

THE TWELVE WEAPONS OF SPIRITUAL BATTLE, WHICH EVERY  
MAN SHOULD HAVE AT HAND WHEN THE PLEASURE OF  
A SINFUL TEMPTATION COMETH TO MIND

The pleasure little and short.	The nature and dignity of man.
The followers grief and heaviness.	The peace of a good mind.
The loss of a better thing.	The great benefits of God.
This life a dream and a shadow.	The painful cross of Christ.
The death at our hand and unaware.	The witness of martyrs and example of saints.
The fear of impenitent departing.	
Eternal joy, eternal pain.	

*The Twelve Weapons have we more at length Declared as Followeth.*

*The Pleasure Little and Short.*

Consider well the pleasure that thou hast,  
Stand it in touching or in wanton sight,<sup>1</sup>  
In vain smell or in thy licorous<sup>2</sup> taste,  
Or finally, in whatsoever delight  
Occupied is thy wretched appetite:  
Thou shalt it find, when thou hast all cast,<sup>3</sup>  
Little, simple, short and suddenly past.

*The Followers: Grief and Heaviness.*

Any good work if thou with labor do,  
The labor goeth, the goodness doth remain:  
If thou do evil with pleasure joined thereto,  
The pleasure which thine evil work doth contain  
Glideth his way, thou must him not restrain:  
The evil then in thy breast cleaveth behind  
With grudge of heart and heaviness of mind.<sup>4</sup>

*The Loss of a Better Thing.*

When thou laborest thy pleasure for to buy  
Upon the price look thou well thee advise,  
Thou sellest thy soul therefore even by and by  
To thy most utter despiteous<sup>5</sup> enemies:<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., whether the pleasure lies in touch or in sight. More will list the pleasures of the sense before showing that they all hold in common a temporary, short existence.

<sup>2</sup> "Licorous": "Variant of lickerous (adj.): Pleasing or tempting to the palate," but also "of persons, the appetite, etc.: Found of choice or delicious food; dainty in eating; greedy of good fare," or, more generally, "lecherous, lustful, wanton" (OED).

<sup>3</sup> "Cast": "To reckon, calculate, estimate" (OED).

<sup>4</sup> One labors in a good work, but afterwards, enjoys the pleasure of self-respect, but with evil works, sensual pleasure is received first, and then replaced with sadness.

O mad merchant, O foolish merchandise,  
To buy a trifle, O childish reckoning,  
And pay therefore so dear a precious thing!

*This Life a Dream and a Shadow.*

This wretched life, the trust and confidence  
Of whose continuance maketh us bold to sin,  
Thou perceivest well by experience,  
Since that hour in which it did begin,  
It holdeth on the course and will not lin,<sup>7</sup>  
But fast it runneth on and passen shall  
As doth a dream or shadow on the wall.

*Death at our Hand and Unaware.*

Consider well that ever night and day,  
While that we busily provide and care  
For our disport,<sup>8</sup> revel, mirth and play,  
For pleasant melody and dainty fare,  
Death stealeth on full slyly and unaware:  
He lieth at hand and shall us enterprise<sup>9</sup>  
We know not how soon nor in what manner wise.

*Fear of Impenitent Departing.*

If thou shouldst God offend, think how therefore  
Thou were forthwith<sup>10</sup> in very jeopardous<sup>11</sup> case:  
For haply thou shouldst not live an hour more  
Thy sin to cleanse, and though thou haddest space,  
Yet peradventure shouldst thou lack the grace:  
Well ought we then be feared to do offence  
Impenitent lest we departen hence.

*Eternal Reward, Eternal Pain.*

Thou seest this world is but a thoroughfare,<sup>12</sup>  
See thou behave thee wisely with thine host;<sup>13</sup>

<sup>5</sup> “Dispiteous”: “full of despite, contempt, or ill-will; contemptuous” (OED).

<sup>6</sup> I.e., one sells his eternal soul for a transitory moment of pleasure by sinning.

<sup>7</sup> Campbell and Reed suggest “cease” for “lin.”

<sup>8</sup> “Disport”: “Diversion from serious duties; relaxation, recreation; entertainment, amusement” (OED).

<sup>9</sup> “Enterprise”: “To take in hand (a work), take upon oneself (a condition), attempt our undertake (a war, an expedition, etc.), run the risk of or venture upon (danger)” (OED).

<sup>10</sup> “Forthwith” is an adverb, meaning “immediately, at once, without delay or interval” (OED).

<sup>11</sup> “Jeopardous”: “Fraught with risk or danger; hazardous, risky, perilous, dangerous” (OED).

<sup>12</sup> A “thoroughfare” is “a passage or way through” (OED); for More, the world is the road to Heaven.

<sup>13</sup> The “host” of the world is the devil.

Hence must thou needs depart naked and bare,  
 And after thy desert look to what cost  
 Thou art conveyed at such time as thy ghost<sup>14</sup>  
 From this wretched carcass shall dissever:<sup>15</sup>  
 Be it joy or pain, endure it shall forever.

*The Nature and Dignity of Man.*

Remember how God hath made thee reasonable  
 Like unto His image and figure,<sup>16</sup>  
 And for thee suffered pains intolerable<sup>17</sup>  
 That He, for an angel, never would endure.<sup>18</sup>  
 Regard, O man, thine excellent nature;<sup>19</sup>  
 Thou that with angels art made to be equal,<sup>20</sup>  
 For very shame be not the devil's thrall.

*The Peace of a Good Mind.*

Why lovest thou so this brittle<sup>21</sup> world's joy?  
 Take all the mirth, take all the fantasies,  
 Take every game, take every wanton toy,  
 Take every sport that men can thee devise:  
 And among them all on warrantise<sup>22</sup>  
 Thou shalt no pleasure comparable find  
 To th' inward gladness of a virtuous mind.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>14</sup> "Ghost" means soul or spirit, which contrasts to the body and material possessions in the lines above.

<sup>15</sup> "Dissever" means "to separate (a person or thing from another or from a body, two or more things from each other); to divide, disjoin, sever, part, disunite" (OED). All the material possessions one acquires remain on earth with one's body, whereas the soul, separated from the body by death, receives a judgment, casting the soul into eternal pain or bliss, hell or heaven.

<sup>16</sup> Being made in God's image for More means possessing and using well the capacity for reason.

<sup>17</sup> I.e., Christ's death upon the cross.

<sup>18</sup> God would not suffer—or listen to—Lucifer's compliant that man ought not to be treated so specially by Him. Christian lore teaches that Satan might have fallen over the issue of man's creation.

<sup>19</sup> Man's nature, again, should be considered excellent because he is endowed with reason.

<sup>20</sup> See St. Paul, who reminds us, "Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6: 3), and also, that man was made "a little lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:5-7). Because the soul of man will judge even angels, More writes that we should not be subjected to those whom we will later judge by succumbing to their temptations here on earth.

<sup>21</sup> "Weak" could replace "brittle."

<sup>22</sup> In law: "To guarantee the possession of (real property) to a person," or "the action of warranting, guaranteeing, or giving assurance; the state or fact of being guaranteed" (OED). More is either turning the first use of the term into a figurative sense—"suppose you are bequeathed all that the world can offer you"—or, similarly, he is more generally stating, "suppose you are granted all that the world may give." No matter what the world may offer, so runs the argument, nothing compares to the pleasure of an "inward gladness of a virtuous mind." Note that More is emphasizing the superiority of virtue to vice, then, in terms of pleasure alone.

<sup>23</sup> "The seat of a person's consciousness, thoughts, volitions, and feelings; the system of cognitive and emotional phenomena and powers that constitutes the subjective being of a person; also the incorporeal subject of the psychical faculties, the spiritual part of a human being; the soul distinguished from the body" (OED).

*The Great Benefits of God.*

Beside that God thee bought<sup>24</sup> and formed both  
 Many a benefit hast thou received of His:  
 Though thou have moved Him often to be wroth<sup>25</sup>  
 Yet He thee kept hath and brought thee up to this,  
 And daily calleth upon thee to His bliss:  
 How mayst thou then to Him unloving be  
 That ever hath been so loving unto thee?

*The Painful Cross of Christ.*

When thou in flame of the temptation friest  
 Think on the very lamentable pain,  
 Think on the piteous cross of woeful Christ,  
 Think on His blood beat out at every vein,  
 Think on His precious heart carved in twain,<sup>26</sup>  
 Think how for thy redemption all was wrought:  
 Let Him not lose thee that He so dear hath bought.

*The Witness of Martyrs and Example of Saints,*

Sin to withstand say not thou lackest might:  
 Such allegations<sup>27</sup> folly it is to use;<sup>28</sup>  
 The witness of saints, and martyrs' constant sight  
 Shall thee of slothful<sup>29</sup> cowardice accuse:  
 God will thee help if thou do not refuse:  
 If other have stood<sup>30</sup> or,<sup>31</sup> this thou mayst eftsoon:<sup>32</sup>  
 Nothing impossible is that hath been done.

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<sup>24</sup> Saint Paul writes: "For you have been purchased at a great price." He means that humanity was redeemed by Christ through his sufferings on the cross. See 1 Corinthians 6:20.

<sup>25</sup> Deep anger, see note 20.

<sup>26</sup> "two" (OED).

<sup>27</sup> "Allegations": "A statement made in excuse; a plea; the alleging of a reason" (OED). The OED credits More's usage of the word in this sense as its first time.

<sup>28</sup> Anastrophe makes these two lines difficult. What More says in line one is—Thou should not say thou lack might to withstand sin [fight temptation]—and in line two—"such reasons [claiming to lack strength] are foolish to use."

<sup>29</sup> "Of persons, etc.: Full of sloth; in disposed to exertion; inactive, indolent, lazy, sluggish" (OED).

<sup>30</sup> Stood for the original "stand."

<sup>31</sup> "Or": "At an earlier time; earlier, sooner, = ERE" (OED). "Formerly" might be substituted for "or" here.

<sup>32</sup> "Eftsoon" means "again, moreover, likewise" in this context (OED). More is saying: "If others have stood up against sin before, you may do so as well."