

Classic Poetry Series

Francis Quarles

- poems -

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Francis Quarles (8 May 1592 – 8 September 1644)

Francis Quarles was an English poet most famous for his Emblem book aptly entitled *Emblems*.

Career

Francis was born in Romford, Essex, (now London Borough of Havering), and baptised there on 8 May 1592. He traced his ancestry to a family settled in England before the Norman Conquest with a long history in royal service. His great-grandfather, George Quarles, was Auditor to Henry VIII, and his father, James Quarles, held several places under Elizabeth I and James I, for which he was rewarded with an estate called Stewards in Romford. His mother, Joan Dalton, was the daughter and heiress of Eldred Dalton of Mores Place, Hadham. There were eight children in the family; the eldest, Sir Robert Quarles, was knighted by James I in 1608, and another, John Quarles, also became a poet.

Francis was entered at Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1608, and subsequently at Lincoln's Inn. He was made cupbearer to the Princess Elizabeth, in 1613, remaining abroad for some years; and before 1629 he was appointed secretary to Ussher, the primate of Ireland.

About 1633 he returned to England, and spent the next two years in the preparation of his *Emblems*. In 1639 he was made city chronologer, a post in which [Ben Jonson](http://www.poemhunter.com/ben-jonson/) and [Thomas Middleton](http://www.poemhunter.com/thomas-middleton/) had preceded him. At the outbreak of the Civil War he took the Royalist side, drawing up three pamphlets in 1644 in support of the king's cause. It is said that his house was searched and his papers destroyed by the Parliamentarians in consequence of these publications.

Quarles married Ursula Woodgate in 1618, by whom he had eighteen children. His son, John Quarles (1624–1665), was exiled to Flanders for his Royalist sympathies and was the author of *Fons Lachrymarum* (1648) and other poems. Quarles descendants, Charles Henry Langston and John Mercer Langston were American abolitionists whom pressed for greater freedom and suffrages among the African Americans in the 19th century. Charles Henry Langston's grandson (and Quarles' descendant), [Langston Hughes](http://www.poemhunter.com/langston-hughes/), was a celebrated author and poet during the Harlem Renaissance.

The work by which Quarles is best known, the *Emblems*, was originally

published in 1635, with grotesque illustrations engraved by William Marshall and others. The forty-five prints in the last three books are borrowed from the designs by Boetius à Bolswert for the *Pia Desideria* (Antwerp, 1624) of Herman Hugo. Each "emblem" consists of a paraphrase from a passage of Scripture, expressed in ornate and metaphorical language, followed by passages from the Christian Fathers, and concluding with an epigram of four lines.

The Emblems was immensely popular with the common people, but the critics of the 17th and 18th centuries had no mercy on Quarles. [Sir John Suckling](http://www.poemhunter.com/sir-john-suckling/) in his *Sessions of the Poets* disrespectfully alluded to him as he "that makes God speak so big in's poetry." [Alexander Pope](http://www.poemhunter.com/alexander-pope/) in the *Dunciad* spoke of the Emblems, "Where the pictures for the page atone And Quarles is saved by beauties not his own."

Eserleri:

A Feast for Wormes. Set forth in a Poeme of the History of Jonah (1620), which contains other scriptural paraphrases, besides the one that furnishes the title; Hadassa; or the History of Queene Ester (1621)
Job Militant, with Meditations Divine and Moral (1624)
Sions Elegies, wept by Jeremie the Prophet (1624)
Sions Sonets sung by Solomon the King (1624), a paraphrase of the Canticles
The Historic of Samson (1631)
Alphabet of Elegies upon ... Dr Aylmer (1625)
Argalus and Parthenia (1629), the subject of which is borrowed from Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*
four books of Divine Fancies digested into Epigrams, Meditations and Observations (1632)
a reissue of his scriptural paraphrases and the Alphabet of Elegies as Divine Poems (1633)
Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man (1638)
Memorials Upon the Death of Sir Robert Quarles, Knight (1639), in honor of his brother
Enchyridion, containing Institutions Divine and Moral (1640-41), a collection of four "centuries" of miscellaneous aphorisms
Observations concerning Princes and States upon Peace and Warre (1642)
Boanerges and Barnabas--Wine and Oyle for ... afflicted Soules (1644-46), collection of miscellaneous reflections
three violent Royalist tracts (1644), *The Loyal Convert*, *The Whipper Whipt*, and *The New Distemper*, reissued in one volume in 1645 with the title of *The Profest Royalist*
his quarrel with the Times, and some elegies
Solomon's Recantation ... (1645), which contains a memoir by his widow
The Shepherds' Oracles (1646)
a second part of Boanerges and Barnabas (1646)
a broadside entitled *A Direfull Anathema against Peace-haters* (1647)
an interlude, *The Virgin Widow* (1649).

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

An Ecstasy

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-belovèd'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-belovèd'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 Belovèd's mine.

Francis Quarles

Delight In God Only

I love (and have some cause to love) the earth;
She is my Maker's creature, therefore good:
She is my mother, for she gave me birth;
She is my tender nurse; she gives me food;
But what's a creature, Lord, compared with Thee?
Or what's my mother, or my nurse to me?

I love the air; her dainty fruits refresh
My drooping soul, and to new sweets invite me;
Her shrill-mouth'd choirs sustain me with their flesh.
And with their polyphonian notes delight me:
But what's the air, or all the sweets that she
Can bless my soul withal, compared to Thee?

I love the sea; she is my fellow-creature,
My careful purveyor; she provides me store;
She walls me round; she makes my diet greater;
She wafts my treasure from a foreign shore:
But, Lord of oceans, when compared with Thee,
What is the ocean, or her wealth to me?

To heaven's high city I direct my journey,
Whose spangled suburbs entertain mine eye;
Mine eye, by contemplation's great attorney,
Transcends the crystal pavement of the sky.
But what is heaven, great God, compared to Thee?
Without Thy presence, heaven's no heaven to me.

Without Thy presence, earth gives no reflection:
Without Thy presence, sea affords no treasure;
Without Thy presence, air's a rank infection;
Without Thy presence, heaven itself no pleasure:
If not possess'd, if not enjoyed in Thee,
What's earth, or sea, or air, or heaven to me?

The highest honours that the world can boast,
Are subjects far too low for my desire;
Its brightest gleams of glory are, at most,
But dying sparkles of Thy living fire:
The brightest flames that earth can kindle, be
But nightly glowworms, if compared to Thee.

Without Thy presence, wealth is bags of cares;
Wisdom, but folly; joy, disquiet, sadness;
Friendship is treason, and delights are snares;
Pleasures, but pain; and mirth, but pleasing madness:
Without Thee, Lord, things be not what they be,
Nor have their being when compared with Thee.

In having all things, and not Thee, what have I?
Not having Thee, what have my labours got?
Let me enjoy but Thee, what have my labours got?

And having Thee alone, what have I not?
I wish nor sea nor land; nor would I be
Possess'd of heaven, heaven unpossess'd of Thee.

Francis Quarles

Epigram

*

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

Epigram - On Players And Ballad-Singers

They're like the Priest and Clerk at Belial's altar;
One makes the Sermon; t'other tunes the Psalter.

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

On Change Of Weather

And were it for thy profit, to obtain
All sunshine? No vicissitude of rain?
Think'st thou that thy laborious plough requires
Not winter frosts as well as summer fires?
There must be both: sometimes these hearts of ours
Must have the sweet, the seasonable showers
Of tears; sometimes the frost of chill despair
Makes our desired sunshine seem more fair;
Weathers that most oppose the flesh and blood
Are such as help to make our harvest good.
We may not choose, great God: it is thy task;
We know not what to have, nor how to ask

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 Life And Death Of Man

The world's a theatre. The earth, a stage
Placed in the midst: where both prince and page,
Both rich and poor, fool, wise man, base and high,
All act their parts in life's short tragedy.
Our life's a tragedy. Those secret rooms,
Wherein we 'tire us, are our mothers' wombs.
The music ushering in the play is mirth
To see a man-child brought upon the earth.
That fainting gasp of breath which first we vent,
Is a dumb show; presents the argument.
Our new-born cries, that new-born griefs bewray,
Are the sad prologue of the ensuing play.
False hopes, true fears, vain joys, and fierce distracts,
Are like the music that divides the Acts.
Time holds the glass, and when the hour's outrun,
Death strikes the epilogue, and the play is done.

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

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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

The Loadstone

Eternal God! O Thou that only art
The sacred fountain of eternal light,
And blessed loadstone of my better part,
O Thou my heart's desire, my soul's delight!
Reflect upon my soul, and touch my heart;
And then my heart shall prize no good above Thee,
And then my soul shall know Thee; knowing, love Thee;
And then my trembling thoughts shall never start
From thy commands, or swerve the least degree,
Or once presume to move, but as they move in Thee.

Francis Quarles

The Shortness Of Life

And what's a life? A weary pilgrimage,
Whose glory in one day doth fill the stage
With childhood, manhood, and decrepit age.

And what's a life? The flourishing array
Of the proud summer-meadow, which to-day
Wears her green plush, and is to-morrow hay.

Read on this dial, how the shades devour
My short-lived winter's day! hour eats up the hour;
Alas! the total's but from eight to four.

Behold these lilies, which Thy hands have made
Fair copies of my life, and open laid
To view, how soon they droop, how soon they fade!

Shade not that dial, night will blind too soon;
My nonaged day already points to noon;
How simple is my suit! how small my boon!

Nor do I beg this slender inch to wile
The time away, or falsely to beguile
My thoughts with joy: here's nothing worth a smile.

Francis Quarles

Why dost thou Shade thy Lovely Face?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

31 If that be all, shine forth, and draw thee nigher;
32 Let me behold and die, for my desire
33 Is phoenix-like to perish in that fire.

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

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

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

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

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

Francis Quarles