William Latham (fl. 1628-1634), Poet. We know almost nothing about William Latham or the young man for whom he wrote the following poem, Nathaniel Weld. Both were students at Emmanuel College (Cambridge University), and Weld was in some way connected to Thomas, Lord Bruce, 1st earl of Elgin (1599-1663), the Scottish nobleman to whom Latham dedicates the volume. According to Latham, Weld held an MA from Emmanuel and died between the ages of 25 and 26.

Phiala Lachrimarum (1634)

To the Right Honourable Thomas, Lord Bruce, Earl of Elgin.

The message sent by those two sorrowful sisters in the Gospel unto our Saviour (with the change only of one sickly word) is the ground of the sad news which I bring to your lordship (if at least that which is already known everywhere may be called ‘news’): the friend whom you loved is dead, which is the cause that these few plaintive leaves present themselves to your lordship in their funeral blacks. His true love and affection to me hath persuaded me to proclaim my grief in this manner, for the loss of so worthy a friend to the world […] To this my simple memorial of him I have, as a poor post-script, added diverse emblematical essays, which for mine own private entertainment of idle hours, I have long since at several times composed and laid by me (amongst many other of several subjects) unseen of any, save of him whose absence I now lament, which, seeing they received approbation from him, I am the more confident to adventure to your lordship’s hands, and next to the public view; especially conceiving within myself that it will not seem altogether unsuitable or improper (after the naming of a particular friend) to fall into some short discourses of friends and friendship in general; neither (after the lamentation for a lost friend) to let fall some scattering meditations of death, by whom this so dear friend is reaved from the sweet communion of so many his good friends, who do still love him, and miss him.

W. Latham.

From Elegia Introductoria in Lachrymas Sequentes

[...]

Each where I hear complaint, and most lament
On every side of loss and detriment;
Husbands the wives’, the wives their husbands’ loss,
Parents their child, children their parents’ cross;

1 Phiala Lachrimarum Latin, ‘A Phial of Tears.’ The title continues: Or, A Few Friendly Tears, Shed over the Dead Body of Mr. Nathaniel Weld [...]  
2 the message … word) The two sorrowful sisters are Mary and Martha; they send word to Jesus that their brother, his friend Lazarus is “sick” (John 11.3). When Jesus arrives, Lazarus is dead.  
3 emblematical essays presumably ‘emblematic essays,’ referring to writing that functions like a moral fable or allegory.  
4 reaved torn away.  
5 Elegia Introductoria in Lachrymas Sequentes Latin, ‘The Introductory Elegy in this Tearful Sequence [in these Following Tears].’
Brothers for sisters’ death are discontent,  
Sister for brothers’: these do these lament;  
 Merchants their ships, shepherds do lose their sheep,  
Some wail the loss of what they cannot keep. 
I none of these, but I have lost a friend;  
Time may all else, but not this loss amend.  
Which loss whoever suffer, understand  
What ’tis to be deprived of their right hand,  
To have a leg cut off, an eye put out,  
And live a cripple, to be led about;  
A maimed-useless man, at once bereft  
Of outward strength and inward joy; so left  
A wand’ring pilgrim in a land unknown,  
Injured of all, because beloved of none.  
This legless, eyeless, handless man am I;  
All these I lost, when he from me did die. 

[…]

Come all ye (as my seconds) to my grief;  
Lend me your tears, and sighs to furnish out  
The woeful work which I am now about.  
And if such chance you ever do mischance,  
(As God defend it should) in sovenance  
And fair requital of your love, I’ll pay  
You tears for tears, and sighs for your sighs; nay,  
(Unwilling, barely to repay your own)  
I’ll pay you interest of ten for one,  
And (till my briny brain be drained dry)  
Will side with you and mourn incessantly.  
As for your grief will bring to memory  
Mine own unhappy grief, and keep my wound  
Still bleeding fresh, whilst ev’ry seeming sound,  
And each like word, (that even but relates  
And to his name alludes) insinuates,  
And will my heart with news thereof inform,  
Still raising in my bosom a new storm;  
So shall your moan my mournful moan augment,  
For full of harmony, a sweet consent  
Of sorrow is with sorrow, tears with tears,  
And grief in parts the music higher rears;  
But now from you my conference must break  
Whilst all my other mourners I do thus bespeak.

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6 *ye* those who have a true friend.  
7 *seconds* those individuals who support or aid a friend.  
8 *briny* salty (as a result of weeping).  
9 *in parts* i.e., the parts involved in producing musical harmony.
From Phiala Lachrimarum.

[The poem begins as a conventional pastoral elegy, calling on the Graces, the Muses and all the angels of Heaven to help the poet bewail the death of his friend. He asks all these celestial beings to bring flowers and herbs to deck his friend’s dead body and coffin, and there follows an extremely lengthy catalogue of those flowers that are appropriate for the friend’s obsequies and those that are not.]

Instead of these, bring store of fragrant flowers,¹⁰
By faithful friends and pious paramours
In honour greatly held; whose savoury scent
Of mingled sweets do show the sweet content,
Whoe’er so happy be thereof to taste,
Of two true hearts in love united fast.
For well his tongue and ’haviour could indeed
Of faithful love a learned lecture read,
And well him love became, who loyal was¹¹
Unto his love; (unhappy love) alas,
Which when both hearts and hands and friends consent
Had all clapped hands with infinite content,
And all things ready to enjoying, had
(Save publication) death the banns forbad.¹²

[…]

Then underneath his monument write this
(Though of far better he most worthy is)
In plates of shining brass, of purpose made,
And in black marble, on his grave inlaid:

Here lies the mould, the coffin and the shell
That doth the shell, the mould, the coffin hold
Where late our dear friend’s blessed soul did dwell;
Now Heaven is to this blessed soul the mould,
The coffin and the shell become, until
The general assizes of the world, when all¹³
Souls their own moulds and coffins shall fulfill,
And to their old shells, every kernel fall.
In hopeful expectation of which day
Of worthy WELD, whom we so justly mourn,
Leaves here his gage, that he’ll no longer stay¹⁴

¹⁰ these flowers symbolizing that the person wearing them has suffered “loss of love.”
¹¹ And well him love became i.e., love was attractive on him.
¹² (save publication) death the banns forbad The banns are a public proclamation of the intent of two persons to marry; they are read in church (their publication) several times before the ceremony
¹³ general assizes of the world i.e., the rising of the Dead and the Last Judgement. The assizes were sessions held periodically in each English county, where civil and criminal matters were adjudicated, held under the authority of a special judge.
Than he must needs, but suddenly return.
True sign that of his word he will be just,
Thus in his absence, to leave us the care
Of his dear dust, as his feoffees in trust. 15
O grave (for his sake, sacred), be well ware
No violence be done unto his dust.
But keep inviolate until he come. 16
'Till then, religious ashes, rest in peace
(More than Mausolus in his glorious tomb) 17
'Till the renewing of your life's old lease.

And as a poor appendix to his tomb,
Writ so, as to be read, vouchsafe a room
To this my secret plaint and private moan, 18
Conceived in silence to myself alone,
When at his grave I did recall to mind
The fickle-frail condition of mankind:

Ah, for my friend, who wished and loved me well,
I him as well; I (living) saw him dead,
Who mote have lived, 't have bidden me farewell, 19
And see me gasp my last, on my death-bed.
But so't pleased Him (who each man's vital thread
Spins as him list) his thread of life to break 20
And mine hath spared, and longer lengthened;
(The longer though, so much more still the weak:)
Ah, the weak web of man's frail flesh! How soon
(That long was weaving) is't again undone?
But if of all thy friends there be not one
Some little monument of carved stone
That will thee raise, thy name thereon to write,
And none to thee this duty will acquite, 21
Yet shall I joy that I have thought it fit,
And that I thus to them have mentioned it:
And were thy friend, thy sound-whole-hearted friend,
As thy good nature wont him often commend, 22
In heart (as once he was and may again,
If God to his endeavours say 'Amen'),
This charge by him should be for thee defrayed,

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14 gage a glove, often used symbolically as a pledge to accomplish some promise.
15 feoffees A 'feoffee' is here a trustee made responsible for a freehold estate in land; a freehold estate is one
that a person possesses absolutely and permanently.
16 until he come i.e., until Christ comes to Earth on the Last Day or the Day of the Last Judgement, heralding
the general resurrection of the dead. See n13.
17 Mausolus his wife Artemisia loved him so much that when he died she erected a tomb at Halicarnassus that
became of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
18 plaint complaint, lament.
19 mote might.
20 list wishes.
21 acquite pay back.
22 wont was accustomed.
For in small cost much love may be bewrayed.\textsuperscript{23}
And if prayers lawful were to any saint,
And saints our prayers could hear and God acquaint
With what we want, and in necessity
We mote (poor men) relieved be thereby:
Thou should’st my saint of intercession be,
And (my dear Nat) I’d only pray to thee.
For thou amongst the saints a saint doth dwell,
And reap’st the fruit there, of here living well.

[...]  

For never man more worthy is than he
To be remembered both of you and me.\textsuperscript{24}
Rarely was ever seen (be’t not envied)
Such a combination, and so full a tide
(In such an under-age) of all true worth,
Where nature and grace consented to set forth
A model to the world of what they can
When they intend to frame some special man,
For every purpose and intention fit;
A most acuminous, quick-pregnant wit;\textsuperscript{25}
A clear, fine fancy, and a quaint conceit.\textsuperscript{26}
Active, and nimble, and yet full of weight;
A piercing, present strong capacity;
A spacious, vast, tenacious memory;
A mind composed of art and industry;
A heart affecting (unaffectedly)
To make pure profit of all men’s good;
And each vein full of piety as blood.

[...]  

Much have I heard of thy rich mines, Peru,
The rubies, diamonds, and sapphires blue,
And of that Island-rivers’ precious shells
Where orient pearl of nameless value dwells,
But in one mine, one shell, one rock or shore,
Some of all these were never found before:
Gardens and orchards infinite there are,
With all sorts of fruits and flowers rare,
But all at once grown on one stalk and tree,
I never saw ’till now (dear Nat) in thee.
Ah, my dear Lord, pardon this fault of mine,
If not considering well this deed of thine.
I too, too foolish fondly have repined
And in the heat of grief have spoke my mind
Thus saucily. […]

[…] 

Unfeigned friend, oh how unfeignedly
Do I lament, when I say thou didst die?
Why mote not I (whose life is of no use)
Thy too, too hasty death by death excuse?

[…] 

Ah, when I heard them sorrowfully say
That thou wert dead, the very like dismay
In every face I did observe (me thought)
As when in Pharaoh’s land sad news was brought
That in one instant time, and casually,
One was found slain in every family;
So much unhappy tidings one night’s scope
Can bring to light to strangle all our hope.27

 […] 

But well without thee (ah!) how can we fare?
With whose sweet company we wont repair28
Our former loss of time, which we misspent
In idleness or things impertinent.
Oh, my dear WELD, whose conversation was
So lovely unto me! Could sighs (alas)
And true-shed tears (the characters of grief)
Unto thy sickness added have relief,
Had it in power of learned leach-craft lien
Or in the miracle of medicine
A noble art (no doubt) which can again
New twist the thread of life nigh cracked in twain:

[…] 

Thou shouldst not now thy friends’ and parents’ backs
Have clothed all over thus, in mourning blacks […]
Ne should my Muse have on thy heavy hearse,
(O heavy hearse) attend in sable verse;
Ne yet the eyes of my ink-stained quill
On my white cheeked leaves these black tears distil.
How lovely thou wert (living) unto all!
All, for thou wert not sullen-cynical,

—As when … hope— In Exodus 12, God strikes down the first born of Egypt, because Pharaoh has refused to release the enslaved Israelites.

—wont— were accustomed to.
Nor of a supercilious-haughty eye,
But affable and full of courtesy,
Well-pleased with mirth and harmless merriment,
Which (but injuriously) can ne’er be shent. 29
How did all hug thee and embrace for thy,
Thy (hardly-sampled) self and company?
How joyed at thy coming? and in heart
How sad, how sorrowful at thy depart?
Yea, and (now dead) how doth each thing retain
Like love to thee, and of thee been as fain? 30
When (weary) thou thy death-bed didst forsake,
How ready was thy winding sheet to take
Thee in her milk-white arms, not satisfied
’Till wholly to herself then did thee hide.
And next thy coffin (being very proud
At the second hand, t’enjoy thee in thy shroud)
For love of thee the sheet where thou dost dwell
Doth hug and kiss, much like the loving shell,
That for the almond’s sake the tender skin
Encloseth round, where th’almond lieth in.
And then the earth which (living) loved thee so,
To kiss thy feet wherever thou didst go,
With no less love doth now embrace thy chest,
Within her own dear bosom long to rest
’Till thou (whom she seems so in love withal)
In thine own dust, into her arms dost fall.
Last, when thy soul of thee did take her leave,
An angel readily did it receive,
And in his winged arms did it convey
Nimbly to Heaven, and still all the way
With sacred kisses courted it, and sang
To it a requiem sweet, whereat it sprang
In’s arms for joy […]

[…]

Farewell, dear friend, too soon ripe, long to last:
Happy young man, who so long journey hast
In so small time dispatched […]
[…] and amongst all not blessed least
In thy Maecenas (that thrice-noble lord) 31
Who count’rance to thy learning did afford; 32

29 shent disgraceful?
30 fain glad, well-pleased.
31 Maecenas i.e., Thomas, Lord Bruce, earl of Elgin to whom the volume is dedicated. Maecenas’ exemplary support of the poet Virgil made him an emblem of the virtuous patron. Elgin was certainly ‘twice-noble’ by the time this poem was published: he was 3rd Baron Bruce of Kinlosse (title inherited, 1613) and 1st earl of Elgin (title granted, 1633), but I can find no other titles until 1641, when he was made 1st Baron Bruce of Whorlton (1641).
32 countenance encouragement, support, patronage.
Ne only did thee hold in great regard,
But thee with bounteous hand did oft reward,
And graced thy person for thy virtue’s sake.

[...] 

Dear Nat, this little what I have to say:
Unmanly ’tis I know, for men alive
With soul-divorced bodies once to strive;

[...] 

So though through grief and creve-coeur, my heart
Within me die, to think that we must part,
Yet till our next and happier interview
I take my leave; now, worthy WELD, adieu:
Farewell, dear Nat, five hundred times farewell.

[...] 

Take this small tribute of my love to thee
In retribution of thy love to me.
I to thy ingenuity appeal
T’accept this handful of coarse barley-meal,
And these dark grains of bay-salt pray thee hold
In worth from him, who better would if could;
Could my ability reach thy desert
The world should know what manner man thou wert.
Suffice it me that thus my heart’s true love
(However homely) I to thee approve;
Natheless (how ever mean) in loss of sleep
And many private tears, I did them steep,
With much ado together them to save
’Till I could sprinkle them upon thy grave.
Excuse me here that so unorderly
My flaggy muse thus in and out doth fly,
Indenting to and fro her winding course,
Much like the brook once parted from his source.
My grief of this disorder is the cause,
And no disorder ever keeps the laws.
For grief (like love) from reason loves to swerve,
And keeps no mean, ne measure will observe.
And sith my plaints for thee (whom I so miss)
Unto thy happiness injurious is,
And bootless is for me, to think, and vain

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33 creve-coeur French, ‘heart break.’
34 Natheless Nevertheless (with the obvious pun on Weld’s Christian name: Nat-less).
35 flaggy drooping.
36 sith since.
37 bootless useless.
With tears thee hither to recall again;
And sith I cannot more (as I wont) walk
And talk with thee, yet oft of thee to talk
It joys my heart; and much it comforts me
To name thee to myself, whom more I may not see:
Receive this payment, and what I owe more
(As more I 'knowledge) must run on score.\(^\text{38}\)
Yet he that pays both what and when he can
(Which comforts me) is held an honest man.
Much would my love say more; but howsoe’er
Thy worth an everlasting subject were,
And with fresh matter could beget my brain,
Nathless my grief doth barren make my vein,
And shuts up my conceit, that I can say
No more, save ‘ah,’ ‘alack,’ and ‘well-a-day,’
And ‘woe is me,’ with such like poor rhyme
And windy interjections spend the time!
Therefore, farewell. I ne’er so blessed shall be
As to repair this my dear loss in thee,
A man amongst ten thousand and a friend
Worthy this precious name; so I commend
My love to thee, and thee (forever blessed)
To God and thine eternal rest.

[...]