Classic Poetry Series

William Habington

- poems -

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Nox Nocti Indicat Scientiam

WHEN I survey the bright Celestial sphere; So rich with jewels hung, that Night Doth like an Ethiop bride appear:

My soul her wings doth spread And heavenward flies, Th' Almighty's mysteries to read In the large volumes of the skies.

For the bright firmament Shoots forth no flame So silent, but is eloquent In speaking the Creator's name.

No unregarded star Contracts its light Into so small a character, Removed far from our human sight,

But if we steadfast look
We shall discern
In it, as in some holy book,
How man may heavenly knowledge learn.

It tells the conqueror
That far-stretch'd power,
Which his proud dangers traffic for,
Is but the triumph of an hour:

That from the farthest North, Some nation may, Yet undiscover'd, issue forth, And o'er his new-got conquest sway:

Some nation yet shut in With hills of ice May be let out to scourge his sin, Till they shall equal him in vice.

And then they likewise shall Their ruin have; For as yourselves your empires fall, And every kingdom hath a grave.

Thus those celestial fires,
Though seeming mute,
The fallacy of our desires
And all the pride of life confute:--

For they have watch'd since first The World had birth:

And found sin in itself accurst,
And nothing permanent on Earth.
William Habington

To Roses in the Bosom of Castara

YE blushing virgins happy are
In the chaste nunnery of her breasts-For he'd profane so chaste a fair,
Whoe'er should call them Cupid's nests.

Transplanted thus how bright ye grow! How rich a perfume do ye yield! In some close garden cowslips so Are sweeter than i' th' open field.

In those white cloisters live secure From the rude blasts of wanton breath!--Each hour more innocent and pure, Till you shall wither into death.

Then that which living gave you room, Your glorious sepulchre shall be. There wants no marble for a tomb Whose breast hath marble been to me.

William Habington