

Like butterflies their prison shun,
 Buzzing with all their parent faults;
 And springing from the sluggish mould
 Expand their wings of flimsy gold.

9.

But, my dear, these flies, they say,
 Can boast of one good quality,
 To Phœbus gratefully they pay
 Their little songs and melody:
 So I to you this trifle give,
 Whose influence first bid it live.

Excuse this extempore jumble and if you have not patience to read it through, <make> a present of it to the man at the Physic Garden:¹⁰ 'twould make a great figure at the front of a monthly calendar,¹¹ or subjoined to the prognostications in *Poor Robin's Almanac*.¹² Poor Dab! Adieu! my dear,

Yours sincerely,

H. W.

From WEST, Wednesday 12 January 1737

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Christ Church, Jan. 12, 1736/7.

Dear Sir,

POETRY, I take it, is as universally contagious as the smallpox; every one catches it once in their life at least, and the sooner the better; for methinks an old rhymester makes as ridiculous a figure as Socrates dancing at fourscore.¹ But I can never agree with you that most of us succeed alike; at least I'm sure few do like you. I mean not to flatter, for I despise it heartily, and I think I know you to be as much

10. The Botanic Garden, opposite Magdalen College, at Oxford, founded in 1632 by Henry Danvers, E. of Danby (see Thomas Salmon, *The Present State of the Universities*, 1744, pp. 44-5).

11. The calendars of several eighteenth-century almanacs, such as Gadbury's, Moore's, and Partridge's, have doggerel verses prefixed to each month.

12. 'Poor Robin. 1737. A New Almanack

after both Old and New Fashion,' etc. It was begun ca 1662 by William Winstanley (ca 1628-98), originally a barber (DNB). The second section of the almanac is entitled 'A Prognostication for the Year of our Lord God 1737,' and is written partly in verse.

1. For the source of this tradition see Xenophon's *Symposium* ii. 15-20 (from information supplied by Mr E. A. Havelock).