

Classic Poetry Series

Henry Vaughan

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Henry Vaughan (1621-1695)

Henry Vaughan was born into a middle-class Welsh family in Breconshire. In 1638 he went to Jesus College, Oxford, with his brother Thomas, who later achieved fame as an alchemist. Henry left Oxford in 1640 without taking a degree, and spent two years in London studying law. He was recalled home when the Civil War broke out, and he is thought to have served on the Royalist side in South Wales sometime around 1645.

In 1646 Vaughan married Catherine Wise and published his first book of verse, *Poems, with the Tenth Satire of Juvenal Englished*. The poems were secular in theme and attracted little attention. They appear uninspired when compared with the religious poetry of *Silex Scintillus*. In the preface to the second edition of *Silex* Vaughan attributes the transformation of his life and work to a spiritual awakening brought about by reading the poems of 'the blessed man, Mr. George Herbert'. On the title page of this work, he describes himself as 'Henry Vaughan, Silurist' referring to the ancient British tribe of Silures who once lived in Brecon.

During the 1650s Vaughan began practising medicine. After the death of his first wife he married her sister Elizabeth in about 1655. He had four children by each wife, and in his later years he became involved in legal wrangles with his older children. Though his poetry did not attract much attention for a long time after his death, Vaughan is now established as one of the finest religious poets in the language, and in some respects he surpassed his literary and spiritual master, George Herbert.

Christ's Nativity

1 Awake, glad heart! get up and sing!
2 It is the birth-day of thy King.
3 Awake! awake!
4 The Sun doth shake
5 Light from his locks, and all the way
6 Breathing perfumes, doth spice the day.

7 Awake, awake! hark how th' wood rings;
8 Winds whisper, and the busy springs
9 A concert make;
10 Awake! awake!
11 Man is their high-priest, and should rise
12 To offer up the sacrifice.

13 I would I were some bird, or star,
14 Flutt'ring in woods, or lifted far
15 Above this inn
16 And road of sin!
17 Then either star or bird should be
18 Shining or singing still to thee.

19 I would I had in my best part
20 Fit rooms for thee! or that my heart
21 Were so clean as
22 Thy manger was!
23 But I am all filth, and obscene;
24 Yet, if thou wilt, thou canst make clean.

25 Sweet Jesu! will then. Let no more
26 This leper haunt and soil thy door!
27 Cure him, ease him,
28 O release him!
29 And let once more, by mystic birth,
30 The Lord of life be born in earth.

Henry Vaughan

Etesia Absent

Love, the world's life! What a sad death
Thy absence is to lose our breath
At once and die, is but to live
Enlarged, without the scant reprieve
Of pulse and air: whose dull returns
And narrow circles the soul mourns.
But to be dead alive, and still
To wish, but never have our will:
To be possessed, and yet to miss;
To wed a true but absent bliss:
Are lingering tortures, and their smart
Dissects and racks and grinds the heart!
As soul and body in that state
Which unto us seems separate,
Cannot be said to live, until
Reunion; which days fulfil
And slow-paced seasons: so in vain
Through hours and minutes (Time's long train,)
I look for thee, and from thy sight,
As from my soul, for life and light.
For till thine eyes shine so on me,
Mine are fast-closed and will not see.

Henry Vaughan

Friends Departed

They are all gone into the world of light!
And I alone sit ling'ring here;
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

It glows and glitters in my cloudy breast,
Like stars upon some gloomy grove,
Or those faint beams in which this hill is drest
After the sun's remove.

I see them walking in an air of glory,
Whose light doth trample on my days:
My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,
Mere glimmering and decays.

O holy Hope! and high Humility,
High as the heavens above!
These are your walks, and you have show'd them me,
To kindle my cold love.

Dear, beauteous Death! the jewel of the Just,
Shining nowhere, but in the dark;
What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust,
Could man outlook that mark!

He that hath found some fledg'd bird's nest may know,
At first sight, if the bird be flown;
But what fair well or grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown.

And yet as Angels in some brighter dreams
Call to the soul, when man doth sleep:
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,
And into glory peep.

If a star were confin'd into a tomb,
Her captive flames must needs burn there;
But when the hand that lock'd her up gives room,
She'll shine through all the sphere.

O Father of eternal life, and all
Created glories under Thee!
Resume Thy spirit from this world of thrall
Into true liberty.

Either disperse these mists, which blot and fill
My perspective still as they pass:
Or else remove me hence unto that hill,
Where I shall need no glass.

Henry Vaughan

I Walk'd the Other Day

1 I walk'd the other day, to spend my hour,
2 Into a field,
3 Where I sometimes had seen the soil to yield
4 A gallant flow'r;
5 But winter now had ruffled all the bow'r
6 And curious store
7 I knew there heretofore.

8 Yet I, whose search lov'd not to peep and peer
9 I' th' face of things,
10 Thought with my self, there might be other springs
11 Besides this here,
12 Which, like cold friends, sees us but once a year;
13 And so the flow'r
14 Might have some other bow'r.

15 Then taking up what I could nearest spy,
16 I digg'd about
17 That place where I had seen him to grow out;
18 And by and by
19 I saw the warm recluse alone to lie,
20 Where fresh and green
21 He liv'd of us unseen.

22 Many a question intricate and rare
23 Did I there strow;
24 But all I could extort was, that he now
25 Did there repair
26 Such losses as befell him in this air,
27 And would ere long
28 Come forth most fair and young.

29 This past, I threw the clothes quite o'er his head;
30 And stung with fear
31 Of my own frailty dropp'd down many a tear
32 Upon his bed;
33 Then sighing whisper'd, "happy are the dead!
34 What peace doth now
35 Rock him asleep below!"

36 And yet, how few believe such doctrine springs
37 From a poor root,
38 Which all the winter sleeps here under foot,
39 And hath no wings
40 To raise it to the truth and light of things;
41 But is still trod
42 By ev'ry wand'ring clod.

43 O Thou! whose spirit did at first inflame
44 And warm the dead,
45 And by a sacred incubation fed
46 With life this frame,

47 Which once had neither being, form, nor name;
48 Grant I may so
49 Thy steps track here below,

50 That in these masques and shadows I may see
51 Thy sacred way;
52 And by those hid ascents climb to that day,
53 Which breaks from Thee,
54 Who art in all things, though invisibly!
55 Shew me thy peace,
56 Thy mercy, love, and ease,

57 And from this care, where dreams and sorrows reign,
58 Lead me above,
59 Where light, joy, leisure, and true comforts move
60 Without all pain;
61 There, hid in thee, shew me his life again,
62 At whose dumb urn
63 Thus all the year I mourn.

Henry Vaughan

Peace

1 My Soul, there is a country
2 Afar beyond the stars,
3 Where stands a winged sentry
4 All skillful in the wars;
5 There, above noise and danger
6 Sweet Peace sits, crown'd with smiles,
7 And One born in a manger
8 Commands the beauteous files.
9 He is thy gracious friend
10 And (O my Soul awake!)
11 Did in pure love descend,
12 To die here for thy sake.
13 If thou canst get but thither,
14 There grows the flow'r of peace,
15 The rose that cannot wither,
16 Thy fortress, and thy ease.
17 Leave then thy foolish ranges,
18 For none can thee secure,
19 But One, who never changes,
20 Thy God, thy life, thy cure.

Henry Vaughan

Regeneration

1.

Award, and still in bonds, one day
I stole abroad,
It was high-spring, and all the way
Primros'd, and hung with shade;
Yet, was it frost within,
And surly winds
Blasted my infant buds, and sin
Like clouds eclips'd my mind.

2.

Storm'd thus; I straight perceiv'd my spring
Mere stage, and show,
My walk a monstrous, mountain's thing
Rough-cast with rocks, and snow;
And as a pilgrim's eye
Far from relief,
Measures the melancholy sky
Then drops, and rains for grief,

3.

So sigh'd I upwards still, at last
'Twixt steps, and falls
I reach'd the pinnacle, where plac'd
I found a pair of scales,
I took them up and laid
In th'one late pains,
The other smoke, and pleasures weigh'd
But prov'd the heavier grains;

4.

With that, some cried, Away; straight I
Obey'd, and led
Full east, a fair, fresh field could spy
Some call'd it Jacob's Bed;
A virgin-soil, which no
Rude feet ere trod,
Where (since he slept there,) only go
Prophets, and friends of God.

5.

Here, I repos'd; but scarce well set,
A grove descried
Of stately height, whose branches met
And mixed on every side;
I entered, and once in
(Amaz'd to see't,)

Found all was chang'd, and a new spring
Did all my senses greet;

6.

The unthrift sun shot vital gold
A thousand pieces,
And heaven its azure did unfold
Checker'd with snowy fleeces,
The air was all in spice
And every bush
A garland wore; thus fed my eyes
But all the ear lay hush.

7.

Only a little fountain lent
Some use for ears,
And on the dumb shades language spent
The music of her tears;
I drew her near, and found
The cistern full
Of diverse stones, some bright, and round
Others ill'shap'd, and dull.

8.

The first (pray mark,) as quick as light
Danc'd through the flood,
But, th'last more heavy than the night
Nail'd to the center stood;
I wonder'd much, but tir'd
At last with thought,
My restless eye that still desir'd
As strange an object brought;

9.

It was a bank of flowers, where I descried
(Though 'twas mid'day,)
Some fast asleep, others broad-eyed
And taking in the ray,
Here musing long, I heard
A rushing wind
Which still increas'd, but whence it stirr'd
No where I could not find;

10.

I turn'd me round, and to each shade
Dispatch'd an eye,
To see, if any leaf had made

Least motion, or reply,
But while I listening sought
My mind to ease
By knowing, where 'twas, or where not,
It whispered: Where I please.
Lord, then said I, On me one breath,
And let me die before my death!

Henry Vaughan

Retirement

Fresh fields and woods! the Earth's fair face,
God's foot-stool, and man's dwelling-place.
I ask not why the first Believer
Did love to be a country liver?
Who to secure pious content
Did pitch by groves and wells his tent;
Where he might view the boundless sky,
And all those glorious lights on high;
With flying meteors, mists and show'rs,
Subjected hills, trees, meads and flow'rs;
And ev'ry minute bless the King
And wise Creator of each thing.
I ask not why he did remove
To happy Mamre's holy grove,
Leaving the cities of the plain
To Lot and his successful train?
All various lusts in cities still
Are found; they are the thrones of ill;
The dismal sinks, where blood is spill'd,
Cages with much uncleanness fill'd.
But rural shades are the sweet fense
Of piety and innocence.
They are the Meek's calm region, where
Angels descend and rule the sphere,
Where heaven lies leiger, and the dove
Duly as dew, comes from above.
If Eden be on Earth at all,
'Tis that, which we the country call.

Henry Vaughan

Silence and Stealth of Days

Silence, and stealth of days! 'tis now
Since thou art gone,
Twelve hundred hours, and not a brow
But clouds hang on.
As he that in some cave's thick damp
Lockt from the light,
Fixeth a solitary lamp,
To brave the night,
And walking from his sun, when past
That glim'ring ray
Cuts through the heavy mists in haste
Back to his day,
So o'r fled minutes I retreat
Unto that hour
Which show'd thee last, but did defeat
Thy light, and power,
I search, and rack my soul to see
Those beams again,
But nothing but the snuff to me
Appeareth plain;
That dark and dead sleeps in its known
And common urn,
But those fled to their Maker's throne
There shine and burn;
O could I track them! but souls must
Track one the other,
And now the spirit, not the dust,
Must be thy brother.
Yet I have one Pearl by whose light
All things I see,
And in the heart of earth and night
Find heaven and thee.

Henry Vaughan

Son-Days

1

Bright shadows of true Rest! some shoots of bliss,
Heaven once a week;
The next world's gladness prepossest in this;
A day to seek;
Eternity in time; the steps by which
We Climb above all ages; Lamps that light
Man through his heap of dark days; and the rich,
And full redemption of the whole week's flight.

2

The Pulleys unto headlong man; time's bower;
The narrow way;
Transplanted Paradise; God's walking hour;
The Cool o'th' day;
The Creatures' _Jubilee_; God's parle with dust;
Heaven here; Man on the hills of Myrrh, and flowers;
Angels descending; the Returns of Trust;
A Gleam of glory, after six-days'-showers.

3

The Church's love-feasts; Time's Prerogative,
And Interest
Deducted from the whole; The Combs, and hive,
And home of rest.
The milky way chalked out with suns; a clue
That guides through erring hours; and in full story
A taste of Heav'n on earth; the pledge, and cue
Of a full feast: And the Out Courts of glory.

Henry Vaughan

The Evening-Watch

BODY

Farewell! I go to sleep; but when
The day-star springs, I'll wake again.

SOUL

Go, sleep in peace; and when thou liest
Unnumber'd in thy dust, when all this frame
Is but one dram, and what thou now descriest
In sev'ral parts shall want a name,
Then may his peace be with thee, and each dust
Writ in his book, who ne'er betray'd man's trust!

BODY

Amen! but hark, ere we two stray
How many hours dost think 'till day?

SOUL

Ah go; th'art weak, and sleepy. Heav'n
Is a plain watch, and without figures winds
All ages up; who drew this circle, even
He fills it; days and hours are blinds.
Yet this take with thee. The last gasp of time
Is thy first breath, and man's eternal prime.

Henry Vaughan

The Evening-Watch: A Dialogue

BODY

1 Farewell! I go to sleep; but when
2 The day-star springs, I'll wake again.

SOUL

3 Go, sleep in peace; and when thou liest
4 Unnumber'd in thy dust, when all this frame
5 Is but one dram, and what thou now descriest
6 In sev'ral parts shall want a name,
7 Then may his peace be with thee, and each dust
8 Writ in his book, who ne'er betray'd man's trust!

BODY

9 Amen! but hark, ere we two stray
10 How many hours dost think 'till day?

SOUL

11 Ah go; th'art weak, and sleepy. Heav'n
12 Is a plain watch, and without figures winds
13 All ages up; who drew this circle, even
14 He fills it; days and hours are blinds.
15 Yet this take with thee. The last gasp of time
16 Is thy first breath, and man's eternal prime.

Henry Vaughan

The Morning-Watch

1 O joys! infinite sweetness! with what flow'rs
2 And shoots of glory my soul breaks and buds!
3 All the long hours
4 Of night, and rest,
5 Through the still shrouds
6 Of sleep, and clouds,
7 This dew fell on my breast;
8 Oh, how it bloods
9 And spirits all my earth! Hark! In what rings
10 And hymning circulations the quick world
11 Awakes and sings;
12 The rising winds
13 And falling springs,
14 Birds, beasts, all things
15 Adore him in their kinds.
16 Thus all is hurl'd
17 In sacred hymns and order, the great chime
18 And symphony of nature. Prayer is
19 The world in tune,
20 A spirit voice,
21 And vocal joys
22 Whose echo is heav'n's bliss.
23 O let me climb
24 When I lie down! The pious soul by night
25 Is like a clouded star whose beams, though said
26 To shed their light
27 Under some cloud,
28 Yet are above,
29 And shine and move
30 Beyond that misty shroud.
31 So in my bed,
32 That curtain'd grave, though sleep, like ashes, hide
33 My lamp and life, both shall in thee abide.

Henry Vaughan

The Nativity

Peace? and to all the world? sure, One
And He the Prince of Peace, hath none.
He travels to be born, and then
Is born to travel more again.
Poor Galilee! thou canst not be
The place for His nativity.
His restless mother's called away,
And not delivered till she pay.
A tax? 'tis so still! we can see
The church thrive in her misery;
And like her Head at Bethlem, rise
When she, oppressed with troubles, lies.
Rise? should all fall, we cannot be
In more extremities than He.
Great Type of passions! come what will,
Thy grief exceeds all copies still.
Thou cam'st from heaven to earth, that we
Might go from earth to heaven with Thee.
And though Thou foundest no welcome here,
Thou didst provide us mansions there.
A stable was Thy court, and when
Men turned to beasts, beasts would be men.
They were Thy courtiers, others none;
And their poor manger was Thy throne.
No swaddling silks Thy limbs did fold,
Though Thou couldst turn Thy rays to gold.
No rockers waited on Thy birth,
No cradles stirred, nor songs of mirth;
But her chaste lap and sacred breast
Which lodged Thee first did give Thee rest.
But stay: what light is that doth stream,
And drop here in a gilded beam?
It is Thy star runs page, and brings
Thy tributary Eastern kings.
Lord! grant some light to us, that we
May with them find the way to Thee.
Behold what mists eclipse the day:
How dark it is! shed down one ray
To guide us out of this sad night,
And say once more, "Let there be light."

Henry Vaughan

The Relapse

My God, how gracious art thou! I had slipt
Almost to hell,
And on the verge of that dark, dreadful pit
Did hear them yell,
But O thy love! thy rich, almighty love
That sav'd my soul,
And checkt their fury, when I saw them move,
And heard them howl;
O my sole comfort, take no more these ways,
This hideous path,
And I will mend my own without delays,
Cease thou thy wrath!
I have deserv'd a thick, Egyptian damp,
Dark as my deeds,
Should mist within me, and put out that lamp
Thy spirit feeds;
A darting conscience full of stabs and fears;
No shade but Yew,
Sullen, and sad eclipses, cloudy spheres,
These are my due.
But he that with his blood, (a price too dear,)
My scores did pay,
Bid me, by virtue from him, challenge here
The brightest day;
Sweet, downy thoughts; soft lily-shades; calm streams;
Joys full and true;
Fresh, spicy mornings; and eternal beams
These are his due.

Henry Vaughan

The Retreat

1 Happy those early days, when I
2 Shin'd in my angel-infancy!
3 Before I understood this place
4 Appointed for my second race,
5 Or taught my soul to fancy ought
6 But a white, celestial thought;
7 When yet I had not walk'd above
8 A mile or two from my first love,
9 And looking back (at that short space)
10 Could see a glimpse of his bright face;
11 When on some gilded cloud or flow'r
12 My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
13 And in those weaker glories spy
14 Some shadows of eternity;
15 Before I taught my tongue to wound
16 My conscience with a sinful sound,
17 Or had the black art to dispense,
18 A sev'ral sin to ev'ry sense,
19 But felt through all this fleshly dress
20 Bright shoots of everlastingness.

21 O how I long to travel back,
22 And tread again that ancient track!
23 That I might once more reach that plain,
24 Where first I left my glorious train,
25 From whence th' enlighten'd spirit sees
26 That shady city of palm trees.
27 But ah! my soul with too much stay
28 Is drunk, and staggers in the way.
29 Some men a forward motion love,
30 But I by backward steps would move;
31 And when this dust falls to the urn,
32 In that state I came, return.

Henry Vaughan

The Revival

1 Unfold! unfold! Take in His light,
2 Who makes thy cares more short than night.
3 The joys which with His day-star rise,
4 He deals to all but drowsy eyes;
5 And (what the men of this world miss)
6 Some drops and dews of future bliss.

7 Hark! how his winds have chang'd their note,
8 And with warm whispers call thee out.
9 The frosts are past, the storms are gone,
10 And backward life at last comes on.
11 The lofty groves in express joys
12 Reply unto the turtle's voice;
13 And here in dust and dirt, O here
14 The lilies of His love appear!

Henry Vaughan

The Shepherds

Sweet, harmless lives! (on whose holy leisure
Waits innocence and pleasure),
Whose leaders to those pastures, and clear springs,
Were patriarchs, saints, and kings,
How happened it that in the dead of night
You only saw true light,
While Palestine was fast asleep, and lay
Without one thought of day?
Was it because those first and blessed swains
Were pilgrims on those plains
When they received the promise, for which now
'Twas there first shown to you?
'Tis true, He loves that dust whereon they go
That serve Him here below,
And therefore might for memory of those
His love there first disclose;
But wretched Salem, once His love, must now
No voice, nor vision know,
Her stately piles with all their height and pride
Now languished and died,
And Bethlem's humble cotes above them stepped
While all her seers slept;
Her cedar, fir, hewed stones and gold were all
Polluted through their fall,
And those once sacred mansions were now
Mere emptiness and show;
This made the angel call at reeds and thatch,
Yet where the shepherds watch,
And God's own lodging (though He could not lack)
To be a common rack;
No costly pride, no soft-clothed luxury
In those thin cells could lie,
Each stirring wind and storm blew through their cots
Which never harbored plots,
Only content, and love, and humble joys
Lived there without all noise,
Perhaps some harmless cares for the next day
Did in their bosoms play,
As where to lead their sheep, what silent nook,
What springs or shades to look,
But that was all; and now with gladsome care
They for the town prepare,
They leave their flock, and in a busy talk
All towards Bethlem walk
To see their souls' Great Shepherd, Who was come
To bring all stragglers home,
Where now they find Him out, and taught before
That Lamb of God adore,
That Lamb whose days great kings and prophets wished
And longed to see, but missed.
The first light they beheld was bright and gay
And turned their night to day,

But to this later light they saw in Him,
Their day was dark, and dim.

Henry Vaughan

The Star

1 Whatever 'tis, whose beauty here below
2 Attracts thee thus and makes thee stream and flow,
3 And wind and curl, and wink and smile,
4 Shifting thy gate and guile;

5 Though thy close commerce nought at all imbars
6 My present search, for eagles eye not stars,
7 And still the lesser by the best
8 And highest good is blest;

9 Yet, seeing all things that subsist and be,
10 Have their commissions from divinity,
11 And teach us duty, I will see
12 What man may learn from thee.

13 First, I am sure, the subject so respected
14 Is well dispos'd, for bodies once infected,
15 Deprav'd, or dead, can have with thee
16 No hold, nor sympathy.

17 Next, there's in it a restless, pure desire
18 And longing for thy bright and vital fire,
19 Desire that never will be quench'd,
20 Nor can be writh'd, nor wrench'd.

21 These are the magnets which so strongly move
22 And work all night upon thy light and love,
23 As beauteous shapes, we know not why,
24 Command and guide the eye.

25 For where desire, celestial, pure desire
26 Hath taken root, and grows, and doth not tire,
27 There God a commerce states, and sheds
28 His secret on their heads.

29 This is the heart he craves, and who so will
30 But give it him, and grudge not, he shall feel
31 That God is true, as herbs unseen
32 Put on their youth and green.

Henry Vaughan

The Timber

Sure thou didst flourish once! and many springs,
Many bright mornings, much dew, many showers,
Pass'd o'er thy head; many light hearts and wings,
Which now are dead, lodg'd in thy living bowers.

And still a new succession sings and flies;
Fresh groves grow up, and their green branches shoot
Towards the old and still enduring skies,
While the low violet thrives at their root.

But thou beneath the sad and heavy line
Of death, doth waste all senseless, cold, and dark;
Where not so much as dreams of light may shine,
Nor any thought of greenness, leaf, or bark.

And yet—as if some deep hate and dissent,
Bred in thy growth betwixt high winds and thee,
Were still alive—thou dost great storms resent
Before they come, and know'st how near they be.

Else all at rest thou liest, and the fierce breath
Of tempests can no more disturb thy ease;
But this thy strange resentment after death
Means only those who broke—in life—thy peace.

Henry Vaughan

The True Christians

So stick up ivy and the bays,
And then restore the heathen ways.
Green will remind you of the spring,
Though this great day denies the thing.
And mortifies the earth and all
But your wild revels, and loose hall.
Could you wear flowers, and roses strow
Blushing upon your breasts' warm snow,
That very dress your lightness will
Rebuke, and wither at the ill.
The brightness of this day we owe
Not unto music, masque, nor show:
Nor gallant furniture, nor plate;
But to the manger's mean estate.
His life while here, as well as birth,
Was but a check to pomp and mirth;
And all man's greatness you may see
Condemned by His humility.
Then leave your open house and noise,
To welcome Him with holy joys,
And the poor shepherd's watchfulness:
Whom light and hymns from heaven did bless.
What you abound with, cast abroad
To those that want, and ease your load.
Who empties thus, will bring more in;
But riot is both loss and sin.
Dress finely what comes not in sight,
And then you keep your Christmas right.

Henry Vaughan

The Water-Fall

1 With what deep murmurs through time's silent stealth
2 Doth thy transparent, cool, and wat'ry wealth
3 Here flowing fall,
4 And chide, and call,
5 As if his liquid, loose retinue stay'd
6 Ling'ring, and were of this steep place afraid;
7 The common pass
8 Where, clear as glass,
9 All must descend
10 Not to an end,
11 But quicken'd by this deep and rocky grave,
12 Rise to a longer course more bright and brave.

13 Dear stream! dear bank, where often I
14 Have sate and pleas'd my pensive eye,
15 Why, since each drop of thy quick store
16 Runs thither whence it flow'd before,
17 Should poor souls fear a shade or night,
18 Who came, sure, from a sea of light?
19 Or since those drops are all sent back
20 So sure to thee, that none doth lack,
21 Why should frail flesh doubt any more
22 That what God takes, he'll not restore?

23 O useful element and clear!
24 My sacred wash and cleanser here,
25 My first consigner unto those
26 Fountains of life where the Lamb goes!
27 What sublime truths and wholesome themes
28 Lodge in thy mystical deep streams!
29 Such as dull man can never find
30 Unless that Spirit lead his mind
31 Which first upon thy face did move,
32 And hatch'd all with his quick'ning love.
33 As this loud brook's incessant fall
34 In streaming rings restagnates all,
35 Which reach by course the bank, and then
36 Are no more seen, just so pass men.
37 O my invisible estate,
38 My glorious liberty, still late!
39 Thou art the channel my soul seeks,
40 Not this with cataracts and creeks.

Henry Vaughan

The World

1 I saw Eternity the other night,
2 Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
3 All calm, as it was bright;
4 And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years,
5 Driv'n by the spheres
6 Like a vast shadow mov'd; in which the world
7 And all her train were hurl'd.
8 The doting lover in his quaintest strain
9 Did there complain;
10 Near him, his lute, his fancy, and his flights,
11 Wit's sour delights,
12 With gloves, and knots, the silly snares of pleasure,
13 Yet his dear treasure
14 All scatter'd lay, while he his eyes did pour
15 Upon a flow'r.

16 The darksome statesman hung with weights and woe,
17 Like a thick midnight-fog mov'd there so slow,
18 He did not stay, nor go;
19 Condemning thoughts (like sad eclipses) scowl
20 Upon his soul,
21 And clouds of crying witnesses without
22 Pursued him with one shout.
23 Yet digg'd the mole, and lest his ways be found,
24 Work'd under ground,
25 Where he did clutch his prey; but one did see
26 That policy;
27 Churches and altars fed him; perjuries
28 Were gnats and flies;
29 It rain'd about him blood and tears, but he
30 Drank them as free.

31 The fearful miser on a heap of rust
32 Sate pining all his life there, did scarce trust
33 His own hands with the dust,
34 Yet would not place one piece above, but lives
35 In fear of thieves;
36 Thousands there were as frantic as himself,
37 And hugg'd each one his pelf;
38 The downright epicure plac'd heav'n in sense,
39 And scorn'd pretence,
40 While others, slipp'd into a wide excess,
41 Said little less;
42 The weaker sort slight, trivial wares enslave,
43 Who think them brave;
44 And poor despised Truth sate counting by
45 Their victory.

46 Yet some, who all this while did weep and sing,
47 And sing, and weep, soar'd up into the ring;
48 But most would use no wing.
49 O fools (said I) thus to prefer dark night

50 Before true light,
51 To live in grotts and caves, and hate the day
52 Because it shews the way,
53 The way, which from this dead and dark abode
54 Leads up to God,
55 A way where you might tread the sun, and be
56 More bright than he.
57 But as I did their madness so discuss
58 One whisper'd thus,
59 "This ring the Bridegroom did for none provide,
60 But for his bride."

Henry Vaughan

They are all Gone into the World of Light

1 They are all gone into the world of light!
2 And I alone sit ling'ring here;
3 Their very memory is fair and bright,
4 And my sad thoughts doth clear.

5 It glows and glitters in my cloudy breast,
6 Like stars upon some gloomy grove,
7 Or those faint beams in which this hill is drest,
8 After the sun's remove.

9 I see them walking in an air of glory,
10 Whose light doth trample on my days:
11 My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,
12 Mere glimmering and decays.

13 O holy Hope! and high Humility,
14 High as the heavens above!
15 These are your walks, and you have show'd them me
16 To kindle my cold love.

17 Dear, beauteous Death! the jewel of the just,
18 Shining nowhere, but in the dark;
19 What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust
20 Could man outlook that mark!

21 He that hath found some fledg'd bird's nest, may know
22 At first sight, if the bird be flown;
23 But what fair well or grove he sings in now,
24 That is to him unknown.

25 And yet as angels in some brighter dreams
26 Call to the soul, when man doth sleep:
27 So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes
28 And into glory peep.

29 If a star were confin'd into a tomb,
30 Her captive flames must needs burn there;
31 But when the hand that lock'd her up, gives room,
32 She'll shine through all the sphere.

33 O Father of eternal life, and all
34 Created glories under thee!
35 Resume thy spirit from this world of thrall
36 Into true liberty.

37 Either disperse these mists, which blot and fill
38 My perspective still as they pass,
39 Or else remove me hence unto that hill,
40 Where I shall need no glass.

Henry Vaughan

Unprofitableness

How rich, O Lord! how fresh thy visits are!
'Twas but just now my bleak leaves hopeless hung
Sullied with dust and mud;
Each snarling blast shot through me, and did share
Their youth, and beauty, cold showers nipt, and wrung
Their spiciness and blood;
But since thou didst in one sweet glance survey
Their sad decays, I flourish, and once more
Breath all perfumes, and spice;
I smell a dew like myrrh, and all the day
Wear in my bosom a full sun; such store
Hath one beam from thy eyes.
But, ah, my God! what fruit hast thou of this?
What one poor leaf did ever I yet fall
To wait upon thy wreath?
Thus thou all day a thankless weed dost dress,
And when th'hast done, a stench or fog is all
The odor I bequeath.

Henry Vaughan

Upon the Priory Grove, His Usual Retirement

Hail sacred shades! cool, leavy House!
Chaste treasurer of all my vows,
And wealth! on whose soft bosom laid
My love's fair steps I first betrayed:
Henceforth no melancholy flight,
No sad wing, or hoarse bird of night,
Disturb this air, no fatal throat
Of raven, or owl, awake the note
Of our laid echo, no voice dwell
Within these leaves, but Philomel.
The poisonous ivy here no more
His false twists on the oak shall score,
Only the woodbine here may twine
As th'emblem of her love and mine;
Th'amorous sun shall here convey
His best beams, in thy shades to play;
The active air, the gentlest showers
Shall from his wings rain on thy flowers;
And the moon from her dewy locks
Shall deck thee with her brightest drops:
What ever can a fancy move,
Or feed the eye; be on this Grove;
And when at last the winds and tears
Of Heaven, with the consuming years,
Shall these green curls bring to decay,
And clothe thee in an aged gray:
(If ought a lover can foresee;
Or if we poets, prophets be)
From hence transplant'd, thou shalt stand
A fresh Grove in th'Elysian land;
Where (most blest pair!) as here on earth
Thou first didst eye our growth and birth;
So there again, thou'lt see us move
In our first innocence, and love:
And in thy shades, as now, so then,
We'll kiss, and smile, and walk again.

Henry Vaughan