

Childhood

This poem is the first of four poems in a larger work called "Of the Four Ages of Man."

Ah me! conceiv'd in sin, and born in sorrow,
A nothing, here to day, but gone to morrow.
Whose mean beginning, blushing cann't reveale,
But night and darkenesse, must with shame conceal.
My mothers [breeding sickness](#), I will spare;
Her nine months weary burden not declare.
To shew her bearing pangs, I should do wrong,
To tel that paine, which cann't be told by tongue;
With tears into this world I did arrive
My mother still did waste, as I did thrive:
Who yet with love, and all [alacrity](#),
Spending was willing, to be spent for me;
With wayward cryes, I did disturb her rest;
Who sought still to appease me, with her brest,
With weary armes, she danc'd, and [By, By](#), sung,
When wretched I (ungrate) had done the wrong!
When Infancy was past, my Childishnesse,
Did act al folly, that it could expresse.
My sillinesse did only take delight,
In that which riper age did scorn, and slight:
In Rattles, Bables, and such toyish fluffe.
My then ambitious thoughts, were low enough.
My high borne soule, so straitly was confin'd
That its own worth, it did not know, nor mind.
This [little house of flesh](#), did spacious count:
Through ignorance, all troubles did surmount.
Yet this advantage, had mine ignorance,
Freedome from Envy, and from Arrogance,
How to be rich, or great. I did not [carke](#);
A Baron or a Duke, ne'r made my mark.
Nor studious was, Kings favours how to buy,
With costly presents, or base flattery.
No office covered, wherein I might

Make strong my selfe, and turne aside weak right.
No malice bare, to this, or that [great Peer](#),
Nor unto buzzing whisperors, gave ear.
I gave no hand, nor vote, for death, or life:
I'd nought to do, '[twixt Prince, and peoples strife](#).
No [Statist](#) I: nor [Marti'list](#) i'th' field;
Where e're I went, mine innocence was shield.
My quarrels, not for [Diadems](#) did rise;
But for an Apple, Plumbe, or some such prize,
My stroks did cause no death, nor wounds, nor skars.
My little wrath did cease soon as my wars.
My duel was no challenge, nor did seek.
My foe should [weltering, with his bowels reek](#).
I had no [Suits at law](#), neighbours to vex.
Nor evidence for land, did me perplex.
I fear'd no stormes, nor al the windes that blows,
I had no ships at Sea, no [fraughts](#) to loose.
I fear'd no drought, nor wet, I had no crop,
Nor yet on future things did place my hope.
This was mine innocence, but oh the seeds,
Lay raked up, of all the cursed weeds,
Which sprouted forth, in my [insuing](#) age,
As he can tell, that next comes on the stage.
But yet let me relate, before I go,
The sins, and dangers I am subject to.
From birth stayned, with [Adams sinfull fact](#);
From thence I '[gan](#) to sin, as soon as act.
A perverse will, a love to what's forbid:
A serpents sting in pleasing face lay hid.
A lying tongue as soon as it could speak,
And [fift Commandement](#) do daily break.
Oft stubborn, peevish, sullen, pout, and cry:
Then nought can please, and yet I know not why.
As many was my sins, so dangers too:
For sin brings sorrow, sicknesse, death, and woe.
And though I misse, the tossings of the mind:
Yet griefs, in my fraile flesh, I still do find.
What gripes of wind, mine infancy did pain?
What tortures I, in breeding teeth sustain?
What crudities my cold stomach hath bred?
Whence vomits, wormes, and [flux](#) have issued?

What breaches, knocks, and falls I daily have?
And some perhaps, I carry to my grave.
Sometimes in fire, sometimes in waters fall:
Strangely preserv'd, yet mind it not at all.
At home, abroad, my danger's manifold.
That wonder tis, my glasse till now doth hold.
I've done, unto my elders I give way.
For'tis but little, that a child can say.