

## POETRY.

## BREVITY OF LIFE

BY FRANCIS QUARLES.

*Behold*

How short a span  
Was long enough of old,  
To measure out the life of man!  
In those well-tempered days, his time was then  
Surveyed, cast up, and found—but three-score  
years and ten.

*Alas,*

And what is that?  
The come, and slide, and pass,  
Before my pen can tell the what.  
The posts of time are swift, which having run,  
Their seven short stages o'er, their short-lived  
task is done.

*Our days*

Begun we lend  
To sleep to antic plays  
And toys until the first stage end:

Twelve waning moons, twice five times told, we  
give  
To unrecovered loss—we rather breathe than  
live.

*We spend*

A ten years' breath  
Before we apprehend  
What 'tis to live or fear a death!  
Our childish dreams are filled with painted joys,  
Which please our sense awhile, and waking  
prove but toys.

*How vain*

How wretched is  
Poor man, that doth remain  
A slave to such a state as this!

His days are short, at longest; few at most;  
They are but bad, at best; yet lavished out or  
lost.

*They be*

The secret springs  
That make our minutes flee  
On wheel's more swift than eagle's wings;  
Our life's a clock, and every gasp of breath  
Breathes forth a warning grief, till time shall  
strike a death.

*How soon*

Our new born light  
Attains a full-aged moon!  
And this, how soon to gray-haired night?  
We spring, we bud, we blossom and we blast,  
Ere we can count our days, our days we flee so  
fast.

*Tis en*

When scarce begun,  
And ere we apprehend  
That we begin to live, our life is done.  
Man, count thy days; and if they fly too fast  
For thy dull thought to count, count every day  
towards thy last.

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