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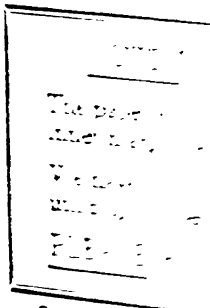


PHILLIS WHEATLEY

THE POEMS

OF

PHILLIS WHEATLEY





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NOTE TO THE READER

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THE POEMS

OF

PHILLIS WHEATLEY



As they were originally published in London, 1773

Re-published by R. R. and C. C. Wright
Philadelphia, Pa.

1909

211.2

1856 7/10

A. M. E. Book Concern
Printers
Philadelphia

Publishers' Note

Our purpose in republishing this little book of poems, a century and a quarter after the death of the author, is to acquaint the present generation more thoroughly with her remarkable genius. She was born in Africa, and at the age of eight years was brought to America and sold into slavery to a Mrs. John Wheatley in Boston. Within a year of her arrival she could read and write English, of which she was previously in entire ignorance. She also acquired a knowledge of the classics, and developed a pleasing poetic style. Before she was twenty her writings had attracted the attention of many literary people of England, and in 1773 a volume of her poems was published in London. Since then there have been many editions published; one in 1784 in Boston, another in Albany, 1793; another in 1802, another in 1805, another 1816. *Memoirs and Poems of Phillis Wheatley* in 1834, 1835 and 1838. Her poems constituted the second volume of Abbie Joseph La Valle's book, "The Negro Equalled by few Europeans," in 1801. Besides these, many separate poems have been published, perhaps the earliest being in memory of George Whitefield, printed in 1770. Many of her poems were not published. She wrote a poem to George Washington, which the general highly complimented, but which he was too modest to publish.

Phillis Wheatley was married to a Mr. Peters, in Boston, but died soon after in 1784, at about the age of thirty-one years. Her poems were written and published before her marriage, and she was known as Phillis Wheatley rather than Phillis W. Peters.

Withdrawn

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'The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



Phillis Wheatley served as no one of her day could—to prove conclusively the capacity for the highest culture on the part of the Negro race. The day of contentions on this subject has passed and there is no need for any defence along this line. But her name and works should never perish; they should always be cherished most warmly by the members of her race, and the lovers of literature generally. Her poems stand for themselves. They show a mind of refinement, highly religious with strong convictions as to the life after death and the felicity of the departed good.

Her language shows the grade of her reading, and its wide range. She was surprisingly familiar with the Bible and with the classics, while her poems show that she was also a careful observer of Nature.

We have adhered, as closely as possible, to the quaint forms and usages which occur in the earliest edition, thinking that these may possess something of interest and charm for the student of literature, while they can scarcely prove of material disadvantage to the casual reader.

RICHARD R. WRIGHT, JR.,
CHARLOTTE CROGMAN WRIGHT.



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



First Publisher's Preface, 1773

The following Poems were written originally for the Amusement of the Author, as they were the Products of her leisure Moments. She had no Intention ever to have published them; nor would they now have made their Appearance, but at the Importunity of many of her best and most generous Friends, to whom she considers herself, as under the greatest Obligations.

As her Attempts in Poetry are now sent into the World, it is hoped the Critic will not severely censure their Defects; and we presume they have too much Merit to be cast aside with Contempt, as worthless and trifling Effusions.

As to the Disadvantages she has labored under, with regard to Learning, nothing needs to be offered, as her Master's Letter in the following Page will sufficiently show the Difficulties in this Respect she had to encounter.

With all their Imperfections, the Poems are now humbly submitted to the Perusal of the Public.

Mr. Wheatley's Letter

The following is a copy of a Letter sent by the Author's Master to the Publisher:

Phillis was brought from *Africa* to *America*, in the year 1761, between seven and eight Years of age, without any assistance from School Education, and by only what she was taught in the Family, she in sixteen Months' Time from her arrival, attained the English Language, to which she was an utter Stranger before; to such a Degree, as to read any, the most difficult parts of the Sacred Writings, to the great Astonishment of all who heard her.

As her Writing, her own Curiosity led her to it; and this she learned in so short a Time, that in the year 1765, she wrote a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Occom, the *Indian* Minister, while in *England*.

She has a great Inclination to learn the Latin Tongue, and has made some Progress in it. This Relation is given by her Master, who brought her, and with whom she now lives.

JOHN WHEATLEY.

Boston, November 14, 1772.

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

To the Public

As it has been Repeatedly suggested to the Publisher by Persons who have seen the Manuscript, that Numbers would be ready to suspect that they were not really the Writings of PHILLIS, he has procured the following Attestations from the most respectable Characters in Boston, that none might have the least Ground for disputing their Originality:

We, whose Names are Underwritten, do assure the World, that the POEMS specified in the following Page* (the words "following Page," allude to the Contents of the Manuscript Copy, which are wrote at the back of the above Attestation), were (as we verily believe) written by *Phillis*, a young Negro Girl, who was but a few Years since, brought an uncultivated Barbarian from *Africa*, and has ever since been, and now is, under the Disadvantage of serving as a Slave in a Family in this Town. She has been examined by some of the best Judges, and is thought qualified to write them.

His Excellency, Thomas Hutchinson, Governor

The Hon. Andrew Oliver, Lieutenant-Governor

The Hon. Thomas Hubbard Mr. John Wheatley, her Master

The Hon. John Erving The Rev. Charles Channey, D.D.

The Hon. James Pitts The Rev. Mather Boyles, D.D.

The Hon. Harrison Gray The Rev. Ed. Pemberton, D.D.

The Hon. James Bowdoin The Rev. Andrew Elliot, D.D.

John Hancock, Esq. The Rev. Samuel Cooper, D.D.

Joseph Green, Esq. The Rev. Mr. Samuel Mather

Richard Carey, Esq. The Rev. Mr. John Moorhead

N. B.—The original Attestation, signed by the above Gentlemen, may be seen by applying to Archibald Bell, Bookseller, No. 8 Aldgate Street.

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Poems on Various Subjects

To Maecenas

Maecenas, you, beneath the myrtle shade
Read o'er what poets sung, and shepherds play'd.
What felt those poets but you feel the same?
Does not your soul possess the sacred flame?
Their noble strains your equal genius shares
In softer language, and diviner airs.

While *Homer* paints, lo! circumfus'd in air,
Celestial Gods in mortal forms appear;
Swift as they move hear each recess rebound,
Heav'n quakes, earth trembles, and the shores
resound.

Great sire of verse, before my mortal eyes,
The lightnings blaze across the vaulted skies,
And, as the thunder shakes the heav'nly plains,
A deep felt horror thrills through all my veins.
When gentler strains demand thy graceful song,
The length'ning line moves languishing along.
When great *Patroclus* courts *Achilles'* aid,
The grateful tribute of my tears is paid;
Prone on the shore he feels the pangs of love,

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And stern *Pelides* tend'rest passions move.

Great *Maro's* strain in heav'nly numbers flows,
The *Nine* inspire, and all the bosom glows,
O, could I rival thine and *Virgil's* page,
Or claim the *Muses* with the *Mantuan* sage;
Soon the same beauties should my mind adorn,
And the same ardors in my soul should burn;
Then should my song in bolder notes arise,
And all my numbers pleasingly surprise;
But here I sit, and mourn a grov'ling mind,
That fain would mount, and ride upon the wind.

Not you, my friend, these plaintive strains become,

Not you, whose bosom is the *Muses'* home;
When they from tow'ring *Helicon* retire,
They fan in you the bright immortal fire,
But I less happy, cannot raise the song,
The fault'ring music dies upon my tongue.

The happier *Terence** all the choir inspired,
His soul replenish'd, and his bosom fir'd;
But say, ye *Muses*, why this partial grace
To one alone in *Afric's* sable race;
From age to age transmitting thus his name
With the first glory in the rolls of fame?

*He was an African by birth.

✧ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✧

Thy virtues, great *Maecenas!* shall be sung
In praise of him, from whom those virtues sprung;
While blooming wreaths around thy temples spread,
I'll snatch a laurel from thine honor'd head,
While you indulgent smile upon the deed.

As long as *Thames* in streams majestic flows,
Or *Naiads* in their oozy beds repose,
While *Phoebus* reigns above the starry train
While bright *Aurora* purples o'er the main,
So long, great Sir, the muse thy praise shall sing,
So long thy praise shall make *Parnassus* ring;
Then grant *Maecenas*, thy paternal rays,
Hear me propitious, and defend my lays.

On Virtue

O Thou bright jewel in my aim I strive
To comprehend thee. Thine own words declare
Wisdom is higher than a fool can reach.
I cease to wonder, and no more attempt
Thine height t' explore, or fathom thy profound,
But, O, my soul, sink not into despair,
Virtue is near thee, and with gentle hand
Would now embrace thee, hovers o'er thine head.
Fain would the heav'n-born soul with her converse,

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

Then seek, then court her for her promis'd bliss,
Auspicious queen, thine heav'nly pinions spread,
And lead celestial *Chastity* along;
Lo! now her sacred retinue descends,
Array'd in glory from the orbs above.
Attend me, *Virtue*, thro' my youthful years!
O leave me not to the false joys of time!
But guide my steps to endless life and bliss.
Greatness, or *Goodness*, say what I shall call thee,
To give an higher appellation still,
Teach me a better strain, a nobler lay,
O thou, enthron'd with Cherubs in the realms of
day.

To the University of Cambridge, in New-England

While an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,
The muses promise to assist my pen;
'Twas not long since I left my native shore
The land of errors, and Egyptian gloom:
Father of mercy, 'twas thy gracious hand
Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.
Students, to you 'tis giv'n to scan the heights
Above, to traverse the ethereal space,
And mark the systems of revolving worlds.



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



Still more, ye sons of science, ye receive
The blissful news by messengers from heav'n
How Jesus' blood for your redemption flows.
See Him with hands outstretched upon the cross;
Immense compassion in His bosom glows;
He hears revilers, nor resents their scorn;
What matchless mercy in the Son of God!
When the whole human race by sin had fall'n,
He deign'd to die that they might rise again,
And share with Him in the sublimest skies,
Life without death, and glory without end.

Improve your privileges while they stay,
Ye pupils, and each hour redeem, that bears
Or good or bad report of you to heav'n.
Let sin, that baneful evil to the soul,
By you be shunned, nor once remit your guard;
Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg.
Ye blooming plants of human race divine,
An *Ethiop* tells you 'tis your greatest foe;
Its transient sweetness turns to endless pain,
And in immense perdition sinks the soul.

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To the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1768

Your subjects hope, dread Sire—
The crown upon your brows may flourish long,
And that your arm may in your God be strong!
O, may your sceptre num'rous nations sway,
And all with love and readiness obey!

But how shall we the *British* King reward?
Rule thou in peace, our father, and our lord!
Midst the remembrance of thy favors past,
The meanest peasants most admire the last.*
May *George*, beloved by all the nations round,
Live with heav'n's choicest constant blessings
crown'd!

Great God, direct, and guard him from on high,
And from his head let ev'ry evil fly!
And may each clime with equal gladness see
A monarch's smile can set his subjects free!

On being brought from Africa to America.

'Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too;
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew,
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their color is a diabolic die."
Remember, *Christians, Negroes*, black as *Cain*,
May be refined, and join th' angelic train.

* The repeal of the Stamp Act.

✠ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✠

On the Death of Rev. Dr. Sewell, 1769

Ere yet the morn its lovely blushes spread,
See *Sewell* number'd with the happy dead.
Hail, holy man, arriv'd th' immortal shore,
Though we shall hear thy warning voice no more,
Come, let us all behold with wishful eyes
The saint ascending to his native skies;
From hence the prophet wing'd his rapt'rous way
To the blest mansions in eternal day.
Then begging for the Spirit of our God,
And panting eager for the same abode,
Come, let us all with the same vigour rise,
And take a prospect of the blissful skies;
While on our minds *Christ's* image is imprest,
And the dear Saviour glows in ev'ry breast.
Thrice happy saint! to find thy heav'n at last,
What compensation for the evils past;

Great God, incomprehensible, unknown
By sense, we bow at thine exalted throne.
O, while we beg Thine excellence to feel,
Thy sacred Spirit to our hearts reveal,
And give us of that mercy to partake,
Which Thou hast promis'd for the *Saviour's* sake!

☞ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ☞

“*Sewell* is dead.” Swift-pinion’d *Fame* thus cry’d,
“Is *Sewell* dead?” my trembling tongue reply’d,
O, what a blessing in his flight deny’d!
How oft for us that holy prophet pray’d!
How oft to us the Word of Life convey’d!
By duty urg’d my mournful verse to close,
I for his tomb this epitaph compose.

“Lo, here a man, redeem’d by *Jesus*’ blood,
“A sinner once, but now a saint with God;
“Behold ye rich, ye poor, ye fools, ye wise,
“Nor let his monument your heart surprise;
“’Twill tell you what this holy man has done,
“Which gives him brighter lustre than the sun.
“Listen, ye happy, from your seats above.
“I speak sincerely, while I speak and love,
“He sought the paths of piety and truth,
“By these made happy from his early youth;
“In glooming years that grace divine he felt,
“Which rescues sinners from the chains of guilt.
“Mourn him, ye indigent, whom he has fed,
“And henceforth seek, like him, for living bread;
“Ev’n *Christ*, the bread descending from above,
“And ask an int’rest in his saving love.
“Mourn him, ye youth, to whom he oft has told
“God’s gracious wonders from the times of old.

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“I too have cause this mighty loss to mourn,
“For he, my monitor, will not return.
“O when shall we to his blest state arrive?
“When the same graces in our bosoms thrive.”

On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George
Whitefield, 1770

Hail, happy saint, on thine immortal throne,
Possess of glory, life and bliss unknown;
We hear no more the music of thy tongue,
Thy wonted auditories cease to throng.
Thy sermons in unequall'd accents flow'd,
And ev'ry bosom with devotion glow'd;
Thou didst in strains of eloquence refin'd
Inflame the heart and captivate the mind.
Unhappy we the setting sun deplore,
So glorious once, but ah! it shines no more.

Behold the prophet in his tow'ring flight!
He leaves the earth for heav'n's unmeasur'd height,
And worlds unknown receive him from our sight.
There *Whitefield* wings with rapid course his way,
And sails to *Zion* through vast seas of day.
Thy pray'rs, great saint, and thine incessant cries

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Have pierc'd the bosom of thy native skies.
Thou moon hast seen, and all the stars of light,
How he has wrestled with his God by night.
He pray'd that grace in ev'ry heart might dwell,
He long'd to see *America* excel:
He charg'd its youth that ev'ry grace divine
Should with full lustre in their conduct shine;
That Saviour, which his soul did first receive,
The greatest gift that ev'n a God can give,
He freely offer'd to the num'rous throng,
That on his lips with list'ning pleasure hung.

“Take him, ye wretched, for your only good,
“Take him, ye starving sinners, for your food.
“Ye thrifty, come to this life-giving stream,
“Ye preachers, take him for your joyful theme;
“Take him my dear *Americans*, he said,
“Be your complaints on his kind bosom laid;
“Take him, ye *Africans*, he longs for you,
“*Impartial Saviour* is his title due;
“Washed in the fountain of redeeming blood,
“You shall be sons and kings, and priests to God.”

Great *Countess*,* we Americans revere
Thy name, and mingle in thy grief sincere;
New England deeply feels, the *Orphans* mourn,

*The Countess of Huntingdon, to whom Mr. Whitefield was chaplain.

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Their more than father will no more return.
But, though arrested by the hand of death,
Whitefield no more exerts his lab'ring breath,
Yet let us view him in th' eternal skies,
Let ev'ry heart to this bright vision rise;
While the tomb safe retains its sacred trust,
Till life divine re-animates his dust.

**On the Death of a Young Lady of
Five Years of Age**

From dark abodes to fair ethereal light
Th' enraptured innocent has wing'd her flight;
On the kind bosom of eternal love
She finds unknown beatitude above.
This known, ye parents, nor her loss deplore,
She feels the iron hand of pain no more;
The dispensations of unerring grace,
Should turn your sorrows into grateful praise;
Let then no tears for her henceforward flow,
No more distress in our dark vale below,
Her morning sun, which rose divinely bright,
Was quickly mantled with the gloom of night;
But hear in heav'n's blest bow'rs your *Nancy* fair,
And learn to imitate her language there.

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“Thou, Lord, whom I behold with glory crown’d
“By what sweet name, and in what tuneful sound
“Wilt thou be prais’d? Seraphic pow’rs are faint,
“Infinite love and majesty to paint.
“To thee let all their graceful voices raise,
“And saints and angels join their songs of praise.”

Perfect in bliss she from her heav’nly home
Looks down, and smiling beckons you to come;
Why then, fond parents, why these fruitless groans?
Restrain your tears, and cease your plaintive moans,
Freed from a world of sin, and snares, and pain,
Why would you wish your daughter back again?
No—bow resign’d. Let hope your grief control,
And check the rising tumult of the soul.
Calm in the prosperous, and adverse day,
Adore the God who gives and takes away;
Eye him in all, His holy name revere,
Upright your actions and your hearts sincere,
Till having sail’d through life’s tempestuous sea,
And from its rocks, and boist’rous billows free,
Yourselves, safe landed on the blissful shore,
Shall join your happy babe to part no more.

On the Death of a Young Gentleman

Who taught thee conflict with the pow'rs of night,
To vanquish Satan in the fields of fight?
Who strung thy feeble arms with might unknown,
How great thy conquest, and how bright thy crown!
War with each princedom, throne and pow'r is o'er,
The scene is ended to return no more.
O, could my muse thy seat on high behold,
How decked with laurel, how enrich'd with gold!
O could she hear what praise thine harp employs,
How sweet thine anthems, how divine thy joys!
What heav'nly grandeur should exalt her strain!
What holy raptures in her numbers reign!
To soothe the troubles of the mind to peace,
To still the tumult of life's tossing seas,
To ease the anguish of the parent heart,
What shall my sympathizing verse impart?
Where is the balm to heal so deep a wound?
Where shall a sovereign remedy be found?
Look, gracious Spirit, from thine heav'nly bow'r,
And thy full joys into their bosoms pour;

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The raging tempest of their grief control,
And spread the dawn of glory through the soul,
To eye the path the saint departed trod,
And trace him to the bosom of his God.

To a Lady on the Death of Her Husband

Grim monarch! see, deprived of vital breath
A young physician in the dust of death!
Dost thou go on incessant to destroy?
The grief to double and lay waste the joy?
Enough thou never yet wast known to say
Tho' millions die the vassals of thy sway.
Nor youth, nor science, nor the ties of love,
Nor aught on earth thy flinty heart can move.
The friend, the spouse, from his dire dart to save,
In vain we ask the sovereign of the grave.
Fair mourner, there see thy lov'd *Leonard* laid,
And o'er him spread the deep impervious shade;
Clos'd are his eyes and heavy fetters keep
His senses bound in never-waking sleep,
Till time shall cease, till many a starry world,
Shall fall from heav'n, in dire confusion hurl'd;
Till Nature in her final wreck shall lie,
Till her last groan shall rend the azure sky:

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Not till then his active soul shall claim,
His body, a divine immortal frame.

But, see the softly stealing tears apace,
Pursue each other down the mourner's face;
But cease thy tears, bid ev'ry sigh depart,
And cast the load of anguish from thine heart;
From the cold shell of his great soul arise,
And look beyond, thou native of the skies!
There fix thy view where fleeter than the wind
Thy *Leonard* mounts, and leaves the earth behind.
Thyself prepare to pass the vale of night,
To join forever on the hills of light;
To thine embrace, this joyful spirit moves,
To thee, the partner of his earthly loves;
He welcomes thee to pleasures more refin'd
And better suited to th' immortal mind.

Goliath of Gath

I Samuel, Chapter XVII

Ye martial pow'rs, and all ye tuneful nine,
Inspire my song, and aid my high design.
The dreadful scenes and toils of war I write,
The ardent warriors, and the fields of fight:
You best remember, and you best can sing

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The acts of heroes to the vocal string:
Resume the lays with which your sacred lyre,
Did then the poet and the sage inspire.

Now front to front the armies were display'd,
Here *Israel* rang'd, and there the foes array'd;
The hosts on two opposing mountains stood,
Thick as the foliage of the waving wood;
Between them an extensive valley lay,
O'er which the gleaming armor pour'd the day,
When from the camp of the *Philistine* foes,
Dreadful to view, a mighty warrior rose;
In the dire deeds of bleeding battle skill'd,
The monster stalks the terror of the field.
From *Gath* he sprung, *Goliath* was his name,
Of fierce deportment, and gigantic frame:
A brazen helmet on his head was plac'd,
A coat of mail his form terrific grac'd,
The greaves his legs, the targe his shoulders prest:
Dreadful in arms high-tow'ring o'er the rest
A spear he proudly wav'd, whose iron head,
Strange to relate, six hundred shekels weigh'd;
He strode along and shook the ample field,
While *Phoebus* blaz'd refulgent on his shield:
Through *Jacob's* race a chilling horror ran,
When thus the huge, enormous chief began:

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“Say, what the cause that in this proud array
“You set your battle in the face of day?
“One hero find in all your vaunting train,
“Then see who loses, and who wins the plain;
“For he who wins, in triumph may demand
“Perpetual service from the vanquish’d land:
“Your armies I defy, your force despise,
“By far inferior in *Philistia’s* eyes:
“Produce a man, and let us try the fight,
“Decide the contest, and the victor’s right.”

Thus challeng’d he; all *Israel* stood amaz’d,
And ev’ry chief in consternation gaz’d;
But *Jesse’s* son in youthful bloom appears,
And warlike courage far beyond his years:
He left the folds, he left the flow’ry meads;
And soft recesses of the sylvan shades.
Now *Israel’s* monarch, and his troops arise,
With peals of shouts ascending to the skies;
In *Elah’s* vale the scene of combat lies,

When the fair morning flushed with Orient red,
What *David’s* sire enjoin’d the son obey’d,
And swift of foot towards the trench he came,
Where glow’d each bosom with the martial flame.
He leaves his carriage to another’s care,
And runs to greet his brethren of the war..

✠ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✠

While yet they spake the giant-chief arose,
Repeats the challenge, and insults his foes :
Struck with the sound, and trembling at the view,
Affrighted *Israel* from its post withdrew.

“Observe ye this tremendous foe, they cry’d,
“Who in proud vaunts our armies hath defy’d :
“Whoever lays him prostrate on the plain,
“Freedom in *Israel* for his house shall gain ;
“And on him wealth unknown the king will pour,
“And give his royal daughter for his dow’r.”

Then *Jesse’s* youngest hope : “My brethren say,
“What shall be done for him who takes away
“Reproach from *Jacob*, who destroys the chief,
“And puts a period to his country’s grief.
“He vaunts the honours of his arms abroad,
“And scorns the armies of the living God.”

Thus spoke the youth, th’ attentive people ey’d
The wond’rous hero, and again reply’d :
“Such the rewards our monarch will bestow,
“On him who conquers, and destroys his foe.”

Eliab heard, and kindled into ire
To hear his shepherd brother thus inquire,
And thus begun : “What errand brought thee? say
“Who keeps thy flock? or does it go astray?
“I know the base ambition of thine heart,
“But back in safety from the field depart,”



Eliab thus to *Jesse's* youngest heir,
Express'd his wrath in accents most severe.
When to his brother mildly he reply'd,
"What have I done or what the cause to chide?"

The words were told before the king, who sent
For the young hero to his royal tent:
Before the monarch dauntless he began,
"For this *Philistine* fail no heart of man:
"I'll take the vale, and with the giant fight:
"I dread not all his boasts, nor all his might."
When thus the king: "Dar'st thou a stripling go,
"And venture combat with so great a foe?
"Who all his days has been inur'd to fight,
"And made its deeds his study and delight:
"Battles and bloodshed brought the monster forth,
"And clouds and whirlwinds usher'd in his birth."
When David thus: "I kept the fleecy care,
"And out there rush'd a lion and a bear;
"A tender lamb the hungry lion took,
"And with no other weapon than my crook
"Both I pursu'd, and chas'd him o'er the field,
"The prey deliver'd, and the felon kill'd:
"As thus the lion and the bear I slew,
"So shall *Goliath* fall, and all his crew:
"The God, who sav'd me from these beasts of prey,
"By me this monster in the dust shall lay."

✠ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✠

So *David* spoke: "The wond'ring king reply'd;
"Go thou with heav'n and victory on thy side;
"This coat of mail, this sword gird on," he said,
And plac'd a mighty helmet on his head:
The coat, the sword, the helm he laid aside,
Nor chose to venture with those arms untry'd,
Then took his staff, and to the neighb'ring brook
Instant he ran, and thence five pebbles took,
Mean time descended to *Philistia's* son
A radiant cherub, and he thus begun:
"*Goliath*, well thou know'st thou hast defy'd:
"Yon Hebrew armies, and their God deny'd:
"Rebellious wretch! audacious worm! forbear,
"Nor tempt the vengeance of their God too far:
"Them, who with his Omnipotence contend,
"No eye shall pity, and no arm defend:
"Proud as thou art, in short liv'd glory great,
"I come to tell thee thine approaching fate.
"Regard my words. The judge of all the gods,
"Beneath whose steps the tow'ring mountain nods,
"Will give thine armies to the savage brood,
"That cut the liquid air or range the wood.
"Thee, too a well-aim'd pebble shall destroy,
"And thou shalt perish by a beardless boy:

☞ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ☞

“Such is the mandate from the realms above,
“And should I try the vengeance to remove
“Myself a rebel to my king would prove.
“*Goliath* say, shall grace to him be shown,
“Who dares heav’ns Monarch, and insults his
throne?”

“Your words are lost on me,” the giant cries,
While fear and wrath contended in his eyes,
When thus the messenger from heav’n replies :
“Provoke no more *Jehovah’s* awful hand
“To hurl its vengeance on thy guilty land :
“He grasps the thunder; and, he wings the storm,
“Servants their sov’ reign’s orders to perform.”
The angel spoke, and turn’d his eyes away,
Adding new radiance to the rising day.

Now *David* comes: The fatal stones demand
His left, the staff engag’d his better hand :
The giant mov’d, and from his tow’ring height
Survey’d the stripling, and disdain’d the fight,
And thus began: “Am I a dog with thee?
“Bring’st thou no armour, but a staff to me?
“The gods on thee their vollied curses pour,
“And beasts and birds of prey thy flesh devour.”

David undaunted thus, “Thy spear and shield
“Shall no pretention to thy body yield:

✠ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✠

“*Jehovah's* name . . . no other arms I bear,
“I ask no other in this glorious war.

“To-day the Lord of Hosts to me will give
“Vict'ry, to-day thy doom thou shalt receive ;
“The fate you threaten shall your own become,
“And beasts shall be your animated tomb,
“That all the earth's inhabitants may know
“That there's a God, who governs all below :
“This great assembly too shall witness stand,
“That needs nor sword, nor spear, th' Almighty's
 hand :

“The battle his, the conquest he bestows,
“And to our pow'r consigns our hated foes.”

 Thus *David* spoke ; *Goliath* heard and came
To meet the hero in the field of fame.
Ah! fatal meeting to thy troops and thee,
But thou wast deaf to the divine decree :
Young *David* meets thee, meets thee not in vain ;
’Tis thine to perish on th’ ensanguin’d plain.

 And now the youth the forceful pebble flung,
Philistia trembled as it whizz’d along :
In his dread forehead, where the helmet ends,
Just o’er the brows the well-aim’d stone descends,
It pierc’d the skull, and shatter’d all the brain,
Prone on his face he tumbled to the plain : —

✠ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✠

Goliath's fall no smaller terror yields
Than riving thunders in aerial fields:
The soul still ling'ring in its lov'd abode,
Till conqu'ring *David* o'er the giant strode:
Goliath's sword then laid its master dead,
And from the body hew'd the ghastly head;
The blood in gushing torrents drench'd the plains,
The soul found passage through the spouting veins.

And now aloud the illustrious victor said,
"Where are your boastings now your champion's
dead?"

Scarce had he spoke when the *Philistines* fled:
But fled in vain; the conqu'ror swift pursu'd:
What scenes of slaughter! and what seas of blood!
There *Saul* thy thousands grasp'd th' impurpled
sand

In pangs of death the conquest of thine hand;
And *David* there were thy ten thousands laid:
Thus *Israel's* damsels musically play'd.

Near *Gath* and *Ekron* many an hero lay,
Breath'd out their souls, and curs'd the light of day;
Their fury quench'd by death, no longer burns,
And *David* with *Goliath's* head returns,
To *Salem* brought, but in his tent he plac'd
The load of armour which the giant grac'd,

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

His monarch saw him coming from the war,
And thus demanded of the son of *Ner*.
“Say, who is this amazing youth?” he cry’d,
When thus the leader of the host reply’d:
“As lives thy soul I know not whence he sprung,
“So great in prowess though in years so young:”
“Inquire whose son is he,” the sov’reign said,
“Before whose conq’ring arm *Philistia* fled.”
Before the king behold the stripling stand,
Goliath’s head depending from his hand:
To him the king: “Say of what martial line
“Art thou, young hero, and what sire was thine?”
He humbly thus: “The son of *Jesse* I:
“I came the glories of the field to try,
“Small is my tribe, but valiant in the fight;
“Small is my city, but thy royal right.”
“Then take the promis’d gifts,” the monarch cry’d,
Conferring riches and the royal bride;
“Knit to my soul for ever thou remain
“With me, nor quit my regal roof again.”



Thoughts on the Marks of Providence

Arise, my soul, on wings enraptur'd, rise
To praise the monarch of the earth and skies,
Whose goodness and beneficence appear
As round its center moves the rolling year,
Or when the morning glows with rosy charms,
Or the sun slumbers in the ocean's arms;
Of light divine be a rich portion lent
To guide my soul, and favour my intent.
Celestial muse, my arduous flight sustain,
And raise my mind to a seraphic strain!
Ador'd for ever be the God unseen,
Which round the sun revolves this vast machine,
Though to his eye its mass a point appears:
Ador'd the God that whirls surrounding spheres,
Which first ordain'd that mighty *Sol* should reign
The peerless monarch of th' ethereal train;
Of miles twice forty millions in his height,
And yet his radiance dazzles mortal sight
So far beneath—from him th' extended earth
Vigor derives, and ev'ry flow'ry birth:
Vast through her orb she moves with easy grace
Around her *Phoebus* in unbounded space;

✧ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✧

True to her course th' impetuous storm derides,
Triumphant o'er the winds and surging tides.

Almighty, in these wond'rous works of thine,
What *Pow'r*, what *Wisdom*, and what *Goodness*
shine?

And are thy wonders, Lord, by men explor'd,
And yet creating glory unador'd!

Creation smiles in various beauty gay,
While day to night, and night succeeds to day;
That *Wisdom* which attends *Jehovah's* ways,
Shines most conspicuous in the solar rays;
Without them, destitute of heat and light,
This world would be the reign of endless night;
In their excess how would our race complain,
Abhorring life! how hate its length'ned chain!
From air adust what num'rous ills would rise?
What dire contagion taint the burning skies?
What pestilential vapours, fraught with death,
Would rise, and overspread the lands beneath?

Hail smiling morn, that from the Orient main
Ascending dost adorn the heav'nly plain!
So rich, so various are thy beauteous dies,
That spread through all the circuit of the skies,
That, full of thee, my soul in rapture soars,
And thy great God, the cause of all adores.



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



O'er beings infinite his love extends,
His *Wisdom* rules them, and his *Pow'r* defends.
When tasks diurnal tire the human frame,
The spirits faint, and dim the vital flame,
Then too that ever active bounty shines,
Which not infinity of space confines.
The sable veil, that *Night* in silence draws,
Conceals effects, but shows th' *Almighty Cause*;
Night seals in sleep the wide creation fair,
And all is peaceful but the brow of care.
Again, gay *Phoebus*, as the day before,
Wakes ev'ry eye, but what shall wake no more;
Again the face of nature is renew'd,
Which still appears harmonious, fair, and good.
May grateful strains salute the smiling morn,
Before its beams the eastern hill adorn!

Shall day to day, and night to night, conspire
To show the goodness of the *Almighty Sire*?
This mental voice shall man regardless hear,
And never, never raise the filial pray'r?
To-day, O hearken, nor your folly mourn
For time misspent, that never will return.

But see the sons of vegetation rise,
And spread their leafy banners to the skies.
All-wise Almighty Providence do we trace
In trees, and plants, and all the flow'ry race;

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

As clear as in the nobler frame of man,
All lovely copies of the Maker's plan.
The pow'r the same that forms a ray of light,
That call'd creation from eternal night.
"Let there be light," he said; from his profound
Old *Chaos* heard, and trembled at the sound:
Swift as the word, inspir'd by pow'r divine,
Behold the light around its Maker shine,
The first fair product of th' omnific God
And now through all his works diffus'd abroad.

As reason's pow'rs by day our God disclose,
So we may trace him in the night's repose:
Say what is sleep? and dreams how passing strange!
When action ceases, and ideas range
Licentious and unbounded o'er the plains,
Where *Fancy's* queen in giddy triumph reigns.
Hear in soft strains the dreaming lover sigh
To a kind fair, or rave in jealousy;
On pleasure now, and now on vengeance bent,
The lab'ring passions struggle for a vent.
What pow'r, O man! thy *reason* then restores,
So long suspended in nocturnal hours?
What secret hand returns the mental train,
And gives improv'd thine active pow'rs again?
From thee, O man, what gratitude should rise

↔ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ↔

And, when from balmy sleep thou op'st thine eyes,
Let thy first thoughts be praises to the skies.

How merciful our God who thus imparts
O'erflowing tides of joy to human hearts,
When wants and woes might be our righteous lot,
Our God forgetting, by our God forgot!

Among the mental pow'rs a question rose,
"What most the image of th' Eternal shows?"
When thus to *Reason* (so let *Fancy* rove)
Her great companion spoke immortal *Love*.

"Say mighty pow'r, how long shall strife prevail,
"And with its murmurs load the whisp'ring gale?
"Refer the cause to *Recollection's* shrine,
"Who loud proclaims my origin divine,
"The cause whence heav'n and earth began to be,
"And is not man immortaliz'd by me?
"*Reason* let this most causeless strife subside."

Thus *Love* pronounc'd, and *Reason* thus repli'd.

"Thy birth celestial queen! 'tis mine to own,
"In thee resplendent is the Godhead shown;
"Thy words persuade, my soul enraptur'd feels
"Resistless beauty which thy smile reveals."
Ardent she spoke, and, kindling at her charms,
She clasp'd the blooming goddess in her arms.

✧ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✧

Infinite *Love* where'er we turn our eyes
Appears: this ev'ry creature's wants supplies;
This most is heard in *Nature's* constant voice,
This makes the morn, and this the eve rejoice;
This bids the fost'ring rains and dews descend
To nourish all, to serve one gen'ral end,
The good of man: yet man ungrateful pays
But little homage, and but little praise.
To him, whose works array'd with mercy shine,
What songs should rise, how constant, how divine!

To a Lady on the Death of Three Relations

We trace the pow'r of Death from tomb to tomb,
And his are all the ages yet to come.
'Tis his to call the planets from on high,
To blacken *Phoebus*, and dissolve the sky;
His too, when all in his dark realms are hurl'd,
From its firm base to shake the solid world;
His fatal sceptre rules the spacious whole,
And trembling nature rocks from pole to pole.

Awful he moves, and wide his wings are spread:
Behold thy brother number'd with the dead!
From bondage freed, the exulting spirit flies
Beyond *Olympus*, and these starry skies.

✧ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✧

Lost in our woe for thee, blest shade, we mourn
In vain; to earth thou never must return.
Thy sisters, too, fair mourner, feel the dart
Of Death, and with fresh torture rend thine heart.
Weep not for them, who with thine happy mind
To rise with them, and leave the world behind.

As a young plant by hurricanes up torn,
So near its parent lies the newly born—
But 'midst the bright ethereal train behold
It shines superior on a throne of gold:
Then, mourner, cease; let hope thy tears restrain,
Smile on the tomb, and sooth the raging pain.
On yon blest regions fix thy longing view,
Mindless of sublunary scenes below;
Ascend the sacred mount, in thought arise,
And seek substantial and immortal joys;
Where hope receives, where faith to vision springs,
And raptur'd seraphs tune th' immortal strings
To strains ecstatic. Thou the chorus join,
And to thy father tune the praise divine.

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

To a Clergyman on the Death of His Lady

When contemplation finds her sacred spring,
Where heav'nly music makes the arches ring,
Where virtue reigns unsullied and divine,
Where wisdom throned, and all the graces shine,
There sits thy spouse amidst the radiant throng,
While thy dear mate to flesh no more confin'd,
There choirs angelic shout her welcome round,
With perfect bliss and peerless glory crown'd.
While thy dear mate to flesh no more confin'd,
Exults a blest, an heav'n ascended mind,
Say in thy breast shall floods of sorrow rise?
Say shall its torrents overwhelm thine eyes?
Amid the seats of heav'n a place is free,
And angels open their bright ranks for thee;
For thee they wait and with expectant eye
Thy spouse leans downward from th' empyreal sky:
"O come away," her longing spirit cries,
"And share with me the raptures of the skies.
"Our bliss divine to mortals is unknown;
"Immortal life and glory are our own.
"There, too, may the dear pledges of our love
"Arrive, and taste with us the joys above;



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



“Attune the harp to more than mortal lays,
“And join with us the tribute of their praise
“To him, who dy’d stern justice to atone,
“And make eternal glory all our own.
“He in his death slew ours, and, as he rose,
“He crush’d the dire dominion of our foes ;
“Vain were their hopes to put the God to flight,
“Chain us to hell, and bar the gates of light.”

She spoke and turn’d from mortal scenes her eyes,
Which beamed celestial radiance o’er the skies.

Then thou, dear man, no more with grief retire,
Let grief no longer damp devotion’s fire,
But rise sublime, to equal bliss aspire,
Thy sighs no more be wafted by the wind
No more complain, but be to heav’n resign’d,
’Twas thine t’ unfold the oracles divine,
To soothe our woes the task was also thine ;
Now sorrow is incumbent on thy heart,
Permit the muse a cordial to impart ;
Who can to thee their tend’rest aid refuse ?
To dry thy tears how longs the heav’nly muse !

An Hymn to the Morning

Attend my lays, ye ever honour'd nine,
Assist my labours, and my strains refine;
In smoothest numbers pour the notes along,
For bright *Aurora* now demands my song.

Aurora hail, and all the thousand dies,
Which deck thy progress through the vaulted skies;
The morn awakes, and wide extends her rays,
On ev'ry leaf the gentle zephyr plays;
Harmonious lays the feather'd race resume,
Dart the bright eye, and shake the painted plume.

Ye shady groves, your verdant gloom display
To shield your poet from the burning day:
Calliope awake the sacred lyre,
While thy fair sisters fan the pleasing fire:
The bow'rs, the gales, the variegated skies
In all their pleasures in my bosom rise.

See in the east th' illustrious king of day!
His rising radiance drives the shades away—
But oh! I feel his fervid leaves too strong,
And scarce begun, concludes th' abortive song.

An Hymn to the Evening

Soon as the sun forsook the eastern main
The pealing thunder shook the heav'nly plain;
Majestic grandeur! From the zephyr's wing,
Exhales the incense of the blooming spring,
Soft purl the streams, the birds renew their notes,
And through the air their mingled music floats.

Through all the heav'ns what beauteous dies are
spread!

But the west glories in the deepest red:
So may our breasts with every virtue glow,
The living temples of our God below!

Fill'd with the praise of him who gives the light,
And draws the sable curtains of the night,
Let placid slumbers soothe each weary mind,
At morn to wake more heav'nly, more refin'd;
So shall the labors of the day begin
More pure, more guarded from the snares of sin.

Night's leaden sceptre seals my drowsy eyes,
Then cease, my song, till fair *Aurora* rise.

✻ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✻

Isaiah lxxiii; 1-8

Say, heav'nly muse, what king, or mighty God,
That moves sublime from *Idumea's* road?

In *Bozrah's* dies, with martial glories join'd,
His purple vesture waves upon the wind.

Why thus enrob'd delights he to appear
In the dread image of the *Pow'r* of war?

Compress'd in wrath the swelling wine-press
groaned,

It bled, and pour'd the gushing purple round.

"Mine was the act," th' Almighty Saviour said,
And shook the dazzling glories of his head,

"When all forsook I trod the press alone,

"And conquer'd by omnipotence of my own;

"For man's release sustained the pond'rous load,

"For man the wrath of an immortal God:

"To execute th' Eternal's dread command

"My soul I sacrific'd with willing hand;

"Sinless I stood before the avenging frown,

"Atoning thus for vices not my own."

His eye the ample field of battle round

Survey'd, but no created succours found;

His own omnipotence sustain'd the fight,

His vengeance sunk the haughty foes in night;

☞ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ☞

Beneath his feet the prostrate troops were spread,
And round him lay the dying, and the dead.

Great God, what lightn'ing flashes from thine
eyes?

What pow'r withstands if thou indignant rise?

Against thy *Zion* though her foes may rage,
And all their cunning, all their strength engage,
Yet she serenely on thy bosom lies,
Smiles at their arts, and all their force defies.

On Recollection

Mneme begin. Inspire, ye sacred nine,
Your vent'rous *Afric* in her great design.
Mneme, immortal pow'r, I trace thy spring:
Assist my strains, while I thy glories sing:
The acts of long departed years, by thee
Recover'd, in due order rang'd we see:
Thy pow'r the long-forgotten calls from night,
That sweetly plays before the *fancy's* sight.

Mneme in our nocturnal vision pours
The ample treasure of her secret stores;
Swift from above she wings her silent flight
Through Phœbe's realms, fair regent of the night;



And, in her pomp of images display'd,
To the high-raptur'd poet gives her aid,
Through the unbounded regions of the mind,
Diffusing light celestial and refin'd.
The heav'nly *phantom* paints the actions done
By ev'ry tribe beneath the rolling sun.

Mneme, enthron'd within the human breast,
Has vice condemn'd and ev'ry virtue blest.
How sweet the sound when we her plaudit hear?
Sweeter than music to the ravish'd ear,
Sweeter than *Maro's* entertaining strains
Resounding through the groves, and hills, and
plains.

But how is *Mneme* dreaded by the race,
Who scorn her warnings and despise her grace?
By her unveil'd each horrid crime appears,
Her awful hand a cup of wormwood bears.
Days, years misspent, O what a hell of woe!
Hers the worst tortures that our souls can know.

Now eighteen years their destin'd course have run
In fast succession round the central sun.
How did the follies of that period pass
Unnotic'd, but behold them writ in brass!
In Recollection see them fresh return,
And sure 'tis mine to be asham'd, and mourn.



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



O *Virtue*, smiling in immortal green,
Do thou exert thy pow'r, and change the scene;
Be thine employ to guide my future days,
And mine to pay the tribute of my praise.

Of *Recollection* such the pow'r enthron'd
In ev'ry breast, and thus her pow'r is own'd.
The wretch, who dar'd the vengeance of the skies,
At last awakes in horror and surprise,
By her alarm'd, he sees impending fate,
He howls in anguish and repents too late.
But O! what peace, what joys are her's t' impart
To ev'ry holy, ev'ry upright heart!
Thrice blest the man, who in her sacred shrine,
Feels himself shelter'd from the wrath divine!

On Imagination

Thy various works, imperial queen, we see,
How bright their forms! how deck'd with pomp
by thee!

Thy wond'rous acts in beauteous order stand,
And all attest how potent is thine hand.

From *Helicon's* refulgent heights attend
Ye sacred choir, and my attempts befriend:

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

To tell her glories with a faithful tongue,
Ye blooming graces, triumph in my song.

Now here, now there, the roving *Fancy* flies,
Till some lov'd object strikes her wand'ring eyes.
Whose silken fetters all the senses bind,
And soft captivity involves the mind.

Imagination! who can sing thy force?
Or who describe the swiftness of thy course?
Soaring through air to find the bright abode,
Th' empyreal palace of the thund'ring God,
We on thy pinions can surpass the wind,
And leave the rolling universe behind:
From star to star the mental optics rove,
Measure the skies, and range the realms above.
There in one view we grasp the mighty whole,
Or with new worlds amaze th' unbounded soul.

Though *Winter* frowns to *Fancy's* raptur'd eyes
The fields may flourish, and gay scenes arise;
The frozen deeps may break their iron bands,
And bid their waters murmur o'er the sands.
Fair *Flora* may resume her fragrant reign,
And with her flow'ry riches deck the plain;
Sylvanus may diffuse his honors round,
And all the forest may with leaves be crown'd:



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



Show'rs may descend, and dews their gems disclose,

And nectar sparkle on the blooming rose.

Such is thy pow'r, nor are thine orders vain,

O thou the leader of the mental train:

In full perfection all thy works are wrought,

And thine the sceptre o'er the realms of thought.

Before thy throne the subject-passions bow,

Of subject-passions sov'reign ruler thou;

At thy command joy rushes on the heart,

And through the glowing veins the spirits dart.

Fancy might now her silken pinions try
To rise from earth, and sweep th' expanse on high;
From *Tithon's* bed now might *Aurora* rise,
Her cheeks all glowing with celestial dies,
While a pure stream of light o'erflows the skies.
The monarch of the day I might behold,
And all the mountains tipt with radiant gold,
But I reluctant leave the pleasing views,
Which *Fancy* dresses to delight the *Muse*;
Winter austere forbids me to aspire,
And northern tempests damp the rising fire;
They chill the tides of *Fancy's* flowing sea,
Cease then, my song, cease the unequal lay.

**A Funeral Poem on the Death of C. E., An
Infant of Twelve Months**

Through airy roads he wings his infant flight
To purer regions of celestial light ;
Enlarg'd he sees unnumber'd systems roll,
Beneath him sees the universal whole,
Planets on planets run their destin'd round,
And circling wonders fill the vast profound.
Th' ethereal now, and now th' empyreal skies
With growing splendors strike his wond'ring eyes :
The angels view him with delight unknown,
Press his soft hand, and seat him on his throne ;
Then smiling thus : "To this divine abode,
"The seat of saints, of seraphs, and of God,
"Thrice welcome thou." The raptur'd babe replies,
"Thanks to my God, who snatch'd me to the skies,
"E'er vice triumphant had possess'd my heart,
"E'er yet the tempter had beguil'd my heart,
"E'er yet on sin's base actions I was bent,
"E'er yet I knew temptations dire intent ;
"E'er yet the lash for horrid crimes I felt,
"E'er vanity had led my way to guilt,
"But, soon arriv'd at my celestial goal
"Full glories rush on my expanding soul."

↪ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ↪

Joyful he spoke: Exulting cherubs round
Clapt their glad wings, the heav'nly vaults resound.

Say, parents, why this unavailing moan?
Why heave your pensive bosoms with the groan?
To *Charles*, the happy subject of my song,
A brighter world, and nobler strains belong.
Say would you tear him from the realms above
By thoughtless wishes, and prepost'rous love?
Doth his felicity increase your pain?
Or could you welcome to this world again
This heir of bliss? with a superior air
Methinks he answers with a smile severe,
"Thrones and dominions cannot tempt me there."

But still you cry, "Can we the sigh forbear,
"And still and still must we not pour the tear?
"Our only hope, more dear than vital breath,
"Twelve moons revolv'd, becomes they prey of
death;

"Delightful infant, nightly visions give
"Thee to our arms, and we with joy receive,
"We fain would clasp the *Phantom* to our breast,
"The *Phantom* flies and leaves the soul unblest."

To yon bright regions let your faith ascend,
Prepare to join your dearest infant friend
In pleasures without measure, without end.

✧ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✧

To Captain H——d, of the 65th Regiment

Say, muse divine, can hostile scenes delight
The warrior's bosom in the fields of fight?
Lo! here the Christian and the hero join
With mutual grace to form the man divine.
In H——d, see with pleasure and surprise,
Where *valour* kindles, and where *virtue* lies:
Go, hero brave, still grace the post of fame,
And add new glories to thine honour'd name,
Still to the field, and still to virtue true:
Britannia glories in no son like you.

To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty's Secretary of State for North America, Etc.

Hail, happy day, when, smiling like the morn,
Fair *Freedom* rose New-England to adorn:
The northern clime beneath her genial ray,
Dartmouth, congratulates thy blissful sway:
Elate with hope her race no longer mourns,
Each soul expands, each grateful bosom burns,
While in thine hand with pleasure we behold
The silken reins, and *Freedom's* charms unfold.

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

Long lost to realms beneath the northern skies
She shines supreme, while hated *faction* dies :
Soon as appear'd the *Goddess* long desir'd,
Sick at the view, she languish'd and expir'd ;
Thus from the splendors of the morning light
The owl in sadness seeks the caves of night.

No more *America* in mournful strain
Of wrongs, and grievance unredress'd complain,
No longer shalt thou dread the iron chain,
Which wanton *Tyranny* with lawless hand
Had made, and which it meant t' enslave the land.

Should you, my lord, while you pursue my song,
Wonder from whence my love of *Freedom* sprung,
Whence flow these wishes for the common good,
By feeling hearts alone best understood,
I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
Was snatch'd from *Afric's* fancy'd happy seat :
What pangs excruciating must molest,
What sorrows labour in my parent's breast?
Steel'd was the soul and by no misery mov'd
That from a father seiz'd his babe belov'd
Such, such my case. And can I then but pray
Others may never feel tyrannic sway?

For favours past, great Sir, our thanks are due,
And thee we ask thy favours to renew,

✻ 'The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✻

Since in thy pow'r, as in thy will before,
To sooth the griefs, which thou did'st once deplore.
May heav'nly grace the sacred sanction give
To all thy works, and thou for ever live
Not only on the wings of fleeting *Fame*,
Though praise immortal crowns the patriot's name,
But to conduct to heav'n's refulgent fane,
May fiery courses sweep th' ethereal plain,
And bear thee upwards to that blest abode,
Where, like the prophet, thou shalt find thy God.

Ode To Neptune

On Mrs. W — 's Voyage to England

I.

While raging tempests shake the shore,
While Ae'lus' thunders round us roar,
And sweep impetuous o'er the plain
Be still, O tyrant of the main;
Nor let thy brow contracted frowns betray,
While my *Susannah* skims the wat'ry way.

II.

The *Pow'r* propitious hears the lay,
The blue-ey'd daughters of the sea

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

With sweeter cadence glide along,
And *Thames* responsive joins their song.
Pleas'd with their notes *Sol* sheds benign his ray,
And double radiance decks the face of day.

III.

To Court thee to *Britannia's* arms
Serene the climes and mild the sky,
Her region boasts unnumber'd charms,
Thy welcome smiles in ev'ry eye.
Thy promise, *Neptune* keep, record my pray'r,
Nor give my wishes to the empty air.

Boston, October 10, 1772.

To a Lady on Her Coming to North America
With Her Son, for the Recovery
of Her Health

Indulgent muse! my grov'ling mind inspire,
And fill my bosom with celestial fire.
See from *Jamaica's* fervid shore she moves,
Like the fair mother of the blooming loves,
When from above the *Goddess* with her hand
Fans the soft breeze, and lights upon the land;
Thus she on *Neptune's* wat'ry realm reclin'd
Appear'd, and thus invites the ling'ring wind.

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

“Arise, ye winds, *America* explore,
“Waft me, ye gales, from this malignant shore;
“The *Northern* milder climes I long to greet,
“There hope that health will my arrival meet.”
Soon as she spoke in my ideal view
The winds assented, and the vessel flew.

Madam, your spouse bereft of wife and son,
In the grove’s dark recesses pours his moan;
Each branch, wide-spreading to the ambient sky,
Forgets its verdure, and submits to die.

From thence I turn, and leave the sultry plain,
And swift pursue thy passage o’er the main:
The ship arrives before the fav’ring wind,
And makes the *Philadelphian* port assign’d,
Thence I attend you to *Bostonia’s* arms,
Where gen’rous friendship ev’ry bosom warms:
Thrice welcome here! may health revive again,
Bloom on thy cheek, and bound in ev’ry vein!
Then back return to gladden ev’ry heart,
And give your spouse his soul’s far dearer part,
Receiv’d again with what a sweet surprise,
The tear in transport starting from his eyes!
While his attendant son with blooming grace
Springs to his father’s ever dear embrace.
With shouts of joy *Jamaica’s* rocks resound,
With shouts of joy the country rings around.

✧ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✧

To a Lady on Her Remarkable Preservation in
a Hurricane in North-Carolina

Though thou did'st hear the tempest from afar,
And felt'st the horrors of the wat'ry war,
To me unknown, yet on this peaceful shore
Methinks I hear the storm tumultuous roar,
And how stern *Boreas* with impetuous hand
Compell'd the *Nereids* to usurp the land.
Reluctant rose the daughters of the main,
And slow ascending glided o'er the plain,
Till *Aeolus* in his rapid chariot drove
In gloomy grandeur from the vault above:
Furious he comes. His winged sons obey
Their frantic sire, and madden all the sea.
The billows rave, the wind's fierce tyrant roars,
And with his thund'ring terrors shakes the shores:
Broken by waves the vessel's frame is rent,
And strows with planks the wat'ry element.

But thee, *Maria*, a kind *Nereid's* shield
Preserv'd from sinking, and thy form upheld:
And sure some heav'nly oracle design'd
At that dread crisis to instruct thy mind
Things of eternal consequence to weigh,
And to thine heart just feelings to convey

✧ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✧

Of things above, and of the future doom,
And what the births of the dread world to come.

From tossing seas I welcome thee to land.
"Resign her, *Nereid*," 'twas thy God's command.
Thy spouse late buried, as thy fears conceiv'd,
Again returns, thy fears are all reliev'd:
Thy daughter blooming with superior grace
Again thou see'st, again thine arms embrace;
O come, and joyful show thy spouse his heir,
And what the blessings of maternal care!

**To a Lady and Her Children, on the Death of
Her Son and Their Brother**

O'erwhelming sorrow now demands my song:
From death the overwhelming sorrow sprung.
What flowing tears? What hearts with grief op-
pres't?
What sighs on sighs heave the fond parent's breast?
The brother weeps, the hapless sisters join
Th' increasing woe, and swell the crystal brine;
The poor, who once his gen'rous bounty fed,
Droop, and bewail their benefactor dead.
In death the friend, the kind companion lies,
And in one death what various comfort dies!

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

Th' unhappy mother sees the sanguine rill
Forget to flow, and nature's wheels stand still,
But see from earth his spirit far remov'd,
And know no grief recals your best-belov'd:
He, upon pinions swifter than the wind,
Has left mortality's sad scenes behind
For joys to this terrestrial state unknown,
And glories richer than the monarch's crown.
Of virtue's steady course the prize behold!
What blissful wonders to his mind unfold!
But of celestial joys I sing in vain:
Attempt not, muse, the too advent'rous strain.

No more in briny show'rs, ye friends around,
Or bathe his clay, or waste them on the ground:
Still do you weep, still wish for his return?
How cruel thus to wish, and thus to mourn?
No more for him the streams of sorrow pour,
But haste to join him on the heav'nly shore,
On harps of gold to tune immortal lays,
And to your God immortal anthems raise.

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

To a Gentleman and Lady on the Death of the
Lady's Brother and Sister, and a Child of
the Name of Ania, Aged One Year

On *Death's* domain intent I fix my eyes,
Where human nature in vast ruin lies:
With pensive mind I search the drear abode,
Where the great conqu'ror has his spoils bestow'd;
There there the offspring of six thousand years
In endless numbers to my view appears:
Whole kingdoms in his gloomy den are thrust,
And nations mix with their primeval dust:
Insatiate still he gluts the ample tomb;
His is the present, his the age to come.
See here a brother, here a sister spread,
And a sweet daughter mingled with the dead.

But, *Madam*, let your grief be laid aside,
And let the fountain of your tears be dry'd,
In vain they flow to wet the dusty plain,
Your sighs are wafted to the skies in vain,
Your pains they witness, but they can no more,
While *Death* reigns tyrant o'er this mortal shore.

The glowing stars and silver queen of light
At last must perish in the gloom of night:

✧ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✧

Resign thy friends to that Almighty hand,
Which gave them life, and bow to his command;
Thine *Avis* give without a murm'ring heart,
Though half thy soul be fated to depart.
To shining guards consign thine infant care
To waft triumphant through the seats of air:
Her soul enlarg'd to heav'nly pleasure springs,
She feeds on truth and uncreated things.
Methinks I hear her in the realms above,
And leaning forward with a filial love,
Invite you there to share immortal bliss
Unknown, untasted in a state like this.
With tow'ring hopes, and growing grace arise,
And seek beatitude beyond the skies.

On the Death of Dr. Samuel Marshall, 1771

Through thickest glooms look back, immortal
shade,
On that confusion which thy death has made;
Or from *Olympus'* height look down, and see
A *Town* involv'd in grief bereft of thee.
Thy *Lucy* sees thee mingle with the dead,
And rends the graceful tresses from her head,

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

Wild in her woe, with grief unknown opprest
Sigh follows sigh deep heaving from her breast.

Too quickly fled, ah! whither art thou gone?
Ah! lost for ever to thy wife and son!
The hapless child, thine only hope and heir,
Clings round his mother's neck and weeps his sor-
rows there.

The loss of thee on *Tyler's* soul returns,
And *Boston* for her dear physician mourns.

When sickness call'd for *Marshall's* healing hand,
With what compassion did his soul expand?
In him we found the father and the friend:
In life how lov'd! how honour'd in his end!

And must not then our Aesculapius stay
To bring his ling'ring infant into day?
The babe unborn in the dark womb is tost,
And seems in anguish for its father lost.

Gone is *Apollo* from his house of earth,
But leaves the sweet memorials of his worth:
The common parent, whom we all deplore,
From yonder world unseen must come no more,
Yet 'midst our woes immortal hopes attend
The spouse, the sire, the universal friend.

✠ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✠

To a Gentleman on His Voyage to Great Britain
for the Recovery of his Health

While others chant of gay *Elysian* scenes,
Of balmy zephyrs, and of flow'ry plains,
My song more happy speaks a greater name,
Feels higher motives and a nobler flame.
For thee, O R——, the muse attunes her strings,
And mounts sublime above inferior things.

I sing not now of green embow'ring woods,
I sing not now the daughters of the floods,
I sing not of the storms o'er ocean driv'n,
And how they howl'd along the waste of heav'n,
But I to R—— would paint the *British* shore,
And vast *Atlantic*, not untry'd before:
Thy life impair'd commands thee to arise,
Leave these bleak regions and inclement skies,
Where chilling winds return the winter past,
And nature shudders at the furious blast.

O thou stupendous, earth-enclosing main
Exert thy wonders to the world again!
If ere thy pow'r prolong'd the fleeting breath,
Turn'd back the shafts, and mock'd the gates of
death,

✧ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✧

If ere thine air dispens'd an healing pow'r,
Or snatch'd the victim from the fatal hour,
This equal case demands thine equal care,
And equal wonders may this patient share.
But unavailing, frantic is the dream
To hope thine aid without the aid of him
Who gave thee birth and taught thee where to flow,
And in thy waves his various blessings show.
May R—— return to view his native shore
Replete with vigour not his own before,
Then shall we see with pleasure and surprise,
And own thy work, great Ruler of the skies!

**To the Rev. Dr. Thomas Amory, on Reading
His Sermons on Daily Devotion, in Which
That Duty is Recommended and Assisted**

To cultivate in ev'ry noble mind
Habitual grace, and sentiments refin'd,
Thus while you strive to mend the human heart,
Thus while the heav'nly precepts you impart,
O may each bosom catch the sacred fire,
And youthful minds to *Virtue's* throne aspire!
When God's eternal ways you set in sight
And *Virtue* shines in all her native light,

☞ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ☞

In vain would *Vice* her works in night conceal,
For *Wisdom's* eye pervades the sable veil.

Artists may paint the sun's effulgent rays,
But *Amory's* pen the brighter God displays:
While his great works in *Amory's* pages shine,
And while he proves his essence all divine,
The Athiest sure no more can boast aloud
Of chance, or nature, and exclude the God;
As if the clay without the potter's aid
Should rise in various forms, and shapes self-made,
Or worlds above with orb o'er orb profound
Self-mov'd could run the everlasting round.
It cannot be—unerring *Wisdom* guides
With eye propitious, and o'er-all presides.

Still prosper, *Amory!* still may'st thou receive
The warmest blessings that a muse can give,
And when this transitory fate is o'er,
When kingdoms fall, and fleeting *Fame's* no more,
May *Amory* triumph in immortal fame,
A nobler title, and superior name!

✠ The Po

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To the Rev. Dr. Thom:
His Sermons on Bait
That Duty is Recomm:

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On the Death of J. C., An Infant

No more the flow'ry scenes of pleasure rise,
Nor charming prospects greet the mental eyes,
No more with joy we view that lovely face
Smiling, disportive, flush'd with ev'ry grace.

The tear of sorrow flows from ev'ry eye,
Groans answer groans, and sighs to sighs reply;
What sudden pangs shot thro' each aching heart,
When, *Death*, thy messenger dispatch'd his dart?
Thy dread attendants, all-destroying *Pow'r*,
Hurried the infant to his mortal hour.

Could'st thou unpitying close those radiant eyes?
Or fail'd his artless beauties to surprise?
Could not his innocence thy stroke controul
Thy purpose shake, and soften all thy soul?

The blooming babe, with shades of *Death* o'er-
spread

No more shall smile, no more shall raise its head,
But, like a branch, that from the tree is torn,
Falls prostrate, wither'd, languid, and forlorn.

"Where flies my *James*?" 'Tis thus I seem to
hear

The parent ask, "Some angel tell me where
"He wings his passage thro' the yielding air?"



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



Methinks a cherub bending from the skies
Observes the question, and serene replies,
“In heav’n’s high places your babe appears:
“Prepare to meet him, and dismiss your tears.”
Shall not th’ intelligence your grief restrain,
And turn the mournful to the cheerful strain?
Cease your complaints, suspend each rising sigh,
Cease to accuse the Ruler of the sky.
Parents, no more indulge the falling tear:
Let *Faith* to heav’n’s refulgent domes repair,
There see your infant, like a seraph glow:
What charms celestial in his numbers flow
Melodious, while the soul-enchancing strain
Dwells on his tongue, and fills th’ ethereal plain?
Enough—for ever cease your murm’ring breath;
Not as a foe, but friend converse with *Death*,
Since to the port of happiness unknown
He brought that treasure which you call your own.
The gift of heav’n intrusted to your hand
Cheerful resign at the divine command:
Not at your bar must sov’reign *Wisdom* stand.



An Hymn to Humanity

To S. P. C. Esq.

I.

Lo! for this dark terrestrial ball
Forsakes his azure-paved hall
A prince of heav'nly birth!
Divine *Humanity* behold,
What wonders rise, what charms unfold
At his descent to earth!

II.

The bosoms of the great and good
With wonder and delight he view'd,
And fix'd his empire there:
Him, close compressing to his breast,
The sire of gods and men address'd,
"My son, my heav'nly fair!

III.

"Descend to earth, there place thy throne;
"To succor man's afflicted son
"Each human heart inspire:
"To act in bounties unconfin'd
"Enlarge the close contracted mind,
"And fill it with thy fire."

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

IV.

Quick as the word, with swift career
He wings his course from star to star,
And leaves the bright abode.
The *Virtue* did his charms impart;
Their G——! then thy raptur'd heart
Perceived the rushing God:

V.

For when thy pitying eye did see
The languid muse in low degree,
Then, then at thy desire
Descended the celestial nine;
O'er me methought they deign'd to shine,
And deign'd to string my lyre.

VI.

Can *Afric's* muse forgetful prove?
Or can such friendship fail to move
A tender human heart?
Immortal *Friendship* laurel-crown'd
The smiling *Graces* all surround
With ev'ry heav'nly *Art*.

✂ 'The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

To the Honorable T. H., Esq., on the Death of
His Daughter

While deep you mourn beneath the cypress-shade
The hand of Death, and your dear daughter laid
In dust, whose absence gives your tears to flow,
And racks your bosom with incessant woe,
Let *Recollection* take a tender part,
Assuage the raging tortures of your heart,
Still the wild tempest of tumultuous grief,
And pour the heav'nly nectar of relief:
Suspend the sigh, dear Sir, and check the groan,
Divinely bright your daughter's *Virtues* shone:
How free from scornful pride her gentle mind,
Which ne'er its aid to indigence declin'd!
Expanding free, it sought the means to prove
Unfailing charity, unbounded love!

She reluctant flies to see no more
Her dear-lov'd parents on earth's dusky shore:
Impatient heav'n's resplendent goal to gain,
She with swift progress cuts the azure plain,
Where grief subsides, where changes are no more,
And life's tumultuous billows cease to roar;
She leaves her earthly mansion for the skies,
Where new creations feast her wond'ring eyes.



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



To heav'n's high mandate cheerfully resign'd
She mounts, and leaves the rolling globe behind;
She, who late wish'd *Leonard* might return,
Has ceas'd to languish, and forgot to mourn;
To the same high empyreal mansions come,
She joins her spouse, and smiles upon the tomb:
And thus I hear her from the realms above:
"Lo! this the kingdom of celestial love!
"Could ye, fond parents, see our present bliss,
"How soon would you each sigh, each fear dismiss?
"Amidst unutter'd pleasures whilst I play
"In the fair sunshine of celestial day,
"As far as grief affects an happy soul
"So far doth grief my better mind controul,
"To see on earth my aged parents mourn,
"And secret wish for T——l to return:
"Let brighter scenes your ev'ning hours employ:
"Converse with heav'n, and taste the promis'd
joy."

☞ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ☜

**Niobe in Distress for Her Children Slain by
Apollo, From Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,
Book vi, and From a View of the
Painting of Mr. Richard Wilson**

Apollo's wrath to man the dreadful spring -
Of ills innum'rous, tuneful goddess, sing!
Thou who did'st first th' ideal pencil give,
And taught'st the painter in his works to live,
Inspire with glowing energy of thought,
What *Wilson* painted, and what *Ovid* wrote.
Muse! lend thy aid, nor let me sue in vain,
Tho' last and meanest of the rhyming train!
O guide my pen in lofty strains to show
The *Phrygian* queen, all beautiful in woe.

'Twas where *Maeonia* spreads her wide domain
Niobe dwelt, and held her potent reign:
See in her hand the regal sceptre shine,
The wealthy heir of *Tantalus* divine,
He most distinguish'd by *Dodonean Jove*,
To approach the tables of the gods above:
Her grandsire *Atlas*, who with mighty pains
Th' etherial axis on his neck sustains:
Her other grandsire on the throne on high
Rolls the loud pealing thunder thro' the sky.



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



Her spouse, *Amphion*, who from *Jove*, too,
springs,
Divinely taught to sweep the sounding strings.

Seven sprightly sons the royal bed adorn,
Seven daughters beauteous as the op'ning morn.,
As when *Aurora* fills the ravish'd sight,
And decks the orient realms with rosy light
From their bright eyes the living splendors play,
Nor can beholders bear the flashing ray.

Wherever, *Niobe*, thou turn'st thine eyes,
New beauties kindle, and new joys arise!
But thou had'st far the happier mother prov'd,
If this fair offspring had been less belov'd:
What if their charms exceed *Aurora's* teint.
No words could tell them, and no pencil paint,
Thy love too vehement hastens to destroy
Each blooming maid, and each celestial boy.

Now *Manto* comes, endu'd with mighty skill,
The past to explore, the future to reveal.
Thro' *Thebes'* wide streets *Tiresia's* daughter came,
Divine *Latona's* mandate to proclaim:
The *Theban* maids to hear the order ran,
When thus *Mæonia's* prophetess began:

“Go, *Thebans!* great *Latona's* will obey,
“And pious tribute at her altars pay:

✦ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✦

“With rights divine, the goddess be implor’d,
“Nor be her sacred offspring unador’d.”

Thus *Manto* spoke. The *Theban* maids obey,
And pious tribute to the goddess pay.
The rich perfumes ascend in waving spires,
And altars blaze with consecrated fires;
The fair assembly moves with graceful air,
And leaves of laurel bind the flowing hair.

Niobe comes with all her royal race,
With charms unnumber’d, and superior grace:
Her *Phrygian* garments of delightful hue,
Inwove with gold, refulgent to the view,
Beyond description beautiful she moves
Like heav’nly *Venus*, ’midt her smiles and loves:
She views around the supplicating train,
And shakes her graceful head with stern disdain.
Proudly she turns around her lofty eyes,
And thus reviles celestial deities:

“What madness drives the *Theban* ladies fair
“To give their incense to surrounding air?
“Say why this new sprung deity preferr’d?
“Why vainly fancy your petitions heard?
“Or say why *Coen’s* offspring is obey’d,
“While to my goddessship no tribut’s paid?
“For me no altars blaze with living fires,

✠ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✠

“No bullock bleeds, no frankincense transpires,
“Thro’ *Cadmus’* palace, not unknown to fame,
“And *Phrygian* nations all revere my name.
“Where’er I turn my eyes vast wealth I find,
“Lo! here an empress with a goddess join’d.
“What, shall a *Titaness* be deify’d,
“To whom the spacious earth a couch deny’d!
“Nor heav’n, nor earth, nor sea receiv’d your queen,
“Till pitying *Delos* took the wand’rer in.
“Round me what a large progeny is spread!
“No frowns of fortune has my soul to dread.
“What if indignant she decrease my train
“More than *Latona’s* number will remain;
“Then hence, ye *Theban* dames, hence haste away,
“Nor longer off’rings to *Latona* pay?
“Regard the orders of *Amphion’s* spouse,
“And take the leaves of laurels from your brows.”
Niobe spoke. The *Theban* maids obey’d,
Their brows unbound, and left the rights unpaid.
The angry goddess heard, then silence broke
On *Cynthus’* summit, and indignant spoke:
“*Phoebus!* behold, thy mother in disgrace,
“Who to no goddess yields the prior place
“Except to *Juno’s* self, who reigns above,
“The spouse and sister of the thund’ring *Jove*.”

✦ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✦

"*Niobe*, sprung from *Tantalus*, inspires
"Each *Theban* bosom with rebellious fires;
"No reason her imperious temper quells,
"But all her father in her tongue rebels;
"Wrap her own sons for her blaspheming breath,
"*Apollo!* wrap them in the shades of death."

Latona ceas'd, and ardent thus replies
The God, whose glory decks th' expanded skies.

"Cease thy complaints, mine be the task assign'd
"To punish pride, and scourge the rebel mind."
This *Phoebé* join'd.—They wing their instant flight;
Thebes trembled as th' immortal pow'rs alight.

With clouds incompas'd glorious *Phoebus* stands;
The feather'd vengeance quiv'ring in his hands.

Near *Cadmus'* walls a plain extended lay,
Where *Thebes'* young princes pass'd in sport the
day:

There the bold coursers bounded o'er the plains,
While the great masters held the golden reins.
Ismenus first the racing pastime led,
And rul'd the fury of his flying steed.
"Ah, me," he sudden cries, with shrieking breath,
While in his breast he feels the shaft of death;
He drops the bridle on his courser's mane,
Before his eyes in shadows swims the plain,

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

He, the first-born of great *Amphion's* bed,
Was struck the first, first mingled with the dead.

Then did'st thou, *Sipylus*, the language hear
Of fate portentous whistling in the air :
As when th' impending storm the sailor sees
He spreads his canvas to the fav'ring breeze,
So to thine horse thou gav'st the golden reins,
Gav'st him to rush impetuous o'er the plains :
But, ah! a fatal shaft from *Phoebus'* hand
Smites thro' thy neck, and sinks thee on the sand.

Two other brothers were at *wrestling* found,
And in their pastime claspt each other round :
A shaft that instant from *Apollo's* hand
Transfixt them both, and stretch'd them on the
sand :

Together they their cruel fate bemoan'd,
Together languish'd, and together groan'd :
Together too th' unbodied spirits fled,
And sought the gloomy mansions of the dead.

Alphenor saw, and trembling at the view,
Beat his torn breast, that chang'd its snowy hue.
He flies to raise them in a kind embrace ;
A brother's fondness triumphs in his face :
Alphenor fails in this fraternal deed,
A dart dispatch'd him (so the fates decreed :)



Soon as the arrow left the deadly wound,
His issuing entrails smook'd upon the ground.

What woes on blooming *Damasichon* wait!
His sighs portend his near impending fate.
Just where the well-made leg begins to be,
And the soft sinews form the supple knee,
The youth sore wounded by the *Delian* god
Attempts t' extract the crime-avenging rod,
But, whilst he strives the will of fate t' avert,
Divine *Apollo* sends a second dart;
Swift thro' his throat the feather'd mischief flies,
Bereft of sense, he drops his head, and dies.

Young *Illioneus*, the last directs his pray'r,
And cries, "My life, ye gods celestial! spare."
Apollo heard, and pity touch'd his heart,
But ah! too late, for he had sent the dart:
Thou, too, O *Illioneus*, art doom'd to fall,
The fates refuse that arrow to recal.

On the swift wings of ever-flying *Fame*
To *Cadmus'* palace soon the tidings came:
Niobe heard, and with indignant eyes
She thus express'd her anger and surprise:
"Why is such privilege to them allow'd?
"Why thus insulted by the *Delian* god?"



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



“Dwells there such mischief in the pow’rs above?
“Why sweeps the vengeance of immortal *Jove*?”
For now *Amphion* too, with grief oppress’d
Had plung’d the deadly dagger in his breast.
Niobe now, less haughty than before,
With lofty head directs her steps no more.
She, who late told her pedigree divine,
And drove the *Thebans* from *Latona*’s shrine,
How strangely chang’d!—yet beautiful in woe,
She weeps, nor weeps unpity’d by the foe.
On each pale corse the wretched mother spread
Lay overwhelm’d with grief, and kiss’d her dead,
Then rais’d her arms, and thus in accents slow,
“Be sated cruel *Goddess*! with my woe;
“If I’ve offended, let these streaming eyes,
“And let this sev’nfold funeral suffice:
“Ah take this wretched life you deigned to save,
“With them I too am carried to the grave.
“Rejoice triumphant, my victorious foe,
“But show the cause from whence your triumphs
flow?
“Tho’ I unhappy mourn these children slain,
“Yet greater numbers to my lot remain.”
She ceas’d, the bow string twang’d with awful
sound,
Which struck with terror all th’ assembly round,

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

Except the queen, who stood unmov'd alone,
By her distresses more presumptuous grown.
Near the pale corpses stood their sisters fair
In sable vestures and dishevell'd hair
One, while she draws the fatal shaft away,
Faints, falls and sickens at the light of day.
To soothe her mother, lo! another flies,
And blames the fury of inclement skies,
And, while her words a filial pity show,
Struck dumb—indignant seeks the shades below.
Now from the fatal place another flies,
Falls in her flight, and languishes, and dies.
Another on her sister drops in death;
A fifth in trembling terrors yields her breath;
While the sixth seeks some gloomy cave in vain,
Struck with the rest and mingled with the slain.

One only daughter lives, and she the least:
The queen close clasp'd the daughter to her breast:
"Ye heav'nly pow'rs, ah spare me one," she cry'd,
"Ah! spare me one," the vocal hills reply'd:
In vain she begs, the fates her suit deny,
In her embrace she sees her daughter die.

*The queen of all her family bereft,
"Without or husband, son, or daughter left,

*This Verse to the End is the Work of another Hand.

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

“Grew stupid at the shock. The passing air
“Made no impression on her stiff’ning hair.
“The blood forsook her face: amidst the flood
“Pour’d from her cheeks, quite fix’d her eye-balls
stood.

“Her tongue, her palate both obdurate grew,
“Her curdled veins no longer motion knew;
“The use of neck, and arms, and feet was gone,
“And ev’n her bowels hard’ned into stone:
“A marble statue now the queen appears,
“But from the marble steal the silent tears.”

**To S. M., a Young African Painter, on Seeing
His Works**

To show the lab’ring bosom’s deep intent,
And thought in living characters to paint.
When first thy pencil did those beauties give,
And breathing figures learnt from thee to live,
How did those prospects give my soul delight,
A new creation rushing on my sight?
Still, wond’rous youth! each noble path pursue,
On deathless glories fix thine ardent view:
Still may the painter’s and the poet’s fire
To aid thy pencil, and thy verse conspire!



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



And may the charms of each seraphic theme
Conduct thy footsteps to immortal fame!
High to the blissful wonders of the skies
Elate thy soul, and raise thy wishful eyes.
Thrice happy, when exalted to survey
That splendid city, crown'd with endless day,
Whose twice six gates on radiant hinges ring:
Celestial *Salem* blooms in endless spring.

Calm and serene thy moments glide along,
And may the muse inspire each future song!
Still, with the sweets of contemplation bless'd,
May peace with balmy wings your soul invest!
But when these shades of time are chas'd away,
And darkness ends in everlasting day,
On what seraphic pinions shall we move,
And view the landscapes in the realms above?
There shall thy tongue in heav'nly murmurs flow,
And there my muse with heav'nly transport glow:
No more to tell of *Damon's* tender sighs,
Or rising radiance of *Aurora's* eyes,
For nobler themes demand a nobler strain,
And purer language on th' ethereal plain.
Cease, gentle muse! the solemn gloom of night
Now seals the fair creation from my sight.



The Poems of Phillis Wheatley



To His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, on the
Death of His Lady, March 24, 1773

All-Conquering Death! by thy resistless pow'r,
Hope's tow'ring plumage falls to rise no more!
Of scenes terrestrial how the glories fly,
Forget their splendors, and submit to die!
Who ere escap'd thee, but the saint* of old
And the great sage,** whom fiery coursers drew
To heav'n's bright portals from *Elisha's* view;
Wond'ring he gaz'd at the refulgent car,
Then snatch'd the mantle floating on the air.
From *Death* these only could exemption boast,
And without dying gain'd th' immortal coast.
Not falling millions sate the tyrant's mind,
Nor can the victor's progress be confin'd.
But cease thy strife with *Death*, fond *Nature*,
cease :

He leads the *virtuous* to the realms of peace;
His to conduct to the immortal plains,
Where heav'n's Supreme in bliss and glory reigns.

There sits, illustrious Sir, thy beauteous spouse;
A gem-blaz'd circle beaming on her brows.

*Enoch. **Elijah,

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

Hail'd with acclaim among the heav'nly choirs,
Her soul new-kindling with seraphic fires,
To notes divine she tunes the vocal strings,
While heav'n's high concave with the music rings.
Virtue's rewards can mortal pencil paint?
No—all descriptive arts, and eloquence are faint;
Nor canst thou, *Oliver*, assent refuse
To heav'nly tidings from the *Afric* muse.

As soon may change thy laws eternal *fate*,
As the saint miss the glories I relate;
Or her *Benevolence* forgotten lie,
Which wip'd the trick'ling tear from Mis'ry's eye.
Whene'er the adverse winds were known to blow,
When loss to loss* ensu'd, and woe to woe,
Calm and serene beneath her father's hand
She sat resign'd to the divine command.

No longer then, great Sir, her death deplore,
And let us hear the mournful sigh no more,
Restrain the sorrow streaming from thine eye,
Be all thy future moments crown'd with joy!
Nor let thy wishes be to earth confin'd,
But soaring high pursue th' unbodied mind.
Forgive the muse, forgive th' advent'rous lays,
That fain thy soul to heav'nly scenes would raise.

*Three amiable Daughters who died when just arrived to Women's Estate.

A Farewell to America

—
To Mrs. S. M.
—

I

Adieu, *New-England's* smiling meads
Adieu, the flow'ry plain:
I leave thine op'ning charms, O spring
And tempt the roaring main.

II

In vain for me the flow'rets rise,
And boast their gaudy pride,
While here beneath the Northern skies
I mourn for *health* deny'd.

III

Celestial maid of rosy hue,
O let me feel thy reign!
I languish till thy face I view
Thy vanish'd joys regain.

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

IV

Susannah mourns, nor can I bear,
To see the crystal flow'r,
Or mark the tender falling tear
At sad departure's hour ;

V

Not unregarding can I see
Her soul with grief opprest
So let no sigh, nor groans for me
Steal from her pensive breast.

VI

In vain the feather'd warblers sing,
In vain the garden blooms,
And on the bosom of the spring
Breathes out her sweet perfumes.

VII

While for *Britannia's* distant shore
We sweep the liquid plain,
And with astonish'd eyes explore
The wide-extended main.

↔ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ↔

VIII

Lo! *Health* appears! celestial dame!
Complacent and serene,
With *Hebe's* mantle o'er her Frame,
With soul-delighting mein.

IX

To mark the vale where *London* lies
With misty vapors crown'd
Which cloud *Aurora's* thousand dyes,
And veil her charms around.

X

Why, *Phoebus*, moves thy car so slow?
So slow thy rising ray?
Give us the famous town to view,
Thou glorious king of day!

XI

For thee, *Britannia*, I resign
New-England's smiling fields:
To view again her charms divine.
What joy the prospect yields!

✂ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✂

XII

But thou! Temptation hence away,
With all thy fatal train
Nor once seduce my soul away,
By thine enchanting strain.

XIII

Thrice happy they, whose heav'nly shield
Secures their souls from harms
And fell *Temptation* on the field
Of all its pow'r disarms!

Boston, May 7, 1773.

A Rebus, by J. B.

I

A bird, delicious to the taste,
On which an army once did feast,
Sent by an hand unseen;
A creature of the horned race,
Which *Britain's* royal standards grace:
A gem of vivid green;

☞ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ☞

II

A town of gaiety and sport,
Where beaux and beauteous nymphs resort,
And gallantry doth reign;
A *Dardan* hero fam'd of old
For youth and beauty, as we're told,
And by a monarch slain;

III

A peer of popular applause,
Who doth our violated laws,
And grievances proclaim.
Th' initials show a vanquished town,
That adds fresh glory and renown
To old *Britannia's* fame.

**An Answer to the Rebus, by the Author of
These Poems**

The poet asks, and *Phillis* can't refuse,
To show th' obedience of the Infant muse.
She knows the *Quail* of most inviting taste
Fed *Israel's* army in the dreary waste;
And what's on *Britain's* royal standard borne,
But the tall, graceful, rampant *Unicorn*?

✦ The Poems of Phillis Wheatley ✦

The *Emerald* with a vivid verdure glows
 Among the gems which regal crowns compose;
Boston's a town, polite and debonair,
 To which the beaux and beauteous nymphs repair,
 Each *Helen* strikes the mind with sweet surprise,
 While living lightning flashes from her eyes,
 See young *Euphorbus* of the *Dardan* line
 By *Menelaus'* hand to death resign;
 The well known peer of popular applause
 Is *C——m* zealous to support our laws.
Quebec now vanquish'd must obey,
 She too must annual tribute pay
 To *Britain* of immortal fame.
 And add new glory to her name.

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