

Letter from Erasmus Darwin to Matthew Boulton, 1778

Directions to Mr Boulton for making a Tea Vase.

Friend Boulton take these ingots fine
From rich Potosi's sparkling mine,
With your nice art a tea-vase mould,
Your art more valued than the gold!
Around it "to the Fairest" write,
And send it to Eliza bright.
I'll have no bending serpents kiss
The boiling wave and seem to hiss;
No dragons gape with jaws of ire,
And breathe out steam or vomit fire;
No naiads weep, no sphinxes stare,
Nor tail-hung dolphins swim in air.
Let sprigs of myrtle around the rim
With rose-buds twisting lace the brim;
With clustering flowers the sprigs adorn,
And from the rose-buds clip the thorn.
Each side, let woodbine stalks descend,
And form the handles as they bend:
While on the foot a Cupid stands,
And twines the wreaths with both his hands.
Perch'd on the rising lid above,
O place a love-lorn turtle dove,
With hanging wing, and ruffled plume,
And gasping beak, and eye of gloom. -
Last let the silver bosses shine
With purest white and burnish fine;
Bright as the fount whose banks beside
Narcissus stood, and gazed, and died. -
Vase! when Eliza deigns to sip
Thy fragrant steam with ruby lip,
Deigns with white hand thy waves to mix
And sweetly talks and smiles betwixt
More charms thy polished orb shall shew
Than Titian's* glowing pencil drew,
More than his chisel# soft unfurled,
Whose Heav'n-wrought statue charms the world!

*Titian's famous picture of Venus.

The famous statue of Venus de Medici's