Classic Poetry Series

Francis Quarles

- poems -

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A Divine Rapture

E'EN like two little bank-dividing brooks,
   That wash the pebbles with their wanton streams,
And having ranged and search'd a thousand nooks,
   Meet both at length in silver-breasted Thames,
   Where in a greater current they conjoin:
So I my Best-beloved's am; so He is mine.

E'en so we met; and after long pursuit,
   E'en so we joined; we both became entire;
No need for either to renew a suit,
   For I was flax, and He was flames of fire:
   Our firm-united souls did more than twine;
So I my Best-beloved's am; so He is mine.

If all those glittering Monarchs, that command
   The servile quarters of this earthly ball,
Should tender in exchange their shares of land,
   I would not change my fortunes for them all:
   Their wealth is but a counter to my coin:
The world 's but theirs; but my Beloved's mine.

Francis Quarles

A Good Night

Close now thine eyes and rest secure;
Thy soul is safe enough, thy body sure;
He that loves thee, He that keeps
And guards thee, never slumbers, never sleeps.
The smiling conscience in a sleeping breast
Has only peace, has only rest;
The music and the mirth of kings
Are all but very discords, when she sings;
Then close thine eyes and rest secure;
No sleep so sweet as thine, no rest so sure.

Francis Quarles

Epigram

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MY soul, sit thou a patient looker-on ;
Judge not the play before the play is done :
Her plot hath many changes ; every day
Speaks a new scene ; the last act crowns the play.

*

Francis Quarles

Hos ego versiculos

*

LIKE to the damaske rose you see,
Or like the blossome on the tree,
Or like the daintie flower of May,
Or like the Morning to the day,
Or like the Sunne, or like the shade,
Or like the Gourd which Jonas had;
   Even such is man whose thred is spun,
   Drawn out and cut, and so is done.

The Rose withers, the blossome blasteth,
The flowre fades, the morning hasteth:
The Sunne sets, the shadow flies,
The Gourd consumes, and man he dies.

Like to the blaze of fond delight;
Or like a morning cleare and bright;
Or like a frost, or like a showre;
Or like the pride of Babel's Tower;

Or like the houre that guides the time;
Or like to beauty in her prime;
   Even such is man, whose glory lends
   His life a blaze or two, and ends.

Delights vanish; the morne o'ercasteth,
The frost breaks, the shower hasteth;
The Tower falls, the hower spends;
The beauty fades, and man's life ends.

*

Francis Quarles

My Beloved Is Mine and I Am His

Even like two little bank-dividing brooks,
That wash the pebbles with their wanton stream,
And having ranged and searched a thousand nook
Meet both at length in silver-breasted Thames
Where in a greater current they conjoin
So I my Best-Beloved's am, so he is mine
Even so we met; and after long pursuit
Even so we joined; we both became entire
No need for either to renew a suit,
For I was flax and he was flames of fire
Our firm united souls did more than
So I my Best-Beloved's am, so he is mine.

If all those glittering monarchs that command
The servile quarters of this earthly ball
Should tender in exchange their shares of land,
I would not change my fortunes for them all:
Their wealth is but a counter to my coin;
The world's but theirs, but my Beloved's mine.

Nay, more: if the fair Thespian ladies all
Should heap together their diviner treasure,
That treasure should be deemed a price too small
To buy a minute's lease of half my pleasure.
'Tis not the sacred wealth of all the Nine
Can buy my heart from him, or his from being mine.

Nor time, nor place, nor chance, nor death can bow
My least desires unto the least remove;
He's firmly mine by oath, I his by vow;
He's mine by faith, and I am his by love;
He's mine by water, I am his by wine;
"Thus I my Best?Beloved's am, thus he is mine.

He is my altar, I his holy place;
I am his guest, and he my living food;
I'm his by penitence, he mine by grace;
I'm his by purchase, he is mine by blood;
He's my supporting elm, and I his vine:
Thus I my Best-Beloved's am, thus he is mine.

He gives me wealth, I give him all my vows;
I give him songs, he gives me length of days;
With wreaths of grace he crowns my conquering brows;
And I his temples with a crown of praise,
Which he accepts as an everlasting sign,
That I my Best-Beloved's am; that he is mine.

Francis Quarles

My beloved is mine, and I am his

EV'N like two little bank-dividing brooks,
   That wash the pebbles with their wanton streams,
And having rang'd and search'd a thousand nooks,
   Meet both at length in silver-breasted Thames,
      Where in a greater current they conjoyn:
So I my best-beloved's am; so he is mine.

Ev'n so we met; and after long pursuit,
   Ev'n so we joyn'd; we both became entire;
No need for either to renew a suit,
   For I was flax and he was flames of fire:
      Our firm-united souls did more than twine;
So I my best-beloved's am; so he is mine.

If all those glitt'ring Monarchs that command
   The servile quarters of this earthly ball,
Should tender, in exchange, their shares of land,
   I would not change my fortunes for them all:
      Their wealth is but a counter to my coin:
The world's but theirs; but my beloved's mine.

Nay more; If the fair Thespian Ladies all
   Should heap together their diviner treasure:
That treasure should be deem'd a price too small
   To buy a minutes lease of half my pleasure.
      'Tis not the sacred wealth of all the nine
Can buy my heart from him, or his, from being mine.

Nor Time, nor Place, nor Chance, nor Death can bow
   My least desires unto the least remove;
He's firmly mine by oath; I his by vow;
   He's mine by faith; and I am his by love;
      He's mine by water; I am his by wine;
Thus I my best-beloved's am; thus he is mine.

He is my Altar; I his Holy Place,
   I am his guest; and he, my living food;
I'm his by penitence; he mine by grace;
   I'm his by purchase; he is mine by blood;
      He's my supporting elm; and I his vine:
Thus I my best-beloved's am; thus he is mine.

He gives me wealth, I give him all my vows:
   I give him songs; he gives me length of dayes.
With wreaths of grace he crowns my conqu'ring brows:
   And I his Temples with a crown of Praise,
      Which he accepts as an ev'rlasting signe,
That I my best-beloved's am; that he is mine.

Francis Quarles

On the Infancy of Our Savior

Hail! blessed Virgin, full of heavenly grace,
Blest above all that sprang from human race,
Whose heaven-saluted womb brought forth in one
A blessed Savior and a blessed Son.
O what a ravishment 't had been to see
Thy little Savior perking on thy knee!
To see Him nuzzle in thy virgin breast,
His milk-white body all unclad, undressed;
To see thy busy fingers clothe and wrap
His spraddling limbs in thy indulgent lap;
To see His desperate eyes with childish grace
Smiling upon His smiling mother's face;
And when His forward strength began to bloom
To see Him diddle up and down the room.
O who would think so sweet a Babe as this
Should ere be slain by a false-hearted kiss?
Had I a rag, if sure Thy body wore it,
Pardon, sweet Babe, I think I should adore it;
Till then, O grant this boon, a boon far dearer:
The weed not being, I may adore the Wearer.

Francis Quarles

On the Infancy of Our Saviour

Hail blessed Virgin, full of heavenly Grace,
Blest above all that sprang from human race;
Whose Heav'n-saluted Womb brought forth in One,
A blessed Saviour, and a blessed Son:
O! What a ravishment 't had been, to see
Thy little Saviour perking on thy Knee!
To see him nuzzle in thy Virgin-Breast:
His milk-white body all unclad, undrest!
To see thy busie fingers cloathe and wrap
His spreading limbs in thy indulgent Lap!
To see his desp'rate Eyes, with Childish grace
Smiling upon his smiling Mother's face!
And when his forward strength began to bloom,
To see him diddle up and down the Room!
O, who would think so sweet a Babe as this,
Should e'er be slain by a false-hearted kisse!
Had I a Ragge, if sure thy Body wore it,
Pardon, sweet Babe, I think I should adore it:
Till then, O grant this Boon, (a boon or dearer)
The Weed not being, I may adore the Wearer.

Francis Quarles

On the World

The world's an Inn; and I her guest.
I eat; I drink; I take my rest.
My hostess, nature, does deny me
Nothing, wherewith she can supply me;
Where, having stayed a while, I pay
Her lavish bills, and go my way.

Francis Quarles

Respice Finem

MY soul, sit thou a patient looker-on;
Judge not the play before the play is done:
Her plot hath many changes; every day
Speaks a new scene; the last act crowns the play.

Francis Quarles

Why dost thou Shade thy Lovely Face?

Why dost thou shade thy lovely face? Oh, why
Does that eclipsing hand so long deny
The sunshine of thy soul-enliv'ning eye?

Without that light, what light remains in me?
Thou art my life, my way, my light; in thee
I live, I move, and by thy beams I see.

Thou art mv life; if thou but turn away
My life's a thousand deaths: thou art my way;
Without thee, Lord, I travel not, but stray.

My light thou art; without thy glorious sight
Mine eyes are darken'd with perpetual night.
My God, thou art my way, my life, my light.

Thou art my way; I wander if thou fly:
Thou art my light; if hid, how blind am I!
Thou art my life; if thou withdraw, I die.

Mine eyes are blind and dark, I cannot see;
To whom or whither should my darkness flee,
But to the light? and who's that light but thee?

My path is lost, my wand'ring steps do stray;
I cannot safely go, nor safely stay;
Whom should I seek but thee, my path, my way?

Oh, I am dead: to whom shall I, poor I,
Repair? to whom shall my sad ashes fly,
But life? and where is life but in thine eye?

And yet thou turn'st away thy face, and fly'st me;
And yet I sue for grace, and thou deny'st me;
Speak, art thou angry, Lord, or only try'st me?

Unscreen those heavenly lamps, or tell me why
Thou shad'st thy face; perhaps thou think'st no eye
Can view those flames, and not drop down and die.

If that be all, shine forth, and draw thee nigher;
Let me behold and die, for my desire
Is ph{oe}nix-like to perish in that fire.

Death-conquer'd Laz'rus was redeem'd by thee;
If I am dead, Lord, set death's prisoner free;
Am I more spent, or stink I worse than he?

If my puff'd life be out, give leave to tine
My shameless snuff at that bright lamp of thine;
Oh, what's thy light the less for lighting mine?

If I have lost my path, great Shepherd, say,
Shall I still wander in a doubtful way?
Lord, shall a lamb of Israel's sheep-fold stray?

Thou art the pilgrim's path, the blind man's eye,
The dead man's life; on thee my hopes rely;
If thou remove, I err, I grope, I die.

Disclose thy sunbeams; close thy wings, and stay;
See, see how I am blind, and dead, and stray,
O thou, that art my light, my life, my way.

Francis Quarles