

SUMMARY: The epitaphs below were written by Oxford's wife Anne after the death of their infant son, Lord Bulbeck, who was buried at Castle Hedingham on 9 May 1583. The epitaphs were published in John Southern's *Pandora, The Music of the Beauty of his Mistress Diana* in 1584. Certain lines are said to be translated from verses by the French poet Philippe Desportes (1546-1606), a favourite of King Charles IX. Desportes published his *Premieres Oeuvres* in 1573.

Four epitaphs, made by the Countess of Oxenford after the death of her young son, the Lord Bulbeck, etc.

Had with morning the gods left their wills undone,
 They had not so soon herited such a soul,
 Or if the mouth, Time, did not glutton up all,
 Nor I nor the world were deprived of my son,
 Whose breast Venus, with a face doleful and mild,
 Doth wash with golden tears, inveighing the skies,
 And when the water of the goddess's eyes
 Makes almost alive the marble of my child,
 One bids her leave still her dolour so extreme,
 Telling her it is not her young son Papheme,
 To which she makes answer with a voice inflamed,
 Feeling therewith her venom to be more bitter,
 As I was of Cupid, even so of it mother,
 And a woman's last child is the most beloved.

Another

MN: Gold, the best of all metals, nightingale, the sweetest of all birds, and roses, the fairest of all flowers.

In doleful ways I spend the wealth of my time
 Feeding on my heart, that ever comes again.
 Since the ordinance of the destins hath been
 To end of the seasons of my years the prime.
 With my son my gold, my nightingale and rose,
 Is gone, for 'twas in him and no otherwhere.
 And well though mine eyes run down like fountains here,
 The stone will not speak yet, that doth it enclose.
 And destins and gods, you might rather have ta'en
 My twenty years than the two days of my son.
 And of this world what shall I hope, since I know

That in his respect it can yield me but moss,
 Or what should I consume any more in woe,
 When destins, gods and worlds are all in my loss.

Another

The heavens, death and life have conjured my ill,
 For death hath take[n] away the breath of my son;
 The heavens receive, and consent that he hath done,
 And my life doth keep me here against my will.
 But if our life be caused with moisture and heat,
 I care neither for the death, the life nor skies,
 For I'll sigh him warmth, and wet him with my eyes,
 And thus I shall be thought a second Promete.
 And as for life, let it do me all despite,
 For if it leave me, I shall go to my child,
 And it in the heavens there is all my delight,
 And if I live, my virtue is immortal,
 So that the heavens, death and life, when they do all
 Their force, by sorrowful virtue th' are beguiled.

Another

Idal for Adon never shed so many tears,
 Nor Thete for Pelid, nor Phoebus for Hyacinthus,
 Nor for Attis the mother of prophetesses.
 As for the death of Bulbeck, the gods have cares:
 At the bruit of it the Aphroditan queen
 Caused more silver to distil fro her eyes
 Than when the drops of her cheeks raised daisies,
 And to die with him, mortal she would have been;
 The Charits for it break their perukes of gold,
 The Muses and the nymphs of caves; I behold
 All the gods under Olympus are constraint
 On Laches, Clothon and Atropos to plain.
 And yet Beauty for it doth make no complaint,
 For it lived with him, and died with him again.

Others of the four last lines of other that she made also

11 My son is gone, and with it, death end my sorrow.
12 But death makes me answer: Madam, cease these moans,
13 My force is but on bodies of blood and bones,
14 And that of yours is no more now but a shadow.

Another

11 Amphion's wife was turned to a rock.
12 How well I had been had I had such adventure,
13 For then I might again have been the sepulchre
14 Of him that I bare in me so long ago.

FINIS