

21B

255 His foes' derision, and his subjects' blame,
 And steals to death from anguish and from shame.
 Enlarge my life with multitude of days,
 In health, in sickness, thus the suppliant prays;
 Hides from himself his state, and shuns to know
 That life protracted is protracted woe.
 Time hovers o'er, impatient to destroy,
 And shuts up all the passages of joy:
 260 In vain their gifts the bounteous seasons pour,
 The fruit autumnal, and the vernal flower,
 With listless eyes the dotard views the store,
 He views, and wonders that they please no more;
 265 Now pall the tasteless meats and joyless wines,
 And luxury with sighs her slave resigns.
 Approach, ye minstrels, try the soothing strain,
 Diffuse the tuneful lenitives¹ of pain:
 No sounds, alas, would touch th' impervious ear,
 270 Though dancing mountains witnessed Orpheus' near;
 Nor lute nor lyre his feeble powers attend,
 Nor sweeter music of a virtuous friend,
 But everlasting dictates crowd his tongue,
 Perversely grave, or positively wrong.
 275 The still returning tale, and lingering jest,
 Perplex the fawning niece and pampered guest,
 While growing hopes scarce awe the gathering sneer,
 And scarce a legacy can bribe to hear:
 The watchful guests still hint the last offence,
 280 The daughter's petulance, the son's expense,
 Improve his heady rage with treacherous skill,
 And mould his passions till they make his will.
 Unnumbered maladies his joints invade,
 Lay siege to life and press the dire blockade;
 285 But unextinguished avarice still remains,
 And dreaded losses aggravate his pains;
 He turns, with anxious heart and crippled hands,
 His bonds of debt, and mortgages of lands;
 Or views his coffers with suspicious eyes,
 290 Unlocks his gold, and counts it till he dies:
 But grant the virtues of a temperate prime,
 Bless with an age exempt from scorn or crime:

lenitives soothing medicines
Orpheus Greek bard, whose music moved
 mountains

An age that melts with unperceived decay,
 And glides in modest innocence away;
 295 Whose peaceful day benevolence endears,
 Whose night congratulating conscience cheers;
 The general favourite as the general friend:
 Such age there is, and who shall wish its end?
 Yet even on this her load misfortune flings,
 300 To press the weary minutes' flagging wings:
 New sorrow rises as the day returns,
 A sister sickens, or a daughter mourns.
 Now kindred merit fills the sable bier,
 Now lacerated friendship claims a tear.
 305 Year chases year, decay pursues decay,
 Still drops some joy from withering life away;
 New forms arise, and different views engage,
 Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage,
 Till pitying nature signs the last release,
 310 And bids afflicted worth retire to peace.
 But few there are whom hours like these await,
 Who set unclouded in the gulfs of Fate.
 From Lydia's monarch¹ should the search descend,
 By Solon² cautioned to regard his end,
 315 In life's last scene what prodigies surprise,
 Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise?
 From Marlborough's³ eyes the streams of dotage flow,
 And Swift⁴ expires a driveller and a show.
 The reeking mother, anxious for her race,
 320 Begs for each birth the fortune of a face:
 Yet Vanet⁵ could tell what ills from beauty springs;
 And Sedley⁶ cursed the form that pleased a king.
 Ye nymphs of rosy lips and radiant eyes,
 Whom pleasure keeps too busy to be wise,
 325 Whom joys with soft varieties invite,
 Whom joys with soft varieties invite,
 By day the frolic, and the dance by night,
 Who frown with vanity, who smile with art,
 And ask the latest fashion of the heart,

Lydia's monarch . . . Solon the rich King
 Croesus, whom the Greek philosopher Solon
 advised that no man is happy until dead
Marlborough, John Churchill, Duke of
 Marlborough (1650-1722), the great Whig
 victor of Blenheim, suffered from strokes
 after 1716
Swift M's political enemy, was declared of

unsound mind in 1742 and had died as
 recently as 1745
Vanet Anne Vane (1705-36), mistress of
 Frederick, Prince of Wales
Sedley Catherine Sedley (1657-1717),
 mistress of James II. (Both Vane and Sedley
 seem actually to have been ugly.)