

BEN JONSON

*To Penhurst*

THOU art not, Penshurst, built to envious show  
Of touch, or marble; nor canst boast a row  
Of polished pillars, or a roof of gold;  
Thou hast no lantern, whereof tales are told,  
Or stair, or courts; but stand'st an ancient pile,  
And, these grudged at, art revered the while.  
Thou joy'st in better marks, of soil, of air,  
Of wood, of water: therein thou art fair.  
Thou hast thy walks for health, as well as sport;  
Thy Mount, to which the dryads do resort,  
Where Pan and Bacchus their high feasts have made  
Beneath the broad beech and the chestnut shade;  
That taller tree, which of a nut was set,  
At his great birth, where all the Muses met.  
There in the writhed bark are cut the names  
Of many a sylvan, taken with his flames.  
And thence the ruddy satyrs oft provoke  
The lighter fauns to reach thy Lady's oak.  
Thy copse, too, named of Gamage, thou hast there,  
That never fails to serve thee seasoned deer  
When thou wouldst feast, or exercise thy friends.  
The lower land, that to the river bends,  
Thy sheep, thy bullocks, kine, and calves do feed;  
The middle ground thy mares and horses breed.  
Each bank doth yield thee coney; and the tops  
Fertile of wood, Ashore and Sidney's copse,  
To crown thy open table, doth provide  
The purpled pheasant with the speckled side;  
The painted partridge lies in every field,  
And, for thy mess, is willing to be killed.  
And if the high-swol'n Medway fail thy dish,  
Thou hast thy ponds, that pay thee tribute fish,  
Fat, aged carps, that run into thy net,  
And pikes, now weary their own kind to eat,  
As loath the second draught or cast to stay,  
Officiously at first themselves betray;  
Bright eels that emulate them, and leap on land  
Before the fisher, or into his hand.  
Then hath thy orchard fruit, thy garden flowers,  
Fresh as the air, and new as are the hours.  
The early cherry, with the later plum,

Fig, grape, and quince, each in his time doth come;  
 The blushing apricot and woolly peach  
 Hang on thy walls that every child may reach.  
 And though thy walls be of the country stone,  
 They're reared with no man's ruin, no man's groan;  
 There's none that dwell about them wish them down;  
 But all come in, the farmer, and the clown,  
 And no one empty-handed to salute  
 Thy lord and lady, though they have no suit.  
 some bring a capon, some a rural cake,  
 Some nuts, some apples; some that think they make  
 The better cheeses bring'em, or else send  
 By their ripe daughters whom they would commend  
 This way to husbands, and whose baskets bear  
 An emblem of themselves, in plum or pear.  
 But what can this (more than express their love)  
 Add to thy free provisions, far above  
 The need of such whose liberal board doth flow  
 With all that hospitality doth know!  
 Where comes no guest but is allowed to eat  
 Without his fear, and of thy lord's own meat;  
 Where the same beer and bread and self-same wine  
 That is his lordship's shall be also mine.  
 And I not fain to sit, as some, this day,  
 At great men's tables, and yet dine away.  
 Here no man tells my cups; nor, standing by,  
 A waiter doth my gluttony envy,  
 But gives me what I call and lets me eat,  
 He knows, below, he shall find plenty of meat.  
 Thy tables hoard not up for the next day,  
 Nor when I take my lodging need I pray  
 For fire, or lights, or livery; all is there  
 As if thou, then, wert mine, or I reigned here;  
 There's nothing I can wish, for which I stay.  
 That found King James, when hunting late this way  
 With his brave son, the Prince, they saw thy fires  
 Shine bright on every hearth as the desires  
 Of thy Penates had been set on flame  
 To entertain them; or the country came,  
 With all their zeal, to warm their welcome here.  
 What (great, I will not say, but)sudden cheer  
 Didst thou then make them! and what praise was heaped  
 On thy good lady then! who therein reaped  
 The just reward of her high huswifery;  
 To have her linen, plate, and all things nigh,

When she was far; and not a room but dressed,  
As if it had expected such a guest!  
These, Penshurst, are thy praise, and yet not all.  
Thy lady's noble, fruitful, chaste withal.  
His children thy great lord may call his own,  
A fortune in this age but rarely known.  
They are and have been taught religion; thence  
Their gentler spirits have sucked innocence.  
Each morn and eve they are taught to pray  
With the whole household, and may, every day,  
Read, in their virtuous parents' noble parts,  
The mysteries of manners, arms, and arts.  
Now, Penshurst, they that will proportion thee  
With other edifices, when they see  
Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else,  
May say, their lords have built, but thy lord dwells.