

The Passionate Man's Pilgrimage

Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618)

English explorer, adventurer, and advisor to Queen Elizabeth I

*Give me my scallop shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon,
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,
My bottle of salvation:
My gown of glory, hope's true gauge,
And thus I'll make my pilgrimage.*

*Blood must be my body's balmier.
No other balm will there be given
Whilst my soul like a white palmer
Travels to the land of heaven,
Over the silver mountains,
Where spring the nectar fountains;
And there I'll kiss,
The bowl of bliss,
And drink my eternal fill
On every milken hill
My soul will be a-dry before,
But after it, will ne'er thirst more.*

*And by the happy, blissful way
More peaceful pilgrims I shall see,
That have shook off their gowns of clay,
And go apparelled fresh like me.
I'll bring them first
To slake their thirst,
And then to taste those nectar suckets
As the clear wells
Where sweetness dwells,
Drawn up by saints in crystal buckets.*

*And when our bottles and all we
Are filled with immortality;
Then the holy paths we'll travel
Strewed with rubies thick as gravel,
Ceilings of diamonds, sapphire floors,
High walls of coral and pearl bowers.*

*From thence to heaven's bribeless hall
Where no corrupted voices brawl,
No conscience molten into gold,
Nor forg'd accusers bought and sold,
No cause deferred, nor vain-spent journey,*

*For there Christ is the King's attorney:
Who pleads for all without degrees,
And he hath angels*, but no fees.*

*When the grand twelve million jury
Of our sins with sinful fury,
'Gainst our souls black verdicts give,
Christ pleads his death, and then we live.
Be thou my speaker, taintless pleader,
Unbolted lawyer, true proceeder
Thou movest salvation even for alms,
Not with a bribed lawyer's palms.*

*And this is my eternal plea,
To him that made heaven, earth, and sea,
Seeing my flesh must die so soon,
And want a head to dine next noon,
Just at the stroke when my veins start and spread
Set my soul an everlasting head.
Then I am ready like a palmer fit,
To tread those blest paths which before I writ.
Of death and judgment, heaven and hell,
Who oft doth think, must needs die well.*



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*a pun on the "angel-noble", an Elizabethan coin.