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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SONNETS, AND SONNETS
ON ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS (1590-1650) ***

Sonnets

Sonnets on English Dramatic Poets (1590-1650)

By Algernon Charles Swinburne

Taken from

The Collected Poetical Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, Vol V.

SWINBURNE'S POETICAL WORKS

- I. POEMS AND BALLADS (First Series).
- II. SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE, and SONGS OF TWO NATIONS.

- III. POEMS AND BALLADS (Second and Third Series), and SONGS OF THE
SPRINGTIDES.
IV. TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE, THE TALE OF BALEN, ATALANTA IN CALYDON,
ERECHTHEUS.
V. STUDIES IN SONG, A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS, SONNETS ON ENGLISH
DRAMATIC POETS, THE HEPTALOGIA, ETC.
VI. A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY, ASTROPHEL, A CHANNEL PASSAGE AND
OTHER POEMS.

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SONNETS

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HOPE AND FEAR

[226]

[227]

Beneath the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,
 With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,
 Hope from the front of youth in godlike cheer
 Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men grope
 Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can ope,
 And makes for joy the very darkness dear
 That gives her wide wings play; nor dreams that fear
 At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.
 Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,
 May truth first purge her eyesight to discern
 What once being known leaves time no power to
 appal;
 Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn
 The kind wise word that falls from years that fall—
 "Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all."

AFTER SUNSET

[228]

"Si quis piorum Manibus locus."

I

Straight from the sun's grave in the deep clear west
 A sweet strong wind blows, glad of life: and I,
 Under the soft keen stardawn whence the sky
 Takes life renewed, and all night's godlike breast
 Palpitates, gradually revealed at rest
 By growth and change of ardours felt on high,
 Make onward, till the last flame fall and die
 And all the world by night's broad hand lie blest.
 Haply, meseems, as from that edge of death,
 Whereon the day lies dark, a brightening breath
 Blows more of benediction than the morn,
 So from the graves whereon grief gazing saith
 That half our heart of life there lies forlorn
 May light or breath at least of hope be born.

II

The wind was soft before the sunset fled:
 Now, while the cloud-enshrouded corpse of day
 Is lowered along a red funereal way
 Down to the dark that knows not white from red,
 A clear sheer breeze against the night makes head,
 Serene, but sure of life as ere a ray
 Springs, or the dusk of dawn knows red from grey,
 Being as a soul that knows not quick from dead.
 From far beyond the sunset, far above,
 Full toward the starry soundless east it blows
 Bright as a child's breath breathing on a rose,
 Smooth to the sense as plume of any dove;
 Till more and more as darkness grows and glows
 Silence and night seem likest life and love.

[229]

III

If light of life outlive the set of sun
 That men call death and end of all things, then
 How should not that which life held best for men
 And proved most precious, though it seem undone
 By force of death and woful victory won,
 Be first and surest of revival, when
 Death shall bow down to life arisen again?
 So shall the soul seen be the self-same one
 That looked and spake with even such lips and eyes
 As love shall doubt not then to recognise,
 And all bright thoughts and smiles of all time past
 Revive, transfigured, but in spirit and sense
 None other than we knew, for evidence
 That love's last mortal word was not his last.

A STUDY FROM MEMORY

[230]

If that be yet a living soul which here
 Seemed brighter for the growth of numbered springs
 And clothed by Time and Pain with goodlier things
 Each year it saw fulfilled a fresh fleet year,
 Death can have changed not aught that made it dear;
 Half humorous goodness, grave-eyed mirth on wings
 Bright-balanced, blither-voiced than quiring strings;
 Most radiant patience, crowned with conquering cheer;
 A spirit inviolable that smiled and sang
 By might of nature and heroic need
 More sweet and strong than loftiest dream or deed;
 A song that shone, a light whence music rang
 High as the sunniest heights of kindest thought;
 All these must be, or all she was be nought.

TO DR. JOHN BROWN

[231]

Beyond the north wind lay the land of old
 Where men dwelt blithe and blameless, clothed and
 fed
 With joy's bright raiment and with love's sweet
 bread,
 The whitest flock of earth's maternal fold.
 None there might wear about his brows enrolled
 A light of lovelier fame than rings your head,
 Whose lovesome love of children and the dead
 All men give thanks for: I far off behold
 A dear dead hand that links us, and a light
 The blithest and benigntest of the night,
 The night of death's sweet sleep, wherein may be
 A star to show your spirit in present sight
 Some happier island in the Elysian sea
 Where Rab may lick the hand of Marjorie.

March 1882.

TO WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

[232]

The larks are loud above our leagues of whin
 Now the sun's perfume fills their glorious gold
 With odour like the colour: all the wold
 Is only light and song and wind wherein
 These twain are blent in one with shining din.
 And now your gift, a giver's kingly-souled,
 Dear old fast friend whose honours grow not old,
 Bids memory's note as loud and sweet begin.
 Though all but we from life be now gone forth
 Of that bright household in our joyous north
 Where I, scarce clear of boyhood just at end,
 First met your hand; yet under life's clear dome,
 Now seventy strenuous years have crowned my friend,

April 20, 1882.

A DEATH ON EASTER DAY

[233]

The strong spring sun rejoicingly may rise,
 Rise and make revel, as of old men said,
 Like dancing hearts of lovers newly wed:
 A light more bright than ever bathed the skies
 Departs for all time out of all men's eyes.
 The crowns that girt last night a living head
 Shine only now, though deathless, on the dead:
 Art that mocks death, and Song that never dies.
 Albeit the bright sweet mothlike wings be furled,
 Hope sees, past all division and defection,
 And higher than swims the mist of human
 breath,
 The soul most radiant once in all the world
 Requicken'd to regenerate resurrection
 Out of the likeness of the shadow of death.

April 1882.

ON THE DEATHS OF THOMAS CARLYLE AND GEORGE ELIOT

[234]

Two souls diverse out of our human sight
 Pass, followed one with love and each with wonder:
 The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,
 Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might
 Of darkness and magnificence of night;
 And one whose eye could smite the night in sunder,
 Searching if light or no light were thereunder,
 And found in love of loving-kindness light.
 Duty divine and Thought with eyes of fire
 Still following Righteousness with deep desire
 Shone sole and stern before her and above,
 Sure stars and sole to steer by; but more sweet
 Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet,
 The light of little children, and their love.

AFTER LOOKING INTO CARLYLE'S REMINISCENCES

[235]

I

Three men lived yet when this dead man was young
 Whose names and words endure for ever: one
 Whose eyes grew dim with straining toward the sun,
 And his wings weakened, and his angel's tongue
 Lost half the sweetest song was ever sung,
 But like the strain half uttered earth hears none,
 Nor shall man hear till all men's songs are done:
 One whose clear spirit like an eagle hung
 Between the mountains hallowed by his love
 And the sky stainless as his soul above:
 And one the sweetest heart that ever spake
 The brightest words wherein sweet wisdom smiled.
 These deathless names by this dead snake defiled
 Bid memory spit upon him for their sake.

II

Sweet heart, forgive me for thine own sweet sake,
 Whose kind blithe soul such seas of sorrow swam,
 And for my love's sake, powerless as I am
 For love to praise thee, or like thee to make
 Music of mirth where hearts less pure would break,
 Less pure than thine, our life-unspotted Lamb.
 Things hatefulest thou hadst not heart to damn,
 Nor wouldst have set thine heel on this dead snake.
 Let worms consume its memory with its tongue,
 The fang that stabbed fair Truth, the lip that stung
 Men's memories uncorroded with its breath.
 Forgive me, that with bitter words like his
 I mix the gentlest English name that is,
 The tenderest held of all that know not death.

[236]

A LAST LOOK

[237]

Sick of self-love, Malvolio, like an owl
 That hoots the sun risen where starlight sank,
 With German garters crossed athwart thy frank
 Stout Scottish legs, men watched thee snarl and scowl,
 And boys responsive with reverberate howl
 Shrilled, hearing how to thee the springtime stank
 And as thine own soul all the world smelt rank
 And as thine own thoughts Liberty seemed foul.
 Now, for all ill thoughts nursed and ill words given
 Not all condemned, not utterly forgiven,
 Son of the storm and darkness, pass in peace.
 Peace upon earth thou knewest not: now, being dead,
 Rest, with nor curse nor blessing on thine head,
 Where high-strung hate and strenuous envy cease.

DICKENS

[238]

Chief in thy generation born of men
 Whom English praise acclaimed as English-born,
 With eyes that matched the worldwide eyes of morn
 For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then
 When thoughts of children warmed their light, or when
 Reverence of age with love and labour worn,
 Or godlike pity fired with godlike scorn,
 Shot through them flame that winged thy swift live pen:
 Where stars and suns that we behold not burn,
 Higher even than here, though highest was here thy
 place,
 Love sees thy spirit laugh and speak and shine
 With Shakespeare and the soft bright soul of Sterne
 And Fielding's kindest might and Goldsmith's
 grace;
 Scarce one more loved or worthier love than
 thine.

ON LAMB'S SPECIMENS OF DRAMATIC POETS

[239]

I

If all the flowers of all the fields on earth
 By wonder-working summer were made one,
 Its fragrance were not sweeter in the sun,
 Its treasure-house of leaves were not more worth
 Than those wherefrom thy light of musing mirth
 Shone, till each leaf whereon thy pen would run
 Breathed life, and all its breath was benison.
 Beloved beyond all names of English birth,
 More dear than mightier memories; gentlest name
 That ever clothed itself with flower-sweet fame,
 Or linked itself with loftiest names of old
 By right and might of loving; I, that am
 Less than the least of those within thy fold,
 Give only thanks for them to thee, Charles Lamb.

II

So many a year had borne its own bright bees
 And slain them since thy honey-bees were hived,
 John Day, in cells of flower-sweet verse contrived
 So well with craft of moulding melodies,
 Thy soul perchance in amaranth fields at ease
 Thought not to hear the sound on earth revived
 Of summer music from the spring derived
 When thy song sucked the flower of flowering trees.
 But thine was not the chance of every day:
 Time, after many a darkling hour, grew sunny,
 And light between the clouds ere sunset swam,
 Laughing, and kissed their darkness all away,
 When, touched and tasted and approved, thy honey
 Took subtler sweetness from the lips of Lamb.

[240]

TO JOHN NICHOL

[241]

I

Friend of the dead, and friend of all my days
 Even since they cast off boyhood, I salute
 The song saluting friends whose songs are mute
 With full burnt-offerings of clear-spirited praise.
 That since our old young years our several ways
 Have led through fields diverse of flower and fruit,
 Yet no cross wind has once relaxed the root
 We set long since beneath the sundawn's rays,
 The root of trust whence towered the trusty tree,
 Friendship—this only and duly might impel
 My song to salutation of your own;
 More even than praise of one unseen of me
 And loved—the starry spirit of Dobell,
 To mine by light and music only known.

II

But more than this what moves me most of all
 To leave not all unworded and unsped
 The whole heart's greeting of my thanks unsaid
 Scarce needs this sign, that from my tongue should fall
 His name whom sorrow and reverent love recall,
 The sign to friends on earth of that dear head
 Alive, which now long since untimely dead
 The wan grey waters covered for a pall.
 Their trustless reaches dense with tangling stems
 Took never life more taintless of rebuke,
 More pure and perfect, more serene and kind,
 Than when those clear eyes closed beneath the Thames,
 And made the now more hallowed name of Luke
 Memorial to us of morning left behind.

[242]

May 1881.

DYSTHANATOS

[243]

*Ad generem Cereris sine cæde et vulnere pauci
 Descendunt reges, aut siccâ morte tyranni.*

By no dry death another king goes down
 The way of kings. Yet may no free man's voice,
 For stern compassion and deep awe, rejoice
 That one sign more is given against the crown,
 That one more head those dark red waters drown
 Which rise round thrones whose trembling equipoise
 Is propped on sand and bloodshed and such toys
 As human hearts that shrink at human frown.
 The name writ red on Polish earth, the star

That was to outshine our England's in the far
 East heaven of empire—where is one that saith
 Proud words now, prophesying of this White Czar?
 "In bloodless pangs few kings yield up their breath,
 Few tyrants perish by no violent death."

March 14, 1881.

[Transcriber's note: Please hover your mouse over the
 Greek text below to see a transcription.]

[244]

EUONYMOS

εὖ μὴν ἦ τιμὴν ἐδίδου νικηφόρος ἀλκὴ
 ἐκ νίκης ὄνομ' ἔσχε φόβου κέαρ αἰὲν ἄθικτος.

A year ago red wrath and keen despair
 Spake, and the sole word from their darkness sent
 Laid low the lord not all omnipotent
 Who stood most like a god of all that were
 As gods for pride of power, till fire and air
 Made earth of all his godhead. Lightning rent
 The heart of empire's lurid firmament,
 And laid the mortal core of manhood bare.
 But when the calm crowned head that all revere
 For valour higher than that which casts out fear,
 Since fear came near it never, comes near death,
 Blind murder cowers before it, knowing that here
 No braver soul drew bright and queenly breath
 Since England wept upon Elizabeth.

March 8, 1882.

ON THE RUSSIAN PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS

[245]

O son of man, by lying tongues adored,
 By slaughterous hands of slaves with feet red-shod
 In carnage deep as ever Christian trod
 Profaned with prayer and sacrifice abhorred
 And incense from the trembling tyrant's horde,
 Brute worshippers or wielders of the rod,
 Most murderous even of all that call thee God,
 Most treacherous even that ever called thee Lord;
 Face loved of little children long ago,
 Head hated of the priests and rulers then,
 If thou see this, or hear these hounds of thine
 Run ravening as the Gadarean swine,
 Say, was not this thy Passion, to foreknow
 In death's worst hour the works of Christian men?

January 23, 1882.

BISMARCK AT CANOSSA

[246]

Not all disgraced, in that Italian town,
 The imperial German cowered beneath thine hand,
 Alone indeed imperial Hildebrand,
 And felt thy foot and Rome's, and felt her frown
 And thine, more strong and sovereign than his crown,
 Though iron forged its blood-encrusted band.
 But now the princely wielder of his land,
 For hatred's sake toward freedom, so bows down,
 No strength is in the foot to spurn: its tread
 Can bruise not now the proud submitted head:
 But how much more abased, much lower brought
 low,
 And more intolerably humiliated,
 The neck submissive of the prosperous foe,
 Than his whom scorn saw shuddering in the snow!

December 31, 1881.

QUIA NOMINOR LEO

[247]

I

What part is left thee, lion? Ravenous beast,
 Which hadst the world for pasture, and for scope
 And compass of thine homicidal hope
 The kingdom of the spirit of man, the feast
 Of souls subdued from west to sunless east,
 From blackening north to bloodred south aslope,
 All servile; earth for footcloth of the pope,
 And heaven for chancel-ceiling of the priest;
 Thou that hadst earth by right of rack and rod,
 Thou that hadst Rome because thy name was God,
 And by thy creed's gift heaven wherein to dwell;
 Heaven laughs with all his light and might above
 That earth has cast thee out of faith and love;
 Thy part is but the hollow dream of hell.

II

The light of life has faded from thy cause,
 High priest of heaven and hell and purgatory:
 Thy lips are loud with strains of oldworld story,
 But the red prey was rent out of thy paws
 Long since: and they that dying brake down thy laws
 Have with the fires of death-enkindled glory
 Put out the flame that faltered on thy hoary
 High altars, waning with the world's applause.
 This Italy was Dante's: Bruno died
 Here: Campanella, too sublime for pride,
 Endured thy God's worst here, and hence went home.

[248]

And what art thou, that time's full tide should shrink
For thy sake downward? What art thou, to think
Thy God shall give thee back for birthright Rome?

January 1882.

THE CHANNEL TUNNEL

[249]

Not for less love, all glorious France, to thee,
"Sweet enemy" called in days long since at end,
Now found and hailed of England sweeter friend,
Bright sister of our freedom now, being free;
Not for less love or faith in friendship we
Whose love burnt ever toward thee reprehend
The vile vain greed whose pursy dreams portend
Between our shores suppression of the sea.
Not by dull toil of blind mechanic art
Shall these be linked for no man's force to part
Nor length of years and changes to divide,
But union only of trust and loving heart
And perfect faith in freedom strong to abide
And spirit at one with spirit on either side.

April 3, 1882.

SIR WILLIAM GOMM

[250]

I

At threescore years and five aroused anew
To rule in India, forth a soldier went
On whose bright-fronted youth fierce war had spent
Its iron stress of storm, till glory grew
Full as the red sun waned on Waterloo.
Landing, he met the word from England sent
Which bade him yield up rule: and he, content,
Resigned it, as a mightier warrior's due;
And wrote as one rejoicing to record
That "from the first" his royal heart was lord
Of its own pride or pain; that thought was none
Therein save this, that in her perilous strait
England, whose womb brings forth her sons so great,
Should choose to serve her first her mightiest son.

II

Glory beyond all flight of warlike fame
Go with the warrior's memory who preferred
To praise of men whereby men's hearts are stirred,
And acclamation of his own proud name
With blare of trumpet-blasts and sound and flame

[251]

Of pageant honour, and the titular word
 That only wins men worship of the herd,
 His country's sovereign good; who overcame
 Pride, wrath, and hope of all high chance on earth,
 For this land's love that gave his great heart birth.
 O nursling of the sea-winds and the sea,
 Immortal England, goddess ocean-born,
 What shall thy children fear, what strengths not scorn,
 While children of such mould are born to thee?

SONNETS ON ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS

[295]

(1590-1650)

[296]

I

[297]

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Crowned, girdled, garbed and shod with light and fire,
 Son first-born of the morning, sovereign star!
 Soul nearest ours of all, that wert most far,
 Most far off in the abysm of time, thy lyre
 Hung highest above the dawn-enkindled quire
 Where all ye sang together, all that are,
 And all the starry songs behind thy car
 Rang sequence, all our souls acclaim thee sire.

"If all the pens that ever poets held
 Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,"
 And as with rush of hurtling chariots
 The flight of all their spirits were impelled
 Toward one great end, thy glory—nay, not then,
 Not yet might'st thou be praised enough of men.

II

[298]

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Not if men's tongues and angels' all in one
 Spake, might the word be said that might speak
 Thee.
 Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains,
 yea, the sea,
 What power is in them all to praise the sun?
 His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.
 Man, woman, child, praise God for him; but he
 Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.

He is; and, being, beholds his work well done.
All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,
Are his: without him, day were night on earth.
Time knows not his from time's own period.
All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,
Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.
All stars are angels; but the sun is God.

III

[299]

BEN JONSON

Broad-based, broad-fronted, bounteous, multiform,
With many a valley impleached with ivy and vine,
Wherein the springs of all the streams run wine,
And many a crag full-faced against the storm,
The mountain where thy Muse's feet made warm
Those lawns that revelled with her dance divine
Shines yet with fire as it was wont to shine
From tossing torches round the dance aswarm.

Nor less, high-stationed on the grey grave heights,
High-thoughted seers with heaven's heart-kindling lights
Hold converse: and the herd of meaner things
Knows or by fiery scourge or fiery shaft
When wrath on thy broad brows has risen, and laughed
Darkening thy soul with shadow of thunderous
wings.

IV

[300]

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

An hour ere sudden sunset fired the west,
Arose two stars upon the pale deep east.
The hall of heaven was clear for night's high feast,
Yet was not yet day's fiery heart at rest.
Love leapt up from his mother's burning breast
To see those warm twin lights, as day decreased,
Wax wider, till when all the sun had ceased
As suns they shone from evening's kindled crest.
Across them and between, a quickening fire,
Flamed Venus, laughing with appeased desire.
Their dawn, scarce lovelier for the gleam of tears,
Filled half the hollow shell 'twixt heaven and earth
With sound like moonlight, mingling moan and mirth,
Which rings and glitters down the darkling years.

V**PHILIP MASSINGER**

Clouds here and there arisen an hour past noon
 Chequered our English heaven with lengthening bars
 And shadow and sound of wheel-winged thunder-
 cars
Assembling strength to put forth tempest soon,
When the clear still warm concord of thy tune
 Rose under skies unscared by reddening Mars
 Yet, like a sound of silver speech of stars,
With full mild flame as of the mellowing moon.
Grave and great-hearted Massinger, thy face
High melancholy lights with loftier grace
 Than gilds the brows of revel: sad and wise,
The spirit of thought that moved thy deeper song,
Sorrow serene in soft calm scorn of wrong,
 Speaks patience yet from thy majestic eyes.

VI

[302]

JOHN FORD

Hew hard the marble from the mountain's heart
 Where hardest night holds fast in iron gloom
 Gems brighter than an April dawn in bloom,
That his Memnonian likeness thence may start
Revealed, whose hand with high funereal art
 Carved night, and chiselled shadow: be the tomb
 That speaks him famous graven with signs of doom
Intrenched inevitably in lines athwart,
As on some thunder-blasted Titan's brow
 His record of rebellion. Not the day
 Shall strike forth music from so stern a chord,
Touching this marble: darkness, none knows how,
 And stars impenetrable of midnight, may.
 So looms the likeness of thy soul, John Ford.

VII

[303]

JOHN WEBSTER

Thunder: the flesh quails, and the soul bows down.
 Night: east, west, south, and northward, very night.
 Star upon struggling star strives into sight,
Star after shuddering star the deep storms drown.
The very throne of night, her very crown,
 A man lays hand on, and usurps her right.
 Song from the highest of heaven's imperious height

Shoots, as a fire to smite some towering town.
 Rage, anguish, harrowing fear, heart-crazing crime,
 Make monstrous all the murderous face of Time
 Shown in the spherul orbit of a glass
 Revolving. Earth cries out from all her graves.
 Frail, on frail rafts, across wide-wallowing waves,
 Shapes here and there of child and mother pass.

VIII

[304]

THOMAS DECKER

Out of the depths of darkling life where sin
 Laughs piteously that sorrow should not know
 Her own ill name, nor woe be counted woe;
 Where hate and craft and lust make drearier din
 Than sounds through dreams that grief holds revel in;
 What charm of joy-bells ringing, streams that flow,
 Winds that blow healing in each note they blow,
 Is this that the outer darkness hears begin?

O sweetest heart of all thy time save one,
 Star seen for love's sake nearest to the sun,
 Hung lamplike o'er a dense and doleful city,
 Not Shakespeare's very spirit, howe'er more great,
 Than thine toward man was more compassionate,
 Nor gave Christ praise from lips more sweet with
 pity.

IX

[305]

THOMAS MIDDLETON

A wild moon riding high from cloud to cloud,
 That sees and sees not, glimmering far beneath,
 Hell's children revel along the shuddering heath
 With dirge-like mirth and raiment like a shroud:
 A worse fair face than witchcraft's, passion-proud,
 With brows blood-flecked behind their bridal wreath
 And lips that bade the assassin's sword find sheath
 Deep in the heart whereto love's heart was vowed:
 A game of close contentious crafts and creeds
 Played till white England bring black Spain to
 shame:
 A son's bright sword and brighter soul, whose deeds
 High conscience lights for mother's love and fame:
 Pure gipsy flowers, and poisonous courtly weeds:
 Such tokens and such trophies crown thy name.

X

THOMAS HEYWOOD

Tom, if they loved thee best who called thee Tom,
What else may all men call thee, seeing thus bright
Even yet the laughing and the weeping light
That still thy kind old eyes are kindled from?
Small care was thine to assail and overcome
Time and his child Oblivion: yet of right
Thy name has part with names of lordlier might
For English love and homely sense of home,
Whose fragrance keeps thy small sweet bayleaf young
And gives it place aloft among thy peers
Whence many a wreath once higher strong
Time has hurled:
And this thy praise is sweet on Shakespeare's tongue—
"O good old man, how well in thee appears
The constant service of the antique world!"

XI

GEORGE CHAPMAN

High priest of Homer, not elect in vain,
Deep trumpets blow before thee, shawms behind
Mix music with the rolling wheels that wind
Slow through the labouring triumph of thy train:
Fierce history, molten in thy forging brain,
Takes form and fire and fashion from thy mind,
Tormented and transmuted out of kind:
But howsoe'er thou shift thy strenuous strain,
Like Tailor^[1] smooth, like Fisher^[2] swollen, and now
Grim Yarrington^[3] scarce bloodier marked than
thou,
Then bluff as Mayne's^[4] or broad-mouthed Barry's^[5]
glee;
Proud still with hoar predominance of brow
And beard like foam swept off the broad blown sea,
Where'er thou go, men's reverence goes with thee.

^[1] Author of *The Hog hath lost his Pearl*.

^[2] Author of *Fuimus Troes, or the True Trojans*.

^[3] Author of *Two Tragedies in One*.

^[4] Author of *The City Match*.

^[5] Author of *Ram-Alley, or Merry Tricks*.

XII

JOHN MARSTON

The bitterness of death and bitterer scorn
 Breathes from the broad-leafed aloe-plant whence
 thou
 Wast fain to gather for thy bended brow
 A chaplet by no gentler forehead worn.
 Grief deep as hell, wrath hardly to be borne,
 Ploughed up thy soul till round the furrowing plough
 The strange black soil foamed, as a black beaked
 prow
 Bids night-black waves foam where its track has torn.
 Too faint the phrase for thee that only saith
 Scorn bitterer than the bitterness of death
 Pervades the sullen splendour of thy soul,
 Where hate and pain make war on force and fraud
 And all the strengths of tyrants; whence unflawed
 It keeps this noble heart of hatred whole.

XIII

[309]

JOHN DAY

Day was a full-blown flower in heaven, alive
 With murmuring joy of bees and birds aswarm,
 When in the skies of song yet flushed and warm
 With music where all passion seems to strive
 For utterance, all things bright and fierce to drive
 Struggling along the splendour of the storm,
 Day for an hour put off his fiery form,
 And golden murmurs from a golden hive
 Across the strong bright summer wind were heard,
 And laughter soft as smiles from girls at play
 And loud from lips of boys brow-bound with May
 Our mightiest age let fall its gentlest word,
 When Song, in semblance of a sweet small bird,
 Lit fluttering on the light swift hand of Day.

XIV

[310]

JAMES SHIRLEY

The dusk of day's decline was hard on dark
 When evening trembled round thy glowworm lamp
 That shone across her shades and dewy damp
 A small clear beacon whose benignant spark
 Was gracious yet for loiterers' eyes to mark,
 Though changed the watchword of our English camp
 Since the outposts rang round Marlowe's lion ramp,
 When thy steed's pace went ambling round Hyde Park.

And in the thickening twilight under thee
 Walks Davenant, pensive in the paths where he,
 The blithest throat that ever carolled love
 In music made of morning's merriest heart,
 Glad Suckling, stumbled from his seat above
 And reeled on slippery roads of alien art.

XV

[311]

THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN

Sons born of many a loyal Muse to Ben,
 All true-begotten, warm with wine or ale,
 Bright from the broad light of its presence, hail!
 Prince Randolph, nighest his throne of all his men,
 Being highest in spirit and heart who hailed him then
 King, nor might other spread so blithe a sail:
 Cartwright, a soul pent in with narrower pale,
 Praised of thy sire for manful might of pen:
 Marmion, whose verse keeps alway keen and fine
 The perfume of their Apollonian wine
 Who shared with that stout sire of all and thee
 The exuberant chalice of his echoing shrine:
 Is not your praise writ broad in gold which he
 Inscribed, that all who praise his name should see?

XVI

[312]

ANONYMOUS PLAYS:

"ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM"

Mother whose womb brought forth our man of men,
 Mother of Shakespeare, whom all time acclaims
 Queen therefore, sovereign queen of English dames,
 Throned higher than sat thy sonless empress then,
 Was it thy son's young passion-guided pen
 Which drew, reflected from encircling flames,
 A figure marked by the earlier of thy names
 Wife, and from all her wedded kinswomen
 Marked by the sign of murderess? Pale and great,
 Great in her grief and sin, but in her death
 And anguish of her penitential breath
 Greater than all her sin or sin-born fate,
 She stands, the holocaust of dark desire,
 Clothed round with song for ever as with fire.

[313]

XVII

ANONYMOUS PLAYS

Ye too, dim watchfires of some darkling hour,
 Whose fame forlorn time saves not nor proclaims
 For ever, but forgetfulness defames
 And darkness and the shadow of death devour,
 Lift up ye too your light, put forth your power,
 Let the far twilight feel your soft small flames
 And smile, albeit night name not even their names,
 Ghost by ghost passing, flower blown down on flower:
 That sweet-tongued shadow, like a star's that passed
 Singing, and light was from its darkness cast
 To paint the face of Painting fair with praise:[1]
 And that wherein forefigured smiles the pure
 Fraternal face of Wordsworth's Elidure
 Between two child-faced masks of merrier days.[2]

[1] *Doctor Dodypol.*

[2] *Nobody and Somebody.*

XVIII

[314]

ANONYMOUS PLAYS

More yet and more, and yet we mark not all:
 The Warning fain to bid fair women heed
 Its hard brief note of deadly doom and deed:[1]
 The verse that strewed too thick with flowers the hall
 Whence Nero watched his fiery festival:[2]
 That iron page wherein men's eyes who read
 See, bruised and marred between two babes that
 bleed,
 A mad red-handed husband's martyr fall:[3]
 The scene which crossed and streaked with mirth the
 strife
 Of Henry with his sons and witchlike wife:[4]
 And that sweet pageant of the kindly fiend,
 Who, seeing three friends in spirit and heart made
 one,
 Crowned with good hap the true-love wiles he screened
 In the pleached lanes of pleasant Edmonton.[5]

[1] *A Warning for Fair Women.*

[2] *The Tragedy of Nero.*

[3] *A Yorkshire Tragedy.*

[4] *Look about you.*

[5] *The Merry Devil of Edmonton.*

XIX**THE MANY****I**

Greene, garlanded with February's few flowers,
Ere March came in with Marlowe's rapturous rage:
Peele, from whose hand the sweet white locks of age
Took the mild chaplet woven of honoured hours:
Nash, laughing hard: Lodge, flushed from lyric bowers:
And Lilly, a goldfinch in a twisted cage
Fed by some gay great lady's pettish page
Till short sweet songs gush clear like short spring
showers:
Kid, whose grim sport still gambolled over graves:
And Chettle, in whose fresh funereal verse
Weeps Marian yet on Robin's wildwood hearse:
Cooke, whose light boat of song one soft breath saves,
Sighed from a maiden's amorous mouth averse:
Live likewise ye: Time takes not you for slaves.

XX**THE MANY****II**

Haughton, whose mirth gave woman all her will:
Field, bright and loud with laughing flower and bird
And keen alternate notes of laud and gird:
Barnes, darkening once with Borgia's deeds the quill
Which tuned the passion of Parthenophil:
Blithe burly Porter, broad and bold of word:
Wilkins, a voice with strenuous pity stirred:
Turk Mason: Brewer, whose tongue drops honey still:
Rough Rowley, handling song with Esau's hand:
Light Nabbes: lean Sharpham, rank and raw by
turns,
But fragrant with a forethought once of Burns:
Soft Davenport, sad-robed, but blithe and bland:
Brome, gipsy-led across the woodland ferns:
Praise be with all, and place among our band.

XXI**EPILOGUE**

Our mother, which wast twice, as history saith,

Found first among the nations: once, when she
 Who bore thine ensign saw the God in thee
 Smite Spain, and bring forth Shakespeare: once, when
 death
 Shrank, and Rome's bloodhounds cowered, at Milton's
 breath:
 More than thy place, then first among the free
 More than that sovereign lordship of the sea
 Bequeathed to Cromwell from Elizabeth,
 More than thy fiery guiding-star, which Drake
 Hailed, and the deep saw lit again for Blake,
 More than all deeds wrought of thy strong right
 hand,
 This praise keeps most thy fame's memorial strong
 That thou wast head of all these streams of song,
 And time bows down to thee as Shakespeare's land.

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