

LATIN LITERATURE

For while in Sabine forests, charmed
By Lalage, too far I strayed,
Me singing, careless and unarmed,
A furious wolf approached, and fled.

No beast more dreadful ever stained
Apulia's spacious wilds with gore;
No beast more fierce Numidia's land,
The lion's thirsty parent, bore.

Place me where no soft summer gale
Among the quivering branches sighs,
Where clouds, condensed, for ever veil
With horrid gloom the frowning skies:

Place me beneath the burning zone,
A clime denied to human race;
My flame for Lalage I'll own;
Her voice and smiles my song shall grace.

SAMUEL JOHNSON (1757)

RUSTIC JOYS

Blest as the immortal Gods is he
Who lives from toilsome business free,
Like the first race in Saturn's reign
When floods of nectar stained the main;
Manuring with laborious hand
His own hereditary land;
Whom no contracted debts molest,
No griping creditors infest.
No trumpet's sound, no soldier's cries,
Drive the soft slumbers from his eyes,
He sees no boisterous tempests sweep
The surface of the boiling deep,
Him no contentious suits in law
From his beloved retirement draw,

1. The revised version of a poem written in 1743.

HORACE

He ne'er with forced submission waits,
Obsequious, at his patron's gates;
But round the lofty poplar twines
With artful hand the teeming vines,
Or prunes the barren boughs away;
Or sees from far his bullocks play
Or drains the labour of the bees,
Or sheers the lambkins' snowy fleece.
Or when with golden apples crowned
Autumn o'erlooks the smiling ground
When ripening fruits perfume the year,
Plucking the blushing grape and pear,
Grateful, rewards the deities
That, favouring, listen to his cries.
Beneath some spreading ilex shade
On some green bank supinely laid,
Where rivulets gently purl along
And, murmuring, balmy sleep prolong,
Whilst each musician of the grove
Lamenting warbles out his love,
In pleasing dreams he cheats the day
Unhurt by Phoebus' fiery ray.
But when increased by winter showers
Down cliffs the roaring torrent pours,
The grizzly foaming boar surrounds
With twisted toils, and ravening hounds;
Betimes the greedy thrush to kill
He sets his nets, employs his skill,
With secret springes oft ensnares
The screaming cranes and fearful hares.
Would not these pleasures soon remove
The bitter pangs of slighted love?
If to complete this heavenly life
A frugal, chaste, industrious wife,
Such as the sun-burnt Sabines were,
Divide the burden of his care,
And heap the fire, and milk the kine,
And crown the bowl with new-pressed wine.

LATIN LITERATURE

And waiting for her weary lord
With unbought dainties load the board,
I should behold with scornful eye
The studied arts of luxury:
No fish from the Carpathian coast
By Eastern tempests hither tossed,
Nor Libyan fowls, nor snipes of Greece,
So much my appetite would please
As herbs of which the forests nigh
Wholesome variety supply.

Then to the gods, on solemn days,
The farmer annual honours pays,
Or feasts on kids the wolves had killed
And, frightened, left upon the field.
How pleased he sees his cattle come,
Their dugs with milk distended, home!
How pleased beholds his oxen bow
And faintly draw the inverted plough.
His cheerful slaves, a numerous band,
Around in beauteous order stand.

Thus did the usurer Alfius praise,
With transports kindled, rural ease.
His money he collected straight,
Resolved to purchase a retreat.
But still desires of sordid gain
Fixed in his cankered breast remain:
Next month he sets it out again.

SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-1784)

HORACE

In my small pinnace I can sail,
Contemning all the blustering roar:
And running with a merry gale
With friendly stars my safety seek
Within some little winding creek,
And see the storm ashore.

JOHN DRYDEN (1685)

FAITHLESS

Did any punishment attend
Thy former perjuries,
I should believe, a second time,
Thy charming flatteries:
Did but one wrinkle mark thy face,
Or hadst thou lost one single grace.

No sooner hast thou, with false vows,
Provoked the powers above;
But thou art fairer than before,
And we are more in love.
Thus heaven and earth seem to declare
They pardon falsehood in the fair.

SIR CHARLES SEDLEY (1639-1701)

A QUIET LIFE

In storms when clouds the moon do hide,
And no kind stars the pilot guide,
Show me at sea the boldest there
Who does not wish for quiet here.

For quiet, friend, the soldier fights,
Bears weary marches, sleepless nights,
For this feeds hard and lodges cold,
Which can't be bought with hills of gold.

LATIN LITERATURE

Since wealth and power too weak we find
To quell the tumults of the mind,
Or from the monarch's roofs of state
Drive thence the cares that round him wait,

Happy the man with little blest
Of what his father left possessed;
No base desires corrupt his head,
No fears disturb him in his bed.

What then in life which soon must end
Can all our vain designs intend?
From shore to shore why should we run,
When none his tiresome self can shun?

For baneful care will still prevail,
And overtake us under sail,
'Twill dodge the great man's train behind,
Outrun the roe, outfly the wind.

If then thy soul rejoice today,
Drive far tomorrow's cares away.
In laughter let them all be drowned;
No perfect good is to be found.

One mortal feels fate's sudden blow,
Another's lingering death comes slow;
And what of life they take from thee
The gods may give to punish me.

Thy portion is a wealthy stock,
A fertile glebe, a fruitful flock,
Horses and chariots for thine ease,
Rich robes to deck and make thee please.

For me, a little cell I choose,
Fit for my mind, fit for my Muse,
Which soft content does best adorn,
Shunning the knaves and fools I scorn.

THOMAS OTWAY (1652-85)