

Classic Poetry Series

John Oldham
- poems -

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John Oldham(9 August 1653 – 9 December 1683)

John Oldham was an English satirical poet and translator.

Life and Work

Oldham was born in Shipton Moyne, Gloucestershire, the son of John Oldham, a non-conformist minister, and grandson of John Oldham the staunch anti-papist rector of Shipton Moyne and before that of Long Newton in Wiltshire. He was educated first at Tetbury grammar school, then at St. Edmund Hall at the University of Oxford, where the Principal was Thomas Tully, an ex-headmaster from Oldham's school at Tetbury. Tully was "a person of severe morals, puritanically inclined and a strict Calvinist.

Oldham received a B. A. degree in May 1674. He became an usher at the Whitgift School in Croydon, Surrey (now in Greater London), a position that was poorly paid, monotonous and left little time for him to compose poetry; his discontent at the time was expressed in these lines from one of his satires - "To a friend about to leave University":

*"But who would be to the vile drudgery bound
Where there so small encouragement is found?
Where you for recompense for all your pains,
Shall hardly reach a common fiddler's gains?
For when you've toiled and laboured all you can,
To dung and cultivate a barren brain,
A Dancing-Master shall be better paid,
Tho' he instructs the Heels and you the Head."*

By then, his poetry had already been published, since he received an unexpected visit at the school from an illustrious party including the Earl of Rochester, Charles Sedley and the Earl of Dorset (part of the "merry gang", as Andrew Marvell called them), who wished to express their appreciation of his work.

He left the Whitgift school in 1678 and took up the post of tutor to the grandsons of a retired Judge, Sir Edward Thurland, in the vicinity of Reigate in Surrey. It was during this period that he composed and had published his satires against the Jesuits at a time when popular anger was being stirred up against Catholics in England by the "Popish plot". In 1680, he became, for a short time, tutor to the son of Sir William Hicks, through whom he made the acquaintance of the notable physician Dr. Richard Lower. Under his influence he took up the study of medicine for a year before returning to his poetic muse.

Oldham settled in London and was introduced to [John Dryden](http://www.poemhunter.com/john-dryden-2/), with whom he became close friends. He entered fashionable society (said to be centred around Will's Coffee House), and was approached by the Earl of Kingston-upon-Hull to be a private chaplain to his household. Oldham turned down the post but did accept the hospitality of the Earl at his seat at Holme Pierrepont Hall in Nottinghamshire.

It was here that he died of smallpox, on 9 December 1683, aged only 30 (he may also have suffered from Tuberculosis during his lifetime). The Earl of Kingston-upon-Hull had a monument, possibly designed by Grinling Gibbons, erected over Oldham's grave in St. Edmund's Church in Holme Pierrepont. John Dryden wrote an elegy on his death.

Oldham was a satirist who imitated the classical satires of Juvenal. His best-known works are *A Satire Upon a Woman Who by Her Falsehood and Scorn Was the Death of My Friend*, written in 1678 and *A Satire against Virtue*, written in 1679. During his lifetime, his poetry was published anonymously. His translations of Juvenal were published after his death.

John Dryden was one of Oldham's admirers; upon Oldham's death, Dryden expressed his admiration in *To the Memory of Mr. Oldham*.

Style

Although regarded as a vigorous and passionate satirist, Oldham is often regarded as having been hampered by a poor ear for rhyme and rhythm. As Robinson (1980) has pointed out, however, "Oldham chose the rugged style of most of his satires: it was not imposed upon him by incapacity or carelessness.

A Quiet Soul

Thy soul within such silent pomp did keep,
As if humanity were lull'd asleep;
So gentle was thy pilgrimage beneath,
Time's unheard feet scarce make less noise,
Or the soft journey which a planet goes:
Life seem'd all calm as its last breath.
A still tranquillity so hush'd thy breast,
As if some Halcyon were its guest,
And there had built her nest;
It hardly now enjoys a greater rest.

John Oldham

A Satire, In Imitation Of The Third Of Juvenal

1 Though much concern'd to leave my dear old friend,
2 I must however his design commend
3 Of fixing in the country: for were I
4 As free to choose my residence, as he;
5 The Peak, the Fens, the Hundreds, or Land's End,
6 I would prefer to Fleet Street, or the Strand.
7 What place so desert, and so wild is there
8 Whose inconveniences one would not bear,
9 Rather than the alarms of midnight fire,
10 The falls of houses, knavery of cits,
11 The plots of factions, and the noise of wits,
12 And thousand other plagues, which up and down
13 Each day and hour infest the cursed town?
14 As fate would hav't, on the appointed day
15 Of parting hence, I met him on the way,
16 Hard by Mile End, the place so fam'd of late,
17 In prose, and verse for the great faction's treat;
18 Here we stood still, and after compliments
19 Of course, and wishing his good journey hence
20 I ask'd what sudden causes made him fly
21 The once lov'd town, and his dear company:
22 When, on the hated prospect looking back,
23 Thus with just rage the good old Timon spake.
24 'Since virtue here in no repute is had,
25 Since worth is scorn'd, learning and sense unpaid,
26 And knavery the only thriving trade;
27 Finding my slender fortune ev'ry day
28 Dwindle, and waste insensibly away,
29 I, like a losing gamester, thus retreat,
30 To manage wiselier my last stake of fate:
31 While I have strength, and want no staff to prop
32 My tott'ring limbs, ere age has made me stoop
33 Beneath its weight, ere all my thread be spun,
34 And life has yet in store some sands to run,
35 'Tis my resolve to quit the nauseous town.
36 Let thriving Morecraft choose his dwelling there,
37 Rich with the spoils of some young spendthrift heir:
38 Let the plot-mongers stay behind, whose art
39 Can truth to sham, and sham to truth convert:

40Whoever has an house to build, or set
41His wife, his conscience, or his oath to let:
42Whoever has, or hopes for offices,
43A Navy, Guard, or Custom-house's place:
44Let sharpening courtiers stay, who there are great
45By putting the false dice on King, and state.
46Where they, who once were grooms, and foot-boys known,
47Are now to fair estates, and honours grown;
48Nor need we envy them, or wonder much
49At their fantastic greatness, since they're such,
50Whom Fortune oft, in her capricious freaks,
51Is pleas'd to raise from kennels, and the jakes,
52To wealth, and dignity above the rest,
53When she is frolic, and dispos'd to jest.
54 'I live in London? What should I do there?
55I cannot lie, nor flatter, nor forswear:
56I can't commend a book, or piece of wit,
57(Though a lord were the author) dully writ:
58I'm no Sir Sydrophel to read the stars,
59And cast nativities for longing heirs,
60When fathers shall dropp off: no Gadbury
61To tell the minute when the King shall die,
62And you know what-come in: nor can I steer,
63And tack about my conscience, whensoe'er,
64To a new point, I see religion veer.
65Let others pimp to courtiers' lechery,
66I'll draw no City-cuckold's curse on me:
67Nor would I do it, though to be made great,
68And rais'd to the chief ministry of state.
69Therefore, I think it fit to rid the town
70Of one, that is an useless member grown.
71 'Besides, who has pretence to favour now,
72But he, who hidden villainy does know,
73Whose breast does with some burning secret glow?
74By none thou shalt preferred, or valued be,
75That trusts thee with an honest secrecy:
76He only may to great men's friendship reach,
77Who great men, when he pleases, can impeach.
78Let others thus aspire to dignity;
79For me, I'd not their envied grandeur buy
80For all th' Exchange is worth, that Paul's will cost,
81Or was of late in the Scotch voyage lost.

82What would it boot, if I, to gain my end,
83Forego my quiet, and my ease of mind,
84Still fear'd, at last betray'd, by my dear friend?
85 'Another cause, which I must boldly own,
86And not the least, for which I quit the town,
87Is to behold it made the common shore,
88Where France does all her filth, and ordure pour:
89What spark of true old English rage can bear
90Those, who were slaves at home, to lord it here?
91We've all our fashion, language, compliments,
92Our music, dances, curing, cooking thence:
93And we shall have their pois'ning too ere long,
94If still in the improvement we go on.
95 'What would'st thou say, great Harry, should'st thou view
96Thy gaudy, flutt'ring race of English now,
97Their tawdry cloths, pulvilios, essences,
98Their Chedreux perukes, and those vanities,
99Which thou, and they of old, did so despise?
100What would'st thou say to see th' infected town
101With the foul spawn of foreigners o'errun?
102Hither from Paris, and all parts they come,
103The spew, and vomit of their jails at home;
104To Court they flock, and to St. James his Square,
105And wriggle into great men's service there:
106Footboys at first, till they from wiping shoes,
107Grow, by degrees, the masters of the house:
108Ready of wit, harden'd of impudence,
109Able with ease to put down either Haines,
110Both the King's player, and king's evidence:
111Flippant of talk, and voluble of tongue,
112With words at will, no lawyer better hung:
113Softer than flattering Court-parasite,
114Or City trader, when he means to cheat,
115No calling, or profession comes amiss:
116A needy Monsieur can be what he please,
117Groom, page, valet, quack, operator, fencer,
118Perfumer, pimp, jack-pudding, juggler, dancer:
119Give but the word, the cur will fetch and bring,
120Come over to the Emperor, or King:
121Or, if you please, fly o'er the pyramid,
122Which Aston and the rest in vain have tried.
123 'Can I have patience, and endure to see

124The paltry foreign wretch take place of me,
125Whom the same wind, and vessel brought ashore,
126That brought prohibited goods, and dildoes o'er?
127Then, pray, what mighty privilege is there
128For me, that at my birth drew English air?
129And where's the benefit to have my veins
130Run British blood, if there's no difference
131'Twixt me, and him, the statute freedom gave,
132And made a subject of a true-born slave?
133 'But nothing shocks, and is more loath'd by me,
134Than the vile rascal's fulsome flattery:
135By help of this false magnifying glass,
136A louse, or flea, shall for a camel pass:
137Produce an hideous wight, more ugly far
138Than those ill shapes, which in old hangings are,
139He'll make him straight a beau garçon appear:
140Commend his voice, and singing, though he bray
141Worse than Sir Martin Mar-all in the play:
142And if he rhyme, shall praise for standard wit,
143More scurvy sense than Prynne, and Vickars writ.
144 'And here's the mischief, though we say the same,
145He is believ'd, and we are thought to sham:
146Do you but smile, immediately the beast
147Laughs out aloud, though he ne'er heard the jest;
148Pretend you're sad, he's presently in tears,
149Yet grieves no more than marble, when it wears
150Sorrow in metaphor: but speak of heat;
151'O God! How sultry 'tis!' he'll cry, and sweat
152In depth of winter: strait, if you complain
153Of cold; the weather-glass is sunk again:
154Then he'll call for his frieze-campaign, and swear,
155'Tis beyond eighty, he's in Greenland here,
156Thus he shifts scenes, and oft'ner in a day
157Can change his face, than actors at a play,
158There's nought so mean can 'scape the flatt'ring sot,
159Not his Lord's snuff-box, nor his powder-spot:
160If he but spit, or pick his teeth; he'll cry,
161'How every thing becomes you! let me die,
162Your Lordship does it most judiciously:'
163And swear, 'tis fashionable, if he sneeze,
164Extremely taking, and it needs must please.
165 'Besides, there's nothing sacred, nothing free

166From the hot satyr's rampant lechery;
167Nor wife, not virgin-daughter can escape,
168Scarce thou thy self, or son avoid a rape:
169All must go padlock'd: if nought else there be,
170Suspect thy very stable's chastity.
171By this the vermin into secrets creep,
172Thus, families in awe they strive to keep,
173What living for an Englishman, is there,
174Where such as these get head, and domineer,
175Whose use, and custom 'tis, never to share
176A friend, but love to reign, without dispute,
177Without a rival, full and absolute?
178Soon as the insect gets his honour's ear,
179And fly-blows some of 's pois'nous malice there,
180Strait I'm turn'd off, kick'd out of doors, discarded,
181And all my former service disregarded.
182 'But leaving these Messieurs, for fear that I
183Be thought of the silk-weavers' mutiny,
184From the loath'd subject let us hasten on,
185To mention other grievances in town:
186And further, what respect at all is had
187Of poor men here? and how's their service paid,
188Though they be ne'er so diligent to wait,
189To sneak, and dance attendance on the great?
190No mark of favour is to be obtain'd
191By one, that sues, and brings an empty hand:
192And all his merit is but made a sport,
193Unless he glut some cormorant at Court.
194 'Tis now a common thing, and usual here,
195To see the son of some rich usurer
196Take place of nobles, keep his first-rate whore,
197And for a vaulting-bout or two give more
198Than a Guard-captain's pay: meanwhile the breed
199Of peers, reduced to poverty, and need,
200Are fain to trudge to the Bankside, and there
201Take up with porter's leavings, suburb-ware,
202There spend that blood, which their great ancestor
203So nobly shed at Cressy heretofore,
204At brothel-fights in some foul common shore.
205 'Produce an evidence, though just he be,
206As righteous Job, or Abraham, or he,
207Whom Heaven, when whole nature shipwreck'd was,

208Thought worth the saving, of all human race;
209Or t'other, who the flaming deluge scap'd,
210When Sodom's lechers angels would have rap'd;
211'How rich he is,' must the first question be,
212Next, for his manners and integrity:
213They'll ask, 'what equipage he keeps, and what
214He's reckon'd worth, in money, and estate,
215For Shrieve how oft he has been known to fine,
216And with how many dishes he does dine?'
217You look what cash a person has in store,
218Just so much credit has he, and no more:
219Should I upon a thousand Bibles swear,
220And call each saint throughout the calendar
221To vouch my oath, it won't be taken here;
222The poor slight Heav'n, and thunderbolts (they think),
223And Heav'n itself does at such trifles wink.
224 'Besides, what store of gibing scoffs are thrown
225On one, that's poor, and meanly clad in town;
226If his apparel seem but overworn,
227His stockings out at heel, or breeches torn?
228One takes occasion his ripp'd shoe to flout,
229And swears 't has been at prison-grates hung out:
230Another shrewdly jeers his coarse cravat,
231Because himself wears point: a third, his hat,
232And most unmercifully shows his wit,
233If it be old, and does not cock aright:
234Nothing in poverty so ill is borne,
235As its exposing men to grinning scorn,
236To be by tawdry coxcombs piss'd upon
237And made the jesting-stock of each buffoon,
238'Turn out there, friend! (cries one at church) 'the pew
239Is not for such mean scoundrel curs, as you:
240'Tis for your betters kept:' belike some sot
241That knew no father, was on bulks begot:
242But now is rais'd to an estate, and pride,
243By having the kind proverb on his side:
244Let Gripe and Cheatwell take their places there,
245And Dash the scriv'ner's gaudy sparkish heir,
246That wears three ruin'd orphans on his back:
247Meanwhile you in the alley stand, and sneak:
248And you therewith must rest contented, since
249Almighty wealth does put such difference.

250What citizen a son-in-law will take,
251Bred ne'er so well, that can't a jointure make?
252What man of sense, that's poor, e'er summon'd is
253Among the Common Council to advise?
254At vestry-consults, when he does he appear
255For choosing of some parish officer,
256Or making leather-buckets for the choir?
257 'Tis hard for any man to rise, that feels
258His virtue clogg'd with poverty at heels:
259But harder 'tis by much in London, where
260A sorry lodging, coarse, and slender fare,
261Fire, water, breathing, every thing is dear:
262Yet such as these an earthen dish disdain,
263With which their ancestors, in Edgar's reign,
264Were serv'd, and thought it no disgrace to dine,
265Though they were rich, had store of leather-coin.
266Low as their fortune is, yet they despise
267A man that walks the streets in homely frieze:
268To speak the truth, great part of England now
269In their own cloth, will scarce vouchsafe to go:
270Only the statute's penalty to save,
271Some few perhaps wear woollen in the grave.
272Here all go gaily dress'd, although it be
273Above their means, their rank, and quality:
274The most in borrow'd gallantry, are clad,
275For which the tradesman's books are still unpaid:
276This fault is common in the meaner sort,
277That they must needs affect to bear the port
278Of gentlemen, though they want income for't.
279 'Sir, to be short, in this expensive town
280There's nothing without money to be done:
281What will you give to be admitted there,
282And brought to speech of some Court-minister?
283What will you give to have the quarter-face,
284The squint and nodding and go-by of his Grace?
285His porter, groom, and steward, must have fees,
286And you may see the tombs, the Tow'r for less:
287Hard fate of suitors! who must pay, and pray
288To livery-slaves, yet oft go scorn'd away.
289 'Whoe'er at Barnet, or St. Albans fears
290To have his lodging dropp about his ears,
291Unless a sudden hurricane befall,

292Or such a wind as blew old Noll to Hell?
293Here we build slight, what scarce outlasts the lease,
294Without the help of props, and buttresses:
295And houses nowadays as much require
296To be insur'd from falling, as from fire.
297There buildings are substantial, though less neat,
298And kept with care both wind-, and water-tight:
299There you in safe security are blest,
300And nought, but conscience to disturb your rest.
301 'I am for living where no fires affright,
302No bells rung backward break my sleep at night:
303I scarce lie down, and draw my curtains here,
304But strait I'm rous'd by the next house on fire:
305Pale, and half dead with fear, myself I raise,
306And find my room all over in a blaze;
307By this 't has seiz'd on the third stairs, and I
308Can now discern no other remedy,
309But leaping out at window to get free:
310For if the mischief from the cellar came,
311Be sure the garret is the last, takes flame.
312 'The moveables of Pordage were a bed
313For him, and 's wife: a piss-pot by its side,
314A looking-glass upon the cupboard's head,
315A comb-case, candlestick, and pewter-spoon,
316For want of plate, with desk to write upon:
317A box without a lid serv'd to contain
318Few authors, which made up his Vatican:
319And there his own immortal works were laid,
320On which the barb'rous mice for hunger prey'd:
321Pordage had nothing, all the world does know;
322And yet should he have lost this nothing too,
323No one the wretched bard would have supplied
324With lodging, house-room, or a crust of bread.
325 'But if the fire burn down some great man's house
326All strait are interested in the loss:
327The Court is strait in mourning sure enough,
328The Act, Commencement, and the Term put off:
329Then we mischances of the town lament,
330And fasts are kept, like judgments to prevent.
331Out comes a brief immediately, with speed
332To gather charity as far as Tweed.
333Nay, while 'tis burning, some will send him in

334 Timber, and stone to build his house again:
335 Others choice furniture: here some rare piece
336 Of Rubens, or Vandyke presented is:
337 There a rich suit of Mortlack tapestry,
338 A bed of damask, or embroidery:
339 One gives a fine scritoire, or cabinet,
340 Another a huge massy dish of plate,
341 Or bag of gold; thus he, at length, gets more
342 By kind misfortune than he had before:
343 And all suspect it for a laid design,
344 As if he did himself the fire begin.
345 'Could you but be advis'd to leave the town,
346 And from dear plays, and drinking friends be drawn,
347 An handsome dwelling might be had in Kent,
348 Surrey, or Essex, at a cheaper rent
349 Than what you're forc'd to give for one half-year
350 To lie, like lumber, in a garret here:
351 A garden there, and well, that needs no rope,
352 Engine, or pains to crane its waters up:
353 Water is there, through nature's pipes convey'd,
354 For which, no custom, nor excise is paid:
355 Had I the smallest spot of ground, which scarce
356 Would summer half-a-dozen grasshoppers,
357 Not larger than my grave, though hence remote,
358 Far as St. Michael's Mount, I would go to 't,
359 Dwell there content, and thank the fates to boot.
360 'Here, want of rest a-nights more people kills
361 Than all the College, and the weekly bills:
362 Where none have privilege to sleep, but those,
363 Whose purses can compound for their repose:
364 In vain I go to bed, or close my eyes,
365 Methinks the place the middle region is,
366 Where I lie down in storms, in thunder rise:
367 The restless bells such din in steeples keep,
368 That scarce the dead can in their churchyards sleep:
369 Huzza's of drunkards, bellmen's midnight rhymes,
370 The noise of shops, with hawkers' early screams,
371 Besides the brawls of coachmen, when they meet,
372 And stop in turnings of a narrow street,
373 Such a loud medley of confusion makes,
374 As drowsy Archer on the bench would wake.
375 'If you walk out in bus'ness ne'er so great,

376 Ten thousand stops you must expect to meet:
377 Thick crowds in ev'ry place you must charge through
378 And storm your passage, wheresoe'er you go:
379 While tides of followers behind you throng,
380 And pressing on your heels, shove you along:
381 One, with a board, or rafter hits your head,
382 Another, with his elbow bores your side;
383 Some tread upon your corns, perhaps in sport,
384 Meanwhile your legs are cas'd all o'er with dirt.
385 Here you the march of a slow funeral wait,
386 Advancing to the church with solemn state:
387 There a sedan, and lackeys stop your way,
388 That bears some punk of honour to the play:
389 Now you some mighty piece of timber meet,
390 Which tott'ring threatens ruin to the street:
391 Next a huge Portland stone, for building Paul's,
392 Itself almost a rock, on carriage rolls:
393 Which, if it fall, would cause a massacre,
394 And serve at once to murder and inter.
395 If what I've said can't from the town affright,
396 Consider other dangers of the night:
397 When brickbats are from upper stories thrown,
398 And emptied chamber pots come pouring down
399 From garret windows: you have cause to bless
400 The gentle stars, if you come off with piss:
401 So many fates attend, a man had need
402 Ne'er walk without a surgeon by his side:
403 And he can hardly now discreet be thought,
404 That does not make his will, ere he go out.
405 'If this you 'scape, twenty to one, you meet
406 Some of the drunken scourers of the street,
407 Flush'd with success of warlike deeds perform'd,
408 Or constables subdu'd, and brothels storm'd:
409 These, if a quarrel, or a fray be miss'd,
410 Are ill at ease a-nights, and want their rest;
411 For mischief is a lechery to some,
412 And serves to make them sleep like laudanum.
413 Yet heated, as they are, with youth, and wine,
414 If they discern a train of flambeaus shine,
415 If a great man with his gilt coach appear,
416 And a strong guard of footboys in the rear,
417 The rascals sneak, and shrink their heads for fear.

418 Poor me, who use no light to walk about,
419 Save what the parish, or the skies hang out,
420 They value not: 'tis worth your while to hear
421 The scuffle, if that be a scuffle, where
422 Another gives the blows, I only bear:
423 He bids me stand: of force I must give way,
424 For 'twere a senseless thing to disobey,
425 And struggle here, where I'd as good oppose
426 Myself to Preston and his mastiffs loose.
427 ."Who's there?' he cries, and takes you by the throat,
428 'Dog! Are you dumb? Speak quickly, else my foot
429 Shall march about your buttocks: whence d' ye come,
430 From what bulk-ridden strumpet reeking home?
431 Saving your rev'rend pimpship, where d' ye ply?
432 How may one have a job of lechery?'
433 If you say anything, or hold your peace,
434 And silently go off, 'tis all a case:
435 Still he lays on: nay well, if you scape so:
436 Perhaps he'll clap an action on you too
437 Of battery, nor need he fear to meet
438 A jury to his turn, shall do him right,
439 And bring him in large damage for a shoe
440 Worn out, besides the pains, in kicking you.
441 But patience: his best way in such a case
442 Is to be thankful for the drubs, and beg
443 That they would mercifully spare one leg,
444 Or arm unbroke, and let him go away
445 With teeth enough to eat his meat next day.
446 'Nor is this all, which you have cause to fear,
447 Oft we encounter midnight padders here:
448 When the exchanges, and the shops are close,
449 And the rich tradesman in his counting house
450 To view the profits of the day, withdraws.
451 Hither in flocks from Shooter's Hill they come,
452 To seek their prize, and booty nearer home:
453 'Your purse!' they cry; 'tis madness to resist,
454 Or strive with a cock'd pistol at your breast:
455 And these each day so strong and num'rous grow,
456 The town can scarce afford them jail-room now.
457 Happy the times of the old Heptarchy,
458 Ere London knew so much of villainy:
459 Then fatal carts through Holborn seldom went,

460And Tyburn with few pilgrims was content:
461A less, and single prison then would do,
462And serv'd the city, and the county too.
463 'These are the reasons, sir, that drive me hence,
464To which I might add more, would time dispense,
465To hold you longer, but the sun draws low,
466The coach is hard at hand, and I must go:
467Therefore, dear sir, farewell; and when the town,
468From better company can spare you down,
469To make the country with your presence blest,
470Then visit your old friend amongst the rest:
471There I'll find leisure to unlade my mind
472Of what remarks I now must leave behind:
473The fruits of dear experience, which, with these
474Improv'd will serve for hints, and notices;
475And when you write again, may be of use
476To furnish satire for your daring muse.'

John Oldham

The Careless Good Fellow

1 A pox of this fooling, and plotting of late,
2 What a pother, and stir has it kept in the state?
3 Let the rabble run mad with suspicions, and fears,
4 Let them scuffle, and jar, till they go by the ears:
5 Their grievances never shall trouble my pate,
6 So I can enjoy my dear bottle at quiet.

7 What coxcombs were those, who would barter their ease
8 And their necks for a toy, a thin wafer and mass?
9 At old Tyburn they never had needed to swing,
10 Had they been but true subjects to drink, and their king;
11 A friend, and a bottle is all my design;
12 He has no room for treason, that's top-full of wine.

13 I mind not the members and makers of laws,
14 Let them sit or prorogue, as his majesty please:
15 Let them damn us to woollen, I'll never repine
16 At my lodging, when dead, so alive I have wine:
17 Yet oft in my drink I can hardly forbear
18 To curse them for making my claret so dear.

19 I mind not grave asses, who idly debate
20 About right and succession, the trifles of state;
21 We've a good king already: and he deserves laughter
22 That will trouble his head with who shall come after:
23 Come, here's to his health, and I wish he may be
24 As free from all care, and all trouble, as we.

25 What care I how leagues with the Hollander go?
26 Or intrigues betwixt Sidney, and Monsieur D'Avaux?
27 What concerns it my drinking, if Cassel be sold,
28 If the conqueror take it by storming, or gold?
29 Good Bordeaux alone is the place that I mind,
30 And when the fleet's coming, I pray for a wind.

31 The bully of France, that aspires to renown
32 By dull cutting of throats, and vent'ring his own;
33 Let him fight and be damn'd, and make matches and treat,
34 To afford the news-mongers, and coffee-house chat:

35 He's but a brave wretch, while I am more free,
36 More safe, and a thousand times happier than he.

37 Come he, or the Pope, or the Devil to boot,
38 Or come faggot, and stake; I care not a groat;
39 Never think that in Smithfield I porters will heat:
40 No, I swear, Mr. Fox, pray excuse me for that.
41 I'll drink in defiance of gibbet, and halter,
42 This is the profession, that never will alter.

John Oldham