

## IAMBIC IDIOSYNCRASY

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Word Ways readers may recall my "Potpourri" in the August 1981 Kickshaws, a poem consisting of lines from many different poets. If the following poem does not seem to make a great deal of sense, there is a very good reason; it, too, is a poetic patchwork. Can you identify the poets? (Warning: three of the lines are my own.) Identifications are given in Answers and Solutions.

- True wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,  
 What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd.  
 When I consider how my light is spent,  
 I wonder then which way the Devil went.
- 5 As long as skies are blue and fields are green,  
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen.  
 With streams and men be this the rule of thumb:  
 The shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb.  
 Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
- 10 The shell must break before the bird can fly.  
 When I have fears that I may cease to be,  
 I smile, of course and go on drinking tea.  
 Religion stands on tiptoe in our land,  
 But wild Ambition loves to slide, not stand.
- 15 With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climbs't the skies!  
 Tomorrow's sun to thee may never rise.  
 The holy time is quiet as a nun,  
 A wisp of fog betwixt us and the sun.  
 Let all who prate of beauty hold their peace,
- 20 The poor man's wealth the prisoner's release.  
 The world was turning slowly into gold;  
 The owl for all his feathers was a-cold.  
 Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow;  
 Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go!
- 25 The quiet mind is richer than a crown  
 Till human voices wake us and we drown.  
 Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?  
 Twixt cup and lip there may be many slips.  
 I long to talk with some old lover's ghost,
- 30 With certain victory, and 'tis my boast.  
 Pray love me little, so you love me long.  
 Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song.