

Mary Barber, "An Unanswerable Apology for the Rich"

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[MARY BARBER]

"An Unanswerable Apology for the Rich"

All-bounteous Heav'n, *Castalio* cries,
With bended Knees, and lifted Eyes,
When shall I have the Pow'r to bless,
And raise up Merit in Distress?

How do our Hearts deceive us here! 5
He gets ten thousand Pounds a Year.
With this the pious Youth is able
To build, and plant, and keep a Table.
But then the Poor he must not treat:
Who asks the Wretch, that wants to eat? 10
Alas! to ease their Woes he wishes;
But cannot live without *Ten* Dishes:
Tho' *Six* would serve as well, 'tis true;
But one must live, as others do.
He now feels Wants unknown before, 15
Wants still increasing with his Store.
The good *Castalio* must provide
Brocade, and Jewels, for his Bride.
Her Toilet shines with Plate emboss'd;
What Sums her Lace and Linen cost! 20
The Cloaths that must his Person grace,
Shine with Embroidery, and Lace.
The costly Pride of *Persian* Looms,
And *Guido's* Paintings, grace his Rooms.
His Wealth *Castalio* will not waste; 25
But must have ev'ry thing in *Taste*.
He's an OEconomist confest;
But what he buys, must be the best:
For common Use a Set of Plate;
Old China, when he dines in State; 30
A Coach and Six, to take the Air;
Besides a Chariot, and a Chair.

All these important Calls supply'd,
Calls of Necessity, not Pride,
His Income's regularly spent; 35
He scarcely saves to pay his Rent.
No Man alive would do more Good,
Or give more freely, if he cou'd.
He grieves, whene'er the Wretched sue;
But what can poor *Castalio* do? 40

Would Heav'n but send ten thousand more,
He'd give — just as he did before.

NOTES:

1 *Castalio* Identity untraced; Barber's pseudonym suggests a male form of "Castilian," characteristic of the spring Castalia, sacred in antiquity to Apollo and the Muses as a source of poetic inspiration (*OED*).

10 *Wretch* "An unfortunate or unhappy person" (*OED*).

18 *Brocade* "A rich fabric with a raised pattern, typically with gold or silver thread" (*OED*).

23 *Persian Looms* Expensive textiles imported from areas that belonged to the Persian Empire, or modern day Iran

24 *Guido's paintings* Probably a reference to Guido Reni (1575-1642), a prolific Italian Baroque painter whose works were popular in eighteenth-century England. Charles I, for example, had more paintings by Reni than any other artist in his collection. (*England and the Italian Renaissance*).

27 *OEconomist* Archaic spelling of economist.

30 *China* "Household tableware or other objects made from China or a similar material" (*OED*).

31 *A Coach and Six* "A carriage drawn by six horses" (*OED*).

32 *Chariot* "A stately or triumphal carriage" (*OED*); *Chair* "An enclosed chair for conveying one person, carried between horizontal poles by two porters" (*OED*).

39 *sue* "Appeal formally to a person for something" (*OED*).

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1735), pp. 17-19. [Google Books]

Edited by Nikolas Refanidis

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