A CELEBRATION OF CHARIS
IN TEN LYRIC PIECES

I
His Excuse for Loving

Let it not your wonder move,
Less your laughter, that I love.
Though I now write fifty years,
I have had, and have my peers;
Poets, though divine, are men:
Some have loved as old again.
And it is not always face,
Clothes, or fortune, gives the grace;
Or the feature, or the youth:
But the language, and the truth,
With the ardor, and the passion,
Gives the lover weight, and fashion.
If you then will read the story,
First, prepare you to be sorry,
That you never knew till now,
Either whom to love, or how:
But be glad as soon with me,
When you know that this is she,
Of whose beauty it was sung,
She shall make the old Man young,
Keep the middle age at stay,
And let nothing high decay;
Till she be the reason why,
All the world for Love may die.

II
How he saw Her

I beheld her on a day,
When her look out-flourish’d May:
And her dressing did out-brave
All the pride the fields then have:
Far I was from being stupid,
For I ran and call’d on Cupid;—
Love, if thou wilt ever see
Mark of glory, come with me;
Where’s thy quiver? bend thy bow;
Here’s a shaft, thou art too slow!
And, withal, I did untie
Every cloud about his eye;
But he had not gain'd his sight
Sooner than he lost his might,
Or his courage; for away
Straight he ran, and durst not stay,
Letting bow and arrow fall:
Not for any threat, or call,
Could be brought once back to look.
I foolhardy, there up took
Both the arrow he had quit,
And the bow, with thought to hit
This my object; but she threw
Such a lightning (as I drew)
At my face, that took my sight,
And my motion from me quite;
So that there I stood a stone,
Mock'd of all, and call'd of one,
(Which with grief and wrath I heard),
' Cupid's statue with a beard;
Or else one that play'd his ape,
In a Hercules his shape.'

III
What he Suffered

After many scorns like these,
Which the prouder beauties please;
She content was to restore
Eyes and limbs, to hurt me more,
And would, on conditions, be
Reconcil'd to Love, and me.
First, that I must kneeling yield
Both the bow, and shaft I held
Unto her; which Love might take
At her hand, with oath to make
Me the scope of his next draught,
Aimèd with that self-same shaft.
He no sooner heard the law,
But the arrow home did draw,
And (to gain her by his art)
Left it sticking in my heart:
Which when she beheld to bleed,
She repented of the deed,
And would fain have chang'd the fate,
But the pity comes too late.
Loser-like, now, all my wreak
Is, that I have leave to speak;
And in either prose or song,
To revenge me with my tongue;
Which how dexterously I do,  
Hear and make example too.

IV  
*Her Triumph*

See the chariot at hand here of Love,  
Wherein my Lady rideth!  
Each that draws is a swan or a dove,  
And well the car Love guideth.  
As she goes, all hearts do duty  
Unto her beauty;  
And enamour’d do wish, so they might  
But enjoy such a sight,  
That they still were to run by her side,  
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.

Do but look on her eyes, they do light  
All that Love’s world compriseth!  
Do but look on her hair, it is bright  
As Love’s star with it riseth!  
Do but mark, her forehead’s smoother  
Than words that soothe her!  
And from her arch’d brows, such a grace  
Sheds itself through the face,  
As alone there triumphs to the life  
All the gain, all the good of the elements’ strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily grow,  
Before rude hands have touch’d it?  
Have you mark’d but the fall o’ the snow,  
Before the soil hath smutched it?  
Have you felt the wool of bever,  
Or swan’s down ever?  
Or have smelt o’ the bud o’ the briar?  
Or the nard in the fire?  
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?  
O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!

V  
*His Discourse with Cupid*

Noblest Charis, you that are  
Both my fortune and my star!  
And do govern more my blood,  
Than the various Moon the flood!
Hear, what late discourse of you, 
Love and I have had; and true.
'Mongst my Muses finding me, 
Where he chanced your name to see 
Set, and to this softer strain; 
Sure, said he, if I have brain, 
This, here sung, can be no other, 
By description, but my Mother! 
So hath Homer praised her hair; 
So Anacreon drawn the air 
Of her face, and made to rise 
Just about her sparkling eyes, 
Both her brows bent like my bow.
By her looks I do her know, 
Which you call my shafts. And see! 
Such my Mother's blushes be, 
As the bath your verse discloses 
In her cheeks, of milk and roses; 
Such as oft I wanton in; 
And, above her even chin, 
Have you placed the bank of kisses, 
Where, you say, men gather blisses, 
Ripened when a breath more sweet, 
Than when flowers and west winds meet. 
Nay, her white and polish'd neck, 
With the lace that doth it deck, 
Is my Mother's! Hearts of slain 
Lovers, made into a chain!
And between each rising breast, 
Lies the valley call'd my nest, 
Where I sit and proyne my wings 
After flight; and put new stings 
To my shafts. Her very name 
With my Mother's is the same. 
I confess all, I replied, 
And the grass hangs by her side, 
And the girdle 'bout her waist, 
All is Venus, save unchaste. 
But alas, thou seest the least 
Of her good, who is the best 
Of her sex: but couldst thou, Love, 
Call to mind the forms that strove 
For the apple, and those three 
Make in one, the same were she. 
For this beauty yet doth hide 
Something more than thou hast spied. 
Outward grace weak Love beguiles: 
She is Venus when she smiles; 
But she's Juno when she walks,
And Minerva when she talks.

VI
*Claiming a Second Kiss by Desert*

Charis, guess, and do not miss,
Since I drew a morning kiss
From your lips, and suck’d an air
Thence, as sweet as you are fair.
  What my Muse and I have done:
Whether we have lost, or won,
If by us the odds were laid,
That the bride (allowed a maid)
Look’d not half so fresh and fair,
With the advantage of her hair,
And her jewels, to the view
Of the assembly, as did you!
  Or that did you sit or walk,
You were more the eye and talk
Of the court, to-day, than all
Else that glister’d in Whitehall;
So, as those that had your sight,
Wish’d the bride were changed to-night,
And did think such rites were due
To no other Grace but you!
  Or, if you did move to-night
In the dances, with what spite
Of you peers, you were beheld,
That at every motion swell’d
So to see a lady tread,
As might all the Graces lead,
And was worthy (being so seen)
To be envied of the queen.
  Or if you would yet have stay’d,
Whether any would upbraid
To himself his loss of time;
Or have charged his sight of crime,
To have left all sight for you.
  Guess of these which is the true;
And if such a verse as this
May not claim another kiss.

VII
*Begging Another,*
*On Colour of Mending the Former*

For Love’s sake, kiss me once again,
I long, and should not beg in vain,
Here's none to spy or see;
Why do you doubt or stay?
I'll taste as lightly as the bee,
That doth but touch his flower, and flies away.

Once more, and, faith, I will be gone,
Can he that loves ask less than one?
Nay, you may err in this,
And all your bounty wrong:
This could be called but half a kiss,
What we're but once to do, we should do long.

I will but mend the last, and tell
Where, how it would have relished well;
Join lip to lip, and try:
Each suck the other's breath,
And whilst our tongues perplexed lie,
Let who will think us dead, or wish our death.

VIII
_Urging her of a Promise_

Charis one day in discourse
Had of Love and of his force,
Lightly promised she would tell
What a man she could love well:
And that promise set on fire
All that heard her, with desire.
With the rest, I long expected
When the work would be effected;
But we find that cold delay,
And excuse spun every day,
As, until she tell her one,
We all fear she loveth none.
Therefore, Charis, you must do't,
For I will so urge you to't,
You shall neither eat nor sleep,
No, nor forth your window peep,
With your emissary eye,
To fetch in the forms go by,
And pronounce, which band or lace
Better fits him than his face:
Nay, I will not let you sit
'Fore your idol glass a whit,
To say over every purl
There; or to reform a curl;
Or with Secretary Sis
To consult, if fucus this
Be as good as was the last:—
All your sweet of life is past,
Make accompt, unless you can,
(And that quickly) speak your Man.

IX
Her Man described by her own Dictamen

Of your trouble, Ben, to ease me,
I will tell what Man would please me.
I would have him, if I could,
Noble; or of greater blood;
Titles, I confess, do take me,
And a woman God did make me;
French to boot, at least in fashion,
And his manners of that nation.

Young I'd have him too, and fair,
Yet a man; with crisped hair,
Cast in thousand snares and rings,
For Love's fingers, and his wings:
Chestnut colour, or more slack,
Gold, upon a ground of black.
Venus and Minerva's eyes,
For he must look wanton-wise.

Eyebrows bent, like Cupid's bow,
Front, an ample field of snow;
Even nose, and cheek withal,
Smooth as is the billiard-ball:
Chin as woolly as the peach;
And his lip should kissing teach,
Till he cherish'd too much beard,
And made Love or me afeard.

He would have a hand as soft
As the down, and show it oft;
Skin as smooth as any rush,
And so thin to see a blush
Rising through it, ere it came;
All his blood should be a flame,
Quickly fired, as in beginners
In Love's school, and yet no sinners.

'Twere too long to speak of all;
What we harmony do call
In a body should be there.
Well he should his clothes to wear;
Yet no tailor help to make him;
Drest, you still for man should take him,
And not think h’ had eat a stake,
Or were set up in a brake.
   Valiant he should be as fire,
Showing danger more than ire.
Bounteous as the clouds to earth,
And as honest as his birth;
All his actions to be such,
As to do no thing too much:
Nor o’er-praise, nor yet condemn,
Nor out-value, nor contemn,
Nor do wrongs, nor wrongs receive,
Nor tie knots, nor knots unweave;
And from baseness to be free,
As he durst love Truth and me.
   Such a man, with every part,
I could give my very heart;
But of one if short he came,
I can rest me where I am.

X
Another Lady’s Exception, present at the
Hearing

For his mind, I do not care,
That’s a toy that I could spare:
Let his title be but great,
His clothes rich, and band sit neat,
Himself young, and face be good,
All I wish is understood.
What you please, you parts may call,
’Tis one good part I’d lie withal. — 1640-41