

1649

TO ALTHEA FROM PRISON

Richard Lovelace

Lovelace, Richard (1618-1658) - English Cavalier poet who was passionately dedicated to the Royalist cause; he was imprisoned twice for defending Charles I. Thought to be one of the handsomest men of his age, he was admired for his graceful gallantry. To Althea from Prison (1649) - A well-known poem in which Lovelace expresses his belief that true freedom comes from the soul. Opening lines: When Love with unconfined wing / Hovers within my gates, ...

TO ALTHEA

When Love with unconfined wings
 Hovers within my gates,
 And my divine Althea brings
 To whisper at the grates;
 When I lie tangled in her hair
 And fetter'd to her eye,
 The birds that wanton in the air
 Know no such liberty.

When flowing cups run swiftly round
 With no allaying Thames,
 Our careless heads with roses bound,
 Our hearts with loyal flames;
 When thirsty grief in wine we steep,
 When healths and draughts go free
 Fishes that tipple in the deep
 Know no such liberty.

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When, like committed linnets,
 I With shriller throat shall sing
 The sweetness, mercy, majesty,
 And glories of my King;
 When I shall voice aloud how good
 He is, how great should be,
 Enlarged winds that curl the flood,
 Know no such liberty.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
 Nor iron bars a cage;
 Minds innocent and quiet take
 That for an hermitage;
 If I have freedom in my love
 And in my soul am free,
 Angels alone, that soar above,
 Enjoy such liberty.

THE END