

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Christopher Marlowe**

**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2004

**Publisher:**

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

### **Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)**

The son of a shoemaker, Marlowe was born two months before Shakespeare. A great wit and a precocious talent, he won scholarships first into King's School, Canterbury, and later into Corpus College, Cambridge where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1583 and his Master of Arts in 1587. He joined a company of actors called the Admiral's Men who brought his first great play, Tamburlaine the Great (1587), to the stage. Its success inspired him to follow up with Part Two of the play a year later. He joined the secret diplomatic service whilst continuing to write such great plays as Dr Faustus and The Jew of Malta. His plays dealt with the corruption of power (as in Tamburlaine), of knowledge (as in Faustus), and of money (as in the Jew). When a plague caused London theatres to close in 1592, he went and lived with a patron, Thomas Walsingham, under whose brother he had worked as a secret agent. He was suspected of atheistic and blasphemous writings and was still being investigated by the London privy council when he died. He had been gambling at backgammon in a Deptford tavern with three other men when one of them stabbed him fatally after a quarrel. He was twenty-nine.

## **Hero and Leander**

It lies not in our power to love or hate,  
For will in us is over-rul'd by fate.  
When two are stript long ere the course begin,  
We wish that one should lose, the other win;  
And one especially do we affect  
Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:  
The reason no man knows; let it suffice,  
What we behold is censur'd by our eyes.  
Where both deliberate, the love is slight:  
Who ever lov'd, that lov'd not at first sight.

Christopher Marlowe

## Hero and Leander: The First Sestiad

1 On Hellespont, guilty of true love's blood,  
2 In view and opposite two cities stood,  
3 Sea-borderers, disjoin'd by Neptune's might;  
4 The one Abydos, the other Sestos hight.  
5 At Sestos Hero dwelt; Hero the fair,  
6 Whom young Apollo courted for her hair,  
7 And offer'd as a dower his burning throne,  
8 Where she could sit for men to gaze upon.  
9 The outside of her garments were of lawn,  
10 The lining purple silk, with gilt stars drawn;  
11 Her wide sleeves green, and border'd with a grove,  
12 Where Venus in her naked glory strove  
13 To please the careless and disdainful eyes  
14 Of proud Adonis, that before her lies;  
15 Her kirtle blue, whereon was many a stain,  
16 Made with the blood of wretched lovers slain.  
17 Upon her head she ware a myrtle wreath,  
18 From whence her veil reach'd to the ground beneath;  
19 Her veil was artificial flowers and leaves,  
20 Whose workmanship both man and beast deceives;  
21 Many would praise the sweet smell as she past,  
22 When 'twas the odour which her breath forth cast;  
23 And there for honey bees have sought in vain,  
24 And beat from thence, have lighted there again.  
25 About her neck hung chains of pebble-stone,  
26 Which lighten'd by her neck, like diamonds shone.  
27 She ware no gloves; for neither sun nor wind  
28 Would burn or parch her hands, but, to her mind,  
29 Or warm or cool them, for they took delight  
30 To play upon those hands, they were so white.  
31 Buskins of shells, all silver'd, used she,  
32 And branch'd with blushing coral to the knee;  
33 Where sparrows perch'd, of hollow pearl and gold,  
34 Such as the world would wonder to behold:  
35 Those with sweet water oft her handmaid fills,  
36 Which as she went, would chirrup through the bills.  
37 Some say, for her the fairest Cupid pin'd,  
38 And looking in her face, was strooken blind.  
39 But this is true; so like was one the other,  
40 As he imagin'd Hero was his mother;  
41 And oftentimes into her bosom flew,  
42 About her naked neck his bare arms threw,  
43 And laid his childish head upon her breast,  
44 And with still panting rock'd there took his rest.  
45 So lovely-fair was Hero, Venus' nun,  
46 As Nature wept, thinking she was undone,  
47 Because she took more from her than she left,  
48 And of such wondrous beauty her bereft:  
49 Therefore, in sign her treasure suffer'd wrack,  
50 Since Hero's time hath half the world been black.

51 Amorous Leander, beautiful and young

52 (Whose tragedy divine Musæus sung),  
53 Dwelt at Abydos; since him dwelt there none  
54 For whom succeeding times make greater moan.  
55 His dangling tresses, that were never shorn,  
56 Had they been cut, and unto Colchos borne,  
57 Would have allur'd the vent'rous youth of Greece  
58 To hazard more than for the golden fleece.  
59 Fair Cynthia wish'd his arms might be her sphere;  
60 Grief makes her pale, because she moves not there.  
61 His body was as straight as Circe's wand;  
62 Jove might have sipt out nectar from his hand.  
63 Even as delicious meat is to the taste,  
64 So was his neck in touching, and surpast  
65 The white of Pelops' shoulder: I could tell ye,  
66 How smooth his breast was, and how white his belly;  
67 And whose immortal fingers did imprint  
68 That heavenly path with many a curious dint  
69 That runs along his back; but my rude pen  
70 Can hardly blazon forth the loves of men,  
71 Much less of powerful gods: let it suffice  
72 That my slack Muse sings of Leander's eyes;  
73 Those orient cheeks and lips, exceeding his  
74 That leapt into the water for a kiss  
75 Of his own shadow, and, despising many,  
76 Died ere he could enjoy the love of any.  
77 Had wild Hippolytus Leander seen,  
78 Enamour'd of his beauty had he been.  
79 His presence made the rudest peasant melt,  
80 That in the vast uplandish country dwelt;  
81 The barbarous Thracian soldier, mov'd with nought,  
82 Was mov'd with him, and for his favour sought.  
83 Some swore he was a maid in man's attire,  
84 For in his looks were all that men desire,--  
85 A pleasant smiling cheek, a speaking eye,  
86 A brow for love to banquet royally;  
87 And such as knew he was a man, would say,  
88 "Leander, thou art made for amorous play;  
89 Why art thou not in love, and lov'd of all?  
90 Though thou be fair, yet be not thine own thrall."

91 The men of wealthy Sestos every year,  
92 For his sake whom their goddess held so dear,  
93 Rose-cheek'd Adonis, kept a solemn feast.  
94 Thither resorted many a wandering guest  
95 To meet their loves; such as had none at all  
96 Came lovers home from this great festival;  
97 For every street, like to a firmament,  
98 Glisten'd with breathing stars, who, where they went,  
99 Frighted the melancholy earth, which deem'd  
100 Eternal heaven to burn, for so it seem'd  
101 As if another Phaeton had got  
102 The guidance of the sun's rich chariot.

103 But far above the loveliest, Hero shin'd,  
104 And stole away th' enchanted gazer's mind;  
105 For like sea-nymphs' inveigling harmony,  
106 So was her beauty to the standers-by;  
107 Nor that night-wandering, pale, and watery star  
108 (When yawning dragons draw her thirling car  
109 From Latmus' mount up to the gloomy sky,  
110 Where, crown'd with blazing light and majesty,  
111 She proudly sits) more over-rules the flood  
112 Than she the hearts of those that near her stood.  
113 Even as when gaudy nymphs pursue the chase,  
114 Wretched Ixion's shaggy-footed race,  
115 Incens'd with savage heat, gallop amain  
116 From steep pine-bearing mountains to the plain,  
117 So ran the people forth to gaze upon her,  
118 And all that view'd her were enamour'd on her.  
119 And as in fury of a dreadful fight,  
120 Their fellows being slain or put to flight,  
121 Poor soldiers stand with fear of death dead-strooken,  
122 So at her presence all surpris'd and tooken,  
123 Await the sentence of her scornful eyes;  
124 He whom she favours lives; the other dies.  
125 There might you see one sigh, another rage,  
126 And some, their violent passions to assuage,  
127 Compile sharp satires; but, alas, too late,  
128 For faithful love will never turn to hate.  
129 And many, seeing great princes were denied,  
130 Pin'd as they went, and thinking on her, died.  
131 On this feast-day--O cursed day and hour!--  
132 Went Hero thorough Sestos, from her tower  
133 To Venus' temple, where unhappily,  
134 As after chanc'd, they did each other spy.  
135 So fair a church as this had Venus none:  
136 The walls were of discolour'd jasper-stone,  
137 Wherein was Proteus carved; and over-head  
138 A lively vine of green sea-agate spread,  
139 Where by one hand light-headed Bacchus hung,  
140 And with the other wine from grapes out-wrung.  
141 Of crystal shining fair the pavement was;  
142 The town of Sestos call'd it Venus' glass:  
143 There might you see the gods in sundry shapes,  
144 Committing heady riots, incest, rapes:  
145 For know, that underneath this radiant flower  
146 Was Danae's statue in a brazen tower,  
147 Jove slyly stealing from his sister's bed,  
148 To dally with Idalian Ganimed,  
149 And for his love Europa bellowing loud,  
150 And tumbling with the rainbow in a cloud;  
151 Blood-quaffing Mars heaving the iron net,  
152 Which limping Vulcan and his Cyclops set;  
153 Love kindling fire, to burn such towns as Troy,  
154 Sylvanus weeping for the lovely boy

155 That now is turn'd into a cypress tree,  
156 Under whose shade the wood-gods love to be.  
157 And in the midst a silver altar stood:  
158 There Hero, sacrificing turtles' blood,  
159 Vail'd to the ground, veiling her eyelids close;  
160 And modestly they opened as she rose.  
161 Thence flew Love's arrow with the golden head;  
162 And thus Leander was enamoured.  
163 Stone-still he stood, and evermore he gazed,  
164 Till with the fire that from his count'nance blazed  
165 Relenting Hero's gentle heart was strook:  
166 Such force and virtue hath an amorous look.

167       It lies not in our power to love or hate,  
168 For will in us is over-rul'd by fate.  
169 When two are stript, long ere the course begin,  
170 We wish that one should lose, the other win;  
171 And one especially do we affect  
172 Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:  
173 The reason no man knows, let it suffice,  
174 What we behold is censur'd by our eyes.  
175 Where both deliberate, the love is slight:  
176 Who ever lov'd, that lov'd not at first sight?

Christopher Marlowe

## Lament for Zenocrate

Black is the beauty of the brightest day,  
The golden belle of heaven's eternal fire,  
That danced with glory on the silver waves,  
Now wants the fuel that inflamed his beams:  
And all with faintness and for foul disgrace,  
He binds his temples with a frowning cloud,  
Ready to darken earth with endless night:  
Zenocrate that gave him light and life,  
Whose eyes shot fire from their ivory bowers,  
And tempered every soul with lively heat,  
Now by the malice of the angry skies,  
Whose jealousy admits no second mate,  
Draws in the comfort of her latest breath  
All dazzled with the hellish mists of death.  
Now walk the angels on the walls of heaven,  
As sentinels to warn th'immortal souls,  
To entertain divine Zenocrate.  
Apollo, Cynthia, and the ceaseless lamps  
That gently looked upon this loathsome earth,  
Shine downwards now no more, but deck the heavens  
To entertain divine Zenocrate.  
The crystal springs whose taste illuminates  
Refined eyes with an eternal sight,  
Like tried silver runs through Paradise  
To entertain divine Zenocrate.  
The Cherubins and holy Seraphins  
That sing and play before the King of Kings,  
Use all their voices and their instruments  
To entertain divine Zenocrate.  
And in this sweet and curious harmony,  
The God that tunes this music to our souls,  
Holds out his hand in highest majesty  
To entertain divine Zenocrate.  
Then let some holy trance convey my thoughts,  
Up to the palace of th'imperial heaven:  
That this my life may be as short to me  
As are the days of sweet Zenocrate.

Christopher Marlowe

## **The face that launch'd a thousand ships**

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?  
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.  
Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies!  
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.  
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,  
And all is dross that is not Helena.  
I will be Paris, and for love of thee,  
Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sack'd;  
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,  
And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;  
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,  
And then return to Helen for a kiss.  
O, thou art fairer than the evening air  
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;  
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter  
When he appear'd to hapless Semele;  
More lovely than the monarch of the sky  
In wanton Arethusa's azur'd arms;  
And none but thou shalt be my paramour!

Christopher Marlowe

## **The Passionate Shepherd to his Love**

1 Come live with me and be my love,  
2 And we will all the pleasures prove,  
3 That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,  
4 Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

5 And we will sit upon the rocks,  
6 Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,  
7 By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
8 Melodious birds sing madrigals.

9 And I will make thee beds of roses,  
10 And a thousand fragrant posies,  
11 A cap of flowers and a kirtle  
12 Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle:

13 A gown made of the finest wool,  
14 Which from our pretty lambs we pull;  
15 Fair lined slippers for the cold,  
16 With buckles of the purest gold:

17 A belt of straw and ivy buds,  
18 With coral clasps and amber studs;  
19 And if these pleasures may thee move,  
20 Come live with me and be my love.

21 The shepherd swains shall dance and sing  
22 For thy delight each May morning;  
23 If these delights thy mind may move,  
24 Then live with me and be my love.

Christopher Marlowe

## **Who Ever Loved That Loved Not at First Sight?**

It lies not in our power to love or hate,  
For will in us is overruled by fate.  
When two are stripped, long ere the course begin,  
We wish that one should love, the other win;

And one especially do we affect  
Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:  
The reason no man knows; let it suffice  
What we behold is censured by our eyes.  
Where both deliberate, the love is slight:  
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?

Christopher Marlowe