

Classic Poetry Series

Phineas Fletcher
- poems -

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Phineas Fletcher(1582 - 1650)

English poet, elder son of Dr Giles Fletcher, and brother of Giles the younger, was born at Cranbrook, Kent, and was baptized on the 8th of April 1582.

He was admitted a scholar of Eton, and in 1600 entered King's College, Cambridge. He graduated B.A. in 1604, and M.A. in 1608, and was one of the contributors to Sorrow's Joy (1603). His pastoral drama, Sicelides or Piscatory (pr. 1631) was written (1614) for performance before James I., but only produced after the king's departure at King's College.

He had been ordained as a priest and before 1611 became a fellow of his college, but he left Cambridge before 1616, apparently because certain emoluments were refused him.

He became chaplain to Sir Henry Willoughby, who presented him in 1621 to the rectory of Hilgay, Norfolk, where he married and spent the rest of his life.

In 1627 he published *Locustae, vel Pietas Jesuitica*. The Locusts or Apollyonists, two parallel poems in Latin and English furiously attacking the Jesuits. Dr Grosart saw in this work one of the sources of Milton's conception of Satan.

Next year appeared an erotic poem, *Britain's Ida*, with Edmund Spenser's name on the title-page. It is certainly not by Spenser, and is printed by Dr Grosart with the works of Phineas Fletcher.

Sicelides, a play acted at King's College in 1614, was printed in 1631. In 1632 appeared two theological prose treatises, *The Way to Blessedness and Joy in Tribulation*, and in 1633 his magnum opus, *The Purple Island*. The book was dedicated to his friend Edward Benlowes, and included his *Piscatorie Eclsgs* and other *Poetical Miscellanies*.

He died in 1650, his will being proved by his widow on the 13th of December of that year.

The Purple Island, or the *Isle of Man*, is a poem in twelve cantos describing in cumbrous allegory the physiological structure of the human body and the mind of man. The intellectual qualities are personified, while the veins are rivers, the bones the mountains of the island, the whole analogy being worked out with great ingenuity. The manner of Spenser is preserved throughout, but Fletcher never lost sight of his moral aim to lose himself in digressions like those of the

Faerie Queene. What he gains in unity of design, however, he more than loses in human interest and action. The chief charm of the poem lies in its descriptions of rural scenery.

The Piscatory Eclogues are pastorals, the characters of which are represented as fisher boys on the banks of the Cam, and are interesting for the light they cast on the biography of the poet himself (Thyrsil) and his father (Thelgon).

A Litany

DROP, drop, slow tears,
 And bathe those beauteous feet
Which brought from Heaven
 The news and Prince of Peace:
Cease not, wet eyes,
 His mercy to entreat;
To cry for vengeance
 Sin doth never cease.
In your deep floods
 Drown all my faults and fears;
Nor let His eye
 See sin, but through my tears.

Phineas Fletcher

Instability Of Human Greatness

Fond man, that looks on earth for happiness,
And here long seeks what here is never found!
For all our good we hold from Heaven by lease,
With many forfeits and conditions bound;
Nor can we pay the fine and rentage due;
Though now but writ, and sealed, and given anew,
Yet daily we it break, then daily must renew.

Why shouldst thou here look for perpetual good,
At every loss 'gainst Heaven's face repining?
Do but behold where glorious cities stood,
With gilded tops and silver turrets shining;
There now the heart, fearless of greyhound, feeds,
And loving pelican in safety breeds:
There screeching satyrs fill the people's empty stedes.

Where is the Assyrian lion's golden hide,
That all the East once grasp'd in lordly paw?
Where that great Persian bear, whose swelling pride
The lion's self tore out with rav'nous jaw?
Or he who, 'twixt a lion and a pard,
Through all the world with nimble pinions fared,
And to his greedy whelps his conquer'd kingdoms shared.

Hardly the place of such antiquity,
Or note of those great monarchies we find:
Only a fading verbal memory,
And empty name, in writ is left behind:
But when this second life and glory fades,
And sinks at length in Time's obscurer shades,
A second fall succeeds, and double death invades.

Phineas Fletcher

The Apollyonists - Canto 1

I

Of men, nay beasts; worse, monsters; worst of all,
Incarnate fiends, English Italianate;
Of priests, O no! mass-priests, priests-cannibal,
Who make their Maker, chew, grind, feed, grow fat
With flesh divine; of that great city's fall,
Which born, nursed, grown with blood, the earth's empress sat,
Cleansed, spoused to Christ, yet back to whoredom fell,
None can enough, something I fain would tell.
How black are quenched lights! Fallen heaven's a double hell.

II.

Great Lord, who graspest all creatures in Thy hand,
Who in Thy lap layest down proud Thetis' head,
And bindest her white curled locks in cauls of sand,
Who gatherest in Thy fist and layest in bed
The sturdy winds, who groundest the floating land
On fleeting seas, and over all hast spread
Heaven's brooding wings to foster all below,
Who makest the sun without all fire to glow,
The spring of heat and light, the moon to ebb and flow,

III.

Thou world's sole Pilot, who in this poor isle
(So small a bottom) hast embarked Thy light,
And glorious Self and steerest it safe, the while
Hoarse drumming seas and winds' loud trumpets fight,
Who causest stormy heavens here only smile,
Steer me, poor ship-boy, steer my course aright;
Breathe, gracious Spirit, breathe gently on these lays;
Be Thou my compass, needle to my ways;
Thy glorious work's my freight; my haven is Thy praise.

IV.

Thou purple whore, mounted on scarlet beast,
Gorged with the flesh, drunk with the blood of saints,
Whose amorous golden cup and charmed feast
All earthly kings, all earthly men attaints,
See thy live pictures, see thine own, thy best,

Thy dearest sons, and cheer thy heart that faints.
Hark! thou saved island, hark! and never cease
To praise that hand which held thy head in peace;
Else hadst thou swum as deep in blood as now in seas.

V.

The cloudy night came whirling up the sky
And scatt'ring round the dews, which first she drew
From milky poppies, loads and drowsy eye.
The wat'ry moon, cold Vesper, and his crew
Light up their tapers; to the sun they fly
And at his blazing flame their sparks renew.
Oh, why should earthly lights then scorn to tine
Their lamps alone at the first Sun divine?
Hence as false as falling stars, as rotten wood, they shine.

VI.

Her sable mantle was embroidered gay
With silver beams, with spangles round beset;
Four steeds her chariot drew: the first was gray,
The second blue, third brown, fourth black as jet.
The hollowing owl, her post, prepares the way;
And winged dreams, as gnat swarms flutt'ring, let
Sad sleep, who fain his eyes in rest would steep.
Why then at death do weary mortals weep?
Sleep's but a shorter death; death's but a longer sleep.

VII.

And now the world, and dreams themselves were drowned
In deadly sleep; the laborer snorteth fast,
His brawny arms unbent, his limbs unbound,
As dead, forget all toil to come, or past;
Only sad guilt and troubled greatness, crowned
With heavy gold and care, no rest can taste.
Go then, vain man, go pill the live and dead,
Buy, sell, fawn, flatter, rise, then couch thy head
In proud, but dangerous gold, in silk, but restless bed.

VIII.

When lo! a sudden noise breaks the empty air:
A dreadful noise, which every creature daunts,
Frights home the blood, shoots up the limber hair;

For through the silent heaven hell's pursuivants,
Cutting their way, command foul spirits repair
With haste to Pluto, who their counsel wants.
Their hoarse bass-horns like fenny bitterns sound;
The earth shakes, dogs howl, and heaven itself, astound,
Shuts all his eyes; the stars in clouds their candles drowned.

IX.

Meantime, hell's iron gates by fiends beneath
Are open flung, which framed with wondrous art
To every guilty soul yields entrance eath;
But never wight but He could thence depart,
Who dying once, was death to endless death.
So where the liver's channel to the heart
Pays purple tribute, with their three-forked mace
Three Tritons stand and speed his flowing race,
But stop the ebbing stream if once it back would pace.

X.

The porter to the infernal gate is Sin,
A shapeless shape, a foul deformed thing,
Nor nothing, nor a substance, as those thin
And empty forms which through the air fling
Their wandering shapes, at length they're fastened in
The crystal sight. It serves, yet reigns as king;
It lives, yet's death; it pleases, full of pain;
Monster! ah, who, who can thy being feign?
Thou shapeless shape, live death, pain pleasing, servile reign!

XI.

Of that first woman and the old serpent bred,
By lust and custom nursed, whom when her mother
Saw so deformed, how fain would she have fled
Her birth, and self! But she her dam would smother,
And all her brood, had not He rescued
Who was His mother's sire, His children's brother:
Eternity, who yet was born and died;
His own creator, earth's scorn, heaven's pride,
Who the Deity infleshed, and man's flesh deified.

XII.

Her former parts her mother seems resemble,

Yet only seems to flesh and weaker sight,
For she with art and paint could fine dissemble
Her loathsome face. Her back parts, black as night,
Like to her horrid sire, would force to tremble
The boldest heart. To the eye that meets her right
She seems a lovely sweet, of beauty rare;
But at the parting, he that shall compare,
Hell will more lovely deem, the devil's self more fair.

XIII.

Her rosy cheek, quick eye, her naked breast,
And whatsoe'er loose fancy might entice,
She bare exposed to sight, all lovely dressed
In beauty's livery and quaint device.
Thus she bewitches many a boy unblest,
Who drenched in hell, dreams of all paradise:
Her breasts, his spheres; her arms, his circling sky;
Her pleasures, heaven; her love, eternity.
For her he longs to live; with her he longs to die.

XIV.

But He that gave a stone power to descry
'Twixt natures hid, and check that metal's pride
That dares aspire to gold's fair purity,
Hath left a touchstone erring eyes to guide,
Which clears their sight and strips hypocrisy.
They see, they loathe, they curse her painted hide;
Her as a crawling carrion they esteem;
Her worst of ills, and worse than that, they deem,
Yet know her worse than they can think, or she can seem.

XV.

Close by her sat Despair, sad ghastly sprite,
With staring looks, unmoved, fast nailed to Sin;
Her body all of earth, her soul of fright,
About her thousand deaths, but more within;
Pale, pined cheeks, black hair, torn, rudely dight,
Short breath, long nails, dull eyes, sharp-pointed chin;
Light, life, heaven, earth, herself, and all she fled.
Fain would she die, but could not; yet half dead,
A breathing corse she seemed, wrapped up in living lead.

XVI.

In the entrance Sickness and faint Languor dwelt,
Who with sad groans toll out their passing knell,
Late fear, fright, horror that already felt
The torturer's claws, preventing death and hell.
Within loud Grief and roaring Pangs that swelt
In sulphur flames, did weep and howl and yell.
A thousand souls in endless dolours lie,
Who burn, fry, hiss, and never cease to cry,
'Oh, that I ne'er had lived; oh, that I once could die!'

XVII.

And now the infernal powers through the air driving,
For speed their leather pinions broad display;
Now at eternal death's wide gate arriving,
Sin gives them passage; still they cut their way
Till to the bottom of hell's palace diving,
They enter Dis' deep conclave. There they stay,
Waiting the rest, and now they all are set,
The horrid court, big swoll'n with the hideous council sweat.

XVIII.

The midst, but lowest (in hell's heraldry
The deepest is the highest room) in state
Sat lordly Lucifer; his fiery eye,
Much swoll'n with pride, but more with rage and hate,
As censor mustered all his company,
Who round about with awful silence sate.
This do, this let rebellious spirits gain,
Change God for Satan, heaven's for hell's sovereign:
O let him serve in hell, who scorns in heaven to reign!

XIX.

Ah, wretch! who with ambitious cares oppressed,
Longest still for future, feelest no present good;
Despising to be better, wouldst be best,
Good never; who wilt serve thy lusting mood,
Yet all command : not he who raised his crest,
But pulled it down, hath high and formly stood.
Fool! serve thy towering lusts, grow still, still, crave,
Rule, reign; this comfort from thy greatness have,
Now at thy top thou art a great commanding slave.

XX.

Thus fell this Prince of Darkness, once a bright
And glorious star; he willful turned away
His borrowed glove from that eternal light;
Himself he sought, so lost himself: his ray
Vanished to smoke, his morning sunk in night,
And never more shall see the springing day.
To be in heaven the second he disdains;
So now the first in hell and flames he reigns,
Crowned once with joy and light, crowned now with fire and pains.

XXI.

As where the warlike Dane the scepter sways,
They crown usurpers with a wreath of lead,
And with hot steel, while loud the traitor brays,
They melt and drop it down into his head,-
Crowned he would live, and crowned he ends his days;
All so in heaven's courts his traitor sped,
Who now, when he had overlooked his train,
Rising upon his throne, with bitter strain
Thus 'gan to whet their rage and chide their frustrate pain.

XXII.

'See, see, you Spirits (I know not whether more
Hated, or hating heaven) ah! see the earth
Smiling in quiet peace and plenteous store.
Men fearless live in ease, in love, and mirth;
Where arms did rage, the drum and cannon roar;
Where hate, strife, envy reigned, and meager dearth,
Now lutes and viols charm the ravished ear;
Men plow with swords; horse-heels their armors wear;
Ah! shortly scarce they'll know what war and armors were.

XXIII.

'Under their sprouting vines they sporting sit.
The old tell of evils past; youth laugh and play
And to their wanton heads sweet garlands fit,
Roses with lilies, myrtles weaved with bay.
The world's at rest; Erinny's, forced to quit
Her strongest holds, from earth is driven away.
Even Turks forget their empire to increase;

War's self is slain and whips of Furies cease.
We, we ourselves, I fear, will shortly live in peace.

XXIV.

'Meantime (I burn, I broil, I burst with spite)
In midst of peace that sharp two-edged sword
Cuts through our darkness, cleaves the misty night,
Discovers all our snares; that sacred word,
Locked up by Rome, breaks prison, spreads the light,
Speaks every tongue, paints, and points out the Lord,
His birth, life, death, and cross; our gilded stocks,
Our laymen's books, the boy and woman mocks;
They laugh, they flee, and say, 'Blocks teach and worship blocks.'

XXV.

'Springtides of light divine the air surround
And bring down heaven to earth; deaf Ignorance,
Vexed with the day, her head in hell hath drowned;
Fond Superstition, frightened with the glance
Of sudden beams, in vain hath crossed her round;
Truth and Religion everywhere advance
Their conquering standards; Error's lost and fled;
Earth burns in love to Heaven; Heaven yields her bed
To earth, and common grown, smiles to be ravished.

XXVI.

'That little swimming isle above the rest,
Spite of our spite and all our plots, remains
And grows in happiness: but late our nest,
Where we and Rome, and blood, and all our trains,
Monks, nuns, dead and alive idols, safe did rest.
Now there, next the oath of God, that wrestler reigns,
Who fills the land and world with peace; his spear
Is but a pen, with which he down doth bear
Blind ignorance, false gods, and superstitious fear.

XXVII.

'There God hath framed another paradise,
Fat olives dropping peace, victorious palms;
Nor in the midst, but everywhere doth rise
That hated tree of life, whose precious balms
Cure every sinful wound, give light to the eyes,

Unlock the ear, recover fainting qualms.
There richly grows what makes a people blest,
A garden planted by Himself and dressed,
Where He Himself doth walk, where He Himself doth rest.

XXVIII.

'There every star sheds his sweet influence
And radiant beams; great, little, old, and new,
Their glittering rays and frequent confluence
The milky path to God's high palace strew;
The unwearied pastors with steeled confidence,
Conquered and conquering, fresh their fight renew.
Our strongest holds that thundering ordinance
Beats down and makes our proudest turrets dance,
Yoking men's iron necks in His sweet governance.

XXIX.

'Nor can the old world content ambitious light;
Virginia, our soil, our seat, and throne,
(To which so long possessions gives us right,
As long as hell's) Virginia's self is gone;
That stormy isle, which the Isle of Devils hight,
Peopled with faith, truth, grace religion.
What's next but hell? That now alone remains,
And that subdued, even here He rules and reigns,
And mortals 'gin to dream of long, but endless pains.

XXX.

'While we, good harmless creatures, sleep or play,
Forget our former loss and following pain,
Earth sweats for heaven, but hell keeps holiday.
Shall we repent, good souls, or shall we plain?
Shall we groan, sigh, weep, mourn, for mercy pray?
Lay down our spite, wash out our sinful stain?
Maybe He'll yield, forget, and use us well,
Forgive, join hands, restore us whence we fell;
Maybe He'll yield us heaven and fall Himself to hell.

XXXI.

'But me, O never let me, Spirits, forget
That glorious day when I your standard bore,
And scorning in the second place to sit,

With you assaulted heaven, His yoke forswore!
My dauntless heart yet longs to bleed and sweat
In such a fray; the more I burn, the more
I hate: should He yet offer grace and ease,
If subject we our arms and spite surcease,
Such offer should I hate, and scorn so base a peace.

XXXII.

'Where are those Spirits? Where that haughty rage
That durst with me invade eternal light?
What! Are our hearts fallen too? Droop we with age?
Can we yet fall from hell and hellish spite?
Can smart our wrath, can grief our hate assuage?
Dare we with heaven, and not with earth to fight?
Your arms, allies, yourselves as strong as ever;
Your foes, their weapons, numbers, weaker never.
For shame, tread down this earth! What wants but your endeavour?

XXXIII.

'Now by yourselves and thunder-daunted arms,
But never-daunted hate, I you implore,
Command, adjure, reinforce your fierce alarms;
Kindle, I pray, who never prayed before,
Kindle your darts, treble repay our harms.
Oh, our short time, too short, stands at the door!
Double your rage; if now we do not ply
We lone in hell, without due company,
And worse, without desert, without revenge shall lie.

XXXIV.

'He, Spirits, (ah, that, that's our main torment!) He
Can feel no wounds, laughs at the sword and dart,
Himself from grief, from suffering wholly free;
His simple nature cannot taste of smart,
Yet in His members we Him grieved see;
For, and in them, He suffers; where His heart
Lies bare and naked, there dart your fiery steel,
Cut, wound, burn, sear, if not the head, the heel.
Let him in every part some pain and torment feel.

XXXV.

'That light comes posting on, that cursed light,

When they as He, all glorious, all divine,
(Their flesh clothed with the sun, and much more bright,
Yet brighter spirits) shall in His image shine,
And see Him as He is; there no despite,
No force, no art their state can undermine:
Full of unmeasured bliss, yet still receiving,
Their souls still childing joy, yet still conceiving,
Delights beyond the wish, beyond quick thoughts perceiving.

XXXVI.

'But we fast pinioned with dark fiery chains,
Shall suffer every ill, but do no more;
The guilty spirit there feels extremest pains,
Yet fears worse than it feels; and finding store
Of present deaths, death's absense sore complains:
Oceans of ills without or ebb, or shore,
A life that ever dies, a death that lives,
And, worst of all, God's absent presence gives
A thousand living woes, a thousand dying griefs.

XXXVII.

'But when he sums his time and turns his eye
First to the past, then future pangs, past days
(And every day's an age of misery)
In torment spent, by thousands down he lays,
Future by millions, yet eternity
Grows nothing less, nor past to come allays.
Through every pang and grief he wild doth run,
And challenge coward death; doth nothing shun
That he may nothing be, does all to be undone.

XXXVIII.

'Oh, let our work equal our wages, let
Our Judge fall short, and when His plagues are spent,
Owe more than He hath paid, live in our debt;
Let heaven want vengeance, hell want punishment
To give our dues; when we with flames beset,
Still dying, live in endless languishment,
This be our comfort: we did get and win
The fires and tortures we are whelmed in;
We have kept pace, outrun His justice with our sin.

XXXIX.

'And now you States of Hell, give your advice,
And to these ruins lend your helping hand.'
This said and ceased; straight humming murmurs rise:
Some chafe, some fret, some sad and thoughtful stand,
Some chat, and some new stratagems devise;
And everyone heaven's stronger powers banned,
And tear for madness their uncombed snakes;
And everyone his fiery weapon shakes,
And everyone expects who first the answer makes.

L.

So when the falling sun hangs o'er the main,
Ready to drop into the western wave
By yellow Cam, where all the Muses reign,
And with their towers his reedy head embrace,
The warlike gnat their flutt'ring armies train;
All have sharp spears, and all shrill trumpets have;
Their files they double, loud their cornets sound,
Now march at length, their troops now gather round;
The banks, the broken noise, and turrets fair rebound.

Phineas Fletcher

The Divine Lover

I

Me Lord? can'st thou mispend
One word, misplace one look on me?
Call'st me thy Love, thy Friend?
Can this poor soul the object be
Of these love-glances, those life-kindling eyes?
What? I the Centre of thy arms embraces?
Of all thy labour I the prize?
Love never mocks, Truth never lies.
Oh how I quake: Hope fear, fear hope displaces:
I would, but cannot hope: such wondrous love amazes.

II

See, I am black as night,
See I am darkness: dark as hell.
Lord thou more fair than light;
Heav'ns Sun thy Shadow; can Sunns dwell
With Shades? 'twixt light, and darkness what commerce?
True: thou art darkness, I thy Light: my ray
Thy mists, and hellish foggs shall pierce.
With me, black soul, with me converse.
I make the foul December flowry May,
Turn thou thy night to me: I'll turn thy night to day.

III

See Lord, see I am dead:
Tomb'd in my self: my self my grave
A drudge: so born, so bred:
My self even to my self a slave.
Thou Freedom, Life: can Life, and Liberty
Love bondage, death? Thy Freedom I: I tyed
To loose thy bonds: be bound to me:
My Yoke shall ease, my bonds shall free.
Dead soul, thy Spring of life, my dying side:
There dye with me to live: to live in thee I dyed.

The Dying Husband's Farewell

I LEAVE them, now the trumpet calls away;
In vain thine eyes beg for some times reprieving;
Yet in my children here immortall stay:
In one I die, in many ones am living:
In them, and for them stay thy too much grieving:
Look but on them, in them thou still wilt see
Marry'd with thee again thy twice-two Antonie.

And when with little hands they stroke thy face,
As in thy lap they sit (ah carelesse) playing,
And stammering ask a kisse, give them a brace;
The last from me : and then a little staying,
And in their face some part of me survaying,
In them give me a third, and with a teare
Show thy deare love to him, who lov'd thee ever deare.

Phineas Fletcher

The Happy Shepherd

Thrice, oh, thrice happy, shepherd's life and state!
When courts are happiness' unhappy pawns!
His cottage low and safely humble gate
Shuts out proud Fortune with her scorns and fawns
No feared treason breaks his quiet sleep,
Singing all day, his flocks he learns to keep;
Himself as innocent as are his simple sheep.

No Syrian worms he knows, that with their thread
Draw out their silken lives: nor silken pride:
His lambs' warm fleece well fits his little need,
Not in that proud Sidonian tincture dyed:
No empty hopes, no courtly fears him fright;
For begging wants his middle fortune bite:
But sweet content exiles both misery and spite.

Instead of music, and base flattering tongues,
Which wait to first salute my lord's uprise;
The cheerful lark wakes him with early songs,
And birds' sweet whistling notes unlock his eyes
In country plays is all the strife he uses;
Or sing, or dance unto the rural muses;
And but in music's sports all difference refuses.

His certain life, that never can deceive him,
Is full of thousand sweets, and rich content;
The smooth-leaved beeches in the field receive him
With coolest shades, till noontide rage is spent;
His life is neither toss'd in boist'rous seas
Of troublous word, nor lost in slothful ease:
Pleased and full blest he lives, when he his God can please.

His bed of wool yields safe and quiet sleeps,
While by his side his faithful spouse hath place;
His little son into his bosom creeps,
The lively picture of his father's face:
Never his humble house nor state torment him:
Less he could like, if less his God had sent him;
And when he dies, green turfs, with grassy tomb, content him.

Phineas Fletcher

The Purple Island

Canto XI.

The early morn lets out the peeping day,
And strewed his path with golden marygolds;
The moon grows wanne, and starres flie all away,
Whom Lucifer locks up in wonted folds,
Till light is quencht, and heav'n in seas hath flung
The headlong day : to th' hill the shepherd's throng,
And Thirsil now began to end his task and song.

Who now, alas ! shall teach my humble vein,
That never yet durst peep from covert glade ;
But softly learnt for fear to sigh and plain,
And vent his griefs to silent myrtils' shade ?
Who now shall teach to change my oaten quill
For trumpets' 'larms, or humble verses fill
With graceful! majestie, and loftie rising skill ?

Ah, thou dread spirit ! shed thy holy fire,
Thy holy frame into my frozen heart;
Teach thou my creeping measures to aspire,
And swell in bigger notes and higher art:
Teach my low muse thy fierce alarums to ring,
And raise my soft strain to high thundering:
Tune thou my loftie song; thy battels must I sing:

Such as thou wert within the sacred breast
Of that thrice famous poet, shepherd, king,
And taught'st his heart to frame his cantos best
Of all that e'er thy glorious work did sing :
Or as those holy fishers once amongs
Thou flamedst bright with sparkling parted tongues ;
And brought'st down heav'n and earth in those all-conqu'ring songs.

These mighty heroes, fill'd with justest rage
To be in narrow walls so slosely pent,
Glitt'ring in arms and goodly equipage,
Stood at the castle's gate, now ready bent
To sally out, and meet the enemie

A hot disdain sparkled in every eye,
Breathing out hatefull warre and deadly enmitie.

Thither repairs the careful Intellect,
With his fair spouse Voletta, heav'nly fair :
With both, their daughter ; whose divine aspect,
Though now sad damps of sorrow much empair'
Yet through those clouds did shine so glorious bright,
That every eye did homage to the sight,
Yeelding their captive hearts to that commanding light.

But who may hope to paint such majestie,
Or shadow well such beautie, such a face—
Such beauteous face, unseen to mortall eye?
Whose pow'rful looks and more than mortall grace
Love's self hath lov'd, leaving his heav'nly throne,
With amorous sighs and many a loving moan
(Whom all the world would woo) woo'd her his only one.

Farre be that boldnesse from thy humble swain,
Fairest Eclecta, to describe thy beautie,
And with unable skill thy glory stain,
Which ever he admires with humble dutie;
But who to view such blaze of beauty longs
Go he to Sinai, th' holy groues amongs,
Where that wise shepherd chants her in his Song of Songs.

The island's king with sober countenance
Aggrates the kni ghts, who thus his right defended ;
And with grave speech and comely amenance,
Himself, his state, his spouse, to them commended:
His lovely childe that by him pensive stands
He last delivers to their valiant hands ;
And her to thank the knights, her champions, he commands.

The God-like maid awhile all silent stood,
And down to th' earth let fall her humble eyes;
While modest thoughts shot up the flaming bloud,
Which fir'd her scarlet cheek with rosie dies;
But soon to quench the heat, that lordling reignes,
From her faire eye a show'r of crystall rains,
Which with its silver streams o'er-runs the beauteous plains:

As when the sunne in midst of summer's heat
Draws up thinne vapours with his potent ray,
Forcing dull waters from their native seat;
At length dimme clouds shadow the burning day
Till coldest aire, soon melted into showers,
Upon the earth his welcome anger powres,
And heavn's clear foreheade now wipes off her former lowres.

At length, a little lifting up her eyes,
A renting sigh way for her sorrow brake,
Which from her heart 'gan in her face to rise;
And first in th' eye, then in the lip, thus spake;
'Ah gentle knights, how many a simple maid,
With justest grief, and wrong so ill apaid,
Give due reward for such your pains and friendly aid?

' But if my princely spouse do not delay
His timely presence in my greatest need,
He will for me your friendly love repay,
And well requite this your so gentle deed :
Then let no fear your mighty hearts assail:
His word's himself; himself he cannot fail.
Long may he stay, yet sure he comes, and must prevail.'

By this the long shut gate was open laid;
Soon out they rush in order well arranged:
And fastning in their eyes that heav'nly maid,
How oft for fear her fairest colour chang'd !
Her looks, her worth, her goodly grace and state,
Comparing with her present wretched fate,
Pitie whets just revenge, and love's fires kindle hate.

Long at the gate the thoughtful Intellect
Staid with his fearfull queen and daughter fair;
But when the knights were past their dimme aspect,
They follow them with vowes and many a prayer:
At last they climbe up to the castle's height,
From which they viewed the deeds of every knight,
And mark'd the doubtfull end of this intestine fight.

As when a youth bound for the Belgick warre,

Takes leave of friends upon the Kentish shore;
Now are they parted, and he sail'd so farre
They see not now, and now are seen no more
Yet farre off viewing the white trembling sails,
The tender mother soon plucks off her vails,
And shaking them aloft, unto her sonne she hails.

Mean time these champions march in fit array,
Till both the armies now were come in sight
Awhile each other boldly viewing stay,
With short delaye whetting fierce rage and spight.
Sound now ye trumpets, sound alarums loud;
Hark, how their clamours whet their anger proud:
See, yonder are they met in midst of dustie cloud!

So oft the south with civil enmitie
Musters his watrie forces 'gainst the west;
The rolling clouds come tumbling up the skie,
In dark folds wrapping up their angry guest:
At length the flame breaks from th' imprisoning cold,
With horrid noise tearing the limber muld,
While down in liquid tears the broken vapours roll'd.

First did that warlike maid herself advance ;
And riding from amidst her companie,
About her helmet wav'd her mighty lance,
Daring to fight the proudest enemy:
Porneios soon his ready spear addrest,
And close advancing on his hastie beast,
Bent his sharp-headed lance against her dainty breast.

In vain the broken staffe sought entrance there,
Where Love himself oft entrance sought in vain
But much unlike the martial virgin's spear,
Which low dismounts her foe on dustie plain,
Broaching with bloody point his breast before
Down from the wound trickled the bubbling gore,
And bid pale Death come in at that red gaping door.

There lies he covered now in lowly dust,
And foully wallowing in cluttered blood,
Breathing together out his life and lust,

Which from his breast swamme in the steaming floud :
In maids his joy, now by a maid defi'd,
His life he lost and all his former pride;
With women would he live, now by a woman di'd.

Aselges, struck with such a heavie sight,
Greedy to venge his brother's sad decay,
Spurr'd forth his flying steed with fell despite,
And met the virgin in the middle way:
His spear against her head he fiercely threw,
Which to that face performing homage due,
Kissing her helmet, thence in thousand shivers flew.

The wanton boy had dreamt, that latest night,
He well had learnt the liquid aire dispart,
And swimme along the heav'ns with pineons light
Now that fair maid taught him this nimble art:
For from his saddle far away she sent,
Flying along the emptie element,
That hardly yet he knew whither his course was bent.

The rest that saw with fear the ill successe
Of single fight, durst not like fortune trie ;
But round beset her with their numerous presse ;
Before, beside, behind, they on her flie,
And every part with coward odds assail:
But she redoubling strokes as thick as hail,
Drove far their flying troops, and thresh'd with iron flail

As when a gentle greyhound set around
With little cures, which dare his way molest,
Snapping behinde; soon as the angrie hound
Turning his course, hath caught the busiest,
And shaking in his fangs hath welnigh slain ;
The rest, fear'd with his crying, runne amain,
And standing all aloof, whine, houl, and bark in vain.

The subtil Dragon that from far did view
The waste and spoil made by this maiden knight,
Fell to his wonted guile ; for well he knew
All force was vain against such wondrous might
A craftie swain well taught to cunning harms,

Call'd False Delight, he chang'd with hellish charms,
That True Delight he seem'd the self-same shape and arms.

The watchfull'st sight no difference could descree ;
The same his face, his voice, his sail the same :
Thereto his words he feign'd; and coming nigh
The maid, that fierce pursues her martial game,
He whets her wrath with many a guilefull word,
Till she less carefull, did fit time afford :
Then up with both his hands he lifts his balefull sword.

Ye pow'rful heav'ns ! and thou, their Governour !
With what eyes can you view this dolefull sight ?
How can you see your fairest conquerour
So nigh her end by so unmanly slight ?
The dreadful weapon through the aire doth glide;
But sure you tum'd the harmfull edge aside:
Else must she there have fall'n, and by that tratour died.

Yet in her side deep was the wound impight;
Her flowing life the shining armour stains :
From that wide spring long rivers took their flight.
With purple streams drowning the silver plains:
Her cheerfull colour now grows wanne and pale,
Which oft she strives with courage to recall,
And rouze her fainting head, which down as oft would fall:

All so a lilie prest with heavie rain,
Which fills her cups with show'rs up to the brinks;
The wearie stalk no longer can sustain
The head, but low beneath the burden sinks :
Or, as a virgin-rose her leaves displayes,
Which too hot scorching beams quite disarayes,
Down flags her double ruffe, and all her sweet decayes.

Th' undaunted maid, feeling her feet denie
Their wonted dutie, to a tree retir'd ;
Whom all the rout pursue with deadly crie :
As when a hunted stag, now welnigh tir'd,
Shor'd by an oak, 'gins with his head to play ;
The fearfull hounds dare not his horns assay,
But running round about, with yelping voices bay.

And now perceiving all her strength was spent,
Lifting to list'ning heav'n her trembling eyes,
Thus whispering soft, her soul to heav'n she sent;
'Thou Chastest Love! that rul'st the wand'ring skies,
More pure than purest heavens by thee mov'd;
If thine own love in me thou sure hast prov'd;
If ever thou myself, my vows, my love hast lov'd;

'Let not this temple of thy spotlesse love
Be with foul hand and beastly rage defil'd ;
But when my spirit shall its camp remove,
And to his home return, too long exil'd,
Do thou protect it from the ravenous spoil
Of ranc'rous enemies, that hourelly toil
Thy humble votarie with lothsome spot to foil.'

With this few drops fell from her fainting eyes
To dew the fading roses of her cheek;
That much High Love seem'd passion'd with those cries;
Much more those streams his heart and patience break
Straight he the charge gives to a winged swain,
Quickly to step down to that bloody plain,
And aid her wearie arms, and rightful cause maintain.

Soon stoops the speedie herauld through the aire,
Where chaste Agneia and Encrates fought
' See, see !' he cries, ' where your Parthenia fair,
The flow'r of all your armie, hemm'd about
With thousand enemies, now fainting stands,
Readie to fall into their murd'ring hands:
Hie ye, ho, hie ye fast ! the Highest Love commands.'

They casting round about their angrie eye,
The wounded virgin almost sinking spi'd;
They prick their steeds, which straight like lightning flie
Their brother Continnence runnes by their side;
Fair Continnence, that truly long before,
As bis heart's leige, this ladie did adore :
And now his faithful love kindled his hate the more.

Encrates and his spouse with slashing sword

Assail'd the scatter'd troops that headlong flie;
While Continnence a precious liquour pour'd
Into the wound, and suppld tenderly :
Then binding up the gaping orifice,
Keviv'd the spirits, that now she 'gan to rise,
And with new life confront her heartlesse enemies.

So have I often seen a purple flow'r
Fainting through heat, hang down her drooping head,
But soon refreshed with a welcome show'r,
Begins again her lively beauties spread,
And with new pride her silken leaves display;
And while the sunne doth now more gently play,
Lays out her swelling bosome to the smiling day.

Now rush they all into the flying trains,
Bloud fires their bloud, and slaughter kindles fight;
The wretched vulgar on the purple plains
Fall down as thick as when a rustick wight
From laden oaks the plenteous akorns poures;
Or when the thickend ayer that sadly lowers,
And melts his sullen brow, and weeps sweet April show'rs.

The greedy Dragon, that aloof did spie
So ill successe of this renewed fray,
More vex'd with losse of certain victorie,
Deprived of so assur'd and wished prey,
Gnashed his iron teeth for grief and spite :
The burning sparks leap from his flaming sight,
And from his smoking jawes streams out a smould'ring night.

Straight thither sends he in a fresh supply,
The swelling band that drunken Methos led
And all the rout his brother Gluttonie
Commands, in lawlesse bands disordered,
So now they bold restore their broken fight,
And fiercely turn again from shamefull flight ;
While both with former losse sharpen their raging spite.

Freshly these knights assault these fresher bands,
And with new battell all their strength renew :
Down fell Geloios by Enocrates' hands ;

Agneia, Moechus and Anagnus slew ;
And spying Methos fenc't in's iron vine,
Pierc't his swollen panch: there lies the grunting swine,
And spues his liquid soul out in his purple wine.

As when a greedy lion long unfed,
Breaks in at length into the harmless folds,
(So hungry rage commands) with fearful dread
He drags the silly beasts ; nothing controls
The victor proud; he spoils, devours, and tears:
In vain the keeper calls his shepherd peers
Mean while the simple flock gaze on with silent fears:

Such was the slaughter these three champions made;
But most Encrates, whose unconquer'd hands
Sent thousand foes down to th' infernal shade,
With uselesse limbes strewing the bloudie sands
Oft were they succour'd fresh with new supplies,
But fell as oft :—the Dragon, grown more wise
By former losse, began another way devise.

Soon to their aid the Cyprian band he sent,
For easy skirmish clad in armour light
' Their golden bowes in hand stood ready bent,
And painted quivers furnisht well for fight
Stuck full of shafts, whose heads foul poison stains ;
Which dipp'd in Phlegethon by hellish swains,
Bring thousand painfull deaths, and thousand deadly pains.

Thereto of substance strong, so thinne and slight,
And wrought by subtil hand so cunningly,
That hardly were discern'd by weaker sight ;
Sooner the heart did feel, then eye could see
Farre off they stood, and flung their darts around,
Raining whole clouds of arrows on the ground;
So safely others hurt, and never wounded, wound.

Much were the knights encumbred with these foes;
For well they saw, and felt their enemies :
But when they back would turn their borrow'd blows,
The light foot troop away more swiftly flies
Than do their winged arrows through the winde:

And in their course oft would they turne behinde,
And with their glancing darts their hot pursuers blinde.

As when by Russian Volgha's frozen banks,
The false back Tartars, fear, with cunning feigne,
And posting fast away in flying ranks,
Oft backward turn, and from their bowes down rain
Whole storms of darts ; so do they flying fight:
And what by force they lose, they win by slight;
Conquer'd by standing out, and conquerors by flight.

Such was the craft of this false Cyprian crew:
Yet oft they seem'd to slack their fearful pace,
And yield themselves to foes that fast pursue ;
So would they deeper wound in nearer space :
In such a fight he wins who fastest flies.
Fly, fly, chaste knights, such subtil enemies:
The vanquish'd cannot live, and conqueror surely dies.

The knights, oppres'd with wounds and travel past,
Did soon retire, and now were near to fainting
With that a winged post him speeded fast,
The General with these heavy news acquainting:
He soon refresh'd their hearts that 'gan to tire.
But, let our weary Muse awhile respire :
Shade we our scorched heads from Phoebus' parching

Phineas Fletcher