

Classic Poetry Series

**Michael Drayton
- poems -**

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Michael Drayton(1563 - 1631)

Drayton was born at Hartshill in Warwickshire and as a youth he became page to Sir Henry Goodere of Polesworth. He fell in love with Sir Henry's daughter, Anne, and worshipped her as 'Idea' in his poetry. Even after her marriage to Sir Henry Rainford he continued to celebrate her charms in verse, and he never married.

He had wanted to be a poet from the age of ten, and achieved his ambition through hard work and a succession of noble patrons, in spite of some ill-fortune. His first work was a verse paraphrase of parts of the Old Testament and Apocrypha, *The Harmony of the Church*. Ironically, the *Harmony* caused offence among the authorities and was banned. When James I became king in 1603 Drayton angled for royal favour with *To the Majesty of King James: a Gratulatory Poem*. Unfortunately he omitted to include the customary tribute to the late Queen Elizabeth, and this gaffe probably cost him an appointment at court.

In spite of this setback, Drayton had a fairly successful career as a poet, and he counted Ben Jonson and William Drummond of Hawthornden among his friends.

Endimion And Phoebe (Excerpts)

In Ionia whence sprang old poets' fame,
From whom that sea did first derive her name,
The blessed bed whereon the Muses lay,
Beauty of Greece, the pride of Asia,
Whence Archelaus, whom times historify,
First unto Athens brought philosophy:
In this fair region on a goodly plain,
Stretching her bounds unto the bord'ring main,
The mountain Latmus overlooks the sea,
Smiling to see the ocean billows play:
Latmus, where young Endymion used to keep
His fairest flock of silver-fleeced sheep,
To whom Silvanus often would resort,
At barley-brake to see the Satyrs sport;
And when rude Pan his tabret list to sound,
To see the fair Nymphs foot it in a round,
Under the trees which on this mountain grew,
As yet the like Arabia never knew;
For all the pleasures Nature could devise
Within this plot she did imparadise;
And great Diana of her special grace
With vestal rites had hallowed all the place.
Upon this mount there stood a stately grove,
Whose reaching arms to clip the welkin strove,
Of tufted cedars, and the branching pine,
Whose bushy tops themselves do so entwine,
As seem'd, when Nature first this work begun,
She then conspir'd against the piercing sun;
Under whose covert (thus divinely made)
Phoebus' green laurel flourish'd in the shade,
Fair Venus' myrtle, Mars his warlike fir,
Minerva's olive, and the weeping myrrh,
The patient palm, which thrives in spite of hate,
The poplar, to Alcides consecrate;
Which Nature in such order had disposed,
And therewithal these goodly walks inclosed,
As serv'd for hangings and rich tapestry,
To beautify this stately gallery.
Embroidering these in curious trails along,

The cluster'd grapes, the golden citrons hung,
 More glorious than the precious fruit were these,
 Kept by the dragon in Hesperides,
 Or gorgeous arras in rich colours wrought,
 With silk from Afric, or from Indy brought.
 Out of this soil sweet bubbling fountains crept,
 As though for joy the senseless stones had wept,
 With straying channels dancing sundry ways,
 With often turns, like to a curious maze;
 Which breaking forth the tender grass bedewed,
 Whose silver sand with orient pearl was strewed,
 Shadowed with roses and sweet eglantine,
 Dipping their sprays into this crystalline;
 From which the birds the purple berries pruned,
 And to their loves their small recorders tuned,
 The nightingale, wood's herald of the spring,
 The whistling woosel, mavis carolling,
 Tuning their trebles to the waters' fall,
 Which made the music more angelical;
 Whilst gentle Zephyr murmuring among
 Kept time, and bare the burthen to the song:
 About whose brims, refresh'd with dainty showers,
 Grew amaranthus, and sweet gilliflowers,
 The marigold, Phœbus' beloved friend,
 The moly, which from sorcery doth defend,
 Violet, carnation, balm, and cassia,
 Idea's primrose, coronet of may.
 Above this grove a gentle fair ascent,
 Which by degrees of milk-white marble went:
 Upon the top, a paradise was found,
 With which Nature this miracle had crown'd,
 Empal'd with rocks of rarest precious stone,
 Which like the flames of Ætna brightly shone,
 And served as lanthorns furnished with light,
 To guide the wand'ring passengers by night:
 For which fair Phœbe, sliding from her sphere,
 Used oft times to come and sport her there,
 And from the azure starry-painted sky
 Embalm'd the banks with precious lunar:
 That now her Maenalus she quite forsook,
 And unto Latmus wholly her betook,
 And in this place her pleasure us'd to take,

And all was for her sweet Endymion's sake;
Endymion, the lovely shepherds' boy,
Endymion, great Phoebus's only joy,
Endymion, in whose pure-shining eyes
The naked fairies danced the heydegies.
The shag-hair'd Satyrs' mountain-climbing race
Have been made tame by gazing in his face.
For this boy's love, the water-nymphs have wept,
Stealing oft times to kiss him whilst he slept,
And tasting once the nectar of his breath,
Surfeit with sweet, and languish unto death;
And Jove oft-times bent to lascivious sport,
And coming where Endymion did resort,
Hath courted him, inflamed with desire,
Thinking some nymph was cloth'd in boy's attire.
And often-times the simple rural swains,
Beholding him in crossing o'er the plains,
Imagined, Apollo from above
Put on this shape, to win some maiden's love.

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Michael Drayton

How Many Paltry Foolish Painted Things

How many paltry foolish painted things,
That now in coaches trouble every street,
Shall be forgotten, whom no poet sings,
Ere they be well wrapped in their winding-sheet!
Where I to thee eternity shall give,
When nothing else remaineth of these days,
And queens hereafter shall be glad to live
Upon the alms of thy superfluous praise.
Virgins and matrons, reading these my rhymes,
Shall be so much delighted with thy story
That they shall grieve they lived not in these times,
To have seen thee, their sex's only glory:
So shalt thou fly above the vulgar throng,
Still to survive in my immortal song.

Michael Drayton

Idea Li: Calling To Mind Since First My Love Begun

Calling to mind since first my love begun,
Th' incertain times oft varying in their course,
How things still unexpectedly have run,
As t' please the fates by their resistless force:
Lastly, mine eyes amazedly have seen
Essex' great fall, Tyrone his peace to gain,
The quiet end of that long-living Queen,
This King's fair entrance, and our peace with Spain,
We and the Dutch at length ourselves to sever:
Thus the world doth and evermore shall reel.
Yet to my goddess am I constant ever,
Howe'er blind fortune turn her giddy wheel:
Though heaven and earth prove both to me untrue,
Yet am I still inviolate to you.

Michael Drayton

Idea Liii: To The River Ancor

Clear Ancor, on whose silver-sanded shore
My soul-shrin'd saint, my fair Idea lies,
O blessed brook, whose milk-white swans adore
Thy crystal stream, refined by her eyes,
Where sweet myrrh-breathing Zephyr in the spring
Gently distills his nectar-dropping showers,
Where nightingales in Arden sit and sing
Amongst the dainty dew-impearled flowers;
Say thus, fair brook, when thou shalt see thy queen:
Lo, here thy shepherd spent his wand'ring years,
And in these shades, dear nymph, he oft hath been,
And here to thee he sacrific'd his tears.
Fair Arden, thou my Tempe art alone,
And thou, sweet Ancor, art my Helicon.

Michael Drayton

Idea Xxxvii: Dear, Why Should You Command Me To My Rest

Dear, why should you command me to my rest
When now the night doth summon all to sleep?
Methinks this time becometh lovers best;
Night was ordain'd together friends to keep.
How happy are all other living things
Which, though the day disjoin by sev'ral flight,
The quiet ev'ning yet together brings,
And each returns unto his love at night!
O thou that art so courteous else to all,
Why should'st thou, Night, abuse me only thus,
That ev'ry creature to his kind dost call,
And yet 'tis thou dost only sever us?
Well could I wish it would be ever day,
If when night comes you bid me go away.

Michael Drayton

Love's Farewell

SINCE there's no help, come let us kiss and part,—
Nay I have done, you get no more of me;
And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free;
Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,
When his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,
When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And innocence is closing up his eyes,
—Now if thou would'st, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou might'st him yet discover!

Michael Drayton

Noah's Flood (Excerpts)

Eternal and all-working God, which wast
Before the world, whose frame by Thee was cast,
And beautified with beamful lamps above,
By thy great wisdom set how they should move
To guide the seasons, equally to all,
Which come and go as they do rise and fall.

My mighty Maker, O do thou infuse
Such life and spirit into my labouring Muse,
That I may sing (what but from Noah thou hid'st)
The greatest thing that ever yet thou didst
Since the creation; that the world may see
The Muse is heavenly and deriv'd from Thee.

O let Thy glorious Angel which since kept
That gorgeous Eden, where once Adam slept,
When tempting Eve was taken from his side,
Let him great God not only be my guide,
But with his fiery faucheon still be nie,
To keep affliction far from me, that I
With a free soul thy wondrous works may show,
Then like that deluge shall my numbers flow,
Telling the state wherein the earth then stood,
The giant race, the universal flood.

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Michael Drayton

Nymphidia, The Court Of Fairy (Excerpts)

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But let us leave Queen Mab a while,
Through many a gate, o'er many a stile,
That now had gotten by this wile,
Her dear Pigwigen kissing;
And tell how Oberon doth fare,
Who grew as mad as any hare,
When he had sought each place with care,
And found his queen was missing.
By grisly Pluto he doth swear,
He rent his clothes, and tore his hair,
And as he runneth here and there,
An acorn-cup he greeteth;
Which soon he taketh by the stalk,
About his head he lets it walk,
Nor doth he any creature balk,
But lays on all he meeteth.
The Tuscan poet doth advance
The frantic Paladine of France,
And those more ancient do enhance
Alcides in his fury,
And others Ajax Telamon:
But to this time there hath been none
So bedlam as our Oberon,
Of which I dare assure you.
And first encount'ring with a wasp,
He in his arms the fly doth clasp,
As tho' his breath he forth would grasp,
Him for Pigwigen taking:
'Where is my wife, thou rogue?' quoth he,
'Pigwigen, she is come to thee,
Restore her, or thou di'st by me.'
Whereat the poor wasp quaking,
Cries, "Oberon, great Fairy King,
Content thee, I am no such thing;
I am a wasp, behold my sting!"
At which the fairy started;
When soon away the wasp doth go,
Poor wretch was never frightened so,

He thought his wings were much too slow,
O'erjoy'd they so were parted.
He next upon a glow-worm light,
(You must suppose it now was night)
Which, for her hinder part was bright,
He took to be a devil,
And furiously doth her assail
For carrying fire in her tail;
He thrash'd her rough coat with his flail,
The mad king fear'd no evil.
"Oh!" quoth the glow-worm "hold thy hand,
Thou puissant King of Fairy-land,
Thy mighty strokes who may withstand?
Hold, or of life despair I."
Together then herself doth roll,
And tumbling down into a hole,
She seem'd as black as any coal,
Which vext away the fairy.
From thence he ran into a hive,
Amongst the bees he letteth drive,
And down their combs begins to rive,
All likely to have spoiled:
Which with their wax his face besmear'd,
And with their honey daub'd his beard;
It would have made a man afear'd,
To see how he was moiled.
A new adventure him betides:
He met an ant, which he bestrides,
And post thereon away he rides,
Which with his haste doth stumble,
And came full over on her snout,
Her heels so threw the dirt about,
For she by no means could get out,
But over him doth tumble.
And being in this piteous case,
And all beslurried head and face,
On runs he in this wildgoose chase;
As here and there he rambles,
Half-blind, against a mole-hill hit,
And for a mountain taking it,
For all he was out of his wit,
Yet to the top he scrambles.

And being gotten to the top,
Yet there himself he could not stop,
But down on th' other side doth chop,
 And to the foot came rumbling:
So that the grubs therein that bred,
Hearing such turmoil overhead,
Thought surely they had all been dead,
 So fearful was the jumbling.
And falling down into a lake,
Which him up to the neck doth take,
His fury it doth somewhat slake,
 He calleth for a ferry:
Where you may some recovery note,
What was his club he made his boat,
And in his oaken cup doth float,
 As safe as in a wherry.
Men talk of the adventures strange
Of Don Quishott, and of their change,
Through which he armed oft did range,
 Of Sancha Pancha's travel:
But should a man tell every thing,
Done by this frantic fairy king,
And them in lofty numbers sing,
 It well his wits might gravel.

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Michael Drayton

Ode To The Cambro-Britons And Their Harp, His Ballad Of Agi

Fair stood the wind for France,
When we our sails advance;
Nor now to prove our chance
Longer will tarry;
But putting to the main,
At Caux, the mouth of Seine,
With all his martial train
Landed King Harry.

And taking many a fort,
Furnish'd in warlike sort,
Marcheth towards Agincourt
In happy hour;
Skirmishing day by day
With those that stopp'd his way,
Where the French gen'ral lay
With all his power.

Which, in his height of pride,
King Henry to deride,
His ransom to provide
To the King sending;
Which he neglects the while,
As from a nation vile
Yet with an angry smile
Their fall portending.

And turning to his men
Quoth our brave Henry then:
"Though they to one be ten
Be not amazed.
Yet have we well begun:
Battles so bravely won
Have ever to the sun
By Fame been raised!

"And for myself," quoth he,

"This my full rest shall be:
England ne'er mourn for me,
Nor more esteem me;
Victor I will remain,
Or on this earth lie slain;
Never shall she sustain
Loss to redeem me!

"Poitiers and Cressy tell
When most their pride did swell
Under our swords they fell;
No less our skill is
Than when our grandsire great,
Claiming the regal seat,
By many a warlike feat
Lopp'd the French lilies."

The Duke of York so dread
The eager vaward led;
With the main Henry sped
Amongst his henchmen:
Excester had the rear,
A braver man not there
O Lord, how hot they were
On the false Frenchmen!

They now to fight are gone;
Armour on armour shone;
Drum now to drum did groan:
To hear, was wonder;
That, with cries they make,
The very earth did shake;
Trumpet to trumpet spake,
Thunder to thunder.

Well it thine age became,
O noble Erpingham,
Which didst the signal aim
To our hid forces;
When, from a meadow by,
Like a storm suddenly,
The English archery

Stuck the French horses

With Spanish yew so strong,
Arrows a cloth-yard long,
That like to serpents stung,
 Piercing the weather.
None from his fellow starts,
But playing manly parts,
And like true English hearts
 Stuck close together.

When down their bows they threw,
And forth their bilboes drew,
And on the French they flew,
 Not one was tardy;
Arms were from shoulders sent,
Scalps to the teeth were rent,
Down the French peasants went:
 Our men were hardy.

This while our noble King,
His broad sword brandishing,
Down the French host did ding,
 As to o'erwhelm it.
And many a deep wound lent,
His arms with blood besprent,
And many a cruel dent
 Bruised his helmet.

Gloster, that duke so good,
Next of the royal blood,
For famous England stood
 With his brave brother.
Clarence, in steel so bright,
Though but a maiden knight,
Yet in that furious fight
 Scarce such another!

Warwick in blood did wade,
Oxford the foe invade,
And cruel slaughter made,
 Still as they ran up.

Suffolk his axe did ply;
Beaumont and Willoughby
Bare them right doughtily;
 Ferrers and Fanhope.

Upon Saint Crispin's Day
Fought was this noble fray,
Which fame did not delay
 To England to carry.
O when shall English men
With such acts fill a pen,
Or England breed again
 Such a King Harry?

Michael Drayton

Roc

All feathered things yet ever known to men,
From the huge Rucke, unto the little Wren;
From Forrest, Fields, from Rivers and from Pons,
All that have webs, or cloven-footed ones;
To the Grand Arke, together friendly came,
Whose several species were too long to name

Michael Drayton

 And the Peak mountains;
Nor would she none should dream
 Where she abideth,
Humble as is the stream
 Which by her slideth.
 On thy bank...

Yet my pour rustic Muse
 Nothing can move her,
Nor the means I can use,
 Though her true lover:
Many a long winter's night
 Have I waked for her,
Yet this my piteous plight
 Nothing can stir her.
All thy sands, silver Trent,
 Down to the Humber,
The sighs that I have spent
 Never can number.
 On thy bank,
 In a rank,
 Let thy swans sing her,
 And with their music
 Along let them bring her.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet I: Like An Advent'rous Seafarer

Like an advent'rous seafarer am I,
Who hath some long and dang'rous voyage been,
And, call'd to tell of his discovery,
How far he sail'd, what countries he had seen;
Proceeding from the port whence he put forth,
Shows by his compass how his course he steer'd,
When East, when West, when South, and when by North,
As how the Pole to every place was rear'd,
What capes he doubled, of what Continent,
The gulfs and straits that strangely he had past,
Where most becalm'd, where with foul weather spent,
And on what rocks in peril to be cast:
Thus in my love, Time calls me to relate
My tedious travels and oft-varying fate.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet II: My Heart Was Slain

My heart was slain, and none but you and I;
Who should I think the murder should commit,
Since but yourself there was no creature by,
But only I, guiltless of murth'ring it?
It slew itself; the verdict on the view
Doth quit the dead, and me not accessory.
Well, well, I fear it will be prov'd by you,
The evidence so great a proof doth carry.
But O, see, see, we need inquire no further:
Upon your lips the scarlet drops are found,
And in your eye the boy that did the murder;
Your cheeks yet pale, since first he gave the wound.
By this I see, however things be past,
Yet Heaven will still have murder out at last.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Iii: Taking My Pen

Taking my pen, with words to cast my woe,
Duly to count the sum of all my cares,
I find my griefs innumerable grow,
The reckonings rise to millions of despairs;
And thus dividing of my fatal hours,
The payments of my love I read and cross,
Subtracting, set my sweets unto my sour,
My joy's arrearage leads me to my loss;
And thus mine eye's a debtor to thine eye,
Which by extortion gaineth all their looks;
My heart hath paid such grievous usury
That all their wealth lies in thy beauty's books,
And all is thine which hath been due to me,
And I a bankrupt, quite undone by thee.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Iv: Bright Star Of Beauty

Bright star of beauty, on whose eyelids sit
A thousand nymph-like and enamour'd Graces,
The Goddesses of Memory and Wit,
Which there in order take their several places;
In whose dear bosom sweet delicious Love
Lays down his quiver, which he once did bear,
Since he that blessed Paradise did prove,
And leaves his mother's lap to sport him there.
Let others strive to entertain with words;
My soul is of a braver metal made;
I hold that vile which vulgar wit affords;
In me's that faith which Time cannot invade.
Let what I praise be still made good by you;
Be you most worthy, whilst I am most true.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet IX: As Other Men

As other men, so I myself do muse
Why in this sort I wrest invention so,
And why these giddy metaphors I use,
Leaving the path the greater part do go.
I will resolve you: I am lunatic,
And ever this in madmen you shall find,
What they last thought of when the brain grew sick
In most distraction they keep that in mind.
Thus talking idly in this bedlam fit,
Reason and I, you must conceive, are twain;
"Tis nine years now since first I lost my wit;
Bear with me then, though troubled be my brain.
With diet and correction men distraught
(Not too far past) may to their wits be brought.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet L: As In Some Countries

As in some countries far remote from hence
The wretched creature destined to die,
Having the judgement due to his offence,
By surgeons begg'd, their art on him to try,
Which, on the living, work without remorse,
First make incision on each mastering vein,
Then staunch the bleeding, then trasnpierce the corse,
And with their balms recure the wounds again,
Then poison and with physic him restore;
Not that they fear the hopeless man to kill,
But their experience to increase the more;
Ev'n so my mistress works upon my ill,
By curing me and killing me each hour,
Only to show her beauty's sovereign power.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Li: Calling To Mind

Calling to mind, since first my love begun,
Th'uncertain times oft varying in their course,
How things still unexpectedly have run,
As it please the Fates, by their resistless force.
Lastly mine eyes amazedly have seen
Essex' great fall, Tyrone his peace to gain;
The quiet end of that long-living Queen;
This King's fair entrance; and our peace with Spain,
We and the Dutch at length ourselves to sever.
Thus the world doth and evermore shall reel;
Yet to my Goddess am I constant ever,
Howe'er blind Fortune turn her giddy wheel.
Though Heav'n and Earth prove both to me untrue,
Yet am I still inviolate to you.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Lii: What? Dost Thou Mean

What? Dost thou mean to cheat me of my heart?
To take all mine and give me none again?
Or have thine eyes such magic or that art
That what they get they ever do retain?
Play not the tyrant, but take some remorse;
Rebate thy spleen, if but for pity's sake;
Or, cruel, if thou canst not, let us 'scourse,
And, for one piece of thine, my whole heart take.
But what of pity do I speak to thee,
Whose breast is proof against complaint or prayer?
Or can I think what my reward shall be
From that proud beauty, which was my betrayer?
What talk I of a heart, when thou hast none?
Or, if thou hast, it is a flinty one.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Liii: Clear Anker

Another to the River Anker

Clear Anker, on whose silver-sanded shore
My soul-shrin'd saint, my fair Idea, lies,
O blessed brook, whose milk-white swans adore
The crystal stream refined by her eyes,
Where sweet myrrh-breathing Zephyr in the Spring
Gently distils his nectar-dropping showers,
Where nightingales in Arden sit and sing
Among the dainty dew-impearled flowers;
Say thus, fair Brook, when thou shalt see thy Queen,
"Lo, here thy shepherd spent his wand'ring years,
And in these shades, dear nymph, he oft hath been,
And here to thee he sacrific'd his tears."
Fair Arden, thou my Tempe art alone,
And thou, sweet Anker, art my Helicon.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Liv: Yet Read At Last

Yet read at last the story of my woe,
The dreary abstracts of my endless cares,
With my life's sorrow interlined so,
Smok'd with my sighs and blotted with my tears,
The sad memorials of my miseries,
Penn'd in the grief of mine afflicted ghost,
My life's complaint in doleful elegies,
With so pure love as Time could never boast.
Receive the incense which I offer here,
By my strong faith ascending to thy fame,
My zeal, my hope, my vows, my praise, my prayer,
My soul's oblation to thy sacred name,
Which name my Muse to highest heav'ns shall raise
By chaste desire, true love, and virtuous praise.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Lix: As Love And I

As Love and I, late harbor'd in one inn,
With proverbs thus each other entertain:
"In Love there is no lack," thus I begin;
"Fair words make fools," replieth he again;
"Who spares to speak doth spare to speed," quoth I;
"As well," saith he, "too forward as too slow";
"Fortune assists the boldest," I reply;
"A hasty man," quoth he, "ne'er wanted woe";
"Labor is light where Love," quoth I, "doth pay";
Saith he, "Light burden's heavy, if far borne";
Quoth I, "The main lost, cast the bye away";
"You have spun a fair thread," he replies in scorn.
And having thus awhile each other thwarted,
Fools as we met, so fools again we parted.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Lv: My Fair, If Thou Wilt

My Fair, if thou wilt register my love,
A world of volumes shall thereof arise;
Preserve my tears, and thou thyself shalt prove
A second flood, down-raining from mine eyes.
Note by my sighs, and thine eyes shall behold
The sunbeams smother'd with immortal smoke;
And if by thee my prayers may be enroll'd,
They Heav'n and Earth to pity shall provoke.
Look thou into my breast, and thou shalt see
Chaste holy vows for my soul's sacrifice,
That soul, sweet Maid, which so hath honor'd thee,
Erecting trophies to thy sacred eyes,
Those eyes to my heart shining ever bright,
When darkness hath obscur'd each other light.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Lvi: When Like An Eaglet

When like an eaglet I first found my Love,
For that the virtue I thereof would know,
Upon the nest I set it forth to prove
If it were of that kingly kind or no;
But it no sooner say my Sun appear,
But on her rays with open eyes it stood,
To show that I had hatch'd it for the air
And rightly came from that brave mounting brood;
And, when the plumes were summ'd with sweet desire,
To prove the pinions it ascends the skies;
Do what I could, it needsly would aspire
To my Soul's Sun, those two celestial eyes.
Thus from my breast, where it was bred alone,
It after thee is, like an eaglet, flown.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Lvii: You Best Discern'D

You best discern'd of my mind's inward eyes,
And yet your graces outwardly divine,
Whose dear remembrance in my bosom lies,
Too rich a relic for so poor a shrine;
You, in whom Nature chose herself to view
When she her own perfection would admire,
Bestowing all her excellence on you,
At whose pure eyes Love lights his hallow'd fire;
E'en as a man that in some trance hath seen
More than his won'ring utt'rance can unfold,
That, rapt in spirit, in better worlds hath been,
So must your praise distractedly be told,
Most of all short when I would show you most,
In your perfections so much am I lost.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Lviii: In Former Times

In former times such as had store of coin,
In wars at home, or when for conquests bound,
For fear that some their treasure should purloin,
Gave it to keep to spirits within the ground,
And to attend it them as strongly tied
Till they return'd; home when they never came,
Such as by art to get the same have tried
From the strong Spirit by no means force the same;
Nearer men come, that further flies away,
Striving to hold it strongly in the deep.
E'en as this Spirit, so you alone do play
With those rich beauties Heav'n gives you to keep;
Pity, so left to the coldness of your blood,
Not to avail you, nor do the others good.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Lx: Define My Weal

Define my weal, and tell the joys of Heav'n;
Express my woes, and show the pains of Hell;
Declare what fate unlucky stars have giv'n,
And ask a world upon my life to dwell;
Make known the faith that Fortune could not move;
Compare my worth with others' base desert;
Let virtue be the touchstone of my love,
So may the heav'ns read wonders in my heart;
Behold the clouds which have eclips'd my sun,
And view the crosses which my course do let;
Tell me if ever since the world begun
So fair a rising had so foul a set,
And see if Time (if he would strive to prove)
Can show a second to so pure a love.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Lxi: Since There's No Help

Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part,
Nay, I have done, you get no more of me,
And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free.
Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,
When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And Innocence is closing up his eyes,
Now, if thou wouldst, when all have giv'n him over,
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Lxii: When First I Ended

When first I ended, then I first began,
The more I travell'd, further from my rest,
Where most I lost, there most of all I wan,
Pined with hunger rising from a feast.
Methinks I fly, yet want I legs to go,
Wise in conceit, in act a very sot,
Ravish'd with joy amid a hell of woe;
What most I seem, that surest am I not.
I build my hopes a world above the sky,
Yet with the mole I creep into the earth;
In plenty I am starv'd with penury,
And yet I surfeit in the greatest dearth.
I have, I want, despair and yet desire,
Burn'd in a sea of ice and drown'd amidst a fire.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Lxiii: Truce, Gentle Love

Truce, gentle Love, a parley now I crave;
Methinks 'tis long since first these wars begun;
Nor thou nor I the better yet can have;
Bad is the match where neither party won.
I offer free conditions of fair peace,
My heart for hostage that it shall remain;
Discharge our forces, here let malice cease,
So for my pledge thou give me pledge again.
Or if no thing but death will serve thy turn,
Still thirsting for subversion of my state,
Do what thou canst, rase, massacre, and burn;
Let the world see the utmost of thy hate;
I send defiance, since, if overthrown,
Thou vanquishing, the conquest is my own.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet V: Nothing But No

Nothing but "No," and "Aye," and "Aye," and "No"?
How falls it out so strangely you reply?
I tell ye, Fair, I'll not be answer'd so,
With this affirming "No," denying "Aye."
I say, "I love," you slightly answer "Aye";
I say, "You love," you pule me out a "No";
I say, "I die," you echo me an "Aye";
"Save me," I cry, you sigh me out a "No";
Must woe and I have nought but "No" and "Aye"?
No I am I, if I no more can have;
Answer no more, with silence make reply,
And let me take myself what I do crave.
Let "No" and "Aye" with I and you be so;
Then answer "No," and "Aye," and "Aye" and "No."

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Vi: How Many Paltry Things

How many paltry, foolish, painted things,
That now is coaches trouble every street,
Shall be forgotten, whom no Poet sings,
Ere they be well wrapt in their winding-sheet.
Where I to thee eternity shall give,
When nothing else remaineth of these days,
And Queens hereafter shall be glad to live
Upon the alms of thy superfluous praise.
Virgins and matrons, reading these my rhymes,
Shall be so much delighted with thy story
That they shall grieve they liv'd not in these times,
To have seen thee, their sex's only glory.
So shalt thou fly above the vulgar throng,
Still to survive in my immortal song.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet VII: Love In A Humour

Love in a humor play'd the prodigal
And bade my Senses to a solemn feast;
Yet, more to grace the company withal,
Invites my Heart to be the chiefest guest.
No other drink would serve this glutton's turn
But precious tears distilling from mine eyne,
Which with my sighs this epicure doth burn,
Quaffing carouses in this costly wine;
Where, in his cups o'ercome with foul excess,
Straightways he plays a swaggering ruffian's part,
And at the banquet in his drunkenness
Slew his dear friend, my kind and truest Heart.
A gentle warning, friends, thus may you see
What 'tis to keep a drunkard company.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet VIII: There's Nothing Grieves Me

There's nothing grieves me, but that Age should haste,
That in my days I may not see thee old,
That where those two clear sparkling eyes are plac'd
Only two loop-holes then I might behold;
That lovely, arched, ivory, polish'd brow
Defac'd with wrinkles that I might but see;
Thy dainty hair, so curl'd and crisped now,
Like grizzled moss upon some aged tree;
Thy cheek, now flush with roses, sunk and lean;
Thy lips with age as any wafer thin;
Thy pearly teeth out of thy head so clean
That, when thou feed'st, thy nose shall touch thy chin.
These lines that now thou scorn'st, which should delight thee,
Then would I make thee read but to despite thee.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet X: To Nothing Fitter

To nothing fitter can I thee compare
Than to the son of some rich penny-father,
Who, having now brought on his end with care,
Leaves to his son all he had heap'd together;
This new rich novice, lavish of his chest,
To one man gives, doth on another spend,
Then here he riots, yet among the rest
Haps to lend some to one true honest friend.
Thy gifts thou in obscurity dost waste,
False friends thy kindness, born but to deceive thee,
Thy love that is on the unworthy plac'd,
Time hath thy beauty, which with age will leave thee;
Only that little which to me was lent
I give thee back, when all the rest is spent.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xi: You Not Alone

You not alone, when you are still alone,
O God, from you that I could private be.
Since you one were, I never since was one;
Since you in me, my self since out of me,
Transported from my self into your being;
Though either distant, present yet to either,
Senseless with too much joy, each other seeing,
And only absent when we are together.
Give me my self and take your self again,
Devise some means but how I may forsake you;
So much is mine that doth with you remain,
That, taking what is mine, with me I take you;
You do bewitch me; O, that I could fly
From my self you, or from your own self I.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xii: That Learned Father

To the Soul

That learned Father, who so firmly proves
The Soul of man immortal and divine,
And doth the several offices define:
Anima - Gives her that name, as she the Body moves;
Amor - Then is she Love, embracing charity;
Animus - Moving a Will in us, it is the Mind
Mens - Retaining knowledge, still the same in kind;
Memoria - As intellectual, it is Memory;
Ratio - In judging, Reason only is her name;
Sensus - In speedy apprehension, it is Sense;
Conscientia - In right or wrong, they call her Conscience;
Spiritus - The Spirit, when it to Godward doth inflame.
These of the Soul the several functions be,
Which my Heart, lighten'd by thy love, doth see.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xiii: Letters And Lines

To the Shadow

Letters and lines we see are soon defac'd,
Metals do waste and fret with canker's rust,
The diamond shall once consume to dust,
And freshest colors with foul stains disgrac'd;
Paper and ink can paint but naked words,
To write with blood of force offends the sight;
And if with tears I find them all too light,
And sighs and signs a silly hope affotds,
O sweetest shadow, how thou serv'st my turn,
Which still shalt be, as long as there is sun,
Nor, whilst the world is, never shalt be done,
Whilst moon shall shine or any fire shall burn;
That everything whence shadow doth proceed
May in my shadow my love's story read.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xiv: If He From Heav'N

If he from Heav'n that filch'd that living fire
Condemn'd by Jove to endless torment be,
I greatly marvel how you still go free
That far beyond Prometheus did aspire.
The fire he stole, although of heav'nly kind,
Which from above he craftily did take,
Of lifeless clods us living men to make,
He did bestow in temper of the mind;
But you broke into Heav'n's immortal store,
Where Virtue, Honor, Wit, and Beauty lay,
Which taking thence you have escap'd away,
Yet stand as free as e'er you did before;
Yet old Prometheus punish'd for his rape.
Thus poor thieves suffer when the greater 'scape.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xix: You Cannot Love

To Humor

You cannot love, my pretty heart, and why?
There was a time you told me that you would;
But now again you will the same deny,
If it might please you, would to God you could.
What, will you hate? Nay, that you will not, neither.
Nor love nor hate, how then? What will you do?
What, will you keep a mean then betwixt either,
Or will you love me and yet hate me, too?
Yet serves this not. What next? What other shift?
You will, and will not; what a coil is here.
I see your craft, now I perceive your drift,
And all this while I was mistaken there;
Your love and hate is this, I now do prove you:
You love in hate, by hate to make me love you.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet XI: My Heart The Anvil

My heart the anvil where my thoughts do beat;
My words the hammers fashioning my desire;
My breast the forge including all the heat;
Love is the fuel which maintains the fire;
My sighs the bellows which the flame increaseth,
Filling mine ears with noise and nightly groaning;
Toiling with pain, my labor never ceaseth,
In grievous passions my woes still bemoaning;
My eyes with tears against the fire striving,
Whose scorching gleed my heart to cinders turneth,
But with these drops the flame again reviving,
Still more and more it to my torment turneth.
With Sisyphus thus do I roll the stone,
And turn the wheel with damned Ixion.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xli: Why Do I Speak Of Joy

Love's Lunacy

Why do I speak of joy, or write of love,
When my heart is the very den of horror,
And in my soul the pains of Hell I prove,
With all his torments and infernal terror?
What should I say? What yet remains to do?
My brain is dry with weeping all too long,
My sighs be spent in uttering my woe,
And I want words wherewith to tell my wrong;
But, still distracted in Love's lunacy,
And, bedlam-like, thus raging in my grief,
Now rail upon her hair, then on her eye,
Now call her Goddess, then I call her thief,
Now I deny her, then I do confess her,
Now do I curse her, then again I bless her.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xlii: Some Men There Be

Some men there be which like my method well
And much commend the strangeness of my vein;
Some say I have a passing pleasing strain;
Some say that in my humor I excel;
Some, who not kindly relish my conceit,
They say, as poets do, I use to feign,
And in bare words paint out my passion's pain.
Thus sundry men their sundry words repeat;
I pass not, I, how men affected be,
Nor who commends or discommends my verse;
It pleaseth me, if I my woes rehearse,
And in my lines if she my love may see.
Only my comfort still consists in this,
Writing her praise I cannot write amiss.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xliii: Why Should Your Fair Eyes

Why should your fair eyes with such sovereign grace
Disperse their rays on every vulgar spirit,
Whilst I in darkness, in the self-same place,
Get not one glance to recompense my merit?
So doth the plowman gaze the wand'ring star,
And only rest contented with the light,
That never learn'd what constellations are
Beyond the bent of his unknowing sight.
O why should Beauty, custom to obey,
To their gross sense apply herself so ill?
Would God I were as ignorant as they,
When I am made unhappy by my skill,
Only compell'd on this poor good to boast:
Heav'ns are not kind to them that know them most.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xliv: Whilst Thus My Pen

Whilst thus my pen strives to eternize thee,
Age rules my lines with wrinkles in my face,
Where in the map of all my misery
Is modell'd out the world of my disgrace.
Whilst, in despite of tyrannizing times,
Medea-like, I make thee young again,
Proudly thou scorn'st my world-outwearing rhymes
And murderest virtue with thy coy disdain.
And though in youth my youth untimely perish,
To keep thee from oblivion and the grave
Ensuing ages yet my rhymes shall cherish,
When I entomb'd, my better part shall save;
And though this earthly body fade and die,
My name shall mount upon eternity.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xlix: Thou Leaden Brain

Thou leaden brain, which censur'st what I write,
And say'st my lines be dull and do not move,
I marvel not thou feel'st not my delight,
Which never felt'st my fiery touch of love.
But thou, whose pen hath like a pack-horse serv'd,
Whose stomach unto gall hath turn'd thy food,
Whose senses, like poor prisoners, hunger-starv'd,
Whose grief hath parch'd thy body, dried thy blood,
Thou which hast scorned life and hated death,
And in a moment mad, sober, glad, and sorry,
Thou which hast bann'd thy thoughts and curs'd thy breath
With thousand plagues, more than in Purgatory,
Thou thus whose spirit Love in his fire refines,
Come thou, and read, admire, applaud my lines.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xlv: Muses, Which Sadly Sit

Muses, which sadly sit about my chair,
Drown'd in the tears extorted by my lines,
With heavy sighs whilst thus I break the air,
Painting my passions in these sad designs,
Since she disdains to bless my happy verse,
The strong-built trophies to her living fame,
Ever henceforth my bosom be your hearse,
Wherein the world shall now entomb her name.
Enclose my music, you poor senseless walls,
Since she is deaf and will not hear my moans,
Soften yourselves with every tear that falls,
Whilst I, like Orpheus, sing to trees and stones,
Which with my plaint seem yet with pity mov'd,
Kinder than she whom I so long have lov'd.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet XLvi: Plain-Path'D Experience

Plain-path'd Experience, th'unlearned's guide,
Her simple followers evidently shows
Sometimes what Schoolmen scarcely can decide,
Nor yet wise Reason absolutely knows.
In making trial of a murther wrought,
If the vile actors of the heinous deed
Near the dead body happily be brought,
Oft it hath been prov'd the breathless corse will bleed.
She's coming near, that my poor heart hath slain,
Long since departed, to the world no more,
The ancient wounds no longer can contain,
But fall to bleeding as they did before.
But what of this? Should she to death be led,
It furthers justice, but helps not the dead.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xlvii: In Pride Of Wit

In pride of wit when high desire of fame
Gave life and courage to my laboring pen,
And first the sound and virtue of my name
Won grace and credit in the ears of men,
With those the thronged theatres that press
I in the circuit for the laurel strove,
Where the full praise, I freely must confess,
In heat of blood a modest mind might move,
With shouts and claps at every little pause
When the proud round on every side hath rung,
Sadly I sit, unmov'd with the applause,
As though to me it nothing did belong.
No public glory vainly I pursue;
All that I seek is to eternize you.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xlviii: Cupid, I Hate Thee

Cupid, I hate thee, which I'd have thee know;
A naked starveling ever may'st thou be.
Poor rogue, go pawn thy fascia and thy bow
For some few rags wherewith to cover thee.
Or, if thou'lt not, thy archery forbear,
To some base rustic do thyself prefer,
And when corn's sown or grown into the ear,
Practise thy quiver and turn crow-keeper.
Or, being blind, as fittest for the trade,
Go hire thyself some bungling harper's boy;
They that are blind are often minstrels made;
So may'st thou live, to thy fair mother's joy,
That whilst with Mars she holdeth her old way,
Thou, her blind son, may'st sit by them and play.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xv: Since To Obtain Thee

His Remedy for Love

Since to obtain thee nothing will be stead,
I have a med'cine that shall cure my love,
The powder of her heart dried, when she is dead,
That gold nor honor ne'er had power to move,
Mixt with her tears, that ne'er her true-love crost
Nor at fifteen ne'er long'd to be a bride,
Boil'd with her sighs in giving up the ghost,
That for her late deceased husband died;
Into the same then let a woman breathe,
That, being chid, did never word reply,
With one thrice-married's prayers, that did bequeath
A legacy to stale virginity.
If this receipt have not the power to win me,
Little I'll say, but think the Devil's in me.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xvi: Mongst All The Creatures

An Allusion to the Phoenix

'Mongst all the creatures in this spacious round
Of the birds' kind, the Phoenix is alone,
Which best by you of living things is known;
None like to that, none like to you is found.
Your beauty is the hot and splend'rous sun,
The precious spices be your chaste desire,
Which being kindled by that heav'nly fire,
Your life so like the Phoenix's begun;
Yourself thus burned in that sacred flame,
With so rare sweetness all the heav'ns perfuming,
Again increasing as you are consuming,
Only by dying born the very same;
And, wing'd by fame, you to the stars ascend,
So you of time shall live beyond the end.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet XVII: Stay, Speedy Time

To Time

Stay, speedy Time, behold, before thou pass,
From age to age what thou hast sought to see,
One in whom all the excellencies be,
In whom Heav'n looks itself as in a glass.
Time, look thyself in this tralucent glass,
And thy youth past in this pure mirror see,
As the world's beauty in his infancy,
What is was then, and thou before it was.
Pass on, and to posterity tell this,
Yet see thou tell but truly what hath been;
Say to our nephews that thou once hast seen
In perfect human shape all heav'nly bliss,
And bid them mourn, nay more, despair with thee,
That she is gone, her like again to see.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet XVIII: To This Our World

To the Celestial Numbers

To this our world, to Learning, and to Heav'n,
Three Nines there are, to every one a Nine,
One number of the Earth, the other both divine;
One woman now makes three odd numbers ev'n.
Nine Orders first of Angels be in Heav'n,
Nine Muses do with Learning still frequent:
These with the Gods are ever resident;
Nine Worthy Women to the world were giv'n.
My Worthy One to these Nine Worthies addeth,
And my fair Muse one Muse unto the Nine,
And my good Angel, in my soul divine,
With one more Order these Nine Orders gladdeth;
My Muse, my Worthy, and my Angel then
Makes every One of these three Nines a Ten.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xx: An Evil Spirit

An evil spirit, your beauty haunts me still,
Wherewith, alas, I have been long possest,
Which ceaseth not to tempt me to each ill,
Nor gives me once but one poor minute's rest;
In me it speaks, whether I sleep or wake,
And when by means to drive it out I try,
With greater torments then it me doth take,
And tortures me in most extremity;
Before my face it lays down my despairs,
And hastes me on unto a sudden death,
Now tempting me to drown myself in tears,
And then in sighing to give up my breath.
Thus am I still provok'd to every evil
By this good wicked spirit, sweet angel-devil.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxi: A Witless Galant

A witless gallant a young wench that woo'd
(Yet his dull spirit her not one jot could move),
Entreated me, as e'er I wish'd his good,
To write him but one sonnet to his love;
When I, as fast as e'er my pen could trot,
Pour'd out what first from quick invention came,
Nor never stood one word thereof to blot,
Much like his wit that was to use the same;
But with my verses he his mistress won,
Which doted on the dolt beyond all measure.
But see, for you to Heav'n for phrase I run,
And ransack all Apollo's golden treasure;
Yet by my froth this fool his love obtains,
And I lose you for all my love and pains.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxii: Love, Banish'D Heav'N

Love, banish'd Heav'n, on Earth was held in scorn,
Wand'ring abroad in need and beggary,
And wanting friends, though of a Goddess born,
Yet crav'd the alms of such as passed by.
I, like a man devout and charitable,
Clothed the naked, lodg'd this wand'ring guest,
With sighs and tears still furnishing his table
With what might make the miserable blest.
But this ungrateful, for my good desert,
Entic'd my thoughts against me to conspire,
Who gave consent to steal away my heart,
And set my breast, his lodging, on a fire.
Well, well, my friends, when beggars grow thus bold,
No marvel then though charity grow cold.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxii: With Fools And Children

To Folly

With fools and children, good discretion bears;
Then, honest people, bear with Love and me,
Nor older yet, nor wiser made by years,
Amongst the rest of fools and children be;
Love, still a baby, plays with gauds and toys,
And, like a wanton, sports with every feather,
And idiots still are running after boys,
Then fools and children fitt'st to go together.
He still as young as when he first was born,
No wiser I than when as young as he;
You that behold us, laugh us not to scorn;
Give Nature thanks you are not such as we.
Yet fools and children sometimes tell in play
Some, wise in show, more fools indeed than they.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxiv: I Hear Some Say

I hear some say, "This man is not in love."
"What? Can he love? A likely thing," they say;
"Read but his verse, and it will easily prove."
O judge not rashly, gentle Sir, I pray.
Because I trifle loosely in this sort,
As one that fain his sorrows would beguile,
You now suppose me all this time in sport,
And please yourself with this conceit the while.
Ye shallow censors, sometime see ye not
In greatest perils some men pleasant be?
Where fame by death is only to be got,
They resolute? So stands the case with me.
Where other men in depth of passion cry,
I laugh at Fortune, as in jest to die.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxix: When Conquering Love

To the Senses

When conquering Love did first my Heart assail,
Unto mine aid I summon'd every Sense,
Doubting, if that proud tyrant should prevail,
My Heart should suffer for mine Eyes' offence;
But he with Beauty first corrupted Sight,
My Hearing bribed with her tongue's harmony,
My Taste by her sweet lips drawn with delight,
My Smelling won with her breath's spicery.
But when my Touching came to play his part
(The King of Senses, greater than the rest),
He yields Love up the keys unto my Heart,
And tells the other how they should be blest.
And thus by those of whom I hop'd for aid
To cruel Love my Soul was first betray'd.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxv: O Why Should Nature

O why should Nature niggardly restrain
That foreign nations relish not our tongue?
Else should my lines glide on the waves of Rhene
And crown the Pyrens with my living song.
But, bounded thus, to Scotland get you forth,
Thence take you wing unto the Orcades;
There let my verse get glory in the North,
Making my sighs to thaw the frozen seas;
And let the Bards within that Irish isle,
To whom my Muse with fiery wing shall pass,
Call back the stiff-neck'd rebels from exile,
And mollify the slaught'ring Gallowglass;
And when my flowing numbers they rehearse,
Let wolves and bears be charmed with my verse.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxvi: I Ever Love

To Despair

I ever love where never hope appears,
Yet hope draws on my never-hoping care,
And my life's hope would die, but for despair;
My never-certain joy breeds ever-certain fears;
Uncertain dread gives wings unto my hope,
Yet my hope's wings are laden so with fear
As they cannot ascend to my hope's sphere;
Though fear gives them more than a heav'nly scope,
Yet this large room is bounded with despair;
So my love is still fetter'd with vain hope,
And liberty deprives him of his scope,
And thus am I imprison'd in the air.
Then, sweet despair, awhile hold up thy head,
Or all my hope for sorrow will be dead.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxvii: Is Not Love Here

Is not Love here as 'tis in other climes,
And differeth it, as do the several nations?
Or hath it lost the virtue with the times,
Or in this island altereth with the fashions?
Or have our passions lesser power than theirs,
Who had less art them lively to express?
Is Nature grown less powerful in their heirs,
Or in our fathers did she more transgress?
I am sure my sighs come from a heart as true
As any man's that memory can boast,
And my respects and services to you
Equal with his that loves his mistress most.
Or nature must be partial to my cause,
Or only you do violate her laws.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxviii: To Such As Say

To such as say thy love I overprize,
And do not stick to term my praises folly,
Against these folks, that think themselves so wise,
I thus oppose my Reason's forces wholly,
Though I give more than well affords my state,
In which expense the most suppose me vain,
Which yields them nothing at the easiest rate,
Yet at this price returns me treble gain.
They value not, unskillful how to use,
And I give much, because I gain thereby;
I that thus take, or they that thus refuse,
Whether are these deceived then, or I?
In everything I hold this maxim still:
The circumstance doth make it good or ill.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxx: Those Priests

To the Vestals

Those priests which first the Vestal fire begun,
Which might be borrow'd from no earthly flame,
Devis'd a vessel to receive the Sun,
Being steadfastly opposed to the same;
Where, with sweet wood, laid curiously by art,
On which the Sun might by reflection beat,
Receiving strength from every secret part,
The fuel kindled with celestial heat.
Thy blessed eyes the sun which lights this fire,
Thy holy thoughts, they be the Vestal flame,
The precious odors be my chaste desire,
My breast's the vessel which includes the same.
Thou art my Vesta, thou my Goddess art;
Thy hallow'd temple only is my Heart.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxxi: Methinks I See

To the Critic

Methinks I see some crooked mimic jeer,
And tax my Muse with this fantastic grace,
Turning my papers asks, "What have we here?"
Making withal some filthy antic face.
I fear no censure, nor what thou canst say,
Nor shall my spirit one jot of vigor lose;
Think'st thou my wit shall keep the pack-horse way
That every dudgen low invention goes?
Since sonnets thus in bundles are imprest
And every drudge doth dull our satiate ear,
Think'st thou my love shall in those rags be drest
That every dowdy, every trull, doth wear?
Up to my pitch no common judgement flies;
I scorn all earthly dung-bred scarabies.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxxii: Our Flood's-Queen Thames

Our flood's-queen Thames for ships and swans is crown'd,
And stately Severn for her shore is prais'd,
The crystal Trent for fords and fish renown'd,
And Avon's fame to Albion's cliffs is rais'd;
Carlegion Chester vaunts her holy Dee,
York many wonders of her Ouse can tell,
The Peak her Dove, whose banks so fertile be,
And Kent will say her Medway doth excell;
Cotswold commends her Isis to the Thame,
Our Northern borders boast of Tweed's fair flood,
Our Western parts extol their Wylve's fame,
And the old Lea brags of the Danish blood.
Arden's sweet Anker, let thy glory be,
That fair Idea only lives by thee.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxxiii: Whilst Yet Mine Eyes

To Imagination

Whilst yet mine Eyes do surfeit with delight,
My woeful Heart, imprison'd in my breast,
Wisheth to be transformed to my sight,
That it, like these, by looking might be blest.
But whilst my Eyes thus greedily do gaze,
Finding their objects over-soon depart,
These now the other's happiness do praise,
Wishing themselves that they had been my Heart,
That Eyes were Heart, or that the Heart were Eyes,
As covetous the other's use to have;
But finding Nature their request denies,
This to each other mutually they crave:
That since the one cannot the other be,
That Eyes could think, or that my Heart could see.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxxiv: Marvel Not, Love

To Admiration

Marvel not, Love, though I thy power admire,
Ravish'd a world beyond the farthest thought,
And knowing more than ever hath been taught,
That I am only starv'd in my desire.

Marvel not, Love, though I thy power admire,
Aiming at things exceeding all perfection,
To Wisdom's self to minister correction,
That I am only starv'd in my desire.

Marvel not, Love, though I thy power admire,
Though my conceit I further seem to bend
Than possibly invention can extend,
And yet am only starv'd in my desire.

If thou wilt wonder, here's the wonder, Love:
That this to me doth yet no wonder prove.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxxix: Some, When In Rhyme

Some, when in rhyme they of their loves do tell,
With flames and lightnings their exordiums paint;
Some call on Heav'n, some invoke on Hell,
And Fates and Furies with their woes acquaint.
Elysium is too high a seat for me;
I will not come in Styx or Phlegethon;
The thrice-three Muses but too wanton be;
Like they that lust, I care not; I will none.
Spiteful Erinnys frights me with her looks;
My manhood dares not with foul Ate mell;
I quake to look on Hecate's charming books;
I still fear bugbears in Apollo's cell.
I pass not for Minerva nor Astraea;
Only I call on my divine Idea.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxxv: Some, Misbelieving

To Miracle

Some, misbelieving and profane in love,
When I do speak of miracles by thee,
May say, that thou art flattered by me,
Who only write my skill in verse to prove.
See miracles, ye unbelieving, see
A dumb-born Muse made t'express the mind,
A cripple hand to write, yet lame by kind,
One by thy name, the other touching thee;
Blind were mine eyes, till they were seen of thine,
And mine ears deaf by thy fame healed be,
My vices cur'd by virtues sprung from thee,
My hopes reviv'd, which long in grave had lien,
All unclean thoughts, foul spirits, cast out in me
Only by virtue that proceeds from thee.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxxvi: Thou Purblind Boy

Cupid Conjured

Thou purblind boy, since thou hast been so slack
To wound her heart, whose eyes have wounded me,
And suffer'd her to glory in my wrack,
Thus to my aid I lastly conjure thee:
By hellish Styx, by which the Thund'rer swears,
By thy fair mother's unavoyded power,
By Hecate's names, by Proserpine's sad tears
When she was rapt to the infernal bower,
By thine own loved Psyche, by the fires
Spent on thine alters flaming up to heav'n,
By all true lovers' sighs, vows, and desires,
By all the wounds that ever thou hast giv'n:
I conjure thee by all that I have nam'd
To make her love, or, Cupid, be thou damn'd.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxxvii: Dear, Why Should You

Dear, why should you command me to my rest
When now the night doth summon all to sleep?
Methinks this time becometh lovers best;
Night was ordain'd, together friends to keep;
How happy are all other living things
Which through the day disjoin by sev'ral flight,
The quiet ev'ning yet together brings,
And each returns unto his love at night.
O thou, that art so courteous else to all,
Why shouldst thou, Night, abuse me only thus,
That ev'ry creature to his kind dost call,
And yet 'tis thou dost only sever us?
Well could I wish it would be ever day,
If when night comes you bid me go away.

Michael Drayton

Sonnet Xxxviii: Sitting Alone, Love

Sitting alone, Love bids me go and write;
Reason plucks back, commanding me to stay,
Boasting that she doth still direct the way,
Or else Love were unable to endite.
Love, growing angry, vexed at the spleen
And scorning Reason's maimed argument,
Straight taxeth Reason, wanting to invent,
Where she with Love conversing hath not been.
Reason, reproached with this coy disdain,
Despiteth Love, and laugheth at her folly;
And Love, condemning Reason's reason wholly,
Thought it in weight too light by many'a grain.
Reason, put back, doth out of sight remove,
And Love alone picks reason out of love.

Michael Drayton

The Battle Of Agincourt

Fair stood the wind for France
When we our sails advance,
Nor now to prove our chance
Longer will tarry;
But putting to the main,
At Caux, the mouth of Seine,
With all his martial train,
Landed King Harry.

And taking many a fort,
Furnished in warlike sort,
Marcheth towards Agincourt
In happy hour;
Skirmishing day by day
With those that stopped his way,
Where the French gen'ral lay
With all his power;

Which, in his height of pride,
King Henry to deride,
His ransom to provide
Unto him sending;
Which he neglects the while,
As from a nation vile,
Yet with an angry smile
Their fall portending.

And turning to his men,
Quoth our brave Henry then,
"Though they to one be ten,
Be not amazed.
Yet have we well begun,
Battles so bravely won
Have ever to the sun
By fame been raised.

"And for myself (quoth he),
This my full rest shall be;
England ne'er mourn for me,

Nor more esteem me.
Victor I will remain,
Or on this earth lie slain;
Never shall she sustain
Loss to redeem me.

"Poitiers and Cressy tell,
When most their pride did swell,
Under our swords they fell;
No less our skill is
Than when our grandsire great,
Claiming the regal seat,
By many a warlike feat
Lopped the French lilies."

The Duke of York so dread
The eager vaward led;
With the main Henry sped
Amongst his henchmen.
Exeter had the rear,
A braver man not there;—
O Lord, how hot they were
On the false Frenchmen!

They now to fight are gone,
Armour on armour shone,
Drum now to drum did groan,
To hear was wonder;
That with the cries they make
The very earth did shake;
Trumpet to trumpet spake,
Thunder to thunder.

Well it thine age became,
O noble Erpingham,
Which didst the signal aim
To our hid forces!
When from a meadow by,
Like a storm suddenly,
The English archery
Stuck the French horses.

With Spanish yew so strong,
Arrows a cloth-yard long,
That like to serpents stung,
Piercing the weather;
None from his fellow starts,
But, playing manly parts,
And like true English hearts,
Stuck close together.

When down their bows they threw,
And forth their bilbos drew,
And on the French they flew,
Not one was tardy;
Arms were from shoulders sent,
Scalps to the teeth were rent,
Down the French peasants went—
Our men were hardy!

This while our noble king,
His broadsword brandishing,
Down the French host did ding,
As to o'erwhelm it;
And many a deep wound lent,
His arms with blood besprent,
And many a cruel dent
Bruised his helmet.

Gloucester, that duke so good,
Next of the royal blood,
For famous England stood
With his brave brother;
Clarence, in steel so bright,
Though but a maiden knight,
Yet in that furious fight
Scarce such another.

Warwick in blood did wade,
Oxford the foe invade,
And cruel slaughter made
Still as they ran up;
Suffolk his axe did ply,
Beaumont and Willoughby

Bare them right doughtily,
Ferrers and Fanhope.

Upon Saint Crispin's Day
Fought was this noble fray,
Which fame did not delay
To England to carry.
O, when shall English men
With such acts fill a pen;
Or England breed again
Such a King Harry?

Michael Drayton

To The Reader Of These Sonnets

Into these Loves who but for Passion looks,
At this first sight here let him lay them by
And seek elsewhere, in turning other books,
Which better may his labor satisfy.
No far-fetch'd sigh shall ever wound my breast,
Love from mine eye a tear shall never wring,
Nor in Ah me's my whining sonnets drest;
A libertine, fantastically I sing.
My verse is the true image of my mind,
Ever in motion, still desiring change,
And as thus to variety inclin'd,
So in all humours sportively I range.
My Muse is rightly of the English strain,
That cannot long one fashion entertain.

Michael Drayton

To The Virginian Voyage

YOU brave heroic minds

 Worthy your country's name,

 That honour still pursue;

 Go and subdue!

Whilst loitering hinds

 Lurk here at home with shame.

Britons, you stay too long:

 Quickly aboard bestow you,

 And with a merry gale

 Swell your stretch'd sail

With vows as strong

 As the winds that blow you.

Your course securely steer,

 West and by south forth keep!

 Rocks, lee-shores, nor shoals

 When Eolus scowls

You need not fear;

 So absolute the deep.

And cheerfully at sea

 Success you still entice

 To get the pearl and gold,

 And ours to hold

Virginia,

 Earth's only paradise.

Where nature hath in store

 Fowl, venison, and fish,

 And the fruitfull'st soil

 Without your toil

Three harvests more,

 All greater than your wish.

And the ambitious vine

 Crowns with his purple mass

 The cedar reaching high

 To kiss the sky,

