

"Against Pleasure"

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*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup
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Against Pleasure. Set by Dr. Coleman.

1.

1 There's no such thing as pleasure here,
2 'Tis all a perfect cheat,

3 Which does but shine and disappear,
4 Whose charm is but deceit:
5 The empty bribe of yielding souls,
6 Which first betrays, and then controls.

2.

7 'Tis true, it looks at distance fair,
8 But if we do approach,
9 The fruit of Sodom, ^{Sodom} will impair,
10 And perish at a touch;
11 It being than in fancy less,
12 And we expect more than possess.

3.

13 For by our pleasure we are cloy'd, ^{Cloyed}
14 And so desire is done;
15 Or else, like rivers, they make wide
16 The channels where they run;
17 And either way true bliss destroys,
18 Making us narrow, or our joys.

4.

19 We covet pleasure easily,
20 But ne'er true bliss possess;
21 For many things must make it be,
22 But one may make it less.
23 Nay, were our state as we would choose it,
24 'Twould be consumed by fear to lose it.

5.

25 What art thou, then, thou wingèd air,
26 More weak and swift than fame?
27 Whose next successor is despair,
28 And its attendant shame.

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29 Th' experienced prince then reason had
30 Who said of Pleasure, — "It is mad."

Footnotes

Sodom In the biblical account, Sodom was a city destroyed by God for the wickedness of its inhabitants (Oxford English Dictionary).

Cloyed Cloyed refers to being made weary by something that was initially pleasurable or sweet.