Esther Inglis, Octonaries, upon the Vanitie and Inconstancie of the World, edited from Folger MS V.a.91

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When one may firmly stay the ordinary rout
Of the great Poste of heau’n, that beares the light about
When one may firmly stay the euer-rouling yeire
On his triumphant Teeme of months, of hours and dayes:

When one may firmly stay the many squadrons cleere
Of twincleing starrs, that in the emptie welkin strayes,
Darting against our heads the long beames of their eye;
Then maye he firmly staye the worlds inconstancye.

Who will not be amazde, when lifting vp his eyes
The steaddy-ordréd course of restles heauens he sies:
And casting doun the same to th’earth so firme and stable,
Shall find all things there-on inconstant, alterable?
What liues vpon the earth, and what is made of clay
Is mortall, apt to change, without repose or stay.

The heauens take neuer reste: yet in the heauens we place
The solide steady reste, which happiest soules embrace.
OCTONARIES

OCTO. III.
The fyre, aire, water, earth, the world with changes fill:
They tourne and tourne again, each in the other still.
So God was pleas’d to mak what this lowe worlde presents
Of well-agreeing warrs of contraire Elements:
To teache vs that we ought for our cheef good enquyre
Else-where than in the earth, the water, aire or fyre:
That the true reste of man, rests in an hyer place
Then earth, aire, water, fyre; Or they all can embrace.

OCTO. III.
Is any thing so strong, so not to be witstand
As is the stormie Sea’s, by boystrous windes increst?
Is any thing so weake, so feebill as the sand?
The sea is ne’ertheles by her owne sands represt.
O wordling! how much more, the tempest doth preuaill
That doth torment thy soule, with winds of vain desyres,
Sith nothing can be found so strong that may auayle
To stop the passions-stormes, that in thy mynd impyres.

OCTO. V.
When faire Phoebus son (the day)
At his arysing doth bewray
Of mountaine tops the proudest hight
New painted with a golden light
Assoone I fixe deep in my mynde
The long day of Eternité
When all things shall renewed be
And night shall neuer cum againe.

OCTO. VI.
Yow fontains cleire, yow floods, and brookes that runs amaine
And with a slydeing pace
Roules out your restles race,
   Tell me, I yow intreat, the cause of your long paine?
It is to figure foorth, our lyues as fast to flie
As we the streames do see,
And that our onely bliss
   Rests no wayes heer below, where each thing restles-is.
OCTO. VII.

When the black face of the skyes
Doth robbe the day-light from our eyes,
My mynde presents vnto my sight
An other farre more darker night:
It’s, wordling, when thou dost refuse
Instructions good to heare and vse;
And, blinded with a doubill night,
Thou dost putt out thyn inward light.

OCTO. VIII.

When the sweet Spring doth dres th' earth in a liurie greene
And eurie Tree of fresh with floorish clothed bein
  The floures are pleadges trew
Of fruicts that shall ensew.
Wordlings that fruictles are, albeit yee floorish doo
In pleasures and delytes, in wealth and honnour too!
  Your fained fruict we find
  Blown off with eury wind.

OCTO. IX.

When Sommer hott inflames the ayre,
The ioyfull Cloune shakes off all caire;
The yellow treasure of the playnes
At large re quyting all his paynes.
But yee that with discourses vaine
And found desyres, we euer find
Nothing to sowe, but onely wind;
What can yee reape but wind againe?

OCTO. X.

When as the witherd leaf doth fall,
And wan-hewd Autumnne doth apall
And with fowle tanny spots desgrace
The beautie of the fayre yeares face
Their maye (as in a glas) be seene
Thy lyfe, ô worldling! Somestymes greene
And some tymes faded and forlorne
As yow no fruict nor leafe had borne.
OCTO. XI.
The wrinced winters face dost thou behold
With frosts and snowes ore-spreed, benumd with colde?
Thus are we all, such is our very cace
When wee the last part of our age attaine.
85
When winter's past, the spring retourns-againe,
But yee, ô wordlings! that your hoipes do place
In this fraile lyfe, and higher hoipes resing,
Your winter lasts without all hoipe of Spring.

OCT. XII.
Thou siest how beautyes passe and quickly scapes thyn eyes:
Thou hearest, and heares no more, sweet sounds that quickly dyes:
The wind remoues at once the sweetest smelling sents:
The pleasure of the touth is mix’t with present paine:
The daientest tast doth but three fingers breadth remaine.
90
Haue I not reason then, wordling, to moue complaints?
What thy sense knowes is vaine, yitt thy sense n’eer conceaues
The vanitie extreeme that all thy sence deceaues.

OCTO. XIII.
Wordling, that liues and dies, in this wretch’d vale of teares
Thy lyf is miserable, and wretch’d thy death appeares.
For thy lyfe killeth thee, and holds thee fastned in
100
The gyues of liuing death, the dew reward of sin.
And when thou comest to die, thy death is immortell
A death so much the worse, as it is euer dieing.
Thus both in lyfe and death, thou finds a restles hell
Thy lyfe without trew lyfe, thy death without death being.

OCTO. XIII.
The world is nothing else except an Eccho vaine
Ysswing from woods, and rocks, and eury watrie plaine;
A lyueles lyuely voice, a new-borne dieing sounde;
A light aire that the wind doth bricoll and rebound;
105
A conterfeted speech, that in a tryce is gone
Before it fully peirs the eares of any one.
O hold thy peace, flie hence, flie Eccho, world flie
To watrie plaines, to rocks, and eury hollow tree.
OCTO. XV.
Lyke as the Prisoner, that lyes fast in the gyues,
115
And as the famish’d man, that dreames of daynty meates
The more enhongred is, the more he thinks he eates:
So wordlings luld on sleep in dangers are secure;
Thus though Captiued still, they dreame of libertie.
Thus dreame they do abounde, though in penuretie,
120
Yitt both their prison still, and famine, doth indure.

OCTO. XVI.
The wordling still desyres, and euer feares withall;
A contraire martyredome his hart doth doubly gall.
Desyre is like a fyre that runs through all his vaines
That dryes and alters him, and plagues his joints with paines.
125
His feare an yse-shok is, that his faint hart doth holde,
Still douting that he hath what hee about him beares.
And so beseeged both with his desyres and feares,
He freizes in the fyre, and burnes in yssie colde.

OCTO. XVII.
The wordling feedes his shallow braine
130
With hoipes of his discourses vaine
Which are nought els but smooke and wind
That so do him deceiue and blinde
And his soule with such shadows hooke.
Then wonder not, although he be
135
So light and voladge, sith yow sie
Him euer feed of wind and smooke.

OCTO. XVIII.
As the swift hawty wing of th’Agle in the aire,
140
As the ship on the sea, by winds blowne here and there
So worldly wealth takes wings, and flies as fast awaye,
So pleasures quickly passe, and makes no longer staye.
And as no eye can marke nor in the aire nor floods
The winged vessels path, nor the swift Agles race;
So are thy pleasures gone, so wastes away thy goods,
And thou stryues but in vain to hunt them by the trace.
OCTONARIES

OCTO. XIX.
145 Ambition, Voluptye, Auarice
Thrie Ladyes are that all the seruice haue
Of wordlings, that vnceessantly do craue
Honnours from them, with wealth, and pleasures nyce
They all are payde: for the ambitious vaine
150 Gets noght but wind. The man that burns in lust
Repettoance gets. The other, earth and dust:
Who stil the more he grips, the les he doth retaine.

OCTO. XX.
T’hambitious man doth alwayes vpward tend
And honours high to honours euer bend:
155 The greedy wretch doth through the earth descend
And cerche her center mettals riche to find.
Th’one vpward doth, The other dounward bend,
Th’one to the other opposite wold seeme:
But do them not for this contrary deeme,
160 For both are plac’de together in the end.

OCTO. XXI.
I ouerheard the great regrets and mone,
Both of the miser, and ambitious:
My greatnes I haue lossed, sayd the one:
And I allace! my treasure precious.
165 To what effect are these complaints I craue?
To what effect are these regrets ingrosd?
Mourne rather that your wealth and greatnesse haue
Your silie selues in soule and bodie los’d.

OCTO. XXII.
Au’rice extreem is a mischeuous ill,
170 And no les euill is vain ambition:
But so who both throughly consider will,
Shall find each feele his proper passion.
O then how great is that most strange desease,
That makes the madd'ed Louers languish so?
175 Sith but one euill bereaues two harts of ease,
And but one follie still infecteth two.
OCTO. XXIII.
If heav’ns a cercle be, and earth the midle point,
As great Philosophers wold have us to conceave:
Why do yee all the frame of heav’n and earth desiojnt,

180 Wordlings, with endles warrs, who most of earth may have?
Why (wordlings) do yee still perplex yovr selfs with paine,
Gvld with a foolish hoipe of an Ambition vaine?
O errovr admirable! what follie to confide,
That any labovr can a parteles point divyde.

OCTO. XXIII.

185 What ayles the (lover fond), whose half-dead sovle we find
To sobbe ovt skalding sighs, transported with the wind?
Accvse none bvt thy self. Desyre is thy desease,
And that wherof thov plains, thee most of all doth please.

190 Thou ioyest in the desease, that makes thy hart to pant,
And drinks’t the bitter-sweet, that makes thy senses drvnke
Thy pleasvres dollovrovs, And thy dollovrs plaisant.

OCTO. XXV.
The water streames right swiftlie slyde;
The flieing darts more swiftly glyde;

195 And yitt more swifter flies than thay
The wind that drives the clovdes away.
Bvt so exceeding sovdain bee
The covrse of wordly ioyes we see,
That it f arre swifter flies, we find

200 Than either water, dart, or wind.

OCTO. XXVI.
Inconstant fickill France, well mayest thov testifie
That in this world is novght but vaine inconstancie.
For thy peace is thy warre, And thy warre is thy peace
Thy pleasvres thee desplase, Thy solace thee annoyes

205 Thow thinkest by being kild, that thov thy lyfe enioyes.
Thvs, wav’ring, dost thov rvn a most contrary race
Their is nothing in thee, that firmenes doth imply,
And nothing constant hast, bvt thyne inconstantcie.
OCTONARIES

OCT. XXVII.
Now, wordling (if thou canst) the world descryue to me.
210 If good, wherefore in it, such euils abundant be?
If euill, why dost thou it so much cerche and procure?
If sweet, how hes it than such store of bitternes?
If bitter, how doth it thy senses so allure?
If frendly, why doth it so fremb a forme profes
215 To kill and ouerthrow his fauourits with shame?
And if it be thy foe, why trusts thou to the same?

OCTO. XXVIII.
The beautie of the world goes
As soudain as the wind that bloes:
As soudain as yee sie the floure
220 To wither from his first colloure:
As soudain as the flood is gone
That's chaste by others one by one:
What is the worlde then I pray?
A wind, A floure, A flood alway.

OCTO. XXIX.
225 The yse yow sie is bright and faire;
The world lykwyse is faire and bright.
From yse men fall to water deep
From th’other men to hell repaire.
Both yce and world are gone at last:
230 But yce to liquide watter thoës.
The world with all hir galland choës
Doth vanish to a nothing wast.

OCTO. XXX.
Go Goldsmith beat me out a hudge round hollow ball,
Which, full of wind, wee may the world his image call;
235 And lett it as much rare and dainties beauties haue
As all thy cunning can with curious hand engrae,
Expressing there-vpon fruicts of all sortes and kynd.
And then with this deuyse deck me the restles Boule:
Thus doth the world still about her center rowle,
240 Whose fruicts but painted are, and founded on the wind.
OCTO. XXXI.
Far sooner shall yow sie
The faire day light
No more opposite be
To the blak night
245
Far sooner may a man
Ioin eauen and od
The fyre and water, than
The world and God.

OCTO. XXXII.
The world is sure a goodlie Tree,
Whose monstrous roote and tennours be
Deepe to the very hells sunke doun.
The leafe is of a collour green,
The floure is plaisant to be seen,
The fruict the floure ensueth soon.
255
The floure it beares, we call it ioye;
The fruict is dollour and annoye.

OCTO. XXXIII.
The Traueller amazde, obserues, and walkes along
The rare antiquities of glorious Rome among.
He sies the arches broke, the marbres rich appeares.
Maimd and massacred by the rage of many yeeres.
He sies high in the aire, a mossye pillar olde
Whose sydes an yuie green with long embracements holde.
And who, sayth he, should found his glories heere beloe?
Sith Tyran Tyme triumphes of what is founded soe.

OCTO. XXXIII.
The World a Gardine is: The floures her pleasures are:
Of faire and fragrant ones, it hath exceeding plainty,
The pale-hewde floure de luce, The Rose so sweet and dainty,
All sortes of Gilliflours, whose fyne parfums be rare,
And their the Soussy doth beyond his fellows thryue,
270
The vyolet is their, and there the Pansye groes;
But Death the winter is, that straight away doth dryue
The Luce with all the reste, The Gillifloure and Rose.
OCTONARIES

OCTO. XXXV.
Neuer to haue, and euer to desyre,
Are his effects, that doth the worlde loue.

275 The more that he, of wealth and honours proue
The more wee sie him still therto aspyre.
He neuer doth enioye his proper things,
But other mens he loues, esteemes, requyres.
When he hath all, that all him nothing brings;

280 For hauing all, he all things still desyres.

OCTO. XXXVI.
In diuine speech from heauen, I once did heare the same
The world is to the wyse, as nightes to dawnings gaye,
As dew is to the Sun, The shade to full mid day
For Verteu that his hart doth lighten, warme, enflame

285 Is dawning bright, is Sun, and the full mid day too.
The night is ignorance, frayle pleasures be the dewe,
The shade is vanitie, that doth our soules pursewe
Till they true vertu once fully enherite doo.

OCTO. XXXVII.
Forgoeing Age, wherefore did thou bestoe
On wordly wealth of goods the match-les name
Sith nought but euils and woes be in the same
For foolish men that are addict therto?
But rather (wordlings) why do yee abuse
The cheefest meane true vertu well to vse?

290 The goods are good, to such as well can vse them;
The goods are euill, to all that do abuse - them.

OCTO. XXXVIII.
The Babylonian subdued to his raigne
One of the greatest parts of all the Earth we knó:
The Persian vainquish’d him: The gallant Perse right so

300 Humbled his hye-raisde head vnder the Greeks againe;
The Romains, last of all, did all the earth command
And Rome, we sie hath not endured to the end.
Who art thou then (o man) that dars’t thy hoipes intend,
To fixe thy standing heer, Sith Monarks could not stand?
OCTO. XXXIX.

305 Such as imagine that they maye
Upon the earth find reste and staye
And their felicitie do place
Upon these chaungements that yow sie;
What thoughts think yow such men embrace?
310 They think most surely sett to be,
Whill as they sitt but on a Boule
That in the restles floods doth roule.

OCTO. XL.

When wordlings labour still, and lab’ring neuer tyres
To draw, and to heap vp, To purchase and procure
Richesse vpon richesse, and pleasure on pleasure,
To crowne with happines the heape of their desyre
When they are burdened most, they least to burdeins yeilde,
They cerche their ease in toyle, that wastes - thim selfes away,
They beare, they euer bring, and heapes on heapes they lay
315 In summe, what’s all they do? Their ruine they do beilde.

OCTO. XLI.

I one day sawe, the world fiercely fight
Against Vertu her professed Ennemy:
He treatned her, and shee did him defy;
He went to feeld, shee did attend him right;
320 He goes, cums, strykes, he quick approches maks:
But all his blowes did but his owne arme tyre.
For all the world his weapons are of waxe,
And Vertu’s sheeld, is made of flaming fyre.

OCTO. XLII.

Thou that dost plunge thyn hart, into the worlds deepe,
325 Knowes thou what thing thou art? A wandring vesshell sure,
That doth the furious rage of wind and tyde endure
Whilst on the stormye back of Neptun she doth keep.
Raison (thy ruther’ s lost, each thing to ship-wrack tend;
Thou errest heere and there at pleasure of the wind
330 Of thyn impure delytes, till carried so we find
Thee dasht gainst cruell rocks of an vnhappy end.
OCTONARIES

OCTO. XLIII.
Wher’s Death? It’s in the world. And wher’s the world? in death,
It’s death unto it self: And what's in all the world
That kils the worlds self, so much as doth the world;
Which doth begett, and breed, yea giues lyfe to his death.
But if Gods loue should raise the world aboue the world,
By slayeing of the world, as well the loue as death;
Then happy should wee see, to triumphe ouer death.
The world no more à world, And Death dead in the world.

OCTO. XLIII.
I sawe, I sawe, the world is but a dreame,
When as Gods voice made me awake and ryse.
For nothing is in all the world but lyes.
The eye is shutt. The spirits perturbed seeme;
Man is not man; All theire is midnight deep,
Thus feeding on his owne opinions vaine
And senseles of his passions prophaine
Man may not brooke such as wold break his sleepe.

OCTO. XLV.
O who is hee that in so happy state is plaste
As neuer of the sweet deceits of sin to taste?
Which man a pris’ner makes while he doth pray on it,
Bewitching so his soule, and blinding both his eyes.
O who is hee that hath by tryall learned yitt
T’acknowledge and descryue, the hell that in vyce lyes?
O by what meanes, I saye, may one suche blissings see?
If not the world in him, though in the worlde he be.

OCTO. XLVI.
What monstre haue we heere? That hath of heads such store,
So many eares, and eyes, of diuers sortes and kynde;
Whose vesture poudred is, with plaisant green before
And hath nothing except a darknes black behinde.
Whose restles feete, vpon a rouling bowle doth slyde,
Borne on by winged tyme, that swiftly flies awaye:
And death runs after still, still schooting at his syde?
I sawe it well. What wast? It was the world I saye.
OCTO. XLVII.
Stay, heark yee wordling: whither runst thou so?
List'n and giue eare to Vertus lesson now.
Yitt runs he on, after the world tho;
Nay flies allace! As fast as Riuers doo
That, sodainly wax'd proud, sends doun amaine
Their stormie stremes vnto Neptunus raigne,
My counsale, lyke a rock, encounters thame:
But they passe ore, and grumbils at the same.

OCTO. XLVIII.
O most abusing lips, that with egregious lyes
Drew out ambitious teares from Alexanders eyes
Who descontented with one world desyred two!
O is not one enewe, so full of greef and woe?
But saye, he had sayd trueth. Ceas sighing, Monark braue!
And suffer me to weep and mourne my course about;
Who beates, and beates my braines; And yitt no cunning haue
The nmbrous vanities; of one world to sett out.

OCTO. XLIX.
Change & rechange, O Poete, to and froe
Now to the Treble, now to Basses loe,
The diffring noates of thy well-framed song,
Diffring in forme, yitt in the subject stable;
Expressing well the changes that belong
Vnto the world both vaine and variable.
For lo, the world doth vary yitt much more,
And thy Theme goeth thy verses farre before.
OCTONARIES

OCTO. L.
Now doth not perfytyly appeare
Their vanitie, that founds them heere?

395
Sith this lyues joyes and pleasures be
No thing but paine and fascherie.
O God, all- good, and onely wyse
In whome my staye and wisdome lyes,
With bounteous blessings so preuent

400
My wants, that I may liue content.

FINIS.