John Cleveland was a clever young contemporary of Milton’s at Christian College, Cambridge. In the civil wars he chose the royalist side, and became a bitter satirist of the parliamentarians. But though known in his own time chiefly as a wit and controversialist, he is best remembered now for his *Mark Antony*, a strange and uncharacteristically “deep” lyric piece.

**Mark Antony**

Whenas the nightingale chanted her vespers,
And the wild forester couched on the ground,
Venus invited me in th’ evening whispers
Unto a fragrant field with roses crowned

Where she before had sent
My wishes’ complement;
Unto my heart’s content
Played with me on the green.

Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian queen.

First on her cherry cheeks I mine eyes feasted,
Thence fear of surfeiting made me retire;
Next on her warmer lips, which when I tasted,
My duller spirits made active as fire.

Then we began to dart
Each at another’s heart
Arrows that knew no smart,
Sweep lips and smiles between.

Never Mark, &c.

Wanting a glass to plait her amber tresses,
Which like a bracelet rich deckéd mine arm,
Gaudier than Juno wears whenas she graces
Jove with embraces more stately than warm,

Then did she peep in mine
Eyes’ humor crystalline;
I in her eyes was seen
As if we one had been.

Never Mark, &c.

1. Cleveland’s customary vein led him to metaphysical ingenauties almost as frigid as Cowley’s, and rather more tortured. But *Mark Antony* is looser and more natural; its dancing dactyls balance beautifully across a strongly-felt caesura—as in the line,

Mystical grámmar of || ámorous glance. It is an odd metrical pattern in English and especially in the 17th century but very striking when one gets the swing of it.

2. A rough pony.
Mystical grammar of amorous glances,
Feeling of pulses, the physic of love,
Rhetorical courtings, and musical dances,
Numbering of kisses arithmetic prove.
   Eyes like astronomy;
Straight-limbed geometry;
   In her art’s ingeny\(^3\)
Our wits were sharp and keen.
   Never Mark Antony
   Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian queen.

3. Ingenuity, also exercise.