The Night
(John, iii, 2)

Through that pure Virgin-shrine,
That sacred vail drawn o’er thy glorious noon
That men might look and live as Glo-worms shine,
And face the Moon:
Wise Nicodemus saw such light
As made him know his God by night.

Most blest believer he!
Who in that land of darkness and blinde eyes
Thy long expected healing wings could see,
When thou didst rise,
And what can never more be done,
Did at mid-night speak with the Sun!

O who will tell me, where
He found thee at that dead and silent hour!
What hallow’d solitary ground did bear
So rare a flower,
Within whose sacred leafs did lie
The fulness of the Deity.

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No mercy-seat of gold,
No dead and dusty Cherub, nor carv'd stone,
But his own living works did my Lord hold
And lodge alone;
Where trees and herbs did watch and peep
And wonder, while the Jews did sleep.

Dear night! this worlds defeat;
The stop to busie fools; cares check and curb;
The day of Spirits; my souls calm retreat
Which none disturb!

Christ's progress, and his prayer time;
The hours to which high Heaven doth chime.

Gods silent, searching flight:
When my Lords head is fill'd with dew, and all
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;
   His still, soft call;
   His knocking time; The souls dumb watch,
   When Spirits their fair kindred catch.

Were all my loud, evil days
Calm and unhaunted as is thy dark Tent,
Whose peace but by some Angels wing or voice
   Is seldom rent;
Then I in Heaven all the long year
   Would keep, and never wander here.

But living where the Sun
Doth all things wake, and where all mix and tyre
Themselves and others, I consent and run
   To ev'ry myre,
   And by this worlds ill-guiding light,
Erre more than I can do by night.

There is in God (some say)
A deep, but dazling darkness; As men here
Say it is late and dusky, because they
   See not all clear
O for that night! where I in him
Might live invisible and dim.

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