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

Jamie Reid Baxter  
*University of Glasgow*

Georgianna Ziegler  
*Folger Shakespeare Library*

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**ESTHER INGLIS**  
***OCTONARIES UPON THE VANITIE***  
***AND INCONSTANCIE OF THE WORLD***

*edited by*  
*Jamie Reid Baxter and Georgianna Ziegler*

**OCTONARIES**  
**VPON THE VANITIE**  
**AND INCONSTAN=**  
**CIE OF THE WORLD.**  
**WRITIN BY ESTHER INGLIS,**  
**The First of IANVAR 1600.**

**OCTONARIE. I.**

When one may firmly staye the ordinary rout  
Of the great Poste of heau'n, that beares the light about  
When one may firmly staye the euer-rouling yeire  
On his triumphant Teeme of months, of houres and dayes:  
5 When one may firmly staye the many squadrons cleere  
Of twincling starrs, that in the emptie welkin strayes,  
Darting against our heades the long beames of their eye;  
Then maye he firmly staye the worlds inconstancye.

**OCTO. II.**

Who will not be amazde, when lifting vp his eyes  
10 The steady-ordred course of restles heauens he sies:  
And casting down 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.  
15 The heauens take neuer reste: yet in the heauens we place  
The solide steady reste, which happiest soules embrace.

**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  
 20 Of well-agreeing warrs of contraire Elements:  
 To teache vs that we ought for our cheef good enquiryre  
 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.**

25 Is any thing so strong, so not to be withstand  
 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 preuail  
 30 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 aysing doth bewray  
 35 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  
 40 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?  
 45 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  
 50 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;  
 55 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  
 60      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.**

65 When Sommer hott inflames the ayre,  
 The ioyfull Cloune shakes off all caire;  
 The yellow treasure of the playnes  
 At large requyting all his paynes.  
 But yee that with discourses vaine  
 70 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 Autumme doth apall  
 75 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  
 80 As yow no fruict nor leafe had borne.

**OCTO. XI.**

The wrinckled winters face dost thou behold  
 With frosts and snowes ore-spred, 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:  
 90 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 daintyest tast doth but three fingers breadth remaine.  
 Haue I not reason then, wordling, to moue complaints?  
 95 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 appears.  
 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.**

105 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;  
 A conterfeted speech, that in a tryce is gone  
 110 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,  
 Dreames that he runs and goes where his delyte him dryues,  
 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 ioints 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 beseege 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,  
 As the ship on the sea, by winds blowne here and there  
 So worldly wealth takes wings, and flies as fast awaye,  
 140 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.

**OCTO. XIX.**

145      Ambition, Voluptye, Auarice  
 Thrie Ladyes are that all the seruice haue  
 Of wordlings, that vncessantly do craue  
 Honnours from them, with wealth, and pleasures nyce  
 They all are payde: for the ambitious vaine  
 150      Gets nought but wind. The man that burns in lust  
 Repentance 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 honnours high to honnours 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 downward 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 disease,  
 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 conceive:  
 Why do yee all the frame of heav'n and earth desioint,  
 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 sovlē we find  
 To sobbe ovt skalding sighs, transported with the wind?  
 Accvse none bvt thy self. Desyre is thy desease,  
 And that wherof thov plaines, thee most of all doth please.  
 Thov hes no reste, bvt in what thee from reste hath shrvnke  
 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 farre 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 Thov 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 inconstancie.



**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 faourits 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 engraue,  
 Expressing there-vpon fruiets 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 fruiets 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,  
 250 Whose monstrous roote and tennours be  
 Deepe to the very hells sunke down.  
 The leafe is of a collour green,  
 The floure is plaisant to be seen,  
 The fruit the floure ensueth soon.  
 255 The floure it beares, we call it ioye;  
 The fruit is dollour and annoye.

**OCTO. XXXIII.**

The Trauellar amazde, obserues, and walkes along  
 The rare antiquities of glorious Rome among.  
 He sies the arches broke, the marbres rich appears.  
 260 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. XXXIIII.**

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.

**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 honnours 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 dawnsings 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  
 290 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?  
 295 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  
 Vpon the earth find reste and staye  
 And their felicitie do place  
 Vpon 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  
 315 Richesse vpon richesse, and pleasure on pleasure,  
 To crowne with happines the heape of their desyre  
 When they are burdned most, they least to burdeins yeilde,  
 They cerche their ease in toyle, that wastes - thim selves away,  
 They beare, they euer bring, and heapes on heapes they lay  
 320 In summe, what's all they do? Their ruine they do beilde.

**OCTO. XLI.**

I one day sawe, the world fiercely fight  
 Gainst Vertu her professed Enemy:  
 He treatned her, and shee did him defy;  
 He went to feeld, shee did attend him right;  
 325 He goes, cums, strykes, he quick approaches 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,  
 330 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  
 335 Of thyn impure delytes, till carryed so we find  
 Thee dasht gainst cruell rocks of an vnhappy end.

**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;  
 340 Which doth begett, and breed, yea giues lyfe to his death.  
 But if Gods loue should raise the world about the world,  
 By slaying of the world, as well the loue as death;  
 Then happy should wee sie, to triumphe ouer death.  
 The world no more a world, And Death dead in the world.

**OCTO. XLIII.**

345 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 there is midnight deep,  
 350 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?  
 355 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?  
 360 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.  
 365 Whose restles feete, vpon a rousing bowle doth slyde,  
 Borne on by winged tyme, that swiftly flies awaye:  
 And death runs after still, still shooting 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?  
 370 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 streames vnto Neptunus raigne,  
 375 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 discontented with one world desyred two!  
 380 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 nombrous vanities; of one world to sett out.

**OCTO. XLIX.**

385 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  
 390 Vnto the world both vaine and variable.  
 For lo, the world doth vary yitt much more,  
 And thy Theme goeth thy verses farre before.

**OCTO. L.**

395      Now doth not perfytely appeare  
            Their vanitie, that founds them heere?  
            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,  
400      With bounteous blissings so preuent  
            My wants, that I may liue content.

FINIS.