

“R.”, “The Toasts. A Fable.”

Description

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“The Toasts. A Fable”

Satan one day (one night I mean,
For days in Hell are seldom seen)
At *Pandemonium* in state
Among his peers carousing sat,
To celebrate our parents fall 5
In draughts of liquid fire and gall;
The toasts in bumpers flew around,
The palace roofs the toasts resound,
And all was noise, yet all unite
To pelt Heav'n with their blunted spite: — 10
Beelzebub gave his harlot PRIDE,
To match whose charms he Hell defy'd;
ENVY by *Baäl* then was given,
Foe to herself, to earth, and Heav'n;
AV'RICE was *Mammon*'s toast, a vice 15
Wou'd make a Hell of Paradise: —
My toast, cries *Ashteroth*, shall be
That *Janus*-prude, HYPOCRISY;
And mine, quo' *Belial*, — IDLENESS,
Whose charms both fiends and men confess; 20
Dear IDLENESS! to whom we owe
Myriads on myriads here below; —
Dagon gave FALSEHOOD, a mean jest,
Still mask'd, and cloath'd in rainbow-vest;
A will o' th' wisp, that leads astray, 25
A coward vice, that dreads the day; —
Moloch gave blood-stain'd CRUELTY, —
And *Thammuz*, INFIDELITY;
But to *that* toast they all objected
As one, no fiend there recollected, 30
(For, tho' such weeds on earth may grow,
There are no infidels below);
Thammuz on this, — since change he must, —
Gave that sweet creature, Madam LUST:
In short, each demon, in his toast, 35

Avow'd which fair he honour'd most.

The turn at length to *Satan* came
To bumper round *his* darling flame;
“I own that all your toasts,” he cried,
“Are beauties long approv'd and try'd, 40
But I'll give one, in whom alone
The quintessence of Hell is shown,
INGRATITUDE! – of vices *first*,
Most infamous, and most accurst,
That fiend in grain! that *hydra*-pest! 45
(Behold her image on my breast)
To her Hell's empire owes its birth,
To her I owe those swarms from earth;
When other vices rule the mind,
VIRTUE, by fits, may entrance find, 50
But let INGRATITUDE bear sway,
Not VIRTUE's shade dare cross her way;
E'en Hell itself, when she appears,
A more than double darkness wears; —
Then in a bumper toast the *belle*, 55
As *premier* beauty here in Hell .”
The fiends aloud the toast proclaim,
And Hell rethunders with her name;
“INGRATITUDE! of vices *first*,
Most *infamous*, and most accurst.” 60
York.

NOTES:

Title *Toasts* “Any person, male or female, whose health is proposed and drunk to” (*OED*).

1 *Satan* “In Christian theology: the proper name of the Devil, the supreme embodiment or spirit of evil” (*OED*).

3 *Pandemonium* “A place represented by Milton in *Paradise Lost* as the capital of hell, containing the council chamber of the Evil Spirits” (*OED*).

4 *carousing* “To drink a full bumper to his or her health” (*OED*).

6 *draughts* “The drawing of liquid into the mouth or down the throat; an act of drinking” (*OED*); *gall* “A wind of considerable strength” (*OED*)

7 *bumpers* “A cup or glass of alcoholic drink filled to the brim, esp. for a toast” (*OED*).

11 *Beelzebub* “In the Bible, the prince of the devils” (*Britannica*).

13 *Baäl* A Canaanite god; one of the seven princes of Hell.

15 *AV'RICE* “Inordinate desire of acquiring and hoarding wealth”(OED); *Mammon* The personification of

avarice and greed in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Book I, line 678); sometimes figured as one of the seven princes of Hell (*OED*).

17 *Ashteroth* Variant of "Astaroth" who, along with Lucifer and Beelzebub, made up the evil trinity in Hell (*The Occult Encyclopedia*).

18 *Janus* Ancient Roman deity, "regarded as the doorkeeper of heaven, as guardian of doors and gates, and as presiding over the entrance upon or beginning of things" (*OED*).

19 *Belial* "The spirit of evil personified; used from early times as a name for the Devil or one of the fiends, and by Milton as the name of one of the fallen angels (*Paradise Lost*, Book I, line 490) (*OED*).

22 *Myriads* "A countless number of specified things," here alluding to souls in Hell (*OED*).

23 *Dagon* "The national deity of the ancient Philistines; represented with the head, chest, and arms of a man, and the tail of a fish;" also referenced by Milton in *Paradise Lost* (Book I, line 462).

24 *rainbow-vest* Colourful clothing.

25 *will o' th' wisp* "A phosphorescent light seen hovering or floating at night over marshy ground" (*OED*).

27 *Moloch* "A Canaanite diety associated in biblical sources with the practice of child sacrifice" (*Britannica*).

28 *Thammuz* "A Syrian diety" and minor demon, also represented in Milton's parade of demons in Hell (*Paradise Lost* Book I, line 446) (*OED*).

32 *infidels* "A disbeliever in religion or divine revelation generally" (*OED*).

36 *Avow'd* "To declare, affirm" (*OED*).

42 *quintessence* "The most perfect embodiment of a certain type of person or thing" (*OED*).

43 *INGRATITUDE* "Mortal sin is ... ingratitude towards the most constant love; it is the adultery of the soul" (*OED*).

45 *hydra-pest* "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy" (Revelations 13:1-10).

58 *Rethunders* "To make a loud, echoing sound like that of thunder; to resound. Frequently poetic" (*OED*).

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Edited by Alban Fenn