

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Benjamin Jonson**

**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2004

**Publisher:**

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

## **Benjamin Jonson (1572 - 1637)**

Born in London of Border descent, Jonson was the son of a clergyman who died before his son's birth. He was educated at Westminster School and then, embarking upon a life that would be characterised throughout by great diversity and outlandish events, worked for a time as a bricklayer for his stepfather. This was followed by military service in Flanders, some acting in a strolling company of actors, and marriage, in 1594, to Anne Lewis, prior to being imprisoned in 1597 for his involvement, as playwright and player, in a satire entitled *The Isle of Dogs*. One year later he killed another actor in a duel but escaped execution by pleading benefit of clergy. During his subsequent imprisonment he converted to Roman Catholicism only to convert back to Anglicanism over a decade later in 1701.

In the same year his most important play, the comedy *Every Man in His Humour*, was performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Men. The cast included Shakespeare. His first court masque, of which he produced several in the following years, was produced in 1605 - the same year in which he was, once again, imprisoned for his part in a satire, this time entitled *Edward Hoe*, and also gave evidence concerning the infamous Gunpowder Plot. The period of his major plays followed with the publication and production of *Volpone* (1605-6), *Epicene* (1609) and *Bartholomew's Fair* (1614), by which time he had also worked as a personal tutor in France and had travelled to Scotland where he recorded his famous conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden. In 1616 he published his complete Works - poems, plays and masques - and received, in 1619, an honorary Master of Arts degree from Oxford University and began to lecture on rhetoric at Gresham College, London. Two disasters followed: a fire, in 1623, that destroyed many of his belongings, and a stroke in 1628 from which he never fully recovered.

Jonson was a massive man - he spoke of his "mountain belly" - and a massively prolific writer. As well as his many plays and non-dramatic verses, his numerous masques include *The Masque of Queens* (1609), *Love Restored* (1612), *Mercury Vindicated From the Alchemists at Court* (1616), *Pleasure Recounted to Virtue* (1618) and *Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion* (1624). His friends - Shakespeare, Donne, Francis Bacon, George Chapman and so on - were, and those he influenced remain even today, numerous. His tombstone in Westminster Abbey bears the apposite inscription "O rare Ben Jonson".

## **A Celebration of Charis: I. His Excuse for Loving**

Let it not your wonder move,  
Less your laughter, that I love.  
Though I now write fifty years,  
I have had, and have, my peers;  
Poets, though divine, are men,  
Some have lov'd as old again.  
And it is not always face,  
Clothes, or fortune, gives the grace;  
Or the feature, or the youth.  
But the language and the truth,  
With the ardour and the passion,  
Gives the lover weight and fashion.  
If you then will read the story,  
First prepare you to be sorry  
That you never knew till now  
Either whom to love or how;  
But be glad, as soon with me,  
When you know that this is she  
Of whose beauty it was sung;  
She shall make the old man young,  
Keep the middle age at stay,  
And let nothing high decay,  
Till she be the reason why  
All the world for love may die.

Benjamin Jonson

## A Celebration of Charis: IV. Her Triumph

See the chariot at hand here of Love,  
Wherein my lady rideth!  
Each that draws is a swan or a dove,  
And well the car Love guideth.  
As she goes, all hearts do duty  
Unto her beauty;  
And enamour'd, do wish, so they might  
But enjoy such a sight,  
That they still were to run by her side,  
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.

Do but look on her eyes, they do light  
All that Love's world compriseth!  
Do but look on her hair, it is bright  
As Love's star when it riseth!  
Do but mark, her forehead's smoother  
Than words that soothe her;  
And from her arched brows, such a grace  
Sheds itself through the face  
As alone there triumphs to the life  
All the gain, all the good, of the elements' strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily grow,  
Before rude hands have touch'd it?  
Ha' you mark'd but the fall o' the snow  
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?  
Ha' you felt the wool o' the beaver?  
Or swan's down ever?  
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the briar?  
Or the nard in the fire?  
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?  
Oh so white! Oh so soft! Oh so sweet is she!

Benjamin Jonson

## A Farewell to the World

FALSE world, good night! since thou hast brought  
That hour upon my morn of age;  
Henceforth I quit thee from my thought,  
My part is ended on thy stage.

Yes, threaten, do. Alas! I fear  
As little as I hope from thee:  
I know thou canst not show nor bear  
More hatred than thou hast to me.

My tender, first, and simple years  
Thou didst abuse and then betray;  
Since stir'd'st up jealousies and fears,  
When all the causes were away.

Then in a soil hast planted me  
Where breathe the basest of thy fools;  
Where envious arts professed be,  
And pride and ignorance the schools;

Where nothing is examined, weigh'd,  
But as 'tis rumour'd, so believed;  
Where every freedom is betray'd,  
And every goodness tax'd or grieved.

But what we're born for, we must bear:  
Our frail condition it is such  
That what to all may happen here,  
If 't chance to me, I must not grutch.

Else I my state should much mistake  
To harbour a divided thought  
From all my kind--that, for my sake,  
There should a miracle be wrought.

No, I do know that I was born  
To age, misfortune, sickness, grief:  
But I will bear these with that scorn  
As shall not need thy false relief.

Nor for my peace will I go far,  
As wanderers do, that still do roam;  
But make my strengths, such as they are,  
Here in my bosom, and at home.

Benjamin Jonson

## A Fit of Rhyme against Rhyme

Rhyme, the rack of finest wits,  
That expresseth but by fits  
True conceit,  
Spoiling senses of their treasure,  
Cozening judgment with a measure,  
But false weight;  
Wresting words from their true calling,  
Propping verse for fear of falling  
To the ground;  
Jointing syllables, drowning letters,  
Fast'ning vowels as with fetters  
They were bound!  
Soon as lazy thou wert known,  
All good poetry hence was flown,  
And art banish'd.  
For a thousand years together  
All Parnassus' green did wither,  
And wit vanish'd.  
Pegasus did fly away,  
At the wells no Muse did stay,  
But bewail'd  
So to see the fountain dry,  
And Apollo's music die,  
All light failed!  
Starveling rhymes did fill the stage;  
Not a poet in an age  
Worth crowning;  
Not a work deserving bays,  
Not a line deserving praise,  
Pallas frowning;  
Greek was free from rhyme's infection,  
Happy Greek by this protection  
Was not spoiled.  
Whilst the Latin, queen of tongues,  
Is not yet free from rhyme's wrongs,  
But rests foiled.  
Scarce the hill again doth flourish,  
Scarce the world a wit doth nourish  
To restore  
Phœbus to his crown again,  
And the Muses to their brain,  
As before.  
Vulgar languages that want  
Words and sweetness, and be scant  
Of true measure,  
Tyrant rhyme hath so abused,  
That they long since have refused  
Other cœlig;sure.  
He that first invented thee,  
May his joints tormented be,  
Cramp'd forever.  
Still may syllables jar with time,

Still may reason war with rhyme,  
Resting never.  
May his sense when it would meet  
The cold tumor in his feet,  
Grow unsouder;  
And his title be long fool,  
That in rearing such a school  
Was the founder.

Benjamin Jonson

## A Hymn to God the Father

Hear me, O God!  
A broken heart  
Is my best part.  
Use still thy rod,  
That I may prove  
Therein thy Love.

If thou hadst not  
Been stern to me,  
But left me free,  
I had forgot  
Myself and thee.

For sin's so sweet,  
As minds ill-bent  
Rarely repent,  
Until they meet  
Their punishment.

Who more can crave  
Than thou hast done?  
That gav'st a Son,  
To free a slave,  
First made of nought;  
With all since bought.

Sin, Death, and Hell  
His glorious name  
Quite overcame,  
Yet I rebel  
And slight the same.

But I'll come in  
Before my loss  
Me farther toss,  
As sure to win  
Under His cross.

Benjamin Jonson

## A Part of an Ode

to the Immortal Memory and Friendship of that noble pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison

IT is not growing like a tree  
In bulk, doth make man better be;  
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,  
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:  
A lily of a day  
Is fairer far in May,  
Although it fall and die that night;  
It was the plant and flower of light.  
In small proportions we just beauties see;  
And in short measures, life may perfect be.

Call, noble Lucius, then for wine,  
And let thy looks with gladness shine:  
Accept this garland, plant it on thy head,  
And think--nay, know--thy Morison 's not dead.  
He leap'd the present age,  
Possess with holy rage  
To see that bright eternal Day  
Of which we Priests and Poets say  
Such truths as we expect for happy men;  
And there he lives with memory--and Ben

Jonson: who sung this of him, ere he went  
Himself to rest,  
Or tast a part of that full joy he meant  
To have exprest  
In this bright Asterism  
Where it were friendship's schism--  
Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry--  
To separate these twy  
Lights, the Dioscuri,  
And keep the one half from his Harry.  
But fate doth so alternate the design,  
Whilst that in Heav'n, this light on earth must shine.

And shine as you exalted are!  
Two names of friendship, but one star:  
Of hearts the union: and those not by chance  
Made, or indenture, or leased out to advance  
The profits for a time.  
No pleasures vain did chime  
Of rimes or riots at your feasts,  
Orgies of drink or feign'd protests;  
But simple love of greatness and of good,  
That knits brave minds and manners more than blood.

This made you first to know the Why  
You liked, then after, to apply  
That liking, and approach so one the t'other

Till either grew a portion of the other:  
Each styled by his end  
The copy of his friend.  
You lived to be the great surnames  
And titles by which all made claims  
Unto the Virtue--nothing perfect done  
But as a CARY or a MORISON.

And such the force the fair example had  
As they that saw  
The good, and durst not practise it, were glad  
That such a law  
Was left yet to mankind,  
Where they might read and find  
FRIENDSHIP indeed was written, not in words,  
And with the heart, not pen,  
Of two so early men,  
Whose lines her rules were and records:  
Who, ere the first down bloomed on the chin,  
Had sow'd these fruits, and got the harvest in.

Benjamin Jonson

## A Pindaric Ode

### THE TURN

Brave infant of Saguntum, clear  
Thy coming forth in that great year,  
When the prodigious Hannibal did crown  
His rage with razing your immortal town.  
Thou looking then about,  
Ere thou wert half got out,  
Wise child, didst hastily return,  
And mad'st thy mother's womb thine urn.  
How summ'd a circle didst thou leave mankind  
Of deepest lore, could we the centre find!

### THE COUNTER-TURN

Did wiser nature draw thee back,  
From out the horror of that sack;  
Where shame, faith, honour, and regard of right,  
Lay trampled on? The deeds of death and night  
Urg'd, hurried forth, and hurl'd  
Upon th' affrighted world;  
Sword, fire and famine with fell fury met,  
And all on utmost ruin set:  
As, could they but life's miseries foresee,  
No doubt all infants would return like thee.

### THE STAND

For what is life, if measur'd by the space,  
Not by the act?  
Or masked man, if valu'd by his face,  
Above his fact?  
Here's one outliv'd his peers  
And told forth fourscore years:  
He vexed time, and busied the whole state;  
Troubled both foes and friends;  
But ever to no ends:  
What did this stirrer but die late?  
How well at twenty had he fall'n or stood!  
For three of his four score he did no good.

### THE TURN

He enter'd well, by virtuous parts  
Got up, and thriv'd with honest arts;  
He purchas'd friends, and fame, and honours then,  
And had his noble name advanc'd with men;  
But weary of that flight,  
He stoop'd in all men's sight  
To sordid flatteries, acts of strife,  
And sunk in that dead sea of life,  
So deep, as he did then death's waters sup,  
But that the cork of title buoy'd him up.

## THE COUNTER-TURN

Alas, but Morison fell young!  
He never fell,--thou fall'st, my tongue.  
He stood, a soldier to the last right end,  
A perfect patriot and a noble friend;  
But most, a virtuous son.  
All offices were done  
By him, so ample, full, and round,  
In weight, in measure, number, sound,  
As, though his age imperfect might appear,  
His life was of humanity the sphere.

## THE STAND

Go now, and tell out days summ'd up with fears,  
And make them years;  
Produce thy mass of miseries on the stage,  
To swell thine age;  
Repeat of things a throng,  
To show thou hast been long,  
Not liv'd; for life doth her great actions spell,  
By what was done and wrought  
In season, and so brought  
To light: her measures are, how well  
Each syllabe answer'd, and was form'd, how fair;  
These make the lines of life, and that's her air.

## THE TURN

It is not growing like a tree  
In bulk, doth make men better be;  
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,  
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sear:  
A lily of a day  
Is fairer far, in May,  
Although it fall and die that night,  
It was the plant and flower of light.  
In small proportions we just beauties see;  
And in short measures life may perfect be.

## THE COUNTER-TURN

Call, noble Lucius, then, for wine,  
And let thy looks with gladness shine;  
Accept this garland, plant it on thy head,  
And think, nay know, thy Morison's not dead.  
He leap'd the present age,  
Possess with holy rage,  
To see that bright eternal day;  
Of which we priests and poets say

Such truths as we expect for happy men;  
And there he lives with memory, and Ben

#### THE STAND

Jonson, who sung this of him, ere he went  
Himself, to rest,  
Or taste a part of that full joy he meant  
To have exprest,  
In this bright asterism,  
Where it were friendship's schism,  
Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry,  
To separate these twi{-}  
Lights, the Dioscuri,  
And keep the one half from his Harry.  
But fate doth so alternate the design,  
Whilst that in heav'n, this light on earth must shine.

#### THE TURN

And shine as you exalted are;  
Two names of friendship, but one star:  
Of hearts the union, and those not by chance  
Made, or indenture, or leas'd out t' advance  
The profits for a time.  
No pleasures vain did chime,  
Of rhymes, or riots, at your feasts,  
Orgies of drink, or feign'd protests;  
But simple love of greatness and of good,  
That knits brave minds and manners more than blood.

#### THE COUNTER-TURN

This made you first to know the why  
You lik'd, then after, to apply  
That liking; and approach so one the t'other  
Till either grew a portion of the other;  
Each styled by his end,  
The copy of his friend.  
You liv'd to be the great surnames  
And titles by which all made claims  
Unto the virtue: nothing perfect done,  
But as a Cary or a Morison.

#### THE STAND

And such a force the fair example had,  
As they that saw  
The good and durst not practise it, were glad  
That such a law

Was left yet to mankind;  
Where they might read and find  
Friendship, indeed, was written not in words:  
And with the heart, not pen,  
Of two so early men,  
Whose lines her rolls were, and records;  
Who, ere the first down bloomed on the chin,  
Had sow'd these fruits, and got the harvest in.

Benjamin Jonson

## An Elegy

THOUGH beauty be the mark of praise,  
And yours of whom I sing be such  
As not the world can praise too much,  
Yet 'tis your Virtue now I raise.

A virtue, like allay so gone  
Throughout your form as, though that move  
And draw and conquer all men's love,  
This subjects you to love of one.

Wherein you triumph yet--because  
'Tis of your flesh, and that you use  
The noblest freedom, not to choose  
Against or faith or honour's laws.

But who should less expect from you?  
In whom alone Love lives again:  
By whom he is restored to men,  
And kept and bred and brought up true.

His falling temples you have rear'd,  
The wither'd garlands ta'en away;  
His altars kept from that decay  
That envy wish'd, and nature fear'd:

And on them burn so chaste a flame,  
With so much loyalty's expense,  
As Love to acquit such excellence  
Is gone himself into your name.

And you are he--the deity  
To whom all lovers are design'd  
That would their better objects find;  
Among which faithful troop am I--

Who as an off'ring at your shrine  
Have sung this hymn, and here entreat  
One spark of your diviner heat  
To light upon a love of mine.

Which if it kindle not, but scant  
Appear, and that to shortest view;  
Yet give me leave to adore in you  
What I in her am grieved to want!

Benjamin Jonson

## **An Epitaph On A Child Of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel**

Weep with me, all you that read  
This little story;  
And know, for whom a tear you shed  
Death's self is sorry.  
'Twas a child that so did thrive  
In grace and feature,  
As heaven and nature seemed to strive  
Which owned the creature.

Years he numbered scarce thirteen  
When fates turned cruel,  
Yet three filled zodiacs had be been  
The stage's jewel;  
And did act what now we moan,  
Old men so duly,  
As, sooth, the parcae thought him one,  
He played so truly.

So by error, so his fate  
They all consented;  
But viewing him since, alas too late,  
They have repented,  
And have sought to give new birth,  
In baths to steep him;  
But being so much too good for earth,  
Heaven vows to keep him.

Benjamin Jonson

## An Ode to Himself

Where dost thou careless lie,  
Buried in ease and sloth?  
Knowledge that sleeps doth die;  
And this security,  
It is the common moth  
That eats on wits and arts, and oft destroys them both.

Are all th' Aonian springs  
Dried up? lies Thespia waste?  
Doth Clarius' harp want strings,  
That not a nymph now sings?  
Or droop they as disgrac'd,  
To see their seats and bowers by chatt'ring pies defac'd?

If hence thy silence be,  
As 'tis too just a cause,  
Let this thought quicken thee:  
Minds that are great and free  
Should not on fortune pause;  
'Tis crown enough to virtue still, her own applause.

What though the greedy fry  
Be taken with false baits  
Of worded balladry,  
And think it poesy?  
They die with their conceits,  
And only piteous scorn upon their folly waits.

Then take in hand thy lyre,  
Strike in thy proper strain,  
With Japhet's line aspire  
Sol's chariot for new fire,  
To give the world again;  
Who aided him will thee, the issue of Jove's brain.

And since our dainty age  
Cannot endure reproof,  
Make not thyself a page  
To that strumpet, the stage,  
But sing high and aloof,  
Safe from the wolf's black jaw and the dull ass's hoof.

Benjamin Jonson

## **Begging Another**

For love's sake, kiss me once again;  
I long, and should not beg in vain,  
Here's none to spy or see;  
Why do you doubt or stay?  
I'll taste as lightly as the bee  
That doth but touch his flower and flies away.

Once more, and faith I will be gone;  
Can he that loves ask less than one?  
Nay, you may err in this  
And all your bounty wrong;  
This could be called but half a kiss,  
What we're but once to do, we should do long.

I will but mend the last, and tell  
Where, how it sould have relished well;  
Join lip to lip, and try  
Each suck other's breath.  
And whilst our tongues perplexed lie,  
Let who will, think us dead or wish our death.

Benjamin Jonson

## **Come, My Celia**

Come, my Celia, let us prove  
While we may, the sports of love;  
Time will not be ours forever;  
He at length our good will sever.  
Spend not then his gifts in vain.  
Suns that set may rise again;  
But if once we lose this light,  
'Tis with us perpetual night.  
Why should we defer our joys?  
Fame and rumor are but toys.  
Cannot we delude the eyes  
Of a few poor household spies,  
Or his easier ears beguile,  
So removed by our wile?  
'Tis no sin love's fruit to steal;  
But the sweet theft to reveal.  
To be taken, to be seen,  
These have crimes accounted been.

Benjamin Jonson

## **Epitaph On Elizabeth**

Wouldst thou hear what man can say  
In a little? Reader, stay.  
Underneath this stone doth lie  
As much beauty as could die;  
Which in life did harbor give  
To more viture than doth live.

If at all she had a fault,  
Leave it buried in this vault.  
One name was Elizabeth,  
Th' other let it sleep with death;  
Fitter, where it died to tell,  
Than that it lived at all. Farewell.

Benjamin Jonson

## **Have You Seen But A Bright Lily Grow**

Have you seen but a bright lily grow  
Before rude hands have touched it?  
Have you marked but the fall of snow  
Before the soil hath smutched it?  
Have you felt the wool of beaver,  
Or swan's down ever?  
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier,  
Or the nard in the fire?  
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?  
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she!

Benjamin Jonson

## Hymn to Diana

QUEEN and huntress, chaste and fair,  
Now the sun is laid to sleep,  
Seated in thy silver chair,  
State in wonted manner keep:  
Hesperus entreats thy light,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade  
Dare itself to interpose;  
Cynthia's shining orb was made  
Heaven to clear when day did close:  
Bless us then with wished sight,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,  
And thy crystal-shining quiver;  
Give unto the flying hart  
Space to breathe, how short soever:  
Thou that mak'st a day of night--  
Goddess excellently bright.

Benjamin Jonson

## **It Is Not Growing Like A Tree**

It is not growing like a tree  
In bulk doth make Man better be;  
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,  
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:  
A lily of a day  
Is fairer far in May,  
Although it fall and die that night&mdash;  
It was the plant and flower of light.  
In small proportions we just beauties see;  
And in short measures life may perfect be.

Benjamin Jonson

## **My Picture Left in Scotland**

I now think Love is rather deaf than blind,  
For else it could not be  
That she,  
Whom I adore so much, should so slight me  
And cast my love behind.  
I'm sure my language to her was as sweet,  
And every close did meet  
In sentence of as subtle feet,  
As hath the youngest He  
That sits in shadow of Apollo's tree.  
O, but my conscious fears,  
That fly my thoughts between,  
Tell me that she hath seen  
My hundred of gray hairs,  
Told seven and forty years  
Read so much waste, as she cannot embrace  
My mountain belly and my rocky face;  
And all these through her eyes have stopp'd her ears.

Benjamin Jonson

## Ode to Himself upon the Censure of his New Inn

Come, leave the loathed stage,  
And the more loathsome age;  
Where pride and impudence, in faction knit,  
Usurp the chair of wit!  
Indicting and arraigning every day  
Something they call a play.  
Let their fastidious, vain  
Commission of the brain  
Run on and rage, sweat, censure, and condemn;  
They were not made for thee, less thou for them.

Say that thou pour'st them wheat,  
And they will acorns eat;  
'Twere simple fury still thyself to waste  
On such as have no taste!  
To offer them a surfeit of pure bread  
Whose appetites are dead!  
No, give them grains their fill,  
Husks, draff to drink and swill:  
If they love lees, and leave the lusty wine,  
Envy them not, their palate's with the swine.

No doubt some mouldy tale,  
Like Pericles, and stale  
As the shrieve's crusts, and nasty as his fish--  
Scraps out of every dish  
Thrown forth, and rak'd into the common tub,  
May keep up the Play-club:  
There, sweepings do as well  
As the best-order'd meal;  
For who the relish of these guests will fit,  
Needs set them but the alms-basket of wit.

And much good do't you then:  
Brave plush-and-velvet-men  
Can feed on orts; and, safe in your stage-clothes,  
Dare quit, upon your oaths,  
The staggers, and the stage-wrights too (your peers)  
Of larding your large ears  
With their foul comic socks,  
Wrought upon twenty blocks;  
Which if they are torn, and turn'd, and patch'd enough,  
The gamesters share your guilt, and you their stuff.

Leave things so prostitute,  
And take the Alcaic lute;  
Or thine own Horace, or Anacreon's lyre;  
Warm thee by Pindar's fire:  
And though thy nerves be shrunk, and blood be cold,  
Ere years have made thee old,  
Strike that disdainful heat  
Throughout, to their defeat,

As curious fools, and envious of thy strain,  
May blushing swear, no palsy's in thy brain.

But when they hear thee sing  
The glories of thy king,  
His zeal to God, and his just awe o'er men:  
They may, blood-shaken then,  
Feel such a flesh-quake to possess their powers,  
As they shall cry: "Like ours  
In sound of peace or wars,  
No harp e'er hit the stars,  
In tuning forth the acts of his sweet reign,  
And raising Charles his chariot 'bove his Wain."

Benjamin Jonson

## **On Elizabeth L. H.**

Epitaphs i

WOULDST thou hear what Man can say  
In a little? Reader, stay.  
Underneath this stone doth lie  
As much Beauty as could die:  
Which in life did harbour give  
To more Virtue than doth live.  
If at all she had a fault,  
Leave it buried in this vault.  
One name was Elizabeth,  
The other, let it sleep with death:  
Fitter, where it died, to tell  
Than that it lived at all. Farewell.

Benjamin Jonson

## **On My First Son**

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy;  
My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy.  
Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,  
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.

Oh, could I lose all father now! For why  
Will man lament the state he should envy?  
To have so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage,  
And if no other misery, yet age!

Rest in soft peace, and asked, say, Here doth lie  
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.  
For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such  
As what he loves may never like too much.

Benjamin Jonson

## On Salathiel Pavy

A child of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel  
Epitaphs: ii

WEEP with me, all you that read  
This little story;  
And know, for whom a tear you shed  
Death's self is sorry.  
'Twas a child that so did thrive  
In grace and feature,  
As Heaven and Nature seem'd to strive  
Which own'd the creature.  
Years he number'd scarce thirteen  
When Fates turn'd cruel,  
Yet three fill'd zodiacs had he been  
The stage's jewel;  
And did act (what now we moan)  
Old men so duly,  
As sooth the Parcae thought him one,  
He play'd so truly.  
So, by error, to his fate  
They all consented;  
But, viewing him since, alas, too late!  
They have repented;  
And have sought, to give new birth,  
In baths to steep him;  
But, being so much too good for earth,  
Heaven vows to keep him.

Benjamin Jonson

## Queen and Huntress

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,  
Now the sun is laid to sleep,  
Seated in thy silver chair  
State in wonted manner keep:  
Hesperus entreats thy light,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade  
Dare itself to interpose;  
Cynthia's shining orb was made  
Heaven to clear when day did close:  
Bless us then with wished sight,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart  
And thy crystal-shining quiver;  
Give unto the flying hart  
Space to breathe, how short soever:  
Thou that mak'st a day of night,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Benjamin Jonson

## **Simplex Munditiis**

STILL to be neat, still to be drest,  
As you were going to a feast;  
Still to be powder'd, still perfumed:  
Lady, it is to be presumed,  
Though art's hid causes are not found,  
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face  
That makes simplicity a grace;  
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:  
Such sweet neglect more taketh me  
Than all th' adulteries of art;  
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

Benjamin Jonson

## **So Breaks The Sun**

So breaks the sun earth's rugged chains,  
    Wherein rude winter bound her veins;  
So grows both stream and source of price,  
    That lately fettered were with ice.  
So naked trees get crisped heads,  
    And colored coats the roughest meads,  
And all get vigor, youth, and spright,  
    That are but looked on by his light.

Benjamin Jonson

## **Song from The Silent Woman**

Still to be neat, still to be dressed,  
As you were going to a feast;  
Still to be powdered, still perfumed:  
Lady, it is to be presumed,  
Though art's hid causes are not found,  
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face,  
That makes simplicity a grace;  
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free;  
Such sweet neglect more taketh me  
Than all th' adulteries of art:  
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

Benjamin Jonson

## **Song to Celia**

Drink to me only with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine;  
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,  
And I'll not look for wine.  
The thirst that from the soul doth rise  
Doth ask a drink divine;  
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,  
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,  
Not so much honouring thee  
As giving it a hope, that there  
It could not withered be.  
But thou thereon didst only breathe,  
And sent'st it back to me;  
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,  
Not of itself, but thee.

Benjamin Jonson

## **Song To Celia - I**

Come, my Celia, let us prove  
While we may the sports of love;  
Time will not be ours forever,  
He at length our good will sever.

Spend not then his gifts in vain;  
Suns that set may rise again,  
But if once we lose this light,  
'Tis with us perpetual night.

Why should we defer our joys?  
Fame and rumour are but toys.  
Cannot we delude the eyes  
Of a few poor household spies?  
Or his easier ears beguile,  
So removed by our wile?

'Tis no sin love's fruits to steal;  
But the sweet theft to reveal,  
To be taken, to be seen,  
These have crimes accounted been.

Benjamin Jonson

## **Song To Celia - II**

Drink to me only with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine;  
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,  
And I'll not look for wine.  
The thirst that from the soul doth rise  
Doth ask a drink divine;  
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,  
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,  
Not so much honouring thee  
As giving it a hope, that there  
It could not withered be.  
But thou thereon didst only breathe,  
And sent'st it back to me;  
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,  
Not of itself, but thee.

Benjamin Jonson

## **Song To Diana**

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,  
Now the sun is laid to sleep,  
Seated in thy silver chair  
State in wonted manner keep:  
Hesperus entreats thy light,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade  
Dare itself to interpose;  
Cynthia's shining orb was made  
Heaven to clear when day did close:  
Bless us then with wished sight,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,  
And thy crystal-shining quiver;  
Give unto the flying hart  
Space to breathe, how short soever:  
Thou that mak'st a day of night,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Benjamin Jonson

## **That Women Are But Men's Shadows**

Follow a shadow, it still flies you;  
Seem to fly it, it will pursue:  
So court a mistress, she denies you;  
Let her alone, she will court you.  
Say, are not women truly then  
Styled but the shadows of us men?

At morn and even shades are longest,  
At noon they are or short or none;  
So men at weakest, they are strongest,  
But grant us perfect, they're not known.  
Say, are not women truly then  
Styled but the shadows of us men?

Benjamin Jonson

## **The Metamorphosed Gypsies (excerpt)**

The fairy beam upon you,  
The stars to glister on you;  
A moon of light  
In the noon of night,  
Till the fire-drake hath o'ergone you.  
The wheel of fortune guide you  
The boy with the bow beside you;  
Run aye in the way  
Till the bird of day,  
And the luckier lot betide you.

To the old, long life and treasure,  
To the young, all health and pleasure;  
To the fair, their face  
With eternal grace,  
And the foul to be lov'd at leisure.  
To the witty, all clear mirrors,  
To the foolish, their dark errors;  
To the loving sprite,  
A secure delight;  
To the jealous, his own false terrors.

Benjamin Jonson

## The Noble Balm

HIGH-SPIRITED friend,  
I send nor balms nor cor'sives to your wound:  
Your fate hath found  
A gentler and more agile hand to tend  
The cure of that which is but corporal;  
And doubtful days, which were named critical,  
Have made their fairest flight  
And now are out of sight.  
Yet doth some wholesome physic for the mind  
Wrapp'd in this paper lie,  
Which in the taking if you misapply,  
You are unkind.

Your covetous hand,  
Happy in that fair honour it hath gain'd,  
Must now be rein'd.  
True valour doth her own renown command  
In one full action; nor have you now more  
To do, than be a husband of that store.  
Think but how dear you bought  
This fame which you have caught:  
Such thoughts will make you more in love with truth.  
'Tis wisdom, and that high,  
For men to use their fortune reverently,  
Even in youth.

Benjamin Jonson

## **The Shadow**

FOLLOW a shadow, it still flies you;  
Seem to fly it, it will pursue:  
So court a mistress, she denies you;  
Let her alone, she will court you.  
Say, are not women truly, then,  
Styled but the shadows of us men?

At morn and even, shades are longest;  
At noon they are or short or none:  
So men at weakest, they are strongest,  
But grant us perfect, they're not known.  
Say, are not women truly, then,  
Styled but the shadows of us men?

Benjamin Jonson

## The Triumph

SEE the Chariot at hand here of Love,  
Wherein my Lady rideth!  
Each that draws is a swan or a dove,  
And well the car Love guideth.  
As she goes, all hearts do duty  
Unto her beauty;  
And enamour'd do wish, so they might  
But enjoy such a sight,  
That they still were to run by her side,  
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.

Do but look on her eyes, they do light  
All that Love's world compriseth!  
Do but look on her hair, it is bright  
As Love's star when it riseth!  
Do but mark, her forehead's smother  
Than words that soothe her;  
And from her arch'd brows such a grace  
Sheds itself through the face,  
As alone there triumphs to the life  
All the gain, all the good, of the elements' strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily grow  
Before rude hands have touch'd it?  
Have you mark'd but the fall of the snow  
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?  
Have you felt the wool of beaver,  
Or swan's down ever?  
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier,  
Or the nard in the fire?  
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?  
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she!

Benjamin Jonson

## To Celia

DRINK to me only with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine;  
Or leave a kiss but in the cup  
And I'll not look for wine.  
The thirst that from the soul doth rise  
Doth ask a drink divine;  
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,  
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,  
Not so much honouring thee  
As giving it a hope that there  
It could not wither'd be;  
But thou thereon didst only breathe,  
And sent'st it back to me;  
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,  
Not of itself but thee!

Benjamin Jonson

## To Heaven

Good and great God, can I not think of thee  
But it must straight my melancholy be?  
Is it interpreted in me disease  
That, laden with my sins, I seek for ease?  
Oh be thou witness, that the reins dost know  
And hearts of all, if I be sad for show,  
And judge me after; if I dare pretend  
To ought but grace or aim at other end.  
As thou art all, so be thou all to me,  
First, midst, and last, converted one, and three;  
My faith, my hope, my love; and in this state  
My judge, my witness, and my advocate.  
Where have I been this while exil'd from thee?  
And whither rap'd, now thou but stoop'st to me?  
Dwell, dwell here still. O, being everywhere,  
How can I doubt to find thee ever here?  
I know my state, both full of shame and scorn,  
Conceiv'd in sin, and unto labour borne,  
Standing with fear, and must with horror fall,  
And destin'd unto judgment, after all.  
I feel my griefs too, and there scarce is ground  
Upon my flesh t' inflict another wound.  
Yet dare I not complain, or wish for death  
With holy Paul, lest it be thought the breath  
Of discontent; or that these prayers be  
For weariness of life, not love of thee.

Benjamin Jonson

## To John Donne

Donne, the delight of Phoebus and each Muse  
Who, to thy one, all other brains refuse;  
Whose every work of thy most early wit  
Came forth example, and remains so yet;  
Longer a-knowing than most wits do live;  
And which no affection praise enough can give!  
To it, thy language, letters, arts, best life,  
Which might with half mankind maintain a strife.  
All which I meant to praise, and yet I would;  
But leave, because I cannot as I should!

Benjamin Jonson

## To Lucy, Countess of Bedford, with John Donne's Satires

Lucy, you brightness of our sphere, who are  
Life of the Muses' day, their morning star!  
If works, not th' author's, their own grace should look,  
Whose poems would not wish to be your book?  
But these, desir'd by you, the maker's ends  
Crown with their own. Rare poems ask rare friends.  
Yet satires, since the most of mankind be  
Their unavoyd subject, fewest see;  
For none e'er took that pleasure in sin's sense  
But, when they heard it tax'd, took more offence.  
They, then, that living where the matter is bred,  
Dare for these poems, yet, both ask and read  
And like them too, must needfully, though few,  
Be of the best; and 'mongst those best are you,  
Lucy, you brightness of our sphere, who are  
The Muses' evening, as their morning star.

Benjamin Jonson

## To the Memory of My Beloved Author, Mr. William Shakespeare

To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,  
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;  
While I confess thy writings to be such  
As neither man nor muse can praise too much;  
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these ways  
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise;  
For seeliest ignorance on these may light,  
Which, when it sounds at best, but echoes right;  
Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance  
The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance;  
Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,  
And think to ruin, where it seem'd to raise.  
These are, as some infamous bawd or whore  
Should praise a matron; what could hurt her more?  
But thou art proof against them, and indeed,  
Above th' ill fortune of them, or the need.  
I therefore will begin. Soul of the age!  
The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!  
My Shakespeare, rise! I will not lodge thee by  
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie  
A little further, to make thee a room:  
Thou art a monument without a tomb,  
And art alive still while thy book doth live  
And we have wits to read and praise to give.  
That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses,  
I mean with great, but disproportion'd Muses,  
For if I thought my judgment were of years,  
I should commit thee surely with thy peers,  
And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,  
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.  
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,  
From thence to honour thee, I would not seek  
For names; but call forth thund'ring {AE}schylus,  
Euripides and Sophocles to us;  
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,  
To life again, to hear thy buskin tread,  
And shake a stage; or, when thy socks were on,  
Leave thee alone for the comparison  
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome  
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.  
Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show  
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.  
He was not of an age but for all time!  
And all the Muses still were in their prime,  
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm  
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!  
Nature herself was proud of his designs  
And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines,  
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,  
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.  
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,  
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please,

But antiquated and deserted lie,  
As they were not of Nature's family.  
Yet must I not give Nature all: thy art,  
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.  
For though the poet's matter nature be,  
His art doth give the fashion; and, that he  
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,  
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat  
Upon the Muses' anvil; turn the same  
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame,  
Or, for the laurel, he may gain a scorn;  
For a good poet's made, as well as born;  
And such wert thou. Look how the father's face  
Lives in his issue, even so the race  
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines  
In his well-turned, and true-filed lines;  
In each of which he seems to shake a lance,  
As brandish'd at the eyes of ignorance.  
Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were  
To see thee in our waters yet appear,  
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,  
That so did take Eliza and our James!  
But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere  
Advanc'd, and made a constellation there!  
Shine forth, thou star of poets, and with rage  
Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage;  
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd like night,  
And despairs day, but for thy volume's light.

Benjamin Jonson

## **To The Memory Of My Beloved, The Author, Mr William Shakespeare, And What He Hath Left Us**

To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name  
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;  
While I confess thy writings to be such  
As neither Man nor Muse can praise too much.  
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these ways  
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise;  
For silliest ignorance on these may light,  
Which when it sounds at best but echoes right;  
Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance  
The truth, but gropes, and urges all by chance;  
Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,  
And think to ruin where it seemed to raise.  
These are as some infamous bawd or whore  
Should praise a matron. What could hurt her more?  
But thou art proof against them, and indeed  
Above th' ill fortune of them, or the need.  
I therefore will begin: Soul of the Age!  
The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!  
My Shakespeare, rise; I will not lodge thee by  
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie  
A little further, to make thee a room:  
Thou art a monument without a tomb,  
And art alive still, while thy book doth live,  
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.  
That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses,  
I mean with great but disproportioned Muses,  
For if I thought my judgement were of years,  
I should commit thee surely with thy peers,  
And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,  
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.  
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,  
From thence to honour thee I would not seek  
For names; but call forth thundering Aeschylus,  
Euripides, and Sophocles to us,  
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,  
To live again, to hear thy buskin tread,  
And shake a stage; or, when thy socks were on,  
Leave thee alone for the comparison  
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome  
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.  
Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show  
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.  
He was not of an age, but for all time!  
And all the Muses still were in their prime  
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm  
Our ears, or, like a Mercury, to charm!  
Nature herself was proud of his designs,  
And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines!  
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,  
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.  
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,  
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please;

But antiquated and deserted lie,  
As they were not of Nature's family.  
Yet must I not give Nature all; thy art,  
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.  
For though the poet's matter nature be,  
His art doth give the fashion; and that he  
Who casts to write a living line must sweat  
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat  
Upon the Muses' anvil; turn the same,  
And himself with it, that he thinks to frame,  
Or for the laurel he may gain a scorn;  
For a good poet's made as well as born.  
And such wert thou. Look how the father's face  
Lives in his issue, even so the race  
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines  
In his well turned and true-filed lines:  
In each of which he seems to shake a lance,  
As brandished at the eyes of ignorance.  
Sweet swan of Avon! what a sight it were  
To see thee in our waters yet appear,  
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,  
That did so take Eliza and our James!  
But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere  
Advanced, and made a constellation there:  
Shine forth, thou Star of Poets, and with rage,  
Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage,  
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourned like night,  
And despairs day, but for thy volume's light.

Benjamin Jonson

## **To The Reader**

Pray thee, take care, that tak'st my book in hand,  
To read it well -- that is, to understand.

Benjamin Jonson

## Venus' Runaway

Beauties, have ye seen this toy,  
Called Love, a little boy,  
Almost naked, wanton, blind;  
Cruel now, and then as kind?  
If he be amongst ye, say?  
He is Venus' runaway.

She that will but now discover  
Where the winged wag doth hover,  
Shall to-night receive a kiss,  
How or where herself would wish:  
But who brings him to his mother,  
Shall have that kiss, and another.

He hath marks about him plenty:  
You shall know him among twenty.  
All his body is a fire,  
And his breath a flame entire,  
That, being shot like lightning in,  
Wounds the heart, but not the skin.

At his sight, the sun hath turned,  
Neptune in the waters burned;  
Hell hath felt a greater heat;  
Jove himself forsook his seat:  
From the centre to the sky,  
Are his trophies reared high.

Wings he hath, which though ye clip,  
He will leap from lip to lip,  
Over liver, lights, and heart,  
But not stay in any part;  
But if chance his arrow misses,  
He will shoot himself in kisses.

He doth bear a golden bow,  
And a quiver, hanging low,  
Full of arrows, that outbrave  
Dian's shafts; where, if he have  
Any head more sharp than other,  
With that first he strikes his mother.

Still the fairest are his fuel.  
When his days are to be cruel,  
Lovers' hearts are all his food,  
And his baths their warmest blood:  
Naught but wounds his hands doth season,  
And he hates none like to Reason.

Trust him not; his words, though sweet,  
Seldom with his heart do meet.  
All his practice is deceit;

Every gift it is a bait;

Not a kiss but poison bears;  
And most treason in his tears.

Idle minutes are his reign;  
Then, the straggler makes his gain  
By presenting maids with toys,  
And would have ye think them joys:  
'Tis the ambition of the elf  
To have all childish as himself.

If by these ye please to know him,  
Beauties, be not nice, but show him.  
Though ye had a will to hide him,  
Now, we hope, ye'll not abide him;  
Since you hear his falser play,  
And that he's Venus' runaway.

Benjamin Jonson