

The pronounced poetic merit of Herrick's "Book," has long decided that "the fire" shall not be called upon to afford it an entrance into oblivion, and has won for the writer a place with the great names in English poetry.

Among the secular Caroline lyrists the name of Richard Lovelace stands out very prominently. He is conspicuous among the amorous poets for a certain virile power and reserve which betoken entire sincerity; and which have gained for him a place of his own in that age of extravagant and frivolous conceits. He is best known to lovers of English classical poetry by the couplet which occurs in his lines "To Lucasta going to the Warres":

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Lov'd I not Honour more."

These lines possess that quality which distinguishes great poetry; the quality of an enduring truth, set forth with simple, direct persuasiveness; and clad in a graceful form which subserves the poet's meaning, and is not obtruded upon the sense to hide the absence of meaning. It is on the merit of this poem, with one or two others of pronounced beauty, that Lovelace has attained to immortality.

His lines "To Althea from Prison" show the same noble spirit:

"Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for an hermitage;

If I have freedom in my love,  
And in my soul am free,  
Angels alone that soar above  
Enjoy such liberty."

Such utterances show us in what a spirit some of the cavaliers served a King who was not worthy such high service.

Lovelace's ode on "The Grasshopper" possesses the qualities of movement, freshness and life in a high degree. It has a buoyant gladness which is quite spontaneous, and the touch of sadness wherein he introduces the sickle rises to the level of the tragic.

After spending many years in reduced circumstances owing to his devotion to the Royalist cause, he died, tradition says, of a broken heart, because Lucasta had married, supposing him to be dead. Such a fate is not inconsistent with the more earnest and lofty tone of his poetry, and is certainly much more easily believable of him than it could be of a spirit like the jovial Herrick.

There is not space within the compass of this paper to quote Carew, who, according to Professor Saintsbury, "is one of the most perfect masters of lyrical form in English poetry."

Suffice it to say, that the period was a rich blossoming time for the fancy, before the parenthesis of the Pope School of Wit as, after that parenthesis, the end of the Eighteenth and beginning of the Nineteenth Centuries were the blossoming time of the imagination.

