Classic Poetry Series

Henry Vaughan

- poems -

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Henry Vaughan (1621 – April 23, 1695)

Henry Vaughan was a Welsh physician and metaphysical poet.

Vaughan and his twin brother the hermetic philosopher and alchemist Thomas Vaughan, were the sons of Thomas Vaughan and his wife Denise (née Morgan) of 'Trenewydd', Newton, in Brecknockshire, Wales. Their grandfather, William, was the owner of Tretower Court.

Vaughan spent most of his life in the village of Llansantffraed, near Brecon, where he is also buried.

Early Life

Both Henry and his twin Thomas were schooled locally by the rector of Llangattock (Crickhowell), the Rev. Matthew Herbert. This occupied six years preceding their attendance at Jesus College, Oxford, England in 1638. However, around 1640, Vaughan's family influenced him to pursue a career in law to the abandonment of an Oxford degree.

As the Civil War developed, he was recalled home from London, initially to serve as a secretary to Sir Marmaduke Lloyd, a chief justice on the Brecknockshire circuit and staunch royalist. Military service interrupted his study of the law and, upon his return, Vaughan began to practise medicine. By 1646, he had married Catherine Wise with whom he reared a son, Thomas, and three daughters, Lucy, Frances, and Catherine. After his first wife's death, he married her sister, Elizabeth.

Secular works

Vaughan took his literary inspiration from his native environment and chose the descriptive name "Silurist," derived from his homage to the Silures, the Celtic tribe of pre-Roman south Wales which strongly resisted the Romans. This name is a reflection of the deep love Vaughan felt towards the Welsh mountains of his home in what is now part of the Brecon Beacons National Park and the River Usk valley where he spent most of his early life and professional life.

By 1647 Henry Vaughan, with his wife and children, had chosen life in the country. This is the setting in which Vaughan wrote Olor Iscanus, the (Swan of Usk). However, this collection was not published until 1651, more than three years after it was written. It is believed that there was great crisis in Vaughan's life between the authorship and publication of Olor Iscanus. During these years, his grandfather William Vaughan died and he was evicted from his living in Llansantffraed. Vaughan later decried the

publication, having "long ago condemned these poems to obscurity".

Olor Iscanus is filled with odd words and similes that beg for attention despite its dark and morbid cognitive appeal. This work is founded on crises felt in Vaughan's homeland, Brecknockshire. During the Civil War there was never a major battle fought on the ground of Brecknockshire, but the effects of the war were deeply felt by Vaughan and his surrounding community. The Puritan Parliament visited misfortune on the community, ejecting many of their foes, the Anglicans and Royalists. This was an obvious source of misfortune for Vaughan, who also lost his home at that time.

There is a distinct difference between the atmosphere Vaughan attempts to convey in this work and in his most famous work, Silex Scintillans. Olor Iscanus is a direct representation of a specific period in Vaughan's life, which emphasizes other secular writers and provides allusions to debt and happy living. A fervent topic of Vaughan throughout these poems is the Civil War and reveals Vaughan's somewhat paradoxical thinking that, in the end, gives no clear conclusion to the question of his participation in the Civil War. Vaughan states his complete satisfaction of being clean on "innocent blood" but also provides what seem to be eyewitness accounts of battles and his own "soldiery". Although Vaughan is thought to have been a royalist, these poems express contempt for all current authority and a lack of zeal for the royalist cause. His poems generally reflect a sense of severe decline, which possibly means that Vaughan lamented the effects of the war on the monarchy and society. His short poem "The Timber", ostensibly about a dead tree, concludes "thy strange resentment after death / Means only those who broke - in life - thy peace."

Conversion

The period shortly preceding the publication of Henry Vaughan's Silex Scintillans marked an important period of his life. Certain indications in the first volume and explicit statements made in the preface to the second volume of Silex Scintillans suggest that Vaughan suffered a prolonged sickness that inflicted much pain. Vaughan interprets this experience to be an encounter with death and a wake-up call to his "misspent youth". Vaughan believes he is spared to make amends and start a new course not only in his life but in the literature he would produce. Vaughan himself describes his previous work as foul and a contribution to "corrupt literature". Perhaps the most notable mark of Vaughan's conversion is how much it is credited to George Herbert. Vaughan claims that he is the least of Herbert's many "pious converts". It is during this period of Vaughan's life, around 1650, that he adopts the saying "moriendo, revixi", meaning "by dying, I gain new life".

Poetic Influences

It was not until Vaughan's conversion and the writing of Silex Scintillans that he received significant acclaim. He was greatly indebted to George Herbert, who provided a model for Vaughan's newly founded spiritual life and literary career, in which he displayed "spiritual quickening and the gift of gracious feeling" derived from Herbert.

Archbishop Trench has proposed that "As a divine Vaughan may be inferior [to Herbert], but as a poet he is certainly superior". Critics praise Vaughan's use of literary elements. Vaughan's use of monosyllables, long-drawn alliterations and his ability to compel the reader place Vaughan as "more than the equal of George Herbert". Yet others say that the two are not even comparable, because Herbert is in fact the Master. While these critics admit that Henry Vaughan's use of words can be superior to Herbert's, they believe his poetry is, in fact, worse. Herbert's profundity as well as consistency are said to be the key to his superiority.

While the superiority or inferiority of Vaughan and Herbert is a question with no distinct answer, one cannot deny that Vaughan would have never written the way he did without Herbert's direction. The explicit spiritual influence of Herbert on Henry Vaughan is undeniable. The preface to Vaughan's Silex

Scintillans does all but proclaim this influence. The prose of Vaughan exemplifies this as well. For instance, The Temple, by Herbert, is often seen as the inspiration and model on which Vaughan created his work. Silex Scintillans is most often classed with this collection of Herbert's. Silex Scintillans borrows the same themes, experience, and beliefs as The Temple. Herbert's influence is evident both in the shape and spirituality of Vaughan's poetry. For example, the opening to Vaughan's poem 'Unprofitableness':

How rich, O Lord! How fresh thy visits are!

is reminiscent of Herbert's 'The Flower':

How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean

Are thy returns! ev'n as the flowers in spring

Another work of Vaughan's that clearly parallels George Herbert is Mount of Olives, e.g., the passage, Let sensual natures judge as they please, but for my part, I shall hold it no paradoxe to affirme, there are no pleasures in the world. Some coloured griefes of blushing woes there are, which look as clear as if they were true complexions; but it is very sad and tyred truth, that they are but painted. This echoes Herbert's Rose:

In this world of sugar's lies,

And to use a larger measure

Than my strict yet welcome size.

First, there is no pleasure here:

Coloure'd griefs indeed there are,

Blushing woes that look as clear,

As if they could beauty spare.

Critics have complained that Vaughan is enslaved to Herbert's works, using similar "little tricks" such as abrupt introductions and whimsical titles as a framework for his own work, and that he "failed to learn" from Herbert. Vaughan carried an inability to know his limits and focused more on the intensity of the poem, meanwhile losing the attention of his audience.

However, Alexander Grosart denies that Henry Vaughan was solely an imitator of George Herbert (Grosart, 3). There are moments in Vaughan's writings where the reader can identify Vaughan's true self, rather than an imitation of Herbert. In such passages Vaughan is seen to demonstrate naturalness, immediacy, and ability to relate the concrete through poetry. In some instances, Vaughan derives observations from Herbert's language that are distinctly his own. It is as if Vaughan takes proprietorship of some of Herbert's work, yet makes it completely unique to himself. Henry Vaughan takes another step away from George Herbert in the manner to which he presents his poetry to the reader. George Herbert in The Temple, which is most often the source of comparison between the two writers, lays down explicit instructions on the reading of his work. This contrasts with the attitude of Vaughan, who considered the experience of reading as the best guide to his meanings. He promoted no special method of reading his works.

In these times he shows himself different from any other poet. Much of his distinction derives from an apparent lack of sympathy with the world around him. His aloof appeal to his surroundings detaches him and encourages his love of nature and mysticism, which in turn influenced other later poets, Wordsworth among others. Vaughan's mind thinks in terms of a physical and spiritual world and the obscure relation between the two. Vaughan's mind often moved to original, unfamiliar, and remote places, and this reflected in his poetry. He was loyal to the themes of the Anglican Church and religious festivals, but found his true voice in the more mystical themes of eternity,

communion with the dead, nature, and childhood.A poet of revelation who uses the Bible,Nature and his own experience to illustrate his vision of eternity. Vaughan's poetry has a particularly modern sound.

Alliteration (conspicuous in Welsh poetry)is more extensively used by Vaughan than most of his contemporaries writing English verse,noticeably in the opening to The Water-fall.

Vaughan elaborated on personal loss in two well-known poems, "The World" and "They Are All Gone into the World of Light." Another poem, "The Retreat," combines the theme of loss with the corruption of childhood, which is yet another consistent theme of Vaughan's. Vaughan's new-found personal voice and persona are seen as the result of the death of a younger brother.

This is an example of an especially beautiful fragment of one of his poems entitled "The World:"

I saw eternity the other night

Like a great Ring of pure and endless light,

All calm, as it was bright,

And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years

Driv'n by the spheres

Like a vast shadow moved, In which the world

And all her train were hurl'd.

Death and Legacy

As is the case with many great writers and poets, Henry Vaughan was acclaimed less during his lifetime than after his death on April 23, 1695, aged 74. He is buried in the churchyard of St Bridget's, Llansantffraed, Powys. He is recognised "as another example of a poet who can write both graceful and effective prose" and influenced the work of poets such as Wordsworth, Tennyson and Siegfried Sassoon. The American science fiction writer Philip K. Dick even named Vaughan as a key influence.

Works:

Poems with the Tenth Satire of Juvenal Englished
Peace
Olor Iscanus
Silex Scintillans
Silex Scintillans II
Mount of Olives
Flores Solitudinis
Hermetical Physics
The Chemist's Key
Humane Industry
Thalia Rediviva
The World
The Retreat

A Song To Amoret

If I were dead, and, in my place,
Some fresher youth designed
To warm thee, with new fires; and grace
Those arms I left behind:

Were he as faithful as the Sun,
That's wedded to the Sphere;
His blood as chaste and temperate run,
As April's mildest tear;

Or were he rich; and, with his heap
And spacious share of earth,
Could make divine affection cheap,
And court his golden birth;

For all these arts, I'd not believe
(No! though he should be thine!),
The mighty Amorist could give
So rich a heart as mine!

Fortune and beauty thou might'st find,
And greater men than I;
But my true resolved mind
They never shall come nigh.

For I not for an hour did love,
Or for a day desire,
But with my soul had from above
This endless holy fire.

Henry Vaughan

And Do They So?

'Etenim res creatoe exerto capite observantes
expectant revelationem Filiorum Dei.'

'For created things, watching with head erect,
await the revelation of the Sons of God.'

And do they so? Have they a sense
Of aught but influence?
Can they their heads lift, and expect,
And groan too? Why the elect
Can do no more; my volumes said
They were all dull, and dead;
They judged them senseless, and their state
Wholly inanimate.
Go, go, seal up thy looks,
And burn thy books.

I would I were a stone, or tree,
Or flower, by pedigree,
Or some poor highway herb, or spring
To flow, or bird to sing!
Then should I, tied to one sure state,
All day expect my date;
But I am sadly loose, and stray
A giddy blast each way;
O let me not thus range,
Thou canst not change!

Sometimes I sit with Thee and tarry
An hour or so, then vary;
Thy other creatures in this scene
Thee only aim and mean;
Some rise to seek Thee, and with heads
Erect, peep from their beds;
Others, whose birth is in the tomb,
And cannot quit the womb,
Sigh there, and groan for Thee,
Their liberty.

O let me not do less! Shall they
Watch, while I sleep or play?
Shall I thy mercies still abuse
With fancies, friends, or news?
O brook it not! Thy blood is mine,
And my soul should be Thine;
O brook it not! why wilt Thou stop,
After whole showers, one drop?
Sure Thou wilt joy to see
Thy sheep with Thee.

Henry Vaughan

Anguish

My God and King! to Thee
I bow my knee;
I bow my troubled soul, and greet
With my foul heart thy holy feet.
Cast it, or tread it! it shall do
Even what thou wilt, and praise thee too.

My God, could I weep blood,
Gladly I would,
Or if thou wilt give me that art,
Which through the eyes pours out the heart,
I will exhaust it all, and make
Myself all tears, a weeping lake.

O! 'tis an easy thing
To write and sing;
But to write true, unfeigned verse
Is very hard! O God, disperse
These weights, and give my spirit leave
To act as well as to conceive!

O my God, hear my cry;
Or let me die!

Henry Vaughan

As Time One Day by me did Pass

AS Time one day by me did pass,
Through a large dusky glass
He held, I chanc'd to look,
And spied his curious book
Of past days, where sad Heav'n did shed
A mourning light upon the dead.

Many disorder'd lives I saw,
And foul records, which thaw
My kind eyes still, but in
A fair, white page of thin
And ev'n, smooth lines, like the sun's rays,
Thy name was writ, and all thy days.

O bright and happy kalendar !
Where youth shines like a star
All pearl'd with tears, and may
Teach age the holy way ;
Where through thick pangs, high agonies,
Faith into life breaks, and Death dies.

As some meek night-piece which day quails,
To candle-light unveils :
So by one beamy line
From thy bright lamp, did shine
In the same page thy humble grave,
Set with green herbs, glad hopes and brave.

Here slept my thought's dear mark ! which dust
Seem'd to devour, like rust ;
But dust—I did observe—
By hiding doth preserve ;
As we for long and sure recruits,
Candy with sugar our choice fruits.

O calm and sacred bed, where lies
In death's dark mysteries
A beauty far more bright
Than the noon's cloudless light ;
For whose dry dust green branches bud,
And robes are bleach'd in the Lamb's blood.

Sleep, happy ashes !—blessed sleep !—
While hapless I still weep ;
Weep that I have outliv'd
My life, and unreliev'd
Must—soullesse shadow !—so live on,
Though life be dead, and my joys gone.

Henry Vaughan

Beyond The Veil

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

Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae : Liber 2. Metrum 5

Happy that first white age when we
Lived by the earth's mere charity!
No soft luxurious diet then
Had effeminated men:
No other meat, nor wine, had any
Than the coarse mast, or simple honey;
And by the parents' care laid up,
Cheap berries did the children sup.
No pompous wear was in those days,
Of gummy silks or scarlet blaize.
Their beds were on some flow'ry brink,
And clear spring-water was their drink.
The shady pine in the sun's heat
Was their cool and known retreat,
For then 'twas not cut down, but stood
The youth and glory of the wood.
The daring sailor with his slaves
Then had not cut the swelling waves,
Nor for desire of foreign store
Seen any but his native shore.
Nor stirring drum scarred that age,
Nor the shrill trumpet's active rage,
No wounds by bitter hatred made,
With warm blood soiled the shining blade;
For how could hostile madness arm
An age of love to public harm,
When common justice none withstood,
Nor sought rewards for spilling blood?
Oh that at length our age would raise
Into the temper of those days!
But - worse than Etna's fires! - debate
And avarice inflame our state.
Alas! who was it that first found
Gold, hid of purpose under ground,
That sought out pearls, and dived to find
Such precious perils for mankind!

Henry Vaughan

Childhood

I cannot reach it; and my striving eye
Dazzles at it, as at eternity.
Were now that chronicle alive,
Those white designs which children drive,
And the thoughts of each harmless hour,
With their content, too, in my power,
Quickly would I make my path even,
And by mere playing go to heaven.

Why should men love
A wolf more than a lamb or dove?
Or choose hell-fire and brimstone streams
Before bright stars and God's own beams?
Who kisseth thorns will hurt his face,
But flowers do both refresh and grace,
And sweetly living - fie on men! -
Are, when dead, medicinal then;
If seeing much should make staid eyes,
And long experience should make wise,
Since all that age doth teach is ill,
Why should I not love childhood still?
Why, if I see a rock or shelf,
Shall I from thence cast down myself?
Or by complying with the world,
From the same precipice be hurled?
Those observations are but foul
Which make me wise to lose my soul.

And yet the practice worldlings call
Business, and weighty action all,
Checking the poor child for his play,
But gravely cast themselves away.

Dear, harmless age! the short, swift span
Where weeping Virtue parts with man;
Where love without lust dwells, and bends
What way we please without self-ends.

An age of mysteries! which he
Must live twice that would God's face see;
Which angels guard, and with it play,
Angels! which foul men drive away.

How do I study now, and scan
Thee more than e'er I studied man,
And only see through a long night
Thy edges and thy bordering light!
Oh for thy center and midday!
For sure that is the narrow way!

Henry Vaughan

Christ's Nativity

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

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

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

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

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

Henry Vaughan

Cock-Crowing

Father of lights! what sunny seed,
What glance of day hast Thou confined
Into this bird? To all the breed
This busy ray Thou hast assigned;
Their magnetism works all night,
And dreams of paradise and light.

Their eyes watch for the morning hue;
Their little grain, expelling night,
So shines and sings as if it knew
The path unto the house of light.
It seems their candle, howe'er done,
Was tinned and lighted at the sun.

If such a tincture, such a touch,
So firm a longing can empower,
Shall Thy own image think it much
To watch for Thy appearing hour?
If a mere blast so fill the sail,
Shall not the breath of God prevail?

O Thou immortal Light and Heat!
Whose hand so shines through all this frame
That, by the beauty of the seat,
We plainly see who made the same,
Seeing Thy seed abides in me,
Dwell Thou in it, and I in Thee!

To sleep without Thee is to die;
Yea, 'tis a death partakes of hell:
For where Thou dost not close the eye,
It never opens, I can tell.
In such a dark Egyptian border,
The shades of death dwell, and disorder.

If joys, and hopes, and earnest throes,
And hearts whose pulse beats still for light
Are given to birds, who but Thee knows
A love-sick soul's exalted flight?
Can souls be tracked by any eye
But His who gave them wings to fly?

Only this veil which Thou hast broke,
And must be broken yet in me,
This veil, I say, is all the cloak
And cloud which shadows Thee from me.
This veil Thy full-eyed love denies,
And only gleams and fractions spies.

O take it off! make no delay;
But brush me with Thy light that I
May shine unto a perfect day,

And warm me at Thy glorious eye!
O take it off, or till it flee,
Though with no lily, stay with me!

Henry Vaughan

COME, COME ! WHAT DO I HERE?

COME, come ! what do I here ?
Since he is gone
Each day is grown a dozen year
And each hour, one ;
Come, come !
Cut off the sum :
By these soil'd tears !
Which only Thou
Know'st to be true,
Days are my fears.
2.

There's not a wind can stir,
Or beam pass by,
But straight I think, though far,
Thy hand is nigh.
Come, come !
Strike these lips dumb :
This restless breath,
That soils Thy name,
Will ne'er be tame
Until in death.
3.

Perhaps some think a tomb
No house of store,
But a dark and seal'd up womb,
Which ne'er breeds more.
Come, come !
Such thoughts benumb :
But I would be
With him I weep
Abed, and sleep,
To wake in Thee.

Henry Vaughan

Content

PEACE, peace ! I know 'twas brave ;
But this coarse fleece,
I shelter in, is slave
To no such piece.
When I am gone,
I shall no wardrobes leave
To friend, or son,
But what their own homes weave.
2.

Such, though not proud nor full,
May make them weep,
And mourn to see the wool
Outlast the sheep :
Poor, pious wear !
Hadst thou been rich, or fine,
Perhaps that tear
Had mourn'd thy loss, not mine.
3.

Why then these curl'd, puff'd points,
Or a laced story ?
Death sets all out of joint,
And scorns their glory.
Some love a rose
In hand, some in the skin ;
But, cross to those,
I would have mine within.

Henry Vaughan

Corruption

Sure it was so. Man in those early days
Was not all stone and earth;
He shined a little, and by those weak rays
Had some glimpse of his birth.
He saw Heaven o'er his head, and knew from whence
He came, condemned hither;
And, as first love draws strongest, so from hence
His mind sure progressed thither.
Things here were strange unto him: sweat and till,
All was a thorn or weed:
Nor did those last, but - like himself - died still
As soon as they did seed.
They seemed to quarrel with him, for that act
That felled him foiled them all:
He drew the curse upon the world, and cracked
The whole frame with his fall.
This made him long for home, as loth to stay
With murmurers and foes;
He sighed for Eden, and would often say,
'Ah! what bright days were those!'
Nor was Heaven cold unto him; for each day
The valley or the mountain
Afforded visits, and still paradise lay
In some green shade or fountain.
Angels lay lieger here; each bush and cell,
Each oak and highway knew them;
Walk but the fields, or sit down at some well,
And he was sure to view them.
Almighty Love! where art Thou now? Mad man
Sits down and freezeth on;
HE raves, and swears to stir nor fire, nor fan,
But bids the thread be spun.
I see, Thy curtains are close-drawn; Thy bow
Sin triumphs still, and man is sunk below
The center, and his shroud.
All's in deep sleep and night: thick darkness lies
And hatcheth o'er Thy people -
But hark! what trumpet's that? what angel cries,
'Arise! thrust in Thy sickle'?

Henry Vaughan

Death. A Dialogue

Soul.

'TIS a sad Land, that in one day
Hath dull'd thee thus ; when death shall freeze
Thy blood to ice, and thou must stay
Tenant for years, and centuries ;
How wilt thou brook't ?

Body.

I cannot tell ;
But if all sense wings not with thee,
And something still be left the dead,
I'll wish my curtains off, to free
Me from so dark and sad a bed :

A nest of nights, a gloomy sphere,
Where shadows thicken, and the cloud
Sits on the sun's brow all the year,
And nothing moves without a shroud.

Soul.

'Tis so : but as thou saw'st that night
We travail'd in, our first attempts
Were dull and blind, but custom straight
Our fears and falls brought to contempt :

Then, when the ghastly twelve was past,
We breath'd still for a blushing East,
And bade the lazy sun make haste,
And on sure hopes, though long, did feast.

But when we saw the clouds to crack,
And in those crannies light appear'd,
We thought the day then was not slack,
And pleas'd ourselves with what we fear'd.

Just so it is in death. But thou
Shalt in thy mother's bosom sleep,
Whilst I each minute groan to know
How near Redemption creeps.

Then shall wee meet to mix again, and met,
'Tis last good-night ; our Sun shall never set.

JOB, CAP. IO. VER. 21, 22.

Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the
land of darkness, and the shadow of death ;
A Land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the
shadow of death, without any order, and where the
light is as darkness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Henry Vaughan

Joy Of My Life While Left Me Here!

Joy of my life while left me here!
And still my love!
How in thy absence thou dost steer
Me from above!
A life well led
This truth commends,
With quick or dead
It never ends.

Stars are of mighty use; the night
Is dark, and long;
The road foul; and where one goes right,
Six may go wrong.
One twinkling ray,
Shot o'er some cloud,
May clear much away,
And guide a crowd.

God's saints are shining lights: who stays
Here long must pass
O'er dark hills, swift streams, and steep ways
As smooth as glass;
But these all night,
Like candles, shed
Their beams, and light
Us into bed.

They are, indeed, our pillar-fires,
Seen as we go;
They are that city's shining spires
We travel to:
A swordlike gleam
Kept man for sin
First
out
; this beam
Will guide them
in.

Henry Vaughan

Love And Discipline

Since in a land not barren still
(Because Thou dost Thy grace distill)
My lot is fallen, blest be Thy will!

And since these biting frosts but kill
Some tares in me which choke or spill
That seed Thou sow'st, blest be Thy skill!

Blest be Thy dew, and blest Thy frost,
And happy I to be so crossed,
And cured by crosses at Thy cost.

The dew doth cheer what is distressed,
The frosts ill weeds nip and molest;
In both Thou work'st unto the best.

Thus while Thy several mercies plot,
And work on me now cold, now hot,
The work goes on and slacketh not;

For as Thy hand the weather steers,
So thrive I best, 'twixt joys and tears,
And all the year have some green ears.

Henry Vaughan

Man

Weighing the steadfastness and state
Of some mean things which here below reside,
Where birds like watchful clocks the noiseless date
And intercourse of times divide;
Where bees at night get home and hive, and flowers
Early, as well as late,
Rise with the sun, and set in the same bowers;

I would, said I, my God would give
The staidness of these things to man! for these
To His divine appointments ever cleave,
And no new business breaks their peace;
The birds nor sow nor reap, yet sup and dine;
The flowers without clothes live,
Yet Solomon was never dressed so fine.

Man hath still either toys or care;
He hath no root, nor to one place is tied,
But ever restless and irregular
About this earth doth run and ride;
He knows he hath a home, but scarce knows where;
He says it is so far
That he hath quite forgot how to go there.

He knocks at all doors, strays and roams,
Nay, hath not so much wit as some stones have,
Which in the darkest nights point to their homes
By some hid sense their Maker gave;
Man is the shuttle, to whose winding quest
And passage through these looms
God ordered motion, but ordained no rest.

Henry Vaughan

Midnight

WHEN to my Eyes
Whilst deep sleep others catches,
Thine host of spies,
The stars, shine in their watches,
I do survey
Each busy ray,
And how they work, and wind ;
And wish each beam
My soul doth stream
With the like ardour shin'd ;
What emanations,
Quick vibrations,
And bright stirs are there !
What thin ejections,
Cold affections,
And slow motions here !
2.

Thy heav'ns, some say,
Are a fiery-liquid light,
Which mingling aye
Streams, and flames thus to the sight.
Come then, my God !
Shine on this blood
And water, in one beam ;
And Thou shalt see
Kindled by Thee
Both liquors burn, and stream.
O what bright quickness,
Active brightness,
And celestial flows,
Will follow after
On that water,
Which Thy Spirit blows !

Henry Vaughan

Mount Of Olives (I)

1.
SWEET, sacred hill ! on whose fair brow
My Saviour sate, shall I allow
Language to love,
And idolize some shade, or grove,
Neglecting thee ? such ill-plac'd wit,
Conceit, or call it what you please,
Is the brain's fit,
And mere disease.
2.
Cotswold and Cooper's both have met
With learn褠swains, and echo yet
Their pipes and wit ;
But thou sleep'st in a deep neglect,
Untouch'd by any ; and what need
The sheep bleat thee a silly lay,
That heard'st both reed
And sheepward play ?

3.
Yet if poets mind thee well,
They shall find thou art their hill,
And fountain too.
Their Lord with thee had most to do ;
He wept once, walk'd whole nights on thee :
And from thence?His suff'rings ended?
Unto glory
Was attended.

4.
Being there, this spacious ball
Is but His narrow footstool all ;
And what we think
Unsearchable, now with one wink
He doth comprise ; but in this air
When He did stay to bear our ill
And sin, this hill
Was then His Chair.

Henry Vaughan

Peace

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

Henry Vaughan

Quickness

False life, a foil and no more, when
Wilt thou be gone?
Thou foul deception of all men
That would not have the true come on.

Thou art a moon-like toil, a blind
Self-posing state,
A dark contest of waves and wind,
A mere tempestuous debate.

Life is a fixed, discerning light,
A knowing joy;
No chance or fit, but ever bright
And calm and full, yet doth not cloy.

'Tis such a blissful thing that still
Doth vivify
And shine and smile and hath the skill
To please without eternity.

Thou art a toilsome mole, or less;
A moving mist;
But life is what none can express:
A quickness which my God hath kissed.

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 successless 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

Rules And Lessons

When first thine eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
To do the like: our bodies but forerun
The spirit's duty. True hearts spread and heave
Unto their God, as flowers do to the sun.
Give Him thy first thoughts then; so shalt thou keep
Him company all day, and in Him sleep.

Yet never sleep the sun up: Prayer should
Dawn with the day. There are set awful hours
'Twixt Heaven and us. The manna was not good
After sunrising: far day sullies flowers.
Rise to prevent the sun: sleep doth sin's glut,
And Heaven's gate opens, when this world's shut.

Walk with thy fellow-creatures; note the hush
And whispers amongst them. There's not a spring
Or leaf but hath his morning hymn; each bush
And oak doth know
I AM
. Canst thou not sing?

O leave thy cares and follies! go this way,
And thou art sure to prosper all the day.

To heighten thy devotions, and keep low
All mutinous thoughts, what business e'er thou hast,
Observe God in his works; how fountains flow,
Birds sing, beasts feed, fish leap, and th' earth stands fast;
Above are restless motions, running lights,
Vast circling azure, giddy clouds, days, nights.

When seasons change, then lay before thine eyes
His wondrous method; mark the various scenes
In Heaven; hail, thunder, rainbows, snow, and ice,
Calms, tempests, light and darkness, by his means;
Thou canst not miss his praise; each tree, herb, flower,
Are shadows of his wisdom, and his power.

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

Sweet empty sky of June without a stain,

O Lord, the hope of Israel, all they that forsake
Thee shall be ashamed ; and they that depart from
Thee, shall be written in the earth, because they have
forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.
Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed ; save me,
and I shall be saved, for Thou art my health, and my
great deliverer.
I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to
the gates of the grave ; I have deprived myself of the
residue of my years.
I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the
land of the living : I shall behold man no more with
the inhabitants of the world.
O Lord ! by Thee doth man live, and from Thee is
the life of my spirit : therefore wilt Thou recover me,
and make me to live.
Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the
pit of corruption ; for Thou hast cast all my sins
behind Thy back.
For Thy name's sake hast Thou put off thine anger ;
for Thy praise hast Thou refrained from me, that I
should not be cut off.
For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot
celebrate Thee : they that go down into the pit, cannot
hope for Thy truth.
The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do
this day : the father to the children shall make known
Thy truth.
O Lord ! Thou hast been merciful, Thou hast
brought back my life from corruption : Thou hast
redeemed me from my sin.
They that follow after lying vanities, forsake their
own mercy.
Therefore shall Thy songs be with me, and my
prayer unto the God of my life.
I will go unto the altar of my God, unto God, the
joy of my youth ; and in Thy fear will I worship
towards Thy holy temple.
I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanks-
giving ; I will pay that which I have vowed ; sal-
vation is of the Lord.

Henry Vaughan

The Bird

Hither thou com'st: the busy wind all night
Blew through thy lodging, where thy own warm wing
Thy pillow was. Many a sullen storm
(For which coarse man seems much the fitter born)
Rained on thy bed
And harmless head.

And now, as fresh and cheerful as the light,
Thy little heart in early hymns doth sing
Unto that Providence, whose unseen arm
Curbed them, and clothed thee well and warm.
All things that be, praise Him, and had
Their lesson taught them when first made.

So hills and valleys into singing break;
And though poor stones have neither speech nor tongue,
While active winds and streams both run and speak,
Yet stones are deep in admiration.
Thus praise and prayer here beneath the sun
Make lesser mornings, when the great are done.

For each inclosed spirit is a star
Enlight'ning his own little sphere,
Whose light, though fetched and borrowed from far,
Both mornings makes and evenings there.

But as these birds of light make a land glad,
Chirping their solemn matins on each tree,
So in the shades of night some dark fowls be,
Whose heavy notes make all that hear them sad.

The turtle then in palm trees mourns,
While owls and satyrs howl:
The pleasant land to brimstone turns,
And all her streams grow foul.

Brightness and mirth, and love and faith, all fly,
Till the day-spring breaks forth again from high.

Henry Vaughan

The Book

Eternal God! Maker of all
That have lived here since the man's fall:
The Rock of Ages! in whose shade
They live unseen, when here they fade;

Thou knew'st this paper when it was
Mere seed, and after that but grass;
Before 'twas dressed or spun, and when
Made linen, who did wear it then:
What were their lives, their thoughts, and deeds,
Whether good corn or fruitless weeds.

Thou knew'st this tree when a green shade
Covered it, since a cover made,
And where it flourished, grew, and spread,
As if it never should be dead.

Thou knew'st this harmless beast when he
Did live and feed by Thy decree
On each green thing; then slept - well fed -
Clothed with this skin which now lies spread
A covering o'er this aged book;
Which makes me wisely weep, and look
On my own dust; mere dust it is,
But not so dry and clean as this.
Thou knew'st and saw'st them all, and though
Now scattered thus, dost know them so.

O knowing, glorious Spirit! when
Thou shalt restore trees, beasts, and men,
When Thou shalt make all new again,
Destroying only death and pain,
Give him amongst Thy works a place
Who in them loved and sought Thy face!

Henry Vaughan

The Call

1.

COME, my heart ! come, my head,
In sighs, and tears !
'Tis now, since you have lain thus dead,
Some twenty years ;
Awake, awake,
Some pity take
Upon yourselves !
Who never wake to groan, nor weep,
Shall be sentenc'd for their sleep.

2.

Do but see your sad estate,
How many sands
Have left us, while we careless sate
With folded hands ;
What stock of nights,
Of days, and years
In silent flights
Stole by our ears ;
How ill have we ourselves bestow'd,
Whose suns are all set in a cloud !

3.

Yet come, and let's peruse them all,
And as we pass,
What sins on every minute fall
Score on the glass ;
Then weigh, and rate
Their heavy state,
Until
The glass with tears you fill ;
That done, we shall be safe and good :
Those beasts were clean that chew'd the cud.

Henry Vaughan

The Daughter of Herodias

Matthew xiv 6-11

Vain, sinful art! who first did fit
Thy lewd loathed motions unto sounds,
And made grave music like wild wit
Err in loose airs beyond her bounds?

What fires hath he heaped on his head?
Since to his sins (as needs it must,)
His art adds still (though he be dead,)
New fresh accounts of blood and lust.

Leave then young sorceress; the ice
Will those coy spirits cast asleep,
Which teach thee now to please his eyes
Who doth thy loathsome mother keep.

But thou hast pleased so well, he swears,
And gratifies thy sin with vows:
His shameless lust in public wears,
And to thy soft arts strongly bows.

Skilful enchantress and true bred!
Who out of evil can bring forth good?
Thy mother's nets in thee were spread,
She tempts to incest, thou to blood.

Henry Vaughan

The Dawning

Ah! what time wilt Thou come? when shall that cry,
'The bridegroom's coming,' fill the sky?
Shall it in the evening run,
When our words and works are dome?
Or will Thy all-surprising light
Break at midnight,
When either sleep or some dark pleasure
Possesseth mad man without measure?
Or shall these early fragrant hours
Unlock Thy bowers,
And with their blush of light descry
Thy locks crowned with eternity?
Indeed, it is the only time
That with Thy glory doth best chime;
Full hymns doth yield,
The whole creation shakes off night,
And for Thy shadow looks the light;
Stars now vanish without number,
The pursy clouds disband and scatter,
All expect some sudden matter;
Not one beam triumphs, but from far
That morning star.
Oh, at what time soever, Thou,
Unknown to us, the heavens wilt bow,
And with Thy angels in the van
Descend to judge poor careless man,
Grant I may not like puddle lie
In a corrupt security,
Where, if a traveler water crave,
He finds it dead and in a grave;
But as this restless vocal spring
All day and night doth run and sing,
And though here born, yet is acquainted
Elsewhere, and flowing keeps untainted,
So let me all my busy age
In Thy free services engage;
And though while here of force I must
Have commerce sometimes with poor dust,
And in my flesh, though vile and low,
As this doth in her channel flow,
Yet let my course, my aim, my love,
And chief acquaintance be above;
So when that day and hour shall come
In which Thyself will be the sun,
Thou'lt find me dressed and on my way,
Watching the break of Thy great Day.

Henry Vaughan

The Dedication

The Son of the living GOD, and the sacred
Virgin Mary.

I.
MY God ! Thou that didst die for me,
These Thy death's fruits I offer Thee ;
Death that to me was life and light,
But dark and deep pangs to Thy sight.
Some drops of Thy all-quick'ning blood
Fell on my heart ; those made it bud,
And put forth thus, though, Lord, before
The ground was curs'd, and void of store.
Indeed I had some here to hire
Which long resisted Thy desire,
That ston'd Thy servants, and did move
To have Thee murder'd for Thy love ;
But, Lord, I have expell'd them, and so bent,
Beg Thou wouldst take Thy tenant's rent.

II.
Dear Lord, 'tis finished ! and now he
That copied it, presents it Thee.
'Twas thine first, and to Thee returns,
From Thee it shin'd, though here it burns.
If the Sun rise on rocks, is't right
To call it their inherent light ?
No, nor can I say, this is mine,
For, dearest Jesus, 'tis all Thine ;
As Thy clothes, when Thou with clothes wert clad,
Both light from Thee, and virtue had ;
And now,as then, within this place
Thou to poor rags dost still give grace.
This is the earnest Thy love sheds,
The candle shining on some heads,
Till at Thy charges they shall be
Cloth'd all with immortality.

III.
My dear Redeemer, the world's light,
And life too, and my heart's delight !
For all Thy mercies and Thy truth,
Show'd to me in my sinful youth,
For my sad failings and my wild
Murmurings at Thee, when most mild ;
For all my secret faults, and each
Frequent relapse and wilful breach,
For all designs meant against Thee
And ev'ry publish'd vanity,
Which Thou divinely hast forgiven,
While Thy blood wash'd me white as heaven ;
I nothing have to give to Thee,
But this Thy own gift, given to me.

Refuse it not ; for now Thy token
Can tell Thee where a heart is broken.

REVEL. CAP. I. VER. 5, 6, 7.

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our
sins in His own blood.
And hath made us kings and priests unto God and
His Father ; to Him be glory and dominion, for ever
and ever. Amen.
Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall
see Him, and they also which pierced Him ; and all
kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him : even
so, Amen.

Henry Vaughan

The Dwelling Place

What happy, secret fountain,
    Fair shade or mountain,
Whose undiscovered virgin glory
Boasts it this day, though not in story,
Was then thy dwelling ? Did some cloud,
Fixed to a tent, descend and shroud
My distressed Lord ? Or did a star
Beckoned by thee, though high and far,
In sparkling smiles haste gladly down
To lodge light, and increase her own ?
My dear, dear God ! I do not know
What lodged thee then, nor where, nor how ;
But I am sure, thou dost now come
Oft to a narrow, homely room,
Where thou too hast, but the least part,
My God, I mean my sinful heart.

Henry Vaughan

The Dwelling-Place

John 1:38-39

What happy secret fountain,
Fair shade or mountain,
Whose undiscovered virgin glory
Boasts it this day, though not in story,
Was then thy dwelling? Did some cloud,
Fixed to a tent, descend a shroud
My distressed Lord? Or did a star,
Beckoned by Thee, though high and far,
In sparkling smiles haste gladly down
To lodge light and increase her own?
My dear, dear God! I do not know
What lodged Thee then, nor where, nor how;
But I am sure Thou dost now come
Oft to a narrow, homely room,
Where Thou too hast but the least part:
My God, I mean my sinful heart.

Henry Vaughan

The Evening-Watch: A Dialogue

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 Incarnation, And Passion

LORD, when Thou didst Thyself undress,
Laying by Thy robes of glory,
To make us more, Thou wouldst be less,
And becam'st a woful story.

To put on clouds instead of light,
And clothe the morning-star with dust,
Was a translation of such height
As, but in Thee, was ne'er express'd.

Brave worms and earth ! that thus could have
A God enclos'd within your cell,
Your Maker pent up in a grave,
Life lock'd in death, heav'n in a shell !

Ah, my dear Lord ! what couldst thou spy
In this impure, rebellious clay,
That made Thee thus resolve to die
For those that kill Thee every day ?

O what strange wonders could Thee move
To slight Thy precious blood, and breath ?
Sure it was love, my Lord ! for love
Is only stronger far than death !

Henry Vaughan

The Morning-Watch

O joys! infinite sweetness! with what flow'rs
And shoots of glory my soul breaks and buds!
All the long hours
Of night, and rest,
Through the still shrouds
Of sleep, and clouds,
This dew fell on my breast;
Oh, how it bloods
And spirits all my earth! Hark! In what rings
And hymning circulations the quick world
Awakes and sings;
The rising winds
And falling springs,
Birds, beasts, all things
Adore him in their kinds.
Thus all is hurl'd
In sacred hymns and order, the great chime
And symphony of nature. Prayer is
The world in tune,
A spirit voice,
And vocal joys
Whose echo is heav'n's bliss.
O let me climb
When I lie down! The pious soul by night
Is like a clouded star whose beams, though said
To shed their light
Under some cloud,
Yet are above,
And shine and move
Beyond that misty shroud.
So in my bed,
That curtain'd grave, though sleep, like ashes, hide
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 Night

Through that pure virgin shrine,
That sacred veil drawn o'er Thy glorious noon,
That men might look and live, as glowworms shine,
And face the moon,
Wise Nicodemus saw such light
As made him know his God by night.

Most blest believer he!
Who in that land of darkness and blind eyes
Thy long-expected healing wings could see,
When Thou didst rise!
And, what can never more be done,
Did at midnight speak with the Sun!

Oh who will tell me where
He found Thee at that dead and silent hour?
What hallowed solitary ground did bear
So rare a flower,
Within whose sacred leaves did lie
The fullness of the Deity?

No mercy-seat of gold,
No dead and dusty cherub, nor carved stone,
But His own living works did my Lord hold
And lodge alone;
Where trees and herbs did watch and peep
And wonder, while the Jews did sleep.

Dear night! this world's defeat;
The stop to busy fools; care's check and curb;
The day of spirits; my soul's calm retreat
Which none disturb!
Christ's progress, and His prayer time;
The hours to which high Heaven doth chime;

God's silent, searching flight;
When my Lord's head is filled with dew, and all
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;
His still, soft call;
His knocking time; the soul's dumb watch,
When spirits their fair kindred catch.

Were all my loud, evil days
Calm and unhaunted as is thy dark tent,
Whose peace but by some angel's wing or voice
Is seldom rent,
Then I in heaven all the long year
Would keep, and never wander here.

But living where the sun
Doth all things wake, and where all mix and tire
Themselves and others, I consent and run

To every mire,
And by this world's ill-guiding light,
Err more than I can do by night.

There is in God - some say -
A deep but dazzling darkness, as men here
Say it is late and dusky, because they
See not all clear.
Oh for that night, where I in Him
Might live invisible and dim!

Henry Vaughan

The Pursuit

LORD ! what a busy, restless thing
Hast Thou made man !
Each day and hour he is on wing,
Rests not a span ;
Then having lost the sun and light,
By clouds surpris'd,
He keeps a commerce in the night
With air disguis'd.
Hadst Thou given to this active dust
A state untir'd,
The lost son had not left the husk,
Nor home desir'd.
That was Thy secret, and it is
Thy mercy too ;
For when all fails to bring to bliss,
Then this must do.
Ah, Lord ! and what a purchase will that be,
To take us sick, that sound would not take Thee !

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

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

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

Henry Vaughan

The Revival

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

Hark! how his winds have chang'd their note,
And with warm whispers call thee out.
The frosts are past, the storms are gone,
And backward life at last comes on.
The lofty groves in express joys
Reply unto the turtle's voice;
And here in dust and dirt, O here
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 Shower (I)

1.

'TWAS so ; I saw thy birth. That drowsy lake
From her faint bosom breath'd thee, the disease
Of her sick waters and infectious ease.
But now at even,
Too gross for heaven,
Thou fall'st in tears, and weep'st for thy mistake.

2.

Ah ! it is so with me : oft have I press'd
Heaven with a lazy breath ; but fruitless this
Pierc'd not ; love only can with quick access
Unlock the way,
When all else stray,
The smoke and exhalations of the breast.

3.

Yet, if as thou dost melt, and with thy train
Of drops make soft the Earth, my eyes could weep
O'er my hard heart, that's bound up and asleep ;
Perhaps at last,
Some such showers past,
My God would give a sunshine after rain.

Henry Vaughan

The Star

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Henry Vaughan

The Storm

I SEE the use : and know my blood
Is not a sea,
But a shallow, bounded flood,
Though red as he ;
Yet have I flows, as strong as his,
And boiling streams that rave
With the same curling force, and hiss,
As doth the mountain'd wave.
2.

But when his waters billow thus,
Dark storms, and wind
Incite them to that fierce discuss,
Else not inclin'd,
Thus the enlarg'd, enragèd air
Uncalms these to a flood ;
But still the weather that's most fair
Breeds tempests in my blood.
3.

Lord, then round me with weeping clouds,
And let my mind
In quick blasts sigh beneath those shrouds,
A spirit-wind ;
So shall that storm purge this recluse
Which sinful ease made foul,
And wind and water to Thy use
Both wash and wing my soul.

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

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

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

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

Henry Vaughan

The World

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

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

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

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

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

Henry Vaughan

They are all Gone into the World of Light

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

Thou That Know'st for Whom I Mourn

THOU that know'st for whom I mourn,
And why these tears appear,
That keep'st account till he return
Of all his dust left here ;
As easily Thou might'st prevent,
As now produce, these tears,
And add unto that day he went
A fair supply of years.
But 'twas my sin that forc'd Thy hand
To cull this primrose out,
That by Thy early choice forewarn'd
My soul might look about.
O what a vanity is man !
How like the eye's quick wink
His cottage fails ; whose narrow span
Begins even at the brink !
Nine months thy hands are fashioning us,
And many years—alas !—
Ere we can lisp, or ought discuss
Concerning Thee, must pass ;
Yet have I known Thy slightest things,
A feather, or a shell,
A stick, or rod, which some chance brings
The best of us excel ;
Yea, I have known these shreds outlast
A fair-compacted frame,
And for one twenty we have past
Almost outlive our name.
Thus hast Thou plac'd in man's outside
Death to the common eye,
That heaven within him might abide,
And close eternity ;
Hence youth, and folly, man's first shame,
Are put unto the slaughter,
And serious thoughts begin to tame
The wise man's madness, laughter.
Dull, wretched worms ! that would not keep
Within our first fair bed,
But out of Paradise must creep
For ev'ry foot to tread !
Yet had our pilgrimage been free,
And smooth without a thorn,
Pleasures had foil'd eternity,
And tares had chok'd the corn.
Thus by the cross salvation runs ;
Affliction is a mother
Whose painful throes yield many sons,
Each fairer than the other.
A silent tear can pierce Thy throne,
When loud joys want a wing ;
And sweeter airs stream from a groan,
Than any arted string.

Thus, Lord, I see my gain is great,
My loss but little to it ;
Yet something more I must entreat,
And only Thou canst do it.
O let me—like him—know my end !
And be as glad to find it :
And whatsoe'er Thou shalt commend,
Still let Thy servant mind it !
Then make my soul white as his own,
My faith as pure and steady,
And deck me, Lord, with the same crown
Thou hast crown'd him already !

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

Vain Wits and Eyes

VAIN wits and eyes
Leave, and be wise :
Abuse not, shun not holy fire,
But with true tears wash off your mire.
Tears and these flames will soon grow kind,
And mix an eye-salve for the blind.
Tears cleanse and supple without fail,
And fire will purge your callous veil,
Then comes the light ! which when you spy,
And see your nakedness thereby,
Praise Him, Who dealt His gifts so free
In tears to you, in fire to me.

Henry Vaughan

Vanity Of Spirit

Quite spent with thoughts, I left my cell and lay
Where a shrill spring tuned to the early day.
I begged here long, and groaned to know
Who gave the clouds so brave a bow,
Who bent the spheres, and circled in
Corruption with this glorious ring;
What is His name, and how I might
Descry some part of His great light.
I summoned nature: pierced through all her store,
Broke up some seals which none had touched before:
Her womb, her bosom, and her head
Where all her secrets lay abed,
I rifled quite; and having passed
Through all her creatures, came at last
To search myself, where I did find
Traces and sounds of a strange kind.
Here of this mighty spring I found some drills,
With echoes beaten from the eternal hills;
Weak beams and fires flashed to my sight,
Like a young east, or moonshine night,
Which showed me in a nook cast by
A piece of much antiquity,
With hieroglyphics quite dismembered,
And broken letters scarce remembered.
I took them up and, much joyed, went about
To unite those pieces, hoping to find out
The mystery; but this ne'er done,
That little light I had was gone:
It grieved me much. At last, said I,
Since in these veils my eclipsed eye
May not approach Thee (for at night
Who can have commerce with the light?),
I'll disapparel, and to buy
But one half glance, mist gladly die.

Henry Vaughan