

Classic Poetry Series

Fyodor Sologub

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

A Son Was Born To A Poor Peasant

A son was born to a poor peasant.
A foul old woman stepped inside
The hut, with trembling bony fingers
Clawing her tangled locks aside.

And when the midwife wasn't looking,
Across towards that babe she reached.
And with her gnarled, misshapen fingers
His cheek she very lightly touched.

Mumbling weird words and slowly tapping
Her crooked stick, she went away.
Nobody knew what charm she'd woven,
And so the years went duly by -

The secret spell came to fulfilment:
In life, much sorrow came to him
But happiness, and joy, and true love
Fled the dark sign upon the skin.

Fyodor Sologub

All The World's Ruled By A Dragon

All the world's ruled by the Dragon -
Fiery, mad, wicked, perverse.
Let me praise him with a humble,
Daring and ironic curse:

You, destruction-bringer, ordered
The damp swamps to show your power;
You brought forth the trees and grasses
Growing into leaves and flowers.

All things flying, all things crawling
You made - though their time is brief.
Those aware and those ambitious
You doomed to the harshest life.

You moved and clouds started floating . . .
You chased winds along the land,
So your kisses, deadly scorching,
Would not sear before you planned.

And your orders can't be cancelled;
You have no mercy to bring.
You rule and don't hear our begging.
You don't love. You kill each thing.

Fyodor Sologub

Devil's Swing

Over the rushing river
Where shaggy fir-trees stand,
The devil himself is pushing
My swing with furry hand.

Pushing, he laughs away,
 And up I go,
 And down I go,
The seat creaks ominously,
The rope begins to fray,
Rubbing against a bough.

Prolonged the seat-board's creaking,
As up and down it glides.
With wheezy laughter shaking,
The devil holds his sides.

I hang on, swinging, gliding,
 As up I go,
 And down I go,
Slithering, slipping, sliding,
My dizzy gaze avoiding
The devil down below.

Above the shady fir-tree,
A voice laughs from the blue:
"You've landed on the swing, see! -
Swing, and to hell with you!"

And in the shaggy fir-tree,
A raucous hullabaloo:
"You've landed on the swing, see! -
Swing, and to hell with you!"

The devil will not leave it,
The swing will fly apace
Till with a violent buffet
I'm swept clean off my place,

Until the last few strands
Of hemp snap finally,
Until my native land
Comes flying up at me.

I'll soar above that fir-tree
And bang earth with my head.
So swing the swing on, devil,
Higher, higher... Aah!

Fyodor Sologub

I Have Enchanted All Of Nature

I have enchanted all of Nature
And forged each moment's quality.
And what a horrifying freedom
I found in such a sorcery!

My constant guilt - with no beginning
Spread till all limit-zones were passed;
The body far away expanded,
And depths opened that were so vast.

Thell I called out to the Prime-Mover,
My challenge unto Heaven thrown;
The stars and planets gave the answer:
I made Nature myself, alone.

Fyodor Sologub

We Are All Captured Beasts

We are all captured beasts,
And we howl - as we might.
We can't open the doors,
For the doors are locked tight.

If our hearts can remember tradition,
When our barking brings solace, we bark.
We don't know. Long ago we've forgotten
That it stinks badly in this zoo-park.

For our hearts can accept repetition;
Bored and weary, we cuckoo our song.
For the zoo is impersonal, habitual;
We've not longed to be free for so long.

We are all captured beasts,
And we howl - as we might.
We can't open the doors,
For the doors are locked tight.

Fyodor Sologub

When Heaving On The Stormy Waters

When, heaving on the stormy waters,
I felt my ship beneath to sink,
I prayed, "Oh, Father Satan, save me,
Forgive me at death's utter brink!

"If you will save my soul embittered
From perishing before its hour,
The days to come, the nights that follow
I vow to vice, I pledge to power."

The Devil forthwith snatched and flung me
Into a boat; the sides were frail,
But on the bench the oars were lying
And in the bow an old gray sail.

And landward once again I carried
My outcast soul, bereft of kin,
Upon its sick and vicious sojourn
My body and its gift of sin.

And I am faithful, Father Satan,
Unto my evil hour's vow,
When from my drowning ship you saved me
And when I prayed you guide the prow.

To you descend my praises, Father,
No day from bitter blame exempt.
O'er worlds my blasphemy shall tower;
And I shall tempt -- and I shall tempt.

Fyodor Sologub

Wine And Joy

Wine and joy are completely forgotten,
As well as his armor and sword.
Alone he descends in the rotten
Mysterious dungeon. The door
Is squeaking with long drawn sound
For no one has entered inside.
The dark and the damp reign around.
The window is narrow and high.

His eyes grow accustomed to the gloom and
Through the dust and the web he explores
Some strange marks, emerging and looming
On the floor, on the vaults, on the walls.
He gazes at the marks' interlacement
At those incomprehensible signs
And tarries for Death to embrace him
To enlighten his soul and eyes.

Fyodor Sologub