

Classic Poetry Series

Earl of Dorset Charles Sackville

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

A True Account of the Birth and Conception of a Late Famous Poem call'd The Female Nine

When Monmouth the chaste read those impudent lines
Which ty'd her dear monkey so fast by the loins,
Show'd his jackanapes tricks and his apish false smiles,
And set him a chattering aloft on the tiles,
She saw with a fright,
Howe'er they came by't,
The rogues had describ'd pretty whirligig right.
And none can be certain, when scandals begin
To draw so near home, but that they shall come in.
She heard that the nine ladies' turn would be next,

And fearing some bungler should mangle the text
And paint her sweet person like some hagg'd elf,
She wisely contriv'd how to draw it herself;
And luckily hit
On a method most fit
At once to display both her virtue and wit,
Not doubting to have from herself a good word,
And thus she bespoke the kind help of her lord:
` ` Methinks the same nine which they count so well writ
Has nothing of air, bon sens, or l'esprit.

The numbers so rough and so harsh the cadence,
As would blister a mouth embellish'd in France.
Come pour amusement
Let us make a song
And so do ourselves right, whome'er we do wrong.
We'll give a beau tour to the feminine nine,
Among whom my prudence and virtue shall shine.

You yourself shall appear the great Turk of the scene
And I'll recommend you so far to the Queen,
And soothe the vain humor to which you incline,

As to make you belov'd by two of the nine.
And that's very fair
For a poor, sickly peer,
Who to my certain knowledge has nothing to spare;
And since these lampoons are the wit of the times,
I'll furnish the sense if you'll tag it with rhymes."
Her spouse, fir'd at this, scream'd aloud and leapt forth,
And fetching his dead-doing pen in his wrath,
He workt off his piece with such art of the pen
That he aim'd at the ladies but wounded the men;

And labour'd so hard
The doors were all barr'd,
And none was admitted but trusty Blanchard.
'Twas writ in such haste, you're desir'd to dispense
With the want of true grammar, good English and sense.

Earl of Dorset Charles Sackville

Dorinda's Sparkling Wit and Eyes

Dorinda's sparkling wit and eyes,
United, cast too fierce a light,
Which blazes high but quickly dies,
Warms not the heart but hurts the sight.

Love is a calm and tender joy,
Kind are his looks and soft his pace;
Her Cupid is a blackguard boy
That runs his link into your face.

Earl of Dorset Charles Sackville

Four Poems on the Countess of Dorchester

I. Sylvia, methinks you are unfit

Sylvia, methinks you are unfit
For your great Lord's embrace;
For tho' we all allow you wit,
We can't a handsome face.
Then where's the pleasure, where's the good
Of spending time and cost?
For if your wit ben't understood,
Your keeper's bliss is lost

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III. Proud with the spoils of royal cully

Proud with the spoils of royal cully,
With false pretence to wit and parts,
She swaggers like a batter'd bully
To try the tempers of men's hearts.

Tho' she appears as gay and fine
As jet and gems and paint can make her,
She ne'er shall win a heart like mine --
The devil or Sir Davy take her.

Her bed is like the Scripture feast,
Where none who were invited came,

So disappointed of her guest,
She took up with the blind and lame.

IV. Tell me, Dorinda, why so gay

Tell me, Dorinda, why so gay,
Why such embroid'ry, fringe, and lace?
Can any dresses find a way
To stop th'approaches of decay

And mend thy ruin'd face?

Wilt thou still sparkle in the box,
And ogle in the ring?
Canst thou forget thy age and pox?
Can all that shines on shells and rocks
Make thee a fine young thing?

So have I seen in larder dark
Of veal a lucid loin,
Replete with many a heatless spark,
As wise philosophers remark,
At once both stink and shine.

Earl of Dorset Charles Sackville

On King William's Happy Deliverance from the Intended Assassination

*

The youth whose fortune the vast globe obey'd,
Finding his royal enemy betray'd
And in his chariot by vile hands opprest,
With noble pity and just rage possess't,
Wept at the fall of so sublime a state
And with the traitor's death reveng'd the fate
Of monarchy profane; so acted too
The generous Caesar when the Roman knew
A coward king had treacherously slain
One he scarce foil'd on the Pharsalian plain.

The doom of his fam'd rival he bemoan'd
And the base author of the crime dethron'd.
So virtuous was the actions of the great,
Far from the guilty acts of desperate hate:
They knew no foe, but in the open field,
And to their cause and to their gods appeal'd.
So William acts, and if his rivals dare
Dispute his right by arms, he'll meet them there
Where Jove, as once on Ida, holds the scale
And lets the good, the just, the brave prevail.

*

Earl of Dorset Charles Sackville

On the Countess Dowager of Manchester

*

Courage, dear Moll, and drive away despair.
Mopsa, who in her youth was scarce thought fair,
In spite of age, experience, and decays,
Sets up for charming in her fading days;
Snuffs her dim eyes to give one parting blow,
Have at the heart of every ogling beau!
This goodly goose, all feather'd like a jay,
So gravely vain and so demurely gay,
Last night, to grace the Court, did overload
Her bald buff forehead with a high commode;
Her steps were manag'd with such tender art,
As if each board had been a lover's heart.
In all her air, in every glance, was seen
A mixture strange, 'twixt fifty and fifteen.
Crowds of admiring fops about her press;
Hampden himself delivers their address,
Which she, accepting with a nice disdain,
Owns them her subjects and begins to reign.
Fair Queen of Fopland is her royal stile --
Fopland! the greatest part of this great isle!

Nature did ne'er more equally divide
A female heart, 'twixt piety and pride.
Her watchful maids prevent the peep of day,
And all in order on her toilet lay:
Prayer books and patch box, sermon notes and paint,
At once t'improve the sinner and the saint.
Farewell, friend Moll: expect no more from me;
But if you would a full description see,
You'll find her somewhere in the litany,
With pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy.

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Proud With the Spoils of Royal Cully

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At once both stink and shine.

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The Antiquated Coquette

*

Phyllis, if you will not agree
To give me back my liberty,
In spite of you I must regain
My loss of time and break your chain.
You were mistaken if you thought
I was so grossly to be caught;
Or that I was so blindly bred,
As not to be in woman read.
Perhaps you took me for a fool,
Design'd alone your sex's tool;
Nay, you might think so made a thing,
That with a little fashioning,
I might in time for your dear sake,
That monster call'd a husband make:
Perhaps I might, had I not found
One darling vice in you abound --
A vice to me which e'er will prove
An antidote to banish love.
O! I could better bear an old,
Ugly, diseas'd, misshapen scold,
Or one who games, or will be drunk,
A fool, a spendthrift, bawd, or punk,
Than one at all who wildly flies,
And with soft, asking, giving eyes,
And thousand other wanton arts,
So meanly trades in begging hearts.
How might such wond'rous charms perplex,
Give chains or death to all our sex,
Did she not so unwisely set
For ev'ry flutt'ring fool her net!
So poorly proud of vulgar praise,
Her very look her thoughts betrays:
She never stays till we begin,
But beckons us her self to sin.
Ere we can ask, she cries consent,
So quick her yielding looks are sent,
They hope forestall and ev'n desire prevent.
But nature's turn'd when women woo --
We hate in them what we should do;
Desire's asleep and cannot wake

When women such advances make:
Both time and charms thus Phyllis wastes,
Since each must surfeit ere he tastes.
Nothing escapes her wand'ring eyes,
No one she thinks too mean a prize;
E'en Lynch, the lag of human kind,
Nearest to brutes by God design'd,
May boast the smiles of this coquette,
As much as any man of wit.

The signs hang thinner in the Strand,
The Dutch scarce more infest the land,
Tho' Egypt's locusts they outvie,
In number and voracity.
Whores are not half so plenty found,
In playhouse or that hallow'd ground
Of Temple Walks or Whetstone's Park:
Caresses less abound in Spark.
Then with kind looks for all who come
At bawdyhouse, the drawing room,
But all in vain she throws her darts --
They hit but cannot hurt our hearts.
Age has enerv'd her charms so much,
That fearless all her eyes approach;
Each her autumnal face degrades
With `` Rev'rend Mother of the Maids''!
But 'tis ill-natur'd to run on,
Forgetting what her charms have done;
To Teagueland we this beauty owe,
Teagueland her earliest charms did know:
There first her tyrant beauties reign'd,
Where'er she look'd she conquest gain'd.
No heart the glances could repel,
The Teagues by shoals before her fell;
And trotting bogs was all the art
The sound had left to save his heart.
She kill'd so fast, by my salvation,
She ne'er dispeopl'd had the nation,
Tho' she, good soul, to save took care
All, all she could from sad despair.
From thence she hither came to prove

If yet her charms could kindle love.
But ah! it was too late to try,
For spring was gone and winter nigh:
Yet tho' her eyes such conquests made
That they were shunn'd or else obey'd,
Yet now her charms are so decay'd,
She thanks each coxcomb that will deign
To praise her face and wear her chain.
So some old soldier who had done
Wonders in youth and battles won,

When feeble years his strength depose,
That he too weak to vanquish grows,
With mangled face and wooden leg,
Reduc'd about for alms to beg,
O'erjoy'd, a thousand thanks bestows
On him who but a farthing throws.

*

Earl of Dorset Charles Sackville

To all you ladies now at land

To all you ladies now at land
We men at sea indite;
But first would have you understand
How hard it is to write:
The Muses now, and Neptune too,
We must implore to write to you--
With a fa, la, la, la, la!

For though the Muses should prove kind,
And fill our empty brain,
Yet if rough Neptune rouse the wind
To wave the azure main,
Our paper, pen, and ink, and we,
Roll up and down our ships at sea--
With a fa, la, la, la, la!

Then if we write not by each post,
Think not we are unkind;
Nor yet conclude our ships are lost
By Dutchmen, or by wind:
Our tears we'll send a speedier way,
The tide shall bring 'em twice a day--
With a fa, la, la, la, la!

The King with wonder and surprise
Will swear the seas grow bold.
Because the tides will higher rise
Then e'er they us'd of old;
But let him know it is our tears
Bring floods of grief to Whitehall stairs--
With a fa, la, la, la, la!

Should foggy Opdam chance to know
Our sad and dismal story,
The Dutch would scorn so weak a foe,
And quit their fort at Goree;
For what resistance can they find
From men who've left their hearts behind?-
With a fa, la, la, la, la!

Let wind and weather do its worst,
Be you to us but kind;
Let Dutchmen vapour, Spaniards curse,
No sorrow we shall find;
'Tis then no matter how things go,
Or who's our friend, or who's our foe--
With a fa, la, la, la, la!

To pass our tedious hours away
We throw a merry main,
Or else at serious ombre play;
But why should we in vain

Each other's ruin thus pursue?
We were undone when we left you--
 With a fa, la, la, la, la!

But now our fears tempestuous grow
 And cast our hopes away,
Whilst you, regardless of our woe,
 Sit careless at a play:
Perhaps permit some happier man
To kiss your hand, or flirt your fan--
 With a fa, la, la, la, la!

When any mournful tune you hear
 That dies in ev'ry note,
As if it sigh'd with each man's care
 For being so remote,
Think then how often love we've made
To you, when all those tunes were play'd--
 With a fa, la, la, la, la!

In justice you cannot refuse
 To think of our distress,
When we for hopes of honour lose
 Our certain happiness;
All those designs are but to prove
Ourselves more worthy of your love--
 With a fa, la, la, la, la!

And now we've told you all our loves,
 And likewise all our fears,
In hopes this declaration moves
 Some pity from your tears:
Let's hear of no inconstancy,
We have too much of that at sea--
 With a fa, la, la, la, la!

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To Mr. Edward Howard on His New Utopia

Thou damn'd antipodes to common sense!
Thou foil to Flecknoe! Prithee tell from whence
Does all this mighty stock of dullness spring,
Which in such loads thou to the stage dost bring?
Is't all thy own, or hast thou from Snow Hill
Th'assistance of some ballad-making quill?
No, they fly higher yet; thy plays are such
I'd swear they were translated out of Dutch:
And who the devil was e'er yet so drunk
To own the volumes of Mynheer Van Dunk?
Fain would I know what diet thou dost keep,
If thou dost always or dost never sleep.
Sure hasty pudding is thy chiefest dish;
With lights and livers and with stinking fish,
Oxcheek, tripe, garbage, thou dost treat thy brain,
Which nobly pays this tribute back again.
With daisy roots thy dwarfish muse is fed:
A giant's body with a pigmy's head.
Canst thou not find 'mongst all thy num'rous race
One friend so kind to tell thee that thy play's
Laugh'd at by box, pit, gallery, nay stage
And grown the nauseous grievance of this age?
Think on't a while, and thou wilt quickly find
Thy body made for labor, not thy mind.
No other use of paper thou should'st make
But carrying loads of reams upon thy back.
Carry vast burdens 'till thy shoulders shrink,
But curs'd be he that gives thee pen and ink:
Those dang'rous weapons should be kept from fools,
As nurses from their children keep edge tools.
For thy dull muse a muckender were fit
To wipe the slav'rings of her infant wit,
Which, though 'tis late, if justice could be found,
Should like blind, new-born puppies yet be drown'd.
For were it not we must respect afford
To any muse that's grandchild to a lord,
Thine in the ducking stool should take her seat,
Drench'd like herself in a great chair of state,
Where like a muse of quality she'll die,
And thou thyself shalt make her elegy
In the same strain thou writ'st thy comedy.

Earl of Dorset Charles Sackville

**To Mr. Edward Howard, on his Incomparable, Incomprehensible Poem Called
'The British Prince**

Come on, ye critics! Find one fault who dare,
For, read it backward like a witch's prayer,
'Twill do as well; throw not away your jests
On solid nonsense that abides all tests.
Wit, like tierce claret, when 't begins to pall,
Neglected lies and's of no use at all;
But in its full perfection of decay,
Turns vinegar and comes again in play.
This simile shall stand in thy defence
'Gainst such dull rogues as now and then write sense.

He lies, dear Ned, who says thy brain is barren,
Where deep conceits, like vermin, breed in carrion;
Thou hast a brain, such as thou hast, indeed --
On what else should thy worm of fancy feed?
Yet in a filbert I have often known
Maggots survive when all the kernel's gone.
Thy style's the same whatever be the theme,
As some digestions turn all meat to phlegm:
Thy stumbling, founder'd jade can trot as high
As any other Pegasus can fly.

As skillful divers to the bottom fall
Sooner than those that cannot swim at all,
So in this way of writing without thinking
Thou hast a strange alacrity in sinking:
Thou writest below e'en thy own natural parts
And with acquired dullness and new arts
Of studied nonsense tak'st kind readers' heart.
So the dull eel moves nimbler in the mud
Than all the swift-finn'd racers of the flood.
Therefore, dear Ned, at my advice forbear

Such loud complaints 'gainst critics to prefer,
Since thou art turn'd an arrant libeller:
Thou sett'st thy name to what thyself dost write;
Did ever libel yet so sharply bite?

Earl of Dorset Charles Sackville