

AN EPITAPH ON THE MARCHIONESS OF WINCHESTER

by John Milton

An Epitaph  
on the Marchioness of Winchester  
This rich Marble doth enterr  
The honour'd Wife of Winchester,  
A Vicounts daughter, an Earls heir,  
Besides what her vertues fair  
Added to her noble birth,  
More then she could own from Earth.  
Summers three times eight save one  
She had told, alas too soon,  
After so short time of breath,  
To house with darknes, and with death.  
Yet had the number of her days  
Bin as compleat as was her praise,  
Nature and fate had had no strife  
In giving limit to her life.  
Her high birth, and her graces sweet,  
Quickly found a lover meet;  
The Virgin quire for her request  
The God that sits at marriage feast;  
He at their invoking came  
But with a scarce-wel-lighted flame;  
And in his Garland as he stood,  
Ye might discern a Cipress bud.  
Once had the early Matrons run  
To greet her of a lovely son,  
And now with second hope she goes,  
And calls Lucina to her throws;  
But whether by mischance or blame  
Atropos for Lucina came;  
And with remorsles cruelty,  
Spoil'd at once both fruit and tree:  
The haples Babe before his birth  
Had burial, yet not laid in earth,  
And the languisht Mothers Womb  
Was not long a living Tomb.  
So have I seen som tender slip  
Sav'd with care from Winters nip,  
The pride of her carnation train,  
Pluck't up by som unheedy swain,  
Who onely thought to crop the flowr  
New shot up from vernall showr;  
But the fair blossom hangs the head  
Side-ways as on a dying bed,  
And those Pearls of dew she wears,

Prove to be presaging tears  
Which the sad morn had let fall  
On her hast'ning funerall.  
Gentle Lady may thy grave  
Peace and quiet ever have;  
After this thy travail sore  
Sweet rest cease thee evermore,  
That to give the world encrease,  
Shortned hast thy own lives lease;  
Here besides the sorrowing  
That thy noble House doth bring,  
Here be tears of perfect moan  
Weept for thee in Helicon,  
And som Flowers, and som Bays,  
For thy Hears to strew the ways,  
Sent thee from the banks of Came,  
Devoted to thy vertuous name;  
Whilst thou bright Saint high sit'st in glory,  
Next her much like to thee in story,  
That fair Syrian Shepherdess,  
Who after yeers of barrennes,  
The highly favour'd Joseph bore  
To him that serv'd for her before,  
And at her next birth much like thee,  
Through pangs fled to felicity,  
Far within the boosom bright  
Of blazing Majesty and Light,  
There with thee, new welcom Saint,  
Like fortunes may her soul acquaint,  
With thee there clad in radiant sheen,  
No Marchioness, but now a Queen.

-THE END-