows,
And all that's built upon't, to ruin goes.

Offenders now, the chiefest, do begin

To strive for grace, and expiate their sin.
All winds blow fair, that did the world embroil;
Your vipers treacle yield, and scorpions oil.

If then such praise the Macedonian got,
For having rudely cut the Gordian knot,
What glory's due to him that could divide
Such ravelled interests; has the knot untied,
And without stroke so smooth a passage made,
Where craft and malice such impeachments laid?

But while we praise you, you ascribe it all
To His high hand, which threw the untouched wall
Of self-demolished Jericho so low;
His angel 'twas that did before you go,
Tamed savage hearts, and made affections yield,
Like ears of corn when wind salutes the field.

Thus patience crowned, like Jobs's, your trouble ends,
Having your foes to pardon, and your friends;
For, though your courage were so firm a rock,
What private virtue could endure the shock?
Like your Great Master, you the storm withstood,
And pitied those who love with frailty showed.

Rude Indians, torturing all the royal race,
Him with the throne and dear-bought sceptre grace
That suffers best. What region could be found,
Where your herioc head had not been crowned?

The next experience of your mighty mind
Is how you combat fortune, now she's kind.
And this way, too, you are victorious found;
She flatters with the same success she frowned.
While to yourself severe, to others kind,
With power unbounded, and a will confined,
Of this vast empire you possess the care,
The softer part falls to the people's share.
Safety, and equal government, are things
Which subjects make as happy as their kings.

Faith, law, and piety, (that banished train!)

Justice and truth, with you return again.
The city's trade, and country's easy life,
Once more shall flourish without fraud or strife.
Your reign no less assures the ploughman's peace,
Than the warm sun advances his increase;
And does the shepherds as securely keep
From all their fears, as they preserve their sheep.

But, above all, the Muse-inspired train
Triumph, and raise their drooping heads again!
Kind Heaven at once has, in your person, sent
Their sacred judge, their guard, and argument.

Edmund Waller

To The King On His Navy

Where'er thy navy spreads her canvas wings,
Homage to thee, and peace to all, she brings:
The French and Spaniard, when thy flags appear,
Forget their hatred, and consent to fear.
So Jove from Ida did both hosts survey,
And when he pleas'd to thunder, part the fray.
Ships heretofore in seas like fishes sped,
The mightiest still upon the smallest fed:
Thou on the deep imposest nobler laws,
And by that justice hast remov'd the cause
Of those rude tempests, which, for rapine sent,
Too oft, alas, involv'd the innocent.
Now shall the ocean, as thy Thames, be free
From both those fates, of storms and piracy.
But we most happy, who can fear no force
But winged troops, or Pegasean horse:
'Tis not so hard for greedy foes to spoil
Another nation, as to touch our soil.
Should Nature's self invade the world again,
And o'er the centre spread the liquid main,
Thy power were safe; and her destructive hand
Would but enlarge the bounds of thy command:
Thy dreadful fleet would style thee lord of all,
And ride in triumph o'er the drowned ball:
Those towers of oak o'er fertile plains might go,
And visit mountains, where they once did grow.

The world's restorer once could not endure,
That finish'd Babel should those men secure,
Whose pride design'd that fabric to have stood
Above the reach of any second flood:
To thee His chosen, more indulgent, He
Dares trust such power with so much piety.

Edmund Waller

Upon His Majesty's Happy Return

The rising sun complies with our weak sight,
First gilds the clouds, then shows his globe of light
At such a distance from our eyes, as though
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Edmund Waller

Upon The Late Storm

[And Death of His Highness Ensuing the Same.]

We must resign! Heaven his great soul does claim
In storms, as loud as his immortal fame;
His dying groans, his last breath, shakes our isle,
And trees uncut fall for his funeral pile.
About his palace their broad roots are tossed
Into the air: So Romulus was lost.
New Rome in such a tempest missed her king,
And from obeying fell to worshipping.
On Oeta's top thus Hercules lay dead,
With ruined oaks and pines about him spread;
The poplar, too, whose bough he wont to wear
On his victorious head, lay prostrate there.
Those his last fury from the mountain rent;
Our dying hero from the continent
Ravished whole towns, and forts from Spaniards reft,
As his last legacy to Britain left.
The ocean, which so long our hopes confined,
Could give no limits to his vaster mind;
Our bounds' enlargement was his latest toil,
Nor hath he left us prisoners to our isle.
Under the tropic is our language spoke,
And part of Flanders hath received our yoke.
From civil broils he did us disengage,
Found nobler objects for our martial rage:
And, with wise conduct, to his country showed
Their ancient way of conquering abroad.
Ungrateful then, if we no tears allow
To him that gave us peace and empire too.
Princes, that feared him, grieve, concerned to see
No pitch of glory from the grave is free.
Nature herself took notice of his death,
And, sighing, swelled the sea with such a breath
That to remotest shores her billows rolled,
The approaching fate of her great ruler told.

Edmund Waller

While I Listen To Thy Voice

While I listen to thy voice,
Chloris, I feel my life decay;
That powerful noise
Calls my flitting soul away.
Oh! suppress that magic sound,
Which destroys without a wound.

Peace, Chloris, peace! or singing die,
That together you and I
To heaven may go;
For all we know
Of what the blessed do above
Is, that they sing and that they love.

Edmund Waller