"Youth"

By Anne Bradstreet

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SEVERAL POEMS

Compiled with great variety of Wit and
Learning, full of Delight;
Wherein especially is contained a compleat
Discourse, and Description of
The Four { ELEMENTS
CONSTITUTIONS,
AGES of Man,
SEASONS of the Year.
Together with an exact Epitome of
the three first *Monarchyes*
Viz, The { ASSYRIAN,
PERSIAN,
GRECIAN.
And beginning of the Romane Common-wealth
to the end of their last King:
With diverse other pleasant & serious *Poems* ,
By a Gentlewoman in *New-England* .
The second Edition, Corrected by the Author,
and enlarged by an Addition of several other
Poems found amongst her Papers
after her Death.

Boston , Printed by *John Foster* , 1678.

Youth

MY goodly cloathing, and my beauteous skin,
Declare some greater riches are within;
But what is best i'le first present to view,
And then the worst, in a more ugly hue;
For thus to do, we on this Stage assemble,
Then let not him, which hath most craft dissemble;
Mine education, and my learning's such,
As might my self, and others, profit much:
With nurture trained up in vertues Schools,
Of Science, Arts, and Tongues, I know the rules,
The manners of the Court, I likewise know,
Nor ignorant what they in Country do;
The brave attempts of valiant Knights I prize,
That dare climbe Battlements, [battlements], rear'd to the skies;
The snorting Horse, the Trumpet, Drum I like,
The glistring Sword, and wel advanced Pike;
I cannot lye in trench, before a Town,
Nor wait til good advice our hopes do crown;
I scorn the heavy Corsset, Musket-proof,
Though thus in field, at home, to all most kind,
So affable that I do suit each mind;>
I can insinuate into the brest,
And by my mirth can raise the heart deprest.
Sweet Musick rapteth my harmonious Soul,
And elevates my thoughts above the Pole.
My wit, my bounty, and my courtesie,
Makes all to place their future hopes on me.
This is my best, but youth (is known) alas,
To be as wilde as is the snuffing Asse,
As vain as froth, as vanity can be,
That who would see vain man, may look on me:
My gifts abus'd, my education lost,
My woful Parents longing hopes all crost,
My wit, evaporates in meriment:>
My valour, in some beastly quarrel's spent;
Martial deeds I love not, 'cause they're vertuous,
But doing so, might seem magnanimous.
My Lust doth hurry me, to all that's ill,
I know no Law, nor reason, but my wil;
Sometimes lay wait to take a wealthy purse,
Or stab the man, in's own defence, that's worse,
Sometimes I cheat (unkind) a female Heir,

Of all at once, who not so wise, as fair,
Trusteth my loving looks, and glozing tongue,
Until her freinds, treasure, and honour's gone.
Sometimes I sit carousing others health,
Until mine own be gone, my wit, and wealth;
From pipe to pot, from pot to words, and blows,
For he that loveth Wine, wanteth no woes;
Dayes, nights, with Ruffins, Roarers, Fidlers spend;
To all obscenity, my eares I bend.
All counsel hate, which tends to make me wise,
And dearest freinds count for mine enemies;
If any care I take, 'tis to be fine,
For sure my suit more then my vertues shine;
If any time from company I spare,
'Tis spent in curling, frisling up my hair;
Some young Adonis I do strive to be,
Sardana Pallas, [Sardanapallas], now survives in me:
Cards, Dice, and Oaths, concomitant, I love;
To Masques, to Playes, to Taverns stil I move;
And in a word, if what I am you'd heare,
Seek out a Brittish, bruitish Cavaleer;
Such wretch, such monster am I; but yet more,
I want a heart all this for to deplore.
Thus, thus alas! I have mispent my time,
My youth, my best, my strength, my bud, and prime:
Remembring not the dreadful day of Doom,
Nor yet that heavy reckoning for to come;
Though dangers do attend me every houre,
And gastly death oft threats me with her power,
Sometimes by wounds in idle combates taken,
Sometimes by Agues, [agues] all my body shaken;
Sometimes by Feavers, all my moisture drinking,
My heart lyes frying, and my eyes are sinking;
Sometimes the Cough, Stitch, painful Plurisie, [plurisie],
With sad affrights of death, doth menace me;
Sometimes the loathsome Pox, my face be-mars,
With ugly marks of his eternal scars;
Sometimes the Phrensie, strangely madds my Brain,
That oft for it, in Bedlam, [bedlam] I remain.
Too many's my Diseases to recite,
That wonder 'tis I yet behold the light,
That yet my bed in darknesse is not made,
And I in black oblivions den long laid;
Of Marrow ful my bones, of Milk my breasts,
Ceas'd by the gripes of Serjeant Death's Arrests:
Thus I have said, and what i've said you see,

89 Child-hood and youth is vaine, yea vanity.

Footnotes

battlements	The summit of a mountain or a parapet at the top of a wall. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
Sardanapalus	Sardanapallas is legendary tragic king of Assyria. Source: Encyclopedia Brittanica.
agues	Sickness with a high fever. Source: Oxford english Dictionary
plurisie	Pleurisy is an illness characterized by chest pains often accompanied with coughing and inflammation. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
bedlam	A truncation of Bethlehem Hospital, a facility for the supposed insane. Source: Oxford English Dictionary