

A reverend man that grazed his cattle nigh--  
 Sometime a blusterer, that the ruffle knew  
 Of court, of city, and had let go by  
 60 The swiftest hours, observed as they flew--  
 Towards this afflicted fancy fastly drew,  
 And, privileged by age, desires to know  
 In brief the grounds and motives of her woe.

So slides he down upon his grained bat,  
 65 And comely-distant sits he by her side;  
 When he again desires her, being sat,  
 Her grievance with his hearing to divide:  
 If that from him there may be aught applied  
 Which may her suffering ecstasy assuage,  
 70 'Tis promised in the charity of age.

'Father,' she says, 'though in me you behold  
 The injury of many a blasting hour,  
 Let it not tell your judgment I am old;  
 Not age, but sorrow, over me hath power:  
 75 I might as yet have been a spreading flower,  
 Fresh to myself, If I had self-applied  
 Love to myself and to no love beside.

'But, woe is me! too early I attended  
 A youthful suit--it was to gain my grace--  
 80 Of one by nature's outwards so commended,  
 That maidens' eyes stuck over all his face:  
 Love lack'd a dwelling, and made him her place;  
 And when in his fair parts she did abide,  
 She was new lodged and newly deified.

85 'His browny locks did hang in crooked curls;  
 And every light occasion of the wind  
 Upon his lips their silken parcels hurls.  
 What's sweet to do, to do will aptly find:  
 Each eye that saw him did enchant the mind,  
 90 For on his visage was in little drawn  
 What largeness thinks in Paradise was sawn.

'Small show of man was yet upon his chin;  
 His phoenix down began but to appear  
 Like unshorn velvet on that termless skin  
 95 Whose bare out-bragg'd the web it seem'd to wear:  
 Yet show'd his visage by that cost more dear;  
 And nice affections wavering stood in doubt  
 If best were as it was, or best without.

'His qualities were beauteous as his form,  
 100 For maiden-tongued he was, and thereof free;  
 Yet, if men moved him, was he such a storm  
 As oft 'twixt May and April is to see,  
 When winds breathe sweet, untidy though they be.  
 His rudeness so with his authorized youth  
 105 Did livery falseness in a pride of truth.

'Well could he ride, and often men would say  
 'That horse his mettle from his rider takes:  
 Proud of subjection, noble by the sway,  
 110 What rounds, what bounds, what course, what stop  
 he makes!'

And controversy hence a question takes,  
 Whether the horse by him became his deed,  
 Or he his manage by the well-doing steed.

'But quickly on this side the verdict went:  
 115 His real habitude gave life and grace  
 To appertainings and to ornament,  
 Accomplish'd in himself, not in his case:  
 All aids, themselves made fairer by their place,  
 Came for additions; yet their purposed trim  
 120 Pieced not his grace, but were all graced by him.

'So on the tip of his subduing tongue  
 All kinds of arguments and question deep,  
 All replication prompt, and reason strong,